

Iyashikei 151

Chapter 151:

The sudden scream from the 4th floor shook Han Fei. Then he heard the voice of the boy in the stairwell again, "Why are the three of them doing this again? I should have let mommy suffocate all of them when I had the chance!" The boy cursed under his breath before he hurried upstairs. As the boy moved away, Han Fei pushed the door slightly outward so he could catch a glimpse of the boy's back. The boy was wearing the school uniform of Yi Ming Private Academy but the uniform was several sizes too big for him. After the boy left, the door to the manager's office swung open again. The powerful footsteps returned. It was the hostel manager, who also headed upstairs, with a flashlight.

'An accident might have happened, this place is much more dangerous than the Happiness Neighbourhood.' Han Fei arranged the info in his mind, 'Just now it was a boy who stood on the other side of the door. Based on what he said, he should be the one who planted the needle inside the banana, in that case, he probably has to do with those 'thank you' notes as well. The boy was not shocked when the scream occurred, he even said that this was not the first time this has happened. This means that he knows the culprits. From the info that I have, there are at least 4 malicious spirits inside this building and they know each other.'

After the hostel manager left, Han Fei walked out from behind the door. He put the landlord's ring back on and headed upstairs. Even though the hostel only had 4 floors, every floor contained many rooms. However, all of the rooms were deathly quiet. Han Fei slunk his way up to the corner between 3rd and 4th floor. He could hear a barely discernible voice coming from upstairs. "I only killed one, why are there dead bodies all over the place?" A middle-aged woman's voice came from the 4th floor stairwell door. From his vantage point, Han Fei could see that she was dragging a female carcass out from Room 401. The body's stomach was unusually flat like the organs inside had been hollowed out.

The hostel manager was incredibly fit. She wrapped the girl up inside the comforter and then hauled the body over her broad shoulder and went down the stairs. Han Fei reacted quickly and slithered into the 3rd floor corridor.

The hostel manager's every step jingled as the keys in her pocket jangled against each other. Carrying the body, she did not enter the 3rd floor corridor but headed directly downstairs. After the hostel manager left, Han Fei found his way up to the 4th floor instead.

'The doors to Room 401 and the nearby bathroom are open. Did a tragedy befall someone when they tried to use the bathroom in the middle of the night? But what about her roommates? Are they still

alive?’ Han Fei gathered his courage and stepped into Room 401. At first glance, this was a normal hostel bedroom. And it was empty. The small room was littered with objects. Han Fei felt uneasy inside so he picked up his pace and searched for valuable information.

The girl who occupied Bed No. 1 was called Qiu Qiu. There was a collection of love poems hidden under her pillow. A few pages were torn out from the book. The girl appeared to be in a relationship. Some flirtatious remarks were left on the back of her exercise book. ‘Why would she leave these in her exercise book? Isn’t she afraid that the teacher will see them? Or are they meant to be seen by the teacher?’

In any case, Han Fei turned to Bed No. 2 since he had limited time. The name of the girl in this bed was written on her textbook, Yu Yingying. The girl was a groupie. She seemed to come from a better background. The clothes that were draped over her bed were of a more expensive quality than the rest of the girls.

The girl in Bed No. 3 was called Wang Hui. Two pairs of sports shoes were placed beside her bed. Her open school bag contained a pass from the school sports team. It appeared like she was aiming for a sports scholarship.

Han Fei reached Bed No. 4 at last. He pulled back the mosquito net and immediately noticed something was wrong. The mattress was wrinkled and the comforter was balled up into a mess. Something unsightly had just happened here. ‘The girl that the hostel manager carried out occupied this bed? But what happened to her? There was no visible wound on her stomach but her stomach appears deflated. Is the culprit still inside this room?’ He whipped his body around to check. Before Han Fei could get a good look, the boy’s voice came from the corridor again. “I’ve already planned everything, why do the 3 of you have to ruin everything?!”

“We can do whatever we like, who are you to boss us around?”

“Stop arguing, all of them are going to die anyway.”

The voices approached the door, if Han Fei left the room now, he’d run right into them. He looked around, pulled back the sheet from Bed No. 4 and scurried underneath it. Holding his breath, Han Fei turned his eyes to the door. It was then that he felt goosebumps coming all over his body. He saw a woman’s face under Bed No. 1!

Her curtain of black hair swung to the ground. The girl was trussed up and tied under the bed. Her eyes were wide open even in death. Han Fei clamped on his teeth to prevent the scream from escaping his throat.

Soon someone entered Room 401. Said person wore a pair of white sports shoes and sat on Bed No. 1.

“Now that all four girls have been murdered, Teacher Ma’s secret will never be exposed again.”

“He is really a horrible person. After accepting Qiu Qiu’s confession, he still went after Chu Xia.”

“I so wish to kill him.”

“Shut your mouths! That is our father!” The boy suddenly shouted. “There is one more person who knows about the secret. When daddy tricked Chu Xia into the gym, there was someone hiding behind the sports equipment. That person escaped through the gym window before they were discovered.”

“How are we supposed to find this person when there are so many students at this school? You don’t expect us to murder everyone at the school just to protect Teacher Ma, right?”

“It’ll be impossible to do that. Why don’t we change our target and kill Teacher Ma instead?”

“Are you capable of killing him?”

“Just shut up already!” The boy warned dangerously. “I will deal with the rest.”

“Why should the three of us listen to you?”

“Of the quadruplet, you’re the only one alive. You’ve sucked away all of the life forces so the three of us became stillborn and now we still need to listen to your orders?”

“Try us and see if we’ll kill you or not?”

“Are you threatening me?” The boy huffed but he did not get angry. “Indeed, I am weak on my own... How about this, I will find some relics in this school and give them all to you. They will have a lingering presence that you favor.”

“What do you need from the three of us?” The 3 other voices were instantly persuaded.

“I need you to leave my body and stay inside Room 401. Do not wander off again!” The boy said as he unzipped something. “If you promise me that, the things inside this schoolbag are all yours.” As the bag opened, the temperature in the room dropped. Chill also came from Han Fei’s ring. But to Han Fei’s surprise, there was a comfort laced within the chill. He turned to look at his finger and realized Xu Qin’s pet shadow was curled around the landlord’s ring. It seemed to enjoy the chill emitted from the ring. ‘This thing has followed me into the map?!’

Since Weep and Lee Zai did not have the correct id, they were blocked outside Yi Ming Private Academy. However, the barrier appeared to only work on ghosts and spirits. Xu Qin’s pet was of indeterminate nature, it was not a lifeform, it was very unique. Its presence appeared to be a bug. The shadow on his finger desired Yin energy, Han Fei could feel its hunger but he could do nothing about it for now.

Han Fei once obtained information from the female student who infiltrated into Happiness Neighbourhood. There was a student at Yi Ming Private Academy who had been possessed by a very scary ghost, it was that student who changed the whole school. Han Fei believed that the boy inside the room with him might be that student, therefore, he had to be careful. He had to wait until the boy vacated the room before he could do anything.

The boy completed the transaction with the 3 other voices. He left the schoolbag and departed from Room 401. After he was gone, three small figures materialized inside the room. They started to ransack through the schoolbag. ‘The boy had his brothers stay inside Room 401, this is not good for me. If I stay here any longer, they’ll eventually find me.’ Unless absolutely necessary, Han Fei was not going to log off. ‘It’s better for me to escape from this room and find a safer place before I log off.’

His muscles tensed and Han Fei observed the room. When he was looking for a chance, an old pair of glasses fell to the ground. The 3 figures had been fighting over the things inside the bag and one of the things fell out during the commotion. The glasses looked worn out and had blood stains on it. It radiated a strong Yin energy.

“How about we share this?”

“Okay.”

“I agree.” One of the boys bent down. It reached out for the glasses when it felt something off. It slowly turned its head to look under Bed No. 4 and a man’s face was looking back at it!

Using Soul-Depth Touch, Han Fei landed a kick right on the boy’s body!

Han Fei had no other choice. So far, all he kept getting from the system was passive skill. Even though it was not meant for this purpose, Han Fei had to use the passive skill in an offensive manner to save himself. He toppled the bed frame and plunged forward to swipe away the schoolbag from the stunned boy. The thread around his fingertip curled around the glasses on the ground. Before the 3 boys could react, Han Fei already flew out the room and raced down the corridor!

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Run! Grabbing the schoolbag was already more than he hoped for. Han Fei charged out of Room 401 without looking back. The 3 ghost children in the room did not expect to find a man hiding under the bed, much less him jumping out and snatching the schoolbag with him. Naturally these ghosts were not going to let him off the hook so easily. They shrieked pointedly. After a temporary stun, they chased after Han Fei. Holding the bag tightly, Han Fei raced down the corridor. As his legs moved, he reached his hands into the bag and the system started to work its magic.

“Notification for Player 0000! You’ve discovered a Grade G Item, Unreturned Library Book.

“Unreturned Library Book (Possessed by Resentment and Despair): According to legends, a girl died after reading this book. If you borrow this book home, then she’ll follow you home too.

“You’ve discovered a Grade G Item, Surveillance Video Tape.

“Surveillance Video Tape (Possessed by Resentment and Despair): This tape records very important things, including your moment of death.

“You’ve discovered a Grade G Item, Red School Uniform.

“Red School Uniform (Possessed by Resentment and Despair): There is a red uniform placed inside one of the lockers at the changing room. It will only appear when you are inside the changing room alone.”

Han Fei shoved every identifiable object into his inventory. The rest, he allowed the shadow on his finger to absorb. Since he could not keep them in his inventory, after he logged off, the remaining items inside the bag would be left for other ghosts anyway. In that case, Han Fei decided to treat the shadow to a feast. He was even more generous than Xu Qin. He loosened the shadow inside the schoolbag and allowed it to suck all the negative energy away from the relics. After much consumption, the shadow which was only a thread large started to grow. It crawled on the bag like a black snake.

“Eat as much as you can! Don’t let anything go to waste!” The most cursed items from the bag were kept by Han Fei inside his inventory and the Yin energy of the other objects were consumed by the shadow. In other words, there was nothing but trash left in the schoolbag. When he reached the first floor, without even stopping, Han Fei lobbed the schoolbag at the manager office’s window!

The glass window shattered and the items inside the bag scattered all over the office. ‘The hostel door is locked and there are 3 ghosts chasing after me. If they split up to block my path, I won’t be able to do anything about it. It is unwise to log off while they are around either. They might be waiting right for me to return. So the best option now is to find a secluded spot to hide.’ After making the perfect throw, Han Fei turned into the bathroom on the first floor.

The footsteps approached. The 3 ghost children weren’t dumb. Two of them sneaked into the manager’s office to retrieve the schoolbag while the last one turned into the bathroom to check for Han Fei. Han Fei was hiding inside Cubicle 1 when the chill came from his ring. Before he was exposed, Han Fei chose to log off. The blood dropped and Han Fei’s consciousness detached itself from the game. Taking the helmet off, the man reached for the cold bottle of water on the table and chugged it down. “That was exciting.”

Putting down the bottle, Han Fei crawled to his computer and quickly recorded down a few names. Bed 1, Qing Qiutao; Bed 2, Yu Yingying; Bed 3, Qing Wanghui; Bed 4, Qing Chuxia; Teacher Ma.

He scoured the net for a long time before Han Fei found something. Room 401 did exist at Yi Ming Private Academy and the girls’ names matched. Incidentally, Girl 4, Chuxia was the female student who

got her face scratched by Jin Sheng. It was her boyfriend who 'committed suicide' within the school compound. Based on the staff roster, there was only one teacher with the surname Ma at Yi Ming Private Academy and he was the language teacher for Primary 1 Class 1, Ma Manjiang.

"Girl 1, Qiutao is from class 1, that was noticeable from her exercise book. That means that the lovey-dovey messages on her exercise books were meant for Ma Manjiang. The poor girl probably didn't know she had been played a fool by her teacher until her death.' As he dug deeper, Han Fei found more shocking information. Ma Manjiang indeed had a child. His name was Ma Bo. There was a psychiatrist report on Ma Bo from many years ago. The boy suffered from schizophrenia and he had 4 main personas. Everything matched what Han Fei experienced in the game. Ma Manjiang's son had 3 ghost children possessing his body. 'Everything matches. This Ma Manjiang sure is a pervert. As a teacher, he not only had an illicit relationship with his student, Qiutao but also tricked Chuxia to follow him into the gym. God knows what he had done to her. Unfortunately, his action was encountered by another student who was hiding inside the gym. To protect his reputation, he and his children have been trying to locate that student.'

Han Fei stared at the screen as the thoughts circulated in his mind. He recorded down everything that he found from the internet. Then he pulled down all the pictures of the human jigsaw case from the wall and replaced them with info from the new case. "Four people have died at Yi Ming Private Academy in real life. The first victim was the security guard, he didn't seem to be related to Ma Manjiang. The second victim was Jin Sheng's class teacher, a female teacher who was new to the job. Her name is Liu Lina and she was also Ma Manjiang's wife. The third victim was a ruffian. He was Chuxia's boyfriend and Chuxia was a victim of Ma Manjiang's sexual advances. The last victim was Jin Sheng. At first glance, Jin Sheng has nothing to do with this whole event so why was he killed? Was he the student who was inside the gym and saw Ma Manjiang's secret?"

Han Fei had a hypothesis, all the victims did not die from suicide but killed by Ma Manjiang and his son. "That still does not feel right."

Han Fei went back to the computer and checked further down the date. He accidentally came across a news that was extremely curious. Long after Yi Ming Private Academy was locked down, the 4 girls from Room 401 died one after another, just like the curse from the ghost story.

According to the article, the police confirmed that the killer was Ma Manjiang's son, Ma Bo. As if knowing his ending, Ma Bo committed suicide in his room out of guilt. Everyone who was related to this case had been killed, only Ma Manjiang did not receive his deserved punishment.

The sun was rising. Han Fei had another thought, he took out his phone to call Li Xue. After a few rings, Li Xue's voice came from the phone. She appeared to have just woken up.

"Li Xue, can you bring me to meet your teacher today? I have a case that I need to discuss with him."

"The human jigsaw case has already been handed over to the heavy crime unit. My teacher is not part of it anymore and you have to understand that he is going to retire soon..."

"This is another case, it's related to Yi Ming Private Academy."

"Yi Ming Private Academy?" That snapped Li Xue out of it. "Teacher's health is failing and he needs to take regular check-ups. I'll bring you to meet him this afternoon."

"Okay, thank you for everything." After hanging up, Han Fei climbed into bed to catch up on his sleep.

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"You're an actor, is it appropriate for you to have such constant interaction with the police? What if this is captured by paparazzi?" Li Xue rode on her bike and Han Fei sat behind her.

"It's fine. I have a good relationship with the paparazzi, in fact, I am thinking about using them as my informant."

"A celebrity using the paparazzi as informants to solve cases? Well, that's unusual." Li Xue drove very fast. "The entertainment industry is quite messy, I still think it's better for you to keep a low profile."

"Before this, I did not have a choice but now I just want to be a professional actor. If others in the industry want to stand in my way, I will bulldoze over them and then hand them over to the police." Han Fei suddenly asked seriously, "During new officer recruitment, will the candidate's history of being a Good Samaritan help his resume?"

"Well, we'll take that into consideration."

“Will it matter if that history is slightly bloody?”

“Huh?” At around 11 am, they finally arrived at the old city’s police station. Originally Li Xue’s teacher was resting at the hospital but once he heard Han Fei requested to meet him, he immediately changed the meeting location. In his opinion, Han Fei shouldn’t get too close to a location like the hospital. When they arrived, the senior officer was already there, he did not like for others to wait for him.

“What is it that you wish to discuss with me?” The old man stood beside the table. His posture was straight, unlike someone who was sick.

“Sir, I’m just wondering if the police have investigated this one particular person before.” Han Fei cut right to the chase.

“Who?”

“Ma Manjiang.” When Han Fei gave the name, the whole office silenced. The senior officer did not answer immediately. He looked at Han Fei strangely before revealing a rare smile. “Where did you hear that name?”

“From the internet.” Han Fei shared his full hypothesis. He believed Ma Manjiang had taken advantage of Chuxia and then to keep his evil deeds a secret, he first threatened and then killed the girl. Han Fei suspected Jin Sheng was the student who was inside the gym when Ma Manjiang assaulted Chuxia. Han Fei would not have come up with such a firm hypothesis without his adventure in the cryptic world but Li Xue’s teacher had no idea about the cryptic world’s existence. From his perspective, Han Fei was a genius detective since he managed to piece such a perfect hypothesis together just from the information he got from the internet. After hearing what Han Fei had to say, the senior officer’s eyes glowed with admiration, “It’s impressive that you manage to come up with all these on your own.”

“So the police are onto him as well.” Based on the old man’s expression, Han Fei believed that the police were already on Ma Manjiang’s tail.

“After we got the information from Meng Changan, we reopened the case into Yi Ming Private Academy. Unfortunately, Ma Manjiang has gone missing, yes, we have people looking for him as we speak.” The senior office sat down and signaled for Han Fei to join him. “When we pulled up the old case files, we

noticed Ma Manjiang appeared much too often with different identities. He was last seen at his father's funeral. Oh, right, do you know that his father was the founder of Yi Ming Private Academy?"

"His father was the headmaster?"

"Ma Manjiang's father was an entrepreneur and philanthropist. They built this school in the countryside to provide an education opportunity for those who lived far away from the city but something about that goal changed..." Li Xue's teacher shared the info that he knew. Based on the police investigation, there was a connection between all the victims at Yi Ming Private Academy. However, unlike Han Fei, they believed that connection to be Jin Sheng and not Ma Manjiang. Jin Sheng was the last victim at the school before it was closed down and the boy was the turning point in all the cases.

Han Fei viewed that case from Ma Manjiang's perspective but Li Xue's teacher viewed it from the Butterfly's perspective. The Butterfly liked to toy with humanity, to push kindness to its brink. Of all the victims, the one who fitted the bill best was Jin Sheng. Li Xue's teacher even had a brave supposition that it was Jin Sheng who caused the series of tragedies at Yi Ming Private Academy. It was Jin Sheng who was targeted by the Butterfly, the other victims were murdered because the Butterfly intended to expose the world's sin brutally before the child for him to edge deeper and deeper into the abyss.

Han Fei speculated that Jin Sheng was the student who hid inside the gym, Li Xue's teacher agreed with him and he even went one step further to hypothesize that it was the Butterfly who lured Jin Sheng in there. The purpose was for the boy to witness the true nature of his respected Teacher Ma. Jin Sheng probably would have sought help after that but no one believed him. Once people did start to hear him out though, those who trusted him started to die one after another.

Perhaps Jin Sheng's death was not the Butterfly's goal, they probably wanted Jin Sheng to embrace the darkness but Jin Sheng had chosen death instead. That was the police's deduction, but ultimately police work depended on evidence, so far they could not even tell why Jin Sheng was targeted by the Butterfly. After some interviews, their impression of Jin Sheng was that he was a normal child, the only thing special about him was he liked to tell ghost stories, that was all. Jin Sheng was already dead so they could not get anything from him. However, it was a different case for Han Fei. He suspected Jin Sheng was still at Yi Ming Private Academy. He had the chance to get close to Jin Sheng and maybe even be his friends.

Han Fei had an advantage that the police did not. After hearing the senior officer's analysis, Han Fei knew what to do next. There was a bond between Han Fei and the law enforcement. Han Fei could glimpse the dead's memories from the cryptic world and then used these memories to form part of the truth and that would provide a general picture for the law enforcement to follow up on. The

apprehension of the culprit, collection of evidence, or things that required manpower were all left to the police. They were in a symbiotic relationship, one worked on capturing the killers and the Butterfly in real life while the others attempted to bring salvation and release to the dead in the cryptic world.

With his superb memory, Han Fei already memorized all the key points even though the senior officer only went through it once. Han Fei planned to search for Jin Sheng in the cryptic world that very night. "Sir, I feel like my mind has cleared after talking to you." Han Fei was detailed-orientated but Li Xue's teacher was more a big-picture person. The latter helped put Han Fei into perspective.

"I enjoy our chats too." The old man looked at Han Fei and he smiled kindly. "I am glad to have met a young man like yourself, but I hope you can promise me one thing."

"What is it?"

"I hope that you'll find a happier career. I know you are a great actor and even have the potential to be a great officer but neither of these careers will help you regain a real smile." Li Xue's teacher appeared to be able to see through Han Fei's mind. "An actor can make other people smile but they can never make themselves smile; an officer will be exposed to many sins and when the weight of the sin crushes you, you'll lose more than just a smile."

The senior officer's words warmed Han Fei's heart. Unfortunately he had no other choice. "I know the risks but I can't give up now. I have to capture the Butterfly." Han Fei said determinedly. He was telling the truth. The black box that Butterfly was looking for was in his mind. Even if Han Fei gave up, the Butterfly would not. One young and one old, the duo with wildly different backgrounds chatted for a long time inside the office. It was not until the call came from the hospital that Li Xue's teacher was escorted away by another officer. Even Li Xue found it unbelievable that her teacher had chatted for so long with Han Fei. Her teacher usually wasn't such a chatterbox.

After the exchange with Li Xue's teacher, Han Fei found his perspective adjusted. Most of his speculations were confirmed by the police. A plan was forming in Han Fei's brain. The killers at Yi Ming Private Academy included Ma Manjiang and his son. Their suspected victims so far were the security guard, the ruffian, and Ma Manjiang's wife. Han Fei needed to find the other victims to figure out more about the story. Han Fei left the police station and was about to go home when his phone rang. It was Director Jiang. "Director Jiang, how can I help you?"

"8 pm tomorrow night, Twin Flowers will be released on all platforms. We have rented a space and all of us plan to watch the first premiere together."

“It’s happening so soon?”

“We’ve already given up on offline premiere, we’ll be focusing on online platforms instead. Tomorrow night, we’ll know whether all our effort will be worth it or not.”

As time advanced, offline and online cinemas branched off into two different product chains. Online movie cinemas were efficient and more comfortable, with that, it carved out a niche for itself; offline cinemas though had the upperhand in visual and audio effects, going to one was no different from a virtual reality experience.

Twin Flowers was a small budget film, it did not have that many special effects so online cinemas were more suitable for it.

“I will be there tomorrow night.” Han Fei was quite excited, after all, this was his first movie as the main character.

“Okay!” Getting Han Fei’s promise, Director Jiang sounded more excited than Han Fei was. “By the way, I have a friend who wants to meet you. He is quite a famous horror movie director. Tomorrow he’ll be there to watch the premiere with us as well.” Director Jiang was sharing his connection with Han Fei, he hoped that Han Fei would walk further on the road of being an actor.

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“A famous horror film director?” Han Fei hesitated, “Director Jiang, to be honest, I still wish to be a comedy actor. Compared to bringing people fear, I prefer to bring my audience smiles and laughter.”

“I know that but we would love to see you smile as well, but at your current stage, I suggest that you stick to your forte of horror film. When you have enough money saved up and don’t need to worry about day-to-day life expenditure anymore, you can feel free to explore other film genres.”

“My forte is now horror films?” Han Fei guessed that was true. “Alright, I will talk to him tomorrow.” Even after hanging up, Han Fei still found it hard to calm down. His first big movie was going to premiere

soon, it would be a lie to say he was not nervous. “To witness my first actual appearance on the big screen, I need to survive in that school tonight.”

After a quick meal, Han Fei went to find Li Xue. After much haggling, bargaining and begging, he finally learned some new fighting skills from Li Xue. The techniques were not complicated but they were efficient and fatal. Some of the tips could not be found online, they were concluded from Li Xue’s own experience on the streets. It was immensely helpful to Han Fei. Before this, Han Fei was just dipping his toes into the pool of martial arts but now he was seriously considering taking up this skill professionally.

Han Fei reached home at 3 pm. After a shower, he looked through books related to education and then went online to attend a class on educational science. He tried to put himself in the shoes of an educator. ‘Kind, tolerant, patient, respectful, I need to treat all of my students equally. They are all my children and I only want the best for them.’ Han Fei studied until night came. Pulling back the curtain, Han Fei stood before his wall of crimes. He memorized all the details he could find on Yi Ming Private Academy. Time ticked by. The layout of the hostel bathroom appeared in his mind. Han Fei took a deep breath and put on the gaming helmet. Blood poured like rain and washed out the city. In the redness, Han Fei opened his eyes.

A horrible smell wafted past his nose. Han Fei was still standing inside the cubicle of the 1st floor bathroom. It was extremely quiet. Waves of chills came from the ring. Han Fei eased the cubicle door open and then took out the red uniform from his inventory. Once the uniform was out in the open, the darkness in the bathroom corner started to twist. A black snake then slithered out from it.

“Seems like you have found yourself a good hiding spot.” Xu Qin’s little pet was extremely good at hiding. It literally had hidden itself from the system’s detection, much less the ghosts at this school. But its other skills were not as powerful. The black snake crawled onto the red uniform and consumed the resentment on it. Its body expanded again.

“The thing’s ability is consumption but it is still too small now, it couldn’t consume anything larger than it.” Han Fei did not have much use for these objects possessed with negative energy. He might as well feed them all to Xu Qin’s pet. If it got larger, then at least it could help protect Han Fei. Han Fei left the snake to its meal while he sneaked over to the bathroom door. The glass shards on the corridor had been cleared away and a new window pane had been replaced. The only difference was there was now a new plaque on the hostel manager’s door—Admittance of Staff Only.

Han Fei sneaked down the corridor to look through the window. The ceremonial urn that Han Fei hid under the bed was sought out and it was abandoned alongside many other useless trashes at the corner of the room. ‘4 girls died yesterday night in this building but everyone carries on like nothing is out of

place. The front door is still locked.' The hostel manager was not in again. Han Fei wanted to get inside the room to retrieve Weep's urn and then search the room for spare keys. He just pushed the manager door open when he heard one of the doors on the 1st floor creak open as well.

Han Fei slipped behind the door and peeked outwards. He saw a young man about 16 sneaking his way over to the hostel manager's office. Initially Han Fei could not see the man clearly but as he got closer, Han Fei managed to recognize the young man. This was the ruffian who committed suicide by jumping off a building at Yi Ming Private Academy. He was as skinny as a stick, had a square face, big eyes and his hair was dyed half yellow-half black. There was a tattoo for the Chinese character, 恨 (hatred) on his arm.

'How did he end up here?' The victim was coming closer and closer. Since the man was volunteering himself to Han Fei, the latter naturally was going to welcome him with open arms. The man leaned against the wall and slowly poked his head towards the window. On the other side of the wall, Han Fei did the same. The 4 eyes met and the young man stumbled back from shock and fear.

"Shush!" Just as the man lost his balance, Han Fei reached out to grab the man by his collar and close his hand over the man's mouth. Han Fei's action was so smooth that it was clear this was not his first time doing something like this. After the young man calmed down, Han Fei loosened his grip.

"Man, manager? Since when did we get a new hostel manager?"

"It's not safe out here, I suggest we continue this conversation in the room that you just came out from."

Han Fei placed Weep's urn inside an electric cooker. He closed the lid and carried the cooker out from the manager's office. They rushed to Room 104 which was situated in the middle of the corridor. Han Fei only sighed in relief after the door closed.

"Why do you have the key to this bedroom?" Han Fei placed with the cooker under the bed and turned to question the man.

"I, I am a student here, so naturally I have a key here!" The man answered.

“Your name is Zhang Guanxing, you’re 17 and dropped out from school a year ago. You started to hang out with the ruffians around the school and gave yourself a street name called Wild Hound.” Han Fei had memorized the victim’s information. “I know you very well, so I hope you won’t lie to me again.”

The man did not expect Han Fei to have done a background check on him. He shrunk his neck and fidgeted nervously.

“Tell me, how did you get into this hostel? Why are you here? And how did you end up with the key to this bedroom?” Han Fei’s voice was not angry but it was definitely stern.

“What does that have to do with you?” The young man rolled his eyes at Han Fei, he appeared to despise figure of authority.

“Recently, some bad things have happened here. I am a teacher who just got transferred here, therefore, I have the responsibility to protect all of my students, even the former ones.” Han Fei stated his intention very clearly. He was not there to harm the young man.

“You’re a new teacher here?” The man finally lifted his head. He began hesitantly. “I used to stay here before I dropped out. I copied the key for myself. I’d come back here once in a while when I have nowhere else to put my head down for the night. I do not mean to do any harm.”

“Why won’t you have a place to sleep? What do you mean?”

“After my parents’ divorce, my father drinks every day. He’d come home to beat me and I’ll have to stay up to clean up his puke. That is not a home, it’s worse than the garbage dump.” The boy’s hand reached instinctually to his tattoo.

“Then how did you get in here?” Han Fei was more curious about that. The front door was locked and all the windows had security nets.

“My best bro lives in Room 201. Normally, I’d climb up the net to get into his bedroom before I sneak my way down here.” The man’s expression twitched like he was still hiding something.

“If there’s something that worries you, just tell me. I’m a teacher, I can help you.”

“Actually, I’m now trapped here and I can’t leave.” The boy eventually came out with the truth. “I was trying to sneak into the hostel manager’s office earlier to steal the key.”

“Trapped here? What do you mean? Can’t you just make your way back through the same route you used to come in here?”

“Something has happened to my bro. I can’t go back there because everyone in that bedroom...” The young man halted for a long time before he uttered, “Are dead.”

“Dead?!”

“Not too long ago, my best bro picked up a can somewhere around school. Instead of throwing it away, he carried the can back to his room and spoke to it every night. Then his school results improved tremendously.” The man said with fear. “I thought it was because he had started to treat his homework seriously but one day, when I visited him again, I realized not only him but also all his roommates were sitting around that can.

“Their faces were pale, they kept staring into the can, mumbling something at it. They did not pay me any attention so I did not disrupt them either. However, when I went back a few days later, I realized my best bro has gone missing! However, his 3 other roommates were still seated around that can. They did not seem to notice his disappearance or my presence either.

“I was so afraid that I immediately escaped from that bedroom. Then I picked my phone to call my best bro. The call was picked up and my bro sounded normal but there was an echo coming from his end of the line.”

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“An echo?”

“Yes, it sounded like he was trapped inside some kind of empty, small room.” Zhang Guanxing gestured with his hands. “He told me on the phone that he was fine. He was studying in the classrooms. I thought he really must have turned over a new leaf. He used to be the first to escape from the classroom when the bell rang. But now he’d stay to revise his homework after school? No wonder his result improved so much. Hearing the normalcy in his voice, the anxiety in my heart slowly faded away. He even joked with me like usual.

“However, the concern returned when I made another call to him at 11 pm that night. The voice from his end was blurry. I asked him what he was doing and he told me he was still in the classroom studying! The classrooms should have been closed by then. The lights were off, so how could he still be studying?

“I instantly realized something was wrong. I sneaked out from Room 104 and ran to Room 201. I tried knocking on the door and the bedroom door swung open easily. I looked into the room and saw there was only one student left beside the can. His head was lowered as he looked into the can with undetached attention. His expression was unusual. I did not dare to get too close so I grabbed the broom from behind the door and pushed him lightly with it. He turned around and his expression instantly turned back to normal. He smiled at me and told me to be quiet as he gestured for me to get closer to him. He told me to join him, apparently there was something interesting inside the can.

“To be honest, I was quite curious. The can appeared to have some kind of magic, and it pulled my attention. My legs moved involuntarily forward. When I snapped out of it, I was already inside Room 201. The student beside the can continued to smile at me but there was something fake about his smile like he was not the one smiling but someone was pulling his facial muscles into a smile.

“Wary of him, I didn’t get any closer. Instead, I called my friend’s name loudly but there was no reply!

“I knew then my friend was not inside the bedroom. There was no reason for me to stay inside that bedroom anymore. I couldn’t wait to leave. As I turned to exit, I took out my phone and called his number. The phone was picked up after one ring. I shouted into the phone but a moment later, two echoes of my friend’s voice appeared inside the room. One came from my phone and the other came from inside the can!

“I was stumped. When I turned back to look, I saw a pair of hands were around the neck of the student beside the can. The pale arms slowly dragged the student into the can. Blood dripped on the rim of the black can. Then the room was empty like the students were never there in the first place. My legs went out under me. At that moment, I heard my friend’s voice again, he told me to go accompany him inside

the can. I had no idea how I got out from that bedroom, in any case, I won't be going back to Room 201 ever again."

Zhang Guanxing was clearly frightened or else he normally would not have been such a model student and answered every question Han Fei had so obediently. "Sir, can you bring me out of this hostel? Things are getting stranger and stranger around this place! I have a feeling that bad things will happen if we continue to stay here!"

After hearing Zhang Guanxing's story, the system sounded in Han Fei's mind.

"Notification for Player 0000! You've triggered Grade G Hidden Mission—The Can.

"Mission Requirement: Open the can with your own hands and look inside it for 3 full minutes.

"Time-limited Mission: The Mission will automatically end one hour after it is triggered. If you have not completed the mission by then, the mission will be considered a failure.

"Warning! Yi Ming Private Academy is a unique map! The completion of each mission will increase the overall difficulty needed to clear the map!"

When Han Fei heard the mission requirement, his expression dropped. He knew looking into the can would bring tragedy but the mission demanded him to do that very exact thing. To quit the game, he had to complete at least one mission and stay for 3 hours. Therefore, Han Fei had no choice but to accept this time-limited mission for now. The moment he did so, the system continued to announce, "Notification for Player 0000! You've triggered Yi Ming Private Academy's Grade F Hidden Mission—Jin Sheng's Tales of School Horrors.

"Jin Sheng's Tales of School Horrors (Grade F Hidden Mission): Challenge 7 Ghost Stories inside Yi Ming Private Academy!

"Time-limited Mission: The Mission will automatically end 7 days after it is triggered. If you have not completed the mission by then, the mission will be considered a failure!

“Warning! All the missions inside a hidden map will be hidden missions, they provide extremely valuable rewards!”

Staring at the mission interface, Han Fei was shocked to have undertaken 2 missions in such a short amount of time. The Grade F mission even directly had Jin Sheng’s name on it. The mission had to be the key mission at Yi Ming Private Academy!

‘I need to challenge 7 ghost stories at this school?’

“Sir, sir, hello?!” Zhang Guanxing called him several times before Han Fei turned his attention back to the young man.

“Yes, Guanxing?” It was Zhang Guanxing who brought him two missions so he was kind towards the little ruffian.

“The name Guanxing was given to me by my parents, I have abandoned it a long time ago. Why don’t you call me Wild Hound? I prefer...”

“You’re still too young for the streets. After we leave this place, I’ll help you reassess your goals in life.” Using Soul-depth Touch, Han Fei patted Zhang Guanxing on his shoulders. He could feel fear, panic and hatred towards his father from the boy.

“You’re the teacher, I’ll listen to you.” Before the threat of unknown danger, Zhang Guanxing was as meek as a sheep. “Should we go find the hostel manager or the other teachers now?”

“We’ll head to Room 201 first, I want to take a look at that can.” Han Fei’s words immediately stupefied Zhang Guanxing. “Why? Sir, you don’t believe me?”

“It’s because I believe you that I have to go there! There are 4 of my students inside that can, you want me to abandon them and escape on our own? Is that something a teacher should do?” Han Fei grabbed Zhang Guanxing by his hand. “Let’s go.”

“I have to go with you? Wait! Sir! Let go please!”

“Shush, there are things more dangerous than the can at this building. You’re safest with me.” Han Fei warned sincerely. “I’ll worry if I leave you here on your own.”

With Zhang Guanxing in tow, they exited Room 104 and entered the left staircase. When they were close to the bathroom, Han Fei stopped temporarily. While Zhang Guanxing looked anxiously about, a shadowy snake slithered out from the bathroom and crawled up Han Fei’s body. The night was thick. Shadows flickered inside the hostel and red eyes appeared to open at the end of the corridor. Room 201 was directly next to the staircase. The door was not closed, it was left open a gap.

“How about I wait for you outside the door?”

“How do you plan to join the gang if you’re that cowardly? You disappoint the name of Wild Hound.” Han Fei dragged Zhang Guanxing into Room 201 and he closed the door. Room 201 looked normal but there was a wooden table placed in the middle of the room and on top of it sat an aged can painted black.

“Sir, don’t get too close to it, hands will come out from it!”

“You stay beside the door. And grab that broom, hit me with it if I start acting funny.”

“Okay.”

Han Fei took tentative steps towards the can. When he was about to reach the can, he turned back to tell Zhang Guanxing, “If I do not respond to the broom, or I was captured by the ghost and pulled into the call, then do not hesitate and run back to Room 104 to hide. Do not wander about aimlessly.” After giving the last advice, Han Fei had Xu Qin’s pet curl around his arm while he reached over to flip open the can’s lid.

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Frost came from his finger tip and it seeped into his body before slowly freezing his mind. He lowered his head and the dark mouth of the can started to yawn. The water at the bottom of the can rippled as a

pale human face surfaced. The face hid at the bottom of the can. It looked at Han Fei expressionlessly as its facial features started to change. "What is it that you want? What do you desire?"

A strange voice came from a far and then echoed inside Han Fei's heart. He refused to answer but he found his lips moving. The human face inside the water took on a more defined feature as the voice listed out some common human desires like beauty, money, fame. Han Fei did not react to any of these things. But when the human face uttered the word, truth, Han Fei could feel his spirit being drawn towards the water. He raised his hands to grab at something but there was only himself in the darkness.

"You desire the truth?" Han Fei felt enveloped by a chill. The room fell away. Instead Han Fei found himself falling down a dark hole, his mind tumbling into an icy cold pond. He could feel the oxygen drying out in his lungs. Despite struggling hard, he continued to sink. Han Fei lifted his head and the face which was previously floating on the surface of the water was now looking down at him who was underwater. It was still staring at Han Fei but the facial feature was becoming more like Han Fei's.

The lips moved as if wanting to tell Han Fei something. However, it only managed to utter one word when a ghastly wound split across the human face. At that moment, Han Fei's consciousness cleared for a second. He lowered his head to look deeper into the water. Many people were sunken down there. They were like mannequins without soul. They were piled on top of each other, their hairs flowing with the current. There was no light in their eyes. Han Fei's body continued to submerge. Han Fei tried to swim upwards but his limbs felt leaden.

Pain, suffocation, lethargy, his mind started to slow down. If Han Fei was to close his eyes and give up the struggle, he'd be released from all these torments. There were voices in the pond welcoming Han Fei. The pale hands reached out towards him. They were like humanity's endless desire. They closed around Han Fei and refused to let go. His lungs were burning and his head spinning. His limbs were going numb. But even in that state, Han Fei refused to succumb. He needed to survive!

Using the last bit of consciousness, Han Fei tried to open the menu. Since he was in an unusual mental state, other than the two talents, Spirit Farer and Resurrection, everything else was greyed out. Just to do something, Han Fei attempted to use Spirit Farer inside the can but before he could trigger it, the human face on the surface of the water suddenly grimaced in pain. The human face inside the can had to satisfy its victims' desire before it could trap their souls. Han Fei's desire though was very special, it was an adamant yearning for truth.

To satisfy Han Fei's desire, the human face appeared to have spoken the name of an Unmentionable. More cracks appeared on its face. The human face finally decided to abandon its own rules. Without giving the truth to Han Fei, it controlled the bodies at the bottom of the pond and used them to drag

Han Fei down. The moment the human face in the can violated its own rules, the lull over Han Fei's mind slowly loosened. The shackles over him gradually weakened. Gritting his teeth, Han Fei made for the surface!

When his fingers broke through the surface, a strand of blackness immediately curled around his arm and yanked him out from the water!

Ping! A spidery splinter appeared on the black can. Life returned to the eyes of the man who stood beside the table. Han Fei's back was cold. His upper body was tightly wrapped together by Xu Qin's pet while the other half of the snake was extended into the can. 'That was too dangerous!' Han Fei's body was still shaking from the cold. If his desire was not the truth but something else, he wouldn't even have the chance to resist. He remembered that just as he was about to yield, a wound appeared on the human face. It was due to the damage to the human face that Han Fei managed to regain his consciousness. There were not many who desired truth and even less when that truth involved an Unmentionable.

The human face in the can was scammed and accidentally incurred the wrath of an Unmentionable.

Han Fei pulled Xu Qin's pet out from the can. To Han Fei's surprise, the shadow drew out a string of old paper notes with it. The notes contained many wishes like I hope xx will love me, let me place number 1 in class, I don't want to fail, I need xxx to die. Wrapped within the layer of notes, there was a small piece of bone.

“Notification for Player 0000! You've completed Grade G Hidden Mission—The Can. Obtained 1 free skill point and special reward, The Can of Wishes.

“The Can of Wishes (Grade G Cursed Item): There is a can buried at the school garden. According to legend, if you whisper your desire into the can, your wish will come true. It was a female student who started this legend. She said she used to despise her younger brother. One day, she shared her wish with the can and the next day her little brother disappeared.

“You've completed the challenge of 1 tales of horrors at the school. Completion rate of Jin Sheng's Tales of Horror: 1/7.”

After combining the object description and the items he had found, Han Fei believed the girl probably had murdered her younger brother and stuffed part of his body into the can. It was not the can that fulfilled her wish, the so-called Can of Wishes was merely an excuse to hide her malice. 'This can is essentially someone's grave.' Han Fei frowned as he studied the can. The shadow though stuffed itself on the negative energy on the notes. The creature never seemed to be picky with its food.

"Sir, are you alright?" Zhang Guanxing asked nervously as he used the broom to poke the back of Han Fei's waist.

"My consciousness was sucked into the earlier but I'm fine now."

"Then did you see my friend inside the can?"

"I'm afraid that your friend has been consumed by the can." Han Fei picked up the lid and closed the black can. In a way, this Can of Wishes could be turned into a good weapon.

Chapter 157:

Opening the closet door, Han Fei pretended to place the can inside it but actually he was trying to see if he could keep the can inside his inventory. He eventually surrendered after failing several times. "Zhang Guanxing, do you know about other strange events that have happened here?" Han Fei hugged the black can and turned to Zhang Guanxing.

The ruffian had no idea why Han Fei would ask that question. He did not dare to answer willy-nilly. He thought about it before saying, "I hear from my girlfriend that someone has died in Room 304 on the 3rd floor. After midnight, the girls in Room 304 would hear footsteps from outside their door like someone was pacing in the 3rd floor corridor. Perhaps it was the dead girl looking for the way back to her room."

"Your girlfriend? Aren't you a bit young to be in a relationship?"

"Sir, is that the problem here? The dead have risen again!"

“Even so, that’s no excuse to be in a relationship so soon. Anyway, please continue the story.” Through what he said, Han Fei then realized Zhang Guanxing did not know what happened to Chuxia so he was not the one who hid inside the gym.

“Rumours said that the girl died because her roommates in Room 304 bullied and ostracized her. The dead girl was beautiful but she came from a poor family. She was shy and always appeared so friendly. She would not get angry no matter the things which were done to her, so everyone was surprised when she did what did.”

“Perhaps she was merely holding it all in and did not know to express what she really felt.” Han Fei had Zhang Guanxing carry the can. “We’ll look around this bedroom first, if we fail to find anything, then we’ll move onto the 3rd floor to take a look.”

“3rd floor? But that’s the girl hostel!”

“Male or female, they are all my students.”

After spending about 3 hours pretending to be busy, Han Fei left Room 201 with Zhang Guanxing. By then Xu Qin’s pet had grown from a small snake to a twisting python. It had consumed the negative energy on the school uniform, library book and video tape as well as the lingering curses on the notes of wishes. It was growing rapidly. Using the left staircase, they sneaked their way to the 3rd floor. Han Fei and Zhang Guanxing hid behind the door as they stared down the deserted corridor.

“When I came here in the past, this place used to be very lively. Some students would be up chatting or playing in their rooms through the night, others would even escape from the hostel to find their entertainment outside of school. But recently, this building feels like it has been hollowed out, it is eerily quiet.”

“Shush.” Han Fei stared at the landlord’s ring, there was no chill from his finger. “Something’s not right.” Yesterday night, the hostel manager patrolled the building and 3 children ghosts murdered a roomful of girls but tonight they were not seen anywhere. Not even their footsteps could be heard. ‘Have the hostel manager and the 3 ghosts eliminated each other?’ Yesterday night, Han Fei threw the ghosts’ schoolbag into the hostel manager’s office and then he logged off when he was hiding inside the toilet. If the 3 children ghosts could not find him, they might seek trouble with the hostel manager.

But the hostel manager was not a pushover either. She once admitted that she had murdered someone. Furthermore, she still managed her patrols in a building that was filled with murderers and ghosts, so she had to be quite powerful herself.

“We better be careful.” Han Fei tapped Zhang Guanxing on his shoulder. “Why don’t you go back to Room 104 to hide for now. After I’m done here, I’ll go get you. Don’t go anywhere else.” If they ran into danger, Han Fei could log off anytime but that would expose Zhang Guanxing to extreme danger.

“Sir, I think I prefer to stick with you. It feels safer being around you than to be in the room alone.” Without realizing it, Zhang Guanxing started to trust Han Fei, believing the latter was really a teacher at Yi Ming Private Academy.

“Then I need you to listen to my orders. Do not question them.”

It won’t do for them to stay at the staircase door forever so Han Fei decided to take a closer examination. Han Fei and Zhang Guanxing walked down the dark corridor and stopped before Room 304. When he placed his hand on the door handle, he felt something sticky in his palm. He lowered his head to look and noticed the handle was covered in a layer of blackened blood stain. It suggested a pair of bleeding hands use this door often.

Creak... Han Fei did not push but the door opened on its own. Pungent perfume and the smell of decomposition mixed together to form a very disgusting aroma. Pushing his nose into the crook of his elbow, Han Fei glanced into the room. At that moment, the robotic voice sang, “Notification for Player 0000! You’ve triggered Grade G Hidden Mission—Knocking at Midnight.

“Mission Requirement: Enter Room 304, do not open the door no matter what happens. Stay inside the room for half an hour.

“Time-limited Mission: The Mission will automatically end one hour after it is triggered. If you have not completed the mission by then, the mission will be considered a failure.”

Han Fei triggered yet another hidden mission, this was unimaginable in the normal version of Perfect Life. ‘It’s another time-limited mission.’ Grade G Mission was difficult even for Han Fei. He did not want Zhang Guanxing to become collateral damage, he was about to order the man to leave when strange footsteps echoed in the corridor. The sound was hard to describe. It sounded like someone’s feet were

dragging on the ground. Instead of moving on their own, said person was being dragged along by something else.

“Someone is coming?” Unable to confirm the source of the sound, Zhang Guanxing zipped into Room 304, “We better hide for now!”

It was too late to make the escape now so Han Fei had to follow him in. When the door closed, the hidden mission was activated. Han Fei ensured the door was locked and as an extra measure, moved the broom over to create another block. The ruffian who dropped out and an actor who was not the teacher stood inside the dark bedroom together. There was no light. The two held their breath and listened to the sound from outside the room. The nails scratched against the floor. The thing was coming closer to Room 304 and Han Fei’s heart raced. The air became moister and the horrible smell inside the room thickened. When the two thought it was over, the strange sound moved away from Room 304.

“It has left?” Zhang Guanxing’s voice was quivering.

“Don’t let your guard down, it’ll probably return.” Han Fei took several steps back. “Now is the time to search through this room for clues. We need to find useful information.”

Like a professional detective, Han Fei scanned the room and through the items left behind, started to reconstruct what had happened inside Room 304. The 4 girls who stayed in Room 304 came from less than stellar family backgrounds. Other than Girl 4, the other girls looked unassuming on their student Id. Girl 4 had fair skin and enviable body proportions. Of the 4 cupboards, only Girl 4’s drawers had cosmetics in them. However, they were not famous brands, in fact most of them were sample packs given at promotional events. Based on the worn state of most of the cosmetics, the girl did not use them that often. However, she did cherish them because she even had a special box to store them.

Han Fei picked up a small bottle of lotion. Han Fei tried to squeeze some out but it wouldn’t work. He studied it for a long time before he realized someone had glued the mouth shut. Putting down the bottle, Han Fei found a pack of contact lenses inside the trash can next to Bed No. 4. The lens also had traces of glue on them. ‘If she had put these on, she’d be blind.’ Han Fei stood beside Bed No. 4 and as more details surfaced, the tragedy that had befallen Girl 4 slowly formed in his mind.

Chapter 158:

A pretty girl occupied Bed No. 4. She came from a poor family but she would save on her daily expenses to purchase cosmetic products. It was not a fault to pursue beauty but the prettier she became, the more uncomfortable it made her roommates.

After the footsteps outside the door departed, Han Fei pried open the locked cupboard beside Bed No. 1. He found a diary hidden in a stack of old clothes. It detailed how envy turned 3 normal girls into demons. At the start, everyone was the same, they were all girls from non-spectacular families. However, after some time staying together, their individual personalities slowly revealed. Girl 4 was very kind, she was considered tall among her peers and she always had a smile for everyone.

The source of all conflict began from cosmetics. Girl 4 skimmed and saved to purchase a set of cheap make-up, then she started to follow make-up tutorials online. During classes, the girl would not put on make-up because that was against the rules. She would only put on a very light touch of make-up during the weekends. Whenever there was a group outing, Girl 4 would often be the centre of attention. To be honest, the girl's make-up skill was not that good, the reason she was well-loved was because she had a nice-going personality. People were naturally drawn towards her kindness but her roommates thought it was because she was the only one among them who used make-up. They were still too young to have mature thoughts.

Girl 4's roommates would sometimes borrow Girl 4's cosmetics. The girl rarely rejected them, she even volunteered to do their make-up. But when everyone had on the same-up, it was still Girl 4 who was the shiniest star wherever she went. For the first few times, it did not matter but slowly, her roommates thought Girl 4 purposely did a horrible make-up on them so that her beauty would be highlighted.

Her roommates stopped going out with Girl 4 but they would still borrow her make-up. There were not many chances for students to use make-up but even so, a set of cosmetics would not last long when it was shared by 4 people. Later one day, Girl 3 used Girl 4's make-up without asking for the latter's permission. After Girl 4 discovered it, she lost her temper for the first time and got into an argument with Girl 3. Even though they made up the next day, the harmony was only on the surface.

The girls in Room 304 started to ostracize Girl 4, they would purposely 'forget' about her during group outings; whenever she wanted to engage them in conversation, they'd turn away and pretend to be busy with something else; they spread nasty rumours behind her back, saying she had a sugar daddy who sponsored her make-ups and she would always come back on weekend nights. The rumors had their intended effect, people started to stray away from Girl 4, she did not know how to explain herself. Even the kindest and most well-loved Teacher Ma at the school started to look at her differently. She tried to go to the teachers for help but that only made things worse. The girls in Room 304 hated her even more after they were lectured by the teachers.

They mocked her more openly and resorted to harsher forms of emotional violence. Other girls joined in their ranks, they could not tell why Girl 4 was so hated, they assumed since so many people hated her, there must be something horrendous about her. It was thus right to hate her. The ostracization turned Girl 4 more introverted. Things got so bad that she considered dropping out from school.

The girl's parents were just normal people and the tuition at Yi Ming Private Academy was not cheap. When they found out from the school and the girl's friends that she would wear make-up like a slut and stay out late at night, the first emotion they felt was disappointment and anger. They had sacrificed so much to send her to a prestigious school. Instead of focusing on her studies, she instead became fixated on frivolous stuff like beauty and make-up. The girl's father had an explosive temper, he almost hit her when he heard the news. They refused to allow the girl to quit and insisted on the girl staying at the school.

Then things only got worse. In the eyes of the girls in Room 304, no matter what Girl 4 did, it was wrong. They would feel disgusted just in her presence. Their failure to chase her away only escalated their actions even more. They turned to more extreme methods. First, they started by ruining the girl's stuff, dirtying her clothes and then moved onto pouring glue into her cosmetics and onto her contact lenses. But that was not all. In the last few entries of the dairy, Han Fei read that one of the girls had found contraceptive pills, grounded them up into dusts and melted them into the girl's water bottle and thermos. Malice was percolating, it consumed the 3 girls in Room 304 and pushed Girl 4 to her brink.

One Saturday night, just like the rumors suggested, Girl 4 did come home late that day. The 3 other girls could not have been happier, they giggled among themselves as they came up with the stories to spread the next day. One of the girls even moved the table to block behind the door. They made a pact that no matter what happened that night, they would not open the door. That way even if the girl had the key, she could not come in. Girl 4 was still nowhere to be seen after 11 pm. The girls were not worried, in fact, they took out their phones and recorded Girl 4's empty bed. This time, they would have 'evidence' that Girl 4 had been spending her nights outside of school. The implication was that she was with her sugar daddy.

At around 3 am, the sound of strange footsteps and water dripping came from the corridor. Then the lock of Room 304 twisted, someone was trying to open the door with the key. The person jiggled with the lock for a long time but it refused to open. The sound had woken up the 3 girls inside the room. They were holding their hands over their mouths, chuckling.

The door did not open and the footsteps slowly moved away from Room 304. She paced for a long time in the corridor before she returned to Room 304 to try the door again. This was repeated for several times until the footsteps faded away completely.

The next morning, the 3 girls hurried excitedly to the classrooms. The gossip started almost instantly. Negative implications about Girl 4 flew everywhere. They showed 'evidence' of her empty bed to support their stories. The rumors spread like wildfire. The students criticized the girl, no one had anything good to say about her. No one cared about her feelings, they only cared that it was not them who was under mockery and scrutiny. Everything changed after the teacher walked into the classroom. The teacher ordered the girls from Room 304 out from the room because he needed to talk to them.

The teacher informed them that Girl 4 had drowned herself in the river yesterday night. She died around 11 pm. The girl's footsteps were found on the bank which suggested that she paced repeatedly before she finally came to the decision to kill herself. At the last moment of her life, she was still hesitating. If someone had shown her kindness, she probably would have been saved. Hearing that, the 3 girls looked at each other and they captured fear in each other's eyes.

If the girl had already died at 11 pm, then who was the one who came back to try to enter their room yesterday night at 3 am? The 3 girls were very afraid, they did not dare to tell this to others. That night, the girls were unable to sleep. Once they closed their eyes, they could see Girl 4 waving her hands at them at the bottom of the river. At 3 am, the strange footsteps returned at the corridor. The 3 girls widened their eyes. The lock was jimmied with again. The sound was like a hand closing over the girls' hearts. They were fearful and no one dared to get down from bed. They curled up under the sheet. The door remained closed but soon there was a series of knocking. It carried a certain rhythm with it.

The knocking fell on the girls' heart. They started to complain about each other, to push the blame onto the next but that did nothing to lessen the fear in their hearts. The key was once again inserted into the keyhole but this time, after a few turns, the door opened. The door knocked into the table which blocked behind it. Someone was standing outside the door!

Unable to stand it anymore, one of the girls screamed at the top of her lungs. The lights on the corridor flickered and soon the hostel manager's voice arrived. The auntie thought something had happened so she came to check up on the girls. When the girls heard the hostel manager, they quickly moved the table away. The girls did not want to reveal the horrible deeds that they had done, so they merely said that Girl 4 had returned. The hostel manager resisted her urge to roll her eyes at these young girls. She comforted them half-heartedly before she went back to the office.

After the hostel manager left, the girls replaced the door. For some reason, the strange footsteps disappeared. The 3 girls finally relaxed. They were exhausted from their high-strung emotions. They slowly drifted off to bed.

But in their dreams, the footsteps returned to haunt them. However, this time the footsteps did not echo outside the corridor but inside Room 304. One of the girls opened her eyes blurrily and she heard something rustling inside the room. She turned her eyes to the source and her entire body froze.

There was a figure standing beside Bed No. 4. Her entire body was dripping wet, her soaked clothes stuck against her skin. The pretty face which was the other girls' object of jealousy had been ruined beyond recognition.

Chapter 159:

Near the end of the diary, there were some apologies from the girls but they were clearly forced. The diary last entry had a hasty end. Other than Girl 4, the other girls were only reminded of the need for kindness when they were faced with death and despair. At the end of the diary, there was a group picture of the 4 girls when they first moved into Room 304. It looked so ironic now. Han Fei picked up the picture, and turned it over. 4 names were written on the back. Girl 4 was called Su Mengting. She had the gentlest smile in the picture.

“Such a kind soul, but she was twisted into a monster by the world.” Han Fei placed the picture into his pocket because he felt negative energy from it.

“The environment does influence an individual's personality a lot.” Zhang Guanxing looked at the tattoo on his arm, he empathized with Su Mengting.

“Indeed, once upon a time, I too was an innocent boy.” Han Fei placed the can of wishes near the door. If the ghost tried to enter from that door, she'd be stopped by the can. Han Fei did not plan to harm the girl, in fact, he did not think he was capable of hurting the girl in the first place. So his plan had always been to survive for 30 minutes inside the room and then run for his life. 15 minutes had passed since the start of the mission, and so far everything was fine. Han Fei and Zhang Guanxing ransacked Room 304 and found no other useful clues.

“Sir, I think we should just stay inside this room.” Zhang Guanxing tried to remember what the diary said. “The 3 girls got their comeuppance because the hostel manager came and they had to open the door for her. I believe it was then that Su Mengting also entered the room. So as long as we keep the door closed, we should be fine.”

“You’re too naïve.” Han Fei shook his head. “The diary was never completed. Clearly something bad has befallen the author. Su Mengting was already inside the bedroom.”

“Wasn’t that what I said?”

“Yes, but what if she never left?” Han Fei’s question stumped Zhang Guanxing.

“You mean the ghost has been in here with us? Then... what about the footsteps outside the door?” Zhang Guanxing was covered in cold sweat.

“Didn’t you realize how strange those footsteps were? It felt more like something was dragged along the floor than someone actually pacing about.” Han Fei pointed out the problem. “That was probably just a method to get us to run inside the room to hide.”

“So this is a trap all along?”

“I believe so.” Han Fei still remembered the mission requirement, he had to stay inside the room for a whole half an hour no matter what happened. So far, the system missions had always asked Han Fei to do extremely dangerous things. The system wanted him to stay inside the room not because there was a ghost outside the door but because it wanted Han Fei to try to survive inside a room with a ghost for 30 minutes. Half an hour later, he could walk out from the room freely, provided that he was still alive. The system would always issue the most insane mission in the most casual tone.

“There might be ghosts both inside and outside the room, it only depends on which ghost we’d like to face.” Han Fei sat on the mattress. He was becoming better at making deductions.

“So we’re doomed?” Zhang Guanxing sat beside Han Fei obediently. This ruffian had been turned into a teacher’s pet in this Iyashikei game.

“Don’t worry, after half an hour, we’ll be safe.” Just as Han Fei said that, the strange footsteps returned to the corridor. The sound slowly approached and this time it stopped before Room 304. The key eased into the keyhole, the old lock creaked noisily. The keyholder turned until the whole lock shook like it was about to fall off. Han Fei and Zhang Guanxing closed their mouths and turned to stare at the door. Neither of them dared to breathe too loudly. A few minutes later, silence returned outside the door.

“Has she left?” Zhang Guanxing asked when the knocking came on the door of Room 304. The sudden noise startled Zhang Guanxing. He jumped up and almost knocked his head against the board of the upper bunk. They were reliving the incidents described in the diary. The knocking came at fixed intervals, it rang inside the room consistently. The incessant knocking tortured the people inside the room. She returned to Room 304 again and again, fueled by resentment, hatred and pain. The stench in the room enhanced. A cold draft picked up even though the windows and door were already closed. Han Fei and Zhang Guanxing had no idea what was outside the door, the fear of the unknown was the scariest. With veins popping on the back of his hands, Zhang Guanxing picked up the pen and paper from the table and wrote a note to Han Fei.

“Sir, I’ll go and open the door. You go and grab the can. When the door is open, you throw the can out!” Zhang Guanxing’s idea was not bad but he overlooked one problem. The Can of Wishes was one of the few ‘weapons’ Han Fei had, if he tossed it out, how were they going to deal with the ghost inside the room? Furthermore, the half an hour limit was not yet up. Han Fei would not ruin his own chance at completing the mission. Therefore, he replied on the note, ‘Just stay still and wait for my orders.’

The ghost inside Room 304 wanted to play the long game with them and that fitted Han Fei’s goal perfectly. Zhang Guanxing and Han Fei continued to stare at the door. Slowly, the door of Room 304 started to tremble and the moisture inside the room became more palpable. Zhang Guanxing who had his attention fixed to the door suddenly felt a chill on the back of his neck. He shivered. He reached behind his neck and realized it was wet. “It’s leaking but aren’t we on the bottom bunk?” Zhang Guanxing turned his head around in confusion. He looked through the gap in the bed and saw there was a disfigured face looking at him.

“S, s, sir...” Zhang Guanxing used his shaking hand to touch Han Fei.

“What’s wrong?”

“She, she is just above us!” After saying that, Zhang Guanxing dragged Han Fei and leaped away from the bed. The two of them stood in the middle of the bedroom and turned back to stare at the bed they just vacated. There was no ghost there but the upper bunk bed was wet. There was a water stain in the shape of a human. “But I saw it! I swear I did!”

“Don’t worry, I believe you.” Han Fei signalled for Zhang Guanxing to move behind him. He reached his hand towards the mattress. When his hand touched the human-shaped stain, the sound of a girl crying reverberated inside the room. Han Fei sensed regret and despair from the stain. “You’ve pushed her to her death and she’s now back to get you, it’s entirely fair.” Han Fei did not even consider saving the stain. First, he did not have that ability and secondly, he believed those who made mistakes should be punished.

The smell of decomposition inside the room heightened until it was suffocating. Han Fei’s clothes started to bloom with wet stains, the bedroom felt like it was sinking into a dark river. It was getting wetter and colder. The light dimmed. Not one spot was safe. Han Fei inspected his mission interface, he was 6 minutes left to complete the mission. Picking up the black can, Han Fei looked around with alertness, he knew the girl was about to show herself soon. The knocking became more insistent. Han Fei and Zhang Guanxing stood in the room with the greatest alarm!

When he was 3 minutes away from completing the mission, the knocking abruptly stopped. Then the footsteps began again, it sounded like the thing outside the door was leaving. As the footsteps faded away, Han Fei’s heart slowly returned back to its place but then he slowly noticed something was wrong!

‘There are 2 sets of footsteps!’ He whipped his body around. A girl in dripping clothes stood behind Zhang Guanxing. Her skin was devoid of life and color! The water stains on the ground were climbing up Zhang Guanxing’s body. The ruined face was painted with resentment and hatred. Her body was bloating.

“Behind you!” Grabbing Zhang Guanxing by his arm, Han Fei dragged him back while opening the can to aim it at the girl. Perhaps the girl was too strong or the can had been too badly damaged, after the girl saw the can, she only halted for a few seconds. However, in those few seconds, Han Fei had managed to save Zhang Guanxing.

The girl’s body was melting together with the water stains inside the room. An imposing presence radiated off her. The black can snapped with a crisp sound. Another crack appeared on the can. Han Fei knew there was not much time left.

“Keep the mouth aimed at her.” Han Fei handed the black can over to Zhang Guanxing as he took out the red paper doll from his inventory. The situation was too dangerous for Han Fei to communicate with the doll. He cut his palm and allowed his fresh blood to drop onto the doll. Savoring the blood, the doll’s eyes slowly opened. The way it looked at Han Fei was colored with a pathologic remembrance.

Chapter 160:

The paper doll staggered up from the ground. It was made from paper but the expression on its face was no different from a living human. Malicious energy appeared inside the room. With each of the paper doll’s steps, it would turn around to look at Han Fei. There was deep memory as well as thick desire to murder in the paper doll’s eyes. Once the paper doll emerged, the girl’s attention was immediately drawn to it. Perhaps because she was cursed and mocked endlessly when she was alive, she despised all kinds of curses after death.

Surprising amount of resentment pooled inside the water stains. Harrowing wails echoed inside the room. One after another human-shaped stains were yanked out from the floor and walls, they gathered to form a flowing black river. The river water was cold and reflected not one bit of light. It carried a suffocating despair with it!

The river was overflowing with humiliation, rumors, arguments, all the tragedies that drowned out the girl’s life. The girl slowly submerged into the black river. Her despair was swallowed by the water and the waves rushed to cleanse away all the dirty stains in the world. The paper doll was a Grade F Cursed Object, it could resist the negative emotions inside the black river. But as the river gushed at it, the layer of blood on it slowly lightened. The malice in the paper doll’s eyes slowly returned. Xu Qin’s face began to unfold itself and the doll took on a more featureless face. As the paper doll fought with the girl, Han Fei’s memory started to overlap with that of the doll. Cruel, creepy images that could easily turn a man insane repeated in Han Fei’s mind. Han Fei felt the corners of his eyes becoming wet. The world in Han Fei’s vision was turning red.

“Sir! Your eyes are bleeding!” Zhang Guanxing screamed worriedly but Han Fei could not allow himself to be distracted. At his stage, it was still not easy to control a Grade F Cursed Item. Based on player level, Grade F should correspond to level 10 to 20 but the Red Paper Doll was an extremely rare cursed object.

‘I have to hang in there!’ Gritting his teeth, Han Fei was reliving the pain and despair the paper doll once suffered. This was a battle between minds. The black river flowed rapidly but the red paper doll

was like rock by the sea. It stood amidst the rapids stolidly. Other than the fading of the color on its body, it did not receive much damage. Inside Room 304, it would look like the girl was in an intense fight with the paper doll but in actuality, this was a fight between Han Fei and the paper doll's memory. A cursed object's memory was like a poison-dipped knife for normal humans. If they were not careful, their own memory and persona would be twisted by the cursed object.

With blood trickling out of his eyes and ghosts screaming in his ears, just as Han Fei was about to reach his limit, the system announced that the mission had been completed. "Notification for Player 0000! You've completed Grade G Mission Mission—Knocking at Midnight! Obtained 1 free skill point, additional hidden mission reward—Su Mengting's diary.

"Su Mengting's Diary: It has recorded Su Mengting's secrets. Use it well and you'll soon be the girl's best friend.

"You've challenged 2 tales of horror. Grade F Hidden Mission, Jin Sheng's Tales of Horror, completion rate: 2/7."

Hearing that, Han Fei turned his head around to say, "Guanxing, be prepared to run! I can't hold it back anymore!" Zhang Guanxing moved to open the door, to his consternation, there was another ghost outside the door. It was one of the girls who once lived inside the room. Her body was twisted together and looked extremely scary.

"Go and save yourself first!" Han Fei shouted. He had the snake bound around the ghost outside the door to incapacitate her.

"Sir, I can't leave you!" Zhang Guanxing hugged the can and uttered with desperate tears.

"I need you to go back to your room and wait for me. You can do this!" Han Fei exited the bedroom. He used himself as bait to distract Su Mengting and the other girl. Zhang Guanxing understood what Han Fei wanted to do. Without any hesitation, he said, "Sir! I'll come with you! I can help you!" The ruffian showed comradery when it most mattered. With determination, he guarded behind Han Fei's back.

"Go!" Han Fei did not expect this to happen. He assumed this would only happen in movies. "I need you to go!" In his desperation, Han Fei kicked Zhang Guanxing down the safer side of the corridor. "Go!"

Zhang Guanxing watched as Han Fei pulled the two ghosts away from him. He saw the bloody tears on Han Fei's face and the cheeks that clenched from pain. The young man's heart gripped. His drunkard father had never protected him like this before.

"Sir..." The color of the tattoo on the young man's arm faded. Zhang Guanxing gritted his teeth, held the black can and hurried down the stairs. At the same time, the robotic voice pinged in Han Fei's mind again. "Notification for Player 0000! Friendliness level with Zhang Guanxing (Wild Hound) has increased by 40! You have gained Zhang Guanxing's trust!" After ensuring the student had escaped, Han Fei controlled the paper doll to slowly move closer to him. He defended while he retreated. When the doll was close enough, Han Fei snatched up the doll and placed it back into his inventory. Han Fei then summoned the black shadow and raced towards the 3rd floor toilet. Even though Han Fei raced with the top of his speed, Su Mengting already caught up to him before he even managed to get into the toilet. He had no choice but to have Xu Qin's pet slither into the toilet while he logged off right in the middle of the corridor. The red world froze and so did Han Fei's consciousness.

Han Fei's heart was pumping as he removed the heavy helmet. He fell weakly onto the bed and gasped greedily for fresh air. "It feels so good to be alive." Han Fei had never loved life as much as he did in that moment. He had a reason to survive for another day because his first movie would premiere tomorrow. "Even someone like me has found the reason to live for another day."

Han Fei tossed and turned for quite some time before he fell asleep. At noon, Director Jiang called to make sure that Han Fei did not forget about the gathering. To have the director repeatedly call the cast, Han Fei was the first actor to enjoy that privilege. After a quick shower, Han Fei ordered a take-out and opened his computer. He searched for information on Yi Ming Private Academy. The more he found out about the school, the more curious he got about it. He wanted to see what kind of ghost stories he might encounter next so that he could be better prepared. "There is so little information about this school online. I have to dig deeper because it feels like this school is deeply related to the Butterfly."

So far, the Butterfly's targets had all been kids, from Little Eight to Jin Sheng. Han Fei believed that the Butterfly was trying to model a child that would fit his satisfaction. What was the Butterfly's standard of satisfaction? Han Fei did not know yet but he would find out. Han Fei studied the wall of crime. The information about the human jigsaw case, Han Fei did not throw away after he removed them. Instead he placed them inside a box. "It is becoming more like a police filing room here by the days."

Shaking his head, Han Fei cleared his mind. He turned to his books. Criminal psychology, education, talent management, urban building, based on his reading list, one wouldn't know he was an actor. At 6 pm, when Director Jiang called to 'remind' him for the 3rd time, Han Fei changed into a clean outfit and left his rental.