

## 48 Hours 961

### Chapter 961: Chaos

Zhang Heng could understand why Xu Qian would stand up for the girl in the short skirt. What happened outside the restaurant earlier probably reminded her of all the grievances she had to endure when working as a waitress. She must have very likely gone through what the girl experienced.

At that time, Xu Qian could only endure it silently, like what the girl intended to do. So, she had to bite the bullet and keep the matter to herself. Instead of saying that she spent three thousand credits to make the man apologize to the girl he pushed, it was better to say that she was buying the long-overdue life and apology that she deserved.

...

The waitress, on the other side, quickly took the menu and asked respectfully, "What do you want to eat? We have Cantonese, Sichuan, and Huaiyang delicacy in the restaurant. If you don't like Chinese food..."

Xu Qian, however, interrupted her halfway. "I want Chinese Yam in Hot Toffee, squirrelfish, stir-fried snow peas, and a pot of fruit tea. Get rid of the yam skin. Also, tell the chef not to use dead squirrelfish. Oh, and don't you serve me leftover fruit tea."

The girl in the short skirt looked baffled. "Have you... Have you visited our restaurant for a meal before?"

"Oh. I've dined here a couple of times before," Xu Qian said.

The girl in the short skirt had misunderstood what she meant, thinking that she was just a regular customer. Hence, she quickly apologized, "I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I haven't been working here for long, and I still can't recognize all of the regular customers."

Xu Qian had no intention to explain the whole thing to her. Instead, she waved her hand to signal her to leave her alone. After that, she started to look around the restaurant.

"How is it? Anything's changed since you left?" Zhang Heng asked.

"There are some. However, most things remain the same." Xu Qian curled her mouth and pointed at a stain on the wall. "I still remember this particular spot. I wiped it with disinfectant for an hour after the restaurant closed for business. Unfortunately, I failed to clean it. The lady boss scolded me after that before proceeding to deduct half month's salary. I remembered I cried the whole night. Then, there was another time when a customer ordered the wrong dish, but they refused to admit that they did. So, I was forced to pay for it in the end. I happened to have to pay the rent that day..."

Revisiting the restaurant reminded Xu Qian of the darker days of her life.

"No wonder you are so reluctant to come back here." Zhang Heng took two pairs of chopsticks from the chopstick box and rinsed them in the teacup.

Xu Qian then sat up straight. "So, you brought me back here just to hear about my tragic past?"

"Well, I really want to know more," Zhang Heng said while handing Xu Qian a pair of washed chopsticks.

At the same time, the girl in the short skirt brought the Chinese Yam in Hot Toffee and fruit tea to them. She also fetched Zhang Heng a new cup of tea.

“You can always ask me. Coming all the way to the first level is completely unnecessary.”

Zhang Heng made no comment. Instead, he asked, “Is that so? How much do you believe in your memory?”

“What do you mean?” Xu Qian raised her eyebrows, “I don’t deny that human memories change over time. Some of the good memories will be further enhanced, and some of the bad memories would worsen. There might be some deviations in the details. But... Our memories are generally credible. Otherwise, why would we need them then?”

Xu Qian seemed to have thought of something when she said that. She paused and continued, “Oh, I’m sorry. I know you must have suffered a lot during this period of time. However, I don’t know which memories are true and which are fabricated. If this happened to me, I think I will break down.”

“Really? I don’t think it’s that serious.”

While the two chatted on, the waitress in a short skirt also brought over the dishes Xu Qian ordered. When the last dish, the squirrelfish, was served, the owner, who had been cooking, walked out of the kitchen in his apron. He then wiped his hands and said with a smile, “I heard that a regular customer is here today. I had to come out of the kitchen to say hello.”

He walked to the table where Xu Qian and Zhang Heng at. However, he was taken aback when he saw them.

Saying nothing, Zhang Heng picked a piece of toasted sweet potato and put it in his mouth as if it had nothing to do with him.

Xu Qian sneered, “Why? Never thought I’d come back?”

“You are...”

The boss seemed a little overwhelmed.

Xu Qian then took off her sunglasses. “Now, I don’t need to introduce myself anymore.”

As a result, the boss had gotten even more confused. He then smiled and said, “If it’s not too much trouble, do you mind introducing yourself to me?”

“Have you become so old that you forgot about me? Don’t you remember me?” Xu Qian snorted.

“Should I... remember you?”

The dispute between the two had attracted the attention of the lady boss at the counter. The latter looked at them suspiciously, causing the owner to panic even more. With a wry smile, he said, “Miss, please don’t spout nonsense. This is really my first time meeting you.”

“Interesting. Who was the one that hinted to me as long as I am willing to sleep with you, I’m allowed to do only half of the work in the restaurant?”

When the boss heard what she said, the hairs all over his body stood up. He could feel his wife was giving him the gaze of death from behind him. He was so anxious that he quickly coined something up. "I am the owner of a small restaurant, and I'm that capable. Usually, I tease my waitresses, but I would never dare say such a thing to you. Besides, I don't think you are from the first level. I can't afford to do that to you."

Before he could say a word more, the lady boss furiously bellowed, "Okay! I saw you flirting with those two bitches earlier! Are you cheating on me?!"

"No. No. I just told you that the most I would do is to tease."

The owner realized that he said something wrong, so he quickly defended himself.

But at the moment, the lady boss was completely soaked in wrath. As the owner had said, the lady boss did not believe that her husband would dare to provoke a woman dressed so fancily. However, the way Xu Qian dressed made her think twice about throwing a tantrum. Zhang Heng was sitting beside Xu Qian too, and unless she were blind, there was no reason she'd allow the owner to take advantage of her.

In the end, the waitress in the short skirt had to take the blame. The lady boss threw a teacup at her without thinking twice. Although it did not hit her, the shattering glass shocked her immensely, and she quickly hid in the corner. She was trembling, but the lady boss had no intention to let her go. The enraged woman rushed over and tried to grab the waitress's hair. In the end, the whole restaurant became a hot, piping mess.

## **Chapter 962: Accident**

The boss was about to cry. He felt sorry for the waitress in the short skirt, but he was afraid to stop his wife. He could only stomp his foot, yelling at Xu Qian, "Look at what you've done! I have never wronged you! Why are you messing with me?!"

"I'm messing with you?" Xu Qian exclaimed, "I'm just telling the truth. You've done so many bad things to me when I worked for you. Do you want me to say them out loud one by one?"

"You're sick!" The boss widened his eyes. "When did you work for me? I don't even recognize you!"

The lady boss on the other side, who was busy teaching the waitress a lesson, raised her head and asked, "You worked in my restaurant before? When was that?"

"Three years ago," Xu Qian said. "Rest assured. I didn't come here to mess with you. You guys can stop pretending to act like a bunch of crazies in front of me."

"Pretend to be a bunch for crazies?" The lady boss had gotten even more furious now. "I think you are insane. Look at yourself! How can our small restaurant hire someone like you?"

"At that time, I wasn't as rich as I am now, and I just moved to New Shanghai 0297. The first job I got with my cousin was to be a waitress at your restaurant. Thanks to you, you've made me understand that if I want to take control of my destiny, I will have to be desperate enough to climb higher," Xu Qian sneered.

"What nonsense are you talking about?" The boss looked confused. "You've got the wrong person."

“How is it possible? You are still the same person.” Xu Qian said.

“We did hire an usher three years ago, but now she’s gone to be a waiter at the bar on the next street,” the lady boss snorted contemptuously. “The lady wasn’t serious about the job. However, she only wanted half of the usual salary we offer, so we decided to hire her temporarily. After a year working for us, she resigned.”

“You are lying!” Xu Qian became agitated. She then got up from her seat and took off the 20,000 credit coat. And she did not stop there. She pulled the singlet that she wore and revealed her cleavage.

Although the boss was complaining about the unsuspecting disaster that had befallen him, he could not help but look at Xu Qian.

Xu Qian then pointed at the scar on her chest and said, “Look at this scar! One of the customers’ girlfriends was upset that day. So, she poured the hot fruit tea on me. However, you still forced me to apologize to her. I will never forget that moment.”

“But the problem is that I haven’t done something like that before.”

The owner seemed upset by the fact that Xu Qian was accusing him of something that he had apparently never done before.

For a moment, Xu Qian started to doubt her memories. If they served her well, she remembered that the owner of this restaurant was greasy and disgusting. And his acting skills were never this good.

After that, she saw the lady boss acting like she had received a revelation.

“You... Are you...”

As if suddenly remembering the laws and regulations, she quickly covered her mouth with her hands.

Xu Qian then said angrily, “Do you think I am a clone? Why don’t you shine an ultraviolet light at the back of my neck?”

The lady boss was shocked, and she looked embarrassed. After that, she winked at her husband beside her. He hesitated for a while, went back to the kitchen, and grabbed the ultraviolet lamp he used for disinfection.

Xu Qian did not move. She just stood there and glared at the two of them.

The owner cautiously approached her with the ultraviolet light in one hand and a pot lid in the other. The lady boss, not to be outdone, looked as though she was standing in the face of a formidable nemesis. She even had her hand with the bracelet behind her back, preparing to contact the police.

After that, the owner pressed the switch to the light with his trembling fingers. At the same time, everyone in the rest restaurants subconsciously held their breath.

The boss’s pupils shrank suddenly, and he started to take a step back.

“Well?”

The lady boss had her heart stuck in her throat.

“Nothing,” the owner confirmed honestly.

“Then why did you take a step back?” the lady boss exclaimed.

“I was reminded of the Tang incident,” the owner said. After realizing that it was a false alarm, he breathed a sigh of relief as he put down the lid.

Meanwhile, Zhang Heng, who had been sitting silently, finally said, “Sorry. My friend here has encountered a severe traffic accident before. It affected her head greatly. I hope you don’t take her words to heart. We will pay you to double for this meal.”

The boss looked like he was crying without tears, “If your head is sick, go for treatment. Don’t come here to make a scene out of nothing. Besides, even if you pay me double the money, you can’t make up for the damage you caused to my marriage.”

Xu Qian opened her mouth and wanted to say something, but Zhang Heng stopped her by glaring at her. Zhang Heng then said, “What do you guys want?”

The owner looked at his wife, the lady boss, beside him. The latter thought for a while and looked at the coat Xu Qian took off. She then gulped, “If you want to make it up to us, you will have to pay us. Five, oh no, ten times the cost of this meal.”

“Okay. Deal.” Zhang Heng nodded.

The lady boss almost dropped her jaw. She knew Xu Qian was rich, but she did not expect her to be this rich. If she knew, she would’ve asked them to pay twenty times the cost of this meal.

When the lady boss was thinking of all the money that she could earn, she heard the waitress in the short skirt in the corner suddenly asking, “What... What’s a clone?”

“Darn! It was too fu\*cking chaotic just now. I totally forgot about you,” moaned the owner.

He then said to his wife again, “We have no other options. Let’s just call the company.”

The waitress was still confused and was oblivious as to what had happened to her. Less than five minutes later, a blue car that operated on new energy sources stopped in front of the restaurant. The car was no different from the other cars on the street, and the four people who got out of it also looked ordinary, just like any other ordinary office worker.

The three men escorted the waitress to the car. And the other man said to the lady boss, “I will send the bill to your mailbox later.”

The lady boss looked pained. “We didn’t mean for this to happen. We know the rules. It was a slip of the tongue. Can you give us a discount?”

“I’m afraid that’s not going to work,” the man said.

“Also, can you change her character again? I don’t want her to be so flirtatious. My husband has very poor self-control. He can’t control his lower half.”

“Weren’t you the one who chose this character for her? You wanted her to attract more men, right?” the man asked rhetorically. He then glanced at Xu Qian and Zhang Heng in the restaurant. “We shouldn’t

talk about such things in public. Let's talk about the specific details by e-mail later. Or you can visit our place tomorrow if you have the time."

"Good, good," the lady boss nodded repeatedly.

### **Chapter 963: Revisiting Old Place**

"Why are they so reluctant to admit that I worked here?!"

After leaving the small restaurant, Xu Qian was still complaining.

Zhang Heng, on the other hand, didn't answer her question. "Next, let's go to the house you rented before," he said instead.

"Oh, so you are really here to listen to my tragic story?"

"No. I just need to further confirm some matters," Zhang Heng said.

"And, what are those matters?"

"Let's wait until you go to the house you previously rented."

Zhang Heng waved a taxi down as he spoke. Xu Qian glanced at him, and she did not get in the car right away. Instead, she said, "You have been keeping it a secret since last night. Why don't you just tell me everything? What do you want me to do? Our current relationship... is like two ants on a hotpot. Are you still worried I'll betray you? When those men came into the restaurant just now, I didn't ask for their help. During this period, I have been doing what you asked me to do—cover for you."

"It's not that I don't believe you. It's just hard for me to explain the whole thing. Also, ordinary people might find it hard to believe. I think it'll be better if we make slow and steady progress."

"Then why not tell me the conclusion first? From there, we can move forward step by step?"

"Well, I think you should try to stay away from your boyfriend," replied Zhang Heng after thinking for a bit.

"What?"

"As I said, it's hard for you to accept the conclusion."

"I just don't understand. Being with my boyfriend has nothing to do with my past."

"This is what I want to prove to you next."

Zhang Heng then gestured for Xu Qian to get into the car.

Although Xu Qian still had a ton of questions, she finally decided to do what Zhang Heng said, especially since the taxi driver was getting impatient and had started honking. Thus, she quickly hopped into the backseat.

Ten minutes later, they arrived at the place Xu Qian rented when she first moved to this city. It was a small ten-story residential building. It was said to have ten floors, but the original building had only six.

So the top four floors were additional floors that were built on top of the original building. Not only that, the first floor had been transformed into shop lots and was rented out to the people who lived there.

Xu Qian pulled Zhang Heng to the side, found a safe passage, opened the door, and saw many shop lots. But, unfortunately, there was only a small passage in the middle that could accommodate one person.

It seemed like Xu Qian knew what Zhang Heng was thinking, so she said, "This is the first floor. No one cares about this kind of thing. These stores refuse to spend their money renting warehouses. So, they store all of their merchandise here. They have been doing this since I moved here. As for what happens if this place catches fire, I guess that we can only pray that it'll never happen."

Xu Qian led Zhang Heng through the piles of items while she talked. They came up to the elevator on the second floor and pressed the button to go up. Unlike the convenient single-person elevator in Yacheng District, these looked more like the elevators Zhang Heng was familiar with. The apartment elevators in China still used buttons, and the entire car would vibrate slightly when it moved.

Xu Qian pressed the button to the seventh floor. The first thing he saw after the elevator doors opened was many clothes left hanging in the corridor to dry. Xu Qian bent down, walked through the drying rack, and came to a house that had a half-missing number.

"This is the place I used to rent. What shall we do next?"

Xu Qian stopped outside the door.

"Are you sure this is the place? Do you remember who moved here after you?"

"Before I moved out, the tenant came to check out the place, and she even placed her luggage in the house. However, this apartment has a very high turnover rate, and after this long, I'm not even sure if she still lives here," Xu Qian said.

"Let's take a look first."

Zhang Heng knocked on the door of the room.

After a while, the door was opened from the inside, and a man in only a pair of beach pants appeared. In an ominous tone, he asked, "Who are you looking for?"

"Jiang Hong, does she still live here?" Xu Qian asked.

The man glared at Zhang Heng and frowned.

"There's no one called Jiang Hong here. You come to the wrong place."

He was just about to shut the door in their faces but didn't expect that someone's hand would block it.

"The next time you lie, don't pause. Others will know that you are coming with something that would benefit you," Zhang Heng said as he stepped into the house. The expression of the man in the beach pants changed.

"Hey, boy, don't bring trouble to yourself," he growled.

As he said, he tackled Zhang Heng with his shoulder, trying to push him out of the house. Obviously, he had overestimated his strength and underestimated his opponent. Zhang Heng did not even dodge the attack, allowing the man to tackle him instead. The end result of that—Zhang Heng's body moved a little, but the beach pants man was being pushed back by the ground reaction force. Pushed away from the door, he could only watch Zhang Heng walk into the house.

Xu Qian hesitated before following Zhang Heng into the house. As soon as she entered, though, she was immensely shocked at the sight before her. A naked girl was cuffed to the bed, and she had bruises all over her body. One of her eyes was swollen as well.

"Jiang Hong?" Xu Qian froze for a while before she could recognize the lady.

Zhang Heng grabbed the bedsheets and put them on Jiang Hong's body. He then looked at the beach pants man and said, "She is a tenant here. Who are you? Thief? Robber? Did you suddenly decide to attack the girl while trying to steal her money?"

"What the hell are you talking about? I'm her husband!!!" the man yelled. "Who the hell are you guys? Why break into my house?!"

"Consider us the good Samaritans."

Zhang Heng looked at the handcuffs on Jiang Hong's hands and realized that an electronic lock was underneath it.

"What is the password?"

"What makes you think I will tell you the password?" sneered the man.

Zhang Heng did not respond. Instead, he immediately turned off the light bulb above his head and smashed it at the corner of the table while everyone looked at him in a surprised manner. He then pressed the man's head against the wall, about to stab his eyes with the broken light bulb.

"You don't have to do that. I will give you the password. The password is 8672."

Seeing that the broken glass was less than a centimeter from his eyeball, the man was startled and quickly told Zhang Heng the password.

Xu Qian entered the password and unlocked the handcuffs. After that, she took out the clothes from the closet on the side for Jiang Hong to put on. The man wanted to speak at that moment, but he shut his mouth again when he saw the broken light bulb in front of him. It was not until Zhang Heng put down the bulb and Xu Qian and Jiang Hong were out of the house that he spoke again.

"Where are you taking my wife?"

"Take care of your own affairs."

Zhang Heng put the gun back in his bag.

"Do something a husband should do. You could start by replacing the broken light bulb."

**Chapter 964: How Much Do You Believe In Your Memory**

Xu Qian went to the nearby clinics to look for a doctor to treat Jiang Hong's bruises.

On the other hand, Zhang Heng took the chance to buy a cup of hot tea, two bottles of mineral water, a pack of cigarettes, and a lighter from a nearby vending machine. He then put the cigarettes and the lighter in his pocket and returned to the clinic.

He passed the cup of hot tea to Jiang Hong.

The latter repeatedly thanked him.

Xu Qian, on the other side, took a bottle of mineral water, unscrewed it, and took a sip. "Is he really your husband?"

Jiang Hong lowered her head and mumbled something softly.

"Did he always abuse you?"

Before Jiang Hong could say anything, the old Chinese doctor on the side said, "Yes. This is the third time she has come to me this month."

"Then why don't you call the police or get a divorce?" Xu Qian frowned.

"Because she still has a younger brother who works under her husband. If she gets divorced, her younger brother will also be unemployed."

The old Chinese doctor was familiar with Jiang Hong's family situation. And perhaps he did persuade Jiang Hong to divorce before.

Jiang Hong raised his head and squeezed out a smile, "I'm fine. I'm used to it. Thank you for what you've done for me today. You both are good people. And you were willing to stand up for me even when you didn't know me."

"What are you talking about?" Xu Qian was taken aback. She then took off her sunglasses. "It's me, Xu Qian, the previous tenant that stayed in your current house. I met you when you wanted to rent the house two years ago. At that time, you weren't married yet."

"Really?" Jiang Hong looked a little dazed when she heard what Xu Qian said.

"Why? Don't you remember me? Two years ago, you left your luggage with me in advance. To thank me, you even invited me to dinner. I still remember we had roasted duck at the street next to us."

"Did we eat together?" Jiang Hong looked as though she did not remember a single thing.

After experiencing the incident at the small restaurant, Xu Qian also noticed something was wrong this time. She then asked, "Did you move here two years ago?"

"Yes, that's right." Jiang Hong agreed to what she said.

Her answer made Xu Qian felt a little relieved, "Do you still remember the tenant who lived here before you?"

Xu Qian looked into Jiang Hong's eyes while talking, expecting the latter to say, "It's you," but Jiang Hong's reply shocked her once again.

“The tenant before me was a family of three. I still remember them. The man was an elementary school teacher, and the woman was a housewife. They also had a son who was about six or seven years old. After that, they moved to the second level,” Jiang Hong replied.

“You are lying! Why are all of you behaving like this? I have never wronged any of you, not to mention we just saved you. Why are you lying?” Xu Qian’s expression was getting a little aggressive. She then grabbed Jiang Hong’s arm. However, she used too much force to grab her, and she accidentally touched Jiang Hong’s bruise, causing the latter to grimace in pain.

Zhang Heng, on the side, had to make a move to separate the two of them.

After that, Xu Qian started to glare at Jiang Hong, “You know the boss and his wife at Fu Ji, right? They must’ve contacted you just now and asked you to lie to me.”

After a while, the old Chinese doctor could no longer hold back and interrupted them. “I can vouch for her. I have also seen the family that she mentioned. Before she came, the child of that family had a fever one night, and the family of three came to me for Gua Sha. They told me that they were going to move to the second level.”

“But this does not prove that they are the tenants of 714. I am the tenant of 714. The person who lived there before Jiang Hong was me. I remember your clinic. I passed your place every day after I got off work. However, I have never entered your clinic before,” Xu Qian said.

The old Chinese doctor said, “But I remember that they told me their house number that night. It was 714. They also invited me to visit their house whenever I am available. They are a very warm and polite family.”

When the two were arguing, Zhang Heng suddenly chipped in. “The landlord.”

“Huh?”

“You can ask the landlord this question. He should have a record of the tenants that lived in this building,” Zhang Heng added.

“You’re right.” Xu Qian seemed to see hope again. She clicked on the address book in the bracelet, but she remembered that she had deleted everything related to the first level after checking it.

Jiang Hong said weakly, “I have the landlord’s number.”

“Okay. Send it to me...”

Xu Qian suddenly stopped talking, showing a hint of hesitation. Zhang Heng knew what she was worried about. So, he said, “You can go to the shops downstairs. You should be able to get the landlord’s number from someone.”

Xu Qian accepted Zhang Heng’s suggestion and went to the shops downstairs. Five minutes later, Zhang Heng saw that Xu Qian had finished the call and was standing alone on the side of the road.

“Thank you for answering our questions,” Zhang Heng said to Jiang Hong. He then nodded at the old Chinese doctor on the side, “I will make a move first.”

Zhang Heng pushed open the clinic door, looked to his left and right for traffic, and crossed the road.

He walked towards Xu Qian and asked, "How did it go? Did you get the answers you want?"

Xu Qian did not hear what he said. Instead, she stayed there for half a second before reacting. "You planned everything, right? You contacted everyone and asked them to lie to me."

"But before today, you have never told me your past on the first level. I don't know where you worked before. How could I have contacted everyone to lie to you?"

"Then how am I supposed to explain what is happening now," Xu Qian asked, "I just called the landlord and paid her 1,000 credits to help me check the tenant that lived 714 three years ago."

"What did she say?"

"She said exactly the same thing as Jiang Hong. They must have communicated in advance. Did you see Jiang Hong calling anyone when I asked for the landlord's number?"

"I'm afraid not. She just sat there, and she didn't do anything," Zhang Heng said.

"Then they must have other means of communication," Xu Qian said anxiously. "If you are not the one who pranked me, then who is messing with me? What is the person's agenda? Why does the person want to make me think that I've never lived on the first floor before?"

"Calm down first." Zhang Heng took out the pack of cigarettes he had just bought, handed one to Xu Qian, and lit the cigarette for her. After a couple of puffs, she continued, "Remember the question I asked you before? How much do you trust your memory?"

"So, you think that there is something wrong with my memory?" Xu Qian seemed like she just heard an extremely absurd thing. She then shook her head. "That's quite impossible. Only cloned humans have forged memories. I am a citizen of New Shanghai 0297, and I came here three years ago. I have lived here for a long time."

"How can you be so sure?"

"Because all the clones here don't know the existence of cloning technology. That's how they remain stable. And they have a tracking device in their heads and numbers on the back of their necks. This is something that everyone knows," Xu Qian said. "You saw what happened in Fu Ji just now. That waitress is a clone. She was taken away just because she heard the word 'clone.' And you, there is also a serial number at the back of your neck, right?"

"So, if someone creates another batch of clones and allow them access to information about cloning, they wouldn't need the serial number on the back of the neck and the tracking device in their head. In other words, they would be more stable than the first batch of clones. And they will never suspect that they are clones," Zhang Heng said casually.

### **Chapter 965: Second Type Of Clone**

Zhang Heng's explanation left Xu Qian in complete shock for two full seconds, and she even forgot to breathe. Until she choked on the smoke she had just inhaled, she said with a cough, "This is too ridiculous. If what you said is true, there will be a lot of clones living in New Shanghai 0297 right now."

Other than those clones with serial numbers on their necks, there are also clones like me... What did you say earlier? You said there's another batch of clones without serial numbers living in New Shanghai 0297."

"That's right," Zhang Heng nodded.

"How did you come to this conclusion? From the moment the boss and the lady boss of Fu Ji refused to admit that I had worked there, Jiang Hong and the landlord insisted that the previous tenant of 714 was a family of three? So, you think I'm not the only one, and there are many clones like me in this city?"

"You are not the only one who faced a situation like this," Zhang Heng said calmly.

"What?"

"I went to your boyfriend's company two days ago."

"Wait, you're still investigating him and you didn't tell me?"

Xu Qian sounded a little angry.

"I've said it many times, haven't I? The investigation is no longer needed."

"I heard what you said, but that's got nothing to do with you being followed. It's just my personal interest," Zhang Heng said. "I investigated your boyfriend's company, and I met a marketing manager there named Liao Ming."

Xu Qian did not know what to say after she heard Zhang Heng's explanation. He was free to investigate anyone he liked as long as it wasn't related to her. After that, Xu Qian took a deep breath and calmed herself down.

"I seem to have a bit of an impression of this person. I met him when I went to my boyfriend's company. My boyfriend said that he is the backbone of the company and that he is a very responsible man."

"Yes, if you read his resume, you will find that he is the perfect employee all companies dream of."

"And?"

"Do you know why Liao Ming works so hard? He still has a daughter and ex-wife. Maybe it's because he feels that the divorce caused his daughter to lose her mother and has always carried that guilt with him. Therefore, he tries to make up for the lack of a mother by giving her a materialistic life."

"What are you trying to say here? Does Liao Ming's daughter actually exist?" Xu Qian asked.

"His daughter exists. She is the fruit of his effort, and the two meet from time to time. She has to exist so that Liao Ming has the motivation to work like a machine," Zhang Heng paused, "but you are right about one thing, there are indeed people who don't exist."

"Who?"

"Liao Ming's ex-wife," Zhang Heng said. "Liao Ming brought his daughter to New Shanghai 0297 after the divorce. So, there are no friends and relatives who know him and his ex-wife in this city."

“Isn’t that normal? When we first met, I told you that this is a young city. A lot of people come here to look for jobs and a better life. Of course, there are also some who hope to start a new life here.”

“Yes. I did ask Liao Ming’s daughter’s class teacher about it. Since Liao Ming’s daughter transferred to this elementary school a year ago, her mother has not visited her, not even once.”

“Well. That doesn’t sound right. But as far as I know, some women cut off all contact with their previous families after they remarry,” Xu Qian said. “Maybe Liao Ming’s ex-wife is that kind of person. She left all her past behind, and welcomes everything new into her life. It’s scary when a woman hardens her heart.”

“Yes. You are probably right. In order to verify this deduction of mine, I visited another person on the second level afterward.”

“Who is that person?”

“Liao Ming has a female subordinate. She has always admired Liao Ming, and they have developed something... a little more than just colleagues.”

“Office romance?”

“Almost. I checked their chat records. The female subordinate was willing to change her job for Liao Ming and promised to treat his daughter as her own. However, Liao Ming was still reluctant to admit their relationship. It agitated her a little, and she asked Liao Ming if he had contacted his ex-wife. Liao Ming’s reply was—when we met the last time, she told me that she would remarry and wanted me to treat her as if she was dead. After that, I didn’t bother to contact her anymore.”

“Doesn’t this prove my previous conjecture?” Xu Qian asked.

“That looks to be the case. The person who knows you best is not your friend but your enemy. After the visitation, I got more details of the meeting that day, including the time and place, what happened, and what they talked about. With this information, not only did I manage to locate the cafe where the incident happened, but I also found the owner of the cafe. What’s interesting is that the owner of the cafe does not remember that Liao Ming and his ex-wife visited his cafe. Does that sound familiar?”

“But this is normal. The cafe receives so many visitors every day, and it happened so long ago.”

“And you are also right about that. From what I know, the meeting between Liao Ming and his ex-wife that day did not go smoothly. During that time, the two had a fierce quarrel. Liao Ming’s wife made it clear that she would never move to New Shanghai 0297, nor did she want to meet Liao Ming again. After that, she grabbed a steak knife on the table and slashed Liao Ming with it. Liao Ming’s arm was cut badly, and he was bleeding... The café owner surely wouldn’t be encountering this kind of thing every day. Later, I figured out a way to talk to several waiters who worked in the coffee shop that day. And they didn’t remember him too.”

Xu Qian went silent for a moment. She then looked up again, “Do you think this marriage of Liao Ming was faked? And he is a clone?”

“Unfortunately, according to the current standards of identifying a human clone, he is not one,” Zhang Heng said. “When he took me for a walk around the factory, I secretly took a picture of the back of his neck with an ultraviolet flashlight... and there was no serial number on it.”

Xu Qian’s fingers that were holding the cigarette couldn’t help but start to shake. However, she was still unwilling to accept Zhang Heng’s idea of the so-called second type of human clone existing in this city.

“Your deduction is too outrageous. There has to be some other explanation. Let’s take a step back and assume what you said is true where the second type of clone is no different from a real human. Why do you want to tell me these things? As long as you don’t doubt the authenticity of the memory, I can pretend that I’m the real human being and live normally.”

“I’m afraid you can never live like an ordinary person...” Zhang Heng said, “A human clone is born to serve. And since they are just tools, they have to consider the probability of themselves malfunctioning. You have seen how they treat ordinary clones. Once something goes wrong, they instantly get sent back to the factory for recalibration. For clones who cannot be calibrated, you too know the kind of fate that awaits them.

Zhang Heng looked at Xu Qian as he spoke.

“Tell me, during your time with your boyfriend, have you ever doubted his purpose of approaching you? When you were being followed and monitored, did you really never suspect him? You don’t want me to continue investigating this matter. Is it because you subconsciously don’t want to accept the results of the investigation? “

### **Chapter 966: Garden And Bees**

“What are you trying to say?” Xu Qian asked.

“I remember you telling me that your livestream viewers have been on a steady decline.”

“What about it?”

“It was at that time when you suddenly met your prince charming, one that’s perfect from every aspect. Not only that, he could give you what you have been longing for, which is to move to the fourth level. If I’m right, once you agree to his proposal and announce it in your final stream, you will no longer appear in front of the public. And this is exactly what they want. No matter what happens to you next, no one will know.”

“How is that possible? Even though my viewers have been declining, more than 400,000 people still watch my stream at any given time,” Xu Qian said.

“But once you retire, all those viewers will go and watch other streamers. You should know this better than anyone else. During the first few weeks, the netizens would talk about you, and there will be news in the newspapers reporting that you married into a wealthy family. Once the heat goes down, most of them will forget your name, save for diehard fans like E-Goat.”

Xu Qian was taken aback. As a newcomer who worked hard to become a famous streamer, she certainly knew how cruel this line was. The most abundant thing this job had to offer were the throngs of new

streamers waiting to become famous. Let alone her. Even though Tang was once a star and had unbeatable achievements, nobody really talked about her anymore.

However, Xu Qian still found it difficult to accept Zhang Heng's deduction, especially when she realized that on her right hand was the life he had been longing for and on her left was the abyss of horror. Nevertheless, it was not difficult for her to make a decision.

Xu Qian took two steps back and said to Zhang Heng, "I have already seen what you want me to see. it's time to go back."

"But there's still something I want you to see," Zhang Heng said, "You think Fu Ji's boss, Jiang Hong, and the landlord were working together to mess with you? Why not go and talk to your distant cousin? You said she used to work with you at Fu Ji, and you cut all connections with her because of the streamer incident. No matter what, she is still related to you. Why don't we go to her for confirmation next?"

"I won't go looking for her. You are right. We have cut off all the ties, and we will never see each other again in this life," Xu Qian grunted while throwing the spent cigarette before stepping on it, "Okay. I don't care who you are going to find next. Anyway, I don't want to stay in this hell hole for another second. The buildings and air here are terrible. I'm going back to the third level."

After that, Xu Qian waved a taxi down. She seated herself at the front seat and said to the driver, "Go to the shuttle station as soon as possible. I can pay you double the fare if you can get me there within ten minutes."

On the other hand, Zhang Heng did not try to stop Xu Qian. He just stood there and watched the taxi move away from him.

Less than two minutes later, a black SUV stopped in front of Zhang Heng.

The front passenger window wound down, revealing Miss F, who went straight to the point.

"Get in the car. Mr. G wants to see you."

An hour later, the black SUV arrived at the edge of the first level, finally stopping in front of a huge glasshouse. Zhang Heng and Miss F got out of the car and started to look around. The place looked like a private garden that occupied an area not too big nor small.

Such gardens were not uncommon on the third and fourth levels. It was, however, a rare occurrence on the first level. Here, the people were more concerned about bread and milk. When Zhang Heng walked into the garden, he saw all kinds of flora and fauna. The person that owned this place even kept some rare bees. And there were swarms of them.

As soon as the door was opened, Zhang Heng could hear the loud droning sounds. Thousands of bees buzzed around the flowers, collecting the day's nectar. They would return to their hives once their maximum load was reached. The bees were more than happy to repeat this process. In front of the hives stood a man with a straw hat, busy taking out a nesting frame from the colony. He began to scrape off the honeycombs with a knife before carefully placing them one by one into a wooden barrel on the side.

When he was done with everything, he inserted the frame back into the hive. He then stood up straight and walked towards Zhang Heng.

“Welcome, we meet again.” Mr. G took off the straw hat with a veil on his head, and handed it and his knife to his bodyguard, and shook hands with Zhang Heng.

He seemed to be in a good mood today. Seeing that Zhang Heng was still looking at the beehives behind him, he smiled.

“A temporary hobby of mine,” he said.

“Do you produce your own honey?” Zhang Heng asked.

“No, no, no, honey is just a by-product. What I like is the beekeeping itself, especially observing these little fluffy things with wings. Have you ever learned about bees? Their habits, social structure, and population characteristics?”

“Appreciate further details.”

“Bees and humans have a lot in common. We both need to produce and reproduce. In order to make these two things more efficient, we have come up with a social division of labor. You must have heard of a bee colony—the responsibilities of different bees.”

“Well. I know a thing or two.”

Mr. G took the water bottle handed by the bodyguard, took a few sips, and then happily said, “The queen bee—the one and only in each colony. Their main responsibility is to reproduce, and the queen does not need to be engaged in labor work. All she needs to do is to lie comfortably in the hive and wait for the worker bees to feed her every day. That’s what it’s like to stay on top of the pyramid. Under the queen are the drones. Life is good for her. She doesn’t need to do any heavy labor. After all, it is impossible that one person does all the reproduction work. Even the queen needs someone to help her.”

“But the problem is that only one male bee is allowed to mate with the queen. Before that, they need to fight with each other to determine a winner. However, the winner dies immediately after the mating process is over. It doesn’t sound too good. Every bee has its specific role in the hive. Finally, let’s look at the worker bees.”

Mr. G stretched out his hand and stopped a flying bee. ”

These are located at the bottom of the pyramid. The worker bees have the most numbers in the hive. These ones have the heaviest responsibilities. From collecting honey to incubating the eggs, cleaning the incubation room, feeding the queen, her larvae, the drones, and the guards... They work almost all the time. Their fate has been sealed since they were born. So they firmly believe that what they are doing is extremely important. But the truth is they are also the most expandable bees in the entire hive.”

Mr. G suddenly squeezed the bee on his fingertips without warning.

“Look, nothing happened. It’s business as usual for the bee colony.”

### **Chapter 967: Test**

“Although some may think that the bees have an unfair social structure, they can’t deny it does help them operate in an orderly fashion. They all perform their duties faithfully and produce a steady stream

of honey. Human society runs on a similar structure. Although it is more complicated than the bee colony, it runs on essentially the same concept.”

Mr. G took out a handkerchief and wiped off the remains of the dead bee on his finger.

“Is New Shanghai 0297 also a beehive capable of producing a steady stream of honey?” Zhang Heng asked.

“Good question. In my opinion, the companies, cities, and even the defunct national systems are part of the beehive. However, our social structure looks different from the outside.” Mr. G spread his hands and continued, “We humans have been working hard for thousands of years, looking for more efficient production and reproduction methods. From the use of basic tools to the numerous industrial revolutions, our productivity greatly improved thanks to the emergence of the global division of labor. Then, our lives have become more and more abundant. Take a look at the world around you. Our lives are so much better than the lives of our ancestors.

“At the same time, however, we are becoming more and more like our creation. The vast majority of people have lost their unique individuality. Just like these worker bees, they all look the same and are replaceable. We forget what our true desires are. Deceived by society, we gradually become the tools of production. We are put together with different responsibilities to make the world go round. However, the more productive we are, the more we appear like tools. Until the emergence of clones, everything had to be pushed to the extreme.

Mr. G paused.

“When the clones were born, someone predicted that humans would gain a more advanced and efficient production method. Do you know how much it used to cost to raise a child in ordinary families in the early years? Not to mention that when they get older, they would still receive social insurance when they quit the production link. That means they would continue consuming society’s resources. The emergence of human clones perfectly solves these problems.

“When they are still at their juvenile phase, you can raise them in large quantities like pigs. You only need to feed them to keep them alive, and you don’t need to provide them anything other than food. Then, when they grow up, just give them some fake memories. The false memories you give them mold them into the tools you need. Just like you, molded to be a bodyguard. A clone could also become a cook or a good employee, ready to work in the production line. When they get older and their efficiency drops, we can go ahead and destroy them. This is the perfect tool that could help us excel in productivity. They are like the new type of worker bee that needs neither food nor drink.”

As he spoke, Mr. G waved his hand at his bodyguard to lift the barrel with the honeycomb.

“Do you know what’s the problem that humans and bees share? In the beginning, these bees exist to keep their kind alive. However, after that, they’d forget their most fundamental purpose. They start to collect honey for the sake of collecting honey. And thus, honey overflows in their beehive. In the end, the beekeepers take advantage of them.

“Oh. I just talked so much without paying attention to the time. Forgive me. I went on and on about bees till I almost forgot about the real business. I came to you this time for the express delivery. The day to carry out the transaction has been set in stone. It’s the night after tomorrow. I hope you won’t be

offended—I watched the clip of your previous battle, and I also saw how you singlehandedly protected my middleman from a group of bikers. This is why I've chosen you as my courier. However, I hope you can also understand that this transaction is very important to me, and I must make sure that nothing goes wrong."

"What do you mean?" Zhang Heng asked.

Mr. G did not answer the question immediately. Instead, he watched his two bodyguards bring a table and two chairs, put a tablecloth on the table, arrange the tableware, and place a bottle of wine before he continued.

"Before you actually start working for me, I hope I can see what you are capable of doing with my own two eyes. I'd like to know whether the person I spent so much money hiring is reliable. Is this request too much?"

Mr. G reached out to Miss F. "And you, my beautiful fiancée, can you enjoy afternoon tea with me?"

Miss F frowned when she heard what he said.

"This is not what we agreed on."

"Yes. This is the part I spontaneously decided on. I like our friend here as much as you do. Because of this, I don't want him to have any accidents when he delivers for me the day after tomorrow."

Miss F wanted to say more, but she heard Zhang Heng say,

"It's fair. What's the test?"

"Since your job is to help me to deliver the item, please help me deliver this honeycomb bucket to the storage room at the back of the garden. Other than that, bring my fiancée's favorite croissant from the kitchen. Be careful. This garden holds many dangers. I planted lots of thorny flowers.

"Pay attention. You have only 20 minutes to complete the task. If you run out of time or lose your life during the mission, it'll be considered a fail."

Mr. G then set a countdown timer on his bracelet.

"Any other questions?"

"Can I borrow your sword?" Zhang Heng requested Miss F.

"Why? Don't you like your blade?" Mr. G asked.

"My blade is too sharp. I'm worried I'll hurt your men," Zhang Heng said casually.

Mr. G smiled upon hearing this. "You needn't worry about this. Your opponents are real bad guys. I don't mind if they die. I've made an agreement with them. If they manage to kill you, all of their debts will be canceled. Even if they don't die in your hands, I'll kill them myself sooner or later. So please, be very careful. Oh, and you can give up and quit the test at any time."

Having said that, Miss F still took off the sword on her waist and threw it to Zhang Heng.

"Take it; my sword is made of tungsten steel alloy. You should make good use of it."

A strange look flashed in Mr. G's eyes, but he said nothing. Instead, he just nodded at Zhang Heng and said, "Good luck."

"Thank you."

Zhang Heng took the sword, lifted the bucket of honey on the table, and walked towards the back of the garden.

After only walking less than twenty meters, Zhang Heng met his first enemy. A muscular man who had modified his left arm into a chainsaw was waiting for Zhang Heng under a palm tree. The moment he saw Zhang Heng, he turned on the chainsaw and charged.

Zhang Heng stood there and did not make a move. He waited until the muscular man came close enough before he swung his sword.

It was a quick slash.

From swinging the sword to keeping the sword away, the entire process took less than 0.2 seconds. The attack was so swift that it was almost impossible to catch a glimpse with the naked eye.

Later, the muscular man's chainsaw slipped from his shoulder and hit his toe. The sharp spinning teeth instantly sliced off four of his toes, leaving the muscular man wondering if he should be more about losing his arm or toes.

#### **Chapter 968: Garden**

Zhang Heng didn't look at the muscular man who had fallen to the ground and was crying out in pain. After putting away the sword, he walked over the man's body and continued.

Mr. G's garden wasn't that big, but he did plant a large number of plants. Other than the myriad species of flowers, there were a lot of weird trees as well. Among them, there was even a giant tree taller than a ten-story building. The flora around here was randomly planted, and since there were tons of poisonous and thorny plants, it turned the garden into a complicated maze.

To walk past the garden in the shortest time possible, the easiest way was to undoubtedly follow the paths in the garden. However, the most dangerous thing in this garden was not the flowers and trees. Mr. G then used his bracelet to project the first camera's image, but the first thing he saw was mud and blood. It appeared the wearer of the camera had been killed.

"It seems our courier is really good at what he does." Mr. G then asked the bodyguard next to him with raised eyebrows, "Do you think he can pass the test?"

The latter thought for a while and said, "I watched the video too. It was impressive that he could singlehandedly deal with so many enemies at the same time. However, his enemies were just a group of violent bikers. Since the middleman was close to him, the enemies didn't dare to go all out. It's different this time. The people in the garden are some of the most violent people we have ever encountered. We hired them according to your requirements. Some of them are our enemies, and they have caused us lots of headaches in the past. And you promised them, as long as they kill the target and go through the garden, you'd grant them the freedom they have been longing for and nullify all their debts. In other words, they will be desperate enough to get the deal done. It will not be easy to get past them."

Miss F frowned when she heard what he said. She then looked into Mr. G's eyes and said gravely, "Aren't you taking things a little too far? This is not a test. You are making things difficult for him."

"Sorry. But this has nothing to do with personal grievances. I have to know what his limits are," Mr. G said. "I just received something from an informant. Shengtang Morgan will send an emergency response team to stop this deal."

"Emergency response team? Their serial numbers?"

"They start with zero. You know what this means," Mr. G said. "All members of this team are clones. Before the age of 16, they received a lot of high-intensity training. Ten of these will be selected from 10,000 clones. The professional personnel would then program all kinds of combat skills, including reconnaissance, sniping, close-quarters assassination, and intelligence analysis into their brain... Each one is an excellent all-rounder."

"They are the perfect killing machine, completing their given tasks no matter what. I know you value him very much, but he is just a bodyguard clone of a security company. And he is alone. For your sake, I'm willing to give him an opportunity. If he can't even get out of this garden, how can I believe that he can complete the task while he was under the emergency response team's attack?"

Miss F went silent.

"As I said, he came to me at the wrong time. Otherwise, I really don't mind helping him and making a new friend. To be honest, I kinda like him."

Mr. G then opened the red wine in front of him.

"It's a pity," he muttered.

While talking, he switched the projection to the second and third cameras. The wearers of these two cameras were snipers, and they had found their perfect spots to set up shop. One hid behind a sycamore tree while the other sniper concealed himself within the flower bed.

There was a saying on the battlefield: if a sniper saw you first, you were dead. Therefore, this was an unfair battle from the beginning. The two snipers chose their sniping spots in advance and pointed their snipers at the only path. They were confident enough that they would kill Zhang Heng the moment that he showed up. And the whole ordeal would end there.

At this moment, their index finger on the trigger seemed to be announcing that they had won the battle. Mr. G did not think it was possible for Zhang Heng to avoid the deadly duo, especially since the two snipers were sharpshooters. They never missed their shots, not to mention that there were two of them.

The sniper hiding behind the flower bed could not help, but he got distracted by other things. To him, Zhang Heng was no different than a lump of dead meat. But according to Mr. G's promise to them, only the person who killed Zhang Heng could go free. In other words, he needed to kill Zhang Heng before the sniper hiding behind the tree killed him. And doing that wouldn't be that easy.

When the sniper behind the flower bed was still thinking about how to win the competition, he heard an unfamiliar voice say, "Why are you being distracted?"

The sniper was startled by the voice, but before he could react, the tungsten steel sword had slit his throat.

At the same time, the sniper hiding behind the tree also heard the movement. His body quickly reacted, and he turned the muzzle for the first time, aiming at the flower bed. He was looking for his target. However, other than his companion's corpse, he could see no one else.

The sniper then thought about something. Since their target could approach them silently, why should he make a sound when he killed his enemy? Immediately, a chill ran up the sniper's back. He turned his stiff neck around, and he saw his target standing behind him.

It was a pity that he did not get the chance to pick up his sniper.

Zhang Heng wiped the blood from the tungsten steel sword on the back of the corpse. He then turned around, walked to the intersection, and lifted the bucket of honey.

Indeed, the complex environment in the garden was very conducive for the sniper to hide and shoot.

At the same time, this was the perfect place for an assassin to move. In the Roman dungeon, Zhang Heng had increased his assassin skills to Lv3. And it made him an assassin that was on the same level as a Balance Blade assassin. That was why he could take advantage of the surrounding plants to approach the two snipers quietly. In fact, Mr. G had hired the two snipers to increase the difficulty of the assessment.

But everyone knew that this place held more disadvantages than advantages for Zhang Heng. From the moment Zhang Heng walked on the small path, the prey and the hunter swapped roles. When Mr. G saw that the two snipers were dead through the projection, he finally showed a touch of surprise on his face. The thing that surprised him was not the fact that he defeated the two snipers. After all, Zhang Heng did singlehandedly defeat a group of bikers. It was not a surprise that he could kill the two snipers on his own. Mr. G was surprised by how fast and clean Zhang Heng killed the two snipers.

"Interesting. I can't believe I misjudged him. He is more than just an ordinary bodyguard clone."

### **Chapter 969: Dangerous Encounter**

Killing the muscular man with the chainsaw and the two snipers were just the beginning. Zhang Heng decided not to walk on the garden path after that, choosing instead to walk through the flowerbed. With his sneaking skills and Heart of Kreis, he could completely disappear within the grass and trees. After he completed the novice quest, Bell taught him a thing or two about herbology, so Zhang Heng could identify most of the poisonous plants that he wasn't supposed to approach.

Through this, he would be able to use the garden to his advantage. Hooking the tungsten steel sword Miss F gave him on his waist, he picked up the sniper on the ground. And he found the next target quite a distance away. Without waiting for the other party to notice him, Zhang Heng pulled the trigger first. The bullet ejected from the barrel, penetrating the head of its target dead on. The bullet also hit the camera on his head. This time Mr. G's projection turned into a black screen.

"So, he knows how to use a sniper rifle?"

The surprise on Mr. G's face only intensified. He then asked the bodyguard next to him, "How is his marksmanship?"

"Very impressive. He is at least better than the two snipers he killed. The bullet holes we found on the bikers' corpses showed that they were killed with one single shot. Considering the situation that he is in, his marksmanship is excellent.

"But I don't know what he is truly capable of. His marksmanship is way better than mine," he admitted after a pause.

"It's understandable if he is good at using his pistol. He is a bodyguard, after all. However, it's a little strange that he is so good on the sniper rifle." Mr. G put down the wine glass. "Why did the security company grant him the ability to use the sniper rifle? Is he really a bodyguard clone? I think he is more like a killer clone."

Zhang Heng had defeated four enemies while they were talking, each one killed by a single shot. During this period, Mr. G could not even spot Zhang Heng through the camera. The latter had turned into a ghost in the garden. He approached his target silently and reaped their lives without any mercy.

As the gunshots got closer and closer, they began to feel the pressure. Mr. G saw the camera shaking slightly. When he turned to the eighth camera, he saw the camera swaying frantically from left to right. Clearly, the person with the camera had completely lost it. He could not figure out which direction Zhang Heng would come from.

Unfortunately, it was a pity that his 360-degree vigilance did not save him in the end.

As gunfire rang out again, a bullet from an unknown direction sent him to meet his maker.

"He is not a killer clone." Miss F, who had been staying silent suddenly talked.

"But he is acting like a top-notch killer right now," Mr. G said. "Look at the way he moved and his sniping skills. This guy treats my garden as his backyard. He behaves like a tiger charging at a flock of sheep. Now, why does G7Z, a security company, want to produce a killer clone? To help them to get more business?"

"He is not a killer clone," Miss F repeated. "I have seen several killer clones, and they are almost emotionless. Without emotions, unexpected events were less likely to happen to them during an assassination. Other than that, they would also do whatever they were asked to do. But he is different."

"Why? Doesn't he also seem to have no emotions?"

"Yes. But he doesn't seem merciless to me. And he is not skeptical towards the world. On the contrary, he has a set of rules to follow. I have never seen a clone with such strong self-awareness, especially after he realized his identity. He still seems to be capable of believing in something, which makes him really special," Miss F said. "This is why I hope you can help him escape the authorities."

"Well, I'm getting more interested in our mutual friend now," Mr. G chirped. "Let's take a look at his other skills then. All those people he killed were just the appetizers. The real show is about to begin."

...

Zhang Heng did not deliberately count how many people he had killed. The number of bullets that he had left with him told him the answer. After killing the twelfth enemy, he didn't encounter another enemy for quite some time. It was only after he walked across half of the garden when he caught a glimpse of his next opponent.

Unlike Zhang Heng's other opponents, the enemy did not go into hiding this time. Instead, he stood in the middle of the road, waiting to attack Zhang Heng. And he was wearing something that looked like an exoskeleton. It looked quite cool.

Zhang Heng wasted no time, swiftly looking for a spot to hide and set up his sniper rifle.

He ignored the exoskeleton and aimed at the enemy's head before pulling the trigger.

At that distance, it was almost impossible for Zhang Heng to miss his target.

However, as soon as he pulled the trigger, he saw the target's head suddenly tilting towards him. Putting on a strange smile, he blocked the bullet with his alloy shield on his left hand with inhuman speed. In the end, Zhang Heng couldn't put him down.

The sniper rifle bullet failed to penetrate the large alloy shield, but the huge kinetic energy still affected him a little. However, it was offset by the exoskeleton the next second. He only took a small step back. After a while, he shouted, "This is all you are capable of? It's my turn to perform."

The moment he started talking, a series of explosions took place at Zhang Heng's hiding spot. Not only did the fire affect the nearby plants, but it also lifted the land. As for the people lying on it, they were dead for sure.

"Is this the end? It seems a lot easier than expected," the man standing in the middle of the road mumbled.

And Mr. G in front of the projection on the other side, also had a look of agony on him.

"This guy overdid it. How many flowers and plants did he destroyed? There are a lot of rare plants, which I collected over the years. It's not easy to find them again."

But before he could finish his words, he saw a dark shadow suddenly appear in the flame. He then dashed towards the small path with lightning speed. A flash of cold light reflected in the air, and Zhang Heng slashed the man that stood in the middle of the road!

### **Chapter 970: Attribute vs Skill**

Zhang Heng realized that the enemy had located his hiding place in advance when the enemy blocked his bullet. With Zhang Heng's current stealth skills, he had a very low possibility of getting spotted. So, there was only one explanation for this situation: the enemy's exoskeleton might be equipped with a heat detector.

The opposing man knew Zhang Heng killed all the enemies that crossed paths with him with his sniper rifle. From the very beginning, the man just stood there carelessly in the middle of the road. It was not because he wanted Zhang Heng to kill him. In fact, he appeared to be taunting Zhang Heng, even putting on an arrogant look on his face. If Zhang Heng were to fall for it, he would have been killed by the bombs.

Once Zhang Heng realized that he missed his target, he quickly vacated his hiding spot, which was why he survived the explosion just now. And afterward, Zhang Heng realized that the heatwave the explosion generated had messed with the heat detector. So, he took the opportunity to dash towards his enemy.

At that time, he had already ditched his sniper rifle. Although Zhang Heng had excellent marksmanship skills, he still needed some distance to fully utilize his sniper rifle. Since the enemy had a heat detector, it would be suicidal for him to hide at some spot.

Therefore, Zhang Heng decided to abandon the idea of killing with the sniper rifle, resorting to close-quarters combat instead. And his decision surprised his opponent slightly. An ordinary person would subconsciously avoid frontal contact with the enemy's exoskeleton, especially after he displayed his enhanced reflexes with it, blocking the bullet with its alloy shield.

So, when he saw Zhang Heng charging at him, he didn't panic, but yelled, "good job!" instead.

Suddenly, he threw his right fist at Zhang Heng. Zhang Heng's movements were already fast enough, managing to escape the fire with only one step. Before he even approached his enemy, he had already pulled out his tungsten steel sword to slash at the opponent's neck.

However, no matter how fast Zhang Heng was, there was only so much a human body could do. In contrast, his opponent could surpass the limits of the human body with the help of the exoskeleton.

His fist nearly landed on Zhang Heng's chest.

The previous battle ended too quickly that Mr. G, who was looking at the projection, couldn't even get to watch how Zhang Heng fought. The cameras were either facing the ground or the screen was a complete blackout. It was rare to be able to witness the whole process. So, Mr. G quickly paid full attention to the fight. He wanted to evaluate Zhang Heng's true strength through this battle.

He did not say a word when Zhang Heng missed the shot and almost got killed by the bomb. It appeared that he was confident Zhang Heng wouldn't die so easily. However, when he saw Zhang Heng charging towards the man with the exoskeleton, he could not help but twitch uncomfortably.

"It's unwise to charge at an enemy with an exoskeleton."

On the other side, Miss F sat silently without saying a word and watched the projection quietly.

Right before that first landed on Zhang Heng's chest, the sword in his hand suddenly disappeared out of thin air. When it reappeared, it magically bypassed the opponent's arm and struck his opponent's neck.

Miss F was taken aback.

"Good swordsmanship. To be more precise, I should say he is good at using a bladed weapon," she commended.

"Is his swordsmanship really that good?" Mr. G curiously asked.

Ms. F nodded.

“Since he is physically weaker than his enemy, he had to rely on his swordsmanship to pressure his opponent.”

“So he is programmed to use the sword too? What kind of clone is he?”

“No. His swordsmanship is not fabricated.

“To be more accurate, it is not possible to program such a high-leveled swordsmanship,” Miss F explained after a pause.

“What do you mean by that?”

“You should have heard of it. There is still a certain gap between the abilities given by the memory encoder and the abilities that you’ve mastered.”

“Well, I have heard of that research topic. It is said that with current cloning technology, two-thirds of the records are maintained by humans rather than clones.”

“Yes. And the scientists don’t know the reason behind it. Even if the previous owner’s memories are completely copied into the clone’s brain, it is still very difficult for the clone to break the previous owner’s record.”

“Is it because of muscle memory?” Mr. G asked with interest.

“Muscle memory is a factor, and then there is also a gap in acumen.”

“Acumen? Are you talking about the fusion of nature and man? I’ve always thought that such things are fabricated statements in martial arts novels.”

“That’s not the case. It is rumored that once real master masters a certain skill set, they have to rely on mental breakthrough if they want to improve it further. Something like that can never be copied and transferred to the clones.”

“Are you saying that his swordsmanship has reached such a state? But his memory was reset not too long ago. How could he achieve something like that in such a short time?”

“Now, that’s something I still don’t understand,” Miss F said.

While the two were talking, Zhang Heng had already fought with the man a few times. The sudden attack from Zhang Heng almost scared the man to death. However, he later realized that Zhang Heng’s tungsten steel sword could only make a scratch on his exoskeleton.

So he started to act arrogant again, yelling, “Hahaha! You can’t even penetrate my defenses. Just what the hell do you think you are doing?! I suggest you let me hammer you to death. I need your head in exchange for freedom.”

Zhang Heng ignored the man opposite him. Just like before, the actual reason why the man in the middle of the road was so excited was also very simple. Although Zhang Heng could not break his defense, there was nothing he could do to Zhang Heng as well. So, he could only use words to taunt Zhang Heng.

With the help of the exoskeleton, the man surpassed Zhang Heng in almost everything. However, he still found it hard to end the battle fast and clean. That was because Zhang Heng's swordsmanship and the way he moved were more superior than him. In other words, Zhang Heng sort of had the upper hand in this battle.

The man's current situation was not that great. Although he was now wearing the exoskeleton, he still couldn't lay a finger on Zhang Heng if he were unwilling to make contact. However, his superhuman strength, speed, and responsiveness came with a cost. Although the exoskeleton had its power system, the man still had to withstand a lot of force. They only fought for two minutes, and he was already panting. The man clearly did not want to drag the battle.

But what he did not expect was that the opponent on the other side had the same plan.

Zhang Heng looked at the time on his bracelet, and he suddenly took two steps back. After that, he planted the tungsten steel sword in his hand into the ground.