

48 Hours 651

Chapter 651 Old News

Come nightfall, not a soul was around the riverside, where only the sound of rushing water could be heard.

Zhang Heng was looking for something with a flashlight. For reasons unknown, a cloud of mist mysteriously appeared on the river surface, blurring Zhang Heng's vision. It prompted him to instantly pull out his Filter Lens from his pocket.

However, the reliable Filter Lens that had offered so much help to Zhang Heng in his previous quests had unexpectedly failed this time.

In other words, he couldn't see through this thick fog.

After realizing the threats he might be facing, he backed up and walked towards his car. When he looked up, he saw a group of densely packed "people" standing on the embankment. They were bowing their heads together and grinning at him with silent smiles, smiling as if they were looking at food on a plate.

At that time, Zhang Heng opened his eyes and saw the alarm clock on the table. The time was 00:36. Two hours ago, he finished copying his homework and lay on a chair to take a break. Unexpectedly, he instantly fell asleep and dreamt of getting surrounded by those things.

Maybe the dream was due to Bai Qing talking about her family that noon. Zhang Heng began to realize that those things might have infiltrated human society deeper than he thought. If left unresolved, they might secretly take control of the entire society after a while. And in the end, the entire human race would be wiped out. Fortunately, it was something that only happened in this quest. Zhang Heng got up, went to the bathroom to wash his face, and brushed his teeth. Initially, he planned to head to the river again tonight. Due to the nightmare, however, he hesitated and gave up on the idea. He had searched the river continuously for two nights without any gains, and it was time to consider changing the direction of his investigation. Besides, he had to look for a way to earn more money. If he relied on his grandpa's weekly pocket money, Bai Qing might have to buy him a burger again next time. In this modern society, money could solve most issues, and with sufficient funds, Zhang Heng could quickly speed up the investigation.

In this quest, Zhang Heng was given a chance to relive his past life. Zhang Heng then started to think about how a 'time traveler' like him could make more money. It turned out that the tricks commonly used in novels and movies didn't work on him, and he could forget about buying lottery tickets since he had never paid attention to such matters. And he had neither the energy nor the time to start a business. It was the same for buying stocks. Even if Zhang Heng remembered the market trend, he would need a lot of patience and enough capital to start-up.

After looking around, Zhang Heng realized that he could only return to what he did best.

He changed into a set of clothes he rarely wore and borrowed his grandpa's car again.

Zhang Heng was cautious when he drove out late at night. When he returned, he had to park the car back at its original position and carefully arrange the cushions and footpads. There was also a need to

clean up the mud that he brought into the car. One thing, though, consumption of fuel was the only problem that he could not solve.

His grandfather might not notice it if he only drove out one or two times. Over time, however, the latter would definitely find an abnormality in the fuel gauge. If Zhang Heng had enough money, he could have easily solved this problem, where all he needed to do was buy two cans of gasoline and refuel the car every time he was done with it.

Zhang Heng drove the Volkswagen to the overpass, then continued southward until he arrived at a new district.

It could be considered a new district on the surface, but in reality, it was actually a ghost town. The new city's mayor announced with great pride that he wanted to turn it into an Oriental Manhattan, but just when work started on the grand blueprint, he was transferred away by his higher-ups. For some reason, the new mayor had lost all intention to continue with the grand project. Hence, the new district was vacant; its occupancy rate very low.

Zhang Heng could feel that once he got off the overpass. Almost no other vehicles were nearby, and the high-rise apartments surrounded by residential areas were devoid of light. He slowed down the car.

According to the description in the news, he finally found his target after circling the area halfway. As compared to other deserted areas, this street was actually quite lively. It was now midnight, but many still gathered around the area. There were also no fewer than ten customized luxury cars parked there. Zhang Heng breathed a sigh of relief when he saw the scene. What he worried most was that this group of people never appeared in this dungeon or that they did not come out to party tonight.

These were the members of a car modification club, its members mostly consisting of wealthy businessmen's children. When the abundance of material pleasure could no longer satisfy their lust, they naturally turned to the pursuit of excitement.

Every week, they would gather at this spot to drag race. This had been going on for a year and a half. During this period, some had gone overseas to study, and some quit due to a deteriorating financial situation for their families. Fresh blood constantly joined the exclusive club reserved for society's upper echelons.

Since very few lived in this new settlement, and because of some families' ties to the authorities, no one cared about them until two of them got into a car accident. During the race, a Porsche and a Mercedes rammed each other, the collision so bad that it caused the Porsche driver's death. The whole thing was exposed after that.

Zhang Heng was not too bothered by the news. After all, it was their own people who died in the end, and they did not hurt passers-by. Moreover, they chose to race in a new, sparsely populated township. In other words, whatever they were doing wasn't considered a nuisance. Compared to some who made a racket on the streets, these were a much better lot. Despite all that, street racing was still an illegal endeavor.

They became nervous when they saw a Volkswagen appearing on the other side of the street.

One guy who looked very young, probably the most arrogant among them, said to Zhang Heng, "What are you looking at? Get lost now!"

Although the others did not say anything about Zhang Heng, it was obvious that they wanted him to get lost as well. Instead of leaving, Zhang Heng stopped the Volkswagen next to them. As the windows wound down, the crowd saw the person in the driver's seat.

They were surprised to see that the driver was a millennial. Zhang Heng was no stranger to such a situation. Although everyone was giving him hostile stares, he showed no fear like an ordinary man would, asking instead, "Drag racing?" "It's none of your business," snapped a young man who was sitting on his Porsche 911's hood while puffing a cigarette. He was the only racer tonight that came without a female companion and seemed to be the group leader.

"It's boring to race among yourselves. Let me join in," Zhang Heng said. The moment Zhang Heng said that, everyone started to laugh at him.

One of the girls who wore a cap and a plaid suspender dress laughed the loudest. Laughing and clutching her belly at the same time, she almost burst into tears. "You're a funny one, aren't you? Are you planning to race with this piece of junk?"

Chapter 652 Racing

"What's wrong with my car?" Zhang Heng asked, "In 1983, the Santana resulted from SAIC and Volkswagen's first joint venture. Pushed out from the assembly line using the CKD method, it was 4546mm long, 1710mm wide, and 1427mm tall and had a wheelbase of 2548mm. With a kerb weight of 1100kg, the sedan came standard with a 1.6L four-cylinder engine that put out a maximum of 87 horsepower."

The girl in the cap was dumbfounded after hearing a bunch of numbers. She did not understand cars that well. However, she still knew that some of the classic cars were very valuable. She could not help but ask respectfully, "Is your car the first batch of the joint venture?"

"No, this is a 2004 Santana 3000." "...then why are you talking about the car of the 80s?" The girl in the cap felt as if she had just been brought on a ride by Zhang Heng. Feeling cheated, she became outraged.

"Just to tell you not to underestimate Santana," Zhang Heng said. "Hmph. The price of any cars that parked here tonight is enough to buy ten of your stupid cars!" The capped girl sarcastically jeered.

"Really? But it's a pity that they can't overtake my Santana." Zhang Heng's expression remained unchanged.

"Pretty smug, aren't you? Really think that junk you're driving is an AE86?" a tattooed man in a Supreme T-shirt asked from the other side.

His words drew laughter again.

When the laughter had subsided, the young man who was on the Porsche 911 spoke again.

"Okay, enough." Then, he looked at Zhang Heng and warned, "You'd better leave quickly." "We haven't raced each other yet."

"We don't race with outsiders," the young man said, "and we are all gamblers here. Do you have money with you?"

"How much?"

"30,000 yuan. The winner takes all."

"I have no money, but I can bet my car," said Zhang Heng.

The young man shook his head. "Your car is not worth 30,000 yuan. At most, you can get 10,000 yuan out of it. And you stole this car from your house, right? Does it belong to your dad or your grandpa? When your parents wake up tomorrow, and they find that the car is gone, how is your dad supposed to send your mom to work?"

The crowd broke out in another roar of laughter.

"That means I have to win the race come what may," Zhang Heng said. "First, you can't win. Second... As I said, you can't even pay the entrance fee," the young man flicked the ash off his cigarette, "Go home. It's for your own good."

Suddenly, the millennial who scolded Zhang Heng spoke up. "I can help him with the money."

"Hmm?"

Putting his arms around the cap girl, he said, "I want to see him racing his Santana against us. It should be fascinating. My family runs a debt collection company. I will make sure that he pays us."

"Don't cause any unnecessary trouble. Since you have joined our circle, you must abide by the rules I've set." The young man sitting on his 911 frowned. "I said, we don't race with outsiders."

Clearly, he was indeed an influential character among this group of people. After he dropped the order, the millennial did not dare to say anything

"Consider yourself lucky. Leave now with your broken car." The tattooed man in a Supreme t-shirt made a shooting gesture at Zhang Heng.

Instead of leaving, Zhang Heng turned off the engine, pulled out the key, and parked the car at the side of the road. "Sorry. I don't want to leave yet. I feel this place is growing on me, and I plan to stay here a little longer. Maybe I should come here every night to see if there's a race going on." "So, you are taking our kind words for granted?" The leader of the group glared at Zhang Heng. "You seem to have misunderstood something. Do you really think that we can't do anything for you? We will beat you up if you make us! I don't want to cause trouble because it is troublesome. Don't you think for a second that we can't deal with a brat like you."

After he finished speaking, all the people from the club gathered around, and someone took out a wrench and a portable fire extinguisher from the trunk, waiting for their leader to give the order to smash Zhang Heng's car.

Most of them were the kind who had the stomach to do anything that would cause chaos. And they were unhappy with Zhang Heng's attitude ever since he stepped into their territory.

“I will give you one last chance. You better get lost within a minute.”

The leader gave Zhang Heng an ultimatum. Zhang Heng glanced at the people around who were ready to charge at him at any time. He then said to the leader, “So you’d rather fight me than race me. Is this a modified car club or a fight club?”

“Fine.” The leader seemed amused by Zhang Heng’s perseverance and desperation to race. He threw the cigarette butt in his hand and got off the 911’s hood. “If you lose, I don’t want your money or your stupid car. I want you to crawl on the ground in a circle, and you’d better not show up in front of me again.”

To everyone’s surprise, Zhang Heng shook his head when he heard this, “Let’s not apply the rule to the two of us. Everyone here should do it together. The more, the merrier.”

Finally, the leader had become really irked by Zhang Heng. Glaring, he stopped saying anything unnecessary. “Okay, you have the final say. Little K, tell him the rules,” he growled coldly.

A large bosomed petite girl approached Zhang Heng with a sweet smile. “The rules are straightforward. Once everyone is ready, the drivers will go to their respective positions. I will announce the start of the race from here. Use whatever means necessary to win the race! Sounds fair?”

“Where is the finishing line?” Zhang Heng asked.

“Do you know where the stadium is? The swimming pool at the west gate is the finishing line for this race,” Little K went on.

When the two chatted, four cars fetched the girls to the finishing line of this race. They did not want to participate, and Zhang Heng had no intention to force them to do so. There were eight cars left. Since each would have to pay the racing fee of 30,000 yuan, Zhang Heng stood to gain a whopping 240,000 yuan if he won the race.

It was more than enough for him to survive the dungeon.

Before he got to enjoy the money, he had first to win the race.

The capped girl was right when she said that even the cheapest car here could buy ten Santanas. Not to mention that the leader’s car was race-tuned. Taking only 3.9 seconds to make the century sprint, its horsepower and handling both completely outplayed Zhang Heng’s Santana 3000.

And this time, Zhang Heng did not have the time to modify his car because it belonged to his grandpa. He could not do it without his grandpa’s consent, or the old man might suffer from a heart attack the moment he stepped on the gas.

But there was good news. Zhang Heng checked out the route with GPS and discovered this to be an ordinary course. Considering that many of the new townships’ infrastructure was half completed, the road conditions were quite rough. Only a skillful driver would compete and win this race.

Besides, the leader did not seem to want to take untoward advantage. The route that he chose this time was brand new for everyone. That would mean the race was just as tough for everyone.

Chapter 653 Competing

About 25 minutes later, Little K received the news that the others had reached the finishing line. And at the same time, she sent out pictures of the road conditions to the drivers for their reference. Including Zhang Heng's car, nine cars had already lined up at the starting line.

The starting grid had three rows. The leader decided to abandon the lot-drawing system, where they all agreed to let Zhang Heng's Volkswagen be placed in the middle of the first row. On his left was the Porsche 911, and on his right was the millennial's Mercedes-Benz SL.

Behind them were BMWs and Jaguars.

Regardless of the advantage of their modified cars, Zhang Heng was at a disadvantage even if their cars were not modified. The Porsche 911 could make the century sprint in 3.9 seconds, and its engine could churn out a healthy 420 horsepower. As a comparison, a Santana 3000 would get from 0-100kp/h in a leisurely 11 seconds, its engine pumping out a lethargic 110 horsepower. These two cars were not even on the same tier. The odds were firmly stacked against Zhang Heng, and there was a 99.9% chance that he would lose the race.

The 911 couldn't reach its maximum speed due to the complicated road conditions, but even if Zhang Heng was a more skilled driver than the club leader, it was still not enough to make up for the gap between the two cars.

Although Takumi Fujiwara pitted his humble AE86 against cars that were a lot more powerful, the AE86 was heavily modified. If Zhang Heng could use his Polo to compete, he was confident he could win the race. For now, though, he needed to think of other ways to win.

Having planned for the worst, Zhang Heng was prepared to use the Water-Soluble Metal to cause some trouble.

Before heading out, he had already put a thumb-sized piece of Water-Soluble Metal into the half-finished plastic water bottle, and since it had been sitting there for almost two hours, it should come into effect right about now. After checking out the route, however, Zhang Heng felt that there was a chance for him to win in this race.

After all, now, only it was convenient to use Water-Soluble Metal to stir-up some chaos, but it would also bring him a lot of trouble afterward. Although the modified car club members weren't professional drivers, they at least knew a thing or two about cars and would instantly spot the anomaly if they did a thorough check.

"Are you ready?" A skimpily dressed Little K stood in the middle of the road, looking at the nine cars in front of her.

Her eyes deliberately stopped at Zhang Heng's Santana for half a second.

After she asked the question, the drivers all revved their engines up, like a group of hunks showing off their muscles.

Zhang Heng knew his car well enough to know that no matter how hard he stepped on the gas, the roar of the Santana's tiny engine would be drowned out by the imports around him. So he simply extended his hand out of the car window and made an OK gesture, causing everyone to laugh at him again.

Little K smiled at him too. After confirming that all the drivers were ready, she raised both arms and started the countdown, "5... 4... 3... 2... 1... GO!"

And then, her arms came down.

Thus, the late-night racing competition finally commenced. All nine cars lunged forward, like tigers breaking free of their cages!

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To make up for the gap between the high powered roadsters and his sedan, Zhang Heng used the launch control technique to gain the upper hand. He first engaged the clutch in a semi-depressed state and revved the engine up to 3000 rpm before the start of the race. When the lights went out, he completely released the clutch and put the pedal to the metal. Once the rev-counter neared its red-line, he shifted into second and continued to push the engine as hard as he could. After that, he would change gear again until the tires emitted white smoke. Once Little K said go, Zhang Heng released the brake immediately.

As the car took off from the starting grid, the Santana's engine was forced to squeeze out every last Nm of torque it could muster. The powerful acceleration threw Zhang Heng back into his seat; his acceleration, only a little slower than the 911 on his left side. Zhang Heng breathed a sigh of relief. That said, using such a method to get off the line was actually extremely detrimental to the Santana 3000. It wore down not only the clutch, but its tires and gearbox would be damaged to a certain extent. It was a technique used only occasionally in an emergency. Fortunately, the car was well maintained and completed the launch control.

But soon, the Porsche 911 on his left overtook him, and so did the millennial's Mercedes SL on his right side. The driver even wound down his window to flip Zhang Heng the bird.

And this was just the beginning. After a while, two more cars overtook him.

It was not until the first corner that Zhang Heng caught up with them a bit. His lead, however, didn't last long. Once they were on a straight road again, the sports cars easily overwhelmed Zhang Heng's Santana 3000.

The 911 took the lead. After overtaking Zhang Heng, it was in the first place. It headed into the tunnel, followed closely by the SL. The tattooed man initially placed on the second row had now caught up with him. The two cars were basically moving side by side.

At that moment, Zhang Heng and his Santana 3000 had dropped to fifth place.

Considering how he was driving the worst-performing car among the lot, his position had caused the club leader to stare at him for a long time. Unfortunately, fifth-place wouldn't be winning him the race. It seemed that he could keep his fifth place until the end of the race.

Half a minute later, by the time they were out of the tunnel, Zhang Heng's Santana had fallen to the sixth position. Although he tried his best to tailgate the cars in front of him, the road was very wide, and once the left and right car overtook the Santana, the ones behind would have no problem overtaking it as well.

Zhang Heng was a skillful driver but an overconfident one.

This was how the club leader judged Zhang Heng.

There seemed to be a great distance between the finishing line and the starting point, but it would only take them six or seven minutes to complete a lap at their current speed.

In other words, they had completed almost one-fifth of the course now. Zhang Heng's Santana was now four cars away from the Porsche 911. After a while, he lost sight of the 911's taillamps. It seemed that his fate had been sealed. However, Zhang Heng did not appear to be in a hurry. Although cars were constantly overtaking him, he still maintained his previous speed (mainly because the car wouldn't go any faster). Another two minutes passed, where most drivers had completed half of the lap. Zhang Heng and his Santana were now in the final position.

On the other hand, the millennial wasn't doing too good as well, where two opponents overtook him. The tattooed man, on the contrary, was doing exceptionally well today. He actually found a chance to surpass the Porsche 911 in one fell swoop, temporarily holding onto first place.

Then the club leader noticed in the rearview mirror that the Santana had disappeared.

Did he give up?

Did he flee from the race after knowing that he had no hope of winning the race?

If Zhang Heng had listened to his advice earlier, the club leader had no intention to cause him any trouble. But now Zhang Heng's speech had successfully triggered his anger. He would not let Zhang Heng off the hook just like that. He was not the kind of men that one should mess around with. Before the race started, he had memorized Zhang Heng's car plate number. With the power of his family, he could locate Zhang Heng quickly.

By that time, he would be able to force Zhang Heng to carry out his promise. But now, the race was not over. Even if Zhang Heng quit, there were still eight racers competing with him. As the club president, he had no intention to lose the race.

Less than 500 meters ahead was a large construction site. Although he could shorten the distance by going through it, the road condition was harsh, according to the information given to him earlier. The road was filled with potholes, and a lot of building materials were abandoned on the road. It was better to take the long road than risking it since it was now night time. Therefore, the club leader turned away from the construction site without any hesitation.

Chapter 654 Blind Attack

Zhang Heng felt helpless when he saw all his opponents passing him one by one.

After all, no matter how glorious the Santana's past was, it was always designed to be a sedan, and it would never outrun a sports car. In order to ensure that the engine and tires remained intact after the race, Zhang Heng did not dare to perform any bold moves.

Nevertheless, it was an expected outcome. After knowing the road conditions before the race started, the first half of the journey was an unfavorable one. All he could do was to try his best and tail his opponents as closely as he could.

Then, the second half of the race commenced. It was now Zhang Heng's time to showcase his strength.

When Zhang Heng saw the construction site from a distance, he quickly turned off the car's lights. Since he had his Filter Lens, it made no difference if the headlights were turned on or not. The moment it all went dark, the drivers in front of him descended into confusion.

It was said that Takumi Fujiwara had used this trick before in 'Initial D.'

He named this trick 'blind attack.'

Zhang Heng drove his Santana toward the construction site.

If the club president could see Zhang Heng's bold move, he would probably be surprised by his choice. Electing not to take a detour like the others and not slowing down as well, he smashed through the half-opened gate and rammed right into the construction site.

Close to him was a grey truck that had tipped over. Considering the Santana's current speed, most drivers wouldn't have been able to avoid the truck. With the help of the Filter Lens, however, Zhang Heng managed to avoid it with ease. As it dodged the truck, the Santana kicked up a huge cloud of dust behind it.

Zhang Heng positioned the car carefully, driving between the brick wall and the scrap piles. He felt as if he was back in the Tokyo Drift dungeon, where the seafood shop owner taught him how to drift.

It took him a long time before his training was completed. Fortunately, he managed to master the intricacies of the driving skills taught to him, the reason why he could avoid all those obstacles with ease.

Zhang Heng drove through the construction site without having to slow down.

Simultaneously, the club president had also overtaken the tattooed man while he was doing the turn, and he regained the leading position. However, before he could put a smile on his face, he saw a car dashing at high speed, charging out from the construction site.

Zhang Heng's car landed right in front of the Porsche 911!

The club president was so shocked that his eyes bulged wide open. He thought that Zhang Heng had given up on the race and fled the scene. The last thing he expected was that an opponent with a family sedan would be determined enough to race with them. And he even surpassed everyone. This was Zhang Heng's first time grabbing the top spot ever since the race started. Considering that he was driving a Santana, the club president would never believe that he could outrun the high-performance roadsters if he hadn't witnessed it himself.

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Then the club president noticed another fantastic feat—the Santana's headlights were turned off. Let alone the high beam, Zhang Heng did not even turn on the lowest setting. It was no wonder that the club president noticed the Santana disappearing for a brief period. However, he still could not figure out how Zhang Heng could traverse the construction site in pitch-darkness, and come out unscathed.

The club president could also see that the Santana didn't slow down one bit. Although they took a detour, it wasn't a long course. Knowing that he was far behind the club president, Zhang Heng had to ensure that he was constantly driving at top speed if he wanted to make any meaningful gains. Was there something wrong with the information that they were given? Were there no obstacles in the construction site? How did Zhang Heng acquire this insider information? Or was that just a desperate move?

Although the club president was puzzled, he had no intention to slow down his car.

It wasn't the time to be entangled in these questions. There was still about one-third of the journey to cross the finish line, and the winner had not decided. Even though Zhang Heng took the lead temporarily with his incredible driving skills, a Santana was in essence, still a Santana.

It was like the difference between nobles and commoners.

The club president got serious for the first time tonight. 30,000 yuan was nothing to him. The most important thing was that he did not want to bear the shame of losing to an old sedan while driving a sports car. If that happened, he would become a laughing stock for the rest of his life.

The Porsche 911 seemed to feel the owner's anger, its strained engine let out a deafening roar.

Although Zhang Heng managed to once again increase the gap between them when he took a turn, the club president managed to close the gap between them until they were driving on the same line.

This undoubtedly came as bad news to Zhang Heng since a Santana was never going to outdo the club president's Porsche 911. Once the club president regained the advantage, it would be then almost impossible to defeat him.

The 911's taillights drew two streams of light in the night, while the Santana looked like a ghost in the dark. The club president realized that Zhang Heng wasn't in a panic at all. On the contrary, he even lowered the windows to get a dose of the night breeze.

After a while, Zhang Heng signaled the club president by pointing forward.

"Again?!" The club president noticed that there was another small construction site in front of him. Immediately, his face turned pale.

They were now at a spot close to the stadium, and once they passed the unfinished shooting gallery in front of them, they should arrive at the finishing line. Under normal circumstances, they would have taken a detour.

The club president knew that Zhang Heng would definitely choose to go through the construction site because that was the only way for him to win the race.

Now, he was stuck in a dilemma. On the one hand, he did not believe that Zhang Heng would get so lucky again—the information he received earlier had some mistakes in it. On the other hand, he was worried that if he chose the detour, Zhang Heng would overtake him again. And the last section of the road was too short to regain the leading position.

There wasn't much time left for him to make up his mind. In a blink of an eye, he would arrive in front of the shooting gallery. With gritted teeth, the club president decided to charge into the construction site.

His strategy was simple. If there were giant obstacles on site, he would rather be trapped by them, together with Zhang Heng, of course. Zhang Heng was a one-man team, after-all, and the modified car club still had seven active races. The tattooed man was getting closer to them as well—he would win the race after he took the detour. And if the construction site were cleared of obstacles, the club president would become the winner of this race.

It all sounded like the perfect plan.

Unfortunately, what happened next went beyond his control. The road conditions in the construction site were indeed as complicated as indicated. He had to drastically slow down his car to protect himself. However, the Santana, now tailing him closely from behind, seemed completely unaffected.

Not only did Zhang Heng not slow down the car, but he continued to step on the gas. Unsurprisingly, he overtook the club president, at the same time, avoiding the steel rods jutting out from the ground in front of him. The smoke and dust created by the Santana brought forth an indescribable irony to the whole situation. It was as if the old Volkswagen was laughing at a Porsche 911 that could never overtake it.

And Zhang Heng's driving skill had also allowed the club president to witness what an exceptionally skillful driver looked like.

This time, through the bright beam of the 911's headlights, the club president managed to witness Zhang Heng's Santana's performance. He paid so much attention to it that he didn't notice that his car had collided with the sidewalk.

After that, the Santana 3000 drove out of the shooting gallery's construction site and raced toward the finish line. At the same time, the tattooed man who had taken the detour had just emerged from the corner. He was still about a hundred meters away from Zhang Heng and in the end, he could only watch helplessly as the family sedan sailed across the finish line to win the race.

Chapter 655 This Isn't About Skill

The Santana 3000 crossed the finishing line where the girl wearing the cap was holding up a signboard. Once Zhang Heng arrived at the finishing line, he drifted his car and parked it in front of the stadium, leaving only less than half a centimeter between the right tire and the stairs.

Turning off the engine, he pulled the key out.

The group waiting at the finishing line were flabbergasted the moment they saw that Zhang Heng was the first to arrive.

Earlier, they were able to see the tattooed man's Jaguar from far and had even prepared some beer upon his win. Although it was pointless to celebrate his victory over the Santana, they could not deny that he did defeat all the other seven drivers. Technically speaking, tonight's race could be considered the modified car club's competition.

No one expected that Zhang Heng and his Santana would clinch the podium in this race. All these rich brats who raced with their luxury cars just had their ass handed to them by a humble Santana, a car that would garner no more than 10,000 yuan in the second-hand car market. Even at such a bargain, it might need a long time before someone would actually buy it.

The capped girl opened her mouth so wide that a dragon fruit could fit into it. After a while, she asked skeptically, "Did he install NOS in his car?"

In recent years, NOS had been frequently used in racing movies, and almost everyone was familiar with it. Installed in tanks and fed into the engine, nitrous oxide would release oxygen and nitrogen when burned. The combustion of oxygen would increase the engine's output, while the nitrogen would cool down the cylinders, all in all giving a massive boost to the car's horsepower.

Fortunately, though, most who were present here were all car-buffs in their own right. After hearing her question, a man immediately shook his head and said, "Impossible. The Santana's engine and exhaust system are not compatible with a NOS installation. He would have killed himself if he fixed it onto his car."

But after explaining to the capped girl, the man also showed a look of confusion, "Could he have secretly swapped his engine before the race? But the exhaust pipe still looks the same..."

As they were racking their brains trying to figure out how Zhang Heng could win the race, the other drivers crossed the chequered flag one after the other. The tattooed man and his Jaguar came in second. No one paid attention to him anymore, though. The entire crowd had now turned their focus on Zhang Heng and his seasoned Volkswagen Santana that could.

Zhang Heng then opened the car door and looked at the group of people who seemed to be petrified by his victorious moment. "The Porsche 911's driver is still at the construction site," he said. "I think he crashed into something just now. Did you guys check on him?"

Immediately, the crowd composed themselves and realized that there was a missing car.

They were shocked when they heard that the Porsche 911 hit the wall. While they were racing, several drivers noticed that the Porsche 911 and the Santana had driven into the construction site together.

At that time, the club president and his members were sure that Zhang Heng would lose the race. To everyone's surprise, the Santana was the first to emerge from the construction site. The Porsche 911, on the other hand, was nowhere to be seen. A few even began to suspect that Zhang Heng must have used some dirty tricks in the construction site to eliminate the president.

Fortunately, when they found the Porsche 911, the president was safe and sound.

The president instantly regretted his decision to rush into the construction site with Zhang Heng since the obstacles would force him to slow down. After the Santana overtook him and he witnessed Zhang Heng's impeccable driving skills, his morale dipped to zero. Thank goodness he wasn't speeding when he crashed his car at the wall. The airbags that deployed on time had also saved him a great deal of injury.

He was physically fine, but the same couldn't be said about his psychological state. When they found him, he was squatting down, looking extremely dejected.

The tattooed man checked the mildly wrecked Porsche 911 next to him and comforted, "It's okay. Only the front is damaged." "I'm not saddened by the fact that my car is damaged," the young man shook his head. "I'm disappointed in myself. How could I lose to a Santana after I've raced here so many times."

When he said it out loud, the other club members bowed their heads in shame as they fell into silence.

The outcome of tonight's race had truly baffled everyone. Some still couldn't believe that Zhang Heng actually won the race.

"Did that guy... cheat?" someone suggested, trying to find an acceptable excuse for the defeat. "How did he cheat?"

The club president lit himself a cigarette and said, "You guys just raced with him. His Santana is factory-stock. It wasn't modified anyway. Otherwise, we wouldn't have outrun him in the first half of the race."

"Was he really that good of a driver?" the millennial asked, obviously still doubting the miraculous win.

He hadn't paid much attention to Zhang Heng. He had been busy chasing down the Porsche 911 and the Jaguar from the very beginning, but he still ended up losing to them.

"Let's not talk about his skills first. He is really the kind that's... rare, you know..." The young man took in drag while trying to recall the unbelievable and unforgettable incident he had just witnessed.

An ordinary Santana had drifted all the way along the bumpy construction site to avoid various hazards. And the most unbelievable part was that its headlights weren't even turned on.

'What the f*ck was that?! I know drifting, but drifting in the darkness without light is something I have never seen before.'

It was no wonder that the club president was so stunned by Zhang Heng. Any right-thinking person who had witnessed the scene would indeed be left puzzled as well.

Zhang Heng had just singlehandedly changed his fate.

"It seems that this time, we have met ourselves a master." The club president blew out a mouthful of smoke, a solemn expression adorning his face.

"So what should we do now?" All of them were looking at each other, trying to figure out what they should do next. In the end, the club president had to be the one to make the decision.

"I will admit defeat and give him the money first."

After finishing the race, Zhang Heng got out from his Santana and walked over to the capped girl.

"You've got any water with you?"

"Yes, wait a minute." The capped girl hurriedly searched the car behind her. She found a bottle of drinking water and passed it to Zhang Heng. "Thank you," Zhang Heng took the mineral water and thanked her politely. After he confirmed that the bottle had been opened before, he proceeded to unscrew the cap and took two sips from it.

The girl stared at Zhang Heng, filled with questions and curiosity.

When she recalled how the two first met, she thought something must be wrong with this Zhang Heng. But now, it turned out that his Santana really outperformed a whole bunch of high-performance cars. The way she looked at Zhang Heng had changed completely.

Zhang Heng was indeed a mysterious man.

And she thought that Zhang Heng was way younger than her.

“Aren’t you worried?” the capped girl asked with concern.

“What should I be worried about?”

“Although you won the race, they have lots of people over there. What if they want to beat you up?”

Women were such a strange species. She herself was from the modified car club, but now that Zhang Heng had outperformed all the other drivers, she started to worry about his safety.

“Oh, it doesn’t matter. They can’t beat me anyway,” Zhang Heng chirped casually.

Chapter 656 Don’t Worry

Zhang Heng didn’t have to wait too long before the modified car club members returned.

The president came back with them as well, and as he walked toward Zhang Heng, he was touching his pocket with one hand. In response, Zhang Heng quickly drew out his utility knife.

“You have misunderstood me.” Upon seeing that, the club president quickly moved his hand away from his pocket to show that he had no malicious intent. He then took out his mobile phone from his pocket, “You won this round. The total prize money is 240,000 yuan. Your bank account number?”

“I haven’t had time to apply for a bank card. Do you have cash?” Zhang Heng asked.

The club president was stunned when he heard Zhang Heng’s request. Was that how a master lived his life? He was shocked by the fact that Zhang Heng did not even own a bank card. Maybe only people like him could possess such masterful driving. In martial arts novels, after a martial artist had trained his art to a certain level, he would start to work on his state of mind. The president figured that perhaps this was how Zhang Heng had become so skillful at driving. It was difficult for those who had not reached this level to figure out Zhang Heng completely.

“You... wait a minute.”

The club president turned around and started to collect as much money as possible. The electronic wallet, however, was widely used in the country right now. Even if most of the club members were extremely wealthy, none would bring so much cash with them when they came out. Basically, everyone had about three to five thousand yuan each in their wallets to handle emergencies. For everything else, there was always the credit card.

Hence, the president only managed to collect 50,000 yuan for Zhang Heng. Amid the hastily collected notes, Zhang Heng saw some ten yuan bills. It seemed the president had tried his best to give everything that they had to Zhang Heng.

“Don’t worry. I will send the rest of the money to you.” The young man patted his chest.

“You guys are car modifying experts. Do you know any places where I can fix my car in the middle of the night?” Zhang Heng asked after receiving 50,000 yuan. Since he couldn’t stop the car in the middle of a race, he collided with the construction site’s gate. It left a few dings and dents on the front bumper and

grille. The Santana's tires and brakes were worn out as well, and Zhang Heng had to fix all of that before he drove it home.

"Yes, we have our auto repair shop. It is usually open for business during the day. At night, it's our playground." "Great. You can ask your men to send the rest of the money there," said Zhang Heng as he put away the knife.

Since the club president had a good attitude, Zhang Heng had no intention to embarrass him. After all, his purpose was to make a fortune from the rich kids here, where he managed to coerce them into racing with him. In the end, not only did they have to fork out a huge sum of money, but they were left to deal with the trauma to a certain extent.

When Zhang Heng learned that the club president was so polite, he was still a little surprised.

The members had asked him to become their special adviser for the modified car club and teach them how to race professionally. According to the president, he had never seen anyone possess the skill to beat luxury cars with a mere Santana. Zhang Heng's experience and knowledge about racing were apparently masterful enough to be taught to everyone in the club.

They even offered to pay Zhang Heng 20,000 yuan every time he gave a lesson. It was a pity that Zhang Heng did not come to this dungeon to make money. With 240,000 yuan, it would be more than enough to fund his future activities. Hence, it did not make sense to be making more money.

So Zhang Heng rejected the offer, but the two still exchanged numbers. After that, he sent his Santana 3000 for inspection and repair. Once the car was restored to its previous state, Zhang Heng gave the car some well-deserved gas. Finally, he parked the car back in the garage before dawn and returned home with a bag of money.

"You won't... stay up late again, right?"

On Monday, in math class, Bai Qing could not help but ask after seeing how Zhang Heng kept yawning while scribbling on the paper.

Her voice was so soft that Zhang Heng did not hear her clearly. "Huh?" he asked.

"I said... Did you not sleep again last night? Were you copying homework the whole night?" she repeated, a lot louder this time.

Zhang Heng blinked after hearing what she said, "...the teacher is looking at you."

"Huh?!"

Bai Qing froze for a split-second. When she turned around, she saw the chemistry teacher glaring at her. Since Bai Qing was a member of the study committee, the teacher refrained from reprimanding her on the spot. If Bai Qing were a student with poor academic performance, however, she would have been instantly punished.

Bai Qing lowered her head in shame, not daring to say another word. She waited until the teacher turned to the blackboard before poking Zhang Heng again with a pen. "You were talking too. Why didn't she glare at you?"

“Because I didn’t move my mouth just now.” Zhang Heng gave Bai Qing a demonstration, and his lips barely moved when he spoke.

Bai Qing was speechless. Although Zhang Heng was yawning all the time, he somehow always managed to always pay attention to the teacher’s behavior. Ever since she was caught red-handed by the teacher, Bai Qing did not dare talk to Zhang Heng again, paying all her attention to the teacher like a top student until the class was over. It was only after the teacher left the classroom that Bai Qing could breathe a sigh of relief.

“Actually, you don’t need to worry. She can’t be bothered to reprimand you,” Zhang Heng said.

“And... why say that?”

“Because she is worried about her family. Or, to be more precise, she is worried about her husband cheating on her. She is exhausted and doesn’t want to get involved in other troubles. All she wanted to do was to leave right away after the class is over.”

“Huh... how do you know that her husband’s cheating on her? Did you hide under her sofa last night?”

“I don’t even need to hide under her sofa to know about it. It’s so obvious. The teachers in our school don’t usually put on makeup, but today, for the very first time, Ms. He put on some really fine makeup on her face. She would have taken at least 40 minutes to put on the foundation before doing this kind of makeup. And she was in our very first period this morning. If you were to be her, would you be willing to sacrifice 40 minutes of sleep to apply makeup for the pleasure of your students in your class?” “But that doesn’t mean that her husband cheated on her, right?” Bai Qing asked after she thought for a while.

“If it’s not for work, women, especially middle-aged-have two possibilities to wake up early in the morning to put on some fine makeup-they are either going to meet their lover or their enemy. From the lipstick that she chose, it seems that she is more inclined to the latter. And she appeared to be extremely impatient today. She stomped her feet several times during the morning class, and she flipped her book very loudly. It doesn’t look like she is going to meet her lover later. “Moreover, if I remember correctly, Ms. He is a very controlling person. She controls the family’s finance and her husband strictly. She will check her husband’s whereabouts all the time. Sometimes, things will turn sour when you exert too much control on a person, especially in front of outsiders. She shouldn’t show off this kind of thing-it will inflict lots of psychological pressure on his husband. At this time, he will need a fairer and more petite opposite sex to bring back his male dignity... And that’s how the tragedy happened.”

Bai Qing blushed when she heard the explanation, “How do you know this kind of thing so well?”

“Emotional dispute is one of the major causes for committing a crime. I have studied crime before. That’s why I know quite a bit about one’s emotions.”

Zhang Heng then closed the notebook on the table.

Chapter 657 Elementary School

“Hmm... what you just said seems to be true. And I’m actually a little convinced.” Bai Qing thought for a while and realized that Zhang Heng’s reasoning sounded very logical, making it difficult to refute.

“Don’t take it too seriously,” Zhang Heng said.

“If you are right, I really pity Teacher He.”

“This is life... We all have our own difficulties to face.” Zhang Heng fiddled with the gel pen in his hand.

“It sounds old-fashioned, but you are right,” Bai Qing sighed and placed her chin on the desk, “My dad and my mom have been giving me a headache recently.”

“Headache... and why would that be?” Zhang Heng’s expression changed, and he clamped the rotating gel pen with his index and middle fingers.

“I think I told you about it before. My dad has begun socializing less with his client, and he now comes home early. However, they quarreled again last night, and this time, it was a long argument. They didn’t want to let me listen to what they were fighting about, and when I went to the bathroom at night, I saw my mother crying in the living room. She just sat there, and her surroundings were pitch black.”

“Did you comfort her?”

“No, I went back to my room,” Bai Qing said.

“Huh?” Zhang Heng snorted softly. “From the time I found out about their dispute, they had always been quarreling over trivial matters. I guess this is how they run their marriage. When my mother was young, many men had their eyes on her. She would party every day, but in the end, I guess that she wanted to live a stable life, and she married my dad. After they were married, however, she kept getting the feeling that she was married to the wrong man. At that time, my dad was just a small-time technician. His world revolved around technology, and he knew nothing about romance.

“My mother had always told me that if it were not for me, they would have gotten divorced. As I got older, they argued less frequently. At that time, my dad went through a rather large change. He began learning how to socialize. Later, he quit his job to start his own company, and when the business had become stable, he started coming home late. So my mother began to suspect that he had an affair... So is this what marriage looks like?”

“Well, many marriages do indeed look like this.”

“Then, marriage is a scary thing.” “You shouldn’t be worrying about this sort of thing yet. A friend once told me, don’t worry about things that haven’t happened yet,” Zhang Heng said.

“Don’t you boys ever wonder who you will marry in the future?”

“About that, it’s a useless thought at the moment... We will know when the time comes,” Zhang Heng said. “Eh...”

The bell rang, and the teacher opened the door and walked into the classroom.

Immediately, Bai Qing straightened up herself. “Ah, did I talk too much? I haven’t even told any of these to my best friend.”

“You’ll feel better after you let it out of your chest. And as I said, you can tell me about your dad’s abnormal behaviors anytime you want,” replied Zhang Heng.

“So that you can continue to study the subject of emotion serving as a trigger for crimes? I’ll pass. Although my parents always quarrel, they are not going to kill each other.” Bai Qing finished the last sentence quickly, pulling out her biology textbook from her schoolbag.

Zhang Heng had almost completely forgotten how he spent his high school years. Whether it was the phoenix trees outside the window or the sound of playing from the playground, they now seemed so foreign and unfamiliar.

And he did not remember too much about Bai Qing as well, who was sitting next to him, paying attention to the class. There were no such things as aliens in the real world. Although the relationship between the two was amicable, they were classmates, and they did not go beyond that. She did not meet him at Wanda Plaza. The two had never eaten KFC together. Zhang Heng had also never listened to Bai Qing discuss her family matters.

After going to college, the two gradually lost contact with each other, just like most of his other friends in high school. Everyone met new friends in college, and each began to have new circles. Most of them did not meet up after that, and Zhang Heng only remembered that Bai Qing was enrolled in Fudan University.

Zhang Heng spent another day falling asleep in class. At the end of the last period, all the students in the class were almost gone. Bai Qing’s gel pen was still scribbled on the paper, and she handed her finished homework to Zhang Heng after a while. Once she entered her learning state, she would become as efficient as a machine.

“Well, this is the last one.”

“Thank you.” Zhang Heng took the homework from her and put them in his backpack. After thinking about it, he had been copying her homework for some time now. And Bai Qing even treated him to a KFC meal. He felt awful about it, so he took out his phone and checked on something

“Are you free Friday night?”

“Huh?”

“I will take you to a place after school.”

“Oh.” Bai Qing nodded. She did not know why she said yes to Zhang Heng. Her mother had been telling her to keep her distance from boys to protect herself. Traveling with a boy at night was something that her mother would never agree with. Perhaps it was because Zhang Heng had always given her a sense of security. Besides, he had “saved” her once, and it was hard to put her guard up against him. Thus, she unconsciously agreed to Zhang Heng’s proposal. “Oh, by the way, you can bring a friend with you. And I will bring a friend too.” Zhang Heng realized that Bai Qing might feel uncomfortable if she was the only girl that went with him. “Okay.” Bai Qing picked up her schoolbag as she bashfully bit her lower lip, “Then... see you tomorrow.”

“See you tomorrow.” After school, most students would either go home and slog on homework or make plans with each other. As for Zhang Heng, he had to work on the investigation immediately.

Zhang Heng hadn’t gained much information about the river, and he quickly realized that perhaps he had been heading in the wrong direction. Perhaps he should no longer be focussing on the three

children but on what they found or discovered instead. What caused those creatures to attack them? Maybe their past lives could yield some answers? Zhang Heng found a school that one of the kids used to attend. He tore a piece of paper from his exercise book and wrote down the name of the school. An elementary school should have ended all their classes by now, but fortunately, the class teacher's name was printed on the news. So, Zhang Heng took a taxi to the elementary school.

At that time, all the students had basically left the school and had returned home. The school's gates, however, remained unlocked.

king for only a few steps, Zhang Heng was stopped by the security guard. "What are you here for?" the guard asked.

"Oh, I booked the badminton court at 7:00 in the evening, and my friend has already arrived," Zhang Heng said calmly and confidently.

Many elementary and junior high schools had indoor gymnasiums. To generate some extra revenue, the indoor gymnasium would be opened to the public during non-schooling hours. Zhang Heng had checked everything out when he was in the car, which was why he knew exactly what to say at a time like this.

Chapter 658 Reporter Xiao Song

The security guard allowed Zhang Heng to enter the school without asking any questions.

Zhang Heng walked towards the gymnasium. When he went to the second floor and confirmed no one around him, Zhang Heng jumped into the teaching building through the window.

The school's students had all gone home a while ago, and not a single soul wandered the silent corridor.

Desks, chairs, blackboard, podium, and the wall could all be seen through the glass.

The news did not mention the children's names that drowned in the river to protect citizens' privacy. The reporters only mentioned only their surnames, but fortunately, it wasn't too hard for Zhang Heng to find their full names. Knowing their ages, it wasn't too difficult locating their classes either. After he arrived at the right floor, Zhang Heng checked the classrooms one by one through the glass.

Soon, he found an empty immaculate seat, one that had no books on it but a bunch of white lilies.

Zhang Heng looked up at the signboard in front of the door. It showed Grade 5, Class 4. Using his public transport card, he pried the door open and walked in. There was nothing left on the table or the drawer. It seemed that the child's family had come to take away all its belongings after the tragedy. Later on, the class students bought the white lilies with their class fees, and they had been sitting there a while.

The poster at the back, however, was somewhat helpful to Zhang Heng. After Lin drowned, her classmates had made a special poster to remember her. Zhang Heng also found out that Lin's full name was Lin Sisi. Her classmates had said many good things about her in the poster, including how willing she always was to offer a hand to those in need and her impeccable academic performance. Zhang Heng skipped all the useless information and continued reading the rest. Soon, he found two notable points. The first thing was that Lin Sisi was a hushed girl. Of course, it was a nice way to describe her. In reality, she was timid and rarely interacted with others, where she sat alone most of the time, engaged in her own thoughts. And the second noteworthy point was that she was very interested in astronomy. The

second point surprised Zhang Heng a little. The internet was a widely used commodity in the modern-day, and it offered much entertainment. Finding a child that had an interest in a subject like astronomy was extremely rare. Besides, Lin Sisi was a girl. But having said that, many of those who liked astronomy were likely to be introverts. If they could not mix well with others, they would choose to immerse themselves in astronomy.

Besides, Zhang Heng also noticed that this was related to his main quest.

Where did those aliens come from? When did they come to earth? Or, were they some new lifeform? Zhang Heng had all these questions in his head, which was why he became so sharp when he knew that Lin Sisi was interested in astronomy.

With all these bits and pieces of information, it was not enough to understand those things. After that, Zhang Heng went around the classroom and found no other useful clues. So he closed the door and left, and went to the office area.

Earlier, Zhang Heng saw the name of Lin Sisi's headteacher in the newspaper. Her name was Li Yan, a Chinese teacher in this school. Zhang Heng managed to locate her seat with ease. The things on the teacher's desk were quite messy. Teaching books, photocopied documents, notes, and the homework she had finished marking were scattered around. There was a cup with a picture of her daughter, and her husband was printed on it.

Zhang Heng's interest was triggered when he saw the enrolment form for Quality Young Teacher Course. Her personal information was written down on the form, including her address, teaching experience, contact number, and others. Zhang Heng then took a photo of the application form and checked on the principal's office.

After that, he took a nap on the sofa for 20 minutes. Seeing that the time was almost up, he went to the toilet to wash his face and sprinkle some water on his back and neck, pretending that he had just finished exercising. Before he left the school, he nodded at the security guard.

Zhang Heng then went to the mall to purchase some formal clothes, bought a voice recorder and a notebook to make himself look like a young reporter. Once everything was done, he called Li Yan to make an appointment with her.

The latter was a little surprised when she received the call. A few days had passed since Lin Sisi's drowning, and it was no longer the hottest topic that everyone talked about, which was why Li Yan was surprised that a reporter wanted to interview her. Zhang Heng told her that he was from the Evening City News, and he wanted to make a special report on ensuring the children's safety outside of school. He also told her that he had talked to Headmaster Wu about it. All he needed was twenty minutes from her. To make him sound more convincing, he also mentioned Li Yan's address in the phone call.

Thankfully, she showed no suspicion, instantly asking Zhang Heng where to meet.

Zhang Heng told her to meet at a small cafe near her house. Not only did he get to know more detailed information about Lin Sisi from Li Yan, but he also managed to extract had Lin Sisi's home address and the address of two other deceased children.

After the interview was over, Zhang Heng shook her hand and sent her out of the cafe.

Li Yan had just given birth to a baby. There were still a lot of things waiting for her to do at home. So after the interview was over, she hurriedly left the café. After she walked a few steps away from the cafe, she stopped and turned around.

“Reporter Xiao Xiong, do you believe that there are aliens in this world?” “Why do you ask?” “I always ask my students to write weekly journals. Sisi’s weekly journal was always the most special journal among all her peers. According to my teaching experience, the more introverted a child is, the richer their inner world... Sorry, that’s out of topic. Now, let’s go back to her weekly journal. One week before Sisi’s accident, she handed me a weekly diary saying that there are aliens in this world. Apparently, they were already here, living around us, and pretending to be us. They also study us and learn from us, waiting for the day to replace us. And their numbers are growing every day. The worst part is we can’t distinguish them from us on the outside. I’m sorry... I don’t know why I would tell you about it. You must also think that her fantasy is kind of creepy.” Li Yan then squeezed a smile on her face.

“Who else has seen her weekly journal?” Zhang Heng asked.

“Hmm?”

“Did anyone read her weekly diary except you?”

“Oh, a lot of students read her journal before. I will usually ask my students to read out their weekly journal if they did an excellent job. After that, I will put up the journal on the notice board. Although disturbing, it was indeed very creative. Why do you ask?”

“It’s nothing,” Zhang Heng paused and asked again, “Did you tell anyone about this other than me?”

“No, I was very sad after Sisi was found drowned in the river. Many reporters came to interview me, and I had to take my children to class as well. Everything was so hectic to the point that I forgot to mention the weekly journal. I’m sorry. I don’t know why I mentioned it. I must not have rested well...” “Yeah, get a good night’s sleep and forget about it,” Zhang Heng said, “The idea of aliens living among us is ridiculous.”

Chapter 659 Concert and Extra Income

Initially, Zhang Heng planned to check out Lin Sisi’s neighborhood. Considering the fact that he had spent quite a long time outside, he could only push this matter back for now. Besides, interviewing Lin Sisi’s parents wasn’t going to be as easy as interviewing Li Yan. Even if they believed that Zhang Heng was a reporter, they might not be willing to meet him.

After all, another interview would only reopen the wounds still fresh from losing their beloved daughter.

Zhang Heng returned home at about 8 in the evening. His grandpa was sitting on the sofa reading newspapers, and the food on the table remained untouched.

“I’ve sent you a message telling you not to wait for me.”

“It’s better that we eat together anyway,” said Grandpa as he put down the newspapers. He did not ask where his grandson had gone to since he always believed in his judgment and self-discipline. The two had always lived like that. Grandpa believed that the more he controlled Zhang Heng, the more rebellious his grandson would become.

Zhang Heng later asked his grandfather where he learned such an idea, and the latter told him that he found it out when raising his mother.

“Let me heat the food then.” As he spoke, Zhang Heng brought the dishes on the table into the kitchen.

After learning that those creatures wouldn't do anything to him for now, Zhang Heng stopped using the Lego kitten as his meal taster. That said, he remained vigilant. The tragic incident that happened to Lin Sisi and the college students was a constant reminder that this was no safe place. The aliens might have replaced people he thought he knew.

After dinner, Zhang Heng contacted Qin Zhen again.

The latter had a cousin who worked as a ticket reseller, specializing in buying, then selling tickets for performances or events at a higher price. Ticket resellers were either loved or hated, especially when it came to popular performances where tickets would be sold out in a blink of an eye on an online ticketing platform. Even if one had a smooth internet connection, there was no guarantee that they could bag a single ticket. If they were lucky enough to snatch one, however, it would be one with an awful sitting position.

Thus, fans who failed to buy the tickets or wanted a good position could only seek the help of a ticket reseller. It wasn't uncommon for a one thousand yuan ticket to be marked up to at least three or four thousand yuan. As for tickets that sold like hotcakes, the reseller would increase the price to seven to eight thousand yuan. At the same time, there was a risk that the scalper would scam the buyers by selling them fake tickets.

Although all online ticketing platforms claimed that they had nothing to do with these resellers, it was difficult for them to explain the shady order of ticket allocation. Only they would know the truth. Like many, Zhang Heng disliked ticket resellers too. However, there were only four days left before the start of the concert, and purchasing the tickets through the legal channel wasn't possible anymore. Knowing how Bai Qing was a real big fan of GEM, Zhang Heng had been thinking about how to repay her kindness. It so happened that there was a GEM concert on Friday, so he decided that he'd invite her to the concert as a thank you gesture.

At the same time, Zhang Heng was concerned that Bai Qing would misunderstand his intention. In the end, he decided to bring Qin Zhen with him.

Qin Zhen took a deep breath after hearing that Zhang Heng was inviting him to a GEM concert.

“Did you rob a bank recently? Do you know how much it costs to get GEM's concert tickets? And you're even getting the VIP seats?!”

“Don't worry about the money. Just ask your cousin to help me to get the tickets,” Zhang Heng said.

Since the race proceeds couldn't be brought back into the real world, it would be all but a waste if he didn't spend it now.

“Okay, I'll ask my cousin!” Qin Zhen agreed. He then asked curiously after a pause, “Now, which girl are you blowing-off such a huge fortune on?”

“Look... if you’re not interested, I can pass your ticket to someone else,” Zhang Heng said. “Fine... Fine... You’re the boss since you are paying. It so happens that I like GEM a lot too. Don’t forget me if you are going to do something like this again! I promise to be your eternal wingman.”

IIII

Zhang Heng hung up the phone after that. So far, he had been carrying out continuous investigations for several days and nights. He had to go to class during the day, and hence, didn’t plan to sleep late again tonight. After copying his homework and taking a shower, he retired early and went to bed.

In the next few days, he continued playing high-school student while investigating the alien debacle. Zhang Heng went to the neighborhood where Lin Sisi once lived. Just like what he expected earlier, the girl’s parents had no intention to be interviewed anymore. However, he managed to use a pack of cigarettes to acquire some valuable information at the gate outside the neighborhood.

According to the security guard, the three children often left together in a group. The one thing he didn’t know was where they were heading to.

These three children should have had their own secret base or something along that line.

Through the surveillance clips, Zhang Heng extended his investigation to a place that was ten kilometers away. He was closer to the east of the city, where several state-owned factories and mines were once located.

The 1990s were probably the golden years of the state-owned factories and mines. At its peak, a factory had tens of thousands of employees, and the director of a factory was considered to be on equal footing as a mayor. The factory’s grounds were usually like a self-contained kingdom, having its own kindergarten, elementary, junior, and high school built within its grounds. It had everything the prospective worker needed, including housing and hospitals. Due to various reasons, however, these large state-owned factories started to go downhill. Not only were all the benefits canceled, but the factories even failed to pay the workers as well. Due to this reason, the whole city looked a little bleak.

There was no longer any need for Zhang Heng to masquerade as a worker from a security camera manufacturer. Since he had loads of money with him now, he could just make up an excuse and gave the store manager a hundred yuan to check their CCTV footage. With that, he managed to speed up his investigation.

He tracked the Honda Fit all the way here, but it disappeared all of a sudden. Even after watching all the footage from the nearby shops, the Honda Fit was nowhere to be seen. It all but seemed to have disappeared into thin

air.

Excluding the possibility of a supernatural phenomenon, Zhang Heng figured that they might have changed the car halfway.

After noticing an underground parking lot next door, he went down, wanting to check the parking lot’s CCTV footage. It was then that an accident happened.

There was no one in the duty room, and at the same time, the light above his head began to flicker. Zhang Heng stood still and looked at his surroundings. At least eight to nine people, all holding steel pipes and wrenches in their hands, had emerged from the dark.

“You shouldn’t have been so nosy,” a man who appeared to be their leader snorted in an unfriendly tone.

“Is that so?” Zhang Heng raised his eyebrows, put his hand in his pocket. “What can you do to me then?” he chided nonchalantly.

The leader snorted, “Stop acting like a fool. You know what’s going on here. Someone asked me to tell you to stay put. Otherwise, you might just be the next victim.”

“And... who is that person?”

“Hey, why are you asking so many questions?”. the leader growled impatiently.

“So you actually don’t know anything. You just take their money and do their bidding.” Zhang Heng’s stare swept across the crowd. Judging from their clothes, they should all be the workers from nearby factories, and it seemed that they hadn’t received any stipends for some time. Hence, they could only find other ways to make some extra cash.

Chapter 660 You Guys Should Be Running

Zhang Heng figured that his recent actions must have alerted those beings. After all, he had been collecting security footage along the street, and he knew it wasn’t something he could hide. Such a move had probably caused them to feel that he was threatening their existence, and thus, hired a group of people to teach Zhang Heng a lesson.

To them, Zhang Heng was nothing more than a high school student. Once the group of thugs taught him a lesson, they expected him to realize reality’s cruelty and hoped that he’d give up on what he was doing.

Obviously, they had severely underestimated Zhang Heng and his abilities.

Technically speaking, this was actually a double-blind quest. Zhang Heng had no idea where those creatures originated from, nor did they know his identity as a player. Hence, both parties were still at the stage of testing the waters they were in.

“How much did the person pay you to teach me a lesson?” Zhang Heng looked at the group’s leader.

“Why are you asking this?” the leader asked cautiously. “I want to see if money can be used to settle this,” Zhang Heng said. After all, he was now quite rich in this dungeon. He would opt for a more civilized solution if he encountered troubles.

“He paid us 3,000 yuan, and he wanted us to beat you up so bad that you wouldn’t be getting out of bed for a week.”

“Then I will pay you 6000 yuan for you guys to leave me alone. And I also want to know more about the person that you guys contacted.”

After the leader heard Zhang Heng's proposal, he looked at the man with a wrench next to him and asked in doubt, "Are you trying to get our personal information and hand them over to the police while you transfer the money to

us?"

"I can give you cash," Zhang Heng said. "You have 6000 yuan on you?"

"Yes."

"Then you pay first."

Zhang Heng wasted no time, taking out 6000 yuan from his schoolbag and handing it to the leader. At the same time, he said sincerely, "I would advise you to give up on any unnecessary thoughts you have in your mind." However, the latter obviously had no intention to listen to Zhang Heng's advice. After getting the money from Zhang Heng, the leader had no intention to leave Zhang Heng alone. A sense of greed started to manifest in his eyes. When Zhang Heng was searching his bag, the leader saw more money in Zhang Heng's schoolbag. In total, Zhang Heng came out with 10,000 yuan this time. So, the leader changed his words on the spot, "No, we can't take your money. We are trustworthy people. So, we will definitely deliver what we promised. Otherwise, no one would dare to work with us in the future."

The leader's self-righteous talk amused Zhang Heng. "Then how much do you want?" he asked directly without beating around the bush.

"How much do you have on you?"

"It's better not to be too greedy, uncle." Zhang Heng said lightly.

"We have been waited for so long for an opportunity to make more money. Do you really think we will leave you alone if we don't squeeze out everything you have on you?" The leader curled his lips.

"I guess it's time for things to get ugly."

Zhang Heng zipped up his schoolbag and slung it on his back again.

"What are you trying to do? Are you trying to run?" The leader let out a sly smile, "There are so many of us here. If we allow you to run away before our eyes, no one will hire us again in the future."

"Run?" Zhang Heng raised his eyebrows and took out the utility knife in his pocket. "No, you are the one who should run."

The entire battle did not last long.

All of them were workers from nearby factories, and obviously, hadn't received combat training of any sort. So, they could only intimidate others with the fat and tattoos on their bodies. In a one-on-one battle, they might even lose to an ordinary civilian. Although they had the numbers, they were facing an experienced player like Zhang Heng. In other words, they would lose the battle regardless.

Since he was not in Nassau or 19th century America, Zhang Heng did not beat them up too badly. Things could get troublesome if he caused them to be permanently disabled, or even worse, killed them. So

Zhang Heng beat them up only to disable them temporarily. Doubling down on his generosity, Zhang Heng was actually helping the local hospitals or clinics to earn more money. Truth be told, Zhang Heng only had to defeat four men. The rest were so frightened that they dropped the steel pipe in their hand and ran away.

Zhang Heng ignored those who ran away, walking directly to the leader that was lying on the ground and moaning. When he saw Zhang Heng walking toward him with a utility knife, he became nervous and started to talk, "Wh... What are you doing?! Don't come near me, eh? We are all civilized people here. If you continue to beat me up, I will call the police!"

Zhang Heng squatted down beside him, and used his clothes to wipe the blood on the utility knife, then recollected the 6,000 yuan.

"Tell me, who is this person that contacted you."

The leader saw that the 6,000 yuan that he received from Zhang Heng earlier was now gone. He wanted to slap himself so bad right now. Initially, he could have just left with an extra 6000 yuan in his pocket. Even if he returned the 3,000 yuan he received from his client, he could still earn an extra 3,000 yuan. Thanks to his greed, however, he now lost every dime on him. And he would also have a hard time explaining his failure to his client.

Since the leader's arm still bled, he did not dare plot anymore evil plans. So he told Zhang Heng everything about the person who hired them.

Zhang Heng was not too surprised when he heard about the person. Since the college student was waiting for him in the corridor that night, he was ready to expose himself. That would also mean the fake college student was the best person to deal with Zhang Heng. He had figured out that Zhang Heng's investigation would lead him to this parking lot sooner or later, and he had got some hire muscles to ambush Zhang Heng here.

In other words, the college student's family did change their car here that night, but the security footage should have been deleted by now.

This came in no way as good news for Zhang Heng. The investigation had to be put on pause again.

On the other hand, Zhang Heng was now very close to where the college student's family went that night.

He had a hunch that the creatures' nest was very likely nearby. Although the CCTV footage had been deleted, Zhang Heng believed that the residents around the place must have sensed something amiss.

So, for the next step of the investigation, Zhang Heng decided to focus on interviews.

Five minutes later, he confirmed that he could not extract any more useful information from the leader. So, Zhang Heng walked out of the garage and looked up at the sky outside. There was not much time left before the dark of night would set in, and the last thing he wanted was to let grandpa wait for him. Thus, today's investigation would have to end here.

He called a taxi and chatted with the driver as they drove on the road. After a while, he received a message from Qin Zhen, who said that he had obtained the concert tickets. Since Qin Zhen had bought

the tickets from his own cousin, he only needed to pay an extra 500 yuan for each. In total, Zhang Heng was only required to pay 7,120 yuan for all the tickets.

To his cousin, this was a significant loss, having made not much more than the cost to purchase those tickets. This was clearly not a bad deal for him.

Zhang Heng was fine with it, though. The price was indeed reasonable. It would be unrealistic to expect Qin Zhen's cousin to not earn a single cent from them. After that, he asked Qin Zhen to send over the QR code on the ticket to confirm that the tickets were real. Once he saw that the tickets were fine, Zhang Heng sent the money to him after arriving home.

Qin Zhen, on the other hand, was in high spirits, since he'd be able to watch the concert for free. He had stopped asking Zhang Heng about the girl that would attend the concert with him.

He prepared himself and said, "Don't worry, even if the girl is super ugly, I'll not say a word. After all, I still have a masterpiece on the stage for me to watch."