

48 Hours 831

Chapter 831: Don't Overdo It

After Zhang Heng said what he wanted to say, the tavern became really quiet. All the laughter was gone. Black Mamba, the dwarf, and the rest all took a deep breath. The patrol team had come up with an effective strategy to go against them. Since they could not handle past cases because no one was willing to cooperate with their investigation, they wouldn't stop crime from happening on the spot if they focused on only three streets.

This would happen to all of Iron Handcuff's turfs if they chose not to accept Zhang Heng's offer. After all, those responsible for earning money for Iron Handcuff were just underage kids.

And as Zhang Heng said, if they focused on patrolling only three streets, the twelve members of the patrol team could make all the thieves lose their jobs. In other words, Iron Handcuff and his men would receive no income every week.

Iron Handcuff felt that something was not right.

The group of men in front of him was supposed to be the law enforcers of this area. However, they had now disregarded all laws. To be more precise, they were still talking about the rules, but they used their authority to seek personal gain. Right now, they did not look like patrol teams to Iron Handcuff anymore. They were no different from the other gangs in this area.

This was no business talk. Zhang Heng was blatantly blackmailing Iron Handcuff.

No matter what words Zhang Heng would use to explain their behavior, they could not hide the fact that they were about to take advantage of Iron Handcuff's gang. Iron Handcuff and the dwarf had been living here for some time now and they were all too familiar with such a practice. In order to not be taken over by other forces and survive, they often had to pay protection fees and donations to other more powerful gangs. However, this time, the group of people that blackmailed them was the patrol team.

For a moment, Iron Handcuff, the dwarf, and others suddenly came to a realization. It seemed like the neighborhood that they lived in had degraded severely. Even the patrol team was now involved in the extortion business. As criminals, they even began to care about the spiritual development of their surrounding area.

Everyone in the tavern dwelled in their thoughts. No one spoke for a long time. And when they came back to their senses, everyone turned around and looked at Iron Handcuff. Clearly, they were waiting for him to make the decision. However, Iron Handcuff was still hesitating.

The patrol team had been the mascot of this place for a long time. No one paid any attention to them, and they were greatly respected in the past. Suddenly, the patrol team that seemed useless to the public was now threatening them with their fangs. They were about to dominate Iron Handcuff's gang. It was difficult for Iron Handcuff and the dwarf to accept such drastic change.

On the other hand, Iron Handcuff knew that Zhang Heng was telling the truth. The business that Iron Handcuff operated now was quite unique. Once the patrol targeted those thieves, it would be difficult

for them to steal more money. As a chain reaction, their income would indeed be significantly reduced by that time.

What should they do? Were they going to fight them?

In terms of numbers, they had the advantage even if the thieves were excluded. The number of men that Iron Handcuff had was twice that of the patrol team. And some of them were good at fighting. On the patrol team, they had to pay attention to Aris and the Oriental man they were unfamiliar with. If they start a fight now, they should be able to win.

But the question was what they should do afterward?

No matter how useless Aris's patrol team was, they were still the only law enforcers in this area. If they beat them up, would the government send more powerful people to maintain law and order of this place? After all, this was not the only patrol team in the entire empire. They were scattered in various parts of the city, and if all of them worked together, they might be able to bring this place down. That would also mean they could eliminate Iron Handcuff's team easily.

After all, they are just the bad guys that lived at the bottom of this slum. And they had a difficult time looking at the bigger picture. How could they have known of the dirty things that the patrol team had done? Aris and his men were exiled to this place. Even if he knew about it, he would not know how other teams would react after beating Aris and his men. As for Aris, he had no idea about it as well. And he did not want to get to the bottom of it. If the other patrol teams knew what they did here, every single member from his team would be fired.

Although their lives were miserable, they still had a meager salary to make ends meet and provide for their families. If they were to lose their job here, they would probably be consumed by this place. Therefore, when Iron Handcuff was hesitating, Aris and the other patrol members felt very nervous too. They had one hand placed on their weapon. Iron Handcuff's men were ready to strike too. They were waiting for their boss to give the order to deal with the patrol members that knew no bounds.

The situation in the tavern became really tense. Only Zhang Heng could remain calm in such moments. He even leaned back to wait for Iron Handcuff's reply.

Iron Handcuff noticed that Black Mamba was signaling him with his eyes as if something he wanted to tell him. However, Iron Handcuff did not have the time to discuss anything with his most reliable subordinate. He had kept silent for quite a long time, and it was time to speak up. Otherwise, his men and opponents would know his confidence was shaken.

"30% is too much."

Iron Handcuff chose to settle this matter through peaceful means. After all, they were just a small gang, and he did not wish to go against the patrol team. This was the most significant concession that Iron Handcuff had ever made. Next, they were supposed to enter the time of negotiations.

However, he did not expect Zhang Heng that was sitting opposite of him, to shake his head when he heard those words.

"Thirty percent, non-negotiable."

“Impossible! We don’t get to keep all the money too.” Iron Handcuff was so furious that he almost jumped up from this seat. But in the end, he suppressed his anger and explained, “I have to pay half of my income to a more powerful gang. We can only get half of what we earn. And I have to pay my men too. At most, I can give 10% of my income to your patrol team.

Some of the patrol members could not help but gulp when they heard Iron Handcuff’s offer. Looking at how Iron Handcuff and his men spent the money they earned, they clearly had a better life than the patrol members. Even if they took 10%, they would still make more than what they earned currently.

The patrol team wanted to yes to them immediately, but they did not expect Zhang Heng to reject their offer, “30% is the final offer. No more, no less.”

“Don’t push me.” Iron Handcuff finally could not stand Zhang Heng, and he said sternly.

“Pushing you? We are just a patrol team that helps maintain public order on the streets. There’s nothing wrong for us to catch a few thieves.” Zhang Heng shook his head and said, “It seems that you haven’t figured out the situation. From now on, without our permission, you can’t continue carrying on with your business. You won’t be able to make a single Sestertius. I don’t mind if you don’t want to cooperate with us, though, I believe that some of your men are.”

Chapter 832: Please Ask

After Zhang Heng and the patrol team walked out of the tavern, a young patrol team member named Barbir could not help and shout in excitement,

“Wow! I can’t believe it! This is amazing!!! This is just one night. No, it’s less than that. We didn’t even do anything. All we did was stand in the tavern, and we earned six Aureus just like that. You should have seen Iron Handcuff’s face...”

This was probably his most memorable night since he joined the patrol, especially when Zhang Heng said to Iron Handcuff, “Thirty percent, no more, no less.” Everyone in the tavern could hear Zhang Heng’s unequivocal powerful statement.

It was as if hundreds of patrol members were waiting outside the tavern to ambush them. At Zhang Heng’s order, they would rush in and kill everyone. Iron Handcuff experienced the most pressure since he sat right opposite Zhang Heng. To him, they were no longer the ordinary patrol team. He felt like he was talking to the three most powerful bosses in this area. A man like that could decide his fate in just one sentence. During the negotiation, Iron Handcuff’s forehead was drenched in a cold sweat. And he found that he could not refuse Zhang Heng’s proposal.

It was not until Zhang Heng and the patrol members left the tavern that he woke up from his nightmare and noticed that his right hand under the table was shaking slightly.

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Zhang Heng did not walk far. He stopped shortly after leaving the tavern and opened the coin purse with six gold coins. He divided the money into fourteen shares and distributed it to twelve patrol members, each of whom would get about forty-two Sestertius.

To the patrol members living on a meager salary, forty-two Sestertius was a huge amount of money. And that was only a week's income. According to Zhang Heng and Iron Handcuff's agreement, Iron Handcuffs had to pay 30% of their income every week to the patrol team. The money was supposed to serve as a token of gratitude to the patrol team for maintaining law and order in this city.

And they did not mind that Zhang Heng took a double share. After all, Zhang Heng was the one that struck a deal with Iron Handcuff. No one thought that Zhang Heng could make so much money off the gang here. They even felt that Zhang Heng took too little for himself. Even if he took a little more, they wouldn't have said anything about it.

Nonetheless, Zhang Heng did not need so much money for now. He was still receiving the performance income from the Victor Arena. He took one more share because he wanted to set the rules for the future division of money. Since he intended to take over the patrol team, he first established clear rules about dealing with monetary matters. Otherwise, the team would not be able to last long.

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While they happily took the money from Zhang Heng, the way they looked at Zhang Heng had changed too. They no longer regarded him as a new member. Right now, they respected and admired him more. However, Aris looked at Zhang Heng in a slightly complicated way. He did not take his share right away.

Instead, he said, "I actually wanted to ask you something just now, but you were still negotiating with Iron Handcuff. Since you are one of the patrol members, I couldn't embarrass you. I think I can ask you the question now."

"Please ask," replied Zhang Heng.

"What is the difference between those bastards and us?" Aris asked.

His words poured over the patrol members like a bucket of cold water. The lively and cheerful atmosphere was now gone. And now, all the patrol team members who took the money from Zhang Heng looked a little embarrassed.

Especially the two young people who just joined the patrol team. Since their hope for this place had not been consumed by the terrible reality here, they bowed their heads with shame. No matter how careful Zhang Heng chose his words or how grandiose they were, it could not change the fact that they had just blackmailed them.

They had used the fact that they were patrol members to extort Iron Handcuff and his men, which granted them a huge sum of money. This was no different from Iron Handcuff and his men collecting cash from those thieves. However, they recognized that they were the villains of the area and felt no guilt when they committed such crimes. The patrol members, on the other hand, were the law enforcers in this area.

They were supposedly different from the criminal organizations in this place. After the patrol members received the money from Zhang Heng, they had forgotten how he acquired that money. When Aris brought up this matter, everyone had to re-examine their role in this incident.

However, Zhang Heng's expression did not change. He nodded when he heard what Aris said, "Good question. I'm going to ask you a question now. What do you think is the most important duty of the patrol team?"

"Maintaining law and order here and catching criminals," Aris replied without hesitation. As the captain of the patrol, he was certainly no stranger to his duties.

"No offense, but before I came, how well did you do?"

Aris was silent when he heard the question. After a while, he spoke again. "We are not doing very well. That bastard Iron Handcuff is right about us. No one is afraid of us when we patrol this place.

"The residents here will not cooperate with us. This has caused the patrol team to carry out their duties ineffectively. We don't have enough manpower and funds, and we can't do anything. All we can do is watch the situation get worse and worse. As the captain of the patrol team, I carry the most responsibility. However, I have been telling the new members not to be nosy." Aris laughed at himself, "I know I look like a coward in your eyes."

After hearing what Aris said, the patrol members felt sad, reminiscing the state the patrol team was in during their early days. Aris wasn't exaggerating.

"Although life is hard, we still cling on to it. And we haven't done anything that breaks the law."

"It's admirable. I'm serious. Given the situation that you are in, it's amazing that you can do that," Zhang Heng said. "...but... if you really want to carry out your duties well, I'm afraid you need a sacrifice some of your self-esteem and pride. Maintaining your moral superiority will not make this a better place. You have been here for so long. I believe you should understand what I just said better than myself."

"I know how to be flexible," Aris frowned, "blackmailing Iron Handcuff can make us rich, but I don't see how it can make this a better place. After losing so much money, Iron Handcuff will make his thieves work harder. In other words, the security of the three streets around here will further deteriorate."

"For now, this is my plan. However, please don't think that I'm only here to help the patrol members earn pocket money. This is just the beginning," Zhang Heng said lightly, "When we unite all the big and small forces here, we can formulate a new set of orders and rules."

Chapter 833: Same Goal

"You want to unite all the large and small forces here?" Aris was frightened by Zhang Heng's plan. It wasn't just him; the other patrol members were just as shocked.

After all, Blackmailing Iron Handcuff and coming out with a new set of rules to govern this chaotic place were two completely different things.

The number of people in Iron Handcuff's gang was just a speck of dust in this place. Iron Handcuff could rough up this area's thieves, but he was only a small-time gang boss in this entire place. There was nothing he and his men could do in the face of other bigger forces. On the other hand, Iron Handcuff's manpower was twice that of the patrol team. If they had started a fight in the tavern just now, 80% of the patrol team would be unable to deal with all of them.

It was hard dealing with a small-time gang boss like Iron Handcuff, let alone dealing with the bigger gang. Thus, Aris and other patrol members started to doubt the authenticity of Zhang Heng's plan. Unlike Aris, they probably expected Zhang Heng to lie. Although what Aris had said was the right thing to do, most of the patrol members still hoped to make more money with Zhang Heng. It was, however, also important that they did not lose their lives for the sake of making money.

"Yes. We'll have to do this step by step," Zhang Heng said, "As a patrol member, we are the perfect candidate to collect security fees from those gangs. However, we mustn't stick our noses in their fights. At least that's the case for now. If we are careless, the other gangs might oppose us and, worse, join forces to eliminate us. For now, we need to take down Iron Handcuff and his gang. We'll use them as the foundation to absorb and cultivate smaller forces willing to swear loyalty to us. After we accumulate enough strength, we can launch an attack on the medium forces in this place. And finally, the large forces..."

Zhang Heng explained his action plan as simple as possible.

However, everyone still looked baffled after they heard his plan. After a while, Barbier spoke, "Can you tell us what we need to do next?"

"I just said that we need to take down Iron Handcuff and his men first."

"Uh, haven't we already done that?" Babil asked in confusion.

"Oh, you seem to have misunderstood something. We just took money from them. Do you really think that Iron Handcuff and his people will give in to us so easily? Taking 30% of their income is too much. It's enough for them to risk their lives to fight with us."

"What?" The patrol members were greatly taken aback.

"Don't worry. He doesn't want to make things worse. Otherwise, he would have attacked us at the tavern just now. After this, he will only target me alone," Zhang Heng said. "If he is not stupid, he should know that I'm the mastermind. After all, the patrol team had always behaved well before I arrived. As long as they eliminate me, their problem would be automatically solved."

"Is he going to kill you?" Barbier's expression tightened.

"That's not necessarily true. I am also a member of the patrol team, after all. The best solution for them is to teach me a lesson and drive me out of this place." Zhang Heng said calmly.

As a result, not long after he finished speaking, a patrol member named Marcus suddenly said, "I'm with you."

It had been two years since Marcus joined the patrol. He did not speak much during normal times and seemed to prefer to be alone. He would spend most of his time thinking about his affairs. That was why he did not have many friends from the patrol. Although he did not mind joining the group's activities, he was still not very active overall.

No one expected that he would act so righteously tonight. To everyone's surprise, he was willing to side with someone he barely knew for a day. He seemed to be planning to deal with the upcoming troubles with Zhang Heng.

Marcus explained, "I didn't do this entirely for justice. You did a great job in the tavern earlier. And you are smarter than all of us. Since you know that insisting on asking for 30% of Iron Handcuff's income will force them to make a move on you, you must have thought about how to deal with them later on. I think you are a more qualified leader than Aris. Instead of saying that I'm going to help you, it is better to say that I want to follow you."

Zhang Heng was a little surprised. He learned about the patrol earlier. And he did not care much about other people except for Aris. Other than that, he also did not mind if they were willing to work with him since he might drag everyone into the troubles that he caused. And strictly speaking, Zhang Heng only wanted to gain the patrol member identity. He did not care much about the other patrol members.

To his surprise, he found a treasure here. Although this young man named Marcus spoke little, he had a clear mind, possessed great calmness, and at the same time, wasn't indecisive. When he was required to make an important decision, he would never hesitate. With some training, Zhang Heng would be able to put him to great use.

Zhang Heng wanted to integrate all the large and small forces here. He certainly could not do it alone. He would need someone to help him. Zhang Heng's original plan was to select suitable talents from the powerful gangs here to help him. However, it would be perfect if he could find someone great from the patrol team instead.

After all, the people in the team had the same goal as him. With Marcus taking the lead, several people on the team expressed their willingness to stand on Zhang Heng's side and work with him to deal with Iron Handcuff and his men. This meant that the patrol team had begun to divide.

This seemed unbelievable at first glance. It had taken Aris many years to gain his team members' trust and make his way up the ladder to become a captain eventually. However, Zhang Heng broke it in less than half a night.

This was actually an expected outcome. After all, the thing that Zhang Heng did in the tavern was so impressive that it shocked everyone. Of course, the most important thing was that he proved that those who followed him would never be short of money.

Although they were patrol members, most people do not possess such high moral standards as Aris, especially after staying here for a long time. They would be influenced by the culture here to a certain extent. When Aris questioned Zhang Heng earlier, some of the patrol members did not argue with Aris because he was, after all, their captain. In their opinion, since they did not rob the money from anyone on the streets, it was totally fine for them to take it. Besides, Iron Handcuff and his gang were the villains of this area. Some of them even blamed him for saying such a thing and stopped them from taking the money.

But to everyone's surprise, Aris said afterward, "Let's stop fighting. Zhang Heng is a member of the patrol team. His business is the patrol team's business. How can we stand aside and watch someone attack him?"

After speaking, he stretched out his hand.

"What?" Zhang Heng raised his eyebrows.

“My share of the money,” Aris demanded. “You won’t feel good if I don’t take the money, right?”

Zhang Heng knew Aris had figured out something. It was unsurprising that he was being assigned here. Aris knew that someone more powerful was trying to make his life difficult. Besides dealing with the gang problem here, Zhang Heng also had to look out for someone plotting against him in the dark. It was true that the thing that Zhang Heng did now was not legal. And, of course, Zhang Heng realized it too. He was cautious with the words that he used. There were a lot of things that he did not plan to do by himself.

But in any case, he would not reject the fact that Aris proved to him that he would never betray him.

“I will always keep one eye on you to see if you can fulfill your promise,” Aris said after taking the money.

“Welcome.” Zhang Heng said, “Actually, I don’t plan to change my final goal because I don’t intend to stay here too long.”

Chapter 834: Growth And Test

Late in the night.

Two days and one night had passed since Zhang Heng led the patrol team to collect security fees from Iron Handcuff.

In the meantime, Iron Handcuff also managed to figure out Zhang Heng’s identity. In fact, it was not hard to find out that Zhang Heng was the gladiatorial champion of the Amphitheatrum Flavium since it was currently the hottest topic of discussion in the entire city of Rome. This man had captured the hearts of many ladies.

Everyone regretted that they allowed Zhang Heng to regain his freedom so early since it meant they wouldn’t get to watch him fight in the arena anymore. Fortunately, Mark Reuss’s gladiator school advertised that Zhang Heng would perform once in Victor Arena every month. And they were now accepting ticket bookings.

The ticket sales of Victor Arena skyrocketed, showering Mark Reuss in joy. Not only did Zhang Heng’s return significantly increase Victor Arena’s exposure level, but it also allowed Mark Reuss to slowly gain the upper hand in negotiation when he purchased Terufelos, the Giant.

Until now, Terufelos had not been sold. His owner had received dozens of offers. Basically, all the gladiator schools that could afford to purchase Tefufelos had made their offer. These offers were only getting higher and higher. The more offers Terufelos’s owner received, the more hesitant he became. He thought he could sell Terufelos at a higher price if he were willing to wait a little longer.

After all, the seller had the greater advantage in the market now. After Zhang Heng was freed, Terufelos, who made an impressive performance in the final battle, became the best-selling gladiator in Rome.

However, when they heard that Zhang Heng would be performing in Victor Arena every month, the demand for Terufelos finally began to cool down. The gladiator schools did not make any new offers after that. It was now their turn to hesitate since going all-in on a gladiator could be a precarious

business, not to mention that once Zhang Heng started to perform in Victor Arena, Terufelos would also lose the title of the strongest gladiator.

One should never underestimate how different the first and second gladiators could be. Take Sethnets and Sartonilos back then, for instance. Although Sartonilos had many followers himself, he did not sell as many tickets as Sethnets. Zhang Heng's return would turn Victor Arena into the top arena in the city of Rome. In order to compete for second place, how much were the gladiator schools willing to pay?

At this time, the only gladiator school owner still willing to make a higher offer was Mark Reuss'. However, Mark Reuss had also mentioned that he would only allow Terufelos's owner to think about it for a night. Once the time was up, he would cancel his offer and withdraw himself from the bidding competition.

Finally, after thinking about it for an entire night and coupled with the persuasion of Terufelos, he accepted Mark Reuss's offer. And he left Rome with the money before dawn. The other gladiator schools had no idea that Victor Arena had purchased Terufelos until the afternoon. Marco Reuss now possessed the top three gladiators in Rome. His greed had caused all the other gladiator school's owners to take a deep breath.

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On the other hand, Iron Handcuff was taken aback after learning that Zhang Heng was the strongest gladiator in Rome, especially after Black Mamba told him that Zhang Heng had singlehandedly defeated all of his men. It also proved that Zhang Heng's combat skills were as powerful as how the rumor described him. However, it did not stop Iron Handcuff from getting his revenge. Losing 30% of their income was unbearable for them. After all, they were just a small gang in this area, and there were lots of bills to be paid. And typically, at the end of all that, not have much money would be left in their pockets.

He could still hang on to the sudden loss of 30% of his income in the short term. However, he would definitely reduce the number of people under him over time. Their situation would deteriorate even further in the long run, and they would either be replaced or annexed by other forces.

Thus, Iron Handcuff was determined to drive Zhang Heng out of this place, now that he had found the reason that had changed the patrol team's usual behavior. As long as Zhang Heng was gone from this place, the patrol team would return to its previous state. In the last two days, they were preparing to exact revenge. Considering Zhang Heng's terrifying combat abilities, Iron Handcuff decided to avoid head-on conflict as much as possible even though he had the advantage in numbers.

In the meantime, he also found out where Zhang Heng lived. For some reason, Zhang Heng did not live in the patrol station but rented a room on the next street alone. He spent the night alone there for the past two days, giving Iron Handcuff and his men a great start to their revenge plan. Of course, not all of them were confident that their plan could work. Black Mamba, for instance, was one of them. Traumatized after Zhang Heng beat up his men, he felt that something must be wrong with this coincidence. Deciding to retaliate against Zhang Heng had thus presented a golden opportunity. It was as if they hit the jackpot.

It was too late for them to step back now. They had to strike Zhang Heng while they were still able to do so. Iron Handcuff arranged two of his men to watch the patrol team's movements. Aris and his men were the only people who might rush to protect Zhang Heng. As long as they did not make any moves there, Iron Handcuff would not have to worry about any unexpected incidents.

And they deliberately chose to do it late at night. At this time, most of the people were asleep. No matter how powerful Zhang Heng was, there was no way that he could figure out their plan in his sleep. At the same time, Iron Handcuff had also found a guy who excelled at picking locks. As long as they could enter Zhang Heng's room quietly and get a few men to pounce on him simultaneously, that would be the end of him.

Iron Handcuff's plan was well formulated. They first got to the ground floor of Zhang Heng's residence. Iron Handcuff then assigned most men to block all the entrances and exits before putting the dwarf in command. As for him, he led eight men upstairs, Black Mamba included, and asked the expert to pick the lock silently.

The eight people held their breath together and looked at the figure lying sideways on the bed. It appeared the target was in a deep sleep. Seeing that the other party did not respond, a touch of joy appeared on Iron Handcuff's face. He then took the lead, followed by his seven men, and walked up to Zhang Heng's bed.

Zhang Heng looked down at Iron Handcuff's men moving around outside his residence on the roof of the building. After that, a ghostly figure quietly passed through their seemingly indestructible line of defense. Iron Handcuff did not even notice that someone walked past them and went upstairs. It was as if the darkness had blinded them.

Zhang Heng made silent applause and complimented, "That's not bad. You are still quite good at what you do."

"Stop talking nonsense. I've already killed the people watching the patrol team as you requested." The man helping Zhang Heng was none other than Dadatis. "Just a handful of useless grunts... and they are scattered all over the place. We can kick all of their asses in a few minutes. Do we really need outsiders to help us? Besides, the people on the patrol team don't seem to be useful to us."

"Well, they need to grow up. How can they grow without opportunities? They are not useful now. It does not mean that they will not be useful in the future. After all, I won't be staying with them for too long," said Zhang Heng. "I underestimated the patrol team. I didn't expect that there'd be some valuable people on the team. I simply wanted to see which ones were worthy of my training."

Chapter 835: The Fight Begins

Dadatis stared at Zhang Heng for a while and let the latter touch his face.

"Why?"

"You know that many in the organization disagree with me choosing you as my successor, right? However, I still insist on doing so."

"Hmm."

“But I am a bit confused now, whether or not this is the right or wrong thing to do. I realize that I don’t seem to know you quite well. Every time I meet you, you show me something I didn’t know about. Like right now, I have never seen this side of you before. I never knew that you had such an excellent political skillset. To be honest, I am a little afraid of you now.”

“What are you afraid of? Anyway, you are going to retire soon. Whatever happens after that has nothing to do with you anymore,” Zhang Heng replied casually.

“You are right,” Dadatis seemed to be relieved. After a while, his expression became solemn again, “However, if you wrong Balance Blade in the future, you better watch out for your life. No matter where I am and how old I will be, I will come back and find you. You’d better stay alert every time you eat and sleep because I will pierce your throat with my dagger when your guard is down.”

“Don’t be so angry, old man.” Zhang Heng was calm. “You know me. The reason I joined Balance Blade was that I wanted to read the books stored in the secret library.”

“...”

Dadatis was left speechless, “Your talent blinded me at the beginning. I knew that I should have gone for someone else as my successor. Forget it, how long will it take to deal with things on your side?”

“If you are asking about Iron Handcuff, we can solve this problem by tonight. If you are asking about the security situation here, it will take at least two months before Commodus notices the changes.”

Dadatis was shocked. “You can integrate all the big and small forces here in two months?”

“Not so fast. The situation here is very complicated. Even I have to spend some time to sort out the problems here. But after two months, we should be fit enough to handle the assessment,” Zhang Heng said.

The problems were rooted deeply in the heart of this place. It was not easy to get to sixty points from zero. However, it was definitely easier to get from zero to thirty points than sixty to ninety points.

They would still fail the assessment, but they could not deny that it was a great improvement. Zhang Heng hadn’t forgotten his purpose here, coming to prove that he could lighten the young emperor’s burden by joining his side. Of course, he would not break the promise he made to Aris and other patrol members. He would complete the integration of the big and small forces here, and other than preparing himself to receive a promotion, he also wanted to look for someone that he could rely on during critical moments.

He needed someone that was neither Balance Blade nor under the control of Commodus. And this was the perfect place for him to look for someone like that. Therefore, when Zhang Heng found out that Clint had purposely assigned him to his place, he was thrilled. The ten years spent in the Black Sail dungeon had provided him the experience needed to handle the chaotic situation here with ease. Besides, Zhang Heng had also accidentally discovered a cheating device when Sartonilos and others ambushed him.

It could help him skip the most troublesome part of this quest and speed up the whole process.

“I don’t care what you do next, but you’d better spare two weeks for me, and I only need to meet up with you during the evening. An old friend has asked me to help him with something. I guess I’ll be away for quite some time. Before I leave, I want to teach you everything that I know.”

Zhang Heng knew that the priestess had fulfilled the agreement she made with him. Hence, he nodded, “Okay, we can start with the meetup tomorrow evening.”

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At the same time, Iron Handcuff and his men realized that their ambush had failed after discovering the person sleeping on the bed wasn’t Zhang Heng. The person that they pressed on the ground was a trembling stranger. According to him, he was the only tenant in this building, and he did not know why he ended up here and got attacked by them. Iron Handcuffs and his men felt that something terrible was about to happen. It seemed that their plan was going to fail miserably. So Iron Handcuffs made a decisive decision and prepared to evacuate the location.

But at this moment, the men assigned to guard the entrances and exits sent them a signal. They saw that the heavily armed patrol was approaching the building, and they were led by Aris. The two men that Iron Handcuff sent to keep an eye on the patrol team had disappeared.

Iron Handcuff was not afraid of the patrol team. After all, he knew what they were capable of. Besides, they had an advantage in number as well. What really worried him was Zhang Heng. He had no idea where Zhang Heng was right now. When glanced at the patrol team, he saw that Zhang Heng was not among them. Immediately, he was hit by fear that surged from the bottom of his heart.

His worst nightmare was about to come true. When he walked out of the room with his men, he saw Zhang Heng at the end of the corridor. He held two Persian swords, waiting for Iron Handcuff and his men to walk past this corridor. Iron Handcuff had never seen Zhang Heng fighting before. Currently, he believed that eight of them was more than enough to deal with Zhang Heng. And if they could not win, he could simply run away. On the other hand, Black Mamba was trembling in fear.

Before he could warn Iron Handcuff about Zhang Heng, they saw the latter charging them with his swords. At a critical moment like this, Iron Handcuff had to show his courage to his men. He knew that Zhang Heng defeated Black Mamba and his seven men, and as gang boss, if he failed to lead by example, everyone would surrender without putting up a fight. Fortunately, his right-hand man, Broken Finger, would be fighting by his side.

Black Mamba’s status in the gang was slightly higher than that of Broken Finger. He was better at getting along with his subordinates and others. In terms of strength, Broken Finger claimed the first spot in their gang. Iron Handcuff had spent a lot of effort making Broken Finger succumb to him during the early days. Still, fortunately, Broken Finger had repeatedly proven that his efforts were not in vain on almost every critical moment.

Thus, Iron Handcuff firmly believed that this time, Broken Finger would prevail as well. The two attacked Zhang Heng simultaneously, one on the left and the other on the right. A second later, the two knelt in sync.

Zhang Heng had no intention to spare their lives because Iron Handcuff and Broken Finger had grievances with him. Even if he managed to make them succumb to him, Zhang Heng doubted that they

would be of any use. It would be better to choose another person to take over the gang. No matter who Zhang Heng chose, he still had to eliminate Iron Handcuff and Broken Finger. Otherwise, the new boss might risk killing by them. Therefore, Zhang Heng showed them no mercy and slit their throats without hesitation.

Black Mamba and others were low in morale in the beginning. Their last ounce of courage to fight with Zhang Heng disappeared when they saw what happened to their boss. Immediately, they turned around and wanted to run away. They would rather jump off the building, risking broken legs, than face Zhang Heng. And Zhang Heng was not in a hurry to go after them. He first went downstairs to check the situation.

In terms of numbers, the patrol team was still at a disadvantage. And their combat skills might be weaker than their opponents as well. However, since Iron Handcuff's plan failed miserably, his men had lost the will to fight. They did not even get to carry out their backup plan. The sudden appearance of the patrol team had caused panic within them. Iron Handcuff had brought all the elites to go upstairs to deal with Zhang Heng, while the dwarf was left downstairs to lead the battle. Unfortunately, fighting wasn't his best suit.

When they saw Black Mamba and the rest of the gang members jumping down from the buildings, their last hope was crushed. They were almost frightened to death, and they shouted that Iron Handcuffs and Broken Figner were dead. This bad news had caused the rest of the gang members to put down their weapons and surrender.

And this marked the first victory of the patrol team.

Chapter 836: I'm In

Aris actually had some worries before tonight's battle. As captain, he knew about the strength of his patrol team reasonably well. Although they trained every day, their combat experience was still not enough to handle a real battle. Besides, they hadn't even fought with those small-time thugs that caused trouble on the street, not to mention that Iron Handcuff's gang had more people than them.

However, the course of the battle afterward went beyond his expectations. The patrol team did suffer some losses when they fought with them, but since Iron Handcuff's men did not expect that the patrol team would appear suddenly, they were caught off guard. They fought very carefully and did not take the opportunity to attack them aggressively.

When the patrol team gradually got used to the battle rhythm, their previous training finally showed some results. Of course, everyone performed differently. Some people were determined to execute Aris's orders step by step, while some felt uncomfortable when they saw blood, and it slowed them down a lot. In contrast, the others seemed to have turned on a switch somewhere in their bodies, causing them to fight without fear.

Among them, Marcus and two other young men who had only recently joined the patrol team spontaneously formed a small group to watch each other's backs during the fight. They even ignored Aris's orders. They left the patrol team and charged at the spot with most enemies after they had a taste of blood.

Marcus took the lead and charged at the dwarf with both his short swords. The fear kicked in, and the dwarf immediately summoned three of his men to stop Marcus. And Marcus managed to kill one of them. However, it bought the dwarf more time to bring in more reinforcements. By the time Marcus realized it, he was already surrounded by more enemies. Marcus wiped a random enemy's blood off his face and formed a triangle formation with the other two patrol members. They then went into frenzy mode and killed all the enemies that charged at them.

At this time, the dwarf was determined to go all out to deal with the three of them. He vowed to give these three patrol members who dared to mess with him a valuable lesson. Just when the three of them were about collapse, Black Mamba and his men jumped down from the building. It was at that time that the people downstairs realized that Iron Handcuff and Broken Finger were dead. Immediately, everyone lost their will to fight.

Marcus and his comrades took this time to catch a breath. At the same time, Aris and the other patrol members had caught up to them. They then started to hunt down the rest of Iron Handcuff's gang members that were on the run. Among them, Marcus managed to kill the dwarf. Black Mamba hurt his legs when he jumped down from the building. However, he was lucky enough to have one of his men help him get to an alley. Not too long after that, Black Mamba heard a series of footsteps coming from behind him.

Soap and the other patrol members seemed to be more nervous than Black Mamba. After all, there was a huge gap of strength between them. A single word from Black Mamba could seal the fate of Soap and the others. However, fate played a cruel joke on them. It was Soap and the others' turn to hunt them down.

Looking at the few teenagers in front of him, Black Mamba's men were furious. "Do you wish to die now? Why are you coming after us?! Get lost!"

Soap and others were taken aback, but they did not turn around and run. Instead, they walked a few steps forward, and at the same time, pulled out the daggers from their waists.

"Boss Black Mamba, I'm sorry," Soap confessed. "Our task tonight was to kill you." After saying this, he seemed to have found some courage. He then looked at the other person, "As for other people, as long as they surrender, we will not kill them, and they will continue to receive income."

"Receive income? Iron Handcuff is gone. Who else will pay us?" Black Mamba's men protested furiously.

"Me." Soap pointed at his nose and said in a soft tone, "I will take over Iron Handcuff's business and manage the thieves in these three streets."

"You?!" Black Mamba's men were exasperated.

"Of course, I can't do it alone. The people in the patrol will help me," Soap said. "The only requirement is that I have to kill Black Mamba first."

"You are a puppet of the patrol team!" Black Mamba's man suddenly realized.

It would be inappropriate for the patrol team to manage those thieves. If they wanted to make more money, they had to support the person taking over Iron handcuff's business. And that person was Soap. Soap was young, and his strength average. And he had no experience in managing people. Hence, it was

difficult to convince anyone to obey his order. He was definitely not the best candidate to inherit Iron Handcuff's business. But on the other hand, he was easier to be controlled. The other reason Zhang Heng valued him was that he had a small appetite, and it was easy to satisfy him for now.

It was not surprising that Zhang Heng chose him as Iron Handcuff's successor. Of course, Soap was just a puppet to him and Zhang Heng intended to hand over the gang to Marcus. Black Mamba finally realized that the patrol team's true intention was to take over the gang.

Such a thing was ubiquitous in this place, especially among the small forces. There were gangs and people being wiped out every day. During the early days, Iron Handcuff and his men fought hard to take over the business of controlling the thieves in these three streets. However, the people that attacked them this time were the patrol members. And it was something that had never happened before.

Black Mamba grinned and smiled miserably. "I lost the fight. I won't deny that. But don't have to kill all of us. I am different from Broken Finger and Iron Handcuff. I have always been a very peaceful person. Instead of killing me, you might as well let me assist you. With my help, you will be more likely to master the business left by Iron Handcuff. Besides, I also know where Iron Handcuff hides all his income over the years. I will use all those money to buy my life. You can keep this money for yourself, and I will cooperate with you to keep it a secret."

Soap and others were shocked when they heard Black Mamba's offer. Since they were just ordinary thieves, their families were not very rich. Earlier, Skinny Monkey's sister had fallen ill, and they had to use the money they stole to pay for her treatment. Now, with such a large sum of money placed in front of them, they also realized that Iron Handcuff must have earned tons of money after running the gang for so long. With this money, they could even consider moving out of this slum.

Soap and others looked at each other.

Black Mamba added another sentence at the right time, "If you want to know more, come over. I can tell you more. Don't worry. I have no weapons." Black Mamba raised his hands while talking.

Soap knew that he might be lying but could not resist the temptation of money. So he walked toward Black Mamba. He then bent down and said in Soap's ear, "Listen, Iron Handcuff hides his money at..."

When he spoke halfway, he drew a short knife from his cuff. Black Mamba knew that the only person that could fight a little was Soap. He was going to turn into an adult soon. As long as he dealt with Soap, he could eliminate the remaining three people easily. Besides, he still had his subordinate with him. Although he hurt his foot and could not catch up with others, he still possessed the strength to eliminate the remaining three people.

But Black Mamba did not expect a dagger to pierce his back in the next moment.

"Sorry, boss." Black Mamba turned around with his last straw of strength. And he saw his subordinate apologized to him. "Although you treat me well, I am really short of money. Since the new boss is still willing to pay us, I don't mind having a change of management." He then drew his dagger and nodded at Soap, who was almost frightened to death. "He's lying. Iron Handcuff gambled away all his money. I will join your gang now, boss."

Chapter 837: Changes

With the death of Black Mamba, the clean-up officially came to an end. As promised, Zhang Heng appointed Soap as the new boss and took over the gang left behind by Iron Handcuff. On the other hand, Marcus was responsible for communicating with Soap.

Both knew that Zhang Heng intended to make Marcus the actual boss of the gang. However, since Marcus was still a patrol member, he was unsuitable to take over the gang. That was why Zhang Heng assigned Soap as the new boss. With that, Zhang Heng could guarantee the safety of Marcus to a certain extent.

Neither of them had any objections.

From a lowly thief, Soap had turned into a gang boss overnight, breaking away from the life requiring him to steal every day. It was definitely a huge jump and transition for him. What Marcus valued more, however, was not the newly minted power but getting Zhang Heng to notice him. He seemed to have made up his mind to bet everything he had on Zhang Heng. When the time came, he could withdraw from the patrol and take charge of the gang.

But Zhang Heng did not agree to his request, at least not now.

While waiting to end this matter altogether, Zhang Heng looked up, and Dadatis was long gone.

Zhang Heng retracted his gaze and clapped his hands to attract everyone's attention. He then said, "I'm very grateful to everyone for helping me tonight. All of you have fought valiantly and defeated a lot of enemies. I am proud of you. To express my gratitude, I want to invite everyone for drinks. I wonder if anyone is interested."

"Now?" Aris was surprised. "Although we won the battle, many of us still have injuries..."

Before he could finish, he heard someone say, "Those injuries are nothing. We have just endured such an epic battle. How can there be no alcohol?! Don't blame us for breaking your wallets later."

His words immediately triggered the approval of many. After this battle, the patrol team's confidence had increased tremendously, as if they were reborn from ashes. All that accumulated frustration was now gone, and everyone's faces were filled with confidence and pride. Not only did they show no signs of exhaustion, but they even seemed to run out of places to spend their extra energy. So, Zhang Heng suggested buying them drinks to let the alcohol drain all that unused strength.

In the end, Aris did not get to say that they still needed to patrol the street tomorrow. And he did not want to make everyone unhappy. However, when Aris looked at his team members again, he found out that he suddenly found out that they looked like strangers to him.

Especially Marcus and others, the looked at Zhang Heng was as if they worshipped him. After all, anyone clever enough would know that although the patrol team performed well tonight, the key to victory was that Zhang Heng got rid of Iron Handcuff and Broken Finger. And at the same time, he had put enough fear in Black Mamba and other gang members to care only about themselves and eventually flee this place. Zhang Heng predicted almost every step that Iron Handcuff and others made. From there, he formulated a corresponding plan to deal with them. Coupled with his previous outstanding performance in the tavern, he quickly gained his first batch of hardcore followers.

Aris knew that Marcus's small group still respect him. However, if his order conflicted with Zhang Heng's order, Marcus and the others would definitely choose to obey Zhang Heng.

If they acted in such a way, what about the others? Perhaps they were still willing to obey his orders now, but if this went on, Aris was sure that it would not be long before he lost all his power as a captain.

Still, Aris chose not to say a word about it because he had neither the ability nor the intention to prevent this from happening. When he was the captain of this patrol team, the patrol team was the embarrassment of this place. Although external environmental factors contributed to such a failure, Aris, as a captain, was partly responsible for it.

Now that someone was more qualified than him to captain the patrol team, he was more than willing to take a step back. However, Aris did not know how Zhang Heng would shape the team's future and what would become of them.

The change had already begun tonight.

After Zhang Heng promised to buy the team drinks, he pulled Soap aside and whispered something into his ears. Immediately, Soap had a shocked look on his face. And he kept on nodding after that.

Soap did not expect that Zhang had no intention to stop after taking over Iron Handcuff's gang. Immediately, Soap was given a second goal, and he only had two days to settle down his gang members. It was at that time that Soap felt the pressure bearing down on his shoulders.

Only then did he realize that it was not easy to become a puppet. He figured that he might need to go through a battle of a larger scale in the future. And he did not know how long he could live. Soap was reminded of Black Mamba's surprised look before his body slowly fell to the ground. He could not believe that he felt sad for Black Mamba.

Would this be his fate in the future? Since he had entered this line of work, he now had to endure the dangers that came with it. Only by constantly and relentlessly climbing up would he have a sense of security.

After realizing this, Soap felt that he had to make some changes as well. Perhaps after dodging Black Mamba's attack, his mind had undergone some subtle changes. He was very close to Skinny Monkey and the others, and although they were not blood-related, they were like brothers. In order to save Skinny Monkey's sister, he had gone against Iron Handcuff's orders and used the stolen money to pay for her treatment.

However, when Soap looked at Skinny Monkey again, it made him wonder if Skinny Monkey would stab him if he too went on the path like Black Mamba one day.

Soap thought that Skinny Money would not do it for the money. However, if someone placed more bargaining chips on the scale... Soap shuddered, and he did not want to think about it anymore.

Skinny Monkey, on the other side, felt happy that their lives were transformed. He was dancing and singing happily. When he saw Soap looking over, he smiled and shouted at him. He then winked. "Boss, what are we going to do next?"

“Marca and his men run the prostitute business at the two streets nearby us. Our next goal is to absorb them.” Soap tried hard to recall the way Iron Handcuff behaved and talked, and he unconsciously imitated it. However, in actual fact, he wanted to emulate Zhang Heng. Unfortunately, Zhang Heng’s temperament was too unique, hence Soap felt it more logical to imitate Iron Handcuff.

“Marca and his thugs are very powerful, and they are way stronger than ours.” Skinny Monkey was startled when he heard the plan, and he was worried.

“It doesn’t matter if they are more powerful than us. We will always find a way to defeat them,” Soap said afterward as though patting himself on the back. After that, he repeated it again, with a firm tone. “We will definitely find a way.”

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Iron Handcuff and his gang of thieves were just an inconspicuous, tiny force. Hence, the change of boss in the gang did not attract too much attention. After Soap took over the position, he did not reduce the gang members’ income. So, it did not matter to them who the boss was anymore. However, the changes in the patrol team were witnessed by many residents.

The main reason was that they had changed their spirits. When they patrolled the street, they were no longer fearful of the thugs. Instead, they hold their heads high, and they even got themselves a set of new weapons and armor. Now, and they finally looked like a formal patrol team.

Chapter 838: Farewell

Recently, Zhang Heng experienced his tightest schedule ever. During the day, he had to deal with the expansion of his power. When they first took over the Iron Handcuff’s gang, they were just a small and inconspicuous force. But afterward, the newly appointed boss, Soap, discarded his cowardice and transformed himself into a mad dog. He began to provoke the nearby gangs and declared war on them. Once, he even provoked two more powerful gangs on the same day. Hence, Soap was supposed to be killed by his enemies when he headed for lunch. Fortunately, the patrol team that was waiting at the side managed to stop them in time, eventually saving him. Simultaneously, all the gangsters who attempted to kill Soap were taken down, and they were charged with attempted murder.

That night, someone came to attack the patrol station. If it were the old station, they would have been forced to release the captured gang members, and Aris might have had to apologize to the gang boss. But now, the patrol team had gathered their family members in a unit on the top floor. After that, the rest put on armor, took up weapons, and silently guarded behind the gate.

A short while later, Soap received news that another gang would attack the patrol station. So, he quickly rushed over with his men and greeted the gang boss with a grin. Before the enemies could figure out what was going on, Soap and his men had drawn their weapons, readied to attack. And on the other side, the patrol team opened the gate, and Aris led his men to charge at them. Soap and Aris attacked them from both sides. In a blink of an eye, they defeated the enemies. The enemies were then forced to drop their weapons, kneel, and surrender.

This scene was similar to the night they defeated Iron Handcuff’s gang. Although the enemy outnumbered them, they did not expect that they’d be working with the patrol team to mess them up.

This was the second time Soap and the patrol team set a trap for them to step in. They had lost so thoroughly this time that getting back up again would be very hard.

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In just two weeks, Soap's gang had expanded six-fold, and they were almost at their limit. His gang hadn't been built on a good foundation, much like a premature, deformed baby. Before he even learned to walk, he had started baring his fangs, attempting to chew at his enemies, hunting down all that stood in his path. Under the care of the patrol team, however, he prevailed.

Presently, they had now almost made all the money that they could make.

Now everyone knew that Soap's gang was under the protection of the patrol team, naturally causing the other gangs to be more careful. They had to make sure that the two sides would not work together to attack them. Earlier, Iron Head had sent a team of people to attack Soap, but they failed miserably. After that, they sent another team of people to attack the patrol station but were yet defeated. Basically, a situation like this would not happen anymore.

On the other hand, Soap also needed some time to digest what he had swallowed recently. Whether it was the area he took over or the gang members he had, he could not even remember his men's names. Naturally, there was no sense of unity among them. If he was not paying them, his men would have run away and joined other gangs. Besides, he just killed another gang boss and had no idea what the new members would think of him. When he learned that Zhang Heng had decided to give him a two-week leave to deal with his internal affairs, Soap was relieved.

Zhang Heng was also a little surprised by Soap's performance. It was much better than he expected. Considering the latter's background, Zhang Heng initially thought that he could expand his power by two or three times, but he did not expect that he would exceed the limit of growing further.

Nonetheless, Zhang Heng had no intention to change plans. He summoned the group of gangsters who helped him investigate Varo's enemies, and he was preparing to create a new gang. For now, Zhang Heng had no plan to ask Soap to expand his gang. That was because his gang was close to growing into a medium-sized one. And they had also joined forces with the patrol team. It began to draw the public's attention.

So Zhang Heng intended to create a new gang. This time the patrol team would not help them so blatantly. The new gang also had an advantage, however. At the same time, Zhang Heng just finished his first performance at the Victor Arena. That day, the stands were filled to the brim with spectators. Mark Reuss, the greedy gladiator school owner, sold 50% more tickets than the arena's capacity, leaving the audience to worry if the stand would actually collapse.

Fortunately, the performance would undoubtedly be a huge success. Zhang Heng again proved his popularity as the number one gladiator in Rome, and according to the agreement between him and Mark Reuss, he also received a large sum of money.

Zhang Heng used half of his money to form the new gang. He also planned to use the threat posed by the patrol team and Soap, the Mad Dog, to force some small gangs to join his new gang. After that, he would turn his man into the boss of the new gang. And now, the embryonic form of this alliance had begun to take shape.

Zhang Heng had been very sensible. He chose to absorb the gangs at the bottom of the pyramid and avoid touching the powerful ones. When those big gangs realized what was happening, they would find that the bottom of the pyramid had gone through a huge change.

Other than that, the patrol team had also started recruiting more soldiers after their big windfall. Of course, the new recruits were not considered patrol members just yet. They could only be regarded as informants who assisted the patrol members in arresting criminals. However, these informants could also turn into thugs when necessary.

This place was full of poverty and sin. However, one good thing did come out of the poor conditions. As long as one was willing to spend the money, they could recruit as many as they liked to work for them. Zhang Heng's plan to integrate large and small forces was steadily advancing. His real focus, however, was not here.

It took two weeks for Dadatis to finish all the lessons, and since he memorized everything that Dadatis told him, Zhang Heng gained a Lv1 assassin skill. After he had fully understood and mastered those things, his skill should be upgraded to Lv2. It would take him two months to do so, however.

The time to say goodbye had come.

Dadatis told Zhang Heng that he had taught him everything he knew. He had been procrastinating for quite some time, and it was time to hit the road to accomplish what the priestess entrusted him with. So when their last training session ended, the two said goodbye by the Tiber River. And Zhang Heng also brought a bottle of wine to bid him farewell.

Dadatis asked after he took over the wine, "How about Commodus? Did he visit you again? With the interest he has in you, shouldn't he come to visit you once? After all, it has been a long time since you won the championship."

Zhang Heng shook his head. "I think the people around him are stopping him from seeing me. When I resolve the matter here, I will return in Commodus's sights."

"That's good, get rid of Altrus as soon as possible, and you can be a Balance Blade core member sooner." After Zhang Heng told him his plan, Dadatis no longer had any doubts about him. He then uncorked the wine bottle and took in a whiff. "This wine is not bad, worth at least three gold coins."

"I'm glad you like it."

Zhang Heng was not short of money now.

Dadatis then pushed the cork into the bottle again, and he sighed. "Do you remember what I said before, where the Hound killed one of us? They have not done anything for a long time, and that's not a good sign. I've been a little nervous recently, and I feel that something big might happen soon."

"Did your god not tell you the answer?" Zhang Heng asked rhetorically.

"Watch your mouth. The priestess often tells me that you are rude and disrespectful."

Dadatis was displeased.

"Then, did she tell you that she planned to throw me into the river?"

“Anyway, you are going to be one of us soon. Try to get along well with your companions. Given the distrust that the other members have toward you, you can only talk to the priestess if you have any questions. I will tell you how to contact her later,” Dadatis said.

Zhang Heng shrugged. “You have the final say.”

“I thought I could stay with you a little longer and arrange everything for you, but it now seems that you can only rely on yourself.” Dadatis sighed again.

“Don’t worry. I can handle the tasks given to me. Don’t be long-winded. Hurry up and go your way. You are so old. It will take you much time to get to your destination,” Zhang Heng said.

“...”

“In that case, let’s say goodbye here.” Dadatis stopped walking. “I also left a gift for you. Due to your bad attitude, I decided not to tell you where I placed it. Figure it out yourself.”

Dadatis finished his last sentence and felt a lot more comfortable. He winked at Zhang Heng again before he jumped on the boat by the river.

Chapter 839: Your Heart Jumps Too Fast

Although Dadatis did not tell Zhang Heng where he hid the gift, it wasn’t difficult figuring out the answer. Dadatis was a very cautious person. The two usually met at night, and they had only been to a couple of places. All he needed to do was go to each of those places and cross them out one by one.

After sending Dadatis off, Zhang Heng went to a small bathhouse, which was very close to where he lived. Considering it was only open during the day, Dadatis selected it as their temporary training ground at night. After making some deductions, Zhang Heng figured Dadatis would have most likely hidden the present here.

Zhang Heng was very familiar with this place. He climbed over the wall and bypassed the place where the guard slept. The bathhouse was not that big, but there were still heaps of places for Dadatis to hide the gift. Considering the fact that he might not be able to find it immediately, the gift would not be hidden in a place the ordinary person would accidentally come across. Hence, Zhang Heng eliminated the spots where the ordinary customers would go to.

After that, the first place that he thought of was the locker area. Usually, the customers would store their clothes in the locker. At most, they could store their belongings there for a day. When the bathhouse closed for the day, they had to clear out all their stuff. However, the regular affluent customers would rent a long-term locker for themselves.

Zhang Heng then walked to where those long-term lockers were and checked the names written on them. Unexpectedly, he could not find Dadatis or his own name on them. To be safe, he opened the lockers and checked one by one. It was confirmed that Dadatis’s gift was not placed here.

So Zhang Heng could only continue to consider other possibilities. He circled the bathing area, and when he walked to the cold-water zone, he noticed the twelve pillars there. Eight of them were supporting the roof, and the other four pillars served as a decorative piece.

He moved around and found a crack on the top of a decorative pillar.

“Did Dadatis think that he is still young and strong?”

Zhang Heng tried the firmness of the pillar, and he used his hands and feet together to climb up the pillar. He then put his hand into the crack. The next moment, he heard a system notification,

[Game item found—Heart of Kreis (unidentified)]

Zhang Heng took the game item and slid it down the pillar. After that, he took a good look at the fingernail-sized sapphire in his palm. Although it had not been identified yet, he could figure out the item’s function when he back on the ground. He noticed that his senses had become sharper, and his landing much lighter than before, his breathing almost inaudible.

If he was right, this item allowed its user to conceal the sounds the user made while on the move or hiding. Kreis was supposed to be the God of Assassins, and this was the perfect item for Zhang Heng, who had just started to work as an assassin. After that, Zhang Heng unfolded the little papyrus wrapping the Heart of Kreis.

Only one sentence was on the paper. “Now you, believe me, right?”

Zhang Heng smiled. After playing so many games, he had become more and more aware of the nature of those gods. Instead of saying that God created humankind, it was more like humankind created those gods to satisfy their needs. In the early days, when productivity wasn’t that developed yet, many worshipped gods to strengthen their reign, or because they were afraid of death and disease. They had to make sure that the stability of the social structure was upheld.

The existence of gods could explain many unknown phenomena. With the improvement of productivity and the spread of popular culture, more and more things that looked mysterious in the past could now be explained by science. And humans no longer relied on their prayers to win battles or reap good harvests. Hence, the group of ancient gods began to weaken. And the new gods started to surface. For example, Zhang Heng suspected that he encountered the God of Technology in the Apollo quest and the God of Lego in the Lego World.

However, Zhang Heng did not expect that Kreis would be selected to become one of the gods because she was not as popular. It seemed there were more assassins in Rome than Zhang Heng thought.

After that, Zhang Heng put away Dadatis’s gift and left the bathhouse.

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The patrol team was still working on the integration of the bottom forces.

Simultaneously, the anti-patrol alliance on the other side was in its full force while Soap took the time out to deal with his gang’s internal affair. During this time, the small forces in this area began to choose a side actively and passively. As a result, the situation on the street worsened. Sometimes, two different gangs would just randomly fight on the street.

However, Zhang Heng had no intention to stop them from having conflict. Instead, he wanted to make use of the conflict to eliminate some of the unstable forces. With that, his people would have better control over their forces.

His plan had been going on smoothly and faster than he expected. Unfortunately, an accident still happened in the second week.

When Zhang Heng and Marcus were patrolling the street, they were told that a patrol member on his off day had been blocked by a group of masked men while buying a loaf of bread in a bakery. However, the member was no longer a sack of potatoes to be kicked around. When he saw the masked men, he threw away his bread immediately and drew out the weapon he carried.

Despite his brave performance, the enemies still had the absolute advantage in numbers.

Several people rushed up at him and snatched his weapon, and started to beat up the patrol member. Zhang Heng and Marcus quickly put aside whatever they were doing when they got the news and ran to where the patrol member was.

When the incident happened, Zhang Heng and Marcus found out that onlookers had surrounded the bakery.

Marcus was standing in front of the crowd, and Zhang Heng got into the crowd from behind, trying to squeeze forward. At this moment, a dagger quietly pierced into Zhang Heng's heart. Surrounded by so many people, his body was in close proximity to them, not to mention how noisy the surroundings were. Logically, there was no way Zhang Heng could guard against this fatal blow.

The assassin was obviously very satisfied with his silent attack. To him, Zhang Heng was surely dead by now. He had worked as an assassin for so many years, and he had never missed his targets. He was confident in his strength, and he initially wanted to attack Zhang Heng head-on. However, his employer had repeatedly emphasized that he should be careful of Zhang Heng. Hence, he finally came up with this plan.

It could be said that he had perfect control over the environment and his target's mental state.

However, he did not expect that his perfect strike would fail in the end.

A second ago, Zhang Heng was still in front of him. And the next second, he had lost sight of him. After that, he felt a stink on his wrist, and now the dagger had gone to Zhang Heng's hand.

"Who is your teacher? Didn't he teach you not to keep staring at your target before you assassinate him? I can see through your plan now. Besides, your heart beats too fast when you wanted to attack me."

Chapter 840: Uninvited Guest

The assassin didn't expect that he'd miss his target. And the worst part was that it took him a long time to come up with this plan. Fortunately, he was not a new assassin. He realized that it was not the time to be consumed by ego even though Marcus was not with Zhang Heng.

When the assassin discovered that Zhang Heng was the champion of the Amphitheatrum Flavium, he knew that he would not stand a chance against him. So, he did not hesitate to run after he missed his target, pretty confident in his stealth ability.

Almost every assassin had worked hard to perfect their stealth ability. Not only would it help them to approach their targets silently, but it could also help them to escape, thus saving their lives.

And as the assassin ran, he deliberately created more chaos in the crowd. He pushed and kicked the people around him. The people he chose to mess with looked like they had bad tempers, instantly angered when the assassin irritated them. The assassin, however, made sure that the men that he annoyed wouldn't know that he was the culprit. Since they could not find the instigator, these hotheads had to vent their anger on the people around them. Soon, more people had started fights, making the whole place even more chaotic.

The assassin turned around, looked back, and saw that Zhang Heng did not come after him. He just stood still and watched quietly from a distance. This gave the assassin a little relief.

He did not lower down his guard and stop running, however. After escaping the mob, he plunged into the nearby alleys, running across four in one go. Only then did he slow down a little. Next, he changed clothes quickly, walked out of the alley, and pretended to be a customer in front of a small stall while actually scrutinizing his surroundings. After confirming that there were no suspicious people around him, he stood up.

But what he did not notice was that a pair of eyes were trailing him from the other side of the roof. Zhang Heng wasn't in a hurry to rush to a confrontation since the man below him was just a hired assassin. In other words, the things he knew would be very limited. In all fairness, however, his skills as an assassin were pretty good. Zhang Heng figured that he could be one of the best assassins among his peers.

In terms of assassin skills, he was currently better than Zhang Heng. However, the potential of the two wasn't something that could be compared. Zhang Heng's teacher was Dadatis, and he was among the world's best assassins. For now, Zhang Heng had not yet mastered everything that Dadatis taught him. Fortunately, assassin skills weren't the only skill that he learned. He also had the Heart of Kreis with him, a perfect item to track someone down since it allowed him to move around without a single sound.

Zhang Heng tailed the assassin all the way, wanting to see who he would come into contact with next. Considering how he had taken such a long time to prepare and execute this plan, then failed miserably, he would obviously need to give his employer a good explanation.

After that, the assassin walked into a laundromat. Zhang Heng knew that it belonged to a small gang from this area. Having also joined the anti-patrol alliance, this gang was one of the more aggressive groups that had always promoted violence. Their goal was to curb the patrol's growth.

However, Zhang Heng made no moves when he entered the laundrette. After that, he waited for about a quarter of an hour before the assassin came out of the shop, personally escorted out by the small gang's boss. Zhang Heng then waited for his target to walk for a considerable distance and began tailing him again.

If it was someone else, they might have thought that the small gang's boss was the one that hired the assassin to kill Zhang Heng. After all, Zhang Heng was working his way to becoming a full-fledged assassin. Earlier, he had learned from Dadatis about how an assassin's mind worked.

Excluding the incompetent ones, most assassins would have a handler. The handler would help them to scout for more business opportunities, and at the same time, negotiate with their employers as well. When the salary was agreed upon, the employer would tell the handler they wanted the assassin to

eliminate. After completing the task, the handler would take part in the assassin's reward as his pay. Their pay was about 10% to 20% of the assassins' reward.

This was done to protect the employer. Even if the assassin was caught while carrying out the mission, they couldn't tell who their employers were. Secondly, doing this protected the assassin and prevented the employer from killing the assassin after completing the task.

And this assassin who dared to attack him was good. Obviously, it wasn't the random lyncher that one could pick off the streets. It made no sense for him to contact his employer after he had personally failed the mission.

At the same time, Zhang Heng was very patient about it. He followed him for about half an hour before the assassin walked into a butcher shop. The butcher shop's owner obviously knew him, seeing how he did not ask his customer what he wanted to buy. After confirming that there was no suspicious person behind him, he opened the side door and allowed him to enter the backyard. Once he got there, he put down his guard entirely and complained, "What kind of job did you pick for me?"

In the backyard, a Samaritan who was blind in one eye dangled a bag of gold coins. And there was a wonderful melody coming out from it. He raised his head when he heard the question, "He is the champion of the Amphitheatrum Flavium! Didn't you say you can deal with him? I asked for three hundred gold coins from the person so you could complete this task. You can go on retirement once you complete this job, and I can also make a lot of money. How did it go? Please tell me that you have completed the task!"

There was a touch of eagerness in Samaritan's eye.

"It's a pity that I brought you bad news this time. I failed the task." The assassin shook his head.

"How is that even possible?! You are my best assassin. You said that the gladiatorial champion possesses only a strong frontal fighting ability, and he was no different from ordinary people?!" The Samaritan had a hard time accepting the bad news.

"I don't know how he dodged my fatal attack. He even took the dagger from me, and I don't feel too good about it," the assassin hesitated. "It seems he and I are the same kinds of people."

"What? Are you from the far and mysterious Eastern Empire, too?" the one-eyed Samaritan asked.

"I'm not talking about where he comes from. For a moment, I thought he was also an assassin."

"Do you think he is an assassin too? Then why would he give that up and transform himself into a gladiator?"

"I know it sounds a bit ridiculous. Forget it... Maybe I'm wrong," the assassin muttered. "And I've also managed to lose him and put on a show to confuse him before I come here."

Before he could finish his sentence, the one-eyed Samaritan on the opposite side had his eye wide open as if he saw a ghost.

So the assassin also turned around, followed where the Samaritan looked and saw Zhang Heng standing by the wall.

“I heard you talking about me, and I just have a few questions to ask. So please forgive me for the uninvited visit.”