

48 Hours a Day

Chapter 6: The Games Begins

“You’re going out now?” Dorm Leader Wei Jiangyang had just returned from a movie date, reeking of love. It was 9:45 when he pushed the door open to see Zhang Heng in sportswear, bending down to tie his shoelaces. ”

“Yeah, there’s an activity tonight.”

“Activity? Is it a date?” Wei Jiangyang shot his roommate a knowing smile.

Chen Huadong who was enjoying a bottle of coke with his movie gasped. “What? Young Master Zhang, am I not the person you like?”

Ma Wei, the oldest among the roommates, put down the English book he was reading. “Zhang Heng, you have such good qualities, it should be really easy for you to get a girlfriend, yet you’ve remained single. If we’re not roommates, I would’ve thought that you’re actually gay.”

Ma Wei’s lament was not unjustified. Among the four roommates, his family’s circumstance was the least favorable—with his parents being only simple-minded farmers.

There was a girl back in high school whom he secretly liked. He never told anyone about until the one time this group of roommates took him out to celebrate his birthday and he drank too much. That was when his roommates found out that that girl Ma Wei liked was studying in a university in the same city. They urged him to confess his feelings for her, and he was rejected.

They all knew of Ma Wei’s family’s circumstances, and that he had to rely on the China National Scholarship to pay for his tuition fee and to lighten his family’s financial burden. He buried himself in his studies,

spending all his free hours either in the library or giving private tuition to earn money. He had no time for dating.

These were things that other people could not help him with. Ma Wei had very strong self-esteem. He would always refuse his dormmates' offer to pay for him whenever they went out.

Zhang Heng patted Ma Wei on the shoulder and said, "Stop teasing me. There's no date tonight, and I'm not gay. I just haven't met a girl that I like yet."

Chen Huadong raised the bottle of coke as if he was giving a toast. "When you finally meet her, you must bring her to meet us. We want to see what kind of succubus can capture our Young Master Zhang's heart."

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It took Zhang Heng quite a while to wrestle his nosy friends off his back. By the time he walked out of the school gate, it was already 10:05.

If he had not found the string of numbers on his right arm while he was in the shower, Zhang Heng might have suspected that incident at the maid café to be a delusion.

The cute little maid with the cat ears had confirmed that from the moment he walked into the store up until the moment he left, he had been alone, and the handsome lady in charge of making the drinks revealed that she had only made a cup of Forbidden Love during that short period of time.

"Never ever doubt a bartender because every cup is filled with the thing called love. People never forget the things they love," the latter had said.

"..."

To everyone in the café, his conversation with the old man had never happened.

That Tang suit and homburg wearing guy did mention that their meeting was forbidden and that he could take care of the problem.

Zhang Heng postulated that this could very well be the solution he was talking about.

Zhang Heng was growing more and more curious by this guy. All his abilities seemed to be related to time. But this was not the time to think about this; right now, what he needed to was to get through that game that was about to begin.

Once he was outside of school, he followed the navigation on Baidu and took the subway to an industrial area outside 5th Ring Road, then jogged the rest of the way to warm up.

He arrived at the bar called 'Sex and the City' at 10:45.

It was in a remote area, and on the way there, Zhang Heng walked past a couple of people who looked like trouble with their cigarettes hanging on the corner of their mouth and their eyes seizing him up. There were even a few scantily-clad, drunk girls throwing up on the side of the road.

Zhang Heng wanted no trouble so he pulled his hood up over his head, and kept a steady but swift pace as he jogged past them.

The bar was even more crowded than he imagined it to be. It was converted from an abandoned factory, so it was huge. The rusty façade was painted with all kinds and styles of strange graffiti, and the front of the building was parked full of luxury cars and racecars.

This was the peak business hour for the bar—the young people from all over the city had gathered here.

Before he even stepped into the building, Zhang Heng could hear deafening music booming from inside, as if it could rip his soul apart. Zhang Heng frowned. Even though his companion at the café had stressed that he could not reveal anything to Zhang Heng and that he would find out everything once he was deep into the game, there was a vague message in between the lines.

Whatever it was, the organization that old man was involved in must be ancient and very well hidden. This was not their first time coordinating a game like this yet the world did not even know that they existed.

This indicated that they were doing a good job covering their tracks.

However, there were at least seven to eight hundred people here. There were thighs and buttocks everywhere he turned. Cool laser lights were blinking and pulsing along with the deejay's mix. If that supposedly dangerous game commenced here, Zhang Heng was willing to bet that it would all over TikTok and YouTube.

Could the address he was given be wrong?

This was a common mistake, especially considering that old man's age. It really would not be surprising.

Just then, Zhang Heng's attention was suddenly drawn to a dark shadow above him on the right.

Technically speaking, that was not considered a second floor. It was just a giant container fastened with steel structures to the west wall. At the bottom of the ladder that led up to it stood two brawny men in suits and black sunglasses.

A couple of gin-soaked boys and girls made an attempt to climb the ladder but was turned away by the two men.

One of them, probably a *fuerdai* from a wealthy family, threw a handful of banknotes at the face of one of the guards. When the other around him realized that they were hundred-dollar American bills, they began snatching at the scattered papers.

But neither of the buff men reacted.

The *fuerdai* appeared to be provoked by this and threw contents of the glass in his hands at both men. He was probably so used to getting his way that he bolted for the ladders. Whatever happened next was a blur. He was suddenly sent flying across the room, knocking over a few

people and some tables. He landed on the ground with his face covered in blood and dirt, barely alive.

His drunk companions were shocked into sobriety. Some of the guys wanted to throw in a few hostile words but when they saw one of the guards methodically cleaning his sunglasses, their balls shrank and they fled to the parking lot carrying their unconscious *fuerdai* friend.

As the commotion subsided, the people in the bar cast wary glances at the two strapping men, keeping a good distance from them.

Zhang Heng waited for another five minutes, and when he was sure that no one was paying attention, he took in a deep breath and walked towards the ladder.

The two men in suits watched him with from behind their glasses. Their stony faces gave off a glacial vibe. Zhang Heng felt as if he was the victim of two lions on the prowl. He rolled up his sleeves, and revealed the numbers on his arm.

He was a little worried remembering what happened to that *fuerdai*. Even though he had an inkling that the numbers on his arm was the entrance ticket to the game, he could not rule out other possibilities.

Luckily, nothing bad happened. He did not end up like that *fuerdai* as a human bowling ball.

The two towering giants stepped aside and revealed the path behind.