

48 Hours 841

Chapter 841: Suspected Assassination

When the assassin saw Zhang Heng, he was terrified. He was supposed to be a master of stealth, yet failed to realize that he was being followed. And he had been followed for a long time, from the laundry shop all the way to the meat shop. And Zhang Heng had waited until the assassin met his handler before showing up.

When the assassin was reminded of the strange feeling he got earlier, he could not help but ask, "Are you... are you also an assassin?"

"Unfortunately, it's still my turn to ask the questions." Zhang Heng raised his eyebrows, and he turned around to look at the one-eyed Samaritan. "It appears you are his handler. If so, you should know the person paying you for this service, right? Tell me. Who wants me dead?"

The Samaritan had quickly calmed down after his initial bout of panic. He simply shook his head, and said, "I don't know what you are talking about; I'm just the boss of this meat shop; I don't know what the heck assassination is."

"Really?" Zhang Heng did not rush him after he heard his reply. Instead, he drew the two Persian swords from his waist.

"What are you going to do to me? Arrest me and bring me back to the patrol station?" The one-eyed Samaritan raised his voice, "Do you have any evidence that I am his handler?!"

"Arrest you? I think you just complicate the whole thing. It seems you have no idea how the patrol team works recently." Zhang Heng said, "I was very careful when I came over here. No one on the street noticed that I entered your meat shop. In other words, no one will know that I kill you here."

The one-eyed Samaritan was left in shock when he heard what Zhang Heng said. He did not expect Zhang Heng, a patrol team member responsible for maintaining the area's order, would break the law. To him, Zhang Heng was no longer a law enforcer. Now, he was just a robber.

Immediately, the Samaritan turned around and looked at his assassin to seek help. At that time, the assassin was looking around as well. It seemed he was looking for a viable way to flee from this place as well.

He was just an ordinary assassin. After all, his forte being sneak attacks and assassinations. It wasn't possible for him to defeat a gladiatorial champion. Fortunately, the burly butcher from the meat shop walked into the backyard. He was the Samaritan's bodyguard. Selling meat was just his side job. His real job was to ensure the safety of the Samaritan.

Earlier, the Samaritan had deliberately spoken louder. It seemed effective enough to summon his bodyguard to come and rescue him—the butcher rushed over with a sharp knife the moment he spotted Zhang Heng, while the assassin on the other side was caught in a dilemma. He wanted to take advantage of this rare opportunity and run away. However, when he thought about Zhang Heng's extraordinary tracking ability, he became unsure if he could get away. Besides, he had a good relationship with the one-eyed Samaritan. The latter had been his handler for four or five years, and it would be unethical to betray him at such a critical moment.

Thus, the assassin gritted his teeth and rushed forward to help the butcher attack Zhang Heng. With the butcher in front of him, he could adopt his best combat strategy. He believed that the two of them would stand a chance to defeat Zhang Heng.

While the fight ensued, the Samaritan jumped up from his chair, turned his head, and ran towards the house. Knowing how dangerous his business was and the number of haters he had, he was well prepared to face such life-threatening situations. Not only did he have the butcher as his bodyguard, but he also had a secret tunnel hidden under his bed. It led to the alley outside the shop.

When the Samaritan entered the secret tunnel, he suddenly felt a sharp pain in his right foot.

Zhang Heng had nailed his feet to the ground with his Persian sword!

“Where are you going? You haven’t even answered all my questions. Stay for a while, please.”

Zhang Heng then blocked the butcher’s knife with another Persian sword while dodging the assassin’s sneak attack. It resulted in the assassin moving half a beat slower when he stepped back, and Zhang Heng almost slashed his stomach.

When the Samaritan saw the three of them finally fighting together, he wanted to escape again. However, after two attempts, he still failed to pull out the Persian sword stuck in his foot. Instead, the excruciating pain caused him to scream and sweat profusely. On the other hand, the butcher he had high hopes for was losing the battle. He had finally got to experience the true strength of the gladiatorial champion. If it were not for the assassin, he would have already lost the battle. Now, he was stuck in a tough situation, and it was only a matter of time before Zhang Heng beat him to the ground.

At the same time, the assassin who partnered up with the butcher also realized that the situation was worse than he had imagined. Even though the two teamed up against Zhang Heng, they were still no match for him. Now, the assassin couldn’t flee from this place. That was because Zhang Heng did not spend too much of his effort to deal with the butcher. Most of the time, he focussed on dealing with the assassin.

The assassin realized that he could not leave even if he wanted to. No matter where he moved, Zhang Heng would seal his retreat in advance with his sword.

His forehead was covered in sweat. Since he was about to lose the battle, the assassin pulled his trump card. He threw the weapon in his hand to the ground, took a half step back, and raised his hands, saying, “I surrender!”

And Zhang Heng pointed his sword at his nose. The Samaritan, on the other side, almost cried when he heard that. Earlier, he had endured excruciating pain and pulled out the sword stuck in his foot. After the Samaritan heard that the assassin was going to surrender, he could not help but shout, “You should have surrendered a little earlier! If you did that, I wouldn’t have had to pull out the sword in my foot!”

After that, he looked at the butcher and shouted at him, “Stop fighting. We can’t beat him anyway. We will surrender this time.”

The butcher hesitated for a while and finally dropped the sharp knife in his hand.

Zhang Heng did not intend to kill him anymore. He took his other Persian sword from the Samaritan. The latter quickly asked the butcher to get him a cloth to bandage the wound on his foot. The Samaritan had suffered a lot this time. He was carried back to the chair by the butcher and assassin, and he complained nonstop about it.

“So you want to know who hired me to kill you? I’m afraid I’ll have to disappoint you because I don’t know the person who contacted me. I have never seen him before. I don’t think he is from around here.”

“And?”

“And... that’s it.” The Samaritan looked a little innocent. “We don’t ask questions that do not concern us. I negotiated the price with him and collected his money to execute his order. We didn’t talk much. I don’t even know how he found me. By the way, he even specifically told me to make it look like the gang killed you. From here, you can know that the gangs were not the ones that ordered your death.”

“Don’t force me to stab your left foot,” Zhang Heng warned, “I have a way to check if you are lying. If this is it, why did you attempt to run away just now?”

There was a frustrated look on the Samaritan’s face, and after a moment, he said, “Well, the next thing that I’m about to tell you is just speculation. Although he hid it well, some of his small habits betrayed him. I think he is from the military. I always felt that this is an extremely complicated matter. The last thing I want is to get involved in any political events.”

“So why accept the deal, then?”

“Because the other party paid me too much,” the Samaritan confessed.

“Your hunch is correct. For your safety, you’d better not tell anyone that you’ve told me this,” replied Zhang Heng, indifferent. “Also, find someone to paint how the person looks like and show it to me.”

Chapter 842: Let Him In

Zhang Heng was a little surprised that the person who wanted him dead was an Imperial Guard. Considering that he had spent most of his time here taking down gangs, it was not surprising that the bigger gangs wanted him dead. However, it was bizarre that an Imperial Guard wanted him dead.

The person he first suspected was Clint. After all, Clint had a conflict of interest with him. Commodus now favored him more than anyone else, and if he was asked to work by Commodus’s side, there was a high chance that Clint’s position would be affected. In other words, if he died here, Clint would benefit the most.

And Clint had done something like this before. Earlier, he appointed Pannonax to make things difficult, not to mention that Pannonax was also an imperial guard. This time, it seemed Clint was eager to get rid of Zhang Heng once and for all after seeing how he improved the patrol team.

Zhang Heng also knew that he could be mistaken. Although assassination was the most effective method to get rid of someone, politicians never used this method unless it was their last resort. That was because if their target survived the assassination, they would have to bear a lot of risks.

After Zhang Heng talked to Clint, he proceeded to profile him. As expected, he was indeed full of jealousy and thirst for power. Once the situation worsened, he would not mind hiring someone to assassinate Zhang Heng. Most of the time, he was a relatively cautious and conservative politician.

This was evident in the way he dealt with Zhang Heng. More accustomed to hiding himself behind the scenes and twisting the existing rules to play to his advantage, assassinating Zhang Heng was not something he would do right now. This would just make it easier for his rivals to go against him. As of now, Zhang Heng was not too large of a threat. Taking such a huge risk wasn't worth it.

After that, Zhang Heng received the portrait given by the Samaritan and found that the person was not Pannonax. It was someone that he had never seen before. For now, Zhang could investigate this matter no further. The only thing he could do was ask the Samaritan to scrutinize the imperial guard that struck a deal with him. He didn't put much hope in this one either. The person who wanted him dead clearly tried his best to cover his tracks, not wanting anyone to know about him. After discovering that the assassin had failed to kill him, Zhang Heng figured that he would not contact the Samaritan again.

If he wanted to keep investigating, he had to wait until he returned to Commodus's side. By that time, there would be more opportunities to contact the imperial guards.

Although Zhang Heng's attempted assassination not life-threatening, it was a stark wake-up call for him. Now, he knew that someone was watching him from the dark.

This, however, did not affect the next step of his plan. Zhang Heng's wanted to integrate all large and steadily advancing smaller forces.

After all the bottom forces had chosen their sides, Zhang Heng soon started a new war. This time, he used the excuse of investigating a patrol member assaulted on the street to attack a medium-sized gang. Of course, Zhang Heng knew that the medium-sized gang was not the one responsible. Previously, the assassin had already confessed how he planned the assassination. After its failure, the assailants at the bakery quickly fled from the scene. The member of the patrol team suffered some minor injuries.

But it would be a pity for them not to take advantage of this incident, especially after Zhang Heng noticed that one of the accomplices belonged to the medium-sized gang. He managed to locate the accomplice and went ahead to plan the dramatic revenge.

The patrol team attacked the medium-sized gang after they refused to hand over the accomplice. While the gang boss was still trying to figure out what was going on, the other patrol team had already come knocking at his door.

The current patrol team had gone through a huge transformation. They were no longer the useless puppets they were a month and a half ago. Every single one of them had showered in the enemies' blood before, and they had been recruiting soldiers as well. Combined with the people they had spent money on to hire, they now had more than fifty people. With Zhang Heng leading the team, they were now stronger than ever.

The medium-sized gang had a lot of members, amounting to more than a hundred people. However, they seemed to lack teamwork, working all over the place around the area. It was difficult for them to gather at the same time.

Zhang Heng had stated that it was a grievance between the two parties. However, none of them informed Soap about it. According to the rules, it was difficult for other forces to intervene in a matter like this. In the end, he could only watch the medium-sized gang getting defeated by the patrol. Zhang Heng did not kill the gang boss this time. He was willing to show him mercy.

But even so, he received an invitation later. Someone had asked him for a drink at a tavern in five days.

Zhang Heng could not reject this invitation because it came from a person from one of the three major forces in the nearby area. And Zhang Heng figured that the other two major forces would be there as well. In other words, these gangs had reached their limits and wanted to stop what Zhang Heng did. If everything went well, they would attack him tonight.

If the patrol team could survive the attack, it meant they could continue to develop in the future. Strictly speaking, most of Zhang Heng's goals had been achieved. With the patrol team and the other small forces under his control, he was confident that he could pass the assessment two weeks later. However, if he wanted to complete all his plans, he would need to work hard for it.

To everyone's surprise, Zhang Heng paid Clint a visit.

The two talked for about an hour in Clint's study, which surprised his wife. She had rarely seen her husband, known for his efficiency, chatting with a person for so long. And he even sent Zhang Heng to the door personally after that.

After Zhang Heng left, Clint asked an old servant who served the two in the room just now, "What do you think of this?"

"Haven't you decided that you'd suppress him?" the old servant asked, "If that is the case, why would you help him?"

"Because, he turned out to be such an interesting person," Clint smiled. "And I can hardly refuse the bargaining chip he offered."

"Why, wasn't he asking for a favor?"

"Yes, but that's not the whole picture. I believe he has a backup plan," Clint said. "A person like him would not put all his chips on one person."

"But you suppressed him before, and then there is that incident. Aren't you afraid that he might retaliate when he gains power? Besides, you keep saying that the emperor values him a lot, and he just asked you about his current situation, right?"

"There are no absolute friends in politics, and naturally, no absolute enemies either." Clint smiled. "I'm beginning to think that it's not so bad having one more competitor. After all, we have the same opponent, and that person is Altrus, the emperor's most trusted person. He even gave his ring to Altrus. In the past two years, I have been sitting in a tough spot. Instead of hanging on, it'll be better that someone new be brought in to cause more chaos. He looks like a smart man, and he should know who his real enemy is."

Chapter 843: Trial

The day to meet up had finally come.

Zhang Heng was not the only one who received the invitation. On this day, all the high-level leaders of all the big and small gangs were there. In the morning, almost not a single soul hung around in the nearby streets. Instead, a group of fierce-looking strong men guarded the tavern and took control of the two streets nearby them.

Regardless of the size of their gang, the invited person could only bring two subordinates to the meeting. By doing that, they could prevent someone from taking this opportunity to make trouble. The mixed settlement of Jews and other foreigners in the southeastern part of Rome had been filled with chaos since Hadrian's time. Thieves, assassins, robbers, and villains loitered around, and they were unregulated by the law.

Most of the time, they were more accustomed to dealing with their problems using their fists. After all, this was a world where the strong preyed on the weak. At times, however, they would actually talk it out if they thought a war was not worthwhile. Most of the time, a negotiation would only involve a maximum of two to three parties. On the other hand, a negotiation led by one of three major forces would only happen once in six or seven years.

When everyone was summoned to this meeting, it could mean that a major event had taken place and had affected the vast majority of the forces. This time was no exception. Everyone who received an invitation knew the purpose of this gathering.

Many of them were waiting to see Zhang Heng and his patrol team unfold the drama before them.

Many, especially the small forces bullied by the patrol team, looked forward to returning to the good old days. They hoped the big forces could uphold justice for them, wanting them to restrain the patrol team and stop the patrol team from doing anything wrong. It would be perfect if they could make the patrol team return to their previous state.

Among them, one person showed the most eagerness. His eyes were filled with hatred. Everyone here knew about him. He was the medium-sized gang that was beaten up by the patrol team recently. The unlucky boss's nickname was Copper Arm.

After being defeated by the patrol team, he immediately ran to the Jewish's turf. The Jews had occupied the southeast part of this area. And at the same time, the most powerful gang in this region belonged to the Jews. With the largest number of members, they controlled almost half of the business in this area. Under normal circumstances, the Jewish gangs never interfered with the affairs of the smaller forces.

Considering the criminally rich environment in this place, there was never a shortage of the brave. The replacement of the bottom forces and turf battles was a common occurrence that happened almost every day. As long as the new successor could continue handing in money to the higher forces, they would not care who helped them manage their businesses.

Bronze Arm's status in this place was somewhat. A member of the Jewish gang, he dabbled in the money lending business in an underground arena belonging to the Jewish gang. He used this relationship to get to know a lot of underground gladiators who could fight well. After that, when he came across a golden opportunity to form his gang, he did it without hesitation. Since the Jewish gang backed him, he managed to grow his gang extremely fast. Within two years, he became a well-known medium-sized gang.

But just five days ago, his good days came to an end. Before he could figure out what had happened, he was told that one of his members was involved in beating up a patrol. After that, Zhang Heng had raided his turf, using the excuse of him refusing to hand over the accomplice. When Copper Arm saw that the situation had gone sour, he decided to hand over the person responsible. However, he found out that the person was gone. In the end, he did not even get a chance to surrender to Zhang Heng. It caused him to lose his turf. And after that, he only managed to recruit less than twenty people.

In just one night, he lost everything and returned to the period where he had nothing. Bronze Arm had to ask the Jewish gang to help him this time. He thought that the three major forces would punish Zhang Heng and the patrol team during the gathering in the afternoon later. But this wasn't the Basilica Julia, and they were not about to follow Roman law. The three major forces were the ones who set the rules of this place.

To Bronze Arm, Zhang Heng wouldn't be walking out of the tavern alive this time.

...

It was almost time for everyone to gather at the tavern, but Zhang Heng still hadn't shown up. Soap and his men were close to the last ones to arrive. This time, he did not bring his best friend, Skinny Money. Instead, he brought two burly men with him.

But even so, Soap still felt a little guilty. Since he was a child, he had heard of the Jewish gang, and his previous dream was to join them as a member. If he managed to achieve his dream, he would no longer need to live under the Copper Arm's control anymore. And now, not only did he not get to join the Jewish gang, but he had also become their enemy.

Fate really was amazing sometimes.

When Soap walked into the tavern with his men, the way the others gave him looks filled with hostility. It was no secret that Soap and the patrol team were very close. When the two sides first cooperated, they used this relationship to take down many small forces, the reason why a new-rising force like him could grow so quickly.

And the price he had to pay was to be poorly treated by other forces. When Soap walked into the tavern, he kept hearing the word "traitor" being thrown around. Some people even swore right in front of him. After all, he was only a thief. Although he performed relatively well some time ago and started to feel that he was slowly becoming a true boss, many here still had more influence and bigger territories than him.

When he saw that everyone was staring at him, it was inevitable that he started to fear his life. And his biggest backup, the patrol team, was not here yet. Even if they were here, they might not be able to protect him if a fight broke out.

After Soap received the invitation, the first thing he did was run to Zhang Heng and ask him what he planned to do. However, the only thing Zhang Heng told him was not to worry.

But how could he not be worried? They were now facing all the forces in the southeast city, united to strike at them. Soap could not figure out how Zhang Heng would neutralize a huge threat like this. Fortunately, his worries were not reflected in his expressions.

Soap might not make him look calm, but he could at least a straight face. He did not have the guts to fight with the people that swore at him, so he went to a secluded corner with his subordinates and sat down.

After waiting for a while, almost everyone had arrived, except for Zhang Heng and the patrol team.

Soap saw a middle-aged Jew walking downstairs. He wasn't of low status in the Jewish gang, and he was also the person in charge of this meeting. He then walked towards Soap and spoke.

"Is it so difficult to invite the people from the patrol team to come here? All the older and more powerful gangsters have arrived early. Only they have not appeared yet. Are they trying to make Mr. Lockheed wait for them?"

Chapter 844: Disobeying The Rules

Lockheed was the leader of the Jewish gang. No one on the southeast side of the city had the guts to make him wait.

Except for his favorite woman and his children, no one else could do something like this to him.

When Soap heard what he said, he could not help but stand up and apologize. "Sorry, I think something must've caused them to be late. Would you like me to have someone look for them?"

"Is there anything else more important than this afternoon's meeting?" the middle-aged Jew snorted unceremoniously. "We've notified them five days in advance! Even if they have business to attend to, they should have gotten them done within that five days."

"About that..."

Soap did not know how to answer the question. He wiped away the cold sweat from his forehead.

"You guys have done lots of bad stuff recently. Do you really think we are blind? We invited him here to give him a chance to explain his intention. If he refuses to explain himself, we are more than happy to enter the next phase."

The middle-aged Jew was clearly threatening them. Soap had no idea what he could say since he knew nothing about Zhang Heng's plan. Hence, he did not know how he could help improve the situation.

Fortunately, Zhang Heng finally made his appearance at the tavern right at this critical moment.

The people in the tavern had been waiting for them for a long time and were all too ready to give them their hostile glares like how they did Soap earlier. However, when Zhang Heng and his men showed up, they realized that they could no longer do as they wished.

That was because the three people outside the tavern were wearing brand-new uniforms, armor and were carrying sharp weapons. They were armed to their teeth.

This was especially true for their leader, Zhang Heng. When he glanced at everyone in the tavern, no one dared look back at him. They lowered their heads subconsciously and thought of the unpleasant things that had happened. As of now, the patrol team was the kryptonite of all the small and medium forces in the area.

Initially, they wanted to put some people on the patrol team. However, they realized if Zhang Heng survived the judgment, he would probably retaliate later. Hence, the crowd had to swallow their pride and anger.

The atmosphere in the tavern turned cold for a while, with Copper Arm the only person that was still glaring at Zhang Heng and his men. He had nothing left anyway, and naturally, he was no longer afraid of the patrol team.

According to the Jewish gang's rules, even if they decided to back him up, he would no longer be able to get back what he lost. Thus, the best outcome for him right now was for Zhang Heng and the patrol team to be driven out of this place. The middle-aged Jew frowned. He did not expect Zhang Heng and his men to make such a powerful appearance.

"Are you here for a fight or meeting?" he asked.

"Of course, we are here to attend the meeting. But don't you forget that we are still the patrol members. It's our responsibility to maintain law and order of this place. We must not forget our responsibilities. In fact, we had just finished patrolling the nearby streets, and we rushed here immediately," Zhang Heng took off his helmet as he spoke.

The leaders of the various forces in the tavern quietly scolded Zhang Heng in their hearts when they heard what he said. Everyone knew that he was lying. If it were not for the patrol team and Soap's gang, the southeastern part of the city wouldn't have fallen into such chaos. Let alone enforcing law and order, the security and safety of this part of the city were no better than before.

Fights constantly broke out on the streets now. After seeing what happened to Bronze Arm, the other bosses were forced to bring bodyguards whenever they headed out. At times, they even felt insecure in their own turf. Think about it. If the criminals felt insecure about the place, there was no way law and order could be adequately enforced.

The middle-aged Jew was also taken aback when he heard what Zhang Heng said. Sure, he said nothing wrong. He shouldn't have been the one to say something like this. Since the Jew represented the Jewish gangs, he had no intention to dwell on such a small issue. He could always hold them accountable anyway if there were more time later. Hence, he simply nodded at Zhang Heng's excuse. "Since you are here, please take a seat."

Zhang Heng thanked him politely and led Aris and Marcus to sit at the table beside Soap.

Immediately, a waitress poured wine for the three of them.

Just then, the middle-aged Jew came to the center of the tavern too. He first glanced at the leaders from different forces.

"Thank you, everyone, for taking the time to attend this meeting," he said. "I will not waste any time talking about anything useless. The situation here is getting worse, and I believe it has affected the bosses' businesses. Some people have called for Mr. Lockeed to set this right, but it has always been the principle of the Jewish gang to allow everyone to handle their own issues. I don't think you guys want us to stick our nose into your business. Evidently, the situation is gradually getting out of control, thanks to the unruly behavior of a small group of people. So, the Jewish gang is obliged to get things back on track.

His remarks were immediately supported and applauded by everyone. On the other hand, Soap was sitting on the needle.

Everyone knew who the small group of people that the middle-aged Jew had just mentioned was. He then looked at the patrol team. "We are reasonable people. As the party of concern, do you have anything you'd like to explain and add on?"

The middle-aged Jew went straight to the topic they wanted to discuss today. The situation in the tavern was like a trial now, and the subject on trial seemed to be Zhang Heng and his patrol team.

"What do you mean by unruly and out of control?" Zhang Heng asked indifferently as if he did not feel the vainly tense atmosphere. "As a patrol team, is it not normal that we catch criminals and tackle criminal activities? Since Mr. Lockeed invited me to this meeting, he seemed to consider the patrol team as one of the gangs here. According to the rules of your Jewish gang, you shouldn't stick your nose into gang business, right?"

"The problem is that you are not normal, especially compared to a month and a half ago," the middle-aged Jew confessed coldly.

"I think we couldn't be more normal than we were a month and a half ago. At that time, the patrol team lacked the strength to operate normally. Because of that, we could not perform our duties. Everyone treated us as nonexistent. Now that we have the strength, we, of course, have to carry out our responsibilities."

"So you mean you were just fulfilling your duties?" The middle-aged Jew pointed at Soap, "Well, as far as I know, you are pursuing criminals on the surface. However, you secretly colluded with his gang to deal with other forces. After you eliminate the other bosses, he will take over all their turf and gang members. Is this also your responsibility?"

Zhang Heng said, "So you want us to arrest all the local criminals and throw them in jail? By doing that, you will wipe out all the criminal activities in this place. The reason why we did what we did is that we respect the Jewish gang a lot. Yes, we only catch first offenders, but we do not stick our noses into the affairs of others. And we will not change the way the gangs conduct their business. When the time is right, we will also find the right person to take over the gang. The income of the Jewish gang will not decrease. So, when you describe us as out of control, I hope you'll take into account the concessions we've made to maintain the order here."

Chapter 845: Ultimatum

The middle-aged Jew was speechless. He did not expect that Zhang Heng, a gladiator, could be so eloquent in debating. It was true that the patrol team had been working together with Soap to eliminate and take over all the gangs nearby them. However, Zhang Heng managed to make it sound like they were doing the right thing.

According to Zhang Heng's statement, the Jewish gang was supposed to be grateful for the patrol team's efforts to safeguard their interests. The key issue was that Zhang Heng insisted it was the patrol team's duty to fight the crimes on the street. In other words, their behavior and motives were completely different from those forces that were present here. And the Jewish gang would not be able to apply their rules on the patrol team.

The middle-aged Jew realized this too. He had prepared lots of materials to prove that the patrol team and Soap's gang had colluded to bring down the other small and medium gangs, not to mention the suspicious financial exchanges. He even found out the secret relationship between the patrol team and the anti-patrol alliance. However, if Zhang Heng insisted that all he did was to be a part of the patrol team's duties, the questions and evidence would become invalid.

Therefore, he acted decisively and dwelled no further on this topic. Instead, he said, "No matter how you quibble, you can't deny that security in the southeast of the city during this period has further deteriorated because of your actions! Everyone's business is now affected."

"About that... Sometimes if we want to achieve something bigger, we'll have to pay a small price," Zhang Heng said.

As soon as he said that, everyone in the tavern booed. That was because the reason sounded ridiculous. Previously, everyone had a good life and lived well here, and there was no need to make this place better. And no one knew if the changes would turn out good for everyone. It was something that required a lot of further discussions.

Copper Arm then shouted, "Don't talk nonsense with them anymore. Let them pay for their shameless behavior!"

The atmosphere was filled with righteous indignation, and some even drew their weapons. Soap had only gotten even more nervous. He quickly placed one of his hands on the dagger around his waist, and his palms were full of sweat.

The middle-aged Jew waited for the boos to tone down before speaking again, "Look, no one here is willing to believe your nonsense. How long have you been in this neighborhood? You have absolutely zero ideas about their beliefs, living habits, and what they actually want. You are unqualified to talk about the future that they want."

"What do they want?" Zhang Heng asked.

"It's very simple. We just want to live our lives peacefully and undisturbed," the middle-aged Jew said. "Do you know how our ancestors came to Rome? They were enslaved, discriminated against, and killed by the crazy emperor. And we endured everything silently. After all the hardships, we finally gained our precious freedom and obtained this neighborhood where we could settle down. We know that this place is criminal heaven in the eyes of outsiders. This place also reeks of poverty and evil. However, this is a place where we can call home. Most who are here in this tavern grew up in this neighborhood. We have our set of rules and regulations that might conflict with the Roman laws, but these rules help us survive this place. This is the lifestyle we choose, and outsiders are unqualified to make decisions for us."

His statement was unanimously approved by everyone in the tavern.

"With the power of the Jewish gang, we could have driven you out immediately. We could've made you suffer, but in the end, we chose to resolve this issue as peacefully as possible. That's how Mr. Lockeed treats his guest. Of course, we will only lean toward this solution if you are still willing to be our guest," the middle-aged Jew warned. "I will give you a week to lay off all the patrol team's expansions, return to

us the turf that you took over recently, and we want you to resign from the patrol and never step foot in this place again. If you can do all that, we can forget about everything you have done.”

Bronze Arm was obviously unsatisfied with this decision. After all, the patrol team was the one that caused him to lose everything. He hoped that the Jewish gang could impose a heavier punishment on Zhang Heng and others. However, he also knew that he had no right to interrupt the meeting in his current position. Therefore, he could only glare at Zhang Heng fiercely. He believed that he still could deal with Zhang Heng after he resigned from the patrol team. Since the Jewish gang could not avenge him, he could only do it himself.

As long as Zhang Heng was no longer part of the patrol team, Bronze Arm would be able to do more harm.

Soap’s heart was still agitated. Was the big fight inevitable? The Jewish gang finally gave Zhang Heng an ultimatum. Indeed, this was also a dilemma they had to face. No matter how well Zhang Heng could explain the motives of the patrol team, this was not Basilica Julia, after all. There was no need to abide by any law. The only rules that worked here were the rules that the three most potent gangs came up with. And the Jewish gang was leading them.

This decision was made before they invited everyone. Giving Zhang Heng a chance to explain himself simply just a formality. The Jewish gang was determined to restore the situation to how it was a month and a half ago.

Soap would not be able to accept this decision. A month and a half ago, he was an ordinary thief on the street, and he had never thought of becoming a gang boss. But now that he had tasted power. Marcus and the patrol team were still the ones that controlled the gang. However, his outstanding performance during this period had allowed him to more decisions on his own. That was why he was unwilling to hand over his power.

Of course, the bigger problem was that he had recently been following Zhang Heng’s orders to fight with the other gangs. Thanks to that, he had offended a lot of people. Still, his gang was growing bigger, and he was backed by the patrol team. Once he fell from his current position, he believed that many would come forward and make him pay for what he did to them.

Thus, after the middle-aged Jew finished speaking, Soap and others turned around and looked at Zhang Heng. But Zhang Heng’s expression remained unchanged. After listening to the middle-aged Jew, he said, “Very well. Don’t try to justify yourself since you are the bad guy here. It’s good that you gave me an ultimatum.”

“I don’t mind if you see us this way,” the middle-aged Jew said lightly.

“Then I won’t beat around the bush anymore. I appreciate all the efforts you have made to maintain your lifestyles and traditions,” Zhang Heng looked around again. “But, unfortunately, I can’t do the three things that you asked. In fact, you should be grateful for everything I’ve done because the old order has collapsed. Either you welcome the new world with me, or you can go down with the old order.”

Chapter 846: You Are Not In Charge Here

“Are you threatening us?” The middle-aged Jew acted like he just heard a hilarious joke. “With your current patrol team and the gangs that currently side with you or are secretly controlled by you, how many people can you gather against us? Do you know how many members the Jewish Gang has? If we want, we can even turn the 30,000 Jews living here into our people. You have nothing you can use to threaten us.”

“The threat I’m talking about won’t be coming from us,” Zhang Heng said. “I believe that some of you have heard the fantastic news recently. Our young emperor has just returned from the battlefield and has claimed the throne. He is desperate to do anything that can win him the praise and support of the people. Holding a gladiatorial performance was only his first step. Next, he intends to turn his attention to public security. The emperor has noticed the southeast city’s extrajudicial status and is concerned about the people living in that place. No matter what you think, you are ultimately the citizens of this empire and to the emperor. And the conditions of this place have indeed affected the surrounding areas. Otherwise, why do you think I joined the patrol team?”

Zhang Heng paused.

“My arrival here is only the first step. If I fail to improve the security, then a thousand guards will be stationed here to take over the security and defense work. By that time, you will face the spears and daggers of the Imperial Guard. Are you sure you still want to drive me away?”

Zhang Heng’s words immediately caused an uproar.

None of them expected that this incident would involve the Imperial Guard, especially after hearing that the newly appointed emperor was preparing to take action on the southeast’s security problem. Everyone’s heart skipped a beat. Previously, they could bully the poor patrol team, but if one thousand imperial guards replaced them, all gangs in this area would surely suffer a great deal.

As for a powerful gang like the Jewish Gang, they could indeed mobilize 30,000 Jews. However, let’s not talk about whether these civilians could actually defeat the imperial guards. Even if they did, were they prepared to rebel against the emperor? Although they were all criminals and had engaged in multiple crimes in the city of Rome, their goal had always been to make more money and ensure that they wouldn’t go hungry. None of them wanted to commit treason. The Spartacus gang was a living example.

Currently, Roman national power was at its peak, and the war with the Germanic had ended. The group of veterans who had been at war had returned to Rome. It was not a problem for them to deal with the gang problem in this place.

However, everyone was skeptical about this matter. The southeast’s security problem had existed since the first group of Jews settled in Rome, way before even the history of the Jewish gang. None of the emperors could solve this problem. It was not because they could not, but that it was simply unworthy of their effort and attention.

Although the southeast was the worst part of Rome, it also provided a steady stream of cheap labor. Sometimes these desperate people were sold for prices lower than slaves. After all, when the slaves died, the masters would lose a fortune. In this part of the city, however, no one cared about the life and death of its residents. The people responsible for cleaning the sewers and the laborers who unloaded goods at the Tiber River were all from the southeastern urban area.

Most of those cheap laborers were controlled by the criminals like the Jewish gang. If they wiped out all the criminals here, forget whether it could be done or how many people were left, it was estimated that labor costs in the city of Rome would definitely skyrocket. This was something the businessmen and the nobles did not want to see.

Therefore, the problems that Rome's southeastern part faced had been put on hold for a long time. But now that Commodus was on the throne, most people still could not figure out what he wanted to do to make Rome a better place. In other words, chances were he could decide to eliminate the criminal forces here once and for all.

The three major forces had conducted an investigation on Zhang Heng's background. They knew that he was someone that Commodus valued. It was strange that the emperor would assign him to this place. If Commodus wanted to deal with the crime problem here, it did make sense that he appointed this job to Zhang Heng.

A thousand Imperial Guards? If there were a thousand Imperial Guards stationed here in the future, they might be unable to continue their businesses. Therefore, all the leaders in the tavern began talking about it when they heard this unexpected news.

When the middle-aged Jew saw how the crowd reacted, he coughed to signal them to shut their mouths. He then shook his head. "Do you really think that you can trick us with this kind of fake news? I have been through many storms. In the end, this place will always belong to us."

"Whether I'm bluffing or not, you know better than anyone," Zhang Heng responded calmly. "I believe you have spent a lot of money to build a good relationship with the Senate. This is the main reason why no one touches this place. In that case, your men must have already passed the news to you."

"It's not even a proposal. It's just something the emperor spurted on a whim a few days ago. How could the Senate approve something so ridiculous? There's an 80% chance that this will be intimidation. After being invited, didn't you go to Clint's house? This news popped up after you went to his house..." The middle-aged Jew was furious, but he soon after he blurted those words, he realized that he had made a mistake.

After he said that, he had basically helped Zhang Heng confirm that what he said. As expected, after he said that, everyone in the tavern had a worried look on their faces.

Although they had to deal with the recent troubles caused by the patrol team, they were undoubtedly more reluctant to see the Imperial Guards stationed. The very presence of those guards could be simply devastating.

After the young emperor sent the Imperial Guards to this place, he might realize that there was nothing to be gained after a while. By that time, he might consider bringing in the cheap labor again. By that time, how many of them would be left there?

Even if it was just a possibility, it was still worrying.

This was also the purpose of Zhang Heng's visit to Clint some time ago. He proposed a plan to Clint where it could benefit both sides. Zhang Heng realized that after he caused all those troubles in the southeast, it was only a matter of time before the three major forces led by the Jewish gang paid

attention to him. And Zhang Heng's solution to this problem was very simple. All he needed to do was to apply pressure on them and make them focus on something that might cause them more devastation.

On the surface, it seemed difficult for the patrol team to grow in Rome's southeast because they lacked manpower and money, and there could not afford to offend the big forces over there. However, the actual reason was that the patrol team and the criminal gangs did not share the same interest. That was why the patrol team would not fit well there.

If this problem were not resolved, they would not be able to grow and expand. So, Zhang Heng needed Clint's help to create the news that a thousand guards would be stationed in the southeastern part of the city. And Zhang Heng did not mind giving Clint some of the credits. Heck, in the end, he gave most of the credit to Clint. All he wanted was to complete the test and return to Commodus's side.

And Clint would receive a great political achievement without having to do anything. And the public would see that he worked with Zhang Heng to solve the overdue security problem of Rome's southeast. Of course, he could also choose to stand aside and stab his potential competitors in the back, but as Clint said, he believed that people like Zhang Heng always had a backup plan. Zhang Heng knew that Balance Blade had something to do with Rome's political situation as well. If Clint refused to help him, he could go and look for the priestess for help. But if that were the case, he might have to pay a hefty price. Hence, coming up with a mutual-benefit plan with Clint seemed the better option.

Zhang Heng looked at the middle-aged Jew, "You are not in charge of this matter. Why don't you ask Mr. Lockheed and other powerful people to come down here and talk to me? Or should I bring my men to the second floor?"

Chapter 847: The Master Of Southeast City

The big and small forces from the southeastern part of the city of Rome were gathered in this tavern today. It was crowded, and it looked very lively.

However, Zhang Heng knew that those powerful enough to make decisions were not here. They were sitting on the second floor. He instructed the middle-aged Jew to conduct the meeting while quietly listening to their quarrels and conversation downstairs. They would only comment during critical times and would be the ones that would decide the fate of this place. And Zhang Heng was hoping to hear from them.

The middle-aged Jew sneered when he heard the words, "Do you really think you can meet Mr. Lockheed whenever you want?"

However, as soon as he finished talking, a young girl came down from the second floor, looked towards Zhang Heng, and curiously asked, "You are the gladiatorial champion of the Amphitheatrum Flavium, the mysterious oriental man from the distant empire?"

"That sounds like me," Zhang Heng nodded.

"There are rumors that you are the incarnation of a certain god, with wings on your back, and you can soar in the sky, but you seem to be no different from the ordinary." The girl seemed a little disappointed.

"In order not to scare my friends, I put my wings away."

The girl laughed when she heard this, "You men like to talk nonsense. Since you treat us as friends, come on, my grandpa wants to see you."

"After you." Zhang Heng stood up from his chair and followed the girl to the second floor.

The middle-aged Jew had a look of frustration on her face, but he knew the girl, and he knew that Lockheed decided to meet Zhang Heng. And the most important rule of being a member of the Jewish gang was never to question Lockheed's decision. So, he closed his mouth and said nothing. After that, he respectfully watched the two go upstairs.

The girl whispered to Zhang Heng as she walked, "My grandpa hates dishonest people the most, so don't lie when you see him later."

"Thank you for the reminder, but I always like to tell the truth," Zhang Heng replied.

"Well... I think we will know soon." The girl smiled.

The two arrived on the second floor fairly quickly. Contrary to what Zhang Heng expected, there were only four people on the vast second floor.

Three of them were sitting at a long table. On the main seat was an old man in his early sixties. He had a distinctive Jewish look and had short brown-black hair, but most of his hair had turned white. He also had a broad forehead, aquiline nose, and a pair of deep-seated eyes. It seemed like he could see through everyone's heart.

Needless to say, he should be the current boss of the Jewish gang, Lockheed. He was the most important figure in the entire southeast city. The rise of Lockheed was a legendary tale in this place. Born of an ordinary Jewish family, his father died young, and his mother had to sell her body to support the three children in the family. As the eldest son, Lockheed had to work from a very young age to make more for the family. He used to be a thief, an apprentice in a blacksmith shop, urine collector, and sewer cleaner.

In short, he had done all kinds of jobs that could make him money. It was not until he joined the Jewish gang that his life gradually got better at sixteen. But at that time, fate would make a cruel joke on him. His mother and sister died in plague one after another, and his only remaining brother also died in a gang conflict.

And until the age of thirty, Lockheed was just a small and inconspicuous character in a Jewish gang, with only five subordinates at most.

Then there was the legendary battle. At that time, the leader of the Jewish gang was betrayed by his own men. Someone wanted to assassinate him, so he fled all the way to the temple. There was no one around him, and at that time, Lockheed happened to bring his two men to collect money at the market in front of the temple.

The three of them protected the boss. No one knew how they fought against those enemies while severely outnumbered, but when help arrived, the three of them were soaked in blood. Lockheed's two men did not manage to hang on until the doctor came to help them. Lockheed was the only one that survived the battle. After that, his bravery was recognized by the Jewish leader, and his rank in the gang

rose to new heights. And after the death of the leader, he was chosen as successor, taking over the largest gang in this southeastern city.

All the children on the streets of the Southeastern District regarded Lockheed as their idol. They wished that, like Lockheed, they too would be able to achieve something great.

On the left-hand side of Lockheed was a Sikabri who was about his age. He was meditating, and his eyes were closed. He was the boss of the second largest gang of the area, Golden Crown. His business included money lending and rent collection. Although he didn't have as many members as the Jewish gang, he was richer. More than half of the real estate in the southwestern city belonged to the Golden Crown.

On Lockheed's right-hand side was a young man. Unlike the two people around him, he looked very young, about the same size age as Zhang Heng, and came with an innocent smile on his face. He looked like the family member of the bosses here. He was actually the spokesperson of Beehive, which was the third-largest force in this city.

No one knew who Beehive's boss was, and no one knew exactly how many members Beehive had and what kind of business they conducted. The only thing they knew was that.

Beehive was the oldest gang in the southwest city. They were everywhere, and anyone could be a member. Even Golden Crown and the Jewish gang had members from Beehive. Hence, no one could hide anything from the Beehive gang. Other than that, it was rumored that all the assassins in the southwestern city were related to them too.

The young man here was one of the few from Beehive in charge of communication and negotiations with other gangs. His nickname was Cornu.

As for the fourth person, instead of sitting at the table, he stood aside and poured wine for the three important personnel like a waiter in a tavern. However, Zhang Heng stared at him the longest because he realized that he could not gauge his true strength.

It was no wonder that the three of them could sit so casually on the second floor, with no guards protecting them.

"Zhang Heng, in the southeast city, no, it should be told that the whole city of Rome is talking about you." The first person who spoke was Cornu from Beehive. With a smile, he said, "Two months ago, you were still the gladiators from the Victor Arena. After you regained your freedom, you immediately began to work for the emperor. It is said that the emperor values you a lot. When you were a gladiator, he visited you privately. Naturally, you don't want to mess up your first task."

"So when you joined the patrol team, you started to work on your task right away. First, you forced Iron Handcuffs and his men to attack you. After that, you appointed the thief called Soap to be your puppet. It is a smart move. You know that it is not right for the patrol team to take over those gang members and territories. Otherwise, you would have attracted our attention long ago. And you are very cautious. You looked for the five gangsters that you knew previously and formed an anti-patrol alliance. With that, you can make sure Soap will not grow too fast. Second, you can take the opportunity to get rid of the unstable factors in the two gangs. After that, you started to expand your patrol team aggressively.

“Your series of actions have successfully attracted the attention of Mr. Lockheed. We extended an invitation to you, but unfortunately, you went to look for your political ally, Clint. After that, the Senate started to spread the message that the emperor wanted to do something about the southeastern city. Am I right? By the way, you had Focaccia with honey for breakfast. You don’t like the bread because it was overbaked.”

Chapter 848: True Purpose

It had to be admitted that of the four people on the second floor, Zhang Heng paid the least attention to this young man named Cornu because he had the lowest sense of existence among them.

As soon as Cornu opened his mouth, however, he immediately attracted everyone’s attention. Zhang Heng had also heard a lot of things related to the Beehive from Soap and Aris. He knew that the most mysterious force in the southeast city was extremely good at collecting information.

What surprised Zhang Heng most was not the fact that the other party knew what he had for breakfast but that he paid attention to him. From the surface, Cornu showed that top forces in the southeast city had the ability to monitor his every move. And at the same time, they were warning him not to try to lie to them.

On the other hand, Zhang Heng also noticed that Cornu emphasized the close relationship between Zhang Heng and Commodus. And Clint was considered as Zhang Heng’s political ally. The only flaw in Zhang Heng’s plan was that the relationship between him and Clint was not strong. He provided Clint with a win-win solution, and he also believed that Clint would be willing to accept his proposal. Since this method was working, it would mean that the major forces in the southeast city led by the Jewish gang could also use the same method to make Clint side with them.

After Zhang Heng analyzed the situation in the southeast city, he found out that the top forces here had political ties with the government. The Jewish gang, the Golden Crown, and the Beehive had used more than violence to rule this place. They spent an obscene amount of money every year to pay the Senate’s influential. The purpose was to maintain their status as semi-rulers of this place.

This was probably the reason why Lockheed and others were not as panicked as the people below after hearing that a thousand imperial guards were about to be stationed here.

But even if Zhang Heng knew that Cornu had done that out of good intentions, he had to fight back to make sure that he put on a complete show. After Cornu was done talking, Zhang Heng said, “You were busy hanging out with a woman last night. Hence, you woke up in the afternoon, and you had your lunch after that. You ate olives and grilled fish for lunch. While you had your meal, you engaged in a fight with someone. Other than that, I have reason to believe that you did not seem too very satisfied with your performance last night. So, you are looking for ways to last longer in bed.”

Cornu’s face turned pale. He then hurriedly said to the girl next to Zhang Heng, “Don’t believe what he said. That’s nonsense. He’s just trying to get back on me after I exposed him.”

“Don’t worry, of course, I believe you more.” The girl flashed a sweet smile.

At this time, Lockheed had also finished his last piece of venison. As if he didn’t hear the conversation between Zhang Heng and Cornu, he put down his fork, pointed at a seat, and said, “Sit down.”

Zhang Heng sat down, and the girl who came up with him sat down by Lockheed's side again. But she quietly shifted her hips, moving a little farther away from the other side of Cornu.

Lockheed did not use the napkin on the table to wipe the oil stains off his mouth. This was his eating habit all these years. When he was young, there was nothing for him to eat at home. Reluctant to eat the food he stole outside, he often licked the food twice to make sure that some residue would be left in his mouth, pretending to have eaten. After that, he would return home and distribute the food to his brother and sister. Over time, he developed the habit of eating and not wiping his mouth.

Although his life had gradually improved since and had become the leader of the Jewish gang, he could never change this habit. For this reason, his wife and children had started complaining.

"What do you want?" Lockheed looked at Zhang Heng on the opposite side and asked directly.

"The three major forces and the patrol team have joined forces to establish a new order for the southeastern urban area," Zhang Heng replied.

"It's impossible." Lockheed shook his head.

However, he did not explain why it could not be done. He just waved his hand and asked the waiter to pour Zhang Heng a cup of wine. He then continued, "I can understand that you want to get your first task done perfectly. However, I'm not very satisfied with the approach you have taken. And I don't want to dwell on these trivial matters anymore. I was hoping you could dismiss the people hired by the patrol team. I promise that the security in the southeast city will be improved. By the time you leave here, you will get the achievements you need, and we can all end this farce as soon as possible."

In all fairness, the conditions provided by Lockheed were acceptable. He did not mention what Zhang Heng had done, nor did he intend to pursue the damage Zhang Heng caused to the order of the southeast city. And he was even willing to send Zhang Heng away with glorious achievement.

However, what he did not expect was that Zhang Heng insisted on sticking to his plan. "Sorry, I am not going to give up my plan."

Lockheed frowned. "Do you know that even if you and Clint manage to persuade the emperor to station the Imperial Guards here, you still need the approval of the Senate? I am willing to treat you with courtesy, not because I am afraid of the one thousand Imperial Guards, but I just don't want to give the Senate's insatiable senators more money. If we continue to fight, the only people that will benefit are the senators. Let's take a step back. Even if you win in the end and you get the senators' approval, then what?"

"You are not the first who wants to destroy us, nor will you be the last. The dynasty is constantly evolving, and the emperor's head on the gold coins has changed so often. But we are still here. Of course, you can use the army to arrest us or even kill me and ruin the Jewish gang. As long as the people here are given enough time, they will rebuild everything we have built." Lockheed paused. "We are all old people, and old people always wish that all the problems can be solved by relatively peaceful means. At the same time, we are not afraid of death too."

"Uh, sorry for the interruption. I'm young, and I'm quite afraid of death," Cornu said, "But you can just ignore me. I'm just a nobody that delivers messages."

After listening to Lockheed's words, Zhang Heng said, "You have misunderstood me. I personally respect you very much. I have no intention of destroying you or the Jewish gang, nor will I change your way of life. I just hope that the patrol team can be included in managing this place instead of being spectators like before."

"It turns out that what you want is not just to score political points, but you also want to cultivate your strength in this neighborhood."

Lockheed's words revealed Zhang Heng's true purpose.

And Zhang Heng did not hide it. In fact, he generously admitted to it, "I have heard your story about how you started from scratch and eventually became the uncrowned king of the southeast city. I, like the other young people in this neighborhood, am deeply inspired. So, I wish to create my own business here too."

"You're quite honest," Lockheed nodded when he heard Zhang Heng's explanation. "It's good for young people to be ambitious, but your identity is the big problem here. You were not born here, and you rely on the patrol team to help expand your territory. This is not a fair competition. Hence, I can't just sit there and watch you grow."

This time it was Zhang Heng's turn to frown. He did not expect Lockheed to be so stubborn. This old man possessed the skill to make peace with the nobles in the Senate. Why couldn't he tolerate the existence of a new force that wouldn't be much of a threat to the Jewish gang?

At this moment, the boss of the Golden Crown, who had been closing his eyes meditating, opened his eyes. "Mr. Lockheed is saying that if you want to establish your influence here, you first need to prove that you belong to this place. So that we can consider accepting you."

"How can I prove it?"

"It's effortless. After you return to the emperor's side, we want you to kill someone for us." At this point, Lockheed finally told Zhang Heng the true purpose of asking Zhang Heng to go to the second floor.

Zhang Heng raised his eyebrows when he heard the request. He almost thought that his relationship with Balance Blade was exposed. Fortunately, Lockheed on the opposite side added, "Veteran Divo Braille, we need you to find a way to end his political career and strip him of his position as a senator. He is too greedy, and we can no longer satisfy him. In exchange, we can allow you and your patrol team to develop here, but you can't go overboard as before. If you agree, then we can talk about the places that the patrol team is allowed to govern."

Chapter 849: Set In Stone

No one thought that the gang gathering initiated by the Jewish gang with the three major forces in the southeast city to sanction the recent crimes committed by the patrol team led by Zhang Heng could now be forgotten.

Those who were waiting to see the patrol team were all dumbfounded.

They all thought that Zhang Heng must have fed magical potions to Lockheed and forced him to obey his order. In the end, the three major forces fully recognized the territory that the patrol team took over

recently, including Soap's gang and the anti-patrol alliance. The Jewish gang also nodded and showed everyone that they allowed the patrol team to carry on with whatever they were doing right now. In other words, they had now approved their existence in this place. Soap and others breathed a sigh of relief when they heard what Lockheed said.

Other than that, the three major forces did not prevent the patrol team from expanding their territory in the southeastern city. However, they did agree on only hiring a maximum of 120 patrol members. A lot of gang leaders were taken aback when they heard the number. Although 120 members constituted a medium-sized gang, this would undeniably be a nightmare for all the street gangs except for the three major forces with the patrol team's nature.

Fortunately, Lockheed did put the emotions of the other small and medium gang leaders into consideration. To make sure that everyone was happy with the decision he made, he reached a series of agreements with Zhang Heng. From now on, the patrol team's power would be restricted. Unlike before, where they could just find an excuse to raid a gang, Lockheed promised everyone that something like this would not happen again. The patrol team would resume their duties to maintain law and order in the neighborhood.

Of course, considering the special circumstances of the southeast urban area, almost every gang was involved in some criminal activity. The patrol team couldn't catch all of them. Therefore, it would be more accurate to say that the patrol team was there to deal with some sudden or relatively vicious crimes. At the same time, the gangs around the area would need to provide them with assistance if the patrol team asked for their help.

In addition, from now on, all the gangs had to ensure order on their respective territories. Once the chaos reached a certain level and affected the lives of ordinary people around the area, the patrol team would intervene to deal with the situation.

The purpose of this particular rule was to let Zhang Heng brush up on his political achievements. However, no one knew that Lockheed had already wanted to implement such a rule quite some time ago. As we all knew, Lockheed came from the bottom society, and no one knew the bottom society's life better than him. All this while, he had always wanted to do something for the people that were living here. A man with his position was required to consider all the possibilities and consequences whenever he wanted to make an important decision. Sometimes, it was inappropriate for a man like him to carry out a certain task. Since he was now working with Zhang Heng, he might make use of the patrol team to achieve something that he wanted to do for a long time.

...

In the short span of half an hour, Zhang Heng and Lockheed argued about a series of important issues. They were testing each other's bottom line, each showing their points of argument, and at the same time, they compromised with each other's request. In the eyes of ordinary people, such a scene would be somewhat dull because this was not a fist-to-fist fight. But for those who could look at a bigger picture, this negotiation was far more exciting than the battle on the street.

Lockheed, the uncrowned king of the southeast city, had held onto the dominating role firmly since he spoke the first word. He said a lot, but every word uttered from his mouth proved a strong point. And at the same time, he kept applying pressure on Zhang Heng's shoulders.

The boss of the Golden Crown had known him for a long time, and he cooperated with him very well. Their biggest advantage was that they knew the southeast city very well. Besides, Beehive was constantly feeding them with information. It allowed the two old men to gain the upper hand in the negotiation.

But what surprised Lockheed was that Zhang Heng had never allowed himself to fall to the disadvantageous side, whether it was the way he acted in front of everyone or the content they debated on.

He was alone in a place surrounded by many enemies yet still managed to maintain his calm from beginning to end. His confidence level and the way he talked gave Lockheed the impression that this couldn't be his first time dealing with something like this. However, when he was reminded of his age, Lockheed thought that his deduction was ridiculous.

Lockheed remembered when he was as old as Zhang Heng, he was just a nobody in the Jewish gang. Whenever he saw the leader of the Jewish gang from a distance, his legs would tremble. However, Zhang Heng managed to respond to them calmly and confidently.

On the other hand, it was not easy for Zhang Heng to handle something like this. Although he had done a lot of preparation work earlier, he still realized that he had underestimated the legend of the southeast city.

Lockheed was more difficult to deal with than he thought. So Zhang Heng also realized that his previous plan to integrate all the southeast city forces might change. Although he could easily replace Lockheed, that would mean that he had to spend more energy and time in the southeast city.

This time, the situation was different from that of Black Sail. At that time, Zhang Heng was trying to stay alive when he announced that he wanted to retrieve Jackdaw and attempted to become the King of Nassau. But this time, he had to put more energy into learning. His main goal was to visit the library containing all kinds of classic assassin books.

The southeast city was just a transition to him. Even if he wanted to grow his power here, Zhang Heng did not want to invest too much of his resources and energy in this matter. Hence, he was willing to accept Lockheed's proposal and seek a stable coexistence with multiple parties.

However, Zhang Heng would not reveal his true intention prematurely in the negotiation. On the contrary, he still adopted a rather offensive approach in the argument, especially when he realized that Lockheed was willing to meet him because he hoped to find a new political ally. After they wanted him to eliminate the blood-sucking nobles for the Jewish Gang, Zhang Heng found out that he had more bargaining chips than before.

So the negotiation between the two became more intense.

When Lockheed and Zhang Heng reached an agreement on the final issue, the old man held up a glass of wine. "Although you are an outsider, I have to say you just as competitive as the people that are born and bred here. And you are eager to grasp on to everything in front of you."

Zhang Heng to a drink to that. "Is that a good thing or a bad thing?"

“It’s both a good and a bad thing. It depends on how you look at it. If I can be twenty years younger, I might want to fight with you longer. And I will not limit that to negotiation only.” Lockheed drank his glass of wine and stood up from his seat with the help of his granddaughter.

Golden Crown, on the other side, stood up as well.

Lockheed put down the empty wine glass, “Next, let’s hand over the time to the young people. For more specific details, you can talk to my granddaughter. Old men like us will not bother you anymore.”

After Lockheed finished speaking, he walked up the stairs with the Golden Crown boss and the waiter next to him. He was, after all, an old man. Although he showed his domineering side during the negotiation just now, in the end, he could not hide the fact that age had taken a toll on him. When everything was set in stone, he did not have the energy to wrestle with Zhang Heng on the details anymore.

Chapter 850: What Do You Mean By That?

The skies were already dark when Zhang Heng and Lockheed’s granddaughter finished going over all the details.

So far, the patrol team had finally gone through their biggest crisis yet. The other forces, however, had mixed feelings after receiving the news. In the eyes of outsiders, Zhang Heng had undoubtedly won the negotiation this time. On the other hand, as an outsider and as a patrol team member, Zhang Heng had gained the approval of three major forces to grow and develop his power here. It was indeed a miracle.

The good news was they did not have to worry about the patrol team raiding their gangs out of the blue. Since someone had put a shackle on this wild beast’s nest, they could finally sleep peacefully. When they were told that a thousand Imperial Guards might be stationed in the southeastern city, everyone except for Copper Arm, who hated the patrol team, found it unacceptable. To them, Zhang Heng had taken advantage of everyone’s fear of the Imperial Guards to gain approval from the three major forces.

But Zhang Heng realized the price that he had to pay after being given the opportunity to continue growing here. He even suspected that Lockheed was trying to use him to solve the problems caused by the Jewish gang.

Of course, as far as the final result was concerned, the two parties were using each other, each taking what they needed.

Through this negotiation, Zhang Heng also understood why Lockheed, among all his children, chose his daughter to come here with him. This girl might look innocent, but if someone thought she was just a decorative piece, they’d better be prepared to suffer a lot.

Although her performance wasn’t as good as her grandfather during the negotiation, Zhang Heng could see that Lockheed had trained her for some time now, and she knew her strengths and how to utilize them fully. After the negotiation ended, she swapped back to her innocent look, even inviting Zhang Heng for dinner at her home. In the end, though, Zhang Heng declined her goodwill.

Zhang Heng had been negotiating with Lockheed for the entire afternoon, and he was exhausted. Besides, he still needed to meet an important person. Afterward, Zhang Heng asked Marcus and Aris,

who came together with him, to go back first. He then picked a random direction and walked toward the street under the night sky.

He didn't have to walk too far before he spotted Cornu, who had left the tavern before him in an alley ahead.

The latter was playing mud with a group of children, and he was having a good time. However, when he heard footsteps, he drove those children home. He then dusted off his hands, stood up, and said in surprise, "What a coincidence?"

"The legendary Beehive knew what I had for breakfast. Why are you so surprised to see me here?" Zhang Heng asked rhetorically.

Cornu smiled. "Just like the rumor, you really are difficult to deal with. It seems I have been overthinking. Even if I don't help you, you could deal with the situation smoothly."

"No, the information you gave me when we met helped me a lot in the subsequent negotiations."

"You were ruthless when you accused me of something that I didn't do." Cornu smiled bitterly, "I'm pursuing Lockheed's granddaughter. What you said about me might have cost me my chances."

"I believe a love expert like you will find a way to salvage the situation," Zhang Heng said, his expressions remaining the same.

"Well, I still have some small tricks up my sleeve, but those are my trump cards. I initially planned to use them when I get caught cheating after my marriage," Cornu said with a smile. "By the way, you must be curious about why I helped you earlier?"

"Are you going to tell me the reason?"

"Of course. I come from the same place as you," Cornu replied mysteriously.

"So, are you also from the mysterious and distant East?" Zhang Heng asked.

"No, you know what I'm talking about." Cornu looked around and confirmed that no third party was present. He then whispered into Zhang Heng's ear, "May everything in the world be balanced. You and I are both Kreis's daggers."

"What does it mean?"

Cornu looked at Zhang Heng as if he wanted to find traces of a lie on the latter's face, but he failed in the end. Zhang Heng looked like he had never heard what he said before. His brows slightly frowned, and his eyes reflected a hint of doubt.

Cornu then smiled again, "Nothing, forget it. I just made a joke. Don't take it to heart. The truth is that Beehive is very interested in you. Although you are in trouble now, we believe you will soon be able to return to Commodus's side. Beehive feels that you will become a new star in the Roman political arena and is willing to bet on you and pay you with some of our kindness in advance."

"Then, you are quite generous," Zhang Heng said. "What do you want from a future star like me?" he added.

“For now, you don’t have anything that interests us. However, when you advance a little further, then, I think we can find more things to talk about.”

“I never thought that Beehive is interested in the politics outside the southeast city.” Zhang Heng raised his eyebrows.

“We are unlike the Jewish Gang and the Golden Crown. The southeast city is not the only place we pay attention to,” said Cornu. However, it seemed he did not want to explain further. He then smiled again. “Anyway, I’m glad to meet you. I believe we will meet again soon.”

After speaking, he squatted down again and continued to play with the mud, apparently attempting to finish the mud palace he had built with the children.

As for Zhang Heng, he continued to walk down the street after bidding farewell to Cornu. For now, the patrol team’s troubles were solved. It was time for him to have a good break. He had an appointment with the slave girl tonight, and he was supposed to go home for dinner. So, he would temporarily leave the southeast city for one night.

And shortly after Zhang Heng’s figure disappeared, another figure walked up to Cornu and asked, “How is it? Is he from there?”

“I don’t think so. I used the Balance Blade’s doctrine to test him, but he hardly reacted to it.” Cornu said truthfully, “It’s like he hasn’t heard about it before. What should we do? Should we continue to keep an eye on him?”

“Forget it, let’s withdraw our people first. We don’t need unnecessary attention. After all, he was the gladiator that claimed the championship at the Amphitheatrum Flavium. And he is also the only person who can fight Lockheed. This is the critical period of the plan. If we succeed, we can wipe out the members of the Balance Blade. That being said, there is no need to dwell on one person. Let him go first,” the person said.