

## 48 Hours 421

### Chapter 421 Address

Little Boy did not expect Zhang Heng's prediction to come true so soon.

Two weeks later, just when everyone was beginning to doubt if Edward would ever contact them again, they suddenly received an anonymous email. This email, with nothing written on it, came from a temporary mailbox. The only thing composed in it was an address.

Immediately, 01 members gathered in front of the computer. Waldo scratched his head, not knowing what to make out of it. "Who sent it, Edward?"

"This is too easy. It might be a trap from Black Nest," Little Boy warned cautiously. "Black Nest doesn't know who we are. We didn't expose ourselves except for Luke," Ponytail paused, then explained to Zhang Heng, "On the night you were discovered, Waldo hacked into the airline's computer systems. He's changed our passenger details to prevent Black Nest from finding us."

"Moreover, this email address that we are using right now isn't the same one Edward used to communicate with us. This is my private email address. We used to correspond using this one, Phillip added." "So, you are the only two who know this email address?"

"Uhh, that's not the case. I have a few friends who know it, but they are not the kind to pull pranks. They won't just send me an email with nothing but an address on it without any reason," Philip said.

Before Little Boy could say anything, Zhang Heng chipped in, "There is no problem with the address." "Well, how do you know the address is okay?" "Because one of my friends received this address too when I asked him about it. He used a temporary mailbox as well," Zhang Heng explained.

"But you cannot rule out that it could be a trap that Black Nest has laid for us. If Edward really sent this, why didn't he contact us with the email address he always used?" Little Boy asked rhetorically.

Waldo made a wild guess. "Because... his original mailbox has been exposed?"

"Yes, if Edward's previous mailbox has fallen into the hands of Black Nest, they will know that we have contacted him, and they will likely use this opportunity to set a trap for us," Little Boy analyzed. From a logical point of view, her inference was indeed very reasonable, but for Zhang Heng who had already seen the ending, the address on the email had to be the city where Edward was now hiding in.

Zhang Heng thought for a moment. "You are right, but this is the only clue we have in two months. We can either go to that address or just sit here and wait."

What Zhang Heng said silenced the 01 team. It would be a perilous but exhilarating journey in helping Edward fight against the formidable and fearsome Black Nest. However, they had spent almost two months in a random hamlet, and other than sleeping and eating, they had nothing else to do. Philip was even in the mind to be depressed over a weight gain of two pounds.

On the other hand, Waldo, who had been lying on the sofa slurping Coke and eating potato chips, hadn't gained an ounce of weight. Philip felt that life was unfair.

However, no matter how comfortable it was to live in this town, everyone was getting tired after spending such a long time here. No one knew when or if any new clues would come in if they kept waiting, and even then, they still couldn't get rid of the traps Black Nest set for them.

"Luke is right. We can't just sit and wait here anymore," Ponytail said, "anyway, we need to investigate the place on the address. Of course, Little Boy's worries are justified. It is imperative that we remain vigilant at all times. We can take the train to Grenade first, and drive to Toulouse after that. If Black Nest has set up a trap for us in Toulouse, they won't be finding us at the airport or the train station."

"Great, I've always wanted to go to Toulouse," said Leah.

Toulouse, the capital of Haute-Garonne in southern France-Pyrénées, was the fourth largest city in France. It was known as the city of roses, not because Toulouse produced a lot of roses but for its large number of pre-war buildings with its iconic brick structures. Toulouse was named after the color of the red bricks that resembled blooming roses.

Walking under those red brick walls threw one back in time, giving one a sensation of walking through the tracks of history. Every brick and tile laid here was filled with stories and traces of a time long-forgotten.

Hence, O1 finally reembarked on their journey after two months of rest. This time, Leah traveled with them as well. With a face caked in a thick layer of thick makeup, she hoped Black Nest's people wouldn't spot her. A wide-brimmed hat and oversized sunglasses that masked half of her face completed the disguise.

"Would I be mistaken as a celebrity?" Leah asked with a chuckle.

Zhang Heng glanced at Leah in the rearview mirror, "Can't you buy a smaller pair of shades?"

"I can't help it. I'm afraid the smaller sunglasses will unleash my ravenous beauty," sighed Leah as she stretched lazily, looking as helpless as a kitten.

Zhang Heng understood why Leah would become the leader of O1 twelve years later. This girl was friendly. It did not match her almost perfect appearance, but when the two were mixed, she radiated with a pleasant and easy-going warmth that instantly made those around her feel at home.

Little Boy, on the other hand, was on the other side of the spectrum. Although she didn't have the typical poster-girl gleam of Leah, the features on her face were beautiful. She wasn't one to care about dolling up, and would instead remain inconspicuous by having a pair of headphones on and keeping her head down all day. Besides, she was always dressed like a boy. In Waldo's own words, "Little Boy is like a little boy. I have and will never develop any romantic feelings toward a little boy."

Zhang Heng had seen her sitting alone by the window, munching on cookies on a rainy day. He didn't think Little Boy was that bad. As he reminisced life in the parallel quest, Little Boy suddenly broke his thought. "I just checked out the address, and I see nobody suspicious over there," she said.

"Okay, we will reach the place in about five minutes," replied Zhang Heng. Considering how weak the O1 were when it came to combat, he hoped they would focus on the mission's logistics instead of barging to the frontlines and risk their lives. Eventually, Zhang Heng and Leah were the only ones who headed towards the address given in the email.

Little Boy paused for a moment. "It's strange," she said, "The nearby surveillance cameras couldn't find any signs of intrusion."

"It means nothing is wrong, right?" Leah wondered.

"No, she meant that if it were Edward, he would have done something to the place with his skills," Zhang Heng explained.

In the parallel quest, O1 had failed to rescue Leah. Therefore, the subsequent plot development was different from the present. In this timeline, Zhang Heng was unable to figure out what Edward intended to do.

## **Chapter 422 Garden**

Jacobin's Abbey was the address on the anonymous email, a place about ten minutes' walk from the town hall.

This Gothic monastery was built by the Dominicans in 1215 and had a history spanning more than 800 years. The entire building was made out of red-clay bricks and tiles and was divided into churches, the inner courtyard cloister, and the priests' dining hall. It was also the final resting place of Thomas Aquinas, Catholic's most famous theologian, and philosopher.

When Zhang Heng and Leah walked into the church, the first thing that caught their attention was the beams that rose to nearly thirty meters in height. These beams supported the roof of the church, and spreading out into a distinct 'palm-tree' at the top. The elongated windows, also supported by the beams were made up of hand-painted stained glass. When the sun shone through the window and landed on the central bench, it made whoever sit there feel like they were being bathed in a holy and cleansing light.

Zhang Heng looked around and notice a group of tourists who were also visiting the chapel. He didn't see anybody suspicious, though. Edward did not like to take pictures, but during the parallel quest, Zhang Heng managed to get a glance at a sixteen-year-old Edward from his driver's license. According to Leah, Edward had changed a lot in ten years, so Zhang Heng decided to bring her along. Nonetheless, after a tiresome search, Leah failed to spot her brother in the church.

The two were now disguised as lovers, where Leah clung to Zhang Heng's arm lovingly. They posed as tourists who were visiting the 13th-century building. She had also given her hair a new coat of silver dye from the blue that it once was.

"I feel like a spy in a spy movie. Has my brother really become so cautious now?"

"Little Boy's worries are actually justifiable. Edward must have used a different email address to contact us because he knows his original email address isn't secure anymore. In other words, Black Nest is getting closer and closer to him," Zhang Heng said. Considering that his appearance was exposed when he met Piercings at the bar, Zhang Heng had to put some effort into modifying his looks. He was inspired by Fox when they met for the first time, so, to make sure that no one would recognize him, he put on a suit, sprayed on some cologne, and slicked his hair back. Now, he looked more like an elite from the financial industry.

In the parallel quest, Black Nest had found Edward in a nursing home three weeks later. Edward replaced a volunteer there. This, however, wasn't his first hiding spot in Toulouse, where he had been constantly on the move to avoid detection.

Nobody really knew where Edward's hideouts were before this, and if they failed to meet up with him today, Zhang Heng could only go to the nursing home in a week to try his luck. However, the plot of the quest had taken a different turn thanks to the participation of a player. This applied not only to the O1 Guerillas but also to Black Nest.

It would also prove difficult for Zhang Heng to explain how he knew Edward's hiding spot, the reason why he was careful not to be rash during the two months. These two months in the small town was a precious gift granted by the system so players could learn as much as they could about the game. Speeding up this process may not yield any benefits. On the contrary, it had the potential to put the players at great risk. "Would you like to go elsewhere?" Leah asked. The two had been in the church for almost 20 minutes, but they saw nothing that sparked an interest.

"Yeah," Zhang Heng nodded. Behind the church was a beautiful cloister, a place for the priests to communicate and meditate. Two sections of the cloister had been destroyed during the war, and it was rebuilt in 1964. In its center was a courtyard, planted with trees and other foliage.

The two walked across the red stone pavement searching high and low, and despite their best efforts, they still couldn't find Edward there. In fact, they spent nearly two hours in the Jacobin Monastery, exploring every single corner of the building. Yet, they failed to find any clues.

Left with no other options, the two left the monastery empty-handed. Someone was handing out leaflets at the exit. Leah took one and returned to the car, taking off her hat and oversized sunglasses.

"Maybe he's not around today?"

"It is highly unlikely," Zhang Heng frowned, "there's always this one thing I've never been able to understand. Edward's email only stated the location but not the time. This means that we can come here any time we want. And he can't be in the monastery every day since it's guaranteed to attract a lot of unwanted attention. I think we must have missed something there. Let's do this again tomorrow and pay closer attention to our surroundings."

"Is it possible that whatever my brother left behind is outside the monastery?" Leah instantly asked.

"Huh? What have you discovered?"

"When I was young, my brother and I would play a cryptography game. Texts are compiled and ciphered in Hebrew."

"Do you speak Hebrew?"

"No, no, no, but these have very simple keywords. We don't care about its meaning. All we did was to compare it with the corresponding French letters, then translate them to get the information we want," Leah explained as she waved the Catholic leaflet in her hand. She pointed to an inconspicuous spot on it. "Here, look," she said.

Zhang Heng looked closer and saw a sentence written in Hebrew. From the interpretation of typography and context, it seemed to be a passage from the Bible. Leah then attempted to translate it, and she got the word 'garden.'

"Garden? Could it be the atrium's garden that we saw earlier? Did we overlook anything over there?" Leah asked curiously.

She grew excited knowing that the mystery was about to be unraveled, just like opening a clue from all those treasure hunts she played when she was a child.

Little Boy spoke to them through the communicator again, "I searched the garden in Toulouse just now and found a restaurant, a training ground for boxing, and an elementary school. Is it possible that Edward is hiding in one of those places?" "Pick one," Zhang Heng said to Leah. "Restaurant? I happen to be a bit hungry."

"Good."

Zhang Heng pulled open the navigation app on his smartphone, searching for a restaurant named Garden. He knew that it was unlikely that Edward would be there. The restaurant was a popular hotspot, ushering in throngs of diners each day. Such a place was obviously not the ideal spot for a person desperately trying to stay hidden and to avoid getting tracked down.

Fortunately, though, the foie gras and sausages were delicious. For Leah, who had been strolling in the monastery for the whole afternoon, it couldn't be better. The food rejuvenated her exhausted body and mind.

The sky was turned darker as the two finished up their meal.

"There are still the training grounds and elementary school. You can choose this time," said Leah.

### **Chapter 423 Too Quick, Does It Count?**

The boxing training ground called Garden was located in the old town at a corner that usually went unnoticed. Below it was a store that sold second-hand sporting goods. The shophouse was still in its original brick-and-tile structure like the other shops in the old town, and the mottled walls looked like it had been there since forever. The neon sign hanging in front of the window wasn't on. They were not sure if the owner turned it off to save electricity, or it was just broken. Fortunately, the lights from the window proved the training ground was still open for business.

Zhang Heng and Leah walked up the stairs to the second floor of the sports shop, where the unmistakable sound of punching bags got louder louder. Two ripped men without shirts were drenched in sweat. There was someone skipping on a rope, and another man lifted dumbbells. On the side, a group of children sat on the ground, paying attention to a teacher of some sort. He was an old man with greying hair and looked like the person in charge of this training ground.

The group of what seemed to be eight or nine-year-olds focussed intently on what they were doing, ignoring Zhang Heng who had just entered the grounds. However, Leah's beauty caused the man who was lifting the dumbbells to look at her twice.

"My brother is not here," Leah whispered to Zhang Heng

Zhang Heng nodded. For now, he was not in a hurry. So, he stood there and waited patiently out 15 minutes. The grey-haired coach showed the kids a punching routine and let them practice on their own. He then walked towards Zhang Heng and Leah.

“Can I help you?” the old man gestured politely as he put his hands together.

“We are looking for someone,” Zhang Heng said, “but it seems he’s not here.”

“Then I’m afraid I can’t help you,” The old man turned around and returned to teach the group of children again.

“Wait, are you Catholic?” Zhang Heng took out the leaflet he received outside the monastery.

The old man grabbed the leaflet and glanced at it. After a while, he returned it to Zhang Heng.

“Sorry, I don’t believe in religion,” he replied as he shook his head.

“My apologies for the disturbance.”

Zhang Heng put the leaflet back in his pocket and was about to leave. Unexpectedly, one of the muscular guys stopped hitting the punching bag. He pointed at Zhang Heng, then pointed to the boxing ring beside him.

“He wants to fight you,” the old man frowned.

“I’m sorry. I haven’t done any boxing before,” Zhang Heng declined politely, then looked to Leah.

“Let’s go,” he went on, wasting no time and prepared to leave.

The ripped man was displeased when he saw this. At that, the old man sighed and spoke again, “He may know where the person you’ve been looking for is.”

“Sorry, is he a mute? Can’t he speak for himself?” said Zhang Heng as he turned around to look directly at the ripped man.

The ripped man seemed to understand the word mute. His expression changed immediately, and he appeared even more unhappy. He then thumped his chest with his gloved hand, before looking at Zhang Heng with a provocative stare.

Several other people in the training ground also noticed the tension in the air and stopped what they were doing.

“I don’t know the rules of boxing very well,” Zhang Heng said.

“It doesn’t matter, you can use whatever fighting skills you are good at, or you can even use weapons if you wish to.”

“Who can lend me a knife?” Zhang Heng asked. The folding knife he always used couldn’t be brought out of the parallel quest.

“Are you fine with a steak knife?” “Yeah.”

Zhang Heng then borrowed some tape and wrapped it around the knife.

After seeing what Zhang Heng did, a scornful smile surfaced on the ripped man's face, laughing at the young man as if he was doing something useless. Even if Zhang Heng was holding a Tang Dao, there was no way he would be able to hurt him, let alone a steak knife.

"Wait, you will thank me for wrapping the knife with the tape," Zhang Heng said.

The old man tried to pass Zhang Heng some protective gear, to which he only rejected. He took off his suit and handed it over to Leah. After that, he entered the ring with the muscular man.

Zhang Heng's opponent seemed amused by his sparsely he was equipped. Seeing how his opponent was dressed so lightly in only a shirt and a pair of trousers, the ripped man moved his limbs slightly, too lazy to even put up a proper defensive posture. The muscular man then taunted Zhang Heng with a finger, signaling for him to start the fight.

However, his pupils contracted in the next moment. He still thinking about whether to use an uppercut or straight punch and how much strength needed to defeat Zhang Heng without killing him when something didn't seem right. Before he managed to throw any punches, he saw Zhang Heng move suddenly.

The muscular man was in no way weak. He had been an amateur boxer for three years and participated in many boxing matches with opponents of varying experience. This was his first time encountering someone with such a swift reflex.

While he was still putting up a hooking posture to provoke Zhang Heng, the tip of the steak knife in Zhang Heng's hand flashed before his eyes. It happened in a split second, and his eyes would have been sliced to oblivion if he had only moved two centimeters forward.

Nobody expected the battle between dragon and tiger to come to an end in less than a second. Zhang Heng had moved so quickly that those people around him didn't have the time to be surprised.

"Did I move too fast? Does it count?" Zhang Heng withdrew his hand, "Why not you try this time?"

The muscular man wiped the sweat from the tip of his nose. After Zhang Heng's strike, he finally lost his calm and disregard that he had before. He instantly mucked up, becoming more alert as he knew he wasn't dealing with an easy opponent. Despite the odds, he was also confident in his strength, and once he got serious, he knew he still had a good chance to defeat Zhang Heng.

As the thoughts coursed through his mind, the muscular man finally began to move around. To prevent Zhang Heng from attacking him like before, he made sure a good distance separated them. He then carefully tested Zhang Heng's rhythm by shaking his shoulders. It was what he would usually do when he faced a powerful enemy.

On the other hand, Zhang Heng did not respond to what he did. Instead, he just stood quietly in place.

After the muscular man tested his opponent for a while, he became embarrassed after seeing Zhang Heng's reaction. Every time he made a move, he would imagine a way Zhang Heng would counter his attack. He would then come up with a defensive move based on the scenario in mind. As a result, he

kept on freaking out like a silly goose for a long time. On the other hand, Zhang Heng hadn't made a single move yet.

The muscular man realized he could no go on like this. He had to attack. While thinking about this, the muscular man finally took his first step and threw his right fist at Zhang Heng. At the same time, Zhang Heng made a move as well. He leaned back a little to dodge the punch. Immediately, the muscular man pulled a second punch at Zhang Heng! This time he chose to attack his opponent's chest, but Zhang Heng still managed to dodge it easily.

After the two calculated maneuvers, the muscular man threw away whatever strategies he had in his head and just started punching Zhang Heng nonstop with his fists. However unbelievable it may sound, Zhang Heng once again dodged the man's hurricane-like attacks.

"Huh?"

A look of surprise flashed through the eyes of the old man as he watched the battle. It was his first time witnessing a man with such quick reflexes. Even a professional boxer wouldn't perform on the same level. This was not something that could be achieved by theories alone. It required a lot of practical experience.

"Are you done with your attack? If you are done, I'll take a shot next," Zhang Heng finally spoke up after avoiding countless strikes from the muscular man.

#### **Chapter 424 Iron Fist**

Muscles finally understood what Zhang Heng meant when he said he would be grateful for the extra tape.

In just half a minute after Zhang Heng turned from defense to attack, Muscles was cut so many times he lost count. Later on, he decided to give up attacking and focus on defending himself, but nonetheless, still suffered multiple stab wounds.

In Zhang Heng's hands, the steak knife was like an elusive ghost. There was no telling where it would land or go next. Though the knife drew no blood since it was covered in tape, there were still plenty of bruises, and boy, did they hurt like hell.

In the end, the ripped man was down on one knee, gasping for dear breath. When he saw Zhang Heng walking towards him, he quickly raised his arms and shouted in mandarin, "Stop! I give up!"

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Zhang Heng wasn't surprised, knowing who the muscle man really was since he had not spoken a word since the beginning. The fact that he spoke in mandarin meant he admitted to being a player. "Do you know where Edward is?"

"Yes, I've been with him for the past two months, and I've been taking care of him," Muscles gasped, drawing in deep breaths as he struggled to stand, "but that guy is very troublesome, always asking for this and that. He's really difficult."

"What should I call you?" Zhang Heng offered a hand.



"I'm called Torres in this quest, but you can call me Iron Fist." Iron Fist shook Zhang Heng's hand, but the pain in his body only made him wince.

Zhang Heng did not ask Iron Fist why he wanted to challenge him. He did not need to since he knew exactly what Iron Fist was thinking. This was a rival-faction quest. While players of the same faction would naturally work together, there was a – Iron Fist hoped to use his skills to win the right to have a say in the partnership later.

Instead, he was given a handsome drubbing. Zhang Heng compared his opponent to the man with piercings, and he came to a disappointing conclusion. In terms of combat skills, this amateur fighter was no match for the ex-police officer.

"While you were with Edward, have you ever seen other players?"

Iron fist shook his head. "It seems that players won't meet in the earlier stages of the quest. You are the first player to arrive after we sent the email."

"How many have you sent?" Zhang Heng asked.

"Only two emails were sent from the monastery's address. But because only Leah could decipher the keyword that Edward left there, he also contacted three other people-a reporter from Le Monde, a moderator of an online forum, and a well-known documentary director. Edward selected the last because he considers him the most trustworthy person to expose Black Nest."

Iron Fist paused for a second before continuing, "But recently our situation hasn't looked too good. Somehow, Black Nest found out that Edward was in Toulouse and sent many of their men after him. They even got a guy named Vincent to be their commander. We had to be very careful. Just two weeks ago, A group of unidentified militants raided Edward's residence, but fortunately, we evacuated five minutes before they broke in."

"What are you guys talking about?" Leah asked.

"We got lucky. We finally found the one we've been looking for," Zhang Heng answered.

An hour later, the whole 01, including Leah and Iron Fist, headed to the hardware store around the corner of the training hall. Zhang Heng had to act as the interpreter for both parties.

"This is also Mr. Gilm's shop. Oh, Mr. Gilm is the owner of the boxing hall. Back in the day, he was a very famous boxer. He made heaps of money in professional matches and took advantage of the cheap housing prices in Toulouse. He's bought some nice looking properties, but the training hall remains his favorite."

"What is Mr. Gilm's relationship with Edward? Why would he take such a massive risk by helping you?" Little Boy asked.

"We are completely unrelated to Mr. Gilm, but he has a past with Black Nest. His son was a loyal fan of Black Nest and collected all their merchandise. Then, the family was involved in a car accident, where his son was tragically killed. Mr. Gilm believed that the autopilot system supplied by Black Nest was the cause of the unfortunate traffic accident. Then, he sued Black Nest."

“So, what happened?” “Black Nest obviously won the lawsuit. They provided piles of data and test results to prove that the autonomous driving system was safe and reliable. But later, Edward found the flaws in the system and sent it to the court anonymously. So, during the second trial, Mr. Gilm won and received handsome compensation. He still hates Black Nest, though, and thanks to that, he is skeptical of all high-tech products. He hopes someone can stop Black Nest from launching the CTOS system.”

“Hah!” Philip smirked and looked at the surveillance camera above them.

“Don’t worry. This model isn’t connected to the internet. Edward uses it to monitor the movements out here,” Iron Fist explained.

The hardware store was already closed for the day, but Iron Fist had the key with him. He unlocked the door and spoke to the camera in English, “Edward, we’re coming in.”

After that, he pushed the door open and entered the shop. As he walked in, he turned to Leah. “He really cares about you. He’s mentioned your name many times before, and what worries him most is Black Nest doing something to you. So, yeah... it’s great to see you arrive safely.”

Zhang Heng did not translate what Iron Fist said this time. His brows knitted together as he looked around the unlit hardware shop. “Is there something wrong with Edward’s body?” he asked.

“Mm?”

“Edward left Garden’s address in the clue not only because it’s Mr. Gilm’s place, but so he can watch the training hall as well. In other words, he should have spotted his sister already. So why hasn’t he come downstairs?”

“Are you suspicious of me?” Iron Fist asked and cocked an eyebrow at Zhang Heng. Instead of explaining further, he immediately walked up to the attic above the top floor and knocked on the door to prove his innocence. Curiously, no sound came from inside.

Iron Fist looked taken aback. “Could he be sleeping?”

Slowly, Iron Fist pushed the door open. However, the moment he did that, a red dot appeared on his forehead.

“Careful...”

Before Zhang Heng could finish his sentence, Iron Fist’s head violently snapped backward, and he collapsed on the ground. A spatter of warm liquid landed on Zhang Heng’s collar.

“Sniper! Take cover...” Zhang Heng whispered as he scanned the room. There was a messy desk, a folding bed, and a telescope in front of the window pointed toward the training hall, but the room was empty.

### **Chapter 425 Do Me A Favor**

Fortunately, no one else had entered the attic except for Iron Fist. When Zhang Heng asked everyone to take cover, Leah and the 01 immediately retreated to the stairs. Thankfully, no one else was shot.

Zhang Heng spent half a minute looking around the house before withdrawing to a spot outside where the enemies couldn’t see him from the window.

The current situation had become very unfavorable for them. Black Nest had made a grand entrance by brutally pulling a hit on Iron Fist. Zhang Heng wondered if this was the same sniper that ambushed them while they were skiing in Grenoble.

Piercings once mentioned to Zhang Heng that the enemy was uncanilly sharp at long-range shots with his sniper rifle. Zhang Heng had experienced the Soviet-Finnish war, and under a fair fight, he wasn't afraid of snipers even if the opponent had the terrain advantage.

This time, however, time was against him.

Now that the sniper was in place, Black Nest's mercenaries shouldn't be too far away. He faced a dilemma, where even if he could eliminate the sniper, there wasn't enough time to do so. As long as the sniper was still alive, he and 01 would never be able to step out of the hardware store.

One one outcome could result from such a stalemate: Black Nest would soon surround the hardware store and kill them while they were inside.

Leah's body trembled slightly. She had just witnessed the death of a living person in front of her, and the shock and confusion in Iron Fist's eyes were fresh in her mind. Still, she was more concerned about her brother's safety, so once she calmed down a little, she approached Zhang Heng to ask about the details.

"Where is my brother? Did they kill him?"

"No, if Black Nest killed Edward, they wouldn't be waiting for us here then," Zhang Heng said. Taking his chances, he looked around the room for clues as to what condition Edward might be in. No signs of fighting or traces of break-in could be found, a good indication that Edward wasn't attacked.

That could only mean one thing. Edward must have left first because he managed to detect the threat beforehand. Hence, it was the only piece of good news that Zhang Heng got at this moment, and it also meant that the game didn't end here. Although Edward might have got away by the skin of his teeth, Zhang Heng and the 01 weren't so lucky, coincidentally crossing paths with the team tasked to eliminate Edward.

"What should we do?" Waldo asked nervously as he stuck to the wall like glue. "Is it too late to surrender now?" he asked in a trembling voice.

"Judging by what just happened, I don't think they will accept our surrender," Philip smiled bitterly.

The people in 01 were the elite of the elites in their respective fields. Of all the things, combat had never been their forte, and they had no way to deal with a group of armed thugs at this moment. Besides praying silently in their hearts, they could only sit and wait for their enemies to kill them.

In fact, Black Nest came faster than they thought. A large SUV stopped outside the entrance of the hardware store, and five masked men with hoodies jumped out of the car. Without saying anything, they barged into the store, kicking the door down while at it. These people were armed with submachine guns, and weren't to be trifled with. The stance the group carried with them proved they were a special force of some sort, and it was only a matter of time before all hell broke loose.

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Nonetheless, when Black Nest's goons stepped into the hardware store, they were presented with the opportunity to enjoy the torture Iron Fist had gone through. Zhang Heng pulled the trigger, killing three masked men as he charged toward them from the front of the store. One of them raised his weapon and aimed at Little Boy and was about to pull the trigger when Zhang Heng sent him off to hell with his two other companions as well. The remaining two assailants did not expect such a skilled fighter to be concealed within the store. Seeing that the situation had gone south, they attempted to escape. Zhang Heng, however, had no intention of allowing them to do so. He shot them from the back and extinguished their lives.

The dust soon settled, and dead were strewn everywhere. Zhang Heng's retaliation had caught 01 completely off guard and they were left in a stunned, petrified state. They all knew how good Zhang Heng's combat abilities were, but they did not expect them to be this good. It was a one against five battle, and although bringing along many useless teammates, he still managed to kill all of them.

The 01 team was speechless, forgetting to ask where Zhang Heng even acquired the gun from. When Waldo looked at Zhang Heng again, the man was no longer Bourne but was now a Batman.

In spite of the victory, Zhang Heng's expression hadn't changed much. He knew that the advantage only lasted for now since it was just the first wave of enemies. When the second wave arrived, they would be more prepared. In other words, upcoming battles would only increase in difficulty.

Ponytail finally recollected his thoughts after experiencing a massive assault on his senses. He quickly took out his mobile phone, "When I was available earlier, I installed a smart remote function on our car. We can remotely start the engine and drive the car here."

"No, don't drive the car here. The sniper is very good. Once we are in his field of vision, he still can kill whoever is in the car," Zhang Heng said, "Who has an electronic map?" "Me." Philip clicked into the navigation system.

Zhang Heng pointed at a place. "Get the car there," he said.

"This place is two blocks away, right?" Ponytail asked in surprise, "How are we supposed to get there? You said the sniper would kill us even if we use the car as cover. If we walk out of here, he will kill us within seconds! Are you trying to tell us to split up and try our luck?" "It doesn't make sense to go our separate ways. He has the time and bullets to kill us all," Zhang Heng paused, "...what I'm about to do next may defy common sense. So I was hoping you could all do me a favor and don't ask why afterward. Just don't ask how I did

it."

"Huh?" Philip and others hadn't the slightest idea of what Zhang Heng was talking about.

At the same time, the sounds of other vehicles coming from the street outside could be heard. The second wave of enemies was about to arrive. This time, they were about to face more than just one carload of ambushers.

Zhang Heng took out the Evil Wall that he had been carrying with him. The next moment, everyone from 01 finally understood what "defying common sense" meant. The wall at the rear of the hardware store

began to move like water. Thinking that he must be seeing things, Waldo rubbed them hard, and when he opened them again, he saw a door appearing on the wall's surface.

"Uhh, guys... did you see what I see?!" He turned and looked at Zhang Heng in shock, "How is this possible? How did you do it?" The moment he blurted out those questions, Waldo instantly remembered something and hurriedly covered his mouth again, "Oh, sorry, I didn't mean it."

Zhang Heng took the lead and went through the small door.

"Everyone follow me. Try to stick to the wall, and don't let the sniper spot you."

When Black Nest's goons finally rushed into the hardware store, O1 and the team were long gone.

### **Chapter 426 Zero**

The O1 Guerillas were still in shock. Although Black Nest had dispatched snipers at the ski resort last time, they weren't under fire at that time, and so, the fear was simply surreal to them. When the sniper killed Iron Fist, his blood splattered all over Zhang Heng's shirt. It made them realize that they had just crossed paths with death himself.

Everyone, including Leah, crouched under their seats, fearing that the flying bullets would claim their lives from nowhere. Two minutes later, Zhang Heng told them, "Okay, you can come out from the hiding. We are safe for now."

"Uhh... are you sure? I heard that he could snipe the farthest. How far did he shoot when he was being deployed at the ski resort?"

"We are in a city now, not an open environment like a ski resort," Zhang Heng explained patiently, "The route I chose has a building as cover. The snipers can't shoot us from here."

"That's a relief.." Waldo finally relaxed and returned to his seat.

Although out of danger, Ponytail wasn't looking too good. "Those people are not targeting us. Their target is Edward. Black Nest's patience is finally running out, and they do not intend to use peaceful means to resolve this matter."

"Edward is in a dangerous situation now. We must find him before they do." Semiprime said in a rare occurrence that he spoke up.

"But the only person who knew his whereabouts has just died in front of us."

As soon as Little Boy said these words, everyone fell silent again. Although still less than forty, Ponytail was the oldest among the team, and he'd never faced a life and death situation before. Ever since he got himself involved in Black Nest's and Edward's matter, he had witnessed death twice.

When Ponytail jumped down from the bridge, he survived miraculously somehow. However, Iron Fist was really dead this time. There was no way that he could survive that fatal shot.

"I've been thinking about a question along the way: how did Black Nest find us here?" Philip, who had not spoken in a while, asked.

"Eh?"

“No one knows Edward’s abilities better than us, but the guy who died just a few minutes ago said that Black Nest raided their residence two weeks ago. Judging from Edward’s character, he would only become more cautious. At the same time, he must have found out the reason behind it and took precautionary measures. But even so, Black Nest still managed to locate him two weeks later.”

“Are you trying to say that someone betrayed Edward?” Little Boy raised her eyebrows, “At a time like this, there are not many Edward can trust. Iron Fist is definitely not the one that betrayed him. After all, he is already, uhh... that way. So only Mr. Gilm is left, but considering what happened to his son’s family before, it is unlikely he’s on Black Nest’s side.”

“I’m not saying that there is a traitor among us, but that there must be something that allowed Black Nest to locate Edward,” Philip sighed, “unfortunately, we don’t know what that thing is.” “It’s CTOS,” Zhang Heng, who was driving, interrupted suddenly.

“Eh?”

“Black nest has connected CTOS to this city.”

01 looked at each other when they heard that, “...it’s impossible, isn’t it? CTOS isn’t even complete yet. And generally speaking, such a project needs to be approved by the House first.”

“Certain parts of CTOS have yet to be completed, and the algorithms haven’t been calibrated to their optimal level as well. However, the part of the system that collects personal data from the public was completed half a year ago. In theory, this toned-down version of CTOS is now online. As for its legal jargon, Black Nest didn’t get authorization from the parliament, but they are very powerful in Toulouse, and the city council is theirs. They’ve obtained a signed document from the mayor, allowing them to carry out some ‘preliminary experimental work’ in Toulouse.”

“What preliminary experimental work?”

“That’s where the problem lies. The definition of the phrase isn’t stated clearly in the document. That would mean Black Nest can do whatever they want at this point.”

“Including silently launching CTOS without the public knowing it?” Leah’s eyes widened.

“It seems like it.”

Before leaving the parallel quest, Zhang Heng wanted to figure out what exactly the number zero meant in the main mission. He did not get the answer from 01, and Edward’s murder didn’t yield too much useful information either. Zhang Heng spent half a month visiting people involved in the matter at that time, and he did not get anything useful from them. After that, he sneaked into Black Nest’s headquarters on the last day and found a copy of CTOS’s development records during its early days. According to the research and development records, Black Nest apparently launched an unfinished version of the CTOS system in secret to capture Edward.

The name of this system-Zero.

However, according to information Zhang Heng collected, Zero was only supposed to be launched two weeks later. Zhang Heng still had plenty of time to do the necessary preparations. Zero must have gone online earlier than scheduled because of the players’ behavioral changes.

Two weeks ago, Black Nest people raided Edward's room, proving that Zero must have been online at least one month earlier.

"Okay... we now face a city under close surveillance of Black Nest," Philip took a deep breath, "let me think about what we can do at this time?"

"Can you hack into the CTOS system?" Ponytail asked Waldo.

"I don't know. Edward once talked about CTOS with me. He and several other talented guys developed their advanced AI security, a system which continuously improves itself through machine learning. He boasted that even he couldn't hack into it. But you know me, I never thought that there are places in this world I could never go. It will take time, maybe weeks, maybe months, but they will eventually track me down. No... I should say, with the help of CTOS, they will track us down inevitably."

"I can hack into CTOS," Zhang Heng said, "but of course, my skills are only good enough to hack into the incomplete CTOS."

In the parallel quest, a group of hackers led by 01 fought a long war with Black Nest. During this period, the hackers had managed to achieve some small gains. However, every time they found a loophole, Black Nest would upgrade CTOS' security. In the end, the hackers had inadvertently made CTOS more perfect than before. It was nearly perfect, in fact, which was the group of hackers was in such a rut in the end.

But this wasn't the future. Zero was the early version of CTOS, and it surely had loopholes. Two months before they entered the small town, Zhang Heng was already more prepared than everyone in the 01 Guerrillas.

### **Chapter 427 You Want My Coffee?**

It was probably because the team had experienced too many unimaginable things in one night that the 01 did not appear to be shocked, but rather, desensitized when Zhang Heng said that he could hack into CTOS.

After seeing a solid wall melt before their eyes like warm chocolate, Waldo would have probably believed it if Zhang Heng claimed to be Thanos who had come to Earth in search of the Infinity Gems.

Amid the oblivion and confusion, Little Boy was the first to break the silence.

"Can you hack into CTOS and disable it?" she asked.

"No, I'm not going to do that. Now that Iron Fist is dead, we need to find Edward as soon as possible," Zhang Heng answered calmly.

Little Boy looked unconvinced. "Wait, don't tell me you're thinking of using CTOS to get to Edward?"

"Since Black Nest can find Edward using CTOS, I don't think they would mind sharing their search results with us," said Zhang Heng, "but first, I'll need to remove our mobile phones and equipment from CTOS's surveillance network."

On the 27th floor of Black Nest' Toulouse branch, Vincent's lips were tightly pursed as he watched the man in front of him sipping a cup of coffee.

The man was very patient. He had not spoken since he walked into the room, even brewing his own coffee without asking. With a set of seemingly cumbersome tools, he carved a leaf on the latte, as if he hadn't noticed the presence of a guest.

It was clearly not a very polite thing to do.

But Vincent was way past the age where he would be irritated by something like this. And since the person had not spoken, Vincent remained silent too, patiently waiting on the sofa.

While he was one that didn't mind waiting, someone else could not.

A particular sniper who claimed to be the best in the world was very upset. Rubbing his nose, he lamented, "Ah, I really can't figure it out. It's obvious that everyone works for someone, yet how is it that some think so highly of themselves that they feel superior to others?"

A slow smile spread across the face of the man enjoying his coffee. "Perhaps it's because I haven't screwed up before?" he scoffed and put the cup down, "...I've seen your resumes. Imposing, I must say especially yours, Mr. Vincent. You've practically become a legend after what you did as a mercenary and all that dirty work for the seventh division. And... Mr. Abu, the teenager with an addiction to the internet, but discovered accidentally to have extraordinary reflexes and a dynamic vision, then molded and groomed to become the best sniper there ever was. Such a motivational story should have been made into a novel."

"Since you know how close we are, why didn't you at least offer us a cup of coffee during the entire time we are here?" Abu answered, clearly miffed.

"Because I still couldn't wrap my head around one thing," the man leaned forward, smiling.

"Since the both of you are such outstanding individuals, even having groups of elite armed forces under your command, why then weren't you able to handle a weak technician?" he went on.

"Edward is no ordinary technician. He is meticulous and methodical, and his cautiousness, close to paranoia. You can see how sly he is from how he plays chess, always thinking about how he could set-up his opponent. He's very difficult to catch," Abu retorted, picking up an empty cup in front of him, "hey, my mouth is a bit dry, pour me a cup of coffee too, please. No foam, just more sugar..."

The man opposite him chuckled, actually picking up the coffee pot. He was about to pour the coffee over Abu's cup when he suddenly let go, and with his free hand, he grabbed Abu's arm.

Caught off-guard, Abu jumped out of the sofa, slipped, and fell into the coffee table. He screaming in pain as nose came in contact with glass. But it wasn't over yet. The man opposite him had gotten up as well, grabbing both of Abu's hands. He held them back in a handcuff position, before finally stomping his boot on the young man's face.

A bout of rage flashed in Vincent's eyes. Although he never really liked Abu, the young man was still his subordinate. When the man stepped on Abu's face, it indirectly meant stepping on Vincent's face as well. Vincent reached for something at his waist, but the quiet and unmoving red figure standing by the window was much faster than he was. The next thing he knew, the woman's gun was up against his temple.



“You want my coffee? Sure, here, have all you want. Come, come, don’t waste any of it,” the man mocked in a chummy tone. He leaned in on the leg that was on Abu’s face so that the young man’s cheek was pinned against the table. The pot he had just let go shattered, spilling out with it steaming hot coffee that quickly moved towards Abu’s mouth and nose.

“Did you people really think I had a good temper?” The man growled, “I’ve meant to say this, but what the heck is wrong with you French? So rude, yet you think so highly of yourselves. Oh, and you’re always late. You can’t even do a simple task properly. Slow-witted, yet hate accepting the leadership of others, not to mention your constant insecurities about getting your power snatched from you.

“Please, try counting the number of opportunities you must’ve wasted. There are so many of you in Grenoble, yet you couldn’t watch over a little girl, letting her slip under your noses. You had even more in Toulouse, yet all but Edward’s shadow is missing. Headquarters even used the unfinished CTOS to help you find those people. Weapons, personnel... you have everything you need, yet, is this how you repay me in the end?!”

“You let Edward slip away two weeks ago. Okay, let’s just attribute that to your carelessness. But last night, you fell at the same spot over and over again. What are you? A goldfish? Does your memory last only seven seconds?! Please! Can’t you be a little more ashamed of yourselves? If this happened in my neighboring country, you would have been disemboweled-one of the few things I admire about them. You, on the other hand, stroll into my office and demand for coffee. Tsk, tsk, tsk... I should crush your head under my feet right now. At least you’d contribute to the world, reduce carbon emissions perhaps.”

As the man spoke, he put even more weight on his feet until Abu’s face was completely contorted. Vincent couldn’t hold it in anymore. “Enough! You want the authority I have-I can give that to you... I would even follow your commands voluntarily. I planned to explain yesterday’s failed operation to headquarters; to give up my position and let you take over. Are you satisfied now?” Vincent said coldly.

At that, the man loosened his grip on Abu’s hands and removed his boot from Abu’s face. The smile returned to his face. “Great. If you’d said that earlier, I wouldn’t have had to lose a coffee pot. I rather liked that one. Too bad, I won’t be able to use it for coffee anymore.”

“Give me one hour. I will hand you the job, then the team, over to you.” Vincent immediately got up from the sofa. Obviously, he did not want to stay in the room any longer.

Abu clutched his bleeding nose and sheepishly followed Vincent from behind. Just as the two were about to walk out the door, the man’s said, “Just in case, I have a question to ask you. Are you going to do something stupid and irrational... such as asking your subordinates to pretend and obey our orders?”

Vincent kept walking, “Relax. We both know how that would end, but you’d better kill Edward because you know that there are still many in the headquarters who don’t trust you. If you fail, you will end up worse than us.”

“Thank you for the reminder.”

After Vincent and Abu left, the woman in red asked in Mandarin, “Are you sure you want to use such brutal means to seize power?”

“Trust me; I know how to build a good relationship. A harmonious and friendly partnership is the ideal picture, but unfortunately, we do not have the time. We all choose to be on their side because Black Nest is powerful, but who knew how complicated their internal structure was,” the man frowned, “Black Nest is like a clumsy giant, strong but stiff. I can’t believe it took us more than two months just to gain some authority. Zero is the same. We were only able to register for it three weeks ago. We could have grabbed the players from the opposing side and ended the game before they even had a chance to react. We can’t go on like this. It’s too slow. We need to speed up this giant.”

### **Chapter 428 Don’t Waste Your Friend’s Heartfelt Sandwich**

In the parallel quest, twelve years in the future, the whole of Europe was under the control of CTOS. Little Boy also taught Zhang Heng how to survive in such an environment and keep a low profile.

Little Boy had to admit that even extremely cautious individuals couldn’t escape the eye of the obscenely invasive surveillance cameras and electronic systems. As the leader of 01, Leah spent most of her time wandering around the United States, China, and Russia.

Although Edward was one of CTOS’s designers, he wasn’t part of the team responsible for developing the algorithms that collected personal data. However, his understanding of its system was better than most of his counterparts. That said, he was all alone now, and there was nobody around him he could trust. Getting discovered was only a matter of time now.

This time it took only less than four days for Black Nest to locate Edward’s new hiding spot.

The coffee man was in a Hermès suit this time. He held a cup of freshly ground coffee and slowly entered the command car, where the woman in the red dress was waiting for him. As compared to the casual-looking man, she seemed to be better equipped. Wearing a bulletproof suit, she had a 9mm submachine gun in her left hand, a dagger was placed on her arm, and her favorite mini pistol was strapped to her thigh.

The most eye-catching thing on her was the katana on her back with a blade over 80cm in length.

“Wow, it looks like you are well prepared.”

“And it looks like you are late,” the woman in red scowled icily.

“Sorry. It took me a while to grind the coffee.” The man sat down opposite the lady and yawned.

“Did you know that this time, we will likely encounter players from an opposing faction?”

“Yes, I heard that the guy named Abu had killed a player before,” the man replied and sipped a little coffee from his cup.

“Then, you should get serious too,” the woman in red frowned.

“Relax, Scarlet, now that we have the power to command, we are not far from the end of the game,” insisted the man, shifting his bottom to a more comfortable position.

His appearance also triggered the dissatisfaction of Abu at the back of the car. “Look at how arrogant this guy is. You sure piss me off real bad. Why did you stop me from shooting him the night before?! I

was confident that I could keep the whole thing low. After that, we could have just reported to headquarters that he was killed in action.”

“No. Our priority now is to kill Edward. Your other matters have to be put on hold first. That includes your personal grievances between you and your target. Settle it after everything is over,” Vincent said.

“Ah, it’s the old-fashioned saying again,” Abu stretched out his hand, touched his bruised cheek, and proclaimed in an affronted tone, “I think we can handle the task of killing Edward.”

“Really? How did we let those people escape the hardware store four days ago?”

“Well... maybe they turned into ghosts and went straight through the wall?” Abu smiled awkwardly. He felt discouraged as he approached the matter, being something that puzzled him for a very long time.

He had surrounded the people in the hardware store, leaving them nowhere to escape. However, when the second team rushed in, they found no one inside. Those people vanished into thin air right under his nose.

It wasn’t out of pure spite that they got scolded for being worse than trash. However, anybody who was beaten up or stepped on the head would surely be extremely unhappy.

“I’m sorry. Let’s watch them do what we couldn’t,” Abu sneered. Vincent’s expression was as cold as ever. “We will know soon,” he answered.

Edward’s new hiding spot was in a natatorium. After the last attack, he had become more cautious. With the help of Mr. Gilm, there was now more than one hiding spot for him. One was the hardware store, and the other one was a newly opened natatorium.

The natatorium was a very strategic hiding spot since it was one of the few places where surveillance cameras were nonexistent. He worked as a cleaner and night watchman and was permitted to stay at the natatorium all day without going out. Of course, it was all a cover, and he had to abandon all electronic devices on him. Still, despite the overthought precautions, Zero managed to find him anyway.

It was all because of the girl in charge of the cash register at the front desk. She had the habit of writing a diary on the Internet. She recorded stories about this weird new colleague, and Zero subsequently retrieved it thanks to a keyword.

Right now, Scarlet and the coffee-man were rushing to the natatorium with the 01 team.

Edward got up early to change the water for the two swimming pools. At the same time, a group of guests arrived one after another. Ignoring them, Edward had his back facing the swimming pool as he cleaned the tiles on the ground.

After a while, Edward noticed something. He raised his head and saw a sweetly smiling girl beckoning him over. The natatorium provided staff meals, but only offered lunch and dinner, and not breakfast. This wasn’t a big problem for Edward, where two meals were sufficient to keep him alive.

However, the girl in charge of the cashier noticed that he hadn’t been eating breakfast, thinking that he must be trying to save up. Feeling sorry for him, she prepared an extra set of breakfast in the morning and brought it to him.

Edward told the girl that she did not need to do this, to which she nodded, but still insisted on bringing him breakfast every morning. To avert suspicion and appear as normal as possible, Edward accepted the kind gesture.

The girl then mouthed to him, asking him to eat with her in the staff lounge. This had been going on every day for the past few days. Hence Edward did not suspect anything. He put down the mop in his hand and followed the girl to the lounge, but as soon as he opened the door, he was shocked. A stranger was sitting in the room, holding a coffee cup. "Jared, he said that he's a friend, and he wants to surprise you, which is why I didn't tell you in advance."

Goosebumps sprouted all over Edward's skin, and his heart started pounding like mad. He instantly felt threatened and wanted to flee the place as soon as he could.

What the man said next, however, stopped him from running. The stranger put down the Starbucks cup in his hand and said, "You must be quite lucky. We found you before Black Nest did."

The cash-register girl was a little confused. "Black Nest? What kind of Black Nest?" she asked with her head cocked to one side.

"Let's go; Black Nest will arrive in about four minutes. Anything you need to pack?" "I'm taking my backpack with me."

It appeared that Edward had calmed down, and he did not doubt Zhang Heng's identity. Zhang Heng then stuffed the box of homemade sandwiches on the table into Edward's hands.

"Okay, I'll see you in the parking lot in 60 seconds," Zhang Heng added, "Eat it on the road. Don't waste your friend's heartfelt sandwich."

## **Chapter 429 I'll Do It Alone**

"Who wants to tell me who's fault this is? A few minutes ago, our lovely target was still working in this natatorium. When we got here, he is gone."

The technicians were all extremely nervous right now, knowing all too well that the newly appointed boss wasn't someone easy to get along with. Abu's slightly swollen face was the best proof of that. He pretended to be serious, but everyone saw the creases between his eyebrows. They almost laughed out loud.

"Who else can you blame? If you didn't waste our time, we should have arrived here a few minutes ago, and Edward wouldn't have run."

In the end, Scarlet turned out to be the one to give him an unceremonious scolding.

"Let Zero seek out individuals entering and exiting the natatorium in the past few minutes, and look for the most suspicious person."

Immediately, the technicians started working, fingers furiously tapping away on their keyboards.

The coffee-mug man looked helpless. "Can't you see? There is a traitor among us! Someone leaked our plan to our enemies. If the traitor is not found, how are we supposed to carry out our plan?" he scowled

“It doesn’t matter. You go ahead and look for whoever it is. I’ll be here alone, doing whatever needs to be done,” Scarlet replied with that chilly undertone.

She walked to the last truck and asked the driver to open the door. At the same time, the technician chipped in, seeming slightly happy. “I found it! Just three minutes ago, Edward got on a blue Dacia Sandro, and they passed us,” he said in excitement.

“Very well, send me their location,” Scarlett said, then got onto the truck.

“Are you serious? They’ve been gone for a long time now. If they are smart enough, they’ll abandon the car. How are you going to track them down and capture them then?” the coffee man frowned.

The moment he finished his sentence, he saw a motorcycle jump out of the truck, doing a wheelie and rushing forward at an unimaginable speed.

“-Dodge Tomahawk, the fastest bike-like vehicle produced by Chrysler Automobiles in the United States. Taking after a Batmobile, it came equipped with a Dodge Viper 8.3-liter V10 engine, churning out a healthy 500 horsepower. Coupled with its four wheels, it could reach a terrifying speed of 676 kilometers per hour.”

Since a bike was a lot smaller than a car, it was also nimbler and more maneuverable in the city. The rider, however, had to be skillful enough to dodge all the obstacles in its path. In the blink of an eye, Scarlet’s figure disappeared from everyone’s eyes. “Hehehe, did you see that? This is the ‘ability to execute’ that I’ve always emphasized,” the coffee man said, “If all of you possess such zeal and enthusiasm, we could easily take out ten Edwards. Okay... next, those who know where Edward was before this, come to the natatorium with me. I want everyone to... have a little swim and relaxation.”

A sneer appeared on Abu’s face after he heard what the boss said. However, his smile froze at the corners of his mouth when he saw the demon-like figure turning and looked at him.

“Abu, let’s start with you.”

“Who are you?” Edward in the rear seat asked.

Zhang Heng informed him at the natatorium that he wasn’t from Black Nest. Edward too did not doubt it since Black Nest didn’t need to conceal their identity. It was also why Edward followed Zhang Heng into the car without asking a single question. Now that the two of them were finally safe, Edward went ahead and asked what was on his mind.

Zhang Heng handed Edward a communicator, to which Edward frowned, “You may not know that Black Nest is constantly monitoring every corner of this city. They only found us because of this thing over here. They have erected a server in the area, and as long as the sensor detects the analog signals, they will be intercepted. We know that it’s not limited to only cell phone signals, radios, and other electronic devices. An AI system will be analyzing all this information.”

“It doesn’t matter. The line has been encrypted,” Zhang Heng said.

Edward took the communicator and listened to it. A familiar female voice could be heard from the other side of the communicator.

“Brother, are you all right???” “Leah? Are you here too?!”

“Yes, Luke and the 01 Guerrillas rescued me from Black Nest. It was all rather thrilling, but fortunately, we are all fine. But the person who’s been taking care of you... got killed by Black Nest. .”

“Sorry for getting you involved in this dangerous matter,” Edward apologized.

“No, you are just doing the right thing. The ones who should be sorry are those who make the world even worse than it already is,” Leah said.

Edward was silent for a moment. “I made a mistake,” he said, “When they recruited me, they promised to use my technology and their capital to make the world a better place. I believed them, but the results are completely different from their original promise. This is my fault, and I must correct it myself.”

“Don’t worry; we’ll fix it together.”

Zhang Heng drove the Dacia Sandro into a parking lot. Once he received Edward’s coordinates, he set off immediately to prevent the Black Nest from getting there before him. He did not have time to make too many plans, telling Semiprime that he would meet him on the second floor of the parking lot. Semiprime would drive a new car there to replace this one, and when all that was done, the three would leave together in the new car.

Zhang Heng received news that Semiprime had reached the designated location half a minute ago. Hence, he drove the car to the second floor below the basement. When he saw Semiprime waving at him from a distance, Zhang Heng stopped the car, and Edward was about to open the door.

“Stay in the car,” Zhang Heng said sharply with a frown.

After that, Zhang Heng opened the door of the driver’s seat, and he heard a rumbling sound coming from the entrance, like a giant steel beast roaring. The sound became louder and louder.

Zhang Heng then said to Semiprime on the other side, “Get down and hide.”

Out of nowhere, a hideous-looking bike-like vehicle appeared in front of the three of them, and the woman in red raised her submachine gun. Once she pulled the trigger, a rain of bullets started flying in all directions.

The glass shattered, and Zhang Heng rolled over to the concrete pillar next to him. The woman on the bike was fixated on shooting Zhang Heng. Immediately, she directed her weapons to the back seat of Dacia Sandro.

Her goals and intentions were obvious. As long as Edward was dead, the winner of this round would be decided. There was no need to fight with other players.

The next moment, she detected a threat approaching her. She focused her strength at her waist and jumped off the Dodge Tomahawk. At the same time, she threw away the submachine gun in her hand and drew the katana to deflect the incoming arrow. Zhang Heng did not stop there. He shot three arrows in one go, but Scarlet managed to dodge all of them with her incredible skills and inhuman reflexes. The expression on Zhang Heng’s face remained unchanged. He drew the Paris Arrow from his quiver and put it on the bowstring.

## **Chapter 430 Fierce Fight**

The left arm? Scarlet managed to figure out where the arrow would land. Immediately, she tried to turn left to dodge the arrow, but the next moment, her pupils suddenly contracted.

Zhang Heng released the bowstring, and the Paris Arrow curved along a weird trajectory that defied the laws of physics, catching Scarlet off guard. The three ordinary arrows shot before this were to confuse her. Zhang Heng unleashed his Paris Arrow finally revealed his true color the moment he shot the Paris Arrow.

This was the arrow that would determine it all!

However, this time, it was Zhang Heng's turn to be shocked. Scarlet brandished her katana into the air, drawing an arc. She twitched her head a little and pushed the Paris Arrow knocking it slightly to the right before it actually hit her. It grazed her cheek, leaving a long wound that blood slowly oozed out from. Simultaneously, the Paris Arrow's powerful trajectory correction function turned it around, and it was now flying towards the back of Scarlet's head.

However, it had lost most of its kinetic energy, and Scarlet managed to catch it firmly with one hand. Before she could even catch a breath, a blade struck at her again. It was never Zhang Heng's style to greet before a battle. The moment Scarlet attempted to kill Edward, she had indirectly told everyone who she was without saying a word.

On the second floor of the parking lot, two people were locked in battle, giving their best to dodge each others' attacks. Scarlet panted with labored gasps, feeling the uncomfortable sting when sweat dripped into her eyes. However, what disturbed her even more was Zhang Heng's relentless attacks. Ever since she acquired the Mikazuki Munechika, she had shifted all her focus on mastering katana. Soon after that, she started delving into close-quarters combat, realizing her forte as she went on.

Players killed by this katana had reached double-digits, and the name Scarlet gradually spread among the player circle.

This was the first time she encountered such a difficult opponent. Although Zhang Heng was using a blade to fight just like her, his close-quarters combat skills were far superior. At the same time, he exuded this faint domineering aura.

She realized that such skills on the blade couldn't have been mastered in a few years. There was nothing fancy about his techniques, yet, his every calculated strike carried the intention of killing her. They were crude, yet lethal. She would have lost the battle by now if it weren't for the Mikazuki Munechika.

Deep down inside, Scarlet knew that if as her opponent was holding an ordinary saber instead of a dagger, she had no chance of winning. Even with such an unrefined weapon, he'd already managed to push her to the brink of defeat.

Then, Zhang Heng stopped unexpectedly.

It wasn't because he couldn't bear fighting with her anymore. He knew very well that the blade in his hand was almost at its limit. After clashing multiple times with Scarlet's hotshot weapon, it was riddled with cracks. Scarlet's katana, on the other hand, seemed to suffer virtually no damage. Such was the difference in quality between an off the shelf product and a finely crafted work of art.

After fighting with Scarlet for a while, Zhang Heng figured out that her katana must be a game item. She must have dodged his Paris Arrow, not out of sheer luck, but due to the katana. During the battle, he clearly outshone her techniques and skills, but every single time, she somehow managed to neutralize Zhang Heng's lethal blow. She only lasted until now, thanks to the 'magical' sword.

Semiprime and Edward, on the other side, were utterly dumbfounded. They had never seen anyone fight like this before.

"You guys leave first, don't wait for me."

Immediately, the two snapped out from their stupor. Edward got out of Dacia Sandro and got into Semiprime's car. There was no reaction on Scarlet's face. She knew that Zhang Heng was there. In other words, she couldn't capture or kill Edward.

She then spoke into the headset, "I need support." It was all she said, turning it off and focussing entirely on the battle. She took a half step back, holding the katana with both hands in front of her chest as if facing her ultimate nemesis.

Scarlet knew that as long as she dragged the battle on until the cavalry arrived, she would ultimately win.

She had always disliked how Mr.Coffee dealt with the matters at hand. Initially, they had five players on their side, but he thought that they were too troublesome. In a shocking move, he killed them all, leaving Scarlet and him to be the only two players still alive in their faction. She had to admit that he was very powerful. Besides, he knew how to speak and read in French. These were the reasons why she was willing to give up the position of commander.

Zhang Heng was the most powerful enemy that she had encountered so far, but if she joined forces with Mr.Coffee, and coupled with Black Nest's support, she was confident of eliminating the threat.

Zhang Heng knew exactly what Scarlet was thinking

The natatorium where Edward was hiding wasn't too far away, probably around ten minutes' drive from here. Zhang Heng did not know that Mr. Coffee was busy catching traitors in the military camp. Normally, since Scarlet arrived here first, her companion must not be far away.

This was also why Zhang Heng let Semieprime and Edward go first because there was not much time left for him. Scarlet might be only defending to drag the battle on. Combined with her formidable katana, it would prove difficult to transform his stellar swordsmanship into a desirable result. This also meant that the battle wouldn't be ending anytime soon.

Suddenly, Zhang Heng tossed the blade at Scarlet.

While she tilted her head to dodge the blade, Zhang Heng immediately rolled back to the Dacia Sandro that he parked nearby.

Scarlet held the katana in one hand, and with the other, pulled out the mini pistol on her thigh. She then carefully aimed at the spot where Zhang Heng was hiding, taking special care not to get too close, knowing how terrifying her opponent's archery skills were.



“Do you... need our help?” Little Boy spoke through the communicator, a rare hint of tension in her voice. She could not see what was going on in the parking lot. All she heard was Zhang Heng sending off Edward and the Semiprime first. On the other hand, he had been at the parking lot for some time now, and his allies were getting increasingly worried.

“No, just meet at the designated location. I’ll go there now.”

As he spoke, Zhang Heng dragged a big bag out from under the back seat, spending 20 minutes assembling whatever was in it. For the last step, Zhang Heng inserted the Infinite Building Block into the item. He then unveiled the freshly minted RPG, holding it in his arms.

At the same time, Scarlet was uneasy. Zhang Heng had been using the car as cover for some time. If she were to be in his shoes, she would have wanted to leave this parking lot as soon as possible. Although hiding in the car was a good exchange for short-term safety, it also gave her an opportunity to catch a breath and regain control of the situation. Once Zhang Heng showed up again, she would shoot at him.

For a combat expert like Zhang Heng, he should not make such a low-level mistake.

At the back of the car, Zhang Heng adjusted the sights of the rocket launcher. At a time like this, he would not show up in Scarlet’s field-of-vision. After all, a rocket-grenade was slower than the speed of a bullet. Zhang Heng held his breath and estimated Scarlet’s position from the sound of her footsteps. He then aimed at the ceiling from where she stood and pulled the trigger.