

## Iyashikei 81

### Chapter 81:

To put it plainly, Han Fei was famous!

A comedy actor caught his break while shooting a horror film due to his bravery helping the police solve a cold case the movie was based on. The fame came so suddenly that Han Fei was blindsighted by it.

“There’s Han Fei!” When Han Fei appeared beside the window, the reporters recognized him immediately. The cameras flashed and some were audacious enough to trespass into the set. To prevent these reporters from destroying the set, Director Jiang hurried to descend the stairs. Han Fei followed behind him. Director Jiang and the floor manager ushered the crowd away from the apartment.

“Please, if you have any questions, pose them one by one. Han Fei will be here soon.” Director Jiang and the floor manager tried to maintain the order. The reporters and the paparazzi rushed forward as Han Fei arrived. Flashes erupted before his eyes but Han Fei turned away from them. He sought specific faces among the crowd and once he did, Han Fei slithered through the mass of people. He eventually reached his target.

“Sir, Youfu...” That was all Han Fei could say when the old man gripped Han Fei tightly by his arms. After a decade of waiting, the real culprit was finally caught. The old man’s eyes were red. He was too overwhelmed for words. He held Han Fei, and for some reasons, he could see his son’s shadow on the young man in that moment. “We’ve seen the official statement given by the police. Thank you, Han Fei.” Gu Hwa’s big sister, Chui Tianchi’s parents, Xiao Qing’s big brother, the families surrounded Han Fei. Their words of appreciation touched Han Fei. Perhaps the wandering souls were stuck inside that game for all these years because they still had these people keeping them in mind. Many families cried. The pressure and pain they had experienced for the past 10 years were only understandable by each other. Han Fei was flummoxed. He didn’t know how to console them. He stood inside the crowd of humans but all he could think of was the ghosts inside the apartment. ‘If only I can bring them out of the game to meet their families...’ The thought buried itself in Han Fei’s mind. The man did not notice this himself.

Han Fei did not accept the expensive presents the families brought for him. He only took their words of thanks and a banner they made for him.

Human beings are very complicated creatures, some of them derive the sickest joy from hurting their own kind, while others hold onto hope for as long as a decade simply due to a bond to their loved ones.

Eventually after the families had given their thanks, they left Han Fei so he could resume his work. Seeing this opportunity, the media swooped in. They surrounded Han Fei before he could escape. When he fielded the questions, Han Fei did not hog the praise, he shared most of the merits with the police and Meng Changxi. The police because they were crucial in this case and they did most of the legwork; Meng Changxi because the man had been through a lot and he should be acknowledged for his suffering and sacrifice.

Blinded by the cameras and flashes, Han Fei eventually felt a bit dizzy. He was still unused to this. "Guys, we're in the middle of a shoot, I'm afraid now is not a good time for questions. When the movie is out, there will be plenty of time for interviews." Han Fei found an excuse and escaped back into the apartment like his life depended on it. Wiping away the sweat from his forehead, Han Fei saw Sister Long and Director Jiang smiling at him. "Is there anything on my face?"

"Nah, it's just unexpected to see that a cool and professional actor like yourself be so easily flustered by some reporters." Director Jiang chuckled. "But don't worry, Han Fei, you'll soon get used to this."

"More and more people are talking about this case. We can save a lot of money in promotion." Sister Long took out her phone, "Remove the earlier movie posters as soon as possible and replace them with some new ones that have Han Fei as the main character. Do not waste time, get it done today." Sister Long left with a satisfied smile. Director Jiang led Han Fei back to the second floor. "Now, no one will dare to complain about you getting the main role anymore. After you prove your acting chops to the world, your future will only get brighter."

Director Jiang sent Han Fei into his dressing room. When everyone was ready, he shot a short video with Han Fei and then he had Han Fei pose for the new promotional posters.

Meng Changan and Meng Changxi stood back to back while light and darkness collided in the background. Meng Changxi with the ruined face stood in the dark, pain weighed him down and people viewed him as a monster. However, even in the deepest darkness, he held onto a ray of light in his heart. Behind Meng Changxi stood the dashing and handsome Meng Changan under the sunlight. He enjoyed the world's adoration and praise but a mist of darkness curled around his heart where even the strongest light could not reach. Twin flowers, a flower representing the most extreme of duality.

After the script was set, Han Fei needed to hurry home for his game. So when the shoot was over, he rejected the offer to join the crew for dinner and went home alone. After a whole day of bustling

around, even his body was at its limits despite its improvement. After a simple dinner, Han Fei crawled into bed. "Today is indeed a memorable day, my dream finally came true."

Han Fei tapped into his phone to check the articles online before he logged into his social platform. In just one afternoon, without any promotion, his follower number skyrocketed. Perhaps because his profile was so inactive, some questioned whether it was really authentic. Questions like that popped up in the comments. In the end, the Xin Lu law enforcement had to come out with a statement to verify Han Fei's identity. And then, things in the comment section changed... not exactly for the better. His fans started to discuss the human jigsaw case. Those not in the know would assume this was a social platform for the police. "I wonder if any other actor has the same kind of fan activity as I do..."

Li Xue's comment eventually drifted into Han Fei's head. He needed to have a stronger media presence as an actor. He decided to post some pictures online, that was what celebrities do, right?

He opened the photo album in his phone to find something to share but after a long time, the man had to admit that he was a very boring person. Just as Han Fei was about to surrender and close the album, his eyes caught something. It was a normal picture, a picture of himself lying in his bed wearing the gaming helmet. When his eyes first landed on the picture, Han Fei did not feel anything but 1 second later, his blood froze and his hairs stood on end!

"This is impossible!" The man jumped up from bed to grab the fruit knife from the table. He looked around his room with alarm. According to the time stamp, the photo was taken on the second night after he got the gaming helmet. Han Fei was sure he was alone at home that night but if that was the case, who used his phone to take this picture? 'Someone has been inside my house!'

Wielding the knife, Han Fei switched on all the lights in his room and he checked every nook and cranny. "There's no one around."

Standing in the middle of the living room, Han Fei stared at the unusual photo. Slowly a detail jumped out at him. Inside the photo, there appeared to be a shadow worming its way into the gaming helmet.

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Even after he pulled the picture to its maximum amplification, Han Fei still could not tell what that shadowy blur was supposed to be. He stared at the picture and his brain clocked overtime.

'There has to be a reason why this picture is taken and then left inside my phone. It is definitely meant for me to find. But who would do this? And why? Is it because it is unable to communicate with me normally and this is the only way it can reach me?' Han Fei was confused. The picture chilled him, the joy from earlier dissipated. 'My phone can only be unlocked with my fingerprint. This means that whoever this is, it has interacted with my body. But it did not harm me. Furthermore, I am completely vulnerable to the threat in the real world when I am in the game so it could have easily killed me if it wanted to back then. Could this be the doing of the cemetery custodian who sold me the gaming helmet?'

Han Fei had a feeling that things were not that simple. Perhaps he was spared because the culprit needed him to be alive. He was after all the receptacle for the precious black box. 'Many parties are searching for the black box. The founder of Perfect Life created the black box and it attracted the attention of this mysterious butterfly. I will probably run into more unusual characters in the future.' The black box was inside Han Fei's brain so if they wanted to get the black box, they would have to perform cranial surgery on him. Balling up his fists, Han Fei was reminded of the warning the system gave him when he first exited the game. He was told to explore the game as fast as possible. 'The black box is stuck in my head and it is not something I can just remove easily. Ignoring the game won't help me either. All I can do now is level up and explore the game, perhaps the truth is hidden inside it.'

Han Fei stared transfixed at the gaming helmet when knocking came from his door. It caused the man to jump. He hid the fruit knife behind him and sidled to his front door. He spied through the peephole and saw Li Xue standing outside. Putting the knife away, when Han Fei opened the door, his expression had returned to normal. "Why have you decided to pay me a visit? Has your superior allowed you to return to the heavy crime unit?"

"I wish, but the boss has given me a new mission instead." Li Xue entered the room and closed the door. "He said that before the butterfly is captured, I am to patrol your neighbourhood heavily."

"So he wants you to protect me?"

"I suppose so. You are now a key protected individual. Things around here might still look normal to you but your place is now being heavily monitored. If the butterfly dares to show up, he'll fall into the net." Li Xue picked up the glass and gulped down the water. "I'm here to inform you about that. Other than that, a new surveillance system has been installed at this building. If you run into any danger, just rush towards any camera available and wave. The officers on duty will come to rescue you immediately."

“Thanks.” After the scare Han Fei had gone through with the photo, this was welcomed news.

“We’re just doing our duty.” Li Xue informed Han Fei about the camera locations inside his building and then she left.

‘Having police protection solves one of my problems, at least now I don’t need to worry about my real-life safety when I am in the gaming world.’ Han Fei glanced at the clock, it was still early so he picked up the books on the table to read. When it was almost midnight, Han Fei started to remind himself of the layout of the apartment building in the game. ‘When I last quit, I have already left Room 1074, so after I log in, I need to keep my head low and rush down the stairs as fast as I can.’

Han Fei played a few dry runs in his mind. After memorizing every corner, he connected the wires and put on the helmet. Blood descended. Before the notification arrived, the moment Han Fei could open his eyes, he dashed down the stairs like a jaguar. He ran all the way back to Room 1044 without turning once around. He only gave a gasp of relief when he was inside the room. ‘The mirror on the 7th floor didn’t camp for my return. It’s a reasonable neighbour.’

After shutting the anti-theft door, Han Fei entered the front bedroom and crawled into bed. ‘I should rest for an hour first. Then I’ll use the second hour to revise all my studies and the third hour to practice my combat skills.’ Han Fei closed his eyes not to sleep but to think. There were too many questions that needed to be answered. After spending 3 hours inside the haunted house, Han Fei checked his character profile. He added the skill point he gained from the hidden mission to acting before he turned to the mission interface.

‘I still have 2 days left to complete the Grade F Mission, Human Jigsaw. If I can accomplish it, I’m sure it’ll be of tremendous help to me.’ Han Fei took out the landlord’s spare key from his inventory. ‘I have the master key to all the rooms but unfortunately none of the keys is marked. If I am going to try them one by one, that’ll take too much time. And I know staying too long in the corridor will be too dangerous. If only I can persuade Xu Qin to come with me.

‘Other than that, I still have the other mission— Grade G Mission, Explore the 6th Floor. Based on my calculation, most of the non-locals should be dead by now. I should focus on completing this mission first before I attempt to search for the human jigsaw pieces.’ Han Fei knew how to use the game’s rules to be his best advantage. He would not take unnecessary risk. Completing the easier mission first meant that he would be able to quit at any time when he attempted the second mission. After he was ready, Han Fei exited Room 1044 quietly. Perhaps it was his illusion but the apartment felt quieter. ‘Have some of the neighbours moved away when I was gone?’

Han Fei stuck to the wall as he moved to the 5th floor. To his disappointment, Xu Qin was still not home. 'I hope nothing has happened to her. She hasn't been seen for 2 days already...'

Han Fei got no response when he knocked on her door so he had to travel to the 6th floor alone. Almost all the non-locals on the 6th floor had been preyed upon in their goal to hunt Han Fei so the floor was relatively safe now. 'I had to visit all 4 rooms on the 5th floor to complete the mission, Explore the 5th floor, it should be the same in this case.' Han Fei took out the landlord's spare keys. He controlled his breath and tried them out one by one. Throughout the process, Han Fei made no noise. Perhaps it was his high luck point, Han Fei found the correct key to 1061 only after a few trials. He entered to a room that looked more like a torture chamber. 'Xu Qin is right, these people are barely humans.'

Using roughly 10 minutes, Han Fei cleared Room 1061 and Room 1062. He swiped everything that the system could identify, including the poisons that the feminine man concocted and the blood bags used to keep the human cocoons fed.

Han Fei had been to Room 1064 already so now he only needed to enter Room 1063 and the mission would be completed. Everything went smoothly but as he arrived at the door to Room 1063, the strange footsteps returned in the corridor and it appeared chillingly close to Han Fei.

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'It's those footsteps again!' Han Fei immediately stopped what he was doing, turned and scurried into Room 1062. He leaned into the wall next to the door and glanced through the peephole. 'Even Xu Qin refused to encounter the owner of those footsteps, I can't imagine how scary it must be!'

The footsteps picked up in pace. Han Fei's ring reacted with a piercing cold. The thing was coming!

Holding his breath, Han Fei froze. His eyes stuck to the peephole, he wanted to take a gander at this thing. The footsteps stopped on the 6th floor. The chill from the ring almost frosted Han Fei's finger off. Han Fei knew the thing was outside the door but he could see nothing through the peephole. The corridor was dark, not even a shadow could be seen. 'An invisible neighbour?' To be honest though, this kind of unknown presence was even scarier than a known threat. 'I wonder if it's looking at me through the peephole as well...' Han Fei was frightened by his own thoughts. He quickly shrunk away from the peephole and made himself as small as possible. It was very quiet outside the door. If not for the

landlord's ring, Han Fei would assume the thing had left. 'The thing is still waiting for me outside the door!'

This stalemate continued for another 15 minutes before the footsteps returned once more. The thing departed. 'Just what kind of thing it is? It's invisible but I'm sure it's real. After all, there are those footsteps to account for.' After the chill disappeared, Han Fei silently eased the door open. With no time to lose, he hurried to open the door to Room 1063. After he finished searching all the room on the 6th floor, the robotic voice appeared in his mind, "Notification for Player 0000! You have completed Grade G Main Mission, Explore the 6th Floor. You've obtained basic reward, 1 Free Skill Point.

"Notification for Player 0000! You have successfully reached level 5 and obtained 1 Free Attribute Point!"

Han Fei sighed in relief hearing those notifications. He added the attribute point to stamina and the skill point to acting. Now his stamina was at 8 and his acting skill, Intermediate Level 7. Soon he'd reach the level of advanced acting. 'After the increase in stamina, my various physical capabilities should improve as well. I'm probably quite a competent fighter now... right?' Han Fei tried a few punches. 'My speed is almost as fast as the scarred men who ambushed me, but my overall strength is still weaker than them. However, after I level up my stamina further, they'll be the ones who'll need to run and hide in future encounters.'

After the main mission was completed, Han Fei was ready to search for the human jigsaw pieces. The most difficult part of this Grade F Mission was that the player was required to search for the pieces hidden throughout the entire apartment. In Han Fei's case though, the mission was slightly easier. At least he knew where the jigsaw pieces were thanks to Meng Changxi. He easily located 3 jigsaw pieces. These pieces were actually the missing body parts of the human jigsaw victims. Based on the system's identification, other than a surprising amount of curse and resentment, these jigsaw pieces possessed some kind of unique sentiment.

'I've found all the simple ones. For the remaining 4 pieces, 2 of them are on the 8th floor and 2 on the 9th, neither of these floors I've visited before. If I quit the game now, I'll only have the last day to finish this mission. I don't think it's possible to find all 4 pieces on both the 8th and 9th floor in one day.' Han Fei took a deep breath. 'If I don't want to fail this mission, then I'll have to find more pieces today.' The system promised lucrative rewards for completing this mission, Han Fei did not want to give up on it. While he could still quit the game freely, Han Fei decided to venture to the 8th floor to take a look.

'Meng Si did warn me about the landing between 7th and 8th floor. Apparently, going there at midnight, you might end up at some other location and witness some special things.'

Han Fei sneaked carefully up to the 7th floor and he noticed the door to Room 1074 was closed but not locked because he remembered the lock was busted. 'Who closed this door? The owner of the mysterious footsteps? It too did not want to deal with the mirror? Why? This might be its weakness... Maybe the mirror can reflect its real appearance?' Han Fei took down this detail. For now, he couldn't do anything about it. Han Fei was sure that if he appeared before the mirror now, the grey hands would spare no mercy on him. 'There's still time to befriend this neighbour. I shan't hurry a relationship.'

Going up the steps between 7th and 8th floor, Han Fei couldn't help but notice that there were plenty of blood stains on the staircase. 'Just how many people have died here?' Similar to the stairwell on the other floors, there were strange doodles on the walls as well.

When he reached the landing, Han Fei did not feel anything out of place. The only change was the smell of blood in the air thickened.

'Dong!' Suddenly a sound entered his ears, it was followed by a shrill cackle. 'Wait, the sound came from behind me?!' Like usual, Han Fei backed himself against the wall as he climbed up the stairs so logically speaking, there shouldn't be anyone behind him. When he turned his head back to look, Han Fei's face blanched. He was standing in front of a doodle which depicted several youngsters pulling on the limbs of a middle-aged man. 'Where did the laughter come from? From inside this doodle?!'

Han Fei narrowed his eyes at the painted people on the mottled wall. The youngsters were smiling as they yanked on the middle-aged man's hands and legs. The painting was grotesque but that was the overall theme of this game. Han Fei could not tell if the painting was the source of the mysterious laughter or not. In any case, Han Fei abided by the philosophy, seek no trouble where there is none. He did not stay to scrutinize the painting lest trouble came from it.

However, Han Fei swore the moment he turned his gaze away, one of the young men in the painting turned to glare at him. Han Fei's heart stopped but his face belied none of the anxiety he felt. He pretended he did not notice the living painting and hurried up to the 8th floor. 'The houses are already haunted but now even the stairwell is haunted. Not even the walls and corners can be considered 100 percent safe anymore.'

After Han Fei exited the stairwell, the smell of blood cleared. When he turned back to look down the stairwell, grotesque doodles still decorated the walls but the one that he saw had disappeared. The youngsters and the middle-aged man vanished! 'Could there be actual ghosts living inside the wall?'



They're the one responsible for the blood stains inside the stairwell? But why would they only roam the space between the 7th and 8th floor?'

Han Fei was lucky this time but he could not guarantee his fortune would last forever. 'It's too dangerous to leave such a threat inside the stairwell. Perhaps I should consider burning down the wall coating... I wonder if there's stuff like petrol to be found inside this building...'

While pondering a solution, Han Fei sought his way to Room 1084. One of the jigsaw puzzles was hidden inside this room. Han Fei grabbed the handle and pushed. 'Wait, it's not locked?'

Han Fei was surprised but before he could understand this situation, the strange footsteps returned. This time he heard it clearly, the sound came from right above him, from the 9th floor!

The thing was moving very quickly so Han Fei had no choice but to get into Room 1084 to hide.

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Chill engulfed Han Fei. Once Han Fei ran into Room 1084, he immediately shut the door. 'The footsteps first appeared at the 9th floor, this means the thing probably lives there!' Leaning against the door, Han Fei was in a very dangerous situation. The 8th floor was completely different from the 6th floor. Particularly scary things occupied the rooms on this floor. The tenant inside Room 1084, if there was one, still had not shown themselves but the footsteps were approaching. Han Fei's heart couldn't help but race. 'If there's no other choice, I'd just log off.'

Sensing the frost from his finger, Han Fei slowly squatted down as he scanned his surroundings. The room had been remodelled. The décor was much more luxurious than any of the other rooms Han Fei had visited in this building. There were 2 bedrooms visible from Han Fei's vantage point. A grand piano sat inside one of them and the other was probably a girl's room. It was designed in princess style, it had a pink theme with cute dolls on the bed and on the ground. These things did not exude any horror but for some reason, Han Fei felt uncomfortable being inside the house.

'Meng Si did warn me to stay away from the 8th and 9th floor.'

After some time, the chill from the ring finally receded. Han Fei adjusted his breathing as he reached towards the peephole. Leaning on the door, Han Fei glanced outwards. Somethings appeared to be blocking the peephole of Room 1084. All he could see was a blur of something red and black. He adjusted his vision angle but the sight did not clear.

‘That looks like a blob of blood...’ Han Fei made an educated guess. Just as he wondered who had done this, something surfaced among the splotch of blood. Stuck in the peephole, a bloodshot eyeball blinked at Han Fei. ‘What the fuck?!’ Han Fei staggered back immediately. He was not expecting to come into such an intimate contact with an eyeball!

‘I only looked through the peephole after the owner of the footsteps left so the eyeball inside the peephole probably does not belong to it.’ The urge to escape deepened as the feeling of discomfiture amplified. Han Fei reached for the door handle but was distressed to find out that the door refused to budge! ‘It’s not locked so why won’t it open?!’

Fear tingled down his spine, Han Fei knew he has been targeted. ‘Now that the door is locked, even if I log out now, I’ll relog back into this room. The situation will not have changed then.’ Gritting his teeth, Han Fei understood the only way left was forward. He was not one to surrender easily or else he would not have survived until now. At that moment, Han Fei did something a normal person wouldn’t do. He inclined his body towards the door to peek through the peephole again. He wanted to see if he could find any answer from that eyeball. Han Fei was ready for a staring contest but when he glanced through the peephole again, the eyeball had disappeared. ‘The door is still locked but the eyeball is now gone.’

Han Fei turned around and reclined against the door. Using his superior memory, he memorized the location of all the furniture and objects inside the house. ‘There’s nothing outwardly horrifying like talismans, black and white photos or ceremonial urns. There is not even a drop of blood visible. If I have to point out something that’s rather unusual, it’s the number of dolls gathered inside that girl’s room.’

There didn’t seem to be any specific arrangement to the dolls, some were sitting, others were tipped over. Not all of them looked new either. In fact, some of them had obvious traces of wear, with yellow cotton oozing out from their cut bellies. ‘Are there ghosts living inside these dolls?’

Han Fei had no particular penchant or hatred towards dolls but at that moment, these human-like objects appeared so terrifying.

“Tik tok, tik tok...” Amidst the dead silence, suddenly came the sound of waterdrops. Han Fei turned to the source and spotted the faucet in the bathroom leaking. ‘When I first came in, this sound was definitely not present.’

He slowly nudged his way to the bathroom door. Before he entered, he glanced at the mirror and shower. He did not want any nasty surprises. ‘The tap got loosened?’ Han Fei twisted the tap and he realized the tap was not only not screwed on tight, it was left open. ‘The water is supposed to be running since the tap is left open... Then why isn’t it? Is it stuck?’ He bent down to take a closer look. He then saw a bloody eyeball tumble out from the faucet. It was then washed away by the running water down the drain. Everything happened so quickly that Han Fei had to question his own vision. ‘Wait, it was an eyeball that stuffed up the pipe?’

Han Fei swore when the eyeball was carried away by the water, the pupil shook as if focusing on him. ‘What is going on with this place?’

Han Fei finally understood why he felt so uncomfortable. This must be what it felt like being a zoo animal, he was being examined from all sides by an unknown number of eyes. Goosebumps rose on the back of his neck. Han Fei panicked but he did not let it show because he knew that would not change anything, if anything, it would only show weakness. Han Fei switched off the tap and quickly exited the bathroom where Yin energy would gather. Han Fei retreated to the living room and picked up the fruit knife from the coffee table.

‘The system can identify any unique items that I touch. When the eyeball appears next, I should try to grab hold of it.’ Han Fei was not exactly looking forward to that experience but he knew with no risk came no reward.

Since the door was locked, essentially blocking his escape, Han Fei had no choice but to search the house for more clues. After inspecting the living room, Han Fei walked towards the bedrooms. He glanced into the princess room with the dolls and he could not gather the courage to enter it. In his mind, the dolls would come alive and jump on him once he stepped into the room. Thus, Han Fei turned his attention to the other bedroom. This bedroom was well-furnished. There was a piano, a bookshelf, a single bed and many paintings on the wall. ‘Something’s not right.’

Despite the many fancy furniture, the thing that caught Han Fei’s attention was a simple pillow. That was because instead of being on the bed, the pillow was hidden under the single bed. It suggested someone slept under the bed instead of on it. Holding the fruit knife, Han Fei crossed into the bedroom. He bent low to reach for the pillow when he noticed there were many nail scratch-marks on the side of the bed frame. He followed the trail of marks and slowly reached his head under the bed.

The marks reached under the board so Han Fei had to turn his head around to keep up with the snaking path of nail marks. When he did, he saw the same proclamation repeated endlessly, filling up a greater part of the bed board—It is looking at me!

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The words on the board numbed Han Fei's skull because that mirrored exactly what he was feeling at that moment. Something had been looking at him since he entered this house. He could feel the thing's gaze on him but he could not tell where it came from.

Other than the eerie proclamation, more things were written further down the board. To get to the bottom of the truth, Han Fei held the fruit knife and crawled deeper into the space under the bed. Compared to the overall neatness and order of the house, it was a different world under the bed. Blood stains smeared the wooden board. Someone scratched out the last moments of their life with nails.

"The eye has returned. The moment I close the light, it will be staring at me. Damn, what the hell is it?!"

"I can't escape, no matter where I hide, the eye will always be looking at me!"

"Am I mad? I am mad! It has shown up at the bottom of the cup and between the freezer compartments. Why would it stare so vengefully at me? What have I ever done to it?"

"There is more than one eye! There is more than one! There are eyes everywhere inside this house!"

"I'll open my eyes to more eyes. Whenever I wake up, that is the first thing I'll see! It hides in the gap between the closet, behind the bookshelf, even between the bed frame!"

"They are everywhere!"

"Ha ha ha ha! Finally, I know how to make them disappear!"

“Why? Why? Why? Why even after I lose my eyes, I can still see them? Is it because they are now inside my eye holes?”

Initially the handwriting was pretty legible but it soon turned extremely untidy. That was a perfect representation of the writer’s deteriorating state of mind. After they gouged their own eyes out, the unsettling records stopped. Instead, they were replaced by bloody and random scratch marks. By then, the person probably had completely lost their mind.

‘The room looks so normal on the surface but who would have thought such a horrifying detail will be left under the bed...’ The eyes inside the house were like a ghost but also a curse. Even blinding oneself would not spare one from their constant scrutiny. Replacing the pillow, Han Fei plopped his head down on it. He wanted his experience to be as authentic as possible so he could enter the poor victim’s state of mind more easily. This was something he’d do when he was reading for a new role. Curiously, compared to the spacious room, it felt safer under the bed.

‘I wonder where the eye that drove the house owner mad would appear next?’ Han Fei held the knife in one hand and purposely left his other empty so he could reach out to touch the eyeball. The house was silent as a tomb. Han Fei did not spot any eyeball but he could feel its stare on him. Han Fei looked around him. Since he had memorized the location of all the furniture, he’d be able to tell immediately if something had moved.

‘Wait, that’s new!’ Han Fei, who was hidden under the bed, noticed there was an additional doll on the corridor. ‘Are all the dolls ghosts? Or the ghost is hiding among the dolls? What should I do now? Cut all the dolls up?’ Everything was a mystery. The previous house-owner left not much useful information behind. They did leave behind plenty of nightmare fuel though. While Han Fei was thinking, the doll on the corridor toppled over without warning. It landed on its side and its two eyes stared right at Han Fei under the bed.

In that moment, Han Fei’s back chilled with fear. He turned around subconsciously and saw a blood red eye looking at him from the gap in the bed frame. Compelled by extreme fear, Han Fei’s hand that held the knife lashed at it. But just as he moved his arm, the eye disappeared like it was never there to begin with. Taking a deep breath, Han Fei turned back around and the doll on the corridor had disappeared as well.

‘I do not appreciate this game of hide and seek.’ Han Fei knew one of the dolls had exited the bedroom but now it had vanished. ‘It won’t be under the bed with me, would it?’

The more he thought about it, the more unsettled he felt. Han Fei flipped the board over and scurried out. There was nowhere safe inside this house. Like the previous owner claimed, the eye would be following him no matter where he hid. Therefore, the only way forward was to find more clues to solve this puzzle.

From the words on the bed board, Han Fei understood that the previous owner was not murdered by the ghost but instead they were slowly tormented until they wasted away. 'The ghost inside Room 1084 possesses heavy resentment, these are the scariest ones. But this is, questionably, good news for me.'

If the ghost preferred slow torture, then it meant that Han Fei would have more time to seek his escape. If it was an aggressive ghost, then Han Fei would have no choice but to log off to preserve his own life. 'I mustn't panic.' Han Fei tried to clear his mind of the eyeball and the dolls.

He focused on clue-searching. He decided to start inside the bedroom. He walked towards the bookshelf. Among the books, Han Fei spotted a sketch pad. He pulled it out and opened it. It contained plenty of childish doodles. Most of the drawings surrounded the theme of family. Sentences written in both Chinese characters and pinyin adorned the drawings.

"We moved into a new home! This place is bigger than our old home, there is a piano and many dolls."

"Daddy is my daddy, mommy is my mommy, they are not other people's daddy and mommy!"

"This is now my home. Daddy, mommy and the dolls are all mine!"

"Why does she like to take things from me? She lost her own daddy and mommy so she wants to take my daddy and mommy."

"I have figured out a way to get her out of the house. She can't see so she won't find her way home!"

"How did she get home? I hate her so much! I hate everything about her! I hope she'll disappear forever!"

"He he, she is a blind girl. As long as I keep quiet, she won't know it was me who killed her."

The paintings were incredibly colorful but the sentences that accompanied them were spine-chilling.

‘There was once a little girl who stayed here and she killed another girl with a sight problem?’ Pieces of the stories were falling into place. Han Fei continued his search. He found two certificates at the bottom drawer of the study table. There was a death certificate and an asset inheritance certificate. The death certificate belonged to the parents of a girl by the name of Ying Yue. Ying Yue was young when her parents died. Since she suffered from a congenital eye problem, she could not take care of herself. Therefore, she was taken in by her father’s younger sister.

The asset inheritance certificate detailed that in the event of her parent’s passing, Ying Yue would inherit Room 1084. However, Ying Yue was still too young when her parents died so it had no force of law.

‘I think I get it now. Ying Yue was the girl with the eye problem. This house should belong to her. But after her parents died in an accident, her aunt’s family moved in here to take care of her.’

Chapter 86:

This house, the piano, the room filled with dolls belonged to Ying Yue but clearly that was not the end of the story. The feeling of being scrutinized increased. Han Fei found a diary in another drawer. The handwriting was cursive, which suggested the author was female.

“1st Jan, we finally moved into our new home today. From today onwards, I’ll be the mother of 2 daughters, I promise to raise them as best as I can.”

“10th Jan, Ying Yue and Ming Mei are always arguing, this is such a headache. Both of them are my daughters, I hope they’ll be more understanding to each other.”

“15th Jan, Ming Mei wants to get a pet but Ying Yue is allergic to animal fur, how much more different can they be? But I love them equally.”

“20th Jan, Ming Mei and her father have voiced complaints about Ying Yue. But she is ultimately my brother’s daughter, I won’t turn her away. I love her.”

“20th Feb, today the police came. Apparently Ying Yue got separated from Ming Mei when they went for a walk. Thankfully the police found her and brought her home. I wouldn’t know what to do if I lose Ying Yue!”

“18th April, it will cost a lot to cure Ying Yue’s eyes but no worries, I am close to my goal already.”

“4th May, Ying Yue is acting stranger and stranger. Today she refused to let me brush her hair. That won’t do. I am so close to amassing the necessary amount already.”

“1st June, today is Children’s Day. It has been so long since the whole family of 3 went out to celebrate a holiday. It was a happy day.”

A quick read through the diary might amount to nothing but a closer read at it would reveal the scary details. Every entry exuded love but there was a sinister side to this love. The entry that jumped out at Han Fei the most was the one recorded on 1st June. They were supposed to be a family of 4, but in the diary, only 3 of them went to celebrate the holiday. So who was the one left out? What happened to that person?

Han Fei opened the last drawer and discovered a doll sitting inside it. The doll was about the size of Han Fei’s thumb and it was weaved from hair. A piece of white paper was stuck on its back. It had Ying Yue’s name and birthday date on it. A nail pierced through its body. When Han Fei touched the doll, the robotic voice echoed in his mind. “Notification for Player 0000! You have discovered Grade G Cursed Object—Ying Yue’s Doll. It is braided from Ying Yue’s hair, it possesses the most vicious curse.

“Ying Yue’s doll (Grade G Cursed Object): Why aren’t you dead yet? This is no longer your home! Don’t you know that? No one here loves you, every day we pray that you’ll fall dead!”

The doll had no eyes but it radiated an extreme chill. Just holding it caused Han Fei to shiver involuntarily. He could feel the curses crawling through his body.

The story is coming together. The diary entry on the 18th April mentioned the heavy medical bill to cure Ying Yue’s eyes but the mother claimed she was close to her goal already. She was not talking about a financial goal but something else. This was substantiated by the entry in May. She noted that Ying Yue refused to let her brush her hair anymore and that disrupted her goal. So the thing that the author was



amassing was not the money for Ying Yue's treatment but Ying Yue's hair. From the start, the mother never wanted to help Ying Yue with her eyes, she just wanted Ying Yue out of the way.' Han Fei arranged the information he obtained so far. 'This family of three basically took over Ying Yue's home and somehow caused her death, but if that was all, it wouldn't have caused such a deep collection of resentment in this house. They probably have done something worse.

'The eyeball appears in every nook and cranny of this house. It should not be a mere coincidence that Ying Yue's eyesight problem was referenced in both the mother's diary and the daughter's paintings...

'Did Ying Yue spend every moment of her life having her every move scrutinized by this family? For someone with a sight problem, she could sense the curse behind the gazes levelled at her but she could not tell where they came from. She only knew that there was no place that was safe inside her own home. No matter where she hid, there would be vile eyes glaring at her!'

It clicked for Han Fei then. The experience he was going through now was a replication of what Ying Yue felt when she lived with her aunt's family. Helplessness, fear, inescapability, she was trapped in a malevolent panopticon.

'The girl's sketch pad, the woman's diary and the man's will under the bed, that makes a family of three. Ying Yue has plotted her revenge on this family. She would subject them to the same pain and despair they placed on her! But there was only the will left by the tormented person under the bed, assuming that was the father, then what happened to the mother and daughter? Did they manage to escape? Could that be the reason why Ying Yue is still so gripped by hatred?' Now that Han Fei knew why Room 1084 was the way it was, the solution surfaced as well. 'Meng Si mentioned that a very dangerous girl lives on the 8th floor, she should be talking about Ying Yue.'

It would be hard to resolve Ying Yue's resentment overnight, Han Fei did not expect that he'd be able to perform that miracle either. But a journey of a thousand miles begins with a first step. He had to do something. He decided to place himself in Ying Yue's shoes to understand her pain. The feeling of being stared at grew stronger. The eyeball felt like it was blinking closer.

'Ying Yue is mostly likely still here, I need to summon her out and talk to her in person.' Exiting the room with the piano, Han Fei checked the kitchen, bathroom and living room. He searched all these rooms but did not find any trace of Ying Yue. However, he did find many other things, things that caused the hairs on his skin to rise.

There were 3 holes on the shower curtain. Each of them was just large enough for an eye to peek through. All the locks in the house were ruined, so none of the doors could be locked. In spite of the age of the house, all the door and furniture hinges were surprisingly well-oiled. They noticeably made no noise when they opened and closed. Four pairs of slippers sat inside the shoe rack but 3 of them had not seen any use based on the thick layer of dust on them. This suggested that 3 members of this family often walked barefooted at home. That would prevent the sound of slippers slapping against the ground. Other than that, Han Fei found many auditory-impairing drugs as well as bloody ear plugs stuffed inside various drawers and cupboards.

For those visually-challenged, they leaned heavily on hearing but this family was adamant to deprive Ying Yue of that clutch.

‘The only room left is also the most problematic one, the princess room.’ Han Fei’s jaw was set as he stepped into the girl’s bedroom. The room had a pastel theme. Cute marine-themed wallpaper decorated the walls, cartoon fishes were printed on the tiles, even the lamps had an aquatic design. With the lights on, it created the illusion that one was in the Little Mermaid’s world. ‘The room is fit for a mermaid princess but I only have that drowning feeling when I’m in here.’

Stopping beside the bed, Han Fei whipped his head around. He saw something stare at him among the dolls that sat on the ground. ‘Ying Yue’s parents must have loved her dearly to have gifted her so many dolls. Unfortunately, they were all taken away from her. I wonder if Ying Yue is hiding in one of them...’

“I am your neighbour from downstairs, I’m sorry to have barged in without your permission. I mean no harm to you, if anything, I am willing to help you punish those who have hurt you.” Inside the bedroom, Han Fei told the gathered dolls. “You have designed the house this particular way to punish them, right? I will help you figure out a way to lure them here!”

Chapter 87:

Han Fei tried to initiate a communication but he got no reply. He pulled up the menu. As he fixed his eyes at the exit button, he searched through the bedroom for clues. He checked the dresser, the pillows, the bed. When Han Fei reached for the bedside table, he felt a stinging unease coming from his back. Turning his head around, Han Fei noticed all the dolls inside the bedroom were staring at him. The dolls assumed different postures, some laid on the ground, others leaned against the wall, but all of their heads were turned towards Han Fei.

The eyes, which were made from buttons, plastic and metal, appeared to reflect pain and despair. Even for Han Fei, who had been through a lot, the experience of being stared at by a bunch of dolls inside an inescapable room was hair-raising. He pinched himself hard on his arm and then answered with a perfect smile, "I believe there is a misunderstanding here. I feel sorry about what happened to you, I want to punish those who have hurt you. I am not just saying that, I really want to help you take revenge! And return to you the justice you deserve!"

To make his argument more persuasive, Han Fei took out the doll with Ying Yue's name out from his inventory. When he did, the temperature in the room almost dropped to freezing point and the ring around his finger chilled.

"You shouldn't torment yourself anymore. The real culprits are the ones who have hurt you." Before the girl went berserk, Han Fei slowly eased the nail out from the doll. He plucked the paper with Ying Yue's name and birthday date off, folded it and placed it gingerly inside his pocket. He stood up to leave the princess room. Han Fei entered the adjacent bedroom to grab the woman's diary and the child's sketch pad. He tore out a few pages from the sketch pad. He folded a simple paper doll out of them. Then he wrote down Ming Mei's name on the back of the doll.

The house of dolls stared quietly at Han Fei, even the ghost had trouble understanding Han Fei. Han Fei raised the nail which was previously stuck in Ying Yue's doll and pierced it harshly through the paper doll with Ming Mei's name. "This whole family has committed terrible sins, we shan't let them get away. It is only fair that they should have a taste of what they've put your through!"

And then Han Fei tore out a few pages from the woman's diary and folded another paper doll. "Can you tell me the woman's name? Please let me help you!"

The nail was removed from Ying Yue's doll and now it was drilled through the doll which carried the name of the person she hated the most. The chill in the room eased. The dolls still kept their eyes on Han Fei but the venom in their eyes was mainly gathered around the paper doll he was holding. Han Fei sighed surreptitiously in relief, his plan to distract Ying Yue was working.

The temperature slowly rose back to normal but the chill from Han Fei's ring kept increasing. The scariest ghost in this house was coming. Without any fear, Han Fei faced the house of dolls sincerely, "Please, let me help you."

Perhaps because she had not met this kind of neighbour before, Room 1084 began to change. The previously closed closet swung open a gap to reveal a blood red eyeball. But that was just the beginning,

behind the bookshelf, between the sheets, beside the curtains, even the eyes on the portraits started to blink. The eyes inside the house winked open, the thing in slumber was awakening.

The chill from the ring already surpassed the level yielded by Han Fei's 9th floor neighbour. But to Han Fei's consternation, the chill was still rising. When the cold was at its thickest, all the eyes began to bleed. At the same time, the robotic voice uttered, "Notification for player 0000! You have successfully triggered Grade G Hidden Mission—The House of Eyes!

"The House of Eyes (Grade G Hidden Mission): Find Ying Yue and leave Room 1084 alive."

There was no time limit and the mission goals were direct. This latest hidden mission was distinct from all the hidden missions Han Fei had encountered in the past.

Han Fei felt suffocated as more eyes blinked opened inside the house. The power balance between them was too one-sided. Ying Yue was close to claiming Han Fei's life just by announcing herself. 'This is the type of ghost that lives on the 8th floor? Then just how scary the ghosts on the 9th floor can be?'

With no place to hide, Han Fei powered forward to continue the mission. 'This mission is split into two parts. The system wouldn't have arranged them this way for no reason. To leave this place alive, I need to first locate Ying Yue.'

The ghost had fully awakened while Han Fei was just starting his mission. The bleeding eyes stared at Han Fei. A girl's cries rose from a corner of the room and then it reverberated all throughout the house!

'What does this mean? Are these echoes of Ying Yue's past tears?' The helpless weeping tore at Han Fei's heart. He could hear a girl calling for help underneath the cacophony. 'With the inability to see, Ying Yue's world was shrouded in darkness. She was surrounded by malice and antagonism, so it is only natural that she would cry for help and hope for someone to come to her rescue.'

Han Fei extended his hand. He tried to use the landlord's ring as a compass to find the girl's location. Unfortunately, while the ring could sense supernatural presence, it could not pinpoint their exact location. 'Ying Yue should be inside the princess bedroom because the chill is strongest here. Perhaps, she is hiding inside one of the dolls!'

However, there were too many dolls inside the room. Han Fei had no other option but to squat down and inspect the dolls one by one. When he picked up a large puppy plushie, Han Fei noticed it was much heftier than the others. Pulling down the zipper on the back, Han Fei discovered an arm covered in tape inside it. When he saw the arm, the first thing that came into Han Fei's mind was an entry from the woman's diary— "15th Jan, Ming Mei wants to get a pet but Ying Yue is allergic to animal fur, how much more different can they be? But I love them equally."

'Ming Mei wanted to get a pet but she couldn't because of Ying Yue's natural allergy. The woman wouldn't be crazy enough to blame Ying Yue for something that she could not control, right?' Han Fei sucked in a cold breath, he realized he shouldn't underestimate the darkness in people's hearts. After all, there was a reason why an arm was found inside a pet dog's plushie. 'Could this be the way the woman expressed her rancor towards Ying Yue? She chopped the girl up into pieces and stuffed them into animal plushies?! That is sick...'

With trembling fingers, Han Fei sought out all the animal plushies. Then he undid all the zippers. This was the one time Han Fei hoped that he was wrong.

Pulling off the tape carefully, inside the room dotted with eyes, Han Fei slowly pieced together a girl whose eyes were forever closed.

#### Chapter 88:

Han Fei found Ying Yue. She looked about the same age as Weep and they both came from pitiable backgrounds. "Can you hear me?" Holding the broken girl, Han Fei's sympathy won over his fear. After knowing about the girl's past, Han Fei was even more determined to survive. He needed to live to provide salvation for this poor girl. The chill from the ring almost froze Han Fei's finger off but the man still did not let go. If anything, he hugged the dismembered girl tighter. After her parents passed away, no one had given her a sincere hug ever again. "You might not believe me now, but I will use my actions to prove myself."

Scrutinized by the bleeding eyes, Han Fei promised earnestly. The eyes could not tell whether he was lying or not. Han Fei sighed inwardly as the image of Weep overlapped with that of the girl in his arms. Children were one of the worlds' most vulnerable parties. They should be protected and cherished.

Gradually, pieces of the girl started to respond. Her bones contorted. Her human form dissolved to take on a more monstrous appearance. 'What is happening?' The hatred and pain inside the girl's heart hacked at her humanity. The bone chips pierced through Han Fei's skin but he still did not let go. Black

capillaries broke out on the girls' body and face. The pair of lips on her ghoulish face started to tremble. A voice squeezed out from the girl's body. "That is my birthday present."

"Birthday present?"

"You have already taken everything, can't you leave this for me? It's the last thing I have from my daddy and mommy."

"Ying Yue, what is this last birthday present your parents have given you?" Han Fei decided to play along to see if he could draw out more information.

"That is mine, mine..." Ying Yue's expression tightened. The black blood capillaries pulled her broken bodies together. Following a heavy thump of the dead heart, Ying Yue's eyes flew open!

Two dark holes stared eerily at Han Fei. The only place that should have a pair of eyes was missing them. "Mine, that's mine!" Her misshapen arms grabbed at Han Fei's body. Ying Yue's neck cracked noisily as her head detached from her shoulder. Her head rose to Han Fei's eye level. The angry declaration was the only thing that came out from the girl's mouth. Ying Yue had completely lost her mind. The hollow eye sockets slowly approached Han Fei as if they were trying to suck Han Fei's soul into them!

"Ying Yue, I won't be able to help you if you kill me!" Han Fei shouted loudly but it landed on deaf ears. Ying Yue was too consumed by hatred and resentment to be reasoned with. Her body morphed into a smear of shadow. The hollows on her face were shown to contain many caged souls. Wails echoed around the house. The bloody eyes cried vehemently. If Han Fei did not leave now, his eyes would end up as another pair of decorations on the wall.

"I really wish to help you, young lady..." Han Fei knew he had to leave now. Facing the advancing hollows, he revealed a gentle smile. Han Fei moved his heavy hands to pat the girl's head and ruffle her hair softly. Just as a sense of tearing gripped his eyes, Han Fei clicked on the quit button.

Red sea swallowed him. Han Fei removed the gaming helmet, his heart still palpating from what he experienced. He could not even start to imagine the horror Ying Yue must have been through to turn into such a monster from a plain little girl. Despite the lethargy, Han Fei went to his computer to search for information on Ying Yue. He hoped a case had been lodged regarding her death but what he found instead was a missing person's advert. "Have you seen this girl about 7 years old, wearing a red dress?"

She has a sweet and innocent smile. She suffers from ocular disease and was last seen at the old city's Northern Street...' The advert was placed a long time ago but it was not answered. The missing person's website still carried Ying Yue's related information. 'The user who posted the advert is someone called Ying Qingmei, that should be Ying Yue's aunt...'

Han Fei's expression darkened as he stared at the screen, "She looks like she's living quite a good life for herself."

Han Fei wished to drag the woman into Perfect World so Ying Yue could exact her vengeance but he did not know how to do that. After giving it a long thought, Han Fei decided to leave this to the police. He calculated the time of the murder and collected all the information he managed to glean from the House of Eyes and sent an anonymous tip to the police. 'I should keep a low profile for now.'

After ensuring the law enforcement had accepted his email, Han Fei crawled into bed and slept. Soon, he was woken up by his alarm and he hurried to the set after a quick wash up. 'Thankfully, my stamina is much better than before, or else I won't be able to survive a life like this.'

Han Fei got into his characters easily. He mastered the complexity of the character emotions. Basically his scenes were all completed with just one shot. The crew and Director Jiang looked at him like he was some kind of monster. Han Fei's perfect performance placed a huge pressure on the other actors. Their flaws would be hugely amplified when they were in the same scene as Han Fei should they fail to pull their own weight. Han Fei's acting skill that was honed at the edge of life and death completely won over Zhan Yueyue and Mian Nian. This new main character was completely different from the previous one. Han Fei's Meng Changxi felt so authentic, it was as if the man had personally experienced the same madness and despair Meng Changxi had been through.

The time passed by quickly and soon it was time for noon break. Mian Nian and Zhan Yueyue wanted to sit down with Han Fei to get some pointers from him but they noticed Han Fei was busy talking on his phone. He didn't even have time to take a bite of the boxed lunch the crew had prepared for him.

"Li Xue, the Happiness Street Station you're posted at is responsible for the security of Northern Street, right? Did any new murder case open this morning?"

"You mean the Toy Plushie Case? Wait a minute, how would you know this? Are you the anonymous tipper?"

“Erm, can you keep that detail to yourself for now?” Han Fei lowered his voice. “I’m mainly calling to check on the update and also I need to ask a favor from you. I need you to help me check something.”

“If you must know, Ying Qingmei’s daughter suffers from mental illness. When the police visited them this morning, some problems were plainly visible. Now the pair of mother and daughter are in custody. However, Ying Qingmei’s husband has gone into hiding probably because he was spooked.” After giving a brief update, Li Xue concluded, “The case is not that complicated, so what do you need me to check?”

“What is the last birthday present Ying Yue’s parents gave her?”

“That... I’m not sure. But I do know that Ying Yue’s parents have left her with a rather unique present before they died... Ying Yue’s mother was still conscious when she was rushed to the emergency room. During the last moment of her life, she signed a certificate at the hospital, donating her and her husband’s cornea to their daughter for transplant after they pass away.”

Chapter 89:

Han Fei was touched that Ying Yue’s parents would leave such a surprising and wonderful present for their daughter. Now he understood why Ying Yue would still remember that birthday present even after lunacy had claimed her.

“Li Xue, do you know what happens after that? Why didn’t Ying Yue get the transplant?”

“After a cornea is removed from the body, they can only survive for a maximum of 6 weeks inside a nutrient vial. At the time, the doctors suggested for Ying Yue to undergo the transplant immediately. Since both of Ying Yue’s parents had passed away, the decision fell on Ying Yue’s temporary guardians. They decided to delay the surgery for some reasons.”

“Was it due to the high surgical fee?”

“I have no idea but that shouldn’t be any problem, because Ying Yue’s parents left their daughter with a huge amount of inheritance. In any case, Ying Yue’s guardians took their time to make their decision despite the urging from the doctors. Eventually the 6 weeks passed, and Ying Yue’s parents’ corneas couldn’t be used anymore. The doctors thought this was such a huge waste so they admitted to violating



the law and slid the vial containing Ying Yue's parents' cornea to the little girl. They knew it wouldn't help much but that was the least they could do under the circumstance."

"Then what happened to that vial? Do you know?"

"I'll call the interrogation room to ask, wait a minute." Li Xue called back a few minutes after she hung up, "According to Ying Qingmei's daughter, she mistook the vial for an aquarium cleanser so she poured the whole vial down their home aquarium. When she realized the mistake, she quickly refilled the vial with the water from the aquarium."

"That little bitch! That was no accident!" Han Fei cursed but he soon calmed himself, "Is there going to be punishment for Ying Qingmei's daughter?"

"Both the mother and the daughter have pushed the murder onto the father. If there's no surprise, the father will receive the death penalty."

"What about the mother and the daughter? Will they escape unscathed?"

"Of course not! We suspect this is a premeditated murder, all 3 of them are accomplice." Li Xue warned Han Fei, "Please leave the case to us. Don't do anything out of line."

"Don't worry." Han Fei promised gently. However, if he had the chance, he would not hesitate to invite the pair of mother and daughter into Perfect Life to play with Ying Yue.

"Humanity can be as bright as the sun, or as dark as the abyss. I've encountered many horrible incidents in my career. The correct thing to do is to submit these criminals to the judgement of law, to prevent these people from harming more innocents." Li Xue advised Han Fei before she added, "Wait, shouldn't you be busy with the movie shooting? Where do you find time to investigate this case?"

"The two are not mutually-exclusive. Acting is my main gig, but I can have many side gigs." Han Fei finally finished the boxed lunch and he then glanced at his watch. "The break is almost over. I have to return to work now. See you later." When he hung up, Han Fei only noticed Zhan Yueyue and Mian Nian who were waiting for him, "How can I help you?"

“Teacher Han, we wish to get your opinions about our characters.” No matter what kind of outfit Zhan Yueyue wore, he had that air of a comedic actor. “I still have trouble mastering my character. I can’t seem to jump out from my usual comedic personality, but you’re different. You are able to snap into the different characterizations with ease every time. How do you do it?”

“Well, you first have to...” Han Fei patiently shared his experience with Zhan Yueyue and Mian Nian. Then he threw himself into work. Twin Flowers had many scenes that involved Meng Changan and Meng Changxi so Han Fei had a heavy workload. Considering the fact that he needed to keep his night free to play the game, Han Fei worked extra hard, so that he would not be required to stay overnight at the set. Han Fei finished all his scenes for the day by late afternoon. Han Fei’s great efficiency meant that the crew would wrap up early as well. That endeared the young man greatly to Director Jiang and his team. After his job was done, Han Fei bade farewell to everyone and left the set on his own.

He stopped by a roadside stall to have a simple dinner. Normally, the crew from the opposite street would come out to snicker at Han Fei but less and less of them showed up these days. They probably found out through the grapevine that their agency had accidentally let a very talented star go. However, they consoled themselves with the fact that Han Fei was just a nobody, no matter how talented he was, in this business, popularity and fame meant everything. And fact was Han Fei had none so the agency wasn’t kicking themselves for firing him.

Han Fei set the alarm and took a quick nap after he reached home. When he woke up, he took a shower and planted himself before the computer.

“Today is the last day for me to complete the Grade F Mission, based on my current progress, the chance of completing it is very low. My imminent goal is to save my own hide and escape from Room 1084.

“Before Ying Yue got consumed by madness, she repeated the term ‘birthday present’. Maybe I can use that to reach out to the lingering humanity within her. After I log into the game this time, I should hurry towards the aquarium which I saw in the living room and see if I can find the present her parents left for her.” Han Fei had no guarantee if he could survive that night. He studied the picture of Ying Yue he had pinned on the wall. “If I can’t reason with Ying Yue, then I’ll probably be stuck in Room 1084 forever as a pair of eyes.” The thought of it caused Han Fei to shiver but he had no way out. The game’s rule was that he had to stay for more than 3 hours and complete at least 1 mission before he could quit the game. Currently, he was trapped inside Room 1084 and the only mission he could get was the hidden mission—Escape Room 1084.

“Ying Yue lives on the 8th floor, further up is the scary 9th floor and then the 10th floor where all the secrets are hidden.” Han Fei was curious about the 10th floor. He wanted to know what was hidden inside the building manager’s room and whether that was related to the black box’s secret or not. But now he was still too weak. Furthermore, he knew nothing of the game world beyond the apartment building. “I need to live, I need to at least survive until I get to the 10th floor!”

After making sure he had everything done, Han Fei’s heart started to race as the time ticked towards midnight. When the clock chimed at 12, Han Fei put on the gaming helmet. Blood covered everything. When Han Fei opened his eyes, he realized he was still sitting inside Ying Yue’s room. The frost engulfed him. Endless eyes blinked open to greet him. All the dolls lifted their heads, their gaze focused maliciously on the stranger inside the room.

“Ying Yue! I’ve found the present your parents left for you!” The plushies rolled together to form a giant shadow. An arm shot out at Han Fei’s head. Without wasting any time, Han Fei climbed up and flew towards the living room. “The aquarium! The girl dropped your present inside the aquarium!”

Instead of heading towards the front door, Han Fei used every bit of his strength to lift up the sizable aquarium. “Look! I’m not lying to you!”

The giant shadow loomed over the living room. Han Fei raised the aquarium to block before him. The chill caused cracks to crackle on the surface of the aquarium. Two goldfish hidden at the bottom of the aquarium swam out from the commotion.

Initially, neither Han Fei nor the shadow paid the goldfish any attention. But when the shadowy monster struck forward to shatter the aquarium to grab at Han Fei’s head, something happened. When Ying Yue’s hand reached the aquarium, the two goldfish did not swim away from fear, instead, they fluttered closer to the glass as if to kiss Ying Yue’s fingers.

Chapter 90:

Ying Yue was basically a monster, a monster who had lost her humanity and mind. But even in the face of such a vicious threat, the two goldfish showed no fear. No matter what Ying Yue turned into, they would always be by her side. The arm that was intertwined with strong hatred ultimately limped against the aquarium. Ying Yue’s arm that leaned against the aquarium crackled with black threads. The giant shadow was dwindling. The bloody eyes receded from the room. When the last eye closed, the monster inside Room 1084 disappeared and in its place was a little girl in a red dress. With her eyes closed, she held the aquarium with both hands. On the other side of the glass, two small goldfish swam in circles

around her fingers. Even though there was no actual contact, both parties could sense the other's presence.

"Ying Yue, your mommy and daddy wanted to be your eyes, they want to be with you forever." Han Fei slowly placed the aquarium on the ground. He knelt down on the side opposite from Ying Yue. "I am your parents' friends. Do you know what their final wish is?"

The girl with the closed eyes slowly lifted her head. She looked cute and innocent, a perfect replica of her picture shown on the missing person's advert. "Your parents wished that you'd grow up safe and healthy. They wish for you boundless happiness, and they hope that you will be able to witness the wonder of the world on their behalf." Han Fei sidled close to Ying Yue. "I will accompany you to apprehend those who have hurt you. After they got their due punishment, how about we go and explore the wonders of this world together?"

The two hands held the aquarium tightly. The goldfish wiggled their tails happily, sending ripples down the surface. Han Fei sighed in relief. He tried to smooth out little Ying Yue's hair. "Girl, I'll be your family from now on." Inside the haunted house, the kind and warm neighbourly big brother consoled the blind girl who had lost her parents. It was a plot straight out of an Iyashikei story. The room with the heaviest negative energy was the princess room. To neutralize that, Han Fei carefully moved the aquarium and placed it inside the princess room. He hoped that would help calm Ying Yue down and help her connect more with her human side.

Once Han Fei entered the princess room, he noticed the handicraft that he made last time was still there. The nailed Ming Yue's doll was placed beside the pillow. "Looks like you appreciate these little things I made." Han Fei noted with a smile but in his mind, he was planning something else, "I will bring that girl who bullied you here. Those who did wrong should be punished, that is only fair."

Hearing the promise in Han Fei's voice, the little girl who stood next to the aquarium suddenly turned her face towards Han Fei. Then she nodded lightly.

"Notification for Player 0000! Friendliness with Ying Yue increases by 5!" When the robotic voice announced that, Han Fei knew he was temporarily out of danger. 'It'll be difficult to draw a living human into Perfect Life but I still need to give it a try. Perhaps the answer will be found on the 10th floor, after all, the old man managed to trick me into the game somehow.'

Ying Yue squatted on the ground and her full attention was occupied by the aquarium and its inhabitants. Han Fei did not disturb her and returned to the living room alone. The feeling of being scrutinized had disappeared. The temperate also rose back to normal.

'I should be able to leave now, right?' He walked towards the front door. He grabbed the handle and the door eased open with a slight push. A chilling gust surged into the room and Han Fei got another system update. "Notification for Player 0000! You have completed Grade G Hidden Mission, House of Eyes! Friendliness with Ying Yue increases by 20! Obtained basic reward—1 Free Skill Point!

"Warning! Different completion rates of the hidden mission will garner different rewards! You have not only escaped from the House of Eyes, you have also eased Ying Yue's pain and helped her regain part of her humanity. Mission completion rate is more than 90 percent! You have obtained a unique reward—Personal Passive Skill, Pied Piper!

"Pied Piper (Personal Passive Skill, cannot be upgraded with skill point): You have a natural affinity with children. You can easily gain their trust and be part of their group. You'll be their friends, families and even a life mentor."

After seeing the details of his new passive skill, Han Fei was startled, 'Despite the seemingly innocent skill description, the Pied Piper is famed for his story of casting a spell over hapless children, right? What is the game trying to suggest here...?'

Once he gave it some thought, Han Fei realized he indeed seemed to share a good relationship with the children. The first 'surprise' he got in the game was from Chen Chen, and then there was that encounter with Weep and now he had just healed Ying Yue. The children inside this building did have a good relationship with Han Fei. 'Hmm, in any case, with this passive skill, I should focus on trying to befriend more young ghosts in the future.'

Han Fei did not hurry to leave the 8th floor, instead he stayed to search for the 2 human jigsaw pieces. He eventually found them. 'Now I only need the 2 remaining pieces from the 9th floor, then I'll complete that Grade F Mission.' That was easier said than done. 'Tonight is the last night, if I fail to find all the pieces tonight, the mission will be deemed a failure.'

Han Fei did not want to surrender that easily. He knew the location of the last 2 jigsaw pieces. 'Maybe I should go visit Xu Qin and get her opinion on this ' When he reached the 5th floor, Han Fei noticed Xu Qin's door was still closed but the 'death' characters on her door appeared to have grown in numbers.

'She went grocery-shopping for 3 consecutive days? That seems unlikely... I hope nothing bad has happened to her.'

The 3 hours limit wasn't up yet so Han Fei did not want to take too much risk. He went down to the 3rd floor to visit Ming Si. Han Fei wanted to get more information about the 9th floor from her but Meng Si had not been to the 9th floor before, she just stressed repeatedly that those who went there had never been seen again. Without any new information, Han Fei said farewell and went to visit Weep.

He wanted to use Weep to try out the new skill but he got a surprise reward instead. Perhaps it was the Pied Piper's skill showing its effect, or maybe Weep himself had taken a shining towards Han Fei, they had a rather peaceful evening. Weep had completely put his guard down around Han Fei. When Han Fei expressed his intention to visit the 9th floor, Weep, who had been showing a levelled emotion, suddenly had fear enter his eyes. He pointed at the empty room and raised his still recovering arms. His expression was scary.

"You mean to say you've been to the 9th floor?" After much guesswork, Han Fei finally understood the boy. In the previous game of hide and seek, after he failed to find Han Fei, Weep trusted Han Fei's words and sent out his friends to disturb the other neighbours. Some of his friends went up to the 9th floor and never returned. Eventually Weep went to the 9th floor to investigate. He only got to the landing between the 8th and 9th floor when he noticed something was wrong. The 9th floor was enshrouded in an extraordinarily thick haze of hatred. It only allowed entry and not exit.

Weep did not venture to the 9th floor. He merely stopped at the landing but even so he had to pay with the loss of his two arms before he could escape.