

48 Hours 711

Chapter 711: Planning

"This explains 1810's abnormal behavior. Once he heard what we told him, he had actually accepted the results of our investigation. However, he knew all too well in his heart that he would have to bear the consequences of this matter going public."

"The other players in the team will make him reimburse all their game points," said Black Swan while as she blew out a cloud of smoke.

"He'll have to admit to everything even if he refuses to do so," Shen Xixi said. "We found this place, and we even got the name, photo, and bank card number of Yogurt's friend. It's only a matter of time before we find him."

It seemed Shen Dongxing wasn't expecting anybody to be able to locate them, seeing how no defensive measures had been set up around his house. Since it was an ordinary home, all manner of necessities were lying around. Although Yogurt and Dongxing managed to escape tonight, they brought nothing with them since they left in such a rush. Zhang Heng even found Shen Dongxing's ID card in the drawer.

"It depends... How far is a father willing to go for his daughter?" Zhang Heng asked gingerly.

"Hmm?"

"Didn't you send all the information about Shen Dongxing to 1810?"

"Yes." Shen Xixi seemed lost in thought for a moment. "He deliberately pretended not to remember Shen Dongxing's name to confuse us? And when he finally left, my, was he in a mighty hurry. He then asked us to keep staying here to collect more clues. He must have wanted to be first to find Yogurt, lest he doesn't have to pay us the balance."

Black Swan shook her head. "The moment you found this place, this whole incident was over. If Yogurt directed this disappearing act, 1810 wouldn't dare to not pay up the balance. After all, you now rank first on the proxy war's leaderboard."

"So he's colluding with Yogurt and the others to make this a real kidnapping case?" The frown on Shen Xixi's brow only grew deeper.

"This is the only way for him to avoid bearing the cost of all 500 game points on his own," Black Swan nodded. "But as far as I know him, he's not going to do something like that."

"Why?"

"Because he knows very well that this trick won't work. Even if you get the balance and leave them alone, the nature of his relationship with Yogurt will cause the other team members to keep investigating this matter. And say if we found Shen Dongxing, we can figure out a way to make him talk."

"Does that mean this is his end?"

"No, he still has a choice. He will need to kill Shen Dongxing before you guys locate him. If Shen Dongxing is dead, he can twist the truth into however he likes," Black Swan went on.

“Is he going to do that for the sake of 500 game points?” Shen Xixi asked in disbelief.

Black Swan thought on it for a moment. “Under normal circumstances, he would never do such a thing since he has a decent job and a happy family. Unless it’s his last resort, it makes little sense for him to take so great a risk. 500 game points is not a small amount for our team, and 1810 certainly doesn’t own that many. However, I know that he has a Grade-C game item. It should value around 1300 points. If he sells it, he could just top it off.”

“Is he willing to sell the Grade-C item?”

“I don’t know about that, but from your description, I think he is prepared to kill Shen Dongxing.”

“Then we’d better find Shen Dongxing and Yogurt before he does,” Shen Xixi sternly voiced, a sense of great urgency marring her tone.

Shen Dongxing and Yogurt left in such a hurry; they had no time to cover their tracks. Nonetheless, it was still daunting of a task to find those two in such a short time. While looking for them, another doubt seeped into Shen Xixi’s mind. “1810 made his move before us, and he got Shen Dongxing’s picture as well. How is he sure that he can locate the two before we do?”

Upon that, Black Swan turned serious. “Although 1810 can be quite selfish, he’s been doing a good job as our captain, that was until Yogurt joined the team, of course. I think it has something to do with his career. No matter what he does, he always figures out every move he needs to take. If he decides to kill Shen Dongxing, then he would’ve found a way to find him before us. I am afraid that the kid will soon die.”

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On the other side, in a 24-hour McDonalds restaurant, Yogurt returned to the table with french fries and drinks.

She then talked to a somewhat scrawny boy who was facing her. “Do you want Fanta or Coke?”

“This is not the time to pick a drink.” The boy smiled bitterly. “What should I do? My ID card and wallet are still at home. We can’t even stay in a hotel, and we don’t know where your dad hired such a powerful guy from. He’s too skillful. Not even my Spider-Man can take him on. Is he still human?”

“That guy is despicable and shameless. He worked with the victim to attack us. And he even hid away that...”

“Anti-material rifle.”

“Yes, the anti-material rifle injured your Spider-Man.”

Shen Dongxing did not seem to think so, though. He watched the battle through Spider-Man’s eyes, realizing that Zhang Heng had terrifyingly accomplished swordsmanship, almost as good as legendary anime characters. Soon, Shen Dongxing began to hesitate. “Maybe... Maybe... You should go back first.”

When Yogurt heard that, she threw the tray on the table. “Shen Dongxing! What do you mean? Are you trying to get rid of me?”

“No, no, I’m not trying to get rid of you. We talked about getting revenge from your dad, but I never knew when this matter would truly end.” Shen Dongxing cautiously continued, “We’ve already taken his Grade-C item. Don’t you think... we should stop here?”

“Stop here?” Yogurt snorted coldly, “It’s too early to stop. He needs to pay for abandoning my mother. My mother got pregnant before she graduated university and was forced to return to her hometown alone. On the other hand, that bastard was flirting with the dean’s daughter. While his life got better, my mother had to endure everyone’s criticism. Her family had their backs turned on her, and she had a hard time looking for a job as well. In the end, she had to toil in a factory and eventually married a foreman. That asshole would go bonkers whenever he got drunk, and he would start beating the life out of my mother. Her whole life was ruined. Can a grade-C game item make up for it? No! I need to ruin his life! An eye for an eye!”

Yogurt tore open a packet of ketchup as she talked.

“But... I think your dad’s been treating you well. He actually gave us the game item when I threatened him. He still cares about you.”

“He doesn’t care about me. He just wants to make himself feel better by showing me some kindness. And he thinks that this makes up for what he owes my mother and me? I won’t let him get what he wants.” Yogurt sneered. “This’s why I joined his team!”

Chapter 712: Delicious?

Seeing that Shen Dongxing was still anxious, she lowered her tone a little. “Why are you always so timid? Be a man and show me some courage! You are an agent with powerful abilities yourself. You can mechanize all kinds of figurines. I have never seen someone as powerful as you.”

“But I need a computer, and I have to carry all those figurines with me. Otherwise... I can only mechanize figurines for an hour per day.” Shen Dongxing smiled bitterly and shook his head. “After that, I’m just another weak otaku.”

“Don’t worry. I will protect you when you can’t use your ability.” Yogurt patted her chest. She picked up a fry and persuaded gently, “Open your mouth.”

“Huh?” Shen Dongxing was a little flattered seeing Yogurt trying to feed him fries. He had been living with her for some time, but she had always kept a certain distance from him. They had not slept on the same bed before nor had they held each other’s hands. This was the first time Yogurt made such an intimate move.

Shen Dongxing’s ears turned red, and he closed his eyes with excitement. He then moved his mouth closer to Yogurt’s hand, and his lips touched her finger. A look of disgust flashed in the latter’s eyes, but she dismissed it quickly.

Taken aback by his uncontrollably bold actions, his eyes instantly snapped open and he quickly apologized. To his surprise, Yogurt did not get angry. Instead, she smiled and asked, “Delicious?”

Shen Dongxing nodded repeatedly. “It’s delicious.” He then thought of something, stammered, and hastily explained, “I, I’m talking about... the french fries.”

"I'm talking about the fries as well." Yogurt retracted her hand, quietly rubbed it at the inner part of the pack, and picked up another fry. "You don't have to worry about your identity getting blown. Just hang in there. When this matter is over, I will look for a great guild, and we can join together. When that happens, my dad won't dare hire someone to deal with you."

"Okay."

Shen Dongxing agreed to continue helping Yogurt. As he chewed on the fries, he stared at her with zealous eyes. "I will do whatever you ask me to do."

"Good." Yogurt smiled.

Suddenly, her mobile phone vibrated, notifying her that she had received a new email. Faking her kidnap that night was the first step of her plan. After that, she would use herself to threaten 1810. Since she was his illegitimate daughter, he would never let his team members know about it.

She was going to use this secret to threaten 1810. If he did not want his daughter to die, he would have to pay the ransom. That was how Yogurt blackmailed the Grade-C game item off him. As if that wasn't enough to satisfy her, she asked for another 300 game points from 1810.

Yogurt was adamant in making 1810 lose all his possessions, and she was trying her best to force him to drop the "loving-father" act. When she managed to overwhelm him, Yogurt anticipated that he would give up on her to save himself. After all, she was not his only offspring. He still had a legitimate wife, children and had an everyday life.

Yogurt had always believed that 1810's feelings for her resulted from his guilt towards her mother. This was actually what the unassuming person would do. The two had just met not long ago, and they had never lived together as well. 1810 treated her well not because of fatherly love but that he simply wanted to feel better about himself, seeing that he now had the ability to take care of his illegitimate daughter.

In the end, he was still a selfish man, and Yogurt wanted to expose his darkest secret. She wanted to prove that if he could abandon her mother back then, he would eventually abandon her too. Yogurt could live with the analysis of her relationship with 1810 but, she did make a few mistakes. The first was that she did not expect Black Swan to investigate her relationship with her father. Their secret was then exposed in front of other team members. As for the second mistake, she did not expect 1810 to spend 500 game points to hire Zhang Heng to rescue her. From there, her plan started to crumble. Shen Dongxing and Yogurt could never return to their safe house. But among these, the gravest mistake she could have made was to underestimate how dangerous 1810 was.

Yogurt looked at her mobile phone and saw 1810 sent her an email. The latter had stopped being nice. He told her that he had found out everything about Shen Dongxing, including his name, appearance, ID number, and even his social network accounts, and it was only a matter of time before he would be caught. But at the end of the mail, 1810 expressed his willingness to give Shen Dongxing one last chance. That was, if Shen Dongxing was willing to deliver Yogurt safely to the designated location, he might spare his life.

"What should we do now?" Shen Dongxing's coolness lasted for only three seconds. He just mentioned that he would do whatever Yogurt told him to do. However, when he saw the ultimatum-like email, he

immediately broke out in panic. "They know everything! We won't be hiding for long. And I didn't bring my wallet when I escaped! How much money do you have in your bag, and where are we staying tonight? I can't stay at McDonald's all night!"

"Hey, calm down. Don't you see that he is just intimidating us? Since he sent us this email, it proves that he can't find us."

"But... he is telling the truth here," Shen Dongxing protested. "How many days can we run from him? Sooner or later, they will capture us." Shen Dongxing paused, then mustered his courage and continued, "Or, we can join Arc of Light now. They just destroyed the union not long ago, and they are receiving a lot of attention. As long as we join Arc of Light, your father wouldn't dare do anything to us."

"No." Yogurt interrupted him. She realized that her tone was too harsh when she talked to him earlier. So, she quickly explained, "At least not yet. My revenge plan is only half-complete. I need to destroy him."

"But we are about to lose this fight."

Yogurt gritted her teeth. "Then we speed up our final plan. Tell him that we need 1,000 game points and his arm. If we don't see it before dawn, he'll be collecting my dead body."

"Huh?" Shen Dongxing was dumbfounded, "But he... he's close to finding us. Will he still agree to such a harsh condition?"

"It's because he is desperate to find us that he will do what we ask," Yogurt added.

Chapter 713: Illusion

Rabbits would bite their enemies when forced into desperation. Shen Dongxing, however, had no idea what he would do when someone forced his hand.

He had never gotten into a fight before since young, and even after gaining superpowers one could only dream of, the only thing he did was to let his figurines go out for a walk in the evening.

What Yogurt did next almost caused Shen Dongxing to wet his pants.

After coming out of McDonald's, Yogurt headed to a 24-hour convenience store and bought a penknife. The two then headed to the parking lot, where Yogurt unpacked the knife and handed it to Shen Dongxing.

She rolled up her sleeves and said, "Come on."

"Come... come what?" Shen Dongxing took the penknife and did not know what to do with it.

"Torture me," Yogurt blinked. "Did you really think that you could just sit there and do nothing? My dad needs to know that you are desperate. They have been to your house, and there is a high chance they have begun suspecting that you and I have been faking the whole thing. We have to show him some proof."

"How do we prove it?" Shen Dongxing asked with trembling hands.

“Don’t you know how to torture people? Ugh. Forget it. I’ll do it myself,” snapped Yogurt as she snatched the knife from Shen Dongxing. In a clean, unfaltering swipe, she made sure she exerted every ounce of her strength when she cut herself. The knife went in all the way, splitting its way into her muscles, causing bright red blood to gush out from the deep wound.

Shen Dongxing was shocked as he witnessed the terrifying scene unfolding in front of him. “You are crazy!” he yelled while instinctively taking-off his t-shirt and wrapping it around Yogurt’s arm to stop the bleeding.

“Wait here! I’ll go buy some gauze and iodine,” he blurted in panic.

As he ran towards the convenience store, he suddenly stopped in his tracks and whispered in embarrassment. “Um... can you lend me some money? I just remembered that I have no wallet.”

“Don’t waste your time. Just stay here!” Yogurt rolled her eyes. She did not use Shen Dongxing’s t-shirt to stop the bleeding. Instead, she deliberately dabbed and rubbed the wound with it, causing the shirt to be awash with bloodstains. She then threw the t-shirt back to Shen Dongxing.

“Put it on!”

“What?”

“Don’t make me repeat it,” Yogurt growled impatiently.

Seeing that Yogurt was getting angry, Shen Dongxing quickly put on the bloody t-shirt.

However, Yogurt still seemed unsatisfied. She frowned. “You’re too weak. Do you even know what to do when forced into a desperate situation?” She then took some of her blood and smeared it on Shen Dongxing’s face and neck, making him look a lot more terrifying.

“Hmm.” Yogurt took two steps back, cocked her head, and took a better look at Shen Dongxing. This time, though, she seemed satisfied. After that, she stabbed her arm twice without so much as a twitch on her face.

“I... we can fake the wounds and blood! I know a friend who does a great job.” Shen Dongxing’s lips quivered as he spoke, and his forehead was sweating profusely.

“Don’t be stupid,” Yogurt snorted, “My dad is just bad, not stupid. You can’t possibly fool him.”

“Then... Then you can’t keep hurting yourself either!” Shen Dongxing was almost crying.

Yogurt’s expressions remained stoic as she inflicted cut after deep cut on her arm. After a while, four gaping slash wounds were very visible. At the same time, she said lightly, “Compared to the suffering my mother had to endure over the years, this is nothing. Rest assured, I will make him pay for what he’s done to us.”

After that, Yogurt made another sixteen cuts on the same arm. Fortunately, the last ten cuts were not as deep as the ones before. With all that blood and slashes on her, she looked appalling. Even the keenest skeptic who saw her would not doubt that she had been severely tortured.

Yogurt then threw her mobile phone to Shen Dongxing and said, "Record a video of me. Keep the first part of the video at around 10 seconds long."

Shen Dongxing shakily pressed the record button with his trembling hand. After that, she saw Yogurt crawling on the ground in horror, crying and begging for mercy. Her blood began to stain the green grass of the parking lot.

After that, Shen Dongxing recorded a four-second video of him chasing Yogurt, then took a few more photos for good measure.

"It's done. You can go buy the gauze and iodine now," Yogurt said and took out fifty yuan from her wallet.

Seeing Shen Dongxing subconsciously walking towards the convenience store, Yogurt quickly halted him. "Hey, hey, what are you doing? Do you want the store's employees to call the police?"

"Take off that shirt and wash away the blood on your face and hands."

"Oh... Oh!"

Shen Dongxing snapped back to reality.

When he returned five minutes later, Yogurt had already composed the videos and pictures into an email and sent it to 1810. She then sat on the flower bed in the parking lot, watching Shen Dongxing kneeling beside her, tending to her wounds.

In the quiet and dark, their breathing was audible to each other.

After a while, Yogurt suddenly asked, "Why did you stop talking to me? Did my behavior scare you?"

Shen Dongxing shook his head, and tears started flowing down his cheek.

"You are a man. Stop crying! I didn't even hurt you. I'm the one who's gotten hurt here. If I didn't cry, you have no right to cry!" Yogurt said.

Shen Dongxing wiped away his tears, but made no attempts to defend himself.

"Sometimes, I get very curious. What do you like about me? I have an awfully bad temper, I can't cook and do housework, and I don't treat you well. Revenge is all I've been thinking about. Even after we've stayed together for so long, I never allowed you to hold my hands. I know that you haven't achieved much in the past, but you are an agent now. If you go and work for one of the three major guilds, I'm pretty sure tons of girls would start coming after you, and those will be more beautiful than me. Why are you so stupid? Why must you cling on to me?"

After running here and there for the entire day, fatigue was beginning to plague Shen Dongxing. After helping Yogurt bandage her wounds, he slumped to the ground in exhaustion. He did not immediately answer, but instead, he asked, "Do you remember what happened when we first met?"

"I remember what happened to you. A few senior students were bullying you at the bus stand because you didn't steal enough money from home for them," Yogurt nodded.

“At the time, everyone pretended not to see me. They walked past me as quickly as they could. And I still remember the feeling of helplessness I felt that morning, as if the whole world was gray... until you stopped them.”

“Initially, I didn’t want to stick my nose into your business,” Yogurt laughed. “But I remember how you kept crying. The sound of it frustrated me. I thought to myself, how did a boy like you become so weak? All you did was to cry endlessly. I have been through so much horror, yet I haven’t shed a single tear. So, why cry over such a small matter?”

“I probably... fell in love with you at that time,” confessed Shen Dongxing. “I didn’t expect to meet you again after moving house and transferring to another school. When I knew you were a player, I was so happy. For a long time, you have always taken care of me. I didn’t expect that someday, I’d be able to help you. So when you came to me, I never thought of rejecting you.”

Yogurt fell into silence. After a while, she spoke again, “You know that I’m just using you, right?”

“Well, I also know that you like girls and not boys,” Shen Dongxing said. “I once sneaked upstairs to look for you during the inter-class exercises. To my surprise, I saw you having an intimate session with another girl in the classroom. So, I went off and cried for the whole afternoon. You kept asking me who bullied me... I know that you will never join one of the three major guilds with me. You are just lying. But I was still delighted just listening to what you have to tell me. When we were at McDonald’s, I was elated when you fed me French fries. Do you know who Fitzgerald is?”

“Yes, the guy who wrote The Great Gatsby.”

“He used that book to predict his tragic fate perfectly. And he saw the source of all his pain and tragedy, yet still chose to plunge into the illusion without looking back. In the end, he sacrificed his life for it. I never understood his choice when I was young, but now, I understand him perfectly. Sometimes the illusion is just too beautiful to resist.” Shen Dongxing said.

Chapter 714: Farewell

“Sorry,” Yogurt whispered, “I always hated my father because he abandoned mother and ruined her life. Before I found him, I could only think about how to avenge her. And I’m willing to do whatever it takes to destroy his life. But when I looked back, I realized that I had become another him.”

“You don’t need to apologize. It’s my own choice,” Shen Dongxing replied. “I think your mother... never really hated your father at the beginning. Otherwise, she wouldn’t have given birth to you.”

“It doesn’t matter,” Yogurt said, “Wrong is wrong. Now that I’ve come to this, I must make my father pay the price. As for our problems, let’s talk about them after all this is over. I will find a way to compensate you.”

Shen Dongxing wanted to say something, but in the end, the words just failed to come out.

“I contacted my dad and sent him the video and photos, and he’s agreed to our request. However, he asked to see me first to confirm I am still alive.”

“He...”

“There’s no way that he will agree to give us what we want,” Yogurt sneered. “He will take this opportunity to ambush you. High chances, he’ll be bringing along the man that fought with your Spiderman earlier.”

“Why agree to meet up with him, then?” Shen Dongxing was dumbfounded.

“What are you afraid of?” Yogurt asked, “It’s past midnight now, and your ability has been refreshed. If he dares to attack us, we will retaliate immediately. And you don’t have to be there this time. This plan is foolproof.”

“But how can I help you if I don’t go with you?”

“Just pick one of your figurines and pretend it’s you,” Yogurt said.

“Then I... I will hide at a place near you. If something bad happens to you, I can send another figurine to neutralize the threat. My limit is mechanizing seven figurines at the same time. However, their duration will be reduced by half.” With no holds barred, Shen Dongxing explained what was supposed to be an absolute secret to Yogurt.

“Whatever,” Yogurt said. “Just make sure to hide well.”

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Afterward, the two of them did some preparations. Yogurt chose a secluded spot as the meeting place—a closed shopping mall. She secretly picked the lock and used some unknown game items to render the security guards unconscious.

Shen Dongxing, on the other hand, had rented a private room in an Internet cafe not far away. He hurriedly logged into the computer and selected the Captain America figurine that he borrowed from someone else. Captain America had always been a protector, and Shen Dongxing would be more relieved if Captain America was the one who protected her.

The superhero outfit, however, was still too glamorous for a 1920s United States. Shen Dongxing then asked him to change to a new set of clothes and covered his face with a hoodie. As for his shield and uniform, he put them on a plastic mannequin for the time being.

Yogurt stood in front of the glass wall on the mall’s third floor, and from up high, watched 1810 park the car by the side of the street.

1810 got out of the car. Visibly cautious of his surroundings, he kept looking around. As promised, he came alone. No one else was in the car. That, however, meant in no way that he did not bring anybody with him. Yogurt had studied 1810 for a long time, and she knew he would never fight a battle he could not win.

Nonetheless, those thoughts bothered Yogurt little since there would only be one winner tonight.

While there was still some time, Yogurt turned around and looked at Captain America beside her. The latter stood quietly in the dark and kept an eye on his surroundings. Yogurt said, “I wanted to tell you something. However, it would be best if you didn’t hear them. So, this is the best time to say it. I hope this incident also helps you learn something new. You are not that young anymore. Stop trusting others so easily. Never invest all your feeling and emotions in someone who doesn’t love you back. Now that

you have the ability others can only dream of, you should learn to protect yourself. You can't expect someone to be always there to help you."

Yogurt paused for a while and continued, "Consider that Grade-C game item as your compensation. Initially, I wanted to get you more game points, but now, it seems impossible. So, that's it. I hope you will find a girl truly worthy of your love and will never be let down by her. Well, that's all I want to say. Take good care of yourself."

After she finished speaking, she moved her head to the other side and looked at the elevator.

In the Internet café's private room, Shen Dongxing was dumbfounded. He could see what Captain America saw through the computer, but he could not hear any sound. All he saw was Yogurt moving her lips. Hence, he had no idea what she just said.

However, his instinct told him that something bad might happen tonight. Unfortunately, he could not make Captain America speak. At the same time, 1810 had arrived, but he could not leave the café to help Yogurt. All he could do was sit in his chair and stare at the monitor anxiously.

Yogurt never told Shen Dongxing about her whole plan. She planned to divulge bit by bit as she went along. Shen Dongxing was not a complete fool, either. Sure, he would space out, and his mind would go blank at times, but that was when he talked to Yogurt. Now that he was alone, he could finally analyze the whole thing. And he realized that something had gone really wrong tonight.

Since Yogurt knew that she wouldn't be getting what she wanted tonight, why would she agree to meet 1810? Even if she managed to defeat 1810 and his men, it would still do her no good.

Her ultimate goal has never changed. She wanted to force 1810 to tear off his hypocritical mask and his fake loving act and admit that he was scum and an irresponsible father. He had to live with the guilt until the end of his life, knowing that no one would forgive him.

How could Yogurt made it happen?

Shen Dongxing felt that he was slowly figuring out the whole thing. After a while, he realized that he had no way to prove his speculation right. Suddenly, he thought about the man that fought with his Spiderman earlier. He felt nervous again, and he had to stop allowing his mind to wander around. He, he quickly focused his attention on Captain America.

Besides, he still had Thor, Hulk, Black Widow, Iron Man, and Hawkeye on his table. Their existence gave him a little relief. No matter who came here tonight, no one would be able to hurt Yogurt as long as his ability still worked.

It was rare that he possessed such confidence.

Chapter 715: Accidental Death

After entering the mall, 1810 did not rush to the floor where Yogurt was. As captain, he had helped his team go through all kinds of challenges, and he wasn't one to act recklessly after knowing that his enemy could mechanize figurines.

The moment he stepped into the shopping mall, he had to be hyper-aware of his surroundings. Since he took stealthy steps, it took him a good ten minutes to get from the first floor to the third. However, there was no danger along the way.

Then he saw Yogurt.

The latter's hands and feet were bound, and she was lying behind a display window. Just like the photo, she looked to be in an awful state, not to mention the deep wounds all over her arms. When 1810 saw her chest moving, he realized she was still alive. And he was relieved to see that. Then he noticed some yellow unidentified liquid on Yogurt.

The yellow liquid stretched all the way from behind the display window to the front of the shop. 1810 then took a deep breath, and his expression changed, and said to the man who in front of the door, "Gasoline?"

Although Shen Dongxing was extremely anxious, he had still asked Captain America to take out the lighter in accordance with the agreement with Yogurt.

1810 became nervous when he saw the lighter, and solemnly, he persuaded, "Don't do it. We can talk about the reward."

At that time, Yogurt had also woken up. She became excited when she saw 1810 and immediately hit her head against the display window, seemingly signaling to him to rescue her quickly.

1810 comforted, "Don't worry, you will be safe soon."

Then he turned his head and said to Captain America, "Aren't you Shen Dongxing? Where is Shen Dongxing?"

Although Captain America had wrapped himself up like a mummy, the difference in size between him and Shen Dongxing was too vast. 1810 could not convince himself that Shen Dongxing was actually the one standing in front of him.

And he also realized that the tall figure facing him had not spoken since they met.

The moment 1810 took a step forward, Captain America ignited the lighter.

1810 knew that his opponent was warning him not to take another step. The situation fell into a temporary stalemate. 1810 did not give up on communicating with the other party, though, mentioning that he was willing to give out a thousand game points. However, he could not come up with so much in such a short time, and he hoped that the other party could give him more time and release Yogurt first.

Shen Dongxing was scratching his head in front of the computer. He could not hear what 1810 was saying. So, he could only order Captain America to protect Yogurt while he held the lighter to continue threatening 1810.

1810 kept on talking to Captain America, but he received no response. Looking at 1810 through the monitor, it seemed like he was trying to calm Captain America down.

This was what a father would do to protect his child.

But the next moment, an unexpected accident happened. A bullet whizzing by from an unknown direction smashed through the mall's glass wall and hit the target accurately. Shen Dongxing was taken aback. At first, he thought Captain America was the one who had been shot but he saw no bullet holes on him. Yogurt seemed unharmed as well. As for 1810, his body jerked back violently, and a bullet hole appeared on his head. After that, he stumbled, hit the third floor's guardrail, and tumbled to the first floor's marble floor.

With his head first to hit the ground, it was a bloody scene to watch. And there was no point rescuing him anymore.

"This is... what the hell?!" Shen Dongxing's eyes widened in front of the computer, completely stunned by what was happening before him.

Yogurt was equally as shocked. She thought she had taken into account every possible scenario that might occur tonight. No matter what 1810 or Shen Dongxing did, however, none of them could change the ending.

But she did not expect 1810 to be killed right in front of her eyes.

His death was so unexpected Yogurt did not know how to proceed.

Since her target was now dead, everything that she had done so far was all but pointless.

The death of 1810 had messed up Yogurt's plan completely, causing her mind to go blank for a few seconds. She then snapped back to reality when she heard the bullet smashing the display window in front of her. It seemed the enemy had no intention to stop after killing 1810.

Fortunately, Captain America managed to grab his shield and block the bullets aiming for Yogurt in time. At the same time, he used his other hand to untie the rope around her feet.

"Wait. Something is off," Yogurt said with suspicion.

As a player, 1810 must have had participated in team battles before. Hunting monsters in the real world could easily plunge the players into conflict. Therefore, it was not surprising that 1810 had enemies in the real world. However, the timing his enemies chose to eliminate him seemed a little off. And the killing happened too quickly just now. Yogurt did see 1810 getting shot, falling head-first to the first floor. However, she did not have the time to examine his body.

After blurting out what she wanted to say, Yogurt realized that it was all useless because Shen Dongxing, now far away in the Internet cafe, could not hear a single word she was saying. After Captain America untied the rope from her foot and hand, he wanted to drag her away from this place.

At the internet cafe, a few young people who were focussing on their LoL game witnessed the most magical scene in their lives. They saw Black Widow, Hawkeye, and Hulk running out of the private room one after the other! Just when they were about to say something, something even more magical happened. Iron Man smashed the window and flew into the sky.

The cafe owner who was helping a customer get a can of Coke at the checkout counter was almost frightened to death. He just sat on the ground and dared not move a single muscle. He never thought that his Internet café, now open for five years, could have become a temporary office for the Avengers.

The rest of the Avengers rushed to the mall with lightning speed. Among them, Iron Man was the first to arrive on the third floor. And Yogurt came to an epiphany when she saw Iron Man.

She finally realized what 1810 wanted to do. She then yelled at Iron Man, "Quick, go back!" At the same time, she kept waving her hands, but alas, Iron Man had no idea what she was trying to do. He could only respond with a not-to-worry gesture with his hands.

There was clearly a communication problem between the two of them. Yogurt did not bring her mobile phone with her. She did this because she had anticipated what would happen next, and she did not want Shen Dongxing to get in her way. However, she did not expect that this move would inadvertently put Shen Dongxing at grave risk.

Chapter 716: In The Name Of Justice

Considering how dangerous it was to become a player, many of the capable ones would have a trump card to handle critical situations.

1810 was no exception. His trump card was a Grade-C game item that went by the name "Feign Death." In other words, 1810 had two grade-C game items with him. It was a secret even his team members knew nothing about.

Feign Death was an elementary game item. Basically, it allowed the user to fake their death in front of everyone, where the illusion would last for fifteen minutes. If someone touched the user's body, however, the item's effect would be nullified.

While 1810 took his time walking from the first floor to the third, he was actually watching out for Shen Dongxing's ambush and looking for a spot where he could use his Feign Death. Whether Yogurt or Shen Dongxing, none of the two realized that 1810 had sneaked out of the mall after he faked his death.

Since 1810 now knew that Yogurt had orchestrated the whole thing from the beginning, he was no longer concerned about her safety. Hence, he only had one thing to do tonight, and that was to kill Shen Dongxing.

The latter's absence in the mall surprised 1810. However, he strongly believed that Shen Dongxing had to be somewhere nearby. After reading the information that Shen Xixi provided him, he now knew the nature of the relationship between them both.

Yogurt had never developed romantic feelings for Shen Dongxing, who, however, was completely obsessed with Yogurt.

1810 was a man too, and he was once a young lad. He knew exactly what a boy that age was thinking about.

When the girl he liked was in danger, no matter how strong or weak he was, he couldn't just watch and do nothing from a distance.

The person who shot 1810 was 1810 himself. He killed his own illusion to create chaos and to disrupt Yogurt's plan. After he killed his illusion, he turned his gun and fired at Yogurt. This was to prevent her from checking his dead body downstairs. The second reason he did that was to force Shen Dongxing's hand when he saw Yogurt getting attacked.

As expected, Shen Dongxing went all out to save Yogurt. He mechanized the remaining figurines he had and rushed them to the mall. When he did that, his location was immediately exposed.

He was about to pay a huge price for his actions.

1810 knew that Shen Dongxing had taken the bait. He did not enter the internet café, however, because what he was about to do was illegal.

So he quietly walked to the other side of the café, where he could see what would happen in Shen Dongxing's private cubicle.

1810 didn't need to spend too much effort looking for Shen Dongxing. The latter was sitting in front of the computer and looked very anxious. From time to time, he would look in the mall's direction through the window. The poor guy hadn't realized that he had actually been targeted.

"You can only blame your bad luck."

1810 was just about to pull the trigger when he heard a voice nearby talking to him.

"Is this necessary?"

Shen Xixi emerged from the corner of the convenience store, looking at 1810 with a solemn expression.

1810 was surprised to see Shen Xixi.

"How did you find this place?"

Before waiting for the other party to answer, 1810 stressed in a deep voice, "Tonight's matter has nothing to do with you. You'd better not get involved. I will pay him the four hundred points left by your friend."

"And the price of that is? A young and innocent life?"

"I agree with you, but he is far from innocent. If he didn't stick his nose into my business, he would not have lost his life today." 1810's last sentence carried a hint of threat.

From a rational standpoint, 1810 did not want to be Shen Xixi's enemy. Although he had never seen her fighting with anyone before, he knew she was an upright and righteous woman. Some might not fully agree with Shen Xixi's philosophy, but one could not deny that it was good to have someone like her as a friend.

Therefore, the consequences of killing Shen Xixi and an insignificant otaku like Shen Dongxing were completely different. But at this point, it would be hard to put a stop to his plan. And now 1810 had a new problem. Even if he killed Shen Dongxing, he couldn't escape the law since Shen Xixi watched him. In other words, his only way to completely absolve himself from this mess was to kill Shen Xixi after he killed Shen Dongxing.

Fortunately, 1810's problem did not last too long.

A figure then came out of the Internet café.

1810 subconsciously pointed the muzzle at the person. To his surprise, his opponent reacted faster than him. The person took out a pistol, casually pulled the trigger, and the bullet landed on 1810's weapon, dead on target.

"Meeting a person who's willing to reason with you is something you should cherish," Zhang Heng said, "most wouldn't waste their time negotiating with you."

Immediately, 1810's expression changed. The person he feared most was none other than Zhang Heng himself. When the two met for the first time, he knew nothing about the young lad. However, he had to admit that if it were not for Zhang Heng, they would have never captured the mechanical Sphinx. Considering Zhang Heng ranked first in the proxy war's leaderboard, 1810 knew that he was not powerful enough to defeat an opponent like him.

So he was smart enough to put down his weapon. He then raised both of his hands to tell Zhang Heng that he wanted to surrender.

Although he acted aggressively tonight, he killed nobody in the end. It meant Shen Xixi didn't need to eliminate or punish him. At most, she would make him pay Zhang Heng the remaining game points he owed and give him a verbal warning.

Zhang Heng glanced at Shen Xixi. The latter's expression, too, seemed a little hesitant. After a while, she took out a small scale and said to 1810, "I am no judge, and I am not qualified to judge you. Since this is a player's matter, we can't hand you over to the police. However, you did attempt to kill someone, and I can't just let you off the hook without doing anything. Since this is the situation, we can only let the Justice Scale judge you."

Zhang Heng could see that Shen Xixi did not really want to use her Justice Scale on 1810, but unfortunately, there was no other way to deal with him. In the end, she took the scale and walked towards 1810.

1810's expression became tense. As a player, he knew that different game items were used in different situations. The scale Shen Xixi held looked unusual, not to mention the powerful aura of righteousness it exuded.

1810 attempted to stay calm, but he felt more and more guilty when he looked at the scale. In the end, his legs went soft, and he could not help but kneel on the ground. Shen Xixi stood still in front of him and sighed. In one hand, she held the scale, the other, placed on 1810's head. She then said sternly.

"In the name of justice, I shall now judge your evil deeds!"

Chapter 717: Repentance

This was also Zhang Heng's first time seeing Shen Xixi putting the scale to use.

At that moment, she had transformed into what seemed to be an ancient stone statue, one that exuded a majestic aura.

Some might have missed it, but Zhang Heng clearly witnessed something that might not even be real. He could vaguely see a beating heart in the dark. Some inexplicable black matter surrounded this heart.

There wasn't very much of this black matter, and they slowly gathered, then landed on the scale's tray. It was these black substances that slowly weighed the scale down.

At the same time, 1810 felt like he was suffocating. Nothing unusual seemed to be happening to his body, but he looked like he was gasping for air. His forehead was lined with beads of sweat, and his mind began to transport him back, reliving the vows he exchanged with his first love. Those long-forgotten, sweet memories came rushing back, severely haunting his mind. And in his heart was also the same burdensome guilt he felt when he informed his first love that he was preparing to marry the dean's daughter. The way she glared at him, those accusing eyes, was something he would never forget.

1810 was expecting his first love to scold and argue with him. However, she did not say a word. She simply turned around, stepping out of his life forever.

After that, his mind shifted scenes. Under the dean's help, 1810's career skyrocketed, and he quickly became a renowned figure in the medical industry. Later, someone found him and asked for his help in promoting a new medical device. With the status of expert, he was more than qualified to endorse the product. After practicing as a doctor for some time, 1810 knew that this medical device was not as good as the manufacturer claimed. It might have been useful in certain surgeries, but it required the surgeon to have considerable surgical experience. And it also had some shortcomings as compared to traditional surgery methods. But these flaws were often not mentioned during the promotion of the product. Besides, most surgeries did not require the use of such high-end equipment. At the same time, it was highly likely that certain medical personnel would abuse this product.

At that time, 1810 had felt that it wasn't right to market medical equipment that had known flaws. Considering the responsibilities he had toward his patients, he did not want the manufacturer to manipulate him. Hence, he disagreed. After that, his father-in-law, a retiree, talked to him and hinted that the purchasing of the medical equipment had everything to do with his bright future. Hence, it would be unwise for him to push something like that away. The older man promised 1810 that he would reap the rewards in the near future.

In the end, 1810 decided to endorse the medical equipment after sleeping on the thought for two nights. During that time, his smoking addiction grew exponentially.

Once again, the scene in his mind changed. This time, he was on a plane.

Only half a minute had passed, but 1810 felt that he had spent a century in his memories.

He was reminded of all the evil he had done in his life. Finally, he recalled that he wanted to keep that five-hundred game points, save Yogurt, and kill Shen Dongxing.

All of a sudden, he heard Shen Xixi's voice echoing from an unusually remote place.

She extended her hand and inserted it into 1810's body. He felt no pain, however.

After a while, she retracted her hand, and 1810 woke up from his nightmare. The first thing he did was check his body. He found nothing wrong with it as if nothing had happened to him.

But 1810 knew the punishment had taken effect. He turned to look at Shen Xixi, who was now in front of him. "What did you do to me?"

"I took away your happiness. From now on, you will never feel joy anymore. No matter what food you taste, what beautiful scenery you see, or meeting whoever you love, you will not get a single ounce of happiness," Shen Xixi said. "But this is not permanent. You can still earn back your happiness."

"What should I do?"

"Aren't you a surgeon? Save 300 people, and you will return to normal."

1810 was left in complete silence. Saving three hundred people did not seem like an impossible task. After all, some surgeons performed more than a dozen surgeries a day. Most of them, however, were small procedures like removing an appendix. An operation as such didn't qualify as saving one's life. Surgeries like removing tumors were one of those operations that could save a patient's life. But what if the cancer cells have metastasized and spread to the whole body even after the tumor had been removed? How long did the patient need to survive to be counted as saving one's life? The difficulty of this matter depended entirely on the definition of saving one's life.

1810 looked at Shen Xixi again, but the latter did not intend to explain the matter.

While they were talking, Yogurt had left the shopping mall to look for Shen Dongxing. Although Shen Dongxing's combat awareness was rather low, he had already noticed that Zhang Heng, Shen Xixi, and 1810 were not too far away from him. He was so frightened that he hid under the table since he could find no weapon to defend himself.

After that, he saw a woman with a choker on her neck coming into the café. She sat on the sofa and looked at him with a smile.

Shen Dongxing recognized the woman as a member of 1810's team. He realized that this might be the end for him.

"I want you to pay the price for stunning me. Seriously, that was the first time I was stunned by a man since I was born... literally," gushed Black Swan.

Shen Dongxing sneered.

"But you are lucky, I happen to be in a good mood tonight, and I don't want to pursue the matter anymore."

"Really?!"

Shen Dongxing was overjoyed.

"I'm just kidding. I am thinking how to trick you out of the table, then slaughter you."

Shen Dongxing's face turned pale again after hearing what she said.

"You are so gullible. No wonder the girls around you could manipulate you so easily."

"Yogurt... didn't lie to me," Shen Dongxing defended her in a low voice.

Black Swan harrumphed and seemed like she wanted to say something. She thought for a while before shrugging him off. "Forget it. Young people should do the stupid things only young people would do. Self-protection is something only older people would think about. Learn to reserve your feelings from

your failed relationships. Learn to calculate your gains and losses. With that, you will not get hurt easily. However, after experiencing a failed relationship, you won't be able to give as much for the next person you fall in love with. Is that a good thing? I don't know."

Black Swan finished speaking and saw Yogurt coming out of the mall. She walked to the table where Shen Dongxing was hiding, reached out, and knocked on the table. "Go ahead. At least stop her from doing something suicidal..."

Chapter 718: Unraveling The Secrets Of Set-Items

Everyone had secrets. Zhang Heng never asked how Shen Xixi acquired the Justice Scale and what sort of agreement she had made with the goddess of justice, Justitia. Shen Xixi, too did not ask Zhang Heng how he came to know about the location where Yogurt and 1810 would meet.

She and Black Swan had followed Zhang Heng here, subsequently managing to prevent two tragedies from happening during the critical moment.

Zhang Heng had two Grade-B game items with him, second only to those major guilds' highest-ranking members. However, his biggest secret was the extra 24 hours that he had every day. To Shen Xixi, Zhang Heng investigated Yogurt's disappearance with her the whole night, but the truth was that he had left Shen Dongxing's apartment after midnight. Using the tracking skill he learned from the Deductive Reasoning quest, it took about four hours to find the two. Instead of tying them up, Zhang Heng implanted Trojan horse malware in their mobile phones to monitor and pinpoint their locations.

If 1810 had arrived here to accept the result, the investigation of this matter would end here. If 1810 refused to accept the outcome, Zhang Heng could locate Yogurt and Shen Dongxing faster than him.

Anyway, this matter was resolved peacefully in the end. 1810, however, had to pay the price of his team getting disbanded. As they went their separate ways, Black Swan hinted to Zhang Heng that if he were willing to team up with her, she would surprise him with something pleasurable. Unfortunately, Zhang Heng declined her request.

From the beginning of this game, Zhang Heng had never thought of teaming up with anyone else. Although the difficulty of the Proxy War quest had increased, he could handle it alone for now.

Zhang Heng had also asked 1810 to pay him the remaining game points he owed. However, the latter did not have enough points, and since his Feign Death was now exposed, he decided to give the Grade-C game item with one use left to Zhang Heng.

After a little deliberation, Zhang Heng agreed to take the item in place of the game points. Feign Death was a unique game item, a perfect trump card he could put to good use. However, it had its shortcomings. If his enemies found out about the item, using it would be pointless. Zhang Heng wasn't too bothered, as long as it could be used in the quest. In the real world, however, he would never think of using Feign Death to help him to save his life.

In total, Zhang Heng received three game items in just one night. After bidding Black Swan and Shen Xixi farewell, he headed to the game's checkpoint to look for Miss Bartender since he had acquired the last Shadow Set piece.

“Interesting. You actually managed to complete the entire Shadow Set. That’s efficient of you,” commended the bartender lady after seeing the four items on the table.

“You said that when I find them all, I can inherit part of the original owner’s power?”

“Yes, that’s right. But I also mentioned that you’d need to go through some form of test.” The bartender lady picked up Shadow Key. “You can only use this item once more. Once you decide to inherit its power, whether succeed or fail, you won’t be able to use it anymore.”

“I know, but it doesn’t matter.”

Shadow Key and Shadow Foot were both Grade-E and Grade-F game items. Their values were limited, and they had been used before. Shadow Key had only one last use left in it. So after giving it a little thought, Zhang Heng decided he wouldn’t wait any longer to go through the test. After all, he had a ton of items with him, and he would not be able to use them all.

Whenever he entered a dungeon, he would need to consider which item he should bring with him. This was as painful as thinking about what to eat and what to wear every morning. It was better if the game items were converted into an ability.

“Since you are fine with it, when do you want to be tested?” the bartender lady shrugged and asked.

“Do we need to complete any rituals?”

“Of course, but it is a very simple ritual. You can complete it now if you want.”

“Let’s begin,” Zhang Heng said.

...

It took less than 15 minutes for the bartender to complete all the preparations. Zhang Heng watched on simultaneously, and he felt that she was just doing what she usually did. Except this time, she used some weird ingredients like lizard tails and mouse skulls. She then put all of them into a blender to grind them and made a homemade cigar filled with some suspicious tobacco.

Zhang Heng raised his eyebrows.

“Yes, I know it looks very old-fashioned, but there’s nothing I can do about it. Those old-timers like it a lot. As early as the BCE era, the Mayans and Indians had started smoking tobacco, believing that it allowed them to communicate with their gods. The Mayans left behind this blend’s recipe,” Miss bartender said. “Don’t underestimate this thing. It’s not easy to get these materials in the modern world. So you’ll have to pay me whether you fail or succeed. It will cost you 50 game points.”

“What should I do?” Zhang Heng asked and grabbed the cigar.

“Just bring those four game items with you. It’s best to allow all of them to contact your body. Once you’ve made sure of that, go ahead and light the cigar. By the way, do you have any other game items with you now? Pass them to me first, or they might interfere with the communication, especially the more powerful ones. The original owner of this Shadow Set has passed away for some time. Hence, not much power is left in them. You better not expect too much.”

“Okay.”

Miss bartender thought for a while and decided to explain more. “If the original owner of this set-item is still alive, it’d be nearly impossible for you to gather them all. After all, if not for special reasons, no one would want to divide their power to others. Giving out part of their power would speed up the owner’s deterioration process. As an agent, you should know about this. This set of items should belong to some very ancient existence.”

Zhang Heng nodded and temporarily stored all his game items at the game point. After that, he sat cross-legged on the deck and put the four Shadow set items on his lap. Once that was done, he lit the cigar and took a deep breath.

The taste... was not as disgusting and strange as he initially thought. Zhang Heng even tasted a strange scent from it.

It seemed like the Mayan’s ritual was not too difficult for him to accept.

Zhang Heng took a small puff first, and then two long drags after that. The white smoke rose in front of his eyes. Strangely, the smoke did not spread to other places but hovered around him, becoming thicker over time.

At the same time, Zhang Heng also fell into a half-awake, trance-like state. He became completely oblivious to the existence of time and where he was. When he finished smoking the cigar, the smoke had disappeared as well.

Zhang Heng looked at the scene in front of him and frowned deeply.

Chapter 719: Unforeseen Circumstance

Before he even lit the cigar, Zhang Heng was already prepared to face everything that came his way. With the current strength he had, there was no need to worry about the similar tests he would face. According to Miss Bartender, the Shadow-set’s original owner should have died a long time ago, which meant that there was not much power left in the items.

This implied that Zhang Heng would not get much power from these set-items, but it did not mean that this wouldn’t be a safe trip for him. Considering how he had killed one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, it was unlikely that an ancient god forgotten by time would cause him too much trouble.

When the smoke dissipated, a run-down scene appeared before Zhang Heng, one that perfectly matched the Shadow-set items. He was, however, bewildered, when he saw the building in front of him.

In his dream during the Alien quest he completed not too long ago, he had visited this seaside town.

Zhang Heng speculated that the Shadow-set had to be the reason the dream happened to him. But when he calmed down, he realized that the items were an unlikely cause. In the Alien quest, he had not yet acquired the Shadow-set’s last piece, the Shadow Foot, and the only set-item he had with him was the Shadow Key.

It was hard to believe that a mere Grade-E game item could be the root of so many problems.

Strictly speaking, the first time Zhang Heng realized that there was something wrong with his body was when he dealt with the Dreamland of Death. Pestilence had touched him without him knowing it, and at that time, his condition became critical, and he was sent directly to the emergency room. The doctor, however, did not know what to do with him.

His heart stopped beating for a short while, and Zhang Heng felt death approaching.

He lost a few seconds of memory after that and when he opened his eyes again, the sickness in him had disappeared without a trace. His heart started to beat again, and he was stronger than before.

Han Lu once told Zhang Heng that she experienced inexplicable fear when she saw Director Kuang and had always thought the fear had something to do with him. During that time, Zhang Heng happened to lose his memory for few seconds.

After connecting what happened on the roof, Zhang Heng realized that the fear Han Lu had felt might have not come from Pestilence but from him.

Perhaps he should be considering his current situation from another angle.

It seemed that his body hid secrets he had no idea about. And Miss Bartender told him that the tobacco recipe that she prepared came from the Mayans, used to communicate with the gods. Zhang Heng had deposited all of his game items at the checkpoint. Right now, he only had the four Shadow-set items with him. Hence, it stood to reason that the original owner of these four items should communicate with Zhang Heng when he inhaled the smoke.

To his surprise, the tobacco did not get him in touch with the original owner. On the contrary, the smoke unlocked a seal somewhere in his body, allowing him to return to the weird dream that he experienced before.

Zhang Heng did not know what the cause of this glitch was. Maybe the power left by the Shadow set's original owner was too weak compared to the secrets in his body. Maybe something happened to his body again after the incident on the roof. However, for some unknown reason, he had failed to notice the changes. All in all, his circumstances were not that bad. Between inheriting a small part of the Shadow-set's power and the secrets his body held, the latter was clearly more important.

He could always attempt to extract the power from the Shadow set items later. As for the weird dream, he would not get to encounter it as he wished. And Zhang Heng also noticed that this time, although he had returned to this bizarre dream, the Shadow-set items were still with him. They did not disappear with other game items, and it made him wonder if he was in the test-realm or the weird dream.

It took him only half a minute to sort out his situation. Whatever that came later would have to be settled later. Right now, he wanted to explore this dilapidated town.

This place probably had something to do with his life.

As he walked down the street, a strong stench of fish wafted into his nose. A large number of dilapidated houses could be seen on both sides of the street, where some had even collapsed. Everything here seemed to be decaying slowly.

Zhang Heng noticed a difference, though. There were obviously more people on the street this time.

Although there were very few functioning houses here, at least he was no longer the only person around. Those people, however, might not have improved Zhang Heng's situation.

Some of the residents looked no different from ordinary people. However, they were only a small part of the population here, and most of them were youngsters. It seemed like the elderly in this place were cursed. All of their faces were deformed, just like the old man Zhang Heng met before. He had a narrow forehead, flat nose, convex eyes, and crusted skin. And at the same time, the old man appeared slimy and slippery, much like the offspring of a fish and frog.

However, their gloomy and terrifying faces now had a smile on them. They were coming out of the broken houses at the side of the streets. Some were cleaning their signs, some were busy delivering the fish they had caught, sending them to the fish shops to be processed, and some even put the carpets on the floor. It looked like a banquet would be held that night.

Besides, some strange noise could be heard from the nearby sealed buildings from time to time. It was as if something was walking across the wooden floor, emitting a low and hoarse hiss.

Zhang Heng walked for a while and saw a Gothic stone church in front of him. It was far older than the other town buildings. As the bells tolled, the townsfolk knew that it was six in the evening. The sun was about to set into the sea, and the only glimmer of light in this town was about to disappear.

Walking into the church to take a look, a voice suddenly came from behind him, "It's already late. Don't you need to find a place to stay?"

Zhang Heng turned and recognized that the person speaking was the old man he saw when he first came to this town. The latter had come from the other side of the street. Although he was trying his best to act like an old man who had trouble walking, Zhang Heng could tell that he was better than what was presented.

"Any idea what's going on here?" Zhang Heng asked.

The old man did not answer his question but repeated what he said. "It's already late. Don't you need a place to stay?"

Chapter 720: Gilman Hostel

"Any recommendations?" Zhang Heng did not dwell on the previous question, and decided to answer the old man directly.

"Gilman Hostel. They serve delicious food and provide soft beds," the old man replied. "I can take you there." Upon saying that, he turned around and walked away, as though beckoning Zhang Heng to follow him.

Zhang Heng took another good look at the church that stood before him. It did not look like a real church since he could sense the evil and insanity oozing out of it, just like the town itself.

A man in a black robe and golden crown walked past the church, but Zhang Heng could not see what he looked like under the robe.

Since Zhang Heng was not close to the mysterious man that just passed the church, he stopped walking and glared at Zhang Heng with his protruding eyes, like a toad.

After a short deliberation, Zhang Heng decided to follow the old man since the latter was the only person in this town who took an initiative to talk to him. However, he was still not willing to answer any of his questions.

“Do you know me?” Zhang Heng asked after catching up with the old man, “What day is today?”

“July 15, 1927.” The old man finally answered one of his questions.

It was almost similar to the date Zhang Heng estimated when he first came into this dream. Zhang Heng then looked at the watch on his right hand subconsciously. However, he discovered that the watch that had been with him all the time was not on his wrist.

Zhang Heng had been wearing that watch for a long time. Previously, when he arrived in this dream, he forgot to check whether his watch was with him. That didn't bother him too much, though. It was past midnight when he came into this world, which meant there was still plenty of time before the next midnight came. Besides, his extra 24 hours might not work here.

Second, he was no longer an ordinary person when he entered his first dungeon. The long list of high-level skills that he acquired had become a part of him, and even if he did not rely on his game items, he was more than capable of protecting himself.

He technically still had those Shadow-set items with him. His Shadow Moment should have depleted its uses by now, but it seemed that that got refreshed when he came to this place. For now, there was no time to give it a look.

While following the old man, Zhang Heng attempted to gather some more information. “I see that you are preparing for some celebration. What are you guys celebrating?”

“Oh, it's just an ordinary traditional ritual. Don't mind us.”

“Is that so? Do you know how to get out of here?”

The old man suddenly stopped in his tracks. “The train is no longer in service. It will take a very long time to leave this place on foot. If you insist, you can take the bus that leaves at 8 every night, but...”

“But what?”

“But not tonight. The driver himself is preparing for the celebration. So, the bus will not be in service tonight.”

“What about a horse?”

“There are no horses in the town,” the old man replied in a hoarse voice. “Someone attempted to raise them once, but those animals didn't seem to like this place. They were restless at night, so we had to sell them.” Then he turned his head. “Do you want to leave this place?”

“Leave? No. I'm just asking,” Zhang Heng said.

The old man was not lying. For some reason, he hoped that Zhang Heng could stay in the Gilman Hostel tonight. Always wanting to investigate the place from the beginning, Zhang Heng himself wanted to

know what would happen if he stayed in there tonight. Even if that was the only bus in service tonight, he was not about to leave.

Nonetheless, Zhang Heng was smart enough to figure what was really going on. When he met the old man for the first time, he said, "You are... finally here?" Zhang Heng could see that the traditional ritual was probably related to him.

Something interesting was about to happen tonight.

He continued chatting with the old man, hoping that he would obtain some useful information. The old man, on the other hand, still answered his questions selectively. It soon became apparent that the old man was trying his best not to accidentally divulge any secrets—he would not answer anything related to the ritual.

Still, Zhang Heng managed to obtain something useful. A hundred years ago, the houses here were filled with people. During that time, this place was prosperous and lively. Some might even refer to it as a city.

Ships would dock at the port, and sailors would go ashore for some r&r. Simultaneously, the train frequently stopped by, bringing goods and immigrants from other cities along with it. Locals also employed the train's services to deliver the fishes and shrimp they had caught. Lastly, the gold refinery was the town's primary source of income.

Unfortunately, the town started to deteriorate after the civil war. Its residents began to lose faith in this place, and soon afterward, some started to disappear. At first, only a few went missing, but after that, more and more people began to inexplicably vanish into thin air. At the same time, a group of newborns began to grow up. Some people's appearances began to change, the elderly being one of them.

As he talked about this matter, the old man seemed to be paying extra attention to the changes in Zhang Heng's expressions. When he saw that there was no reaction, he felt a little disappointed. The young man seemed neither surprised nor afraid, simply signaling him to continue talking.

At this point, the old man stopped. "This is it," he said.

Zhang Heng looked up and saw a domed building. Like the other houses around here, this one was in a state of disrepair as well. The words on the signboard could barely be seen, and the walls around him were peeling too. He even noticed how most of the walls were now covered in moss and mold.

A hotel like this would attract no tourists, but according to the old man, this was the only place left in the town for outsiders to rest. As Zhang Heng stepped into the shabby hall, he began to suspect that there would be no delicious food and soft beds here.

The male staff at the front desk looked relatively normal, except that he was a little moody and withdrawn.

"Room 427, one dollar." Putting down the dirty old newspaper in his hand, he continued, "today is a good day. There are actually two guests here today."

"Another person is living here tonight?" The old man was a little surprised.

"Yes, something happened in the town earlier..." He stopped halfway and looked at Zhang Heng on the other side.

Zhang Heng searched his pockets and looked at them. "Sorry, I don't have any money with me."

"..."

The old man and the staff looked at each other.