

## Iyashikei 91

### Chapter 91:

Hearing Weep's story, Han Fei was pained, but beyond that, he was more interested in what Weep saw that day. With his patience, Han Fei continued to dig. Weep gestured back and forth with Han Fei before the former eventually broke out in tears due to the latter's stubbornness. "Please don't cry, it's not that I wish to tear into your painful past, I simply wish to know what is there on the 9th floor because I plan to go there tonight."

Hearing the conviction in Han Fei's voice, Weep gradually slowed his tears. He stared at Han Fei for a long time. Then he grabbed Han Fei's palm and wrote down the following on it—Remember yourself.

"Remember myself?" Han Fei naturally had more to ask but Weep had disappeared into his ceremonial urn. 'This boy... sure is unique.'

Han Fei did not leave Room 1034 despite the disappearance of his host. Sitting amidst the pile of talismans, Han Fei's mind wrestled against itself. 'The last 2 human jigsaw pieces are on the 9th floor. If I am unable to complete the puzzle tonight, I'll fail the mission and my effort before this will all go to waste. I wish to save my roommates and to do that, I need to patch back their bodies. I wish to find out the secrets of this apartment building and to do that I need to reach the 10th floor. In other words, I'll have to go through the 9th floor sooner or later.' Han Fei knew the 9th floor was dangerous but he also understood the rewards from completing a Grade F Mission would be very worthwhile. 'I'll head up the stairs for now. If I sense any danger, I'll run into Ying Yue's home to hide. If all else fails, I can still quit the game.'

With the timer for the Grade F Mission reaching its final countdown, Han Fei exited Room 1034 and headed up the stairs. The strange footsteps did not return and Han Fei arrived at the 8th floor without any problem. Han Fei stopped to greet Ying Yue and left the door to the House of Eyes open. Should there be danger, he could skip the step required to open the door and rush into it directly. After doing all that, Han Fei still did not make his way up. Instead he leaned against the banister and tried to look up through the gap.

There was nothing too unusual that differentiated the 9th and 10th floor. It looked just like the other floors, a part of an old apartment building. However, Han Fei knew this normalcy was just an illusion. Ghosts could attack him from any corner so he could not let his guard down at all. Holding the banister, Han Fei scanned his surroundings while keeping his eyes on the quit button.

'Time to go up and see.' When he took the first step up to the 9th floor, nothing particularly disparate stood out to Han Fei. There was no strange smell or inexplicable sounds in the air. Han Fei eventually arrived at the landing between 8th and 9th floor without running into any danger. This was the location where Weep lost both of his arms. Standing on his tiptoes, Han Fei leaned his head as far as he could to peer at the 4 doors on the 9th floor. The 4 anti-theft doors looked unassuming. The four doors were painted with their respective room number. There was nothing unusual. Han Fei took another 2 steps before he noticed the first thing that was slightly out of place.

There was a ceremonial brazier placed before the door of Room 1091. Half-burnt paper money sat inside it. Next to the brazier was a picture frame and it contained a black and white picture with a faceless man. 'Something doesn't feel right...' The picture sent a chill down Han Fei's spine. When he took a closer look, Han Fei understood why! The person in the picture was wearing the same outfit as he did! His legs took an involuntary step back but when he did, Han Fei turned around to realize the steps behind him had disappeared. All that was left was a suffocating darkness.

"Notification for Player 0000! You have found all of the building manager's remains. You have satisfied the condition to trigger the Grade F Manager Mission—Building Manager!

"Building Manager (Grade F Manager Mission): The basic responsibility of a building manager is to understand and have a handle over all the tenants, eliminate all safety hazards, mediate neighbourly conflicts, aid the vulnerable parties and most importantly, kill everyone else who wants to become the building manager.

"Warning! Since the mission difficulty is too high for the player's current level, the system will provide the player with additional hints!

"In this world, every building or infrastructure will house a most dangerous, cunning, crazy and oppressive presence, some citizens of this world refer to them as the managers. Now you only have 2 paths before you, become the manager or be killed by one.

"Warning! Each Manager Mission is manufactured and constructed from the previous manager's memory and past, in other words, during this mission, you will enter the manager's memory. There is no death penalty here but with each death, you will lose part of your own memory.

"Warning! If you end up forgetting who you are in the process of doing the mission, then you will be permanently trapped inside the manager mission and become part of the previous manager's memory. And it will use your body to regain a new lease at life!"

The sudden pings of notifications froze Han Fei to the spot. 'Grade F Manager Mission? Grade F Mission is far more difficult than a Grade G Mission and it appears like Manager Mission is more difficult than a common mission as well. I can't imagine how impossible a Grade F Manager Mission will be!'

The way back was swallowed by darkness, the stairwell had completely vanished. Han Fei tried to walk into the darkness and his Life Points plummeted. Now he finally understood why no one had ever returned from the 9th floor, it was because there was literally no way back!

Han Fei had no choice but to move up to the 9th floor. Then he encountered something even more bizarre. He tipped his head upwards and all he could see was the ceiling. It was as if the 10th floor did not exist and the 9th floor was the very top. 'Based on the mission description, all manager missions are based on the memory of the previous manager. In other words, I am now dragged into the memory of the previous manager? Only by getting his approval that I can complete this mission?'

Taking a deep breath, Han Fei tried to calm himself. But when he pulled up the menu, his forced composure shattered. Next to his character name, there was a new statement—Due to the unique status the player is currently in, the player is temporarily unable to exit Perfect Life.

'Wait, I can't leave?!' Han Fei understood what this meant. If he was unable to finish this Grade F Mission, he'd be trapped inside this game forever!

Anxiety and apprehension gripped Han Fei. He took a long time before he settled down again. He knelt down before the door of Room 1091, by then, the person inside the black and white picture had fully taken on Han Fei's appearance. 'Everything's still fine, I only need to complete the mission and then I can leave. I can do this.' Han Fei stared at his own death portrait. In the picture, he was smiling brightly. The man himself could not remember the last time he had such a genuine smile on his face.

'At this cryptic world, the difficulty level increases from normal mission, hidden mission and finally manager mission. Accepting manager missions will apply a unique status on the player. Does this mean that the manager missions are closely related to the core of the cryptic world itself?

'If I am able to complete these unique missions, maybe I can gain a deeper understanding of the cryptic world.'

Everything had its pros and cons. Han Fei did not let the challenge weigh him down. He knew that in this game, the risk was always proportional to the reward.

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‘After I finish this manager mission, I will become the new building manager.’ Han Fei repeated the positive reinforcement in his mind. Initially, he studied these psychological tricks to help his neighbours out but as fate would have it, he ended up using them on himself first. ‘The mission does not give any detailed description, I’ll have to do the exploration on my own.’

He glanced at the brazier, picture frame and black and white photo. This looked like it was prepared for Tou Qi, the seventh day after a person’s death when said person’s soul would be expected to return. ‘This whole setup gives me the chills.’ Han Fei tipped over the picture frame so he would not need to keep looking at his death portrait. He held the handle to Room 1091. When he tried to push the door open, the robotic voice said, “Notification for Player 0000! You need to kill all the ghosts, and save all the humans inside this room!”

The door swung open. Before Han Fei even stepped through the threshold, a girl’s head fell from the top of the frame and latched itself onto the back of Han Fei’s neck!

Pain surged through his body. Han Fei gripped at the head but no matter how hard he pulled, he was unable to shake the thing loose. Blood blurred his sight. His trachea shattered and air wheezed out intermittently from his mouth. The voice died in his throat as his energy drained away. Pain came from everywhere. Han Fei collapsed to the ground. His consciousness wavered and the last thought on his mind was, ‘So this is what death feels like?’

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His eyes flew open and Han Fei found himself standing before the door to Room 1091. The young man himself smiled brightly at him from the picture frame which was righted again. ‘That was considered one death?!’ Everything happened so quickly. Han Fei then realized the aim of this mission was to strip the players of their memory. Han Fei wiped away the cold sweat and reminded himself of the system warning. There was no death penalty when he attempted this mission but every death would result in a memory loss. When the player forgot his own identity, the previous manager would be reborn in the player’s body. ‘This mission is far more dangerous and difficult than I thought!’

Han Fei raked through his brain and he believed he did not find any obvious hole in his memory but that was the thing that worried him the most. 'Would I eventually forget the fact that my memory will be partially erased with each death?' Suppressing the apprehension, Han Fei turned to Room 1091, 'A girl's head will fall from the top once I open the door, she will aim for my neck and snap it immediately...'

Han Fei had no interest in reliving that experience. He picked up the brazier and looked around. 'The mission told me to kill all the ghosts in the room but with what? By burning paper money for them or turning them against each other?'

Han Fei stood there, thinking for 5 minutes. Suddenly, the door to Room 1051 opened on its own. The girl's head swung forward at a degree. The last thing Han Fei saw was her glinting jaws. The girl chomped and tore off Han Fei's throat. The young man tumbled over and died in his own pool of blood.

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His eyes flew open and Han Fei's hands reached subconsciously to his neck. 'Looks like I can't stay idle for too long either. I need to proceed with the progress.'

Shaking his head, Han Fei cleared his mind. His first two deaths brought him plenty of pain but also valuable experience. For example, he had memorized the location of the head. This time he swore to evade the attack and dashed into the room. Picking up the brazier, Han Fei raised it at a certain angle as he pushed open the door!

Bang! The girl's head knocked into the bottom of the brazier. A groan echoed inside the room as the head careened backwards. Han Fei followed up on the aggression. He rushed into the room and cupped the girl's head under the brazier.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

As the head knocked against the brazier, Han Fei used the valuable time to study the room around him, 'There's a glass coffee table with a fruit basket filled with rotten fruits. There are two bedrooms down the left corridor and a kitchen on the right...'

As the brazier clattered noisily against the ground, announcing the head's freedom, Han Fei charged towards the kitchen. He needed a weapon, and knives were usually found inside kitchens. Opening the kitchen door, a heady smell of decomposition hit Han Fei. A middle-aged woman was mincing rotten meat before a chopping block!

After she saw Han Fei, she let loose a banshee-like wail as she threw her knife at Han Fei. The knife stuck into his shoulders. Then a gnashing pain came from the back of his neck. Han Fei collapsed to the ground. As pain overwhelmed him, Han Fei tried to memorize every small detail he could capture with his eyes!

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His eyes flew open. 'That was my fourth death.' Han Fei couldn't tell what exactly he had forgotten and he hated that feeling immensely. 'This mission is impossibly difficult. The main problem comes from the memory loss. Will I eventually forget that I am doing a mission inside a game and assume that I am born in this place?'

The thought chilled Han Fei to the core. Han Fei counted the time quietly in his mind. 'Based on my studies, there are 2 main kinds of memory, cognitive memory and motor memory. There are cases where people suffer from amnesia, remembering the routines that they're used to before their memory loss. I can use this to my advantage because based on my observation, the black box inside my head will probably only affect my cognitive memory.'

To ensure that he would not lose himself completely, Han Fei decided to do something crazy. He glanced at himself in the picture frame. He picked it up and smashed it against the floor. Then he grabbed a glass shard and carved out 4 bloody gashes on his arm. This was his 4th death!

Blood dripped down his fingers. The pain was invigorating. Then Han Fei gouged out the name, Han Fei on his other arm. 'I will repeat this every time I die, hopefully my body will remember this pain!'

He pocketed the glass shard and opened the door. Similar to last time, he blocked the girl's head with the brazier but this time he ran towards the bedrooms instead. He did not stop lest the head caught up to him. 'There are two bedrooms, the first door is pasted with the alphabet chart and study posters, it's probably a nursery.'

Han Fei reached for the door handle of the room closer to the living room and pushed it open. The first thing that he saw was a room littered with toys. A toddler about 5 to 6 sat facing away from him in the middle of the toy pile.

With the girl's head following close behind him, Han Fei dashed into the room. He remembered his goal: kill all the ghosts and save all the humans. 'Is this child a ghost or a human?'

To be safe, he avoided the child and stayed hidden in the shadows behind the door. Regardless, the child sensed his presence and slowly turned around. A scarred face revealed itself to Han Fei. The child then let out a shrill whine. A pair of slender arms reached out from the shadows. They tightened around Han Fei's neck and pulled him up to the ceiling. Han Fei's face turned purple, his eyes bulged forward as he stared around the bedroom.

'There are bloody clothes peeking through the closet gap, there's half a face staring from under the bed, a person is hanged from behind the curtain, the shadow moved under the study table, there are at least 4 more ghosts inside this nursery...'

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His eyes flew open. Before Han Fei did anything else, he shattered the picture frame. He used this special method to reinforce the motor memory into his body.

Each laceration represented a past that he must not forget.

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'I've died 5 times already but at least now I've grasped the hidden locations of most ghosts inside the nursery. Compared to the nursery, the kitchen and living room appear to be safer.' Han Fei had no idea why so many ghosts hid inside the nursery. He had too little information to make an analysis. After using the shard to carve out his own name, Han Fei once again ventured into the room. Similar to before, he used the brazier to stop the girl's head but this time he dashed towards the master bedroom. To his trepidation, the door was locked. 'So far only this door is locked, that suggests there is something of interest inside the master bedroom. Looks like I'll have to locate the bedroom key first.'

Han Fei did not stay but kept on moving. By now he had fully ascertained the head's attack pattern. Han Fei would raise the brazier to block whenever the girl's head flung itself at him. While negotiating this deathly dance, Han Fei slowly moved away from the master bedroom and down the corridor. The corridor led to the bathroom. Han Fei did not think he would solve the mission without losing more lives so he tried to make each of his life as valuable as possible!

Han Fei kicked down the door to the bathroom. The slamming door raised such a ruckus that it lured the woman out from the kitchen. Facing both the girl's head and the woman armed with the knives, Han Fei knew retreat was the wise option. As the girl's head lunged at him, Han Fei whacked at it as hard as he could before he escaped into the bathroom.

"Bang! Bang! Bang!" The sharp knife chopped against the door. Han Fei could hear the woman growling, she had completely lost her mind. "Can you please calm down? I just want to help you! Can you understand me?!"

Unfortunately, the woman did not cease for rational communication. Room 1091 was practically a den of devil. Han Fei's hands that gripped the handle froze. While his attention was fully on the woman and the girl, a gushing sound of water came from behind him. Someone had switched on the tap. Turning back to look, black hair oozed out from the faucet. The hair was like rotten seaweed. They emitted a horrible stench. They overflowed from the sink and twined themselves around Han Fei's feet.

Han Fei's body was eventually wrapped inside the black hair and his life was constricted out of him.

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His eyes flew open. Han Fei's body trembled, "That was my 6th death." Shattering the frame, Han Fei picked up the shard and recorded the pain on his body. 'It's unrealistic to expect me to kill all the ghosts on my own, my only chance at succeeding is to make them turn against each other.'

There was a startling amount of ghosts inside the house. Even after 6 deaths, Han Fei could not tell how many ghosts there were in total. 'The nursery is the most dangerous, followed by the bathroom. Maybe I should try opening the doors to both the nursery and the bathroom at the same time. Only when they're onto each other that I'll be spared. The mission requires me to kill all the ghosts and save all the humans. Of all the entities I've met, the most human-like are the middle-aged woman and the toddler with the ruined face. But they barely act like humans. They react so violently when they see me, like I'm some kind of ghost.' Han Fei lowered his eyes at his death portrait and a thought entered his mind. 'Wait, is it possible that I am actually a ghost?!'



Picking up the brazier, Han Fei stared at Room 1091. 'The manager mission is based on the previous manager's memory. In other words, traces of the manager should exist inside the room, in fact, the manager themselves might be somewhere inside the room now. If only I can meet up with them, that will definitely clear many things up.' Han Fei knew nothing about the previous manager. He needed more information. However, in his situation, any information needed to be traded with his own life. This was a gamble with his memory on the line, the losing party would lose everything.

Opening the door to Room 1091, Han Fei raised the brazier to block the girl's head. He was already so familiar with her actions that he could predict her every move. Han Fei sprinted towards the nursery. After pulling the door open, he turned and raced down the corridor. Without taking a break, he kicked the bathroom's door open. The temperature in the room dropped. The child's crying wafted out from the nursery. The door to the kitchen jiggled after the woman heard the sobbing.

Han Fei hid beside the kitchen door. When the door opened, Han Fei lunged through it and tried to grab at the woman's knife!

Perhaps the woman was just cooking because the temperature inside the kitchen was much higher than the rest of the house. To prevent the girl's head from ambushing him from behind, Han Fei slammed the door close as he rolled into the kitchen. While Han Fei wrestled with the woman for the control of the knife, a ring of keys fell out from the woman's apron. 'The key is on her all along? Why would she keep the main bedroom locked? Who is she keeping captive inside the bedroom?'

Han Fei eventually overpowered the woman and got the knife. But when he bent over to pick up the keys that dropped next to the fridge, the door suddenly yawned open. A headless body of a girl pounced forth to pull Han Fei into the fridge. Frost chilled every cell in his body. Pain froze his every nerve. 'So cold...'

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His eyes flew open. The first thing Han Fei did, as if on memory, was to shatter the frame and carve out his name and his number of deaths on his arms. 'A girl's head will fall down from the front door and a headless child's body was stuffed inside the kitchen fridge... Assuming this place is housing a family, then the middle-aged woman is probably the mother, the toddler her child and the father, assuming there is one, probably trapped inside the main bedroom.' Han Fei arranged the web of relationship in his mind. When he was ready, he entered the room again.

Similar to last time, he opened the door to the nursery and the bathroom. The child's crying summoned the woman out from the kitchen. The moment she did, Han Fei swiped the ring of keys from her apron. Evading the knife lashes, Han Fei raced towards the main bedroom. He only had one chance to get the key right since both the girl's head and the woman were on his heels.

He chose a random key and stuck it into the keyhole. He twisted it but the lock did not click. When he attempted the second key, the knife already cut into his body. 'There has to be something inside the main bedroom!'

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It was not until Han Fei's 10th death that he managed to get the main bedroom door open!

The moment the door eased open, he slipped into it. Then he used the key to lock the door. The child's mother hacked at the door with her knife. The girl's head rammed against it as well. Han Fei knew he had limited time. He turned around to inspect the room, his eyes were soon drawn to the double bed. The stained mattress had a boy about 12 strapped into it. His extremities were tied to the bed posts and he wore a patient's garb. His eyes were closed like he was sleeping.

'I've now visited all the rooms inside Room 1091. There are most likely 3 humans, the mother and her two children. Who among them is the previous manager?'

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'The woman is the oldest of the 3 and even in this haunted house, she would respond to her child's cries for help. Relatively speaking, she at least has that humane quality retained in her. She will still look after her family.

'The toddler will make a loud fuss whenever he sees me. Assuming that I am currently a ghost, it's perfectly normal for a child to see me and cry though.

'Finally, there is the boy. He is in a patient's outfit and has his movement limited. Looks like he's most ill. In his family's eyes, he's probably the most abnormal.' Not everything was what it appeared. Whether a scenario was defined as normal or not depended fully on its environments. The knife chipped on the

bedroom door. Han Fei hurried to the bedside. He asked urgently, "Can you hear me?" With clear threats on his tail, now was not the time to be gentle. However even after he shook the boy and gave him a slap on his face, Han Fei still got no response from the boy.

"There are pills scattered around the bed and blood stains on the ground. These are clear signs of conflict." Han Fei looked around and he spotted a change of clothes, a patient's record and discharge form on the study table.

'Second Mental Health Centre?'

"The patient suffers from unreasonable anxiety, and pain. He reports occasional bouts of acoasm and hallucinations. His situation has not improved despite multiple therapy sessions." Flipping through the pages, Han Fei finally found the thing he was looking for. "The patient has a history of childhood trauma. He was abused by his father and his only protector was his mother. According to the patient, he witnessed his father murder a pair of mother and daughter in the nursery. The father proceeded to dismember the victims inside the bathroom before hiding the carcasses inside the kitchen fridge.

"It was since then that the patient's mental state became unstable. He claimed that he could see ghosts and souls. After his mother died, his father remarried. During his stay with his new family, the patient's condition worsened. He was found committing many dangerous behaviors during this period. Another trauma came when his father passed away. The patient claims that he can see his parents' soul and other ghosts residing inside his house. He also insisted that there is a vicious demon possessing his younger stepbrother.

"Based on the patient's explanation, his younger brother would attract the attention of dead souls and passing monsters, he's the source of all tragedy. The patient's various inexplicable behaviors were supposedly meant to chase the ghosts away. He believed that once he kills all the ghosts, the demon hiding inside his younger brother will appear. Only by eliminating this true demon that his life can return to normal.

"The patient operates on his own set of reasons. He shattered the mirror because he saw a ghost inside it; he bound the fridge with ropes because he believed the flesh inside the fridge will come alive at night; there is a reason behind his every action. We suspect this aberrant worldview is formed from the patient's prolonged exposure to immense stress and untreated hallucinosis..."

The second half of the report was torn apart. It probably would have described the ending of this strange family.

Han Fei took some time to parse the wealth of information he had just been exposed to.

In the boy's patient record, it stated that the patient believed he witnessed his father commit murders inside the bedroom, dismember the bodies inside the bathroom and then hide them inside the kitchen fridge. That corresponded to the 3 most dangerous locales in Room 1091, the bedroom where the toddler was, the bathroom where the banshee with the black hair was and the kitchen where the headless carcass was.

The nursery housed the largest number of ghosts, probably because in the boy's mind, it was the source of everything. The tragedy began after his father started killing people inside the bedroom.

The hair that oozed out from the bathroom could be a representation for another scene the patient had witnessed. After the father dealt with the victims, their hair would have floated in their own pools of blood.

The father once used the fridge to hide the dead bodies so it was not that unnatural for the patient to imagine the frozen meat inside it coming alive to haunt the living residents. Underneath the absurdity of the situation, there was a logic to everything.

Since the mission was constructed from the previous manager's memories, Han Fei could basically confirm that the sleeping brother was indeed the previous manager. Room 1091 and its horrors were modelled after his mental history.

'Some studies suggest that supernatural sightings are nothing more than emotional stress manifestations of one's subconscious. In this case though, these manifestations and the threat they pose cannot have been realer. The patient's father used the nursery for killing, the bathroom for butchering and the kitchen for storing. Viewed from the patient's perspective, one can easily see how the bedroom can be a womb for the ghosts and monsters to linger, the bathroom a place where they can be injured or killed, and the fridge in the kitchen a cage to detain them. Perhaps I can make use of these findings to help me accomplish my own goal.'

The knife cleaved through the wooden door. The mother in the stained apron charged at Han Fei. Han Fei grabbed the chair to block the attack and then purposely jumped onto the bed. Even in the throes of her madness, the mother did not lose her maternal instinct. She stopped attacking for fear of accidentally injuring her child. However, the girl's head abandoned Han Fei immediately and turned her

aggression onto the sleeping boy once she entered the bedroom. 'The mother and toddler will focus on me but the other ghosts will target the boy first?'

This discovery inspired Han Fei. Finally, something to take the heat off him. "Your son is being bullied by a house full of ghosts and all you can think of is to come after me?!" Han Fei pushed against the chair and sent the woman sprawling to the ground. He swiped the knife while she was down. He saw off the ropes that bound the boy. While he did that, the woman jumped on his back and bit into his neck. Han Fei's flesh tore open but the man gritted his teeth and powered on. When he was done, he swung his elbow back and stunned the woman with a shot to the side of her head. Han Fei quickly used the ropes to tie up the woman and bound her to the bedpost.

Picking up the remaining rope and knife, Han Fei ran out from the bedroom. By then the black hair had leaked out from the bathroom into the living room. It crawled on the floor like black briar. Han Fei stepped gingerly around the hair and picked his way into the kitchen. Before the fridge could open, he wrapped the rope securely around it. 'No wonder the boy was admitted into a mental hospital. These actions would definitely appear senseless to others.'

After the knot was made, Han Fei locked the door and started to search the kitchen for useful items. About 5 minutes later, a child and a woman's wails came from outside the kitchen. Han Fei leaped towards the door and eased open a gap to look. The whole Room 1091 was now overgrown with black hair. Both humans and ghosts were swallowed by it. The black hair slithered into the kitchen and Han Fei was not spared from the unfortunate fate.

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His eyes flew open. Han Fei slammed the frame against the ground. He picked up the shard to carve out his name and number of deaths. "That's my 11th death! I have to deal with the ghost inside the bathroom as soon as possible. That sea of hair goes after everything indiscriminately. If I leave it be, it'll cover the entire room in under 10 minutes."

With the information he gathered from each death, Han Fei came up with a more detailed plan every time he initiated a new loop. 'I have to take the clues from the patient's records into account in spite of, or perhaps due to, how peculiar they are. After all, this whole mission is a grotesque reconstruction of the patient's state of mind.'

'Other than that, the mission requires me to kill all the ghosts and save all the humans. I wonder if the sleeping boy is considered a human in this case... Do I need to keep him safe as well? I probably should.'

When he was ready, Han Fei pushed open the door to Room 1091. The brazier was used to block the girl's head, the ring of keys was swiped from the woman's apron and entry was made into the main bedroom. Now that he knew what was inside the bedroom, Han Fei modified his plan slightly. He deliberately waited for the girl's head to lag behind the mother before he entered the bedroom. Once the mother followed him in, Han Fei slammed the door to shut the head outside. He tricked the mother into the bedroom alone and then overpowered her to grab her knife.

He sliced through the boy's binding and used the rope to tie the mother to the bed. Then he exited the bedroom with the remaining rope. He lured the girl's head into the kitchen. The girl's head was missing a body and the body inside the fridge was missing a head, they'd be a perfect match for each other. Han Fei neared the fridge. He could hear the fridge rocking harder as he ventured closer. As the girl's head pitched itself at Han Fei, the latter side-stepped and yanked the fridge door open. The headless carcass jumped out for the head to slam into it. Using this momentum, Han Fei banged the fridge door close. While throwing his weight against the fridge door, Han Fei tied the rope around it.

Wiping the blood off his hands, Han Fei collected himself and continued with the mission. After dealing with the girl, he exited the kitchen. 'I've followed the boy's actions in his patient's records, and so far they have proven useful. Perhaps that's the way to succeed at this Manager Mission, to gain the previous manager's approval. The other thing mentioned in the records was that the patient had once shattered a mirror to kill the ghost inside it. The most conspicuous mirror here is the one inside the bathroom.'

Han Fei noticed that the hair had pooled around the bathroom. Instead of heading towards it, he picked up the vase from the living room and flung it at the mirror inside the bathroom. A woman's scream escaped from the cracked mirror. The surface bled. The woman appeared to be connected to the black hair because after she was injured, the knots of hair twisted as if in pain. Han Fei turned to head back into the kitchen. He moved the fridge and placed it before the bathroom door. He undid the ropes. Once he did, the fridge door flew open immediately. Han Fei was glad to see that the girl had reunited with her estranged body. Though it was a shame that she tumbled right into the pool of hair and was soon consumed by it.

'So this is how I can kill these ghosts. The imageries in the patient's records are more than just symbolic...' Han Fei stared at the mirror. With the table finally turned, a dangerous smile appeared on the young man's face.

This was the first time Han Fei attempted a manager mission so he was making up solutions as he went.

Han Fei picked up the ashtray from the living room and lobbed it at the mirror inside the bathroom. 'I must take care to not shatter it completely. I still have use for it.' Han Fei aimed the tray at the sides of the mirror, to slow down the cracks' recovery speed. As the woman inside the mirror screamed, Han Fei dragged the fridge away from the bathroom door and turned it to face the nursery instead. 'According to the patient's records, there might be a very scary demon inside the toddler's body.'

Han Fei was very cautious but he made sure not to idle for too long either. The room was changing at every moment. Ghosts and monsters could jump out from any shadowy corner to claim his life. Holding the knife, Han Fei pushed open the nursery door. Learning from his previous experience, the moment he did, Han Fei jumped to the side. Two extended arms reached out from the shadows but this time, they missed. Han Fei countered immediately. "Kill me once, shame on you! Kill me twice, shame on me!"

The knife was stained with blood and the stains probably possessed some kind of curse. The knife cut through the arms like butter. However, Han Fei did not slice the arms right off. Instead, he yanked on the knife handle and tried to pull the owner of the arms out from behind the door. While he wrestled with the arms, the toddler turned around from the commotion. When the scarred face saw Han Fei, it cried immediately for help. The piercing cries echoed inside the house. Banging sounds came from the main bedroom, that was the mother struggling against the binding to come save her child.

'The woman will do anything to protect her children. Looks like in the boy's impression, his mother will always be there for her kids.' Han Fei knew the mother had struggled loose from the binding because he could hear slamming against the bedroom door. 'Since the mother is so protective of her children, perhaps I can try to bring this toddler out from the nursery and then hand him to her. Hopefully, with her child in her arms, she'll calm down.' With this temporary change to his plan, Han Fei abandoned the fight with the arms and dashed into the nursery instead.

"Give me your hands!" He planned to rescue the toddler out from the nursery but to his shock, just as his hands were about to reach the toddler, the child who was sobbing suddenly stopped. The tears dried and a wicked smile bloomed on the ruined face. He pulled out a dagger that was planted among the pile of toys and stabbed it right through Han Fei's palm.

"He he." The little monster's sharpened nails dug into Han Fei's arms as it climbed onto Han Fei's body. With unnatural accuracy, the nails punctured Han Fei's aorta. Blood sputtered everywhere. Han Fei knew that he was dying. With the last breath that he had, he tumbled and knocked against the closet. The closet door swung open. A bloody pair of clothing cowered at the corner like it was alive. It emitted a horrible smell.

Han Fei collapsed to the ground. The last moment before his consciousness faded, Han Fei's eyes were pointing at the space under the bed. To his surprise, there was another toddler hiding under there. The toddler's face was also ruined, he looked just like the child sitting amidst the pile of toys!

'The real toddler is hiding the bed?! The one outside is a disguise taken on by a ghost?'

...

His eyes flew open. Shattering the frame, Han Fei grabbed the shard to gouge out his name and number of deaths on his arms. He took some time to arrange his plan. 'The real toddler is hiding under the bed. If I want to keep the mother relatively stable, I need to rescue him first.'

That was Han Fei's 12th death. Each death brought him immense pain and the process was subtly reshaping Han Fei. 'The system warns me that with every death I will lose parts of my memory but how come I don't feel like that's the case? I still have all of my main memories intact. My name is Han Fei, I am a down-on-my-luck actor. I am trying to complete a Manager Mission inside the cryptic world of the game Perfect Life. I remember Xu Qin, Meng Si and Weep. I remember everything that I've done inside the game. So what did I miss? What was taken away from me?'

At this point, Han Fei's mind suddenly throbbed in pain. A thought fluttered into his mind inexplicably, 'Wait, am I a down-on-my-luck actor? I have to be, because I was let go from my agency. I am too much of a loner to form any connections to save my hide in real life. I am an orphan and thus I have no family or friends to depend on in real life...

'I did have a brief interaction with the law enforcement due to the human jigsaw case but that was merely through emails, I did not have any actual contact with them... Or did I? Am I remembering wrongly or there was an officer who was particularly kind to me?'

Han Fei racked his mind anxiously. He came up with nothing. Soon the 5 minutes were up. When the girl's head exited from the front door, Han Fei already had the brazier raised. Like a programmed machine, he went through every step smoothly and precisely. After he dealt with the girl, Han Fei dragged the fridge to the nursery door. He knew the 'toddler' inside the room would start to cry once it saw him so this time Han Fei planned to lure it out instead. 'The thing does seem to like toys a lot.'



Han Fei found a few toy models under the living room's television set. Han Fei arranged them in front of the nursery door before he opened it. Soon, the confused toddler waddled out from the room. It was not until he picked up the models that he noticed Han Fei who was hiding in the shadows. The ghost let loose a wail immediately. However, it was still too late. Han Fei's knife was already coming for it.

"He he? Come, let me hear you giggle again!"

After it was injured, the tiny ghost's body turned illusive. It phased through Han Fei's knife and flickered away to make its escape.

Chapter 96:

"Get back here!" Han Fei chased after the ghost. At that moment, the main bedroom door shoved open. The mother had shed her human skin and morphed into a giant monster. Stimulated by her child's cries for help, her body grew twice as big and she was covered in blood. When the toddler ghost saw the woman, it immediately shifted back into the helpless child. He held his injured leg and cried while pointing accusatorily at Han Fei. Feeling pain on her child's behalf, the woman charged at Han Fei.

Han Fei knew this was not a physical match he could win. He turned back into the nursery and kicked the door close behind him!

"Get out of there! Come with me!" He reached under the bed. Han Fei grabbed the real toddler's collar and yanked him out. The younger brother was startled by Han Fei's harsh action. Soon two kids were heard crying inside the room. The mother rammed so heavily against the door that the walls trembled!

Han Fei retreated to the deepest corner of the room where the window was. Suddenly, the curtain lifted from a non-existent wind. A light touch landed on the back of Han Fei's head. He turned to look and saw a man hanging from behind the curtain. The thing that touched Han Fei's head was the tip of his shoe. As their eyes met, the hanging man was already falling towards Han Fei. At the same time, the nursery door cracked open. The mother poked her bloody face, that was covered in wooden splinters and blood, into the room. She glared fiendishly at Han Fei. His body was torn open and pain silenced Han Fei's consciousness.

...

His eyes flew open. Han Fei shattered the frame and stared at Room 1091 coldly. 'If I can kill all the ghosts and humans inside the room, I should be able to unlock a different reward.' The thought entered Han Fei's mind and it frightened him. Han Fei wondered where that chilling thought came from. It was as if he was slowly transforming into someone else, 'Looks like the system notification was not complete. Dying here will not only make you lose your memory but your humanity as well.'

After loops of painful, devastating deaths, the struggle in endless despair insidiously changed the young man's personality. 'There is only one solution to break out of this situation and that is to face death head on, and find the correct path among this endless reincarnation.' After using the glass shard to carve out his own name and number of deaths, Han Fei pushed open the door.

He used the main bedroom to trap the mother and then manipulated the black hair inside the bathroom to swallow the decapitated girl. Han Fei cleared the fridge and left the door open facing the side of the nursery door. He collected the toy models to use as bait for the toddler ghost. Han Fei lined up the models in a row like the witch leading Hansel and Gretel with the trail of sweets. The last model was placed close to the open fridge. The toddler ghost fell easily into the trap. The moment he toddled to the spot Han Fei needed him to be, Han Fei jumped out from his hiding spot and threw the brazier at the ghost. The ghost was slammed by the brazier into the fridge. Before the ghost could react, Han Fei rushed forward to close the door. Then he dragged the fridge down the corridor and dumped its content right inside the bathroom.

The toddler ghost tried his best to escape but it was not a match for the entwining ropes of black hair. He screeched for help but it was to no avail. To ensure that the blame did not fall on him, Han Fei quickly retreated before the mother reappeared. He dragged the fridge as quickly as he could away from the bathroom and towards the nursery. The whole process took less than 30 seconds, Han Fei was getting so good at this after multiple practices.

'The real younger brother is hiding under the bed. The mother will still get here after he starts to cry. Therefore, I need to deal with all the other ghosts before I can deal with him.' Han Fei's expression was eerily devoid of emotion. He raised the knife and slashed at the air before him as he made his way into the nursery. When he raised the knife, there was nothing at the door. But when the first slash fell, two arms appeared just in time to be chopped. It was as if the arms appeared on purpose to be harmed by Han Fei. After slicing through the arms, Han Fei jumped on the bed and waved his knife madly at the curtain.

The hanged man howled in pain. Han Fei grabbed the man by his feet and was about to fling the man into the fridge but, right at that moment, the closet doors opened. Han Fei released his hold on the man's leg and raised the knife to pierce at a particular direction behind him. It was as if the man had eyes on his back. The bloody clothing was poked through. Han Fei then continued his work on the

hanged man. Both ghosts were heavily injured. Just as Han Fei thought he could let his guard down, the shadows under the study table gushed out like waves. These were wandering souls who normally hid at dark corners. Endless hands latched onto Han Fei's body and the man was eventually dragged against his will under the table. The last thing he saw was a wall of deadly visage.

...

His eyes flew open for the 14th time. Death by the mother's bludgeoning.

His eyes flew open for the 15th time. Death by hanging.

His eyes flew open for the 16th time. Death by suffocating on the bloody clothing.

His eyes flew open for the 17th time. Death by being surrounded by the mother and son.

His eyes flew open for the 18th time. Death by strangulation by the black hair.

...

His eyes slowly flickered open. The man picked up the frame and shattered it. He picked up the sharpest shard and slashed at his arm almost mechanically. After making 44 gashes, he hesitated for a moment before he made the 45th. 'What do these bloody gashes represent? Why am I so familiar with this pain?'

His eyes rimmed with red. Studying his arms, one of them was dripping with blood but the other was unscathed. 'I believe I have forgotten something.' His bloody arm reached for the glass shard as he carved out a name on the other arm as if on rote. Han Fei!

Pushing open the door, and blocking the head, the man entered the room. "The next step is to take the keys." The man had forgotten many things but he could not have been more familiar with this room. It was as if he owned Room 1091. He was familiar with every occupants of the place and everyone was associated with a unique kind of pain in his mind.

The mother was tricked into the bedroom. He acquired the ropes. After dealing with the decapitated girl, he switched on the stove inside the kitchen. While he set up the trail of toys, he took a shot at the mirror in the bathroom. The man's every move was unnaturally calculated. He entered the nursery 3 times. The first time was to lure out the toddler ghost among the toys and used the hair in the bathroom to eliminate him. The second time, he chopped off the arms that dangled from the door. Then he sought up the dagger hidden among the toys and used it to pierce right through the hanged man's heart. Before the bloody clothing appeared, he retreated from the room. He moved the living room sofa to bulwark the door to the main bedroom, to block the mother's exit.

The third time he entered the nursery, he was just in time for the bloody clothing just finished its feast on the hanged man's corpse. The man opened his arms wide and allowed the shirt to clamber onto his body. Bloody threads unravelled from the clothing's seams and they punctured through the man's skin to feed on his blood. However, it also protected the man's vitals. Kicking over the study table, the wandering souls were forced out from their hiding place. They crowded the room and gnarled angrily at the man.

The man was unfazed by this horrifying spectre. He had amazing short-term memory because he managed to memorize the movement of each individual soul. As the souls jumped at him, he shifted elegantly between the claws and jaws. The whole thing looked like a well-rehearsed dance of death. The man weaved his way through the endless aggression towards the bathroom. He borrowed the sea of hair's power to consume most of the wandering souls. Then with the knife in hand and the bloody shirt draped over him, the man spared no mercy on the straggling souls. After all the souls were taken care of, the man walked towards the kitchen. By then, his face was pale because the clothing had almost drained his body of blood.

The man dived towards the scorching flames. The fire licked at his body and the clothing. The man gave not a whimper while the clothing wailed in agony. The former merely watched on with disinterest. He only left after the last bit of the cloth was turned into ash. Dragging his broken body, the man picked up a random object from the corridor and threw it right at the mirror. As the last shard of mirror fell from the mirror frame, the woman and the sea of black hair disappeared with a final shriek.

Slowly, the man turned to face the nursery. He counted silently. 3 seconds later, a toddler with a scarred face crawled out from under the bed. The toddler had an innocent expression but his body kept transmogrifying. Veins bulged on his skin and malice exploded from the miniature body. The younger brother was transforming into a monster. It swallowed everything around him, the toys, the food, the light, and even his parents' love. The monster became more deformed the more it ate. If the man did not make his next move soon, he too would end up the toddler's meal.

“Based on the patient’s record, the boy believes that only after murdering the demon on his younger brother’s body that his life can return to normal, but is there really a demon possessing his younger brother?” The monster slowly approached. Despite the wounds, the man’s eyes were clear. “I have forgotten the reason why I am here but I remember someone told me that I have to save all humans but eliminate all the ghosts I can find.”

The man raised the knife not at the monster but at himself. “No matter how ghastly his younger brother has become, he will always be a family to the boy. The reason I’m still here is because there is one last ghost in this house who is not dead.” The blade pressed against his pulse. The man remembered his own death portrait at the front door. “This final ghost is me.”

The knife sliced through his throat. The room started to haemorrhage as the truth was being revealed.

Chapter 97:

Dried scabs covered the small living room. Every tile was soaked with blood. No one knew what had happened here. Thick capillaries intertwined inside the room, while binding themselves around two figures. One of them wore a red jacket. Her plump lips dripped with blood and many stained table knives littered around her. The other was a humanoid giant wooden mannequin. Its head was decorated with a mask painted with strange patterns. Several rotten hearts were placed around its chest.

“You dare to come to the 9th floor even though you’re just level 5? If not for the 2 of them, you wouldn’t have been able to escape even after several thousand deaths.” The bedroom door slowly opened. The previously sleeping boy came out from it. With each of his steps, his body aged rapidly. Wrinkles climbed on his face and his hair turned from black to white. When he stopped before the man, death was already written on his face. His life counter was ticking, “Do you still remember what’s your name?”

“Han Fei.” Heavy stench crawled into the man’s nostrils. He studied the name on his arm. His face was calm and his eyes serene.

“Then do you remember how many times you’ve died?”

“45 times.”

“You remember even that?” The old man nodded. “I knew we would meet again, I just didn’t expect it to happen so soon.” His body gradually disintegrated into blood threads, dissolving and becoming part of the room. “You have just experienced my childhood memories. Only the most unfortunate will possess the black box, it has chosen me and I have chosen you. Now it is your turn to make your choice.”

“Are you sure you want me to make the choice now? I’ve already forgotten so many things...”

“That is exactly why I need you to make the choice now. Only the choices made when you are free of the shackles of memory can reflect your real belief.” The man opened his chest and took out a black box. “You have now obtained the lowest qualification to be a manager. You have gained the right to choose your own path.”

“What are the choices I have?”

“Open the lid on the back if you want to destroy this world filled with tragedy, misfortune and absurdity; Open the lid on the front, if you want to salvage this world dominated by ghosts and monsters.” The old man’s body was still dissolving, he did not have much time left.

“Which choice did you make back then?” The man did not hurry to make his decision, he knew this was going to be an important choice.

“I chose to open the lid on the back but I failed. My memory was shredded into pieces and the black box was only able to retain the fragments of my childhood memory.”

The man hesitated for a while before he said, “Can I open both ends of the box? I wish to salvage this world but at the same time, I believe to do that, some of the things in this world need to be destroyed as well.”

“If you do that, you will face resistance from both sides! Do you know how dangerous that’ll be?!” The old man had never encountered someone who voiced such desire before. If both choices could be taken, then what was the purpose of making a choice then? After a quick pause, the old man added, “Think carefully about this. If you do this, death will become a luxury for you. You’ll only run into bigger and scarier challenges. Take for example, this latest Manager Mission, you died 45 times before you completed it. But for some other Manager Missions, you’ll only need to die once to be consumed by eternal darkness. Do you really have faith that you can do this?”

“I might not have faith but what does that have to do with anything?” The man gripped the box from both ends and opened both lids at once. Nothing changed. Inside the black box was another black box. “What’s this?”

“You’re now a Level F Manager, with every increase in your Manager Level, you can open another layer of the box. When you reach the end, you’ll see for yourself, what is truly inside the box.” The old man’s body was disintegrating. His final gesture was to reach out towards Han Fei’s chest. The space where Han Fei’s heart was cracked open like a drawer. “Remember, this black box is placed inside the deepest part of your consciousness so you have to stay conscious at all times.” After the black box was placed inside Han Fei’s heart, the stolen memory returned like waves. Han Fei felt his brain exploding. He groaned as he fainted.

After the old man sewed Han Fei’s chest back together, his body was already at its limit. His eyes colored with complication as he faded away. “Speed up your exploration. Open your eyes to this world before they extend their claws at you. Perhaps you might find hope somewhere in this misbegotten world. You have picked the hardest path but you should be able to do it, at least you’re much more capable than I was. You cleared the 9th floor at level 5. I only dared to get up here when I was level 19. A true madman, you are. Don’t you know that you’ll expire from cerebral death in real life should you die in game?” The fragile figure diffused into blood. The capillaries inside the room started to wilt. The oppressive presence dissipated.

“Notification for Player 0000! You have completed the Grade F Manager Mission—Building Manager! You’ve gained triple EXP, 2 free skill points and Grade F Manager Title—Building Manager!

“Building Manager (Grade F Manager Title): Increase the friendliness level with all the permanent tenants inside the apartment building for 10 points! Randomly obtain a Grade F Manager Talent! You can select a tenant with Amicable friendliness level to accompany you when you take an excursion from the building!

“Notification for Player 0000! Grade F Missions are recommended for players between level 10 to 20. Since you have completed the Grade F Mission beneath the recommended level, you have obtained an extremely rare, upgradeable Grade F Manager Talent!

“Notification for Player 0000! You have obtained Grade F Manager Talent—Spirit Farer!

“Spirit Farer (An extremely rare Manager Talent with 0.00001 percent of activating. It will upgrade alongside the player’s personal level): Possess a certain chance to summon a player with spiritual affinity in person before the user. The summoned player will exist in a unique form. Can only be used once per night.

“Notification for Player 0000! You have successfully reached level 6! Obtained 1 free attribute point!”

The headache ceded as the voices echoed in his mind. Slowly, everything came back to Han Fei. ‘Wait, that was the old man who sold me the gaming helmet!’ The discovery jolted Han Fei awake. His arms flew outwards from shock but it accidentally knocked against the figure beside him. Instantly a heady smell of blood surrounded Han Fei. Turning to look, Han Fei saw Xu Qin sitting beside him. She was polishing her table knives but for some reasons, the more she cleaned them, the dirtier they became.

“You’re awake?” The bright red lips curled upwards. Xu Qin turned to glance at him. “Did you come up here to find me?”

Seeing Xu Qin’s hands that wiped up and down the blade and the blood that colored her lips, Han Fei decided to tell the truth. Han Fei struggled to stand up to look Xu Qin in her eyes. “I’ve died 45 times in that dream, I thought I would never wake up again.”

Hearing that, Xu Qin showed no outward response except her hand that held the knife tightened slightly.

“Notification for Player 0000! Friendliness with Xu Qin increases by 20! Friendliness level with Xu Qin has reached Amicable!”

Chapter 98:

The system announced that Xu Qin’s friendliness level had rocketed for 20 points. “Notification for player 0000! Friendliness Level with Xu Qin has reached the required standard! Congratulations for gaining Xu Qin’s friendship! You’ve now learned how to build a peaceful relationship with your neighbours!” Han Fei swiped his character profile to the last page and found Xu Qin’s name under the tab, Life Blueprint. Her name was arranged above Meng Si.



“Xu Qin (Curse Amalgamation): Her original persona has long since disappeared, causing cognitive dissonance in her mind. Teetering at the edge of the abyss, she is on her journey to pursue the world’s most extreme taste.”

After completing the Manager Mission, Han Fei gained a whole lot of rewards, he still had not gone over them in detail. ‘High risks come with high rewards. The unique Manager Talent alone is worth all the trouble. Spirit Farer sounds like it is perfect for this game. I shall act as a journeyman to help those lost souls in their adventure towards closure and salvation, it fits my identity as the Building Manager as well.’ Han Fei now had 2 talents, one was Spirit Farer and the other was the unknown talent, Resurrection that he was ‘born’ with. There was no description about Resurrection in the menu but based on his newly-acquired talent, he believed that these talents were all related to the user and other players.

According to the description, Spirit Farer enabled Han Fei to invoke players with spirituality affinity to appear before him. In other words, could this be a way for Han Fei to draw players from the normal world into the cryptic world? For now, the talent was only Level F so it had a low success rate and it could be used once per night. However, the talent could grow. When Han Fei was at a higher level, the talent might experience a paradigm shift.

‘If only I can draw Ying Yue’s extended family into the game.’ Han Fei prayed that the family of three would live a fabulous life until he was experienced enough to invite them to join him in this Iyashikei game. ‘Didn’t they like to take over people’s houses? Well, I have so many empty houses here for them to inhabit.’

After studying the talents in more detail, Han Fei inputted the free attribute point on stamina and 2 skill points on acting. In other words, his intermediate acting upgraded to advanced acting skill. How powerful this ‘advanced acting skill’ was, Han Fei had no idea. The only visible change he could feel was he could now not only easily portray internal emotions and expressions, but also copy the expressions of those he had met before. Acting would not be a conventional skill to level up in a game, but in both the cryptic world and the real world, it proved immensely helpful to Han Fei.

Working out the kinks in his body, Han Fei glanced around Room 1091. He realized Xu Qin was still staring at him. Her red eyes appeared to have blood flowing through them. Moving his eyes away, Han Fei said, “Wasn’t there another person in the room with us? I remember it was some kind of mannequin.”

“The mannequin escaped from a nearby theme park several decades ago. It was given a home by the building manager but it had gone missing one day. I was surprised to run into it on the 9th floor as well.”

Xu Qin put away her knives and wiped down the blood that stained her hands. "It has been heavily injured, I believe I saw it run into Room 1094 after you fainted."

"Shall we go see how it's faring?" Han Fei's interest was piqued.

"Do you plan to take it down when it's injured?" Xu Qin said bluntly. "Before this, no one was able to leave the 9th floor but now the 3 of us can exit freely. This can only mean that the previous building manager has disappeared without a trace, and the new building manager should be among the 3 of us." The bright lips slowly opened. Xu Qin bit on her pinkie and her expression colored with desire, "If you wish to kill it, I am more than glad to help you." Xu Qin probably had guessed that Han Fei was the new building manager but she simply did not point it out.

"That's not my intention, I just want to meet it. To be honest, I'm more interested in the theme park where you said it came from." Han Fei heard from Huang Yin that there was a rumored crossroad between Perfect Life's surface and cryptic worlds at the deepest part of a theme park maze. He wanted to locate that point of intersection. To do that, he needed more information on the theme park.

"Its consciousness of self has been severely impaired. You might need to wait forever before you can communicate normally with it."

"What do you mean by that?"

"The mannequin's essence is in the mask. It is where its consciousness resides. The previous building manager took over the mask and basically mind-controlled the mannequin to act as his building patrol."

"So the shuffling footsteps that we heard earlier belong to it?"

"Yes, I'd advise you to not place too much hope on the mannequin, I'm not even sure it's sentient anymore."

Han Fei did remember the strange mask on the mannequin's face. Since the previous manager could manipulate the mannequin through it, there was no reason why he couldn't do it either. After some brief conversation with Xu Qin, both of them headed to Room 1094. The mannequin stood at the corner

of the room. No matter what Han Fei or Xu Qin did to it, it did not respond, like it was an inanimate object.

“The mask can’t be removed and I can’t carry this thing with me. O well, we’ll let it rest here for now. We’ll return to check on it later.” The mannequin was one of the tenants of the building, Han Fei did not want to harm it. After exiting Room 1094, Han Fei did not hurry to leave. Instead he went searching for the last 2 human jigsaw pieces. Now he only needed to bring all the pieces back to Room 1044 and he’d complete another Grade F Mission.

“Should we head up to the 10th floor to take a look?” Xu Qin glanced at the stairs that led upwards. Other than the building manager, none of the tenants had been to the 10th floor before. Her curiosity was evident.

“Sure.” Han Fei followed behind Xu Qin as they headed up to the 10th floor.

The top floor of the haunted apartment was surprisingly normal. The building manager had reconstructed this floor according to his former house. Pushing open the door to Room 1101, the place did not give off any scent of blood or rot, in fact, everything was arranged neatly. It was like they were stepping into a model house.

The thing that attracted attention the most inside the room was a hand-painted map on the wall. When Han Fei touched it, the robotic voice said, “Notification for Player 0000! The map function has been unlocked, the places that you have explored will be highlighted!”

Opening the menu, Han Fei found the game map under the Life Blueprint tab.

Among the sea of darkness, there was a barely discernible pinprick of light. Han Fei had to magnify the map to its maximum before he could see the legend that was marked beside the point of light—  
Explored Locale, Happiness Neighbourhood Apartment 1.

Chapter 99:

The Game Map in the menu would only show the places Han Fei had visited, the unexplored places were shrouded in darkness. On the other hand, the hand-painted map on the wall generously marked out the

locales near to the apartment, some of them were even specifically circled out with red pen. 'I remember the building manager saying that his memory has been shredded into pieces, could these places be the locations where his memory fragments can be found?' Other than these places of interest, at the most corner of the map, there was an area that had a red question mark. A label in untidy handwriting was written beside it—Exit?

This location was extremely far from the Happiness Neighbourhood.

'What is the meaning of this exit? Is it the exit that leads back to the real world? Or the passage to the surface world? Regardless, this is a valuable find.' If it was the latter, Han Fei would be able to leave this place with all of his neighbours, to have them witness their justice being served. 'This hand-painted map might be even more valuable than the system's rewards. This is probably the last present the previous building manager left for me.'

Han Fei stood before the wall for about 10 minutes.

"What are you standing there for? Aren't we going to explore the other places?" Xu Qin caressed the knife. She was rather bored.

"I'm trying to memorize this map into my mind before I destroy this wall. Like everything else, the rarer the information, the more precious it'll be." Han Fei was thinking ahead. Before this, the previous building manager's presence stopped anyone from coming up to the top floor but now that he was gone, there was no telling who might come up here and use this information against Han Fei. Han Fei quickly branded the map in his mind with his photographic memory. Then he marred the map with Xu Qin's aid.

"In the future, you can use this place to prepare your food ingredients. But help me store the non-locals' blood and body parts. I wish to use their blood to paint a new map over this wall." Han Fei until now had no idea why those non-locals had infiltrated into this building but he knew he had to be careful of them.

"I understand what you mean. If someone intends to take advantage of the map, it'll only provide them a false trail to a deeper abyss." Xu Qin chuckled with mirth. She realized she could encounter many new adventures around Han Fei.

“To make the new map feel more authentic, we need to set up more traps on the 9th floor. The harder it is to get to the map, the less suspicion they’ll have of it. That is a basic psychological trick.” Han Fei had been studying human psyche and psychology. He realized they come in handy most of the time. After a brief discussion, the duo continued to explore the rest of the house. There was no discovery of anything grotesque. There were no dead bodies or ghosts. This was probably a sanctuary for the previous building manager. After a thorough search, only 2 objects were identified by the system.

“Notification for Player 0000! You’ve discovered Grade G Blood Red Object—Yi Ming Private Academy’s Educator Id.

“Yi Ming Private Academy’s Educator Id: Only while wearing this id, can the user enter Yi Ming Private Academy.

“Notification for Player 0000! You’ve discovered Grade G Blood Red Object—Cursed Homework.

“Cursed Homework: A revision exercise book that cannot be finished. Until now, no one knows what kind of curse lingers on it. It can absorb children’s resentment, prolonged interaction with the book might cause loss of self.”

Han Fei was quite surprised with these discoveries. “The building manager was a teacher?”

“I’m not sure. But if that’s true, I pity his students. He was such a tedious person.” Xu Qin licked the blood off her lips, the way she looked at Han Fei was quite scary.

“According to the map on the wall, Yi Ming Private Academy is slightly to the west of this neighbourhood. The place was circled out in red so it should be somewhere important.” Han Fei said. After he was more capable, he decided to pay the place a visit. ‘I have the talent of Piep Pier, and Hide-and-Seek. With my acting skill, I should have no problem handling a group of kids.’ Han Fei’s intention was to venture out there to see if he could make more friends. After ensuring they did not leave anything unchecked, Han Fei and Xu Qin left the 10th floor. Finally this apartment began to feel more like a real home. After bidding farewell to Xu Qin, Han Fei returned to Room 1044 alone.

The clock said that it was not yet 4 am. He died 45 times inside the building manager’s memory, the pain and torment lasted for multiple lifetimes but outside of the mission, time did not pass by that much. ‘The passage of time inside the game and outside the game is the same but while I was doing the

Manager Mission, I was inside a unique state. In that state, the time flow slowed down and I was unable to exit the game. Basically, it was like I was pulled into another person's memory.'

There were still many things about Perfect Life that eluded Han Fei. He was still a relatively new player in this game.

Entering the innermost bedroom, Han Fei saw his 7 roommates sitting by the bed, facing away from him.

"I'm home." Han Fei greeted the victims casually. Like usual, he sat beside Wei Youfu, "I've located the parts you've lost. For now I can only help restore your wounded soul, but in the future, I will make it so that you can see the murderers punished with your own eyes."

Opening the inventory, when Han Fei took out the first human jigsaw piece, the temperature in the room dropped. The landlord's ring gave off a stern warning. With no fear and apprehension, Han Fei very carefully inserted the 'jigsaw puzzles' back into their allotted places. 'I am basically building back my own roommates, it's quite hair-raising when you think about it.'

The first roommate Han Fei worked on was Wei Youfu but Han Fei soon noticed the problem. The puzzle piece matched but it refused to fuse back with Wei Youfu's body. Black and red blood leaked out from Wei Youfu's body. Han Fei believed he heard a girl's screams among the blood. 'Why won't it fit?'

The ring was freezing. While Han Fei was deep in thought, Wei Youfu next to him suddenly raised his arms to push Han Fei towards the door. Black capillaries snaked out from the victims' bodies. The threads bound them forcibly together, twisting their frames out of shape. Bones were crushed and flesh torn. Blood squirted everywhere. The monster made of despair slowly emerged. Han Fei once again met the girl residing at the monster's heart. The last time this happened, Han Fei was doing the shower mission. Wei Youfu even left him a mirror message, requesting Han Fei's aid to save the girl.

'I think I get it now.' Han Fei suddenly leaped towards the monster. He tore open the flesh that was closing around the monster's chest and reached in to grab the girl! 'The 8th victim is the key in this whole tragedy!'

Chapter 100:

Previously, Han Fei also tried to yank the girl out of the monster's body but he failed because the monster started to dissolve into the mist. Han Fei had been wondering why that happened, and now he finally got it. The girl's body was the glue that melded the 7 victims together. The monster would never let the girl leave its body because once she did, it would disintegrate. Hence, it stopped Han Fei using the black threads last time. Therefore, the only way to get the girl out from the monster while maintaining the monster's physical stability was to find 'materials' to replace the space the girl would normally occupy inside the monster. Naturally, normal 'materials' would not have worked. The monster's body would only be compatible with the victims' flesh.

Holding the girl with one arm, Han Fei shoved the human jigsaw pieces that he found right into the monster's vacated heart. The human jigsaw pieces retained the victims' humanity and emotions so as they combined into the Frankenstein monster, the latter became less aggressive.

"Hold onto me, do not let go no matter what!" Many people have played with puzzles before but one that was made from human flesh? That was probably incredibly rare. The 7 roommates shared a unique bond with Han Fei. Their souls slowly recovered as Han Fei pieced them back together. When Han Fei managed to fully drag the girl out from the monster's body, there was one last opening left at the monster's chest. Retrieving the 7th jigsaw piece from his inventory, Han Fei clicked the last puzzle into place before the monster crumbled.

All the blood capillaries started to retract. The ghastly monster groaned in pain. Its body was now completed but it did not look too happy about it. The resentment almost raised the roof. The pain and despair experienced by the 7 victims fueled the Frankenstein monster's rampage. 'Now I understand why the building manager did not fully piece them back together, the threat posed from the accumulation of their total resentment will seriously upset the balance inside the building.'

Han Fei felt his consciousness freezing. His body was drawn subconsciously to the monster. With an easy swipe, the monster could end his life. "Please wake up! This is not you!" Han Fei's pleas fell on deaf ears. He turned to the menu and turned his gaze to the exit button. However, right at that moment, the girl who had just been rescued suddenly walked towards the Frankenstein monster. The girl's eyes were clear as glass, her mind pure as ice. Even if Han Fei wanted to stop her, he was unable to. He could only watch as the girl stopped before the monster. Then she reached out to hug the rampaging monster with sadness and faith. For the girl, the monster that was pieced together from the seven victims was her only family and literal home.

With the girl's comfort, the resentment gradually dissipated and the monster's body started to change. Its flesh began to rearrange themselves as cracks appeared on the monster's chest. Amidst the horrifying creaks and cracks, one after another victim crawled out from the monster's chest. They appeared according to their time of death. After the last victim emerged from the monster's chest, the

large monster morphed into black smoke and disappeared. Inside the small bedroom, the 8 victims stood together. The air of resentment faded away as if reabsorbed back into the victims' hearts.

"Notification for Player 0000! You have completed the Grade F Mission—Human Jigsaw! Obtained triple EXP, 1 Free Skill Point and 10 points increase in friendliness with all the human jigsaw case's victims!

"Notification for Player 0000! Since the mission grading is too high for the player's current level, completing the mission will award the player with additional, unique reward—Grade F Skill, Soul-Depth Touch.

"Soul-Depth Touch (Beginner's Skill, can be upgraded with skill points): Your hands can reach into a monster's or a ghost's body to feel their emotional fluctuation provided that they are not guarded against you.

"Notification for Player 0000! You have successfully reached level 7, obtained 1 free attribute point!"

In a very short amount of time, Han Fei completed 2 consecutive Grade F missions. The Manager Mission already provided Han Fei with great EXP and now with this Grade F Mission, he rose to level 7 practically overnight.

'Soul-Depth Touch? That sounds useful. If I can make direct hand-to-heart contact with the spirits, does that mean that one day I can be powerful enough to manipulate their feelings... while they are not paying attention?' Han Fei added the new skill point to the newly acquired skill to make it Beginner Level 2. And then he added the attribute point to stamina, making his current stamina level a solid 10.

The pros of the Hidden Missions were that they not only provided common system rewards but also many interesting and unique side rewards. Han Fei's 8 roommates no longer bore any hostility towards Han Fei. They looked at Han Fei with peace and acceptance.

There were 2 things worth noting.

After the victims regained their missing body parts, their average power level increased but Wei Youfu was an exception. The man's presence not only did not strengthen, it had weakened. It appeared as if



Wei Youfu had given his own power to the other victims. He was attempting to control his own emotions and consciousness, to find his humanity.

“Youfu?” Han Fei called out softly.

When Youfu heard Han Fei, the man raised his head and even managed to force a smile at Han Fei. His pale lips quivered before he uttered, “Thank you.”

“You can understand me?!” Han Fei was excited. Even though Meng Si and Xu Qin technically were communicable, they only achieved that after sealing away part of their most crucial memories. Wei Youfu’s situation was clearly different from them. Han Fei appeared to have achieved something even the previous building manager failed to.

Wei Youfu smiled once more seeing how clearly excited Han Fei was. He nodded slightly. Then he closed his eyes as he tried to control the rampaging resentment inside his body.

“Notification for Player 0000! You have gained Wei Youfu’s approval, you are now as close as family!”

The system rang out suddenly. Han Fei turned to the life blueprint and saw all the victims’ names under the list of family!

What Han Fei did for his roommates did not go unnoticed. They remembered everything.

“Family?” Han Fei was stunned. This familiar word for many was so strange to the young man’s ears. Honestly, he was quite flustered to suddenly gain so many new family members.

To be honest, one of the biggest reasons he tried so hard to help the human jigsaw case’s victims was so that he could have an easier time surviving in the game. Han Fei’s initial purpose was self-serving but through the process, without even realizing it, Han Fei had done more than the bare minimum needed to survive.

‘So this is what it feels like to have a family?’

A scene flashed in Han Fei's mind. 7 murdered individuals sat in the living room watching the television, while the only living human hid under the cover inside the bedroom. Eventually, the human voluntarily came out from the bedroom to join the party. This should have been a horrifying image but for some reason, Han Fei's heart welled with warmth.

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