

48 Hours 891

Chapter 891: Backfire

Zhang Heng dealt with the priest who came out to pee as fast as possible. After that, he went to the temple's door and took a quick look at the temple's interior. As compared to the Temple of Jupiter, the place was enveloped in darkness. The Temple of Juno, on the other hand, was well lit.

Zhang Heng saw two servants helping a priest tidy up something. They looked like they were dealing with some valuable information they had obtained from the children just now. The three men were positioned quite far away from the door. Zhang Heng figured that it would be almost impossible to sneak past the three of them, so he removed the Pestilence Bone Bow from his back.

The first arrow accurately pierced the throat of one of the servants. Before the servant could say a word, his body collapsed onto the marble pillar behind him. Immediately, the other servant beside him was alerted by the sound of the arrow penetrating his ally's body. He then drew his weapon, opened his mouth, and was about to warn the others loudly, but the last thing he expected was to end like the dead servant beside him. The second arrow came faster than he thought, and it penetrated his heart.

In order to get rid of those two servants in the shortest possible time, Zhang Heng used ordinary arrows for his first shot and the Paris Arrow for the second. He took a quick aim at his targets and released the arrows without any hesitation. The moment the Paris Arrow left the bow, it corrected its flying path and went for the target's weak point.

When the two servants fell on the floor, the priest focusing on sorting out the papyrus, realized that something had gone wrong. The moment he raised his head, Zhang Heng's Persian short sword was already placed on his neck.

"Where is Altrus?" Zhang Heng asked in a low voice.

"Who?" The priest looked a little panicked, "I don't know who Altrus is. This is the temple of Queen Juno. We don't have much money with us. If you want to rob someone, you should go to the nobles that live under the mountain."

"You know I didn't come here for the money," Zhang Heng said.

As soon as Zhang Heng finished talking, he heard footsteps coming from behind the statue room. The priest's face showed a touch of joy, knowing that someone was coming to save him. That could mean the mysterious man in front of him would have to surrender soon.

However, he did not expect Zhang Heng to push the short sword into his neck after hearing the footsteps. The priest looked at his blood coming out of his throat, and he felt surprised that Zhang Heng would make such a move. After that, Zhang Heng quickly moved to the side of the corridor's entrance.

Before the owner of the footsteps walked out of the corridor, he saw the priest pressing his neck with his hand. Subconsciously, he wanted to walk closer and check on him, but before he could do that, a shadowy figure appeared in front of him and inserted a dagger into his heart. So far, Zhang Heng had eliminated five enemies. All of them were killed with only a single move. It prevented the dead from making too much noise and attracting too much attention.

Zhang Heng was not on a whim to pursue a five-star achievement for killing his enemies stealthily. It was because he knew that Altrus had a secret path that could lead to Commodus's study room. The entrance of the secret path could very well be located at this temple. Besides, Zhang Heng did not know if other exits were in the middle of the secret path.

In order not to cause too much trouble for himself, Zhang Heng hoped that he could deal with Altrus before he entered the secret passage. That was why he chose to eliminate his enemies as stealthily as possible.

So far, there was no hiccup in his plan. Although he did not extract any information from the priest about Altrus's whereabouts, he was fortunate that the temple was not that huge. Zhang Heng then put away his arrow and continued towards the corridor. The oil lamp on the stone walls was not as bright as the one outside the hall. Zhang Heng's quivering shadow was cast on the wall, distorting and looking a little scary.

Zhang Heng walked past a couple of old-looking stone chambers in the corridor. He speculated that these chambers were once rooms of the priests' hundreds of years ago. However, after the temple went through several expansions, the priests' now lived in their new residences. Hence, the stone chambers were now used as a place to store files and sundries.

After Zhang Heng walked for a while, he realized that something was not right. First of all, he had walked a long way, and he could feel the altitude was getting lower and lower. Secondly, he saw that there were more stone chambers than the Jupiter Temple next door. Most of the stone chambers were connected, like a maze. So Zhang Heng had to remember the paths he walked on while searching for what he was looking for. Suddenly, he heard a loud rumbling noise. Turning around, he saw a huge boulder appearing out of nowhere on the path he had walked on.

At the same time, he heard Altrus's voice coming from behind him.

"Who sent you to kill me?"

Zhang Heng turned his head and looked at the place where the sound came from. However, all he saw was a stone wall with no one standing there. Altrus then spoke again, "Don't waste your time. You can't see me. Do you know what place this is?"

"I would like to know more about it," Zhang Heng said as he walked toward the stone wall and looked up.

"This is the underworld," replied Altrus's ghostly voice. "Except for those who have died once like me, no living being can leave this place alive..."

"Hmm." Zhang Heng knew that the underworld was more than a myth. There was an actual underworld beneath the Roman Square.

Right beside the golden pillar that symbolized the beginning of all roads, there was a small building. The Romans regarded the upper part as an umbilical cord, and the lower part was the underworld. Romans believed that a crack connected the living world on the surface of the Earth to the underworld beneath the ground. The underworld would open its doors three days a year, and these three days were considered bad days.

Zhang Heng would never believe in such a thing, though. After a while, he found what he was looking for on the stone wall. It was a copper pipe hidden in the cracks of the stone. Altrus's voice had come from this pipe, and he had used the underworld legend to put fear in Zhang Heng's mind.

Zhang Heng then leaned closer to the copper tube and mumbled a few words. He knew that Altrus was paying attention to what he had to say. After that, Zhang Heng took out his dagger and scratched the copper pipe a few times. Altrus, on the other side, was impacted by the enhanced screeching. He almost vomited out his dinner after Zhang Heng attacked him with the sound wave.

Zhang Heng wasn't simply messing with Altrus out of boredom. This time, Altrus had been outwitted. The rock that he lifted to throw at Zhang Heng had now landed on his foot. He wanted to use the underworld's legend and talk through the copper pipe to scare off Zhang Heng, but it turned out to be a failed attempt.

One had to admit that it was indeed a powerful technique in this era. Coupled with the truth serum that he used earlier, Zhang Heng felt that it was a waste of talent for Altrus to work as Commodus's advisor. He should have been an inventor or scientist of the second century AD. His ideas could have enlightened humankind.

Unfortunately, his ingenious ideas did not work on Zhang Heng, who had completed nine years of education in the modern world. Besides, Zhang Heng was baptized by science as well. Such a childish technique would never work on him. Judging from the volume of Altrus' voice, Zhang Heng knew that the latter was not too far away.

With the soundwave attack, Zhang Heng was hoping that he managed to provoke Altrus. He also wanted Altrus to stay put and wait for him to knock on his door.

Chapter 892: Altrus's Death

There was also a reason why Altrus did not escape right away. Not only was Zhang Heng wearing a black suit, but he had also put on a hood. Although Altrus did notice Zhang Heng's arrival in time, he did not know who sent the assassin to deal with him.

According to the news that he received, the Balance Blade was now dead. There was only one backup member left. Even if he was still alive, Altrus figured that he would be overwhelmed by the troubles he had to face, and he should not have time to come here to assassinate him. Although the Hounds was his ally, Altrus would not trust them completely. The two had only formed an alliance because they had a common enemy, but now that the enemy was gone, their ally-relationship would be dismissed naturally.

Altrus was not too surprised if the Hounds sent this assassin. Other than that, he had made a lot of enemies throughout the years. He had to find out the identity of the assassin as soon as possible. And how did the enemy find his hiding place? Hiding at the temple was Altrus's greatest secret. If this secret were exposed, his most important channel of intelligence would be cut off. Although Altrus was quite capable, losing the temple was like a magician losing his magic wand.

If possible, Altrus still wanted to keep this secret safe. That was the reason why he took the risk to talk to Zhang Heng. Altrus had always been a very cautious person, but at the same time, he was also very conceited. Most of the time, he was very confident with the tricks in his sleeve. By making use of the

legend of the underworld, no matter how determined enemies were, they should have been nervous about the whole thing.

To his surprise, Altrus received a small gift from Zhang Heng, and it did anger Altrus at the beginning. He wished to crush the bastard who scraped the copper pipe with a knife. However, after he recovered from the effects of the screeching, he gradually calmed himself down. And Altrus realized that it might not be safe for him to stay here anymore.

He regretted that he did not leave as soon as he realized that there was an intruder. Fortunately, it still wasn't too late to leave; hence Altrus did not hesitate this time. He grabbed his cane and said to the guards around him, "Let's go to the tunnel."

The moment the guards received his order, they quickly surrounded him and formed a protection circle. After that, they left through the side door to another room. However, after taking only two steps forward, the guards positioned at the back of the team suddenly knelt on the ground. His heart was shot through by a sharp arrow. And it caused the remaining guards to become nervous. They spontaneously divided into two teams. One team stayed back to stall the enemy, while the other team continued to protect Altrus and moved towards the underground path with stone rooms.

While getting panicked, Altrus, who had a physical disability, fell and dropped his cane. However, Altrus did not have time to pick it up. Although the copper pipe was good at transmitting the sound, it would get quieter once he got too far away from it. In order to listen to what Zhang Heng was saying, he chose to enter a stone room that was closer to Zhang Heng. However, the price he had to pay was that he could not enter the tunnel from that particular stone room. He had to walk for another fifty meters to get to the tunnel.

Altrus felt that the fifty meters were the longest distance that he traveled in his life. Right after he fell, two guards would quickly get to his feet. After walking for another thirty meters, the guards carried him to run towards the final destination. Altrus faintly heard the sound of fighting coming from behind. However, it did not last too long.

After the fighting sound disappeared for a few seconds, a glimpse of hope reappeared in Altrus' heart. The six soldiers that stayed back to fight with Zhang Heng were brought over here by him from the front line. Logically speaking, they were not supposed to be trounced by the enemy. Their odds of killing the assassin were greater. However, Altrus did not stop moving. He continued to run towards the stone room.

And now, he was only less than two meters away from the stone room. But the next moment, he felt a blast of air passing over his ears. And the guard on his left fell to the ground with an arrow penetrating his body. It caused Altrus to lose his balance. The guard on his right attempted to draw his weapon to protect Altrus.

However, the assassin with the Persian short swords cut open his chest without much effort. After that, Zhang Heng walked to Altrus's side, who was still crawling on the ground. The latter was extremely close to touching the stone room's door. However, he heard the assassin next to him saying,

"Your sister asked me to send her regards to you."

At that moment, Altrus had finally lost all his pride and composure. He pleaded, "No, this is impossible. How much is she paying you? I can double it! No! I can pay you ten times her offer. Don't kill me!"

"I feel your sincerity, but I'm sorry. You can't give me what she paid me," said Zhang Heng as he grabbed Altrus's hair.

The fear in Altrus's eyes gradually turned into anger. He kept repeating, "No, I have escaped death once! I won't die here! I won't die here! I won't die here!"

"It's a pity. This time you will die for real. But the good news is that everyone heard of your death five days ago. I also attended the funeral held by his majesty. It was pretty good." Zhang Heng slit Altrus's throat as he spoke.

The latter's fear and anger eventually turned into unwillingness, forever enshrined in his eyes.

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Zhang Heng had eliminated his first target of the night. However, he ran into a bit of trouble when he attempted to get out of the stone chamber maze. Since his way in was blocked, Zhang Heng had to take a long route before he could get back to the ground. By the time he left the maze, the sky had turned bright.

After that, Zhang Heng saw his wanted portrait posted on the streets. Immediately, he put on his hood when there were not a lot of people around him. The first thing that he did was to return to the southeast city. There was still one person on his assassination list. It was someone that had managed to hide well.

The person was the Hounds' leader.

So far, Zhang Heng had not obtained any information about him. Altrus was mysterious enough, but most of the people from the upper class had heard of his name before. However, when one compared him with the leader of the Hounds, no one knew if he was even a real person. If it weren't for the coincidence, Zhang Heng would've never known who the Hounds' leader was.

Initially, Zhang Heng wanted to assassinate the leader after killing Altrus, but he was accidentally trapped in the maze. Last night was the best time to eliminate him. Unfortunately, he missed the window of opportunity. When his wanted portrait was posted everywhere on the street, Zhang Heng's actions were also greatly affected. Fortunately, since Zhang Heng knew who the Hounds' leader was, he knew the best time to eliminate him. Zhang Heng ceased all his actions and waited quietly for his target to approach him.

Chapter 893: Leader Of The Hounds

Although Lucilla gave up the thought of committing suicide after Zhang Heng talked her out of it, her heart was still full of anxiety, especially the next morning when she saw Zhang Heng's wanted warrants posted almost everywhere in the city. Let alone getting close to the target. It was now getting very difficult for him to even walk on the street.

And with the passage of time, Zhang Heng's circumstances would only become more and more dangerous. The two had lost contact since that night. Lucilla did not know if Zhang Heng was still alive

and how long he could hide if he were. She knew that Zhang Heng was somewhat influential in the southeast city, and with him on the wanted list, the bounty alone was enough to turn anyone into a traitor. Besides, the people that lived in the southeast city had no sense of honor. As long as someone paid them enough, the poor people would betray their fathers. Zhang Heng was no longer Commodus's advisor too, which meant he had the least control over his life now.

Lucilla could not figure out how Zhang Heng would restrain his subordinates so they would not betray him. In fact, she felt that Zhang Heng had more likely already escaped Rome by now. This was the only reason to explain why he did not look for her or get caught. Lucilla's heart sank at the thought of this.

Suddenly, a hand wrapped around her waist, and Pompeanus's voice came from behind her, as gentle as ever. "What's going on? Are you not feeling well?"

Lucilla retracted her gaze from the street downstairs, and she barely smiled. "It's nothing. I was just thinking; it's Saturnalia in a few days."

"Oh, yeah, Saturnalia," Pompeanus nodded. "I heard that a grand celebration will be held on Trajan Square that day. Maybe we can go there and have some fun."

"Yeah, that's right."

Lucilla dealt with her husband with an absent mind.

"But now, my dear, we are going to the Victor Arena to watch the gladiatorial show!" Pompeanus picked up the necklace on the table, put it on for Lucilla, and tidied her hair. "It's a pity that your favorite Easterner can no longer perform in the Victor Arena. Fortunately, we still get to watch Terufelos the Giant. We have to hurry up, or we won't make it to the show."

"I'll be done soon. Why don't you go downstairs and wait for me first."

"Okay." Pompeanus smiled and kissed Lucilla on the forehead before opening the door.

However, after he took a step forward, he stood there, stunned. And he slowly retreated into the room. Lucilla frowned when she heard the footsteps behind her. She then turned back to ask, "Did you forget something?"

However, the next moment, she saw a servant holding a dagger against Pompeanus's chest. And a chill suddenly crept up in Lucilla's heart. She had never expected the Hounds' assassin to come so quickly. "I'm your target," she said. "This has nothing to do with him. He doesn't know anything."

"No. I'm afraid this has something to do with him." The assassin dressed as a servant opened his mouth, and Zhang Heng's voice came out.

"You still haven't left Rome?" Lucilla was taken aback.

"Yes, our agreement hasn't been fulfilled yet. Of course, I won't leave Rome," Zhang Heng said. "I killed Altrus for you, but the Hounds' leader usually spends his time in the barracks. It will not be easy to kill him. And after I kill Altrus, he would definitely be more cautious. Fortunately, I know an excellent opportunity to completely avoid all his men and guards. And that window of opportunity is when he returns to his home from the barracks."

“Hold on. Are you are saying that my husband is the leader of the Hounds?” Lucilla looked incredulous, “How is this possible? This is just a lie you made up so you can enter the library, right?”

“Unfortunately, no. To be honest, I had never doubted him before, because he had an almost perfect disguise. He is Aurelius’s crony, your husband, the number one figure in the military, and has always been known for his gentle personality. At the same time, he hardly participates in any faction wars. Under normal circumstances, no one will associate him as the Hounds’ leader, and neither would I.”

Zhang Heng continued after a short pause, “But a few months ago, when I was still in the southeast city, I was targeted to be assassinated. At that time, I was more inclined to think that Clint was the one that sent the assassin because he had always felt jealous of Commodus’s favor for me. Until a few days ago, I saw a centurion named Herto, and I realized that he had served under your husband for a long time. And he seemed a little flustered when someone mentioned his relationship with your husband. This made me believe that your husband may not be as simple as he seemed.

“But until then, I still didn’t think he would be the leader of the Hounds. Firstly, the person who wanted to assassinate me was not from the Hounds. And secondly, my identity was not exposed when I was being targeted. No matter who hired the assassin, the person didn’t want to kill me because I was a backup member of the Balance Blade. In fact, I still haven’t gotten an answer to this question,” Zhang Heng said as he cast his gaze on Pompeanus in front of him.

The latter, however, merely listened quietly and did not say a word about it.

So Zhang Heng continued, “Through that incident, I found out that the man behind Herto is your husband. At that time, I only knew about Altrus and your identity. And I still could not figure out who the Hounds’ leader was. Hence, I didn’t plan to stay in Rome anymore.

“I have a friend named Varo. It’s my... Well, I met him in the gladiator school. He was an antique dealer before he became a slave. His wife and his best friend teamed to set him up. Afterward, I hired someone to help him investigate his property. I found out that this matter was not as simple as I thought it was. Whether his wife or friends, they were hired by someone else. The mastermind behind the whole thing was a senator named Perret. And this is not the first time he has done this kind of thing.”

“What are you trying to say here?” Lucilla did not know why Zhang Heng suddenly mentioned a civilian.

Zhang Heng continued, “Don’t worry, you will understand after I tell you everything. After the assassination of A’ fakeltrus, the Balance Blade did not contact me. I knew that you weren’t in a good situation, so I waited for another two days, and I was ready to escape. At that time, I thought since I’m running away, I might as well help my friend to get rid of his troubles. After all, Varo and I got along with each other quite well in the gladiator school. Consider that my last favor for him.”

Chapter 894: Love

“I went to Pellegrino’s domus and eliminated six of his six guards. By the way, I didn’t break a sweat throughout the whole thing. I even took the time out to walk around his domus. To my surprise, Pellegrino, who was always busy bringing in more money, lived way simpler than I thought. There were not many slaves in his domus, and there was nothing particularly valuable. Considering that he makes a lot of money every year, I doubted Senator Pellegrino valued money more than anything else.

“When I kicked on the door of his room and put my dagger on his neck, he was so scared that he knelt in front of me and kept begging for mercy. However, he didn’t mention anything about using his money to buy his life. It was rather strange. According to my experience, no matter how stingy a person is, they are usually more than willing to spend some money when they are about to lose their lives. Unless... ”

“Unless the money he earned over the years is no longer in his hands.” Lucilla raised an eyebrow. “He is making money for others.”

“Yes. Something interesting came up next. After that, I asked him who he gave the money to. He told me that he gave all his money to a centurion. And this reminded me of something else.”

“What was it?”

“Rome had always been the Balance Blade’s territory. It wouldn’t be easy for the Hounds to ask their assassins to infiltrate this place. Besides, my teacher and other assassins that work alone, would need external support as well. The middleman is not the only person they talk to. They would need an efficient intelligence channel that could provide them with all the useful and updated information. And a place like that would need a lot of money to operate. There is an organization called the Beehive in the southeast city. It is a very mysterious organization. And their influence is not limited to the southeast city and the Senate. It seems that there are some of them in China, and it’s pretty obvious that they have spent a lot of money to collect intelligence.

“But unlike the other two forces, the Beehive does not have any income. Or, to be more precise, they earn no apparent income on the surface. In other words, its owner needs to keep bleeding money to keep it running. And as far as I know, the Beehive’s owner was the Hounds. Their spokesperson was a guy called Corne. He once tested me with the Balance Blade’s doctrine. From then on, I started to cast my doubts on your husband.

“After that, I did a thorough investigation on your husband. I looked for information about him when he was still young.” Zhang Heng looked at Pompeanus, “You came from a famous family. However, your family started to deteriorate by the time your father became the head of the family. In order to revitalize your family, you joined the army and began to follow Aurelius to go to a different war. At first, you were just an unremarkable centurion. However, you started to put more effort into making more contributions. Aurelius began to appreciate you more and regarded you as his confidant in the end.

“Your situation, however, is kind of similar to mine. Although Aurelius valued you very much, you were not the only young general that he favored. You had a lot of competitors, and many people are better than you. But in the next two years, those younger generals who were better than you died one after another for various reasons. In the end, you became the most dazzling rising star, and Aurelius became more and more dependent on you.”

“Although there were many people in the military who were older than you and more powerful than you, they were all too old to pose a threat to you. You were the only one who could threaten yourself.”

“Lucius!”

Lucilla suddenly thought of something, and her expression changed drastically. She was standing in front of her dressing table, but took two steps back and moved away from Pompeanus when she heard what Zhang Heng said.

“Yes, the younger brother of Aurelius, Rome’s co-ruling emperor Lucius,” Zhang Heng said, “The first man in the military at the time, with outstanding achievements. He was at his prime. Logically speaking, he should be the one to rule the army for a long time. And he, like Aurelius, was the emperor of Rome as well. With him being alive, you will always be his subordinate. After that, Lucius was killed by the plague when he was returning to Rome from the frontline. He did not even make it back.”

“You bastards killed my first husband?” Lucilla looked at Pompeanus. Seemingly to have forgotten her fear, she started yelling at him, “I could have continued to be a queen in the palace! After my father’s death, Lucius was supposed to become the only emperor in Rome, and our child was supposed to be the next ruler of the Roman Empire, not my stupid brother!”

Pompeanus only smiled but made no comment whatsoever. Instead, he looked at Zhang Heng and finally said, “Enough. Stop here. You don’t know me at all. You said you didn’t understand why I sent an assassin to assassinate you. The reason is very simple. It was because of jealousy.”

“What?” Zhang Heng raised his eyebrows. He felt a little surprised.

“Oh. I do not envy your transformation from commoner to a nobleman or the fact that you gained Commodus’s favor... I don’t care about such things. The jealousy I’m referring to is my instinct as a man and a husband.”

“You mistakenly thought I was your wife’s lover?” Zhang Heng suddenly realized, “Let’s not talk about whether I’m your wife’s lover. As far as I know, your wife has had many lovers. You shouldn’t mind about these...”

“Do you know where they are now then?” Pompeanus asked casually. “I can even kill the Roman emperor, Lucius, to get her, let alone the toys she’s gotten tired of playing and has thrown away.”

“But if this matter bothers you, why didn’t you stop her in the first place?”

“Oh. You’ve gravely underestimated her. Lucilla has never been the woman that would live under someone’s control. Even her father can’t control her. If she did it to acquire the sheer pleasure of cheating, why would she let the entire city of Rome know about it? Clearly, she was trying to declare war on her father, who used her as a political bargaining chip to marry her to someone. She wants to trample on the royal honor that her father valued. To me, she is like an out-of-control flame, incinerating everything on every path that she travels on. And that’s why I can’t stop loving her.”

Pompeanus smiled. “With my status, I need to spend no effort to find a gentle and obedient woman. Of all the women I met, none of them have her charm. She is made up of wild vehemence, rapacity, beauty, and debauchery. She is the epitome of perfection. I fell in love with her the first time I laid my eyes on her. I can’t change her, and I don’t want to.”

Chapter 895: Long Distance Traveling

“You are lying,” Lucilla took a deep breath. “You only said that to make me forgive you for what you did.”

“Perhaps.” Pompeanus did not argue too much on this issue, nor did he panic. From the moment his identity was exposed, he had kept a calm expression as if oblivious to the dagger pointed at his chest. He then continued casually, “No matter how much you hate me, there is at least one thing you can’t deny. I am indeed the best person for you in this world.”

“No. You are just a liar that tells all kinds of lies.” Lucilla then looked at Zhang Heng, who was watching the drama unfold before him. She seemed to have finally made up her mind. Hence, with gritted teeth, she growled, “Kill him! Kill him! I’ll tell you the location of the Balance Blade’s library.”

“Deal.”

Zhang Heng was very straightforward. He had been waiting for Lucilla to drop the order. Without any hesitation, he thrust the dagger cleanly into Pompeanus’ chest.

“That’s why I like you.”

Still staring at Lucilla at the last moment of his life, Pompeanus smiled. “Don’t worry, my dear. Even death can’t separate us.”

“What does that mean?” Lucilla’s expression changed slightly.

Pompeanus could no longer answer her because he had stopped breathing.

Zhang Heng pulled the dagger and said, “He is dead, and I have fulfilled the agreement with you. It’s your turn to fulfill your part.”

“Wait, what did his last sentence mean?” Lucilla frowned.

“I can’t answer your question. My understanding of him is limited to the part that he was related to the Hound.” Zhang Heng said, “Perhaps, it is something you should be asking yourself. After all, you and he have been a couple for so long.”

Lucilla looked uncertain. In the end, she decided not to dwell on this question anymore. Instead, she said, “You seem to have a way to hide well in this city. Can I hire you to be my assassin? In this war, I lost all the assassins from the Balance Blade. However, we can always recruit new ones. You can become the Assassin Speaker. You can freely use all the resources left behind by the Balance Blade. Other than that, I will pay you a huge sum of money.”

Zhang Heng seemed indifferent when he heard her offer. He then wiped the blood from the dagger. “Sorry, I am only interested in the whereabouts of the library.”

Lucilla had a sullen expression on her face, but she soon sorted out her emotions. She still had many political allies, and she was also the emperor’s sister. The destruction of the Balance Blade had indeed weakened her power a lot. She was glad that Zhang Heng had managed to kill Altrus and exposed Pompeanus’s identity. Although it was a pity that Zhang Heng did not accept her offer, Lucilla did want to make a more powerful enemy at a time like this.

So she nodded and said, “That’s a shame. Hold on.”

After that, Lucilla walked to her dressing table, took out one of her makeup boxes, and took out a map from the hidden compartment.

“Where is this?” Zhang Heng took the map, looked at it, and asked with confusion.

“Egypt,” replied Lucilla. “The secret library of the Balance Blade was originally located in Greece. However, the tragedy that happened two hundred years ago forced us to relocate it. It was for security reasons. The library is now located in a desert in Egypt.”

“Hmm. It seems I can enjoy my long-distance travel next. I hope the scenery along the way is not too bad,” replied Zhang Heng with his eyebrows raised.

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After killing Pompeanus, Zhang Heng was done with all the tasks in the city of Rome. Before he left, he returned to the southeast city to make some final arrangements.

Lucilla was curious of why Marcus, Soap, and others did not betray Zhang Heng for the considerable reward. The answer was simple. It was not because of Zhang Heng’s charm. He revealed his Shadow Wings to them, causing a significant impact on their mental state. Zhang Heng had no idea how long his trick would last. However, it was definitely enough for him to survive the complex situation in the meantime.

The last place Zhang Heng headed to was the Red Nose Blacksmith shop to withdraw the game items he deposited here. If he were right, he would not be returning to Rome anymore after his journey to Egypt. He employed his Lv2 makeup skill to join a team leaving the city, successfully going past the city gates. After that, he took a last look at Rome behind him.

In just six months, he went from being a slave to a gladiatorial champion to being favored by the emperor. He was granted the status of a free man, and he worked his way up to become a nobleman with a fief. In the end, he became a wanted criminal by the entire empire. Probably no one could beat his life experience.

However, Zhang Heng was not too emotional about it because he was just a passer-by in second-century Rome. To him, the scenery of the city was more interesting than becoming a noble. Zhang Heng withdrew his gaze after that. He had less than a year of game time left in this dungeon. It seemed quite long, but considering the logistical difficulties he would have to face on the path, he might have to spend a long time traveling from Rome to Egypt. If he chose the land route, he would need at least a couple of months to get to his destination.

Fortunately, he could take a ship across the Mediterranean Sea. And the current wind direction favored his journey. So, Zhang Heng found a grain ship at the pier that was about to make a return. Many modern folks believe that Egypt had always been made entirely out of desert and pyramids. During the second century AD, however, Egypt was known for shipping grain to Rome. Every year, the grain from Egypt fed at least half of the population of the Roman Empire.

After paying a gold coin for the ship ticket, Zhang Heng successfully found himself a bed on the ship. The moment he returned to the sea, he felt a sense of familiarity. It did not take him long to mingle with the sailors. The captain even wanted to keep Zhang Heng on the ship and give him a job after arriving in Egypt. However, the latter declined the offer.

Zhang Heng had not forgotten the purpose of his trip. After he arrived in Egypt, he took two weeks to check out the famous places in Egypt. After that, he spent some money to buy thirty camels and prepared seven months' worth of food and water. Lastly, he hired a few local guides and started his journey to the marked location on the map.

Chapter 896: Dusk Of The Empire (End)

Although Zhang Heng had a map in his hand, there were no satellites in this era. Besides, the accuracy of the hand-drawn maps was limited as well. Basically, Zhang Heng only saw the rough location of the library on the map. Other than that, the dunes in the desert would constantly move due to the strong desert winds. Hence, he could not find any landmark for him to refer to in this vast desert.

In the end, Zhang Heng spent an entire month in the desert before finding the stele that Lucilla mentioned to him. Once Zhang Heng spotted the stele, he would be able to see the library's entrance. While he was traveling in the desert, he accidentally ran into a group of robbers. Although he managed to eliminate the group of robbers, he still lost two camels and a local guide.

The local guide died because of his bad luck. When the robbery happened, he was far away from Zhang Heng. One of the robbers shot an arrow at him, and it landed on his forehead. He died on the spot. Zhang Heng had no choice but to come up with a sum of money and entrusted his companion to bring the money back to his family.

On the other hand, two camels had run away in fear. It wasn't a big problem. As long as he found the right place, he could always go to the nearby towns to replenish his food and water.

When Zhang Heng arrived at his final destination, he bid the remaining two local guides goodbye before setting up a tent beside the stele. In the evening, by the time he finished his open-air barbecue, the moon had already risen above his head. After that, Zhang Heng followed Lucilla's instructions, and he waited patiently for a while. When Zhang Heng saw that it was midnight, he extinguished the bonfire and walked about fifty steps in the direction indicated by the stele's shadow.

Zhang Heng knew that the stele's shadow was not as reliable. Fortunately, Zhang Heng still had his secret item with him, and that item was his watch. Zhang Heng knew that the time now was midnight after converting the time that he saw on his watch. However, the next problem that he had to face was the moon that hung in the sky. The moon's perigee constantly changed with different seasons, and everyone's had different steps as well.

Zhang Heng thought that the Balance Blade's predecessors were rather mean when designing the library's entrance two hundred years ago. They were clearly showing off how secure their design was. It was not easy for the people from the later generation to enter the library. All that being said, complaining would be pointless. Hence, after finding the right spot, Zhang Heng started to pick up a shovel to dig the ground. After half an hour of digging, the shovel finally hit something hard.

After all, the Balance Blade was just an organization made up of assassins. No matter how powerful they were, it was still impossible for him to create a library out of thin air under the sand. Therefore, Zhang Heng realized a natural cave beneath him, discovered by the Balance Blade two hundred years ago. After that, they did some modifications to the cave and put up a stele to mark the place.

Now that Zhang Heng had found the cave, the next thing that he would find was the cave's entrance. Zhang Heng tossed the sand into the sky with his shovel, letting them blow away with the wind. Soon, he unveiled the bronze gate. Zhang Heng then threw the shovel away and drew his dagger. After that, he used the dagger to knock the four directions of the bronze door in a specific order. As for the last step, he took out a movable iron piece in the lower-left corner of the bronze door and inserted his dagger into the slot to trigger the mechanism.

[Ding! Successfully found the Balance Blade's secret library. +50 game points. Head to the character panel to view the related information...]

After completing the above steps, Zhang Heng heard a system reminder. At the same time, he also heard a rumbling sound coming from the ground. It was the sound of the iron plate opening the bronze gate. Zhang Heng took two steps backward and looked at the bronze gate slowly opening in front of him. He knew that a new world was beckoning at him behind this gate.

...

...

[The return deadline has been reached. Mission complete...]

[You have cleared the Empire's Sunset dungeon. Your ninth round of the game is over. You will be sent back to the real world...]

...

Zhang Heng received the reminder to return to reality on the 560th day. Before that, he had spent seven months and eleven days in the secret library.

Of course, Zhang Heng did not stay there all the time. He would go out of the library from time to time for some fresh air after spending a long time reading the books stored in the library. Sometimes, he would go to a nearby town to have a different variety of food. Although it was not easy to find the library's entrance and Zhang Heng did complain about the entrance's design, he had to admit that the Balance Blade members had put a lot of thought when they built this library two hundred years ago. They had used every bit of knowledge at their disposal to master to perfect the design.

Upon entering the library, Zhang Heng found that he could play around with the library's mechanism. He moved a piece of rock with holes to the entrance to maintain the air circulation in the library. And at the same time, no passers-by would discover this underground library. That was why Zhang Heng was quite happy to stay there.

By the sixth month, his assassin skill had been upgraded to Lv.3. And this was probably the skill that he spent the least time to reach Lv.3. When Zhang Heng was in the Black Sail dungeon, it took him many years to upgrade his sailing skill from Lv.2 to Lv.3. Thanks to the secret library, he spent less than a year upgrading this assassin skill.

In total, he earned 292 game points from this dungeon, and he even acquired a game item called Heart of Kreis. It was quite a fruitful journey for him.

When Zhang Heng opened his eyes again, he had returned from the desert to the lounge on the second floor of Sex and the City.

Zhang Heng got up from the deck and walked towards the bartender.

"I can finally pay back the 71 game points that I owe you last time. And I have an item for you to identify as well."

Previously, Zhang Heng almost spent all his game points recasting the Ordinary Blade. Before he started his ninth round of the game, he only had 21 game points with him. He could not even afford to pay for the ritual of inheriting the remaining power from the Shadow Set. Luckily, the bartender was kind enough to allow him to pay the remaining game points that he owed later.

So the first thing Zhang Heng did after the end of the dungeon was to pay back the points he owed. After that, he passed the unidentified Heart of Kreis to the bartender. Although he had figured out the function of this item, he was not sure if he missed something. Anyway, it did not cost Zhang Heng too many game points to identify the items, and Zhang Heng could afford it.

"Congratulations, it seems it was a fruitful trip for you." The bartender accepted the sapphire, took out the tablet, and clicked on the payment interface. Zhang Heng took the tablet without the bartender's reminder and entered his player number, deducting 74 game points.

"It appears that our transactions are as pleasant as always," the bartender said with satisfaction. "I will help you identify this game item as soon as possible. By then, your blade should be readied. Do you want me to send it to your school, or do you want to pick it up yourself?"

"I'll come and get it," Zhang Heng replied without hesitation. The previous game items that he asked the bartender to identify were relatively small. Zhang Heng did not want to attract any unnecessary attention. He was not worried that the guard might confiscate his blade, knowing that the logistic service that the bartender used would make sure that he received the item on time, even if he was on the moon. The problem was that Zhang Heng had no place to hide the blade at school. It would cause a lot of unnecessary misunderstandings if Chen Huadong and Wei Jiangyang found out about it.

Chapter 897: Vacation

After Zhang Heng returned to school, the last words of the bartender still lingered on his mind. She had spoken to him the moment he was about to leave the bar.

"There have been many weird people around recently. You better stay away from the person with Ahoge."

"Someone with Ahoge?"

Zhang Heng thought for a while, and the only person with Ahoge was Nanako Mukaichi, the apprentice that Chen Huadong had accepted earlier.

Nanako Mukaichi was Hayase Asuka's junior and had arrived in China as an exchange student not too long ago. Zhang Heng had met her once, and he helped her find the books that she wanted to buy in the bookstore. At that time, Zhang Heng was interrupted by the old man in a Tang suit. Not knowing where he had popped out from, Zhang Heng said goodbye to Nanako Mukaichi and Chen Huadong.

Therefore, Nanako Mukaichi and Zhang Heng did not have a chance to get to know her better. And based on the situation of that day, Nanako Mukaichi seemed to be behaving quite normally. Zhang Heng, however, also believed that the bartender lady wouldn't have said something like that without supporting evidence. The old man in a Tang suit showing up indicated that something was wrong with Nanako Mukaichi.

Although the old man looked like he had nothing to do on the surface, Zhang Heng analyzed him again and realized he wouldn't show up without reason every time. Except for that time he showed up to sign a contract with Zhang Heng, he would only appear whenever Zhang Heng was in trouble. When Moresby came to this world, for instance, they met for the second time. And the third meeting because Zhang Heng crossed paths with the goddess of justice. And the last time Zhang Heng met him was in the bookstore not too long ago. The old man in the Tang suit was there to take away a book on the shelf that should not be there.

It seemed that the reason that the book appeared there was probably related to Nanako Mukaichi.

After realizing this, Zhang Heng wanted to remind Chen Huadong and let him pay extra attention to his safety whenever he spent time with Nanako Mukaichi. However, when he saw Chen Huadong put on a silly smile when he talked on the phone, he knew that his reminder would probably be pointless. Fortunately, Nanako Mukaichi was probably targeting Zhang Heng, so logically, she would not do anything to harm Chen Huadong.

.....

Since the start of the Agent Wars, Zhang Heng had obviously become busier. The time between each quest had shortened by a lot, not to mention that June was coming soon. In other words, it was time for the final exam again. Previously, Zhang Heng spent a year and a half in ancient Rome. Without a doubt, it certainly had affected his memories.

Fortunately, he had 48 hours a day. Even if the final exam came without warning, Zhang Heng still had double the time to prepare for the exam compared to Chen Huadong and Wei Jiangyang. And Zhang Heng discovered that his memory seemed to be better than before after acquiring the deduction skillset. When he was living in London, he tried to build a memory palace in his brain, according to what Holmes told him, and after which, he collected all kinds of information and stored it there. When he needed those memories, he could head to his memory palace to search for them.

It was also the reason why he could quickly find all those hidden connections in the several seemingly unrelated things in Rome. And now, this memory palace had also saved him a lot of time to relearn all those things he learned in school. It allowed Zhang Heng to complete his revisions a lot faster than expected.

Just as Zhang Heng entered the library and turned on his learning mode, a Tesla Model S rolled silently into the campus, stopping in front of Zhang Heng's dormitory after capturing everyone's attention. When the driver's door opened, the first thing emerging out of the car was a pair of perfectly curved, beautiful legs. Immediately, all the males in front of the building landed their gazes on the legs. The driver soon exited the car and took off her sunglasses.

Han Lu looked at Wei Jiangyang, who had just packed his lunch and was about to go back to his dormitory.

“Oh, great! You are the classmate who played basketball with Zhang Heng, right? Could you please help me tell him to come downstairs?”

Wei Jiangyang opened his mouth and spoke after being left speechless for a while, “Weren’t you driving a Lexus?”

“I have more than one car. Besides, I have given away that car. Compared to my life, that Lexus is nothing. Strictly speaking, Zhang Heng was the one who saved me that time.”

“Zhang Heng saved your life?” Wei Jiangyang felt like a paparazzi that carried all kinds of equipment, staking out outside a celebrity’s house.

However, Han Lu did not seem to have any intention of continuing this topic. So, she just smiled and said, “Can you ask him to come down? Don’t tell him that I’m here. I want to surprise him.”

“Oh, no problem, but he is not in the dormitory now. He should be in the library,” Wei Jiangyang stammered. He could not help but feel nervous every time he talked to Han Lu. Mainly, it was because of her reputation. Having been engaged in capital operations for a long time, she had forged within her a decisive temperament. Wei Jiangyang could not figure out how Zhang Heng got along with such a strong woman.

From his point of view, Han Lu was gorgeous, but a man would suffer if he stayed with her long term. After that, Wei Jiangyang looked for a random reason to ask Zhang Heng to come down from the library. Before he walked out of the gate, he saw the Model S parked in front of the library through the glass. Han Lu lowered the window of the co-pilot seat and said to him, “Get in the car.”

Zhang Heng raised his eyebrows and handed the computer and notebook in his hand to Wei Jiangyang, asking his help to bring them back to the dormitory. After that, he opened the car’s door, sat down, closed the door, and asked, “Where are we going?”

“Hawaii, a friend of mine just bought a yacht there. I asked him to lend it to me for a few months.”

Zhang Heng shook his head when he heard what she said, “Hawaii is too far away, and I still have final exams.”

“How about Japan? There are lots of pretty islands there. It only takes three or four hours by plane,” Han Lu chirped. “You said you are about to take the final exam, but you have to make sure you balance study and rest. We can find a small island over there and stay for two nights. I heard Shen Xixi saying that you are quite busy recently. Although she refused to tell me what you are doing, I happened to have finished my work for now. So, I thought maybe we could have a vacation together.”

“Why didn’t you call me in advance?”

“Because I didn’t want you to find a reason to reject my invitation.” Han Lu had already set up the autopilot to get them to the airport. She then turned to Zhang Heng and said, “You saved my life. I know you may think it’s no big deal, but I can’t pretend that it didn’t happen to me. And I want to do something for you. For starters, we can take a vacation together.”

Chapter 898: Okinawa Trip

Han Lu looked at Zhang Heng, seemingly waiting for the latter's reply. However, Zhang Heng was looking at the road ahead and reminded her, "The Buick on the right is about to change lane."

"Okay."

At this stage, Tesla's autopilot was only at Lv2, far from what was advertised. It could operate normally in some relatively empty places, but when it came to the cities, especially those with severe traffic jams, the driver had to take over the car when the road conditions became a little more complicated. Han Lu switched back to manual mode.

"But I have to at least get my passport when I travel to other countries. My passport is in my hometown, and there I need to take care of my visa as well," Zhang Heng said. "Other than that, I didn't bring any clothes with me, so I don't think we can leave today."

"Don't worry. I called Xiao Xia to ask your grandfather to mail your passport here. Someone will help you with the visa later. All we need to do is to wait at the airport. As for the clothes, it's a problem that can be solved easily. We can buy you some clothes when we arrive in Japan," Han Lu said.

"..."

"It looks like I have no reason to reject your invitation. Thank you," Zhang Heng responded politely.

"No. With you beside me, I can be more relaxed when are on a vacation. I don't want to endure being unable to sleep for a few days again."

Han Lu seemed to have some lingering fears on her.

The unknown danger was extremely frightening. Even a social elite like Han Lu could do nothing in the face of supernatural forces. For people like her who were accustomed to controlling everything, such a loss would make her extremely uncomfortable.

Han Lu could not help but glance at Zhang Heng in the passenger seat. She could not figure out how people like Zhang Heng and Shen Xixi, who had been living in that mysterious dark world, resisted the feeling of losing control of a certain aspect of their lives. Zhang Heng, especially, always looked calm and composed.

Even when he was in danger, he would be able to hold himself together, as if what he faced was no different than sitting in a classroom listening to a teacher talking or playing on a basketball court. Han Lu had read countless people over the years, but she had never met a man like this. The time the two spent together was a strange and fresh experience for her. She had done so many things that she would never do and said a lot of things that she would've never said.

Especially last night, she realized that this was probably the last night of her life. Her emotions had completely collapsed, and she even told Zhang Heng that she wanted to have sex with him. There was nothing wrong with her request. After all, Han Lu had been single for so long, and she was not short of money. She must have tried some other methods to deal with her physical needs, but such methods did not quench her psychological needs.

The circumstance on that night was different. After considering that Zhang Heng was Xiao Xia's son, she felt that she had somehow betrayed her best friend.

Fortunately, the two did not mention this matter again after the incident. Zhang Heng seemed to have completely forgotten that she had said something like that. Han Lu, on the other hand, tossed herself back to her work, hoping her busy work schedule would get her back on the right track. The two had not contacted much after the death dream incident.

However, Han Lu discovered that the trick he took pride in seemed to have failed this time. After a rare hesitation for two days, Han Lu contacted Xiao Xia and asked for Zhang Heng's passport. An insensitive woman like Xiao Xia would not notice that there was anything wrong with it. She even praised her for being so generous to her son, pleased that Han Lu had taken good care of her son. Unfortunately, her compliments amplified the sense of betrayal in her heart.

But in the end, Han Lu still decided to drive her Model S to Zhang Heng's school, and the two of them were on the plane to Okinawa four hours later. Han Lu would always be Han Lu. The moment she took her place in the first-class lounge, most of her distracting thoughts drove themselves out of her mind.

Sometimes, it was useless to overthink things. She felt that it was better for her to go with the flow. And she did not want to go against her wishes because of her friendship with Xiao Xia. At the same time, she was not expecting any pleasant outcome. In fact, she had discovered that Zhang Heng rarely showed his emotions when she spent time with him. This trip had proved that she was right all along. Although Zhang Heng was sitting next to her, she felt he would disappear whenever she closed her eyes.

This was the sixth sense of a woman.

Han Lu picked up the cup in front of her and chatted casually. "Where is the girl that was with you before? Not Shen Xixi, but the girl who drove my Lexus."

"Fan Meinan?" Zhang Heng asked. "I have no idea. It's been some time since I last contacted her. When I saw her last time, she complained that your car is too expensive to maintain and asked me when you could take it back."

After Zhang Heng returned from Rome, he did try to contact Fan Meinan but all he got was an automated call from the service provider, telling him that the latter's cellphone was turned off.

"I never take back things I gave out. If she doesn't like it, she can sell it at a lower price. It is actually not a bad idea for her to keep using it. I could've reimbursed her for the follow-up maintenance," Han Lu said while taking a sip of water. She then said, "After all, she almost lost her life because of me."

"I will tell her about it." Zhang Heng said.

"Are you worried about her?" Han Lu raised her eyebrows and asked.

"A little... Mainly because the man that supports her isn't her ideal partner. His record is not exactly good," Zhang Heng admitted. Fan Meinan was Loki's agent, and he was famous for causing troubles in Norse mythology.

In reality, his agents were not to be messed with as well. Fan Meinan was not too bad, but her sister with sunglasses had caused great havoc to the three major guilds. He replaced the Dreamland of Death

with a few pieces of plasticine. And in the end, Dreamland of Death fell into the hands of Seth, the God of Chaos. He then made multiple copies of Dreamland of Death. Although the three major guilds worked hard to collect all those dangerous game items, some of them would inevitably slip out of their hands.

Zhang Heng did not think that this level of chaos would satisfy Seth. He had not heard anything from Seth and Loki for quite a long time, and that was not a good sign.

However, Zhang Heng could not tell this kind of thing to ordinary people like Han Lu. So, Zhang Heng thought for a while, changed the subject, and said, "You have always had a good relationship with my mother. Did she tell you about the scientific expedition in Greenland?"

Chapter 899: Adventure And Vacation

"Scientific expedition to Greenland?" Han Lu frowned. "I have a vague memory of it. I remember her mentioning it to me a long time ago, saying that a Greenland local had found some ruins. It was said that murals related to primitive worship could be found there.

"The guy reported it to the authorities, which caused a great stir at the time. It garnered the interest of many scholars, so they organized two scientific expeditions to the area mentioned by the locals. They went search of the ruins, but found nothing in the end. After that, everyone began to accuse the local man who claimed to have found the ruins. They felt that it was a story he had made up. Although the locals insisted that they weren't lying, they could not find enough evidence to support their claim.

Gradually, they all started to forget about this. Your mother, however, had always kept her interest in it. From the description that locals provided, she believed the ruins were likely related to Mesopotamian, Celtic, and Egyptian mythology."

Zhang Heng seemed a little surprised. "Why can't I find these things online?"

"Oh, the news is about 70 or 80 years old. It was quite a humiliation to the archaeological community at that time, so it was only published in some local newspapers. Xiao Xia had found the piece of news in the old British Library, and during that time, she was writing her thesis. Although the news had little to do with her research, she became obsessed with it ever since.

"Later, we both graduated, and we were busy with our own affairs. In the beginning, Xiao Xia and I kept in touch with each other by phone. Later on, our work became more tedious, so we changed our communication method to emailing each other. We usually talked about the recent events in our lives. And then one day, Xiao Xia suddenly told me that your dad and she met a man called Time in some salon. He ran a travel agency, and he happened to fancy expeditions as well. So, he came up with an expedition team. And he was thinking of going deep into the uninhabited land of Greenland.

"Xiao Xia told him about the 70-year-old piece of news. Time was very interested in it and decided to invite your parents on the expedition. I persuaded Xiao Xia that she shouldn't accept the invitation so soon, let alone the perils that came alongside the harsh environment. She was also traveling with a group of strangers that she would meet for the first time. And here, she was about to accept an invitation from a stranger to explore a desolate land."

"However, Xiao Xia told me about how rare of an opportunity it was and that your dad would also be going with her. But your mother..." Han Lu put down the glass of water, seemingly pondering on what

she should say next. "As far as I know her, she is actually not that courageous. From what I know, she is afraid of the pain of childbirth and the cold. When we studied together, she would lie in bed, munch on chips, and binge on soap operas whenever it started to snow. She didn't even want to get out of bed. I don't know why she was so obsessed with the ruins in Greenland. Since she was ready to brace the extreme cold and face the danger, I knew that she was desperate to go there.

"Finally, she got to join the expedition with your dad as she wished. Because of their participation, the team became a de-facto scientific expedition. They were in Greenland for quite some time. Well, we didn't contact each other for about two months, but when she talked to me again, she told me that they had safely returned to their place of origin. I asked about the scientific research and whether she had managed to find the ruins she had been raving about.

"She said that she had found something she didn't know how to describe. If those things were published, they would probably cause an uproar among every theological and archaeological circle and even impact existing scientific processes. I thought she might have exaggerated the whole thing at the time, but I could hear the excitement in her voice. That being said, I have never seen her publishing the results of that particular expedition until now. After that conversation with her, she never mentioned that expedition again."

Han Lu went on, "In order to make sure that she was emotionally sound, I never asked her about the expedition again. However, I still have to say that her decision at the time was made without much consideration. You were only two years old, and she didn't even return to her country to hand you over to your grandfather. Instead, she asked one of her colleagues to take care of you for a few months. The worst part was she didn't even tell me about it. I didn't know that she gave birth to a son until she returned to China. To be honest, that did make me feel a little uncomfortable.

"I'm her best friend. We used to talk about everything. Although we didn't communicate as frequently as we did at school, it didn't affect our friendship. She should've told me that she had a son. She later explained that she didn't want to annoy me because I had just split with my fiancée at that time. However, she should know me well enough that I would not be bothered by such a thing."

Han Lu paused and then curiously asked, "Why are you so interested in Xiao Xia's trip to Greenland, and why don't you just ask her or your father?"

"I asked my father about it, but as you said, they don't seem to want to talk about it," replied Zhang Heng. "Anyway, thank you for telling me what you know."

"It's not a big deal." Han Lu smiled. "But you better not tell Xiao Xia that I told you these things because I don't know why she hides it from you. I feel as if we are going behind her back at the moment."

"I won't tell her."

After a while, the stewardess walked over with the menu, and with a smile, requested their orders. Han Lu chose a Japanese meal and a glass of plum wine. However, she did not finish her main course. Instead, she finished the dessert and fruit. After she drank about half a cup of plum wine, her cheeks became slightly flushed. She then started to talk about the vacation.

"Where do you want to go and have fun tomorrow?"

"I haven't been to Okinawa. It's your call," Zhang Heng said.

Han Lu said nothing in response to that. Almost immediately, she suggested, "Let's go diving. Have you ever dived before? Are you good at it?"

"Well, I'm okay."

"I have dived in Cape Maeda and Wreck' 92. Let's go to Yonaguni Island this time. It is said that if you are lucky, you could see hammerhead sharks and humpback whales," Han Lu gushed. "But we might encounter strong currents if we dive there. If you are a beginner, or if you have not dived much, we can head somewhere beginner-friendly."

"It doesn't matter. Just go where you want to," Zhang Heng said.

Chapter 900: Tool

Although the flight didn't last too long, it was already night when the two arrived at Naha International Airport, including the time spent waiting at the airport.

Han Lu contacted the local guide in advance to pick them up at the airport exit. Around twenty minutes later, they arrived at the Hyatt Hotel, and Han Lu booked two rooms for herself and Zhang Heng. And early the next morning, Han Lu fulfilled her promise made before they went diving. The first thing she did was to accompany Zhang Heng around the nearby shopping mall to get a change of clothes and buy some necessities.

Seeing Zhang Heng walking out of the fitting room, wearing beach pants and a T-shirt, Han Lu could not help but compliment him. "You look good in this, comparable to advertisement models, I believe."

"Is that right? But we have already bought two sets. Let's forget about this one," Zhang Heng said.

"No, no, no. I like this set. Trust me." Han Lu took out her credit card. "Yonaguni Island is located at the westernmost point of Japan, and there are no big shopping malls on the island. So, we have to prepare a few sets of clothes, right?"

Her last question was meant for the local guide beside her. The latter was a handsome, Chinese-Japanese young man. Whenever he smiled, the people around him could feel the breath of summer. That was why he charged a lot for his service fee. The standard local guide's service fee was 1,000 to 1,500 yen per hour. However, the local guide that Han Lu had hired charged her 4,000 yen per hour. And he was in high demand as well.

But when he put on his signature sunny smile to pick up Han Lu from the airport, he saw her frowning. That was because Han Lu did not expect her assistant to be so careless. Under normal circumstances, she wouldn't mind hiring a handsome local guide to keep her company. After all, everyone liked attractive people.

But this time, she was on vacation with Zhang Heng. It did not make sense if she got herself a handsome local guide. Since the decision was made, Han Lu would not dismiss him. If she had done that on the spot, everyone would be able to see that she was trying to hide something. So, she could only bite the bullet and accept him as their local guide.

Unfortunately, the person that suffered the most from this matter was the local guide. Though he was the one that provided the service, no one would pay double the price just to get a standard local guide's service. He was supposed to enjoy the sun, sea, and beach with her. Occasionally, he would talk to his client about life. That was where the value from paying the extra money came from.

Especially this time, when the local guide saw Han Lu walking out of the airport, he felt his heartbeat slowing by two beats. After that, he saw Han Lu frowning at him. This was his first experience getting rejected by his client. Fortunately, he only needed to send the two to the hotel that night, and he left without speaking much with them. It wasn't until the next day before he realized that he was only a tool to them.

Han Lu would only speak to him when she needed translation service or tell him when she wanted to go next. As for the rest of the time, she would treat him like he was invisible. Even though the sky was clear and the sea breeze embraced Naha today, the local guide's mood was as bad as a blizzard ravaging the island. After taking Han Lu's order, he squeezed out a smile and a "Yes."

"Pay with my card." Han Lu finally made a decision. In fact, she did not bother to listen to the local guide's opinion. She just wanted to make use of him to convince Zhang Heng.

As expected, Zhang Heng did not say no anymore. Neither he nor Han Lu was short of money, so he would not dwell on whether to buy the set of clothes that he was wearing.

...

No matter how old a woman was or what a woman worked as, they always had great enthusiasm when it came to buying stuff in a shopping mall. Although they were here to buy clothes for Zhang Heng, Han Lu would take the opportunity to buy the clothes she liked too. In the end, the two ended up spending their entire morning shopping.

Not only did Zhang Heng buy five sets of clothes, but Han Lu had also bought a ton of cosmetics, shoes, and bags for herself. As she walked out of the mall, the local guide's hands were filled with shopping bags.

"It's getting late. Let's find a place for lunch," Han Lu said while looking at the depressed local guide.

"What are some of the special restaurants nearby?"

"I don't know."

The local guide shook his head.

"You don't know?" Han Lu frowned, "You charge 4000 yen an hour, and you didn't even bother to do some research for us?"

Now that Han Lu had mentioned it, the local guide started to get angry. He did charge Han Lu 4,000 yen an hour. However, he was not happy when she made him carry everything that she bought. With his handsome appearance, he could easily find another client. It was not necessary for him to stay here and work for them to get the hard-earned cash.

There were still many young and beautiful girls in this world waiting for him to fill the emptiness in their hearts. Upon thinking about that, the local guide stood straight and said, "Sorry, Miss Han. I don't feel well today. I don't think I can work as your local guide any more."

Without waiting for Han Lu to speak, he continued, "I will refund all the fees I have received. And I apologize for all the trouble that I made."

After finishing talking, he put down all the shopping bags on the side of the road. At that moment, he felt really proud of himself. He compared himself with the Chinese poet, Tao Yuanming who refused to lower himself down for five buckets of rice.

"Of course, you are free to go. I don't need you to refund the money to me as well. But, you have to at least wait until another local guide to take over your job." Han Lu was displeased with his service from the beginning. After paying him 4,000 yen per hour, he still failed to provide her with the most basic service. And when he was working, he looked weak, and he looked like he had no intention to serve them at all, which was why she been looking for an excuse to fire him. She did not expect he would take the initiative to quit the job.

"Let's find a restaurant for us first." Han Lu took out her mobile phone to contact her assistant to get her a new local guide. In the end, Zhang Heng talked her out of it.

"It's okay. We are going to travel to the island soon anyway. I can be your translator to translate some of the basic conversations."

Zhang Heng stopped an old couple who was about to cross the road and politely asked them to recommend some good restaurants nearby.

When the local guide heard the conversation between Zhang Heng and the old couples, he was taken aback. Usually, a tourist hired a local guide because they did not speak their language. Otherwise, they could go wherever they wanted to if they could communicate with others in their language. Previously, Zhang Heng did not show he was capable of speaking in Japanese. He would remain quiet whenever the local guide did the translation for them.

That was why the local guide assumed that Zhang Heng did not understand Japanese. To his surprise, Zhang Heng was well-versed in Japanese, and he even carried a Tokyo accent. He started to think that maybe Han Lu did pay him that 4,000 yuan per hour to help her carry shopping bags. Had he misunderstood them from the beginning?