

48 Hours 431

Chapter 431 Explosion

Pedestrians on the streets nearby could hear the deafening explosion from the second floor of the parking lot. Zhang Heng went down on the ground immediately after he pulled the trigger. The resulting shockwave was so powerful that it pinned him tightly on the floor. At the same time, Dacia Sandro beside him had moved by more than ten centimeters.

Seeing that the situation did not turn out well, Zhang Heng had put up his arms to protect his head, but even so, he sustained some minor injuries. Thankfully, the good old Dacia Sandro had blocked most of the debris that would have otherwise caused serious harm.

Earlier, only the car's rear window shattered, but now, every pane of glass on the car suffered the same fate. Sharp pieces of broken glass rained all over Zhang Heng. The air was filled with dust and smoke, and there was debris everywhere. It looked like the aftermath of a warzone as if the entire place had been hit by a missile.

The explosion knocked Zhang Heng out, causing him to experience short-term tinnitus. His mind went blank. After about twenty seconds, the ringing in his ears subsided, and his hearing gradually returned. Pushing himself off from the ground, he dusted off the concrete on his body.

A giant crater could be seen at the spot where the rocket-propelled grenade hit. Steel rebar embedded within the concrete jutted out like jagged thorns, and what was left of a Porsche hung out of the hole with its wheels hanging outside.

A pile of concrete and debris now covered the place where Scarlet was standing. Unless a miracle happened, it would be impossible for her to survive. This time, since Zhang Heng's opponent was killed by the explosion (unlike how he killed his opponent with his bare hands during the Apollo Training Camp quest,) he wasn't rewarded any game points.

He stumbled a little, retrieving the Paris Arrow from a distance of about ten meters and walked to the rubble to make sure Scarlet was really dead. Only a few pieces of red cloth were seen were dangling out of the giant concrete slab. However, Zhang Heng managed to spot something else in the gap between the two cement slabs.

As he picked the katana up, he heard a notification from the system.

[Game item found – Katana (unidentified, broken)]

Zhang Heng pulled out the katana without much effort. Unfortunately, like its previous owner, it did not survive the explosion. Its blade was broken, and its lower part was nowhere to be found. He knew it was special the moment he held it in his hands, and a glint of sadness emanated from the cracked blade, seeming like it knew it was broken and was mourning its destiny.

This was the first time Zhang Heng came into contact with a damaged game item, and he had no idea if the sword could be repaired. If only there were more time, he would have looked for its remaining pieces.

However, six minutes had passed since the battle between him and Scarlet ended. Zhang Heng was a little surprised that Black Nest hadn't arrived yet since the explosion was loud enough to alert the police officers nearby. Not wanting to take any more risks, he picked up the Dodge Tomahawk and jumped on it.

Forty seconds later, Zhang Heng thundered out of the parking lot with the monstrous V-10 thumping between his legs. He chose to travel on a route with less surveillance, making it difficult for Zero to lock on to his position.

The current CTOS system was launched in a hurry when it was still semi-finished. The cameras used to monitor the street were from the transportation department. Zhang Heng took advantage of the many shopping malls and subway stations around him, and after changing transportation modes several times, he managed to rid himself of all the surveillance cameras on the street. He met up with the 01 on a trash cleaning boat on the Cannon River.

"We successfully escaped Zero's surveillance. There are no cameras on the river, and I'm confident enough to say that we are safe... for now," Little Boy paused and looked at Zhang Heng, "What the hell happened in that parking lot? I heard the explosion. Are you okay?"

Zhang Heng had already changed two sets of clothes while escaping, but his hair still contained some traces of dust.

"I encountered a difficult opponent. It wasn't that hard to defeat her, actually... I was mainly worried that Black Nest would capture me if I was stuck fighting for too long. So I had to do something minor to get out of there."

"That's not something minor. You've got reporters rushing over there, and it's already on the news on a few channels. Some are even suspecting a terrorist attack," Waldo said while facing the computer.

Zhang Heng took a towel from Little Boy and wiped his face and hair. "Let Black Nest worry about it. They'll find a way to settle the problem. After all, they still want to kill Edward. Things are starting to get more serious now."

"We should move Edward to a safe place as soon as possible," Ponytail said.

"Thank you, but I can't leave yet. I have to fulfill my promise and expose what Black Nest has done to the public."

"But now, these guys are starting to panic. They will do whatever it takes to kill you before you can speak to the public," Philip warned, sounding worried.

"Or you can pass the information to one of us, and we will announce it on your behalf," Ponytail suggested.

"No, it took me a long time to find three honest and selfless people I think I can trust. I took risks communicating with them, establishing a connection, and gaining their trust. The three of them represent traditional media, emerging online forums, and documentaries. I need to tell them the truth face-to-face. It has to be me, and it can only be me. Only via that can it be a credible matter. Black Nest has enormous power, but they can't cut off all three channels simultaneously. As long as these three channels work together, Black Nest will eventually meet their demise," Edward insisted.

“When?” Zhang Heng asked. “The team will come to Toulouse in two days.”

“Black Nest has already hacked your mailbox. So, they probably already knew about the meeting.”

“No, I encrypted my mail this time, and it will be destroyed after I read it. Even if they hacked into my original mailbox, they wouldn’t know who I am contacting.”

“Even so, it’s just too dangerous to risk it,” Ponytail shook his head, “How long will it take to complete the interview?”

“I have a lot of things to tell them, and since they don’t work in our field, I have to explain everything to them in layman terms. I estimated that it would take three days or two and a half at the least to complete the interview.”

“Did you know, that’s long enough for Black Nest to kill you a hundred times over?!” Waldo asked in disbelief.

“Yes, so I may need some help,” Edward looked at everyone, “Words cannot describe how grateful I am for everything that you’ve done for me. Really, I have known you people for so long now, but I have never been able to meet up with all of you. I wish that we could have met in a better place. There’s nothing I can do about it since the matter has almost gotten out of my hand. Perhaps when everything is over, we can reintroduce ourselves in a nice café. But now, we’ll have to complete what hasn’t been completed.”

Chapter 432 This Is Reality

When Mr. Coffee arrived, reporters were already swarming the parking lot.

“Let the victim’s family go in first,” said Mr. Coffee as he lifted the cordon.

At the same time, a blonde policewoman who was standing nearby suddenly walked over and stopped him.

“Sorry, no entry here.”

“I didn’t want to do this, since I’ve despised such people in the novels and movies. But one has to admit, it’s pretty cool doing it once in a while,” Mr. Coffee coughed lightly, before suddenly turning serious, “Who is your chief? Ask him to come see me...”

The policewoman frowned. “Sir, if you continue to cause trouble, I’ll have to arrest you,” she insisted sternly.

“I bet you won’t do it, because, let me tell you what’s going to happen. In exactly half a minute, your phone is going to ring, and your chief will ask you to let me go in,” Mr. Coffee smiled.

Having freshly graduated police academy, the blonde policewoman still had a heart full of passion for upholding justice. Whatever Mr. Coffee just said triggered that very passion. With one hand on the handcuffs on her waist, she pointed menacingly with the other, saying, “No. The law is sacred and inviolable.”

“I like how you turn so serious when you’re talking to me,” Mr. Coffee winked.

The moment Mr. Coffee was done talking, the policewoman's cell phone rang. Her expression changed the moment she saw who was calling. She walked away, answering the call without looking back. Mr. Coffee could hear the policewoman arguing with her superior, but somehow, she appeared defeated. Her boss must have said something harsh, too, for when she walked over, she was sobbing.

"As I said, the world doesn't work the right way most of the time. It's a pity, but this is reality."

Mr. Coffee had already spotted Vincent, first to arrive at the parking lot. The puffy middle-aged man next to him should be the chief of the police station. The two were walking together, and Vincent made a hold-on gesture with his palm.

Mr. Coffee turned to the policewoman, "Justice and evil are just two different factions. There is no distinction between them. The most powerful side will claim victory in the end, but no matter which side you choose, you stick to your principles." After that, the policewoman looked to be deep in thought.

At that, Mr. Coffee smiled lightly, turning his attention to Vincent and the director.

Vincent's face was virtually expressionless.

"I didn't know you had the ambition to be a mentor," said Vincent.

"I don't have anything to do anyway," Mr. Coffee rubbed his hands, "So? How did it go? Is my companion dead?"

"No, but she is seriously injured and is receiving treatment below."

"Tsk tsk, that woman is just amazing. Even an RPG can't kill her. Just like me, she is a monster as well. Let's go check on her."

Nas

On the second floor of the parking lot, Scarlet's eyes were shut when she was carried into an ambulance. Her left shoulder was severely injured, and her scapula suffered from a comminuted fracture. The doctor had just repositioned her index and little finger that was garishly bent 90 degrees upward. He even fixed one of her knees that had popped out of its socket.

Mr. Coffee walked up slowly to the ambulance, "Wow, if it isn't our lone knight... you don't look too good, eh?" "If you think you can kill me and take away my game items in the state I'm in, just bloody do it already," said Scarlet.

Mr. Coffee sat down across Scarlet. "Tsk tsk, you seem to have misunderstood something," he scoffed.

"I'm not a murderer. I killed those players because they were too weak! Not only did they do nothing to help us, but all they could think about was the loot they'd get at the end of the game. But you... you are different.

"Just like me, you are the selected. We are special. These boring appetizers are about to end, and the main course will be served! The war is about to begin. When that happens, only the strong will live. Obviously, a lone wolf will not survive. Admit it, you need a companion, and I need a companion. We are like... well, a perfect match, should I say, just like soy milk and youtiao."

“Just give up already. Even if I need a partner, I’ll never choose you,” Scarlet replied coldly.

“Why? I have achieved 18 consecutive victories. If you count this game, it will be my 19th time claiming the win. It is difficult to find someone as good as me,” Mr. Coffee exclaimed wide-eyed.

“Careful of your overconfidence. Your 18-game winning streak may just end this round.”

“Huh?!”

Mr. Coffee raised his eyebrows, interested in what Scarlet had to say, “Come on, let’s talk about who you fought against? How many people are there? And how strong were they?”.

Scarlet closed her eyes as she leaned her head on the stretcher. “I had only one opponent. I can’t gauge his age, but that guy’s skills on the sword are immaculate. It is safe to assume he’s reached lv3 in swordplay. He’s practiced for at least ten years, and he has a lot of actual combat experience. I believe he’s killed many people, but his attacks carried no hostility. No, the man has steady emotions, almost expressionless with no fluctuations.”

Mr. Coffee was a little taken aback as if he’d just discovered a panda. “He won with pure skill, instead of relying on a game item like you?” he asked in disbelief, “Hah! There are there still crazies like him who would spend more than ten years practicing their swordsmanship? Marksmanship would be a lot better, don’t you think?”

“Yeah, I thought so too before I met him, but it turns out I can’t even defeat him with my Mikazuki Munechika,” Scarlet grimaced.

As soon as she stopped talking, somebody in charge of cleaning the scene ran happily towards her while holding a cutting blade. “Found it! We have found what you want!” he shouted excitedly.

In his haste and excitement, he tripped over a piece of jutting steel, and his body leaned forward. The next thing he knew, his hand was bleeding

“Careful! It’s a sharp blade...” Scarlet chipped in, taking the broken blade with her hand that could still move. A hint of sadness flashed through her eyes, and she carefully put the broken blade away.

“When you told me about your opponent, I felt excited,” rejoiced Mr. Coffee, “I always thought this was another ordinary game. I didn’t expect to have this much fun!”

Scarlet was puzzled, “Aren’t you busy looking for an alliance for the future war? That guy is not weak. Why not make him your ally?”

“You have to admit, having a teammate of the opposite sex is always more exciting,” Mr. Coffee scoffed.

Scarlet was too lazy to pay any attention. After a while, she spoke again, “I will quit this round. You can complete the game yourself. I will use a mission failure exemption card to offset the punishment.”

“Hey! Hang on, will you? I’m still here. Try to do nothing and enjoy the victory once in a while. Maybe you will like it,” laughed Mr. Coffee.

Chapter 433 She’s Also My Landlady

Zhang Heng was wrapping the broken blade in canvas when he heard footsteps approaching “We completed the plan according to your instructions. Want to take a look?” Little Boy asked.

“Good. I’ll be there in a minute,” Zhang Heng answered, but he didn’t budge from where he was standing. He pointed at a brightly lit arch bridge in front. “Is that Pont Neuf*?”

“Yes, it’s also called Pont de pierre*. Built in the sixteenth century and repaired for almost a hundred years, it is still used today. It’s considered one of Toulouse’s places of attraction,” Little Boy walked up next to Zhang Heng

Under the moonlight, the reflection of the bridge on the river against the sea of burning city lights gave off a beauty few words could describe. It was simply magnificent.

The two gazed in silence at the spectacular view. A moment later, Little Boy spoke up again. “If everything goes as planned, we will meet those guys from the newspaper forum tomorrow. When Edward is finished with the interview, we’ll transfer him to a safe place. How about you? Any plans after this?”

“Hmm?”

“Will you return to your country?”

“Oh, if everything goes well, most probably. My passport is about to expire soon anyway,” said Zhang Heng. As soon as the ninety days were over, all players would be sent back to the real world. Since he could not tell this to the 01 Guerillas, Zhang Heng used his passport as an excuse. Coincidentally, his passport would also expire in ninety days, making for an acceptable explanation. “I still have no idea why you’re willing to get yourself involved in the entire thing. Unlike us, you’re not from here, and you don’t live here... But hey, whatever it is, I still want to thank you,” Little Boy said.

“Don’t need to thank me,” replied Zhang Heng, “I’ve learned a lot from all of you throughout this time. Consider it helping each other out.”

Little Boy nodded and was about to return to the cabin when Zhang Heng suddenly said, “Make more friends and live a happier life.”

“What?” Little Boy thought she must have heard wrong.

“Other than these people from 01, you probably don’t have any other friends, right?”

Little Boy was taken aback. “How do you know that?” she gasped, “We’re all geeks, and we don’t really care what the public thinks of us. For me, 01 is enough.”

“... perhaps you’re right. I take back what I said.”

“Will we meet again in the future?” Little Boy asked.

“Perhaps someday; I’d like to try the cookies you baked.”

Little Boy frowned. “Fine. I’ll learn when I’m free, but I can’t guarantee they’ll taste good.”

“Trust me, you may not be a genius in the kitchen, but when it comes to baking, you’re practically a Michelin star chef.”

Zhang Heng then returned the game console to Little Boy.

The highest record on it was now his 999999 points.

“Is it just me, or do we actually know each other?” Little Boy asked, looking puzzled. “No, I just happen to know someone who’s almost exactly like you.”

“Is she your friend?”

“Mmhhh, and she’s also my landlady,” Zhang Heng answered, “Better get an early rest. We’ll be busy again starting tomorrow.”

In the conference room, Vincent could clearly feel Mr. Coffee’s excitement, and the woman who was assigned with him was now gone.

After the explosion in the parking lot, she simply dressed her wounds, returned to her place, packed her bags, booked a flight, and took a taxi to the airport. Three hours later, she was gone from Toulouse. Everyone in Black Nest was flabbergasted. And after Mr. Coffee’s rectification movement, the whole team was even more saddened. Many had been complaining about the two people sent from headquarters, and some of them even hoped that Vincent would step forward and stop all this nonsense.

However, they were all declined by Vincent. Since surrendering his position as leader, he had done his best to accommodate Mr. Coffee’s every request like a good deputy would, and thanks to his almost omnipresent poker face, no one really knew what he was thinking

The technician wiped the cold sweat on his forehead and finished the report. “We fixed the flaws in Zero so the enemy can no longer use it to collect information,” he said.

“So, you’re saying that the swimming pool incident happened because they used Zero to find Edward?” Mr. Coffee put both his legs on the table, fiddling a spoon with his hand.

“Yes... that seems to be the case,” the technician nervously stammered, growing even more nervous by the minute.

“Relax. I’m just asking you a few questions. Even if your answer’s not satisfactory, I can’t possibly use this little spoon to kill you.”

The joke was in no way funny, but the technician forced himself to smile.

“I just find it hard to accept that a toy that costs tens of billions of euros to build has such weak protective measures. Didn’t you say that this thing is very secure, that even if someone did find a loophole, it would take more than three months to crack? But... it hasn’t even been four weeks since this thing went online,” Mr. Coffee grumbled as he tapped the spoon on the table with a slow, menacing rhythm.

The technician was on the verge of tears. “I... I don’t know either,” he managed to croak.

Only making that guarantee to Vincent and the others, he did not expect it to come back and bite him, and so soon too. Until today, the technical team still marveled at their adversary’s ability to sniff out and

exploit vulnerabilities in the system. It was hard to imagine that anyone at all would be able to pull that off in such a short amount of time.

“Who could it be? Edward? He knew CTOS like the back of his hand, and is also a very skilled hacker, right?”

“No, after doing some research, we agreed that this is not Edward’s usual method of attack.”

“Then who is it?”

“I... don’t know,” the technician answered awkwardly.

“Will there be other attacks on Zero?”

By this point, the technician had lost all confidence. “Probably not. Uhh, I... I don’t know either,” he babbled.

“Don’t you have any other lines besides I don’t know?” Mr. Coffee sighed, “I could hire someone off the street for a couple of euros to replace you so he can tell me ‘I-don’t-know’ all day long.”

It was then that Vincent spoke up. “We came across a very good technical team in Grenoble —it’s possible they did it.”

“You see that? Now that’s professional,” Mr. Coffee clapped his hands, “From this point onward, we must consider the existence of this team of technicians whenever we make plans. Okay, the next question... why did Edward choose to hide in Toulouse?”

“We’ve already looked it up. It’s because he knows a man called Jimmy. Thanks to an accident that killed his son, he hates Black Nest,” the technician quickly answered.

“No, he was waiting for someone,” Vincent corrected, “He wants to reveal all the information he has to the public, but since he’s worried about his sister’s safety, he hasn’t done anything. He doesn’t have to worry about that anymore, though.”

Mr. Coffee looked interested. “How does he plan to do that?”

“Based on his character, he won’t just select one channel. Besides, he will make sure to choose the most lethal method, knowing how he’s made up his mind.

“Very good. Monitor all the airports, train stations, and highways—find out which journalists, public figures, or influencers are coming to Toulouse. Whoever they are, they will definitely be meeting with Edward. And then...” Mr. Coffee paused, “...we show up and kill everyone.”

Translator’s note:

Pont Neuf: New Bridge, also known as Pont de pierre (Stone Bridge) is the oldest standing bridge across the river Seine in Paris, France.

Chapter 434

Combat Proposal

Blagnac Airport, the sixth largest airport in France, is located next to the Airbus assembly plant. Less than a 20-minute drive from the city, it was also a few of the places monitored by Black Nest.

Mr. Coffee got all the passengers' names before the plane landed. Three names on the list aroused his interest. One was a news reporter, the other a documentary director, and the last a forum moderator. They were all famous individuals in their respective fields, and it was merely a 'coincidence' that the three of them got on the same plane. It was impossible that nobody would notice it.

The Black Nest technician who discovered the list immediately sent it to Mr. Coffee, anticipating his praise, grinning from ear-to-ear. However, Mr. Coffee only held the list for a long time. "What do you think?" he asked Vincent, completely ignoring the technician in front of him.

"It's a trap," Vincent said, "With the skills of the technical team on the enemy's side, I believe they can hack into Zero. I don't believe changing a few names in the airline's boarding system without anyone knowing would be a problem for them."

The coffee man slapped his thigh, "Well, what do you know? It's a damn obvious trap, isn't it?! Are they looking down on us? Are there even such idiots who would fall for such a trap?"

The person in charge of the technical team looked embarrassed, "Then... shall we... resummon the team tasked to watch the enemy?"

"No," Mr. Coffee smiled, "Did you get anything from the tracking team you applied from headquarters?"

"Not yet. Those people did not attack Zero again, and we have strengthened our guard for now. If our opponent makes a move again, we will know."

This time, the head of the technical team was confident enough to make such a promise.

"Besides, the drone has also arrived," he went on, "It allows us to monitor places that the surveillance cameras can't cover. We followed your orders and entered the information and faces of the potential suspects into the database in advance. The city's surveillance cameras and drones can now scan every single person in the city. This time, we'll definitely find them in the shortest time possible."

Mr. Coffee said nothing, turning to Vincent instead. "Mr. Vincent, I heard that you were a mercenary and participated in several wars. I want to ask you a question."

"Please, ask away."

"What would you do if you're trapped in a dangerous situation, where you're completely surrounded by your enemies?"

"Sitting and waiting is the most dangerous approach. The best way to get out of a sticky situation like this is to move around as much as possible, disrupt the situation, and devise a way to escape. It's the only way you can create an opportunity."

Mr. Coffee rubbed his chin.

"It seems the enemies think the same thing as well. Rather than seeing this list as a botched trap, it is more like a war book," he said.

“War book?” Little Boy was puzzled.

“Black Nest will take the bait,” said Zhang Heng.

It was difficult for him to explain the rationale behind it to Little Boy. Edward wanted to meet the three people he had been communicating with for a long time to expose CTOS’s dirty secrets. This would seriously threaten Black Nest, and they would use everything at their disposal to stop it from happening. As long as Black Nest deployed its personnel at several transportation hubs, there was a high probability that they would lock on to their target.

“There is nothing wrong with the airport’s power outage plan, but we have to draw Black Nest’s people away-especially the sniper, he’s just too dangerous.”

“All we did was change the boarding information. Think it’ll fool Black Nest?”

“Oh yeah, it will,” Zhang Heng said affirmatively.

The main objective of this round was to either help Edward escape or assist Zero in capturing Edward. On the surface, it seemed that this would result in only two endings for these players. There was, however, another possibility. When the quest’s duration ran out, and if Edward neither escaped, nor did Black Nest kill him, players from all factions would lose the quest.

No one wanted to see such results.

Although an ending that benefitted nobody was very much dreaded, it was still possible. After all, only five days remained for the quest, and it was too risky for Zhang Heng to give up now. Be that as it may, he was confident that he could survive another five days.

On the other hand, such a result was acceptable for Black Nest. As long as they managed to stop Edward from contacting the media, they could slowly play hide-and-seek with him in the city. But then again, it would surely be unacceptable for the players who chose Black Nest’s side.

In the eyes of Vincent and Little Boy, the name list wasn’t even worth being called a trap, but in the eyes of players like Mr. Coffee and Zhang Heng, that list served a larger purpose.

“Is this an invitation to start a duel in advance? This is unexpectedly refreshing. Oh, shit, the proposal is making me so excited,” Mr. Coffee scratched his head.

Vincent rarely spoke since he handed over command to Mr. Coffee. It was usually Mr. Coffee asking the questions, and Vincent answering them accordingly. This time, though, he couldn’t hold himself back.

“We have the advantage now, and as long as we don’t mess up, the enemy will not be able to defeat us,” he proclaimed.

“You’re right, but if we can use the opportunity to cut off their source, it will extinguish the threat once and for all,” said Mr. Coffee.

“But what if this is just a distraction?”

"I can understand your worries. This is my plan. It's three in the afternoon now. Whether I can kill the guy on the enemy's team or not, I'll bring our people back before dark. I'll leave the place to you for the time being," said Mr. Coffee adding a reassuring pat on Vincent's shoulders.

Vincent seemed a little helpless, "How many people do you want?"

"I don't need too many. Just get me a small team. And oh, I need that guy as well. He'll be useful in the upcoming battle," said Mr. Coffee as he pointed at a man standing behind Vincent. He was Abu, and he was trying his hardest to pretend he did not exist.

Since the night before yesterday, Abu stopped talking back or humiliating Mr. Coffee. Instead, there was a touch of fear in his eyes. It was Vincent's first time seeing Abu behaving in such a manner, and it only served to fuel his curiosity on what happened between the both of them. But since Abu never spoke about it, he had decided not to ask about it.

Abu's face changed when he was named, but in the end, he had no choice and followed Mr. Coffee's order.

"Don't cry. It might be an opportunity for you to see something hard to see in life. You should be happy."

Mr. Coffee then turned around to look at the technician on the other side. "Watch the three baits. See where they are headed."

"Yes, sir." The leader of the technicians hurriedly left after receiving the order.

Mr. Coffee clapped his hands.

"The party has already started. Alright, pack up and get ready to move! Let's not let our hosts wait too long!"

Chapter 435 Pursuit

As the plane landed and the three targets on the list walked out of the airport, the drama between Edward and Black Nest finally kicked off.

Black Nest's personnel quickly locked on to all three and hacked into their electronic devices. At the same time, Mr. Coffee and Abu sprung into action, with the two elite action squads, closely following them from behind. Vincent was dissatisfied with Mr. Coffee's decision to act without authorization despite knowing all too well that it was a bait. Still, since what was done was already done, he could only try to control the damage as best he could and fix the consequences afterward. Now, he had to readjust the remaining manpower and layout. These were issues that Ponytail and Little Boy should have been worried about.

Thus, the battle between the players began!

In the beginning, more players chose Black Nest's side. Ironically, their only player left in the end was Mr. Coffee.

"Many fail to understand simple logic. No matter how much trash adds together, it just ends up a bigger pile of trash," said Mr. Coffee.

Abu felt a little uncomfortable, especially when he and Mr. Coffee were the only two in the car. So, he poked his head out of the window, pretending to enjoy the scenery.

“Of course, I’m not talking about you; you are still useful,” Mr. Coffee added leisurely.

Those words finally ticked Abu off. “If you want to kill me, just do it! Is it that fun to ridicule me every day?” he lamented in an irritated tone.

“To be honest, it’s exciting,” Mr. Coffee said.

“Well, to make up for your unpleasant stay with me, I’ll allow you to move freely from now on.”

“Huh?” Abu was surprised.

“I’ve studied your resume. You are a talented sniper, lurking in the dark. Seizing the opportunity at the right time is your forte. It is a waste of talent letting you follow orders. So... this means you won’t have to take any more orders from me,” said Mr. Coffee,

“...I hope you won’t let me down.”

“Aren’t you afraid I would just leave?” Abu raised his eyebrows.

Mr. Coffee was resolute, brimming with conviction. “You are a smart man. When I saw you for the first time, I knew that although you don’t like me, you’d always choose to stand on the side of the winner, and I am born a winner,” he said, tone filled with confidence.

Abu fell silent, and after a while, he looked up. “Did you deliberately give me a chance that night?” he asked.

“What do you think?” Mr. Coffee asked rhetorically without answering.

“...I need a car.”

Then, this is your car from now on.

.....

Twenty-five minutes later, Black Nest’s convoy arrived in front of Toulouse Town Hall Square, one of the Toulouse’s most central and visited attractions.

The technician reported to Mr. Coffee, “The three people have been here for a while, but no one left, and their cell phone signals disappeared as well.”

O

“Interesting, were they worried that we might have brought a sniper with us? He deliberately chose the place with most people,” Mr. Coffee took a look at all the people around him. Other than tourists, there were booths trading secondhand goods and street performers littering the way.

“Bring out the drones to scan the area.”

“Okay...” the technician paused, “But getting the drones into the city hall won’t be easy.”

“It’s okay. I’ll bring some people with me to search the city hall,” Mr. Coffee replied and ordered a group of people to follow him. All of them were asked to carry only a pistol that was strapped to their waists. After that, Mr. Coffee showed a special permit from the police to the guard at the door, and they were allowed into the city hall.

Toulouse’ city hall was built in 1190, but among the medieval parts of the building, only the gate and courtyard of Henry IV was preserved. Most of the structure was completed after 1750, with golden corridors and paintings hanging all over the place. Its interior was one that exuded magnificence. But Mr. Coffee wasn’t here for sightseeing. All eleven of them scattered in different directions and started an intensive search of the place. The drones operating outside the city hall gave them a bird’s eye view of the situation.

It did not take long for them to locate their targets in the crowd.

Just as Mr. Coffee approached them, one of them suddenly yelled, stepped over the warning sign, and rushed to a painting next to him. The tourists were left in shock, when they saw a lunatic splashing his drink on the treasured oil painting, while his two companions took off their pants.

Before they could make any more disturbing antics, they were stopped by the security guards. Mr. Coffee looked on at the troublemakers with a smile.

“It’s too naive. Are you planning to use this method to save your life... call the chief, and we will arrest these people on behalf of the police.”

But as soon as his voice dropped, a group of reporters came out of nowhere and started taking pictures, attempting to cover the sensational piece.

The moment Black Nest’s operatives took a step forward, they were forced to stop again. They turned to look at Mr. Coffee in a frustrated manner, and at the same time, the voice of the technician could be heard over the communicator.

“I found the suspected Asian in the bar that night. Our goal is now on a bus,” he reported.

At the same time, the identities of the three people in front of them were also revealed. They were three new interns recruited by the newspaper.

“Tsk tsk. Are they trying to force me to make a choice here?” Mr. Coffee’s tone did not change, but his glare was terrifying.

The captain of the squad did not want to get into trouble at a time like this. When he remembered what Vincent told him before they left, he had to muster up enough courage to speak up. “If we arrest those three men on behalf of the police, the reporters will definitely come after us,” he said.

Mr. Coffee didn’t insist on the previous order to be carried out. “Do I look like someone who never thought about this possibility? “Follow that guy and don’t let him get away. When the problem over there is resolved, we’ll go to the police station to get someone,” Mr. Coffee changed his mind.

“Roger that.” The team leader breathed a sigh of relief and immediately commanded the team back to the car.

The two drones had already caught up with the bus. Mr. Coffee quickly boarded it, followed closely by Black Nest's convoy.

With the help of Zero, the Black Nest fleet picked the fastest route. Simultaneously, the traffic lights on the roadside were manipulated to ensure that the Black Nest could catch up to them. The distance between the two parties quickly shortened. However, as the bus stopped at the next stop, the people went into the subway entrance.

Mr. Coffee was a step too late. Now that Zero was online, all cell phones in the city could be turned into monitoring devices. Soon, he managed to locate the target in the subway, and not long after that, the pursuit had led the two out of the city.

Chapter 436 Reaper's Scythe

The blue Renault finally stopped outside an old manor on the outskirts of the city.

According to the intel, the estate's former owner was a wholesale seed merchant. After going bankrupt, his wife left him, and the bank repossessed the land. In the end, having no place to go, he committed suicide in the living room. As a result, the bank failed to sell the property, and it had been left abandoned ever since.

There was no one to take care of it, and the once beautiful courtyard was now overgrown with weeds. Strangely, the sweet iris planted by the merchant when he was still alive was thriving well.

Mr. Coffee got out of the car and looked up at the sky. It was gloomy, and low, dark clouds foretold that heavy rain was around the corner. Closing the car door, he took a look around. "Is it here? It's a good place to send him to his maker," he said.

Picking a bulletproof vest from the back seat, Mr. Coffee put it on, then collected his Remington M870 shotgun from the trunk, along with three grenades. "Let's give our friends a heartfelt welcome."

The assault team dragged two heavy machine guns from the bed of the truck and set them up on the grass outside the manor.

Once the weapons were hot, they began firing at whatever that came into their sight. Bullets poured out from the barrel, shattering glass, wooden doors. Everything unfortunate enough to be in the path of the flying shells were shredded mercilessly. The mindless shooting lasted for a full five minutes, stopping only after they had depleted their bullets.

Mr. Coffee threw two grenades at the manor before taking off his earplugs.

"Now, it looks better! Get ready to go in."

The assault team behind him immediately picked up their assault rifles, crouched through the broken door, and charged into the house.

It was a monumental, disheveled mess inside. Whatever valuable furniture had been moved a long time ago, leaving whatever that was left to be utterly decimated by the rain of lead. The blackened blotches on the once white walls were in no thanks to the grenades. The assault team searched room by room, but they found nothing.

“It makes no sense. Our drone saw him get into this building, and he didn’t leave after that!” said the captain while frowning.

Mr. Coffee carried the shotgun and walked to the end of the hallway. “That can only mean that there are rooms we haven’t searched yet.”

When the captain heard that, his mood lightened slightly, and his face relaxed. The team had searched every corner of the manor above ground, and it was almost impossible for anybody to make a move without being noticed. Hence, the only place they hadn’t searched was underground.

Immediately, Mr. Coffee spread the team out, sweeping the place again from the start. True enough, after a more comprehensive search, they managed to find an entrance to a hidden tunnel behind the fireplace. However, an unfortunate event occurred whilst the secret door was being opened. It was a booby-trap, where an arrow launched from a crossbow, and penetrating the chest of an unlucky one.

The very untimely death of a Black Nest personnel instantly made the rest of the team very skittish. The team leader quickly sent in a second person to replace the dead man. With the help of a glow stick, he managed to take a look around. It was a small wine cellar, built by the merchant before his business went bust. It stored countless bottles of wine from all corners of the world.

The team member reported his findings to the captain, and unbeknownst to him, a dark figure suddenly emerged from behind the wine rack and fired several shots. Consequently, another Black Nest elite was killed.

At the exact moment, the other Black Nest agents poured in and began firing back at the O1 Guerillas with everything they had. After emptying their magazines, they ceased fire and walked up to the wine rack in anticipation.

Lo and behold, there was no one there

Mr. Coffee made a gesture, and two of his men entered the tunnel from the front. A small gunfight ensued as the those in the tunnel retaliated. Then, once again, yet another Black Nest member was killed and the other severely wounded.

In just a short period, Black Nest’s elite assault squad was reduced to a mere four members. Yet, despite paying such a hefty price, they hadn’t even seen the opponent’s shadow. This sorely irked Mr. Coffee, but nonetheless, he remained indifferent, appearing unaffected by the massive casualties his team suffered. “Has the drone picked up on anything?” he asked as he tossed a glow stick into the tunnel.

“No.”

“Then, take a look around and see if there are other buildings around the manor.”

“There is a warehouse. The tunnel leads in that direction,” answered the captain once he got confirmation.

“Leave two men to guard the entrance. The rest will come with me to the warehouse,” Mr. Coffee replied.

Vincent had trained the Black Nest team well. Upon hearing Mr.Coffee's command, he efficiently divided the assault team into two teams. Mr. Coffee took the four people behind him, left the manor, and walked towards the warehouse in the northwest direction. Before they could make any headway, though, they came under attack again.

Instead of feeling surprised, Mr.Coffee lit up, since it meant they had been on the right track all along. And this time it was the enemies' last stand. He could feel it from the way they were attacking. The enemy fire felt extraordinarily aggressive, as if it was their last hurrah, and they had nothing to lose.

Overwhelmed by the zealous O1, Mr. Coffee had no choice but to look for cover with his four men following closely behind.

On the other side, the lone Abu walked through a small forest. He had arrived before Mr. Coffee and got to witness the battle that had just taken place, even hearing in the entire time on the communications channel. However, he chose to remain silent.

Mr. Coffee judgment on him was correct. Abu preferred to move unrestricted as compared to face-to-face combat, finding his own secluded nest to settle in. Besides, he wasn't a defensive sniper, constantly electing to go full offense, especially if he could land a one-shot kill.

His prey often didn't know where the bullet came from until the very last moment of their lives.

This was also the principle that Abu adhered to-the true reaper would come when one expects it the least. No one would ever see the reaper's face or hear his footsteps.

Abu took a look at the warehouse, mapping out several suitable sniping points in his mind. When the two men began clashing, he ran to the warehouse, nesting up in one of those spots. After setting up his weapon, the warehouse's south window with the target beneath it came into his sights.

The weather wasn't looking too good today.

Due to the thick clouds hovering in the sky, it was darker than usual, and way more humid. For an elite sniper like him, this wasn't too much of a problem. 1.7 kilometers was no different than staring at his target in front of his eyes.

The only troublesome thing was the incoming heavy downpour.

Fortunately, raindrops falling from the sky were far slower than bullets flying through the air. Abu adjusted the scope, and now, there was nothing to stop the reaper from swinging his sickle. "It's not your day today," Abu murmured, gently pulling the trigger.

As the loud gunshot echoed in the air, the target in the warehouse unsurprisingly fell to the ground.

Abu let out a sigh, all the frustration in his chest of Mr. Coffee finally lifted. What happened three days ago was like a nightmare. It had been haunting him, never expecting such a horrifying demon to exist in the world.

"Anyway, there's no way for you to defeat that demon. I will do you a favor and send you to your maker."

Abu kept away his gun and enabled the call function on his cellphone.

“It’s done.”

Mr. Coffee and the others walked out of the bunker after getting confirmation that the target was eliminated. “What? I thought he was a powerful and ruthless character. Did he just die like that?” asked Mr. Coffee cynically.

Suddenly, another gunshot thundered from inside the warehouse, catching Black Nest’s team off guard. At least three members were shot, with Mr. Coffee taking one in the leg as well. He fell to the ground with a groan as bullet penetrated flesh with a sickening spatter.

Abu was shocked to see the situation, quickly looking into the scope again. It was then that he witnessed something incredible. The “corpse” that lay on the ground had been resurrected, and now, he was shooting like a madman.

Chapter 437 Sniper Duel

How could this be?!

Abu had always been very confident in his marksmanship, never expecting to miss his target twice in just three days. At this point, his confidence was greatly shaken.

Soon, he managed to calm down and properly figure out the problem.

Glass!

Earlier, he faintly felt that there was something wrong. The glass on the warehouse was too clean. Obviously, it did not match the dilapidated warehouse, looking to have been replaced only recently. This glass had a higher refractive index than ordinary glass, the reason why his previous shot did not land on his target.

Instead, the opponent feigned death and defeated an ambush.

However, the guy’s good luck ended here. Now that the problem had been discovered, a good sniper wouldn’t fall for the same trap twice.

Abu immediately laid on the ground again, calculating the glass’s refractive index from the previous bullet hole and adjusting his sights to the new trajectory.

A few seconds later, the sniper’s sixth sense saved his life.

Abu sensed something wasn’t right, decisively giving up on shooting as he rolled to his side with the sniper rifle in hand. That very moment, a bullet landed on where he laid earlier, splashing mud on his face. If he had not moved, his brain matter would have splattered everywhere instead of mud. Abu knew the precariousness of the situation he was in. Estimating his opponent’s position based on the shot, he rolled on the ground several times and ended up behind a small tree.

It appeared that just like him, his opponent was an elite sniper as well!

With only one shot, Abu managed to figure out where his opponent was hiding. Being the experienced sharpshooter that he was, he was actually excited instead of panicking. As long as his opponent human

and not a demon, there was no reason to fear. He was also grandly proud of his skills, especially in the field of sniping. Abu never thought there would be a rival to his talents.

Many marveled at his talents when he played video games, where his lightning-fast reflexes and instant responses came naturally as drinking water. There was no need for any practice—he would get the highest kill count in the game. His only trouble was that he kept getting reported to the officials that he was a cheat, and the game’s management frequently banned his account by mistake.

Unceremonious as it may sound, it might be the only way ordinary players could beat him.

Things were different now that he was holding the real sniper rifle. No one could ban him anymore since this was the real world. He had become unbridled, unfazed in the sights of another sniper that matched his unopposed skills.

Abu closed his eyes and allowed himself to be one with his surroundings. He attempted to capture and filter out certain sounds that could point him in the right direction, hopefully gaining better insight into who he was fighting and eventually getting an advantage. Judging from the opponent’s position, he was now in a safe spot. If the opponent wanted to attack again, he would need to change his position.

And as long he moved, he would make a sound. It might be no different from the wind blowing over grass or the rustling of fallen leaves to the ordinary person. Still, Abu was one who could distinguish insignificant details often ignored by everyone else. Judging by the previous shot, Abu could tell that he and the opponent weren’t too far apart. All he needed was a little movement, and he would be able to pinpoint the enemy’s exact position accurately.

And Abu firmly believed that his opponent would make a move eventually. It wasn’t because he was more patient than the enemy, but rather basing his judgments on what was happening beneath the manor right now. Although the warehouse guy succeeded in carrying out a surprise attack, eventually eliminating three Black Nest agents, another two members were still fighting back. Not to mention Mr. Coffee, who started cursing incessantly at everybody after getting shot in the calf.

Besides, two powerful assault team members were still in the wine cellar. After hearing what had happened through the communicator, they had instantly rushed over to the scene. In other words, those in the warehouse were still at a disadvantage. As of now, they had unleashed their trump card, and if Black Nest got serious, they would be in some serious trouble.

By this time, Abu had basically figured out the combat plan of the other party. While he was thinking about killing his target in the warehouse, his enemy was thinking about how to kill him as well. No one liked the fact that a sniper was lurking in the shadows somewhere, ready to extinguish the life of whoever that came across his sights.

This only exacerbated the bad situation of those in the warehouse. The opponents didn’t randomly choose this location for the final battle—the topography of the warehouse and the high-refractive glass had been intentionally placed. It was a trick for him to expose his position first. Abu knew very well that he did not need to worry at all. His enemy should be the one to worry about the current situation. Just as he expected, his opponent took the first step after staying silent for half a minute. Abu instinctively picked up his rifle, rolled out from behind the tree, and fired a shot.

It was a pity that the scope wasn't used, seeing how he failed to hit the target. Abu was in no hurry, though. He hid behind a large rock and waited for his enemy to act again. On the other hand, the storm had been brewing for a while, and it would soon hit landfall with a fury. A heavy downpour would severely inhibit vision, but the good news was that the rain would affect both sides. It was still fair play. In fact, Abu was confident that he would perform better than the other sniper in such unfavorable weather.

The enemy must be anxious now, Abu thought. The enemy wouldn't have been expecting the sudden rain, and it would surely ruin whatever plan he had in mind.

...right?

Did the heavy rain disrupt Zhang Heng's plan?

Well, Zhang Heng did not think so, since he too, was expecting the heavy rain. To be precise, he was actually the one who summoned the downpour with his Weather Marbles.

Abu had to be the most formidable sniper he'd met after Simon.

Zhang Heng's shooting skills increased to Lv. 2 in the Mannerheim dungeon. Being his teacher, Simon's shooting skills were obviously a tad higher, at Lv.3, and possibly approaching Lv.4. As for Abu, although not as skillful as Simon, there was a high probability he had Lv.3 shooting skills.

Of course, a duel between snipers wasn't entirely determined by skills alone, where factors such as strategy and environment would influence the outcome. Abu was right

-Zhang Heng had always been a meticulous opponent, wanting to make sure that his enemy was completely decimated.

Unfortunately, Abu had miraculously dodged Zhang Heng's most confident shot. Despite the miss, Zhang Heng didn't flinch, waiting patiently... waiting for the rain to fall. As the storm blurred the surroundings with an impenetrable mist of water, he took out the Filter Lens from his pocket.

This meant the horrible weather would only affect one side in this battle.

Chapter 438 You Won, But I Didn't Lose

(Name: Filter Lens]

(Grade: D]

(Function: Preserves the user's field of vision up to 300 meters-user will be unaffected by factors including light and natural occurrences]

Zhang Heng and Abu were about 270 meters apart, just within the Filter Lens' range. Equipped with this D-class prop, the blur of the rainstorm within a 300-meter radius of Zhang Heng's field of vision magically vanished, and visible light had improved significantly.

Abu, on the other hand, was struggling. Constantly harassed by the pouring rain, all he could at the moment was to keep his ears open and try his best to locate his target amid the roaring patter.

As Abu was in deep concentration, his right ear twitched slightly. Then all of a sudden, he rolled out from behind the rock into a crouched position, raised his gun, and pulled the trigger. Without checking to see if he had hit the target, he hurried over to the next bunker.

This coherent set of actions took only less than two seconds, enough to put all the snipers in the world to shame.

But just as he was about to stand up again, he felt a sharp, overwhelming pain stab his waist.

Abu's eyes widened, and the searing pain was suddenly overcome by confusion and bewilderment as his knees gave way to onto the muddy ground.

Though his mind told him that he was in grave danger and should get to a safe place as quickly as possible, the harsh reality was that Abu had lost all sensation in his body. He couldn't even lift a finger.

No one knew the power of a sniper rifle better than Abu, himself a sniper.

He had once landed headshot on a target two kilometers away with a sniper rifle. The poor guy's head exploded like a watermelon. Abu didn't even have to look down to know how bad his injury was. That shot had not only blasted a fist-sized blood hole in his body but had also severely shattered his spine.

He was on death's waiting list, and very near the top at that.

Zhang Heng took his time retrieving the backpack he had used as bait.

Even though there wasn't much aiming involved, Abu's blind shot still managed to hit the backpack, and the Lego bricks inside it spilled all over the ground. It was a testament to the sniper he claimed to be, where such fine marksmanship could only be described as otherworldly.

Even Zhang Heng, an opponent, couldn't help but put him in the highest regard. So, after he finished tending to his backpack, he walked to Abu's body to bid him farewell for the last time.

Abu was losing blood fast. All too soon, he was at death's door, falling in and out of consciousness. As Abu slipped further into the jaws of death, he gave a final look of reluctance but there was nothing he could do in the last moments of his life. His mind replayed the scene of the fight, confirming again that he hadn't made any mistakes and had done everything he could. Alas, everything ended in such irony. Now he lay in the mud like a defeated dog.

Though he couldn't speak, Zhang Heng knew what Abu was dying to ask. So, he reached into his pocket and showed the dying man the Filter Lens. A sudden burst of energy snapped Abu's eyes open. Then, miraculously, as if regaining the confidence of the best sniper in the world, he croaked in a raspy voice, "You... you won, but I... didn't lose?"

"Mm," Zhang Heng nodded.

When he finally got his answer, a look of content permanently plastered on Abu's ashen face.

Zhang Heng had taken the crown in this battle, gaining him 20 points.

As the sniper duel concluded, the battle at the warehouse was about to reach its peak.

Once the men from the wine cellar arrived, Black Nest had the upper hand in firepower, even flying in two drones through the window to act as their eyes. Those holding up the warehouse were further driven into a corner. There were no catching of breaths, as a hail of bullets showered on them from all directions to the point they could barely raise their heads an inch.

When he saw the enemy outside about to barge in, Piercings screamed into the walkie talkie, "Are you f*cking done?! If you don't get your ass here soon, you'll be dragging my body out of this place!" This time, to his great relief, he wasn't greeted by silence from the other end. "In position," Zhang Heng answered as he pulled the trigger. The enemy running in the front suddenly leaped into the air. His rifle was raised, and he was about to face Piercings, but he did not even get the chance to fire. In fact, he'd never had the opportunity to fire ever again.

Zhang Heng, hiding in the forest, was in sniper mode. There were hardly any adjustments to be made, as he pivoted the barrel of his gun, and the next target was located almost immediately. As the second shell left the rifle's elongated barrel, the target's bone shattered to smithereens, and he fell to the ground, rolling and screaming in pain. Undoubtedly, it was a sight never to be witnessed by children. To Zhang Heng, this shot was a dud. The Filter Lens was only effective up to 300 meters, and since the warehouse was way out of range, his shots weren't as accurate as they should. But they were sufficient.

He fired eight shots in total. Two missed, and the remaining six hit their targets, Mr. Coffee included. Now, they were all but sprawling across the ground.

While Piercings swore that he would never be bait again, the battle had come to an end. He stuck his head out, and other than faint groans and whines, the world was quiet again. Not to be missed, the two drones that were attempting an escape were also shot down by Zhang Heng. Finally, he put away the rifle, got up, and walked down the slope.

"Have you been notified by the system?" Piercings asked.

"Huh?"

"I mean, any opposition players among these people?"

Piercings walked out of the warehouse, armed with a pistol as he examined the bodies with his toes and putting the poor bastards who were hanging on by a thread, out of their misery.

"No," replied Zhang Heng. It was one of those things he was intrigued by. In terms of sheer firepower, Black Nest had the upper hand, and since they accepted the battle, players had to be behind it.

In theory, a player should be among the ones who fought this battle.

Zhang Heng had seen the woman in red from the rival team, but he wasn't sure if she was dead or alive after what happened at the parking lot. As for the rest of the players, he knew nothing about them. Mr. Coffee seemed to be the group commander, but there were no notifications from the system even after getting gunned down. "Could the players from the rival team be so afraid they completely relied on Black Nest to eliminate us?" asked Piercings. He had already checked all the corpses on the ground, except for coffee man. The latter had performed relatively poorly in the battle, shouting orders to attack at his subordinates, while he pulled back. When Zhang Heng shot the man running in the front, the

coffee guy immediately turned around and ran away. Unfortunately, that only kept him alive for only half a minute longer.

Chapter 439 Enough Talking

Piercings had checked his surroundings thoroughly, but when he walked up to the last corpse, he stopped and became alert suddenly. There were bullet holes on his clothes, but there was no blood on it. Without hesitation, Piercings shot the dead body's head another three times.

A few seconds later, he witnessed something unbelievable. The bullets had hit their target but left only a slight red mark. After that, deformed bullet shells ricocheted off the corpse and dropped to the ground. "Oh, are you done?" Mr. Coffee got up from the ground, tidied up his messy hair, and said in Chinese, "You didn't even give me a chance to scare you."

Piercings compensated for his panic, beguiling his heart as he witnessed something impossible. As a player, he'd seen all kinds of supernatural occurrences especially players who had completed a few rounds of the game—they would have at least one or two life-saving items with them.

Like how he jumped from the bridge into the river when danger befell him, Mr. Coffee was obviously in possession of some game item that protected him from harm. Piercings grunted, letting out two sharp breaths. With a decisive move, he emptied the entire clip in one go. Items with such powerful effects generally had a limit on the number of times they could be used. The easiest way to defeat an opponent like this was to make him deplete his item's uses. By that time, the opponent would no longer be able to defend himself.

The rain of bullets battered Mr. Coffee, and under the influence of Newton's law of motion, his body twitched and jerked like an electrocuted frog. Instead of falling to the floor, he grinned.

"You sure are rude. Not even letting me have my turn?"

When Piercings finally stopped shooting, there was a wide grin on Mr. Coffee's face.

Greeted by an empty pistol, Piercings tossed it away and immediately rolled over to pick up a corpse's rifle. He then pointed it at the seemingly immortal Mr. Coffee again. "It's useless, you can't kill me even if you shoot until your fingers cramp up," said Mr. Coffee leisurely, as if knowing what his opponent was thinking. Piercings' face changed drastically. "Grade B game item?" he thought.

There was nothing else he could think of other than a game item that was at least Grade B or higher, which also had an extraordinarily lengthy duration.

"Wrong answer. What a pity, but... you can't be blamed. After all, there's only so much an ordinary player knows at this level." Mr. Coffee stood up from the ground and patted away the muddy water on his body.

"Your skills are very average, and I am not interested in you. I'm actually here to look for the guy that beat Scarlet in the parking lot," Mr. Coffee paused, "...he's also the one who ambushed us in the woods. He killed my sniper. I didn't expect him to be that good."

"Don't treat me like a fool. I have killed some of the most powerful players," Piercings snorted in disgust.

“Is that so? I haven’t killed players more powerful than me. It must be because... the most powerful player I have ever met is myself,” Mr. Coffee replied confidently.

Seeing Piercings’ gaze still following him, Mr. Coffee compounded on his conviction. “There’s no need to look around; I have no companions. In fact, save for a future teammate who decided to quit this round, I was the one who sent the three remaining troublemakers to their makers,” he thoughtfully added.

Piercings was in shock. “You even killed the players from your faction? Is it because of game points, or you want to loot their items?”

“Neither, I just don’t like them,” shrugged Mr. Coffee. “An antisocial? I caught quite a few of your types when I was working.” “Oh, I promise you I’m better than them.” Mr. Coffee snapped his fingers, “Well, the chat ends here. I will kill you first, then I shall see how good that guy really is.” After he said that, Mr. Coffee moved toward Piercings.

Piercings instantly pulled the trigger with no indisposition. The assault rifle was way more tenacious than the pistol, firing multiple large rounds each second, but as Mr. Coffee had foretold, the shells did little effect to him, except for shredding his clothes into tiny rags.

He even took off his bulletproof vest to prove his point.

“F*ck!”

Seeing that the impossible Mr. Coffee was still standing before him, Piercings threw the assault rifle in his hand and punched him.

Astonishingly, or rather, un-, at this point, Mr. Coffee didn’t even flinch. Piercings had given everything he got into that punch, socking his right cheek firmly, and this time, not even the slightest of marks could be seen. Piercings, on the other hand, felt as if he’d just hit an armored car with his fist. His fingers hurt badly, and it seemed the bones might have cracked as well.

Mr. Coffee’s head tilted a little as it absorbed the punch’s impact but soon returned to normal. He blinked and smiled slyly. “Is it my turn yet?” he asked with palms in the air.

The moment he said that Mr. Coffee grabbed Piercings’ collar and rammed his forehead with his own. Piercings staggered, and his forehead started to bleed. Stumbling a little, he almost lost his balance.

“Don’t die on me just yet. I’m just getting started!”

Mr. Coffee continued his savage assault with a left uppercut. Since Piercings was stumbling about anyway, he miraculously managed to dodge the attack. After this blow, he stretched out his arms and hugged the coffee man firmly, and then the two fell to the ground together.

As they fell, Piercings changed tactics again, grabbing Mr. Coffee’s arm with one hand, and with the other, he twisted his wrist, performing a Jiu-Jitsu Kimura lock.

“This is interesting. Are you using this method to control me after you realize you can’t break my defense?”.

Not only was the Mr. Coffee unperturbed, he even showed a touch of appreciation. The best way to deal with the Kimura Lock was to stop the opponent before completing the routine. That was because the Kimura Lock was almost unbreakable.

There was an exception, of course. Like what Mr. Coffee was doing right now, he was so strong that he used only one hand to force Piercings into spreading both his arms. Piercings' face darkened and reddened, but still, he failed to stop Mr. Coffee from escaping. He had the strength of an iron horse, way exceeding the limit of a normal human being. Piercings was hit on the chin, and he slid half a meter away from where he stood, passing out almost instantly. However, Mr. Coffee didn't intend to stop here. He walked over and sat on Piercings, delivering one brutal punch after another. Piercings was soon like a broken sandbag. Under the series of heavy blows, all his ribs were broken.

It wasn't until half a minute later that Mr. Coffee stopped. "Do you have anything else to say? Otherwise, get ready to meet your maker," he continued without even the slightest pant.

Before Piercings even had the chance to reply, Mr. Coffee raised his fist again and thumped his trachea with all his might, but instead of making landfall, his fist went through his opponent's body and hit the dirt on the ground.

Mr. Coffee frowned, puzzled when he saw that Piercings' body had melted into a puddle of water. This small puddle then merged into a water giant two meters away from him.

Chapter 440 Invincible Body

"It seems that you have a good item on you. Is water the condition that triggers it? But how did you managed to predict that the storm would hit us today? The weather forecast says today is supposed to be sunny..."

Mr. Coffee got off the ground and shook his wrist. "...but it doesn't matter. You don't have to answer me. I am not that interested in the answer anyway. As long as I get rid of you, these questions are no longer important." However, before he could do anything, the water giant struck first. Thus, two indestructible monsters started a savage and primitive fight. Both sides chose not to use any weapons, electing to fight each other with their bare fists. At the same time, they also couldn't be injured or fatigued.

This even fight, however, lasted less than sixty seconds before the water giant began to fluctuate.

"Oh, it seems you need to top up your item. Mine's still going strong. You may not believe it, but I can do this all day long," said Mr. Coffee.

Before he finished talking, the water giant had already separated from Piercings. He then quickly retreated five meters. As he stood there, the water around Piercings started to flow away. Standing there, the water around the man with earrings began to flow out. He panted in exhaustion, horrified by how powerful the coffee man was.

How could this be?

W

Mr. Coffee's powers went beyond his comprehension, and it was then that he knew defeating him was impossible. Piercings now believed what Mr. Coffee said, that he had never crossed paths with anybody more powerful than him. With his terrifying defensive power and incredible strength, it was no wonder he managed to complete so many quests.

Like an apex predator, he stood at the top of the food chain without natural enemies to dethrone him.

Piercings couldn't imagine what else could kill him. Did he have to resort to a nuclear weapon? If one were dropped here, Toulouse would be gone as well.

"I like the look on your face now," sneered Mr. Coffee, "...although I have seen it on a lot of people, I have to admit that this is still very fascinating to me. Thank you for warming up to me, but we should end it now."

Mr. Coffee took another step toward Piercings.

Piercings were left terrified, but there was nothing he could do. The bizarre creature he faced was a monster that couldn't be killed by bullets, nor did Kimura's lock work on him as well. His strength was abnormal, and he would never tire. Besides, his trump card had also been used.

Piercings glanced at the pearl in his hand. It had lost all its luster, which meant this Grade-C game item had exhausted all its uses. He still had another game item with him, but it was useless in combat. And the worst part was that his stamina had depleted, his body sustaining injuries as well. It looked like this is going to the end for him.

"Don't get too frustrated-you're considered one of the better opponents I've met. I think I can rank you in my top ten," said Mr. Coffee, "You're... out of luck. It was a pure misfortune that you met me as your opponent."

He stretched out his hand as he spoke, about to strangle Piercings' neck.

A few seconds later, a bullet that came from the sniper rifle hit his eyeball accurately. Mr. Coffee only managed to utter the word 'f*ck' before he was sent flying away.

"You only rescue me at the last minute, brother," said Piercings. He almost burst into tears when he turned around as he looked at the figure walking in the rain.

"I couldn't help it. We were too far apart. Trust me; I came as soon as I could," Zhang Heng replied. "You are so toxic. The combined danger of working undercover for eight years was a lot lesser than working as bait for you!" complained Piercings as he stood in the heavy rain with tears in his eyes.

As they talked, the "corpse" on the ground started to move again.

"What the hell?! Is he still not dead?" screamed Piercings as if he was about to lose his mind.

"Damn, I was scared! I thought I was about to die." Mr. Coffee frisked the dust off his chest and sat on the ground with a frightened look. "Hehehe... I have used my head to catch bullets, and I have even tried to use my buttocks, but this is the first time I'm using my corneas to catch bullets!"

"Are you still human?! Are you sure you're not a monster in human skin?!" stammered Piercings. He tried to speak, but the words just wouldn't come out.

Mr. Coffee grinned. "Well... I am actually quite curious myself," he said, and shifted his gaze to Zhang Heng, "Ah, so you're the one who defeated Scarlet. My main purpose of coming here is to see you and... kill you."

Zhang Heng stood silently in the veil of heavy rain.

"Sorry, I've got nothing personal against you. I was wooing that woman indeed, and I promised to carry her through this round. I am also obsessed with competing against all manner of players, especially the more powerful ones," said Mr. Coffee, then reached out to point at Zhang Heng, "I want to see the same expression on your face... next, I will need you to struggle as much as you can, and slowly witness my invincibility in despair."

After listening to Mr. Coffee's, Zhang Heng finally spoke.

"Styx?" he asked.

When Mr. Coffee heard the name, his pupils contracted. After a while, though, he laughed again. "Ah, yes! It appears I didn't target the wrong guy. You are no ordinary player, but unfortunately, you are not destined for the proxy war."

Piercings was confused. "Styx? What is Styx?" he asked in bewilderment.

"Styx is an ancient Greek goddess that lives in the underworld and is in charge of the River Styx. Some call her the goddess of oath and hatred." Previously, Zhang Heng studied the god of time, Kronos, and he'd read up quite a bit about ancient Greek mythology.

Mr. Coffee's state made him think of a distinct possibility, and now, his reaction confirmed his conjecture.

"In ancient Greek mythology, if mortals stepped into River Styx that ruled by Styx, they would be able to enter the underworld. Gods would lose their divinity if they crossed this river, and as for demigods, they would become invulnerable if they soaked themselves. However, it would leave a fatal weakness on their body."

"Wait, why does the story sound familiar to me? Was someone soaked in this river?" frowned Piercings.

"Achilles, the son of the sea goddess Thetis and the hero Peleus, and legendary hero of the Trojan War. His mother dipped him into the River Styx when he was a baby," Zhang Heng replied, throwing the sniper rifle away and taking the longbow with him.

"You are right. I am Styx's agent. In a sense, I'm to be considered a demigod," Mr. Coffee admitted, "Styx took me to the River Styx, and I soaked in it for a while. So, I am now invincible. As for the weaknesses recorded in the myths, trust me, you won't be able to locate them even if I give you a day."

However, he did not expect Zhang Heng to put on a strange look on his face.

"I have always been reluctant to believe in the existence of destiny, but I am afraid I'll have to make an exception we've met today," said Zhang Heng, drawing his Paris Arrow from the quiver.