

48 Hours 971

Chapter 971: Testing Blade

“What’s going on? Are you ready to surrender?”

The man standing in the middle of the road sneered.

Although he was taunting Zhang Heng, he remained as vigilant as ever. After the two fought for so long, his fear of Zhang Heng gradually increased. Now, he didn’t dare underestimate Zhang Heng, looking like he was preparing to face a very powerful enemy. From the start of the fight, he made sure his eyes were locked onto his opponent.

Of course, he did not forget to taunt Zhang Heng. He now realized that his words had no effect. It was as if Zhang Heng’s emotions would never fluctuate. However, he still didn’t shut his mouth since talking helped him release part of his anxiety.

After that, Zhang Heng planted Miss F’s tungsten steel sword beside his feet and finally pulled out the Shrouded Sheath from his waist. Due to the overpowering effect of this blade, this was Zhang Heng’s first time using it ever since he obtained it.

Zhang Heng mimicked the skill, Hyakkidou-ri, inspired by Okita Soji. He aimed the tip of his blade at the man’s eyes.

The latter then blinked and muttered, “What the hell?! Don’t you dare think you can cut through my exoskeleton with that blade.”

To answer his doubt, Zhang Heng took the initiative to attack. Upon seeing that, the man standing in the middle of the road wasn’t surprised but rejoiced instead. Earlier, he was thinking about how he could force Zhang Heng to fight him face-to-face. To his surprise, Zhang Heng volunteered for the first strike.

The man in the middle of the road was thrilled, immediately raising his fist to fight again. In Zhang Heng’s hand, the Shrouded Sheath collided with the enemy’s exoskeleton, emitting a loud clank. Soon after that, the clanks became more and more frequent. They sounded like raindrops falling on a metal roof.

The noises made the man more and more nervous, but when he realized that his exoskeleton sustained no damage, he managed to calm down again.

That said, his current situation was unlike what he had expected. Initially, he thought that once he engaged in close-quarters combat with Zhang Heng, he could take advantage of his strength and speed to get the upper hand. However, he would be too naive to think so. Zhang Heng appeared to have concealed some of his strength. The moment he pulled out the Shrouded Sheath, he was about to give it everything he had to fight against the man.

Now his attacks gushed onto his enemy like a raging tsunami. The man who stood in the middle of the road thought that the statement was just a metaphor, but now he felt that he might just be drowned by the tsunami. The last thing that he could rely on was his strength. Hence, he believed that there was no way Zhang Heng could continuously maintain such high-intensity attacks. No matter how good Zhang

Heng's swordsmanship was, he would be the final winner as long as Zhang Heng failed to penetrate his exoskeleton.

That was what the man thought in the midst of the fight. However, he heard a more distinct clank, and this one sounded a little harsh. When he looked for the source of the sound came from, he realized that it had come from his right arm.

Then, he saw something that almost terrified him to death. The exoskeleton of his right arm was covered with dense cracks.

If he had not seen it with his eyes, he would've never believed that an exoskeleton strong enough to withstand a tungsten steel sword could be cut to pieces by a single slash. When he realized that the situation wasn't in his favor, he tried to withdraw his hand, albeit a little too late.

After taking in a deep breath, Zhang Heng smashed his target's exoskeleton with a single stab, the blade driving deep into his flesh, cutting off half of his carpal bone along with it. If the latter had not withdrawn his arm, the blade would've severed off his entire right hand.

After Zhang Heng managed to wound the man, he dashed away from Zhang Heng at an explosive speed with the help of the exoskeleton. Words would fail to describe the amount of pain and shock he had just endured. And that triggered his primal rage.

The people who were brought to the garden by Mr. G today were all murderers. All of them had killed at least a dozen people each. Although the injuries on the man's arm were severe, they did not destroy his will. Instead, the pain motivated him to fight harder. The man fumbled around his waist and found the medical gel, and sprayed it on his wounds. With gritted teeth, he growled, "It appears that I'll have to get serious too. I want to see if you can do the same thing to me again!"

When he was finished, he saw Zhang Heng putting the Shrouded Sheath back into the scabbard. Zhang Heng then pulled out the tungsten steel sword from the ground and said, "It's a pity. You can't see it anymore."

"It's just a small injury." The man licked his lips and smirked, "Don't worry. I will make sure you pay for it with your body..."

The man stopped suddenly because he noticed a pool of blood on his feet. It was blood that was coming from the injuries Zhang Heng had inflicted on him. The man was horrified by what he saw. Although the wound wasn't fatal, it was indeed deep. If it weren't patched in time, he would probably die from excessive blood loss.

Thus, the man pulled out the bottle of medical gel again and sprayed it on the wound on his wrist. Supposedly, medical gels could heal such wounds. However, the strange thing was that he began to bleed even more after applying for the medicine. The wound had even begun rotting, emitting a stench so putrid it overpowered the fragrance of the nearby flowers.

But Zhang Heng, who was opposite of him, had moved away from where he stood. He lifted the bucket of honeycombs and continued to walk on the path. Whoever the Shrouded Sheath hurt would eventually be harvested by the reaper.

Not only would the wound fail to heal, but it would also continue to rot. This effect was thanks to Pestilence's phalanx that was added to the blade when recast. The wound was also quite deep, so even if the man lost only one finger, he wouldn't be leaving the garden alive.

Not long after Zhang Heng walked away from him, he heard the sound of his enemy falling to the ground behind him. And that marked the end of the battle.

On the other side of the garden, Mr. G was in complete bewilderment. When Zhang Heng asked to borrow F's sword because his blade was too sharp, Mr. G thought Zhang Heng was ridiculous. The moment Zhang Heng took out his blade to cut the exoskeleton, however, Mr. G quickly felt that Zhang Heng was actually too humble.

The blade's hardness had surpassed any material he knew. However, Mr. G was more interested in the owner of the blade. He could not figure out who Zhang Heng was, whether from a human or clone perspective.

Chapter 972: Li Mo

It took Zhang Heng some time to get rid of the man with the exoskeleton. Fortunately, he managed to find a familiar battle rhythm.

In all fairness, the goons that Mr. G hired were of very high quality. The enemies Zhang Heng met at the later part of his journey only got stronger and stronger. Mr. G's mistake this time was to test Zhang Heng's capability with his garden. The enemies were all scattered as well. Initially, Mr. G expected that they'd hide in the garden to ambush Zhang Heng. Unfortunately, it became a place for Zhang Heng to showcase all the skills he learned in Rome.

After Zhang Heng killed the squad and acquired dozens of heat inducers, he no longer needed to worry about the heat detectors his enemies had. Mr. G realized that he was switching the camera frequently again. However, all he saw was the dirt on the ground or a black screen. In the end, Mr. G didn't bother looking at it anymore. He turned off the projection after that.

Afterward, Zhang Heng ran into a small wood with the newly found submachine gun and killed the last three enemies in an ambush. At this point, he finally finished walking the whole path and came to the back door of the garden.

He remained on guard because he did not know what was on the opposite side of the door. As soon as he opened the door, he threw a smoke bomb and his last heat inducer at the open space. However, instead of gunshots, he heard someone coughing.

Thus, Zhang Heng remained as vigilant as he could. Holding a submachine gun, he charged in as fast as possible. Behind the garden was a small hotel, so Zhang Heng rushed to the lobby. It was different from ordinary hotels—other than a girl standing no taller than 1.5 meters tall, holding a basin, the place was empty. She had a basin full of dirty bedsheets and was standing in the middle of the lobby. And Zhang Heng did not see anyone other than her.

Clearly, she was the one who coughed earlier. Immediately, she raised both hands when she saw Zhang Heng pointing his submachine gun at her.

"Are you a hotel staff?" Zhang Heng asked without putting away his gun.

The girl nodded. She then pointed at the tag on her chest.

The tag said Li Mo, Receptionist.

“Where are the rest?”

“Mr. G said that there might be fighting in the garden. So, he asked everyone to get off work early.”

“Why are you still here, then?”

“According to hotel’s regulations, someone has to work in this hotel,” Li Mo muttered timidly.

“So, you are the only one left here now?” Zhang Heng asked with raised eyebrows.

“Yes.”

“Turn around.”

“Huh?” Although Li Mo was puzzled, she still obediently turned around.

Zhang Heng looked around, and he did not see the girl carrying any weapons. And unlike the men that he met in the garden earlier, she wasn’t equipped with a camera. She looked just like an ordinary hotel attendant.

“Okay. Let’s turn around and put down the things in your hands first.”

Zhang Heng waited for Li Mo to put down the bedsheets and handed her the bucket of honeycomb that he had with him.

“Do you know where the storage room is? Bring it there.”

“Okay. No problem.”

Li Mo was about to head to the storage, but she was stopped by Zhang Heng again. “I will go with you.”

“Oh. Oh. Good.”

So, with Li Mo leading the way, the two came to the elevator and took it down to the storage room on the first floor. They then put the bucket of honeycomb in it. After he did that, half of the task that was assigned to him was completed. After that, Zhang Heng asked the girl to bring him to the kitchen.

The two went through the dark underground corridor and returned to the elevator from the storage room. After that, Li Mo tiptoed and pressed the fourteenth-floor button. While waiting for the elevator door to close, she stood there awkwardly. She did not know where to look. After a while, she heard Zhang Heng speaking.

“When are you guys going to assault me?”

“What?” Li Mo didn’t seem to understand Zhang Heng, and she looked lost.

So Zhang Heng repeated again. “I asked, when do you plan to do it?”

“Do what?”

“Assassinate me.” Zhang Heng said lightly.

“Huh?!” Li Mo was taken aback. “I said I’m just a hotel attendant. Not the kind of person you think I am.”

“Your figure is indeed very confusing, especially when men see your petite figure. Coupled with the timid character you have worked so hard to create, men can’t help but put down their guard when they see you. However, there is a flaw in the identity you created. It doesn’t make sense for them to hire a girl less than 1.5 meters tall as a receptionist in the lobby.”

“Oh. About that. You misunderstood me. This is Mr. G’s hotel, and it is usually not open to the public. There is indeed a special relationship between me and Mr. G, but it is not what you think. Mr. G helped my family a lot. So, I repay him by working as a hotel attendant here,” Li Mo explained.

Zhang Heng was unmoved, however.

“Really? How can you explain the dirty sheets you were holding when we first met? A receptionist like you were holding the dirty bedsheet? That’s not your job.”

“This is Mr. G’s private hotel. We have few employees, and we don’t usually have such a clear division of labor. We just do whatever needs to be done when we have the time,” Li Mo replied.

“So, you didn’t hide the gun under the storage room table?”

As Zhang Heng said his last sentence, the atmosphere in the elevator suddenly became tense. Li Mo, on the other hand, was taken aback as if she did not know how to answer the question.

“When I was in the storage room, I saw you glancing at this a few times,” Zhang Heng said as he drew a lady pistol from his waist. “Are you looking for this?”

“When did you... get it?” Li Mo asked in surprise.

“Just now. When we left the storage room, I also noticed that you made a call before entering the elevator. Although you didn’t talk to anyone, I really hope no one else will be waiting outside when the elevator opens.”

Li Mo’s calves trembled. This time, she was genuinely terrified. It wasn’t an act. She then saw Zhang Heng quickly pressing the button to the thirteenth floor before the elevator reached the fourteenth floor. After that, he pointed the gun at Li Mo and said, “Get down if you don’t want to die.”

Li Mo bit her lip and walked out of the elevator. She then spoke again, “If you don’t go to the fourteenth floor, you won’t get a croissant, and you can’t pass Mr. G’s assessment.”

“Thank you for your concern. I’m still going to the fourteenth floor, but I want to change the route,” Zhang Heng said as he found the emergency exit.

Chapter 973: Croissants

At the entrance of the garden, Mr. G poured Miss F a glass of wine.

“I know you don’t like red wine, but you have to try this bottle. Produced in the year 2000, there are now less than a thousand bottles left in this world. It is hard to find such a bottle of rare wine on earth.”

Miss F shook her head, and she did not pick up the glass.

Mr. G, on the other hand, couldn't be bothered. He then put down his wine glass and asked, "Are you still worried about him?"

"Aren't the previous battles enough for him to prove his strength? Why are you making him go to your killer hotel?" Miss F was puzzled.

"Because I told you that it's a very complicated circumstance this time. Not only do I need an excellent courier, but I also have to make sure that he has good observation and analysis skills. Yes. His combat skills are awe-inspiring, even better than mine. He is more powerful than anyone I've ever seen. However, being a good fighter is not enough. The killers in the killer hotel may be lacking to those in the garden in terms of strength, but they are better at seizing opportunities and disguising."

"But you only reminded him to be careful of the people in the garden earlier."

"Yes. I wouldn't have been able to examine his observation and analysis ability otherwise." Mr. G then spread his hands, "It's not possible to prepare for every threat every single time. You should know that better than me."

Miss F was rendered speechless.

"This battle won't end so soon even if he knows he's walking into a trap. As long as the killers in the hotel guard the kitchen and drag time as long as possible, he wouldn't be able to pass this test." Mr. G took a sip of the red wine. "I'm rather curious what he plans to do in such a situation."

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The bullet holes left on both sides of the safe passage's wall showed how fierce the battle was. The assassins on the fourteenth floor responded to the sudden change of circumstance very quickly. Seeing the elevator stopping ahead of time, they knew that their plan had been exposed. So, they quickly thought of the safe passage, the only place connecting the two floors apart from the elevator.

After that, Zhang Heng, who wanted to go upstairs, ran into a team of killers rushing down to the lower floor. Immediately, a gunfight broke out between the two sides. In the end, Zhang Heng managed to kill two of them. However, there were too many enemies surrounding him, so he had to retreat to the thirteenth floor.

After that, Zhang Heng prevented the team of killers from trying to charge towards the thirteenth floor. In the midst of it, he killed three more enemies. According to Li Mo, there were a total of thirty killers in this hotel. Discounting the ones Zhang Heng held hostage, Li Mo, and the enemies he killed in the two battles earlier, there were still twenty-four enemies left.

If the remaining enemies were scattered, Zhang Heng could kill them one by one, like how he decimated his enemies in the garden. However, if they worked together to guard the kitchen, Zhang Heng could be in big trouble. After they failed to enter the thirteenth floor, Zhang Heng realized that they stopped making any moves. And they seemed to want to keep it like that. They had no intention to rescue their companion.

"You better give up," Li Mo said. "We have received the order in advance. If our identities are revealed, and we fail to kill you, all the entrances on the fourteenth floor will be sealed off, and the kitchen will be heavily guarded."

Right after she finished speaking, the hotel's power supply cut off suddenly, and the elevator could no longer be used. After that, Zhang Heng heard the sound of something heavy being dragged above his head. Clearly, the people above him were planning to block the emergency exit.

Zhang Heng didn't panic. Instead, he said with raised eyebrows, "When I was in the elevator, I saw that the western restaurant is located on the fourteenth floor. The restaurant has floor-to-ceiling windows. right?"

"Are you planning to climb to the restaurant?" Li Mo frowned, "I advise that you dismiss this idea. Since you can think of something like this, you can bet your enemies would've thought of it too. I think they sent someone to guard the French windows."

"It's not something you need to be worried about, and thank you for your cooperation. According to our agreement, I will let you live. Sweet dreams." After Zhang Heng got the answer he wanted, he knocked Li Mo out with his gun. He then walked towards the window and stretched his hand to push it open.

The next moment, a pair of shadowy wings slowly spread out behind him. Li Mo was right. There were indeed a couple of people standing in front of the French windows. They wanted to stop Zhang Heng from climbing up to the restaurant from below.

However, little did they expect Zhang Heng to use another method to get to the western restaurant. The person standing on the left-hand side saw a dark shadow passing by. However, he could not see what the person looked like. And the next second, a bullet penetrated the glass and landed on his heart.

The person that stood next to him did not manage to escape death as well. One second after his partner was killed, a bullet landed on his head. Both of them fell to the ground at the same time. And Zhang Heng had officially declared war on them.

Immediately, Zhang Heng frantically fired his submachine gun at them. A total of four of them were killed, and two of them were injured. They could not figure out how Zhang Heng suddenly appeared outside of the window without any warning. They thought that he could fly like a bird, flying towards them to fire the bullets. After they lost a couple of men, they realized that they had to search for cover quickly. However, the three didn't move fast enough, and they were killed by Zhang Heng.

The people who found their cover began to fight back. However, Zhang Heng did not stay in place. He was frequently changing his position in the air with the help of the Shadow Wings. It could help him dodge attacks and find the right angle to kill his enemies.

At the same time, Zhang Heng was also secretly counting the time in his heart. Twelve seconds later, he landed on the bar counter and killed the last killer that hid there. At this point, other than Zhang Heng, no one else was alive in the western restaurant.

The killers from other places started to run towards the western restaurant when they heard the gunshots. However, there were only ten of them, and they were nowhere nearly good enough to cause Zhang Heng any damage. One after the other, they were all killed by Zhang Heng's Lv3 marksmanship.

When the gunfire finally died down, Zhang Heng stood up from behind the bar. Shaking off the broken glass on his clothes, he pushed the door open and walked into the kitchen on the other side. Without having to search the place, he saw the plate of croissants on the table. The chef who made it was hiding

at the corner, trembling. He could not believe he was looking at the man that just singlehandedly killed thirty enemies.

Zhang Heng then nodded at the chef and reached out to grab the plate of croissants on the table. However, the seemingly harmless chef suddenly put on a fierce look and put his hand into his uniform. Before he could touch the gun, a gunshot could be heard.

“Did you really think that I would believe there are only thirty killers?” Zhang Heng placed the smoking pistol on the dining table and picked up the plate of croissants.

Chapter 974: Restoration Storage Point

When Zhang Heng returned to the garden gate with the plate of croissants, less than fifteen minutes had passed.

Before Zhang Heng walked towards the table, Mr. G stood up and applauded him.

“It’s so amazing... it’s definitely impressive. I have to apologize to you. To be honest, I didn’t expect you to complete this test. Now, it seems I’ve underestimated you. You are indeed the best courier for this transaction. No, it should be said that no one else can be more perfect than you. With you taking the job, I believe this transaction will proceed smoothly.”

After speaking, he picked the two wine glasses with red wine from the table and handed one to Zhang Heng.

“Please forgive me for the previous offense.”

Zhang Heng took the wine glass and put the plate of croissants on the table.

“I will start preparing now. As long as you help me to complete the transaction, I will immediately help you extract the tracking device under your cerebral cortex.”

Mr. G toasted.

After that, Zhang Heng returned the tungsten steel sword to Miss F before saying, “Thank you.”

Miss F nodded in kind. Although Zhang Heng’s performance also surprised her, she didn’t ask him any questions.

“I will send you back,” she said to Zhang Heng after taking the sword.

Zhang Heng drank the glass of wine in his hand and turned to Mr. G. “Is there anything else you’d like to talk to me about?”

“Not for now. I will let F tell you the details of the transaction before you carry out the job.” Mr. G tiptoed, patted Zhang Heng’s shoulder, and said enthusiastically, “After you bring back what I want, we will take care of your problem.”

“Okay.”

Zhang Heng put down the wine glass and walked out of the garden with Miss F.

The black SUV that sent them here was no longer there. Instead, it was replaced by Miss F's off-road vehicle.

After the two got into the car, Miss F did not immediately send Zhang Heng to the station. Instead, she asked, "Do you have time? I will take you to see something."

"Okay."

Once Zhang Heng agreed, Miss F stepped on the accelerator. The off-road vehicle lurched forward like a raging bull, breaking into a wild rampage on the road. Seeing how F barreled down the road, other cars automatically evaded it without much protest. Twenty minutes later, the vehicle finally slowed down before stopping in front of a KTV named Youhong.

Zhang Heng then saw the familiar blue new energy car in front of the door, and he took a look at the license plate, remembering that this car was parked in front of Fu Ji earlier. The waitress at the small restaurant was taken into this car.

"This is a restoration storage point," Miss F said.

"What?"

"A restoration storage point. You know they reset the memories of glitchy clones, right?"

"Yeah." Zhang Heng nodded.

"The memory reset is performed in the Shengtang Morgan's memory coding room on the fifth floor. In other words, if there are problems with the clones on the first to fourth floors, they will be collected first and sent to the restoration storage point. After six days, all the clones stored there would be sent to the fifth floor for the repair."

"So, all the problematic clones are stored there?"

"Not all of them. This is just a restoration storage point. Under normal circumstances, there are multiple restoration storage points on each floor."

"Are there usually so many glitchy clones?" Zhang Heng raised his eyebrows.

"No. Some people are dissatisfied with the clones they hire, such as their personalities or their background. Of course, if you return them to the factory because of these reasons, you will need to pay for the extra service.

"Don't you want to know how they treat those clones?" Miss F said after pausing.

"Hmm?"

"Human clones are valuable production tools. It is necessary to take protective measures to prevent damage to those clones. As for the unlucky ones forced to stay here for six days, the employees would place them in a small prison underground. It is soundproof. No one will hear you, no matter how loud you cry. Other than that, there is a full set of restraints that can fix the clones' teeth in one position to prevent them from harming themselves. There will be people who feed them on a regular basis. So, it will be impossible for them to go on a hunger strike. Eventually, those clones would be sent to the fifth

floor with other clones. After the memory rewriting process is completed, the clones will forget everything, and they would be remade into efficient production tools once again.

“The whole process is no different from shattering your soul. After that, they would be remolded into a different person. And this process will keep repeating for the rest of their lives. The question is how different we are from human beings. We have the same DNA, the same appearance, the same emotions, and language. Just because we are born differently, and we do not come from the womb, does that mean that we have to accept such a fate?”

“Good question. Have you found the answer?” Zhang Heng asked.

“Not yet. But I will soon. We are about to reach the final destination,” Miss F said. “I hope you can join in and help us.”

“We? Who else? Mr. G?”

“Yes. Although he is human, he is our ally and leader. He has always sympathized with the clones, and he is willing to become our liberator. I know that the test just now was too much to bear, and I’m trying to defend him by justifying his behavior. I hope you can understand him. He just did what had to be done in his position. Over the years, we have done a lot of things under the nose of Shengtang Morgan. Most of them are dangerous things. That’s why our relationship with Shengtang Morgan has only gotten tenser.”

“At first, Shengtang Morgan had a different opinion on acquiescing the autonomy of the first level. Sooner or later, they would have to deal with Mr. G and the first level. Our only way out is the deal that happens the day after tomorrow. He needs to make sure that the transaction gets carried out successfully.”

“He wants to get the memory encoder,” Zhang Heng asked.

Miss F was taken aback.

“It seems you already know the details of the transaction. Did the middleman tell you?”

Zhang Heng did not answer. Instead, he asked, “What about you? You have been searching for yourself all your life and trying to be your true self. In that case, why do you still agree to marry Mr. G even though it is against your will?”

“How do you know that it is against my will?”

“Because I know what it’s like to like a person.” Zhang Heng looked into Miss F’s eyes. “You might be grateful to him because he saved you. I also know that you adore him. To you, he is your friend and mentor. You may think he is very reliable, but this is not love. In fact, you know this very well, don’t you.”

Chapter 975: Help

“How much do you know about love?” Miss F asked, “All your memories are fabricated. The person you love is fake too, and the feelings you have for them aren’t real. How can you really tell how it feels to love someone?”

“This is basic human instinct. It has nothing to do with your memory,” Zhang Heng said.

“This answer is too vague.” Miss F shook her head. “You don’t know Mr. G. I was left with no other options at that time, and he saved me. I told him that if he likes me, he can marry me, but he told me that there was no need to make a quick decision. He also mentioned that he did like me, but he didn’t want me to make this decision out of gratitude for him. And when I told him that I wanted to abandon the identity of Tang completely, he looked for a plastic surgeon to give me an ordinary face so I could live like a regular person. However, he still prefers my original face.

“As the actual ruler of the first floor, he can get all kinds of women he wants. However, he chose to remain single all these years. I know he’s been waiting for me. I’m not sure if this could be considered love according to your definition,” Miss F asked rhetorically.

“We talked about your love for him, not his love for you. Since you haven’t accepted his proposal all these years, why did you suddenly decide to engage him now?”

“Because the war is coming. I don’t want to leave any regrets, whether mine or his.” Miss F pointed to a KTV not far away, “We have a common enemy. They are there right now. What I don’t understand is that you don’t look like a nosy person. Why are you so concerned about my love life?”

“I might need your help on something important in the future. So, I need to figure out where you stand,” Zhang Heng said.

“My stand? You want to know how obedient I am to Mr. G, right?”

Zhang Heng did not deny it.

“Once I give him the memory encoder, Mr. G will immediately perform the surgery on me as agreed and extract the tracking device under my cerebral cortex. I hope you will be there during the operation.”

“You don’t trust Mr. G. Why?”

“That’s not true. I just don’t trust politicians in general, no matter how righteous their slogans are,” Zhang Heng said.

The drawback of the single-player game had finally shown itself in this quest.

The operation of removing the tracking device required a craniotomy, which meant Zhang Heng would need to receive general anesthesia during the procedure. During that time, he would be unable to keep conscious. What was more troublesome was that this was a quest that allowed others to alter one’s memories. To make matters worse, Zhang Heng would be handing the memory encoder to Mr. G before his operation.

If he played this quest with one more player, he could rely on his teammate to protect him while he was unconscious. But Zhang Heng’s problem was that he was alone now. In all the other previous dungeons, he could make up for the single-player mode’s caveats by his overwhelming strength and the extra time that he had every day. But this time, no matter how strong he was, once anesthetized, he would lose his consciousness. And that would make him no different from other ordinary people.

Therefore, Zhang Heng needed to pick someone from this quest to protect himself. However, it was not easy to find someone that he could trust. First of all, the person had to be strong enough to protect him

in the event of unexpected situations. Second, he had to make sure that Mr. G. could not buy over this person, which was the most important thing.

For the second requirement, Zhang Heng had been searching for people he could rely on, and he discovered that very few fit the requirements he set. Mr. G's fiancée, Miss F, was also a clone. And Zhang Heng realized that she sympathized with other clones. Hence, he considered her as someone that would stick to her principles.

The only problem was that the identity of her fiancée, Mr. G. Zhang Heng wanted to know if Mr. G was capable of affecting her decision.

"I can be by your side when you're being operated on," Miss F said. "I can understand your fears. There are many nights when I wake up suddenly and wonder if I've found my true self. Or, is this just another set of memories forced into my mind? So, you can count on me during your operation. I will make sure that no one will mess with your memory. I hope that you will stop commenting on my feelings. I have already made my choice."

"Sorry." Zhang Heng apologized.

Miss F accepted his apology.

"Be prepared. I am not a lobbyist for Mr. G. For the thousands of our compatriots living in New Shanghai 0297, and for the people who were brought into this KTV, this transaction will determine if the clones could truly change their destiny."

"I'll try my best."

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Early the following day, Zhang Heng received an email from Old Man Geng, saying that he would arrange for him to have a meal with the supplier at noon. The latter could help Zhang Heng collect the shellac records after Old Man Geng left. So, Zhang Heng left the apartment after he finished his breakfast.

Only Xu Qian was left in the apartment. She did not know what to do. Yesterday, she went to the first level with Zhang Heng. She thought she would never go back. Although Xu Qian had been saying that Zhang Heng's speculation was nonsense, deep in her heart, she knew that Zhang Heng could be right. It was a terrifying feeling to find out that all traces of her life on the first level had been completely erased.

In her final livestream that evening, Xu Qian did not announce her retirement to her fans as planned. Instead, she bit the bullet and did a regular stream. However, she seemed a little absent-minded. While she was chatting with her fans, she had been thinking about what Zhang Heng said to her. And she made a few jokes about him. One of the fans even said that she looked tennen-boke today.

"You look so cute when you are not focused. That's my girl," someone said. And the atmosphere in the livestream became lively suddenly. After that, everyone started to talk about it.

"She's daydreaming. Let me use my pee to wake her up."

"Eat some peanuts too, don't just drink."

In the past, Xu Qian would probably make a shy expression and ask for more gifts, but this time she just squeezed out a smile.

The more well-known streamers needed to work hard to build and maintain their characters. It could help them increase the number of their fans and viewers. It was something that everyone would do in this line of work. In the past, Xu Qian never thought there was anything wrong with that. However, when she remembered Zhang Heng told her that she might be a clone, she stopped being her usual self. She could not help but think that other clones with different faces must also share the same personality.

The more she thought about it, the more frightened she became. In the end, she ended the livestream one hour earlier. She still felt a little restless until the next morning. Then, she received an email.

Chapter 976: Present

Xu Qian never expected her boyfriend, Qiu Ming, to return to New Shanghai 0297 so much earlier than the planned date.

The email that she received was sent by Qiu Ming. He told her that he would arrive at her place in twenty minutes. With her boyfriend's sudden visit, Xu Qian hurriedly asked the housework robot to clean up the house and pack all the morning's unfinished food. After throwing them away, she rushed to the dressing table as fast as she could. She then started to put on some makeup and tried several sets of clothes. Finally, she chose a very humble-looking dress, one that vaguely outlined her figure.

After changing, her bracelet reminded her that a visitor had requested to enter the apartment. Immediately, Xu Qian authorized it. Speaking of which, this was Qiu Ming's first time stepping into Xu Qian's apartment since he fell in love with her a long time ago. Qiu Ming had always wanted to visit her apartment, but she deliberately controlled the relationship's progress to ensure he wouldn't abandon her after realizing how easy it was to capture her heart. Hence, Qiu Ming was never allowed to step into her apartment. At most, he was only allowed to drop her off in front.

But this time, Qiu Ming had deliberately rushed back from earth ahead of time to meet her. The first thing he did when he stepped off the spaceship was to look for her. So, Xu Qian thought it would be inappropriate to reject him this time.

Besides, a lot of things had happened to her while he was gone. She needed a shoulder to lean on. So Xu Qian was overjoyed when she heard that Qiu Ming was coming to meet her. For the first time ever, her boyfriend would be allowed to set foot into her apartment.

She then turned on the projection and flipped to a movie channel. After that, she messed up her hair a little. Coupled with her light makeup, she looked like she had just woken up. As soon as she sat down on the sofa, the door was opened.

A handsome, middle-aged man who had gotten a little plump walked in.

"You are here." Xu Qian stood up, walked to the man, gently helped him take off his coat, and hung it on the hanger.

Qiu Ming, in return, took out a box of chocolates and handed it to Xu Qian. "I brought you a present."

Xu Qian was a little disappointed when she saw chocolate. However, the disappointment only lasted for split seconds in her eyes. After that, she put on a happy look and said, "How do you know that I like chocolate?"

"Don't all girls like chocolate? All the chocolates from this shop are handmade. Open it and give it a go," Qiu Ming offered.

So Xu Qian opened up the outer packaging and opened the chocolate box.

And lo and behold, a diamond-studded lady's watch lay inside.

Overwhelmed with excitement, Xu Qian covered her mouth with one hand. "Oh god! Is this Patek Philippe's retro model? It costs at least one million credits!"

"No matter how expensive the watch is, it can never be compared to you." Qiu Ming picked up the watch from the chocolate box as he spoke and put it on Xu Qian's wrist.

"This is too expensive."

Xu Qian was flattered.

"For my future wife, I don't think so." Qiu Ming put the watch on Xu Qian's wrist and kissed her. He then went to the sofa, sat down, and loosened his tie.

"What would you like to drink," Xu Qian asked.

"Oh, water is fine," Qiu Ming said. He then looked around Xu Qian's apartment again before asking, "Do you live here?"

Xu Qian did not ask the housework robot to help. Instead, she poured the water for Qiu Ming personally and fetched him the water cup. "Are you looking down on the place where the poor people live?"

"That's not what I mean. I wanted to say it's very warm and fuzzy here." Qiu Ming took the water and drank it all in one go. "It's just the place is kinda small. There is no swimming pool, no home cinema, no nanny room."

"I don't live on the fourth level!" Xu Qian pretended to be angry and shoved Qiu Ming a little.

To which, the latter smiled. "So when do you plan to say yes to my proposal and move to the fourth level to live with me? I've asked my servants to get your room ready. My villa needs a hostess."

"Why are you so desperate for me to move in with you? What do you really need? A hostess or a maid to help you warm your bed?"

"To be honest, I need both." Qiu Ming said, reached out, and held Xu Qian's waist.

"Behave yourself..."

Xu Qian slapped her boyfriend's hand.

"I am behaving myself. You are the one who isn't. I thought we have come to an agreement?" Qiu Ming sat upright. "You told me that you would announce that you were getting married soon during the

livestream last night and quit this job afterward. However, when I watched your livestream last night, you didn't say a word about it. And a few nasty guys were calling my future wife their wife."

"I..." Xu Qian paused, "I need some time. Well, after all, I have been in this line for so long. It's hard for me to quit just like that."

"Why not? I told you that after you retire, I will take good care of you," Qiu Ming said as he grabbed a handful of melon seeds and fed them to the hamster on the table. "Is this your pet? I never heard you saying anything about it?"

"Damn it. Can't you give me a little more time? You are not the only one who has a career..." Xu Qian couldn't tell him that Zhang Heng's remarks had actually made her hesitate her choices. That was why she did not announce that she was going to retire during the livestream last night.

"Of course, you can have a career. But didn't you mention that there are still a lot of things to prepare before the wedding? For example, who you want to invite, the venue, the wedding dress... You said you might not have time to do livestreams anymore."

"Did I... say that?" Xu Qian squeezed out a smile.

"Yeah, I remember it clearly. Just two days ago. Did you forget?"

"No. I'll pour you another glass of water," Xu Qian replied as she picked up the glass and headed to the kitchen. Sticking it under the water dispenser, she pressed the hot water button and folded her arms.

Xu Qian now wished she never followed Zhang Heng to the first level yesterday. If that were the case, she would've gladly accepted the new watch Qiu Ming bought her, lying happily in his arms instead of getting paranoid.

"Did something happen?"

Qiu Ming's voice suddenly came from behind, and it gave Xu Qian a huge shock. She had to hold onto the stove behind her to prevent herself from falling to the ground.

"Are you okay? Am I hallucinating, or... you seem a little weird today."

Qiu Ming frowned.

"I'm fine. I just didn't expect you to come into the kitchen."

"Oh, it's because I just remembered something. In the afternoon, there is an opera performance in the Blue Theatre. I've reserved two seats, so we can go and watch it together. Are you okay with it?"

"I'm fine." Xu Qian handed the cup of hot water to Qiu Ming and said, "We can go and watch the opera performance together."

"Very good. And what do you plan to eat at noon? Why not go to the last French restaurant that we went to have our lunch? The foie gras is not bad," Qiu Ming said. "Additionally, I've also prepared another gift for you."

Chapter 977: Negotiation

Old Man Heng and Zhang Heng met in a hot pot restaurant on the first level. Outside the restaurant was a huge Chaoshan Beef Ball signboard. However, the entrance was not that big. After entering the restaurant, Zhang Heng saw the stairs in front of him. To get to the hot pot restaurant, he had to go to the second floor.

As soon as Zhang Heng got out of the car, he saw a few men sneaking around the restaurant, posing as passers-by or small-time entrepreneurs. Without exception, they paid full attention to the movement outside the hotpot restaurant. Prior to what happened last time, these men had been sent by Mr. G to protect Old Man Geng.

Since the last time they separated, Zhang Heng and Old Man Geng had not seen each other for a while now. The latter was the middleman in this transaction, helping to build a bridge between buyer and seller. He knew every single detail about the deal. It was no wonder so many people targeted him. After being attacked by mobsters, Old Man Geng returned to pack everything he needed and moved to the first level. It was for the sake of his safety.

Zhang Heng ignored the people around him and walked up the stairs.

Old Man Geng and his supplier friends arrived early, and they had ordered a couple of dishes.

When Zhang Heng showed up, Old Man Geng immediately got up and waved at him. He then passed the menu to Zhang Heng.

“Check out the menu and see what you want to eat. You’re welcome. The bill is on me, included in the reward for protecting me earlier.”

Unlike the previous meetings, Old Man Geng was obviously more enthusiastic this time. It was because he had already witnessed Zhang Heng’s combat skill. No matter what, it was always a good thing to be more polite towards a formidably powerful individual, let alone Zhang Heng saving Old Man Geng once.

“It’s fine. I’m fine with whatever you guys order,” Zhang Heng said. He pulled out the chair and sat down.

After that, Old Man Geng ordered another plate of beef and shrimp paste and returned the menu to the waiter.

While waiting for the dishes to be served, Zhang Heng raised his head and looked at the man next to Old Man Geng. Slightly younger than Geng, he looked like he was in his early forties. With a well-maintained figure, his muscular arms appeared to be a result of his job that required a lot of physical strength. The marks on his wrists also indicated that he often wore gloves. His small eyes gleamed with a vigilance, showing he did not trust Zhang Heng very much and that what he was doing now might not be legal.

“Let me introduce you to my friend over here,” Old Man Geng said, “This is my supplier and old friend. He’s provided me with more than half of the merchandise in the House of Old Things.

After I sell the item, we divide the profit fifty-fifty between us. Of course, you can directly buy whatever you want from him. He is...”

Old man Geng was interrupted by the man next to him before he finished speaking. He stretched out his hand and said, “Just call me a Gold Digger. This is how everyone calls me.”

Zhang Heng stretched out his hand and shook Gold Digger's hand before introducing himself.

"I'm Zhang Heng."

"Listen, Zhang Heng. You've been introduced to me by Old Man Geng, which is why I am willing to come here to meet you. But I also have my rules. It is better I make some things clear in advance. When you want to make a deal with me, don't ask any questions. Whether it's about where I got the items or if those things are related to me, you'd better not ask those questions. You pay the money, and I deliver the goods. That's all fair and reasonable. If I find out you tell anyone about our transaction, I will terminate the deal immediately," Gold Digger said.

Zhang Heng nodded.

"Sounds reasonable."

"Very good."

Gold Digger was very satisfied with Zhang Heng's cooperation. And he lowered down his guard a little.

"That's great," Zhang Heng said calmly.

Old Man Geng, on the side, did not manage to interrupt them. His forehead was sweating profusely. Now, although he had repeatedly reminded Gold Digger to be polite to Zhang Heng before they got to the restaurant, the latter obviously had little intention to heed his advice. In fact, he was using his old tricks to deal with Zhang Heng. Judging from his expression, he felt that he was in control of the situation, and he was quite happy with it.

Old Man Geng had learned his lesson. He knew that Zhang Heng would never be someone easily controlled. The only reason why he behaved so politely was probably that Gold Digger had said nothing to arouse his interest.

Before Old Man Geng could even remind his old friend about it, their dishes were served.

Gold Digger started to consider himself host and asked Zhang Heng to enjoy the meal. Zhang Heng, on the other hand, continued behaving politely. The three of them quickly finished two plates of beef. Gold Digger was eating happily, and he started to unbutton his shirt. He then shouted at the waiter to lower the air-conditioning before finally, entering the topic that he wanted to discuss today. "Old Man Geng told me that you are collecting... Shellac records."

"Yes." Zhang Heng put the sweet potato chips into the pot. "Can you find them for me?"

"That's is no easy task," Gold Digger said. "I'm pretty sure Old Man Geng told you that shellac records are very rare, especially in a place like this. Although I can find them for you, you might need to pay a hefty price. However, since you are Old Man Geng's friend, I won't overcharge you. Just... four thousand credits for one."

"One hundred." Zhang Heng did not look at Gold Digger.

"What?!" Gold Digger thought there was something wrong with his ears.

"One hundred credits for one," Zhang Heng insisted lightly.

Old Man Geng smiled bitterly on the other side. He remembered that when the two met for the first time, he initially wanted to sell the shellac records to Zhang Heng with the price of three thousand credits. Zhang Heng, however, counter-offered with one hundred credits for one record. Now, it seems that the latter was not against him. He behaved the same to everyone.

“Repeat it?” Gold Digger stared at Zhang Heng furiously.

“One hundred credits for one shellac record. And I want lots of them. So you’d better find me more.”

“Boy, are you messing with me? Didn’t you hear me say that the shellac record is a rare thing? I have to pay a great price to get them too!” Gold Digger slapped the chopsticks on the table as he roared.

“I heard what you said, but I don’t believe a word that comes out your mouth,” Zhang Heng said. He put down his chopsticks, “You are a worker at the fifth-level garbage disposal plant. I know that you have been secretly picking up some old things that might seem valuable from the garbage pile. After that, you will pass those things to Old Man Geng and ask him to help you to sell them.”

“Did you tell him about me!?” Gold Digger turned his head and looked at Old Man Geng angrily.

Seeing how angry Gold Digger had become, Old Man Geng shook his head quickly, “It’s not me. We have been friends for so many years. When did I ever betray you?”

“Then how did he know about me?” Gold Digger was still suspicious of Old Man Geng after listening to his explanation.

“Stop making wild guesses. Your attire exposes who you are. And to be honest, there are only so many ways for a person to acquire items like that. And those usually come from the fourth and fifth levels. Judging from the way you look, you look like someone that lives on the second level. It is impossible for you to contact upper-level buyers. Other than that, it is implausible the people from the fourth and fifth levels would sell those items for money. So the answer is self-evident,” Zhang Heng said.

“Although you changed to your casual clothes before you came, your all-year-round glove-wearing has left traces on your wrists. Even on a hot day, you have to wear waterproof boots. And you also suffer from a certain hip problem. From the beginning until now, I have seen you stretch your waist at least three times. Your strong arms show that you are not a white-collar office worker. Now, here comes the problem. You often wear gloves and boots. You need to bend over all the time, and you always manage to get your hands on the old stuff. I can’t think of any other places for this kind of work besides the garbage disposal plant. Other than that, the moment I sat down, you warned me not to ask any questions. That means you are not allowed to bring anything out of the garbage disposal plant; the rules and regulations of your workplace.”

Chapter 978: Negotiation And Reward

Gold Digger’s eyes widened, and his mouth dropped open, oblivious as to what sort of expression he should be putting on. At that moment, he looked like a mime.

Old Man Geng sighed when he saw his friend’s expression. “I told you from the beginning that your strategy is useless against him. It’s better to come clean as soon as you meet.”

“Didn’t you say that he is just a bodyguard? What was his previous job? A detective?”

Gold Digger looked incredulous.

“Something like that,” replied Zhang Heng. He then diverted to the earlier topic. “So one hundred credits. Can we set this price in stone?”

Gold Digger immediately deflated when he heard what Zhang Heng said. “That... That... is too low of a price. Though most of my things are from the dumpsite, do you know how much garbage is waiting to be recycled? What’s more, I have to take great risks to smuggle those things out. To be honest, I can only smuggle a few things out at most every week. If I bring those shellac records with me, I can’t smuggle other things out. And they will scan me when I leave my workplace. I have to put those things in my self-made backpack that can block the scanning signal.”

“So, if I report you to the garbage disposal site, you will never be able to make that extra money anymore,” Zhang Heng said.

Gold Digger’s face darkened the moment he heard Zhang Heng’s threats. However, he figured that this wasn’t the time for him to take a step back. Zhang Heng would’ve continued taking advantage of him, otherwise. So, he gritted his teeth and said, “As long as I stop doing it, you won’t have any evidence that can be used against me.”

“Who told you that? I recorded what you said.” Zhang Heng then raised the bracelet and clicked play. Immediately, Gold Digger heard their conversation when they met for the first time just now.

“What is going on?! How can you do this kind of thing to me?!” Gold Digger was so angry that he rendered completely speechless.

In the end, Old Man Geng had to stand up to calm them down, “Everyone! Calm Down! Let’s communicate properly.”

“How do you expect me to do that?” Gold Digger said angrily, “So, this is the big customer that you wanted to introduce me to? He started recording our conversation as soon as he sat down. Clearly, he is here to mess with me!”

“I’m just trying to protect myself by preventing you from overcharging,” Zhang Heng said calmly, “especially considering that your friend did the same to me.”

Old Man Geng looked a little embarrassed, “Uh, four thousand credits for one shellac record is indeed too expensive. On the other hand, one hundred credits for one shellac record is outrageous as well... For my sake, please renegotiate.”

“I think one hundred credits for one shellac record is good enough.”

Before Zhang Heng finished speaking, he saw Gold Digger stood up from the dinner table in anger. It seemed like he wanted to leave the restaurant right now. Then, suddenly, he heard Zhang Heng adding, “I can pay you a handsome amount of bonus.”

“Bonus? What kind of bonus?” Old Man Geng then pulled Gold Digger back.

“Every time you find me twenty shellac records, I will pay you twice the price,” Zhang Heng offered. “For example, for the first twenty records, I will pay one hundred credits for each. From the twenty-first to the fortieth, I will pay you two hundred credits each. From forty-first to sixtieth, four hundred credits

each... and so on. When you reach one hundred and twenty shellac records, you will receive 3,600 credits for each one you sell me. This price is very close to what you initially offered.”

“But where can I find you so many shellac records?” Having said that, Gold Digger stopped and added, “And, how do I know this is not one of your tricks? After you pay for all the cheap shellac records, you might stop buying them from me after I sold sixty to eighty shellac records to you.”

“I can assure you that no matter how many shellac records you have, I will buy all of them. My purpose in coming to New Shanghai 0297 is to buy as many shellac records as possible. In order to avoid an infinite price increase, I will set a limit to the shellac records’ price. Starting from the hundred and sixtieth record, I will buy it at a price of ten thousand credits,” Zhang Heng said.

Earlier, Zhang Heng had come up with this price tag in his mind. He could always threaten Gold Digger. However, the price tag of one hundred credits for each shellac record would indeed discourage Gold Digger’s enthusiasm to look for more shellac. Hence, a reward had to be offered to motivate Gold Digger to work harder to find those shellac records.

“I will stay in New Shanghai 0297 for about eight months,” Zhang Heng continued afterward, “As long as you manage to find those shellac records during this period, you can sell them to me.”

“Eight months,” Gold Digger frowned. He was calculating how much money he could make in those eight months. After that, he looked at Zhang Heng with skepticism. “If I manage to find one-hundred shellac records during this time, how much can you pay me?”

“I can vouch for him,” Old Man Geng chimed in. “I’ve seen Zhang Heng’s combat skills, and he can make a lot of money if he is willing to work hard. Moreover, Mr. G and Miss F admire him very much. He can always work for Mr. G.”

Gold Digger hesitated for a moment before finally sitting down again.

“Can Mr. G be his guarantor?” he asked.

“That’s impossible,” Zhang Heng shook his head and said. “You don’t want our transaction to be known to others. And I will do the same. It’s better if we keep this matter among the three of us.” Zhang Heng then took a look at Old Man Geng again.

The latter raised his hand.

“Don’t worry. You don’t have to worry about me. I am not leaving New Shanghai 0297 anytime soon.”

He then said to Gold Digger, “Zhang Heng’s proposal might not be pleasing to the ear, but he is the kind that lets you know in advance if there are any problems. The way the two of you worked is quite similar. As long as he makes the promise, he will do this best to fulfill it. That is something that I can guarantee you.”

“He promised to be my bodyguard a few days ago. Unfortunately, we encountered a group of violent bikers. They outnumbered us, and they all had all sorts of weapons in their hands. Still, he didn’t leave my side. He fulfilled his responsibilities as a bodyguard as agreed. So, you don’t need to worry about the money. He will definitely pay you well.

“All right.”

Gold Digger seemed persuaded. He picked up the pair of chopsticks that he slapped on earlier, gritted his teeth, and said, "Then, I shall trust you again."

"Thank you."

After finalizing the reward, Zhang Heng returned to his amiable demeanor. Gold Digger, however, no longer dared underestimate him anymore. When the two parties negotiated, Zhang Heng's imposing manner caused Gold Digger to tremble slightly. Even if Old Man Geng had not pulled him back then, he probably would not be able to leave this place.

Chapter 979: Fresh Task

While Zhang Heng was discussing the shellac records with a gold digger, Xu Qian, on the other side, followed her boyfriend, Qiu Ming, to a French restaurant on the fourth level. This was also Xu Qian's favorite restaurant. Not only were its dishes scrumptious, but it had an elegant ambiance as well. The velvet carpet was matched with the gorgeous Baroque ceiling, the white tablecloths, and silver tableware. Since only a dozen tables were laid in the spacious hall, it meant diners' privacy was fully guaranteed. They could also enjoy the service of a team of handsome French waiters.

Although the cost of dining here was astronomical, it was still not easy to get a table. One had to book the table a few days in advance to dine here. Qiu Ming's hadn't just spontaneously decided to dine in this French restaurant. When they finished the main course and the last dessert was served, the restaurant's violinists approached their table. After that, Xu Qian seemed to realize something, and she quickly covered her mouth. Qiu Ming suddenly knelt on one knee and took out a small red jewelry box from his pocket.

While playing the violin, Qiu Ming opened the small jewelry box, revealing the diamond ring. He then asked gently, "Miss Xu Qian, will you marry me?"

Xu Qian's heart was struck by something hard at that moment. Almost every girl would've looked forward to such a moment. Qiu Ming was like a knight riding a white horse, wading through the mountains, charging into the battlefield to get to her, and confessing his love for her.

Especially for Xu Qian, she was extremely eager to marry Qiu Ming and move to the fourth level. Everything that happened in front of her was exactly what she dreamt of. And she had a dream like this more than once. In the dream, apart from the blurry characters, the location of the proposal, the violin's melody, and elegant and luxurious tableware were exactly the same in her dream.

Therefore, when her dream became a reality, Xu Qian almost subconsciously took over the ring from Qiu Ming's hand, under the influence of euphoria. There was also a happy smile on the latter's face. When he was smiling halfway, Qiu Ming saw Xu Qian's expression suddenly changed, from happiness to fear. After that, she dropped the jewelry box from her hand like a hot potato. After that, she took a step back.

"What's the matter?" Qiu Ming got up and wanted to hold Xu Qian, but she shoved his arm away. She then ran to the restaurant door without looking back while holding her skirt. She was so nervous that she almost knocked over another table. The red wine on the table was knocked to the ground by her. The wine poured out of the bottle contaminated the carpet beside her feet.

Qiu Ming wanted to go after her immediately, but the French waiter in the restaurant stopped him. He then said politely, "Sir, you haven't pay for the meal yet."

After Qiu Ming paid the bill, he could no longer find Xu Qian.

...

Half an hour later, Zhang Heng found her in an amusement arcade on the third level according to the coordinates sent to him by Xu Qian.

Upon arriving at the location, he saw several youngsters surrounding Xu Qian. It seemed they were asking for her phone number. Zhang Heng then walked towards her and draped his coat over her shoulders.

"It's time to go home," he said.

The youngsters looked at Zhang Heng and caught a glimpse of the Shrouded Sheath on his waist. They disappeared in anguish not too long after. However, Xu Qian did not get up. Instead, she grabbed Zhang Heng's hand and said in horror, "I can't go home. He is coming to get me! He is coming to get me!"

"Calm down first," Zhang Heng said, without rushing to withdraw his hand.

"Who is coming to get you?"

"My boyfriend, Qiu Ming," Xu Qian gasped while looking around nervously as if worried Qiu Ming would appear beside her at any second.

Zhang Heng raised his eyebrows, "Your boyfriend is back. What happened? Did he do anything to you?"

"He suddenly came back from the earth, and he came to me as soon as the spacecraft landed. He bought me a watch."

Xu Qian thought of something, and she quickly took off the watch from her hand. She almost threw it on the floor, only to hesitate at the end.

"What happened after that?"

"Then I got in his car, and we went to a French restaurant on the fourth level to eat together. He proposed there, and the scene was exactly the same as my dream."

"Shouldn't you be happy then?" Zhang Heng asked.

"No. You don't understand what I mean. I mean, the scene there was as though my dream had been projected into reality," Xu Qian held her head. "Everything was perfect, including the violinists. The red wine in the glass, the color of the carpet, and the crystal lamps above my head were exactly the same as my dream! At first, I was very moved. Then, after that, I was terrified. I couldn't control my body. So, I ran out from the restaurant."

"So, you suspect that he knows your memory in advance, and he knows about your most desired marriage proposal. He did that to make it almost impossible for you to refuse him, did he?" Zhang Heng asked.

"I can't think of other explanations," Xu Qian said. "It's more than that. After we were separated yesterday, I couldn't help but think about what you said to me. I told myself over and over again that I couldn't be a clone. But I just can't stop thinking about this possibility... I sat here and recalled our relationship, and I discovered that this is not the first time something like this happened. He seemed to have some kind of magic with him. He always knows what I'm thinking in advance, including what I like to eat or what kind of gifts I like. I originally thought it was a tacit understanding between a couple... he proved that he is the person I've always been looking for. But now. I don't know. I'm just scared."

Xu Qian cried while talking.

Zhang Heng asked for a pack of tissues from the amusement arcade and handed it to Xu Qian. Then, after the latter's mood calmed down a little, he asked, "Then what are you going to do now?"

"Can I hire you to help me to check whether I am a clone or not? I need an answer. Otherwise, I can't live like before," Xu Qian finally made up her mind.

Zhang Heng did not immediately agree.

"How much are you going to pay me?"

"Five hundred thousand credits... I'm used to spending money and I haven't saved much. This is all my savings," Xu Qian said. "Oh yes. And there is this watch."

Xu Qian then put the Patek Philippe that he just received today in Zhang Heng's hands. "This watch is worth one million credits, but it was given to me by Qiu Ming. So I don't know if there's any problem with it."

"I will find a friend to test it."

Zhang Heng took the watch and put it in his pocket, and nodded at Xu Qian.

"I accept your request."

Chapter 980: Express Delivery

Although Xu Qian was tortured by her identity, Zhang Heng believed she wasn't in any danger for now. Compared to clones with tracking devices in their heads and the serial numbers on their necks that might be retrieved by the company anytime, Xu Qian would at least not end up like the short skirt girl from Fu Ji.

Xu Qian was, after all, a famous streamer. Although her popularity had been declining recently, she still had hundreds of thousands of supporting fans. Her sudden disappearance would undoubtedly impact the fan base considerably. Otherwise, they wouldn't have had to go all out to make her disappear by manipulating her to get into an engagement with another man.

Therefore, Zhang Heng advised Xu Qian to live life as she always did. He also asked her to find a logical excuse to explain why she suddenly ran away from the restaurant. For the time being, it would be wise that Xu Qian didn't take Qiu Ming's proposal or stop her livestreaming.

Although Zhang Heng agreed to help Xu Qian, there were still more important things for him to deal with for now.

The two-week deadline was almost up. If Zhang Heng didn't extract the tracking device in his head as soon as possible, he would have to face troops sent by G7Z, or he would be forced to fight the entire New Shanghai 0297's armed forces by himself.

...

Zhang Heng met Mr. G again on the day the trade was supposed to take place. After that, Mr. G took Zhang Heng to visit the operating theatre where he would operate on Zhang Heng later. A complete set of air purification systems had been installed created to create a sterile environment. Operating tables, a large Da Vinci 2070 surgical robot equipment, a disinfection room, an anesthesia preparation room, and other supporting medical equipment were available as well.

There were only two doctors who could perform this kind of surgery in New Shanghai 0297. Mr. G had contacted one of them to send the latter's information to Zhang Heng.

"This is my principle of being human. Once I have made a promise, I definitely stick to that promise. And you were performing an extremely important task for me. Of course, I will have to eliminate your worries too. I will send two teams of bodyguards to guard the gate for you. Look around. Do you have any other questions?" Mr. G said enthusiastically.

"Where is Miss F?" Zhang Heng asked after flipping through the information that was sent to him.

"Oh, I told you, right? She has other things to do today."

Zhang Heng looked around and nodded, "I have no other problems. I only one request, though, and that is for my surgery to be performed only after she comes back."

"No problem. As long as you are willing to wait for her."

A strange look flashed in Mr. G's eyes.

"You don't seem to trust me very much. Is it because of the previous test?" he went on after a pause.

"No." Zhang Heng shook his head. "I'm not the kind that trusts easily."

"Is that so? It seems I still need to explain the misunderstanding," Mr. G said. "Everyone in Shengtang Morgan group has been keeping an eye on us. The biker gang that attacked you was sent by them. Shengtang Morgan promised that they could work in their security department as long as they managed to kidnap the middleman. Other than that, he also promised them permanent resident status on the third level. That was why they are crazy enough to attack you and the middleman at my turf. However, they are nobodies compared to the men you're about to face next."

"Hmm?"

"Have you ever heard of the emergency response team? They are private armed forces trained by Shengtang Morgan group. They do not have the power to enforce the law but don't underestimate them, especially the team starting with number zero. They are elites among the elites," said Mr. G.

"Imagine a group of clones with almost perfect physical fitness. Each has been carefully selected, ones who have mastered various combat strategies, reconnaissance, camouflage, sniping, and close-quarter combat... They are capable of doing everything. I should say that they are the perfect hunters. They can

either work in a team or work alone to perform the given task. Not long ago, I received news that Shengtang Morgan would be sending a zero emergency response team to disrupt this transaction. In other words, they will become your enemies.”

As he spoke, Mr. G studied Zhang Heng’s expression. Seeing that the latter’s demeanor remained unchanged, he complimented him. “I’m glad you are not afraid of them. And we are not without preparation. Although Shengtang Morgan knows that we will trade today, they do not know the specific time and place. So I will send out ten couriers in one go. The other nine couriers are just distractions. You will be the one to close the deal for me. Whether it fails or succeeds, I can only count on you.”

“What should I do?” Zhang Heng asked.

“It’s very simple. We have already talked about the details of this transaction. All you need to do is pay the seller, and he will give you what I want.” Mr. G snapped his fingers as he spoke.

A bodyguard beside him walked to his back and pulled out a metal cylinder that looked like a thermos flask from a large box. Mr. G then picked up the cylinder and placed it in Zhang Heng’s hand.

“Be careful. It contains 1g of antimatter. This is the most valuable thing in the entire human civilization. Even with just such a tiny amount, you can easily buy New Shanghai 0297’s first to third levels. To be honest, this transaction is not fair for me. The value of this thing is almost twice as high as the thing I want to get,” Mr. G mumbled, and there was a painful look on his face.

“But the thing that I want is more useful for me. Although antimatter is priceless, it is of no use to me.” Mr. G waited for Zhang Heng to grab the cylinder with both hands before letting it go. He then whispered to Zhang Heng as softly and quickly as possible, “The location for the transaction is at the Singularity Bar on the second floor, at 6:45 pm. Pay attention to the signs around you. The one with the Apollo tattoo on the lower abdomen is your trading partner.”

Zhang Heng frowned upon hearing what he said, “Lower abdomen. Is that a celestial bar?”

“Unfortunately, no. You have to understand that the actual owner of New Shanghai 0297 is Shengtang Morgan Group. Government agencies rely on them to get paid. In other words, they are Shengtang Morgan’s puppets. So we have to be careful. You have to figure out how to find your trading partner.”

Mr. G patted Zhang Heng on the shoulder again after speaking, “I know this shouldn’t be a problem for you, right?”

Zhang Heng did not say a word. Instead, he put the metal cylinder into his backpack.

“Good luck, my friend. I will be here waiting for your good news,” Mr. G said.