

48 Hours 921

Chapter 921: New Blade

Zhang Heng first picked up the smaller tulle box, which contained the game item that he received from his last quest. It was also a gift Dadatis had given him before he left Rome.

[Name: Heart of Kreis]

[Quality: D]

[Effect: It can significantly reduce the sound of the user's footsteps, heartbeat, and breathing. At the same time, it will lower the enemies' vigilance within 3 meters.]

The Kreis of Heart's effect was no secret to Zhang Heng. However, the last effect mentioned by the system was something that he did not know about before. Since he carried it with him all the time, his stealth skills were getting better and better. On Yonaguni Island, even without Heart of Kreis, Zhang Heng still managed to approach the Self-Defense Forces' soldiers easily. Since he did not interview the targets he knocked out, he would never know his enemies' feelings about his sneak attack.

And this was why he asked the bartender lady to identify it even though he knew its effects pretty well. Other than that, Zhang Heng also noticed how the heart's two effects were described differently. The system mentioned that sounds made by the user would be greatly reduced as for the second effect mentioned that it would be only slightly lower the vigilance of nearby enemies. Clearly, both of the items were not on the same level. However, these two attributes complimented each other very well. It was indeed worthy of being crowned the title of The Assassin's Holy Grail.

And this was probably the reason why it was considered a Grade-D item.

After checking out Heart of Kreis, Zhang Heng moved his gaze to another wooden box. This was the game item he cared about most. Zhang Heng had always wanted to find a bladed weapon that suited him best. A while ago, he made a deal with Scarlet Sword, and it earned him the opportunity to enter a dungeon that allowed him to take a sword out. It was a special dungeon, similar to the Lego dungeon that he entered a long time ago. There was no penalty for failure, and the player could obtain a game item upon clearing the dungeon.

Zhang Heng challenged a handful of dojos in Kyoto. In the end, not only did he acquire the two famous swords, Juzumaru and Kiku-ichimonji, but he also received a nameless sword from Akane Koyama. These three swords were also his copy. These three-bladed weapons were the best melee weapons that he could find in that dungeon.

If he was right, then the first two swords were Grade-C game items. As for the sword Akane Koyama gave him was the hardest sword that one could acquire in the dungeon. Zhang Heng speculated that it might be a hidden reward. Hence, it should be of respectable quality.

According to the dungeon's rule, Zhang Heng could only pick a sword to be brought out of the dungeon. Just when he was about to choose one, he met someone he suspected of being the dungeon owner. The latter proposed to trade one sword with three of his. After a short consideration, Zhang Heng accepted his proposal.

In the end, Zhang Heng only received an Ordinary Sword with an “F” quality.

However, after checking out the attributes of this sword, Zhang Heng decided to spend another four thousand game points to recast it. This amount of game point was an astronomical figure for a single player. Since Zhang Heng spent double the time in every dungeon that he entered, it was not that hard to earn such a huge amount of game points.

However, it still cost him all the game points that he had saved up. And he had to sell off some items he didn't use to gather all four thousand game points. It was not until the end of the last quest that Zhang Heng's game points returned to a surplus state.

And now, he could finally shed some light on the long-awaited question.

Even Zhang Heng felt nervous about it, but that did not last long. After that, he stretched his hand and happily opened the box. He had caught a glimpse of this blade from the photo sent by the bartender before, and it was now his first time getting a closer look at the sword.

As compared with the Ordinary Sword that he received last time, it looked like it was now completely reborn.

After being recast, its blade was now shortened by half an inch, but its weight wasn't reduced. On the contrary, it became slightly heavier now. Zhang Heng felt good when he held it in his hand like it was a part of his body. It was at that time that Zhang Heng realized that the sword paired well with him.

Other than its length and weight, the material used to make the sword was completely different from before. Now, it looked like it was made of an unknown alloy with a darker color. Its physical appearance was not that fancy. However, this blade could easily slice the steak knife that was given to him by the bartender lady to test the sharpness of his new blade.

Under its harmless appearance, Zhang Heng could feel the ferocity hidden within it. Other than that, the blade's handle was engraved with a V, which seemed to be a signature left by the forger.

[Name:?? ?]

[Grade: B (upgradeable)]

[Function: Forged with the hardest material in the world. It is extremely difficult for it to be damaged. The wound caused by this blade cannot be healed. Since the phalanx of a certain deity is mixed in the forging process, the wounds caused by this blade will continue to rot. Other than that, it will also deal extra damage to mythical creatures. The forger has deliberately left some room for the user to upgrade the blade. The owner of this blade has to look for a way to upgrade it.]

Zhang Heng obtained this third Grade-B game item after the Infinite Building Block and Pestilence Bone Bow.

It was also the fiercest Grade-B game item that he'd ever come across.

The description of its function was simple yet straightforward. This blade only had three effects, but these three effects were extremely brutal. When Zhang Heng sent the blade for recasting, he suspected that the mysterious alloy used to forge the sword might be very unusual. However, he was still surprised to hear that the blade was made of the world's strongest material.

In other words, no matter what weapon clashed with this blade in the future, its opponent would surely suffer. The worst part was that the opponent's wound couldn't heal; hence if the blade made a small cut on the finger, it would be impossible for the opponent to stop bleeding. If Zhang Heng managed to inflict a more severe wound on his opponent, it would be a matter of time before they would be sent to meet their maker.

Fortunately, this blade was not too sharp. Otherwise, not even a blademaster like Zhang Heng would dare to keep it by his side. When Zhang Heng was told that the blade would make the wounds rot, his expression became a little strange.

This was not the age for the gods to battle among themselves. According to the old man in the Tang suit, the disputes between the gods were supposed to be resolved by this mysterious game. The way to solve it was no longer as primitive and bloody as in the past; hence the gods didn't fall as frequently.

The only deity known to have died recently was one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. He was killed by Zhang Heng. After Zhang Heng killed him, the latter's body also disappeared immediately.

It looked like his corpse might have fallen into the hands of the craftsman who recast the blade. He added his phalanx into the blade when he recast it. That was why the wound inflicted by the blade would decay. This explained why Zhang Heng felt a sense of familiarity when he laid his eyes on it.

The most brutal effect of this blade was its last effect, allowing the wielder of this blade to deal extra damage to mythical creatures. Of all the enemies Zhang Heng had dealt with, the most powerful enemies were the supernatural creatures. Almost every single one of them had different abilities. When the old man in the Tang suit fought against Moresby, even he needed to use a spear that can summon thunder and lightning.

And the blade that Zhang Heng was holding now was just like the spear.

Chapter 922: Exam Week

As far as Zhang Heng knew, there were many types of game items. However, items that allowed its user to deal extra damage to mythical creatures had always been rare. Even the old man in the Tang suit did not possess such a game item. He wouldn't have borrowed the spear to deal with Moresby if he did. If Zhang Heng was right, then the old man's spear was probably the famous Holy Lance, also known as the Spear of Destiny, the spear the soldier had stabbed Jesus with.

And now, the blade in Zhang Heng's hand was on the same level as the Holy Lance.

Zhang Heng then asked the bartender lady beside him, "Why are there question marks on his name?"

"Because it's fresh out of the furnace. The craftsman is supposed to name it, but he refused since he said he wasn't the one who made the blade. Strictly speaking, all he did was give the blade a new body that suited it better."

The bartender continued after a pause, "I guess what he tried to say is that he forged this blade with one more man. In other words, none of them are qualified to name it. Besides, this is your blade. So, I'll let you name it. You can call it whatever you want."

Zhang Heng thought for a while before saying, "Let's call it Shrouded Sheath."

This blade was immensely powerful. If the wounds it inflicted were deep enough, there would be no cure for whoever it hurt. Another reason why Zhang Heng named it Shrouded Sheath was to remind himself never to use this blade unless it was his last resort.

With his current skillsets, using a Grade-B weapon to deal with his enemies would be overkill, and thus, he swore only to unleash his Shrouded Sheath to deal with overwhelmingly powerful enemies.

After that, Zhang Heng spent another ten game points to order a scabbard made of tule wood from the bartender. As for the upgrade, Zhang Heng also consulted the bartender about it.

According to the bartender lady, there were not many upgradable game items in existence. Most of them were either Grade-E or Grade-F items. It was the first time she laid her hands on an upgradable Grade-B game item. Different game items, however, required different upgrading methods. So, it would be difficult for her to provide Zhang Heng any useful tips. Even if he expressed his willingness to pay a certain amount of game points, the only advice the bartender could give was for him to slash a few people with it.

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After leaving the bar, Zhang Heng temporarily stored his Shrouded Sheath and Heart of Kreis in the trunk of his Polo. Once that was done, he went back to the school to take a shower.

In the next few days, he stopped wandering around, and instead, stayed in the library revising, preparing for the exam next week. Zhang Heng also met Shen Xixi several times in the library, the latter, busy with her revisions as well. After the dismissal of the union, Shen Xixi did not need to deal with so many things, and she had a little more time for herself.

As for Fan Meinan, Zhang Heng wondered why she never mentioned anything about her school even though she looked to be his age. At this age, she should be studying in college. However, she never talked about it, nor did she talk about her majors or classmates.

Zhang Heng was a relatively quiet person in the university. Even though he disliked taking part in group activities, he still fancied hanging out with Chen Huadong, Wei Jiangyang, and others that lived in the same dormitory. In contrast, Fan Meinan would always be alone.

During the Lego quest, Zhang Heng knew that Fan Meinan's family lived in Yangcheng. She had a father, a mother, and a younger brother. Other than that, the lady with sunglasses who stole the Dreamland of Death from the auction under the nose of the three major guilds seemed to be Fan Meinan's long-lost sister too.

Beyond that, Zhang Heng's understanding of Fan Meinan was very limited.

Fan Meinan might look cold-blooded and did not care about a single thing in this world, but Zhang Heng could feel that this was simply a facade she used to cover up her true nature, especially when the two met for the last time. Fan Meinan still smiled when she talked to Zhang Heng, but she seemed worried about something.

And the two had been out of touch since then.

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Zhang Heng was a little distracted when he was taking his exam. However, after he gulped, he quickly focused on his test paper and put a full stop to his last sentence. And that marked the end of his semester.

After that, he put down the pen in his hand and rechecked the answers. He seemed to have accidentally dropped his pencil on the ground, so he bent over and it up. After that, he tidied up his things, got up, and handed the test papers to the podium.

At the same time, Chen Huadong, who was six seats away from Zhang Heng, took advantage of the invigilator paying attention to Zhang Heng. He immediately leaned over and picked up the eraser that rolled to his feet. He then took off the eraser's cover and saw two rows of answers written on it, almost causing him to cry out loud.

Chen Huadong had always claimed that he only needed to do last-minute studies to pass exams. However, his relationship with Nanako Mukaiji had been getting better recently. He had spent most of his time with his girl, and he was in no mood to do any revision. Thus, a little extra midnight oil had to be burned to take care of his previous papers. As for the last paper, he could barely squeeze out the time to study for it.

Thus, he could only seek Zhang Heng's help. Zhang Heng promised Chen Huadong that he would write down the correct answers for the multiple-choice questions on an eraser and throw them to him. However, something unexpected happened before the test started. The invigilator suddenly asked Chen Huadong to swap his seat with a girl. So, he was forced to move to a seat that was further away from Zhang Heng.

Chen Huadong instantly turned pale. He felt like he had been just handed a death sentence.

Fortunately for him, Zhang Heng was much more skillful than he thought. He still managed to accurately throw the eraser to his feet from such a long distance, and he even created an opportunity for him to pick up the eraser.

Chen Huadong suddenly felt that the two Pizza Hut meals he promised to buy were absolutely worth it. He did not waste this rare opportunity, instantly copying the answers to his answer sheet. Then, he started to make up something to answer the essay questions.

The final score of this paper was divided equally among the multiple-choice questions and the essay questions. Combined with Chen Huadong's other results, he would not fail this paper as long as he did not get zero marks on his essay questions. Of course, he did not dare to copy all answers to the multiple-choice questions that Zhang Heng had given him. He was smart enough to fill in some wrong answers. He still had to find a way to get some points for his essay questions.

In the end, Chen Huadong managed to fill up all the blank on the test paper. Other than the fact that he wanted to test his luck, he also wanted to impress his teacher by showing that he put a lot of effort into finishing the exam paper. However, he did not know if this strategy would work well for him.

When the invigilator asked the students to stop writing and collect the papers, Chen Huadong felt that he had performed exceptionally well in this test paper. So, he breathed a sigh of relief.

Chapter 923: Changes

“When are you going home?” Wei Jianguang asked the three people in the dormitory after the exam.

“Oh, you know my situation at home. As usual, I have to work during the holidays, so I won’t be going back to my hometown,” Ma Wei said. As soon as the exam was over, he immediately took out the high school textbook and at the same time boiled a pot of water, sat down, and started to study what he needed to teach during the summer holiday.

The boy tutored by Ma Wei was said to have made a lot of progress during this semester. So, his parents decided to hire Ma Wei as a permanent tutor and doubled his hourly salary. Of course, Ma Wei wouldn’t let such a rare opportunity slide.

What surprised Wei Jianguang was that Chen Huadong, who was the most eager to go home every time, would say, “I’ll be staying in school for a while because Nanako wants to know more about the city. As her Chinese teacher, I have to stay by her side and explain everything to her.”

“Hmm.” Wei Jianguang raised his eyebrows, “It seems someone has completely fallen under Nanako’s spell. All you ever talk about is Nanako.”

“You have no right to say that about me.” Chen Huadong rolled his eyes. “When you and your girlfriend show off your lovey-dovey moves in front of me, I didn’t even ask for any compensation to cure my fragile heart.”

“However, a huge barrier still separates you both. What do you plan to do when Nanako stops being an exchange student and returns to Japan?” Wei Jianguang didn’t sound too optimistic about their future.

“We will find a way to deal with it when the time comes. Didn’t you see me pouring my heart out to learn Japanese? I can always move to Japan with her to teach Chinese there after graduation, or she can stay here and teach Japanese.” Chen Huadong glanced at Zhang Heng. “Young Master Zhang secretly managed to master his English. I can do it too.”

“Young Master Zhang has scored nearly 700 points in his Level Six English Test. I have never seen you score such a high score in a foreign language.”

“...”

“This is different. This time, I have the power of love with me.” Chen Huadong gritted his teeth.

It was true that he reduced his gaming time recently, and he had somehow become less enthusiastic about watching dramas. Recently, he devoted most of his time to learning Japanese. And his Japanese had improved a lot.

“I think you read too much manga.” After Wei Jianguang finished speaking, he looked at Zhang Heng, “What about you, Young Master Zhang?”

“When I finish dealing with the things at hand, I will probably go for a trip during the holiday,” Zhang Heng said.

“Are you going to go on a trip with that rich woman again?” Chen Huadong probed.

“No, just me this time.”

“Ah, what’s the point? Even if you don’t like that rich woman, you can ask Hayase Asuka to go with you. I heard Nanako saying that Hayase Asuka has been talking about you. If you ask her to go on a trip with you, she will definitely say yes.”

With Nanako being his informant, Chen Huadong had become quite well-informed recently. He scratched his head and said, “Seriously, Hayase Asuka is a pretty good girl. You should just go be with her. If that happens, we can work as Chinese together in Japan, and we can become neighbors too. I have always wanted to visit Akihabara.”

“There’s an 80% chance that you will be disappointed,” Zhang Heng said.

“Uh, what are you talking about? Becoming your neighbor or going to Akihabara together?”

“Both.”

While chatting with the three people in the dormitory, Zhang Heng turned on the computer. The school exam was over, but there was still one more exam waiting for him to take.

Zhang Heng logged in to the official website of the organizing committee and looked at the rankings. The first round of the proxy war was halfway done. And the rankings had changed a lot. Zhang Heng was no longer in the first place. The person that now topped the leaderboard was Pegasus, the president of the Silver Wing.

He took the lead with 2203 points, followed by the Arc of Light’s vice president, Mu Ren, ranked second with 2176 points. And most of the players that ranked below him came from the three major guilds, once again proving that the three major guilds were extremely powerful. As for Zhang Heng, since he had completed only one round of the game, his rank had dropped to 49th.

Zhang Heng was not bothered by the fact that he was no longer in first place. It was because he did not feel the need to fight hard to maintain his honor or build a reputation like the players from the three major guilds. According to the bartender lady, the top 500 players were qualified to enter the next stage of the game. And the top fifty players would receive a small gift. Hence, there was no difference between getting first place or the 50th.

Right now, Zhang Heng only needed to make sure that he would be placed in the top-50 category.

Since it was not the deadline yet, and his current rankings would still undergo changes. However, Zhang Heng figured that he did not need to complete all three rounds of games. As long as he completed one more round of the game, he would not fall out of the top-50 category.

When Zhang Heng entered Fan Meinan’s player number into the search bar, however, it yielded no result. When Fan Meinan told Zhang Heng that her sister used some kind of method to scam the Dreamland of Death from the auction, she had also mentioned that her sister hacked the character panel, resulting in both of them being banned from playing the game. But later, the organizing committee seemed to have forgiven them, or they had found some new loopholes. When Fan Meinan invited Zhang Heng to enter the Lego dungeon on New Year’s Eve, the ban on them had obviously been lifted.

However, Zhang Heng did not see Fan Meinan join the proxy war.

Fortunately, when Zhang Heng logged into the player forum, he did not see any news related to her.

Recently, most of the players were focusing on the proxy war, especially the players who were relatively high in the rankings. They became the topic to discuss on the player forum, analyzing who among them was the strongest.

Most of the posts were just hypothetical discussions. Their theories could only be proven when the players that were being compared went on a real fight and see who would prevail till the end. Even then, there was no way to judge the strengths and weaknesses of the two fairly. That was because different players had different development priorities and game items. At the same time, they were also greatly affected by the environment and teammates. An all-around player like Zhang Heng, who was capable of taking care of everything, was probably rarer than a unicorn.

However, it did not stop the player from comparing them enthusiastically. It was human desire to compare with each other. No matter what game it was, the introduction of the leaderboard into the game had always been something huge.

Zhang Heng then quickly looked at the hotter posts in the forum, and few of them were dedicated to him. However, since he had always been alone, he left very little information to the other players. Hence, the other players could only make speculations about him. Unlike Pegasus, with a lot of his information released to the public, they soon stopped talking about Zhang Heng.

And Zhang Heng thought this was a good idea. He could play his second game a day before the deadline, helping him to keep his profile as low as possible. After that, he could go ahead to complete his ordinary round of game in July. Once that was done, he could set off to fly to Iceland to look for more information about himself.

In that huge wasteland, there was something waiting for him.

Especially after escaping from the underwater palace on Yonaguni Island, Zhang Heng noticed that his body started to change again. Not only did he have the ability to breathe underwater, but he also became more and more fond of water. At the same time, he could control the water flow to a certain extent.

Different from the pair of Shadow Wings that he had on him. Zhang Heng could feel that the abilities he mastered this time seemed to belong to him. When he manipulated the ocean currents on the bottom of the sea, it was as natural as eating and drinking.

Chapter 924: Catching Up

After returning to shore, Zhang Heng did some tests on his new abilities. The test included how long he could breathe underwater, his ability to move underwater, his limitation, the limits of manipulating water flow, and so on.

Still, Zhang Heng could not find a clear answer to those questions. After taking off his breathing equipment in that underwater palace, he stayed there for at least seven to eight hours, and he did not feel any discomfort.

Upon returning, Zhang Heng found a swimming pool and tried to stay in it for 24 hours. He found out that his newfound ability did not only apply to the sea. He could also breathe unrestrictedly under the

dead water in the swimming pool. Therefore, Zhang Heng now knew that there were no restrictions to his underwater breathing ability.

In other words, he could no longer drown. Other than that, Zhang Heng also found out that the resistance in the water was way smaller than before, probably one-fifth of the initial resistance he experienced. He was now a lot more flexible underwater. However, it could not be compared with how he moved on land; what he could do had already gone beyond the limits of a human being.

After returning to the world where time flowed normally, Zhang Heng went to the market to buy a few fishes and let them loose in the swimming pool. After they swam for less than five minutes, they were caught by him again.

If Zhang Heng had this ability when he entered the novice dungeon, he wouldn't have to work so hard to look for food. If he was hungry, he could just jump right into the sea and grab whatever marine creatures he desired. The entire sea would become his personal seafood stall that was open 24 hours a day.

However, when it came to manipulating currents, his most powerful skill was controlling ocean currents. He did try to shape the current into a certain shape, such as a water arrow. Unfortunately, the attempt failed. The most he could do was to make the ocean current extremely thin. It would not cause any damage, and at most, give the target a tingling sensation.

Zhang Heng gave up after several attempts. He figured that a dagger coupled with his body's flexibility should suffice in defeating all kinds of underwater opponents easily.

Zhang Heng had also figured out how to stir his coffee without a spoon how to use the least amount of water while bathing.

Despite all of that, however, he still found it difficult to be happy.

It was because he did not know if he was even considered human. As the game progressed, he became more and more unfamiliar with himself. Such an unfamiliarity did not limit his external strength growth, but he also noticed some internal changes.

Zhang Heng instinctively sensed that something was not right about it.

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On the other hand, the bartender lady had finished her night shift at the game checkpoint and was taking a break at the maid cafe. She ignored the manager's whinny gaze. In one of his hands was a mobile phone playing a soap opera, and her other was messing with something. She grabbed a pepper bottle on the side and sprinkled some of it into her passion fruit drink, before adding a spoonful of oil and vinegar after she stirred the drink.

The waitress on the side then fetched this freshly made hellish drink to a fat customer at a table. The latter was taken aback after seeing the drink he ordered. After holding back for some time, he finally asked, "What's wrong? I... I remember the drink I ordered the last time wasn't this color."

"I'm sorry, master. Let me ask the bartender."

The maid looked very considerate. She returned to the customer in less than half a minute. And she repeated what the negligent bartender lady told her to the customer. It was some kind of nonsense that the waitress did not believe in. "Our bartender said that this is a special secret drink. Not everyone can earn the right to have it. Only our regular customers have the opportunity to have a taste."

As for the second part of what the bartender lady said, about her poking a straw into the customer's skull and forcing him to drink his own brain juice if he kept interrupting her drama, it was excluded by the waitress out of her kindness.

"Is that so?" the fat customer showed a hint of joy on his face when he heard what the maid said. He then eagerly picked up the drink in front of him. Before the waitress could warn him, he was choked by the layer of pepper that was floating above the drink. He sneezed, and when he had a taste of the oily vinegar, his whole face turned green.

Just when he wanted to question the maid angrily, his eyes suddenly lit up.

That was because he saw a cute lady who he thought could only be seen in the anime stepping into the maid coffee shop. The appearance of the girl looked like a classic, beautiful anime female character.

She was 1.5 meters tall. She had silver hair, a pair of cute eyes that looked like she just woke up, and an anti-gravity bang on her head. It swayed from left to right as she walked. And the fat customer almost shouted "I'm going to die" out loud.

When the girl smiled at him, he felt as if something hit his heart hard. He had to gulp down several mouthfuls of the special secret drink to make his heart start working again.

A maid then greeted her and asked enthusiastically, "What can I do for you, master?"

"No. I'm here to look for someone." The beautiful Japanese girl pointed at the bartender lady watching soap operas behind the bar.

"Oh. Make yourself at home." The maid seemed to feel regret for not being able to serve such a cute girl, but she still put on a smile.

After that, the beautiful Japanese girl walked towards the bartender and greeted her. "Hi, long time no see."

The bartender lady did not look up. Instead, she said lazily, "Before I finish watching this episode of 'The Great Master,' you better get away from me."

However, the beautiful Japanese lady sat down on the tall stool in front of the bar as if she had not heard what the bartender lady said. She then commented, "You're still as bad-tempered as ever. Have you parted ways with the good-tempered side of yours?"

The bartender's eyelids twitched. A ferocious gaze flashed across her eyes, and she finally lifted up her head and looked at the girl in front of her.

"Are you looking for a fight?"

"No. I'm just a messenger." The Japanese beauty shook her head and continued, "If possible, I prefer not to resort to violence."

“That’s because you can’t beat me.” the bartender lady sneered, “Are you running errands for your master again? Your master is probably not as powerful as you are now, right? There are only a handful of people remember its name now.”

“Good communication starts from showing politeness.” The Japanese beauty blinked, “No matter how weak it is now. It is still the entity that created us, including your master. To me, it is my father.”

Chapter 925: Not Buying You A Drink

If Chen Huadong were now in the maid cafe, he would have instantly recognized the beautiful Japanese girl that attracted everyone’s attention. That girl was none other than Nanako Mukaiji, and at that moment, she was still learning Mandarin from Chen Huadong.

However, she did not sound like someone had just started learning Mandarin. Her pronunciation bettered Uncle Zhang’s, who had been living in the alley next door for seventy years.

“It’s your father, not mine.” The bartender finally put down the phone and looked at Nanako Mukaiji, “I’ve lived here longer than any one of you.”

“But you are one of us now,” Nanako Mukaiji smiled. “Thank you for the birth of literature, movies, animations, and games. It spread faster than any known religion in this world. All those obscure stories carved on the stone slabs can never be compared with the modern entertainment culture. All those popular videos on YouTube and Station B have tens of millions of views. We needed at least tens of thousands of preachers to spend several years to achieve such an achievement back in old times. Let’s take you as an example. You are just a tiny, insignificant part of the original divine system. You are supposed to play the stepping stone for all the heroes that would achieve great things. However, with Marvel comics and movies gaining more and more fame, your name has become something that everyone has heard of.”

“Yes. That’s right. Thanks to pop culture, my identity has undergone changes too.” The bartender lady’s tone turned cold. “Become one of you.”

“Something like this happens from time to time,” Nanako Mukaiji nodded. “In fact, all myths and legend undergo all sorts of changes when passed down from generation to generation. Sometimes they change to adapt to local customs, and at times, change due to fights between different religious sects. The winner will get the right to reinvent the stories. They do it for entertainment sometimes or just to mess with others. As long as they are given enough time, you will realize stark differences between a new legend and its original tale. As long as you are willing to spend some time and effort to do some digging, people will realize how messy our backgrounds can be.”

“So, why does the messenger of the Three Pillars of God look so ridiculous now?” The bartender sneered, “And you no longer rely on deception to lure mankind into despair to gain joy? I can see that you’ve transformed yourself into this stupid, cute-looking girl. You are quite suitable for the maid café. Would you like me an opportunity to make some extra money? Or should I just introduce a couple of sugar daddies to you?”

Nanako Mukaiji was not angry when she heard what was said about her. Instead, she just blinked. “Thank you. But, I don’t think I want to compete for business with Kama.”

“Then what are you doing here?”

Nanako Mukaiji sighed, “I don’t know the reason for your hostility. I’m just doing my job. I’m a messenger. Once the old god wakes up, I need to start running around and do some propaganda work in advance. Besides, the most powerful existence in our divine system is about to be awakened. Half of all popular horror culture today is related to him. His existence has inspired tens of thousands of creators. We can see his presence in games, movies, and novels. Although World of Warcraft is getting less popular, there’s still Bloodborne, Hearthstone, and Dota. DC and Marvel have referenced him in their comics and movies, and their best-selling merchandise is related to him. And the most important thing is that the entire divine system is named after him. In other words, we all work for him.”

“What’s your point?” The bartender lady’s expression remained unchanged.

“He is very powerful, and he knows where our power comes from. One is our existing description, and the other is our popularity. Unfortunately, he excels in both of them. And according to popular culture, his power is still increasing. In just a few decades, the power that he possesses has overpowered most of the ancient gods. When the Jewish gods decided they wouldn’t participate in this game, no ancient god or wast gods were more powerful than him. Although the new gods seem unstoppable in terms of popularity, they also have weaknesses. Without exception, almost all of them are not good at fighting... To this point, I believe you understand why so many people don’t want him to be awakened.”

“Otherwise, why do you think I’m sticking with him?” A fierce gaze flashed across the bartender lady’s eyes. “Do you really think that I’m working this hard so I can earn more money to buy a Fourth Ring Road house? Why do I torture myself squeezing into the overcrowded subway every day?”

“I am not worried about you. You are his follower, so it is impossible for you to harm him. I am talking about someone else.”

“Who are you talking about then?”

“Kronos. I know you’ve made some agreements with him in private, but you know that he cannot be trusted, right?” asked Nanako Mukaiji. “He has a good relationship with all the other ancient gods. During the previous few games, he had sided with the ancient gods. He fought for their interests. I don’t think we should let him intervene in our affairs, especially in such a major event.”

“Interestingly, Kronos also warned me to not fully trust you because you are only loyal to Azathoth. He also said that you are Azathoth’s most loyal lackey. You have always wanted to help Azathoth to regain the throne, haven’t you?” The bartender lady continued lightly, “Compared to you, at least Kronos got him back.”

“Don’t be silly, Little Snake.” Nanako Mukaiji shook her head. “Does Kronos look like someone who likes to help others? He must have his own agenda. The old man who seems harmless to humans and animals has always been the most ambitious god among the ancient gods.”

“I don’t know what Kronos has in mind. On the other hand, I can see the petty moves that you made. Earlier, at the bookstore, why did you place that book in front of him?” The bartender lady squinted her eyes while holding an empty glass. It seemed as though she would throw the glass on Nanako Mukaiji’s face if she gave the wrong answer.

Nanako Mukaiji put on an innocent look and shrugged.

“Just like you, I miss our old friend, and I want to see him sooner.”

“You’d better not do something so dangerous anymore,” the bartender lady warned her. “He will return when the time is right. All we have to do is to wait patiently, and you better stay away from him.”

“Sounds like reasonable advice to me.” Nanako Mukaiji nodded, and a cute smile appeared on her face. “I’m done talking business. It’s time to talk about personal affairs. Shouldn’t you buy an old friend a drink after meeting her?”

“Forget about it,” the bartender lady replied casually. “Everything you drink here will be deducted from my salary. Besides, I know your true form. So, you should stop acting cute in front of me.”

Chapter 926: Bodyguard

Zhang Heng booked the flight ticket to Greenland and hotel in advance. He even hired a local translator online.

The official language of Greenland was Greenlandic. Having a sixth of their population being Danish descendants, a good number of them conversed in Danish. Unfortunately, although Zhang Heng had mastered eight languages, these two languages were not on his list.

Thus, to ease his traveling experience in Greenland, he would need at least one translator to help him converse with the locals.

Zhang Heng selected several resumes from travel websites. After that, he used the Gaussian distribution method to pick a girl named, Songjia. Zhang Heng looked at her resume and found out that she a girl with mixed ancestry, with a Chinese grandfather and an Eskimo grandmother. Hence, she was a quarter of Chinese descent.

In other words, she had three ancestries in her: Chinese, Danish, and Eskimo. Still studying for graduate school, she had a spotless resume and was currently working as a translator to earn extra cash to buy a second-hand car. So Zhang Heng gave her a call and told her about the services he needed, and they discussed her rates as well.

After hanging up the phone, Zhang Heng spent a few days purchasing some materials that he might need in Greenland. When he looked at the time, he realized that only a little more than one day was left before the end of the proxy war. And the ladder match had also entered a fierce stage.

Pegasus, who was at the top of the leaderboard before, had now dropped to ninth place. The player who ranked first was the Arc of Light’s leader, Eryue Weicheng, with a score of as high as 2892 points. At the same time, the players that ranked second and third were the Arc of Light’s members as well. And it caused an uproar on the forum.

Among the three major guilds, Silver Wings was the oldest. Having the largest number of combatants as well, their members equaled the sum of the other two major guilds. However, the other two major guilds were not to be underestimated too. The Arc of Light was the last to be established and had the shortest history among them. Other than the war they fought against Shen Xixi’s union, the Arc of Light had always remained low-key. The Arc of Light’s leader possessed a high-level execution ability. In the

real world, Eryue Weicheng was an executive of a big company. Having designed an extremely effective hierarchy system, everyone under him had a set of clear responsibilities. The players that joined Arc of Light worked more like employees rather than guild members, unlike the laid-back players from some random guilds.

By joining such a well-organized guild, they had to sacrifice some of their freedom. However, the Light or Arc's offered the best welfare among the three guilds, and that had attracted many ambitious players with good potential in recent years. Hence, there were no players who dared underestimate them.

The player base hadn't expected Arc of Light to have secretly grown so fast in strength. Arc of Light's players had now clinched the top three places on the leaderboard, with the player ranked fourth being from another guild. Ever since the Dreamland of Death killed the Silver Wing's leader, the guild's overall strength was greatly affected. They had only two members who got into the top ten on the leaderboard, and both of them were ranked ninth and tenth.

This was why Pegasus decided to finish three games as early as possible. He knew that he might not compete with the players from the other two major guilds. Hence, he wanted to gain everyone's attention by occupying the top position of the leaderboard during the early phase of the game. By doing that, he would be able to boost Silver Wing's reputation. However, when the other competitors started to compete in the game, his position at the top of the leaderboard lasted only a short while.

As for Zhang Heng, he also fell out of the top-50 on the leaderboard. Now ranked 89th, the player base no longer talked about him. Since Zhang Heng's score did not change, some of the players suspected that he had died in his final quest.

At the same time, Zhang Heng carried his new blade with him and entered the lounge on the second floor of the bar. He greeted the bartender lady behind the bar and sat on his usual deck.

The time was now 23:55. The familiar dizziness hit him, and Zhang Heng began his second proxy war quest.

...

[Verifying player's identity...]

[Verification completed. The identity of the agent is confirmed. Player number 07958 is welcome to join the proxy war. This is your second game of this proxy war. A quest is being randomly selected for you]

[Draw completed. Your current quest is Bodyguard]

"Attention, you are now entering New Shanghai 0297. New Shanghai 0297 is a federal demonstration city invested and constructed by Shengtang Morgan Group. Please ensure that everything that you do in this city complies with its laws and regulations. Meanwhile, we hope you will enjoy the charm of this city. New Shanghai 0297 is a young, prosperous, stable, and generous new technology city."

[Task objective: Earn as many points as possible. You will get 10 points for each shellac record you collect.]

[Mode: Single]

[Time flow rate: 240] (1 hour in the real world is equivalent to 10 days in this game. After 30 days, the player will be forced to return to the real world)

[Friendly reminder, the game will officially start in five seconds, please be prepared.]

...

Zhang Heng was also a little confused by the introduction of the game's background that sounded more like an advertisement. After listening to the introduction, he managed to acquire some information. Firstly, the New Shanghai 0297 seemed to be a newly established city. The second was that the city was invested and constructed by a corporate group, and it was hard to imagine that a company was rich enough to come up with such a large amount of investment. Thirdly, it looked like the city belonged to a certain federation. There were still many countries using the federal system.

Countries like the United States of America, Russia, Germany, Belgium, and all used federal systems. It was difficult to imagine that among them, the newly constructed city would be named Shanghai 0297.

Before getting more information, Zhang Heng could not make further inferences for the time being.

Other than the game's background, the way he could earn points in this dungeon also seemed very confusing. The combat mission that he had during his previous round of the game was now changed to a quest that required him to collect specific items to earn points. It looked like the difficulty of the game had reduced a lot. However, Zhang Heng did not think that it would be as simple as he thought.

The difficulty of the Proxy War dungeon had been discussed a lot of times on the forum. From the players' feedback that played in the Proxy War quest, it was undoubtedly more difficult than the ordinary quest. That was because all these dungeons were designed for agents with supernatural powers.

Moreover, most of the agents played in teams, and they had reliable teammates. It was rare that the players chose to play the game alone like Zhang Heng did. It meant that the difficulty that Zhang Heng faced was undoubtedly the highest among all the other players. Even if he had extra twenty-four hours every day, he had to stay vigilant at all times.

Judging by the name of this quest, it seemed Zhang Heng was supposed to protect someone. However, the system mentioned nothing about it. Something was not right. This was where Zhang Heng had to pay extra attention.

As the countdown ended, Zhang Heng opened his eyes again.

He found himself standing in a place with a graceful environment. In front of him was a white building that looked like Tokyo Dome. Instead of being a stadium, however, it was an apartment building. Every household had a balcony and floor-to-ceiling windows. Plants of all manner dotted their balconies, and under the dome was a large green lawn.

Chapter 927: Looking At The Emails Randomly

The faucet on the lawn sprinkled water in a circle. Zhang Heng looked up at the sky and found that today's weather was good. There was plenty of sunshine and wind. Occasionally, a few white clouds would drift by him. However, Zhang Heng noticed those white clouds; movement looked a little dull.

When Zhang Heng checked his body, he realized that he was carrying all the game items with him, including his Pestilence Bone Bow and his new blade, Shrouded Sheath. His current appearance made him look like one of those bad people.

If he walked on the street with such an appearance, the authorities would probably bring him back to the bureau for questioning. However, Zhang Heng realized that the residents of this community did not show much surprise when they passed him, as if it was normal for someone to show up in such a state.

Zhang Heng also noticed one more peculiar thing. He saw that everyone was wearing a bracelet, including himself. If he was right about it, this bracelet should be his terminal. The weight of the bracelet was very light, probably only less than 50 grams or so, and it was made of titanium. This personal terminal could project images mid-air. Its technology was too advanced.

Zhang Heng saw a young couple navigating to a restaurant with their bracelets, and a woman looking like a housewife also went shopping with it.

So Zhang Heng followed them and used his fingerprints to unlock and summon his terminal projection. In a way, this titanium bracelet worked just like a mobile phone, a piece of equipment with a unified operating system with various functional modules.

The first thing that Zhang Heng checked was his mailbox.

Since his emails were arranged by date, the first email was usually the most important one.

From: G7Z Security Company

Time: March 15, 2077

Attention: Zhang Heng (G7Z security employee E group 3-07958)

Subject: Work notification (read)

[Hello Zhang Heng, employee E3-07958, the company hereby asks you to Room 3094, Unit 12, Yacheng Apartment, Area D, 3rd Floor, before 14:00 on March 15, 2077, to work as a bodyguard. Your target person is Xu Qian (photos). You are required to protect her for two weeks. The mission ends at 14:00 on March 29, 2077. During this period, please ensure the safety of the target. You can discuss the specific details with the target. If you have any questions, you can also contact the company.]

[I wish you great success in completing the task.]

...

Sure enough, when one did not know what to do, it was always the right move to read the emails. The title for this round of the game was Bodyguard; hence, the contents of this email had to be related to Bodyguard as well. The email gave Zhang Heng a set of clear instructions and revealed his current identity. Now an employee of the G7Z security company, he received a notice to protect a person named Xu Qian for the next two weeks.

After that, Zhang Heng looked at the time displayed on his wristband. He still had half an hour left before 14:00. When he looked at the warning sign on the lawn, he realized that he was now at Yacheng Apartments.

That said, Zhang Heng did not rush upstairs to meet Xu Qian.

Instead, he spent some time searching online for some information before finally managing to figure out the background of this quest.

The year was 2077, but this world did not share the same timeline from where he came from. The background of this quest was similar to the American drama "The Man in the High Castle," albeit not that dark. Everything looked rather positive so far.

U.S., China, and the Soviet Union still won the final victory, and the world still suffered a huge loss from World War II. Human beings learned a precious lesson, so they finally decided to set up a union, and it became a huge federal state after that. They also shared all of their technology and culture with others. This explained why the system mentioned that the new Shanghai 0297 belonged to the federation.

The establishment of the federation had brought mankind into an unprecedented era of peace. With disappearing wars, the people here could develop and build the city with peace of mind. Coupled with the sharing of science and technology and culture, human development on this timeline was slightly more advanced than Zhang Heng's world.

After the elimination of trade barriers, the new economy also ushered in unprecedented prosperity. Monopolization and capital's pursuit gave birth to several huge conglomerates, Sheng Tang Morgan Group. Meanwhile, humans weren't satisfied that they had to keep staying on the earth. So, they started to make a plan and explore space.

New Shanghai 0297 was born under this background.

It was a huge space station city. The centrifugal force generated by the center rotation simulated gravity. And to control the Coriolis Effect, such a space station city was usually built on an enormous scale.

...

After that, Zhang Heng closed the web page and checked all the other emails he received. Most of the emails were advertisements recommending a variety of products and their discount information. Unfortunately, Zhang Heng could not find the information about shellac records mentioned by the system earlier.

Other than that, he saw that the senders of a couple of emails were his friends and family. The friends that he had were the employees of the G7Z security company as well. As for his family, Zhang Heng's parents were still alive.

And Zhang Heng also found out that he had a sister in this timeline; his wristband containing his family's photos and videos. Never having seen these people before, they had nothing to do with his family members in the real world.

The three who were on earth and would communicate with him once a month. Zhang Heng last communicated with them about a week ago, so as of now, he did not need to worry about this matter.

The above was the information he collected in twenty minutes.

For now, he did not see any possible threats that he would face in this quest. According to the information he found on the Internet, the third floor of New Shanghai 0297 was very safe, having a very low crime rate. Zhang Heng traveled back to when he was still a high school student in the first Proxy War's dungeon. And it did not take long for him to discover the alien creatures hidden in human society. After learning his lesson, Zhang Heng would not take the quest lightly this time.

He looked at the time and realized that there were only ten minutes left until 14:00. Without wasting any time, Zhang Heng turned off the projection of his bracelet and decided to meet his target named Xu Qian first. He wanted to learn more about the mission.

Since his main quest did not require him to protect Xu Qian, theoretically speaking, even if Xu Qian died in front of him, it would not affect his quest. Zhang Heng could even walk away after he met Xu Qian and asked for a leave of absence from the company.

And after that, he could focus on collecting the shellac records. With a total of 240 days of playing time, Zhang Heng believed he would be able to find all the shellac records in New Shanghai 0297. Could this quest really be that simple?

Chapter 928: Meetup

Zhang Heng walked to the gate of the dome-shaped building and looked at the security door. Just when he was thinking about contacting Xu Qian, his bracelet automatically connected to the door's system seconds later.

"Welcome, visitor Zhang Heng. Ms. Xu Qian, Room 3094, Unit 12, has granted you temporary access to the Yacheng Apartment's security door for two weeks. If you have any questions, please contact the apartment management."

After the friendly female voice talked to him, both sides of the apartment's doors were opened. Zhang Heng's bracelet flashed twice, and an email icon popped up. If he was right, then the apartment management system must've just sent him a mail.

This was not Zhang Heng's first time entering a dungeon with a futuristic background. In the Whistleblower quest, he entered a future ruled by CTOS. However, the future in the Whistleblower dungeon was only twelve years apart from the real world. The Bodyguard's dungeon, in comparison, was clearly more technologically advanced.

As he walked into the apartment, the surveillance camera on the ceiling was the first thing he looked at. After that, he started to look around.

Just like the outer environment, the apartment's interior had a very decent design too. Red Persian carpets covered the circular corridor, and the center of the building was a vast space with huge glass walls around it. The floor above him was a large flowerbed. And the floor above the large flowerbed was the resident's private balcony. The place was well-lit, and its residents could enjoy a good amount of privacy.

Just as he raised his head, squinting to identify the plants growing on the second-floor balcony opposite him, the elevator door beside him suddenly opened, and a woman with heavy makeup and fishnets

emerged from the elevator. She looked at Zhang Heng, stopped moving, and raised her eyebrows.
“What is your communication ID?”

“Are you Xu Qian?”

“No. But as long as you give me a thousand credits, I can be anyone for you.” The woman licked her lips.

“Oh, I am not a resident here. And I’m here to work just like you,” Zhang Heng replied politely.

“That’s a shame. I was about to give you a 20% discount,” the woman said. She then took out something that looked like an electronic cigarette from her pocket, took a puff, and started walking towards the door.

And Zhang Heng walked into the elevator that the woman walked out from earlier.

The elevator wasn’t that spacious and could only fit three to four people at the most.

“Please state the room you want to go to.”

When Zhang Heng walked into the elevator, he heard the familiar female voice again.

“Unit 12, 3094.”

“Since you are taking the elevator for the first time, do you want to set this room as your default room number?”

“Okay.”

Five seconds later, the elevator door was closed, and the elevator car, which looked like a glass marble, accelerated upward. Right after the elevator that Zhang Heng was in started moving, another elevator moved to his earlier position, ready for the next rider.

This design saved the passengers a lot of time, and there was no need to wait for another passenger to get out on a certain floor. In total, sixty-four similar elevator doors were on the entire first floor. Such massive numbers of elevators could easily meet the demands of the morning and evening peak hours. Zhang Heng had no clue as to how many of them this apartment actually had.

About 20 seconds later, the elevator stopped on the 30th floor. However, its doors didn’t open, but it began moving laterally instead, sending Zhang Heng directly to room 3094.

“Access permission obtained,” the cordial female voice could be heard again, “Welcome home.”

As soon as he got out of the elevator, Zhang Heng was already standing in front of room 3094. It was a small apartment unit with two small bedrooms and one living room, designed for singles or small families. As of now, Zhang Heng should be standing in the living room.

The place wasn’t looking too good, though. It looked like someone had ransacked the unit, and things were strewn all over the place. The drawers and shoe cabinets were ajar, with clothes and socks messily tossed around the coffee table and sofa. Zhang Heng also noticed lipstick and skincare products on the floor. The whole place looked more like a crime scene.

Since Xu Qian had just hired a bodyguard from the G7Z security company, Zhang Heng didn't dare take the incident lightly. Immediately, he took out his Pestilence Bone Bow and placed the Paris Arrow on the bowstring.

A few seconds later, Zhang Heng heard a rustling sound coming out of the bedroom. He quietly walked over to the bedroom. Just as he was two steps away, the system seemed to detect his arrival, and the door automatically opened for him.

A girl in extremely skimpy clothing was squatting on the ground, looking through the cabinet. She had heard the door opening, and she was taken aback when she saw Zhang Heng.

However, it wasn't him entering the room that shocked her but the weapon that Zhang Heng held in his hand.

"Bows and arrows? Why are you so primitive? Aren't there equipped with technological stuff? Micro bombs? GPS? Or super metal?"

"Neither. They are just ordinary bow and arrow." Zhang Heng said. After seeing the girl frowning, he added, "the arrows are applied with a biochemical agent."

"Oh, now that's is quite rare."

"Sorry." Zhang Heng returned to the place where the girl could not see him. "I didn't mean it. I thought someone broke into your house and robbed you. By the way, I'm..."

"I know who you are. You are the Bodyguard sent by the G7Z security company to protect me. I received the message saying that you have arrived and you've walked past the door. You should sit outside for a while," Zhang Heng heard her voice coming from the bedroom, and she did not sound embarrassed about the whole thing.

"Hmm."

Zhang Heng looked around the sofa. However, the sofa was piled with things, and he did not have any place to sit.

About fifteen minutes later, the girl had changed and walked out of the bedroom.

"..."

After seeing how she dressed herself up, Zhang Heng was rendered speechless. The clothes that she wore right now were no different from what she had on her. If he had to compare the two sets of clothes, Zhang Heng had to admit that the clothes that she wore right now were more extreme.

Still as skimpy as she was, her hair was now dyed gold, and she wore a black collar around her neck. A cat's tail also sprouted from behind her. The tail had to be a high-tech device of some sort, being able to swing and tilt according to her movements. It looked real.

Zhang Heng also couldn't help but notice her well-crafted facial features. Undeniably, she was a gorgeous lady.

The girl did not seem to realize anything wrong with her current outfit. She then reached out her hand to Zhang Heng and said, "Xu Qian, online streamer."

"Zhang Heng, your security detail for the next two weeks." Zhang Heng shook hands with Xu Qian.

"Can you tell me why you wanted to hire a bodyguard?"

"Of course, but you have to wait a while," Xu Qian said. "I just took an urgent order. I searched all over my place, and I couldn't find my cat ears. They should be here... Ah, forget it. It's too late. Zhang Heng, right? I need to work first. Let's talk in 45 minutes?"

"Okay."

Xu Qian hurriedly walked to another room where she worked. Zhang Heng saw the camera, some audio equipment, musical instruments, live streaming equipment, and a virtual background wall.

Just when Xu Qian entered her workroom, she seemed to think of something and clapped her hands. A housework robot that looked like BB-8 from "Star Wars" rolled out of the bedroom and began to clean up Xu Qian's messy living room and bedroom.

"Clean the sofa first, then make a pot of tea."

After Xu Qian finished speaking, she locked the door to her studio. And Zhang Heng saw that the word "LOCKED" was displayed on the digital door lock.

Chapter 929: Level

The housework robot quickly cleaned up the sofa, and Zhang Heng finally had a place to sit down.

While Xu Qian was working, Zhang Heng took the time out to check his character panel.

Name: Zhang Heng

Gender: Male

Age: 20

Player Number: 07958

Number of games completed: 9

Current game points: 217

Possessions: Shrouded Sheath (B), Infinite Building Blocks (B), Plague Bone Bow (B), Death Vision (C), Heart of Kreis (D), Filter Lens (D), Paris Arrow (D), Lucky Rabbit Feet (E), Oath Ring (F), Marble Soda (F)

Skills: Swordsmanship lv4, Sailing lv3, Shooting lv3, Assassin lv3, Language Proficiency lv2 (eight languages are good enough for daily communication), Lego Assembly lv2, Archery lv2, Field Survival lv2, Driving lv2, Modification and Maintenance lv2, Aerospace lv2, Hacking lv2, Criminal Investigation lv2, Makeup lv2, Cowboy lv2, Piano lv1, Skiing lv1, Rock Climbing lv1, Herbology lv1

Evaluation: The player inherits the power of shadows, is proficient in eight languages, and possesses incredible swordsmanship. As an opponent, you don't want him to lay his hands on any bladed weapon

during the battle. At the same time, he is also a Lego master, sharpshooter, an assassin lurking in the shadows, a highly-skilled cowboy, an investigator with excellent criminal investigation skills and camouflage abilities. He has a slightly higher chance of encountering enemies than the ordinary person. He is a messenger of Pestilence with a fierce blade and excellent sailing experience. Proficient at using bows and arrows, he can drive cars, airplanes, spacecraft, and other vehicles. Other than that, he can adapt well to the wilderness. The player possesses multiple skillsets, a combat expert, and abides by his promises, a rarity among players.

...

After all the effort Zhang Heng put into the Ancient Roman's quest, he finally increased his previous zero game points to 217. And the game items that he carried with him this time were different from before. he replaced the White Horse Crown and Hunter's Blessing with Shrouded Sheath and Heart of Kreis. With these two items, he was not better at combating coupled with his lv3 assassin skill.

However, when Zhang Heng read his evaluation, he found out that for some reason, the system did not mention his ability to breathe underwater and manipulate ocean currents upon acquiring them there after his trip to Yonaguni Island. On the contrary, the Shadow Wings that he obtained not too long ago was mentioned in the first sentence of the evaluation.

Fortunately, everything was normal on his character panel so far.

Zhang Heng had been sitting on the sofa for more than 45 minutes, and he had lost count of the cup of tea he drank; the studio's door, however, remained locked. It was not until after an hour later that Xu Qian walked out of the room with an exhausted look on her face. After she came out, she lifted the teapot and gulped down the remaining tea before sitting down beside Zhang Heng.

"Uh, why don't you go back to the bedroom and change?"

"No, I'll start streaming again in an hour. I'll change after that," Xu Qian said, stretching her body. "By the way, what did we talk about just now?"

"I was asking why you hired a bodyguard."

"Oh, it's no big deal, actually," Xu Qian replied. "I just felt as though that some time ago, someone was following me."

Zhang Heng raised his eyebrows. "Managed to catch a glimpse of his face?"

"No. I'm not even sure if I'm really being followed." Xu Qian hesitated, "It's just a hunch. I have this feeling when someone is watching me. Oh, yes. There was this once when I came home. I discovered that someone moved my cup. I am left-handed, so the handle of my mug has always been facing the left. On that day, I realized that the ear of my mug was facing my right."

"Well... did you find anything else unusual besides this?" Zhang Heng continued to ask.

"No," Xu Qian leaned against the sofa after shifting her body. She did look like a cat now. "The alarm didn't go off. There were no visitors recorded for unit 3094 at the security door downstairs. I even went to look for the apartment management to check the elevator's security camera footage. Well, I found nothing unusual. So, maybe I was just hallucinating. To be honest, I've been a little nervous recently."

“Because of what?”

“Work matters,” Xu Qian sighed. “The income of this job is not bad, but the competition is too fierce, especially for mid-level streamers like me. Most of the time, the company would invest most of its resources in those super-famous streamers. There is never a shortage of young and beautiful girls waiting to climb the ranks. My viewers have been declining in numbers for four consecutive months. The number of VIP customers willing to spend money on a personal chat with me is reducing too. I recently got one VIP subscriber, though. So, I spent a long time chatting with him.”

Xu Qian shook her head. “Sorry, I shouldn’t be complaining about these things to you. In short, I know that pressure is likely to be the reason for my paranoia. I have been unable to sleep for consecutive nights. When I went on a walk earlier, I saw your company’s advertisement. So, I contacted your people to hire someone as my bodyguard for two weeks.”

“It doesn’t sound like a big thing. Why didn’t you look for your friends to help you first?” Zhang Heng asked.

“Friends?” Xu Qian looked at Zhang Heng when she heard his suggestion.

“What’s the matter?”

“It’s nothing. I haven’t heard of this word for quite a while now,” Xu Qian lamented. “The people in this industry spend most of their time on the internet. In real life, they don’t have much time and energy to make friends. I have lots of colleagues, but all they do is backstab. There are only so many resources, and others will get less if you take a huge chunk of it. So, it’s not easy to maintain a superficial friendship with others. Even if someone were willing to help me, I wouldn’t dare to accept the favor too. If I do accept the help, news of a streamer going haywire would appear on the internet next morning.”

“This line you’re in seems like a tough one.”

“It’s never easy. However, if it weren’t for this job, I wouldn’t be living on the third floor and renting an apartment like this.” Xu Qian’s words indicated that she was proud of herself.

Of course, her curvaceous body was one reason she was so good at her job. While Xu Qian was streaming, Zhang Heng did not stay idle. He continued to collect more information about this world on the internet, especially information related to this city. Zhang Heng now knew there were a total of five levels on the New Shanghai 0297.

There was no class division in this city. However, due to the huge gap in housing prices, the five levels of New Shanghai 0297 divided the citizens into five categories.

The poorest citizens would live at the lowest level and the billionaires on the top floor. The higher the level, the better the infrastructure, living environment, education quality, and public security. The third level that Xu Qian lived in was mainly occupied by university professors, part of the city’s higher-income public officials, and middle-level members of large companies. Basically, all of them were social elites.

This situation would undoubtedly cause dissatisfaction among the people that lived at the bottom level. But fortunately, it was not that hard to go up a level. And there was a considerable fluidity between the classes. Hence, no major incidents happened.

Xu Qian asked the housework robot to add some hot water to the teapot. “When I first came to New Shanghai 0297, I lived on the fifth level. At that time, I was a nobody. I worked as a waitress in a small restaurant. My daily job was dealing with a couple of idiots. After that, a company’s scout found me. He thought I was rather charming and good at dealing with people; hence, we signed a contract, and I got introduced to this streaming job. After that, I put in a lot of effort to get to where I am today, step by step.”

Chapter 930: The Life I Want

“It looks like you are doing pretty well now.”

Thanks to the income she got from this work, Xu Qian now owned more than one hundred lipsticks, not to mention her myriad skincare products, clothes, handbags, and shoes. Although Zhang Heng was unfamiliar with those brands, all he needed to do was to search them up on the Internet, and he would find out the approximate prices of those items. There was no doubt that these were luxury goods.

The price of a small lipstick was equivalent to a month’s living expenses for those who lived at the bottom level.

It seemed that no matter which timeline he was in, women were always fond of this kind of thing.

“Since we are talking about your friend, can you briefly introduce the relationship of other people in your life to me? Your parents, relatives, spouse, and competitors at work.” Zhang Heng continued to ask.

“Okay,” Xu Qian nodded, “You should know that New Shanghai 0297 was completed only 30 years ago. This is an extremely new city. Compared with the overpopulated earth, this place is full of opportunities. So, I, like the other youths who came to earn more money, came over here with my sister after saving enough money for the tickets.”

“So, you have a sister here?”

“Yes, a distant cousin. We studied in the same school when we were young. We shared a good friendship. However, ever since the company recruited me, I became more and more famous. After moving out of the bottom level, we almost stopped contacting each other.”

“Does the difference in class between you both make her feel inferior?”

“Well... personally, I think it’s more than just jealousy.” Xu Qian shrugged. “At that time, the scout was looking at other girls too, including my distant cousin. However, only one of us would be recruited. You can imagine what happened after that. I defeated other competitors, got this job, and moved up from the bottom level. Unfortunately, other people weren’t as lucky as me, my cousin included. They had to stay on at the bottom level of this city.”

While talking, Xu Qian took off her contact lenses and fake eyelashes. And her hair gradually returned to its previous color—black.

“The problem is that there may be some differences between the views of two people on this matter. In my opinion, most of the time, opportunities will not deliver to your doorstep. It always comes with competition. You need to fight hard for it. The position I am in today is what I strive for. I pay and get

rewarded. This is how society works, but my cousin obviously doesn't think so. She thinks that if I'm not there, then she would be the winner.

"Everything I have today, my clothes, my apartment, my lipstick, and perfume—these apparently also belong to her. She feels I am a thief who stole her life from her. Therefore, we had a big quarrel the night before I moved out of the bottom level of this city. After that, we stayed out of each other's life."

"Do you think she might be the one following you then?" Zhang Heng asked.

"Her? Impossible." Xu Qian shook her head. "She doesn't know where I live, and even if she did, she lacks the courage to do so. She is just a pathetic woman who complains about everything. In the beginning, when we worked as waitresses at the small restaurant, she didn't even dare speak out after the boss took advantage of her."

"Understood."

"As for spouses, getting married means retiring in our line of business. Once the news spreads, the streamers will lose many fans, especially those streamers that play innocent. Streamers like that could possibly lose all their fans in one night." Xu Qian hesitated at this point and finally said, "But I am in a relationship with someone. Please keep this a secret."

"Hmm?"

"He has a small factory that specializes in researching sensors or something... Ah, I am not familiar with these things. Anyway, all those high-tech gadgets look the same to me before they leave the factory," Xu Qian said, "The most important thing is that he lives on the fourth level in this city. We met through my stream. At that time, he rewarded me with a lot of money... It really was a lot of money. Although I'm quite famous in this line, no one has rewarded me with the kind of money he did. And after that, he subscribed to my VIP membership. We talked for the whole night, and we said lots of stupid things. Unlike others, I don't feel tired talking to him. That's how we met.

"Since then, he bought a couple more chat services. We talked more and more. Then one day, he asked to meet up with me. I agreed to it. He drove here to pick me up. We went to an extremely fancy and expensive French restaurant on the fourth level. And then we went to watch a symphony performance. I didn't understand what those guys were doing on the stage. No one sang. It was just a group of people playing musical instruments nonstop. But I guess it was a perfect date. It was probably the kind of date that all girls dream of."

Xu Qian picked up the filled teapot and poured the tea into her cup. She then continued, "He is quite decent. Although he is ten years older than me, a little out of shape, and he likes to brag, at least he has a good temper, and he is funny too. Living at the fourth level. Huh... I know what you are thinking. This woman got into a relationship with him because of his money."

"I never judge the life choices of others," Zhang Heng said calmly.

"It doesn't matter." Xu Qian drank a sip of tea, "It's about money anyway. The main reason I choose to be with him is because of his money. Although my work allows me to earn a lot of money, I can only work until a certain age. I have to make a plan for my future, especially now that the number of viewers in my stream has been declining. I don't want to go back to work at the small restaurant at the bottom

level. I want to marry him. Although I can't make money through streaming anymore, I can at least move to the fourth level and become a rich wife. I have been to his residence. He has a small independent villa right by the lake. it's got a great view, and it's very different from the first to the third level. At the fourth level, there are four seasons."

Xu Qian closed her eyes, "Now, imagine that in summer, we can get on a boat at the lake and stop in the middle of the lake when we are tired. I can rest on his lap. At night, we can barbecue a meal by the lake..."

"Sounds good."

"Yes, this is the life I want." Xu Qian opened her eyes with a smile on her face, "I'll tell you another secret. In fact, he has already proposed to me, but I haven't said yes to him yet. That's how a man works. If they get what they want too easily, they will not cherish it. I told him that I want to think about it first. It just so happens that he has to attend a business meeting on earth. All my problems will be solved if I move in with him, and I wouldn't need to hire a bodyguard to protect me."