

## 48 Hours 381

### Chapter 381 Getting Lucky

Zhang Heng looked like a typical tourist when he wore a short-sleeved T-shirt and a pair of knee-length shorts. He wore sandals on his feet, and there was a pair of sunglasses in his chest pocket. Like the Apollo Training Program quest, his appearance has been modified to some extent. He could feel the beard on his chin, and there was a tattoo of Peppa Pig on his right arm as well (fortunately, it was only a tattoo sticker). This time, the system retained his Asian characteristics, except that his skin was darker now. He seemed to have developed a habit of sunbathing too. Otherwise, his strength, agility, and body shape, though, were in their original state. Zhang Heng's wallet contained about 300 euros in cash and a Visa debit card with an unknown sum of money in it. The name on the passport said, Lu Yan.

Since he couldn't tell if there were other Asian players in this quest, he tried to make himself stand out a little less, exchanging 50 Euros to coins and pretended to play on a slot machine. After a short observation around him, he couldn't find anyone who looked like a player. Although it was late at night, the casino was packed, and a myriad of various languages bombarded his ears. Tourists here poured in from all over the world-France, Italy, the USA, China, Germany, the UAE, and even North and South Africa. In a certain way, the place could pass off as the United Nations General Assembly to the untrained eye.

Zhang Heng managed to get the answers he was seeking from the cover of a travel brochure held by an elderly American couple. He had to make some guesses. The four major gambling cities in the world were Las Vegas, Atlantic City, Macau, and Monaco. Macau could instantly be eliminated. Although he had spotted several Asians in this casino, there was no way it could compare to the casinos in Macau. Then, few European tourists would travel to casinos in Las Vegas or Atlantic City. Since he was in a uniquely subtropical Mediterranean climate, there could only be one answer left-Zhang Heng was in Monaco.

Located in Western Europe, Monaco, a principality situated in the French Riviera became an independent state in 1861. Being the second smallest principality in the world, with a total area of 2.02 square kilometers, the city was smaller than New York's Central Park. Despite Monaco's cramped streets and alleys, it was well-known for its high-stakes betting, upmarket tourism, and top banking institutions. Revenue generated by Monaco was also among the top in the world.

The latest page on the passport confirmed Zhang Heng's deduction. He looked around again, and although still failing to locate other players, he did find a few notable targets of interest. Among them, the ones that concerned him most were a young couple.

The two had been hanging around the poker machine area for some time, staying behind other players and observers, quietly watching the game in front of them. From time to time, they would gaze into each others' eyes and kiss passionately as if they were a couple that had just fallen in love.

A Spanish man in a suit who had constantly been wiping his sweat appeared to be out of luck tonight. He had lost several games in a row, and after losing another round, he had enough, hammering his thigh in anger. He decided to try his luck on other games, as he stormed toward the roulette table with a look of frustration on his face.

Since the machine was now vacated, the young couple sat down and took his place.

They then proceeded to play a few rounds, and just like the previous man, they lost more than they won. Thus, the man got five cards in his hand as the game began, and immediately, he seemed dissatisfied with what he got, opting to change the cards instead. After changing them three times in a row, his cellphone rang suddenly, and he hurriedly answered what appeared to be an important call. Although he had left the casino, his young wife was still sitting next to the console, looking bored and flipping through a fashion magazine.

Seven minutes later, the man returned.

While he was gone, other players wanted to use the machine, only to be stopped by the man's wife. When the man came back, he kissed his wife again and sat in front of the game console.

Although he pretended not to care and was laughing with his wife, Zhang Heng could see that the man was under a lot of pressure. He kept looking at his watch, and his other hand was placed next to his button. It appeared he was getting ready for something. His wife, amused by the constant jokes he threw out, kept laughing nonstop. She laughed so hard that she bent over and with her loosely fitted spaghetti strap, it was a feast for the eyes of those standing behind.

At some point later, the man's middle finger suddenly pressed the button.

The next moment was like a magic wand had been waved.

The screen of the machine began to flicker uncontrollably. As it flashed in a never seen before fashion, the heavenly sound that all gamers dreamed of could be heard blasting out of the machine's speakers.

A Royal Flush! Just as the man looked around him, coming to terms with what just happened, a hushed murmur combined with envious groans resounded all around him.

The man was stunned at first and it wasn't until his wife nudged him in excitement did he react. His expressions confirmed that he still couldn't believe the incredible fortune he was just bestowed with. Just like all gamblers blessed before by the goddess of luck, his mouth was ajar, and the smile on his face ran right from ear-to-ear.

The odds of getting a royal flush was 4000 to 1, and a bet was 5 euros. The man just made two bets, which meant he had already made 40,000 euros in one round of the game. This was by no means a small sum of money.

Ordinary folk had no access to the second floor, a private lounge populated by billionaires. These elites drank fine champagne and hugged supermodels as they played. For most tourists who visited the place for fun, it was nothing less than a miracle winning 40,000 Euros in one night.

The man was already hugging his wife. But his happiness did not last long, as four men in black suits swiftly approached them. They seemed to be the staff of the casino. The young couple was then asked politely to change to a different machine.

Then, one of gentler looking men with high cheekbones squatted in front of the poker machine. He first checked the casing to make sure that nothing was out of place. After that, he took out a bunch of keys,

opened the case, removed the circuit board, and extracted the read-only memory chip inside it. He then placed it in a ROM reader.

More and more tourists in the casino started to notice the unexpected situation, curiously watching the employees fiddling with the machine. The young couple felt offended and were a little dissatisfied with the unwanted surprise. Having lost the mood to play, they demanded to see the casino manager. The remaining three staff, on the other hand, kept a stern eye on them as if they had done something wrong.

Fortunately, the awkward stare-down didn't last too long. After a while, the guy with high cheekbones frowned. The test results on his hand showed that the memory chip had not been tampered with.

Of course, it wasn't right that the casino so blatantly barged in and dismantled the machine that someone won big on. It wasn't an illegal casino either. Be that as it may, the high-cheekboned guy had actually noticed the young couple earlier.

He had enough reasons to suspect that they did not win the game fair and square.

### **Chapter 382 Two Options**

Forty thousand euros wasn't a sum worth mentioning for a large-scale casino like this.

The problem was that no casino wanted to be treated like an ATM.

The casino staff with high cheekbones had recently heard some rumors from his peers. A couple known by the gambling industry as 'the Lucky Fingers' had got royal flushes from four casinos in just three days. These casinos, however, only reacted to the matter after it happened.

The couple also made sure that they controlled their urge to win more money in every casino. They would usually play a game or two and win 50 to 60,000 euros. Under normal circumstances, this amount of money would not attract the attention of the casino.

Thousands of tourists walked through the doors of the casino every day, and most of them generally lost money the moment they sat down on a table. There was, however, the occasional one or two who win a healthy sum of money when the sample was large enough. Professional gamblers and cheaters were the kinds of people that the casino would pay attention to. It was also impossible for them to pay attention to everyone who won money. Although the probability of getting a royal flush was very low, there were so many poker machines in the entire casino that sometimes, a lucky winner would be born from time to time.

When one of the casinos noticed the couple, they quickly took a look at the CCTV footage on the monitor and found that the man received a call and left his seat for a while right before hitting the royal flush. This made him suspicious, and he tried his best to control his facial expressions. He was no professional actor, though, and his acting was all amateurish.

By that time, Lucky Finger had already left, and that casino quickly made corresponding arrangements to handle this matter. However, the couple did not show up the next day. This move not only failed to dissuade the casino's suspicion, but it made them grow even more suspicious of their previous win. After contacting other casinos, they found out that the couple had won four royal flushes in three days in different casinos.

Even if the man's finger had been kissed by the goddess of luck, such a bizarre streak of good fortune was close to impossible. It was therefore concluded that the Lucky Finger couple pair were cheaters. According to their modus operandi, there was a high probability that they hopped from casino to casino to commit the crimes. Following the discovery, the casino that fell victim immediately notified other casinos about it. That was why the staff had initially approached the couple.

From the moment they walked into the casino, their every move was under surveillance. When they magically hit royal flush again, the casino staff wasted no time to approach them. This time, the lucky couple would not be able to leave so easily.

The high cheekbones employee had worked in this industry for more than 20 years, accumulating a lot of experience in that long time. Before being employed here, he worked at Macau and Las Vegas, and through the years, he had seen more than his fair share of characters walking into the casino. When compared to professional gamblers and cheaters, however, the young couple was tenderer than the new shoots just sprouting out of trees.

This indicated that they had just must have just started scamming casinos not too long ago. Such greenhorns were easy to deal with; he was sure. This time though, he seemed to have made the wrong judgment. The woman's acting skills were obviously rather convincing, where she had been yelling and laughing all this time, trying to attract attention and put pressure on the casino. It might seem vulgar, but the staff had to admit that the crude and simple method was indeed very effective.

Naturally, a large number of people began thinking that the casino was overbearing. It was undeniable that many underground casinos operated in such a manner. However, for those famous casinos that targeted tourists, they valued their reputation a lot. Forty thousand euros might be a huge amount of money for the ordinary person, but for these big casinos, it was simply a drop in a bucketful of water. They desperately wanted to catch the Lucky Finger couple, but doing so would certainly affect their reputation. Such a small gain wasn't worth the loss.

The woman's male partner was trying to show his strong side too, but he was a mediocre actor, looking guilty as if he had just committed a crime. The staff with high cheekbones was starting to get unhappy about the ever-increasing crowd that had gathered around them. He initially thought that as long as he showed up on time to catch the couple's cheating, this matter would be quickly resolved. However, things did not go his way. Even the results of the inspection showed that this particular poker machine was still intact and fine.

The staff with high cheekbones had two choices at a time like this. He could either let the two of them leave the premises while the situation was still under control, where the casino would have to swallow the loss and minimize the impact silently, or he could insist that they enter a private room for further interrogation.

The staff wished that he could frisk them right here, right now, but by doing that, he would surely expose whatever dirty little secret they were carrying on them in front of all the guests. Casinos tried to avoid using illegal methods like this unless it was a last resort. It was all in the name of protecting reputation, where they would try to make the whole debacle look more acceptable to the public eye. The best way to do this was to "invite" the two to a room, continue to exert mental pressure on them, and to keep going until through their psychological defense broke. This was especially true for the Lucky

Finger man. The staff with high cheekbones was confident that he could make him confess within ten sentences.

In the end, though, he chose the third method.

The staff with high cheekbones asked someone to bring a bottle of Bordeaux wine and presented it to the young couple. At the same time, he apologized and said, "We are so sorry. Our mistake has caused you unnecessary trouble. This is a gift from the casino. I hope you will have a good time here tonight."

There was a look of surprise on the Lucky Finger man, while his counterpart snorted coldly, "Mistakes were made. How can we still have fun tonight?"

The staff with high cheekbones smiled, "I'm extremely sorry. If you do not wish to stay here any longer, you are free to leave at any time."

"Are you sure?" the woman asked. "Of course! We have neither right nor reason to keep you here." The staff with high cheekbones took two steps back and politely gestured to the door with both hands.

"You're always welcome to visit us again."

"Hmph, I will never come back to this kind of place in my entire life!"

The woman in the camisole dropped the sentence and dragged her husband to get the money that they won. The pair grabbed the cash and stormed out of the casino in a mighty hurry.

As soon as he got out, the Lucky Finger man in a flannel shirt and a silver watch heaved a massive sigh of relief. He could not help but start to complain, "I told you to stop just now, but you insisted on playing another round of poker. Great! Now, we can't enter this casino anymore."

After they walked to a place with no one around them, the woman immediately let go of her husband's hand. "What are you afraid of? I know you well! With whatever little guts you have, you wouldn't come here again anyway, even if they didn't approach us. Best thank me because you got to make some more money before you left. I should take more than 10% this time. You should pay me half the reward!" she sneered.

"Half? Are you kidding? You didn't even do anything! All you did was pretend to be my wife to cover me. My partner and I did all the technical work," flannel-shirt argued.

"You are just a bunch of nerds. If it weren't for your crappy acting, they would have never approached us. What's more, I have already made you almost 200,000 euros, and I still have less than 20,000 euros in my pocket. To be fair, I've contributed a lot as well."

"You just need to dress skimpily, show some skin, and laugh as loud as you can to attract the attention of the cameras and staff. Think about your previous job-you lost nothing in this job," growled flannel-shirt, his eyes about to pop out their sockets.

### **Chapter 383 Masked Man**

The man in the plaid shirt provided a valid reason. "We had an agreement before. You do know the work you did in three days paid you more than what you earned in half a year, right?"

“Yes. But unfortunately, it’s not enough,” the woman replied.

“Not enough... What do you mean by that?” “Okay, I changed my mind. How about sharing all the money we made in the past few days? Otherwise, I’ll tell the casinos what you have done... I believe they will be interested in your recent... winning streak...”

The the Mediterranean sea-breeze wasn’t that cold, but for some reason, the flannel-shirted man shivered. “Why are you doing this?!”

“Why? Because I need more money.”

“But we had an agreement.”

“Yes, yes, you guys always like to talk about agreements and agreements. But you know agreements mean nothing in this world, right? Whatever you’ve been doing; that breaks the game’s rules too, right?”.

“But...” flannel-shirt paused suddenly, and then a look of horror materialized on his face.

“Hey... is that necessary? I just want half of the money. Are you terrified, or what?”

An unfamiliar voice came from behind her, “I’m sorry to disturb you. I wonder if you two are interested in enjoying the night view of Monaco?”

The woman turned around and saw a black Buick stopping behind her. The window of the passenger side came down, and a head poked out from it. The person was bald, and he did not look like he had good intentions. A mermaid tattoo was also on his neck.

In comparison to flannel-shirt, whose calf was already trembling, his fake wife managed to put up a better act. Although she was actually nervous right now, she still mustered enough courage to ask the man a question. “Are you... from the casino?”

“You should watch what you say, miss. We have nothing to do with the casino. We are just a group of Monaco’s hospitable residents,” the bald tattooed man grinned, giving off an unsavory and vile look.

Although they did not admit it, even a fool would have known that the man and his people in this black Buick were related to the casino. The local casinos were concerned about their reputation. Although there were certain things they wouldn’t do themselves, it certainly didn’t mean that they would sit by and do nothing

The inability to hold the two of them responsible for what they did in the casino in front of everyone was by no means a guarantee that they would not hire external help to intervene with the problem outside. The black Buick appearing at this hour was obviously here to solve the casino’s problem.

Flannel-shirt became more and more nervous. It was his first time encountering this kind of trouble and had no idea what he should do in such a situation. Nervously glancing around his surroundings, it was apparent that he was desperate to escape. The woman was also regretting her recent actions. In the past three days, the two had easily scammed away a considerable amount of money from the few casinos, managing to make a fool out of them. Blinded by the thrill and ease of the profits, her appetite became so ravenous to the point that she was deluded.

She thought that those casinos were her personal ATM, especially after she got to know that there was a technical team supporting flannel-shirt. They were the original team, and as he said, she was only recruited to the team to cover him temporarily. Before that, she was just a pole dancer at a small bar in a small town. She was a nobody. When she couldn't make rent, she even provided extraservices to the men in the bar.

Who knew what would happen after this? Such a rare opportunity wouldn't knock twice, and she had to make as much money while she could. It explained why she was adamant to carry on despite flannel-shirt beseeching his counterpart to stop. She knew they might come across little snags and potholes, but certainly not getting into big trouble like this. Compared to a nerdy flannel-shirt, she had come across all kinds of people while she was working as a pole dancer. Since their enemies had managed to locate them, she knew it was now useless trying to escape while inside others' territory.

What more, the entire Monaco was only 2.02 square kilometers wide.

At this juncture, she was already thinking about selling out flannel-shirt to the people from the casino. However, she might not be able to keep the 20,000 euros she earned. Though she threatened to expose him, she wouldn't do unless it was the last resort since she might not make any money anyway at the end of the day.

It was all because she knew what the casino people were interested in. Earlier, she had tried to figure out how flannel-shirt and his team managed to hit a royal flush on the poker machine every time. She also knew that it was her forte to extract whatever information she wanted from men. All she needed were two bottles of beer, some romantic music, and getting into the bathroom naked with steam around her. By that time, most men would have fallen for her. Unfortunately, even after flannel-shirt explained everything to her, she found that she still didn't understand a single thing.

Terms like 'pseudo-randomness' and 'linear-feedback shift register' sounded like a foreign language, let alone the confusing source code.

"That's why I hate nerds. They are not real men! Whether on the bed or under the bed!

Those topless and sweaty things working hard at construction sites are the real men! For those who play with keyboards and numbers, they are a bunch of sissies at best!!!"

Now, she was furious after knowing that although she unleashed all her charm and exposed her body, it yielded nothing in return.

She failed to acquire the most valuable thing. Even if she sold the flannel-shirt out to the casino, she knew that she would gain no benefit. She knew that should be thankful if the casino thugs even let her go in the end.

After a while, the bald man in the black Buick got a little impatient. The car doors flung open, and out came four burly men.

"In Monaco, it's impolite to refuse an invitation."

Flannel-shirt started to panic when he saw the four muscular men, and he was about to run for his life.

Suddenly, a black shadow descended from the sky!

It was a masked man with a hood. He had jumped from the second floor of a nearby residential building and landed on the roof of the black Buick. When he landed, a small cloud of dust flew up, and the whole car shook. For a moment, the bald guy thought it was an earthquake.

Next, the masked man jumped off the roof of the car and kicked the muscular man in front of him with his knee. The three other goons quickly reacted, surrounding the assailant, arms akimbo, and ready to strike.

Flannel-shirt was fortunate to witness a scene that only appeared in American blockbuster movies of the past. Three fierce and confident-looking men had been put down by a single masked man in just one minute.

It seemed that the masked man didn't even exert his full strength on them. Although the four thugs were lying on the ground, their injuries weren't actually fatal.

### **Chapter 384 You Might Be Able To Defeat Us**

The background of this game was obviously related to the Internet, and this was the first time Zhang Heng was given the liberty to choose one of two mission objectives that so drastically contradicted each other. In a sense, this competitive single-player mode was more like a faction rivalry.

Players who chose to go different directions would become opponents.

Of course, no matter which direction they chose, they needed to, first and foremost, find the person named Edward mentioned in the main mission. But, there were millions, if not at least hundreds of thousands of people in the world named Edward. It would be like finding a needle in a haystack.

All things being equal, someone would probably lead him or give him hints to find Edward.

Except for Flannel-shirt who definitely caught his attention, Zhang Heng did not find any other suspicious individuals in the casino. Although the man was wearing a disguise, his glasses, the slightly hunched shoulders, and long, slender fingers especially the innate temperament, were all very difficult to conceal.

If Zhang Heng's guess was right, the guy must have been doing calculating-related work for a long time, and Zhang Heng could also tell that, like the staff with high cheekbones, that Flannel-shirt must have cheated. And similar to the employee, Zhang Heng, too, couldn't tell how he did it. Subsequent inspections also proved that Flannel-shirt did not tamper with the security camera pointed at the poker machine, which made things even more interesting

Since there was no evidence, the high-cheekbone staff had no choice but to let the pair leave the casino. On top of that, to bolster the unfavorable impact of this incident, the casino had to present the couple with a bottle of expensive red wine.

While the other patrons admired and envied the couple's good luck, Zhang Heng knew that the casino had no intention of letting it slide.

The bottle of wine was the best proof of that.

When the couple left the casino, the high-cheekboned staff pushed the door of the staff lounge open, taking out his mobile phone. As that was happening, Zhang Heng quickly walked out of the building.



Nevertheless, Flannel-shirt and his 'wife' had already left in a hurry, worried that they were being followed by the casino staff. Zhang Heng was only one minute behind them, but the couple had already disappeared. Despite that, Zhang Heng did not panic. He noticed that there was a hotel next door and made his way into the lobby. He then followed a couple of passengers into the lift and up to the sixth floor. He then went through the fire exit to finally reach the top floor.

From there, one could enjoy a panoramic view of half of Monaco. It was already late into the night, yet this bustling tourist paradise was still brightly lit. With the help of a camera filter, Zhang Heng was able to find the couple again.

Once he had determined the location they were at, Zhang Heng made a move.

Since the buildings were relatively close to each other, Zhang Heng decided to scale the rooftops-not a terrible way to keep track of the couple. Less than five minutes later, his attention was drawn to the black Buick that was slowly closing in on the couple. At the same time, the flannel shirt and his wife had stopped running and appeared to be in a heated argument.

Zhang Heng looked down and saw a sweater and a short-sleeved shirt hanging on the balcony below, so he borrowed them and used them to cover his face. On the way, he also picked up a table knife from the coffee table on another balcony. The black Buick parked itself behind Flannel-shirt like a ghost. Instead of hurrying down immediately, he hid at a balcony on the second floor to get a measure of the situation below. Only after he was sure that the black Buick was tied to the casino and that the well-built men were not carrying any hostile weapons did he jumped down to help the couple. Even though he had to face four opponents at the same time, Zhang Heng managed to take one of them out by surprise using his knee. So, fighting the remaining three men with his level 3 knife-fighting skills should be less of a strenuous effort. Zhang Heng wasn't planning to become an enemy of the casino. After all, Flannel-shirt didn't squander off an obscene amount of money, and there was no reason to escalate the conflict.

Zhang Heng's sudden appearance gave Flannel-shirt such a fright that he froze completely. His 'wife,' on the other hand, reacted quickly and dragged him away to flee the scene. The bald guy did not go after them, and neither did Zhang Heng. The man asked in French, "Are you with them?"

Because of geographical proximity, pre-independent Monaco was closely attached to France, hence the residents here also spoke French. Zhang Heng understood the language since he spent a decade learning French, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, and Latin in the Black Sail game.

Of course, after over two hundred years, the pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary of modern French had its differences with the lingo spoken back then. Still, it wasn't a problem for day-to-day communication.

Zhang Heng did not answer the man. He simply pointed at the bald man's phone. On the screen was an electronic map with a moving red dot. That was how the Buick was able to track down the couple.

"There seems to be no other way." The bald man sighed and walked out of the car. At the same time, the driver that towered over 1.9 meters and looked as hard as a metal rod got out of the car as well. He tossed a golf club to the bald man, then slipped a pair of brass knuckles over his hand. Zhang Heng did not doubt that bones would definitely be shattered if the weapon hit the body.

The bald man cracked his neck and put up a fighting posture. He then waved at Zhang

Heng.

“My parents have always taught me to be polite, especially when dealing with tourists who bring us income. I have always been very polite, showing my gentlemanliness, but if someone comes to my house and fools around with me, I have to feel sorry for that visitor since I’ll give him a taste of the other Monaco’s magic.”

Two minutes later, he and the driver joined the losers, which consisted of the other four of their men. The bald man was in such pain that he huddled on the ground while clutching his stomach, wheezing as sharp pain gripped him. Zhang Heng up walked to him, took out his phone from his pocket, and placed the locked screen in front of him.

“You may have knocked us down but don’t even think about it... Hiss... 7588.”

Seeing that Zhang Heng was aiming a knife at his eyes, the bald man immediately gave up and told Zhang Heng the password.

Although he was a professionally hired muscle, he wasn’t that dedicated to his job to the point of giving up his only pair of eyes. Besides, Flannel-shirt scammed only 40,000 euros from the casino. This amount of money meant nothing to the establishment, and the only thing they were worried about was that the new confidence scam would spread like wildfire. By that time, the casinos would have gone bankrupt with many people using the same technique to walk out wealthy.

“Thanks.”

Zhang Heng unlocked the phone with the password and took note of where Flannel-shirt and his wife were sitting. After that, he turned around and left.

“You don’t know who you are provoking-no matter where you hide in Europe, we will find you!” the bald guy yelled at Zhang Heng. The moment he said that, he saw Zhang Heng stopping and walking towards him. Immediately, the bald guy’s face changed. “I was just kidding. Don’t take me seriously.” “Send a message to the boss who hired you. I guarantee that I won’t take any action against Monaco’s casinos in the future, nor will I leak the secret technique to others. In exchange, you people must stop pursuing this matter,” Zhang Heng said.

### **Chapter 385 You Guys Don’t Have A Choice**

“Waldo, we’ve been exposed. The casino has people watching us! They even sent someone in a car to abduct us! The guy was terrifying. I can tell from a glance that he’s not a good person. Maybe they’ll even kill us...”

In his panic, Flannel-shirt keyed in the wrong number twice, and when his trembling fingers finally got it right, he instantly started blurting out words into the receiver like a trigger-happy machine gun. “Calm down, man! Calm down...” The guy named Waldo on the other end of the line said. “We’re just making small money off the casinos. They’re not going to kill us for a couple of euros.”

“That’s because you didn’t see those guys! The leader was like a perverted, abusive serial killer. He even brought a whole group of Terminators and was about to haul us into their car! God knows what they’d do to us! I’ve seen movies like that—they will tie us up, electrocute us, and torture us like we’re animals until we tell them everything we know. They’ll even want to find out who I liked in primary school!”

“Hey... Philip. Listen to me. You need to calm down! It’s just the way the casinos do things. They will shake you up and do everything they can to break down your psychological barrier, forcing you to slip up. But like I said before, they don’t want to be involved in any kind of trouble unless it is their last resort. Speaking of which, if they found you, how did you escape?” “To be honest, I’m not sure either. Some guy that was dressed like the Green Arrow, except he didn’t have any bow, suddenly jumped down from the building. It was like in the movies-It took him only one minute to take out all the casino guys. Justina and I escaped while they were fighting.” Philip wondered out aloud, “Did we just come across a superhero like Batman or Green Arrow?”

“I don’t know. But you’re right; we should leave. Where are the both of you? Get to the hotel and pack up. We leave in half an hour...” Waldo paused. His friend on the other side of the line wasn’t responding. “Philip, Philip? Are you still there?” Philip hid his phone behind him when he saw the masked man walking toward him, feeling no more relaxed than when he was facing the bald guy. The one who had taken down four guys in one breath was right in front of him, not the black Buick. It could only mean that this person must have defeated the bald guy and his casino entourage.

Justina put on a brave face. “What do you want? The money we earned from the casino?” she asked boldly. When Zhang Heng heard this, he stopped in front of Justina. Instead of showing fear, she stuck her chest out—those assets weren’t too bad at all. Though she only worked in a small town, Justina never thought herself as lesser or worse off than those in the big cities. The only thing she lacked was an opportunity which was why she was desperate to make money.

She believed that only with enough money could she escape that little backwater town and move on to a bigger stage. So, if possible, she wanted to keep the money-even if she had to sacrifice something else for it. However, to her surprise, the masked man was neither interested in her bag of money, nor was he drooling at her cleavage (of which she was very proud of). Instead, he reached out and took the bottle of red wine from her.

The moment Zhang Heng got hold of the bottle, he threw it down, spilling the blood-red liquid all over the ground. There was an overbearing smell of wine in the air. Justina felt herself wince. Even if she did not drink the bottle, she could have sold it for two to three hundred euros. What a waste, something so valuable was so blatantly and thoughtlessly chucked like that. The masked man, on the contrary, did not seem to think so.

Zhang Heng bent down and picked up something he was looking for among the broken pieces of glass. It turned out to be a waterproof miniature tracking device that was stuck inside the bottle, concealed by the label outside. Unless the bottle was destroyed, no one would ever notice it.

Zhang Heng then proceeded to toss the tracking device and the phone that the bald man used to track it into a nearby dumpster. It finally dawned on Philip that everything Zhang Heng had done up until now was all in the name of helping him. He was about to say something, but Zhang Heng spoke first.

“Where do you live?”

“Err... We are staying at the Port Palace Hotel, but we were just planning to leave. We’re about to pack up and leave,” Philip answered. Zhang Heng’s accent sounded a little strange, but considering his Asian descent, Philip did not overthink it.

“Good. Lead the way,” Zhang Heng said.

“Huh... are you coming with us? How would I know that you don’t have other intentions? Don’t get me wrong; I’m grateful that you saved us, but it doesn’t mean that we’ll just trust you right off the bat. I’ve watched a lot of movies, and I’m not attacking you personally, but bad guys usually approach the protagonist by pretending to be friendly. Then, it would turn out that they were actually hiding sinister secrets.”

“You have no choice,” Zhang Heng answered.

“Okay. I understand.”

Zhang Heng’s sharp reply made Philip realize the gravity of the situation. So, he nodded obediently and lead Zhang Heng to their hotel. The hotel wasn’t very far from the casino. Naturally, given that it was actually Monaco we’re talking about here, even the furthest place was not that far away.

Soon, the three of them arrived at the door of the hotel.

“Erm... you have to get rid of that thing on your face, or the guests in the lobby would become suspicious,” Philip reminded.

Zhang Heng made no comments, simply asking for Philip’s room number. He then followed the couple to take the elevator upstairs.

Justina kept giving Philip the look, but the latter only gave Zhang Heng their real room number.

In the room, Waldo had already packed up, and when he saw Philip, he heaved a sigh of relief. “Thank goodness you guys are back! When the call cut out, I thought of calling the cops. There’s no train to Nice at this hour, but we can drive. I’ve just hired a car.”

“Waldo...” Philip interrupted his partner, shaking his head. “About that... We might have an extra passenger.”

“What do you mean by one more passenger? Hold on. Did you hook up with some chick in the casino? But how is that even possible when Justina is with you the whole time? Since when could you still attract women? What does she look like, and how old is she?”

“Waldo, it’s a guy, and... OH-MY-GOD—He’s right behind you!” Philip’s eyes widened.

### **Chapter 386 Secret of the Slot Machine**

“Lu Yan,” Zhang Heng introduced himself while patting the dust off his pants at the same time. Waldo and Philip gawked at him in shock.

“Waldo!”

Waldo instantly snapped out of his bewilderment and stretched out his hand, “You must be the one who saved Philip and the others. Philip mentioned you before.”

He seemed to be a lot more cheerful and talkative than Philip and appeared to be in a steadier mental state as well. He wasn’t too afraid when he saw Zhang Heng but was instead excited.

“Wow, did you really defeat those four strong men all by yourself? You don’t look like you could achieve such a feat. Did you use Chinese Kung Fu?”

Zhang Heng did not answer him. Instead, he looked at Philip, who was beside him. “Are all your things packed?” he asked.

“I have packed everything for you,” Waldo said, pointing at the two suitcases at the corner. “Don’t worry, I’ve put your book, Lui, that you hid under the pillow into the luggage.”

Philip blushed when he heard what Waldo said.

“You don’t need to emphasize it...”

Waldo pointed at Zhang Heng’s mask again, “Uhh, won’t you remove that thing?” “Given the trouble you have just caused, I don’t want my face to be captured by surveillance cameras.” A bright smile swiftly appeared on Waldo’s face.

“Don’t worry, the cameras here can’t capture your face,” he grinned.

“Oh, I forgot to tell you that we managed to hack the hotel’s surveillance system and installed a small program in it. All the videos that have our faces will be automatically deleted when we leave,” Philip added.

“Who are you guys anyway?” Zhang Heng raised his eyebrows and finally took off his mask.

“Philip is a security consultant for two listed internet companies. As for me, I am an expert on social networking activities.”

“Social network activity expert?”

“Waldo has no job. He lives in the attic of his mother’s house, and all he does every day is scroll through pictures of beautiful women on Instagram and Facebook. He also finds ways to hack their computers and browse through their photo albums.”

“Heh...” Zhang Heng looked at Waldo.

“In short, you can also call us geeks,” Waldo concluded at last.

“Well, you two geeks, I think we should leave the hotel now.”

“Uhh... OK. Then, I’ll go see how Justina is doing,” said Philip as he was about to open the door. When the three of them came to Monaco, they checked into the hotel in two separate instances. Waldo first got a single room for himself. After that, Philip and his “wife” got a double room. When they finally got the rooms to themselves, Philip and Waldo were the ones who took the double room, and Justina had the single room for herself.

“She will not leave with us,” Zhang Heng said. “Oh? Is that so?”

Philip retracted his hand when he heard what Zhang Heng said. After a while, he couldn’t help but ask, “Why?” “I heard your little quarrel...”

“Quarrel, what quarrel?” Waldo asked curiously.

Philip scratched the back of his head. "Justina has some disagreements with us. Well, she wants us to increase her salary..." he muttered.

"I think the word threaten would be more accurate," Zhang Heng said.

Waldo looked regretful. "Damn, I really shouldn't have told her how we cheated."

"Actually, I don't think she can master your methods. Otherwise, she would have gone to the casino and spilled everything to them in exchange for rewards. She would definitely not wait here and do nothing," Zhang Heng said.

"Then, are we supposed to leave just like this? Don't we need to say goodbye to her?" Philip asked.

"I'm afraid you won't get to do it. I went to her room before I came to see you," Zhang Heng replied.

"Did you kill her?" Philip's eyes widened, and his face was horrified.

"Of course not, I just knocked her out."

Zhang Heng threw down forty 500 Euro banknotes to Waldo. "According to your previous agreement, I left the rest of the money to her. Any other questions?"

Philip and Waldo looked at each other.

"Let's leave if you have no questions," Zhang Heng said.

Five minutes later, the three of them were already seated in the Mercedes-Benz C-Class rented by Waldo. Philip fastened his seat belts, taking a glance at Waldo and Zhang Heng beside him to make sure that they too had also fastened their seat belts. He then started the engine.

However, just as he was about to drive off, he quickly pulled the handbrake again, and his face changed. "It's bad," he said nervously. "What happened?"

Waldo thought that Philip must have discovered something new, but Phillip simply replied, "I didn't check the tires and our surroundings." He then crouched down and went around the car to see if the tire treads were fine and that no kids were skulking at the car's blind spots. After the quick inspection, he came back in.

"Uhh... Philip is this kind of person. Due to the nature of his work, he is usually more cautious. You'll get used to it once you spend more time with him," Waldo explained.

Philip re-fastened his seat belt, adjusted the position of the rearview mirror, before finally stepping on the pedal.

The Mercedes slowly and inconspicuously crept out of the hotel parking lot at a humble 20 miles per hour.

Waldo set his navigation system to Nice, the closest French city to Monaco. A well-known tourist town, they would only need 40 minutes to get there from here. The journey would also take them along a beautiful coastal highway. Unfortunately, it was night, and they wouldn't be able to see anything around them.

Philip peeked at Zhang Heng in the rear seat from the rearview mirror. "Uhh... you didn't tell us where you wanted to go? Where should we drop you?"

"I'd better start with you. Tell me why you wanted to scam so much money from the casino, and how did you do it?" Zhang Heng inquired.

Waldo did not say anything. As a 'social network activity expert,' he had made it clear that he was a useless vagrant. However, when Zhang Heng took a second look at him, he deduced that Waldo must have come from a good financial background, noticed how his expression hadn't changed much even when 20,000 euros was tossed to him.

Philip, on the other hand, was the security consultant of two listed Internet companies. He, too, should not be short of money as well. He was obviously the kind of person who would take no risks, and it was hard to imagine that he would risk getting targeted by swindling off such an insignificant amount of money.

Phillip and Waldo didn't answer Zhang Heng's questions. The two knew that they were no match to him, and besides, Zhang Heng did not seem to be a talkative person as well. They were anxious that Zhang Heng might kill them if they gave the wrong answers.

After a while, Waldo said, "Well, let me answer your second question first. You know all casinos tell you that they do not control the machines, right? Whether you hit the jackpot or not all depends on your luck..."

"So?" Zhang Heng frowned. He had never been to a casino before, and his knowledge of slot machines only came from movies and novels.

"But this is actually impossible. Look, if the money that comes out of the machine exceeds the money that the player put in it, the casino will make a loss. However, if the slot machine pays out too little, they would probably not return to the casino. This means the casinos have to set a payout ratio. Larger casinos generally control their profit at about 5%, which means that when the sample is large enough, they will earn 5 dollars out of 100 dollars from one slot machine. By doing that, players will feel the thrill, and they will keep coming back to the casino. The casino, in turn, gets to keep some of the profit. Now, here comes the problem. If the results of each game are really purely random, then whatever payout ratio they set would be meaningless."

### **Chapter 387 Not Interested**

"Pseudo-randomness?"

"Yes. The core internal algorithms of slot machines all rely on one thing, a thing called a pseudo-random number generator. It's an algorithm used by the machine's designers to produce a random infinite number sequence. The sequence of numbers generated by the algorithm might look random, but unfortunately, the numbers you see are not really random."

Immediately, Waldo became excited when he caught wind of the topic. He started to become talkative.

"What we have to do is very simple. First of all, we need to know how the random numbers in the calculation program within the slot machine and the cards displayed on the screen are correlated to each other. So what's its method, and how effective is this pseudo-random number generator in

producing results? If you can master these things, you will know the secrets of a slot machine. To us, a slot machine is akin to a lady who emerges from the bathroom with no clothes on her. We can see everything crystal clear.”

“Well, this metaphor is a bit vulgar, but you know what I mean,” Philip nodded in agreement.

“Next, we need to write a deciphering program that takes into account the various variables that will affect the final result. When we go to a casino to determine the operating cycle of a slot machine, we can then use the deciphering program to predict the machine’s operating status for the next few hours or even days.”

“One thing to add, while we are in the casino, there must be strictly no interference. For example, if the machine gets restarted, we will have to recalculate the whole thing again.” “Yes, that’s right. We chose video poker machines because they are the oldest models, and we hope that the random-number algorithm within them is more straightforward. The poker game machines in these casinos are all produced at the end of the last century. Yes, the program inside is based on a theory put forward by Donald Knut in the 1960s, using the Monte Carlo method —the so-called linear feedback displacement register. They employ the method to give out cards to the players. It’s just... retarded.

“I mean, the actual situation is actually not that simple. We found their source code in the Patent Office and bought a machine of the same model for research purposes. In order to figure out how the code works, Philip also wrote a disassembler. When all the preliminary research had been completed, we have managed to write a small program that allowed us to calculate the current status of the poker machine and how long before it churns out a royal flush. As for the last step, we just need to play a few rounds on the machine.”

“I’m sorry, I’ve been dragging everyone back,” Philip said guiltily. Acting too nervously at the casino, he had caused its employees to become suspicious of them. Supposedly, he was going to stop after he swept the last four casinos but he could not stand Justina’s babbling in his ears, and he finally agreed to hit one last casino. Unfortunately, the last stint caused a series of troubles for them.

Although Phillip and Waldo had somewhat escaped the casino’s clutches, they still couldn’t figure if Zhang Heng, sitting in the back seat, was a friend or foe. Clearly, he posed a larger threat to them right now.

“We can’t blame you. From the beginning, we all knew that you weren’t the most suitable person for this job. The time required to press the last button has to be precise. Among us, only you have been forced to practice piano by your mother since you are a child, which is why you can press it in 0.005 seconds. You can maintain your accuracy at about 50%, which none of us can do,” Waldo explained.

“You have done well,” he went on to comfort his friend.

“So, you have other companions?” Zhang Heng asked. “Well...”

Although Waldo always avoided mentioning anyone else, he got too excited and some words had unintentionally slipped out of his mouth. Unbeknownst to him, he had accidentally revealed something, albeit rather vaguely. Besides, Zhang Heng had also overheard the quarrel between Justina and Philip as well. He knew for a fact that there was a team behind them.



But this time, the two seemed to uphold their loyalty to their team, and no one said a thing about it. Even Philip, who had been a little timid, took the initiative to say, "We can give you all the 200,000 euros we earned this time."

Phillip peeked at Zhang Heng in the back seat but found that the latter gave no reaction.

Zhang Heng wasn't interested in making money, because no matter how much he made here, he couldn't bring it back to the real world. Let alone 200,000 euros; he would not even blink his eyes if 20 million euros were placed in front of him. He was satisfied as long as he had enough money to use here.

"We will share our technology with you, together with the small program to predict the cards you'll receive when you use the machine. With this, you'll be able to make a steady stream of money from other casinos," said Phillip while grinning.

"I'm not interested in these things," Zhang Heng said. "Huh?"

The two were surprised when they heard this. Zhang Heng only appeared after the conflict happened between Philip and the casino. This meant only two possibilities to explain this situation. Either he was staying on for the money or to learn their secrets. Apart from these two things, they had nothing valuable with them.

"Have you ever heard of a person called Edward?" Zhang Heng asked.

"No!" the two replied in unison while shaking their heads.

"You guys answered way too fast. Great. It seems I have found the right person," said Zhang Heng.

Seeing how they had been found out by Zhang Heng, Waldo began to plead for their lives instead.

"Let us go; we've already told you everything we know."

"You misunderstood me. I am not your enemy. On the contrary, I want to join your team."

"Why?" Philip's eyes widened.

"Just consider me a stranger who wants to uphold justice," Zhang Heng said. The system gave him two options to complete the main mission. One was to help Edward escape, while the other was to help Zero to capture Edward. In other words, there were two sides to this quest.

Although Philip and Waldo still refused to admit that they had anything to do with Edward, it was unlikely that they sided with the opposition based on their occupations. That meant that they would want to help Edward out as well.

Zhang Heng was in no hurry to choose sides, but as of now, the two were the only clues he found relating to Edward. He needed to get as much information about Edward as possible and he could at least figure out the gist of the whole thing. And the easiest way to achieve this was, of course, to join the organization that the two nerds were in.

He could also resort to violence, but Zhang Heng wasn't one to torture someone for a confession. That, however, didn't mean he didn't have the ability or capacity to do it. He tormented someone dangerous and challenging in the Black Sail quest. These two would probably not last for ten seconds if Zhang Heng

decided to take it out on them. Judging by the current situation, he would just be shutting off alternate ways to complete the main quest if he were to do that.

This wasn't something that he wanted to see.

Philip and Waldo looked at each other when they heard those words. After a while, Philip said, "Err... it's not for us to decide. We have to ask others' opinions first."

### **Chapter 388 You're Right**

Soon after, the three of them left Monaco and arrived in Nice, a beautiful coastal city located in southeastern France.

Zhang Heng used the free time to check on his character panel briefly.

Name: Zhang Heng

Gender: Male

Age: 19

Player ID: 07958

Rounds played: 5

Current game points: 659

Items in possession: Infinite Building Block (B), Weather Marbles (C), Filter Lens (D), Paris Arrow (D), Evil Wall (D), Shadow Key (E), Lucky Rabbit's Foot (E), Betty's Shell (E), Hunter's Blessing (F), Water-soluble Metal (F)

Skills: Sailing (Level 3), Swordsmanship (Level 3), Language proficiency (Level 2)— Eight languages at general communications level, LEGO assembly (Level 2), Archery (Level 2), Wilderness survival (Level 2), Driving (Level 2), Car tuning and repairing (level 2), Marksmanship (Level 2), Aerospace (Level 1), Piano (Level 1), Skiing (Level 1), Rock climbing (Level 1)

Assessment: Player is a LEGO master, with slightly better luck than most people, and has a higher chance of encountering enemies. He's protected from shadows, storms, and evil thoughts, and can predict and change the weather of a particular area. In addition to extensive sailing experience, the player is also skilled at handling knives, arrows, and firearms. Player can drive cars, fly aircraft, spacecraft, and other vehicles. He is also able to adapt to the wilderness, and with his abundant skill reserves and excellent combat effectiveness, he stands out among players. Even though the new year had passed, Zhang Heng's birthday was a month away explaining why he was listed as 19-years-old on the character panel. At the beginning of the fifth game, Zhang Heng had 695 game points. Then, in the Apollo Training camp, he earned another 154 points but spent some of it to identify several items. After that, when he removed the Leviathan's egg from Peng Jiating's body, he used up 100 points. After identifying the Infinite Building Block and exchanging 50 points with the central bank, he was left with 659 points.

In terms of accessories, he had added the Infinite Building Block, Weather Marble, Filter Lens, and Water-soluble Metal to his collection. Right now, though, Zhang Heng's problem was no longer a shortage of game items, but an over-abundance of them, thereby cluttering up his pockets. Thank

goodness most of them did not take up much space. Except for the Paris Arrow, everything else could be pocketed. If new game items were to keep coming in, he would have to give up some of them.

Similar to sailing, his engineering skills, aerodynamics, physics, and material sciences were all compounded into 'aerospace skills.' When he successfully piloted the lunar module, his aerospace skills had been upgraded to Level 2, but he was too focused on the task at hand to notice it then. The only thing was, this skill wasn't exactly handy for everyday use. On top of that, he had also gone from "worthy of continuous attention" to "stands out."

Zhang Heng's brows furrowed. As the game progressed, he seemed to be encountering an increasing number of supernatural beings and wondered if this was in any way related to his evaluation. He couldn't tell if it was a good or a bad thing, now that more eyes were on him.

On the other hand, Philip and Waldo finally got in touch with their team and briefly explained the situation. About fifteen minutes later, they received a reply from the other side.

Philip hung up the phone and said to Zhang Heng, "The rest of the team agree that you can join us, but..."

"But?" Zhang Heng cocked an eyebrow.

"But you must prove that you're here to help and that you're not our enemy," said Waldo. "How?"

"I just got the news that one of our friends had been captured. If you can save him, we'll welcome you to the team."

"Edward?"

"No, no, no. Not Edward. Edward has enough experience to take care of himself. It's another one of our friends."

"Where is he?"

"Rodez."

Zhang Heng looked at Philip, straight-faced. Although he knew France to a certain extent, it was limited to well-known cities like Paris, Marseille, and Lyon.

"Ah... Rodez is in the Pyrenees region. It's the capital of Aveyron in the south. It's quite far from here," Philip explained.

"We'd better get there by train or plane... do you need to rest before that? It's nearly eleven now. We can leave tomorrow morning," Waldo said. "Oh, I can book us a hotel online-I'm an Accor member, and I still have some coupons," Philip added. He then took out his phone and began to search for the nearest Accor hotels before booking two rooms and a suite specifically for Zhang Heng. Upon arrival, Philip and Waldo dragged their luggage into their room, then popped out to smile at Zhang Heng.

"Good night. We have a lot to do tomorrow. Better get to bed early," Waldo added.

Just as Waldo was about to shut the door, Zhang Heng blocked it with his hand.

“You guys are in the wrong room.” “Haha, Luke, you’re too courteous. The suite is yours. This double bedroom is enough for us.”

“No, we’ll sleep together,” Zhang Heng said.

“Together?” Waldo looked surprised.

“The bed in the suite is large enough for two. The both of you can sleep in it, and I’ll sleep on the couch,” Zhang Heng replied.

“Ah, that won’t do,” Waldo scratched his head, “You are our guest. How can we make you sleep on the couch...”

Zhang Heng nodded, “You’re right...”

Waldo and Philip looked pleased, but what Zhang Heng said next dragged the corners of their mouths down.

“Then, you can sleep on the couch. Philip and I will sleep on the bed,” Zhang Heng went on.

“Huh?” Waldo grimaced, saying, “Seriously? I don’t want to sleep on the couch, either.”

There was no way Zhang Heng was going to let Waldo and Philip share the same room while he slept in a separate room. Sure, the suite was comfortable, but Zhang Heng was certain that the two would slip away in the wee hours of the morning. Especially since there was a living room in the suite, it was going to be even more difficult for Zhang Heng to hear movements in the corridor.

But it was alright if Waldo slept in the living room. He just needed one of them to keep feeding him with clues. Moreover, Zhang Heng noticed that the guy was pretty loyal. If Zhang Heng had Philip with him, there was no way Waldo would run away on his own.

In the end, Waldo spent the night on the couch, and when he woke up, he immediately regretted his decision because now, his back ached like it never ached before.

### **Chapter 389 Elevator Gone Wild**

The night went by uneventfully. During breakfast the next morning, Zhang Heng asked Philip if there was a commercial street near him.

“You want to buy LEGO bricks?” Philip was surprised.

It was no wonder Zhang Heng’s question surprised him. The first impression that Zhang Heng gave him was that of a typical tough guy in those action movies. He was supposed to personify a lone hero that could bring down a group of people without so much as flinch, and when he went to a bar, he would have to order the strongest spirit. Even if he was shot, he could pick out all the bullets from his body while gritting his teeth in the bathroom without frowning.

That morning, Philip saw Zhang Heng drink a glass of warm water and eating a nutritious breakfast—including meat and vegetables, and an omelet. Philip felt inexplicably disappointed, especially now that he heard that Zhang Heng wanted to buy LEGO bricks. He was unable to figure out why the tough guy wanted to buy a bunch of educational toys.

However, Zhang Heng didn't care about what others thought about him, always being one to ignore his surroundings. In his first quest, he had to eat coconuts for three meals a day. Now that conditions had gotten better, he wasn't going to abuse himself by starving. Maintaining a healthy eating habit was essential in keeping his body going until the end of the quest.

"For shopping, we are not far from Jinmeide Avenue. The Star of Nice department store is there. Although it is not as famous as Galleria Lafayette, it's considered one of the best shopping malls in Nice."

Waldo went to get himself two crepes while listening to their conversation.

Zhang Heng finished the last croissant on the plate, wiping his mouth with a tissue. "Very well, let's go there," he continued.

"Uhh, but I haven't finished eating..." Waldo glanced at the crepes on the plate.

"You have eaten a total of five plates of food," Philip said as his eyes widened.

"Because it's free. I should take advantage of it," Waldo replied with a wide grin.

After he finished the crepes, Waldo went on to empty another fruit platter, gulped two glasses of orange juice and milk, went to the bathroom, and reluctantly left the hotel restaurant.

It was Zhang Heng's first time discovering that Waldo could eat so much. Philip told Zhang Heng that Waldo had always lived in his mother's attic and rarely stepped out of the house. Judging by the way he ate, he was still a little thinner than ordinary people. Zhang Heng had to admit that Waldo's must have had very good genes.

The three arrived at the Star of Nice at 9:42 a.m. but had to wait outside the entrance since the department store wasn't open yet. Fortunately, it would open for business in a short while, and they didn't have to wait too long. Zhang Heng managed to find a LEGO store as well, proceeding to buy five boxes of bricks in one go. He also made sure that all the parts and models he needed were included.

Zhang Heng finally understood the gist of the famous saying, an SLR will ruin a person's life, but LEGO can make you poor for three generations. Earlier, he checked his bank account. Unfortunately, there was no money in it-in its place, an overdraft limit of about 2,000 Euros. The LEGO sets he bought cost him 500 Euros, which was almost a quarter of what he had.

Moreover, he ran into trouble after walking out of the store. Although mall security pretended to be patrolling, Zhang Heng was well aware that he was their target judging by their less-than-subtle movements. At the same time, Philip and Waldo were also deliberately keeping their distance from him.

"Are you sure you want to do this?" Zhang Heng asked calmly as he looked at Philip.

The two were shocked and afraid, unable to understand how Zhang Heng knew what they were thinking. Waldo, on the other hand, attempted to put on his best act.

"Huh, what did you say?"

Zhang Heng opened a box of bricks, quickly picked out a handful of parts, and put them in his pocket. He then threw the remaining four unopened boxes bricks to Philip, saying, "Help me take care of these for a moment."

Philip was confused.

"Huh?"

"Although I won't kill you if I lose it, you'd better stop doing irrational things when I'm in a bad mood," said Zhang Heng, leaving with them his last words of advice.

At the same time, all five security guards were walking towards him. Zhang Heng also saw two men who seemed to be plainclothes police officers entering the mall. While he was unprepared, one of the security guards reached out to grab Zhang Heng's arm. However, he managed to dodge it easily. Immediately, the guard's companion charged toward him. Zhang Heng did not want to fight the entire group of security guards at the same time, knowing that it would be hard for him to win if they all attacked him at once. So, after taking out one person, he ran as quickly as he could.

He sped to the elevator that wasn't too far away, managing to get in just in time. However, as he was descending to the lower floors, the elevator suddenly stopped. After a second, it started to operate in the opposite direction, causing its passengers to be thrown to the ground and screaming in fear.

Seeing that Zhang Heng had escaped the security guards, the two plainclothes finally uncovered their identities and rushed toward their target. Meanwhile, Zhang Heng saw a bunch of shopping bags scattered on the floor. The rest of the people in the lift were still trying to stand up and get a hold of the situation. In the end, he had to give up on this route. At the same time, after this incident, he also realized that he had underestimated the team behind Philip and Waldo.

It now appeared that they could not only turn a casino's poker machine into their ATM, but they could even hack through electrical equipment

Of course, appliances like elevators weren't connected to the Internet, and that wasn't how they did it. Zhang Heng remembered two elevator maintenance crew when the mall was opened just now. In other words, they must have been ready for battle since the beginning. When did they start? During breakfast?

Speaking of which, Waldo had gone the bathroom halfway after he overate for breakfast. Did he use that opportunity to contact his team? No, it should have been earlier-he must have contacted his team when he was alone sleeping on the couch in the living room last night.

That meant the other party had one night to prepare for the fight. However, he only proposed to come to the Star of Nice in the morning. Waldo must have taken the opportunity to go to give his team the updated location in the toilet. The mall guards and plainclothes policemen who had suddenly targeted him were obviously on their side. Although Zhang Heng didn't know how they did it, it wasn't the time to think about such things.

His top priority now was to leave the mall first. While Zhang Heng was thinking hard, he quickly assembled a taser gun in his pocket with the LEGO bricks that he just bought. As he added the Infinite Building Block to it, the taser was immediately weaponized, ready to deal with the brewing trouble. At

the same time, Philip and Waldo did not waste the golden opportunity, quickly running to a safe passage while the chaos ensued. It was the first chance they got to escape Zhang Heng's control.

The two geeks mustered every last bit of stamina that they could squeeze out and ran as fast as they could.

### **Chapter 390 Meet at Mary's Cafe**

"Don't you think we've gone too far?" Philip worriedly asked as they ran.

"Err... Too far?" Waldo repeated. To justify his multiple trips to the bathroom, he had forced himself to cram food down his already overloaded stomach, then pretend like he was not already past his limit. It wasn't too bad when he was walking, but right now, as he tried to run, it felt as if his entire stomach was tumbling around inside him.

"Luke did save Justina and me from the casino's men regardless, and he knows Edward too. What if he really wants to help?"

"Z said that the enemy is too powerful. We cannot take any risks right now. Don't worry; he's not in any real danger. The cops will soon realize that they were mistaken, and he's not a fugitive. What we need to do now is to get away from this place before that happens!"

Waldo pushed the door open.

"Wait, that's the second floor," Philip reminded him.

floor, really? It felt 1

Waldo shook his head in exhaustion. "Second floor, really? It felt like we've been running for a very long time," he panted. "That's because you've been living in the attic for too long and need some exercise..."

"Alright."

Huffing and puffing, both men ran all the way to the parking lot and jumped into the car.

"Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! Move it!" Waldo urged as he repeatedly glanced behind them.

Philip, however, still took his time to buckle up his seatbelt. He then adjusted the rear-view mirror, looked left and right to make sure that no one else was following before finally starting up the car.

"Are you for real? At a time like this?!" Waldo looked at his partner in disbelief.

"Sorry, it's become a habit," Philip apologized as he stepped on the gas pedal and drove to the parking lot exit.

The two scrambled to pay the parking fee and even refused to take the change. They then sped away from the place. As they got further and further away from the department store, Waldo heaved a sigh of relief and collapsed in the passenger seat.

"Phew. That was close. We finally got rid of that problem. Victory high-five?"

“No, no!” Philip shook his head. Although he said that, he still offered up a palm and high-fived Waldo. “These few days have been the most exciting days in over twenty years of my life. Hey, you should contact the magician and the others, and tell them that we’ve escaped.”

“Alright.” Waldo took out his cell phone to make the call, but before he could dial the number, his phone rang.

Who is it?”

“Oh, it’s Little Boy. She had to stay behind to clean up the elevator and the security camera room making sure we didn’t leave any trace,” Waldo explained as he answered the call.

The voice that came from the other end, however, was Zhang Heng. “Meet me at Mary’s Café in fifteen minutes.”

Zhang Heng hung up as soon as he was done talking, not giving Waldo the chance to ask questions.

Less than ten minutes later, the white Mercedes-Benz pulled up in front of the café. Shortly after that, the car of an elevator maintenance company also stopped nearby, and two individuals exited the vehicle. They began to survey the area together with Philip and Waldo.

Zhang Heng turned to the petite girl next to him, in a baseball cap and dressed like a boy. “Let’s go,” he said.

The girl harrumphed and tried to yank her arm free from his hand, but failed.

Even though he was prepared for this outcome, being fooled put Zhang Heng in a less-than-good mood, especially since he had to tase a security guard to escape as quickly as possible. He did not mind the fact that Philip and Waldo escaped. They both must have thought that they were stealthy, but in reality, their secret eye contact with the girl in the baseball cap upon entering the department store didn’t escape his eyes.

With the experience gathered from Black Sail, Zhang Heng felt that their acting skills were seriously lacking, which was why he didn’t panic even though he lost sight of Phillip and Waldo. After shaking off the mall cops, he waited for the girl in the baseball cap to leave the mall before following her. Then, when she was crossing the road at the traffic light, he pressed the taser gun against her waist and contacted Waldo using her cell phone. Now, both parties would meet again at Mary’s Café.

This time, Zhang Heng was finally able to speak directly to the team behind Philip and Waldo.

“Are you their leader?” Zhang Heng looked at the ponytailed middle-aged man who resembled an artist.

“No, you seemed to have misunderstood something. We don’t have a leader. We are just a loose organization. In fact, we all have our own careers and life. On normal days, we are busy with our own things-our activities almost never clash. Many of them too just met for this assignment,” the man replied, “so, you can see us as a sort of interest group. I am the oldest in the group, so, if you’re looking for a leader, then I guess that’s me.”

“What you did is not something an interest group could do,” Zhang Heng retorted, “why did the security guards and plain-clothes suddenly attack me?”



“That’s because we did something to make them mistake you for a fugitive,” Ponytail answered. “Sorry about that. According to Waldo, you are very skillful—they wouldn’t have been able to escape under normal circumstances. We only did that as a last resort.”

“You hacked into the police systems?”

“That would be too much trouble. All we had to do was impersonate a police officer and call the manager of the mall and convince him that a wanted criminal is loose in his building,” Ponytail explained, “It’s all very straightforward. There are telecommunication operators called business phone systems, and there are loopholes in their regulations.

“This service was originally set up to facilitate the needs of businesses, where they could choose to change their phone number displayed on the other person’s phone. However, thanks to the aforementioned loopholes, the service can also be used to disguise your number as the police, the fire brigade, or even the bank when making a call or sending a message. Of course, such a service is only made available to specific customers—so, we still had to tweak a little something. Anyway, you can also use rented legal business phone networks to modify certain fields of the Initial Address Message (IAM) in the ISUP (ISDN User Part). Doing that will also achieve the same goal.”

It would have been better if the man hadn’t explained anything at all, because even after he did, Zhang Heng was still completely clueless. It gave him a clue, though, as to who this guy was. “You guys are all computer experts?” Zhang Heng asked.

“Uhh... although we each specialize in different things, we are about the same. We’re all geeks.”

“Even her?” Zhang Heng pointed at the tiny girl in the baseball cap he had kidnapped earlier.

“Yup. Little Boy. She’s our communications expert.”