

Iyashikei 311

Chapter 311

311 Are you Human?

At the Ziggurat, the greater the number of '4' in the room number, the more dangerous the room would be. The 3 guards stared at the face down the corridor and none of them dared to move. The tension in the corridor was palpable. Before this, the horror had been mostly limited to the hearing and sight but with the appearance of the broken finger, it meant that the horror would get more visceral and fatal. With a dry cough, Brother Hwa raised the flashlight and shone it down the 14th floor corridor.

The face at the door of Room 1144 had no hair and brows. The whole head was white and pale, only the pupils were black. "It's that madman again." Clearly Brother Hwa had dealt with this man before. He resisted his fear and headed down the corridor, gripping the flashlight, "You're the one who destroyed the camera and door, aren't you?"

The face at the door didn't answer, he just kept on staring at Brother Hwa and Xiao Fang. The black pupils reflected Brother Hwa and Xiao Fang's images. His body shook and his face scrunched up from fear. But at that moment, he laid eyes on Han Fei. There were 3 people standing before him but there was a reflection of only 2 people in his eyes. He could see Han Fei but could not 'see' Han Fei. Trace of surprise laced his fear. His lips trembled before he uttered the following, "You're human, aren't you?"

Xiao Fang and Brother Hwa thought the man was just rambling madly but Han Fei got the actual meaning behind his words. The question was clearly meant for him. This madman who lived in Room 1144 was different from the other tenants. There were not many 'people' whose memory wasn't touched at Ziggurat, this madman was unique. Han Fei who stood at the back of the group didn't say anything because Brother Hwa had already sighed and answered for him, "Of course, we're humans. Were you the one who trashed the corridor? Mind showing me your hands?"

"No, you're not humans, you're ghosts!" The man immediately hid behind the door when he saw Brother Hwa approach. "I can see ghosts since I was small, you won't be able to trick me!"

"Fine, fine. You win. Just show me your hands, I want to see if they're injured or not." Brother Hwa was worried that the broken finger came from the madman, so despite his fear, he wanted to check on this man. From this detail, it showed that he was a good man.

“The two of you, go away! Let him come, I’ll only talk to him!” The madman pointed at Han Fei.

“Me?” Han Fei acted like he was stunned. He was very unwilling but his feet were already moving forward. Brother Hwa hesitated and then patted Han Fei on his shoulder embarrassingly, “Well, eventually you’ll have to graduate and deal with the tenants yourself. Go and see if his hands are injured. Try to ask if he has taken his meds for the day as well.” Xiao Fang and Brother Hwa took several steps back while Han Fei walked towards the door alone. “Brother, was it you who took down the cameras?”

The madman shook his head and then he told Han Fei seriously, “I can see ghosts, I know you are not one of them.” His dark pupils were changing. At this distance, Han Fei noticed that the man had dicoria. Currently, Han Fei’s reflection was only shown in one of the pupils. “You are human, you are the first human I’ve seen here! Like me, you’re human! You have to help me! You’ll help yourself by helping me!” The madman was being very pushy but he probably didn’t realize it.

“I am the guard of this neighbourhood so naturally I will help you. What exactly is the problem you have?” Han Fei still had no idea what was inside Room 1144 so he wouldn’t reveal his own secrets from just a few words.

“I don’t know how I ended up here! Every ghost I met said that I live here, but I know this is definitely not my home! I’ve tried escaping many times but I can’t. Every time I was almost out of this place, I would faint for no reason. When I woke up, I would be inside this room again.” The madman said helplessly as he grabbed Han Fei’s shirt. “We need to escape, only then can we survive!”

“You need to calm down first.” Han Fei tried to reason with the madman but the man suddenly pulled and dragged Han Fei into Room 1144!

The door slammed close and Han Fei felt like he had been thrown into a frozen lake. The heater was on but it was useless, the chill drilled right into his heart. Han Fei immediately reached for the door handle but the madman refused to let him go. “I’m saving you! They are all ghosts! All ghosts!” The madman practically shouted into Han Fei, his fingers dug into Han Fei’s skin.

“I’m sure we can talk this out.” Han Fei scanned the madman’s hands that held him tightly. He still had all 10 fingers, the broken finger was not his. Perhaps Han Fei’s calmness did work because the madman’s tone slowly evened out. “I am not crazy, I’m telling the truth. This whole building is like a nightmare that you can’t wake up from, we’re all trapped here.” The man who was seen as crazy was the only one who

was sane. Every single thing that he said was true but the others thought he was mentally ill. Han Fei could understand the man but he didn't dare to show that.

With his masterful acting skill, Han Fei acted out the feeling of disbelief with an undercurrent of self-doubt. The madman read the expression perfectly. He held Han Fei's arm for comfort, "I know you'll have a hard time accepting that in a short amount of time, you too might have forgotten many things, so I'll share with you my own experience, maybe it can help jog your memory."

Outside the room, Brother Hwa and Xiao Fang knocked repeatedly on the door, they were worried about Han Fei. Inside the room, the madman leaned closer to Han Fei. With wild gestures, he regaled Han Fei with his past, "Have you ever had this experience that you've been to a place even though you're sure it is your first time there?"

"Yes."

"This building is such a place for me." The madman pulled Han Fei into the toilet, closed the door and turned all the faucet on. "When I was small, I could see strange things in my eyes, they were blurry and unclear. I always thought it was a problem with my eye sight until one day when I was much older and saw an extra person in my own home. He came closer and closer to me, every time I woke up at midnight from shock, he'd stand there beside my bed. He was just staring at me, unblinkingly!

"I didn't dare to tell my family about it. I suspect it was not my eyes which had the problem, but my brain. One day, I used the excuse of going outstation to visit the doctor. During my therapy session, my wife and daughter both died in accidents. All the goodness in my life was taken away. Just as I sunk into despair, he disappeared from my sight too.

"I thought I had finally seen the last of him but from that day onwards, I would keep repeating the same dream. I dreamt that I woke up on the bed in Room 1144 and saw someone inside the room holding a knife. He came to carve something on my skin. It was painful but I couldn't make any noise. Blood flowed and it soaked the bed.

"This dream continued relentlessly for a whole month. Just as my body ran out of space to carve, the man finally stopped. He instead placed something inside my heart. You wouldn't believe how painful the experience was, I even lost consciousness because of it. When I woke up again, I opened my eyes inside this room, I somehow entered the room that I've had endless dreams of!" At this point, the man peeled off his shirt. His pale white skin was like the perfect canvas and a colorful giant butterfly was painted on it!

“I’ve tried killing myself to escape this place but I would faint at the most crucial moment. And when I woke up, I would be in bed again. Everything kept repeating and the wounds I left on my body would disappear but the color of this butterfly would deepen. It feels like it’s hoping for me to kill myself again and again, perhaps it can gain something through my death.” The madman’s rambling reminded Han Fei of the Manager Mission. When he was in the middle of a Manager Mission, he would spawn right at the start whenever he died.

“It was the man in your dream who carved this butterfly on your body?” Han Fei had encountered many outsiders, those with human cocoons implanted inside them. But most of their butterfly patterns were incomplete, some were even disfigured beyond recognition. Han Fei had not seen such a perfect butterfly tattoo before. This meant that this madman was most likely the Butterfly’s near-perfect ‘flower’.

Chapter 312

312 Hidden Profession: Ziggurat Security Guard

“As the butterfly tattoo became clearer, I could feel my body becoming lighter like my soul has grown wings as if it would fly out from my body at any moment.” The man touched the tattoo. His expression was a mixture of disgust and interest. “Everything I’ve said is the truth. You can think that I’m crazy but I hope you’ll seriously consider what I’ve said.” Closing all the faucets, the madman opened the toilet door and turned to look at the wall clock inside the living room. “It’s about 4 am already, I have to return to the bedroom. If you believe me, come back to find me at the break of dawn!” The madman let go of Han Fei. He moved to the bedroom door of Room 1144 with halting steps. Before he entered the bedroom, he turned around to regard Han Fei, “Are you really the guard of this neighbourhood? That is what you remember yourself working as?”

Han Fei nodded. The gaze that the man levelled at Han Fei was filled with pity. “Then you better not be on any patrol between 4 am to 5 am, that is the most dangerous period. Other than that, I have something else to tell you.”

“What is it?”

“The previous security guards all disappeared during nighttime patrols.” When the madman said that, the notification rang inside Han Fei’s mind, he finally triggered his first mission inside Ziggurat!

“Notification for Player 0000! You’ve triggered Grade F Hidden Mission—Nighttime Patrol!

“Nighttime Patrol: Complete a full patrol successfully.

“Warning! After completing this mission, you have the chance of obtaining the hidden profession, Ziggurat Guard!

“Warning! Players can only select one main profession but can have unlimited part time jobs and side jobs, but the buffs from those jobs will be limited.”

Han Fei was glad when he heard the notification, once he completed the mission, he could log off. But as the notification continued, he realized something was wrong. Nighttime patrol sounded like such a normal activity but its difficulty was Grade F? His previous grade F mission could be completed only because he had the help of his neighbours but now his only help was... Brother Hwa and Xiao Fang?

Han Fei was distracted by the system. When he came to and wanted to ask the madman more things, the man opened the bedroom door. The small bedroom was dark. The moment the door opened, he was pulled into the room by something invisible! The bedroom door slammed close. The wall clock showed that it was exactly 3.44 am.

The walls started to bleed and occasionally human fragments squeezed out from the corners, Han Fei had no idea where those things came from. After the madman left, a deeply-hidden compassion appeared in Han Fei’s eyes. This man trapped in an everlasting nightmare was another one was the Butterfly’s ‘creations’.

“Come and find you when the dawn breaks? Unfortunately, dawn will never come at this place.” Han Fei believed the madman’s memory was also fixed on April 4th. This date appeared to have special significance to the Ziggurat owner. Holding the door handle, Han Fei rushed out before a greater change happened inside Room 1144.

“Bai Sinian, are you alright?!”

“This is all my fault! I shouldn’t have let a new guard do something so dangerous!” Brother Hwa and Xiao Fang were worried about Han Fei. They banged on the door repeatedly earlier. To save Han Fei, they had made a lot of commotion.

“I’ve seen his hands. They’re perfectly fine. But I was unable to get anything out of him. He was incoherent, saying things that I couldn’t understand at all.” Han Fei looked like he had been through some inexplicable frights.

“Don’t fixate on them too much or you’ll go crazy yourself.” “It’s great that you’re fine, we better leave this floor now.” When Brother Hwa was ramming into the door earlier, his mind was on Han Fei. But now that Han Fei was out in one piece, his heart quivered as he looked around the darkened corridor. He felt like eyes were on them due to the sound they had made. “Come on, let’s hurry to the 15th floor.” Compared to darkness, most people would feel safe in light.

The 3 guards didn’t stay for long and rushed to the 15th floor. The voice-activated lights came on but this time, the light didn’t bring them any comfort. Perhaps the sound they made was too loud and it had awakened something inside the building. When they moved, there would be echoes to their footsteps. The extra footsteps moved faster than they were. The footsteps came from downstairs, it sounded like something was chasing after the 3 guards.

“Brother Hwa, normally how long will it take for you to complete a round of patrol?” With the red dress on his arm, Han Fei was already contemplating how to complete this Grade F with just the 3 of them.

“It depends, if there’s no problem, half an hour is more than enough; but if there’s a problem, it’s hard to tell.” Brother Hwa glanced at his wrist watch. “We better speed up and try to get back before 4.44 am. Normally, after midnight, the building is more...”

Ping! Before he finished, they heard the sound of glass breaking coming from upstairs. They turned to look up and when they did, their eyes swept the window in the stairwell. Beyond the window, there was a face which stuck close to the glass and it was rapidly falling!

“Someone has jumped out from the building!” Xiao Fang was so frightened he stumbled backwards. All 3 of them saw it clearly. The face was completely twisted. While the body fell, the eyes were transfixed on the 3 guards inside the building! But the key issue was the jumper’s cracked lips kept moving like they were saying something. Han Fei reacted the fastest. He ran to the window and looked out. But there was nothing outside and they didn’t hear the sound of people landing either.

“Was that a tenant from upstairs?!” Xiao Fang grabbed Brother Hwa for support as energy gave out from his knees.

“I’ve not seen her before! I don’t think she’s a tenant here.” Brother Hwa was stunned as well. The scene happened too suddenly, none of them were mentally prepared. “But based on the sound, she jumped not too far up from this floor! Quick! Don’t just stand there! We need to hurry up!” Brother Hwa urged while Han Fei stayed beside the window. He tried to pull up the woman’s face in his mind. “I believe she was saying something.” Han Fei had studied books related to lip reading and sign language to communicate better with the more silent occupants of Happiness Neighbourhood. They felt useless normally but they came in useful at the most unexpected moments.

“She was saying something?”

“Yes, I believe she said... If I touch you, you’ll die.” Han Fei tried his best to figure out what the woman said. He believed he got it right.

“Don’t waste time on that, we need to figure out which room she has jumped out from first!” Brother Hwa and Xiao Fang ran upstairs. The moment they did, several sets of footsteps echoed in the stairwell. Han Fei didn’t follow them but stayed beside the banister and looked down. The banister below the 4th floor had all been dyed red and the blood was still creeping upwards.

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As time progressed, the whole building was transforming. When it was 4.44 am, the Ziggurat would show its true self. ‘I’ve stayed online for more than 3 hours already, now I only need to finish the patrol mission before 4.44 am, then I’ll have a chance at survival.’ Han Fei turned his gaze back to see an arm extend out from the banister on the 5th floor. The bloody arm was twisted and charred. As if sensing Han Fei’s eyes on it, the arm suddenly stopped moving. Moments later, a face covered in blood poked out from the gap between the floors. The pair of venomous eyes stared at Han Fei. The pair of thick lips slowly opened as if saying, if I touch you, you’ll die!

‘Isn’t she the woman who fell down the building earlier? Why is she inside the building now?’ The woman downstairs was different from the other ghosts inside this building. The malice around her was so palpable that it was stronger than Ma Manjiang. There was only pure hatred and madness in her

eyes. She wanted to kill everyone, murder was the only way to vent the resentment pouring out from her heart. 'This woman wants everyone to die!'

Most ghosts and monsters in the cryptic world retained some semblance of humanity, that was their most precious treasure but this woman was the exception. The banister that she touched crawled with blood vessels and the steps she took dripped with blood. Her eyes that landed on Han Fei spoke of destruction and desire to kill. Han Fei resisted the urge to throw the red dress down at the jumper woman. Han Fei was flummoxed.

The jumper woman chased after them, she came closer and closer. If her curse was true and they'd die from a touch, then the 3 guards were in extreme danger!

The lower floors had already changed. They could only run upstairs, but it was only a matter of time before they were caught up. Perhaps the only solution they had was to hide inside one of the rooms, to avoid the detection of the jumper woman.

"Brother Hwa! Xiao Fang! Look down!" Han Fei ran to his colleagues. "The woman who jumped earlier is chasing after us!"

"What do you mean?"

"Quite literally that!" Xiao Fang and Brother Hwa looked down but the woman had already disappeared. They only saw the blood on the banister, it looked like someone had slipped and knocked their head on the banister. But blood wouldn't appear for no reason and they started to believe Han Fei. "Brother Hwa, didn't you say the danger is limited to the 1st floor?"

"The previous security guards all disappeared on the 1st floor! I wasn't lying about that!" Brother Hwa said nervously, "Something's off tonight! Let me contact the guards from the other buildings to help us." He took out the walkie-talkie, messed with it for a long time but there was only static. "I gave it a thorough check before we left the guard room, why isn't it working now?"

"There are night patrols at the other buildings?"

“Of course. There are only 1 guard at both Building 2 and 3, but since there have been cases of disappearances at Building 1 and 4, so those two buildings have more guards.” Brother Hwa was still tweaking the walkie-talkie. “I’m trying to reach our colleagues at Building 4 where the main surveillance control room is. Our friends there will be able to tell us what is happening downstairs through the surveillance footage.”

“The main surveillance control room is at Building 4?” Now Han Fei understood where that feeling of being watched came from and why the madman on the 14th floor would destroy all the cameras!

Han Fei was thankful that he was disfigured by the black mist and the uniform that he wore had not been seen by the Butterfly before. Plus, he was playing Bai Sinian and his presence and personality was different from his actual persona. Even a friend would have trouble recognizing him through the camera.

‘It might not be the Butterfly watching the surveillance at Building 4. In any case, I probably haven’t been discovered yet or with Butterfly’s cautious personality, it would have come in person to destroy me.’ Han Fei was dancing on the tip of the knife. It was a complete accident that he stumbled into Ziggurat that night. Han Fei himself couldn’t expect that, much less the Butterfly.

‘The Singer is an Unmentionable so how come I have not heard anything from it? That’s quite disappointing. But then... this neighbourhood has 4 buildings and the presence of death would be strongest at Building 4, would the Singer have gone to Building 4 directly?’ Pick 1 of 4 buildings, the Singer’s choice would decide Han Fei’s destiny. While he was thinking about that, Han Fei’s train of thought was interrupted by the system, “Notification for Player 0000! A very strong Lingering Hatred is approaching! The hatred in her heart has broken her sustainable limit! She will destroy everything within her sight!

“You’ve appeared in her sight, congratulations for triggering the Grade F Hidden Mission—If I touch you, you’ll die!

“If I touch you, you’ll die: Carrying the strongest curse, she jumped down from the 24th floor. As she fell, she took in her neighbours on each floor. She swore to kill everyone that she saw. She possesses the strongest Death Curse at Building 1, anyone touched by her will die!

“Mission Requirement: Enter Room 1244. Do not be touched by her before that!

“Warning! After reaching certain requirements, Lingering Spirits will transform into Pure Hatred, but some Lingering Spirits would unfortunately lose their humanity in this process. They were unable to master the hatred in their heart and ultimately became monsters dominated by hatred instead! Even though Lingering Hatreds are not as strong as Pure Hatreds, they are much stronger than normal Lingering Spirits! At level 12, you are definitely unable to deal with them!”

Before the notification finished, Han Fei was already drenched in cold sweat. He didn't expect the jumper woman to carry such a scary Death Curse. “Run! Quick! The thing is coming!” Han Fei could feel the resentment rising like water. He was originally at the rear of the group but now he charged to the front. He needed to run into Room 1244 before he was caught by the woman. Patrol and the truth could wait, now he needed to survive!

“Brother Hwa, is there any tenant upstairs who can be negotiated with? We might need to borrow their rooms to hide in.” Xiao Fang also heard the strange sounds coming from below. It felt like a giant spider was rapidly crawling towards them.

“What are you talking about? When have you heard of a security guard seeking refuge in a tenant's home in the middle of their patrols?”

“There's no time to talk! The thing is coming!” Han Fei's voice distorted from desperation. When he looked down the gap in the stairwell, the twisted arm had reached the 8th floor!

Chapter 314

314 That Is Not the Way to Use a Dress

After 4.44 am, the building did change, which was verified by the fact that Han Fei managed to activate 2 Grade F Hidden Missions within a short amount of time. That was the problem. Patrol and enter Room 1244 sounded like simple missions, but the simpler the mission looked, the more worried Han Fei was. He knew how difficult Grade F Missions were. The simplicity was often just a disguise.

“She's coming!” Han Fei gritted his teeth. The woman jumped down and would kill everything that she saw. She cleansed the building floor by floor and the only solution was to hide inside Room 1244. Room 1244 was one of the 3 most dangerous rooms at Building 1 but now Han Fei had no other choices, it was that or death!

Only by completing the mission could he leave the game. For someone who might not even see the sun rise another day, survival was most important. Brother Hwa and Xiao Fang originally didn't realize the severity of the situation, but when they saw Han Fei charge ahead without concern regarding the possibility of opening his wounds, their fear was totally evoked. Fear was a contagious thing. After the horrors that they had experienced that night, they were already at their limits. Even though they still had doubts, their bodies moved involuntarily and ran even faster than Han Fei.

They charged all the way to the 17th floor. Han Fei grabbed the banister and looked down again, it almost caused him to lose his soul. The arm which was originally at 8th floor was now at 11th floor, she was moving faster and faster. As if realizing her prey was getting away, she sped up.

"Don't just charge ahead blindly! We're not supposed to go to the higher floors!" Brother Hwa said anxiously. When he reached the landing between 17th and 18th floor, he tried his best to stop Han Fei and Xiao Fang, "If the safety door on the 18th floor is open, we'll have to go down the corridor and continue our ascend using the other stairwell!" Xiao Fang was too busy running to pay attention to him; Han Fei did hear him but he couldn't afford to stop now. The voice-activated lights on the 17th floor went out and the flashlight rays flickered in the dark. When the rays lit up the 18th floor, the 3 guards saw that the safety door was left wide open. The safety door of the 18th floor was different because it was filled with all kinds of strange talismans. "Stop! We need to stop!" When he saw the open safety door, Brother Hwa shouted urgently, but Han Fei and Xiao Fang who ran ahead of him had no intention of stopping. They soon blasted through the 18th floor but just as they attempted to run towards the 19th floor, they discovered a thin middle-aged man standing in the middle of the stairwell. The man was dressed in white mourning clothes and a pile of paper money crowded around him. Xiao Fang had never seen this man before so he halted but Han Fei couldn't care less. He spread the red dress wide. "Brother, let me give you some red in your life!"

Holding the red dress with both hands, Han Fei continued his charge forward. He was risking his life. As long as he could exit the game, he'd do anything. As Han Fei barrelled forward, the middle-aged man stepped to the side; but when Xiao Fang ran past him, the man suddenly reached out to stop him. "Quick, give him something!" Brother Hwa shouted behind him but it was already too late. The man had reached his hand before Xiao Fang's chest. The man didn't do anything but Xiao Fang suddenly crumbled like wet laundry.

When Brother Hwa saw this, he pulled out a stack of paper money and threw it into the air. As the middle-aged man lowered his head to pick up the money that dropped to the floor, Brother Hwa dragged Xiao Fang and ran. As his head bumped into the sharp corner of the step, Xiao Fang finally woke up. He asked in a shaking voice, "Why am I on the floor?"

“A greedy businessman once lived in Room 1184. He found a sensei who told him that the room would bring him so much wealth that he’d die from it! And a few days after he moved in, he did die. Then people kept seeing him in the stairwell!” Brother Hwa helped Xiao Fang up from the ground. “If you don’t give him money, he’ll follow you home and take your life instead!” Xiao Fang shivered. When he turned back to look, the middle-aged man had disappeared but the paper money was still there. “Room 1184 is very haunted. According to rumors, the sensei who recommended the businessman the room was Room 1184’s original owner, but he was already dead when the businessman met him. We all believe the businessman ran into a ghost and was made into a scapegoat.” Brother Hwa said. He was worried that Han Fei and Xiao Fang would tumble into more troubles. “You guys have to be careful.”

“Now is not the time to be careful. If you’re too slow, you’ll lose your life.” Han Fei was the first to reach the 19th floor. The red dress helped him scare away the middle-aged man but the thing inside the dress seemed to sense it and was awakening. When she knew she had been used as a prop by Han Fei, she’d kill him. There was a jumper ghost chasing after him, he was holding the red dress and there were unknown threats upstairs, everything turned for the worse too quickly. As Han Fei raced for his life, his brain processed all the info, while paying attention to his surroundings and the red dress’ status. The jumper ghost was rapidly approaching.

‘Based on this speed, I do have a chance to reach Room 1244, but the Grade F Mission wouldn’t be so easy. Have I missed out on something?’ The sound of the jumper ghost crawling could now be heard inside the stairwell. She was moving on all fours. Her limbs were all twisted, she was climbing up the banister like a giant bug. ‘This game has always been an Iyashikei game for the ghosts inside it. The core of the mission should be on the ghosts...’ Han Fei’s expression paled as the possibility entered his mind, ‘The mission requires me to enter Room 1244 which is on the top floor and the woman jumped from the top floor as well. Based on the nature of the system, it’s highly possible that Room 1244 might be related to the jumper woman, she might even have jumped out from that room. Wait!’ This thought almost froze Han Fei’s brain.

‘If Room 1244 is locked, and there’s a high chance that it is, I will need a key. If she’s the owner of the room, it’s totally logical for her to have the key.’

Han Fei’s face turned ashen and his eyes twitched, now this was the Grade F Mission’s difficulty he was familiar with. ‘There has to be other solutions, it’s too early to give up now!’

Holding the red dress open with both hands, Han Fei charged towards the 12th. If this was a normal neighbourhood, if the tenants saw someone running up the stairs in such a manner at midnight, they probably wouldn’t dare to stop him as well.

Chapter 315

315 24th Floor

A person like Han Fei was rare even at the Ziggurat, at least Xiao Fang and Brother Hwa had not encountered a colleague like him before. Han Fei had figured out a new way to use the red dress. When others found the red dress inside the toilet, they'd figure out a way to remove or destroy it but Han Fei saw it as a treasure. He held it close to him, not willing to part with it even for a moment. But that was only because the red dress had not awakened, Han Fei didn't forget how the red dress took revenge on Xiao Fang. How he treated the red dress, the red dress would repay him in double.

Han Fei, who was dying several hours ago, was now racing at top speed. His wounds opened but that didn't slow him down. The appearance of this medical miracle was all thanks to the jumper woman downstairs. Inside the stairwell, every spot that she passed would be covered in blood. The resentment and curse on her was so strong that one had to wonder what had happened to her before death?

"Brother Hwa, why don't you put me down?" Xiao Fang had not fully recovered. He had no idea what the businessman had stolen from him but he was unable to summon any energy now.

"Do you know what is that downstairs?" Brother Hwa lowered his head. He was old and his stamina was worse than the younger generations. He had been running all night and it was almost to his limits already. He didn't say he'd give up but his speed had conspicuously slowed and his forehead was covered in sweat.

"Brother Hwa..."

"Don't think that it'll be over after you're dead. There's so many things worse than death." Brother Hwa squeezed out the following, he seemed to know something, "As long as we're still alive, we shouldn't give up." Brother Hwa carried Xiao Fang so both of them had to slow down. The shadow which looked like a giant bug was getting closer! The dense smell of blood drifted into their noses, the blood stains contained pieces of meat that had words written in black. They could already hear the woman's crazy mumblings. "Who is up there? Who is in the stairwell? Stop running, let me touch you and die!" "You won't be able to escape, where can you escape to? I will catch all of you and push you all down the stairs!" "Die, die, die!" The voice was like chains, slowing them down even further.

When they reached the 21st floor, Brother Hwa's legs were already shaking. He couldn't carry on any further but he didn't want to leave Xiao Fang behind. He seemed to have been in similar situations

before. If only a person could live, should you take the opportunity or give it to others? At Ziggurat, no matter the choice, there was no right or wrong and no one would blame him because everything could be blamed on the ghosts. Xiao Fang was not Brother Hwa's first junior; and Xiao Fang never asked Brother Hwa what had happened to the guards that came before him. They had a tacit agreement to not bring up the horrible past. However, certain things could not be avoided forever. His legs were giving out, if he didn't let go, both Brother Hwa and Xiao Fang would die.

"I have to make this choice again?" Brother Hwa knew that Xiao Fang would not blame him but that made things so much harder. The emotions in his heart collided with each other, the collision created beautiful patterns like a flower blooming. His fingers that held Xiao Fang slowly loosened, he tried to hold on a little bit longer but he was already at his limit. Brother Hwa's grasp lightened, just as Xiao Fang was about to trip and fell down the stairs, another hand reached over to grab Xiao Fang by his shoulder.

"Run!" As Han Fei turned to study the jumper woman's location, he noticed the two guards were lagging behind him. He didn't hesitate and turned back to help them. Perhaps for others, the two guards would be the perfect bait to buy time, as long as it could raise one's survivability, it was fine sacrificing others. When Brother Hwa was making a choice, Han Fei also made a choice. However, Han Fei didn't follow the rules of Ziggurat. In other words, the choice that he made was the kind Butterfly wouldn't want to see. The Butterfly liked to toy with kindness and humanity. In the human jigsaw case, it purposely told the drifter the truth and personally watched the drifter go and warn the others and thus ended up being treated as a madman. Humanity was worthless in Butterfly's eyes, it was a tool, a tool to create butterfly patterns. But in Han Fei's eyes, humanity was also the strongest and prettiest flower, even in the depths of the abyss, it could still bloom.

"Don't stop!" Han Fei picked up Xiao Fang and carried him on his back. The bandage soaked with blood. Xiao Fang and Brother Hwa didn't expect Han Fei to come back for them, after all, they had shared less than 10 sentences.

"Bai Sinian..." Xiao Fang branded the name in his heart. At this stage, saving others meant risking one's own life. He made a silent decision. When the ghost was about to get them, he would grab the monster and roll down the stairs, to help Han Fei buy some time.

Circling the red dress around his neck, Han Fei used both hands to carry Xiao Fang. He didn't have much planning, he just wanted to get to the top floor.

"I can see you! I can see you!" A grating voice echoed. When Han Fei reached the 22nd floor, the jumper woman appeared behind them. Blood dyed the steps. The minced body was mashed together. The

smashed body was carried by twisted limbs as it continued to climb! "I will drag you down with me! Let me touch you and die!"

Knowing there was a ghost and seeing an actual ghost behind them was 2 distinct experiences. Brother Hwa who had been pretending to be calm finally broke down when he saw the jumper woman. Black and red pattern appeared on the back of his neck. The more fearful he was, the brighter the color of the pattern. His steps weakened and Brother Hwa's face filled with despair. The twisted arm cracked noisily as she reached for Brother Hwa's back.

"Be careful!" Xiao Fang warned loudly. Han Fei saw the monster and without any hesitation, threw the red dress at the shattered hand. The dress was too light to actually hit anything. To ensure that he hit the target, Han Fei wrapped the dress around the walkie-talkie. The arm grabbed at the red dress. When the jumper woman held the dress, she was slightly startled. The blood on the red and the blood on the arm were two different knives, they pierced into each other's souls. Blood started to spread at that moment!

Red Dress was a Large Lingering Spirit and the jumper woman was a Lingering Hatred. They had always coexisted in peace at Ziggurat... until today.

The Death Curse on the jumper woman spread onto the red dress and the horrible presence within the dress awakened. The jumper woman's aim was to kill everything so she immediately tore apart the red dress but no matter how hard she shredded it, the dress would stitch itself back together. While she was distracted by the red dress, the 3 guards successfully reached the 24th floor.

'The more afraid you're inside the Ziggurat, the faster you'll die.' Han Fei was reminded of Jin Sheng's warning. He glanced at Brother Hwa behind him, the man was in a very bad state and he was getting worse. 'I have to focus on finishing the mission first!'

Opening the safety door, Han Fei carried Xiao Fang to Room 1244. He grabbed the doorknob and to his consternation, the door was locked.

Chapter 316

316 I Have Nothing to Do With It

Han Fei kicked several times at the lock, hoping to use brute force to gain entry but that was not possible at Han Fei's current power level. The steel door didn't budge, but Han Fei's leg did feel the pain. He had no key and the door remained unlocked but Han Fei did gain some progress. As he kicked at the door, a begging sound came from inside the room. "This is all my fault, all my fault, please let me go. I'm begging you!"

'There's someone inside?' Han Fei's hope was ignited when he heard the voice. "We're the building's security guards, please open the door!"

"I will compensate you, anything that you want as long as you do not come back again. I'm sorry, I'm sorry!" There was indeed someone inside but it appeared to be someone mentally unhinged. He only knew how to repeatedly apologize and plead like a wind-up toy. Han Fei had no key so his only hope of gaining entry into Room 1244 was the madman inside the room. "I'm here to help you! If you open the door, we will help you, and the thing that is haunting you will never return again!" No matter what Han Fei said, there was only pleading and no footsteps.

"Open the door!" The scent of smell was approaching, Han Fei turned to Brother Hwa, "Have you been to Room 1244 before? Who is the tenant staying here?"

"I know there are people staying here because occasionally I'd hear sounds of conversation coming from inside at midnight but I've never seen them before." Brother Hwa's eyes were red and his face was carved in despair. His back bent over and he gasped hungrily for air.

"What kind of conversation?"

"They were doing some kind of activity. I couldn't hear them clearly but I remember hearing the term spirit summoning, something to do with being a Spirit Farer."

"A Spirit Farer?" Han Fei's eyes narrowed.

"When the old guard retired, he did bring up the family living in Room 1244, apparently they are all crazy, but they didn't start that way. They weren't particularly well off, but they were doing fine. However, one day, for some unknown reason, their oldest daughter jumped down from the top of the building."

“And they did the summoning to call her back?” Han Fei looked at the door of Room 1244. There was burnt paper money and some pictures on the ground. They scattered the dark corridor.

“Yes, the whole family appeared to be involved in the daughter’s death. Due to guilt, they turned to this kind of alternative ritual. But I believe they might have summoned something else instead.” Brother Hwa spoke as fast as he could. “Actually, that monster which is chasing after us looks like the oldest daughter mixed with something else.”

After hearing what Brother Hwa had to say, his brain spun quickly, he was reminded of the tester who was forced insane inside Perfect Life’s surface world. Based on Feng Ziyu’s statement, the tester first noticed the problem when he was conducting a mission related to spirit-faring and summoning. The mission involved an old man who missed his wife too much and thus conducted a spirit summoning ritual. Similarly, he summoned something else and that something murdered his whole family. It was through this mission that the tester came into contact with the cryptic world and ended up massacring an entire neighbourhood. Coincidentally enough, the neighbourhood that he massacred was the counterpart of Ziggurat in the surface world. The spirit-farer mission was like a thread that bound the surface and cryptic world together.

Incidentally, Han Fei himself had Spirit Farer, this extremely rare talent that allowed him to bridge the connection between the surface and cryptic world. The tester who was made mad by the spirit summoning mission massacred a whole neighbourhood; Han Fei now who had the Spirit Farer talent was forced into Ziggurat, and his goal was also to destroy the Ziggurat. Everything was interconnected and this made Han Fei question, ‘Based on the map, one of the previous manager’s memory fragments is here, could this all be part of Fu Sheng’s plan? What kind of secret is still hidden inside the talent of Spirit Farer?’

Han Fei obtained the Spirit Farer talent when he inherited the managerial position of Happiness Neighbourhood, in other words, Fu Sheng would have this talent as well. ‘Room 1244 is the scariest room at Building 1 and this room is related to the talent of Spirit Farer. Could the other 3 buildings have rooms that are related to this talent as well?’

Han Fei believed he was slowly approaching the truth. If he managed to survive Ziggurat, then many of his questions would be answered. The people inside refused to open but Han Fei didn’t know that was because they were unwilling or they were unable. For all he knew, they could have been tortured until they couldn’t move anymore.

The glass on the 24th safety door cracked and blood dripped in the corridor like rain. Framed in the empty pane, the face of the jumper woman appeared. Her cheeks were sunken and her eyes bloody. Her protruding eyeballs stared at the 3 guards. The hatred within her intensified!

The wooden safety door slammed against the wall. The door was covered in blood. The jumper woman's slanted body slouched forward. This was the first time Han Fei saw her in person. Her clothes were mixed with her flesh and blood. White bones protruded out from her skin, but the thing that attracted Han Fei's attention the most was a black key that was pierced into the woman's heart. The number written on the key was 1244.

The key represented home but clearly it didn't represent warmth and belonging to the woman, instead it was like a sharp knife that punctured her flesh. It was her source of constant pain, powering her resentment and curse. Han Fei didn't expect the game system to be so incredulous, the most difficult part of this mission was not to escape the jumper woman and locate Room 1244 but to remove the room key from her heart, which in essence, would be to defeat the woman or to alleviate her pain!

After knowing that, Han Fei cursed under his breath. "This sure is an Iyashikei game alright!"

While the 3 guards were stunned by her appearance the woman crawled into the corridor. Shredded pieces of red dress littered around her. "Let me touch you, we will fall together!" Her body dissolved into a bloody web. As she charged at them, the scattered red dress stitched back together but different from before, the redness of the dress became even more intense. Among the sea of redness, a pale arm reached out without warning to grab at the jumper woman's neck. The red skirt carpeted the long corridor.

The angry red dress and jumper woman dominated by hatred lost control at the same time, the battle between the 2 impossibly strong spirits continued!

All the doors and windows inside the building buzzed. The corridor was instantly dyed red. Han Fei could feel the earth moving. He looked at the walkie-talkie that still dangled from the skirt of the dress and his face was blanched. "This has nothing to do with me!" Backing away, Han Fei had the sense to realize that the Grade F Mission, Night Patrol should be easier. He decided to hurry to finish that mission while the 2 spirits entangled with each other.

"What are you standing there for?" Han Fei tapped Brother Hwa on his shoulder as he carried Xiao Fang and raced down the other side of the corridor. "Run!"

Chapter 317

317 I'm Ziggurat's Most Responsible Guard

The stairs shook as blood vines crawled up the walls. The livid large Lingering Spirit fought with the Lingering Hatred. The peace of the night was shattered, the black mist outside the building stirred and Han Fei could hear a fleeting song being carried in the wind!

Before this the black mist secluded the building from the outside world but the commotion caused by the 2 spirits was so big that even the black mist couldn't hide it anymore. 'The Singer hasn't left, it is also in the neighbourhood!' Han Fei's prediction was correct, the black mist had eclipsed his presence from the Singer. The Singer failed to find him but it had not given up. Other than the song, there was scream coming from the black mist, it sounded like the Singer had encountered some adversaries of its own. When something as huge as a fight between the two strongest ghosts at Building 1 occurred, Ziggurat's manager should show itself to settle the conflict but the manager seemed to have something more important to do at the moment.

'Part of Butterfly's consciousness has been split out to deal with Huang Yin, and now his servant at the Ziggurat is dealing with the Singer, this is the perfect time to explore this place.' Han Fei ran towards the other stairwell. He took a few steps forward and noticed Brother Hwa hadn't moved. "Brother Hwa?" The appearance of the 2 spirits at the top floor shocked Brother Hwa, his expression became less lively, only fear and anxiety remained. The more fearful he was, the clearer the pattern that crawled out from the back of his neck, his memory and self-consciousness were being siphoned away by the Butterfly pattern!

The security guards hired here were pots that fitted the Butterfly's requirement. Fear was the fertilizer used to make the seeds inside the pots grow and bloom faster. All the guards' memories had been edited by the Butterfly. No one knew what Brother Hwa did for a living before this but from his instinct and actions, he was not a bad person.

"I have a headache and my head is spinning. There are memories in my mind that I've not seen before, like..." Brother Hwa's shoulders were shaking. Black splotches appeared on his skin, "The image of my own death!" His face twitched as his hands reached tremblingly towards Han Fei, "I, I..."

Using the rubber baton, Han Fei whacked at Brother Hwa's palm. The pain immediately had Brother Hwa retract his hands and his mutating face grimaced with confusion, "Why did you hit me?"

“Was it painful?”

“Of course, it was!”

“Then you’re still alive. Now is not the time to talk about this, we need to leave this floor now!” If not for the worry that a blow to the head might knock him out, Han Fei would have aimed at the man’s head. The rubber baton wouldn’t have injured any ghost but since Brother Hwa could feel pain, it meant that he was still living inside the memory weaved by the Butterfly. He hadn’t fully collapsed yet and could still be saved. Living in a cryptic world, Han Fei had to use this kind of method to formulate his decision. It was barbaric but effective.

If he allowed Brother Hwa to continue spiraling out of control, he would eventually be controlled by the pattern, so this was the best Han Fei could do for now. The 3 guards ran towards the other staircase. Even though he was carrying Xiao Fang, Han Fei moved faster. As time approached 4.44 am, the modern décor inside the building was turning old with a speed observable to the naked eye. The white paint peeled to reveal the strange bloody paintings and incoherent statements underneath. The fight between owners of Room 1044 and 1244 sped up the change of the building. Red hue appeared on the bricks and the gap between them, it was like blood was spreading.

The other tenants were coming alive. Various noises entered their ears, it was like everyone had gone crazy!

As he left the 24th floor, Han Fei turned back to look. The shredded red dress scattered everywhere, like it was snowing blood in the corridor. But no matter how many times the jumper woman tore apart the red dress, she could recover and with each recovery, the stronger the resentment on the dress. It was as the guards said, no matter how hard you tried to remove the red dress, it would always return. However, the scariest thing which Han Fei witnessed was that while they were fighting, the two monsters were also moving towards Han Fei. Both of them appeared to possess the desire to kill the 3 guards themselves. Other than to vent resentment and hatred, their fight was also to decide the right to kill for the 3 guards.

‘I shouldn’t have come here at level 12!’ Pulling his gaze back, Han Fei charged into the stairwell. He needed to complete a full round of patrol before he could quit the game. However, the mission required him to do more than just running around in circles. Based on the patrol rules inside the guard room, they had to check the camera and fire devices on each floor and record all the damaged objects if there was any. If they ran into a tenant that needed help, they were also required to provide necessary aid.

As Han Fei made his escape, he also paid attention to the surveillance devices and his surroundings. With his superb memory, he memorized the cameras which were damaged and the severity of the damage. The real difficulty was the tenants. A guard's responsibility was to protect the tenants, if the tenant required it, then he would have to provide help, like Brother Hwa did earlier. After completing the Night Patrol Mission, there was a chance for him to acquire the hidden profession, Ziggurat Security Guard. That was exactly the thing Han Fei needed, something for him to access Ziggurat more easily.

As he passed by the 23rd floor, Han Fei saw a human face at the safety door. When he brushed by the door, it was creaking open. With a flying kick, Han Fei sent the safety door bouncing back. "The building is haunted! People are injured! Stay at home for your own safety!" Han Fei's passionate heart was brimming with concern and love for all the tenants.

The steps became more slippery and the lights flickered on and off. When they passed the 22nd floor, a child's crying came from the corner. It was a boy with a flowery shirt. His body and arms were bruised, he was calling for his mother... Under this circumstance, Han Fei definitely couldn't stop to help him search for his mother but it was inappropriate to leave the boy there as well. When he passed the boy, Han Fei grabbed the boy by his collar, "Come with me! I will help you find your mother!"

Being grabbed by Han Fei, the child cried harder. While he was struggling, the boy was handed over to Xiao Fang. Now Han Fei carried a second person on his back. "Brother Bai..." Soothing the boy in his arms, Xiao Fang gained extra respect for Han Fei. Even when they were in such danger, he still had concern for others, that was truly admirable. 'This world needs more people like Brother Bai!'

The moment Han Fei carried the boy and ran, the safety door of the 22nd floor blasted open, and a woman covered in Yin energy rushed out holding a syringe. Her face was disfigured and a clear butterfly pattern could be seen on her arm. She was just hiding behind the door earlier. If Han Fei hesitated, he would be injected by that syringe already. The child was just a bait to make people stop, what kind of tragedy the woman had gone through to use her own child as a bait? But none of these mattered now. Her ambush failed and her child was kidnapped!

After living for so many years in this building, this was the first time she encountered something as unlucky as this. When the woman charged through the door, Brother Hwa was passing through. He was stunned in immobility and then saw the woman run down the stairs. The boy's cries echoed in the stairwell. Han Fei could hear the movement coming from behind him but he knew he couldn't stop.

"Brother Bai, I believe the boy's family is behind us."

“Ignore them, we need to keep on running!” Han Fei swore he was saying this to protect everyone, “The ghosts are fighting upstairs, if we return to her the child, she might run directly into the 2 ghosts. She has a better chance at survival if we lure her away from them with the child. We’re only doing this for their safety.”

“Brother Bai, you have a point!”

“After all, we’re this neighbourhood’s security guard.” In the blink of an eye, Han Fei had already arrived at the 20th floor. The even-numbered floors had no lights. The safety door of this floor was left open. Before they even got near, Xiao Fang already got a bad feeling about this. When they passed by the open door, a wet arm reached out from the dark. The slick hair stuck to her face and a pale face looked at Han Fei and Xiao Fang. “They left me alone in that cold place, all twisted and folded up. I only had myself as company as I counted the knife wounds on my back to pass time...” Before she finished, Han Fei reached out to grab her by her wrist and pulled with all his might. When the woman came to, she was already lying on top of Xiao Fang. The dripping hair stuck to Xiao Fang’s forehead. This was the most intimate contact the single 20 plus guard had with a woman but he didn’t dare to turn around.

“Brother Bai, Bai, Bai...” Xiao Fang’s body chilled. The senses that the businessman deprived him of were slowly returning but the first thing he felt was a spine-chilling cold!

Han Fei was hunched over due to the weight of 3 ‘people’ on his back but still he didn’t slow down. He ran past the 19th floor safely, but as he passed the 18th floor with the littered paper money, the businessman in mourning materialized from the darkness. However, he immediately halted when he saw Han Fei and the ‘load’ that he carried. The expression on the businessman’s face froze. Han Fei saw the businessman at the same time. He no longer had the red dress but he was not afraid. Instead he shouted directly at the man, “Want to come with?”

The businessman was rich, Han Fei wanted to bring him along, but the man probably mistook Han Fei’s meaning. He immediately shook his head with despair. The businessman spat 3 times at them, this was a very superstitious way of chasing away bad luck, similar to how some people would touch wood after saying something unseemly. “It’s haunted upstairs! You better go back home!” Han Fei warned before he left. As he turned away, footsteps echoed down the stairs. Just as the businessman turned his greedy eyes around, a large syringe almost plunged into his head.

“Get out of my way!” The woman with the syringe barreled forward. After the businessman evaded the attack, he turned back and closed the safety door behind him. He looked like he was going home to rest from all the excitement he had had that night.

Han Fei powered down the stairs and the amount of ‘thing’ on his back increased. When he only had one or two ‘people’ on his back, the other tenants might target him but now no one dared to come close to him. However, this placed a lot of pressure on Xiao Fang. The young man was surrounded by layers of ‘protection’. Brother Hwa who ran at the back was shocked as well. By now, the things that Han Fei carried had fully eclipsed the man. From behind, he looked more like a moving ‘human’ mountain.

Han Fei created a miracle by finally reaching the first floor but the mission was still not yet over. “There are two Lingering Spirits fighting at the top floor, I’ve already tried my best to save all of you!” Han Fei was not saying that for the tenants, he wanted to tell the system this was his way of helping the tenants. “Brother Hwa, do you have the key for the front door? We better send the tenants out for safety!” Han Fei shouted as he ran. Brother Hwa could not see Han Fei, he could only hear his voice coming out from inside the mountain, “To avoid accidents, all the public safety doors’ keys are inside the 4th floor’s guard room!”

Unable to leave and unable to shed off the mountain of tenants, Han Fei didn’t know what to do. At that moment, footsteps came from the other side of the corridor. A deliveryman carrying a giant box appeared. As per his habit, he leaned on the anti-theft door and peered through the peephole. “Is anyone home? Your delivery is here... if there’s no one home, I’ll be coming in!” His nail scratched on the door. Pairs of hands reached out from the delivery box and they grabbed at the door handle.

“Hey, delivery boy!” As the door wiggled, Han Fei charged at the deliveryman carrying almost half of the tenants on his back. “It was you who killed the red dress! It was you who had been sneaking into people’s homes! This time, we finally caught you red-handed!” When Han Fei saw the delivery ghost, a lightbulb came on in his mind. It was the guard’s responsibility to help the building’s tenant but there was a ghost here which didn’t hold a tenancy. If there was someone who could allow these tenants to vent their hatred and anger, wasn’t the delivery ghost who killed the red dress the perfect choice?

Justice might be late but it would never be absent. With that in mind, Han Fei carried everyone and bulldozed his way towards the delivery ghost. The ghost who leaned against the door was flummoxed. He was always the one who did the delivery, this was the first time someone came to him with a delivery, one that he was definitely unable to accept!

“Xiao Fang! Hold on tight!” When Han Fei passed the delivery ghost, he turned and dropped everything on his back into the giant delivery box. He hauled up Xiao Fang. Before he continued to run, he launched

a punch on 'something' inside the box. Screams and wails echoed everywhere. Curse and resentment exploded and thus began the most chaotic night at Ziggurat!

Leading Xiao Fang and Brother Hwa, Han Fei raced towards the other stairwell. The space behind them was consumed by darkness and curse. The poorest victim was definitely the delivery ghost who was caught in the epicentre. Even his delivery box was shattered and out tumbled many things he had stolen from the tenants.

Han Fei had run through 24 floors in one breath. Even Han Fei couldn't take it much longer, his legs felt leaden. 'I have to quit soon, my stamina is almost zero. I can't even move anymore.' Han Fei felt like he could consider changing lanes to become an athlete if his acting business didn't pan out. He would be able to fly the moment he channelled the feeling of being chased by ghosts in real life.

"I have no idea there are so many ghosts hidden in this building..." Brother Hwa said between breaths. He appeared to look better. Mainly it was because Han Fei had literally shouldered all the scarier ghosts, his shock had overwhelmed his fear.

"Brother Bai, how did you come up with this idea anyway?" Xiao Fang looked at Han Fei with admiration. Instead of Bai Sinian, he called Han Fei Brother Bai.

"I was just mimicking what my senior did. He was the guard who taught me everything I knew." Han Fei was referring to Ol' Lee, the guard at Yi Ming Private Academy. Compared to him, Han Fei was nothing. With halting steps, the 3 guards finally reached the guard room before 4.44 am. But just as they were about to open the door, static suddenly came from Brother Hwa's walkie-talkie.

"We can finally contact the guards from the other buildings?" Xiao Fang was excited, it was like the sun had finally arrived after a long night. Brother Hwa sighed in relief too. He moved the device to his ear and was about to speak when a woman's voice came out from the speaker. "How could you leave me here all alone..."

Chapter 318

The tone was crisp but carried with it an undertone of resentment and confusion. Just the voice of it caused Han Fei's skin to crawl with goosebumps. "Why is it a female voice? The neighbourhood doesn't employ a female guard..." Brother Hwa was flummoxed. It only took a moment to fall from heaven to

hell. Naturally Han Fei wouldn't tell Brother Hwa that he had stuffed the walkie-talkie into the red dress due to desperation. But as a responsible guard, he would not let others take the fall for his actions. "Give it to me." After he accepted the walkie-talkie, Han Fei matter-of-factly lifted the speaker to his lips. "I know who hurt you the most. I do not know if there's anything I can say to alleviate your pain, but I will help you destroy the person who injured you the deepest! No, destruction is too simple an end for them. We'll make them suffer thrice the pain that they have unleashed upon you." From the way Han Fei was talking, you'd think he was catching up with his old friend, so much so that Brother Hwa and Xiao Fang wanted to ask, 'Are you 2 friends?'

The static echoed in his ear, and Han Fei spoke again, "I have to stress that I didn't mean to leave you behind. Tell me your current location, I will go fetch you now." After a long time, the woman's voice surfaced among the shrill static. "You want to come fetch me?" The red dress had been dumped again and again, this was the first time she heard someone was offering to come fetch her. "I've been torn into pieces, some are on the 23rd floor, others on the 24th floor."

"Got it, wait for me!" After Han Fei hung up, Brother Hwa, Xiao Fang and himself entered the guard room. Before they started the patrol, the building was quiet, it was no different from a normal building, if a little bit eerie. But after the patrol, the whole building was covered in red. The top and ground floors were almost shattered. The building kept shaking, even the black mist around it stirred like they were hit by an earthquake.

"And that ends the first patrol of my life." Han Fei picked up the patrol form that hung on the wall. Using his superb memory, he noted down all the broken devices and strange occurrences that they had encountered during their patrol. Xiao Fang and Brother Hwa stood dumbly beside him as Han Fei wrote crazily on the form. Those who didn't know better would assume Han Fei was writing down his will. After he was done, Han Fei still didn't receive any notification from the system. He scanned the form anxiously before his eyes settled on the signature columns. 'Do I need the signatures of all 3 patrols? If one of us accidentally died, does that mean I would never finish this mission?'

With no other option, he had Xiao Fang and Brother Hwa drop their signatures. When Brother Hwa finished the last stroke of his signature, Han Fei finally received the notification from the system! "Notification for Player 0000, you've completed Grade F hidden mission, Night-time patrol! You've successfully completed your first patrol with the guidance of your two seniors!"

"There are many firsts in our life. Only by taking on new attempts will our life become more colorful and interesting."

“Mission completion rate is 20 percent, you’ve gained the approval of your two colleagues but the tenants have some opinions regarding you and your actions. You’ve obtained 3 free skill points and the set of Ziggurat Guard Uniform (Basic attire with no buff)

“Due to the low completion rate and the complaints from the tenants, you were unable to unlock the unique profession—Ziggurat Guard.

“Warning! If you are able to gain the approval of all the tenants at Building 1 within the next 3 days, you will immediately unlock the hidden profession—Ziggurat Guard!”

Han Fei gave a long sigh of relief when he heard the system notification. He collapsed on the couch. As the building trembled, he fixed his eyes on the exit button which had finally lit up. He could always try again for the reward but to be able to exit the game was more important. ‘If I can gain the approval of all the tenants within the next 3 days, I’ll directly unlock the hidden profession?’ The hidden profession, Midnight Butcher, had helped Han Fei greatly. If he could get another hidden profession, even as a part time job, Han Fei believed it would benefit him greatly.

‘It won’t be easy to gain the tenants’ approval but it’s not impossible either. I should make that my goal for the next 3 days.’ Holding the walkie-talkie, Han Fei stood up. He radiated confidence. “Brother Hwa, Xiao Fang, you should stay here. I’m going to go fulfil my promise.”

“You’re leaving now? When the whole building is lurking with monsters?” Brother Hwa couldn’t understand Han Fei. Earlier it was Han Fei who ran the fastest but now he wanted to leave again.

“I only came back here to ensure that the two of you can be safe. Now that that is accomplished, it’s time for me to go do something else.” Han Fei shook the walkie-talkie. “Do you know whose voice that was?” Xiao Fang and Brother Hwa shook their heads. This was their first time hearing that voice.

“That was the red dress. We shouldn’t leave her out there all alone.”

“Wait, the red dress that can’t be destroyed and removed?” Brother Hwa stared at the walkie-talkie Han Fei was holding. Xiao Fang silently took out his own walkie-talkie and dropped it at the table far away.

“Yes, she has saved us, we can’t leave her behind. We have to have morals.” Han Fei picked up the walkie-talkie and ensured that his exit button was lit up again before he opened the guard room door. The scent of blood drifted into the room. After hearing the door open, several footsteps came from the stairwell. Ziggurat had never been as lively as it was that night.

“I have no idea if I can return safely. If I don’t come back in the next 24 hours, then most likely something has happened to me...” Han Fei glanced back into the room, “Stay here and don’t wander off. Take care of yourselves.”

The footsteps from downstairs became more frenetic. Han Fei closed the guard room door and headed up the stairs with determination. The chaos had spread through the entire building. Blood crawled. All the tenants had lost their minds, but the key issue was they seemed to have realized that their manager appeared to be missing!

Their suppressed anger and despair were unleashed. This was also the first time Han Fei experienced a massacre on this scale. Along the way, blood splattered everywhere. There were broken spirits and monsters everywhere, it was hell!

At 4.44 am, 4 hours after Han Fei joined the security team at Ziggurat, he came to the 23rd floor, wearing his red uniform, stepping over the dried blood. The walls of the staircase near the top floor had been engulfed by curse and blood vessels but Han Fei paid them no mind. He picked up the pieces of red dress and stored them in his uniform pocket. Following the trail of the shredded dress, Han Fei finally arrived at the top floor. The jumper woman had disappeared, only pieces of red dress remained on the corridor. When he reached the door of Room 1244, Han Fei found his walkie-talkie, it was covered by a large piece of the red dress. Each time the red dress was torn apart, she would become stronger with each recovery but her recovery speed slowed down and the connection between the shredded pieces weakened. A Large Lingering Spirit was scary but it was not like they had no weaknesses.

“I’m a man of my words, so here I am.” Han Fei picked up the scattered dress pieces. When he had a pile of them, Han Fei realized it was not threads that bound the dress together but bloody lines. The bloody lines near the edges twined together to weave out a more alluring and arresting pattern. “Only those who were kind and special in life could be so beautiful in death.” Treading through blood and curse, Han Fei collected the pieces of fabric. Even the red dress didn’t expect him to return!

She couldn’t understand this man at all. She had already planned to take revenge on the 3 security guards after she healed herself. But things had developed in a completely different direction. A living human was willing to take such a huge risk for a Lingering Spirit? Was his heart made from steel?

“The 3 of us would be dead without your help. You’re important for the 3 of us, we will not leave you behind!” Han Fei included Xiao Fang and Brother Hwa in his words because he was worried that the red dress might harm his colleagues after he logged off. The dress slowly regained its form. Han Fei had almost reached the end of the corridor when a sudden wail and howl came from inside Room 1244. Following that, the sound of limbs skittering came from the stairwell! The jumper woman was tipped off and she was rapidly ascending back to the top floor!

The broken face appeared beyond the safety door. The woman’s body had expanded several times in size. Her eyes filled with death fixed on Han Fei who was picking up the fabric pieces. Her fingers covered in black symbols pushed open the safety door. Her large body was imprinted with the Death Curse that looked as black as ink. “I see you! If I touch you, you’ll die! So die, die, die!”

Han Fei had escaped several times from the jumper woman, her hatred towards him was almost palpable. Even through the distance, Han Fei could feel the curse prickling his skin!

The wall started to crack. Every spot that the woman touched crawled with the character of death. Being in the presence of such a dangerous ghost, Han Fei patiently picked up the last piece of red fabric. The red dress was completed. The lines on the dress connected back together but it still needed some time to fully recover. But Han Fei and the red dress knew that the jumper woman wouldn’t give them that time. For Han Fei, tossing the red dress at the jumper woman was his only chance to escape. The jumper woman came from the left stairwell and Han Fei was close to the right stairwell, there was a long corridor between them.

“Actually, I just want to tell you that I meant you no harm. I’m the security here and it’s my responsibility to help you.” Han Fei said as he tested the tensile strength of the red dress. After he made sure the dress wouldn’t tear apart, he wrapped the dress around the walkie-talkie again. Just as the red dress thought she was about to be used as bait again, Han Fei held her beyond the banisters of the stairs. “This time, I’ll stay behind to stop her. If I manage to survive, I hope we can be friends.”

Then Han Fei let go. The red dress fell, pulled by gravity and the weight of the walkie-talkie. A pale face surfaced among the fabric. The hatred in her eyes was slowly overwhelmed by confusion. In this building dominated by death, someone was willing to give up his life for her?

Han Fei didn’t stay to watch the red dress fall, instead he reached into his inventory to grab a cigarette and lit it. After the manager died, his 3 ‘sons’ left 3 cigarettes for him. These 3 cigarettes were one of the earlier mission rewards he obtained. The 3 cigarettes had the presence of the manager’s 3 sons and they

could be used as protection talismans. Han Fei used one when he first left the Happiness neighbourhood and now he was using another. The smoke rings rose into the air. Wailing souls could be heard from the dropping ashes. A pair of eyes appeared to open behind Han Fei. The black mist outside the building stirred harder. The presence of the manager's son caused some changes outside the building but Han Fei didn't have the time to care about that now. His eyes were following the heart of the jumper woman, specifically the key which was stuck there.

If Han Fei just wanted to survive, then he could have quitted the game now but that wouldn't solve the problem. The next time he logged in, he still wouldn't have access into Room 1244 and he'd still be chased by the jumper woman. To solve this conundrum, Han Fei came up with a crazy idea. He allowed the smoke to envelop him. Han Fei stared at the heart of the jumper woman and suddenly charged forward!

Neither party slowed down. Just as the collision was immediate, Han Fei's hand reached towards the key. Activating Soul Depth Touch, Han Fei pulled out the key and shoved it into his inventory. The moment he heard the system notification, Han Fei logged out. "Notification for Player 0000, you've successfully obtained the key to Heart Room 1244!"

"Notification for Player 0000! You've been afflicted by the Death Curse of Room 1244!"

Blood froze the world. His eyes flew open and Han Fei removed the helmet and eased out from the hub. "I did it!" Han Fei slumped to the ground, his heart still pumping from adrenaline. He had been the security guard at Ziggurat for only 4 hours but he had not only completed a patrol but also gained the key to the most dangerous room at Building 1!

Next time he logged into the game, he could attempt the Grade F Hidden Mission directly. Laying there on the ground, Han Fei didn't look like someone who had just finished a satisfactory gaming session but that was indeed the case.

Chapter 319

319 April 4th

"I've obtained the key to Room 1244. The next time I log in, I only need to get into Room 1244 and stay inside for 3 hours." For Han Fei, living another day was worth celebrating, life had never been so precious. "When I quit the game, I believe I heard the system mention a Heart Room 1244, why did it have a special name for Room 1244? Is it symbolic or literal?"

Han Fei considered it when suddenly his heart trembled like someone had kicked at it. His hand went involuntarily to his chest and his head turned to the clock on the wall. It was 4.44 am. "What is so special about 4.44 am to Ziggurat? Will Brother Hwa and Xiao Fang survive the night?" The heartache disappeared as sudden as it came. Han Fei crawled up from the ground. He called Li Xue on her phone because he needed her help to investigate 2 individuals. Han Fei didn't know their names but he knew what happened to them. One of them was an optimistic female livestreamer who wanted to share beauty with the world but was forced to commit suicide due to the ugliness of humanity. The other died from falling from the rooftop of a building and she was the eldest daughter of a family.

After the police were told these 2 victims might be related to the Butterfly, they launched into a quick investigation without much urging from Han Fei. After doing all that, Han Fei left his rental and headed towards Pear Blossom Neighbourhood. The Ziggurat Game at Zhuang Ren's home was deeply related to the Ziggurat in the cryptic world, so clearing the game in real life would help Han Fei immensely in his exploration of the Ziggurat.

There was a murder at the set of Thriller Novelist, even though the victim was the killer himself, it had caused some bad press. Rumours flew everywhere and the public's attention was drawn to the meat packing factory and its compound where Spider once lived. To avoid the press, Han Fei was told to stay away from the set for a few days, this presented him with the perfect time to play the game.

When the sun rose, Han Fei had already appeared at Zhuang Ren's home. He knocked on the door lightly and soon footsteps came from inside the house. Zhuang Ren with bloodshot eyes opened the door hurriedly, it appeared like he had been waiting for Han Fei. "Zhuang Ren, don't tell me you haven't slept?"

"I wanted to try to clear the game myself but I couldn't get to the actual Ziggurat map."

"Go to sleep. I'll help you. If I see your family in the game, I'll wake you immediately."

"It's fine, I'm not sleepy." It was clear that Zhuang Ren really cared about his family. He hurried back to the couch, poured drinks for Han Fei, fluffed the pillow and even polished the controller for Han Fei. It was rare for a former big director to treat an actor like this.

Han Fei didn't waste time on pleasantries, he started the game and began to play. The most difficult part about the game was with each character death, the player would have to start over from the first map,

it felt like the game designer never intended for people to finish the game. This mechanic had almost made Zhuang Ren lose his mind. Random objects were thrown against the wall out of anger, but Han Fei handled this with serenity.

Humans only had one chance at life, there was nothing after death, but the game only required you to start over, that was already kind enough. After taking half an hour, Han Fei finished all the requirements and successfully entered Ziggurat. This time, he didn't choose a random room or stay standing there, instead he had a clear goal. He controlled his character to move to the 4th floor. When he turned the corner at the stairwell, the deliveryman appeared behind him. Han Fei allowed the man to chase after him until he reached Room 1044, the guard room. He opened the door and went inside to hide. 4 NPC in guard uniform were seated inside the dark room. They appeared to be the only normal NPC at Ziggurat.

"There are 4 of them?" Going close to them would trigger conversation and mission. Through the conversations, Han Fei noticed that the 4 guards were actually sharing ghost stories about the building. The building was already strange during the construction phase. There were many strange events that had happened here, especially on the April 4th of each year. There would always be new tenants moving in on that day, and some abandoned rooms would suddenly be 'occupied'. April 4th was also the day when the guards were the most nervous all year.

The 4 guards consisted of 2 seniors and 2 juniors. The 2 seniors were sharing their wisdom with the newbies, there were rules that shouldn't be broken and taboos that shouldn't be challenged. Only by not listening, not asking, and not thinking that one could have a long career here. Han Fei was focused on the game when his phone rang. After he realized it was from the police, he walked out of the room to answer it. "Have you found anything?"

"The female streamer that you mentioned was quite famous. She died 14 years ago on April 4th by cutting her wrist. She was found inside her own home's bathtub wearing a white dress. When she was discovered, she had already lost all vitals." Li Xue said on the phone, "She was mentally unsound and she was under great mental pressure before she died. People faked her chat transcripts and posted them online. Others photoshopped her face into horrible videos and pictures."

"Why would people do that?"

"Perhaps they didn't believe someone as pure as her could exist in the world. That's why they wanted to ruin her, to bring her down to their level."

"Have the culprits been caught?"

“That’s the strangest part. After we reopen the investigation, we realize all the criminals involved in her crime have mysteriously disappeared.” Li Xue seemed to be flipping through files as she spoke, “The most recent disappearance happened to the main culprit behind the harassment. He was once a chef but was fired because he added dirty ingredients into the food. His mind is incredibly dark and twisted. After he lost his job, he took up making deliveries for a living, that was how he met the victim. Online harassment, attempted murder, food poisoning, he was sentenced to many crimes and was jailed for a long time. These people would have to report back to the law enforcement at regular intervals after they were released back into the public but one day, he just disappeared. There was no body found either.”

Li Xue’s words got Han Fei’s attention. He saw the deliveryman in the cryptic world, only Butterfly could do something like that. But why would Butterfly do that? If it wanted to help the red dress take revenge, it would trap the deliveryman inside the guard room, just like how Han Fei helped Ying Yue. But Butterfly didn’t do that, instead it used the man as some kind of bargaining chip to control the red dress.

‘Humans are pawns and everything is a tool in Butterfly’s eyes. The deliveryman is a tool and the red dress is probably just a stronger tool for the Butterfly.’ Butterfly and Han Fei could retain absolute rationality at the craziest moment, but there was a basic difference to their essence.

“Li Xue, other than the streamer, did you find anything on the other woman?”

“There are quite a number of people who committed suicide from jumping every year but there is only one who fits your description. Similarly something happened to her on the night of April 4th, 14 years ago.”

Chapter 320

320 The Exorcist

“It’s April 4th again?” Han Fei felt like every tenant at Ziggurat was trapped on that day, repeating the nightmare loops, waiting for a dawn that would never come.

“The woman’s name is Zhuang Wen, the reason behind her death is very complicated.” Li Xue looked at the files and sighed, “Her biological mother was a D list horror film actor, her name was Yuan Shuang. She was pretty but her acting was not that good, the films that she was in had very low reviews. Just as

she planned to switch to another film genre, something broke her mind. Apparently, she was scared witless. She stopped acting altogether and disappeared from the entertainment industry. Soon she was found with a young girl, marrying a poor and ugly 'exorcist', the girl was Zhuang Wen."

"An exorcist?"

"Yes, the exorcist lived in his own world and insisted on using his own method to cure Zhuang Wen's mother. They lived together for 5 years but Yuan Shuang's conditions didn't improve. Instead she passed away after leaving the exorcist with a pair of twins, a boy and a girl. Zhuang Wen was there to witness and hear everything, the fanatic statements of the exorcist and the rituals performed on her mother. That made it so that Zhuang Wen was different from other children. She couldn't fit in.

"After Yuan Shuang died, the exorcist was heartbroken. For some reason, he blamed her death on the little girl. At the exorcist's home, only Zhuang Wen had a different surname. As the twins grew older, they started to ostracize Zhuang Wen, treating her as an outsider. Because of that, Zhuang Wen's personality became unpredictable and hard to read. One day, the exorcist suddenly announced that Zhuang Wen was haunted and that she was carrying a ghost with her. She was going to have her mind broken like her mother.

"Zhuang Wen assumed that those were just the exorcist's incoherent ramblings and no one would treat him seriously but she soon realized how wrong she was. The family of three saw her as a monster, a monster that was dangerous, and needed to be exorcised. That pushed the girl further, she was a normal person but was labelled by the people around her to be a possessed human.

"The atmosphere at home was just eerie. Without the girl's permission, the family of 3 started their rituals of exorcism on Zhuang Wen. The girl didn't know if she was possessed or not but even if she was, the ghost possessing her was much kinder than the exorcist and her half brother and sister. Zhuang Wen grew up in tragedy, she was just waiting for the day when she could leave home. But her living environment had molded her personality in such a way that she wouldn't fit in normal society anymore.

"Soon, even her neighbours started to treat her differently. This was because Zhuang Wen had a bad EQ. But by then, shouting and howling were the only things she could do to prevent the exorcist and his children from harming her further. If she didn't grow a spine, they would trample all over her. The conflict between them escalated. The exorcist didn't hate Zhuang Wen, he believed unconditionally that the ghost which had possessed Yuan Xue had now moved to inhabit Zhuang Wen's body. To exorcise the 'ghost' out from Zhuang Xue, the exorcist locked Zhuang Wen up at home and forbade her from leaving. That deteriorated Zhuang Wen's mental and physical conditions but it was one year later that she finally committed suicide.

“However, no one knew what happened in that last year because the neighbours never saw Zhuang Wen outside her home anymore. Even her shouts had stopped, the things that happened in that year became a complete mystery. After Zhuang Wen’s death, the exorcist’s family of 3 died one after another and they died in the same manner as Zhuang Wen did.” Li Xue added, “That’s all we can find for now. I can send you the details but are you sure their deaths are related to the Butterfly?”

“I notice their deaths fit the Butterfly’s mo, but beyond that, I cannot be sure. However, I believe they are connected. The same feeling came to me when I was investigating the human jigsaw case.” To increase his persuasion, that was what Han Fei said.

“Sounds like the Butterfly is a challenge that you’re destined to face in life.”

“I think so too.” After hanging up, Han Fei received the info from Li Xue. It had the record of everyone who had hurt the red dress and the jumper woman. After going through the files, Han Fei entered the room. He glanced at Zhuang Ren on the couch and he asked casually, “Director Zhuang, have you heard of a girl by the name of Zhuang Wen?”

“I have not.”

“Then do you know Yuan Shuang? She is Zhuang Wen’s mother.”

“That name sounds familiar, I believe she has starred in a few of my projects. Oh, yes, I remember her now. She doesn’t have much talent, no matter how hard I try to give her pointers, she can’t pick up the acting.” Zhuang Ren did know the woman.

“No offense but what is the nature of your relationship? Why would Yuan Shuang give her daughter the same surname as yours?”

“We had a purely professional relationship!” Zhuang Ren said firmly so Han Fei didn’t press further. He turned his attention back to the game. When he went out to take the call, he died because he stayed idle for too long. The 4 security guards became ghosts after they finished telling the ghost stories. They were the final ghost story and they worked together to kill the character.

Han Fei started from the top and entered Ziggurat the 2nd time. This time, Han Fei memorized all the ghost stories that the guards told. Han Fei frowned when they brought up the red dress. He stared close at the screen. He noticed that as the red dress' story progressed, the toilet door would open wider. Han Fei's experience in the cryptic world was immensely helpful. He controlled the character and left the guard room. He calculated the time in his heart. Several minutes later, he entered the guard room again. Of the 4 guards, 3 were dead. The remaining guard sat in a pool of blood and a red dress stood behind him.

'Looks like the guards were just repeating the stories the Butterfly implanted into their minds.' After the red dress showed up, Han Fei's character triggered the Death Curse inside Room 1044—if you sleep, you'll die. Both the security and the red dress went berserk and charged at the main character. Han Fei watched as he got brutally killed. 'The security guards are the normal NPC inside the building, they seem to serve some kind of purpose. Looks like I'll have to find a way to save them.'

As Han Fei became more familiar with the mechanics, he could now finish all the previous maps in under an hour. Zhuang Ren watched Han Fei control the character and he was flummoxed. Han Fei had an unimaginably perfect memory. He used it to memorize the sequence of the buttons and the frequency necessary to tap them. He didn't even need to consult the maps anymore. It was like Zhuang Ren was watching a fast-forwarded video.

Han Fei returned to the guard room and instantly he charged into the toilet and pulled down the red dress. After obtaining the sleep-related Death Curse, he carried the red dress and hurried to the 1st floor. He left the red dress alone with the deliveryman and after the murder was over, he picked up the delivery box and returned upstairs with the red dress. He sold the box to the businessman. As the businessman carried the box with the red dress inside home, Han Fei controlled the character to wait in the corridor.

Just as Han Fei thought the businessman would be killed, the man's door suddenly opened and he ran out. Han Fei entered the businessman's room and stuffed everything within sight into the delivery box. Then he swiped the stack of paper money and slipped them into the rooms which he had not personally visited in the cryptic world. When the businessman sneaked back to his room, he realized his savings had been 'stolen' by his neighbours. The businessman came up with ways to enter his neighbours' room and through this process, inadvertently earned their ire. Han Fei controlled his character and followed behind the businessman, memorizing the situation and the tenants of each individual room.