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The blood was so thick that Han Fei found it hard to even open his eyes. He had no idea what the woman before him had endured at Cattle Alley, he had many questions for her but he found himself with his mouth hanging open and a lack of words. Instead he reached his hands into his pocket and took out a table knife with human skin sheath. "Someone stole your knife so I'm here to return it to you." Holding the cursed knife by its blade, Han Fei extended the hilt towards the woman. "I heard from the thief that your curse will be incomplete if you do not have a full set of knives."

At that moment, with a little push from the other end, the woman could have easily sent the blade piercing through Han Fei's body. In the cryptic world, other than Han Fei, probably no one else would be so brave as to expose his weakness so openly to others. Different faces flashed in the eyes beneath the pig's mask. The woman raised her slender hand. Inside the alley scattered with bits of meat, engulfed by expanding blood mist, the woman reached for the hilt.

"Do not point the blade at yourself like this anymore in the future." The familiar voice came from under the mask. There appeared to be multiple meanings in that simple reminder.

"I wouldn't have done this with others of course." Han Fei let go of the blade. Light blood oozed out from his palm but the man did not seem to feel the pain. The moment Han Fei let go, the woman stabbed the table knife right into the pig's mask that had fallen to the ground. Amazingly enough, the mask started to bleed. After the mask fully shattered, the woman retrieved her knife. Her red pupils stared at Han Fei for a long time. Then she walked into a dilapidated home nearby and took out a dried branch from inside. The sharpened branch had several hearts impaled through it, some of them were still beating weakly.

"What are these?"

"Pig hearts." Handing the branch to Han Fei, the woman glanced at the space beside Han Fei. The black anaconda slithered forward endearingly but the woman turned back into the house again as if she had forgotten something. The black anaconda stopped in its tracks. Its black maw yawned open as if screaming silently. It felt like the woman couldn't recognize it anymore. Holding the pig hearts, Han Fei carefully approached the dying monster on the ground. The monster's body was practically dismembered but it still had a breath in it. When it saw Han Fei walk over, its ugly face stopped struggling. Instead its face took on flashes of humanity. Its pupil dilated and the blood faded away from the eye. It whimpered weakly as if pleading for mercy.

“If I let you go, more innocent people will get hurt.” Knowing that it would get no mercy from Han Fei, the malice returned to the monster’s eye. It cursed Han Fei with its last breath. It would wait for Han Fei in hell for that was where all of them were headed. “I want to be the Midnight Butcher not because I like murder and not because fresh blood brings me joy or excitement, I merely wish to gain the right to wield a knife so that I can have a better chance at survival. If killing is the only way to bring my friends and neighbours hope and security, then I would kill even if I am not a butcher.” With that, Han Fei chopped off the monster’s head. Blood splattered on his clothes. When the last bit of life drained from the pig-faced monster, Han Fei got the system notification. “Profession Assessment: Murder is a job for a butcher. No matter what is on the chopping block, death is the final gift the butcher bequeaths upon his prey.”

Humans murder cattle to eat their meat, the monsters at Cattle Alley though murdered the whole Wang family and left their carcasses stranded along the alley for sport. The first murder was for the sake of survival, the second murder was for entertainment. They were both murders but they served completely different purposes. That appeared to be the system’s understanding of the profession as well. There were different kinds of butchers.

“Notification for Player 0000! You’ve completed the profession mission! Concluding all the profession assessments, you have currently 75 percent affinity to the profession of Midnight Butcher!

“Warning! The higher the profession affinity, the greater the player can realize the potential of the profession! You have gained the primary qualification to become the Midnight Butcher, you have gained the ability to observe the souls inside most butcher knives!

“A butcher knife is the most important tool for a Midnight Butcher. A good knife can increase the profession affinity further, a bad knife will turn against its user at the most importune moment. If you are certain that you wish to take on this profession, please bring along your butcher knife of choice and head towards the House of the Butcher!

“The House of the Butcher (Hidden building inside Hidden Map): At the most northern side of Cattle Alley, there is a red building which only those with bloody hands will be able to see. Warning! Make sure that you are wearing a mask before you enter said building!”

After completing the profession mission, Han Fei already possessed the qualification to become a Midnight Butcher but he had to head towards the House of the Butcher to complete that journey.

'The House of the Butcher? Isn't there where Spider murdered his other 8 personas? And I have to wear a mask? Strange... Based on my understanding, Spider despised anyone who wears these pig's masks.' Han Fei looked through the mission description again. The system only warned him to wear a mask but it did not specify that he would fail if he did not wear a mask. 'The missions at Cattle Alley are unlike any of the normal ones, I should proceed carefully.'

Xu Qin had sliced through one of the masks, but there was another sitting on the one-eyed monster's face. Han Fei removed the mask, wiped away the blood and placed it in his inventory.

He was one step closer to becoming a Midnight Butcher; He had also found Xu Qin; By completing the profession mission, it meant that he could quit the game anytime he wanted after the time limit was up. The good news came one after another. Han Fei sighed in relief and wasn't that nervous anymore.

'For a butcher, his knife is very important. There are so many knives available at Cattle Alley, looks like I'll have a very difficult choice to make soon.' Han Fei turned towards the bone-paring knife. To his surprise, the item description that he saw was different from before.

"Familicide (Broken Grade G Butcher's Knife): A blade that entraps the souls of a family of six, their hatred enhances the sharpness of the blade! Because the spirits inside the blade have once turned against its user, it has caused the blade itself to shatter. It carries an extremely strong curse of misfortune.

"Warning! You've accidentally saved their family, so temporarily you are given the right to use this knife but if you plan to make this your butcher knife, be prepared for its defiance.

"Overall review: This is a blade which has revolted against its user, it is more powerful and more dangerous than you dare to imagine! If you choose to use this knife, profession affinity will lower to 65 percent and there is a very high chance you will be cursed."

After seeing the system review, Han Fei frowned. Then he tried to pick up the pig-faced monster's cleaver. Once he touched it, a new wound appeared on his finger. The cleaver which was drenched in the pig-faced monster's blood was very hostile against Han Fei. He resisted the pain and checked with the system. He was told that if he chose this cleaver as his butcher knife, the profession affinity would be lowered to under 50 and he might fail to unlock the profession. 'It sure is hard to find a suitable and handy knife.'

It was only after Han Fei interacted with the cleaver that he realized the pig-faced monster's malice still lingered on it. He remembered the monster had used this very cleaver to chop up his kin's blade. He wanted to try the same thing now. With the bone-paring knife, Han Fei aimed it along the edge of the cleaver's blade. The 6 souls inside Familicide bit madly at the energy inside the cleaver. The cleaver which had lost its owner couldn't hold on for long. The blood on its body started to fade.

After the blood stains on the cleaver disappeared, the pale white bone-paring knife took on a darker shade in red and the splinters on the blade started to heal.

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After dealing with the cleaver, Han Fei's bone-paring knife underwent obvious changes, the splinters healed and the aura became chillier and eviller. 'This is a knife that might rebel against its owner. It contains a deep pool of hatred, not anyone can wield it.' Most people would not use a knife like that, after all, in an intense battle, a second of distraction could mean a life lost. If one's trusted weapon turned during battle, then the result could be fatal. Han Fei did not want to use this knife out of safety concern but he wasn't really spoilt for choice. After putting the bone-paring knife and the single-eyed monster's mask away, Han Fei held the branch given to him by Xu Qin. He reached out to touch the pig's heart.

"Pig's hearts soaked in blood: This is a delicacy made by a person with masterful skill in cooking. They are flavored with a unique combination of spices. The creator's cooking level must have reached a recent breakthrough, the food has gotten so much more delicious. After consumption, there is a 60 percent chance of being cursed, 35 percent chance of increasing physical healing and 5 percent chance of triggering unknown effect."

"This comes just in time." Han Fei worked well with Xu Qin. Even though there was a chance that he might be cursed, Han Fei had a high point in luck, so normally speaking, the chance of him being cursed was low. He kept the pig hearts skewer inside his inventory and turned around. Han Fei realized Xu Qin hadn't returned from the old house.

"Xu Qin?" Seeing the pig's mask that Xu Qin had sliced through, something suddenly dawned on Han Fei. He led the snake and hurried into the house. The wooden door was left ajar. The courtyard was soaked in blood, it was like they had entered into a red world. The walls, trees and ground contained traces of cuts. An extremely gory massacre had once happened here. 'Looks like Xu Qin has lost full control of herself at least once already. When I was following the single-eyed monster, I heard sounds of crunching and munching. Xu Qin would only engorge herself when she was out of control.'

Following the trail that was painted by blood, Han Fei entered the main hall. Once he did, he was greeted by a bloody proclamation on the wall—All the butchers are chasing after me, you will die if you keep on following me. Head south and do not turn back. Han Fei searched through the house and found no trace of Xu Qin. He stopped to study the message on the wall, the handwriting was similar to the ones Xu Qin left on her own door on the 5th floor at Happiness Neighbourhood. ‘Xu Qin is worried about dragging me down with her? But what exactly could she have possibly done to have earned the ire of all the butchers?’

Xu Qin probably had her own complications to face, the fact that she had not returned to Happiness Neighbourhood for so long should be a big enough warning sign. ‘The blood mist came from the north and Xu Qin told me to head south. Looks like the north side is the most dangerous part of Cattle Alley.’ One of the main reasons Han Fei entered Cattle Alley was to acquire a profession and to unlock the hidden profession, Midnight Butcher, he had to go to the House of the Butcher and the house was situated at the most northern point of Cattle Alley. ‘At the moment, all the butchers are chasing after Xu Qin, this is a perfect opportunity for me. Only by becoming a Midnight Butcher that I am capable of helping her. Thankfully I have the forethought to return the table knife to her, now that her set of knives is complete, she should be able to take care of herself better.’

Han Fei did not leave in a hurry, he waited until the 3 hours was up before he left the old home. “If we run into danger, you better take care of yourself first. Don’t mind me.” Han Fei touched the anaconda on its head. After their encounter with Xu Qin, the snake had been in a bad mood. It was probably because Xu Qin failed to recognize it. “You’ve changed too much, it’s understandable that she couldn’t recognize you at one glance.” Then again, even the system could not tell what this ‘black snake’ was, much less Xu Qin.

Han Fei was just one step away from unlocking the hidden profession, he did not intend to give up now. Since he could leave the game at any time, now was the perfect time for him to explore the map. Furthermore, he wanted to find out what happened to Xu Qin and why she had put on the pig’s mask. ‘According to the system, I have to remember to wear a mask before entering the House of the Butcher. Has Xu Qin gone into that house? I heard the hairdresser and the waiter mention the word butcher at the dumpling shop. Even though the hairdresser did not wear a pig’s mask, he appeared to be working for the pig-faced monster, helping them hunt something.’ The clues strung in his mind. After Han Fei arranged the pieces, he came up with this hypothesis, ‘The pig-faced monsters, the hairdresser and even Xu Qin, they appear to be looking for someone.’

Han Fei who had familiarized himself with Cattle Alley now wanted to get to know this place’s unique history. He not only wanted to become the Midnight Butcher, he also wished to experience Spider’s

twisted inner world for himself. 'The Spider and Butterfly were mortal enemy. Only by meeting Spider that I have a chance to know Butterfly and their weakness.'

After making all the preparations, Han Fei entered the blood mist. The mist thickened the further north he went. Dead carcasses and dirty clothes piled up against the walls. Bloody objects littered the ground. 'Such a maddening place.' There were more pig-faced monsters in the blood mist, they were all controlled by madness. Wielding various cold steel, they patrolled the alleys with labored breathing and crimson eyes. Compared to the monsters on the outside, the monsters here looked stronger and crazier. However, Han Fei did discover something interesting about them.

When they found a prey, instead of killing them and consuming them directly like the outside monsters, these pig-faced monsters would instead torture their preys until they had only one last breath left and then dragged them deeper into the blood mist. Han Fei had encountered more than one pig-faced monster dragging their dying prize behind them. Their consciousness appeared to be controlled by some kind of existence. Their desire to feast was suppressed as they delivered their prey to some unknown location.

This contradictory behavior garnered Han Fei's attention. Taking a big risk, he decided to tail one of the pig-faced monsters. The blood mist helped to smother Han Fei's presence. Combine that with hide and seek's passive ability and Han Fei's carefulness, the monster did not notice Han Fei. They walked down several alleys. Han Fei memorized all the paths they took just in case he needed to retreat. The blood mist coagulated. But the strange thing was Han Fei could hear constant echoes of pleading screams at this horrifying place. It was as if people were still trying their best to survive even in the darkest of despair.

'Are there even living humans left at Cattle Alley?' The alley became narrower and narrower. Han Fei followed the monster for a full half an hour before the scene before their eyes changed. At the end of the alley, Han Fei saw a large meat packing plant!

If the alleys filled with trash and carcasses were the blood arteries and veins, then this plant would be the heart of Cattle Alley. The blood mist that covered everything originated from deep inside the plant. Han Fei stopped moving subconsciously. When he looked up at the plant, the desire deep within him was all evoked. The worst part of his memory was pulled out and flooded his mind. There appeared to be a voice inside the plant calling him, telling him to put away all the constraints and allow his bestial nature to take over his body.

'Isn't that Fu Gui Meat Packing Factory?' After spotting the factory, Han Fei immediately looked around. In real life, the living compound where Spider once called home was right next to the plant so that

should be reflected inside the cryptic world as well. However, Han Fei's visibility was seriously hindered by the blood mist. He couldn't see too far into the distance and there was no more alley that led away from the plant. After a moment's hesitation, he sneaked into the plant.

Once he entered, Han Fei almost suffocated on the empowering smell of blood. The entire interior of the plant was red. Walking through it would give the impression that one was wading through a red sea. Before Fu Gui Meat Packing Factory in real life closed down, it did more than its name suggested. Other than butchering the livestock, it also dry-froze the meat for storage, manufactured meat products and provided cold transportation service as well. To Han Fei's consternation, the plant in the cryptic world did as much as the plant once did in real life. Everything was automated, so there was no one around. The only difference was the position between livestock and humans had been switched.

With just a quick glance, Han Fei's stomach almost turned. The sights knocked the breath out of him. Blood mist covered his eyes, and he was thankful for that because he had just taken glimpses of the most terrible scene he had witnessed ever since he started this game. A bloody night from his childhood drifted to the surface of his consciousness. Something that was hidden deep within his mind was slowly loosened. However, Han Fei did not notice these perceptive changes, all he wanted to do then was to leave this place as soon as possible. 'This is no factory, this is hell!'

Emotional control was the basic skill of any actor but even for Han Fei who had a masterful level in acting, he needed a long time before he could gain control of his emotions again. Taking a deep breath, Han Fei knew he couldn't stay frozen at a fixed location for long. He forced himself to move. He was still close to the entrance, meaning he had not reached the deepest depth of hell yet. The deeper part of the plant was where the endless screams and the blood mist came from. Nudging further towards it, Han Fei was careful to not touch anything around him.

When he reached the middle of the plant, the black snake suddenly wiggled in warning. It pulled at Han Fei to retreat but it was already too late. The supposedly empty meat packing plant suddenly echoed with thundering footsteps. Ghastly figures appeared from the inner part of the plant. They seemed to have just completed some kind of ritual, the mouths under their pig masks were bright with satisfied smiles. 'There are so many of them here?!'

The number of monsters inside the plant was far greater than Han Fei predicted, it was too late for him to start hiding now. He tried to turn and run towards the entrance. When he passed a drainage sewer, the iron net underneath him rattled. Han Fei looked down and saw that there was a frightened boy waving at him inside the drain.

'Wang Sheng?' The boy was the child he once saved. With no time to lose, Han Fei opened the loose grate and dropped into the drain. Then he placed the net back on. Blood and organs swamped the drain. The monsters enshrouded in mist walked above them. The creatures dominated by hunger did not discover Han Fei and the boy. With his clothes dirtied by bloody water and horrible, polluted air rising around them, Han Fei slowly moved his body around. After the footsteps disappeared, Han Fei looked up through the gap in the net. The pig-faced monsters appeared to have gone out for another round of hunting.

The dirty and rancid drain was a sanctuary so Han Fei did not plan to leave so soon. He turned to look at the boy. After he made sure there was no monster around, he opened his mouth to whisper, "Why are you here?"

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The clothes of the young boy were already soaked, his body was covered in stains and other dirty things. The small face was still frightened and gripped by fear. The child was very afraid, he did not know what to do so the only thing he could do was to hide inside the drain. "Those monsters have already left." Han Fei discovered that humans were really a very special creature. He was shivering in fear himself but before the child, he did not want to show any weakness. Perhaps it was the confident expression on Han Fei's face that gave the boy some security. He gripped Han Fei's clothes and his expression softened slightly. He did not fuss or cry as if fear had already deprived him of those basic abilities. But seeing how catatonic the child was, Han Fei felt even more pained.

The boy had no idea what hope was living inside such a world. He had made no mistake but he was constantly being punished. Occasionally blood and organs floated by them. In this dirtiest, smelliest hiding place, Han Fei's eyes shone with kindness as he gently pushed the dirty stuff away.

"Are you afraid?" Hearing Han Fei's question, the boy first nodded before shaking his head. "You are the toughest kid I've met, we'll definitely be able to escape from this place." Han Fei consoled softly. After quite some time, the boy finally undid his armor around Han Fei and was more willing to communicate. The boy was too thin for his age, he did not even know how to string a complete sentence yet. To communicate, he had to rely on singular terms and hand gestures. Using about 10 seconds, Han Fei had a gist of what the boy was trying to say.

After being rescued by Han Fei, he had been running blindly through the alley. But he was unlucky because after he stepped into the blood mist, he was captured by another pig-faced monster. However, the monster did not kill him. After breaking one of his legs, the monster carried him to the meat packing plant. The boy thought it was over for him but to his surprise, he saw other captured adults deep inside

the factory. The adults tried everything they could to help him. When they were ordered to move, they used their bodies to hide as the boy as he slipped away and found refuge in the drain.

“There are other adults here?” Han Fei knew that he was too weak compared to those monsters, so when he heard there were other adults at the factory, he made the instant decision that he would try to save these people.

When the footsteps couldn't be heard anymore, Han Fei removed the iron net and quietly climbed out. The boy's leg was broken so Han Fei had him stay inside the drain. After putting the net back, Han Fei and the snake moved to hide behind the large machines of unknown uses. They made their way slowly towards the inner part of the factory. The deeper they went, the more palpable the blood mist. The creaking sound of machinery was mixed with screams and howls. This was truly hell on earth.

With the snake ready to enter his tattoo, after walking past a wall covered in blood, Han Fei was greeted by another unforgettable scene. There was a bottomless blood pool deep inside the plant. A giant black scale appeared to grow out from the pool. On the left-hand side, many pig masks were strung along sticky blood threads; while on the right-hand side, living souls dangled on black rusted iron hooks. The pig masks that symbolized animal and the souls that symbolized man were posited on opposite sides of the scale. They both dangled dangerously above the blood pool.

‘What is this?’ The pig masks carried various lively expressions, there were anger, cunningness, condescension and venom, each of the face was turned towards the living soul as if wanting to take a bite out of them. The souls that were impaled by the hooks were all wounded. They struggled weakly, devoid of all hope. However, they still retained a human shape. Even though their faces were colored with pain, there was something still burning within their eyes. It could be kindness, memory, love or even pride as a human.

Staring at the scale, Han Fei was pondering how to save these people, when footsteps came from behind him. He quickly scurried behind one of the machines and held his breath. Cries and pleas echoed inside the plant. A large pig-faced monster covered in scars dragged two men behind him. The pig mask on its face was carved in an excited smile. The more its prey begged, the happier it would be. With a howl, the monster dropped the two almost identical men on the side of the blood pool. The two men appeared to be twins. They looked similar but they had opposite personalities. The younger brother couldn't stop crying. He held his broken arm and applied pressure on his chest as he knelt on the ground.

The older brother was in a deeper injury than his brother. His expression was twisted from pain and veins popped on his forehead but he uttered not a word of plea. Occasionally his eyes would wander to

the monster as if looking for a chance to strike back. Toying with its cleaver, the pig-faced monster enjoyed holding the life and death of others in its hands. It allowed the younger brother to keep crying for mercy. It even grunted several times when the younger brother asked for him to be spared. Just as cautious hope lit up the younger brother's face, the monster kicked heavily against the man's chest, crushing his ribs. The kick also sent the younger brother flying into the blood pool.

When the younger brother's soul came into contact with the blood pool, he screamed shrilly. His skin melted off as his body slowly sank. All struggle was futile. After the younger brother was fully drowned inside the pool, the blood mist thickened further. Then a pig mask surfaced at the spot where the younger brother dipped into the pool. The pig mask contained the facial feature that resembled the younger brother. Its face was colored with selfishness and anger.

'Even the masks are made from actual humans?' Han Fei witnessed everything and he found it difficult to calm down. Originally he thought that Cattle Alley was tyrannized by animals but now he realized everyone at Cattle Alley were human beings. In other words, some of the people managed to retain their human shape while others were animals to begin with. The alley merely stripped away the presentable appearance and exposed the bloody truth for all to see.

The little brother's mask was strung up by a thread and dangled on the left side of the black scale.

The pig-faced monster chuckled gleefully before turning to the remaining brother. It brandished the cleaver as it approached the older brother. As it attempted to kick the brother into the pool, the heavily injured brother jumped to the side. Then he grabbed the monster by its leg and tried to drag the monster down into the pool with him!

The older brother never gave up but ultimately he was too weak, he was not on the same level as the monster. The broken body flew through the air and the big brother fell into the pool as well. Bloody water scorched his skin and seeped into his open wounds. However, no matter how hard the blood water tried, it could not contaminate the purity of the big brother's soul. He had the same appearance as his younger brother but he was made of a stronger constitution.

Resisting the pain, the man tried to swim towards the edge again and again but was kicked back into the pool by the pig-faced monster every time. After multiple attempts, the big brother changed his target and tried to swim towards the pole standing in the middle of the pool instead. His goal was to climb up the pole to destroy all the pig masks on the left side of the scale!

Even with ghastly wounds all over his body, the big brother slowly inched his way upwards. The pig-faced monster looked on with interest. When the man was about to reach the masks, a thick hook reached out from the darkness and pierced through his shoulder. It then dragged him over to the right side of the scale. Blood dripped from his body and fed into the pool below. Despite the many injuries, the big brother still retained his human shape. His face was glowing with fearlessness. He grabbed the hook and tried to unhook himself but naturally it was to no avail.

Han Fei saw this as well. Those who managed to retain their shape after being dropped into the blood pool possessed some kind of unique humanity about them. It was that determination and humane trait that allowed them to keep their human shape and sensibility. Even with the contaminated blood water pouring into them, they did not turn into animals controlled by hunger.

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‘So there are no cattle at Cattle Alley after all.’ After seeing how the pig masks were really formed, chills spread over Han Fei’s heart. The creatures who used the cruelest method to punish humans were not animals but humans themselves.

Even at this moment, the big brother was still trying to resist the pain and torment to crawl over the scale to remove his brother’s mask. The younger brother though glanced at its brother detachedly. There was only hatred and hunger in its eyes. It wished that its brother would die sooner, to join its ranks. The twins looked identical but they had different personalities. Inside the plant, one of them was held in place by blood threads and turned into a pig mask; while the other had his bones and flesh torn apart but still retained the pride of being human. The complicated nature of humanity was simplified at Cattle Alley, there was no third choice in this chaotic and maddening place. Watching the big brother still struggling on the hook, the pig-faced monster laughed mockingly.

Moments later, an extremely fat pig-faced monster ‘walked’ out from the room behind the blood pool. It was probably the one who launched the iron hook at the big brother earlier. Different from other pig-faced monsters, this monster’s body had severely regressed. There were little traces of humans left on it. The rotund body barely squeezed itself out of the room. Both of its legs were stuck together. Its feet and back were crawling with impossibly large blood vessels. The vessels grew beyond its body to connect with the factory as well as to reach into the bottomless blood pool. It seemed to be at one with the whole meat packing factory. Seeing the fat monster, the pig-faced monster beside the pool stopped laughing. It turned to leave immediately, showing extreme fear of the other monster.

‘Even the pig-faced monsters have someone they fear?’ Han Fei’s eyes darted towards the pig-faced monster who was connected to the plant. Its body was at least twice as large as the normal monster. A

small bell was hanging from its layered neck, it looked like a wind chime. 'This pig-faced monster is clearly different from the rest, could it be the manager of this factory? Does this mean killing it will cause the factory to malfunction?' Hiding his intention, Han Fei slowly gripped the bone-paring knife. He knew it would not be easy to kill the monster, he would have to find the perfect opportunity. 'The monster can control everything inside the factory through its blood vessels, only by killing it that I will be able to save the souls on the iron hooks.' Even though the souls on the right side of the scales were heavily wounded and physically broken, their souls still contained a very unique power. It was a power that even the blood pool could not melt. This was extremely rare in the cryptic world. It appeared to be the most brilliant part of humanity.

'There are no other monsters inside the plant now but I don't think I can take it down on my own...' Just as Han Fei was coming up with a plan, a giant commotion came from the front door. The walls cracked and the windows shattered, it sounded like there was a fight at the door. Han Fei retreated back into the shadows. About several minutes later, heavy footsteps arrived as two bleeding pig-faced monsters walked into the plant while staying guard of each other. The smaller monster was dragging two of its kin. The bodies were covered in miniscule wounds and the masks on their faces were fully shattered. The other pig-faced monster was 3 metres tall. It was the tallest creature Han Fei had seen at Cattle Alley. The monster, which was 3 metres tall, painted his body with strange blood tattoos. They looked like totem paintings, or like the ghost tattoo on Han Fei.

However the thing that caught Han Fei's attention was not the tattoo on the monster but the person it was carrying.

'Weep?' The small boy had his eyes closed. His body was mangled and strange symbols were painted all over his skin. Whenever Weep tried to struggle, all the symbols would emit a thick bloody scent. 'Weep has killed 2 pig faces?' The pig-faced monsters would never cooperate, Weep probably managed to take down 2 monsters before he was ambushed by the monster over 3 metres. Seeing the strange pattern on the monster's body, Han Fei couldn't help but be cautious, the pig-faced monster should possess some kind of unique power.

The smaller pig-faced monster tossed its kin into the blood pool. The carcass and masks melted inside the pool. After it did that, it turned silently towards the fat monster. The latter appeared to be the manager at the plant and the small monster was hoping for a reward for a job well done. The fat monster though was in a bad mood. After it approached the pig-faced monster, it stuck a blood vessel into the latter's chest. After taking a few satisfied gulps of blood and flesh, it flung the other monster to the side.

Instead of a reward, the smaller monster got injured instead, its body became even weaker. It looked at its two other kin inside the plant and hurriedly crawled out from the plant. After the manager had its fill,

it smiled with satisfaction. Then it turned to stare at the monster over 3 metres tall. The fight Han Fei was hoping for did not happen. The monster carried Weep to the edge and dropped him into the pool. When Weep touched the blood, the whole pool boiled!

The malice sedimented inside the pool curled around Weep like chains. The black blood at the bottom of the pool started to surge to the surface. Like little hands, they tore at Weep's body. The blood eroded the skin. The strange symbol that suppressed Weep was washed away with his melting skin. The pain was unimaginable. Weep's harrowing cries echoed around the blood pool. Negative emotions and melancholy started to affect the masks and souls on both sides of the scale.

The pig-faced monster didn't expect Weep to have an ability which would affect the things in his surroundings. He immediately controlled the chains inside the pool to drag Weep further deeper into the blood water. After the water drowned out Weep's crying, the scale returned to normal.

The manager glared at the abnormally large monster. If the manager was not present and noticed the problem instantly, Weep might have caused a huge trouble at the factory. The water of hatred formed a whirlpool inside the pool. Han Fei's heart rose to his throat, he feared that Weep might also be turned into a mask. After a normal spirit was tossed into the blood pool, they would be 'cleansed' almost immediately but Weep was a unique case. The whirlpool only disappeared after around 10 minutes. The pig-faced manager controlled multiple iron hooks to fish Weep out from the pool. Not a bit of flesh was left on Weep, most of his energy had been stripped. However, the memory at his core did not disappear, if anything, it became clearer due to the intense washing of the blood pool.

The memory that Weep refused to face inadvertently saved his life. Under the threat of dying and consumed by unimaginable torture, Weep was forced to face the memory that he had been avoiding. Weep was different from other spirits. For the other spirits, the stronger they were, the larger their bodies would become. Weep was the complete opposite. At that moment, the most painful memory spread through his broken body and was the only thing keeping the small boy alive.

The two pig-faced monsters glanced at the dying Weep. Neither of them realized that when Weep was dragged by the iron hooks out from the pool, he had stopped crying. The rusted hooks pulled Weep to the edge of the pool. The manager was about to go inspect Weep's status when a scream came from the entrance of the plant. The two monsters turned to look behind them. A pig-faced head rolled towards them, the smaller monster who left earlier had been decapitated!

A woman's crazed laughter echoed inside the large plant. As the blood mist thickened, a figure strode towards the blood pool. The blood mist was like her dress. The blood red lips curled into a heart-rending

smile. Blood dripped from her table knives. The berserking Xu Qin appeared inside the meat packing plant. All the butchers were chasing after her but she had chosen to come directly to their den!

The pig-faced monster had more urgent thing to attend to now than to inspect Weep's state. It controlled the hooks to quickly hang Weep on the right side of the scale. Then it dragged its body towards the deepest room at the plant but Xu Qin was already launching herself at it. With a howl, the two pig-faced monsters turned to combat Xu Qin.

Seeing this, Han Fei hiding behind the machine knew his opportunity had arrived. He took out the red paper doll and decided to sneak his way into the deepest room at the factory before the pig-faced manager had the chance to!

Chapter 235:

The timing that Han Fei caught was perfect. When he raced towards the deepest room, the factory manager and the other monster were fully occupied by Xu Qin. The manager's blood vessels extended from inside this room so there had to be some kind of secret inside it. 'After the factory manager is killed, all those tortured human souls should be saved!'

Resisting the pain as the snake crawled into the ghost tattoo, Han Fei ran as fast as he could towards the blood red door. The mist became more liquid the nearer he got, Han Fei felt like a fish swimming against a bloody current. The wounds on his body reopened and pain contorted his features. He could leave the game now but if he left, what would happen to the rest of his friends and neighbours?

Biting his lips until they bled, Han Fei gripped Familicide and finally charged into the room where the manager lived. When he crossed the threshold, a shrill shout came from behind him!

As if sensing something, the manager abandoned the fight with Xu Qin and his mountain-like body bulldozed towards Han Fei. Once the door was blocked, Han Fei would have no chance of escaping but Han Fei was not left with much choice now. This was a rare opportunity, he mustn't waste it.

The moment he entered the room, his eyes were covered in red. The room was like a giant heart, the walls, floor, and ceiling were laid with thick blood vessels. Brackish blood flowed through them, standing inside the room, Han Fei could still hear the blood gurgling into the bottomless blood pool. 'The blood

vessels that grew out from the manager's back connect it to the entire factory. It uses them to control all the machines and tools inside the factory.'

The more dangerous the situation, the more careful Han Fei was. Panic would not help his situation, only by staying collected that his chance at survival would increase. The minute Han Fei entered the room, he waved the bone-paring knife wildly about. He used the hatred from the family of six to slice through all the vessels in the room. Only by inhibiting the manager's ability to control the items inside the factory that Han Fei had the chance to rescue the people on the scale or else those rusted iron hooks could have punctured his frail body easily.

Black and red blood splattered everywhere. Han Fei's body was drenched in blood. He gritted his teeth and continued, 'This is still not enough!' The blood with deep malice rained down on him. They scorched out blistering wounds on his skin but Han Fei ignored them.

A strange tingling sound reverberated inside the factory. The factory manager wished to make Han Fei into minced meat. It did not expect someone to be hiding inside its factory, someone who knew how to use a butcher's knife!

The blood and wounds weighed down Han Fei's arms. He continued to slash as he moved deeper into the room. He plunged the blade into the location where the vessels were most concentrated. When the last vessel was severed, the whole factory started to shake as if they were hit by an earthquake. The iron hooks bounced against each other. The edge of the blood pool started to crack, even the onyx-colored scale started to tip!

Han Fei had done everything he could. The monster was almost at the door as well. His exit was about to be blocked. Han Fei held the knife in his unwounded right hand. He had to leave because he still had other things to do. Without any hesitation, Han Fei headed towards the door, it felt like he was attempting to ram into the monster which was multiple his size. 'Fuck it!'

The thick smog of blood mixed with decomposition. Han Fei did not decelerate, he had to leave this room no matter what! The blood paper doll that he released earlier blocked the manager for another second. It was this precious second that allowed Han Fei to slip out from the room!

Due to inertia, Han Fei could not avoid running into the monster's gigantic body. The only thing Han Fei could do was to twirl his body around and turn his back against the monster. When he finished Zhang Guanxing's hidden mission, he obtained the passive effect that could lower the damage to his back.

However, even so the impact still crushed Han Fei. It felt like his internal organs were shaken and his throat coughed with blood.

Abandoning control of the paper doll, Han Fei rolled to the ground. He kept his eyes fixed on the black scale in the middle of the blood pool. When Xu Qin appeared, there were already trundling footsteps coming from outside the factory. The butchers who were chasing after her were coming here as well. Han Fei knew he did not have much time left. Through hell and high water, he needed to accomplish his goal. Silencing the pain running through his body, Han Fei climbed up from the ground. His eyes locked onto Weep on the iron hook. After taking a few steps back, he charged towards the blood pool like mad. He splashed through the blood pool, rushing towards the pole at the centre!

All the human spirits were awakened by his crazy action. Even Weep who was forced to face his darkest memory saw Han Fei as well. Those who fell into the blood pool had to suffer the torment of having their skin literally melted off, didn't Han Fei know about that?

Han Fei was the kind of person who would power on ahead even though he knew about the dire risks.

Bang! His body careened into the pole. The wound on Han Fei's shoulder was torn open, blood leaked out and dyed his back red. Grasping the pole which was slick with blood, Han Fei used his fastest speed to crawl towards Weep. None of the pig-faced monsters appeared to possess the ability of entering the blood pool. Their tainted bodies would instantly be dissolved by the pool water.

Seeing Han Fei continue his hike up the scale, the factory manager slammed his large and fatty palms against the ground. Its ugly face was raw from anger. It picked up the vessels that Han Fei slashed and stuck them right into his heart. The vessels joined with its heart. The pig-faced monster used this barbaric method to temporarily regain control of the black hooks above the scale of humanity.

With the wounds on his body, it was already impossibly difficult for Han Fei to climb up the pole. Avoiding the iron hooks drained him even further. Even though he had calculated every step, accidents still happened. Han Fei left no retreat for himself. He knew that if he continued to climb, it was only a matter of time until he was hit by one of the hooks but he still continued his ways towards the human souls and Weep. More and more pig-faced monsters thronged into the factory and Xu Qin was placed under greater and greater pressure.

The pig-faced monster beside the blood pool cackled wickedly as it controlled the hooks to come at Han Fei's body. When the hook swung by for the 4th time, Han Fei could feel the energy draining from his arms. The hook slowly increased in size as it flew at him. His mind told his body to move out of the way

but his limbs were already at their limits. Just as the hook was about to puncture Han Fei's chest, something unexpected happened.

The soul of the elder brother who was just hooked, swung on his weight and used his own body to block the attack on Han Fei's behalf. The man looked even more pitiable with another hook sticking out of his stomach but with gritting teeth, his eyes glowed brightly at Han Fei. He wished that Han Fei could finish the thing that he started. He prayed that Han Fei could save those people.

"Thank you." Grabbing the hook as support, Han Fei continued his ascend. Different from the twin's elder brother, he made his climb while holding the bone-paring knife!

The blade sharpened by hatred sliced through the blood threads holding the pig masks. As more masks shattered and fell, the scale started to tip towards the human souls. Han Fei was getting closer to Weep who was strung at the highest point.

Chapter 236:

The ugly pig-faced monsters were unable to enter the blood pool and the iron hooks were blocked by other souls. The manager's whole flabby body shook from anger, no one had ever pushed it to such desperation before. The pig's eyes popped out as it stared at the man who was still climbing. The man was so wounded that he should have fallen a long time ago but he kept testing the manager's patience by defying gravity. The limit the manager set for Han Fei was broken through again and again. The man's body which it could have easily crushed appeared to contain a kind of power that eluded its understanding.

It raised more hooks with its power but now more and more souls were coming to Han Fei's aid. The broken spirits that still possessed humanity all sacrificed themselves to shield Han Fei from the offending hooks. A trail of fresh blood was left on the pole, that was Han Fei's tracks. Unafraid of death, unafraid of malice, Han Fei finally reached the top of the scale. The bone-paring knife he had was unable to chop off the chains so Han Fei used Soul-Depth Touch to reach towards Weep and tried to get the boy off from the hook.

It was already chaos inside the meat factory as more and more pig-faced monsters hurried over. Time ticked by. Just as Han Fei was about to rescue Weep, the sound of an iron net being rattled entered Han Fei's ears. A pig-faced monster with a string of human teeth around her waist walked forward with Wang Sheng in her grasp. She had once appeared beside the single-eyed monster. She probably had seen Han Fei battle it out with the single-eyed monster just to save Wang Sheng. Seeing the monster

walk over holding Wang Sheng by his neck, a jolt of fear shot through Han Fei. His body was already at its limit. His Life Points was at a mere 13, and most of them came from the buff given to him by the ghost tattoo. Han Fei couldn't summon any strength any longer. Staring at the pairs of eyes lacking in humanity, he made a crazy choice.

"Leave me and help Weep!" Han Fei had the black anaconda leave his body and told it to share its negative energy with Weep. Under the circumstances, Han Fei still made the most reasonable choice. Weep was more powerful than he was, even if Weep just recovered a little, he could turn this situation around.

The moment the snake left his body, the ghost tattoo faded. The malicious blood around them crawled instead into Han Fei's body. The bone-piercing pain almost knocked Han Fei out. The dirty blood appeared to seep directly into his soul and was consuming his memory little by little. Without the ghost tattoo's protection, Han Fei was just a normal human. The pain eroded his mind wave by wave.

He forced his eyes to stay open as he turned to the edge of the blood pool. The pig-faced monster with the human teeth grabbed Wang Sheng by his shoulders and slowly lowered him into the pool. The blood boiling with malice and dirt crawled up the boy's legs and burned at his soul. Placed under pain that would break a normal adult, the boy never shed a tear. The small face turned to look at Han Fei at the top of the scale. He tried very hard to force a smile but all he could manage was a crooked curl of his lips which he believed to be a smile. Living at Cattle Alley, the boy had not seen a real smile before; to survive, the last thing his mother told him was to hide under her body and do not cry. He had never learned how to smile, he knew never to cry either. That in-between expression was the one Wang Sheng was showing Han Fei. The boy was like a small flower growing at the barrens, he was weak to any wind and was wilting but at least he had once blossomed.

Seeing this, Han Fei's fingers tightened around the bone-paring knife. Perhaps noticing this, when the monster tried to push Wang Sheng deeper into the pool, he bit at the monster's hand. He had never bitten anything so hard before. The pig-faced monster was not expecting this. She swung her palm and swatted Wang Sheng right into the blood pool. The small body was immediately overwhelmed by blood. Endless malice gushed into the boy's body. Wang Sheng was too small. He was too pure to be turned into a pig's mask but he was too tiny to swim towards the pole. His body was slowly sinking. The boy closed his eyes in preparation. As his consciousness was numbed by hatred, pain was replaced by another emotion. The boy did not quite understand the meaning of life. What was the purpose of him trying so hard to survive? Was it to take a longer glimpse of this place which was filled with animals?

Before Wang Sheng fully submerged, he heard something and he opened his eyes. Han Fei plunged into the blood pool while biting a bone-paring knife between his teeth!

The blood and malice immediately swirled around the man and they seeped crazily into his body. In less than a second, the veins inside Han Fei's body started to implode. The man's hands reached towards Wang Sheng and the latter tried to grab at them. When their hands touched, black chains shot out from the bottom of the pool. They wrapped themselves around the duo's bodies. Wang Sheng wanted to push Han Fei away for him to save himself, but it was already too late. The black chains yanked them downwards, they were too powerful for the two souls to resist.

Han Fei's arms which had never let go of Wang Sheng reached their limits already. His body sank deeper into the pool. The water started to suffocate. However, at that moment, Han Fei suddenly felt someone grab his shoulders. A force was dragging him back to the surface.

Turning around with difficulty, Han Fei saw that his rescuer was the twin older brother. He was trying his best to swim to the surface. The surface of the bottomless pool bloomed with one after another flowers of blood as more souls dropped into the pool. With the black anaconda's help, Weep aided the rest of the souls with their rescue. Without any need for communication, the rescued souls all leaped into the pool. Enduring the intense pain, they all swam towards Han Fei and Wang Sheng. When Weep and the last soul dipped into the pool, the giant scale collapsed on its own weight. The pig masks floated on the pool and they glared at each other with hungering desire.

The souls of humanity though swam towards the bottom of the pool. The chains lashed out at them but none of them was scared off. Stomaching the torment and fear, these incomplete souls finally saw the real truth of this world. Deep at the bottom of the pool, there was a half of a rotten heart. All the malice and pain came from that heart. The sin of the entire Cattle Alley originated from not even a full, but a halved, corrupted heart.

'Could this be a half of Spider's heart? The half that symbolizes sin? Then there should be the other half, where is the half that symbolizes kindness?' Chunky chains secured the half heart down at the bottom of the pool. When Han Fei saw that thing, he already made up his mind to destroy it. 'This rotten half heart should be the source of everything. After destroying it, the whole Cattle Alley will fall!'

Holding the hilt in his right hand, Han Fei allowed the chains to drag him down further. He did not reserve any energy to swim back to the surface, instead he channelled all his energy into his right hand that held the knife. He slashed at the heart!

The sharp hatred barely scratched the surface of the heart's skin. Endless blood surged towards it and instantly the small wound was healed. No wonder the manager did not set up any defences around the

heart. While it was submerged in the blood pool, there was nothing that could harm it. Han Fei's arm was tired beyond belief but he still swung it stubbornly. He refused to give up.

When Han Fei did not have the energy to hold the knife anymore, a small hand placed itself over Han Fei's hands. It was Wang Sheng who came to help Han Fei. Before Han Fei could say anything, many other arms reached out to hold the knife with Han Fei. The souls were corroded further when they were underwater and they were slowly dissolving but none of them let go. The blade was raised and a whirlpool swirled inside the pool. All the souls lent their strength to Han Fei as the blade swung downwards!

The layers of scab over the heart were cut off one after another. The bone-paring knife in Han Fei's grasp screamed relentlessly. The blade splintered further and further. With a final ping, the blade shattered inside the pool. Holding the hilt and looking at the broken blade, Han Fei never felt such despair since he started this game. His only blade was made null, he was unable to save anyone!

He appeared to have experienced something similar when he was young. The memory was hooked to the surface as his mind edged towards despair. Light dissipated from his eyes. All of his struggle amounted to nothing, he was still the helpless person he was. Polluted blood permeated into his body. As Han Fei was going to allow the blood to decompose his heart, he felt a tiny hand grab him.

Just like how Han Fei had sacrificed everything to save him, Wang Sheng was now repaying Han Fei the favor. He was mimicking Han Fei's kindness. As his final expression for the world, Wang Sheng tried to show a handsome smile but he only managed a split lip. Regardless, after that, the boy voluntarily swam into the broken blade shards. His body was washed away by blood and the glow of his humanity imbued into the blade.

Moreover, Wang Sheng's sacrifice signalled just the beginning. More and more souls followed in his footsteps. The souls poured their last remaining humanity and pride into Han Fei's knife!

All the cold steel at Cattle Alley possessed their unique curse. The more souls that it claimed, the more powerful the butcher's knife would be. However, things were different here.

The ugliest side of humanity could be seen at Cattle Alley, but hidden deep inside this hell shone humanity's prettiest light as well. The endless spirits flowed into the blade, and forged a very unique butcher's knife!

Holding the hilt, the robotic voice announcing, “Rest in Peace (Grade F Unique Butcher’s Knife): This is a butcher’s knife that has not been seen in the cryptic world before. It has no blade but it can cut through everything!

“Rest in Peace: You are the reason this blade has been forged! With this butcher’s knife, your profession affinity to Midnight Butcher will be raised to 100 percent!”

Chapter 237:

At this unimpressive part of the cryptic world, the man who was awashed in blood gripped at the knife. Moments earlier, there were many kinsmen behind him but now he was all alone. They had given him every bit of hope and goodness they had. He needed to survive, that was the least he owed them.

The bladeless knife glowed softly. The beauty of humanity glowed like fireflies in the dark, compared to the whole world, their lights were barely enough. However, in that moment, they cleared away the sin sediments in the blood pool and lit a path for Han Fei.

“Notification for Player 0000! Your profession affinity with Midnight Butcher has reached 100 percent! Do you wish to skip the inheritance ceremony and become the Midnight Butcher?”

“Warning! If you skip the inheritance ceremony, you will not inherit the previous Midnight Butcher’s understanding of this profession, instead you will be giving it a new meaning! The profession’s property might change!”

Han Fei could obtain the profession without going to the House of the Butcher but the price was he wouldn’t get the profession specialties that he was promised. In other words, if Han Fei chose to become the Midnight Butcher now, then he would be a Midnight Butcher different from the other butchers in the cryptic world! If this was another place and time, Han Fei might hesitate but now he wasn’t given a choice. He needed everything he could get his hands on to survive!

Skipping the inheritance ceremony, after Han Fei confirmed to become the Midnight Butcher, his menu crawled with bloody vines. A bigger whirlpool appeared inside the bottomless pool.

“Notification for Player 0000! Congratulations for obtaining a rare profession—Midnight Butcher!

“Profession Ability 1: Curse resistance to cold-steel type items increases by 30 percent.

“Profession Ability 2: Curse resistance to blood and flesh type items increases by 30 percent.

“Profession Ability 3: Advanced Skill Mastery of Cold Steel (The knife is an extension of the butcher’s body, you can use any butcher’s knife freely)

“Profession Ability 4: Gluttony, engorging on food can rapidly recover your Life Points. The recovery rate will double if you feast on meat.

“Profession affinity reaches 100 percent! Unlocked Profession Ability 5: When you gain a new attribute point and add it to Stamina, the system will award you an extra point in Stamina!

“Profession affinity reached 100 percent! Unlocked Profession Ability 6: Blood and murder excites you. When your Life Points dips under 10 percent, your speed and burst attack will double!

“Since you’ve skipped the inheritance ceremony, the profession speciality has changed!

“Profession speciality: Dawn Butcher, you are a butcher that hunts other butchers! When you are fighting against enemies who are murderous monsters, your knife will become even sharper!”

Han Fei did not have time to examine the new messages carefully, however, he did feel a unique bond being formed between himself and the knife. One after another name imprinted themselves onto the hilt like symbols that couldn’t be washed away. Holding the knife, Han Fei could feel the warmth of their souls. It felt like they were still fighting alongside him. Their human brilliance which even the blood pool couldn’t corrupt became the sharpest blade. The eviller and bloodier his enemy was, the sharper the blade would become.

Raising his arm, Han Fei and all the souls inside the blade, slashed at the heart that had been submerging at the bottom of the pool for who knew how long already. The hardened scabs were sliced through, the rotten heart was chopped apart. Malice and hatred weaved to shield the heart but they were no match for the blade!

The black chains cracked inch by inch. As the rotten half heart was cut open, the blood sea churned and the edges of the pool cracked. The whole meat packing factory was shaking violently. The foundation of the whole Cattle Alley was shaken!

No one had ever been able to do something like this but Han Fei did. Even Spider himself couldn't find the way out of Cattle Alley but Han Fei did. His hands were still clamped around the hilt of Rest in Peace but his body couldn't move anymore. Han Fei and the black scale of humanity sank towards the bottom. Just as he was about to be drowned by the water, a hand reached for his shoulder. The slender Weep carried Han Fei and swam towards the surface. Han Fei leaned on Weep's back. Strangely enough, even though Han Fei was already too weak to use Soul-Depth Touch, he could still easily sense the boy's emotions.

The well-tortured young boy appeared to have opened his heart to Han Fei. Be it joy or pain, he stopped hiding himself. After meeting Han Fei, Weep did change. As they broke the surface, Han Fei gasped greedily for air. He looked around. The floor of the plant had started to fissure. There was blood everywhere. The place was collapsing.

The pig-faced monsters were born of hatred and venom, the moment they touched the blood water, they would be dissolved and become part of the liquid. With the dangerous water rushing everywhere, they abandoned their fight with Xu Qin and started to run for their lives. As a Curse Amalgamation, the blood water would damage Xu Qin as well. But she did not run away, instead she turned towards the most dangerous blood pool.

The roof crumbled. The larger pig-faced monsters had already disappeared, only the manager with the wind chime around his neck remained. Its large body was resting against a meat-mincing machine. It grabbed more blood vessels and stabbed them into its body but no matter what it did, it could not stop the factory's inevitable collapse. It whimpered anxiously. When it saw Han Fei and Weep crawl out from the blood pool, the hatred within it exploded. The flabby arms picked up the machine and it charged at Han Fei. "Never mind, we'll die together!"

When the manager was a few metres away from Han Fei, a sharp table knife shot over and flew right between Han Fei and the manager. After the death of the heart, the blood mist had dissipated for the most part but when the manager turned back, it noticed Xu Qin was still surrounded by heavy blood mist. Its porcine brain could not calculate how many monsters the woman had murdered to accomplish this.

While the manager turned to fight Xu Qin, Han Fei took out the pig's hearts from his inventory. Weep helped feed him the pig's heart. This was the first time Han Fei used his new profession ability—Gluttony. At the start, he had trouble even chewing but after he swallowed the first piece of meat, a warm energy spread through his extremities.

“Xu Qin's food might contain curse but I have curse resistance against blood and flesh type items; she likes to use table knives and I have curse resistance against cold steel...” He continued to gorge and the meat dissolved into energy. When Han Fei finished the 6th hearts, he finally regained control of his body. His mind cleared. Standing uneasily up from the ground, Han Fei grabbed his butcher's knife and glared at the factory manager. “Now it's your turn.”

Chapter 238:

Humans were very complicated creatures, most could not be defined in pure good or evil. Everyone had their own goodness and evilness within them. Majority of occupants at Cattle Alley had chosen the latter while Han Fei had chosen the opposite path.

The factory manager was caught in a fight with Xu Qin. In terms of pure strength, it was several times stronger than Xu Qin but that was its downfall as well. Its large body made it slow and being at a managerial position for far too long had dulled its fighting capability.

The pig-faced manager was being forced back. It wanted to use the iron hooks inside the plant but the black scale had already sunk into the blood pool and the whole factory was crumbling. With more wounds on its body, fear started to seep into the manager's heart. It wanted to escape but it couldn't shake Xu Qin loose. The attempt to escape cost it one of its arms. Its moving speed slowed down and finally its large body crumbled to the ground. It had once brought endless souls pain and suffering, now endless wounds appeared on its body.

It growled with hatred. The large pig head crashed into the pool. The last thing that it saw was Han Fei who was holding the knife. It could not understand it... how could the man's frail body manage to stand up against the overwhelming pressure again and again? Creatures who were stronger, scarier than him had fallen, so how could he still manage to stand tall in this world of red?

At Cattle Alley, only beasts could survive, humans were nothing but food. The red eyes bulged forward. Its murky eyes reflected Han Fei's image. It saw the butcher's knife in Han Fei's grasp fall. The beauty of humanity morphed into a thin blade. The light dominated its eyes. In that moment, it believed it had

seen the whole universe. It couldn't remember the last time it had seen the sky. All the memory in its mind was filled with pain and despair.

Blood rained and the world turned upside down as the pig manager's head rolled to the ground. The wind chime that hung around its neck was sliced through as well. 'In the author's memory, all the tragedies began with the sound of the wind chime. In real life, whenever the day was about to darken, the wind chime inside the author's room would ring. When the old man who lived on the 4th floor heard the wind chime, his expression shifted immediately, he was overwhelmed by fear. From these observations, it is highly possible that the wind chime is a psychological terror that the Butterfly had planted in Spider's mind. Whenever the wind chime rang, Spider would be brought to believe that something bad was about to happen. That would explain why the manager at this meat packing factory is wearing one around his neck.'

The factory had been fully ruined. The half heart at the bottom of the blood pool was dissected. Now Han Fei only needed to find the other half of the heart and he would know the whole secret behind Cattle Alley, he might even see Spider in person. Following the destruction of the heart filled with sin, the blood mist faded by a lot. The number of pig-faced monsters dwindled as well. They appeared to have escaped to the outskirts of the alley.

With Weep's help, Han Fei reunited with Xu Qin. None of them said anything, they planned to leave Cattle Alley first. The black anaconda who had unloaded all of its negative energy into Weep had morphed back into a black tiny snake. It slithered out from the corner. It blinked piteously at Xu Qin. However, fearful that Xu Qin would stomp on it because it was still unrecognizable to its owner, it crawled and curled around Han Fei's wrist after some hesitation. Xu Qin was more familiar with Cattle Alley than Han Fei and Weep so the two decided to follow her lead. After a temporary stop, Xu Qin led them out from the meat packing factory and headed towards the northern side of the plant. After they ventured for about 10 meters, the plant collapsed entirely. The blood pool gushed out to form a river and all the pig masks were buried under the rubble. At the same time, the robotic voice came incessantly in Han Fei's mind.

"Notification for Player 0000! You've completed Grade F Main Mission—First Official Profession! You've obtained 3 free skill points!

"Congratulations for finding your first job in this city! A perfect career is an important step to achieve a perfect life!

"Player has acquired his first profession! Trading tab is now officially activated!

“You’ve completed another life goal! Now you can trade with others through the trading function!”

Han Fei glanced at the newly-acquired trading tab. He did not think much of it, after all, no one other himself was playing this version of Perfect Life. Who was he going to trade with? The ghosts?

Compared to the new tab, Han Fei’s attention was grabbed by the small blood cracks that appeared on his menu after he unlocked his first official profession. They looked like some kind of light pattern. It was also only then that Han Fei realized it had only been days since he left Happiness Neighbourhood. ‘Is it because my schedule at this place is so packed that it felt like years have passed since then?’ Shaking his head, Han Fei continued to read the system messages. “Notification for Player 0000! You’ve completed Grade F Hidden Mission—Cattle Alley!

“There are different ways to tackle a hidden mission, based on the completion rate, the player will be awarded different rewards!

“The original mission requires the player to survive. The aim is for the player to hold onto their humanity while in Cattle Alley, the mission will fail the moment the player gives up on that. The player has to escape from Cattle Alley while maintaining their humanity. The mission completion rate will be decided based on how long it took for the player to escape. Since Player 0000 has directly destroyed the foundation of Cattle Alley, the hidden mission was an unmitigated success! Mission completion rate is 100 percent!

“Congratulations for obtaining 2 free skill points, and double EXP! Since you’ve earned 100 completion rate, you’ll obtain the additional reward—Cattle Mask!

“Cattle Mask (Broken Grade F Item): A unique mask that can only be worn by Midnight Butchers! Wearing the mask will increase the wearer’s stamina by 1! It can hide the living presence of the wearer but wearing it will evoke the baser desire of the wearer! It is not advisable to wear the mask for a prolonged period of time!

“Warning! This item is currently broken, repairing it will grant it extra abilities!

“Notification for Player 0000! You have successfully reached level 11! Obtained 1 free attribute point!” Han Fei was quite shocked by the string of messages, he didn’t expect to clear the hidden mission just

like that. Basically, the system notifications could be summarized as—I've only needed you to escape from the hidden map but you've uprooted the map from its core! What else can I do but to give you a 100 percent completion rate?

'It's a pleasant surprise to have completed the hidden mission, now I can focus on finding the House of the Butcher.'

Han Fei added the attribute point into stamina. Due to the profession ability of Midnight Butcher, Han Fei's stamina rose by 2 points, now his stamina was at 15. If he was sent back in time to deal with the murderers from Happiness Neighbourhood now, they would be the ones running for their lives and there was a good chance they wouldn't be able to escape. With the passive from hide and seek and now the buffs from Midnight Butcher, if Han Fei really wanted to hunt someone, the chance of him failing was very low. 'It feels like I've gotten a lot stronger, unfortunately levelling up won't heal my injuries, I still need to rest and recuperate.'

Sighing, Han Fei leaned weakly towards Xu Qin. Weep was too small, Han Fei was afraid that he might crush the boy... or at least that was what Han Fei told himself.

"Sister Xu Qin, do you still have more food with you? I miss the meals that you cook at Happiness Neighbourhood so much."

Chapter 239:

Xu Qin hadn't been back to Happiness Neighbourhood for a long time already, her memory of it was blurred. But when she heard Han Fei say that, her bloodied world appeared to burst with other colors. It was a simple statement but Xu Qin had not heard anyone say anything like it before she met Han Fei. In the whole cryptic world, only Han Fei liked to eat Xu Qin's food. This was not a casual praise or a false promise, Xu Qin could hear the sincerity in Han Fei's voice. He really did miss her cooking.

Her lips curled upwards, marking an indescribable beauty. The food that she made was missed by someone, it was simple yet meaningful joy. "If you like it that much, I'll cook some for you soon. Just hold on a bit longer, we'll be there soon." As if worried that Han Fei would fall, she reached out to support him. The system kept telling Han Fei that her friendliness level with Xu Qin was increasing. Han Fei had no idea what he had done, and to be honest, he did not quite care. He really treated Xu Qin as family. Trust went both ways, when he gained Xu Qin's trust, he was giving his own trust to Xu Qin. Han Fei's understanding of the concept, family, was very blurry. He had no one who would take care of him like Xu Qin in real life, the feeling was very special.

The Curse Amalgamation who was dominated by hunger and malice in other people's eyes was for Han Fei, a neighbourly big sister who was gentle, kind, loved cooking and had too many positive traits to count. He couldn't understand why Xu Qin's cooking hadn't gained their well deserved popularity yet. Xu Qin appeared to have a less than stellar impression of the previous building manager because he didn't favor her cooking. Shaking his head, Han Fei chased away the thoughts in his mind and asked, "Soon? Where are we going?"

"A building on the northern side. There are some people living there but it's best you do not see them as people."

"Will it be dangerous?"

"It's safer than being outside but since Cattle Alley has changed, something must have changed there as well. Come on, I have left something there and they have medicines that can heal your wounds."

"Medicine?" Han Fei did not ask for more details, he trusted Xu Qin, "Okay, then we should move faster." After surviving the many brushes with death, Han Fei was finally reunited with his 'family'. He felt relaxed and his heart warmed with rare joy. He tried to move his lips but it only formed a smile that he knew was acted out. 'There was joy when Twin Flower was released but the joy then was probably 1/10 of what I'm feeling now. Looks like this Iyashikei game can really help me find my missing smile.'

As they continued to move north, the buildings started to become more unevenly spaced, as if symbolizing the chaos in the manager's mind. The buildings were filled with holes. They tilted to the sides and all the bricks were dyed red by blood. After they passed several unassuming 4 storey buildings, Xu Qin stopped. She turned back to address Weep and Han Fei, "When we're inside, no matter what the people inside say, do not trust them." Han Fei followed Xu Qin into the dilapidated 4 story building. Just as he stepped into the building, the robotic voice sang, "Notification for Player 0000! You've discovered the hidden building on the hidden map—The house of the butcher!"

'This place is the House of the Butcher?' Han Fei halted, his relaxed nerves were pulled taut again. Spider's most important writings were Cattle Alley and the House of the Butcher. Cattle Alley represented the world at large that he saw while the House of the Butcher was a reflection of his inner self.

“Stay close to me.” Xu Qin with half a mask entered the building. The building looked normal from the outside but that was not the case inside. The walls between this building and the other adjacent buildings were knocked down. All the rooms were interconnected, forming a giant maze. After much turning, Xu Qin led Han Fei and Weep to a room on the 3rd floor. They stopped before a blood red door, the door had a pig’s face hung on it. It was not a mask, it was an actual face skinned from a monster.

“The people who live here look normal and have normal professions. They present a unified front to fight against the attacks of the pig-faced monsters but in reality, each of them is harboring their own intention. They not only intend to kill those pig-faced monsters, every single one of them wish to murder all the other living creatures residing here as well.” Xu Qin whispered. Ever since they entered the building, her tone started to change. “I can feel the murderous intent from them, every one of them yearns to be the last one alive.”

“To be the last one alive?” Xu Qin’s description reminded Han Fei of Spider’s 9 personas. If this old building was indeed Spider’s heart, to become the surviving persona, one had to murder all the other personas.

Turning the handle, Xu Qin opened the door. A 60 year old plus old man sat inside the room. He seemed to suffer from a serious cataract, his eyes were different from normal people’s. When his lids opened, they revealed eye whites speckled with black substances. The old man was splayed out on the bed, he looked weak. His legs were no longer nimble but he was a welcoming person. Seeing Xu Qin, he pulled back the cover over his legs and tried to get up.

“Thank God, you have returned safely.” The old man shuffled uneasily towards Xu Qin, he seemed to be incredibly worried about her.

“Give me 2 masks, I need to bring them away from here.”

“You want to leave?” The old man was startled before he shook his head helplessly, “You’ve been here for so long already and you still think about leaving? The place is surrounded by monsters, there is no way we can leave! This world is too dangerous, only by staying here that you can be safe...”

“Give me 2 masks now.” Xu Qin ignored the old man’s spiel. She took out her knives and demanded coolly.

“It’s not that I don’t want to give them to you but the doctor said that the masks can only be given to people who are useful to us. The two that you have with you, one is heavily injured and the other is a child. If I give you the masks, the doctor will be angry.” The old man shrunk his head. He kept using the doctor as his excuse, everything was the doctor’s fault.

“What do you mean by people who are useful to you? Is there a specific standard?” Han Fei was interested in this man. In his impression, Spider’s sixth persona, Ol’ Lee was an old man in his 60s. He was kind to everyone on the surface but actually he was incredibly cunning and mad. He was a real psychopath.

“There are monsters everywhere outside this safe haven. It’s so hard to survive in this world. We are the only ones looking out for each other.” The old man scanned Han Fei but his attention was mostly on Xu Qin. “How about this, if you help me with 2 favors, I’ll give you 2 masks.”

“1 favor.” Xu Qin countered in a tone that brooked no argument or negotiation. “If you disagree, we’ll get the masks from the others.”

“Fine, 1 it is.” The old man’s lips parted to reveal black and yellow teeth. “I haven’t seen the author on the 4th floor for a long time already, I hope you can help me find him.” When the old man spoke, Han Fei turned to the mission tab. Strangely enough, he did not receive any mission notification. It felt like the old man’s words wouldn’t affect the system.

Xu Qin nodded and then led Han Fei and Weep out of the room. When they were far enough away from the door, Han Fei pulled on Xu Qin’s wrist, “Sis, I have an idea that I wish to discuss with you. Actually we have a method that can allow us to get the masks faster.” Leaning closer to Xu Qin, Han Fei whispered, “The old man is clearly lying to us. Instead of risking our lives to find the author, how about we cooperate to take down the old man instead?”

A trace of surprise crossed Xu Qin’s eyes as if shocked to hear that they had arrived at the same thought.

Chapter 240:

“Notification for Player 0000! Friendliness level with Xu Qin increases by 1! Great minds think alike, your relationship is now closer.” When this notification appeared in Han Fei’s mind, he knew that Xu Qin was

plotting the same thing he did. "Sis, you're considering that too, aren't you?" Xu Qin put away her glinting table knives and glanced at Han Fei's injured arm. Then she said softly, "We still have time."

With Xu Qin leading the way, they left the 3rd floor, passed through many empty rooms and returned to the first floor. All the rooms had been made to connect with each other but some of the rooms were death traps. A careless move and you'd die. "You guys better rest here for now. I'll go find you some food and medicine." Xu Qin turned into a kitchen, which was apparently the room she had taken for herself at the House of the Butcher.

Few minutes later, the delectable smell of meat drifted out from the kitchen. Han Fei's nose had been tortured by the nasty smell of putrefaction since he entered Cattle Alley. The delicious smell of food brought him to heaven. "The freshness of ingredients determines the deliciousness of food, unfortunately I do not have many fresh ingredients here." Xu Qin walked out from the kitchen carrying an iron basin. Her eyes were red, her fingers tapered and pale, her red skirt still dripping with blood. When a normal person saw a scene like this, they would turn and run lest they were made to join the food inside the basin. Han Fei though smiled brightly. He sat at the dining table obediently. Seeing the basin of meat, his mouth watered.

With extremely high points in luck, plus the curse resistance to meat and cold steel brought upon by Midnight Butcher meant that Han Fei could enjoy Xu Qin's food without worry. The thick meat stew inside the basin emitted a delicious fragrance. Using his free right hand, Han Fei quickly dug in.

Seeing how gratified Han Fei was wolfing down the food, Weep licked his lips, and took a bite of the meat out of curiosity. Weep was still in essence a child, even though his memory was dominated by despair. Now with Han Fei's help, his more child-like nature started to show through. Munching carefully on the food, Weep was pleasantly surprised to discover how delicious the meat was. Just as he was about to reach for a second bit though, black curse started to show on his frail body. The meat that he swallowed appeared to have come alive inside his stomach. A growl could even be heard coming from the boy.

With the help from Xu Qin, Weep finally got the curse lifted from him. Holding his hurt tummy, Weep edged away from the dining table. He did not know what to think seeing Han Fei continue to shovel the curse-addled food down his gullet. 'So not everyone has the ability to enjoy Xu Qin's cooking.'

Staring at the duo who sat around the dining table, Weep pulled the black snake who had been trying to crawl towards Han Fei and went to the side to play with it.

Han Fei truly enjoyed the food. After he got the new profession, his desire for blood and flesh had grown tremendously. Thanks to the unique feature of Midnight Butcher though, he would not lose himself in the search for food. Han Fei soon finished the whole basin of meat. Throughout the process, he did trigger the curse several times, it felt like his internal organs had been punched but he showed no pain, he did not want to disappoint the chef. Thanks to the curse resistance and the fact that the curse on the meat itself wasn't that strong, Han Fei stomached all of them silently.

After finishing the big basin of meat, the wounds on Han Fei's body had healed for the most part and he noticed his curse resistance against flesh and meat like objects had increased further. If he continued to work together with Xu Qin, he might one day be fully immune to curse on meat-like objects.

"Sis, is this house yours? How did you end up having an asset inside Cattle Alley?" Han Fei turned to stare at his own stomach. He had just engorged a truckload of meat but he did not feel full at all.

"There are many different kinds of curses in my mind, one of them came from deep inside Cattle Alley. The female chef begged me to kill her and bring her away with me. At the time, I was not in control of myself, I dissolved her into part of my curse." Xu Qin was different from normal spirits, she was a Curse Amalgamation. Her power level couldn't be gauged with the system that Han Fei was familiar with. Han Fei had not really considered this before. Now that Xu Qin brought it up, he remembered that Spider's 8th persona was a female chef. The change to her psychology was only second to the writer. Before her first murder, she was extremely kind; but after her first murder, there was a drastic change to her personality as she morphed from a chef to a butcher.

"This was from way back when, at the time, the previous building manager was still around. After he found out I had been to Cattle Alley, he asked me for a favor. He wanted me to look for someone."

"Who?"

"Someone called Spider. The manager only knew his name, he did not have any other information, until now, I have not found this person." Xu Qin put away the iron basin. "After I killed the chef, I gained part of her power and also inherited her room in this building and her mask." With her fingers tapping lightly on the pig mask, Xu Qin provided another crucial piece of information, "Each of the masks has a number behind them, for now I have no idea what they represent. However, most of the residents here are collecting masks, apparently, a reward will be given to the person who manages to find all the masks."

"Then what is the number behind your mask?"

“8.” Xu Qin admitted easily.

‘This isn’t a coincidence. The number on the mask denotes the different personalities of Spider.’ Han Fei stared at Xu Qin’s face while he was parsing another question in his mind. ‘Xu Qin has killed the original 8th persona and consumed her to become part of her curse. If the author still wished to use his old method to redeem himself, does that mean he will need to kill Xu Qin who has taken the number 8 spot? Or perhaps I should envision it like this. Spider in real life had murdered all of his personas but he only fought to a draw with the Butterfly. He knew about the Butterfly’s weakness but he did not know how to exploit it. So theoretically speaking, there should be a better solution I can offer him.’

Han Fei was trying to see the problem from many different perspectives when the door was knocked on. Everyone in the room instantly had their expression changed. As if pulled by a string, they all turned to the door. Pulling out her knives, Xu Qin eased the door open. It revealed a boy around 9 years old. Normally, a child this age should be able to talk already but the boy at the door appeared to be mentally challenged. He stammered for a long time but was still unable to communicate his thoughts. Perhaps he was too nervous. In the end, he took out the paper and pen that he carried with him everywhere. He drew something and handed it to Xu Qin. On the piece of yellowed paper, there was a drawing of a doctor wearing a pig mask.

After seeing the drawing, Xu Qin signalled for Han Fei to stay inside the room while she left with the boy.

‘Spider’s 7th persona is called Dreamer, he’s a stutterer and is born with a neurological defect. He also likes to paint, which matches with that boy perfectly.’ The moment Han Fei saw the child, the corresponding info appeared in his mind, ‘The child has to have more secrets about him to be able to survive at the House of the Butcher. He appears to be able to see things that other people can’t.’

Studying the closed door, Han Fei waved for Weep and the snake to stay close to him. He had a feeling that something big was about to happen.