

BIOLOGICAL 88

Chapter 88: Thiefs, friends, and mysteries (1)

"Listen." A man spoke with a sense of urgency.

"We have received directives from our superior," the man said, his brows furrowing.

"We're to conduct a search in the eastern district. The target is a house occupied by a young boy. We are currently unaware of what we are searching for, so we must take everything suspicious and out of the ordinary."

There was a hint of skepticism in his face, reflecting the uncertainty of their task. "The client has not specified the item of interest," he said, "leading me to believe that even they are uncertain of its nature."

"Do we have any details about the homeowner?" Greg asked.

"Weirdly right question for you, Greg," Howell said.

"The property belongs to a 16-year-old, an E-rank individual possessing a sharpening ability. Current intelligence suggests the boy is involved in a school tournament and is unlikely to return home before 15:00." The man turned to look at the other person in the room, Zachary.

"Your task is to enter his apartment as soon as he departs and search for any leads concerning the item sought by our client. We are to retrieve his computer and transport it back to our base."

"For this task, I have selected you two." He gestured towards the pair, both renowned thieves within the Crystal Cross Gang.

Their expertise and reliability were crucial, given the significance of the client.

Greg had a slender figure with flowing brown hair tied back, bore features indicative of Hinian heritage.

His stature and build were not imposing, yet his agility was unparalleled, an attribute essential for covert operations such as thievery.

Though his appearance was mostly anonymous, a prominent mole on his nose lent him a distinctive aspect.

Orphaned at a tender age, Greg had fended for himself since the age of six. He took up various menial jobs until his adolescence, when he found refuge in the Crystal Cross Gang at thirteen.

His affiliation spared him from conscription but branded him as a fugitive. In the gang, his aptitude for thievery quickly propelled him up the ranks, proving his usefulness for their clandestine endeavors, especially considering his power allowed him to erase the surrounding sound.

It wasn't a powerful fighting ability, but for thieves, it was like having a cheat ability that prevented them from ever being detected under the right circumstances.

Zachary was taller than Greg, but a bit more muscular. He was darkly tanned, like most people who lived in New Alexandria, where the sun shone all day. Unlike Greg, Zachary had a full beard and mustache.

He wore his long black hair in a topknot style, popular amongst his colleagues. Like many of them, Zachary possessed keen eyesight and was an excellent thief, but his brain crystal power gave him a better edge during fights.

The briefing progressed, with Boss Howell providing detailed information. This level of specificity was perhaps superfluous given the professional caliber of Zachary and Greg, yet it was a testament to how important the heist was.

The two seasoned professionals valued precision and sought to mitigate any potential issues that might arise during their mission. Leaving nothing to chance was a hallmark of their approach.

Boss Howell elaborated on the specifics of the target location. "The boy's apartment is on the third floor of the building. Each level contains only one apartment, excluding the chance of an error in identifying the correct unit. I will wait for your return here," he said, ensuring clarity in his instructions.

After having concluded the briefing, Zachary and Greg proceeded to the gang's headquarters, discreetly nestled within a nondescript building in the residential quarter of the East District.

The headquarters were an expansive, windowless chamber, accessible only through a single door connected to an elevator.

The spacious interior was large enough to accommodate a bar, and indeed, it bore a resemblance to one.

The room was furnished with an assortment of stools, tables, chairs, and barrels brimming with beer.

Dominating the space above the counter was a sizeable signboard with the inscription "Coffee House," a misnomer, given that the establishment dealt in everything but coffee.

Alcohol, drugs, and weapons were just some of the things that the place sold.

An imposing board displaying the nicknames of gang members alongside their respective scores was on the far right of the room.

This scoring system was integral to the gang's internal dynamics, with members accruing points upon successful completion of assignments. These points contributed to their cumulative score and, by extension, their rank within the organization's hierarchy.

At present, the man with the highest points was known by the initials N.H. His identity remained a guarded secret, known only to the upper echelons of the gang's leadership, Boss Howell.

His feat of infiltrating General Becker's office and stealing confidential documents was well known among the members due to the stringent security measures in place and the Becker's incredible strength.

Greg and Zachary navigated their way through the headquarters, reaching a modestly sized elevator at the end of a lengthy corridor.

When they reached the ground floor, the elevator started going up, showing that they were underground. After leaving the building, they looked around.

The two, as most people from the Crystal Cross Gang, looked at the citizens with contempt.

They didn't care about people with lower status, less money, and, most importantly, less power. A weak brain crystal power spelled doom for everyone in this city.

They too had been on the other side of this mentality, especially considering they ended up on the streets at a certain point in their life.

It wasn't like they lacked mana, but having not battle oriented powers was a reason for scorn by everyone.

No one knew the headquarters to the most feared organization in Frant was here, in this building.

The headquarters presented itself as a mundane ten-story edifice, constructed of concrete and brick, with its walls painted white.

The building was part of a street lined with similar structures, creating a monotonous architectural landscape.

While each building followed a consistent design template, the apartments varied slightly in dimensions and layout, though all were new constructions.

"What are your thoughts regarding this mission?" Greg asked. Somehow, the thought of having to rob a kid, a pitiful one at that, didn't set well with him. Greg wasn't by any means a Robin Hood.

He did very despicable stuff in the past, but had a sort of code of conduct. In their organization, there were organ traffickers, but he steered away from those people, and not to help them if the chance came.

Zachary replied with a tone of nonchalance, "The task appears straightforward. The target is a young, relatively powerless individual. Should we encounter any complications, we should be able to handle the situation, even to the point of neutralizing the boy if necessary."

"I don't know. If the assignment is as straightforward as it seems, why would they assign it to us? Something is fishy here..."

"Regardless of any underlying factors, our priority is to execute our given task. Extraneous details are not our concern."

"And you are ok with robbing and killing a kid? I didn't think you had this great work ethic."

"I will do anything I need to get food on my table. Now shut up. You know more than anyone that this city has pity for no one."

Navigating through the streets of New Alexandria, Greg and Zachary merged into the crowds to maintain a low profile and deflect any undue attention.

Their strategy proved effective, as the passersby seemed oblivious to their presence, their gazes fixed ahead, unobservant of the duo's movements.

During their journey, the pair engaged in subdued conversations, remarking on some of the weirdest members of their organization, albeit avoiding the disclosure of any sensitive information.

A topic that frequently surfaced was the identity of N.H., the organization's most elusive member.

Greg theorized that N.H. might be an undercover agent assigned to keep the gang on observation, while Zachary speculated he could be a retired military officer with a mysterious past.

His skills were too great for him to be a random person. They warranted an extraordinary past.

Despite their conjectures, one aspect was acknowledged: N.H.'s proficiency in procuring classified documents with remarkable ease.

Upon concluding their long stroll through the city, Greg and Zachary reached their destination: Erik's house.

They were left confused. They knew this wasn't a place where wealthy people lived, but it was weird for them that such a poor person was a target for their organization.

"Have you brought your lock-picking tools?" Zachary asked.

"Of course... you shouldn't even ask..."

They approached the building's main entryway, which was accessible to all, and ascended to the third floor with stealth.

Once at Erik's apartment, Greg bypassed the lock. Moments later, they found themselves inside the apartment, their entry undetected.

The interior of the apartment only deepened their bewilderment. They already had doubts about the target since the place was in a pretty low-income part of the city, but what they saw made them think that some kind of error must have happened.

It wasn't possible that someone living there had something their organization wanted.

Upon entering, the duo noticed the small size of the apartment. It did not have a separate bedroom, meaning the owner slept on the couch.

The furnishings were sparse, comprising an antiquated computer, and a table positioned in front of it, with no other significant items in sight.

The general disorder of the space was clear; weights were scattered on the floor, and the table was cluttered with unwashed dishes, showing infrequent cleaning.

"Are we sure this is the right place?" Greg asked, his tone laced with doubt.

"Yes..."

"I still don't get why were we assigned to this task. It's impossible this kid has something valuable..."

"I don't know, and I don't care... Let's search for anything useful here and if we find nothing, let's just pick the computer up, as the higher-ups said."

"Understood."

As they began their search, the initial apprehension experienced by Greg and Zachary subsided. The modest setting and clear disarray led them to conclude that the apartment's occupant was unlikely to be an individual of any notable importance.

They speculated what this kid could have found that the higher-ups deemed so important as to send two of their most proficient thieves to his apartment.