

Iyashikei 321

Chapter 321

321 The Secrets of Room 1244

To be frank, Han Fei had underestimated this businessman's gut. To get back his money, he would do anything. As long as there was a small ray of hope, even if it was up against a neighbour several times more powerful than he was, he would try his best again and again, it was quite inspiring. 'What exactly happened to this man? His obsession is clearly money, he died for money and has returned in the afterlife also for money. For him, money seems to be the best medicine.'

Following behind the businessman, Han Fei saw many 'tenants' he had not seen in the cryptic world. He realized Ziggurat in the game and the cryptic world still had some differences. In the Ziggurat game, all the rooms were occupied but in the cryptic world, most of the tenants lived inside rooms with the number 4. Han Fei had a feeling a big cleansing had happened at the Ziggurat in the cryptic world and only the most key tenants were allowed to stay. It was the same at Happiness Neighbourhood. When the previous manager was around, there were a lot of tenants but when Han Fei took over, there were very few tenants left.

Carrying the red dress, and following the businessman, Han Fei carefully checked all the rooms inside Ziggurat and soon he noticed something. Following the trail of paper money, the businessman came to the 6th floor. When he saw the sleep-walking child behind the 6th floor safety door, the businessman hesitated before finally leading the boy to knock on the door of Room 1064. The boy's mother stopped at the door. Han Fei saw her face and perhaps he was projecting, because he swore she looked just like the woman with the syringe on the 22nd floor.

To verify his suspicion, Han Fei controlled his character to run up to the 22nd floor. He found the boy with the bruises beside the safety door. The child was sobbing quietly while the woman with the syringe hid behind the safety door. Han Fei slowly approached before his character scooped up the boy and raced down the stairs. What happened next was similar to the events in the cryptic world. The woman with the syringe blasted through the door and chased after Han Fei. Through the screen, Han Fei studied the syringe woman's face carefully, she really did look like the woman on the 6th floor, they could be twins.

But the strangest thing was when Han Fei's character reached the 6th floor and planned to leave the boy with the businessman, the syringe woman stopped chasing after him. She didn't come into the 6th floor corridor, she kept knocking her head against the 6th floor safety door instead. 'The door is not locked, why did she stop?' While Han Fei was confused, a loud noise came from upstairs, it sounded like window breaking. Then Han Fei saw a woman fall through the floors. 'That's the jumper woman!' Han Fei

glanced at the time. The jumper woman appeared about half an hour after Han Fei entered Ziggurat, it was the same as when he was in the cryptic world. 'If the outsiders aren't killed by the Death Curse within half an hour, the jumper woman will appear?'

Several seconds later, the jumper woman's horrid cries came from the stairwell. Han Fei was on the 6th floor, he was dangerously close to the woman. Soon, the disfigured jumper woman appeared on the 6th floor. The corridor behind her was covered in blood and bones. Han Fei didn't panic when he saw her, instead he focused on the woman's barely recognizable face. 'Wait a minute. This jumper woman, the mother on the 6th floor and the syringe woman have similar faces! Are they 3 personas of the same person? One consciousness has been forcibly split into 3?' The more Han Fei thought about it, the more credible the theory was. This was because the jumper woman was completely dominated by hatred, she only had murder and death on her mind. She didn't even have any human memory much less humanity, that was very unnatural.

'Is it possible that Butterfly has split the woman's consciousness into 3 separate parts to better control her? And these 3 women represent 3 distinct memories?' As the jumper woman approached, Han Fei was reminded of something else. He put down the controller and allowed the jumper woman to tear his character into pieces. With Zhuang Ren watching on with confusion, Han Fei took out his phone and searched for the info of the female livestreamer who died 14 years ago. At the time, the issue was huge on the internet so info-gathering was easy for Han Fei. When he saw her picture, Han Fei's eyes widened because his suspicion had been verified. The livestreamer who died 14 years ago looked similar to the female livestreamer who lived in Room 1084!

In other words, the red dress in Room 1044 and the girl in Room 1084 should be the same person. However, the girl in Room 1084 retained her curiosity and optimism that defined her life, that was probably the persona which was removed from the red dress. This proved that the manager was even more powerful than the red dress and the jumper woman because they could tamper with their memories. Their consciousnesses had been spliced. Han Fei didn't know why the manager did that for now but he believed that if he wanted to help the red dress and the jumper woman regain control of themselves, he needed to help them reunite their memories first.

'The girl in Room 1084 is very interested in what happened to the livestreamer in Room 1044, and she remembers some details of it but she thought it was another person's story. She moved to Ziggurat out of curiosity and concern. The connection between the red dress and the livestreamer is clear but what is the connection between the syringe woman, the jumper woman and the divorced mother with the sleep-walking child?

'Zhuang Wen died from falling, so it had nothing to do with the syringe. She was too young to have been divorced... But the two women's children do have similar childhoods as Zhuang Wen.' Han Fei believed

there was a greater story behind the jumper woman. She was the scariest and strongest ghost at Building 1, a monster who failed to overcome her hatred. If Han Fei could get her to side with him, it would help increase his survivability at Ziggurat by a lot.

‘Perhaps this game can give me the answer.’ Picking up the controller, Han Fei continued the game. He was speed-running the game now. Soon, he once again reached the Ziggurat map. The earlier steps were the same as before but after he got the red dress, he didn't bother the businessman but instead hurried to Room 1084. The tenant of Room 1084 was the only person who treated Han Fei well. She didn't harm Han Fei, she was just like that dead livestreamer, full of positivity and joy. That made Han Fei confirm his thought. He attempted to have the girl put on the red dress but the moment she did, she turned into a monster and strangled Han Fei's character. ‘Why didn't it work? What did I miss?’

Han Fei frowned but Zhuang Ren beside him was completely lost. He wouldn't have thought to do these things Han Fei had done. Han Fei's frame of thinking and this game's design was completely unfathomable.

With the next retry, Han Fei planned to do everything at the same time. He first carried the child and lured the syringe woman to the 6th floor. While the syringe woman was held inside the stairwell, Han Fei carried the boy who hid behind the safety door on the 6th floor to the 8th floor. Calculating the time, just as the jumper woman was about to show up, Han Fei knocked on the door of Room 1084 and had the girl put on the red dress. While she was in the bedroom to try the dress on, Han Fei picked up the two boys and ran. After the girl turned into a monster, she chased after Han Fei to the 6th floor. At that moment, Han Fei knocked on Room 1064 but the divorced woman didn't seem to want to leave the room. Just as she reached for her child, Han Fei leaped away from her and charged towards the syringe woman instead. The divorced woman rushed out to ensure that her boy wasn't injured. At that crucial moment, the jumper woman joined the party.

Han Fei planned for the divorced mother, the syringe woman and the jumper woman to meet together and then something unexpected happened. The jumper woman who was dominated by hatred actively stayed away when she saw the divorced mother, the syringe woman and their boys!

‘I knew there was some kind of connection between them!’ The red dress arrived from the other stairwell. As Han Fei predicted, the red dress fought with the jumper woman. Han Fei put down the boys in the chaos and ran to the top floor. The door to Room 1244 was locked, he had to have a key. With no other option, Han Fei returned to the 6th floor. He wanted to see if he could get a chance to grab the key from the jumper woman's heart, but whenever his character got close to the fighting ghosts, he would die instantly. After dying in the same manner for 3 times, Han Fei finally calmed down. Every time he died, he needed to start over. He had to enter the cryptic world again that night, he didn't have that much time to waste.

'There should be another way. The moment I get close to the jumper woman, I'd die but she won't come close to the divorced mother and the syringe woman, perhaps they are my openings to get the key.' Han Fei changed his tactics. He led the boy on the 6th floor to somewhere safe and then told the boy's mother that her child had been captured by the jumper woman and kept in her room on the top floor. To save him, they had to have the key. The divorced mother agreed to help Han Fei out of concern for her boy. Then Han Fei led the red dress over. After the jumper woman paid a heavy price for killing the red dress, the divorced mother plucked the key out of the heavily injured woman's heart. But the moment she touched the key, the black Death Curse appeared on the divorced mother's body. The curse originally was only on the jumper woman.

They ran upstairs, but halfway there, the divorced mother suddenly stopped like she was ravaged by some scary memory. She was morphing into the second jumper woman. Han Fei reached for the key. The moment he held the key, his life already started its countdown. When the curse spread all over his body, he'd die.

Not wasting any time, Han Fei's character rushed to the top floor. He pushed the black and red key into the lock and successfully opened the door to Room 1244!

The heavy black anti-theft door was pushed open. The back of the door was covered in blood red talismans. More strange talismans and carvings decorated the room. The walls were written in some kind of spell, pages of unknown scripts and eerie pictures littered the ground. There was also blood everywhere. Han Fei's character neared the bedroom door. As if hearing his footsteps, crying came from inside the room.

He opened the door to reveal an old and ugly middle-aged man who was tied to the ground. Paper money as well as traditional ceremonial tools for spirit summoning sat around him. He kept mumbling his apologies and penance. Han Fei approached the man and the speech bubbles popped up. It was from them that Han Fei got to know the scary things that Zhuang Wen had experienced. Whenever she was sick, be it real or just imaginary, Zhuang Wen would be locked inside the storage room. The more pained and inconsolable she got, the more confident the man was of her state of being possessed. To 'cure' her, he forced her to drink various concoctions, draw symbols on her body and even tried to beat the ghost out of her.

Seeing the words that rolled on screen, both Han Fei and Zhuang Ren's hearts chilled. After exiting the middle-aged man's room, Han Fei entered the storage room. A single bed was squeezed into the limited space, it was dirty and messy. A shackle was left on the bed which was stained with blood and excrement. There were also needles and syringes in the room. The room used to trap Zhuang Ren was

now the prison for the middle-aged man's son and daughter. They were scared until their minds broke and all they knew how to do was to cry. Han Fei ignored the twins. He looked closer at the bedsheet and mattress. It was filled with curses, it recorded all the pain and despair Zhuang Wen had experienced. Just reading them brought Han Fei goosebumps.

Zhuang Wen hated everything and everyone, including her mother. Zhuang Wen's mother used her as a bargaining chip to threaten the director of her movie, Zhuang Ren when she was very small. Not long after that, Zhuang Wen's mother lost her mind. It was then that the seed of hatred was planted. Zhuang Wen hated her mother, Zhuang Ren, her adopted father. The whole world was an oppressive hateful black.

'To use her child as bait, the syringe woman beat him up, the same thing happened to Zhuang Wen. Zhuang Wen's mother also used Zhuang Wen to threaten the horror film director, Zhuang Ren! The divorced mother's child was trapped at home, similar to how Zhuang Ren was trapped by her stepfather's family. Her biggest hope then was probably to find the elusive key and run away forever! Similarly, the dream-walking boy could always find the key no matter where it was hidden, and escape from home!' All 3 memories were connected. Han Fei's hands that held the controller shivered as much as his heart did.

"How could a person be like this?" When Zhuang Ren saw his own name written in blood on the bed in the game, his hands couldn't stop shaking. "It's all because of this child? It was she who trapped my family inside Ziggurat?" Zhuang Ren's tone was changing. He took rapid breathing. His hand pressed against his chest and his face grimaced from pain. He grabbed the pills on the table and tossed them down his gullet. Then his condition levelled out.

"Han Fei, please, you have to check the other rooms. My family might be inside this crazy house!"

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The pain that eased due to the medicine returned. Zhuang Ren scrunched up his face in pain.

"Why would your name be among Zhuang Wen's curses? Is there really no relationship between you and Zhuang Wen's mother?" Han Fei continued to control the character, but his voice was turning ugly.

“Really, there’s nothing between us! When she was in my movie, her mental condition was already fraying. She often returned to the set alone at midnight, no one knew what she was doing and I definitely did not have a child with her!” Zhuang Ren pleaded with his hand on his chest.

“She returned to the set alone at midnight? Based on what I know, you’ve only worked on horror movies, wasn’t she afraid?”

“The last movie that I shot was called Dreaming. After I have enough money, I plan to shoot a real horror film to prove myself but the shooting got halted due to various reasons!” Zhuang Ren forced himself to stand up. “I still have some of the recordings from back then. It was also at that moment that I started to ruminate over what the Director of Immortal Pharma said. I can show you all the recordings. All I beg of you is that you open the other room doors and see if my family is trapped inside Room 1244 by Zhuang Wen!”

Zhuang Ren’s body shook from emotions. Han Fei didn’t say anything and turned his attention back to the game. Room 1244 was like a hellhole, covered with curses and talismans. Han Fei opened all the rooms and found no trace of Zhuang Ren’s family. Eventually only the main bedroom was left. “This is the last room!” Zhuang Ren’s heart rose, he had been waiting for this moment for a long time.

The bedroom door opened to reveal not Zhuang Ren’s family but a little girl. She sat beside the window with her legs crossed. She had innocence on her face, unaffected by her environment.

“A girl?” Zhuang Ren stared at the screen and the fight went out from him. He appeared to grow old in mere moments. He stood flummoxed for seconds before he sighed and turned towards the bedroom. It sounded like he was searching for the tapes for Han Fei to prove his innocence. After Zhuang Ren left, Han Fei’s character approached the girl and initiated the conversation prompt.

The girl didn’t seem to have a name, she didn’t know who her parents were but she did know that this was not her home. Her home was under the balcony bricks. When he obtained the key to Room 1244, Han Fei’s character had already been affected by Death Curse. He didn’t waste time and hurried to the balcony. The balcony door was covered with talismans and the balcony itself was painted with ritualistic symbols. Han Fei controlled the character to check the brick one by one. When he reached the brick in the middle of the balcony, the game hinted at him that he had found something. He selected for his character to interact with it. He peeled it loose. At that moment, the dawning sun shone into the space underneath the brick, there was a corpse of a baby under there. The moment the corpse was discovered, every talisman in Room 1244 was dyed red. The screen turned red like all the hatred was triggered in that moment. The Death Curse on Han Fei’s ingame character was forcibly triggered and he melted into a pool of blood.

'Why was there a nameless, parentless girl inside Room 1244? And the source of all the hatred is a baby corpse?' Bad omen rose in Han Fei's heart. Han Fei put down the controller and called Li Xue's again. "Did you find anything else?"

"I hope you can help me investigate something. Zhuang Wen who died 14 years ago, can you still get her coroner's report? I want to know if she has given birth before she died."

"Okay."

"There's one more thing. Do you have the right to compare Zhuang Wen's DNA with a living person? I suspect Zhuang Wen might be the horror movie director, Zhuang Ren's daughter. I hope you can look into the citizenry database for me."

"I'll need to submit a request for that, I'll reply to you in 10 minutes." Then Li Xue hung up. At that moment, Zhuang Ren came out from the bedroom. He fixed all the equipment and played the tapes for Han Fei to see. "We suspected someone was sabotaging us because problems kept happening at the set. Therefore, we decided to put security cameras around the set and these were the things we caught." Zhuang Ren pointed at the aged computer screen and the videos that came on were quite creepy.

A very beautiful female actor walked into the set alone. She appeared to be talking to someone, occasionally flirting and showing some skin. The 'someone' appeared to know the presence of the camera because they hid at the blind spot. Then we could see clearly, Yuan Shuang was dragged away by some force deeper into the set.

"Where did you shoot the movie?"

"It was at the building in this neighbourhood, which was bought by Immortal Pharma. At the time, they hadn't made the purchase and the building wasn't yet sealed." Zhuang Ren pointed at the screen, "She lost her mind after that. She kept telling me many strange things but I had no idea what she was talking about!"

"Wait, the same building where the Director of Immortal Pharma spent his childhood?"

“Yes, but when we made the movie, he had long since moved away. Now that you mention it, that is quite a strange coincidence. In fact, not long after the actor went insane, Immortal Pharma bought the building with a fee way above the market price. They sealed off the place and no one was able to enter it since.” Zhuang Ren had something else to say but Li Xue’s call came in then. Han Fei picked up his phone and walked out of the room.

“Zhuang Ren and Zhuang Wen have no blood relationship, but we did find something weird. According to the database, Zhuang Wen’s biological father is unknown.” Li Xue had helped verify Zhuang Ren’s statement. Perhaps Yuan Shuang did run into someone back then and he had been staying in the building where the Director of Immortal Pharma grew up.

“Have you checked Zhuang Wen’s coroner’s report?”

“She wasn’t pregnant when she died but she did give birth before. After her death, her family was investigated but they all soon died in the same manner as Zhuang Ren did so the case ended there. The house they owned is a famous haunted apartment and has been left empty until now.”

“Can we go over there to look? I’ve discovered some disturbing details and I hope to verify them in person.” When Han Fei first encountered the jumper woman, the system told him that she was a monster who failed to overcome her hatred. Just what had to have happened to a person to morph into something like that?

After getting Li Xue’s permission, Han Fei returned to the game. Room 1244 appeared to be a dead end. No matter how hard Han Fei tried, he couldn’t clear it. His progress was stuck.

3 hours later, Li Xue and her colleagues who got the key to Zhuang Wen’s former home arrived. They brought Han Fei to a rather high-end neighbourhood at Xin Lu. With the land owner leading the way, they came to the top floor of the building. The moment they opened the door, they were shocked by the dusty, innumerable talismans inside the room. As they entered the room, everyone including Han Fei had to take a moment. The room was similar to Room 1244 in the Ziggurat game. The walls were painted with strange curses and there were many grotesque and eerie objects.

“This place is haunted and no one dares to rent it. I hear the last family all jumped to their deaths. It’s a horrifying place.” The land owner didn’t dare to even enter. After a moment of observation, Han Fei pushed open the door to the storage room. There was a small bed with a shackle sitting on it.

He walked out from the storage room and entered the main bedroom. He pulled off the layer of talismans on the balcony door and forced it open. The sun shone on the ground. Han Fei's eyes wandered to the brick in the middle of the balcony.

Li Xue ordered, "Someone put on the gloves and pry this brick loose." As the brick was shattered, a box which was wrapped in strange talismans appeared. It was painted with inexplicable patterns. After removing the talismans and ropes, the box cracked and shattered to reveal the bones of a baby inside.

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The baby's bones were buried in the middle of the balcony. It was wrapped in talismans. The owner of the house saw this small creature as some kind of monster, the source of all the tragedy and thus had contained it with layers of talismans.

"Why would someone treat a baby like this? Based on the size, it should be only several weeks old." Li Xue had her colleagues take the bones back for analysis while she took out her phone to report the findings to her superior.

Walking back into the living room, Han Fei glanced into the narrow storage room and all the info started to link in his mind. 'The Exorcist locked Zhuang Wen up at home for a whole year to 'cure' her. But why must her movements be limited? What happened to Zhuang Wen in that year? Was the baby under the brick her child?' The baby inside the balcony was the source of her hatred. It was because of the baby that the jumper woman possessed enough hatred to break through the limits of a lingering spirit!

Even if her memory was spliced, she could overpower the red dress. Hatred was the source of her power, her everything. The hatred had grown beyond the jumper woman's control and she became the janitor at Building 1, cleaning up all the living creatures that she saw. She would appear half an hour after an outsider entered the building. From these observations, it was clear that Ziggurat's manager had greatly manipulated the jumper woman, or rather, the jumper woman became the thing that she was, due to the deliberate planning of the manager. The jumper woman was one of Butterfly's creations.

Taking in the smelly mattress, and the shackle, Han Fei was chilled to his core. Being in this house, the line between the cryptic world and the real world blurred. The house radiated an oppressive feeling. Han Fei couldn't imagine how Zhuang Wen managed to spend a whole year inside that suffocating storage room. 'The cryptic world is the reflection of the real world. How horrid it is here is how terrifying it will be there.'

Han Fei and the rest waited for an hour before Li Xue's colleagues came back with the news. After analysis and comparison, the baby's mother was Zhuang Wen and the father was the Exorcist's son. As they investigated deeper, something surprising popped up. The Exorcist's son had crossed paths with the killer of the human jigsaw case 14 years ago! No one expected these 2 completely different men to have known each other!

With the citizenry database as well as the photon computer, as long as it had been recorded, such information could be found easily by law enforcement. 14 years ago, before the Exorcist's family died, Exorcist's son often visited and donated to the orphanage run by Weep's father. Around the same time, the young Meng Changan often frequented that orphanage as well. This might be a coincidence but when dealing with the Butterfly, there were no coincidences. The police immediately launched an investigation into the private orphanage, the goal was to check who was there 14 years ago. When Meng Changan and the Exorcist's son appeared there, who else was there as well.

Meng Changan was moulded by the Butterfly, it was probably the same case with the Exorcist's son. While the police exchanged information, Han Fei felt his limbs go numb. If the Exorcist's son was Butterfly's follower, then many things could be explained. With Butterfly's cruelty, it would have done anything to achieve its goal.

Han Fei had played the Ziggurat game and had seen what was inside Room 1244. The Exorcist's family of 3 were all detained and trapped, they were punished the same way Zhuang Wen was. They most likely had done something incredibly horrible to Zhuang Wen.

"The 'exorcism' on Zhuang Wen was just a manifestation of human sin. Based on the baby and Zhuang Wen's time of death, Zhuang Wen was pregnant about a year before she died. She was trapped inside the storage room after her baby bulge couldn't be covered up anymore, that was the real reason behind the 'exorcism'." Li Xue concluded.

"Their sins might be deeper than you dare to imagine." Han Fei said under his breath. He knew the female livestreamer and Zhuang Wen died on the same day, April 4th wasn't a coincidence, the Butterfly had arranged this. But how to make 2 victims choose to commit suicide on the same day?

Han Fei didn't know much about the female livestreamer but he had a guess about Zhuang Wen's situation. Based on Zhuang Wen's circumstances, it was not hard to imagine that the poor girl would have sought death as an escape so why did she wait until April 4th? Perhaps the Exorcist used the baby to keep her alive. He probably told her that she would be able to see her child once the ghost was

chased out of her. Since Zhuang Wen was young, all she had was her sickly mother, she didn't have a good childhood. Understandably, she wouldn't want the same to happen to her child so she held onto hope for her baby. But on April 4th, the Exorcist's family told Zhuang Wen the truth. Her baby had been killed a long time ago because it was the source of all tragedy. A ritual had been performed on it and it was buried for everyone's safety.

After finding that out, Zhuang Wen's lingering hope turned into hatred. Now that she had lost everything, she chose death. The world lost that poor girl and the cryptic world gained a new Lingering Hatred—the jumper woman.

Considering the Butterfly's involvement, Han Fei believed this was the truth. "However even after everything she had been put through, she ended up as a failed product. All of her pain and torment were for nothing, even her despair was just a tool." To the Butterfly, the jumper woman was a failure, or else it wouldn't have progressed to the creation of Little Eight. Han Fei's fists closed as his hatred towards Butterfly intensified. 'If the Butterfly is not apprehended, more tragedies like the one that happened to the jumper woman would continue. The creature that condescended on humanity would do anything.'

After knowing everything that happened to the jumper woman, Han Fei parted from the police. He returned to Pear Blossom Neighbourhood to try to complete the game while he still had the time. But just as he reached the Ziggurat map again, Huang Yin's call came. "Han Fei! Feng Ziyu has gone missing!"

"Missing? Have you contacted the police?" Han Fei was definitely not expecting that.

"I have. They're investigating it." Huang Yin said in a worried tone, "I have a very bad feeling about this, I believe the Butterfly might have Ziyu. On the night before he disappeared, he sent me some messages about this repeating dream he had been having. He felt there was something beside his bed and he reminded me to be careful of my own safety."

"Forward all the messages that he has sent you to me. Do not miss out on anything!" Feng Ziyu was close to the tester who went insane, he was also the only surviving human being who had been to the surface world's Ziggurat. He knew how to protect himself, he had been keeping a low profile and very few people knew about him.

Huang Yin sent the messages to Han Fei, when the latter saw the first message, he sucked in a cold breath.

“I have been having this repeated nightmare recently. I dreamt that I was walking out from darkness, a voice told me that the exit was not far ahead.

“I couldn’t wake up, I could only keep on walking. Eventually I did see a door in the darkness.

“The door was connected to an apartment building. All the room numbers in this building start with 4 and the room that I just walked out of was Room 4444.”

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The messages left behind by Feng Ziyu would be incomprehensible to most but Han Fei. “Room 4444?” Han Fei noticed that the Room numbers at Ziggurat had a certain numbering rule to the,—The 1st number was the Building Number; the 2nd and 3rd numbers were the floor number; while the 4th number was the room tally. However, if all four buildings at Ziggurat only had 24 floors, then there wouldn’t be a Room 4444. ‘When I accepted the Death Curse mission, the hint given to me was Room 4444 and now Feng Ziyu is missing and he dreamt that he was in Room 4444...

‘Based on my earlier prediction, there should be an opening connecting the cryptic and surface worlds at Ziggurat, could that opening be Room 4444? It was how Butterfly managed to keep sending non-locals into the cryptic world and turn Ziggurat into its lair? When I obtained the key to Room 1244, the term used by the system was unique. It said I had obtained the key to Heart Room 1244. Looks like it might be more symbolic than I thought. Every room at Ziggurat might be the ‘heart’ of an individual, containing their past and secrets. If that is the case, whose heart did Room 4444 correspond to? The Butterfly or Fu Sheng?’

Han Fei memorized every word in Feng Ziyu’s messages because he might see the man at Ziggurat that night. ‘If I can find Feng Ziyu and rescue him, I’ll get to know the secrets of Room 4444. That might help me get to know the Butterfly better.’ Feng Ziyu’s messages showed that he was at Building 4 and that was the most dangerous building at Ziggurat. Not only the Butterfly but the Singer was there as well.

“Han Fei, do you think it was because of me that the Butterfly came after Ziyu?” Huang Yin’s voice came from the phone, “The Butterfly appears to have the ability to look through people’s memories when it is in their dreams. It should know everything about me but it didn’t come after me but instead it was Ziyu who has gone missing.” Huang Yin’s memory was too normal and that was abnormal for the Butterfly, therefore, its first target was not Huang Yin. Of course, Han Fei didn’t tell Huang Yin that. Cluelessness

was the best shield for Huang Yin. "I'll handle things with Ziyu, but what about you? Did you still dream about your mother at night?"

"Not only in dreams, she appears to have stepped out into reality. It's hard to explain. For example, I've dreamt about her pouring a glass of water for me and then when I woke up, there would be a filled cup of water on my bedside table."

"Perhaps it was the Butterfly who infiltrated your mind during REM sleep and made you pour the water yourself. After you woke up, you wouldn't have any recollection of it."

"Perhaps."

"Brother Huang, Butterfly's influence will slowly move from the dreamscape to reality. You can use it to lessen your guilt towards your mother but remember this, it is ultimately a madman pretending to be your mother, you mustn't ever forget about that!" Huang Yin's words concerned Han Fei. When Butterfly went all out on Huang Yin, it would be the moment when Huang Yin's true vulnerability would be exposed. Butterfly would take the wildest revenge on Huang Yin for 'fooling' it for so long.

"Understood."

After hanging up, Han Fei pondered many things but the speed by which he controlled his character didn't slow. He cleared the maps again and again to reach Ziggurat but always ended up dead inside Room 1244. This series of endless death was like some kind of omen, it was quite unsettling. At 10 pm, Han Fei woke up Zhuang Ren who had fallen asleep. He reminded the director to be careful before he left.

As he exited the neighbourhood, he was greeted by the large virtual screen in the sky. The number had dropped down to 4, meaning there were 4 more days to the OB of Perfect Life. There was a celebratory atmosphere in the air as the public discussed this game which would change the era. As the countdown approached, many players couldn't reign in their excitement anymore. Han Fei stood out against the ecstatic crowd. Under the shadow of the virtual screen, he walked into the darkness.

After he got home, Han Fei picked up the books on his table to read. In this era, there were not that many readers left. Han Fei didn't like to read in the past either, but after starting Perfect Life, he fell in love with this obsolete form of entertainment. Only with a real book in his hand could he find some

peace. "Psychopathy is hard to define. The general consensus is that psychopathy originates from trauma and pain, or the malfunction of hormones..."

At midnight, Han Fei took one glance out the window. He put down the book, crawled into the gaming hub and put on the gaming helmet. "Time is counting down for me. Playing the game with my life on the line, it's quite exciting."

Han Fei who fell back into the cryptic world was not only fighting for himself, he also wanted to save everyone from the evil clutches of the Butterfly. The story of the jumper woman affected him deeply and the sad thing was hers was not an exception to the rule.

The smell of decay crawled into his nostrils and Han Fei's eyes flew open. The top floor of Building 1 was crawling with blood vessels and the walls cracked. While Han Fei was away, the conflict appeared to have escalated. Without wasting any time, Han Fei rushed towards his destination. He remembered where he stood when he logged off and his location in relation to Room 1244. Several seconds later, Han Fei found himself standing before Room 1244. He took out the key and stuck it into the keyhole. Han Fei could only leave the game after he completed a mission and stayed for 3 hours, therefore, everything came second to completing a mission.

Han Fei had a clear assessment of his situation. Only when the 'exit' button lit up could he explore the building more fearlessly. The key covered in black curses slowly turned. As the blood red anti-theft door opened, the black curse on the key crawled onto Han Fei's palm. But to Han Fei's surprise, when the black curse came up to the blood red pattern on the back of his arm, it stopped. 'The bloody pattern is similar to the ones on Big Sin, is it helping me?'

In any case, now was not the time to ponder that. Han Fei pushed the anti-theft door open and walked in. The yellowed talismans slipped from the door. As Han Fei entered Room 1244, the notification from the system came.

"Notification for Player 0000! You've completed Grade F Hidden Mission—If I touch you, you'll die! Obtained 3 free skill points! Obtained unique mission reward—Welcoming Present from Heart Room 1244.

"Welcoming Present from Heart Room 1244: Every object inside Room 1244 contains the memory of its owner, you can choose one and take it away with you. Warning! Selecting the right object will help you increase friendliness level with the owner of Room 1244 but if you select the wrong thing, then she might chase after you forever.

“Notification for Player 0000! You’ve successfully reached level 13, obtained 1 free attribute point!”

Ziggurat was a Grade E Hidden Map. It was highly dangerous but the missions here also provided a lot of EXP. Of course, it also helped that Han Fei was severely underleveled. After all, a normal level 12 player would still be at the Happiness Neighbourhood, so after completing 2 consecutive hidden missions at Ziggurat, Han Fei earned enough EXP to reach level 13.

Even though his overall level was low, thanks to the buff from Midnight Butcher, his stamina was passable. After adding the new attribute point to stamina, Han Fei now had 19 stamina points. The increase in strength was good but the important thing was now he could run faster.

Chapter 325

325 Zhuang Wen

The yellow talismans were written in bloody words. The peeling paint hid black symbols. Burnt paper money littered the living room and various pictures scattered the ground. Han Fei picked up a picture closest to him. It had a woman in shackles, the shackles around her ankles were tied to chains. Her stomach was bulging. She kept her head lowered so her hair covered her face. With one hand supporting her body, her other hand reached towards the camera, as if to snatch it away.

The blackened mattress, the fair skin; the thick shackles, the thin arms; the model didn’t want to be on camera, the photographer clicked the shutter endlessly. It was just a picture but everything was exposed so clearly and brutally.

The sound of metal clashing came from the bedroom. The thin thread tied to the axle moved, causing the bells that strung from it to jingle. A man’s croaks came from inside the room. Underlining the man’s voice was a woman’s scream. It was so gut-wrenching that the pain couldn’t be measured by normal standards anymore. Holding the picture in his hand, Han Fei slowly moved around the living room, he couldn’t be sure if the jumper woman was inside the room or not.

“This place is bizarre.” Strange and incoherent sentences were written all over the walls. The walls were also covered with talismans. The doors of the furniture were all left open, they looked like open caskets in the dark. Han Fei had been to Room 1244 in the Ziggurat game and in real life but neither places were as oppressive as the room in the cryptic world. The moment he stepped through the door, Han Fei

immediately noticed the difference about this room. Every single object in this room was laden with something scary. The horrifying wails were still ongoing. The jingling of the bells was maddening and the man chanted faster and louder. Avoiding the pictures on the ground, Han Fei slowly approached the main bedroom.

A voodoo doll made from human hair dangled above the door. The bedroom door wasn't fully closed so Han Fei stood outside and glanced through the gap. The main bedroom was decorated like a ceremonial altar. The picture of Zhuang Wen's mother hung on the wall. Zhuang Wen, who was just a child, knelt on the ground, crying. Her head was pressed to the ground by an extremely ugly man. The man was writing some kind of strange characters on her back. As he wrote, he mumbled incoherently on his lips. His wording was unusual but Han Fei got the meaning for part of it. The gist was that the ghost who possessed Zhuang Wen's mother had now moved to Zhuang Wen and she had to be 'purified'. What happened next was suffocatingly inhuman. Han Fei saw the man take out a carving knife. He knew this was a virtual recollection of Zhuang Wen's memory but he still pushed open the door to stop the ceremony.

As Han Fei opened the door, a girl's voice came from behind him. "Who are you?"

Han Fei who was incredibly tense was startled and he whipped his head around. A little girl stood behind him. She was very cute, especially her eyes, they were bright and soft, they showed interest towards everything in the world.

"I'm going to save the girl being bullied in there." Han Fei answered honestly. The girl scrunched up her face in confusion, "Is there another girl here?"

"Wasn't she..." Han Fei turned back to the main bedroom. The picture on the wall no longer featured Zhuang Wen's mother but Zhuang Wen herself. The portrait of Zhuang Wen in the bedroom was different from other pictures of her that scattered the living room. Zhuang Wen in the black and white portrait looked relatively normal. Underneath the portrait were 2 human-sized paper dolls, they were covered in symbols and words. Before the paper dolls knelt a pair of male and female.

A middle-aged man who was extremely ugly was carving something into their flesh. The words he carved were similar to the ones on the paper dolls. The middle-aged man was probably performing some kind of ritual to transfer the 2 children's tragedy onto the pair of paper dolls. The man mumbled things that he once said to Zhuang Wen. The middle-aged man dipped the tip of the carving knife into the cinnabar and slowly carved the evil-warding words on the man and woman's bodies. The pair kept screaming in pain, the man's ugly face was filled with heartache but he had to do this. Seeing the exorcist's children being punished, Han Fei's expression hardened.

The girl beside Han Fei was confused. She assumed Han Fei didn't know about the details so she explained, "They are all bad guys, don't feel sorry for them."

"I'm not feeling sorry for them, I just felt unsettled because that woman was also once treated like this." Han Fei silently closed the main bedroom door. As he chatted with the girl, he roamed around to explore the other rooms. Soon he discovered something interesting. Behind every door was Zhuang Wen's painful memories, Han Fei could see the many horrible things that Zhuang Wen had been put through. But whenever the little girl came close, the events inside the room would change and it would instead show the exorcist's family being punished.

The room at Ziggurat was an anchor for its tenant's memory, but Heart Room 1244 didn't seem to want to show those bad memories to this little girl. After taking a tour of all the rooms, Han Fei stopped before the balcony. He was reminded of the conversation he had with the girl inside the Ziggurat game. He turned to study the innocent girl. Han Fei's lips opened but he couldn't bring himself to follow the script written in the Ziggurat game. He ruffled the girl's hair, "Are you really happy staying here, watching these things day in and day out?"

Blinking her eyes, the girl didn't seem to understand Han Fei. She thought for a long time before shaking her head.

"Since you're not happy here, why not leave this place to see the world outside? There are many things that you haven't seen before outside the door. I cannot guarantee that they will all be good but at least some of them will be able to bring you true happiness." Han Fei couldn't change what had already happened in the real world, all he could do was to comfort the little girl in the cryptic world.

"Leave this place?" The girl hesitated. As she pondered that, the talismans on the balcony door started to tremble before they started to peel off and fall. Han Fei knew the source of the jumper woman's hatred was outside in the balcony so this reaction was probably due to what he said. He immediately grabbed the girl's hand and backed away. The bells that strung all over the room jiggled crazily. The normal-looking balcony door started to vibrate like it was about to shatter.

"This room is too dangerous, I will bring you somewhere safe." Picking up the girl, Han Fei didn't go out into the balcony but started to run out of Room 1244!

As he left the room, the notification sang in his head, "Notification for Player 0000! The mission reward that you've selected in Room 1244 is—Zhuang Wen!"

"After Zhuang Wen's child died, unable to accept the truth, she manifested the last of her humanity as a little girl and perhaps this little girl is the real Zhuang Wen. This is Zhuang Wen's motherly instinct kicking in, even though she has become a monster dominated by hatred, she was willing to give up everything pure and good within her to her child.

"Warning! You've taken the last piece of Zhuang Wen's humanity, you will be forever haunted by Zhuang Wen until you die!"

Before the system even finished, the talismans on the balcony door were reduced to ashes and an eerie voice announced from behind it. "If I touch you, you'll die!"

Chapter 326

326 Accidental Help

Han Fei didn't expect the jumper woman to show up so soon. He also didn't expect to pick Zhuang Wen's last humanity as his mission reward and brought it out from the room either. 'She's going to chase me until I die?!' Blood seeped out from the gap in the door. As the balcony door was about to explode, Han Fei immediately picked up the girl and ran downstairs. "Let me touch you and die! Die! Die!" With the shriek, all the bells inside Room 1244 shattered. The blood trails crawled through the room like snakes. The seal in this scariest room was being forcibly broken!

No outsider had been able to enter Room 1244 much less take something out from it. The jumper woman was mad, her key was stolen and now even her last piece of humanity was taken away!

Han Fei had done things Butterfly both dared and did not dare to do.

"What to do now? I thought you were the soul of Zhuang Wen's child, I didn't expect you to be Zhuang Wen herself!" Holding the innocent girl in his hand, Han Fei raced for his life even though he had just literally started the game. A normal person wouldn't be able to relax in such an intense Iyashikei game.

“Give me back my child!” The loud voice echoed out from the abyss of Room 1244 and reverberated all over Building 1. It had not been half an hour but the jumper woman appeared to have shattered some kind of binding. She dragged her broken body covered in curses and crawled out from Room 1244. This time she didn’t fall from the balcony but instead used the front door to chase after Han Fei. Perhaps for the jumper woman, this didn’t mean anything but the little girl in Han Fei’s embrace had seen everything. A glint entered her clear eyes. Leaving that room appeared to be the wish once buried inside her heart. And Han Fei had accidentally helped her fulfil that wish.

The jumper woman was trapped inside her room when she was alive and she had never really ‘left’ her room after death. After she was trapped at Ziggurat, Butterfly never gave her the opportunity to leave from the front door either because every time there was a new outsider, she would have to fall from the balcony again and again!

Room 1244 was locked and the jumper woman had to pull the key out from her own heart to unlock it, but that was easier said than done because whenever she tried to touch it, her horrible pasts would come back to haunt her. The jumper woman was trapped inside Room 1244, if someone wanted to help her, they had to risk their lives to pull the key out from her heart but obtaining the key was just the first step. Furthermore, it was already hard enough to survive at Ziggurat. No one would be dumb enough to save a Lingering Hatred, even at the cryptic world, they were treated as ‘monsters’. So it was the jumper woman’s fate to be forever trapped in Room 1244 and became the manager’s tool to clean up Building 1.

But the miracle arrived in the form of Han Fei. He plucked away the woman’s key for the sake of his mission but it was pure coincidence that he grabbed the little girl and ran. With the stars lining up, Han Fei accidentally helped the jumper woman fulfil one of her biggest wishes, she managed to walk out from the house of evil which entrapped her. Complicated emotions entered the girl’s eyes and her body was changing. However, Han Fei was too busy running to save himself to notice all these. The jumper woman was the scariest presence at Building 1, only a perfect red dress could stop her. Han Fei didn’t know what happened at Building 1 after he left yesterday night, his safest bet now was to hurry towards the guard room.

‘Zhuang Wen has been split into different parts, the jumper woman, the divorced mother, the syringe woman and this girl from Room 1244. To have her regain her consciousness, I’m afraid I’ll have to reunite all of her split consciousnesses.’ Han Fei had attempted that many times in the Ziggurat game but he failed every time. But the cryptic world was different from that game, here, he didn’t have the chance to start over. If he died here, it would be truly over.

‘The livestreamer lives on the 8th floor but it’s too early to go find her. My main goal should be the red dress inside the guard room.’ Noisy footsteps echoed in the stairwell. With literal death chasing after

him, Han Fei couldn't care less about subtlety anymore. When Han Fei rushed past floor 18, the safety door suddenly opened. The businessman in mourning attire looked into the stairwell and immediately turned around, "A gentleman makes money the right way."

Han Fei continued his escape. After Han Fei passed by, a waterfall of redness swallowed the stairwell. The shattered bells, paper money rolled inside the storm of curses and talismans as the jumper woman careened downwards. The businessman who saw this from inside the safety door was stunned speechless. The jumper woman's only target was Han Fei and because of that, the businessman was spared. After Han Fei and the jumper woman disappeared, he picked up the scattered paper money on the ground and hurried home.

Han Fei created a large commotion as he hurried downstairs but there were not many tenants who were willing to come out to check on the situation. Practically no one dared to stop Han Fei. Han Fei reached the 4th floor, when he was worried about whether there were still people inside the guard room, he saw the door open and Xiao Fang walk out.

"Brother Bai, I knew it was you from the sounds of footsteps!" Xiao Fang said happily. Brother Hwa poked his head out too. His face was pale but he sighed in relief after he saw Han Fei. "It's great that you're still alive. Quick, come in, we have many things to tell you."

"There's no time for that! Toss me the red dress! Now!" Han Fei didn't have time for a reunion. "The jumper woman is following behind me!"

Thankfully, Xiao Fang and Brother Hwa were already used to Han Fei's scale of doing things. They ran back into the room and came out with a red box. "The red dress is inside this box. She has stitched herself back together but there's something wrong with her..."

"Give me and close the door!" Before Brother Hwa could finish, Han Fei snatched the box with his free hand and raced past the corridor. He still had the girl in his embrace. The horrifying wails soon followed. Brother Hwa and Xiao Fang didn't have the time to close the door and so they saw the crazed jumper woman crawl past them. The stinging smell of blood almost made them faint.

"My God! What has Brother Bai done to the jumper woman?" Brother Hwa and Xiao Fang looked at the blood-dyed corridor and they shivered. They didn't dare to imagine the possible answers...

Chapter 327

327 The Hapless Businessman

Han Fei didn't have the time to care about Xiao Fang or Brother Hwa. His mind was only filled with the image of the jumper woman's broken body chasing after him!

'Calm down! I've already led the girl out of the room, this is a rare opportunity, I should make use of that! Yes, be calm! To help Zhuang Wen regain her sensibility, I need to attempt to reunite all of her separate consciousnesses. But first, I need to get to the 8th floor to find the female livestreamer and have her put on the red dress. Only a completed red dress will be able to help me stop the jumper woman. While she is preoccupied, I need to find the divorced mother and the syringe woman as well as their children. After that...'

The howling wind drilled into his ears. The scent of blood instantly enveloped Han Fei like a wave. The jumper woman had caught up to him!

Different from resentment, the presence of the jumper woman was darker and colder, that should be her hatred. To evolve from resentment to hatred, there was a gap that one had to cross, even though the jumper woman failed the evolution, she was still a Lingering Hatred. Unable to avoid it, Han Fei raised the wooden box above his head.

Bang! Wooden chips scattered everywhere. The blood red box was shattered by the jumper woman's twisted arm. The hand covered in Death Curse reached towards Han Fei but it found resistance. Blood coagulated and a bloody wind gathered in the corridor. The red dress, which had the brightest crimson Han Fei had ever seen, appeared to block the Death Curse. In the narrow corridor, two forces collided.

"Give me back my child!" The Death Curse on the jumper woman was boiling, the cursed black characters stuck together, morphing into new shapes. After her last piece of humanity was taken away by Han Fei, ironically enough, the jumper woman no longer just had death and destruction in her mind, as evidenced by the fact that she had demanded something else for the first time. The jumper woman who had been under the Butterfly's control started to possess her own wants. Compelled by extreme anger, her wounded heart started to beat again.

Han Fei had no idea how big of a trouble he had caused. After all, not even the Butterfly dared to approach the jumper woman's child. But Han Fei directly stole away the jumper woman's most important thing, causing the door to Room 1244 to be shattered as a result. If Butterfly didn't come to Building 1 soon, this place would eventually be demolished by Han Fei and the jumper woman. Both the jumper woman and the red dress were not the complete version of themselves but their conflict was

already large enough to overwhelm Building 1. Normally, the manager would have come to intervene but until now Han Fei had not seen the manager.

Blood red cracks appeared on the wall, the nearest doors were torn apart like they were made of paper. The red dress once again bought precious time for Han Fei. He carried the little girl and ran down the corridor to reach the other stairwell.

“Open up! I’ve found your child!” Han Fei knocked on the door of the divorced woman. The boy who hid behind the safety door poked his head out confusedly. He was perfectly hidden, so why would this strange man say that he had been found? “Open the door!”

The footsteps came and the divorced mother opened the door. She looked afraid.

“Here, this is your child!” Han Fei hugged the girl and ran into the room.

“But my child is a boy...” The divorced mother still had more to say but suddenly the girl in Han Fei’s embrace reached out to caress the mother’s face. When her tiny finger touched the woman’s cheek, the divorced mother was stunned. And a tear leaked out from her eyes. She didn’t even realize she was crying. She couldn’t remember anything, but the tears wouldn’t stop. “Impossible, my child is a boy, he always goes around to find the key and leaves the room when I’m asleep at night. I love him dearly so why does he insist on leaving me?” The divorced mother kept wiping away the tears on her face but the tears wouldn’t stop.

“Your memory has been tampered with, you are Zhuang Wen! And this little girl is your humanity, your most precious thing!” Han Fei used his free hand to grab the divorced mother by her shoulder and shake her violently, “Please remember it! For the sake of your child!” Han Fei screamed louder. The divorced mother’s face changed, the place where the tears touched gave birth to a new layer of skin. She was going through unbearable pain until she finally shrieked.

“Stop lying to yourself! It’s time to face your real self! You represent Zhuang Wen’s spirit of maternity! You are her most important, inseparable part of her consciousness!” Han Fei’s voice echoed in the living room. Zhuang Wen’s mother swung her head low and her hair covered her face. The transformation had already begun but she didn’t radiate too strong of a presence. Just as Han Fei thought this divorced mother was just an Animated Regret and attempted to drag her away with him, the bedroom door opened. A pale face poked out from inside the door, then the face rippled to form a tiny ghost. Soon, another face appeared, followed by another and another. The army of tiny ghosts was forming!

For so many years, the divorced mother had brought back a small ghost home every night and took them as her dead child!

The oppressive negative energy came out from the bedroom. Han Fei's hand on the divorced woman loosened, "Forgive my rudeness, but I was only concerned about you, you represent Zhuang Wen's spirit of maternity..." Before he finished, the divorced mother lifted her head to stare at the little girl. Her lips trembled as she said, "Give my child to me..."

"You're still hung up on that? I can return you the child but not now!" Staring at the tiny ghosts that started to fill up the house, Han Fei decided to exit the room and rushed upstairs! "Stop chasing after me! I'm trying to help you!" The divorced mother's front door was rammed through by the tiny ghosts and innumerable children handprints appeared on Han Fei's back. "No way? A memory with just a motherly instinct can be so strong?!"

Without any opportunity to rest, Han Fei gritted his teeth and raced to the 18th floor. Before he got there, he heard the businessman's helpless sigh, "It's you again? I've already moved from the left stairwell to the right stairwell. Don't you need to sleep at night?"

"Get out of my way!" Han Fei growled at the businessman as he charged up to the 22nd floor, where the syringe woman was.

Seeing the state that Han Fei was in, the businessman took a silent step back. He grumbled sadly, "A gentleman should never raise his voice for no reason... I've already tried my best to avoid you, how is my fault that you keep running into me?"

Chapter 328

328 The Woman in the Red Dress

The businessman was feeling helpless, he had a few words of complaints when he heard rustling footsteps coming from downstairs. Turning to look, his already bloodless face paled further. Endless ghosts of children were rushing up the stairs, carrying a maddened woman between them.

“Another one?” The businessman hurried back through the safety door. “Who the hell was that man? I know the security guards here don’t last long but I’ve not seen a guard who is chased by so many ghosts before. How many guards were there already?” The businessman counted on his finger and occasionally looked through the safety door.

Ignoring the other tenants, Han Fei finally arrived at the 22nd floor. The crying of children drifted into his ears. The bruised boy this time didn’t stand inside the stairwell but instead beside the safety door. The syringe woman had learned from her lesson. To prevent her boy from being stolen away too easily, she had the boy stand closer to the safety door. To her surprise, Han Fei returned. The face of the crazy woman peeked through the window on the safety door. She had the syringe raised. The moment Han Fei laid his hand on the boy, she would plunge the syringe through Han Fei’s brain.

“Wake up please! This little girl is your real child, not him!” Han Fei rushed past the wounded boy, shoved the safety door open and grabbed the syringe woman’s wrist. Using Soul Depth Touch, Han Fei became more attuned to the syringe woman’s emotions. The syringe woman was also a manifestation of Zhuang Wen’s maternity instinct but it had been corroded to a different form. The divorced mother was the version of motherhood Zhuang Wen strove towards, while the syringe woman was a reflection of Zhuang Wen’s own mother. She couldn’t shake the reliance on medication, believed too easily into the exorcist’s words, used her child as a bargaining chip, she was crazy and unreasonable. With Han Fei’s hand around her wrist, the syringe woman’s eyes slowly widened. ‘Last time you kidnapped my child and this time you wish to kidnap me?’

Before the raised syringe reached the intended target, a chilly hand touched the syringe woman’s face. The madness on her face softened, some kind of instinct awakened in the broken heart. The syringe woman was prepared when the safety door was blasted through. She had already raised the syringe to poke at Han Fei. But her hand froze as the pair of confused eyes stared at the little girl.

“Where... is my child?” Her lips mumbled, something appeared to have returned to her.

“We’ll run as we talk!” While holding onto the little girl, he grabbed the wounded boy and continued to run. The syringe woman stood there stunned until the divorced mother came with the group of her ‘children’. The syringe woman’s chest rose and fell like something was crawling out from her heart. “My child, they have stolen my child, that is my child!” Her pupils shook as her limbs morphed. Her nails became as sharp as knives. She dropped the syringe and joined the chase after Han Fei.

‘The jumper woman who was trapped inside Room 1244 has voluntarily left the room of nightmare; the divorced mother who never left her home to search for her child is now outside; the syringe woman who has always been tormented by medication has abandoned her syringe as well. All 3 of them have

transformed. Some kind of limitation the Butterfly put on their memory has been shattered.' Han Fei's intention was good but the problem was there were now even more people chasing after him. He wasn't sure the red dress could hold back so many 'people'.

'Either way, I need to find the female livestreamer, to have her reunited with the red dress!' With the plan made, Han Fei raced down to the corridor to enter the other stairwell. When he played the Ziggurat game, Han Fei had tried forcing the 3 separate consciousnesses of the jumper woman together. They wouldn't attack each other, but they wouldn't help each other either. It appeared like there were more conditions he needed to meet to make them reform into one. Han Fei assumed the specific condition was the little girl but now he realized that might not be the case.

Han Fei hadn't played the game for that long that night but the amount of exercise he got from this lyashikei game was already larger than most other games. As he ran down and down, the walls and floor that Han Fei passed would be imprinted with red children's handprints. Han Fei was like the harbinger of tragedy. All the tenants could now recognize the sound of Han Fei's footsteps because he wasn't trying to hide them. Then again, whenever the tenants heard Han Fei now, most of them would stay obediently inside their room.

'I'm getting close.' With bloodshot eyes and 2 children in his embrace, Han Fei shouted the female livestreamer's name. As the door opened, he squeezed his feet into the gap.

"How can I help you?" The girl raised her eyes and saw Han Fei.

Before she could say anything else, Han Fei practically shouted at her, "Haven't you been curious about the dead woman in Room 1044? I'll bring you to go meet her! I forgot to tell you but I am too interested in everything supernatural. You haven't left the room since yesterday night, haven't you?"

"No, I haven't. Is there a problem?"

"No problem, just come with me!" Han Fei could hear the sounds coming after him. He picked up the 2 children and ran downstairs. The female livestreamer represented the positivity and kindness of the world but even someone like her had a hard time keeping a positive outlook when she saw the army that chased after Han Fei. The mountain of ghosts rushed down the corridor. It was too late for the girl to regret her decision now. The ghosts had blocked her way back home. The moment she stopped, she would be crushed under the wave of ghost children.

The upper floors were like scenes of tragedies but the lower floors didn't fare any better either.

After a whole night, the red dress had managed to fix herself. She was able to do that thanks to Han Fei's fearlessness. When she was in the most dangerous situation, he risked his life to save her and created a chance for her to escape. She awakened from the wooden box and the first thing that she saw was the jumper woman who injured her the day before. No matter how generous she was, she couldn't suffer this offense anymore.

The fight between the two became more intense than before. The red dress dissolved into threads and each of the threads possessed unsolvable pain and resentment. The jumper woman was desperate to find the little girl so she too didn't hold back. She poured her Death Curse into the red dress. The red dress would get stronger every time she was destroyed. But she had the same problem as the jumper woman, she too wasn't complete. The red dress was like a weapon, missing some key parts.

Underneath the folds of the red dress, a fair woman slowly appeared. Her face had no expression and her skin was fair and flawless. But underneath her flawless skin was endless scars and wounds!

The horrible rumors and words couldn't harm her appearance but they sank right into her flesh. They pierced through her heart. The powerful Death Curse entered the red dress. With each black character on her body, the wound inside her would deepen. The red dress could be stitched back together after it was shredded, but the woman herself could not. All the wounds remained inside her body, including the ones from 14 years ago. Facing the pressure from the whole world, she could no longer hide behind the red dress, she had to face them herself. But she was not complete, she was missing the most instrumental part of her consciousness. How could she be expected to face the darkness of the world when she had no light within her?

A long time ago, there was a light in her but she appeared to have lost that light. To ensure that no accident would happen, the manager at Ziggurat dismembered any ghosts who might pose a threat to it; it only needed tools to heed his orders. And now Han Fei was doing the complete opposite, he was piecing the individual tools back into complete characters.

"Quick! There is now only one way for us to survive!" Han Fei was close to the point of conflict between the jumper woman and the red dress. He turned back to the female livestreamer, she no longer looked as collected as she usually did.

"What is it?"

“I’ll find a way to distract the jumper woman, while you take that opportunity to approach the woman in the red dress! If possible, put the dress on yourself!”

“What?!” The girl didn’t expect Han Fei to say something like that. She was interested in the woman from Room 1044 but she was not going to fight her for her dress.

“Believe me, after you put it on, many things will clarify! The dress is yours to begin with!”

What Han Fei said confused the girl until she laid her eyes on the woman in the red dress. Her heart skipped a beat. An invisible line seemed to connect her and the red dress. “Do not hesitate! You are her! And she is you!” After saying that, Han Fei turned to the jumper woman with the little girl. “Your humanity is here! Your most treasured thing is here!” To help the girl buy some time, Han Fei taunted the Lingering Hatred. Only Han Fei would dare to do something like that.

The jumper woman’s original target was Han Fei. Since he had returned, she disengaged from the red dress immediately. The tattered red dress was covered in Death Cover, the black words were like venomous bugs, eating into the red dress’ arresting patterns. Under the flawless skin, the soul was heavily damaged. The woman in the red dress held her heart, she could feel the pain, the pain which was much harder than the physical pain.

“You... must be very tired. You’ve already done the best you could.” The red dress turned to look behind her, the livestreamer stood several steps away. “Pain, and disappointment tear at your heart, you couldn’t wait to say goodbye to the harsh world. But you still have things holding you back, like your parents’ love, you never got the chance to thank them and really apologize to them.” The female livestreamer looked at the woman in the red dress, her face twisted from pain and suddenly she cried, “It shouldn’t have gone like this...”

The cold heart beat inside the red dress. The livestreamer studied the wounds under the thin skin and she raised her hands towards them. “This is never our choice, was it?” She slowly approached and the girl ultimately reached out to hug the woman in the red dress, to embrace herself.

Chapter 329

329 Death

The Death Curse on the red dress travelled onto the livestreamer but she didn't let go of the woman in the red dress. Rumours and horrible comments turned into knives and pierced out from the red dress woman's skin. The female livestreamer was heavily cut but she still didn't let go. The incurable disease became a poison and seeped into the livestreamer's body. Her beautiful face paled and her skin shriveled like a wilted flower. She lost her health and beauty but yet she didn't let go.

"Nothing will make me let go. I know I have an incurable disease, my parents and doctor never told me when I would die so I was born in the company of despair. But it was also these people who gave me hope to keep on living. I wish to share this hope with more people, to have them see the light!" The wilted bodies melted together. The patterns on the red dress came alive as they washed away the Death Curse. "Even if I am doomed, I will use my own blood to paint out the world's most vibrant red dress. I will keep my head held high, as I walk through the darkness to embrace the dawn!"

The red dress was like the brightest flower blooming in the dark. At that moment, all the red in the world paled in comparison. Resentment, pain and despair were blinded by hope and positivity. The Death Curse was cleansed. The red dress appeared to have shattered something inside her, her body and presence were madly growing. Red dress was slowly approaching Little Eight's state but different from Little Eight, she had absolute control of her own resentment!

The red dress fluttered among the weakening Death Curse, the woman wearing the dress turned to Han Fei who was fending off the jumper woman. A temporary yet impactful image appeared in her mind. The scattered red dress pieces were picked up one by one, and then the man's kind face slowly faded away as she was dropped to safety.

'How could you leave me here all alone?'

'Wait for me, I'll go fetch you.'

'You've saved us earlier so now I'll help you stop her.'

'If I survive this, I hope we can be friends.'

"You were in the trenches of despair yourself, but you insisted on bringing home to others. You... remind me of me."

Hugging the little girl, Han Fei was cornered. When he found himself backed against the wall, a set of footsteps echoed from the other side of the corridor. Before he could turn to look, his sight was dominated by the red dress. An unimaginably large Lingering Spirit rammed into the jumper woman, almost shattering her body!

The Death Curse was knocked away before they crawled out from the jumper woman's body again. As long as she was still alive, the Death Curse would keep on coming. The red dress was rapidly approaching the limit of Large Lingering Spirit, she was now different from the other ghosts.

While the jumper woman was distracted by the red dress, the divorced mother and the syringe woman approached Han Fei. They shared some kind of connection. They could feel each other's emotions but couldn't bind with each other. It was as if there was a needle stuck in their hearts which prevented that from happening. "Why won't this work?" Han Fei turned to the girl in his embrace, "Can you turn them back to normal?" The girl shook her head.

"They treat you as their child, meaning humanity is still very important to them. They should be able to understand each other but there are some problems in the way." Han Fei frowned. 'Zhuang Wen's actual child is dead and it was buried on the balcony in real life. This girl is manifested out as a replacement to that child, so who is currently buried in the balcony of Room 1244?' Han Fei locked onto the key problem. When he was playing the Ziggurat game, he would die instantly if he dug out the dead body on the balcony. With the red dress buying him time, Han Fei carried the little girl and ran back to the top floor. Pushing open the balcony door, everything he saw was sticky blood and scratch marks.

Han Fei took out Rest in Peace to pry open the brick slathered with guts and blood. A wooden box covered in talismans appeared before Han Fei. The box looked the same as the one in real life so much so that Han Fei had a fleeting suspicion that he was back in real life. Carefully taking out the box, Han Fei removed the layers of talisman and eased the lid open. What he saw made Han Fei speechless. The wooden box housed a dead baby. Its entire body was painted with the Death Curse. Other than that, there was a piece of broken butterfly wing in its heart. All the Death Curse originated from that butterfly wing. "This is the source of Zhuang Wen's pain and hatred. The Butterfly went after even a dead baby?"

The soul of the baby had already departed, it was now only a vessel to cultivate the butterfly wing. "Perhaps destroying it will help Zhuang Wen's bodies reunite."

Holding Rest in Peace, Han Fei glanced at the girl beside him. He had no idea whether this was the right solution or not but he didn't have other choices.

“Wait a minute.” The girl suddenly stopped him. She grabbed the box. “Show this to them, they will understand.” The girl represented Zhuang Wen’s lingering humanity. Before Han Fei said anything, she picked up the wooden box and ran. When the talismans on the box were peeled off, the bond between the jumper woman and her other consciousness started to shift.

Han Fei and the girl returned back downstairs. Ignoring Han Fei’s warning, the little girl ran towards the berserk jumper woman with the box.

“Give me back my child!”

“Your child is already dead.” The girl stumbled between the blood and despair, a reflection of Zhuang Wen’s childhood in the exorcist’s home. “It is here, it is dead, it won’t be coming back!” The girl’s words attracted the jumper woman’s attention. As the jumper woman turned to her, she picked up the dead body from inside the box. “You have to stop acting like this, it wouldn’t want its mother to do these crazy things in its name! You should know this better than anyone because you’ve lived through that horrible experience yourself!” Zhuang Wen’s own mother was blinded by a ghost and brought Zhuang Wen into the exorcist’s home.

As the girl pleaded, the syringe woman and the divorced mother slowly calmed down. The jumper woman was the opposite, she became even crazier instead!

She kept repeating the promises of death and murder. She would kill everything she saw, she would drag all the happy people and fall down the building with her. “If I touch you, you’ll die! Die!”

The jumper woman’s Death Curse intensified. She refused to acknowledge her other consciousnesses, in fact, she started to regard them with hatred too!

“You won’t be able to persuade her with words.” Han Fei walked to the girl’s side.

“After you destroy the body and we still can’t bind together, then she’ll chase after you until you die.” The girl made a difficult decision and opened her palm towards Han Fei, “Give me the knife, I’ll chop up this poor dead body.”

Han Fei looked at the girl in shock but he didn't give her Rest in Peace. After she carried the girl out from Room 1244, the system already told him that the jumper woman would chase him forever. "Let me do it." Shaking his head, Han Fei raised Rest in Peace, "You wouldn't be able to wield this knife."

Chapter 330

330 Creature Closest to Hatred

If possible, Han Fei didn't want to get the girl's hands bloody. Picking up the dead baby, the ghost tattoo surfaced on Han Fei's body, his arms turned red as his fingers closed around the hilt of Rest in Peace. He was a butcher, killing was his job. "The pain of the world is too heavy on someone so small, I will set him free." The hands gathered around the hilt and the brilliant blade became the only light inside Ziggurat. The power of the blade sliced through the dead body. The warmth of humanity embraced the young soul which was trapped within the deepest depths of despair.

The thin blade sliced through the baby's chest, the dark characters melted like snow. The cursed threads that bound around the body were severed. The blade eventually reached the broken butterfly wing. The jumper woman who was not far away radiated the Death Curse out of her body. Her pupils turned black. She was dominated by hatred, every inch of her skin was painted with death and its ugly scent. She charged at Han Fei. At the same time, a shrill wail came from outside of Building 1, like someone was crying as a sharp blade punctured into its heart.

"Why have you become the kind of person you despise the most?" The little girl moved to block before Han Fei. She opened her arms and regarded the ghost which was at least 10 times larger than her. Controlled by some kind of malignant power, the jumper woman slammed her broken palm on the little girl and Han Fei. At that moment, Rest in Peace melted through the Death Curse, and severed the broken butterfly wing!

The macabre yet beautiful butterfly wing was shattered and so did the lock that it represented. As the butterfly wing vanished, the heart of the jumper woman, the divorced mother, the syringe woman and the little girl bled. The shackles around their hearts broke. The Death Curse stopped appearing on the surface of their skin. The connection which was suppressed started to emerge in their memories. The bloody palm halted above the little girl's head. The jumper woman's arm was disintegrating. She howled in pain and bloody tears leaked out from her eyes. She was the scariest ghost in Building 1 but at that moment, she was powerless like a child. The Death Curse was rebelling inside her body. The little girl grabbed the jumper woman but her tiny body was immediately flung away. When the girl crawled up from the ground, the syringe woman and the divorced mother came to help her.

Their bodies started to change. A wounded ring appeared around their ankles. A horrible stench leaked out from their unkempt hair. Their eyes were dull, their souls already numb to the pain in their hearts. The hands reached out to steady the jumper woman's muddled body. The Death Curse travelled to everyone. Anyone touched by the jumper woman would die, that was her Death Curse!

The Death Curse infiltrated into the divorced mother and syringe woman's hearts. Instead of saying they were killed, it was more like they sacrificed themselves for the jumper woman. When their memories collapsed, the Death Curse that surged into their bodies became dyed with their blood and memories. When the Death Curse returned to the jumper woman, the fractured memories reunited. Her broken body and face was slowly recovering.

"You are never alone. You have to know that." The little girl opened her arms wide and ran into the jumper woman's embrace like a child running towards her mother. As she was enveloped by the Death Curse, she melted into the jumper woman's body. The last piece of the memory puzzle was found. Underneath the jumper woman's Death Curse, a woman's face surfaced. She didn't inherit her mother's ethereal beauty but she had an arresting presence. Her young face twisted from extreme pain.

When the dead baby dissolved into ashes alongside the butterfly wing, the hatred exploded out from the jumper woman, it shook the entire Ziggurat!

The Death Curse melted into black water and dripped to the ground. The jumper woman's body reformed itself and the broken face slowly returned to normal. The cleaner of Building 1 officially stepped down from her post. Zhuang Wen with intense hatred had returned to the cryptic world.

The lowered head lifted. Zhuang Wen stared at the window at the end of the corridor. Her black eyes stared at something. Moments later, bloody liquid leaked out from her skin. Her penetrating hatred twisted the whole corridor. "Father, what have you done to me?!!"

The windows on every floor of Building 1 shattered and each room number bled. Zhuang Ren ignored everyone else in the corridor and strode downstairs. Every spot that she walked past would be stained black. She came to the first floor and placed her bloody palm on the locked building entrance. A beautiful butterfly pattern traced out on the previously white door. Zhuang Wen cackled shrilly. Her bloody hands caressed the beautiful pattern.

"Mother lost her mind because of you."

“I was tortured like an animal because of you.”

“My child died because of you.”

“I lost everything because of you.”

“Father, I really, really, really want to kill you!”

Hatred blasted at the door. Now Zhuang Wen was a true Lingering Hatred, she was different from any of the ghosts Han Fei had encountered before. Her hatred was sharper than any knife at Cattle Alley. Nothing would be able to stop her. The butterfly pattern on the door cracked little by little. The locked door eventually caved. Zhuang Wen didn't hesitate and walked out into the black mist. The mist rolled into the building. Han Fei held Rest in Peace. He wanted to stop Zhuang Wen but he couldn't find the chance.

‘The father Zhuang Wen mentioned doesn't sound like the Exorcist. Could her biological father be the Butterfly? If that's true, I can trace the Butterfly's real identity in real life through Zhuang Wen! Butterfly had always been a mystery but now Han Fei had slowly cornered it. What followed next would be extremely dangerous. If Han Fei survived, he would have the chance to kill the Butterfly!