

My Iyashikei Game

Chapter 6: 6

After Han Fei lost his job, he did find temporary solace in many different video games. His main goal was to vent and readjust his status, so that he could soon regain motivation to continue on with his life. Well, his goal was accomplished now. After playing this Perfect Life, he had a renewed and deep appreciation for the goodness of life. The injustice that he faced before paled so much in comparison to attempted murders and virtual ghosts. So in a way, he was cured. But the method of treatment was rather rough. To borrow an analogy, it was like the surgeon had decided to chop off his hands because of a wood splinter got stuck in his pinkie.

Lying listlessly on the ground, pain and fatigue tormented his soul. Han Fei had no idea whether he ultimately drifted off to sleep or lost his consciousness.

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Bang! Bang! Bang!

At 7 am, Han Fei was woken up by knocking on his door. He crawled up from the floor and his brain blurred. It was not until he saw the gaming helmet on the table and the blood stains inside it that he realized the game yesterday was not a dream. 'The New Player Mission is already so damn hard, and it'll only get harder from here. If this is not a death summon, then what is? I'm just a comedy actor, I don't even know how to fight. How am I supposed to wrestle with a whole building of crazy neighbours?'

Bang! Bang! Bang! The knocking was insistent. If this happened before Han Fei experienced Perfect Life, the young man with great social anxiety would pretend to be absent from home and quietly wait until the person left. But now? He strode to the front door and opened it without much thought.

"Good morning, we are the police from Xin Fu Road's station." Xin Fu Road was located at the older parts of town, which incidentally was also where the convenience store where Han Fei bought the gaming helmet was located. "My name is Zhao Ming and this is my colleague Zhang Xiaotian."

"Police?" Seeing the two officers in uniform at his door, Han Fei's eyes lit up. The thing called Black Box in his brain threatened him with death should he report his situation to the police but he couldn't help it if police came to find him on their own, right...

"Please come in!" Han Fei was never this glad to see someone in his life. He happily invited the two officers into his house and ran to the refrigerator to serve them drinks.

“We’re here because we have some questions for you. There was a fire in our district yesterday and you were seen on the camera near the arson site.” The two officers were confused by the warm welcome they received. Zhao Ming even took out his phone to confirm the situation. He realized Han Fei was acting very dissimilar to the profile the police had collected on him.

“Actually, I do have something I need to tell you.” Han Fei sat down across from the officers.

“Oh?” The two officers shared a look. Their expression became serious as they stared at Han Fei, “What is it that you wish to tell us?”

“Yesterday night, I...”

“Warning! Warning, Player 0000! Do not reveal the existence of Perfect Life first generation to anyone! After the third warning, the Black Box inside your brain will explode!” It was like someone tightened a grip around Han Fei’s nerves. The tremor that came deep from his brain froze Han Fei. His lips dangled open but no words came out. The two officers looked at Han Fei’s open mouth and the trio stayed in that awkward silence for a few seconds.

“So what happened to you yesterday night?” One of the officers prompted. They had no idea of the pressure Han Fei was currently under. Beads of sweat slid down Han Fei’s cheek. The horror of death curled around his every nerve. Veins popped on his forehead. Han Fei gritted his teeth and slammed his fist on the couch. Ultimately, he kept the existence of the game to himself.

The two officers were startled by his sudden action. “Sir, please calm down. We can talk this out. It is unwise to resort to violence.”

Han Fei churned his mind to try to figure out a way to voice out his problem without bringing up the game. To prevent the black box from exploding, he picked his words carefully. “Around yesterday midnight, okay officers, please pay attention to the timing, an old lady came to invite me to her home for dumplings. When I was there, her grandson knocked over the bowl of fish soup and said she cooked with ingredients taken out from coffins. But I clearly saw the old lady take out the ingredient from the refrigerator. Doesn’t that mean there might be a dead body inside her refrigerator or else why would her grandson make that assumption?”

“I’m actually more curious why you’d make that assumption.” The two officers saw how serious Han Fei was so they did not press him further. In any case, Zhao Ming activated the recorder in his pocket silently, while Zhang Xiaotian moved his left arm casually behind his back. “And then, what happened?”

“I went home and tried to sleep. But the bathroom door started to move on its own and something came out from it. By the way, do you believe in ghosts?”

“Huh?”

“Ghost! The kind that squats on the ground and knows how to teleport. It has a very pale face and it can contort its body like it has no bone!” Han Fei’s emotion frayed. He was afraid that the police officers might leave on account of the absurdity of his story and he’d miss the chance to seek help so he even used gestures to add to his description. His acting chops were put fully on display.

“So I took my recorder out for a ghost story?” Zhao Ming took a deep breath and tried to keep his tone even. “If this is everything you have to tell us, then we better save both of our time. Listen, sir, we will now ask you some questions and we need you to answer them truthfully.”

“But I swear to God I have been telling you nothing but the truth!” Han Fei was not acting. He blinked wildly like a hostage being held against his will. But the person that held him hostage in this case was not a person but a game.

“First, why would you show up around Antique Street at 1.30 pm yesterday afternoon?” Zhao Ming did not go down this spiral with Han Fei and cut right to the chase.

“I went there to purchase a second-hand game, oh yes! We can go and find the shop owner! Officers, you have to come help me find that shop owner!”

“What shop owner? Most buildings at Antique Street are too old to be in use. In fact, all the shops there have been relocated 3 months ago.”

“But that’s impossible! I’ve been purchasing games from that old convenience store for the past 3 days! We can go there now! In fact, I’ll bring you there now!” Han Fei jumped up from the couch.

“Are you toying with us? Do you find this funny? There was a big fire at Antique Street yesterday afternoon. All of the empty shops have been burned down. Thankfully, the place was deserted so there was no recorded injury.” Now Zhao Ming and Zhang Xiaotian eyed Han Fei with blatant suspicion.

“All the shops have been burned down?” Han Fei stared at the officers dumbly. But moments later, determination returned to his eyes. “Impossible! There has to be a bug! I remember the shop owner’s appearance very clearly! As long as you can find this person, you’ll realize that I am not lying!” Han Fei was a very professional actor so he had a great memory. He immediately took out some stationery and wrote down the old shop owner’s facial features. “Just focus on these features! I am sure you’ll be able to locate him soon enough!”

“I will tell you again, there are no more shops in active business...” Zhao Ming wanted to say something more when his phone vibrated. He had Zhang Xiaotian watch over Han Fei while he exited the room to take the call.

“Hello, Captain Wang?”

“Have you arrived at the arson suspect’s home? Did you find anything?” A middle-aged man’s voice came from the line.

“We’re here and we did find the man suspicious after a brief questioning and conversation.” Zhao Ming looked into the room and lowered his voice.

“What do you mean?”

“Based on the profile given to us, this suspect is supposedly to be a highly-introverted, and hard-working comedy actor. We went through his social files and realized he had been to several sessions of psychiatric counselling in the past. According to his files, he suffers from severe social anxiety.”

“An actor with severe social anxiety?”

“That is what the files say, but after actual interaction with the suspect, we noticed that he is extremely hyper and easily-stimulated. His actions are also very weird. I believe his social anxiety has been cured but...”

“But what?”

“But the man probably has gone insane through the process.”