

## Iyashikei 341

### Chapter 341

#### 341 Living Sacrifice

Han Fei silently placed Zhuang Ren's picture into his inventory, he only wanted to give it a try but succeeded easily. "Notification for Player 0000! You've obtained the Fragment of a Grade E Cursed Object—Living Sacrifice.

"Living Sacrifice (Fragment of a Grade E Cursed Object): This cursed object is made up of many fragments and the fragments are spread across Ziggurat, they are related to the mission, Death Curse. At your current level, it is suggested that you leave them be for now or you might end up one of the living sacrifices." The system warned him due to Han Fei's low level. When he challenged the manager mission at level 10, the system said the same thing as well.

Regardless, Han Fei had already kept the picture in his inventory, he was not going to place it back. He'd rather destroy it than leave it with the Butterfly.

'Fragment of a Grade E Cursed Object...' The scariest cursed object Han Fei had encountered was the paper doll from the convenience store, but even at its strongest, the boss of the convenience store was merely a Grade F Cursed Object. 'Living Sacrifice doesn't sound like a good thing, I better keep it for now, perhaps after I find out more about it, I'll be able to tell what it is really for. Then I'll decide whether to keep or lose it.'

Han Fei eased open the bedroom door and looked around. The living room looked neat and clean. Han Fei walked out. There was a black and white flyer on the dining table, it described a donation drive among the tenants to repair something broken. Every week the tenants would also have some kind of gathering and it was compulsory for all the adults to attend.

"Someone has written something here." Next to the flyer was paper and pen as well as an open calendar. Someone had marked out the date—April 4th. 'It's that damn date again, what is its significance to the Butterfly?'

The woman and middle-aged man searched around the room while Han Fei snuck to the front door. He opened the old anti-theft door. He wanted to check the room number but happened to encounter the sound of footsteps and conversation coming from the corridor.

“Mom, will the dead really come back?”

“Don’t question it. Haven’t the family in Room 4244 been reunited? Your father will be back.” It sounded like a pair of mother and daughter were talking.

“Big sister, whenever I fell asleep recently, I would hear the sound of footsteps around the house. The ritual is working. That has to be dad.” Another female voice said. She sounded like a teen.

“Even so, how can you be sure that was dad? We couldn’t see it after all...”

“You should be able to tell that it is your father!” The mother said with some anger. Then she started to grumble, “Your dad is coming back to us soon. Don’t say things like that to make him mad, you know he loved you the most.”

“That is the reason why I have to be sure. He is special to me and I miss him dearly. But he is already dead, even if he comes back, is he still dad?” The eldest daughter sighed. This didn’t sound like it was their first argument about this. The family of three came closer and closer to the door. Han Fei waved at the woman and middle-aged man. They ran back into the bedroom where the dresser was. The door was fiddled with. As the anti-theft door opened, the bedroom door closed. The middle-aged man was the last to retreat into the bedroom.

“Why are you standing there for? Get in!” The mother urged. The youngest daughter stood there for a few seconds and then uttered.

“Mom, I believe I saw a red shadow earlier, it ran into the room that you normally forbid us from going into.”

“A red shadow?”

“Yes, it looks like someone in a bloody shirt. When dad was in the car accident, he was covered in blood as he was dragged away by a truck, wasn’t he? Maybe it was him?!” The youngest daughter stared at the bedroom door and didn’t dare to enter the house. For some reason, even though she was sure it was her father, she still felt fear and anxiety.

“Should we enter the bedroom to check then?” The eldest daughter suggested.

“No, it’s not yet time. If we do, it’ll waste everything we’ve done.” The mother shook her head. She closed the anti-theft door. “We’ll just keep on living like normal. Don’t act so surprised that your dad is back, we’ve been expecting this after all.” That was easier said than done because it was hard to pretend that everything was normal when you knew there was a ghost in the house. The 2 daughters agreed but their eyes kept wandering to the bedroom door.

“Go back to your rooms and rest. According to the ritual, your dad will return to us only when we’re sound asleep. After he has gotten familiarized with us, he’ll show himself. Then you’ll be able to see him again.” The mother held a wooden holy figurine in her hands. It looked old but she treated it like a treasure.

“I’m actually quite tired from working the whole night. Then I’ll go to bed first.” The eldest daughter entered her bedroom. The youngest daughter went to take a shower. The mother snuck into the youngest daughter’s bedroom and when she came out, she no longer had the figurine with her. When the youngest daughter came out from the shower, the mother had already retired to bed. The living room lights were switched off and silence prevailed.

“We should hurry and escape. This family doesn’t sound that normal.” The middle-aged man grumbled.

“We should wait and see.” Han Fei didn’t expect to walk into Zhuang Ren’s family. He wanted to find out exactly what they were doing here. It was Zhuang Ren’s family who died but they believed that it was Zhuang Ren who died and was trying to summon his spirit back in the cryptic world. But the thing that aroused Han Fei’s suspicion the most was the system’s identification of Zhuang Ren’s portrait. Why was it called Living Sacrifice?

About half an hour later, one of the bedroom doors was open and light footsteps approached the bedroom where Han Fei’s group was hiding. When everyone’s heart was squeezed, the lights in the living room came on.

“Zhuang Qing, I knew it was you. What are you trying to do in your father’s room?” The mother’s voice came from the living. She had been guarding there. “It was you who taped the dresser and stole the key of the Soul Lock, aren’t you?” The mother’s voice was laced with anger. “I don’t get it, your father loved you so much when he was alive, why are you so against him coming back?!”

"I..." The eldest daughter bit on her lips. She held a cleaver in her hand, looking like she was prepared to destroy the dresser.

"Tell me why!" The mother shouted.

"Mom, don't believe those people in this building. I feel like there is something wrong with this... ritual!" The eldest daughter finally spoke her mind.

"Something wrong?"

"I've been dreaming that this is not the first time we've done this. We've conducted this ritual many times, we are living through the same day again and again, the spirit summoning ritual never worked." Zhuang Qing looked at her mother and explained.

"All these because of a dream? That's why you don't want your father to come back to us?" The mother said with disappointment. "Do you know what the meaning of family is? Even if there is only a 1 percent chance, I will do my best to bring him back because he is your father and my husband.""

## Chapter 342

### 342 Hostage

The woman was trying her best to control her anger. She had sacrificed a lot for this ritual and she would not allow it to be interrupted. But just as the ritual was about to be completed, she realized it was her daughter who was behind all the disruptions. Being betrayed by your own family, that was a bad feeling.

"Zhuang Qing, you're a grown up now. Ever since your father passed away, I rarely intervene in your business so I hope that you will stop meddling into mine, okay?" Her mother's words felt so unfamiliar, this was not how she remembered her mother. Everything started to change since the ritual started.

They didn't see their father's soul return and her mother started to change into this person that she could not recognize, this terrified Zhuang Qing. Her mouth opened but no words came out. There was another secret inside her heart, one that she didn't dare to tell her mother.

As if afraid of waking the youngest daughter, the mother kept her voice low but the disappointment in her voice cut Zhuang Qing's heart like knives. "Do not go near your father's room ever again." With that, the mother snatched the cleaver away from Zhuang Qing and left.

Silence returned to the living room. After a long time, Zhuang Qing said as if to herself, "But... There's another part to this dream. I dreamt that it was not dad who died in the car accident but we did. We are dreaming of him, he's also thinking of us. Whenever I see him in my dream, he looks that much older." Her hand touched the bedroom door as if caressing her father's arm, "We all miss you very much, I have no idea whether we are doing the correct thing or not. I have a feeling that if the ritual is successful, you'll only end up in greater pain." Zhuang Qing didn't open the door and left quietly.

"They should have all retired to bed already, we better hurry and leave." The middle-aged man said worriedly, "If they see me in this state, they'll really think I'm a ghost."

"We should wait. They said that they had heard footsteps around the house at night, I want to see what the thing that they have summoned to this place really is." Han Fei promised Zhuang Ren that he would look after his family. Furthermore, Zhuang Ren was still alive in real life so the thing which was summoned was definitely not Zhuang Ren. If Han Fei wanted to gain the trust of Zhuang Ren's family, the easiest way was for him to use Spirit Farer on the real Zhuang Ren. The manager had edited the memory of Zhuang Qing's family and made them suffer in this painful loop. But if they were reunited with the real Zhuang Ren, the loop might be broken.

This family also pulled at Han Fei's heartstrings. The father in real life threw himself fully into the death game to search for his family, losing all of his reputation and money. The mother and daughters employed some kind of summoning ritual in the cryptic world to try to save their father and husband. Even though their memories were different, both parties were using their own ways to save each other.

For the Butterfly, they were nothing but tools, but they were trying their best to resist against their destiny. As an observer, Han Fei was quite affected by what he saw.

Zhuang Ren's wife and daughters died many years ago, that was a fact. The only thing he could do now was perhaps to relay the family's memories and emotions to the other party.

“When a living person has too much to bear, it’ll be hard for them to move on. Many people understand this common sense but many are more than willing to stay in the past, perhaps that is the beauty of human foolishness.” At that moment, footsteps came from the living room again. This footstep was distinct from the rest, it sounded like someone was moving on tiptoe.

‘The family of 3 should be asleep already, so who is in the living room?’ Even a sleep-walker wouldn’t make such a curious movement sound. Han Fei eased open the bedroom door and saw something flickering in the dark living room.

10 seconds later, the footsteps came closer. A woman appeared between the couch and the television. She moved around with only her tips touching the ground. It felt like she was being carried by some kind of force as she moved around the living room like a marionette.

“Is that a ghost?” The middle-aged man who looked more like a ghost asked with fear. The middle-aged man spoke softly but even so it still attracted the attention of the woman in the living room. The pale face turned slowly. With her leg dragging on the ground, she charged towards the bedroom. Their eyes met, and Han Fei recognized this woman. “Zhuang Ren’s youngest daughter? Why is it her?”

Han Fei was familiar with this face, but how did she end up like this? Was it related to the figurine that the mother placed inside her room earlier?

So far, Zhuang Ren’s family had acted normally. Han Fei had seen their pictures in real life, one could easily imagine that they had been given a second chance at life here. But now something was clearly wrong with the youngest daughter. Her face was blanched but the scariest thing was her eyes. There were black threads in them like someone was controlling these threads to manipulate her line of sight.

When Han Fei saw the girl, she saw Han Fei as well. Han Fei closed the door and had the middle-aged man block the door with his body.

The footsteps outside disappeared. Several minutes later, Han Fei looked out the gap again, what he saw was a curtain of hair.

'She doesn't have eyes on the back of her head, so how did she expect to see anything like this...?' Then Han Fei suddenly realized something and he looked up. There was a ghost face looking at him from the ceiling!

The woman and the middle-aged man saw the face as well. The two of them retreated subconsciously while Han Fei took out a hilt. 'What can you do with a hilt?'

The ghost clearly didn't sense the danger in the hilt as well. It looked closely at Han Fei. Then the lock jumbled, it wanted to enter the bedroom!

The woman and the middle-aged man were so nervous that they didn't dare to speak but Han Fei voluntarily opened the door, like he was trying to invite the ghost in. With the woman and the middle-aged man watching with confusion, Han Fei's blade fell on the ghost face. The face shattered like a mask. Then Han Fei's arm which was imbued with Soul Poison grabbed the thing by its neck and dragged it into the bedroom like a hostage. "Be quiet, if you dare to wake anyone up inside this house, there will be hell to pay." With the buff from masterful acting, Han Fei's face was colored by ruthlessness and madness. He looked even more dangerous than the ghost at that moment.

## Chapter 343

### 343 Room 4144

Han Fei's action was so smooth that before the woman and the middle-aged man could react, the situation had switched completely. They thought they were cornered but Han Fei turned the tables around on the ghost. First there was a slash to the mask and then a neck lock, followed by a shove of the paper doll into the ghost's mouth, which stopped the thing from making too much noise.

Just seeing this caused the middle-aged man to shiver. He suspected Han Fei was in some shady business in real life. The ghost who controlled the youngest daughter clearly hadn't faced an adversary like Han Fei before. Before it knew what happened, it was already inside the bedroom.

Others thought Han Fei shoved the paper doll into the ghost's mouth to stop it from talking but the reason Han Fei did that was for the paper doll to crawl into the ghost's heart. That way he would have full control of everything.

The cracks on its face spread through the body. Initially the wounds leaked with black blood but soon they were replaced by paper pieces. Noticing the strange behavior of its body, the ghost's eyes widened. It shook its head, trying to tell Han Fei that it won't make any noise, it just wanted to cough the paper doll out. But the more it struggled, the more Han Fei refused to let go. He even added a few stabs. 10 minutes later, the ghost stopped struggling. Its skin turned as fragile as paper.

With the middle-aged man and the woman watching in shock, a red paper doll crawled out from the ghost's heart. The blood on its paper body became more crimson.

"No way, I just wanted it to be silent." Han Fei pulled back the hand that closed over the ghost's mouth. The ghost's face had turned black, courtesy of the Soul Poison. 'Wait, I was using the hand where Big Sin is?' Han Fei was acting on full instinct earlier. He didn't expect the paper doll would directly consume the ghost.

"Don't stay so far away from me." Han Fei glanced at the woman and middle-aged man. He put the ghost down and once he did, the ghost shattered against the ground in a pile of shredded paper. He accidentally destroyed the ghost's body.

"That ghost wasn't that strong... It was most likely just a small Lingering Spirit." Han Fei tried to explain.

"Of course, as a security guard, you have to do what you have to do." The middle-aged man saw the security guard uniform Han Fei was wearing and understood many things. Even though he was scared and wanted to escape, he still needed to rely on Han Fei. So he chose to go along with everything Han Fei said, anything to make Han Fei happy.

"What are we to do with the girl?" The woman changed the subject. She stared at the girl who appeared to be sleeping.

"We should drop her back in her room. We should take the opportunity to examine that figurine we saw earlier." Han Fei picked up Zhuang Ren's youngest daughter. He slunk across the living room and pushed open the door of her bedroom. The room looked clean and neat. There was nothing that was related to ritual and occultism. 'The most common looking thing can often be the most dangerous.' Han Fei placed the girl on the bed and searched the room.

He looked under the bed and saw a broken religious figurine. The figurine resembled the ghost that they encountered earlier. "That was not some kind of holy spirit, it was a ghost masquerading as one." Han Fei reached for the broken figurine but as he did, the landlord's ring shot him with chills.

"There is something else under the bed?" He looked around and noticed there was a black cloth near the wall. He slowly pulled the black cloth back and his body shivered. The wall had been dug out and the hole was filled with various religious idols!

The carved faces looked at Han Fei. The workmanship was amateurish but it made Han Fei feel like he was being stared at, as if each figurine contained one ghost. With the amount of figurines stashed there, Han Fei couldn't imagine how many 'Gods' Zhuang Ren's youngest daughter was in the company of.

"This is not the first time her mother brought back the figurines. They have repeated this loop many times after their deaths, they just can't remember it." With Rest in Peace and the paper doll, Han Fei could deal with Small Lingering Spirit and could escape from a Medium Lingering Spirit but he definitely couldn't take on an army of them.

"This room is far more dangerous than I thought." Han Fei looked at the figurines and wondered, 'What are the purposes of these figurines? Why has the mother placed them here? Is it for them to absorb humanity from Zhuang Ren's family?' Other than that, there were also questions like, 'Why would Butterfly entrap Zhuang Ren's family and make them summon Zhuang Ren in the cryptic world?' Butterfly had the power to pull people into the cryptic world, it would have been easy for him to do that to Zhuang Ren, so why make his family go through all these things? 'Either Butterfly's power has greater limitations than I thought or there is something unique about Zhuang Ren.'

Han Fei pondered these questions. Zhuang Ren was a normal ex-horror film director. His only connection to the cryptic world was that he was the former neighbor to Immortal Pharma's Director. The man had said something to Zhuang Ren when he was young and gave Zhuang Ren the Ziggurat game.

'Wait, the Ziggurat game?!' The thought popped up in Han Fei's mind, 'The Director made the game himself and his older brother, Fu Sheng had the black box. Could the brothers have hidden some secrets inside the game as well?' So far, Han Fei treated Zhuang Ren as a normal civilian who was accidentally dragged into this mess but now his opinion changed.

'After I leave the game, I'll have to question Zhuang Ren. If he's willing, I'll make him play Perfect Life and I'll use Spirit Farer on him.' Zhuang Ren wanted to meet his family and Han Fei could make that

happen. With the plan forming, Han Fei's fingers let go of the black cloth. But the moment the cloth dropped, all the figurines turned towards Han Fei and opened their wooden eyes. A few seconds later, faces surfaced on the black cloth and the figurines became more 'alive'.

"Run!" Han Fei dragged the middle-aged man and the woman out of the bedroom. He pushed open the anti-theft door and raced down the corridor. As he made his escape, Han Fei turned to check the room number.

'Room 4144?' Han Fei knew what that meant. The jumper woman's room at Building 1 only had two 4's. Even though the jumper woman had been split into different parts, she was still a Lingering Hatred. 'Doesn't that mean there is a Pure Hatred residing inside Room 4144? Is it Zhuang Ren's family or one of the 'Gods'?'"

## Chapter 344

### 344 The Previous Manager's Clue

The number 4144 told Han Fei that he was currently inside Building 4 and the dresser did act as a passageway between different rooms at Ziggurat. This teleporter-esque cursed object had aroused Han Fei's great interest. 'After the Butterfly is killed, the dressers and all the buildings can be usable by all the tenants!'

Currently the Ziggurat belonged to the Butterfly and its manager. It treated the tenants as tools and toys, they were things that could be sacrificed to achieve its own goal. But if Han Fei became the new manager, he would respect everyone's decision and help the tenants locate their real selves.

"Wait! I feel like there is something dragging me from behind!" The middle-aged man who ran at the back of the ground said with a pale face. He kept turning his head around until his neck was sore but he couldn't see anything behind him.

They were running for their lives so he didn't dare to make too much noise, he tried his best to keep up with the woman.

In the dark corridor, the voice-activated lights flickered on and off. Compared to Building 1, the corridors at Building 4 looked older. Every door had traces of burnt paper money and photographs. It appeared like every family was conducting the spirit summoning ritual. 'What is the Butterfly up to?'

The building was creepy but it had nothing to do with ghosts. It was like humanity had transmuted at this place to become something else. The axle of the safety door creaked noisily. Han Fei looked into the dark stairwell but he didn't enter it rashly.

Fleeting singing came from outside the building. Han Fei's ring had a few new cracks. Perhaps the ring's owner also didn't expect Han Fei to wear it to come to a place like the Ziggurat.

"Why have we stopped?" The woman asked, "This place gives me a bad feeling, it was safer when we were inside the dresser."

"Can you hear the song outside?"

"Song?" The woman shook her head. "I don't hear anything."

"Did you two hear me? There is really something wrong with my back!" The middle-aged man finally caught up to them. "Please help me take a look. I have this feeling that something is back there!"

Han Fei turned to look at the middle-aged man's back. A holy figurine stood in the middle of his spine, the head appeared to have grown out of the man's spine. "Well, what's wrong? Did you see anything? Is there a bug?" The middle-aged man waved his flabby arms but somehow he couldn't reach the spot where the figurine was.

"It's just a small bug, don't scare yourself for nothing. Take a deep breath and relax." Han Fei had the middle-aged man look ahead. And then he took out Rest in Peace. "Brother, no offense but have you killed anyone before?"

"Of course not! I haven't even killed a chicken before!"

"Okay." Rest in Peace was extremely sharp when dealing against evil enemies. Han Fei didn't want to accidentally harm the man. Pulling back the bloody clothes, Han Fei swung the blade with full force!

The figurine was sliced through and shattered into pieces. But to Han Fei's consternation, as it cracked, the figurine slowly turned to give Han Fei a creepy smile.

The weight was taken off his back. The middle-aged man turned to see what kind of bug it was but he instead saw shattered pieces of the figurine. "Wait, it was the thing under the bed which was on my back all this time?"

"You've been carrying it for quite some time already, but you're safe now, I think..." Han Fei used his hands where Big Sin hid to massage the middle-aged man's back. He noticed some of the broken chips had stuck into the man's flesh. "Be ready, this might hurt a little." He used Rest in Peace to try to dig out the pieces but at that moment, he noticed there was a human face inside the middle-aged man's wound!

"What is that?" As Rest in Peace widened the wound, Han Fei saw a figurine the size of one's thumb embedded inside the man's flesh. When Han Fei dug out the figurine, there was an even smaller figurine behind it!

All the figurines had the same creepy smile. They sat comfortably inside the man's flesh, staring at Han Fei. 'You're taunting me?' Han Fei had no idea why the figurines had targeted the middle-aged man. Perhaps he was the weakest or he was just unlucky, but no matter the reason, Han Fei would not sit idle. After having the middle-aged man close his eyes, Han Fei took out the paper doll and slipped it into the man's wound.

'No matter how many there are, I'll take them all out. After all, I'm not the one in pain.' The smile on the figurines suddenly froze. Han Fei had been taught to be ruthless in the cryptic world. If the figurines had entered his body, he would do the same thing. Controlling the paper doll, Han Fei extracted 2 more figurines from inside the middle-aged man.

The last figurine was only the size of a pin. The ghost inside it was shredded by the paper doll. With a wail, the ghost dissolved into a piece of paper and a strand of hair. They were the origin of its resentment.

The paper doll handed the paper to Han Fei. The paper had someone's name on the front and the back was a Death Curse—If I dismember you, will you die?

Han Fei saw the Death Curse first, it was thick with curse and hatred. Then he turned to see the name on the note. It caught his attention immediately. 'Fu Sheng?'

Han Fei knew that the previous manager's memory fragment was hidden at Ziggurat but he didn't expect to find a clue related to him this way.

'Is it possible that every figurine is holding a paper note?' The ghost that Han Fei killed earlier was a ghost technically inside a figurine but its heart had been eaten by the paper doll. It disintegrated into shredded paper, it was understandable for Han Fei to not notice the note with the Death Curse among them.

'This hair couldn't belong to Fu Sheng, could it?'

'His consciousness has been split into numerous pieces and then hidden inside the figurines?' The Ziggurat's manager should be Butterfly. In other words, it had probably tinkered with Fu Sheng's memory fragment. 'In that case, I believe I know what the scariest thing in Room 4144 is now.'

Han Fei studied the note. The name and hair were to evoke the curse and the note was the curse itself. There were numerous Death Curses inside Ziggurat and now Han Fei suspected they were all prepared for the same person.

The previous manager was at least 40 years older than Han Fei and he had the black box for a long time already. Even though he failed, and his consciousness had been shattered, he could still leave behind so many things for Han Fei, his influence could still be felt, that showed how powerful he was.

'If the Butterfly has the previous manager's memory fragment, then I have one more reason to kill it. There shouldn't be a second person who knows the black box is currently inside my brain.'

## Chapter 345

### 345 Night of Resurrection

Han Fei wasn't clear about the previous manager's plan and he didn't fully trust Fu Sheng, the reason was simple, the path he chose after obtaining the black box was different from Fu Sheng. Fu Sheng

wished to completely destroy the cryptic world and sealed it off; while Han Fei's plan was to destroy those that needed destroying while saving the rest.

Fu Sheng was tackling the issue from his own perspective while Han Fei was fairer. Back then, Han Fei opened the black box on both sides, while he released the demons, he also embraced hope. No one had ever dared to do that before.

Because of that, Han Fei's path differed from Fu Sheng. Fu Sheng might be Han Fei's guide now but in the future, they would face a conflict. It would not be a conflict that could be resolved with words. After all, they had put their future and lives on the line here.

Han Fei used the paper note to wrap around the hair for safekeeping. He didn't think it was wise to return to Room 4144. Fu Sheng's memory was shattered into fragments. Even though the memory at Happiness Neighbourhood and Ziggurat came from the same person, they would manifest differently based on the emotions they harboured. A person would have their darker side, much less someone like Fu Sheng who was chosen by the black box. The darkness within him might be bigger than Butterfly.

"We should leave this floor now." Han Fei carried the middle-aged man into the stairwell but the woman stood there not moving. "What's wrong?"

"How about we take the elevator? I have a feeling we'll die if we go down the stairs." The woman's grip on the fruit knife tightened. "My instinct is almost always right." Flickering light came from the dark stairwell, they looked normal at first glance but upon closer inspection, one would realize the light was slowly moving up the floors. It was like the light was alive.

Han Fei didn't have time for lolly-gagging. All the rooms on this floor had two 4's, this place was a ghost lair. The fact that every tenant was performing the spirit summoning ritual didn't help Han Fei feel any better. As the 'light' slowly approached, Han Fei carried the middle-aged man to the 13th floor. "We'll hide here first, the 14th floor is too dangerous."

Han Fei eased the safety door open. He had the middle-aged man and the woman stay close to the door while he went down the corridor. The 13th floor was slightly normal. There was still paper money on the ground. Each family had a pair of red couplets on their doors but the words were all curses. Their doors were slathered with strange substances like broken red lines and mirror fragments. Soon Han Fei arrived at the door of Room 4134. Before he could turn around, a chill caressed his ears!

Han Fei whipped around and saw a set of security guard uniform plastered to the door of Room 4134. There was a huge hole around the chest like someone had ripped through it with bare hands. Han Fei took half a step back. The uniform which was stuck to the wall slid down and then the door opened a gap. A man's voice drifted out, "It's almost the Night of Resurrection, there shouldn't be anyone in the corridor, come in."

"Night of Resurrection?" Han Fei noticed the person kept his eyes on him, he probably didn't notice the existence of the woman and the middle-aged man.

"It can't be explained in simple words. If you don't want to die, come in." The man ordered. "If not for the fact that you're wearing a guard uniform, I would not have done this! Quick! I'm taking a big risk here!"

With his masterful acting skill, while Han Fei couldn't tell if the man was lying or not, he knew that at least the man wasn't acting. "I have 2 more friends, they're just by the stairwell door...'

"They're guards too? 3 guards have survived this time? Get them over here!" The man said with suspicion but still decided to accept Han Fei. Moments later, Han Fei returned with his friends. When the man saw that they were not guards, he regretted his decision immediately but Han Fei moved too fast. Before he could close the door, Han Fei stuck his foot into the gap.

"Are you trying to look for death?" The man hissed, "If I had known they're not guards, I wouldn't have saved you!" Despite that, the man still opened the door. The 3 entered the room. The moment the door closed, heavy footsteps came from the corridor.

"Shush." The man signaled for them to keep quiet while he stood at the door. No one dared to move. The owner of Room 4134 had on a clean guard uniform but it fitted very badly. The strange thing was there were a lot of other guard uniforms inside the room. Some of them had holes in them while others were fully torn apart. Other than the one the man was wearing, there was not another set of complete guard uniform.

After the footsteps disappeared completely, the man sighed in relief. "If I didn't save you, you 3 would be dead already!"

"What was that thing?"

“You don’t need to know, curiosity kills the cat.” The man whispered, “The 3 of you owe me 1 life each. Remember that.”

“What? We never agreed to this!” The middle-aged man grumbled. In the bloody clothes, he looked scarier than the man.

“Do you want me to toss you outside now? I didn’t want to save you in the beginning.” When the man spoke, his eyes kept wandering over to Han Fei.

“You seem to be very interested in what I’m wearing? And there are security uniforms everywhere inside this room, do you have the habit of collecting them?” Han Fei shot to the point. He wasn’t afraid of conflict because he believed he could win.

“I don’t have such a habit. It’s just that I am also a security guard here.” The man took out his work id, his name was Hua Kui (or Oiran, a specific category of high ranking courtesan in Japanese history). “Before you say anything, my surname is Hua and my parents went to a sensei for the naming ceremony. The man decided to give me the name Kui, apparently it was supposed to give me a long life. My parents agreed so that’s now my name.”

“A big old man and your name is Hua Kui?” The middle-aged man held the wound on his back like he had doubled over from laughing. Different from the middle-aged man, Han Fei thought the sensei was quite impressive. All the guards at Ziggurat were pots for the Butterfly to cultivate human cocoons, only those who could cultivate the prettiest ‘flower’ could survive until the end. So in a way, the name Hua Kui was perfect for this male guard.

“Hua Kui, how long have you worked here?” Han Fei asked.

“Don’t call me by my full name, I’ve just saved your lives and we’re not that close for us to refer to each other by our full names.” The man grumbled but soon his annoyance disappeared. His gaze that took in Han Fei’s group carried a complicated emotion, it was like he was looking at the dead.

“Brother Kui, have you saved other guards like me?” Han Fei changed his tone and words. His words sounded natural and kind.

“Now, that’s better.” The man signaled for them to move deeper into the room. He didn’t dare to switch on the lights. After pulling the curtains close, he lit up a candle. “The people here are crazy. I entered this building 14 days ago. The other guards with me have all been taken away by the tenants here.”

“Taken away?”

“Yes, I have no idea what happened to them after that.” The man whispered, “The tenants here will organize a unique ritual every 4 days, they call it the Night of Resurrection. Every tenant here will go crazy because supposedly the dead would return. In any case, that night will be the scariest night here! You were lucky to have found this room and myself.”

“Have you encountered new guards while you were here?”

“I have, I would try to save them whenever I saw them but for most of them, I would arrive too late. The most I could do was to bring their uniform back to this room for safekeeping.” The man said with a straight-face, he believed his own words, but Han Fei didn’t believe him. It was not that the man was lying to him but the man’s memory was only limited to 14 days.

There were endless uniforms inside the room. The man said he was only responsible for a small part of them but Han Fei believed he collected all of them, he just couldn’t remember it. Every new batch of guards had died, and only Hua Kui survived. In other words, it was not because of luck and the safety of Room 4134 that Hua Kui survived, it was because he fitted Butterfly’s requirement. If another guard arrived with better affinity as the pot, Butterfly would not hesitate to kill Hua Kui.

“How come it sounds like... this place is far more dangerous than the dresser?” The middle-aged man ran out from the dresser with hope. He didn’t return to real life but fell into deeper despair.

“You people better figure out a way to leave tonight. It’ll be the Night of Resurrection tomorrow. After midnight, you’ll never be able to escape...” The dirge interrupted Hua Kui. Hearing the sad music, Hua Kui’s face dropped. “This is not right. This music will only start on the Night of Resurrection. Every family will start the ritual and then the ritual will reach its most dangerous moment after midnight.”

“Has it been pushed ahead?”

"I have no idea either!" Hua Kui said nervously. He was incredibly anxious.

"I don't think the Night of Resurrection is held every 4 days but on the 4th of every month and also on April 4th of every year." Han Fei remembered the calendar he saw in Zhuang Qing's home, and the dates which were marked. It would be April 4th tomorrow. The Night of Resurrection hadn't fully arrived yet, but certain things had already poked their heads out.

"The Night of Resurrection every 4 days is not the real deal. The real Night of Resurrection only happens on April 4th of every year, the day the jumper woman and the female livestreamer died." Han Fei knew that day was important and he believed the two were not the only ones who died on that day. "Why would the Butterfly make so many people die on that specific day? It wants to use their collective resentment to break through some kind of limitation?"

The dirge echoed through the building, it was impossible to tell which floor it was from. But different from others, Han Fei could hear a song underlining it. The Unmentionable was outside the building. It couldn't enter the building but it was still searching for Han Fei.

'Night of Resurrection, will the Butterfly be back for it?' Han Fei was very tired now, but he didn't quit the game. He was afraid that once he did, he would return on the scariest Night of Resurrection. 'Zhuang Wen has run to Building 4 but how come there are no changes here? With her state of madness, she would have done something already! The jumper woman's room had two 4's, and with all the memory fragments reunited, her power increased further. She should now be between two and three 4's.' Han Fei soon came up with a plan. His first mission was to find Zhuang Wen and then Feng Ziyu. He needed to finish at least 1 mission before he quitted the game.

"The two of you should stay here, I'll go out to take a look." Han Fei had a lot of passive and professional talents. A normal tenant would have a hard time chasing him. When Han Fei left Room 4134, he noticed the atmosphere outside had completely changed.

When the dirge began, the paper money fluttered into the air and the couplets surfaced with scratch marks. Once he got closer, he would notice that there was even the sound of scratching coming from the door. The anti-theft doors twisted from the pressure like something inside was trying to come out. Han Fei put away the landlord's ring. He was worried that it might break and expose his location.

He tried to communicate with Big Sin, hoping that it would help warn him of imminent danger. Big Sin agreed easily which concerned Han Fei. He wasn't sure if Big Sin understood him or not. His pet might only give the warning when the ghost literally had Han Fei down its mouth. After all, Big Sin's definition of danger was different from normal. It hoped that Han Fei would always remain in a constant near death state.

"The layout of Building 4 is almost the same as Building 1." Han Fei walked down the corridor and encountered an old elevator. He didn't take the elevator when he was at Building 1.

The silvery door had many different doodles and the doodles formed a human face. After staring at it for too long, you'd be sucked into the elevator.

'I should stay away from it.'

Han Fei was about to leave when the number on the elevator panel changed. Someone was taking the elevator!

The dirge became clearer. Han Fei took one last glance at the panel and then hurried through the safety door into the stairwell.

## Chapter 346

### 346 Soul Chaser

The old elevator ascended quickly, the red number of the panel changed unusually fast. The dirge echoed around his ears, underlined by the fleeing song. There were 2 forces now looking for Han Fei. After living in the cryptic world for so long, Han Fei's senses had been highly trained. While the number on the panel was still changing, he had already run to the landing between the 13th and 14th floor.

'Compared to the 13th floor, 14th floor is more dangerous, do you dare to land on the 14th floor?' That was Han Fei's thought but to his consternation, the elevator did stop on that floor! After the number 14 flickered several times on the panel, the silver doors slowly opened.

At the same time, the Soul Poison on Han Fei's arm started to spread. He was consumed by intense pain, this seemed to be Big Sin's way of warning Han Fei. Based on Big Sin's personality, it would only do this if Han Fei was in extreme danger.

Holding his poisoned arm, Han Fei rapidly retreated and ran down the stairs. As he started to move, heavy footsteps travelled out from inside the elevator, but strangely enough, the footsteps soon disappeared and were replaced by the rustling of scuttling bugs. Han Fei had no idea what it was but he knew it was coming after him. Suddenly, the robotic voice rang in his mind.

"Notification for Player 0000! You've triggered Grade E Main Mission, Night of Resurrection's Preliminary Mission—Soul Chaser!

"The most important day at Ziggurat every year is April 4th and tomorrow, it'll be the 14th April 4th after a new manager took over Ziggurat! It is its Night of Resurrection! Are you ready to welcome its arrival?

"Soul Chaser (Grade E Main Mission's Preliminary Mission, Grade F Difficulty): From now on, you have 5 chances to turn back, you have to make use of these 5 chances to identify who your Soul Chaser is. If you fail to see your Soul Chaser; unable to identify your Soul Chaser after turning all 5 times around; or you were killed within the next 10 minutes, then your soul will be taken by it!"

The system notification came abruptly. Han Fei wasn't even ready but his mind was inundated with information. 'Tomorrow is the 14th yearly Night of Resurrection after the new manager took over? Who would be resurrected?' Han Fei didn't have the time to ponder about these things. He had accidentally triggered a Grade F Mission, if he didn't complete it within the next 10 minutes, he would die.

'What is a Soul Chaser? The thing that took the elevator to the 14th floor is probably one!' Han Fei only had 5 chances to turn his head around so he had to use them wisely. If he didn't see the Soul Chaser after using all of his chances, then his soul wouldn't be his anymore. When a person was given a limitation, there was an innate eagerness to test the limit and now Han Fei was resisting the urge to turn around.

'There are essential differences to Grade F and Grade G Missions, but this is the first time I've encountered a Grade F Mission that is only 10 minutes long.' Processing the information alone took up 10 seconds. Han Fei had now arrived at the landing between 13th and 12th floor, the footsteps behind him became louder. 'Why would the footsteps change? The Soul Chaser has no fixed state? And why did the system only give me 5 chances? Why the fixation with this number?'

Han Fei also had to ensure that he didn't die before he saw the Soul Chaser. The missions in the cryptic world were bloodier than the missions in other games. In other games, you'd only die after you were caught up or trigger some kind of condition; but the missions in the cryptic world weren't so kind. The system tried its best to kill the player, to train them with extreme conditions.

The footsteps behind him slowly approached, even running at full speed, Han Fei couldn't shake the thing off. The encroaching unknown placed a lot of pressure on Han Fei. He had no idea what the thing behind him was, he tried to picture it based on the sound of the footfalls, but the sound kept on changing. Fear tied around Han Fei's neck like a rope.

'What is chasing after me?' Han Fei tried to analyze it. Among the footsteps, there was the sound of something being stuck to the ground and then torn off. The bottom of the Soul Chaser's shoes appeared to be stuck with meat pieces and blood. It squished when the thing stepped on the ground.

The system was basically forcing the player to slowly examine the terror, applying both actual and imagined horror on the player. This would amplify the player's anxiety. Han Fei could log off already but he was having second guesses. If it was a demon carrying a saber chasing after him, Han Fei would be dead the moment the demon got close enough, he wouldn't have the time to leave the game then.

His greatest danger now was that he couldn't look behind him freely. At Building 4, he had to deal with the 'ghosts' that were both behind and before him. That was hard even for Han Fei. That night, he had gone through a lot, if this continued, his mind would eventually break.

Various thoughts flashed across his mind, but before he could figure out a solution, Han Fei felt an extra weight on his back. He could hear the rustling again and felt many stingers crawling rapidly and intensely on his back, the sharp appendages threatening to pierce through his skin!

Under that circumstance, Han Fei's bodily instinct took over and his neck turned slightly around. He looked behind him from the corner of his eye. There was no ghost, no demon and no strange insects, there was only the dark corridor and deep anxiety. 'Impossible, there has to be something or else Big Sin wouldn't have warned me!'

Han Fei also could feel something chasing after him so while he turned back, his feet didn't stop running.

The dirge and the song were still continuing. Han Fei's nerves were like a spring pulled taut, the noises wanted to crawl into his ears, everything was targeting him. The dirge became louder. More paper money appeared and the couplets looked brighter like they had been slathered with blood.

Time was ticking. When Han Fei turned back the first time, he didn't see anything. In such an intense moment, he could barely find time to think. Before he recovered from the previous shock, the heavy footsteps returned and this time, it was closer. It sounded like it had an extra something on its hands like it was dragging along a dead body.

## Chapter 347

### 347 Sacrifice

The footsteps became heavier but Han Fei felt the weight on his body decreased like something had been taken off him. Both his sense of hearing and touch told Han Fei that there was something following him but his eyes couldn't see it. He had already wasted a chance earlier and he didn't want to waste any more chances. He picked up his speed and then tried to think back to what he saw when he turned his head back for the first time.

Han Fei had superior memory. He remembered all the details he had seen, there was really no one behind him. 'There is no clue at all, how am I supposed to complete this mission? Or am I supposed to directly log off the game?'

The mission time limit was 10 minutes. After quitting the game, Han Fei had no idea what he might face when he logged in next time. It might be a mission fail and the Soul Chaser would leave; or he might still be in the middle of the mission and needed to continue to run for his life; or he might die instantly, not knowing who his killer was. This was a risk too high for Han Fei to take. At least before he exhausted all 5 chances, he didn't plan to go offline. With his eyes on the exit button, Han Fei's brain spun quickly. However at that moment, a chilly voice spoke from behind him, "Han Fei?"

When a person heard their name being called, they would turn around subconsciously. At that moment, Han Fei felt goose bumps forming around his neck as a stream of coldness slipped down his collar. "Remember my voice and think of my name, the ritual is about to start soon.

"Han Fei... We came from the same place and saw the same thing, you would be doing the same thing I'm doing..." The icy voice hovered around Han Fei's ears. It could have easily killed Han Fei but it purposely leaked this information to Han Fei instead.

'We came from the same place and I would make the same choice?' Han Fei's brain processed these words, they could be hiding the Soul Chaser's real identity.

"I've seen you in my future nightmare, you are the key to the Day of Revival. Help me! As long as you help me, you will tell you more! We don't have much time left!" The voice was like needles piercing into Han Fei's heart.

'Day of Revival? Fu Sheng?' For some reason, this popped up in Han Fei's mind. Perhaps his actions so far had been predestined.

"Night of Resurrection, Day of Revival, you will die in the nightmare, but you will be revived, but the revived you will no longer be the actual you." The voice floated on the wind and blew right into Han Fei's ears. "In the eyes of the person who can look into the future, your destiny is a thread it pulls, all resistance is futile. Your future will be like my past." The voice was melancholic. The footsteps became heavier like it was carrying more and more things. "We both know about its biggest secret, so there is no way for you to escape. First, you will go crazy and then it will use your hand to kill everyone, to massacre everyone in the neighbourhood and finally you'll kill yourself."

At this point, Han Fei had a rough idea who the speaker was. The person who massacred the neighbourhood was Perfect Life's tester, he had died not too long ago. Now that Han Fei thought about it, the timing of his death was quite unusual, it was around the same time Han Fei was slowly familiarizing himself with the cryptic world. It was like everything had been purposely arranged.

"I was the one who started the Living Sacrifice and you would be the one to close it. You will continue my work and start another 14 years of cycle. It didn't expect you to arrive here before the start of the ritual and for me, the first candidate for the Living Sacrifice to run into you, the last candidate for the Living Sacrifice. This might be our only chance, help me and I will tell you the future." The voice had revealed many things and its tone didn't portray any intention of killing Han Fei.

After a long hesitation, Han Fei replied as he ran, "Who are you?"

"I am one of the Soul Chasers, and you are the most important sacrifice. You have to run! Do not submit to the ritual. Go and find Feng Ziyu, he is in Room 4041, he will..." The voice suddenly disappeared and it was replaced by the sound of flapping wings. Red dust blew into the corridor and at that moment, Han Fei felt intense hatred on him!

Han Fei lost control of the arm where Big Sin was. Soul Poison spread through the arm. Something inside the arm was trying to get out, it controlled Han Fei's hand to grab Han Fei's neck!

A giant force erupted inside the offending arm. Pain radiated from it. When Han Fei came to his sense, the arm where Big Sin was hiding had become incapacitated. A gory butterfly-shaped wound appeared on the arm and it was deep enough to show bone. With the loss of control of the arm, Han Fei's body tipped forward and the man fell down the stairs. His consciousness wandered over to the exit button and his eyes looked behind him as he rolled down the stairs.

A body which was dragged along by some kind of unknown energy was chasing after him. If that was all, Han Fei wouldn't be that surprised but the body had the same body type as he was and when he saw the body's face, he felt incredibly surreal. The body had his face, the eyes were round and open even in death. 'Is that my body?'

Han Fei turned back for the second time, he still didn't see the Soul Chaser but he did notice his body becoming lighter!

'The Soul Chaser... Is that body supposed to be part of my soul?!' According to Chinese mythology, the weight of the human body consisted of 3 parts soul and 7 parts spirit. It was probably why his body had gotten lighter.

Han Fei had a good idea of the Soul Chaser's identity. Since it could specify Feng Ziyu's name, then he was most likely the tester who massacred the Ziggurat neighbourhood many years ago. However, based on what he said, he had been trapped here since then. In that case, whose soul was occupying the body of the tester who was hospitalized in real life?

Day of Revival, Night of Resurrection? Who would return? Butterfly or Fu Sheng?

Falling to the ground, Han Fei held his wound. Before he crawled up from the ground, the rustling sound of a million pinchers came from behind him again. Han Fei resisted the pain and continued to race down the stairs. The wound on his arm didn't heal, if anything, it continued to bleed. Fresh beads of blood dripped on the paper money. The running Han Fei started the Night of Resurrection.

A special atmosphere unraveled within and without the building. The doors at Building 4 opened and more than 1 Soul Chasers were preparing the items for the Living Sacrifice.

## Chapter 348

### 348 Headless Door Guardian

There were 5 chances to turn back, and Han Fei had already used two. Even so he still hadn't seen the face of the Soul Chaser. He had no idea how to complete this mission. Time ticked by, if he couldn't identify the Soul Chaser within the next 10 minutes, he'd die; if he was caught up, he'd die; if he used up all 5 chances, he'd die. The pressure on him was understandably big.

The only thing that gave him hope and strength was the fact that he could get offline now, but he wanted to obtain as much information as he could before he did so that his survivability would be improved to the maximum the next time he logged on. 'I still have about 7 minutes left, that should be enough.' Han Fei had decided to abandon finishing the mission and with that decision made, he felt more at ease. However, the next time he logged in, he would face the threat of death head on. 'I'll have to make use of the remaining 3 chances as best as I can. After I get offline, I'll head over to Zhuang Ren's place immediately to play the Ziggurat game, perhaps I can get some clues about this Soul Chaser in the game, that will help me in the cryptic world next time I get online.'

A time-limited Grade F Mission was really pushing Han Fei's luck. The inescapable Soul Chaser seemed to exist in a different dimension than Han Fei. It was like how Perfect Life had been split into the surface and cryptic world.

The real scary elements were in the cryptic world, while the 'harmless' tenants whose memories were stolen were placed in the surface world. The Night of Resurrection was probably a crossing of both worlds, where the scariest thing in the cryptic world would return. There were currently 2 known bridges between the two worlds, one was Butterfly's nightmare and the other was the Spirit Farer ritual/ability. Interestingly enough, they corresponded to Butterfly and Fu Sheng's manager talent.

'The scariest thing at Ziggurat is awakening. As the ritual progresses, the pressure on me will only intensify.' It was already bad but it would only get worse. Being alive meant sliding deeper into despair. Ziggurat at the cryptic world was like a bottomless abyss, at this place, despair and pain had no end.

Han Fei evaded several attacks from behind. Not turning back even once, he made his way to the 4th floor. 'The goal is Room 4041!' Han Fei made a beeline for this room as his brain spun, 'Feng Ziyu was

dragged by the Butterfly into the cryptic world. With Butterfly's personality, it would keep its prisoner detained so there is a good chance Feng Ziyu is still trapped inside Room 4041.'

Han Fei had the Spirit Farer talent, but he could only use it once every night. If possible, he wanted to attempt it on Feng Ziyu to see if he could send the innocent man away from the cryptic world.

But for that, he had to reach the man first so Han Fei was running as fast as he could. However, when Han Fei touched the handle of the safety door on the 4th floor, he knew something was wrong. His palms felt moisture and they came off stuck with bits of white rice.

As he entered the corridor, there was an inexplicable strangeness about the entire 4th floor. There was a fire pot placed before every door so one had to cross them before entering the house. However, instead of paper ash and money, the pots were filled with shredded photographs and voodoo dolls made from human hair. The corridor looked normal but as he ran through it, he could feel the bumps on the ground and the walls felt like they were closing in like he was running down a tunnel.

The 4th floor was home to a room which had three 4's in its room number so Han Fei didn't want to stay here for long. However, as per usual, he found out that to get to Room 4041, he had to first pass by Room 4044. 'Since I'm already chased by the Soul Chaser, can it really get any worse? Maybe 2 negatives can make 1 positive.' He charged towards Room 4041 but after he took 2 steps, he immediately felt the anomaly. It was as if the corridor had been extended indefinitely. He had taken 2 large steps, but it only covered a small distance.

Han Fei shivered uncontrollably, feeling someone's eyes on him. He lifted his eyes to look ahead and noticed the couplets on each door were like lolling tongues, trying to trip him.

'Where did the gaze come from?' Turning his head, Han Fei's eyes eventually fell on the door to Room 4044, that room was clearly different from the other rooms. The door had a model of a headless door guardian standing before it! It stood facing away from Han Fei.

Door guardians were traditionally used to ward against evil, but a headless one just looked creepy.

Han Fei's instinct told him to stay away from the thing but at that moment, the safety door clicked behind him. The Soul Chaser had also entered the 4th floor. If he backed away, he'd die; if he moved ahead, there might be a 1 percent chance of survival, Han Fei had no choice but to choose the latter.

He dashed down the corridor, but somehow he still found himself close to the safety door. But strangely enough, his distance to the headless door guardian drew closer. 'What could this door guardian be defending?'

The red background made it look like the door guardian was stepping on a river of blood. It was holding something in his arm and Han Fei swore the model's body was turning around. The firepot before Room 4044 trembled. All the pictures inside the fire pot were headless, that should be some kind of clues.

Being chased by the Soul Chaser, Han Fei got inadvertently close to Room 4044 and the corridor before him changed. More blood dripped from the corner and the cement floor slowly morphed into a puddle of blood. The red liquid dripped on his face and they felt sticky. The anxiety within him grew. 'This is probably what a trip to hell would feel like.'

Since stopping meant certain death, Han Fei could only keep going. When he was about to arrive at Room 4044, his injured arm suddenly winced with pain. The blood pattern started to pulse. Black blood vessels crawled out from the butterfly-shaped wound. Something was warning Han Fei to run!

"Big Sin?" When he was attacked by the Soul Chaser, Big Sin helped Han Fei block a fatal blow and now it was giving another warning to Han Fei. Han Fei halted immediately. As Han Fei looked up, the door guardian had already turned forward and it was holding a giant guillotine knife. As the blade swung, Han Fei chose to log off. Blood froze the world, and the blade almost reached Han Fei's neck.

His consciousness started to detach and in that blood red city, Han Fei believed he heard an angry song. Just as Han Fei logged off the game, the Singer once again confirmed his location. As Han Fei slipped through its fingers once more, that incensed the Unmentionable further.

Removing the gaming helmet, Han Fei collapsed inside the gaming hub. He tried to push the hub door open but he didn't even have the energy to lift his hands. This night was a busy one for Han Fei. He was either running for his life or going to run for his life until he was ultimately forced out from the game.

'The next time I log in, it'll be the scariest Night of Resurrection that occurs every 14 years. I have less than 24 hours to prepare for it.'

349 I saw Your Family

The Ziggurat was far more dangerous than Han Fei expected, or rather its danger was far beyond the imagination of any normal mind. For a level 13 player, Ziggurat was like a nightmare, it could and had driven a person insane. Death was a release at this place.

'Zhuang Ren, the Director of Immortal Pharma, Fu Sheng, Butterfly...' Questions befuddled Han Fei's mind, he was under a pressure that a comedy actor shouldn't. After he recovered somewhat, Han Fei crawled out from the gaming hub to pull back the curtain. The sun shone on him and Han Fei slowly closed his eyes, savoring the beauty of the moment. 'Being alive can feel so unreal sometimes.' The warmth of the sun rejuvenated his heart. Han Fei felt so foolish at that moment. The fact that he used to spiral into depression due to losing his acting job felt so ridiculous.

'I could have enjoyed a perfectly blissful life but I didn't appreciate it, but now that I've lost it, I miss it dearly.' Han Fei turned to the murder wall. He scrounge up something to eat and then called Li Xue. "I have something to report to you. Zhuang Wen's biological father might be the Butterfly."

There was a thud from the other side of the line. "Are you sure?"

"Yes, you need to speed up the screening process. The Butterfly is feeling the pressure and it'll act the craziest in the next few days. If we do not zone in on it soon, it might do something crazy."

"We can't find him on the citizenry database but we're applying to gain greater access. Don't worry, we'll do our best to dig it out."

"Also, remember to protect Huang Yin, don't let him disappear like Feng Ziyu. It's best if some of you could move in with him and monitor his mental state."

"We've already done that." Li Xue paused before she asked, "Han Fei, how come I feel like you're rushing into things all of a sudden? Have you encountered something?"

"Basically I'm in a race with the Butterfly and the loser will lose everything." After a few more exchanges, Han Fei hung up, put on some clothes and left. Han Fei didn't have time for leisure, every second counted. He took a taxi to Pear Blossom Neighbourhood and went straight to Zhuang Ren's

home. After his adventure at Building 4, Han Fei was sure of one thing, there was one more secret on Zhuang Ren. It was because of that secret which prevented the Butterfly from harming Zhuang Ren in real life but instead targeted Zhuang Ren's family.

After he waited for 3 minutes, the door to Zhuang Ren's home finally opened. The man looked even worse than the day before. His lips were black and his eyes were filled with blood. Zhuang Ren looked like the walking dead. "I'm sorry, I couldn't sleep yesterday night, I only fell asleep around dawn." Zhuang Ren's voice was hoarse, and laced with fatigue.

"Did you have a nightmare?"

"Not really, I dreamt about my daughter."

"Your youngest daughter?" Han Fei asked.

"Yes, actually." Zhuang Ren was surprised, "She said she misses me and wants me to go accompany her. When I was ready to go with her, she was dragged away by a mean ghost who had its hands around her neck."

"Did you have similar dreams often?"

"I used to but now, I dream about my family every 4 days."

4 days were exactly the time between two Nights of Resurrection. The ritual in the cryptic world had an effect on Zhuang Ren's dream in real life. This discovery chilled Han Fei.

"If not for the dreams being nightmares all the time, I wouldn't mind dreaming of them more often." Zhuang Ren invited Han Fei into the house. "Have you had breakfast? I have some dairy and fruits."

"Thank you but I came today because I have something important to tell you." Han Fei sat on the couch. His tone and attitude was different from before.

“What is it?” Zhuang Ren noticed the unusualness about Han Fei too. After he closed the door, he sat on the other end of the couch and regarded Han Fei with confusion.

“I found your family.”

It was a simple statement but it sounded like thunder in Zhuang Ren’s ears. He could barely register it at first. Several seconds later, his purplish lips trembled and his murky eyes locked onto Han Fei.

“I not only know where they are, I have also met them myself.” Han Fei tossed out the bait. He leaned back into the couch and continued, “But they’re in a very strange state, like they’re charmed by something. They believe that they are still alive and you’re the one who is dead. To reunite with you, they keep selling their souls to the devil to continue a soul summoning ritual.”

Han Fei didn’t wait for Zhuang Ren’s reaction but picked up the gaming controller and started the game. With each of Han Fei’s declarations, Zhuang Ren’s expression changed. Certain things Zhuang Ren hadn’t told Han Fei, but he managed to repeat the same things that the director of Immortal Pharma once told him. His wife and daughters died in real life and Zhuang Ren died in the Ziggurat.

“Where are they now?” Zhuang Ren asked desperately.

“Room 4144 at the Ziggurat. I know the way there, I can bring you to meet your family.” Han Fei didn’t elaborate but turned to look at Zhuang Ren.

“As long as I can see them again, I can give you anything! I don’t see myself living for much long. My house, my assets can all be transferred to your name. Right, aren’t you an actor? I still have some connections in the business, I can help you...”

“That is not what I need.” Han Fei shook his head. “I might have less than 24 hours to live. Money, fame mean nothing to me, I only want to survive.” Zhuang Ren didn’t quite get Han Fei. For him, Han Fei looked perfectly hale, not someone who only had a day left to live.

“Then how can I help you?”

“Tell me everything you know about the director of Immortal Pharma. Has he given you anything else other than the Ziggurat game? Told you something else?” Han Fei didn’t understand one thing, why would the manager at Ziggurat seal up the figurines with Fu Sheng’s memory fragment inside Zhuang Ren’s family’s room?

“I’ve already told you everything I know.”

“You dare to swear on your wife and daughters’ lives?” While Han Fei spoke, his hands were still controlling the in-game character, solving the maps. “Think about it before you answer. In a bit, I will clear my way to Room 4144 to prove that I’m not lying to you. At the same time, I want you to witness for yourself the kind of horror your family is living in.”

## Chapter 350

### 350 The Previous Manager

Han Fei played the Ziggurat game not only to help Zhuang Ren but also to help himself. He had triggered the Soul Chaser mission inside the cryptic world and he had to identify the Soul Chaser to survive. He wouldn’t be able to see the Soul Chaser through conventional methods, so he placed all his hope on the Ziggurat game. The earlier maps were solved pretty much the same way but just as Zhuang Wen was about to reunite, Han Fei carried her child into Room 1144.

“Wait, isn’t that a dead end?” Zhuang Ren got increasingly confused by Han Fei’s control, but he didn’t dare to question it. The young man before him had proven many times that his actions were carefully calculated despite how crazy they looked.

Triggering the conversation with the madman inside Room 1144, Han Fei carried Zhuang Wen’s child into the dresser. He zigzagged through the world of red clothing and made his way based on his memory. Even with his photographic memory, Han Fei still found himself lost twice. He only found the other dresser door in his 3rd play through. Predicting the time, Han Fei approached the dresser door when Zhuang Wen was about to catch up to him.

A giant maw appeared behind the door. The black tongues latched onto Zhuang Wen’s humanity and dragged her inside the dresser. Han Fei’s mission had been completed so he hid at the corner to observe the rest. Zhuang Wen shattered the mouth’s teeth, shredded its tongue and then jumped into the dresser. After a long time, seeing as Zhuang Wen didn’t return from the dresser, he controlled his character to follow her.

Slithering down the 'intestines', Han Fei found the shattered door deep inside the monster's stomach. Han Fei signaled for Zhuang Ren to lean closer as he pushed the door open. The familiar layout and furniture held Zhuang Ren's attention. His murky eyes slowly widened and his silent heart started to beat again. Han Fei's character exited the dresser. Different from the cryptic world, this bedroom was covered in bloody footprints, both children and adults.

"They thought you were the one who died and had burned your dead portrait." The character Han Fei controlled edged along the dresser and discovered a mission object inside the fire pot—Dead Portrait.

The person inside the portrait was Zhuang Ren. Behind the portrait was the instruction for the soul faring ceremony, some of the instructions brought chills to Zhuang Ren. "My, my family is staying here?" Zhuang Ren's arms went up and down. He wanted to grab the controller from Han Fei but was afraid that the character might die the moment he did. Instead, he crawled up from the couch and walked nervously towards the television screen. "What is beyond the door? They've prepared this portrait for me? But I..." Zhuang Ren stammered. He had played this game for decades already, time had exhausted his hope. The game had become more of a method of evasion. He didn't expect that Han Fei could really one day find traces of his family inside the game, the feeling was indescribable.

"Things are not as perfect as you hope. What you're going to see next will be a nightmare." Han Fei pushed the bedroom door open. The living room was also covered in footprints and all the furniture was enclosed within a layer of black curse. The place was a domain of death. Even though the place looked the same as Zhuang Ren remembered it, everything was also completely different.

The in game character opened the door to the youngest daughter's bedroom. Han Fei hadn't even entered it when the door of the living room swung open. The background music suddenly changed. The music was unlike anything the two men had ever heard, it was not meant for human ears.

"They are coming." Han Fei had his character hide behind the door. Then Zhuang Ren and he stared at the screen. Soon a woman holding a religious figurine entered the living room, with 2 girls trailing behind her. They walked into the room as if they were unable to see the strange happenings around them. They conversed about the soul summoning ceremony.

Zhuang Ren stood beside the television and his arms trembled. His family was still wearing the clothes they wore on the day of the accident. It was as if they were still alive, forever locked on that day. His family's death was a huge blow to Zhuang Ren, it ruined his life. He was unable to walk away from the grief even though decades had gone by. He abandoned his job, his social life and was labeled an outcast.

He had been playing the game day in and day out, waiting for this moment but now that it had arrived, he didn't know what to do. His fingers caressed the characters on screen but all he could feel was the coldness and hardness of glass.

"I've found them..." His family was unaffected by the situation in the real world. They continued to discuss the ceremony on how to summon the 'dead' Zhuang Ren to reunite with them. The conversation filled up the screen. A normal person might not be able to understand Zhuang Ren's feelings. What he wouldn't give to be with his family?

"My family is inside the game, I've found them, does that mean it's time for me to face the truth?" Zhuang Ren collapsed to the ground, "Actually I know that I wouldn't be able to reunite with them anymore, there's no way I can enter a game. Thank you for helping me fulfill my dream, now I have no more regrets." At that moment, Zhuang Ren no longer looked as confused as before.

His family was trapped inside a game, and that just sounded preposterous, but he held onto that hope because it gave him the excuse not to face the cruel reality of his family's death. A false hope was still better than pure despair. But now that he found his family in the game, all he had for his effort was a touch of the cold television screen. He had completed his lifelong dream but he had also lost his last hope. Zhuang Ren suddenly felt incredibly drowsy. He wanted to sleep, and wished that he wouldn't need to wake up again.

"You've already carried on for decades, isn't it a bit early to give up now?" Han Fei's voice splashed on his face like cold water. It woke him up immediately. "This game is merely a prediction by the director of Immortal Pharma. Your family is not inside this game, but they do exist for real because I've seen them in person."

Zhuang Ren's eyes finally moved away from the screen, "You've seen them?"

"You might not trust me, but do you not trust the director? Would the man closest to God ever lie to you?" Han Fei controlled his character and continued the game. It was not easy to get to this stage, he was not going to give up now.

"If you can help me reunite with my family, I am willing to pay anything!" Zhuang Ren crawled up from the ground, his bloodshot eyes glowing with determination.

“I’ve already told you what I need. Plus, there’s something else. Meeting your family might require you to pay the ultimate price of your life. You better think about it before making any decision.” Han Fei didn’t urge Zhuang Ren. He continued to play the game and started a game of hide and seek with Zhuang Ren’s family inside the small house.

Zhuang Ren hesitated for a long time before he stood up to head into the bedroom. Half an hour later, Zhuang Ren returned to the living room, lugging a black box. When Han Fei saw the black box, his eyelids twitched, he had seen that box before. When he first purchased the gaming helmet for Perfect Life, the helmet came in a similar looking box!

“The tapes that I showed you weren’t complete. This is the biggest secret I have.” Zhuang Ren opened the box and took out a tape. He slotted it into the tape player. He sped up the video until a part where he enlarged the frame. “This is when the female actor was invaded, pay attention to the mirror at the lower left corner. It happens around the 16th second.”

Zhuang Wen’s mother appeared on screen. She kept talking to herself as she walked deeper into the set. After she turned a corner, she was dragged away by a shadow. Han Fei had seen this before, but what happened next Han Fei had not seen. The female actor called out Zhuang Ren’s name but the face that appeared in the mirror was not Zhuang Ren but the director of Immortal Pharma!

However, the person in the mirror didn’t look at all like the director. His eyes were filled with evil like he was the devil incarnate. ‘Wait, the Butterfly is the director?’ Han Fei’s eyes widened. He continued to watch. The actor’s scream turned harrowing, it sounded like her body was being torn apart. As she was about to die, the sound of a door opening came from the recording. Then a man’s voice said, “Turning into my little brother and living in my former house, do you think that will create a flaw in me?”

“Fu Sheng, why must you be so insistent on interrupting me? I can help you destroy the cryptic...”

“I don’t need help from a ghost.”

Then the recording silenced. Zhuang Ren switched off the player. “The set that you saw was the building where the director once lived. When I saw the man’s face inside the mirror, I was shocked but then the more I thought about it, the more suspicious I found the whole thing.”

“Have the people from Immortal Pharma approached you?”

“On the second day I noticed the face in the mirror, the director personally came to see me, I thought he came to buy the recording off me but he didn’t mention anything related to it. Instead he only left me with a few words.” Zhuang Ren thought for a long time before he uttered, “His eyes that looked at me were filled with pity and then he said something like no one will be able to change the predestined future. Things bound to happen will happen.”

“That’s all?”

“He asked me whether I have played with the game, I told him no and then he gave me this black box. He told me to only open the box when I was in a highly emotional state.”

“Then what did you find in it?” Clearly the tape was something Zhuang Ren added into the box.

“I opened it the second night after my family died. It contained a secondhand therapy device.” Zhuang Ren took out something that looked like the gaming helmet. Compared to Han Fei’s helmet, it looked like a half-finished prototype. Han Fei took a look at the device and the parts were literally falling apart. Some of the fuses had even burnt. “You did this?”

“I don’t know or I can’t remember if I did. After I put this thing on, I felt like I was electrocuted. When I woke up, it was already broken.” Zhuang Ren sat on the box, he really couldn’t remember what happened back then.

“Can you lend me this to bring back home? I want to research it further.” Han Fei believed this was the reason why Butterfly couldn’t enter Zhuang Ren’s dream. If he could understand the theory behind it, he could make one for Huang Yin.

“Of course, I have no use for it anymore.”

‘Through these things, I might get to know Fu Sheng and his brother more.’ Han Fei placed the ruined helmet back into the box and then he told Zhuang Ren to go shower and change, “We’ll be heading towards the building next door to investigate the director’s former home and then I’ll find a way for you to meet your family.”

“Really?” Zhuang Ren’s eyes brightened with hope.

“Just be as prepared as you can.” Han Fei didn’t dare to drag Zhuang Ren into the cryptic world willy-nilly. He needed to know more about Fu Sheng and the Butterfly’s goals before he made the decision. While Zhuang Ren took a shower, Han Fei continued to play the game. But perhaps his mind was on other stuff, he was soon killed by the ghosts in Building 4.

‘There’s still time, I mustn’t rush myself.’ Han Fei took out his phone to call Jin Jun. If he remembered correctly, the experienced reporter still had tester accounts for Perfect Life. Han Fei put down the controller. As he talked on the phone, Han Fei exited the room and slunk his way to the building located at the deepest corner of Pear Blossom Neighbourhood. After Immortal Pharma bought this place, they sealed it up completely. There was a 2 metre tall iron fence and it came equipped with an AI alarm and 24 hour surveillance. The security was tough but the restriction did loosen after the director’s death.

Han Fei easily leaped over the fence. He followed the direction from the movie recordings and soon arrived at Building 4. It was at this corner that Zhuang Wen’s mother was ambushed.

‘Looks like I should pick up lock-picking.’ Huang Yin did send some books related to that skill to the cryptic world and Han Fei learned some basics about locks from them, but he wasn’t given much opportunity to practice the skill. He took out the nunchucks and opened the old door with brute force.

He swung the door back and forth. ‘Inside the tape, before Fu Sheng spoke, there was a soft door opening sound. I wonder what kind of door he opened.’

Han Fei tried all the doors he could find until he stopped before the door of the dresser inside the bedroom. The sound of the dresser opening was similar to the sound inside the recording. Han Fei looked inside the dresser and realized there was a copious amount of dried blood inside and they formed the shape of a door.