

## 48 Hours 1031

### Chapter 1031: What Do You Mean By Huge Chance?

Four days had passed since Zhang Heng left the third level. In order to make sure that everyone thought he was dead, Zhang Heng did not contact anyone during this period. Meanwhile, the news stated that he had been killed in the fire at the hotel.

It was why Mr. G had hoped that Zhang Heng could continue to stay on the first level because once Shengtang Morgan realized that he was still alive, they would know that the memory encoder had returned to the first level. By then, the fragile balance at the first level would be tipped.

Zhang Heng did promise to help Xu Qian find out what happened to her, especially considering the latter's boyfriend had now returned to New Shanghai 0297. Hence, Zhang Heng decided to go back to the third level with makeup as soon as possible after the tracking device was extracted from his head.

Instead of going to Xu Qian's apartment immediately, Zhang Heng went to look for E-Goat first. The latter had gone to the fourth level to investigate Xu Qian's boyfriend after Zhang Heng motivated him. Other than experiencing the difference in the gap between the two levels, they found nothing else. Before they separated, Zhang Heng promised to contact him once he acquired new updates. E-Goat, however, had not received a single email from Zhang Heng. Now, he felt what it was like to be taken advantage of.

At the same time, that trip caused him to completely give up on Xu Qian. He still felt sad after returning to the third level, but as time passed, E-Goat gradually got over the anguish of giving up on someone he loved.

Without relying on alcohol to dissipate his sorrows, E-Goat still looked taciturn. However, he did enroll himself in a Hulusi class for the first time ever. Seemingly planning on cultivating a new hobby other than programming, he wanted to get out of his sadness as soon as possible.

On this day, after he came back from his Hulusi class, someone tapped on his shoulder. E-Goat then turned around, and he saw a somewhat strange-looking man. Immediately, E-Goat dug through his memory, and he did not remember where he met someone like that. Just when he was about to ask what the other party was doing here, the strange-looking man spoke first.

"The time to test how deep your feelings for Xu Qian are has come."

"It's you!" Upon hearing the ghoulish voice, E-Goat shuddered, almost dropping the Hulusi that he held in his hand. "It's the same trick again," he growled in angst. "You are relentless, aren't you? How does such a wicked person like you exist in this world? Why do you have to appear in my life every time after I crawl out of the abyss? You are going to push me off the cliff again. Don't worry; this time, I will not trick you anymore."

After E-Goat was done talking, he pushed Zhang Heng's hand away from his shoulder, turned around, and continued walking towards the residential area.

Zhang Heng then talked to E-Goat again. "Well, I initially wanted to tell you your golden opportunity has arrived, but since you've chosen to give it up, I have to respect your decision. I hope you find someone you like as soon as possible."

Zhang Heng also turned and walked to the other side of the road. However, when he stopped and waited for the traffic light to turn red, the expression on E-Goats' face changed a lot. He then stomped the ground, turned around, and ran towards Zhang Heng. "You mentioned the golden opportunity. What do you mean by that?"

"I thought you were going to give her up?"

"You have complete control over me now. Are you happy now?" E-Goat gritted his teeth.

"I haven't thought about it like that. I just wanted to try my luck with you. After all, you are one of the few people I know willing to help Xu Qian," Zhang Heng said sincerely.

"But the fact is you are now controlling me!" E-Goat cried angrily.

"..."

"I didn't want to run toward you in the first place, but I don't know why my legs went completely out of control."

"Anyway, since you are here, why don't you hear me out. The good news is that I didn't lie to you. You really do have a huge chance to win Xu Qian's heart this time."

"What do you mean by that?" After being repeatedly disappointed by Zhang Heng, E-Goat had learned his lessons by paying attention to Zhang Heng's choice of words.

"You might be able to get into a romantic relationship with Xu Qian."

Zhang Heng then saw E-Goat looking at him as if he was treating him like an idiot.

Zhang Heng then spread his hands, "What promise do you want me to give you? Will Xu Qian change her mind and like you? Would you believe this kind of thing? Don't be stupid. I'm not Cupid. How can I tell Xu Qian who she should like?"

"So, this time, you still plan to use Xu Qian as an excuse to let me work for you for free?" E-Goat sneered.

"No, I will help you get rid of your biggest competitor. After that, Xu Qian will surely be affected. When that happens, she will be in her most vulnerable state. You, my friend, will happen to be by her side. If you still fail to win her heart, I would advise you to give up on her."

Although E-Goat's rational mind told him Zhang Heng was most probably trying to deceive him again, the irrational part made it difficult for him to refuse such a rare opportunity. And finally, he spoke.

"First, tell me what you want me to do?"

After E-Goat finished his sentence, he instantly regretted it because he knew he had lost.

"It's very simple. First, send an email to Xu Qian to confirm her safety."

"Why didn't you do it?" E-Goat asked rhetorically.

"Dude, haven't you watched the news recently? I'm already dead," Zhang Heng said.

E-Goat was baffled. He wasn't one to pay much attention to the daily news. The only thing that interested him was the technical stuff. He then searched the news with his bracelet and found the news that Zhang Heng was killed in a fire.

"What's going on?"

"That's not important. You are not pursuing me anyway," Zhang Heng said. "Send an email to Xu Qian first."

"But I stalked her not long ago, and she found out about me. Since then, we have not contacted each other. Will she call the police if I email her?" E-Goat asked, embarrassed.

"It depends on what you send her. You can tell that you know she is about to get engaged, and you decide to congratulate her. After that, attach 10,000 credits to her as a gift."

"Isn't that too generous?" E-Goat hesitated.

"How do you think she sees you? And don't worry, she won't take the money because her engagement is going to be a fluke."

"Really?" E-Goat was suspicious.

Nevertheless, he still wrote an email according to what Zhang Heng said, with 10,000 credits attached, and sent it to Xu Qian. Then, about less than five minutes later, he received a reply. E-Goat clicked on the email, and the response surprised him.

"What happened?"

"She replied to me saying thank you and accepted the money. Didn't you say that she would not accept the money?"

"She took it?" Zhang Heng also seemed a little surprised. "That's not good."

"What's wrong? She just made 10,000 credits in the blink of an eye."

"Because it means she is probably in trouble."

## **Chapter 1032: Zhuge Liang And Zhou Yu**

**Translator:** EndlessFantasy Translation **Editor:** EndlessFantasy Translation

"She's in trouble? What kind of trouble are you talking about?" asked a puzzled E-Goat. "She has an outstanding online loan? Or did she lose too much money while doing stock trading?"

"I mean the kind of trouble that restricted her personal freedom," Zhang Heng said.

E-Goat showed a look of contempt. "Your excuse this time is too ridiculous. Even if you are trying to deceive me, you should make up a better story."

"I didn't make up the story. Xu Qian is probably a clone," Zhang Heng said bluntly. "You have joined her stream probably longer than anyone. You should know that the number of viewers has been declining. I'm pretty sure of that. The decline in the number of her viewers has caused her company to bring her back and recycle her... I have always suspected that her boyfriend, Qiu Ming, was assigned to bring her

back to her company. Otherwise, I could not explain why such a perfect man would appear before her when her career is failing. It sounds like a fairy tale. Now, I have also found out that Xu Qian's proof of life at the first level does not exist."

E-Goat's mouth dropped wide open, and he froze for at least half a minute. Then, with a tone of admiration, he said, "Even if I'm fantasizing about sleeping with her every day, I would, at most, wish that her boyfriend's company would become bankrupt, penniless, and live on the street. And I want him to grab my trousers and beg for money from me. After that, I would kick him away. I have to say that your imagination is wilder than mine."

"..."

"I'm not kidding," Zhang Heng said sternly.

E-Goat was left in surprise. "You are her bodyguard. You should be able to identify whether she is a clone. Just take a picture of her neck and see if there is a serial number."

"Well, I have done some investigations, and I have reason to suspect that there is another batch of clones with no serial number at the back of their necks in New Shanghai 0297. Do you remember the marketing manager we met at Zhuorui Sensor?"

"That guy named Liao Ming?"

"Well. Didn't you hack into his bracelet and copy his personal information? After that, I followed the breadcrumbs and did a quick check on his background. I found out that his memory doesn't match reality, especially the memory of his ex-wife." Zhang Heng took out a USB flash drive, continuing, "This is the result of my investigation. With it, you can tell whether I'm telling the truth."

"..."

E-Goat grabbed the USB flash drive suspiciously, took out the handheld computer from his bag, and stood by the roadside to check all the audio, video, and text data stored in the USB flash drive.

Zhang Heng then added, "There is no serial number behind Liao Ming's neck."

"How could this be?" E-Goat expression finally changed. He seemed to think of something, and he subconsciously reached out to touch his neck.

"Yes. This possibility cannot be ruled out," Zhang Heng said, "If you have time, you can also check your memory."

E-Goat opened his mouth and wanted to say something, but he closed his mouth again and looked around nervously. Finally, he lowered his voice. "Do you know what it means if your guess is true?"

"Let me think. Everyone in New Shanghai 0297 will be in danger?"

"Yes, because everyone is used to relying on the serial number at the back of the neck and the tracking device in their heads to distinguish clones between human beings. If this method is no longer reliable, mass hysteria will break out in the city." E-Goat then paused again. "Do you know how many clones like that exist in New Shanghai 0297?"

"I don't know, but this is what you and I need to find out next, not just for Xu Qian, but also for yourself," Zhang Heng said.

E-Goat wiped the sweat from his forehead with his hand. "This is huge. You need to give me enough time to think about it."

"I don't mind at all, but I don't know how long Xu Qian can wait."

The expression on E-Goat's face changed again. Zhang Heng did not know whether he felt fear, was frustrated, hopeful, or ecstatic. About half a minute later, though, he seemed to have finally made up his mind. He cut off the Hulusi in his hand and threw it in the trash can. He then gritted his teeth and said, "I will do it."

"Very well. I didn't lie. If we can rescue Xu Qian this time, there is a high chance you both will couple up. However, I don't know if you mind the fact that she is a clone."

"I don't mind if she is a clone or an ordinary person because what I like about her is her true self, not her identity," E-Goat confessed without thinking twice. However, he then hesitated again. "I'm just a network engineer. Even if I manage to save her, I don't know how to protect her from her company. Or perhaps we can go to her company and talk to her superior. Maybe, I can use my salary to make up for the money she could've earned."

"Do you think her company will accept this offer?"

E-Goat could not help but feel discouraged after he heard what Zhang Heng said. Zhang Heng then patted his shoulder, "Don't worry. Maybe it won't take long for us to resolve the problem. New Shanghai 0297 is not exactly peaceful. Soon, something bad will happen to this city. Before that, we have to rescue Xu Qian first."

"Well, what do you want me to do next?" E-Goat asked.

"Let's go to Xu Qian's residence first. It'll be best if she's there."

...

The reason Zhang Heng was recruiting was because he had already died once, and E-Goat was good with all that technical gizmo. Although Zhang Heng was also tech savvy, he was responsible for fighting with the enemies. Hence, it would be nice if there was someone there to back him up and share his burden.

Soon the two came to the downstairs of Xu Qian's residence. E-Goat waited for a while, and when fewer and fewer people entered and exited the building, E-Goat took out a magnetic card with anime stickers from his pocket and secretly swiped it on the keypad.

Following that, a pleasant female voice could be heard. "Welcome, Zhuge Liang and Zhou Yu, owners of Unit 12, Room 3094. You have returned to the Yacheng apartment. You two have administrator rights, and the monitoring system will not record your entry and exit records. All the security footage with you in it will be deleted as well."

"Done!" E-Goat put away the magnetic card and found that Zhang Heng was looking at him and touched his nose, "What's wrong?"

“Zhuge Liang? Zhou Yu? Do you have to be so ostentatious? Did you really think nobody would think that we are using fake names?”

“Sorry, naming is my weakness. It’s much harder than programming,” E-Goat apologized politely. After that, Zhang Heng did not criticize him anymore. The two then walked into the apartment building and got on the elevator.

Zhang Heng took out the pistol from his waist, checked the magazine, and turned on the safety. E-Goat was calm initially, but he suddenly became nervous when he saw Zhang Heng drew the gun.

“Don’t be afraid. It’s for emergencies,” Zhang Heng said causally.

### **Chapter 1033: Change Of View**

The elevator soon arrived in front of Room 3094. As the doors opened, E-Goat subconsciously tried to retreat behind Zhang Heng. However, when he realized that Xu Qian might be in her apartment unit, he decided not to succumb to fear. This was the time to show how manly he was.

As a result, the scene in front of him surprised him. The living room was now as clean as the Heiwu Shopping Mall’s shelves. They could not even find a roll of toilet paper in the unit. Xu Qian was not there, and the furniture in her apartment was gone as well. Other than the air-conditioners and heaters that came with the apartment, not a single thread was left in the living room.

Zhang Heng then checked the bedroom, Xu Qian’s studio, kitchen, and bathroom. The conditions were exactly the same as the living room. So, he put away the pistol in his hand.

“Did she... move away?” E-Goat asked. Other than moving away, he could not figure out what could cause the scene in front of him.

Zhang Heng did not answer this question immediately. Instead, he said, “hack into the access control system of the apartment to see when she left.”

“Oh, okay.” E-Goat took out his handheld computer and quickly began to work on it. On the other hand, Zhang Heng took advantage of this time to search the entire apartment thoroughly, looking for clues that he might have missed.

After about ten minutes, E-Goat spoke again, “I found something.”

“Hmm?”

“The access control system records show that a moving company called EasyMove visited this apartment this morning, and they probably moved out all the furniture.”

“Did Xu Qian leave the apartment at that time?”

“No, Xu Qian left way earlier. She left yesterday morning.”

“Did she leave with her boyfriend, Qiu Ming?”

“No, she left alone. I found the surveillance footage. She did leave alone. I can also see that no modifications have been made to the footage. After this, I will send this to one of my professional friends to check for its authenticity. Well, she looked a little panicked in the video. You mentioned that

you told her that her boyfriend is suspicious. Maybe, she is afraid of him and decided to look for a temporary place to hide. Or should I send her an email and ask her in person? Considering what I did to her before, it is understandable if she has a hard time trusting me. But we can tell her that you are still alive, and she should believe you.”

“It’s not a good time for me to show myself. So don’t drag me into this. If she wants to go into hiding, why would she contact the moving company to move away from all the furniture?”

“Because... she’s moving to her new residence?” E-Goat guessed, “It doesn’t make sense. She decided to move because she was afraid? She picked a place yesterday, and she contacted the moving company to move all her furniture away. So, we only need to contact the company and ask them where we can find her.”

Zhang Heng was noncommittal upon hearing what E-Goat said.

“Any questions?”

“When I took this job, Xu Qian told me that she was being followed by someone mysterious. There was this once she realized that someone had messed with her things after she came home. However, there were no records of the person entering and leaving the apartment.”

“You suspect that someone like us hacked into the apartment system and came to Xu Qian’s residence to kidnap her. But in the surveillance video, she did leave the apartment alone.”

“The intruder didn’t need to use force to make Xu Qian leave the apartment. All he needs to do is leave some traces in there to cause her to panic. By doing that, she’ll leave the apartment voluntarily,” Zhang Heng said. “When I checked the house just now, I found the buoyancy valve of the toilet broken. There is also a foreign object under the sink in the kitchen. Other than that, I spotted a man’s handprints on the window as well. Xu Qian left her apartment voluntarily and abruptly yesterday. It was probably because someone was threatening her. Otherwise, she wouldn’t have found a moving company to move the furniture this quickly. If you are free and are willing to watch all the surveillance videos from the previous day, you should find out that some footage has gone missing.”

“Indeed, your analysis is more logical, but why did the other party choose to go through all these troubles? He can just kidnap Xu Qian from her apartment and delete all the surveillance footage.” E-Goat scratched his head.

“The recovery of the second type of clone is not as simple as the first type. You are right. If the existence of the second type is known to the public, it may cause mass hysteria. Besides, Xu Qian is half a public figure, and she has a lot of fans too. This is why the other party came up with a plan to make her think that she would marry a rich man. From there, they expect her to announce her retirement to her fans. When all that is done, they could easily make her go away silently afterward.”

Zhang Heng paused and went on, “Because of me, Xu Qian has begun to doubt her boyfriend and has not announced her retirement in her livestream until now. I am afraid that the other party has no intention to continue dragging.”

After all, they would need to spend a lot of money to maintain such a perfect boyfriend. So, Zhang Heng did not rule out that they decided to change their strategy after evaluating the existing situation.

“If the plan of getting her married to a man and retirement is not feasible, the mental pressure that comes with her streaming job and eventually leads to mental health problems is also a good reason to make her quit becoming a streamer. And it is very simple to pull this off. All they need to do is to publish the news that is related to her mental health problem on the internet.”

Upon hearing that, E-Goat immediately went on the internet and skillfully retrieved all the information related to Xu Qian. It did not take long for him to find out something about Xu Qian. The news came from a well-known paparazzi website known for its timely and accurate news. The headline of the day was that a female streamer was suspected of suffering persecution delusion. A short clip was attached, showing Xu Qian walking on the road and constantly looking behind her though there was nothing.

The readers did not seem to believe in this news. Some of Xu Qian’s fans thought it was wrong to say that she suffered from mental health problems based on this short clip. Maybe someone was really following her at the time.

However, last night, another anonymous person replied to the following post by uploading the surveillance video. In the video, Xu Qian’s expression was flustered and frightened. She kept shouting at the access control system to close the gate. It was as if someone was coming after her. However, after she left the elevator fifteen minutes later, the surveillance video did not show a second person walking out of the elevator.

As soon as this video was uploaded to the internet, her public opinion had changed drastically. More and more people began to believe that Xu Qian was suffering from mental health problems.

### **Chapter 1034: The Truth About Xu Qian’s Disappearance**

After seeing the news on the Internet, E-Goat became extremely nervous, seeing things going as Zhang Heng had said. Xu Qian’s fans began to persuade her to take a break or even change jobs altogether.

E-Goat became angrier as he read the news. And soon, he could not stand it anymore. He had to reply to a comment left by a cynical netizen that said, “It’s all just an act.” However, as soon as he typed the first two words, Zhang Heng stopped him.

“What are you doing?”

“Explain the whole thing to everyone,” E-Goat said angrily. “You can’t just allow them to insult Xu Qian like that.”

“So, you want to tell everyone that Xu Qian is a clone?” Zhang Heng asked rhetorically.

E-Goat was left speechless.

“And now we are not supposed to focus on debunking rumors. We must first rescue Xu Qian. If I’m right about it, I think someone is controlling her.”

“Is she still alive?” E-Goat thought of something, and it clearly left him very unhappy.

“I can’t confirm my speculation now,” Zhang Heng told the truth. “Her reply in the email is too short. It is impossible to know if she had sent it or not. However, based on my understanding of Xu Qian, during this period, after she knew that you were the one that stalked her, she shouldn’t collect any money or gifts from you anymore.”



It had been a while since Zhang Heng left the third level, and he did not expect that the other party would move on Xu Qian so quickly. However, her whereabouts were unknown now, and he had to bear part of the responsibility for that. Zhang Heng had, after all, previously accepted a new task from Xu Qian. Before he could conduct any further investigation, Xu Qian disappeared. Zhang Heng had to find out what happened to Xu Qian to make up for his previous negligence.

“We have to find Xu Qian before those guys hurt her,” E-Goat eagerly said. “But where will she be now?”

“I don’t know, but I know someone who can answer your question.”

...

Xu Qian’s hands were trembling all the time. She looked at the man on the other side of the sofa. She used to think that she knew him, but now she felt that he was a stranger to her.

“Are you done considering?” Qiu Ming asked, still as gentle and elegant as ever.

“I won’t make the retirement videos you asked me to do.”

Although she was terrified, Xu Qian insisted on not doing it because she still remembered Zhang Heng’s reminder before leaving: stay within the public eye. So, Xu Qian insisted on streaming every night until yesterday morning when she went to the toilet and found the broken buoyancy valve. However, she remembered that it was fine just before she fell asleep.

This discovery caused Xu Qian’s heart to skip a beat. She then noticed that her electronic toothbrush’s head disappeared for some reason. Xu Qian immediately realized that someone might have broken into her apartment. It was at that time, the fear in her heart rose to an all-time high.

She did not know if the intruder had left her apartment or if he was still hiding somewhere in her apartment. Xu Qian did not dare to go to another room. So, she hurried back to her bedroom and put on a dress. After that, she rushed into the elevator without makeup and shouted at the smart panel to close the elevator doors. She was terrified for a while, even after she had run out of her apartment, constantly looking back and speeding up her pace.

She was confused at the time, and she did not know where to go. When she opened up her address book, she did not know who to contact as well. When she saw Zhang Heng’s name, her fingers paused, and she remembered the news that she read yesterday. Immediately, her heart sank.

Xu Qian did not expect Zhang Heng would die so suddenly. When she read the news for the first time, she felt a chill. To her, Zhang Heng’s death was too much of a coincidence. Soon after he agreed to help her to investigate her matter, it was hard for Xu Qian not to connect Zhang Heng’s death with her affairs.

And this not-so-beautiful misunderstanding also made Xu Qian, who was already extremely nervous, feel even more uneasy. What actually happened that night was still unclear to the public. Different versions were circulating on the internet, where more than one person said they saw a group of police officers and exoskeleton fighters fighting each other, destroying a lot of public facilities as they went along. Many bullet marks had been left at the central station on the second level. Xu Qian did not know how she caused both sides to fight fiercely against each other.

She had been thinking about it for the past two days, and since no solid evidence could be found, every idea she came up with was no more than conjecture. This incident caused her to lose the only person that she could rely on.

Xu Qian ran through the address book and found that she could not find anyone to help her apart from Zhang Heng. In the end, Xu Qian had to settle down at a small hotel. While preparing for the livestream at night, she thought about what she should do next.

Unfortunately, her plan was forced to be canceled after a glass of free orange juice the hotel provided. When Xu Qian opened her eyes again, she found out that she was already in Qiu Ming's villa. Since Qiu Ming did not use any violent means to deal with her, Xu Qian finally calmed down a little. She then added, "I don't have any mental illness. My fans know that. So, you made it up. No one would believe a lie."

Qiu Ming didn't answer her immediately. Instead, she smiled and asked, "Do you know Baudrillard?"

"Who?"

"This name was once a taboo in human society, and now there are not many people on earth who recognize this name." Qiu Ming said as he took out a knife from his pocket.

Xu Qian suddenly became nervous, staring intently at the knife in Qiu Ming's hand.

He then picked up an apple from the fruit plate and peeled it with a knife. At the same time, he said casually, "Baudrillard came up with a very interesting and very pessimistic theory. He believes that as society continued growing, the truth will eventually disappear completely and be replaced by a set of made-up and well-designed theories. All those theories would compete with each other, constantly imitating the truth. There might be a certain truth hidden in those theories, tempting us to believe in them. However, we will never know what the truth is."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Open your bracelet and look at your social account." Qiu Ming said.

Xu Qian did what he asked and logged into her social account. Seeing a fan asking her to stop streaming and take a break, she was left in complete shock. Xu Qian then scrolled down the message board and saw that everyone was wishing for her speedy recovery.

"You faked the fake news and told everyone that I was mentally ill?" Xu Qian was shocked and angry.

"Remember the theory that I said earlier? I personally don't recommend you use the term fake news because the content and videos I posted are real. And I never said a word from the beginning to the end that you have a mental illness. I even added the word "suspect" to the title. These netizens believe whatever they want to believe without any hesitation."

### **Chapter 1035: Advice**

"I don't care about your bullsh\*t theory. This is fake news because I don't have any mental problems. You know this very well," Xu Qian growled.

Qiu Ming wasn't angered when he heard what she said. Instead, he cut the apple in his hand, handed it to Xu Qian, and said softly, "You seem to be obsessed with distinguishing the truth from the false. Perhaps this is why we have come to this point in the end. Initially, I prepared aromatherapy, wine and covered the bed with rose petals. Earlier in the restaurant, if you didn't run away when I took out the engagement ring, leaving me there like an idiot, we could have had a very pleasant and unforgettable night."

A slap could be heard after Qiu Ming answered her question.

Xu Qian did not pick up the apple. Instead, she slapped Qiu Ming.

She could not control her anger anymore when she heard Qiu Ming talking about a pleasant and unforgettable night. After Xu Qian slapped him, she felt the fear again. So, she quickly stepped back. Fortunately, Qiu Ming did not throw a tantrum after she slapped him. Instead, he lifted the apple in his hand and waited quietly.

Half a minute later, Xu Qian could not bear the increasing pressure and reached out to grab the apple.

However, Qiu Ming did not let go of the apple. Instead, he extended the other hand and cut the apple in half with the knife that he was holding. Qiu Ming then retracted his hand, and he did not forget to urge Xu Qian, who was almost scared to death.

"Eat it. This apple is quite sweet."

Xu Qian was not in the mood to eat the apple at this moment. She quickly checked the hand that held the apple, and she was relieved to see that there was no wound on it.

"Are you scared of me?" Qiu Ming asked rhetorically, "Actually, you don't need to worry. People are emotional. We have been together for such a long time. I even know your menstrual cycles. If there is one person that cares about you in this world, that will be me. So eat. I'm afraid you won't be able to eat such a delicious apple in the future."

Qiu Ming had already bitten the apple in his hand while talking, indicating that there was no poison in it.

"How are you going to deal with me?" Xu Qian asked while gritting her teeth.

"Well, even if you know the answer, what's the point? You can't change anything." Qiu Ming spread his hands.

"Will you kill me?" Xu Qian asked. "It is said that when an old clone can no longer generate enough value, it would be dragged to a place for euthanasia."

"You already know who you are..." Qiu Ming said with a smile, "No, no, you are still young and beautiful. It will be a shame if you die like that. We don't waste resources."

"Then what do you want to do to me? I am a public figure. You can't just rewrite my memory and throw me back to society. My fans will recognize me."

"Not here, but at other places where no one knows you. You can still start a new life there. Of course, it won't be as beautiful anymore."

“What does it mean when you said where no one knows me?” Xu Qian was puzzled.

Qiu Ming did not intend to explain further. He ate the apple and clapped his hands. “We’ve talked a lot. Usually, this kind of thing should end easily once you accept the engagement ring and announce your retirement. After that, we will have a good night together. This memory of yours will stay, but it will not last too long. Eventually, you will completely forget about this life.

“Speaking of which, you are the only one who gets to chat with me before leaving.” Qiu Ming said, “How about that? I treated you pretty good, right?”

“What if I insist on not posting a retirement video?” Xu Qian gritted her teeth.

“You wouldn’t do that.” Qiu Ming shook his head. “You know that you have no chance of winning if you continue to fight. It is only a matter of time before you surrender. Moreover, even if you don’t announce your retirement, the previous news and video that I spread will do the job. So far, this matter is being controlled within an acceptable range. Your hostility towards me is too great. Instead of treating me like an enemy, you should regard me as a friend that helps you.”

“What kind of friend would deceive me and make me think that I’m getting married to a rich man, erase my memory, and dump me at some random place?” Xu Qian was irritated by Qiu Ming’s shamelessness.

“Perhaps you should look at this matter from another angle. You are a streamer. It should be clear to you that no streamer can remain popular forever. So, this kind of thing will happen sooner or later. My existence is to make this process more humane. Take a look at this life of yours. You built your career from scratch. You started from working as a waitress in a small restaurant at the first level. After that, you eliminated your competitors and got signed by an entertainment company. After that, you relied on your efforts to pave your way to become a popular streamer. And finally, you achieved all of your life goals. You get to marry a handsome and brilliant man. It’s perfect, isn’t it? You can also finish your curtain call in the enviable eyes of others.

“Of course, we can make it hard for you. For example, now, everyone thinks you can no longer work in this line of work because of your unstable mental condition. And now you look scared and helpless. Look at you. The moment you opened your eyes, you look like a chick that’s been blown out of the nest by a strong wind, shivering. You will be happier if you know nothing about it.”

Qiu Ming could not stop talking about it. Other than letting Xu Qian know that her memory would be rewritten soon, he decided to tell her everything honestly, “Like what I told you earlier, even if you choose to continue to dig deeper, you will never be able to really find the truth. Even if you feel that you have known the truth now, what you really get is actually a narrative that you believe in.”

“Then what is the truth?” Xu Qian asked, “Just be honest, tell me, and I will shoot the retirement video as you said.”

“To be honest, I don’t know. And I can only see the side that I am willing to believe.” Qiu Ming said sincerely.

“Aren’t you curious at all? Aren’t you worried that what happens to me, will happen to you one day?” Xu Qian asked unwillingly.

“This is the difference between you and me. I am not obsessed with the truth,” Qiu Ming smiled.  
“Because the truth is painful and can never be reached. Instead of becoming a puppet that is constantly searching for the one that pulls the threads, it would be better to become a puppet that focuses on performing and enjoy what you have. This is the last piece of advice I will give you before you leave.”

### **Chapter 1036: What You Said Touched Me Slightly**

Qiu Ming was humming a pop song that Xu Qian loved singing during her live broadcast. He was frying the steak in the kitchen. His control of the heat was perfect. The steak was tender and juicy. After serving it on a plate, Qiu Ming sprinkled some black pepper on it, adding two slices of broccoli with boiling water.

He then took two steps back and admired his masterpiece before pouring himself a glass of red wine. Then, he held the glass in one hand and carried the steak out of the kitchen with the other, ready to celebrate the successful completion of the work.

But what he saw next stunned him.

He found that there were two more people at his dining table.

Qiu Ming didn't know who one of them was, but he recognized the other person.

“Where is Xu Qian?” E-Goat asked with a dark face. With a puffed chest, he tried to make his voice sound more fierce.

“F\*ck!”

Qiu Ming couldn't help but swear, but he quickly apologized.

“I'm not targeting you. I just didn't expect Xu Qian to tell someone else about her. This will make the whole thing more complicated. By the way, didn't you break up with her because you stalked her? Why still care about this?”

“Even though she said she doesn't want to see me again, and I've decided to wish her happiness. If she's in danger, I won't sit idly by,” E-Goat vehemently proclaimed.

“...”

“Dog licking is a real b\*tch!” Qiu Ming lamented.

Seeing E-Goat's drastic change in expression, Qiu Ming gestured for him to calm down. Then, he walked over and placed the steak and red wine on the table before Zhang Heng pulled out the chair opposite E-Goat and sat down.

“It's challenging for me to do this. By the way, how much do you know about Xu Qian? Have you told anyone else?”

“Why? Do you think you're going to kill us to silence us?” Epsilon added a few scornful laughs. In the end, neither Zhang Heng nor Qiu Ming cooperated with him. Again, Epsilon laughed dryly before awkwardly shutting up. Then, he seemed to have thought of something, and his expression changed. “You want to silence me? Am I a clone too?”

"I don't know why you all care so much whether you're clones or not?" Qiu Ming blinked.

"Isn't that obvious?" E-Goat said. "If Xu Qian weren't a clone, there wouldn't be such a thing after that. Regardless of the viewer decline in her livestream, who she married, whether she's retired or not, no one would come looking for trouble with her. If I weren't a clone, you wouldn't dare to do anything to me, right?"

"Well..." Qiu Ming touched his chin. "That's what you think."

"What do you mean?" Qiu Ming's ambiguous attitude made E-Goat feel a little baffled.

"But I can't blame you because everyone thinks so," Qiu Ming smiled. "This is the reason why new Shanghai 0297 can function normally."

E-Goat became more and more confused, but he didn't forget the pressing issue. He said to Qiu Ming, "Stop talking nonsense. Get to the point and hand Xu Qian over!"

"Sigh, programmers are so simple and crude. They don't have any mood at all. It's strange that I'm in the mood to chat today," Qiu Ming sighed. "You guys are even worse than Xu Qian. At least she's still a little obsessed with the so-called truth."

"Truth? What truth?"

"It doesn't matter anymore," Qiu Ming said. "Unfortunately, you guys are late. Xu Qian has been sent away. You guys will never be able to see her again. However, the slightly comforting thing is that she left a video of her leaving. Later, I will use her social media account to post it. You guys can come with everyone to bless her."

"You bastard!" E-Goat was really mad this time. He stood up from his seat, scoffing, "Are you planning to kill her? Just because the number of people in her live stream has decreased?!"

"Well, let's just understand it according to what you believe," Qiu Ming said. "Clones are purely production tools. The efficiency of production tools has decreased. Of course, we have to replace them with new ones, so what we did was very reasonable."

Qiu Ming's words caused E-Goat to be a little speechless. But then E-Goat said, "Aren't you guys just doing this to earn money? Give me a number. Even if I can't fork out so much on my own, Xu Qian's fans aren't just me. If we all pool together, we'll be able to gather enough."

"I'm a little touched, but believe me, your plan is useless."

"Are you forcing us to use violence?!"

E-Goat's patience had finally run out, especially when he thought of Xu Qian suffering somewhere. His heart ached, and he didn't want to delay any longer.

"We can try." Qiu Ming still looked indifferent.

In terms of their figures, E-Goat undoubtedly had the advantage. Although he was a network engineer, his figure was maintained well. There were even a few muscles on his arm. In comparison, Qiu Ming looked more pampered. He had even put on a little weight, as if he did not exercise enough every day.

Therefore, E-Goat didn't even exert full strength in his first punch. He only clenched his fist and smashed it at Qiu Ming's face. However, Qiu Ming did not react at all. He only smiled when the fist was about to reach his nose. Then, his right hand suddenly bounced from the table at a speed completely inconsistent with his figure.

Then, Qiu Ming's nose took a punch from E-Goat.

Because at the last moment, Qiu Ming's right hand that had bounced up was forcibly pushed back to the table by Zhang Heng. Qiu Ming couldn't care less about the pain in his nose, his left hand automatically pulling the pistol hidden under the dining table. The entire sequence was performed with the smoothness of practiced ease.

In the end, he was still one step too late. Before he could point the gun at Zhang Heng, the latter's knife was already at his throat.

It was only then that Qiu Ming's expression changed slightly. He looked at Zhang Heng in surprise. "It looks like I've misjudged you this time. How can a programmer who basically has no social interaction find such a powerful friend? But I'm a little confused. He's only involved in this mess because of love. Why are you doing this?"

Zhang Heng did not answer Qiu Ming. Instead, he asked, "Xu Qian should have left your place not long ago. Where has she been sent?"

"I don't know." Qiu Ming shook his head. "We belong to different departments. My job is to make the target disappear from New Shanghai 0297 in a reasonable manner. As for where they go after they disappear, that has nothing to do with me."

"Is that so? But from what you said, you don't seem like an honest bloke," Zhang Heng said. He raised the knife half a centimeter higher and cut Qiu Ming's skin.

### **Chapter 1037: E-ID, Work ID, and Fingerprints**

Qiu Ming's skills were not bad. Although he still fell short of the standards of the emergency response team, his job wasn't too dangerous. In addition to his harmless appearance, his current skills were more than adequate.

This was also why Qiu Ming's vigilance was somewhat lacking. He had been a hunter for too long, so long that he thought he could always control the situation. Even if Zhang Heng and E-Goat came knocking on his door, Qiu Ming's first reaction would be that of no surprise. It wasn't to take the two of them out but to deal with the aftermath. He didn't expect that he'd sink this time, so he couldn't help but say a few more words. The last thing he expected was that he would end up in trouble.

Now that the blade was almost touching his trachea, Qiu Ming could scent death. However, even in such times, he still had reins over his emotions, not breaking down or revealing too much fear. This had garnered E-Goat's admiration.

"I completely understand your concerns, but please believe that I'm doing this for your own good. You're already in a precarious situation, and it will bring you no benefit if you pursue this," Qiu Ming said sincerely.

“Why? Are you worried that we will expose the existence of the second type of clone, causing public insecurity and eventually forcing you to publish the entire list of clones?” E-Goat asked rhetorically.

“Hmm... it’s an awful and regrettable result, but believe me, there are worse things than this,” Qiu Ming forbade. “So why don’t we stop here? It’ll be better for both of us. I can assure you that Xu Qian won’t be in any danger.”

“Why don’t I believe a single word out of your mouth?” E-Goat sneered. “You’ve been lying to Xu Qian from the very beginning, making her think that you’re the right man for her. In the end, you turned around and sold her out. Now, you expect us to trust you, a professional liar?”

Qiu Ming tried to defend himself. “This is my job. There’s nothing I can do about it. In fact, if you knew how we spent the last few hours together, you would know that I treated her quite well.”

“Don’t tell me you...?!” E-Goat’s expression changed.

“No, no, no... it wasn’t as good as you think. We had a relatively frank, albeit a little unpleasant conversation. I didn’t touch a single strand of hair on her from the beginning to the end, and I even patiently answered many of her questions. In the end, the video of her retreating was taken voluntarily,” Qiu Ming raised his hands in clarification. “In other words, you can also say she decided to leave on her own.”

“Do you take us for fools?!”

Absolutely enraged by Qiu Ming’s absurdity, E-Goat grabbed the latter by the collar.

“Take us there,” Zhang Heng said. “If you find Xu Qian, you’ll be able to survive. Otherwise, we’ll kill you and continue looking for her.”

After saying that, he lowered his knife a few millimeters.

“I don’t think I have a choice,” Qiu Ming smiled wryly. “Fine, if you insist, I can take you to her. But we have an agreement. I will need your unconditional cooperation. Do whatever I say, or we’d all be in big trouble. Also, be mentally prepared for what you’re about to see.”

“You don’t have to worry about that. What era is this? There are so many weird things on the Internet,” E-Goat said. “I’ve never been scared before.”

Qiu Ming didn’t explain further. Instead, he nodded and said, “That’s good.”

Zhang Heng took Qiu Ming’s gun and searched him. After confirming that he carried no weapons on him, the three got into Qiu Ming’s car. Qiu Ming, however, didn’t immediately bring Zhang Heng and E-Goat to look for Xu Qian. Instead, they went to a video game city first.

This was how Qiu Ming explained it to E-Goat: “The place I’m taking you to has a rigorous entry and exit system. In addition to verifying your electronic ID, you need a work permit and fingerprint verification. These three can’t be forged, so we need the real thing.”

Qiu Ming then pointed at two people playing a racing game. “Do you see them? They should have their wristbands and work permits on them.”



“Wait, what about the fingerprints?” E-Goat asked. “I know a device that can print fingerprints...”

“No, we need living fingerprints. Just cut them off,” Qiu Ming said plainly. “Don’t worry. I have a way to preserve them. Whether body temperature or the degree of expansion of sweat glands, they can be maintained. I guarantee that when you use them, they will be as fresh as they came.”

E-Goat was stunned. After a long pause, he asked, “Aren’t they colleagues of yours?”

“Yes, but not really. I just happen to know that they have a habit of staying in the game city. Please, I’m helping you find the pass now. You should thank me for sacrificing my colleagues, right?” Qiu Ming said.

On the other side, Zhang Heng wasted no time and was ready to make his move. He handed E-Goat a gun and asked him to keep an eye on Qiu Ming. Then, he bought a milkshake at the service counter. As he passed the two of them, he poured the milkshake on the plump guy, who quickly flew into a rage and stood up from the racing console.

Zhang Heng apologized, but to no avail. The chunky dude gave Zhang Heng a shove, but before anything happened, the game city’s security soon arrived. The fat guy and his companion looked at each other before gesturing Zhang Heng to the bathroom. They would deal with the spilled milkshake problem there.

The two had practically forced Zhang Heng into the bathroom, but only three minutes later, Zhang Heng came out of the bathroom alone and threw a plastic bag containing two fingers to Qiu Ming.

“It’s so efficient,” Qiu Ming lauded.

E-Goat felt nauseous when he saw the two bloody fingers, but he did not forget the pompous words he had uttered before this. “It’s just a severed finger,” he forced himself to say. “It’s not like I haven’t seen it before. What’s to be mentally prepared for?”

“Oh, you’ve misunderstood! That was not what I was talking about,” Qiu Ming said in surprise. “Don’t tell me you’re having trouble accepting such a small incident?”

E-Goat was speechless.

Fortunately, Zhang Heng quickly helped him out of his predicament. He handed over a bracelet and work permit to E-Goat, and at the same time, said to Qiu Ming, “Don’t waste any more time. You’ve already gotten what you want. Hurry up and find Xu Qian.”

“Okay.”

Qiu Ming didn’t waste any more time and left the game city with the two, returning to the car.

This time, the three drove directly to the central station before buying tickets to the fifth floor.

“Are we going to New Shanghai 0297’s magnificent Shengtang Morgan headquarters?”

As he thought about this, E-Goat became nervous.

Qiu Ming, however, replied, “No, the headquarters is just for decoration... well, I’m not at liberty to divulge, but the secret of the fifth floor is really not there.”

## Chapter 1038: The Fifth Floor

Unlike the other four floors, there were very few residents on the fifth floor.

Having an officially registered population of less than 2,000, the fifth floor was more like private territory. Travel requests were difficult to apply for, and other than employees, very few people from other floors came to visit.

However, with Qiu Ming around, Zhang Heng and E-Goat's applications were approved very quickly.

After receiving the tickets, the three of them followed the instructions and entered the corresponding waiting hall. The place was also very quiet. Apart from them, only six or seven people were preparing to go to the fifth floor.

"Don't look around," Qiu Ming reminded E-Goat, who was glancing about. "Don't forget your current identity. Many of those who actually go to the fifth floor are employees of the company. Don't let them see any flaws."

"You're quite kind, but are you really thinking for us?"

E-Goat was skeptical but still retracted his gaze and refused to look at Qiu Ming.

"Of course, I've seen countless people, and I'm very clear about my current situation. If I have any inappropriate measures, this friend of yours must have slit my throat or made a hole in the back of my head before they take effect," Qiu Ming said. "I like my job, and I'm very grateful to the company that gave it to me, but my life is more important in comparison."

"Quite self-aware, you," mocked E-Goat.

"Recognizing danger is one of the most important survival instincts of a living creature. Let alone humans, even paramecia know how to avoid harmful stimuli through pressure, and the results tend to be favorable," Qiu Ming said. "On the other hand, I've tried to persuade you many times, but still, you insist on going to dangerous places. It's really not very wise."

"Isn't that because you kidnapped Xu Qian?" E-Goat shot Qiu Ming an accusing gaze.

Qiu Ming realized the situation and tactfully shut his mouth.

Not long after, a shuttle in its ascending state entered the station. The mechanical arm beside the platform also began to move. It completed the assembly as swiftly as it could and loaded the three people waiting in the hall into the shuttle.

"Welcome to the fifth floor. I wish you a pleasant journey."

An elegant female voice sounded, but it sounded a little creepy in the empty carriage.

...

About six minutes later, the shuttle stopped moving again. The mechanical arm prepared earlier grappled the car once more and placed it in the arrival hall.

Qiu Ming unfastened his seat belt and obediently followed Zhang Heng and E-Goat out of the station.

Unlike what E-Goat had imagined, the station on the fifth floor didn't give off a luxurious vibe. Although the building was more elegant than the four floors below, there didn't seem to be any other differences, not to mention how unusually deserted the station was. Passengers and the staff were both pitifully lacking in this area.

"Where's the taxi?" E-Goat looked up at the sign, but he couldn't find the taxi stand.

"There are no taxis on the fifth floor," Qiu Ming said. "All the residents have a car, and those with more mundane jobs have shuttle buses to take them to and from work. They are not allowed to wander around. More than two-thirds of the fifth floor's area is private territory."

"It's all very flashy, I must say. What should we do, then? Are we going far? Can we walk there?" muttered E-Goat.

"Don't worry. Our company has parked some cars in the station's parking lot for the employees to use. We can just drive there," Qiu Ming said.

The three of them then took the elevator down to the parking lot. Qiu Ming turned on his wristband and activated the car mode. Half a minute later, a silver-gray car left its parking space and drove to their front.

Qiu Ming opened the door and made a gesture of invitation. E-Goat got in first, followed by Qiu Ming. Finally, Zhang Heng sat in the front passenger seat.

"It's a rare trip. Do you want to take a simple tour of the fifth floor?" Qiu Ming asked as he adjusted the front and rear mirrors.

"No, just take us directly to Xu Qian. Don't play any more tricks," E-Goat warned.

Qiu Ming looked at the pistol at Zhang Heng's waist and nodded. "It's up to you."

This was also E-Goat's first time coming to the fifth level. It would be hyperbole to say that he wasn't curious, but since all his attention was on rescuing Xu Qian, he wasn't in the mood to enjoy the scenery.

Even so, when Qiu Ming drove through the city, E-Goat couldn't help but peer out of the window.

The result, however, turned out a little disappointing. Just like the station, the fifth floor was much simpler than he imagined. Nevertheless, he kept feeling that something was missing on the street. At first, E-Goat thought it was the pedestrians, but after looking at it a few more times, he realized he was weirded out because he did not see any billboards.

Whether it was the first floor or the fourth floor, many billboards lined both sides of the street. Coming in different shapes and sizes, the products they featured varied as well. As a technology enthusiast, E-Goat often took advantage of event discounts to purchase related products. It was only that on the fifth floor, the entire place was devoid of advertisements, the city was abnormally clean. The large white walls made E-Goat a little uncomfortable as if he was walking on a wasteland.

As if he knew what he was thinking, Qiu Ming said, "It's not so lively here usually."

"Why?"

“Because when we work... We need to focus and avoid making unnecessary associations,” Qiu Ming explained.

“Unnecessary connections? What are unnecessary connections?”

Qiu Ming didn't answer the question. He drove the car up a beautiful hill and saw a private area in the distance. There was a sign that said no one was allowed in without an invitation.

Qiu Ming ignored the sign and drove on. Soon, he arrived at the first sentry post.

The electronic eye scanned his ID and work card and happily let the car pass. Qiu Ming continued driving. Three minutes later, he arrived at the second sentry post. This time, not only Qiu Ming, but Zhang Heng and E-Goat had to also show their work cards. Only then was he allowed to pass.

“You can see how annoying this system is. In fact, the regular Monday meetings are a nightmare for me,” Qiu Ming complained as he passed the second sentry post.

Then, he drove the car up the hill. There was a villa above them. Qiu Ming didn't stop, bypassing the villa and continuing forward until the terrain became flat and started to descend. It was then that E-Goat and Zhang Heng finally saw their destination.

In the valley at the back of the hill stood a huge gray building, occupying an area of more than ten airports. It had a strange design, like a giant ship preparing to sail in the wind. In addition, there was a tunnel in the hillside on the other side that connected to the building complex. Under the transparent tunnel, a train of trucks constantly rumbled along, looking extremely busy.

“What is this place? Is it a secret base hidden by the government? Or is it an extraterrestrial research institute?” asked E-Goat.

“Neither. This is the real headquarters of the magnificent Shengtang Morgan's New Shanghai 0297,” said Qiu Ming leisurely.

### **Chapter 1039: Science and Technology Brings Happiness**

“Shengtang Morgan's real headquarters?”

E-Goat was skeptical when Qiu Ming said that the Shengtang Morgan's fifth-floor building was merely decoration. It was not until he saw the strange giant ship-like building before him that he finally believed the latter.

“But why did Morgan build their headquarters in such a hidden place? In any case, New Shanghai 0297 is their territory. Isn't it better to just openly work in the building?”

“It's inconvenient we disclose our work to the ordinary people outside,” Qiu Ming said. “The reason why we're hiding here is for everyone's good. What do you say? Are you ready to go in together?”

It was fine if he didn't mention it, but once he did, E-Goat couldn't help but become nervous. The main reason for his anxiety was that the geographical location of this building was so hidden, and it was apparent that it was a highly confidential place. In addition, judging by the occupied area and busy traffic flow, it seemed that the place should've been crowded. On the other hand, there were only two people on their side.

Although Zhang Heng had excellent skills, E-Goat wasn't naive enough to think that Zhang Heng alone could pick off the entire Shengtang Morgan base. In other words, once their identities were exposed, it was highly likely that they would end up dead. Thus, not only would they not be able to save Xu Qian, but they would also die inside.

However, the power of love knew no bounds. Thinking about how Xu Qian's life and death were unknown, E-Goat felt that they had to go and explore regardless of whether it was a dragon or tiger's den ahead. However, to be on the safe side, he asked again, "I'm not a clone. So if Shengtang Morgan finds out, they shouldn't do anything to me, right? At most, I'll be kicked out and fined a bit more, right?"

Qiu Ming looked at E-Goat with a strange expression. He stared at him for a long time before tactfully saying, "I'm afraid... It's not that simple. Once you enter the door in front of you, your whole life will change. But, of course, the prerequisite is that you have to be able to come out of it."

"Otherwise, how are you going to treat me?"

"To be honest, I don't know. There's never been such a precedent before. But, no, that's not right either. There was this once when an outsider entered the headquarters..."

"And then?"

"Then, he became one of us," Qiu Ming continued.

"Don't worry, I won't join you guys' dirty work," E-Goat said. "We're not interested in what Shengtang Morgan is doing here. We'll leave after we rescue Xu Qian, so hurry up and lead the way."

Upon hearing this, Qiu Ming did not say anything else. He drove down the hill and all the way to the parking lot outside the gate.

After the three of them got out of the car, Zhang Heng placed the gun's muzzle on Qiu Ming's waist and covered it with his clothes. "Don't say a word," he warned, "and don't make any gestures or expressions that will cause misunderstandings."

"Understood." Qiu Ming nodded. Then, he passed two small five by ten-centimeter boxes to Zhang Heng and E-Goat. "The fingers are inside. You can take it out if you need it later. "Don't look around and don't wander around. Pin your work card on your chest. Don't worry. There are lots of employees inside. Most people won't look at the photo on the work card. Also, we have an agreement. I will only help you find Xu Qian. It's none of my business whether she wants to go with you or not."

"Are you kidding me? Even if I've followed her before, it's impossible she won't come with us in this situation, right?"

Qiu Ming shrugged. After Zhang Heng and E-Goat were ready, the three of them walked out of the door.

It was probably because they had already gone through two security checks that Qiu Ming's wristband was detected this time. Thus, there was no need for any additional operations as the door automatically opened to both sides.

However, Qiu Ming then reminded the two of them, "This door is easy to enter but hard to exit. When you want to leave, you must not walk out directly. It will trigger the alarm. You need to register your

fingerprints and scan your work ID on the machine over there first.” Qiu Ming pointed to an object that looked like an attendance machine inside the door.

Although E-Goat had chosen the hero’s path, saving the damsel in distress, it would be a lie to say that he was not nervous. Especially after entering the huge ship-like building complex, his heart rate had already climbed all the way to 120, almost like after a round of intense exercise.

Fortunately, E-Goat saw no men with hatchets waiting to ambush him.

The first thing that came into his sight was a blue marble wall with the Shengtang Morgan’s company logo printed on it, as well as a slogan—“technology brings happiness.”

The wall of the entire hall was actually composed of a giant curved screen. With no splices in the middle, and coupled with the mirror-like floor under his feet, it would cause incomparable cultural shock to anyone.

The curved screen played the history of the Shengtang Morgan Corporation; its inception, born from the ruins of the war, to how it defeated its competitors step by step, then won over its allies, looked for political allies, before finally growing into an unprecedented business behemoth.

In front of the wall was a streamlined front desk. Two young girls sporting the best figures, dressed in professional attire, stood at the back. They looked like a pair of twins, save for a mole at the corner of one of their mouths. Other than that, there was almost no difference in their facial features. They looked like mirror images of each other. They were both absolute beauties.

Standing in the spacious and Bright Hall, they greeted Qiu Ming with a smile when they saw him. “Commissioner Qiu, Why Are You Here?” they chirped. “Didn’t you say that you would apply for a week’s leave after this job is done?”

As they spoke, their gazes fell on Zhang Heng and E-Goat, who were behind Qiu Ming. Although they also greeted him politely, a hint of confusion marred their eyes. It was evident that the two left little impression on them.

Just as they were about to turn their gaze to the work passes on their chests to see what their names were, Qiu Ming unexpectedly took over the conversation. As expected of a professional actor disguising as an eligible bachelor to bait his target, he still appeared calm and composed even though he was being held hostage with a pistol at his waist. From his appearance, it was impossible to tell that he was nervous at all. He was also a pathological liar.

“Of course, I wanted to rest. I had already booked a hotel and entertainment program, but I just received a notification that a Level 4 incident had happened. I rushed back with my two equally unlucky friends.”

After hearing the words ‘Level 4 incident’, the smiles on the two receptionist’s faces faded slightly. They no longer had time to pay attention to the origins of Zhang Heng and E-Goat. Furthermore, the three of them had already passed the previous inspection and were here now. “In that case, we won’t disturb your work anymore,” they ended with a nod.

“Of course not. I can’t wait to be disturbed by you guys every day.”

Qiu Ming winked at the two girls after he said that. Then, he led Zhang Heng and E-Goat to the center of the hall. After the three of them had sound footing, one of the girls tapped twice on the screen before her, and the floor beneath their feet began to sink.

#### **Chapter 1040: The Structure of the Company**

As soon as they left the hall, E-Goat asked Qiu Ming nervously, "What did you mean by blinking? Were you trying to tell us something?"

"Please, brother, relax. All that blinking was merely me flaunting the charms of my masculinity to help you resolve the crisis," Qiu Ming said. "Actually, you don't have to be so nervous. I brought you here. If I were to be discovered, there's no way I'm going to escape this. So, we're actually in the same boat."

"I remember I warned you not to do anything unnecessary, right?" Zhang Heng, who was standing at the side, said lightly.

"Okay, fine. It's indeed my fault. I apologize for acting on my own accord." Qiu Ming carried a fine attitude, and he didn't find any excuse for himself.

"Don't do it again."

Zhang Heng knew that Qiu Ming wasn't lying this time. It wasn't because of the latter, but because Qiu Ming's daily work was basically a lie. This made Zhang Heng, who had an excellent observation, unable to tell whether Qiu Ming was telling the truth. Thus, his attention was actually on the twin receptionists opposite him. After Qiu Ming blinked, there was no sign of nervousness on their faces. On the contrary, their spirits relaxed, and one of them even giggled with her hand over her mouth.

As it turned out, Qiu Ming's manly charm proved quite effective. Of course, it was also true that he liked to act on his own. Furthermore, he was a little too calm after being threatened, as if he believed that Zhang Heng and E-Goat wouldn't do anything to him. Zhang Heng had no idea where his confidence came from.

As the three of them were talking, the floor continued to descend. Zhang Heng and E-Goat saw the situation below.

Unlike the empty reception hall, this floor bustled with activity. Conservatively, at least 300 to 400 people were on this floor, divided into several rows of workstations, stretching all the way to the back. Men and women in business attire sat in their respective seats, made calls, or were searching for something on the screen in front of them. Everyone looked very busy.

"Customer Service Department," Qiu Ming introduced. "The company's second-largest department is mainly responsible for customer service. It collects all kinds of reasonable and unreasonable customer needs and gives feedback to the product department and Design Department to produce better products. It also accepts all kinds of customizations and also provides free on-site guidance."

Just as Qiu Ming was speaking, a young man ended the call. He got up, put on his clothes, and walked toward the three people. Then, he nodded and rose to the next level.

“No wonder there are so many people. I remember that Shengtang Morgan has many subsidiaries in New Shanghai 0297. They are all over many industries, so there should be quite a number of people buying your products,” said E-Goat.

“No, the customer service department you mentioned is in the Shengtang Morgan building outside. The customer service department here is not for individuals, but for those companies that have moved into Shengtang Morgan’s building.”

“Companies?”

“Yes. Of course, it’s not like those off-the-shelf roadside pop-ups and neighborhood convenience stores on the first and second floors. It’s for big companies and all kinds of well-known brands, such as the Shenzhou computer you use, the Chinese motherboard, or the girls’ Dillingkou. New Shanghai 0297 is the next generation city that Shengtang Morgan is investing in. You can think of it as a large shopping mall. After it’s built, it needs merchants to move in before it can become active. In addition to Shengtang Morgan’s subsidiaries, it will also recruit other merchants. In return, those new cities that other companies invest in will also be open to Shengtang Morgan and invite them to move in.”

“Is it like signing a multilateral trade agreement?”

“Yes.”

“If that’s the case, those companies will then be compelled to purchase a certain product from Shengtang Morgan. What kind of product?” E-Goat frowned.

“A necessary means of production.”

“Energy?”

“Something similar.”

Qiu Ming did not elaborate further. Instead, he led Zhang Heng and E-Goat through the massive customer service department area to the end of the corridor before swiping his work permit, which opened the frosted glass door.

This time, the path before the three of them had branches. On the left was a flight of stairs, and on the right was a staff rest area. There was a gym, a cafe, and a reading corner. However, instead of choosing one of the paths, he pointed at a high-security door at the end of the corridor and said to E-Goat, “To go to Xu Qian’s area, this is the fastest way through. However, you’ll be needing your precious finger.”

The latter took out the small box that he received from Qiu Ming, and, according to his instructions, pressed the button at the back. A part of the finger came out, but no one knew how the box was made. The finger had really maintained its original temperature inside as if it was still connected to the hand.

E-Goat checked the wristband and work card and then entered the fingerprint. The heavy door in front of it opened backward. As soon as it opened, E-Goat felt the temperature change and immediately realized what was behind it.

“Is this the server room?”

“That’s right.” Qiu Ming nodded.



E-Goat should've considered this place his own backyard. When he saw then endless clusters of equipment, however, he remained stunned, nonetheless.

"How... how many servers are there?"

"About a million. It's on this floor and the 12th floor below."

"Shengtang Morgan hid a million servers here. Why? Why do they need so much computing power?"

"It's not easy maintaining New Shanghai 0297's normal operations. We need to collect information from all aspects to ensure that every part works properly and every anecdote can be told as it was supposed to be. These anecdotes connect with each other to minimize appearing bugs during the operation."

"Why do I understand every word you say, but when you put them together, I have no idea what you're talking about?" E-Goat asked curiously.

"It doesn't matter. You'll know once you continue walking forward," Qiu Ming said as he strode toward the door at the other end of the engine room.

E-Goat, filled with a million questions, and a silent Zhang Heng followed behind him.

Ten minutes later, the three passed through the computer lab and arrived at another door. E-Goat opened it and took the elevator to the third floor.

"Where is this?" E-Goat asked Qiu Ming before opening the door.

"The design department," Qiu Ming answered. "All the design procedures before production are finalized here. We've hired the best writers, philosophers, and a team of more than 100 experts to provide the corresponding design consultation. Together with the information stored in the server, we are able to design the most perfect products."