

48 Hours 441

Chapter 441 Similar Fate

Achilles wasn't only the Greek's champion and the most powerful hero of the entire Trojan War. He was invincible on the battlefield, unstoppable even. And he managed to kill Hector, the bravest warrior of Troy, causing the long-stalemate war to lean towards Greece's side. He was known as a demigod hero powerful enough to change the tide of battle. Unfortunately, he blasphemed against Apollo, son of Zeus, and killed by Hector's younger brother, Paris. Under Apollo's guidance, Paris' Arrow accurately hit the only weakness on Achilles' body, his ankle.

This arrow was now in Zhang Heng's hand.

(Paris' Arrow]

(Grade: D]

(Effect: Once the arrow leaves the bow, it automatically heads for the target's weakness.]

Although Zhang Heng had used this arrow in the previous games, he didn't find it very useful. The arrow only proved its worth when he went up against Zavalcha, and considering that it was one of the most inconvenient game items to carry, he was thinking of leaving it behind in the real world.

He was grateful, though, that he did not make such a decision.

Zhang Heng began to pull his bowstring. Mr. Coffee laughed when he saw this, "Are you trying to reproduce the results of the battle three thousand years ago? Unfortunately, I am not Achilles, and you are not Paris. Do you want to shoot my heel? How about I show you my heel and let you shoot it?"

Mr. Coffee lowered his head and rolled up his trousers.

"This guy is too arrogant, right?! The thought of me dying in the hands of such an arrogant guy makes my mood even worse," Piercings smiled bitterly.

He too wasn't inclined to believe that Zhang Heng was capable of hitting Mr. Coffee's weakness. Now that he was unbeatable, Piercings figured out their death was inevitable. If Zhang Heng was right about Mr. Coffee becoming invincible after soaking in the Styx, it meant that there was no way to kill or hurt him.

Such buffs would last permanently without the help of any game items. It was as if he wore 27 layers of steel armor, but all without the heft. Piercings even suspected an atomic bomb might not kill this monster.

Was it okay to let such a powerful man exist in the game?

Mr. Coffee stretched out his hands and raised them to the sky. He was confident that Zhang Heng would not be able to hurt him.

"Come on. You have three chances to attack me..."

However, before he finished, Zhang Heng had unleashed the arrow at him. The Paris' Arrow shot out with an unexpected gust of wind. However, it only flew past Mr. Coffee's ear.

Piercings opened his eyes wide. "Did you miss your target?" he asked. He did not expect Zhang Heng's arrow to really hit a target's weakness. He was disappointed that Zhang Heng missed him completely. After all, they weren't very far apart, and there was no reason for him to miss his target.

Just as was wondering what was going on, he saw that the arrow had suddenly changed trajectory without any external interference. It did a 180-degree turn. Mr. Coffee's grin only got wider and wider. Since Zhang Heng had made such an amateur mistake, his mind must be confused, and he was gradually losing his fighting spirit.

A few seconds later, the smile on his face froze. Behind his head, the returning Paris' Arrow accurately hit the fingernail of his left thumb.

As always, no one could stop destiny.

"I don't need three chances. One arrow is enough," said Zhang Heng nonchalantly.

Mr. Coffee trembled. As compared to the attacks he received before, Zhang Heng's arrow was supposed to leave him unscathed. After all, a large sniper round landed on his cornea earlier, and since he was okay, it was only logical to think that such a minute injury wouldn't do anything to his body. Such damages wouldn't even maim an ordinary person, let alone an almost invincible monster.

When the little fingernail shattered, Mr. Coffee instantly stopped breathing, as if a clock's battery was pulled out, or a wind-up toy getting stuck. Maintained the same posture he was in, he fell head-first on the muddy ground.

"What the hell? Trying to fake your death again?!"

Since Mr. Coffee pulled a prank on him earlier, Piercings was undoubtedly suspicious of his 'death.' After a while; he saw Zhang Heng putting away the longbow in his hand as he walked to the corpse.

"Hey, be careful, this guy likes to pretend he's dead."

"Don't worry; I can assure you that he is dead this time," replied Zhang Heng. He knelt and turned over Mr. Coffee's lifeless body.

"How are you so sure about this?"

Piercings stared nervously at the corpse, not too far away from him.

"Because I received a notification from the system."

Zhang Heng was a little surprised. According to Mr. Coffee, he had killed three players from his side. It was reasonable to think that those players' game items should be with him now. But for some reason, Zhang Heng only found a pair of bronze rings on him.

The effect of these wouldn't be known until he identified them.

"Wait... are you saying that he is dead?!" Piercings thought he heard wrong, unable to believe that Mr. Coffee was still alive and kicking just a few minutes ago. The monster that beat him to a pulp was now dead.

“I told you he’s dead, and he can no longer get back up.” After checking the corpse, Zhang Heng picked up the Paris’ Arrow as the finishing move to win this round. Piercings couldn’t help but feel a little mad. “So, his weakness lies in his fingernail?! That’s f*cking cheating. All he needed to do was to make a fist to hide his thumb. No, he could punch me up when I fought him earlier, even raising his hand arrogantly when he asked you to shoot him with three arrows. He did all that to keep the fingernails behind him. But then again, how did you know his weakness? And how did the arrow U-turn just now?”

“You know the rules. Did I ask you how your water giant works?”

“It’s okay to let you know, I guess. My water giant is a Grade-C item. Its trigger condition is a considerable volume of water. River water or rain will work. However, I just finished up its last use.” Piercings went silent, sighing as he looked at the dying pearl in his hand.

“How are your injuries? Can you still get up?” Zhang Heng asked. “I will live, but I can’t fight anymore. So I won’t be much help from now on. You can look for a place to hide me. Anyway, we have four days before this quest is over. If I can complete this, I owe you once.”

“Well, take your time to recover, and leave the rest to me,” said Zhang Heng as he nodded.

Chapter 442 Are You In A Hurry?

It had been fifteen minutes since Vincent lost contact with Mr. Coffee.

The last footage that the drone sent back showed Mr. Coffee’s people viciously getting gunned down by a mysterious sniper who had also eventually shot down the last two drone units.

The Black Nest technicians looked at each other, and for a long time, no one said anything. Vincent was as expressionless as a statue.

“In the end, Vincent broke the silence. “Do your job! Don’t make me repeat myself.”

Black Nest’s staff breathed a sigh of relief. Before Mr. Coffee took over, Vincent had been in charge of the operation. Vincent was their lynchpin, and now, they could get their act together and delve into their work again. The shock and panic that had befallen the crew quickly dissipated as well.

Vincent, on the other hand, was not as calm as he appeared to be.

In fact, he was on the verge of exploding into an uncontrollable rage.

Though he had disapproved Mr. Coffee’s neurotic decision to step into the trap deliberately, he did not stop him when he made the decision. Instead, he sent his strongest combat team to assist Mr. Coffee and even assigned him his best sniper, Abu.

Much to his disappointment, Mr. Coffee performed dismally. Even with such a luxurious lineup, he still managed to fail in such a miserable fashion. Vincent even started to presume that Mr. Coffee must have been deliberately pitting against him.

The arrogant sod’s blunder ruined all of Vincent’s plans. The technicians were fine, but they were getting a little stretched out in the field. Should push come to shove, he would have to put on his battle armor and take out his favorite 17.

Black Nest had the absolute upper hand in firepower, but being on the defensive had its own disadvantages too. Having no idea what mode of transport Edward and his people would use to get to Toulouse, Vincent had to scatter his men at various locations, including the airport, train station, and highway. At the same time, he mediated and directed the team, all in anticipation of making a move. At least they had Zero's powerful monitoring capabilities, hopefully enabling them to find the target among the sea of people.

Louis was the star reporter of Le Monde, known for his incredible ability to dig up scandals in the government and business world. He had exposed Strauss Kahn, former president of the International Monetary Fund for a sex scandal, eventually forcing him to resign. The wife of former Prime Minister François was also exposed for embezzlement, in no thanks to him, and not too long ago, he was busy following the papertrail of a large welfare agency's funds.

Louis received a secret tip that the welfare agency was allegedly involved in high-priced purchases and financial fraud—a large part of the agency's donations was said to have gone to the chairman and vice chairman's own pockets.

However, in the middle of the debacle, Louis received a strange e-mail. The sender said that he had headline-worthy information in his hands, but refused to disclose the content.

At first, Louis did not take the message seriously since he received emails like this almost daily, with his reputation and all. Still, most of these so-called "big-scoops" were actually the senders getting themselves into trouble.

Louis would reply by expressing his sympathy for them, but he weren't Batman, and neither could he bring justice to everyone. Instead of drowning within these personal dilemmas, Louis wanted to focus his attention on the big scoop, something he knew would have a far-reaching influence.

Upon receiving the email, he quickly managed to sniff out something unusual from it.

This mysterious sender seemed to know what he was thinking and sent him a second email. This time, it wasn't sent to the public email address on his website, but to the secret inbox he used to communicate with special informants.

That caught Louis' attention, his reporter's instincts telling him that there was big fish to catch.

After an exchange of keys, they began to establish a line of communication through encrypted emails. Louis' hunch proved to be true. The more he knew, the more he was gobsmacked. At the same time, he also realized the insurmountable danger that surrounded the matter.

Black Nest was not just some multinational group made up of a bunch of consortia. Their tentacles were far-reaching, coiling all the way among the inner workings of political and business circles. Once CTOS was launched, gaining control over entire Europe would be all too easy for them.

Louis immediately set his work aside and set up a place and time to meet Edward.

He managed to put together a small team, and along with him, was a videographer, a moderator of a large online forum, and a well-known documentary director. There was a total of six people, and together, they departed from Paris to Toulouse.

The team was nervous and on edge as they landed. Before they took off, they were briefed about the status of the newspaper's advance team. The three interns who played bait had done well in completing their part of the mission. The next part was up to them now. Louis looked at Pierre in the next seat. Pierre had been his photographer for a long time, and no matter how precarious the situation got, he was the one always to capture the footage Louis needed.

"Are you ready, Pierre?"

The lights on the airport runway lit up brightly through the plane's windows. Pierre did not answer. He nodded and gave Louis an 'OK' sign. Before Louis's big break, he was a war correspondent in Iraq for a period of time, where he had also met Pierre.

They survived the Gulf War together, so there was no reason they wouldn't survive this investigation.

"Well, let's begin, then."

When the plane came to a halt, the flight attendants routine reminder to the passengers to check all their luggage, the six-person crew's adventure began.

Airports generally got their electricity from two separate power supplies and were also often equipped with more than one backup power set, so power outages were sporadic.

But tonight, Blagnac Airport's terminal was plunged into total darkness. The airport evacuated tourists and tried to find the cause of the power outage. It was chaos where people were running and stepping onto each other.

Upon receiving the news, Vincent acted immediately, barking out instructions as he commanded the driver to start the lead vehicle. Still, as that was happening, an unfamiliar voice came over his hand-held communicator.

"Mr. Vincent, are you in a hurry?" Vincent's brows furrowed. "Are you the people who killed Abu and the others?"

"Yes, that's right. To avoid a reoccurrence of that... unpleasant incident, I strongly recommend you stay where you are," the voice said.

"And what if I refuse?"

He was replied with the sound of a sharp 'thwap,' and a bullet punctured one of the PV's tires.

"This one's just a warning. If you insist on doing things your way, then the next bullet will be for you," replied the voice calmly.

Chapter 443 Whistleblower (End)

"... Nice to meet you. Where should we start?"

Edward faced the camera and adjusted his hairstyle and collar. "Should I talk about CTOS first, or Black Nest?"

"Why don't you start with self-introduction?" said Louis, who was sitting on the opposite side.

“Okay, sorry. It’s my first time doing an interview like this, and I don’t know how it works.” Edward paused. “My name is Benjamin, Benjamin Reynolds. I am a core developer of Black Nest’s CTOS system. Before that, I went to college for a year, but I quickly dropped out. I have a dog, and it is called Pudding. Uhh, not too long after that, I developed two programs with my friends, and I made a fortune selling them. The tech company that bought my software was a Black Nest subsidiary. After that, they wanted to hire me, and it was at that time I was told about the CTOS project. What they told me when they recruited me is completely different from what is happening right now...”

When Edward was being interviewed, Little Boy walked onto the balcony and saw Zhang Heng watching the night scene. “Z contacted me earlier. He has almost completed everything he needs to do in Hong Kong. After Edward finishes the interview, he can fly to Hong Kong right away. He will be safe until the incident is exposed.”

“Hmm,” Zhang Heng nodded. “I will send him to Hong Kong.” This part had everything to do with the success or failure of the quest. At a time like this, Zhang Heng had no intention to let his guard down, and it necessary that he went on this trip. After all, he’d overcome countless threats this round, and if something went wrong during the last phase of the plan, all the effort he had put in would be wasted.

Although, in theory, Black Nest didn’t need to kill Edward anymore after Louis sent the interview to the press in an encrypted mail, being cautious was always Zhang Heng’s way of doing things. Besides, Scarlet was still missing. According to Mr. Coffee, she decided to quit the game halfway. Little Boy wanted to say something, but in the end, all she had to say was, “I wish you all the best.” “You too,” Zhang Heng replied.

After Little Boy left, Leah came to the balcony this time.

“We have thanked you so many times so that I won’t thank you again.” Leah took out a USB flash drive from her pocket. “Hey, my brother asked me to give it to you. But I don’t know what’s inside,” she went on.

Zhang Heng took the USB flash drive and raised his eyebrows... because he heard the system’s notification the next moment.

(Game item – U disk found (unidentified)).

Between Scarlet’s half-broken katana and Mr. Coffee’s copper ring, he had obtained two-and-a-half game items when and combined with the extra 300 points he earned from finding the Easter Egg; it was a considerably good yield overall.

Other than that, Zhang Heng also noticed the proxy war mentioned by Mr. Coffee before his death.

Previously, Zhang Heng encountered a junkie in the Apollo dungeon. He could bypass machines and tests without assistance of game items, and although his ability didn’t affect the ordinary person, it was still considered a supernatural force.

Theoretically, those strange but otherworldly abilities were no different from Zhang Heng’s extra 24 hours.

This also meant that he wasn’t the only agent. The old man in the Tang suit reminded him to be careful of other agents when they met for the first time, and with the sporadic information that Zhang Heng

had gathered, he probably figured out the purpose of this game, or at least the goal of the first half of the game. This peculiar game had been going on until now to allow people like the old man in the Tang suit to choose agents. Encountering players like him in the game, skill level, abilities, game items, and the character panel's evaluation on his performance in each round tournament further confirmed Zhang Heng's line of thought.

The so-called players were like merchandise displayed on shelves, waiting for the next customer to choose them. Zhang Heng was also more concerned about what would happen next. After every gambler at the table had selected their cards, how would the next game be carried out, and how would the proxy war unfold?

Four days later, in Hong Kong, Zhang Heng received a notification to complete the main quest. He had also officially confirmed that Scarlet had given up this round. So, he spent the remainder of his time strolling around Temple Street in Yau Ma Tei, getting a temple attendant outside the southern wall of Tin Hau Temple to look into his face.

The temple attendant was very well dressed. He had his long hair neatly tied into a bun, wore a long-sleeved attire paired with cloth shoes, and from head to toe, exuded a divine aura. Of course, he carried about with him a transcendental temperament.

The reality for many businesspeople was a cruel one, where they had a hard time keeping their business going throughout rain or shine. The temple attendant had spoken Cantonese for fifty years, but for the sake of serving a wider variety of customers, he now had to learn Mandarin.

He spoke about Zhang Heng's career and marriage in an authentic Hong Kong accent, and although he looked calm on the surface, his heart told a different story. Failing to detect any micro-expressions on Zhang Heng's face caused him a great deal of frustration. His tried and tested method wasn't working, and left with no other options; he tried striking up a small conversation. After a while, he finally got to the highlight. Zhang Heng was apparently about to face a catastrophic event in two months.

Zhang Heng smiled when he heard those words, not responding in any way to it. When the temple attendant thought that he could only earn a basic service fee, Zhang Heng took out his wallet from his pocket.

The temple attendant immediately put on a serious look. "If you don't have enough cash, Alipay will do," he said, going straight to the point.

"Aren't there only a handful in Hong Kong who use Alipay?" Zhang Heng asked.

"Oh, in the service industry, the customer comes first. Customers from the Mainland like electronic payments, and ever since they introduced Alipay, my customers have increased by half," the temple attendant sighed. "Next month, I'm planning on using WeChat to help with my business. By the way, do you play online games?" "Occasionally, why?" "I can predict your chances of getting SSR characters... it's cheap. It's just two hundred dollars."

Instead of opening his wallet, Zhang Heng gave the entire thing to the temple attendant.

The temple attendant looked hesitant, "Um... I said you would face a great catastrophe in two months, but you don't have to give up on life just yet. Listen to me, young man. When there's a will, there's a way. Am I not still here to help you change your destiny?"

"You misunderstood me. This wallet has no use to me anymore. There's not much money left in it, but I brought this back from France. Keep it if you like it," said Zhang Heng.

"This doesn't sound right," the temple attendant said cautiously. However, he reached out anyway and took the wallet. "Genuine leather?"

When he raised his head a few seconds later, Zhang Heng had been long gone.

Chapter 444 Crossroads For Youths

Zhang Heng was growing accustomed to his current lifestyle. He would go to the Sex and the City bar every other month to complete a game, then return to school life. Except for his roommates who could detect the change in his temperament, no one else could tell that he was different than he was yesterday.

After completing so many games, Zhang Heng was getting better at controlling his mood. Whatever happened after he returned from Black Sail would never happen again. Like this Whistleblower quest, Zhang Heng spent most of his time living with Little Boy, and thus, hadn't experienced any significant emotional changes and high-intensity mental pressure. It was why the changes within him weren't noticeable.

In the afternoon, while Ma Wei prepared lessons in the library, Wei Jiangyang invited Zhang Heng and Chen Huadong to the court for a game of basketball. After throwing a couple of hoops, a group of senior students came, and they were then divided into two groups of three. Everyone was just playing for fun initially, but they soon got bored, so someone suggested that the losers do 20 push-ups. The game naturally became more aggressive after that, and at the same time, more conflict arose among the team as well. Fortunately, both sides managed to control their emotions well enough. When someone fell, the opposing team would immediately help them get off the ground and pat down their backs.

It wasn't until one thin, tall guy got defeated by Wei Jiangyang three times. Deeply embarrassed, he started to shove Wei Jiangyang around. Then, all of a sudden, the atmosphere around the basketball court tensed up significantly. It was then that the group's attention was caught by a red Lexus approaching from the distance.

The school typically forbade vehicles from outside the school to enter this place. Even the faculty's staff could only park their vehicles in the parking lot. Generally, security would only lower the two iron barriers when freshmen enrolled in the school or when seniors graduated.

Citing those reasons, the appearance of the Lexus quickly captured a lot of attention.

It seemed the car was heading for the office building that wasn't too far away. However, as it passed the basketball court, it suddenly stopped and reversed. The driver lowered the window, revealing the person on the wheel.

It turned out to be a stunning woman in a white shirt and a pair of jeans. There was light makeup on her face, and she was adorned with lustrous ornaments and jewelry. Her appearance told of a woman with a powerful and confident aura.

Chen Huadong looked at her once, and he got excited immediately.

“This has to be the best MILF ever!”

He had just said out what every boy was thinking right now. Logically speaking, as long as the students weren't in engineering, they should come across plenty of girls on campus. The guys had seen all manner of beautiful women, but this time, everyone had to admit that this was probably the gorgeous woman they'd ever laid eyes upon. Especially when the lady turned to look at them, everyone's hearts started racing. They were all very nervous.

“Why didn't you answer my call?”

“Huh?” Chen Huadong was completely confused by what was going on. He then heard Zhang Heng's voice behind him. “Sorry, I didn't hear my phone ringing. I was playing basketball just now. Why are you here, Sister Han?”

Han Lu removed her sunglasses. “The dean of Economics and Management knows me. Hence, he asked me here to give a lecture. Initially, I wanted you to be my guide..”

Han Lu actually knew the dean, also knowing that the field of finance wasn't popular around here. Over the years, she made a name for herself in the financial world, to the point the average entrepreneur would beg to meet her, and she would usually charge by the minute. Somebody like her was expected to have connections with the dean in this university. Something must be wrong since she was willing to give lectures for free. No university would reject such a fantastic opportunity.

Her significance could be seen from the way the school welcomed her, where not only was her Lexus given special permission to be driven on campus, but several high-ranking officers from the Department of Economics and Management even dined with her before the lecture started.

“Have you had lunch? Shall we?” Han Lu asked.

Zhang Heng shook his head. “I don't attend events like that.”

“You are right,” Han Lu said. “I didn't like my uni's leaders when I was studying as well. Academic Affairs Office was the second one I hated. Carry on with your game then. When I finish the lecture, let's go somewhere nice for dinner. You should be familiar with the area. You haven't contacted me since the last time we met. I promised your mother I'd take good care of you,” she lamented.

Zhang Heng smiled. “I was just afraid I'd be interrupting your work. Haven't you been very busy lately?”

“No, my job is to listen to different people bragging about their achievements to me. I might just live a few years longer if I don't listen to all that twaddle,” replied Han Lu as she returned the smile. “I will see you tonight.”

After that, she raised her window and sped towards the office building. The rest of the boys on the basketball court were left open-mouthed and astounded.

“Master Zhang, you got that woman to be your sugar mama?!” Chen Huadong exclaimed in envy. “That has to be the perfect life I’ve always dreamed of.”

Zhang Heng threw the ball at Chen Huadong. “Cut that crap. She’s my mom’s best friend.”

Chen Huadong, however, was no longer in the mood to play any basketball.

“Why doesn’t my mother have a friend like her?!”

Wei Jiangyang, on the other side, seemed a little worried. “Old Zhang, is it because of Shen Xixi’s affair? She went for a rich old man, so... you hooed up with an older woman as revenge?”

“Mind your words, old Wei. Listen to what you just said. How can a MILF queen like her be called an old woman,” grunted Chen Huadong in great dissatisfaction?

“I have explained many times. Shen Xixi and I are just friends, and she doesn’t go for older men, nor is she in a relationship with one. Instead of helping curb the rumor from spreading, it seems you’ve been flaming it.”

Wei Jiangyang scratched his head. “Everyone is saying the same thing about her. Don’t worry. If someone dares to spread rumors about you, we will do everything we can to stop it. Anyway, are you really not in a relationship with that woman?” he chuckled.

||

11

Suddenly, a senior that has hesitating to speak said something. “That was Han Lu, President Han? I saw her picture on a listed company that I applied for. She was the company’s first investor.”

“She didn’t just invest in just one company. Many companies have her picture on their walls. She is often on the news, and she seems to have been awarded the title of Asian Female Leader,” said the tall, thin man. “You’re one lucky guy, brother. You don’t need to worry about work at all after you graduate.”

Undoubtedly, the other seniors thought the same as well.

They were about to finish their studies, and having less than one semester left; they would soon enter society and join the brutal rat race. People of different creeds faced different situations, where some would land their desired careers, and some still unsettled. Some struggled which path they should choose; if they should be a civil servant or engage an unstable job they had been longing to do.

Countless young graduates would face the intense emotional pressure of heading into the unknown. Hence graduation season was also breakup season.

The stresses of moving into a different city, the intense competition, and the harsh realities of making it on their own had left many feeling utterly helpless. The culture shock that hit graduates as they officially took the reins and started their new jobs usually caused them to make sudden and drastic decisions. Some chose to break up with their loved ones, some split-up, and got back together again, and some broke up and regretted it all after a few years. Only a small number of lucky people chose to protect their relationships until it became mature.

Happiness was something that one had to work hard to acquire. Behind every sweet smile in wedding photos were heartbreaking quarrels and bitter conflict others never saw. Enormous sacrifices and compromises from both sides were also essential. These would all eventually come together, forming into what we know as marriage.

Chapter 445 Come Closer

The food alley near the school was a lively place every night. After all, sustenance was the reason mankind was alive. The restaurant Zhang Heng chose served some of the best grilled fish around the area. Hence, the establishment was doing very well, with an almost perpetual queue waiting outside the restaurant every night. As Han Lu looked around for parking, Zhang Heng headed to the usher to get the number. More than 30 people were in line in front of him.

“Should we change restaurants?” Zhang Heng asked Han Lu.

“It’s fine. Let’s eat here,” Han Lu said. “I’m not in a hurry, anyway.”

It was a shame that those in the finance line didn’t hear what she said, or they would have probably died of shock. It was hard to imagine that the Han Lu, who always went, ‘My time is precious. Make your long story short. Don’t say anything unnecessary’ would even think of waiting in a thirty person queue.

She had always been like this, firmly believing that everything could be quantified in value. For her, work was an ongoing struggle, and as soon as she opened her eyes each morning, she would sort out the day’s business based on priority. Time would then be allocated to each task according to its value.

In other words, there could only be one possibility on why she was willing to sit and wait outside a small restaurant. She must have computed that the waiting was worthwhile and the time spent valuable.

“I haven’t stepped into school for a long time. Coming back here; it makes me feel a lot younger. It made me think back on my school days as well,” sighed Han Lu.

Truth be told, she had long forgotten the name of her class monitor, and neither did she care if her old classmates were dead or alive. Apart from meeting Mother Zhang when she studied abroad, she had literally no other friends she could confide in.

For influential people like Han Lu, getting benefits out of a new friendship was priority. To her, it was more about the exchange of interests and creating a win-win scenario. Friendship still mattered, but it didn’t matter much.

Han Lu wasn’t one to whine like little girls in romance dramas. She knew it was a fair world. There were gains and losses, and since she gained far more than she lost anyway, there was really nothing for her to complain about.

Of course, she would be happier if she could procure more than what she bargained for.

Han Lu took out her mobile phone. “Come closer, let’s take a photo,” she told Zhang Heng. “I want to prove to your mother that I’ve lived up to her trust.”

Zhang Heng had to lean against Han Lu again when he heard this. No matter what age the woman came in or what their occupation was, they had always been skillful at taking selfies. All too soon, Han Lu managed to find a perfect angle and captured the photo.

At that very moment, a text message came in on the phone.

It came from an unknown number. The first sentence displayed on the message was 'Boss Han, it's about the project supplementary information you mentioned...'

Han Lu clicked on the text message, but when it was open, she could no longer read the text. Instead, only an inexplicable picture was displayed. In the dim and dark photo, a shadow of a human seemed to lurk in the darkness. The shadow looked to have a pair of black wings as well.

Zhang Heng was quick to react. The moment he saw what it was, he instantly blocked the phone screen with his hand. However, it was too late.

"What the hell is that?" Han Lu frowned. "Is it a prank?"

"What time did you sleep last night?" Zhang Heng solemnly asked.

Han Lu was a little surprised. This was her first time seeing Zhang Heng being so severe. He gave her a calm and mature impression.

"I usually hit the hay before midnight, but a pharmaceutical company I invested in will initiate their first round of financial meetings next week. We still can't agree on the valuation, which is why I worked late last night. I slept at about two in the morning, and I woke up at seven-fifteen. Why ask?"

"Because you might not be getting some shut-eye for a while," replied Zhang Heng. "Huh?" Han Lu raised her eyebrows, obviously having no idea what Zhang Heng meant.

"This is kind of complicated to explain." "It doesn't matter. We have lots of time on our hands."

Zhang Heng took out a lens from his pocket and handed it to Han Lu. "Place it in front of your eyes."

Han Lu was puzzled by the item. She had been venturing the field of business for many years and met all kinds of men. They would all use all manner of methods to win her over, and she thought that Zhang Heng was probably pulling some tricks. That inexplicable photo might have something to do with him, after all. Yes, she was interested in Zhang Heng, but it surely didn't mean she would lose her mind when she was with him.

Han Lu had always believed that even the most perfect man would eventually make a mistake. However, she undeniably enjoyed what was going on right now, and even if this wasn't what she expected, she wished it would last longer.

When Han Lu put the lens in front of her eyes, however, jaw fell open in shock.

"Is this some black-market technology?! This is incredible. Apart from clearer vision, the brightness is adjusted as well. If I can mass produce this, the profits will be unimaginable! This could find many applications in countless fields. What you need right now is a professional team to help you promote this item. I can provide you with such a team, as long as you make me your top investor. Oh, sorry, occupational hazards..." Han Lu laughed at herself. "I feel the urge to invest when I see a good item. Considering the good relationship between your mom and me, I don't mind if you reject my proposal. I'll still help you with it."

“Unfortunately, this item cannot be mass-produced,” Zhang Heng said. Zhang Heng was cautious with the words that he used. Han Lu was the overly practical and logical kind of woman, and it wasn’t easy to change the way she viewed this world. At the same time, he also needed to abide by the rule of not revealing his player’s identity to others. It wasn’t easy to just explain things as it is.

Han Lu lost most of her enthusiasm the moment she discovered that she would yield no benefits from the item no matter how valuable it was. As quickly as her business intuition struck her, she suddenly realized something and quietly waited for Zhang Heng’s explanation. “Below the surface of this ordinary world... are some supernatural things.”

“Well, is this part of your mom’s research? When we were studying together, I knew your mother majored in theology. As far as I know, she doesn’t really believe in these things. It is all fairy tales to her,” said Han Lu.

“This has nothing to do with my mother, and she doesn’t know the existence of those... things. I know it can’t be easy to accept new truths, but what I’m going to say next is very important. From now on, you have to make sure that you don’t close your eyes. Don’t sleep, or take a nap... not until I find a solution.”

Chapter 446 Do You Have Any Enemies?

Dreamland of Death.

It was the most frightening game item known to the players.

It killed the former leader of Silver Wings, one of the three major guilds, where he was an owner of Grade-A game items. After that, the original owner of Dreamland of Death was killed by the guilds combined effort. Since they could not decide on a new owner, the three major guilds eventually came up with the fairest method—putting it on auction.

The guild that acquired the item would compensate the other two guilds with a handsome amount of game points. With that, everyone benefitted from the deal. None of them would expect a mysterious woman to so rudely mess up their plan. The woman in sunglasses managed to acquire the item, using the game points she squandered off from the chamber of commerce. As a result, the Dreamland of Death, an item the three major guilds fought so hard for, disappeared once again before their eyes.

In the following months, players searched high and low for the whereabouts of the mysterious woman and the coveted item, but no matter how hard they looked, she seemed to have vanished from the surface of the earth. It was all quiet, until a year ago, when Zhang Heng took the train home and ran into a middle-aged man who wouldn’t wake up from his sleep. He learned afterward on the forum that the Dreamland of Death had reappeared. This time, there were more victims, and worse, they were no longer limited to players. Many were ordinary people who were scattered all over the country, and none of them were even related to each other. The issue had quickly caught the attention of many, and the forum began to pile up with posts regarding the dreaded item’s reemergence.

After investigations conducted by the three major guilds, the ‘murderers’ were found. The bad news was that they all turned out ordinary people, and the Dreamland of Death they purchased actually came from an online shop called Murder Without Risk.

It didn't cross the minds of most people that the purchase would genuinely kill the person they hated. All they wanted to do was vent their disgust and dissatisfaction, and after learning that those they targeted were actually dead, many descended into insanity.

That said, compared to the mental health of the 'culprits,' the player base was more concerned about other things. These were all questionable killings.

The players demanded answers to a few key questions. Who was the shop owner of Murder Without Risk? Why had so many Dreamland of Death copies appeared in the real world? How did the person do it? The fourth question, however, was the issue that most players were concerned about: how to survive a Dreamland of Death attack.

The entire Silver Wings guild found it hard to carry on after the death of their former leader. The fear among the players had also reached its peak at that time.

To make matters worse, copies of the Dreamland of Death were now widely distributed in the real world. Although the Murder Without Risk shop had disappeared, no one really knew how many copies had been sold, used, or how many were left. No one knew when or where it would appear again. No one could guarantee for sure that they wouldn't be the next victim.

Although posts on the forum were rife with speculations on how to deal with the problem, none were verified. There was a silver lining. After multiple arrests of the 'murderers,' the players soon had a clearer picture on the trigger conditions for the item.

The Dreamland of Death came in the form of a black feather. The user needed to ignite a piece of paper with the target's name on it along with the feather. The ashes of the two were then required to be soaked in water. For the last step, the target would have to be shown the photo that Han Lu received.

Not limited to solely text messages, the picture could be shown on billboards, videos, or even including it in PowerPoint slides. As long as the target looked at it, it was fine, even if they didn't realize that they actually saw it.

"So, you are trying to say that I'm under a curse, and from now on, if I close my eyes, I will die in my dreams?"

Even after witnessing the Filter Lens' magical effect, Han Lu still found Zhang Heng's words to be utterly unbelievable.

"Yes, that's one way to put it. It's not too difficult to prove what I'm saying." Zhang Heng realized that it was unrealistic to make Han Lu realize these problems' gravity by just giving her an explanation.

"Do you have any enemies?"

"It depends on how you define enemy," Han Lu said. "In our field, it is difficult to stay pure and clean. It can be all fine and dandy with your client today, and the relationship could cease to exist tomorrow. Emotions should never get between investments, and as long as I see fit to plug the losses, I will decisively withdraw all the remaining funds. I don't care if your company survives tomorrow. Sometimes entrepreneurs will band up with investors and find a way to kick me out of the game. And if I happen to encounter a project I can't handle myself, I may join forces with the very ones who tried to kick me out."

“It’s very complicated... Personally, I don’t mix feelings or grudges in my work. This is my way of doing things. I have seen too many entrepreneurs losing everything. If you play with fire, you’ll have to expect that your investments can be burned forever too. Perhaps only one out of a dozen projects you invest in will survive. That one project might compensate me just enough to cover my losses. There’s a thin line between gambling and investing, and being rational is my way of living. There are all kinds of people in this field. Some are very emotional... I don’t know how many hate or dislike me. I can’t even remember their names.”

“Let’s narrow it down. Who hates you to the point of killing you?”

“Wow, what a question...”

“Don’t need to think too long. Just give me the first name that appears in your mind, and we’ll start there,” said Zhang Heng.

“Xu Jianjun.” Han Lu spread her hands. “We have no previous grievances. He is a retired soldier, and a friend introduced me to him about two years ago. He took on a project, coming to me and telling me that he wanted to specialize in producing furniture. I read his proposal and thought it was okay. If it worked out, he stood to make a million or two a year. But that’s probably the limit. There isn’t much room for expansion, and I’m generally not interested in small projects like this. For the sake of my friend, though, I invested about 700,000 yuan. I must admit, I made the contract sound rather demanding, but that’s reality. I need to protect my interests. No one besides me was willing to invest in his project. So, he signed the contract after thinking about it for three days.”

“What happened then?” asked Zhang Heng.

Chapter 447 The Past

“Later, a disagreement broke out between us. He found a small textile factory, hoping to come up with his own brand after purchasing it. This isn’t we agreed initially, and it was obvious he wanted me to keep investing more money into his business. I told him that it was impossible. At that time, he was very emotional, and so, I gave him a warning,” Han Lu said.

“What’s next?” “A week later, I contacted the textile factory behind my back. I immediately activated the terms and conditions on the agreement and froze the company’s account. I surrendered and left the investment. I think I lost about three to four hundred thousand yuan. I treated it as an investment for friends. Later, the friend who introduced him to me also apologized. After that, he even recommended a few reliable projects for me. I thought this incident would come to a pass, but I didn’t expect Xu Jianjun had no intention to let it slide.”

Han Lu rubbed her head and gave a big sigh, seeming to have a headache when talking about this.

“Under such circumstances, the entrepreneurs would either look for a new investor or dissolve the company—but Xu Jianjun was very stubborn. I discovered that after textile factory’s acquisition plan was aborted, he was there for another year and a half. However, he couldn’t find a new investor, and in the end, he sold his birthplace home and slept in the company lobby every day, eating pickles and porridge. Unfortunately, working hard might not help with starting a business sometimes.”

“His company was bleeding money, and capable employees started leaving one after another. That was when he entered into a vicious cycle. In the end, he was brought to court for failing to pay their wages. That was the last straw. The company went completely bankrupt after that. He suffered a terrible loss and blamed me for everything instead of reflecting on himself.

“After the company went bankrupt, Xu Jianjun initially planned to sue me. So, he looked for several lawyers, but they told him I didn’t violate the agreement, and he had no right to sue me. Out of options, he stood in protest with a banner at my company’s entrance every day to demand his rights. He even went as far as blocking me at the parking lot several times. Once, he even got so upset that he shoved me. I was afraid since it was late and I was alone, so I called the police. The police station is just right across the street, by the way. The cops soon came, and after I told them what happened, they took him away. That was the last I saw of him.”

“He returned to his birthplace?”

“No, he committed suicide. He laid on the tracks and let a train run over him. It is said that the corpse was... err... mangled and mutilated. He also left a suicide note saying that he had been an upright person, which was his first time getting arrested by the police. He said he’d haunt me for eternity. Think his spirit’s taking revenge it’s on me?” Han Lu became slightly uncomfortable at the thought, instinctively hugging herself and looking around.

“As far as I know, it’s not possible,” Zhang Heng said. “A dead person will remain dead Maybe his family member hates you?”

“He has no family, his parents passed away very early, his wife divorced him four years ago, and he has no children. I heard he has a distant cousin or something, but they rarely keep in touch. Oh... and I was the one who ended up paying for his funeral.”

“What about his friends?”

“I have no idea. I don’t know much about him. I only found out about these things after his death.” Han Lu shook her head.

“Okay, I think I understand what is going on right now. Would you like to go home and wait, or...”

“Can I investigate with you?” Han Lu asked. “You said you wanted to prove supernatural entities exist in the normal world we live in. If I can witness the process, I’ll definitely be convinced. Besides, I need things to do to keep me awake.”

“Okay,” replied Zhang Heng. “Let’s first determine if you’re cursed or not. How did you deal with Xu Jianjun’s stuff?”

“They were cremated with his corpse. In fact, he left nothing behind, only two sets of clothes and a few books on business management. I’ve got to admit, apart from being a little extreme and, oh, that stubbornness of his, he’s a really nice guy, really. At least he’s better than the vast majority of entrepreneurs that only know how to talk. When my friend introduced him to me, I thought he was nice. I saw that he was trustworthy and honest, so I invested some money in his business, but I sure didn’t expect him to end up like this.”

Han Lu sighed.

“Well, did he have any social media accounts?”

“He’s very old-fashioned—no Weibo or blogs whatsoever. The only social media account he had was to promote his company on the forum. It was to save costs—he often went to the forum to promote his products.”

“How about his WeChat friends?”

“Uh, I deleted his contact after the whole thing went south. And I haven’t added him back since.”

“How about the friend who introduced him to you?”

“Erm... I can ask him.” Han Lu dialed a number, got up, and walked to the side of a nearby acacia tree. A moment later, she came back. “He deleted Xu Jianjun’s contact after his death too. He says saving a dead person’s WeChat contact on the phone brings bad luck.”

“How about the phone number?”

“He wrote it on the original agreement. I can ask my assistant to send it over. But will it be useful?”

“It depends. An account would usually be canceled after 90 days of late payments,” said Zhang Heng. “I need a place with internet access. There is an internet cafe nearby, but I’ve got to have some steamed buns to fill out my stomach first. I’m sorry, I guess we won’t be having that grilled fish tonight.”

“Understood. After all, staying alive is more important, right,” chuckled Han Lu. It appeared she was still in a good mental state, seeing how she could still crack jokes. In addition to her not fully believing Zhang Heng’s explanation, the years of hustling in the world of finance also made her calmer than the ordinary Joe. The two bought some buns from a small stall, quickly gobbling it up even before they left the roadside. They then proceeded to the internet cafe to book a private room, and after a while, Han Lu’s assistant sent Xu Jianjun’s number to her. Fortunately, the number was still registered to him, and for good measure, the assistant sent a copy of his ID card as well.

Middle-aged people like Xu Jianjun generally did not care about passwords, security, and that sort of thing. All his accounts used the same password. Hence, it was not difficult to hack into his WeChat account. Zhang Heng first used Xu Jianjun’s ID card to retrieve passwords from registered marketing accounts.

After entering the WeChat login interface, everything went smoothly after that. Since they were using a new mobile phone, all his chat history was gone. The posts for his friends to view did not disappear, though. These were mostly useless ramblings, ranging from inspirational articles to junk, which used exaggerated headlines.

Zhang Heng, however, soon managed to find whatever he was looking for.

Chapter 448 Count to Ten

Guo Miao-Xu Jianjun’s comrade-in-arms, joined the army the same year as Xu Jianjun. After that, the both of them returned to their hometown, where one was discharged, and the other found another profession.

Among his circle of friends, Guo Miao was the one Xu Jianjun interacted with the most. At nearly every event of the latter's life, Guo Miao would leave supportive messages, encouraging his friend to courageously brave through the storms as they would pass and dawn was just on the horizon.

"He's done more harm than good to himself. Starting a business is a perilous thing, especially for those who have no experience. You actually pay a tuition fee when you first start a business. The key lies in how much you learn from that experience. Everyone falls sometimes, but the difference between winners and losers is that the former always finds a way to get up," said Han Lu. "Instead of staying on the bumpy path until the end, you need to learn from your past failures."

"Is this a lesson on entrepreneurship?"

"No, it's small talk between friends. I don't know why, but I always forget how young you actually are. Are you proficient in basic computer operations? How is that possible? You're so young... Why do I feel like there's nothing you don't know? Is this some kind of supernatural phenomenon, like the prophets in the Bible?"

Han Lu's shoulder almost brushed Zhang Heng.

"I just happen to know a little more," Zhang Heng answered. Zhang Heng swiftly retrieved Guo Miao's current address from the Internet—it wasn't too far from where they were—about 400 kilometers away. It would take around four hours if they used the motorway.

"If it's alright with you, let's go now."

"Erm, Guo Miao was also a soldier like Xu Jianjun. It would be better if we bring more people with us, or even hire a bodyguard or

two."

"There's no need for that. I can manage that part." Zhang Heng got up from his seat.

"Whoa, that sounds very reassuring, but to be on the safe side..." Han Lu pointed to a message in the group chat on Zhang Heng's phone. "Would you like me to find some of our old friends to intimidate that woman, show her who's boss?"

She then spread her hands in surrender. "Hey, I don't want to deliver myself to their doorstep only to be bushwhacked."

"As I said, you can still choose to stay at home. I can always record a video for you," said Zhang Heng. "The fewer people know about this, the better. When this is all over, I hope you'll keep it a secret too."

"Why? Are you in danger as well? Do you need my help?" Han Lu was quick to read between the lines of Zhang Heng's request. "...I know many people..."

"If I ever need it, I won't hesitate to ask," said Zhang Heng. "But right now, let's focus on how we can solve your problem."

"Alright."

Han Lu did not mention the bodyguard idea anymore after that. The red Lexus subsequently took off, speeding in the direction of the location pointed by the navigation app.

Four hours later, they exited the highway and entered a small county town where Guo Miao worked as the head of security in a plastic processing factory. Zhang Heng spoke to the old man at the gate and learned that Guo Miao was also on duty at the factory tonight. "Should we come back tomorrow morning instead? The security guards in the factory are all his subordinates," Han Lu suggested. "...or we can wait until he gets off work tomorrow morning and intercept him on his way home."

"Determining if you are a target of the Dreamland of Death is just the first step. I don't want to spend too much time on this part. The real problem is figuring out how to lift the curse," said Zhang Heng. Stepping out of the vehicle, he looked at the time on his watch.

Drive another three hundred meters, and remember to keep the engine running. Then, close your eyes, count to ten, then open your eyes again. After that, don't speak, just listen carefully."

"Huh? Is this... some sort of game?" Han Lu asked. "You can treat it like a game," answered Zhang Heng as he pulled his hoodie over his head.

Han Lu did as she was told and parked the Lexus three hundred meters ahead of them. She saw Zhang Heng's silhouette from the rear-view mirror. He stood under a street lamp, staring at the factory building; his face expressionless, like a statue. Han Lu shrugged.

"Alright."

She let her eyelids fall and counted to ten in her head. When she reached eight, she could hear the heavy breathing of a man coming from the backseat.

When she finished counting to ten, he spoke up.

"Who are you?" the stranger asked, still gasping. Han Lu's quickly opened her eyes. Zhang Heng, who was still standing under the street light ten seconds ago, was now seated at the car's back with a man. His head was covered with a sack, and his limbs were bound.

"Don't panic. We're just doing an aftersales visit," Zhang Heng said.

"What aftersales visit? Did you get the wrong person?" asked the bound man. He sure was a brave one. Most would have wet their pants at this stage, but while his breathing had quickened, there wasn't the slightest tremor in his voice. He really was a soldier.

"You're Guo Miao, right?" Zhang Heng asked.

"Yes, that's me," Guo Miao answered candidly. His wallet was still at the back of his pants, so he did not see the point in lying.

"Then we didn't get the wrong person. You spent ten yuan on a murder democide order on a website called Murder Without Risk."

"Who are you?! Are you the police? And no, just having the intention to kill is not illegal," Guo Miao snarled. He still didn't understand the situation he was put in. Just a second ago, he was enjoying a late-

night hotpot with his colleagues, and the next moment, his hands and feet were bound, and there was a sack over his head.

Though he couldn't see where he was, Guo Miao surmised that he was probably in a car from the shape of the seat he was sitting on. He had even deliberately raised his voice to see if anyone else could hear him.

Suddenly, he received a punch in the lower abdomen, and a hard object was placed against his crotch.

"Save that thought. We're not asking for money, nor do we want your life. We just have a few questions to ask. All you have to do is to answer them nicely, and we will let you

go."

Once he heard that, Guo Miao immediately became compliant. "What do you want to know?"

"Have you ever browsed our online store?"

Guo Miao kept quiet.

"Just like you said, thinking about killing someone is not against the law, and no, we're not the police either."

"Yes," Guo Miao finally admitted.

"Then what was in the package you received?"

"A black feather, something like an instruction manual, and a strange photo. They asked me to follow the steps in the guide, and the target will die unexpectedly."

Han Lu gripped the steering wheel hard, trembling slightly.

"Did you follow the instructions, then?"

"Mmm," Guo Miao nodded. "I wrote down a name and burned it with the feather. Then, I poured the ashes into some water and sent the picture to the target in a message."

"One last question, and please be sure to tell us the truth. Your answer will determine if you'll get out of the car with everything intact, or in pieces which will be eventually discovered in the trash." Zhang Heng paused for a minute. "Whose name did you write?"

Guo Miao gulped. "Han Lu. That woman killed my best comrade-in-arms, and I have to make sure he gets the justice he deserves."

"Congratulations, you're free to go, Mr. Guo Miao."

Zhang Heng opened the door on Guo Miao's side.

Chapter 449 I Think I'm Starting To Like Her

Before letting Guo Miao out of the car, Zhang Heng took a look at Han Lu. She shook her head, and before anyone could say anything, Zhang Heng kicked him out of the car. Han Lu then stepped on the gas, and the car disappeared into the night. Guo Miao's loud cries for help soon attracted the factory's

security guards, and half a minute later, the bag on his head was taken off. Guo Miao was still puzzled until now. He had no idea what happened to him earlier.

How did he get into a stranger's car all of a sudden? What was the purpose of kidnapping him?

What happened tonight was like a bizarre nightmare. Guo Miao shook his head in disbelief. "This is creepy," he murmured to himself.

At the same time, in the Lexus, neither Zhang Heng nor Han Lu spoke. After a while, Zhang Heng broke the silence. "I didn't expect you to be so calm." "What should I have done? Kill Guo Miao? Are you going to kill him for me? And is there any point in killing him other than us getting tangled in a lawsuit? Or should have we beaten him up? According to you, the curse is in effect now, so killing him won't change anything anyway," retorted Han Lu.

Zhang Heng decided to remain as frank as he could. "About that... it's hard to answer. Some think that killing the Dreamland of Death's holder is part of the solution to lifting the curse. A case study, however, had proven that killing its holder will not lift the curse."

"If killing the item's owner works, I'm willing to take the risk," Han Lu said calmly. "However, I don't see the point of killing him to vent my anger. Yes, I'm hated by many, but Guo Miao happened to receive an opportunity to get rid of me. I bet he didn't even know what he was doing. And he didn't dare to confront me, avenging his brother, and all. So, he can only rely on unscrupulous methods..." Han Lu paused. "...let's not talk about him. I believe everything you say now. There are things in this world that science can't explain. Will you help me lift the curse?"

"I'll try my best, but I can't guarantee results," Zhang Heng said.

"...Shouldn't you try to comfort me at a time like this? It's like you go to the hospital for an examination, and you're diagnosed with a fatal disease, but the doctor still says you're fine."

"Sorry, I thought people like you would rather hear the truth."

"Theoretically, you are right, but it turns out that women still like listening to lies," said Han Lu.

The Lexus entered the motorway again.

"Where shall we go next?"

"I'll need to go back to meet a friend first."

Considering that time was of the essence, Han Lu ignored the speed limit. Twelve demerits on her driving records were nothing when compared to her life. In the end, Han Lu made it to the destination in less than three hours.

She parked her Lexus outside a KTV.

After a while, Fan Meinan, in a flight attendant attire, came out.

"Hey, brought your new girlfriend to brag?! What about that Japanese girl? Cruelly abandoned after you took advantage of her?"

Zhang Heng ignored the jeering and looked at Fan Meinan's outfit. "Who is in luck today?"

"Hehe! A young man who runs a film company and likes to lay hands on female students in the name of helping them become a model. I found out that he likes to come here and sing, so I've been waiting for him to give him a gift." Fan Meinan adjusted the flight hat on her head.

"Let's get down to business. Have you contacted the person that I asked?"

"Yes," Fan Meinan nodded. "But let me warn you, I can't guarantee she'll show up. The three major guilds have been looking everywhere for her. I was affected by her, and I have not seen her for a long time. I'm a little afraid of her, actually. She is not easy to get along with."

"No matter what, we'll have to go to the place first."

Zhang Heng's strategy was straightforward. Since there were huge speculations on the forums on how to lift the curse of the Dreamland of Death, it indicated that the three powerful guilds must have had insider information that ordinary players didn't know of. The only ones who knew how to use the Dreamland of Death were limited to those who had used it before.

Among them, the first owner of the item was dead, and the second was supposed to be the mysterious woman at the auction. According to Fan Meinan's statement, the Dreamland of Death was no longer with the woman. Despite that, she was now the only person that Zhang Heng was likely to look for.

"Do you need a change of clothes?" Zhang Heng asked Fan Meinan.

"I don't think so. Aren't you good at fighting?" "...no matter how good I am at fighting, it still doesn't mean I like to get in unnecessary trouble."

"Are you trying to say that with the way I'm dressed, I'm tempting others to commit a crime against me?" Fan Meinan looked at Han Lu, who was in the driver's seat.

Han Lu, on the other hand, was very calm.

"Fine. I will stay put and play the ugly duckling that no one loves. Give me two minutes." Fan Meinan turned around and ran back to KTV.

"Don't take it to heart," Zhang Heng said. "She's always been like that."

"It's fine. She is a fascinating child." Han Lu smiled. "Is she... also from your world?"

"Huh?"

"That... the supernatural world below the ordinary world."

"Well, she's a lot tougher than you think. It won't be easy to take advantage of her just like that."

There was a thoughtful look on Han Lu's face. "Is there any way to enter your world?"

"Trust me; you don't want to enter that world."

Fan Meinan had returned with a set of loose and rather dull-looking set of clothes. She then got into the car. "A luxury car that costs over one million yuan... this is my first time getting into such an expensive

car. I don't know where to put my butt." "If you like it, I can give this car to you," Han Lu said. "We can sign the agreement first, then wait until you get your driver's license."

Fan Meinan was a little surprised when she heard that. "Huh? Why? Was it my sarcasm that irked you? Planning to use money to get me under your thumb, huh?"

"Of course not. It's because Zhang Heng told me that you know someone who can save me, and there's nothing wrong showing generosity to the person who saved my life." "I can't guarantee that I will be able to save you." Fan Meinan opened a bag of pistachios in the back seat. "It's too early to thank me."

"It's not early. If I die, this car is meaningless to me anyway," Han Lu said lightly. "Oh, what should I do? I think I like her now," Fan Meinan said to Zhang Heng.

Chapter 450 She'd Always Been The One I Envied Most

Before departing, Han Lu bought a 15 bottle carton of Nescafe at a 7-11 on the roadside. She sipped on the cold coffee, and it freshened her up a great deal.

It was now four in the morning, and Han Lu still seemed to be doing fine. After all, there was one too many times when urgent work needed to be dealt with overnight. Hence staying up late was not unfamiliar to her. Although she was aging, she had always maintained healthy habits, resulting in a figure way better than women way younger than her. It also meant she would have more time to figure out a way to save her life.

Soon, the three returned to Zhang Heng's school, collecting the recurve bow, Lego bricks, and other gadgets before going to the agreed place. It was a small park outside the Fifth Ring Road. Considering it was close to a nearby community, it was a favorite exercising spot for elderly folk.

Han Lu parked the car outside the park.

"Uh, she doesn't trust anyone," said Fan Meinan. "So, I'll go in alone and tell her about the situation. If everything is good, I'll call you guys in."

"There is no danger, right?"

"...how do I put it? She doesn't like me that much, or should I say, she sneers at me whenever she sees me. But it's alright. Rest assured, she won't beat me up." Fan Meinan took a deep breath, opened the door, and walked out of the car.

Now, only Zhang Heng and Han Lu were left in the Lexus.

Han Lu turned on the radio. "Any songs you want to listen to?"

"You choose," Zhang Heng said. "Play whatever song that lifts your spirits."

"Is this the privilege of a dying woman?" Han Lu shrugged as she took out her mobile phone, and connected it to the car's stereo via Bluetooth. After rummaging through her playlist, she hesitated and sighed. "Forget it. I'm not in the mood for any songs."

After that, neither of them spoke another word.

.....

Han Lu broke the silence after a long while. "How does it feel to have a child?"

"Huh?"

"Your mom and I are best friends. When we were studying abroad, I never got tired of sticking close to her. I thought I knew her well, including her habit of secretly picking out raisins from her cereal. However, I had never seen that expression on her face when she held the little you in her arms. Her eyes were shining, and she became so gentle."

Han Lu paused...

"We also talked about marriage and having children... Little Xia told me she watched a documentary about a mother going into labor before, and she felt that childbirth hurt too much. At that time, she said she would never have children in the future. I told her if that was the case, then no one would marry her. She even said that if no men wanted her, she would live together with me. I would be the one who makes the money, and she would be the one to spend it."

"That sure sounds like her," chuckled Zhang Heng.

"Not too long after that, she found herself the right man and married him." Han Lu tapped the steering wheel. "That traitor... she'd always been the one I was most jealous of. She lives like she's deranged, takes all problems for granted, and shoves them to her people to bear instead. That said, that woman has a compelling intuition. She always makes the right choices at the most critical time. Whether it was marriage or having a child... it's hard not to admire her. For once, I thought I finally won her over with my career taking-off, but she didn't seem to care much about that sort of thing. That retard must probably think she is doing as well as me, but her monthly wages can't even cover my hairdo."

"You have done well," Zhang Heng said. "It's just that people are always reluctant to cherish what they already have, or once they get something else better, the value of whatever they used to have seemingly depreciates. Instead, your desire to obtain what you can't get would only grow. Like getting married, or starting a career... these are just personal choices at different stages of life, and there are no good or bad in this matter. You're simply enduring a very depressing phase. Your normal life will resume when this is all over."

"Is it some illusion... or it sounds like advice from somebody much older than me." Han Lu was about to elaborate but was stopped by Zhang Heng's finger.

Han Lu fell shush. "What's wrong?" she whispered after a while.

"She's been gone for a long time." Zhang Heng lowered the window. The park was eerily silent this late at night, and only the rustling of leaves could be heard echoing in the air.

"I thought we are supposed to wait for her signal?" asked Han Lu.

"Yes, but it might be better for us to do something in such a situation."

Zhang Heng got out of the car and grabbed his recurve bow from the trunk. Taking a ski mask from the backpack, he then put over on his face. "Wait for me in the car and lock the door. Follow the old rules. Keep the engine running; ignore us, and drive away immediately if you notice something not right."

Then, Zhang Heng turned around and walked into the park.

He strode quickly, but at the same time, paid close attention to his surroundings. To avoid any misunderstanding, he did not pull the bowstring.

It did not take long for him to reach the center of the park. There was nothing there. On the other side was an artificial pond with no water in it, and behind him was a wall. There was no place for anyone to hide. Suddenly, something alerted Zhang Heng, and he stopped in his tracks. He stretched his right hand to retrieve the quiver, but two hands suddenly grabbed his waist. The space in front of him started to distort, and several figures appeared from the dark. Fan Meinan's mouth was covered, restrained by two people, while another one held her hands behind her.

The last person appeared right in front of Zhang Heng. After the surprise attack, the assailant was about to punch Zhang Heng's groin.

Thankfully, Zhang Heng's reactions were swift, and he managed to block the punch with his recurve bow. He moved his head back, hitting the nose of the attacker that was behind him. While the enemy suffered immense pain, Zhang Heng took the opportunity to free himself.

He took two steps to the right, looking at the four unfriendlies in front of him.

A person who was apparently their leader spoke up. "Very well, catch her accomplice as well. The three major guilds will definitely offer a good price for them."

Zhang Heng raised his eyebrows. "Who are you?" he asked.

"You can call us the enthusiastic bunch. During this period, the players have worked very hard to look for this woman and her accomplices. I didn't expect our luck to be so good."

"I'm afraid that you have been misled into capturing the wrong person," Zhang Heng replied.

"How is it possible? Her face may be devious, but this plasticine game item is definitely real." The leader put his hand into his pocket and took out a piece of plasticine, smiling casually.