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Chapter 241:

After Xu Qin left, Han Fei started to inspect the room. This room used to belong to the 8th persona, it might contain some useful clues. 'All the rooms at this place have about the same layout, in fact, they resemble the room layout at the plant's living compound in real life, even the location of the altar inside each room is the same.' Stopping at the corner, Han Fei already noticed the altar when he entered the room but he was still too injured at the time to do anything about it. 'Be it in real life or in the cryptic world, the building where the author lived is filled with a lot of altars even though he had stated explicitly that he was not a religious person in the House of the Butcher.'

Slowly removing the black cloth over the altar, Han Fei was about to open the small wooden doors when Weep suddenly stopped him. "What's wrong? Is there a danger?" Weep bristled like a cat being threatened. Looking at the blood that leaked out from the gaps on the altar, Han Fei decided to let it be. 'The blood on the altar is already dried, the door probably hasn't been moved for a long time already. I better not take unknown risks. I should wait for Xu Qin to return and ask for her opinion first.'

The room was well-kept, the place was regularly cleaned and everything was placed neatly. In fact the owner perhaps suffered from OCD because even the distance between each decoration was similar. The living room, kitchen and bathroom were all incredibly tidy but it was a whole 180 when Han Fei entered the bedroom. Bloodied bandages and clothes littered the ground. The mattress was cut with knives and there was dried blood everywhere. The light on the ceiling was shattered. The cupboard toppled over, the study table was sawn apart. Basically any place that was big enough to hide a person had been destroyed. The window was sealed up with cement. The peeled walls were filled with red scratch marks made from nails and knives. The blood red character was imbued with the house owner's pain, just a glance at them could cause great discomfort.

Standing at the door, an image appeared before Han Fei's eyes. At midnight, a woman who was shocked out of her dream sunk into madness. She morphed into a different person and destroyed everything within reach. She destroyed indiscriminately, it was to vent the horror within her heart and to find security for herself. 'The 8th persona, the chef's mind is only slightly less complicated than the writer. Why would a woman who has an obsession with tidiness and cleanliness turn into an unstoppable murderer?'

To get to the bottom of this mystery, Han Fei entered the bedroom and started to inspect the bloody messages. There was this saying within the field of psychology, you can try to enter a mad person's heart but do not ever attempt to see things from their perspective, do not try to understand them. What Han Fei did was extremely dangerous. He had not received official training before, he merely

wanted to reconstruct the fear the 8th persona had been through by submerging himself into her past to ascertain the factors behind the drastic shift to her personality. Studying the words on the wall, his fingers tracing the knife and scratch marks, the chef appeared to not feel pain when she was caught in this delusion. The words had traces of blood and flesh in them. Being enveloped by the bloody words, Han Fei slowly immersed himself into the 8th persona's experience.

"I have forgotten when was the first time that thing appeared in my dream. At first, it hid among the crowd, walking past me as if by accident but for some reason, it has decided to follow me home. The thing then kept appearing in my dreams. No matter what kind of dream it was, there it would be. Most of the time, it would assume the identity of a stranger. It would not interact with me, just observing me from afar.

"But from a moment onwards, everything changed and it started to approach me. I could feel that it was coming closer and closer. Sometimes, it wouldn't be visible but I could feel its gaze on me, I knew it was nearby. I do not understand why I would have such strange dreams. What have I done to deserve such punishment? Real life is already tiring enough, sleep is my only respite but now it is not safe even in my dreams anymore.

"The 7th day after the thing appeared in my dreams, something horrible happened.

"At the time, I dreamed that my own pet cat had jumped onto the window ledge, it appeared to be wary of staying inside my room. I went to go hug it but when it saw me approach, it jumped out the window directly. I hurried over to the window but as I poked my head out to look, I felt a giant force pushing me from behind. Someone was inside my room and it pushed me out of my window!

"As I fell, I saw it was standing at my window. I did not recognize it, but it wanted to kill me, I couldn't figure out why. The death that night was only the beginning, in the following dreams, I would be killed by the thing again and again. It would be creative with the methods. As I was killed, I would be shocked awake from my sleep!

"I didn't dare to fall back into sleep, my mind was fraying. I don't know what to do next, whenever I close my eyes, the thing will be there, waiting to kill me!

"I cannot remember how many times I've been killed already. I can't tell whether I'm awake or still sleeping. Sometimes I know I'm dreaming but the pain is so real. Sometimes I believe I'm in real life but after being murdered, I realized I was inside a dream. The edge between reality and dream blurs. It was right about then that I brought the thing from my dreams into reality. It feeds on my consciousness and

crosses the boundary between dream and reality to reside inside my brain. Yes, I can feel its presence clearly now. Be it in my dream or in real life, I know it is there. The imprint in the shape of the butterfly is the best proof of that.”

After reading all the messages on the wall, Han Fei’s back was drenched. His gaze fixated on the word, Butterfly.

‘The it mentioned by the 8th persona is actually the Butterfly? The Butterfly wasn’t something from real life but came out from nightmares?’ Until now, Han Fei had no idea what Butterfly was. So far, only Spider had encountered the real Butterfly before. ‘All of his 8 personas have died, Spider has paid such a huge price so what has he gained over the Butterfly?’

The clues hidden at the House of the Butcher were far more numerous than Han Fei anticipated, the mysterious veil around the Butterfly would start to peel off here.

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Normally, one shouldn’t put too weight behind the words of a fractured mind but to get to know the Butterfly better, Han Fei not only dissected the messages one by one, he planned to memorize every single one of them. When he was halfway through, the living room door opened and Xu Qin walked in. “There have been a few more deaths inside the building. Things are not looking well, we need to get those masks and leave this place as soon as possible.”

“Must we possess the masks to leave this place?” Han Fei asked, “The meat packing plant has already been destroyed, the rules here might have changed.”

“No one knows who the manager of Cattle Alley is, he is the maker behind all the rules. As long as he is still alive, we need to obey his rules.” Xu Qin brought up something important. All the unique locations in the cryptic world had their own individual manager. If the manager was still alive, they controlled everything within their realm. They were the rule maker and the executor.

“No one know the real identity of the manager?”

“No one has seen him before or rather no one has managed to survive an encounter with him, that should tell you how dangerous he is.” Xu Qin voiced her concern. “To be able to control such a big location and still keep his identity a mystery, the manager at Cattle Alley has to be incredibly powerful.”

“Understood, then what should we do now?”

“We’ll go check the writer’s room first. If we really can’t complete the mission, then we’ll have no choice but to deal with the person who gave us the mission.” Xu Qin said directly. The trio left the room. With Xu Qin’s help, they avoided all the traps and came to a room on the 4th floor. “This is the writer’s place?”

When the door opened, Han Fei was stunned. The writer’s room was completely different from the one in real life. On the walls, inside the cupboards, on the tables, there were butterfly specimens everywhere. The writer appeared to have captured all the butterfly species in the world and turned them into his collection. There was nothing related to the Butterfly in the writer’s room in real life but it was the complete opposite in the cryptic world. It appeared like all the important clues had been left by the writer inside the cryptic world. ‘Looks like the writer has managed to predict that the Butterfly would come to eliminate any trace that might be related to them in real life.’ In reality though, the Butterfly had gone further than that, they not only removed the trace of their existence, they had also murdered everyone who tried to snoop into their secret through the Spider.

Only in the cryptic world that Han Fei would be able to visit the writer’s real room and get to know his real self. The writer’s pen name was Spider but there was nothing related to the arachnid in his room, instead there were a wealth of books and samples related to the butterfly. The writer’s obsession and research into the Butterfly could only be described as madness. He not only chased after real butterflies but also everything symbolic about the butterflies like their legends and stories.

“Seeing all these, wouldn’t you think this is a place of an entomologist?” Xu Qin entered the room with Han Fei. “Don’t be fooled by appearance. The profession of this room’s owner has nothing to do with butterflies at all, one day, he just became insanely obsessed with them for some unknown reason.” Standing inside the room, wherever you turned, you would be greeted by the pretty patterns of the butterfly wings. Eventually you’d lose yourself among their alluring and fearsome beauty. The pattern on the wings appeared to form pairs of eyes, looking into your heart.

After checking the living room, Han Fei entered the study. When he opened the door, he was given another shock. The walls of the room were painted with a giant butterfly wing. Standing inside it, you’d feel like you’re being enveloped by a giant butterfly. The dreamlike, color-bursting wings almost took Han Fei’s breath away, and not in a good way. He could not imagine how the writer managed to work in

a place like this. 'The House of the Butcher is the Spider's inner self, these patterns should be a manifestation of something inside the writer's heart.'

Rummaging through the drawers and cupboards, Han Fei noticed something strange. The writer's place was filled with many different types of literature but there was none written by him. 'The people here refer to the owner of this place as the writer, they do not seem to know that his pen name is the Spider, that is quite strange.' Turning to the window, Han Fei noticed yet another strange phenomenon. At the location where the wind chime sat in real life, there hung something that resembled a talisman here.

Stepping on the stool, Han Fei attempted to pull down the talisman. As he put his hands against the ceiling, he realized part of the ceiling was hollow on accident. He pushed harder and a painted wooden board eased out of place and a waterfall of dead butterflies showered down on Han Fei. 'How many butterflies has the man killed?'

Among the pile of dead butterflies, Han Fei found what appeared to be a manuscript.

"Notification for Player 0000! You've found a hidden mission object—Unnamed Hope (Broken)."

The manuscript was not named and had no list of content. Blowing away the broken butterfly wings that had fallen on the cover, Han Fei turned the page over to read.

"From god knows when, the world in my eyes started to change. I wrote down everything that I saw. This is supposed to be non-fiction but everyone who read it said that it is clearly fiction. Perhaps you too will be curious about what I've seen? Well, it all starts with a dream..."

The front half of the manuscript was similar to the experience of the 8th persona, the butterfly appeared in the writer's dream and tried to enter real life through him. But different from the chef, be it in dream or real life, the Butterfly never once succeeded in killing the writer. He escaped the murderous attempts again and again, until eventually he thought about the need to kill the Butterfly or else this would never end. After endless interaction, the writer slowly realized something, the Butterfly existed for real. It came from the deepest corner of the dream world and the corner seemed to be connected to a world filled with pain and despair.

The Butterfly was not really a butterfly. The writer slowly traced out the image of a person hiding behind the butterfly wings. Initially the writer suspected that this was someone who could see the other world

like he did but as they interacted further, the writer had a different conviction. The Butterfly appeared to have flown out from that world of pain and despair.

Han Fei believed that he was getting close to the real identity of the Butterfly. When he read the manuscript, he memorized every single line. When the story reached its climax, Han Fei realized the most important later half had been torn off and taken away. Someone had been here before he did. 'It can only be the other personas who had done this, but who could it be?' Now there were two choices placed before Han Fei, to kill all the personas to find the other half of the manuscript or to share this secret with all the personas at the building.

"So? Did you find anything?" Xu Qin pointed at her mask, Han Fei grasped her meaning instantly.

"I don't think we'll be able to locate the writer in a short amount of time, I think we should adopt the other plan."

Since the system had identified the manuscript as a mission object, Han Fei kept it inside his inventory. He took one last glance at the room wrapped in butterfly wings and then followed Xu Qin back to the 6th persona's room.

Chapter 243:

The old man in Room 301 was one of the oldest tenants at the building, he was kind and welcoming to everyone. Whenever any of the neighbours was in trouble, he'd be the first to help, thus he shared a good relationship with everyone. When people ran into him, they would greet him kindly by the term of endearment, Uncle Lee. Everyone had their own role at the building. Due to his age and experience, as well as popularity, everyone elected Uncle Lee to be the temporary building manager.

Normally, the old man would be there to negotiate the issues between the neighbours and resolve conflict. If a new tenant wanted to move in, they had to get his approval first too. Uncle Lee's murky eyes swept the young man who stood in the middle of his room. He remembered the young man who arrived at the building with Xu Qin, his name was Han Fei.

"Uncle Lee, my big sister has already done so much for me, I don't want to be a burden for her anymore. Is there anything else I can do at the building? As long as you are willing to give me a mask, I'll do anything you ask." Han Fei said shyly. He was not that social of a person, he did not dare to meet Uncle

Lee's eyes even when he talked. Uncle Lee had a genial smile on his face. He had met a lot of people in his lifetime. He basically knew Han Fei's personality from his mannerism and words. The young man before him was introverted and was not used to socializing. He always kept his problems to himself.

"Honestly, I really want to help you too but the problem is I'm not the decision-maker at this place."

"Uncle Lee, I am very hardworking and I won't complain even if you give me the hardest and dirtiest work here." Han Fei clutched the wound on his shoulder and looked at Uncle Lee seriously. This was the first time Uncle Lee had seen such sincerity and purity in one's eyes. With the protection of a big sister like Xu Qin, it was understandable why this young man was like a gem which had not been touched by malice. Elation crossed Uncle Lee's eyes. For people born of malice, the purer the object, the more satisfactorily it would be to destroy them.

"Giving face to your sister, I'll help you this one time." The old man frowned like he was really thinking of a solution for Han Fei. "Everyone here has their own responsibility to uphold. Do you have any work experience? Where have you worked in the past? Do you have any worthwhile skills?"

Han Fei was silent for a long time before saying, "Even though I'm still young, I have a wealth of working experience. I started working at a convenience store, I showed great passion in my work and built a strong bond with my colleagues. After solving a great problem that my boss was facing, the boss was touched and it swore to be my best friend. We are now always together. Other than that, I know the importance of the need to continually improve myself so while I work at the convenience store, I've been studying up on educational knowledge. Eventually I was accepted by a school to be a teacher. I adore my group of students, they see me as their father figure, bringing them care and concern." Han Fei thought back to the jobs he had. When he was reminded of these beautiful memories, his lips curled into a light smile.

Seeing the involuntary smile on Han Fei's face, the hatred in the old man's heart deepened. Compared to enjoying goodness, he preferred to destroy everything good.

"That's all? Then that's going to be hard. We already have a teacher living here and she's normally the one who looks after all the children." With a limp, the old man got down from bed. He then looked through his room. "What else do you know?"

"I came from a farming village, I lived next door to a family who was our village butcher. I've learned some butchering skills from him." Han Fei stood there and asked quite openly, "You don't have a butcher here, right? After all, this profession is quite rare nowadays."

“A butcher?” The old man was startled. He studied Han Fei multiple times but couldn’t find any flaw in the young man, he did not seem to realize the weight of the meaning behind what he just said, “There are all sorts of people living here but we do not have a butcher. You came at the right time but I have to see your butchering skills first, come with me.” Uncle Lee pushed open the door and went down a path that Han Fei was completely unfamiliar with. “Where’s your sister? And the boy who was with you?”

“My sister is still at the writer’s home looking for clues, the boy is waiting at my sister’s place.” Han Fei had no idea where the old man was leading him. He only saw the ‘kindness’ and ‘trustworthiness’ projected by the senior. The two took a long detour around the building before they arrived at a corner of the first floor. Uncle Lee pushed open the door to reveal a staircase that led underground. The scent of blood lingered in the air, there were uncleaned stains on the steps.

“Uncle Lee, why did you bring me here?” Han Fei showed clear reluctance of going down the steps.

“This is the place we use to slaughter our meat. This will be my test to you. After all, it’s not often we meet someone who has the butcher profession.” However, the old man knew very well that everyone at the House of the Butcher was a butcher, they simply would use other more presentable careers to hide that fact. They would never announce that they were actual butchers. “If you can pass the test, this will be where you work in the future.” Uncle Lee led Han Fei down the long stairs. The basement of this building appeared to be more complicated than the layout aboveground.

When they arrived at the second floor basement, the old man opened a rusted door. A sturdy wooden table was placed in the middle of the room, a large basin covered with black cloth was seated on the table.

“You said you are a butcher so you should be familiar with different types of meat. Go ahead and tell me what kind of meat is sitting inside the basin.” The old man signalled for Han Fei to move to the table while he walked towards a steel cupboard that sat at the corner. Han Fei pulled back the black cloth. The basin was filled with prepared meat. The meat pieces had unique flesh patterns and smell. Han Fei frowned as he studied the meat.

“So? Can you recognize it? As long as you can name the meat, you can stay, get a job and acquire your own mask.” The old man rummaged through the cupboard and asked without turning his head around. After some time, the old man finally found the thing he was looking for. He took out a rusted, dull blade from the lowest drawer. The spotted hand gripped the dull knife and his face that faced Han Fei’s back started to twist with hatred.

"I can't really tell but I'm sure it belongs to some kind of animal. It looks familiar." Han Fei examined the meat closer. He did not seem to notice the old man who was slowly approaching him from behind with the knife. The kindness had completely gone from his face.

"Animal meat?" The old man cackled. He flexed his muscles. "Why don't you take a closer look? Are you sure those are animal meats?" He inched towards Han Fei. The old man's lips cracked open to reveal yellowing teeth. "Feel the layer of skin and then touch your own skin. Don't they... feel familiar?" Just as the old man said that, he swung the blade at Han Fei. He moved at a speed that was different from his usual sluggishness. Han Fei, who was prepared, evaded the attack easily. The blade knocked into the edge of the basin. It rang noisily but the old man didn't care. They were underground, even if the young man screamed, no one was going to hear him.

"I'm sorry but you're not qualified for the work. As a butcher, how can you not tell human meat at first glance?" The old man's cunning cackle echoed in the basement.

"That's because some humans are no different from animals." Han Fei took out Rest in Peace from his inventory. "I just want to look for a job, how come you people always make things difficult for me? It's the same at the convenience store, the school and now here." The reason Han Fei did not attack the old man directly was because he wanted to test the old man, to see if he was the one who took off with half of the writer's manuscript. Ostentatiously, the old man was testing Han Fei but Han Fei was testing the old man as well. If the old man passed his test, then he would share his secret with the old man. After all, Han Fei was not a cruel person, most of the time, he only acted out of self-defence.

"I knew something was not right." Blood leaked out from the old man's murky eyes. The blood turned into a curse and changed the old man's body. "But can a bladeless blade deal any damage?"

"Why don't you let me chop you to find out?" Han Fei sent the small wiggling snake into his ghost tattoo, his body was shrouded in light Yin energy. At the same time, footsteps came from outside. Xu Qin and Weep, who had been following them, were soon to arrive at the scene.

"You are not the person I'm looking for and you've exhausted your use." Holding the butcher's knife, Han Fei said with the same sincerity. "Life is pain, let me help you find eternal rest in peace."

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The situation turned immediately. Han Fei's perfect acting had successfully fooled the old man. Even though the old man eventually caught onto the ploy, it was already too late. Han Fei also wanted to find a secluded place to deal with the old man, so Uncle Lee had set the perfect scene for his own death. Before she appeared in person, the smell of blood already suffused the underground room. Xu Qin, enshrouded in blood mist, appeared at the door of the butcher's knife holding her table knife. The smell of blood curled into nostrils and the sound of children crying echoed in his ears. The blood evoked the murderous intent in people's heart while the crying dampened one's soul with deep melancholy and despair.

The worst memory in the old man's mind began to surface. The scenarios that he had been trying to avoid confronted him. His expression became scarier and more twisted, his eyes overflowing with hatred. The darker side that he had been keeping hidden showed itself. The skin that wrapped around his bones started to crack. The age spots on his arm and face morphed into some kind of curse. Uncle Lee had been harbouring a deep resentment against time, the cruelty that it had descended upon him, one that he was powerless to stop. All the goodness in the world wouldn't involve him anymore, after all, his life was reaching its end soon. In this final moment of his life, he did not wish to give anyone blessing, instead he hoped to drag everyone down with him into the pits of hell.

Han Fei had done deep research into each one of Spider's personas. Among them, Ol' Lee represented the helplessness of human nature before the vicissitudes of life and the overwhelming sense of loss before the yawning abyss that was human destiny. This persona could be easily taken advantage of by the Butterfly, so Han Fei made Ol' Lee his first target. The old man slowly morphed into a monster. His body elongated in size as his bones cracked noisily. He was like a scarecrow draped in human skin. There was no humanity left in him, only hatred and terror.

'Will all the personas turn into unique monsters corresponding to their fear?' Han Fei studied Ol' Lee carefully. He waited for Xu Qin and Weep to arrive, then they ganged up on their enemy. Ol' Lee, who had lost all human shape, took out different blades and chains from the steel cupboard. His favorite pastime was to torture these young fleshies inside the damp and dark butchering ground. Each blade was screaming with innocent souls, it was hard to imagine how many lives Ol' Lee had claimed down here. The butchers inside the Cattle Alley only had one butcher's knife but Ol' Lee who had a human face had a whole cupboard of them. Looks like in terms of slaughtering, humans were still better at it than animals.

The cupboard tipped over, Ol' Lee charged towards the exit brandishing his knives. Ol' Lee was clever, he knew he wouldn't win against 3 enemies so his plan was to run. Unfortunately for him, Han Fei's group had already predicted this and had come up with the solution for any possible scenario. If the old man

had taken Han Fei as hostage, then he might have a chance at survival. If Ol' Lee chose to escape or fight, his only path was death.

"Uncle Lee loves his own life more than anything else, despite how much he laments his old age and harsh fate. He will show his claws when he's cornered but those are all faked. He is just a paper tiger that is all bark and no bite." Han Fei already told Xu Qin and Weep everything he knew about Ol' Lee before he departed alone to accost the old man. Han Fei had read the old man's thoughts. This was a slaughter both physically and mentally. The old man was already in trouble fighting off Xu Qin, much less Xu Qin who had the aid from Weep and Han Fei.

In just half a minute, the old man's body had more than 10 new wounds. Ol' Lee placed all of his attention on Xu Qin and fully underestimated Weep. He would suffer for that mistake because one of his eyes was soon blinded by despair. The old man could not believe this. The small boy who looked so frail had the ability to control the despair in people's hearts, that was an ability which was unheard off.

As the wounds on his body increased, the despair in the old man's heart intensified. His conviction was already weak to begin with, as Weep continued to wear down his mind, he was slowly edging towards despair. "I can give you the masks! I can even tell you all the secrets about this building!" The old cried out. He was trying to find leverage for his survival but the 3 in the room showed no sign of pulling back. "I know how to remove the curse at the Cattle Alley! Don't you love your sister? If you do not lift that curse, she'll be tormented by it for life! She'll never be able to leave this place! She will not be able to escape because only by consuming the meat produced at Cattle Alley that she'll be able to retain her rationality!" Seeing a lack of response from his attackers, the old man delivered another important piece of news. "There is a number behind each of the masks here. If you collect all the masks, you can become the new manager of the Cattle Alley! I already have 2 masks, I can give them to you!"

The worst memory was drawn out and the despair in his heart sharpened into nails as they punctured his soul. The pain was indescribable. "I promise to help you if you let me go! I know many things about this place! There have been many new arrivals recently. There is a hairdresser, a nurse, and a veterinarian. They have already formed a pact to kill your big sister! They are related to the disappearance of the writer as well. It's the outsiders who have killed the writer! The doctor is in cahoots with them, they plan to murder everyone here! The doctor is the most dangerous presence here! After you kill me, you'll only be targeted by him!"

It was hard to tell whether the old man was lying or not, in any case, he had revealed plenty of useful information. At least now Han Fei knew the writer's disappearance might have to do with the doctor.

“I’m telling you the truth! You can go and ask the Dreamer. The drawings in the boy’s room can prove everything I say!” The old man realized Xu Qin’s attacks had slowed down. He assumed his words had gotten their attention. What he did not know was that Han Fei had sneaked behind him and aimed the butcher’s knife at the back of his neck. The moment Han Fei locked onto his target, pairs of pale hands appeared around the hilt. The 3 inch blade which was formed by the brilliance of humanity slashed downwards. The blade reflected many human faces, they swore to help Han Fei forever.

When the blade touched the old man’s body, the shield of malice was forced back immediately. Rest in peace sliced through the flesh without any resistance, it easily severed Uncle Lee’s neck. The power of Dawn Butcher was activated. The more cruel Han Fei’s target was, the sharper the blade would become. When the 6th persona’s head fell to the ground, the blade made from humanity disappeared like it was never there to begin with. Malice and hatred exploded around them. Han Fei released the black snake from the ghost tattoo and had it consume all the negative energy.

‘Outsiders have infiltrated into this building, among them is the hairdresser who has stolen Xu Qin’s knife.’ Han Fei felt there was a need to plan this out. Even though they had taken down Uncle Lee, it did not mean that Uncle Lee was weak. In fact, the old man was stronger than a medium Lingering Spirit. And there were others more powerful than Uncle Lee at the building. If Han Fei’s group earned their ire and was surrounded, the chance of their survival was low.

“We better leave this place now.” Han Fei reached to pluck off the old man’s mask. When he obtained the mask, the system said, “Notification for Player 0000! You’ve gained the House of the Butcher’s approval through your own method! Congratulations for obtaining the 6th Butcher’s Mask and becoming a member of the House of the Butcher!”

“Notification for Player 0000! Your Professional Resume has been updated! Would you like to show or hide your resume on your character profile?”

“On the first night you were hired by the convenience store, you ruined your boss’ coffin and snuffed out its mind.

“When you went to apply for a job at Yi Ming Private Academy, you did everything within your power to ruin the discipline teacher’s reputation.

“To become the Midnight Butcher, you have ruined the foundation of the meat packing plant and murdered more than a handful of your colleagues. Blood follows you like a shadow.

“Today, after you’ve entered the House of the Butcher, you murdered the person who was trying to offer you a tenancy. Congratulations for completing all the requirements to unlock Grade G Title— Business Killer.

“Business Killer (Upgradeable Unique Title): The title perfectly encapsulates your professional life. Every business that you’ve joined is now in shambles. With this title, your Charm will drop by 2 points.”

After reading all that, Han Fei decided to hide his personal resume. He even pushed the new title to the bottom of his other titles.

‘Are you kidding me? Who dares to hire me if they see this title and its explanation? Furthermore, it feels like the system has seriously misunderstood me. How can it frame everything like it was my fault? I’m the real victim here!’ Studying his bloody resume, Han Fei was quite speechless.

Chapter 245:

Crime scene cleaning, after participating in so many murders, Han Fei was very familiar with this work. Even if a professional officer came with high tech devices, it would be hard for them to find any problem. “Respect a man and he will respect you back. You are butchers of the living and I am the butcher of butchers.” Han Fei replaced the black cloth over the basin. Studying the reconstructed room and satisfied that there was no more mistake, he left with his friends. It was like they were never there to begin with.

The malice and negative energy inside Uncle Lee were consumed by the black snake while Uncle Lee’s mask and keys were confiscated by Han Fei. After leaving the basement, Han Fei hurried to Uncle Lee’s place. Since the cunning old man was already dead, why not repurpose his affects to better benefit the living? Han Fei searched through the place for anything useful, for the first time, it felt like he was actually playing a game.

Uncle Lee’s room contained many surprises. Han Fei found many bottles of blood under Uncle Lee’s bed. After giving the snake a taste, they realized the blood was sedimented with heavy negative emotions. Opening the cap and one would hear the horrified screams of the living. The 6th persona was twisted and dark, he liked to torture others. He probably collected all of the despair and pain and poured them into these bottles. Han Fei had no idea why number 6 collected these bottles, perhaps it was to satisfy his twisted needs. In any case, they were useful to help Weep heal quicker.

With the snake blinking eagerly on, Han Fei handed all the bottles to Weep. When he was dropped into the blood pool by the pig-faced monster, Weep was forced to face his most dreaded memory. Initially, the despair from his childhood was the support holding up his frail body but now the boy had changed. Weep had been running away from his past, attempting to use time to mellow out the pain. However, what time did was freeze the pain, it did not go away. Time locked Weep in the past. Even though he was now under greater pain from before, the time that held him back was shattered. He walked over the broken pieces and was growing at enormous speed. After he drank the infused blood, the presence coming out from Weep became chillier. He was collecting various kinds of despair and then transmuting and coalescing them into a singular object. When he succeeded, Weep would have another breakthrough.

‘Before entering the Cattle Alley, Weep’s cries could affect every soul within 10 metres radius, now the range has increased to 15 metres. If he continues to get stronger, the range will only get bigger and bigger.’ Han Fei was reminded of the Singer, the ghost’s song could cover thousands of metres. All the spirits who heard its song would shiver in fear. ‘Weep has huge potential. Perhaps he’ll become an Unmentionable like the Singer one day.’

While Weep was consuming the despair, Han Fei continued his search. The old man’s home was quite untidy. There were expired drugs everywhere. The clothes inside the cupboard were moldy. A scent of death permeated the room. “What’s this?” Han Fei found a wrinkled picture inside one of the clothes pockets. The picture featured a tiny, malnourished-looking boy. The boy was shy before the camera. He had long hair and extremely pale skin. His arms were abnormally grown. On the back of the picture was the boy’s name and date of birth. However, the thing that grabbed Han Fei’s attention the most was the note, Family.

‘Isn’t number 6 just a sub persona of Spider, why would he have a picture like this? Is this Spider’s actual family?’ Han Fei continued to look and he found an adoption paper and a lot of written notes inside a hidden panel at the depths of the cupboard. The handwriting on the notes was different from Number 6’s, if anything, it looked more like the writer’s handwriting. ‘Uncle Lee stole the writer’s adoption record? Why would he do that?’

As he continued to read, Han Fei noticed a lot of info on the record was covered up with a red pen. The empty margins were filled with words like death, sin and murder.

On the few pages of the adoption record, Han Fei noted many different handwritings. There were proclamations that the writer wanted to murder the orphan but the other personas appeared to have accepted the orphan and treated him as family. ‘The writer wanted to kill his own adopted child? Why?’

Han Fei knew that before the Spider died, he had adopted a child. After Spider's death, it was the child who donated Spider's brain to Immortal Pharma. Thinking back, Han Fei couldn't understand why Spider would choose to adopt a child during the last moments of his life. At the time, he was in a deep duel with the Butterfly. Adding a new family meant that he would have a new weakness for Butterfly to exploit. 'Or it was not the Spider who decided to adopt the child, but another persona controlled by the Butterfly?'

By now, Han Fei had already obtained much information. He could confirm that among the 9 different personas of Spider, there was one or more which had been controlled by the Butterfly. With Butterfly's ruthless nature, they would not hesitate to turn Spider's personas against himself.

'I should pay attention to Spider's adopted child, he'll be a break in the case!' After turning the old man's place upside down, Han Fei found nothing else useful. This old man was different from the female chef, he was not targeted by the Butterfly. His desire for murder and cunning was his own. In other words, he was the darker side of Spider's personality, the kind of person Spider despised the most.

After taking the adoption papers and picture with him, Han Fei returned the room to its original state. Then, they regrouped at Xu Qin's place. After briefing Xu Qin and Weep with some details, Han Fei quitted the game at the corner of the bedroom. The blood world solidified and Han Fei removed the gaming helmet. His bloodshot eyes looked quite scary. The sun was coming up. Han Fei worked the kinks out from his muscle. Each movement brought him intense pain. The injury he suffered in the game was so real that Han Fei found the lack of pain quite disorientating in real life. He subconsciously kept his left hand close to his chest, like the bone was still broken.

His head felt heavy and tiredness overwhelmed him. Han Fei stared at his simple gaming device and was reminded of the gaming hub he spotted at Huang Yin's home. Out of habit, he pulled out his phone to check his bank out and then he sighed. The royalty from Twin Flowers hadn't arrived, and the salary from Thriller Novelist wasn't there either. Currently, he had around 200000 RMB in his account, most of which came from the police reward money. 'The most luxurious gaming hub costs around several millions, that's enough to buy a house in the old city. That is not something affordable by the common people.'

The explosive advancement in technology also brought with it many hidden dangers. It was like an iceberg floating at sea. Everyone was in awe of the majesty above water but selectively ignored the suffering of the general public who was underwater necessary to keep the iceberg afloat.

With the amount in his account, buying real estate was out of question. Making friends, finding love, these didn't interest him either. His only focus now was to survive in game and his only material desire was to purchase a multi-purpose gaming hub so that he could game for a longer session.

Lying in bed, Han Fei realized the cryptic world had its positive traits too. At least, the houses there were practically free, as long as you didn't mind the murders and potential haunting.

After a quick rest, his body didn't feel so painful anymore. He only slept for an hour before he was woken up by the alarm. Before his brain kicked in, his body already climbed out from bed and headed into the bathroom. At 8.30 am sharp, Han Fei arrived downstairs. Li Xue and one other plainclothes were already waiting for him by the cruiser. For the police, Han Fei was one of the biggest lures to catch the Butterfly. They protected him to get close to the Butterfly.

"Li Xue, did you guys find any concrete evidence regarding a relationship between Spider and Butterfly?" Han Fei did not rest inside the car. Even though he was an actor, the questions he asked were those from a detective.

"Temporarily, we have nothing. All the files on Spider have been demolished." Li Xue looked at Han Fei's dark circles. "Did you not have a good rest yesterday night?"

"I had a very long nightmare." Han Fei gave an excuse and then pushed with another question. "Did you know that Spider had once adopted a child? If possible, I would like to meet him."

Chapter 246:

Hearing what Han Fei had to say, Li Xue and the other officer were shocked. They only just found out about Spider's adopted son recently. This actor was better at intelligence collecting than most law enforcement officers.

"The situation with Spider's adopted son is quite unique." Li Xue said with clear difficulty on her face. "There is no clear evidence linking him to the Butterfly so we can't subpoena him to talk to us. But we'll try our best to persuade him."

“Aren’t you shooting a movie at Fu Gui Meat Packing Plant? Sometimes, Spider’s adopted son will go there, so you might run into him.” The driving officer said, “In fact, I believe he had returned there yesterday.”

“Yesterday?” Han Fei was instantly reminded of all the strange events that occurred during shooting yesterday. “Did you find any suspicious person at the set yesterday?”

“An old tenant living on the 5th floor admitted to placing the dead birds on the staircase but he didn’t do that to scare you. He is just very superstitious. He was doing some kind of ceremony. I’ve had a stern talk with him, he promised he won’t interrupt with the movie shooting anymore.”

“What about the strange feeling that the stunt actors reported? The thing about an arm pulling on their ankles.”

“They appeared to have fallen under some kind of hypnosis. We found no one suspicious at the set.” The officer told Han Fei everything to get Han Fei to feel safer at work. “We’ve already requested our best psychologist to have a talk with them. The person who was behind the psychological hypnosis knows what they’re doing. This matches Butterfly’s previous mo. This proves that the Butterfly is still following you and aiming to harm you.”

“One last thing, when I jumped down from the 4th floor, I saw a figure inside one of the rooms, did you find out anything about that?” Han Fei remembered that scene clearly. He only shared a quick glance with the thing and his back was already drenched in cold sweat.

“We can’t find the figure you’re talking about, but we did run into Spider’s adopted son when we searched that particular building. He said he was just visiting his father’s home.”

“Really?” Han Fei’s interest in this adopted son deepened. This was someone who was heartless enough to sell his own adopted father’s brain to a pharmaceutical company.

When Han Fei arrived at the set, everyone was already in place. They all looked at Han Fei with respect. A comedy actor dared to attempt a scene where even stunt actors had to reconsider. Han Fei’s leap had earned many people’s respect. Compared to big celebrities, everyone thought the casually-dressed and polite Han Fei was easier to approach. Greeting the crew, Han Fei entered the living compound. All the 9 actors were there. Everyone was studying their script, getting into character. Han Fei had already

memorized the full script so he spent most of his time studying the other actors, and then tried to apply Spider's subpersonas on them. It had to be said that Director Zhang had a very good casting eye. Even though these actors were not the biggest stars in the country, they matched their assigned roles perfectly. Doing this movie was basically giving Han Fei a free chance to reconstruct the scenario from years ago, to experience what Spider did. While he tried to understand Spider, he would search for a new solution to the past problems.

Ever since Han Fei met the 6th persona in the cryptic world, he had been bothered by something. Why had all the subpersonas which were killed by the writer appeared at the House of the Butcher? However, the writer, the supposed killer of all the characters, was conspicuously missing.

It felt like Spider had trapped himself inside Cattle Alley.

'I will help you shake off your shackles, don't worry.' Gripping the script, Han Fei promised the writer. After witnessing the pig-faced monsters and the human meat packing plant at Cattle Alley, Han Fei gained a fresher understanding of sin in the Spider's heart. Now he was going to have to find Spider's kindness. He had chopped the half heart that was rotten and filled with sin. His next goal was to locate the other half which should be brimming with kindness.

Cattle Alley was the stepping stone for Han Fei to take on the Ziggurat. He had to use everything within Cattle Alley to improve his neighbours' power. Furthermore, Han Fei himself was quite intrigued by the hidden map. If he could complete Spider's dying wish, he might inherit half of the map like how he did with Yi Ming Private Academy.

When a normal person accidentally wandered into Cattle Alley, their first and only concern would be how to escape alive, how to remove the curse put on them at Cattle Alley but Han Fei's perspective was different.

Half an hour later, the dressed actors entered the set. The cameras aimed at them. The scene would be taken from all angles so that not one good shot would be lost. The scene today involved all 9 personas as well. It was after the first night they spent at the living compound and everyone suffered from nightmares. But some of the nightmares were real and others were fake; some stayed awake throughout the night, others had their lives marked by Death in their sleep.

The scene was shot in the day and the 9 actors had to bring alive that oppressiveness inside the brightly-lit room. Fear and anxiety crawled like vines. Everyone had their own agenda to pursue but one of them

only wished to murder everyone else. The moment the cameras rolled, everyone got into the required state. Han Fei who sat at the corner pressed the switch in his mind. At that moment, he was the writer.

The subpersonas with different occupations started to share their nightmares from the night before. The line between dreams and reality blurred. They realized things from the nightmare were coming true. The atmosphere turned increasingly oppressive. The personas were slowly influenced by anxiety. After Bai Xian who played the doctor shared his nightmare, everyone turned to Han Fei.

He rubbed the wound on the stomach of his finger. The pair of complicated eyes slowly lifted upwards. "I dreamed that something was looking at me. It stood at the window of the opposite building, staring at me quietly." His eyes moved to the window. And Han Fei's eyes colored with shock!

At that moment, standing at the window of the opposite building was a humanoid creature with an extremely pale face!

This was the second time he encountered this thing at the living compound, the first time was when he did the stunt and jumped down from the balcony. His hands chilled. As Han Fei's eyes were drawn to the thing, the words felt like they were pulled out of his mouth, "I can feel it getting closer to me. It will claw its way out from the nightmare and devise different ways to kill me."

Chapter 247:

"I have forgotten when was the first time that thing appeared in my dream. At first, it hid among the crowd, walking past me as if by accident but for some reason, it has decided to follow me home..." The words seemed to be pulled out of Han Fei's mind as he stared at the thing in the opposite building. The 'ghost' in the nightmare had escaped into real life, he was experiencing the same thing Spider once did. Han Fei really did not expect the enemy would return in this form, everything felt like a planned 'coincidence'. The Spider that he played stood at the same spot where the real Spider did as they spotted the same ghost.

Han Fei strayed from the script, in fact, Han Fei had no idea what he was saying. He kept his eyes on the pale face and the murderous intention in those eyes. When their eyes first crossed, Han Fei's heart quivered with fear but after the training at Cattle Alley and he became the Midnight Butcher, Han Fei's attitude and constitution in real life improved as well. His fingers curled involuntarily as if around a butcher's knife. Han Fei blinked and the next moment, the thing was gone.

Han Fei kept his eyes on the window at the next building over, he knew the thing would return and it would come closer and closer to him. This layering of fear could grind down a person's mind but Han Fei was strangely excited about meeting the thing in person. He wanted to kill the Butterfly, be it in the cryptic world or in real life!

Pulling his gaze back, when Han Fei looked at the other actors, they were looking at him differently. The scene continued to progress with Han Fei finishing his part. Then no one said anything to break up the oppressiveness in the small room until the director called for a cut. The shot was perfect. As the collective breath was released, they turned to Han Fei again.

"Why didn't you follow the script?" Bai Xian paused before continuing, "But I don't mean that as an offense. In fact, I think you've improved upon it. It was like they were the exact words Spider would have said to his other personas."

"That was amazing! And that gaze you shot towards the opposite building, the sudden change in emotion in less than a second! It was like you had seen an actual ghost! How did you do it?" Director Zhang, who had been behind the camera, walked over. He too was shocked. First, indeed it was Han Fei's fault for not following the script. He came up with his own lines but they sounded more natural than the ones in the script. The tone, the emotion and the state when he said those words, everyone felt like they were in the same room as the real Spider.

"What did I say earlier?" Han Fei indeed encountered a ghost but he was not afraid. When he saw the thing, the words were automatically pulled out of his mind, he couldn't recall them anymore.

"You don't remember? You were that into the character?" Bai Xian was impressed. He did not think Han Fei was bluffing or lying.

"Everyone helped to set up the perfect scene, I suppose I got too deep into the character. If we have to redo the scene, I don't think I'll be able to repeat it." Han Fei then turned to glance at the window at the opposite building. The humanoid thing was not there. The next time it appeared, it would be closer to Han Fei, and Han Fei couldn't 'wait' to meet it again.

"Brother, that was awesome. Since the start of the shooting, you've already contributed 2 iconic shots. I am confident you'll be one of those actors mentioned in future textbooks." Honestly Bai Xian was quite jealous. Han Fei used his smallest part to contribute the greatest performance and he was only 20 plus. The young man's future was immensely bright. Facing the waterfall of praises, Han Fei only smiled. He

knew very well that his acting wasn't good enough to provide any iconic scene, he had help from an actual 'ghost'.

While they took a break, Han Fei immediately approached the police. He carried a few lunch boxes to find the team and hoped that Li Xue would accompany him to investigate the building opposite from Spider's building. "I saw that thing inside this room." Han Fei pointed at a door when they reached the 4th floor.

"The door handle and lock are covered in dust. This place has been vacant for a long time already, are you sure about this?" Li Xue called her colleague and she soon got the info on the tenant of this room. The owner of the room died a long time ago. Opening the law enforcement app, Li Xue wanted to use the special tool to unlock the door but the door wasn't locked at all. They opened the door and there was only a pile of smelly trash inside the room. Han Fei walked over to the window, to the spot where the ghost appeared. He then looked out the window at the movie set. 'When would it appear next? Would it appear beside my bed when I'm in game?'

Since there was no discovery, Li Xue urged them to leave. As Han Fei moved towards the front door, he accidentally caught a mirror placed at the corner of the balcony. Everything was dusty in the room except this mirror. 'When I jumped down from the 4th floor, I saw a mirror as well. Could the ghost thing be related to mirrors?' Han Fei shared his suspicion with Li Xue. The latter put on gloves and took the mirror away as evidence. They would perform tests on it to see if they could find anything. Due to this new discovery, Han Fei wanted to stay longer but Li Xue's phone rang. It was her colleague telling her Spider's adopted son had arrived at the living room.

"Han Fei, you've been meaning to meet the Spider's adopted son, right? He's now at the building where your movie is shot."

"This timing of his sure is suspicious." Han Fei exited the room where the ghost appeared. When he reached the stairs, he glanced up. There was nothing there, but Han Fei felt like there were eyes following him behind each of the closed doors. "Alright, let us go see that child who has sold the brain of the person who raised him." Han Fei and Li Xue arrived at the set. They were quite at ease with each other but the others were shocked. Why would a female officer be tagging along beside an actor? The other actors had their assistants following them but this actor was always accompanied by the police.

"Please make way." As they entered Room 401, Han Fei met Spider's adopted son for the first time. And it was inside Spider's bedroom. Before the child met Spider, he was an orphan like Han Fei, more coincidentally he and Han Fei had both stayed at Happiness Orphanage. Knocking on the half-open door, Han Fei's eyes wandered over to the man... or perhaps more fittingly, the boy sitting beside the table.

The man's actual age was around 20 but he had a very young face. His skin was scarily white like they had been bleached. His arms were longer than normal and he wore a whole set of clothes in black. When Han Fei entered, the boy-looking man was closely studying the wind chime hanging by the window.

"What are you looking at?" Han Fei closed the door, to allow him some privacy with the man.

Hearing the question, the young man did not turn around but he did answer. "I'm looking at my father. Shush, keep it down. He's talking to me."

Chapter 248:

"Your father is inside the wind chime?" Han Fei had dealt with many strange characters, if anything, he was more familiar dealing with these people compared to normal individuals. He even had his own system to determine what kind of attitude he should adopt based on how crazy the other party was.

"He spread his ashes into the wind so whenever the wind chime rings, his soul will start to communicate with me." The man with pale skin looked at the wind chime. As if reminded of something, the face that was too young for his age colored with regret.

"Looks like you love your adopted father a lot."

"Yes, I'd come back here to talk to him whenever I have time."

"Then why did you sell his brain to Immortal Pharma?" Han Fei was not that much of a chatter. The main problem was he had the habit of cutting to the chase in conversations.

The man's head slowly turned around to look at Han Fei. "Who are you?"

"My name is Han Fei, I'll be playing your father in the movie, Thriller Novelist." Han Fei looked around. After making sure the man wasn't armed and there was no hidden danger, he walked forward. "Your

father is the most complicated person I've met. His mind is like the sea. Every time I try to emulate his emotions, I would feel like I was swept away by that raging sea."

"No one will be able to bring his character justice." The man said confidently.

"Really? Even if there are 9 of us each playing a side of his persona?"

"That might fool the public but the 9 of you won't be enough to recreate the real him." The man turned back to the wind chime. "That is not something that can be done through acting. Those who never experienced it will never understand."

"Experience? What kind of experience are you talking about?" Han Fei paid attention to every word the man said. This rather strange man was Han Fei's most important way to get to know Spider better.

"I respect my father a lot, and he loves me too but, in the past, he has tried more than once to kill me." A smile unsuitable for his age appeared on the man's face. "Does that not sound absurd? But that is the truth." The man's words reminded Han Fei of the adoption papers he found at the House of the Butcher. There were many notes on the margin, among them were striking words like death and kill.

"I've seen him masterfully butcher livestock; I've seen him easily take down a man much bigger than he was; I've seen him lock himself inside a small cupboard to cry; I've seen him holding a knife or a pen while looking menacingly at my neck. The first time he wanted to kill me, I still didn't understand what death was, I couldn't tell what his reasoning was. But I didn't blame him. He wanted to kill me but he was also the one who protected me. Father has many different personas, there is only one of them who wants to kill me, the rest of the time, he loves me a lot." The man sounded detached when he told his story. It must have been hard to live with a schizophrenic person like Spider but there was no blame in the man's voice, if anything, there was only sweet memories.

"You don't blame him even if he tried to kill you?" Han Fei wanted to see into this man's heart.

"In your eyes, father is nothing more than an author with schizophrenia, you think his story is mysterious and alluring. But for me, he is the saddest person in this world. He couldn't love anyone in his life because he is always trapped in that circle of self-doubt and self-betrayal." The man looked at the wind chime silently as if talking to himself. "You will never understand him."

“Then do you mind telling me more about him? I’ve read all of his books, I really want to know how he was like in person.” Han Fei sat beside the man.

Staring at the wind chime, the man continued, “My father once told me that the bravest decision he ever made in his life was to adopt me. Ever since his breakdown, he locked himself up inside a secluded world. He refused to communicate with the outside world, afraid that he might lose control, afraid that his other personas might harm people close to him. He spent his life trapped within himself. I have no idea why he suddenly changed at the last moment of his life, perhaps it was his way of rebelling against fate. He wanted to use the last moment of his life to prove something... No matter what happened to him, he was still him, fate was not going to change him.” The man pointed at his heart. “I am still alive, I have nothing but love and appreciation for my father and for that, he has won. He won over the arrangement of destiny, won over the persona who wished me death, won over the pair of invisible hands who seemed to be in control of everything.”

“Destiny? Invisible hands?” A suspicion slowly rose in Han Fei’s heart due to the man’s words. The last battlefield between Spider and Butterfly was this adopted child. Butterfly couldn’t take down Spider directly so they tried to make Spider murder his own adopted son to crush his mind!

The ‘death’s in the adoption paper had the same handwriting as the one inside Spider’s manuscript but clearly they were not written in the same mental state. In other words, by the end of his life, Spider perhaps was not so in control of himself anymore, or maybe something was controlling him?

“Did your father tell you anything else? Have you heard the term, Butterfly from him?”

“Butterfly?” The wind suddenly moved the wind chime. The man closed his eyes and his pale face appeared to grimace in pain. The loose black outfit was like a mourning shroud. He did not answer Han Fei’s question but sang some unknown song following the ringing of the wind chime. Then he stood up and prepared to leave.

“One can’t mention that word inside this building? I’ll be honest with you, I’ve already been targeted by the Butterfly. Like your father, I too wish to kill the Butterfly.” Han Fei stopped the man. “I have no other choice, the thing has crawled out from the depth of nightmares. It is getting closer and closer to me, in fact, I’ve just seen it 10 minutes ago.”

The man subconsciously stepped away from Han Fei and then he shook his head. “Impossible, other than my father, no one would be alive after seeing it, no one has the power to make it appear.”

"I have no idea how things got to this stage. Initially I was just invited to join a movie project but I ended up accidentally helping the police solve the human jigsaw case from 10 years ago, that appeared to anger the Butterfly. Then the enmity deepened further after I solved the Case of Foretold Deaths at Yi Ming Private Academy and snapped one of its wings." Han Fei stared at the young man's face. The terror and fearlessness he garnered from the cryptic world poured out. "I'll put it like this. Your father had fought bravely with the Butterfly but it only ended with a draw, however, me and my friends, we've already won the Butterfly once." When Han Fei said that, his presence was completely different from before. The scent of blood appeared to ooze out from him. There appeared to be a devil hiding under the man's gentlemanly surface. He gave Spider's son less the impression of an actor but more of a killer.

The man's face paled even more. He thought for a long time before he turned around. "Since you can see it, it can only mean that you are going to die soon. I don't know how to help you, father never told me anything. The only thing he said on his deathbed was..." The man looked at Han Fei. "He said I am the Butterfly, I was the reason he couldn't win the Butterfly and I was also the reason he won't lose to the Butterfly. Until now, I have no idea what he meant by that. Perhaps the thing that troubled him once crawled into my brain. If he wished to destroy it, then he had to kill me and killing me would have caused him to lose."

Han Fei memorized everything the man said. When Spider met Butterfly, this man was still a child. He was Butterfly's pawn, Spider's battlefield. The man had no idea the war that waged over him but his words did help inspire Han Fei. 'The Butterfly is best at manipulating humanity, I need to make sure this doesn't happen to me.' From the tussle in the mind to the 'accidents' in real life, Han Fei was reliving Spider's past. In the cryptic world, Han Fei was cursed by the tenants of Ziggurat, the place of origin for Butterfly's followers; in real life, the humanoid shadow was slowly encroaching. Butterfly rarely went to such lengths to punish someone, they were not worth the time. Perhaps only Spider, Han Fei and Huang Yin had had such privilege.

"Looks like I have misunderstood you, but I still don't understand why you would sell your father's brain to Immortal Pharma." This was the kind of transaction that was extremely rare. The brain was the most mysterious part of a person's body, it hid all the secrets.

"Father is the cleverest person I know, so clever that even after he got sick, he could still coexist with his other personas and function like normal. But he knew his brain was different from normal and he knew I wouldn't be able to protect it so he paid a visit to Immortal Pharma before he did." The man stared at the wind chime. "Everything was father's decision, I was merely carrying out his last wish." Walking past Han Fei, as the man left the room, he mumbled as if to himself, "I hope you'll live. Father once said, that thing has no weakness but the more fearful you are of it, the stronger it'll become."

The man's words reminded Han Fei of Jin Sheng's advice. The more fearful you showed yourself at the Ziggurat, the smaller your chance of survival.

"Don't worry, I'm not so easily scared." Han Fei waved at him. "You also need to take care of yourself. By the way, I still haven't got your name."

"It is Wu Zui, it means my sin, it's a name my father has given me. He didn't have me take his surname afraid that I might inherit his bad luck." Then the pale skinned man disappeared down the corridor.

Chapter 249:

Han Fei's eyes never left Wu Zui's back as he took out his phone from his pocket, the recording function had been left open. He repeated that statement by Wu Zui several times—"He said I am the Butterfly, I was the reason he couldn't win the Butterfly and I was also the reason he won't lose to the Butterfly." Spider's life was free of any ties until Wu Zui's appearance. He both wanted to kill and protect this child, the complexity of schizophrenia was fully manifested in reference to this child.

"Wu Zui? My sin?" Han Fei had no idea why Spider would give the child such a name, in fact, there were still many things about the writer that he did not understand. 'Looks like I'll have to meet the writer in person in the cryptic world to get down to the truth. However, I did get some valuable information today, Spider did not lose to Butterfly, one of the biggest reasons was he stayed true to his principle. Spider's life was incomplete, he lacked love and protection. Based on Wu Zui's statement, Spider did not dare to love and had nothing to protect. He was like an observer standing at the crossroads of different worlds. He observed everything with detachment, it was how he managed to come up with books like The Cattle Alley. However, with Wu Zui's appearance, Spider started to reassess himself. The scale that carried the two worlds in his eyes started to tip. It was because of Wu Zui that the House of The Butcher came into being. The first book is about the world viewed from without and the second book is the world viewed from within.'

Holding his script, Han Fei stared at the empty corridor. He tried to see things from Spider's perspective. 'Spider did not kill the Butterfly but he did not harm his own son either. Perhaps from the perspective of a father, not losing meant winning.'

When the wind chime rang, Han Fei put his phone away. Like Wu Zui, Han Fei stared at the wind chime silently. He was suddenly reminded of the writer's room in the cryptic world. Just to give it a try, Han Fei pulled over a chair, stood up and his hands searched the part of the ceiling around the wind chime. Han Fei found a well-hidden compartment!

If not for something being hidden inside the writer's room in the cryptic world, Han Fei never would have suspected something would be there in the real life variation as well. Removing the board, instead of a shower of dead butterflies, there was only a black and white picture inside the hidden compartment.

There were 10 chairs placed around the table and the table had 10 dining sets but there were only Spider and Wu Zui in the picture. They were seated at opposite ends of the table, looking at each other. 'Can this count as a family portrait?' In real life, Spider's manuscript wasn't found inside the hidden compartment but only this picture. Han Fei wiped away dust on the picture and he noticed each of the chairs was numbered. Most of the number was crossed out, the ones that were not were 3, 5, and 9.

'Number 3 is the doctor, 5 is the teacher and 9 is the reader. Is this a hint that Butterfly is hidden among one of them?' There was also another possibility, these could be the personas that Butterfly had not eliminated in their journey to eliminate Spider. In any case, Han Fei personally leaned towards the former. The picture was a huge clue for Han Fei. When he returned to the cryptic world, he would focus on these 3 personas.

Han Fei kept the picture with him. Han Fei returned to the set because the break was already over. As his understanding of Spider grew, Han Fei's character became even livelier. His character was only a small one in the movie but the whole centre had started to move towards him. Han Fei, the actor, had something mysterious and alluring about him. When he was in the character, he presented not a one-dimensional persona that appeared before the camera as a whole world shrouded in darkness.

As the sun set, the wind chime on the 4th floor rang again and the tenants started to lock their doors. For them this wind chime was a sign of misfortune.

Han Fei, who never worked overtime, left with the police after notifying Director Zhang. On the way home, Han Fei asked Li Xue to teach him how to use a knife. However, in today's society, even the police rarely used cold steel. Their training focused mainly on how to disarm the enemy so Li Xue couldn't provide much help. Instead, she taught him more advanced fighting skills. With Soul-depth Touch, Han Fei could have physical contact with spirits so close-quarter combat skill was very useful to him.

Han Fei reached home at around 8 pm. He inspected every corner of his room. After ensuring there was no outsider, he locked the door and windows. After searching for knife-wielding videos online, Han Fei ordered a set of blunt heavy knives. They couldn't be used to harm people, they were mostly for practice. With the fridge stuffed with water and compressed food, as well as various weapons stored

around the house, Han Fei's guests wouldn't think this was the home of an actor but more like the house of an apocalypse prepper.

At midnight, after connecting all the wires, Han Fei laid in bed and put on the gaming helmet. Blood enveloped the world and Han Fei's consciousness was yanked out of his body.

The delicious smell of meat woke him up. When Han Fei opened his eyes, he saw the bloody floor and several gazes turned to look at him.

"Boss!" Drake was sitting on the ground. The blood on the store uniform that he wore had turned from red to black. Bite marks and scratches were visible on his skin. Lee Zai laid down beside him and hugged Weep's urn. His thin body had several new wounds. The blood on his body had dried, forming a thin layer of black armor. It was clear that these two had gone through many battles for the past few days, bloody was not enough to describe their state.

"How did you two reach this place?" Han Fei reached to hold Drake's hands. He was worried about them. His original plan tonight included going out to find them.

"We were actually loitering at the outer limit of the alley but the number of monsters suddenly skyrocketed yesterday. We had no choice but to run deeper into the alley to escape from them. Just as we thought it was over, she arrived to help us." Lee Zai nudged his lips towards the kitchen, as if warning Han Fei of the woman who called the kitchen her home. He was afraid of Xu Qin.

"She went out to find you guys after I left yesterday?" Han Fei was shocked. But then Xu Qin had also once rescued Meng Si's grandson. So she was quite nice towards her neighbours from Happiness Neighbourhood.

"I initially refused to follow her but I was no match for her." Lee Zai picked up the urn. "A lot of lingering spirits and negative spirits are collected inside the urn. Even though everyone has been injured, we've improved quite a bit as well. The monsters at the alley have some kind of unique negative energy on them, they're extremely cruel and brutish. This place is like heaven for my younger brother, Lee Huo. He had feasted all along the way. I believe you wouldn't be able to recognize him now." Lee Zai and Lee Huo shared a body. The big brother was the brain, the younger brother the brawn.

Hearing that, Han Fei turned to Drake. The latter understood his meaning instantly. A beast aspect appeared in his single eye. With the buff from the beast aspect, the presence from Drake became more brutal and oppressive. Being stared at by the single eye for too long and one's mind would be disrupted.

All of his colleagues and neighbours had increased in power level. Taking in Drake and Lee Zai's new state, Han Fei felt much better. 'Finally, it feels like I am playing an Iyashikei game.'

Chapter 250:

"By the way, I've been curious, what is your relationship with that scary woman? I noticed that when you first left Happiness Neighbourhood, it was with her too." Lee Zai still remembered the details. "She walked you to the gates of the neighbourhood and then stopped. It felt like a mother sending her son to school for the first time. Both of you looked quite nervous." Seeing the veins popping on Han Fei's forehead, Lee Zai quickly changed the subject, "I'm just saying you two have a very good relationship, are you two actual siblings?"

"We're just neighbours, she has once saved my life."

"That's all?" Lee Zai looked simply disappointed, he pressed. "You ventured into such a dangerous place for her and she purposely went out to search for us for you. Even though she emits scariness, she has a good heart. But most importantly, she is incredibly powerful, is a good cook and is pretty on the eyes."

"What are you getting at?"

"If I encounter such a perfect woman in this despairing world, I would do anything within my power to be with her, to latch onto her and never let go."

"Have you eaten too much curse from the pig-faced monsters?" Han Fei believed Lee Zai was just joking. The brothers had completely different personalities. The older brother, Lee Zai was quite a chatterbox and carried misfortune like a badge, he had once expressed the interest to have Huang Yin as blood brother; The younger brother, Lee Huo Han Fei had lesser interaction with. Han Fei's only impression was that Lee Huo preferred to use fists than words. Either he'd die or the enemy would.

"I'm only saying this for your own good. Perhaps this solution might lessen the despair on both of you..."

“I’d suggest you to focus on healing your wounds.” Before Lee Zai finished, Han Fei looked around, “Is Xu Qin not here?”

“Do you think I dare to say these things if she’s here?” Lee Zai crawled up from the ground. “After she brought us back here, she was summoned away by a kid. He was a stutterer and had a hunchback; he didn’t look like a good person.”

“Dreamer?” Han Fei had no idea why Spider’s sub persona would come to find Xu Qin but he had a feeling that something big was about to happen.

“The kid came with a drawing. Xu Qin left after she saw the drawing.” Drake offered. Compared to Lee Zai, Drake was less frivolous. For example, he kept the drawing for safekeeping. He took out the drawing from his pocket and handed it to Han Fei. There were many stick figures on the painting, two of them were red, the rest all black. One of the red stick figures held 2 table knives and the other red stick figure wore a chef’s hat. They were surrounded by the black stick figure who attempted to yank the woman with the chef’s hat out of the other woman’s body.

‘After Xu Qin killed Spider’s chef persona, she inherited her curse and mask. Dreamer’s drawing is trying to say that someone wishes to yank the chef’s curse out of Xu Qin?’ The meaning of the drawing wasn’t that important, the important thing was someone was trying to harm Xu Qin. “We can’t stay here anymore, we need to go and find the Dreamer.” Han Fei had seen Spider’s family portrait in real life. In that picture, Han Fei believed that the personas other than the reader, the doctor and the teacher were innocent. Thus what Han Fei needed to do now was to gather the other personas around him and prevent the tragedy from happening again.

“Are you sure we should go out? Before Xu Qin left, she warned us to stay inside this room no matter what. She even stressed that we should definitely make sure that you stay put.” Lee Zai turned towards Weep and Drake.

“She has indeed said that.”

“Xu Qin has gone with Dreamer once before but that time she didn’t give such warning. This means that something must have spooked her to say something like this. That’s all the more reason for me to go find her.” Han Fei strode towards the exit without much hesitation. Seeing this, Lee Zai sighed. “For

clarity, I'm not trying to stop you, I'm just hoping that you understand that even if we did manage to find her, we might be of no help to her."

"I understand the monsters at this building better than most and that is the reason why I must go and find her." Han Fei pressed on the door handle. "Don't worry, I know what I'm doing, I won't end up a burden for her." He pushed the door open and the world that greeted him was different from yesterday. It was eerily quiet. "Something's not right!" Han Fei looked around. The blood and broken flesh in the corridor had disappeared. The maze-like corridors had changed as well. There were now corridors when there were walls and the previously open corridors had been cut off by doors.

"All the passages inside the building have changed, we might not be able to find her. Let's be realistic." Lee Zai was still nursing his wound.

"The House of the Butcher is the Spider's heart. Only the manager will be able to control the layout here. This can only mean 2 things." Han Fei's darkened. "1, the manager has awakened; 2, one of the personas has stolen part of the manager's power. We need to move, if a malicious persona becomes the manager of Cattle Alley, the consequences will be unimaginable."

"Personas? Stealing the manager's power?" Lee Zai and Drake had no idea what Han Fei was talking about.

"Before he died, the 6th persona once said, the person who collected all the masks would become the new manager. Someone inside the building must have targeted Xu Qin for those masks." Han Fei analyzed calmly. "Xu Qin knew about that, so she left with the Dreamer. She knew that staying with us would cause us to become collateral damage." Seeing the molds on the wall, Han Fei strung all the clues together. "In the cryptic world, the writer who was the killer had disappeared so they needed a new 'writer'. To become the Midnight Butcher, the system required me to come to the House of the Butcher, it is a profession unique to Cattle Alley. But Spider did not want to become a Midnight Butcher, he needed to become a butcher who could kill the other butchers."

Ever since he entered Cattle Alley, Han Fei felt like there was a pair of eyes following him. The profession reviews, the choices, the salvations and the murders that he did were all captured by that pair of eyes. With Han Fei's arrival, he had given a new meaning to the profession of Midnight Butcher. For Spider, Han Fei had done something even he failed to do. When faced with the same despair, perhaps Han Fei might be able to perform a new miracle.

'I will try my best, if I end up as the manager of Cattle Alley, it'll be perfect.' While Han Fei contemplated, footsteps came from the quiet corridor. The group turned towards the sound. A thin and hunchbacked boy was running this way. His expression was terrified and full of anxiety. He waved a roughly drawn painting in his hand. The painting featured a crazy woman, 13 sharp table knives were stuck into her body.