

## 48 Hours 471

### Chapter 471 Tsunami

The tallest nearby structures were several residential buildings located on the east side of the road, though a green zone remained in the middle of it all. Zhang Heng visually estimated the distance to the spot, where he concluded that it would be almost impossible to get there in time. Instead, the four-story museum on the west side looked like a more reachable goal.

Wasting not a second, he jumped off the taxi's roof and ran toward the museum as fast as he could. The cab driver was still in a rage, mad over his passenger trampling on his vehicle's roof. At that time, Zhang Heng had already arrived at where the bus sign was. He hastily pushed away two high school students engrossed with their mobiles, then ran toward the bicycle and pedestrian lane before jumping over the museum's ticketing gate.

The ticket collector operating the booth was taken aback by the intruder, yelling at Zhang Heng to stop as he went after him. Not only did Zhang Heng refuse to stop running, but he started to speed up the moment he heard those cries. An elderly couple had just entered the museum, and Zhang Heng slipped in before the automatic door closed.

The museum was open for business not too long ago, and there weren't yet many visitors. There were only about a dozen people in the bronzeware exhibition hall on the first floor, where they slowly strolled and admired the showroom's collections.

Zhang Heng found the stairs in a few seconds, but the guards on the first floor were alerted as well. They began to surround him in no time. Zhang Heng, however, didn't plan on wasting any time on them. His mind raced to calculate how much time he had left, eventually estimating that he should have around six or seven seconds left. At that moment, the guard who was now on his right attempted to pounce on him, but Zhang Heng managed to duck the attack, avoiding it by inches. The guard on his left failed to capture him as well since a shelf separated them.

In the final three seconds, Zhang Heng ran up the stairs as quickly as his legs would climb them. From the corner of his eye, he could see through the glass wall that the gargantuan tidal wave was already making landfall. Then, it struck! The ten-meter wave mercilessly smashed onto the museum's south-side glass wall, shattering the double-layered tempered glass in less than half a second!

After that, swathes of seawater rushed into the museum along with a barrage of branches, bricks, bicycles, and other garbage. Zhang Heng managed to rush to the third floor at the last moment. Seawater swallowed the two floors beneath him in the blink of an eye, and the guards in pursuit were swept away by the colossal wave before they could even shout for help. The group of tourists visiting the museum had disappeared, probably killed by as well.

At this moment, Zhang Heng felt as if he was alone on a deserted island in a vast ocean. The human species was evidently powerless against natural disasters.

Nobody really expected a tsunami to hit them, and as it approached the city, many people didn't realize what was happening. It was all but too late when they realized that a cataclysm was coming for them. While many were swept away by the unstoppable current, either being pushed to the wall or trapped in

their floating cars, sharp objects impaled the more unlucky ones, or in this case, lucky, as they were instantly killed on the spot.

A little girl wearing a dress about six to seven years of age opened her eyes wide in terror, utterly shocked by the devastation taking place right in front of her.

Zhang Heng didn't bother asking about her parents. Before he could catch his breath, he saw a second wave approaching at an incredible speed. This one was even taller than the previous one, almost as tall as the museum itself. Instead of running upstairs, he turned and ran to the center of the three-story exhibition hall. He heard a thunderous rumble behind him, and that was when the giant wave effortlessly penetrated the last two layers of glass. The exquisite collections of porcelain from the Tang and Song dynasties had resisted the test of time, but they were nothing against the mighty tsunami. These ended up like the glass wall, too, shattered into oblivion.

The second wave spared nothing in its path, swallowing the little girl behind Zhang Heng too. Zhang Heng held onto a pillar and hugged it as tightly as he could. The ravaging pillar of water came crashing on the pillar violently, and as it hit Zhang Heng's body, it split into two streams, rushing forward with unstoppable force to the wall.

The museum vibrated and shook to its core, but fortunately, the building's foundations were strong enough to withstand the impact. Zhang Heng wasn't so lucky. Since the waves did not break through the wall, they flowed back and headed for him instead. All he could do right now was to curl up and protect his vital organs. Fortunately, the wave was weakened when it returned to Zhang Heng, and since he was holding on to nothing, he was swept along with it. The powerful undercurrent caused him to tumble a few times beneath the water. The world around him spun violently, and all he could do now was ride it out and hope he survived.

That said, after completing the Apollo training camp, Zhang Heng was now a master at resisting dizziness after his episodes of getting thrown around a centrifuge like a ragdoll.

He held onto his breath and tried his best to deal with the impact using his back. Thankfully, he remained conscious, and a minute later, he could clearly feel the undercurrent beginning to weaken. It meant that the tsunami's first wave was about to over. Zhang Heng waited for underwater for about 20 seconds, and right before he ran out of oxygen, he regained control of his body. As he stuck his head out of the water, he quickly realized that the world around him had changed drastically.

The city was no longer a familiar sight.

The once heavy traffic plying the roads were now all under meters of water. The tsunami had completely engulfed the houses built in the lower area nearby, causing only their roofs to be visible. High-rise buildings survived, though, except for a few who had weak foundations.

Zhang Heng wiped the seawater off his face. He saw broken parasol trees and utility poles floating all around him. Overhead cables were entangled with tree branches, and there was even a sandal undulating along with the waves, its owner nowhere to be found.

After a while, Zhang Heng found a door panel floating by. Immediately, he pulled it toward him. It could be used as a raft, and since getting it meant he no longer needed to tread water, precious physical

strength could be conserved. This might just be the first wave, and no one knew if or when the next one would hit the city again. Having those thoughts in mind, Zhang Heng decided to prepare in advance.

Now that he was in Han Lu's dream, common sense and experience might not work in this world. In fact, the tsunami was more than bizarre. Zhang Heng wasn't sure if the tsunami was in any way related to the Dreamland of Death, but it explained why Han Lu left her place in such a hurry. She must have been warned.

Nonetheless, considering her exodus to the airport, she could be anywhere at the moment, and all Zhang Heng could do was pray that Han Lu managed to get to safety in time. As for the burning questions in his mind, they would have to wait until she was located.

But the bad news was that the tsunami had destroyed the city, and everyone related to Han Lu had either been killed or missing. Now, Zhang Heng completely lost track of his goal, and he was at a complete loss on what to do next.

For now, he had to look for a safe place, waiting to see if a second tsunami would arrive.

### **Chapter 472 Han Lu's Childhood**

Zhang Heng held onto the door and paddled in the opposite direction of the tsunami.

He saw many tragedies along the way, including floating bodies, mothers who lost their children, and children who lost their mothers. They were all sitting on whatever high place they could find, and they seemed to have lost their souls. There were also people holding the corpses of their loved ones, sobbing uncontrollably. No help seemed to be available to them right now, and the more resourceful survivors were looking for food and drinking water floating around them.

Zhang Heng remained unmoved by the sight and continued to paddle toward the target location. After all, this was just a dream, and nothing would change even if he decided to help them.

In the end, he came to a five-star hotel whose lobby was fully submerged in water. The receptionist at the front desk could no longer help guests fill out their registrations. Zhang Heng climbed the outer wall and arrived on the sixth floor, managing to find a room with open windows.

The guest inside was missing, but the person's suitcase was still on the bed. Zhang Heng spotted a bottle of water on the table, quickly picking it up and drinking down half of it. After that, he took off his soaked clothes and shoes to dry them before changing into the hotel's bathrobe and slippers. He still didn't know how Shen Xixi and the others were doing. Separated when they entered Han Lu's dream, Shen Xixi and her team had gone in a little earlier than him. He wondered if they had located Han Lu. He stood in front of the window and looked at the flooded city below, knowing that it would be almost impossible to do anything effective in such a catastrophe.

The only good news was that the second wave of tsunami did not come, even after Zhang Heng waited in the room until night arrived. The water flooding the city, on the other hand, showed no signs of receding.

Zhang Heng took a look at his watch, realizing that it had been 12 hours since he left Han Lu's residence. Something was not right since usually, Dreamland of Death victims would survive no longer than three hours. When Zhang Heng did not know what else he could do next, the strange dark cloud in the sky

that had been engulfing the whole city quietly disappeared. After that, he felt increasingly drowsy, and his eyes automatically fell shut.

When Zhang Heng opened his eyes, he found out that he was standing outside a watch shop. The time was about two and a half hours before he entered Han Lu's dream. The sun had just risen, where the city had returned to normal, and there were no signs it was ravaged by a tsunami. The owner of the roadside breakfast stall was already busy preparing for business.

That said, Zhang Heng still noticed that something wasn't right.

The shops along the street were old, looking like they were from the '70s and '80s. The watch shop next to him was a good example. There were no fancy neon signs and LED lights in the shop. The simple-looking black plaque hanging above the shop's entrance had three words printed on it-Clock Repairing Service. A piece of yellow paper on the glass window had the words Shanghai, Dongfeng, and Beijing written in red letters. Zhang Heng guessed that these names were watch brands, names that had already completely disappeared in the modern era he lived in.

He walked out of the alley, noticing that there was no traffic jam. There were very few cars on the road, and most people rode bicycles. From time to time, an old-fashioned public bus would pass by. And there was even a donkey-powered cart. A traffic policeman in a white shirt, black pants, and an armed belt around his waist stood at the intersection, directing traffic. Not far behind him, a banner was being hung. It said, 'Long live the friendship between the peoples of China and France.'

A green army truck drove by Zhang Heng with a load full of young people. Holding the handles with one hand and their straw hats with the other, they all sang the same song. They seemed to be feeling hopeful about their future. Their faces didn't display the frustrations of paying the monthly mortgage and getting forced to follow the 996 working hour system.

Was this... a dream about Han Lu's childhood?

After thinking for a while, he figured Han Lu must probably be a student in this era, though, he wasn't sure which grade she was in. As interesting as it was to see how the place was back in the '70s and '80s, it also made it extremely difficult to locate Han Lu.

After all, Zhang Heng didn't know Han Lu that well, and his understanding of her was limited. Previously, he resorted to a taxi driver for help after failing to find her in her house and office. Now that the dream had morphed into Han Lu's childhood, Zhang Heng was at a complete loss.

He wasn't a man of the era. Most of his understanding of the '70s and '80s came from books and movies. How Han Lu lived her life, how many family members she had, and which school she studied in, Zhang Heng had no answers to all these questions.

Then, something seemed to flash through his mind. He realized that he had received essential clues, but he could not remember a single thing when he tried to recall them. Zhang Heng stood by the side of the road, continuing to try his luck.

He waited for the indicator to turn green and walked to the opposite plaza. There were three young people, two men and one woman, rehearsing a dance routine. The woman wore a long-sleeved military

uniform. One of the men behind her was in a Chinese tunic, and then another man was in a suit and tie. Immersed in their practice, they completely ignored the people around them.

Zhang Heng noticed the three because of the young woman among them.

She dazzled brightly among the crowd as if she was the brightest star in the darkest of skies.

Zhang Heng tried to put himself into Han Lu's shoes, just like how she viewed the taxi driver. She must have had invested a considerable amount of emotions into this young woman, admiring her without thinking about what others thought. It must be why she took up an important spot in Han Lu's dream.

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This information was useless to Zhang Heng, though. Han Lu was just a bystander in this situation, silently admiring this girl in the crowd. She had not attempted to communicate. It appeared he wouldn't be getting any information about Han Lu from this young woman. Zhang Heng quickly looked away and searched for the next target. His gaze fell on another woman not far away who was watching the dancing practice. She was the second most prominent person in the plaza, where Han Lu's attention seemed to be captured by the Aviators she wore. Everyone knew that it was imported, and it was hard for her not to stand out.

After that, Zhang Heng saw a popsicle cart not too far away. An older man with a white hat and apron sold popsicles at five cents each.

Zhang Heng was speechless. This dream was the compilation of situations or people that Han Lu envied. He could guess that Han Lu must have been still very young in this era.

Suddenly, someone patted him on the back.

Zhang Heng turned and saw the girl named Rabbit in Shen Xixi's team. She was surprised to see him and looked at Zhang Heng as if he was her savior. "Oh my god! I finally get to meet someone that I know! This is great! Do you know what place this is?"

### **Chapter 473 Air-Raid Shelter**

"Is this the same city but over 40 years ago? No wonder I kept wandering around without knowing its name for a long time," sighed Rabbit, breathing a sigh of relief after meeting Zhang Heng. "Something worse happened to me. I was trapped on the roof, and the frigid winds from the sea tortured me for almost half a day! During that time, I saved a guy who fell into the water, and instead of thanking me, he wanted to kick me into the ocean. It was awful!"

"Do you know why we were sent here from that tsunami?" Zhang Heng asked. "Well, most people think that we only dream once a night. That's because most people only remember their last dream before waking up. That's not right, I'm afraid. In the study of sleep, the researchers are accustomed to dividing the sleep cycle into two periods: rapid eye movement sleep (REM) and non-rapid eye movement sleep (NREM). These happen alternately during a sleep cycle. Early studies showed that people only dream during their REM sleep but later, new research overturned the claim. Therefore, in theory, we might have many dreams in one night. Based on a conjecture of mine, I believe we just came from Han Lu's previous dream, her second dream. But it is still unclear whether this transition between dreams is

natural or a special one triggered by the Dreamland of Death,” muttered Rabbit, blurting out all the words in a staccato.

“Any plans in mind?”

“Uhh... Is reacting per the circumstance considered a plan??” Rabbit shrugged, “We only just acquired this item that allows us to enter someone’s dream. It has unlimited uses, but one thing’s for sure, it uses up one flower for each trip. Right now, there are only three flowers in total. Once we use it up, we’ll have to wait until it grows again. By the time another flower blooms, who knows how many people the Dreamland of Death would have targeted. Hence, we did not conduct any experiments in advance. We have to watch every step we take.”

When Rabbit was finished, she looked at the Popsicle cart not too far away. “Wow, the popsicles look delicious, and they only cost 5 cents. Don’t worry about the calories. I’ll go get myself one now.”

She took out her wallet, handed over ten yuan, and generously gave it to the elderly man operating the cart. “Keep the change, grandpa.”

Instead of taking the money from Rabbit, the old man stared at the ten yuan and frowned. “Little girl, is your bill... a counterfeit?”

Rabbit looked embarrassed, quickly realizing the mistake she made.

In the end, she simply ran away while the old man looked at her suspiciously. She hurriedly returned to Zhang Heng in desperation.

“Shit! They’ve never seen our modern RMB note before.”

Since the two could find no useful clues around the plaza, they could only keep looking for someone that could help them. Meanwhile, Zhang Heng would look at his watch every once in a while.

When Rabbit saw Zhang Heng looking at his watch repeatedly, she sighed. “It’s useless. The time flow in the dream world is different from the real world.”

Acknowledging Rabbit’s advice, he looked at the time recorded on the phone twice, making sure he remembered it. “I know. I just want to see if I can find out the contact.”

“Contact, what contact?” “I don’t know yet, so be prepared,” said Zhang Heng. The two went along the street, asking around randomly about Han Lu’s childhood. Unfortunately, they found no useful information that told about Han Lu’s whereabouts. After what seemed like a long while, they accidentally bumped into Han Lu’s mother, a translator. She had that frequently serious look on her, and she did not like to smile.

It was evident that Han Lu’s feelings for her mother were very complicated. The nature of her mother’s work required her to travel often, and thanks to that, she missed out on most of her daughter’s childhood. At the same time, her emotionless, poker face also made her look like a mean person.

Zhang Heng, however, managed to discover some things in common between the two of them. The way they frowned when they get impatient looked the same, and other than that, perseverance was a quality they both shared. Zhang Heng also finally got to know where Han Lu’s rhinitis came from.

Zhang Heng and Rabbit quietly followed behind Han Mu, trying to determine where Han Lu stayed as a child. Not long after that, though, Zhang Heng once again noticed the abnormally-shaped clouds appearing above his head.

The same thing happened before the tsunami hit the city, like some omen before a catastrophic event.

Rabbit raised her head to the sky. "Again?" she muttered, her hands shielding her eyes from the sun. "The same bloody thing is going to happen to us again. What should we do? Should we continue to follow her or look for a high place and observe the situation?"

Zhang Heng thought for a while before reaching a decision. "You get to a safe place first. I'll keep following her. Let me know where you're heading to, and I will look for you once there's news or when the tsunami passes."

Rabbit hesitated. "In that case, I'll stay a little longer. According to the previous pattern, we have around half an hour before the tsunami arrives. I'll only have five minutes to retreat to safety." Zhang Heng didn't want to persuade her after hearing her out.

Alas, both couldn't be more wrong this time. After a quarter of an hour, Rabbit looked bewildered as she stared at the thing poking out of the clouds. "Really?! I thought the inland tsunami was enough nonsense. I didn't expect anything mythical to be in this dream?!"

'I saw three huge black shadows spreading their wings above the city, like Death with wings, looking down on the peasants.'

"Uhh... I just hope they won't spit fire everywhere."

As soon as Rabbit said that, a giant dragon opened its mouth, and its flaming breath hit a bus on the road dead-on. Its passengers didn't even stand a chance to escape, where every last person onboard was decimated by the sea of fire. The heat was so intense it melted the cars around the bus.

The dragon did not stop there. Fire quickly swept across the entire street. In just a few fiery spits, the lively and joyful street promptly turned into purgatory on earth. Unlike the previous tsunami, those caught in the fire were completely erased from the world, charred to oblivion.

"Air-raid shelter!" Zhang Heng spat out three words quickly upon seeing the deadly scene unfolding before him.

Air-raid shelters were rare in the modern-day. But in the early 1970s, violent Sino-Soviet relations and threats from the United States gave credence to the notion that nuclear war was imminent. During that special period, the powers that be equipped almost all major universities, factories, and government bureaus with air-raid shelters.

A sprawling underground city was built right below the capital. It extended in all directions, from Wangfujing all the way to the railway station. There was even a cafeteria and barbershop. Fortunately, these air-raid shelters didn't see any use, and they gradually faded out as time went by. With the appearance of the dragons, however, they could surely come in handy.

There was an air-raid shelter less than 400 meters away from the two were, and the terrified crowd was running there. There was no need for Zhang Heng to say anything to Rabbit. She was shoved along with

the running stampede of people, joining the horde involuntarily. After running for a while, she realized that Zhang Heng was no longer with her.

#### **Chapter 474 Dragon Flame**

Rabbit looked back to Zhang Heng rushing in the giant dragon's direction instead of escaping with her. Earlier, everyone paid attention to three giant dragons that had suddenly appeared above the city. Zhang Heng was the only one that divided half of his attention to Han Lu's mother.

When the crowd began to flee in panic, Han Mu ran toward the air-raid shelter as well, but before she could run far, someone pushed her from the back, and she fell to the ground.

Falling amid a stampeding crowd that was fleeing in panic was extremely dangerous. Han Mu tried to get up, but someone stepped on her waist. The person happened to be a young student and was very polite. And he immediately apologized to Han Mu after he realized that he had accidentally stepped on her. A few seconds later, someone accidentally stepped on Han Mu's calf again.

The young student was trying really hard to get Han Lu's mother to stand up amid the chaotic frenzy. However, it was a fruitless attempt. Driven by the survival instinct, everyone was shoving those in front to get to the bomb shelter as fast as possible. The young student couldn't stop the people behind him, as he too got shoved. He almost fell to the ground, and when he looked back again, he saw that a lot of people were stepping on Han Mu.

Suddenly, he felt that someone was squeezing his side. The young student opened his eyes wide and wanted to know who the person that ran past him was. Af of now, he couldn't control where he was headed to, as if being caught in a giant wave. Though he wanted to help Han Mu very severely, he was utterly powerless against the tide of human bodies. At the same time, it was hard for him to imagine that someone would go against the huge wave.

A single person was like a small boat in this storm. Anytime now, it would be torn to shreds by the massive storm. He could, however, always find a gap to squeeze through the crowd.

And just like that, Zhang Heng managed to grab hold of Han Mu. Having lost count of the people that stepped over her body, she didn't look too good. Her right hand was severely injured as well, and she managed to survive the stampede by the skin of her teeth. If she stayed on a little longer, she would be indefinitely killed. Zhang Heng paused for a while, found the perfect opportunity, and grabbed her from the ground.

At the same time, he glanced at the dragon in the sky. The three dragons began to move separately, wandering around the city and spitting fire everywhere. This time, even if Zhang Heng hid in a tall building, he would not be able to avoid the dragon's attack. A single breath from the dragon was enough to raze the entire building to the ground.

The most dangerous dragon had to be the one that attacked the bus earlier. Compared to the other two, it was closest to Zhang Heng and Han Mu. It had also turned both streets into a sea of flames in a blink of eyes.

It now landed on the restaurant's roof, with four of its long clawed legs resting on the eaves. It adjusted its position and chose its next target. After a while, it spotted the bomb shelter that was filled with

people. The rabbit had managed to get to the shelter's door, but Zhang Heng had a little trouble since he was with an injured Han Mu. With an extra person, he couldn't squeeze through the crowd like he so flexibly did before.

This meant his current situation had become more dangerous. After resting for a bit, the dragon expanded its black wings again. It dived into the crowd and took a deep breath of air. A few seconds later, it started spewing a stream of fire from its mouth. Half the street turned into a sea of flames in the blink of an eye.

The flame scorched a large area around the bomb shelter, charring those who had not been able to enter it in time. Even those who had just entered the shelter couldn't escape the brunt of the far-reaching inferno.

Like a neverending sea of napalm, the dragon's breath had immense destructive power!

Zhang Heng got lucky, being right beside the dragon when it attacked the crowd. As a result, he got to witness the dragon killing all the unlucky ones. The extremely high air temperature singed the hair on his head, causing them to frizz up. Unlike the rest which turned around and fled in terror, Zhang Heng stopped for a while, then covered his mouth and nose with his clothes and rushed into the sea of flames ahead of him.

It was impossible to outrun a flying dragon. For the same reason, sticking with the crowd was almost equivalent to committing suicide. The dragon, too, was very cunning. It would only target places where there were most people. The only way for Zhang Heng to survive was to run toward the area that the dragon had already scorched. Obviously unsatisfied with the damage dealt, the dragon didn't look back, continuously looking for its next target and leaving a trail of burnt mayhem and destruction behind.

It was not easy deciding to go into the blaze. In addition to overcoming the dragon's fear, the ridiculously high temperatures and toxic smoke in that area were enough to stop anyone attempting to approach. When Zhang Heng's stepped on the ground, he felt as if he was standing on magma in a volcano crater. The rubber on the soles of his shoes started melting, producing a sickening sizzling noise.

Even with Zhang Heng's extraordinary physique, it was hard to last long in such a hostile environment. He almost had to give Han Lu's mother up, but fortunately, they were now was not too far away from the bomb shelter's entrance.

Zhang Heng ran as fast as possible, managing to get to his target location in less than eight seconds. The one-foot-thick iron gate was half-melted, exposing a black hole behind it. At the same time, Zhang Heng could smell something strange burning.

Upon his arrival, he felt a burning heatwave rushing towards him. He even went into a momentary trance, where he thought he made the wrong bet this time, and the giant dragon had turned and attacked him. Zhang Heng soon realized that the dragon's deadly flames weren't targeting him, but it was simply the draft from the dragon flapping its wings. The crowd was still its main target.

The temperature around Zhang Heng was so high to the point he thought that the dragon was actually aiming for him. Seeing that it was just hot air, Zhang Heng bent down and sprinted into the bomb shelter. By then, his body had almost reached its limits, just like barbecued meat on a stone slab. His

mouth, nose, and respiratory tract were severely irritated from the overbearing smoke and poisonous gasses.

After enduring ten meters of torture, Zhang Heng got to breathe fresh air again. The underground city's ventilation system was well built, where it was said that more than two thousand ventilation shafts crisscrossed the bomb shelter. It ensured that nobody would be stuffy even after long periods. Zhang Heng ran for some distance before finally ending up at a relatively safe place. He put Han Lu's mother down and leaned against the wall. Only then did he have the time to check on her condition. She was still breathing, albeit unconscious. Her face was bluish, with an almost delayed reaction to external stimuli. It appeared to be the effects of excessive carbon monoxide inhalation. Fortunately, she survived.

Zhang Heng breathed a sigh of relief. Han Mu was the only useful clue that he had obtained ever since entering Han Lu's dream. If the dragon killed her, he would have to start looking for another needle in a haystack. Clearly, it was an outcome he didn't desire. He would rather risk it a little and make sure she survived.

### **Chapter 475 Missing Out**

Rabbit was forced to move forward when the crowd shoved her from behind. Upon arriving at the bomb shelter, she could finally get to slow her pace a little. When the flames of the dragon came rushing into the cave, the crowd panicked again. Those wishing to live got away from the entrance as fast as they could. Before she could even catch a breath, Rabbit got pushed deeper and deeper into the bomb shelter.

When she finally stopped moving, she realized she was lost. The place looked the same from every corner, where numerous passages spiderwebbed through the underground city. It took her a long time before she finally returned to the entrance, where she met up with Zhang Heng. "Dang, what's wrong with your skin?!" exclaimed Rabbit.

"Slight burns. No matter," Zhang Heng replied, shrugging the injuries off. "Can you help me find some water?"

"Oh, oh, oh... no problem," Rabbit nodded. After a while, she returned to Zhang Heng, handing over a tin kettle she found lying around at a corner. Zhang Heng fed Han Mu some water and told her to rest up, before standing up to talk to Rabbit.

"How is it?"

Rabbit had been waiting a long time ago to ask Zhang Heng the question. "Well, this dream is based on Han Lu's memories of her first day in junior high. It's her 13th birthday today. Her mother took the day off, wanting to bring her to the zoo to see the pandas. They had been planning this for a month, and I guess Han Lu is looking forward to this day's arrival. She was so excited she couldn't get a good night's sleep. Alas, Han Mu received a call early in the morning. It turned out to be an important translation job, and finally, she had to give up on the plan she made with Han Lu. When she finally returned, she discovered that Han Lu had left home in a fit of rage. So, she came out looking for her."

"Well... it is but a sad story. But why is a three-headed dragon in this dream?"

"I'm looking for an answer to that as well. What do you think it signifies?" Zhang Heng asked.

“Well, the two dreams we experienced so far were filled with catastrophic events—the tsunami in the previous dream and now the dragon. Whenever the dark clouds appear, it foretells of the disaster,” Rabbit said. “They all have one common characteristic, though, and that is that they have nothing to do with the dreams. We can rule out the possibility of Han Lu binge-watching disaster movies or playing action games recently. These disasters are probably not part of Han Lu’s original dream. It seems like something forcefully inserted these catastrophic events into her dreams.”

“The Dreamland of Death?”

Rabbit nodded, “Yes, these disasters are probably related to the Dreamland of Death.”

“Why does the Dreamland of Death need to destroy Han Lu’s dream? It doesn’t make any sense.”

“Good question. Many researchers are experts in the study of dreams. Even before humanity mastered the alphabet, the study of dreams had already begun. Unfortunately, until today, our understanding of dreams is still very limited. Not to mention how the Dreamland of Death is related to Hypnos. It’s always been one of the most mysterious Grade-B game items ever known.”

Rabbit paused for a moment. “Based on Han Lu’s reaction, she seemed very afraid of these disasters as well. Right before each disaster struck, she managed to go into hiding. We don’t know what would happen if she died in one of these disasters, and I strongly recommend that we do not let that happen to her. We need to locate her as soon as possible. Do you know where she’s hiding?”

“Han Mu did tell me some of the possible places that she may hide in. There’s a high chance she’d be in one of them. Han Mu also said that since she finds it hard to move around right now, she hopes we can find her daughter and bring her here,” said Zhang

Heng.

“Excellent, let’s start now,” Rabbit exclaimed, seeming filled with renewed hope. “Based on the previous dream, we should have at least half a day to look for her.”

’70s-era cities were way different from 21st-century modern towns. For safety reasons, the two chose to traverse the underground city tunnel until they found the nearest exit. From there, they would ascend up to ground level.

It wasn’t easy finding the right path amid the hundreds of tunnels that lined the massive underground city. Zhang Heng hired someone familiar with the place, hoping it could help them find Han Lu. Although the banknotes they had weren’t recognized at this point in time, the wallet could still be used for transactions. Bartering, however, was a popular alternative to cash.

After examining the wallet and making sure it was made out of genuine leather, the person agreed to help them after Zhang Heng told him that it was all to save someone’s daughter. The person, however, would only guide them in the underground city. Up there, they were on their own.

Zhang Heng and Rabbit searched three possible spots. According to Han Mu, Han Lu would most likely come to these three places alone. One of the locations was engulfed by fire, and Han Lu wasn’t at the other two as well. Despite getting almost nothing, Zhang Heng and Rabbit weren’t discouraged, continuing to search for all possible locations and eliminating those with no Han Lu in it. In the end, they were left with only one place. There was a high chance they would encounter her over there.

As the two exited the underground city, the dark clouds in the sky rapidly thinned out.

Seeing what happened, Rabbit stomped her feet in frustration. "This is exactly what I worry about the most. Why must it come now? Technically, we should be left with at least thirty to forty hours before we transition to another dream."

Zhang Heng frowned. The last place they could search was the house of Han Lu's best friend in high school. It was just a street away, but the problem was that the dragon was resting on the roof. Most of the people who lived in the area were all gone, and if he were to rush there right now, it would be impossible the dragon wouldn't notice him. After weighing his options, Zhang Heng gave up on the idea. According to his previous encounters, he found out that the dream would change every two or three minutes after the clouds cleared. It would not be easy to find an effective way to avoid the dragon's attention. Now that the dragon was resting there, Han Lu might have even left that area.

Rabbit was a little discouraged to see what was taking place.

"After going through all that trouble, looking for her for the longest time, and almost getting cooked by the dragon, it appears all our effort is wasted."

Zhang Heng remained silent. He kept looking at the dragon, pondering over something in his mind.

Rabbit felt desperate. "We are running out of time," she urged. "We may never get this close again in the next dream. We should set a place to meet in advance."

"You decide the place," Zhang Heng said as he looking away.

Rabbit thought on it for a bit. "How about the plaza that we were at? I now remember what the place is! 40 years into the future, it's become IKEA. Do you remember the name of the street?"

"We will meet there after that."

Now, the dark clouds above Zhang Heng's head had disappeared. Sunlight poured down over the dragon's enormous wings, its scales radiantly glowing like it was made out of gold. The dragon raised its head and let out a roar toward the sky. The third dream had arrived.

### **Chapter 476 Third Round of Dreams**

Zhang Heng opened his eyes and found that he was in a different place. This time, he was in a different era, but he was no longer in the previous city. To be more precise, he was not even in his own country anymore.

At the moment, Zhang Heng was surrounded by blond and blue-eyed foreigners, and the signs of the roadside shops were all written in English. He came up upon a for a magazine booth on the side of the road and learned from the owner that he was now in Durham, a small northeastern English town.

Something instantly struck Zhang Heng's mind the moment he heard the name. Han Lu studied in England for some time, and she had studied at the world-famous Durham University, England's third oldest and most prestigious university. It was also called Doxbridge, along with Cambridge and Oxford, where it constantly ranked among the world's top 100 universities. It attracted many middle-class and wealthy applicants from China, not to mention international students. Han Lu's business school was EQUIS, AMBA, and AACSB certified, making it one of the world's top business schools.

Zhang Heng did not hesitate and took a taxi to Durham University.

The driver, an enthusiastic man about his country, thought that Zhang Heng was a tourist. Naturally, he started talking about famous sightseeing spots around the next city. However, when he arrived at the destination, Zhang Heng had to knock him out because he couldn't pay. Stuffing the driver in the trunk, he scurried the taxi to an underground parking lot. After parking the car, he walked into Durham University.

Like most prestigious schools, Durham University was a massive establishment, where its land was dotted with ancient brick walls and medieval castles. Among the few universities in the city's outskirts, Durham University was one of the few that still adopted the collegiate system. Somewhat similar to Harry Potter's Hogwarts School of Wizard and Wizardry, students weren't divided to their dormitories via majors, but rather according to their personalities, hobbies, and habits. It could all only mean one thing. Looking for Han Lu within these confines would be nothing short of a daunting and gargantuan task.

Zhang Heng thought about where he should go next when a short-haired girl came to him. She was not much older than him and looked like a student from this university. Clutching two books in her arms, she seemed to be in a hurry, but she suddenly stopped in her tracks as she passed Zhang Heng.

She turned over and asked in Chinese, "Need any help?"

Instead of answering her question, he simply stood there and stared at her.

The girl with short hair then touched her face, "Huh? Can't he understand Chinese? Korean or Japanese student, perhaps?" "Sorry... I'm actually looking for someone," replied Zhang Heng as he finally snapped out of his shocking discovery. He kept his eyes trained on her, not looking away though she seemed a little flabbergasted. He had only seen the young her from a photo.

"I'm afraid I can't help you. Consider yourself unlucky for asking the wrong person. I've only been studying here for a year and a half. I can count the people I know with both my hands. Guess I won't be of much help," the short-haired girl shrugged.

"No, I'm pretty sure you know this person because she is your roommate," replied Zhang Heng

Was it a coincidence? No. It should be said that the seemingly heartless woman before him had a keen intuition that didn't match her cute demeanour. It was why she had stopped and turned around even after passing by Zhang Heng. Sensing the frustrations in his heart must have stopped her to give him a helping hand.

When it came to this, he could only consider this ability as some sort of superpower. It was almost impossible for someone to see through his mind after he'd experienced all kinds of stuff, which would make even the most gullible believers shy away. The girl in front of him was probably the only soul in the world that could achieve such a feat.

"Damn! Are you Han Lu's foreign boyfriend? I have heard a lot about you," the short-haired girl opened her eyes wide. "I heard her talk about you and saw your photos. You don't look like the man in the photo," she said, but quickly covered her mouth after that. "I'm done for. Did I say too much? But Han

Lu shouldn't be so promiscuous. All she does is complain about homework every day. O didn't think she'd have the time to have an affair."

"You've misunderstood. I'm just a friend," Zhang Heng replied with a grin. "I need to talk to her about something. In a rush?" Zhang Heng pointed to the books she was holding

"Uhh.. not exactly in a big-big rush... I could go tonight if I didn't make it now." The short-haired girl then snapped her fingers enthusiastically. "Let me take you to Han Lu first!"

"Sorry for the trouble." "Haha! Oh, stop being so obliging, will you? We are all descendants of Yanhuang, after all," pipped the cheery and hospitable short-haired girl. "In return, you can tell me some gossip about her...."

"Okay, I know a lot of stuff from her childhood. Interested to know?"

"Of course!"

The short-haired girl seemed delighted, vigorously nodding at her newfound 'friend.'

With someone as a guide, Zhang Heng could finally stop going for broke. The two walked and chatted and soon came up to a tennis court. The short-haired girl had just come out of her dormitory and said that Han Lu had been out since early that morning. She did not explain her whereabouts, but she loved tennis and often played at this spot at this hour.

Unfortunately, the tennis courts were void of Han Lu as well.

The short-haired girl comforted Zhang Heng, "It's okay. We'll just proceed to the next place. If it's anyone else, I would have been so sure, but it's Han Lu we're talking about here. I can find her with my eyes closed." Zhang Heng didn't really know what else to do but to follow her. "Well, don't look for the places she often goes to. Since you know her so well, any idea where she would hide if she were, uhh, frightened?" "What?!"

The short-haired girl was stunned when she heard what Zhang Heng said. "She is one of the bravest girls I've ever met. We watch those horror movies together and laugh as if it were a sitcom. Who can scare her? You?"

She stole a glance at Zhang Heng. Before he could even begin to disagree, she shook her head and interrupted."..no, nope. I am very good at judging people. You are not a bad person."

"Something very, very bad is about to happen to her, which is why I must look for her as soon as possible. Can you help me?" Zhang Heng asked with raised eyebrows.

"What's with all the mystery? You plan to save the world, or what?" She had a sparkle in her eyes. "it sounds like fun! Let me in-I know somewhere she would go to when she's in a bad mood. Let's head there."

"Where?"

"The Oriental Museum," replied the short-haired girl. "Many Asian and Indian artifacts are displayed there. Han Lu always said the place was like her second home, and it calmed her down on her bad days."

“Let’s not waste a single second and go over there now,” said Zhang Heng as he raised his head and looked toward the sky. The weird clouds were going to show up again. So far, he had experienced three instances of dreams. According to his calculations, the earlier clouds appeared, the faster the dream would end.

It was in no way a good sign; a grim reminder to Zhang Heng that time was running out.

### **Chapter 477 Got Another Clue?**

Along the way, even the short-haired girl noticed the change in the atmosphere. “Hey, I have a bad feeling that something awful is about to go down.”

Zhang Heng looked at her, but he did not explain anything. “We talked a lot about Han Lu. Let’s talk about you,” he said, instead of answering her.

“Me?” The short-haired girl was a little surprised. “How am I related to your mission to save the world?”

“No. I want to have a small chat with you,” Zhang Heng said, “Anyway, we still need to walk a bit before we get to the museum.”

“Well, let’s do the small talk then,” the short-haired girl scratched her head. “I am essentially a very boring person. My hobbies are lying in bed and reading novels and comics. I’m a movie buff as well. Though I don’t mind socializing, I find it troublesome to keep getting my hair done. I take an unpopular course. I don’t know what else to tell you.”

“Is there anyone you like?”

“Wow, now that’s a very personal question.”

“Sorry if you’re offended...”

“I would think a stranger is rude if he were to ask me something like this after meeting him for less than half an hour. I don’t feel that way, though, when you asked me the question. It’s weird. I feel like I know you. Have we met before?” the short-haired girl asked in curiosity.

“Is that right?”

“To answer your previous question, I dated a boy, but it was a high school thing. He took me home on a bicycle, and I could smell the detergent on his shirt. I really loved that smell. Unfortunately, my dad had to spot him, and since then, he’s been waiting at the school gate to pick me up every day. It was miserable. After a while, we broke up since our relationship affected his grades. But what can I say, eh? When I was studying abroad, my drama addiction affected my love life as well.”

“Don’t worry. You will meet someone you like in the future. He will show up at the right time, and you’ll have a happy family. The person you love shall give you all the happiness in the world.”

“Could this be some sort of prophecy?” The short-haired girl smiled, “But it sounds good. I want to think that it’ll come true for me.”

After a while, the bus stopped in front of St. Aidan’s College, and the Oriental Museum was nearby. At the same time, the sky was also covered by dark clouds as well. The short-haired girl was a student at

Durham University, so there was no need to buy a ticket. After frisking his pocket awkwardly, Zhang Heng suddenly realized that he couldn't pay for the ticket.

"I'll buy you a ticket. Han Lu can reimburse me later," the short-haired girl said, reaching for her purse. "Thank you." Zhang Heng breathed a sigh of relief. Although he could use the previous method to get into the museum, it would undoubtedly attract a lot of unwanted attention, thereby risking alerting the nearby police officers.

Since Zhang Heng had no idea what kind of catastrophe he was going to face, he figured it was better he lay low. The museum wasn't that big, very few visitors were there at the moment. To Zhang Heng's surprise, he encountered Rabbit. She was standing with a tall and handsome boy.

"Oh, shit. That's Freddie." The short-haired girl let out a long sigh.

"Who is Freddie?"

"He's Han Lu's admirer and rising star of the school's soccer team. Something's up with him recently. He has been pestering Han Lu relentlessly, and although Han Lu told him that she's attached, he just wouldn't stop. So all she can do is to avoid him as much as possible."

Rabbit, on the other hand, was filled with joy when she spotted Zhang Heng. "You found this place too?"

Zhang Heng's eyes moved.

Rabbit continued, "To be honest, I don't know where I am, although I set a place for us to meet up. Luckily I met this handsome guy here. I asked him if he knew Han Lu, and he told me he would take me to her. We seem to be a step behind, though. She's no longer here. I've asked the staff, and they said she left about 15 minutes ago. The apocalypse is nigh. This time, it's only taken an hour and a half to arrive. At this rate, we probably won't even have half an hour to move around in the next dream. By the way, who's this?"

The short-haired girl was about to say something, but Zhang Heng interrupted her. "That's it for now. Thank you for your help. See you later."

Now that surely didn't sound too polite, and it made it look as if Zhang Heng ditched her after she went out of the way to help him. The short-haired girl said nothing, though, simply looking toward Zhang Heng and Rabbit with a smile. "Well, I wish you all the best, and I hope you save the world soon."

After that, she left the museum.

Rabbit raised her eyebrows, "Whoa... wait.. What do you mean? She can't provide us with more clues?"

"You're right," said Zhang Heng thoughtfully.

"Who is he?" The football player named Freddy suddenly voiced out. All the while, he'd been eyeballing Zhang Heng belligerently.

Seeing the two communicating in Chinese, he began to feel increasingly uncomfortable with Zhang Heng's presence.

"It's okay, Freddie. Uhh, he is a friend of mine." Rabbit quickly turned around to extinguish the brewing flames. She then turned to Zhang Heng again, "What should we do now? Found any clues?"

Zhang Heng didn't speak until the short-haired girl had walked out of the museum's door.

"What should I call you? Hypnos?"

Rabbit's face flashed with surprise.

"Who? Me? Did the dragon fry your brains? Do I look like Hypnos to you?"

"I started to suspect you in the previous dream," replied Zhang Heng. "I must admit that you put up a good act when we first met in that dream. Rabbit and I have just met recently. Apart from her name and appearance, I know very little about her. So it's hard for me to tell that you are pretending to be her."

"What? So you think that I am pretending to be someone?" Rabbit looked puzzled. "Why?"

"You were so good at playing that part. To be honest, when I first saw you, I really thought you were Rabbit," Zhang Heng said. "But then I noticed something small, and that was when I started to suspect you. As far as I know, you and the other three always worked in a team. You've never once mentioned your teammates after you met me. Moreover, when you decided where we should meet in the next dream, you chose the plaza where we met."

"Where's the problem in that?" asked Rabbit, a hint of frustration lining her words.

"Although it isn't a remote area, it's actually very unpopular. You said you didn't remember the road, but later, you said you could recognize the way a little. If you are really Rabbit, you should have started with the desire to meet your teammates. Logically, you were supposed to choose a place familiar to your team. You could have even chosen Han Lu's place. The reason why you chose the place we first met was so that I wouldn't meet the others, especially the real Rabbit."

"Interesting deduction, but how do you explain those disasters then? Just like you, they hit me as well."

#### **Chapter 478 I'd Like To Correct Something**

"Those disasters had nothing to do with the Dreamland of Death. On the contrary, it's more like Han Lu's defense mechanism of sorts. Think of what you would do if you had rats and cockroaches at home?"

"Buy some rat poison and put it at the corner? Or disinfect the whole house with pesticides? It appears she chose the second method," grunted Rabbit.

"Yes, I was wrong from the beginning, whether it was the tsunami or the giant dragon. They weren't targeting Han Lu all along."

"Can't blame you. After all, anybody who found Han Lu running for her life and hiding from these unnatural disasters would think that she's under the Dreamland of Death's spell."

"But in fact, the one she'd been avoiding all along, since the very beginning, has been you, and you alone, yes?" Zhang Heng quizzed. "She changed dreams frequently to escape your tracking—from her childhood to studying abroad to her daily life. I wasn't with you in the first dream, so I don't know why

the tsunami attacked the city. But then we found Han Lu's mother, supposedly the key figure in the second dream, the strange clouds appeared again."

"A coincidence, perhaps?" Rabbit said.

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"Yes, but this time, when you, and this... Freddie appeared in Han Lu's favorite museum; those clouds appeared again. The first time might have been a coincidence, but the second, surely not. It's all but a possibility too small.

"You weren't the sole target of the disasters. Everyone else in the dream could have been killed as well. Right now, we are standing in Han Lu's vault, one that she uses to store information. These are the collection of memories from her subconscious, containing information related to her. She was worried that you'd use this information to locate her. Unsure who to trust and not knowing who the enemy was, she had to destroy all foreign beings in the dream. You choose to partner with me because Han Lu and I are closest among all of us. I'm your best lead, and I would have led you to her eventually."

"Anything else you wish to add?" Rabbit asked.

"Actually, it was the dragon that confirmed my doubts about you."

"The dragon?"

"Yes. During the last dream, we came to Han Lu's schoolmate's house. The dragon was resting on the roof of that building, and yet that building was intact. If those dragons were chasing Han Lu, I thought, then they should have burned down the building as soon as possible. The dragon did not. Instead, it seemed to be guarding the place, preventing anybody from approaching it. It was then that I started to think of another explanation for these disasters."

"Your observation and deduction rank second among everyone I met. Of course, the woman named Han Lu did a good job too. I'd rank her defenses in the dreams among the top ten," Rabbit smiled. "I didn't expect you to find out so quickly. This was supposed to be an interesting round. Unfortunately for you, my friend, you won't get to witness what's about to happen. Since my identity has been exposed, it means I'll have to kill you now. I'll use your identity to approach the rest. The girl called Shen Xixi is pretty good as well. She'll be able to lead me to Han Lu."

'Rabbit' then spoke to Freddy in English. "He just said something insulting, and he even threatened me! Can you help me teach him a lesson?"

"Of course. It's my honor," grinned Freddie, his fists clenched into balls.

Freddie had obviously been waiting for this moment for the longest while. Although Zhang Heng didn't really know what the real Freddie was like, it seemed Han Lu didn't have fond memories of the guy. He was the kind that got jealous quickly, and he was unquestionably violent, where he had been displaying signs of discontent the moment Zhang Heng started talking to Rabbit.

On the flipside, soccer players possessed the physique all men envied. His arms were the size of the ordinary man's calf, and they were beefy as hell, as well.

"Let me educate you on how to treat a lady properly," he grinned and muttered.

Zhang Heng, however, didn't even look at him. Instead, he focused all his attention on Rabbit.

Such a reaction only served to further anger Freddie. He lunged at Zhang Heng, attempting to swing a fist at his face. Within a few seconds, Zhang Heng slipped behind him, stretching out his arm to clamp Freddie's neck. As Freddie instinctively reached out to free his neck from the choke-hold, he felt a sharp sting biting into his unprotected ribs.

Zhang Heng did not hesitate, slamming Freddie's head into a nearby shelf. His head smashed into the glass, crushing the priceless antique jade bowl inside it. Despite his unresolvable resolve, he had lost all the strength to get up from the ground. "Awesome," Rabbit applauded cynically. "I'm tempted to hire you as my next agent."

Suddenly, a commotion could be heard coming from outside the museum. A man, presumably a museum employee, fell in. Zhang Heng quickly recognized him as the man who checked his ticket at the entrance. Zhang Heng thought he was here to stop their fight, but he didn't expect a man to follow him in a suit and sunglasses.

"Hmm... Agent Smith! The character from "The Matrix." Could he be our disaster this time? By the way, I like that movie," Rabbit said.

Zhang Heng knew about Agent Smith as well. Originally an ordinary antivirus program, he was responsible for eliminating people and programs harmful to the Matrix. Gradually freeing himself from the Matrix's control, he became a virus-like being.

In addition to super-strength and inhuman reflexes, Smith's most astonishing ability was to replicate himself infinitely like a virus. He could turn his target into a copy of him by inserting his hand into the target's chest.

Zhang Heng wasn't sure which version of Smith was in Han Lu's dream. If he was the final version of Smith, then he was basically Superman who could do anything he wanted, minus the effects of kryptonite.

Perhaps this was a blessing in disguise. Zhang Heng now knew that these disasters were Han Lu's defensive mechanisms kicking in to counter Hypnos.

Rabbit, however, smiled, seeming to know what he was thinking. "Don't worry, and just relax. You guessed it right. But I have to correct one small little thing about your deduction. These disasters don't just targeting me. They go after every invader that enters her dream. Of course, that includes you. They are like the guardians of Han Lu's subconscious. Their goal is to destroy everything."

### **Chapter 479 Eternal Dream**

Agent Smith spotted Zhang Heng and Rabbit from the outside. He walked in, face expressionless.

Instead of charging directly at him, Smith picked the museum staff from the ground and inserted his right hand into the helpless guard's chest. He screamed in pain, where a thick, black liquid oozed from his chest, spreading and engulfing his entire body at the same time. In only about two seconds, the guard had transformed entirely into another Smith.

Rabbit shrugged. "As I said, neither of us can escape..."

Right before she could finish, Smith turned to Rabbit and lunged at her, socking her in the face with his fist.

“Owww! It hurts!!!”

It wasn't before half her face was smashed, did Smith land a kick on Rabbit's belly. It sent her flying, its force so great she knocked over several shelves along the way.

Zhang Heng didn't have the time to check out what happened to Rabbit since the other Smith was now walking towards him. He looked around quickly, catching a glimpse of a bronze sword in a showcase cabinet. Zhang Heng instinctively smashed the glass when he saw the weapon, drawing a Spring and Autumn Period bronze sword.

This time, it was his turn to face Smith's fist. After seeing what happened to Rabbit, Zhang Heng didn't use his arm to block the punch and instead dodged it with his pure reflexes. Swinging the sword to his back, he thrust the ancient weapon forward, managing to hit Smith.

Nevertheless, the Smith that Zhang Heng just encountered wasn't the most dextrous Smith from The Matrix. This incarnation of Smith had failed to dodge the attack. Despite that, apart from his shades needing a little adjustment, everything, including his hairstyle, remained unchanged.

Smith stretched out to grab the bronze sword, easily snapping it into two. He tossed the pieces to the ground, loosed his neck, removed his sunglasses, and went for Zhang Heng again. Zhang Heng wasn't surprised by how the first round of fights with Smith went. After all, Smith, the ultimate guardian of the third dreams, was nearly as formidable as the tsunami and dragon. Evidently, Smith wasn't one to go down without a fight.

But Zhang Heng's biggest problem now was that his items couldn't be brought into Han Lu's dream. It left him with little room in conjuring an excellent strategy to defeat Smith.

In the end, he decided to adopt the dodge-and-hit strategy. He had to stay as far as he could from Smith and use the opponents' speed to his advantage. He also had to ensure Smith wouldn't get close enough and transform him into another Smith. The virus' killer move in the movie was to create unlimited copies of himself, and there was a good chance Zhang Heng would cease to exist if Smith managed to lay his hands on him.

The Smith next to Zhang Heng started to walk towards Rabbit, now lying motionlessly on the ground as if she was dead. Smith then stretched out, intending to “hack” into her chest and transform her into another Smith copy. A rabbit wouldn't stand a chance if he were to do that. Then, as if jump starting to live, Rabbit's eyes snapped open, and she grabbed Smith's arm.

Rabbit grinned, sneering cynically at the less-than-human apparition. “I admire your attitude and your sense of responsibility. But, hey, don't forget to take a rest once in a while.”

She then touched Smith's forehead with her finger. Then, as if all power to his body was cut, Smith fell lifelessly to the ground. Rabbit stood up, patted the dust off her body, and glanced at Zhang Heng. He was now in a sticky situation. “It seems I there's nothing else for me to do. Take your time to deal with him. Don't worry about me. I'll go ahead first.”

After that, she opened the window and jumped out.

Zhang Heng and Smith didn't go after her, each one afraid of the other. Though less than half a minute later, Rabbit returned to the museum through the window cursing. Zhang Heng looked at where she was, seeing dozens of men standing outside. All dressed in the same suit, sunglasses and had the same face, and they stared into the museum's open window with a ghostly expressionless face.

Smith had already started making copies of himself, and it wouldn't be long before he transformed everyone in the city into his likeness. Earlier, Rabbit managed to end the battle quickly, and she didn't even appear to break a sweat. The truth was, Rabbit had actually sacrificed a lot in the attempt to get Smith to snuggle up with her. The price for that was a heavy blow from Smith, resulting in half her face getting smashed in and two broken ribs.

Seeing how Smiths' copies could come in from all directions, she realized she had to face multiple enemies. It was no wonder she didn't look so good.

This was in no way good news for Zhang Heng, either. The fight was only escalating. One Smith was terrible enough, but he was now forced to deal with a wave of Smiths. Even with a respectable Lv.3 Swordsmanship and the physical skills mastered in Black Sail, he could barely defeat him. If more Smiths joined the battle, it would put him in an immeasurable amount of danger.

Now that the two were trapped in the small museum, Zhang Heng knew it was impossible to simultaneously deal with so many of Smith's copies. He could only hope that they would kill Rabbit first and that Han Lu could wake up in time.

Zhang Heng quietly strayed far away from all the doors and the windows.

He then saw Rabbit, sighing at the sight of her. "So, I'm forced to use that trick in the end?"

Rabbit took out a harmonica from her pocket and started playing it. When Zhang Heng heard the first note, warning signs flashed in his heart. He quickly covered his ears with both hands, but the melody found its way to bypass his ears, eventually reaching his brain despite his best efforts. His consciousness began to fade away slowly.

Zhang Heng knelt on one knee. Making a decisive decision, he picked up a thin piece of glass on the ground and pierced his eardrums with it. Despite that, the sweet and pleasant melody didn't disappear with the other sounds. The last thing that Zhang Heng saw was the suited Smiths dropping like flies as the sound of the harmonica's melody filled the room. The whole world seemed to have fallen asleep.

Rabbit finally finished the song after three minutes. She wasn't in the best state, her lips as pale as paper as she put the harmonica away. She then stood there with her eyes closed before taking a deep breath.

Pocketing the instrument, she walked to Zhang Heng's side.

"The guy called Seth went overboard this time. Why would he make so many copies of my game item? I'm exhausted. This time that nearly killed me. Forget it... Let's finish this order first."

Rabbit squatted, putting her fingers on the forehead of the now comatose Zhang Heng. "In the name of Hypnos, I order you to show me the dreams in your heart, and in return, I will bless you with an eternal dream... Huh? Wait. What the hell is this?!"

A horrified look appeared on Rabbit's face. Hypnos was the god of sleep in Greek mythology, and he had seen all kinds of strange dreams. Whether it a tsunami or dragon, they were all common to him. When he peeked into the eye of Zhang Heng's mind, however, he saw a grotesque, twisted nightmare he had never seen before.

Though a hasty glimpse, Hypnos couldn't help but tremble in fear.

### **Chapter 480 Wake Up**

The scenes in the rescue room replayed in Zhang Heng's mind like a broken record. He didn't know how long these images had been there, nor could he understand the meaning behind them. Perhaps they were just meaningless... just meaningless dreams.

When he opened his eyes, he saw the familiar ceiling again. The fourth dream, perhaps? Zhang Heng could vaguely recall what happened, only remembering the moment before Hypnos put him to sleep. Whatever happened after that was no longer in his memory. Soon, though, he discovered something different. He saw Han Lu, missing in the previous rounds of dreams, lying down beside him.

Shen Xixi, who was on the stool nearby, opened her eyes when she heard movement. Rubbing her eyes, she exclaimed in surprise, "You're awake, great."

"Where are we?" Zhang Heng asked.

"Han Lu's home," Shen Xixi replied with raised eyebrows. "Rest assured; we have left her dream."

"Huh?"

"Probably in the third round of dreams, the situation at that time was terrible. The entire city was filled with Agent Smiths from the Matrix. To protect me, Li Bai sacrificed himself."

"He died?"

"No... I mean, he died in Han Lu's dream and was transformed into Smith. When he dies, he will leave Han Lu's dream and wake up in the real world. On the contrary, what happened to you is rather strange," said Shen Xixi. "Han Lu woke up after the third dream, and we tried to wake you up, but you were still in a deep sleep. I've tried calling your name right beside your ear, and I patted your cheeks as well. You gave me no response. To not hurt you, I didn't use any more intense techniques. So, are you okay now? Any discomfort on your body?"

"Wait, we are in the real world now, and you said Han Lu woke up once?"

"Yes, she's the only person who has ever woken up after being cursed with the Dreamland of Death. She is fine now. Since she didn't get a wink of sleep for the past few days, an hour is obviously not going to be enough. So, we gave her a quick checkup and left her to sleep."

"You defeated Hypnos. How did you do that?" Zhang Heng asked.

"Uhh, well, it was what I wanted to ask you. In previous dreams, there were a series of unnatural disasters, and we speculated that they might have been related to the Dreamland of Death. While looking for Han Lu, I tried to look for a way to deal with them, but unfortunately, there was no progress. After that, we woke up suddenly."

“Where is Rabbit?” Zhang Heng asked.

“After confirming that Han Lu is fine, I let the two return,” Shen Xixi continued, “Especially Rabbit. She’s very busy with her senior year at high school. What’s wrong? Why are you looking for her?”

“Have you seen her in the dreams?”

“Yes, we met in the first dream, and when the tsunami struck us, we hid in the TV station.” Shen, Xixi paused. “...why did you ask about her?”

“I saw Hypnos in the second dream. He disguised himself as Rabbit, approached me, and wanted me to lead him to Han Lu. I was only a little suspicious of him at that time, and when we met again in the third dream; I made him confess,” Zhang Heng said.

“Were you alone?” Shen Xixi raised his eyebrows, “That was way too risky. Hypnos is the god of sleep, and the dream world is his turf. You couldn’t have possibly dealt with him in a dream, could you?”

“Sorry. It seems he can turn into anybody within a dream. I don’t know what he will look like the next time we meet again,” said Zhang Heng said. “I didn’t know who else I could trust during that time, so I resorted to a quick fight.”

“I can understand your situation. I would have done the same thing as well. How did you make him give up killing Han Lu then?”

“I don’t know. Multiple Smiths surrounded us. Then, Hypnos started to play his harmonica, and everyone fell asleep when we heard the melody. I was no exception, which is why I’m asking you what happened after that,” said Zhang Heng. “I didn’t cross paths with him since the beginning, and neither did everyone else. Unless, as you said, he pretended to be one of us...” Shen Xixi pondered for a while before shaking her head. “...but it’s unlikely. We’ve completed so many quests together. It’s not that easy for Hypnos to replace one of us without us finding out sooner or later. Is that why he gave up? But it’s never happened before. Otherwise, the Dreamland of Death wouldn’t have killed so many.”

Zhang Heng and Shen Xixi subsequently exchanged notes about Han Lu’s dream world, and despite going through the small details, they came out fruitless. Not only did they fail to figure out what happened, but only more mysteries and questions surfaced. They still didn’t how Han Lu managed to survive the curse, or why Hypnos let them go when he was at an absolute advantage.

Zhang Heng glanced at Han Lu, still fast asleep like a baby at this time. “Can you please do something for me?” he asked Shen Xixi.

Shen Xixi already knew what he was about to ask even before he finished.

“Stop worrying, people, and I will keep this matter close to the chest. We have to remain silent so that other players won’t hound her.”

Shen Xixi smiled bitterly. “This whole thing looks like an accident to me. We haven’t found the slightest hint of a solution to deal with the Dreamland of Death. It’s not like we can help the others. So... just consider this never happened.”

“No, thank you for your help this time. If you didn’t contact me and bring that item, we wouldn’t have entered Han Lu’s dream. She would probably be dead now like everyone else,” Zhang Heng replied, his mood carrying a slight undertone of exasperation.

“You’ve thanked me more than once. As I said before, I’m just doing what I’ve been doing...” Shen Xixi paused. “I still hope that everyone’s strengths could be pulled with a clearer code of conduct and self-discipline. Then maybe, we might just protect the ordinary from the threat of the supernatural. If you’re interested, you are welcome to join us at any time.” “I’ll consider it,” Zhang Heng said.

Shen Xixi stood up from the chair. “It’s almost dawn now. I will head back to school. What about you?”

“I’ll wait until she wakes up to say goodbye,” replied Zhang Heng, unable to stop himself from looking at the window. There, the first break of light bled over the horizon. The clear sky hadn’t the slightest hint of a cloud, especially not those ominous ones. It confirmed that he had indeed returned to reality.

“See you at school,” Shen Xixi pipped as she stood up.