

DC: The Making of a God

#Chapter 5: The Dancing Pallbearers - Read DC: The Making of a God Chapter 5: The Dancing Pallbearers

Chapter 5: The Dancing Pallbearers

There are two types of dictators:

One uses strong-arm tactics to force submission, never allowing anyone a chance to speak.

The other is absolutely self-centered: you can express your opinion, but things will be done my way.

Luke was, without a doubt, the latter.

After two months of working together, the employees had come to understand the boss's personality. To be honest, they didn't like having this kind of boss, but countless instances had proven that the boss was always right. Over time, people had grown accustomed to following orders.

Only Zacks Borg raised a question.

"What kind of video platform are you planning to create? Traditional, like unique creation and linking? Or a new model, based on copyrights and pay-per-click?"

Luke glanced at him, speaking with arrogance.

"Don't incorporate those sunset industries into ShowMe's blueprint. They are unworthy."

"Charlie, bring in the computers."

"Yes, boss."

Several laptops were placed in front of the department heads. The software was already open. Below the videos and pictures were many never-before-seen options: Share, Repost, Follow, Comment, Like, Pin, and so on.

These functions would be familiar to netizens in the later world, but for the young people in the DC world, these were revolutionary.

After only a few interactions, everyone's expressions changed. The social capability of this platform was incredible.

A fat gamer obsessed with the online world gave a thumbs-up.

"Boss, you're truly a **genius!**"

"I've heard that statement 999 times. You are the one thousandth."

Luke smiled faintly. "Alright, everyone, focus your attention. Stop looking at the computers. The meeting isn't over."

"Zacks, you're the head of the Technology Department. Share your thoughts."

Zacks was speechless. He had countless ideas in his mind, but when he opened his mouth, only two words came out.

"It's... great!"

The staff in the Technology Department sneered, their disdain clearly visible.

Zacks' face flushed, feeling angry and embarrassed.

Luke continued, "Beyond being 'great,' is there nothing else?"

All eyes turned to Zacks. Having been busy with hacking, Zacks Borg suddenly felt an immense pressure he had never experienced before. After a long silence, he tentatively replied,

"I... I think attracting users can't rely solely on the software itself. We need other... **other things.**"

Luke didn't let him off the hook. He wanted to see how much potential this young man, who shared a face with the founder of Facebook, truly possessed.

"What do you mean by 'other things'? Give me some specific suggestions."

"It's... it's just things that can generate widespread attention, like news, hot topics, and so on."

Luke snapped his fingers. "Well said. Excellent!"

"ShowMe is social software. Its essence is the interaction and communication among users. Only by guaranteeing enough engaging topics, giving users goals to pursue and discuss, can the company sustain long-term development."

"Zacks' suggestion is very forward-thinking and hits the core of the issue."

Hearing this, Zacks Borg inexplicably felt relieved. Wiping his forehead, he found a layer of fine sweat.

"So, the question is, how do we maintain the buzz and hot topics?"

Rowan rose and said, "We can start a **Crime Section**

dedicated to discussing the gangs and evil organizations hidden in big cities. Gotham City is an excellent target."

"A good suggestion. After the meeting, have a few employees draft the copy for it and submit it to me before 4 PM."

"Yes, boss."

After Rowan sat down, others offered their ideas: some proposed party competition, others the presidential election, and still others suggested traditional topics like environmental pollution and gun violence...

Luke sat in his chair, listening attentively. Only after everyone had spoken did he begin.

"After hearing your answers, I feel it's necessary to reiterate one point: **90% of ShowMe's users are young people**. Your suggestions are good, but you overlook the most important issue—they don't hit the youth's 'G-spot.'"

"What do young people like? Current events? Party competition? Don't be ridiculous. They don't care about any of that. The things that make them pursue and enthusiastically discuss are nothing more than a few categories: **cool, trendy, fun, and heroes**."

"The first four can be grouped into one category. They only need a catalyst to spark a craze, like this..."

Luke clicked on a video file and projected it onto the large screen.

A group of Black men, dressed in neat attire, were carrying a coffin and performing a lively dance on the street. The movements were strange but rhythmic, coupled with vibrant music, giving a peculiar sense of humor.

Pfft!

The chubby guy in the Technology Department couldn't hold it in and was the first to burst out laughing.

Everyone else's cheeks twitched, their eyes filled with mirth. Only Mr. Arthur remained expressionless. Among everyone present, his skin was the only one that was Black.

Luke pressed the pause button and spoke with a stern expression.

"Do you find this funny?"

Everyone was silent. The boss's mood was written on his face; no one dared provoke him right now.

"Good. I'll ask another question: Can this video ignite the passion of young people?"

"Rowan, you answer."

"It should be no problem."

"Cindy?"

"Definitely."

The young woman replied, full of confidence.

"Zacks, what do you say?"

The latter glanced at Arthur and nodded hesitantly.

"You all think it's fine, and I agree. Entertainment, joy, satire mixed with a little bit of superiority—superficial happiness is easily accepted by the general public. **But this is not what I am pursuing.**"

"I'm telling you, the video you just saw is not an entertainment show; it's a real event. The coffin dance is a specific funerary custom in Ghana, where they believe death is the start of a new life. They should not be sorrowful, but use an atmosphere of overflowing joy to send the deceased on their new journey."

"Using entertainment to please the masses means you will eventually be abandoned by the masses. This is a law of history."

"The ShowMe I envision is not something so shallow. It should become a **window, a window connecting diverse cultures**. Through this window, you can understand different countries, different cultures, and different people. It is your pair of eyes, taking you across the planet to see magical sights you've never even imagined."

"Connecting the world, shortening the distance—this is the future of ShowMe. Entertainment is merely a tool to speed up the process."

The last word fell, and the air abruptly fell silent. Everyone was stunned by his monologue. Admiration, astonishment, lamentation, and silence filled the room, only to be converted into applause a few seconds later.

Philip Arthur sighed deeply.

"Luke, you're a goddamn **genius**."

"Mr. Arthur, you are the one thousand and first person to say that."

Luke wore a smile, poised and calm, further highlighting his extraordinary demeanor. Once the applause died down, he spoke unhurriedly,

"Now that we're done with entertainment, let's talk about **heroes**. Many of you have heard rumors of vigilantes and metahumans. I have a few video clips here. Take a look."

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Chapter 6: Naming the Heroes

Gasps of surprise echoed through the conference room.

On the big screen, a powerful young man with a chest full of dark hair was seen hoisting a burning oil derrick and forcefully throwing it into the sea.

Boom!

The oil derrick exploded, and crimson flames spread across the screen. Just when everyone thought the young man had perished in the fire, he charged out completely unscathed. The hair on his chest danced in the wind, not a single strand missing.

The scene shifted.

It was the same hairy-chested young man, now dragging an ocean liner larger than a building through the snow and ice. The ship sliced through the ice layer, leaving a hundred-meter-wide fissure behind it.

Cindy covered her mouth, gasping. Everyone else was shocked and couldn't believe their eyes.

That was an ocean liner! Weighing tens of thousands of tons, and yet someone was dragging it away. Did it have no pride?

Zacks murmured,

"This... this..."

"Finish watching first."

Luke clicked on another video file. The screen darkened. The night sky was heavily overcast, and Gothic buildings lined up densely. A gloomy palette covered the entire city. This was **Gotham**, the city with the highest crime rate in America, and Metropolis's old neighbor—a city everyone in the room was familiar with.

Under a swaying streetlamp, a ghostly, bat-like figure descended from the sky. After a breathtaking fight, the gang members who were trading drugs were all lying on the ground, groaning in pain.

The scene changed again, seemingly to an underground drug manufacturing factory. A swarm of bats burst through a window and scattered, flying away. The lights went out one by one. In the dark factory, terrified wails were heard intermittently, as if something dreadful was attacking them.

The terror lasted for a long time, until the police arrived and visibility was restored.

The gang members responsible for supervising the workers were detained together. The leader clutched his chest, where a bloody bat-shaped brand had appeared.

The video ended there. Luke turned off the big screen, glanced around the conference room, and said,

"Everyone, what are your thoughts?"

Everyone looked at each other, silent. Many of them had heard rumors of metahuman events, but hearing and seeing were two different things. Especially that hairy-chested youth, who could drag an ocean liner—was that something a normal human could do?

"The video..."

"The videos are real, not film production, and certainly not post-production editing."

Luke crossed his arms and said flatly,

"I want to hear your opinions, your thoughts on these two individuals."

"I think it's cool. Punishing the drug trade, helping others. They are **heroes**."

Luke nodded. "Anything else?"

A female employee from the Marketing Department stood up. "I'm curious where their power comes from. Are they... **gods**?"

"Natasha, I'm telling you very seriously, there are no gods in this world."

"What about God? Isn't God a god?"

"Let's put religious issues aside for now. We are mainly discussing these two people, and these two videos. If we post them on ShowMe, what do you think?"

As the question was asked, the conference room fell silent again. No one was stupid; they clearly understood the potential impact of circulating these two videos.

Robert Downs cleared his throat.

"They will become the focal point of public opinion, and ShowMe will explode nationwide. Of course, the trouble won't be minor. Metahuman events have always existed, and the government suppresses them because they don't want to draw too much attention. If we are the first to do this..."

Philip Arthur chimed in,

"The FBI, CIA, the Federal government, and state governments will all contact the company, demanding that we take the videos down. If we refuse, they are very likely to take compulsory measures."

Luke laughed. "What kind of compulsory measures? Locking me up in prison?"

"That's the worst-case scenario. The usual method is a **cyber attack**

."

"Hackers?"

"Yes."

Luke smiled strangely. The overweight technicians exchanged glances, all showing doting, 'auntie' smiles. Those fools at the FBI, trying to hack ShowMe? They didn't know their own strength.

"Looks like there's no trouble, then."

Luke shrugged. "Mr. Arthur, please draft an article. The subjects are the two people in the videos. I want to start a **Hero Column**, and they will be the vanguards."

The moment the videos appeared, Philip knew Luke would do this. He asked with a smile, "So, what should we call them? Hairy-Chested Muscle Man? Tights-and-Cape Weirdo?"

Everyone was amused by the comment, and Luke was speechless. He thought: *If we write that, it won't be long before Clark Kent drags a semi-truck into ShowMe's headquarters. Don't doubt it, he absolutely would.*

"The first one is not afraid of water or fire, and his body is harder than steel. Let's call him **Superman**. The second one, wearing a high-eared cowl, mysterious and secretive, will be called **Batman**."

Superman? Batman?

The attendees pondered the names. They were quite fitting.

"Rowan, you and Mr. Arthur prepare the articles. The rest of you, come with me to R&D. We must launch the new version of the software before noon tomorrow."

A Funding Snag

After the meeting, Charlie pulled Luke aside where no one could hear.

"Boss, I have some bad news for you."

"What is it?"

"The **Sequoia Group** sent an email. They agree to lease the data server, but they demand a **three hundred thousand dollar deposit** upfront."

Three hundred thousand?

Luke frowned. "Didn't they say fifty thousand before?"

"It was fifty thousand. Those heartless devils somehow got word that our capital chain is failing, and they won't sign the contract as planned. They insist on raising the deposit. We only have five hundred..."

"Give it to them!"

Charlie was stunned. "Boss, what did you say?"

"Three hundred thousand dollars. Pay them, and send a warning: if anything similar happens again, we terminate the cooperation."

"But..."

"There are no 'buts.' Only you and I know the company's accounts. I won't say anything, so will you?"

The casual remark made Charlie stiffen up. He quickly gave his assurance.

"I won't say a word, even if you kill me."

Luke patted his shoulder. "Relax, I'm not doubting you; I'm just stating a fact. You didn't say anything, and I didn't say anything. So how did the people at Sequoia Group know? Do they have mind-reading abilities?"

Charlie gradually understood.

"They're trying to bluff us?"

"Exactly."

Luke clasped his hands behind his back, looking quietly at a building in the distance. "The Sequoia Group has repeatedly proposed acquisition plans, which I've rejected. They won't easily let go of the plump meat that's about to slip away. If they can't acquire us, they have to try something else."

"But if we give them three hundred thousand, the company will have no money left. Even daily expenses will become a problem, and next week's advertising..."

"Don't worry about the advertising for now. We'll deal with that when the time comes."

"...Alright."

Charlie sighed quietly and left, worried.

Most companies face funding shortages in the initial startup phase, and ShowMe was no exception. The best way to solve the capital chain issue is financing. Once financed, cash flow ceases to be a problem, but doing so also reduces the founder's power and subjects the company to shareholder constraints. One wrong step, and the founders could be completely swallowed by investors.

There are countless such cases. Relying on capitalists to have a conscience is like hoping for a crocodile to shed a genuine tear.

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Chapter 7: The Age of Heroes Begins

The Videos Go Viral

In the women's dormitory at Stanford University, Linda Danvers suddenly heard a shriek.

"Linda! Come out, quick!"

Linda dried her hair, covering her beautiful body with a towel, and looked at her frantic roommate with a helpless expression.

"Melissa, don't tell me you have a new boyfriend again. I'm not interested in them."

"It's not a boyfriend."

Melissa pulled up a webpage with large text at the top:

What is a Hero?

Beneath the eye-catching title were two marked short videos. Linda watched only half of the first one, and her expression changed.

"Where did this video come from?"

"Who knows? Everyone's sharing it! Isn't it cool? That guy actually dragged an ocean liner with his bare hands! It's amazing! I really want to be his girlfriend."

Linda automatically ignored the last sentence, watching the video repeatedly. She wasn't interested in the one with the Batman cowl, but the other made her thoughtful.

Kal-EI!

Is that you?

Melissa leaned in and breathed warmly into her friend's ear. "You're interested, sweetheart."

"I'm not interested. I just want to know where the video originated."

Melissa pouted. "Just pretending!"

"The video is on **ShowMe**. Check it yourself."

"ShowMe? What's that?"

"Don't tell me you don't even know ShowMe!" Melissa made an exaggerated face. "My poor Linda, you really should get a boyfriend and feel the beauty of love. If you're looking for love, start with ShowMe."

Melissa was true to her word. She opened the registration page and filled in her personal information. ShowMe was different from other social apps; it required using a **real name**. Linda was uncomfortable with this—she didn't want her name on a social network—but Melissa didn't care at all. She entered her name, email, and phone number, and the verification passed quickly.

"Go for it, sweetheart. Be proactive. You absolutely have to stop being single. You're twenty already!"

"Alright, alright!"

Linda impatiently waved her hand. After searching for the video, she used the link below to find the source. It was a user named **Ghost Traveler**. The space contained no other content, just the two short videos.

The videos were uploaded in the afternoon, and the view count had already surpassed three million.

Linda ignored the statistics. She added the Ghost Traveler to her contacts and sent him a message:

"Who are you? Why do you have a video of Superman? What is his name?"

Reactions Across the DC World

The videos exploded, skyrocketing in popularity. In just two hours, they climbed into the top fifty of the search rankings.

Reporters from major news agencies rushed to call their editors, reporting this monumental news that was worthy of a history book. NBC even broke into its programming for a live report.

Metahumans had always been hidden among ordinary people; this was the first time they had appeared before the world.

In a derelict warehouse in Central City, **Barry Allen** stared in shock at the black-clad hunter on the screen.

Batman? Superman?

What about me?

What should I be called?

...

At the Boston History Museum, **Mindy Meyer** hurriedly threw open the storage room door.

"Diana, you have to see this."

As the two videos played, **Diana Prince** set down her carving tool, a look of solemnity on her beautiful face.

"A demigod?"

...

At the Colorado State Police Department, **John Jones** watched the news broadcast quietly after finishing an interrogation. After a moment, he let out a sigh.

"How many secrets are hidden on this planet?"

...

In Metropolis, at the headquarters of the immensely wealthy **LexCorp**, the omnipotent **Lex Luthor** experienced what true power was for the first time as he watched the massive ocean liner sliding across the ice. He loved power, but he did not like power being in the hands of others.

"Wade, search for any information related to Superman. I want his complete file."

"As you command, Mr. Luthor."

...

On the outskirts of Gotham City, at Wayne Manor.

Alfred pushed open the bedroom door and addressed the handsome young man adjusting his appearance in the mirror.

"I have two pieces of news for you, one good and one bad. Which do you want to hear?"

Bruce calmly replied, "Alfred, the banquet is about to begin."

"You are always so urgent. Sometimes I really wish you'd stop and rest for a few days, and perhaps solve your marital status problem."

Alfred opened a laptop.

"Congratulations, Master Wayne. You've become famous nationwide. They even gave you a very fitting nickname—**Batman**. What do you think of the name?"

After several hours of fermentation, the video views had surpassed twenty million, with thousands of comments below—a chaotic mix of everything.

After watching the video, **Bruce Wayne** lowered his head in contemplation, looking confused.

"Is there a problem?"

"I saw this video in the surveillance center of the Ingel underground factory. **I deleted it.**"

"Perhaps there was a backup."

"No, I checked carefully. There were no backup files," Bruce shook his head and then asked, "Where did the video come from?"

"A social media app called **ShowMe**. It's very hot right now."

"ShowMe?"

Alfred sighed. "Master, I support your idea of eradicating crime, but sometimes, you need to pay attention to the family business. Blair (the CEO of Wayne Enterprises) once offered ShowMe a \$50 million acquisition plan, but it was rejected. They said they would talk again in three months."

"It seems we can't wait three months."

"I concur."

Alfred turned to leave. "I'll call them now!"

"No, wait a few days. I want to see the subsequent development of the situation."

"What about Superman?"

Bruce paused, then shook his head. "Ignore him for now."

The FBI Strikes Back

The first person to eat the crab often faces one of two outcomes: either they become an instant hit and take the biggest piece of the pie, or they crash and burn, becoming a stepping stone for latecomers.

With Batman and Superman leading the charge, ShowMe's popularity surged, leaving other social media apps far behind in just half a day. Naturally, trouble also followed.

The FBI, CIA, state governments, and the White House office all called, but Charlie deflected them all with the excuse that the boss was gravely ill. After several unsuccessful attempts, the officials lost patience and took direct action.

On the 13th floor of the ShowMe Headquarters Building, a thrilling hacker war was beginning. On one side were the ShowMe Technology Department's **overweight programmers**; on the other, a cyber investigation team led by the FBI and comprising several government employees.

The two sides fought fiercely using the host servers as their battlefield.

Luke commanded from his high seat. Although he hadn't slept all night, he was still excited. He wasn't the only one; everyone else was, too. Especially those who had a beef with the FBI, like **Zacks, Dar, and Mike**. They were pumped up, not only defending but also mounting attacks.

The two sides exchanged blows, and the battle intensified.

Charlie hurried in from outside.

"Boss, they're here again."

"Let the lawyers handle it."

"It's different this time." Charlie's voice betrayed his tension. "They have a **White House-signed investigation order**. The leader, **Roger Consius**, specifically demanded to see you. There's a real chance they could make arrests."

"Why are you panicking? It's just the FBI. They won't eat us alive."

Luke waved his hand. "Come on, let's go meet them."

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Chapter 8: FBI

If you found any employee at the FBI headquarters and asked them which department has the hardest time, they would certainly answer: **Cybersecurity**.

Yes!

The Cybersecurity Office is the whipping boy for all executives. Whenever there's any sign of trouble, they are the ones who get yelled at.

As the supervisor of the Cybersecurity Department, **Roger Consius**, who was past forty, was having a tough time. Long nights of staying up had exhausted him, and combined with smoking, heavy drinking, and caffeine, the old saying applied: time is a knife, life is a torrent, and his hair was gone.

He was miserable, and the employees under him suffered too. The intrusion event from a few days ago was still unresolved, and now there was this short video debacle. They thought it was a small pest, but when they stepped on it, a striped tiger with menacing eyes leaped out.

Roger grew impatient. "Has there been any word yet?"

A subordinate quickly replied, "I just called. They said they ran into some trouble and need time to handle it."

"How long?"

"They... didn't say."

"A bunch of idiots!"

Roger kicked the wall, his face utterly grim.

"Emily."

Emily Song, the field agent responsible for mysterious affairs, stepped forward. "Captain!"

Roger raised his index finger, his expression cold as he instructed,

"If **Luke Shaw** dares to say *no* to a single thing later, shut him up. I don't want to waste another half-minute."

"Understood."

Emily nodded and retreated into the corner under the strange glances of the others. The FBI had a special unit, the **Division of Anomalous Investigations**, which handled supernatural and paranormal events. It was rumored that the agents in this department were often metahumans with special abilities, and Emily was one of them.

A Tense Meeting

The moment he entered the reception area, Luke sensed something was off. The agents' gazes were unfriendly, all seeming to glow red, like a bunch of house husbands, who were too scared to speak up at home, but could only vent their frustration outside.

To protect his mental and physical health, he decided to adopt a different approach. After a short, violent cough, Luke walked up to Roger Consius while clutching his chest.

"I didn't rest well last night and somehow caught the flu. I sincerely apologize for keeping you waiting for so long."

Before he finished speaking, he quickly covered his mouth and broke into a heart-wrenching cough, his face turning crimson, as if he was trying to cough up his internal organs. Roger Consius's eyelids twitched. He subtly moved back, afraid of being splattered.

The flu was no small matter. In the US, as many as ten thousand people died from the flu every year, even with effective medicines available.

"Are you Luke Shaw, the founder of ShowMe?"

Luke nodded. Supported by Charlie, he sat down on the sofa and said weakly, "You are..."

"Roger Consius. Here is my ID."

Charlie took the badge, glanced at it, and nodded.

"Mr. Consius, I see."

Luke quickly extended his right hand, very enthusiastically. "Pleased to meet you. I must say, it's my first time seeing the FBI. Could... could we shake hands?"

Roger's mouth twitched. He said flatly,

"We don't have much time. Let's get straight to business!"

"Al... alright!"

Luke awkwardly retracted his right hand, looking embarrassed and lost, like an innocent citizen being bullied by an official. The atmosphere grew instantly awkward.

Roger knew his action was inappropriate. He cleared his throat, took out a document, and placed it on the table.

"This is an authorization document from the White House. I require your company to assist us in dealing with the two videos posted on ShowMe at 1 PM this afternoon."

"Which two short videos are you referring to?"

"Superman and Batman?"

"Oh, those. I watched them, too. Very cool guys. I like them. They are heroes."

"You think they are heroes?"

"Aren't they?"

Roger did not answer the question but switched topics. "Do you know how much impact these two videos are causing? They are inciting social unrest and public panic. The seemingly benevolent actions of those two are, in fact, challenging the majesty of the law. If the Constitution ceases to guarantee safety, who will be responsible for the public's security?"

Luke laughed. "Are you saying they did something wrong?"

"No, they didn't. What they did was admirable and correct, but these things should only be discussed privately. They cannot become a focus of the news, much less objects of public obsession. It is the **Constitution** that protects the public, not superheroes."

"Mr. Consius, you should run for president. If you participate in next year's election, I'll definitely vote for you."

Luke expressed his genuine admiration, then shifted his tone. "So, what exactly do you want me to do?"

Roger leaned forward, asking the most crucial question.

"Who is **Ghost Traveler**?"

"The company's social media account."

"Did you post those two short videos?"

"Yes."

Roger inhaled sharply, feeling he had grasped the key point. He quickly asked,

"Where did you get the videos from?"

Luke signaled to Charlie, who opened his laptop and pulled up the company email. There was an email without a sender name.

"Someone sent me an email three days ago in the afternoon, asking me to post the attached short videos on ShowMe. I watched them a few times, thought they were great, and did as instructed."

An FBI employee took the laptop. After checking the email information, he whispered into Roger's ear,

"The account was registered four days ago. The IP address has been manipulated. It will be difficult to trace."

Roger nodded calmly, but the hand resting on his knee was clenched into a fist. Without an address, he couldn't find the person who sent the email. The trail ended here.

A strong feeling of frustration welled up in Roger. He felt like he was walking through a carefully constructed trap, with every step proving difficult.

"Mr. Consius, is there anything else? If not, I'd like to go back and rest."

Roger remained silent, seemingly lost in thought. Just then, Emily walked up and whispered something. Roger's face turned incredibly dark. He suppressed his anger and hissed,

"Luke Shaw, don't try to deceive the Federal Bureau of Investigation by feigning illness. The cost is something you cannot bear."

Luke sighed deeply, looking very wronged.

"What choice do I have? You people keep calling—the CIA, the state government, the White House—and me? A law-abiding, good citizen. What recourse do I have besides pretending to be sick?"

"Still trying to argue?"

Luke shook his head, too lazy to engage with the man. His gaze turned to Emily, with her purple hair and purple eyes. When he saw her exotic face, his eyes immediately lit up.

"Such beautiful eyes, such a beautiful person. Beautiful lady, what's your name?"

"Emily Song!"

"Oh!" Luke said with sudden realization. "It's you."

Emily frowned.

"You know me?"

"The last person I saw in my previous life was you, but you were far less beautiful then than you are now." Luke stood up, extended his right hand, and put his left hand behind his back. "My beautiful purple-eyed angel, would you be interested in having dinner with me?"

Emily didn't know whether to laugh or cry. In this situation, the guy was trying to flirt with her.

Roger let out a heavy snort.

"Luke Shaw, we are not finished yet!"

"Ah, my memory! I forgot the important person. Mr. Consius, if you have any other requests, please make them."

"I want you to remove the videos!"

"No problem."

The news of metahumans appearing had already spread through various channels, and ShowMe had gained the desired attention. The two short videos were now inconsequential.

Roger stood up and said chillingly, "I am talking about not just the Ghost Traveler account, but **all ShowMe users**."

As he finished speaking, the smile on Luke's face instantly froze.

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Chapter 9: Family

"Mr. Consius, let me ask you a question. Do we have a feud?"

Without waiting for an answer, Luke chuckled.

"I think we must, or you wouldn't say something like that. Do you know what it means for an internet company to illegally tamper with user data?"

"Charlie, tell him."

Charlie spoke up.

"ShowMe has signed a confidentiality agreement with every user. If we breach that contract, we would face tens of thousands of lawsuits, be abandoned by millions of users, and the company would cease to exist. As the founder, the boss would be left with tens of millions of dollars in debt."

"Did you hear that? That's the price I'd have to pay, all because of a single sentence from you."

Luke stood up, walked directly in front of him, and said expressionlessly,

"This conversation ends here. If you have any further requests, contact my lawyer."

"Will!"

Richard Will, who had been waiting outside, walked in.

"It's all yours now."

"Don't worry, boss, I know what to do."

Luke patted his arm, turned, and left. Two agents moved to stop him, but a grim-faced Roger shook his head, allowing the two to depart.

With the main person gone, there was no need to continue the negotiation.

A Powerful Lineage

Roger led his team out and walked directly toward a black SUV outside the ShowMe Headquarters Building.

Emily followed behind, puzzled.

"Why didn't you let me act? You know my abilities."

Roger lit a cigarette and took a deep drag.

"We can't arrest him, and we shouldn't."

"Why?"

Roger opened a text message from an intelligence officer and tossed the phone over.

The message contained Luke Shaw's personal file. In the section for family members, there was a special name: **Xiao Guoxing, the former Head of the Hongmen.**

The Hongmen is a Chinese ethnic society of a special nature, only recruiting Chinese and some Asian members. Its headquarters is in Coast City. Due to historical reasons, they rarely speak out in mainstream media, but they always achieve their goals when they act.

The Hongmen could be said to be the most mysterious organization in the United States. No one knows how many members they have, and no one knows the extent of their influence.

"No wonder he was so arrogant. He's the grandson of the Hongmen's Head," Emily thought to herself.

Roger threw the cigarette butt onto the ground and stepped on it several times.

"I have a task for you: **Get close to Luke Shaw, under a private pretense.**"

Emily frowned. "I don't understand what you mean."

"There's something wrong with that kid—a big problem. I suspect the Hongmen is behind him. ShowMe is a social media application with millions of users. What kind of impact would it have if those Asian people got their hands on that kind of resource?"

"That's just speculation."

"Speculation often becomes reality."

Roger decided to stop talking nonsense. "Emily, this is an **order.**"

"I am with the Division of Anomalous Investigations. I don't report to you."

"As a supervisor, I have the right to request cooperation from agents in other departments. If you disagree, I'll call your superior and let him talk to you."

Emily took a deep breath, suppressing the urge to incinerate him right there. She hissed,

"Tell me what you want me to do."

"Get close to Luke Shaw. Use your abilities to figure out the connections behind ShowMe. If you get the chance, infiltrate the **Hongmen's upper echelon.**"

Emily gave him a cold look and turned to walk away. As she passed a fire hydrant, it suddenly burst, and a powerful stream of water shot out like a cannon, hitting passing vehicles.

A gray Mercedes couldn't brake in time and crashed directly into a cafe. The SUV behind it was also affected, rear-ending a Bentley, which was then rear-ended by a Ferrari.

They were all crashing into each other, creating a chaotic scene.

"Damn metahumans!"

Roger cursed angrily.

A Proposal for Funding

With the FBI's departure, the sense of oppression finally vanished. Luke might not care about the Federal Bureau of Investigation, but that didn't mean his employees didn't. After all, it was the highest intelligence agency in America, with the authority to enforce the Constitution. Being targeted by them was not a good thing.

Charlie still felt uneasy and couldn't help but suggest, "Maybe... call the old man?"

Luke said coldly, "If you're scared, go back to Coast City now."

"I... I didn't mean that."

Luke patted his shoulder and sighed.

"Since we chose to start a business, we must have the courage to take risks. If you can't even handle this much trouble, how can you accomplish great things in the future? Charlie, you are senior management here. Don't let the people below look down on you."

Charlie's face flushed with embarrassment.

Luke said nothing more and turned toward the Technology Department.

There were too many strange events in the DC world. If an explosive news story didn't come out every once in a while, that would be abnormal. The frequent disasters led to a sharp decline in government credibility, and coupled with the extremely high crime rate, how could the public have a positive opinion of the government?

Any capable person would be reluctant to work for the public sector.

When he arrived at the Technology Department, the cyber war was nearing its end. The programmers, led by Zacks, were pushing the FBI into a complete rout with their elusive computer skills.

After watching for a while and seeing no issues, Luke left and returned to his office to handle documents.

The company had too many tasks and too few personnel, requiring Luke to oversee every aspect. Once he started working, time became blurry. Before he knew it, night had fallen.

Looking at the moon rising outside the window, Luke suddenly envied **Bruce Wayne**. The young master had vast wealth; money would pour in without him having to do anything. Unlike him, who was exhausted all day like a dead dog, without even time to date.

Just as he was thinking, a knock sounded on the door.

"Come in!"

Robert Downs pushed the door open, holding a folder.

"Boss, I want to talk to you."

Luke pointed to the chair across the table, inviting him to sit.

"What about?"

Robert straightened his newly bought suit and calmly uttered two words:

"Fundraising."

Luke looked up at him, his tone flat. "The company's finances are ample. We will not consider fundraising in the short term. If you have suggestions regarding this, save them for later."

"Are they really ample?"

"Of course they are."

Robert pulled at the corner of his mouth, his expression a little strange. As a financial genius, he had a keen eye, always able to find what he wanted in complex and dense data logs. For instance, ShowMe's financial statements contained many illogical entries. Grouped together, these points subtly indicated one fact: **the company was out of money.**

Robert was smart enough not to reveal this, but it didn't stop him from using it to get what he wanted.

"Ample funds and fundraising are two different matters. Years of financial experience have taught me a lesson: **Fundraising is a deliberate gamble**. You only reap the most generous rewards when you throw out the right chip at the right time."

Luke leaned against the back of his chair, his hands overlapping.

"A very good summary. Continue."

Robert was unsure of Luke's thoughts, and his tone became increasingly cautious.

"This incident has brought the company great notoriety, and our user count has skyrocketed. We can say we have established our position as the leader in social media. The financial groups and venture capital firms won't overlook this. This is their opportunity, and it's also ours. As long as we throw out the bait at the appropriate time, they won't resist."

Luke smiled. "It seems you already have a comprehensive plan."

Robert placed the document on the table.

"This is the proposal."

Luke opened the file and quickly scanned it. The smile on his face widened as he read.

"To present such a major gift on your second day of work, Robert, you truly surprise me. Tell me, what reward do you want?"

Robert narrowed his eyes, gazing at Luke. He spoke one word at a time.

"I want money. Three million US dollars."

"Three million is too much."

"It's less than one-tenth of the value. It's not too much. It's what I deserve."

Luke stared intently at him, hoping to see some different emotion in those eyes. Unfortunately, besides coldness and a hint of suppressed hatred, there was nothing else.

"Falcone is the mob boss of Gotham City. To deal with him, money alone won't be enough."

Luke closed the file and tossed it onto the table.

"I approve the plan. Once the deal is done, **three million dollars** will be yours. Not a penny less."

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Chapter 10: The Best Way to Woo a Woman

Luke never believed in the idea that a magnificent surge of charisma would cause everyone to instantly submit. That's a trope from bad fiction and doesn't fit his style.

Different people have different needs. Some love money, some crave power, some are lustful, and some are full of resentment. Expecting everyone to obey you is an idea only a fool would have.

As a boss, you should constantly promote positive energy to your employees: money is just dirt, and only a **dream** is the future. If a person doesn't have a dream, what's the difference between them and a piece of salted fish?

Do you want to be a piece of salted fish? Of course not. If you don't want to be salted fish, then work hard.

That's Luke's simple-as-it-gets requirement for his staff.

A Surge of Popularity

Superman and **Batman** truly lived up to their reputation as the mainstays of the DC world. Three days had passed since the videos were posted, and the buzz hadn't diminished; if anything, it was increasing.

The effect of this advertising blitz made Luke beam with delight; he almost laughed himself awake in his sleep.

The two big heroes were indeed incredible; he had no choice but to admire them.

To let more people witness their heroic deeds, Luke transformed into the Grim Reaper, silently slipping into the FBI's internal network to secure a few more metahuman videos and post them online.

Once released, they generated another wave of hype.

The user count surged and had already surpassed the **five million** mark.

Five million was a hurdle; crossing it meant he could proceed with the next step of his plan.

On the last day of July, after many days of intense work, Luke felt physically and mentally exhausted. He decided to relax and expand his network at the same time.

At 7:30 PM, Luke, Charlie, Robert, and Philip Arthur appeared together in front of the Hilton Hotel to attend a charity dinner hosted by Republican Senator **Mars Donald**.

Though called a charity dinner, it was essentially a personal marketing event Mars Donald organized to prepare for the next year's election.

The attendees were all socialites, including high-ranking political officials like senators and party leaders.

Luke had no interest in the white-haired old men. He preferred graceful young female companions, such as the Hollywood actress **Jessica Theron** standing before him.

With her sexy, tall figure, elegant and lovely demeanor, paired with a sky-blue, off-the-shoulder gown, she exuded an aura of the ocean.

"Miss Theron, you must have been a mermaid in your past life, specially designed to lure away men's souls."

The blonde, blue-eyed South African actress chuckled.

"Mr. Shaw... uh, may I call you mister?"

"No, I hope you call me Luke."

"Alright, Luke. I want to ask, are you seventeen?"

"Age isn't important. Talent is."

"I agree with your point, but federal law states one cannot date a minor."

Luke smoothly put his arm around the girl's waist and smiled.

"In that case, I will be the lucky one tonight."

"That's not certain."

Jessica twisted her body, slipping out of his embrace. "Tell me, how old are you?"

"Twenty-two centimeters. Not too big, not too small. Just right."

Jessica smiled strangely, leaned forward, and whispered in his ear, "But someone told me you're only seventeen."

"Little boys can't drink alcohol."

With that, she took the champagne flute from his hand and walked away with elegant steps.

Luke: "..."

Who told you I was small? You won't know unless you try.

This was his fifth failed flirtation tonight. The womanizing skills that worked every time in Coast City were useless in Metropolis. Had the young women here been polluted by the Kryptonian virus and now preferred bulky guys like Clark Kent?

No. It must be a selection problem. I should look for someone younger.

Luke adjusted his demeanor and switched on his scanning mode, searching the venue for a young beauty.

A target entered his sight: **purple hair, purple eyes, a white dress**, standing alone in a corner like a forgotten violet.

"I like purple!"

Luke smiled slightly and strode over.

"My beautiful Song, we meet again. How have you been these past few days?"

"Fine."

Emily offered a faint smile, acknowledging the greeting.

Luke asked a waiter for a glass of champagne and handed it to her.

"My friend, why are your eyes filled with melancholy? Did someone bully you? Tell me, and I'll avenge you."

"No... no."

Emily tugged at her slightly loose low-cut dress, forcing a smile. "I'm doing well."

Luke scrutinized her up and down. Emily turned sideways, clutching the skirt with her right hand, afraid the dress might slip off. Her stiff expression looked increasingly awkward.

In recent days, Roger had been secretly investigating Luke. When he learned Luke was attending this charity dinner, he immediately used his connections to get an invitation for Emily to attend.

Their plan was a private operation without specialized funding. Emily was a spendthrift and didn't even own a decent dress. In desperation, Roger had to pay out of pocket to rent her a "somewhat suitable" evening gown.

How good could a rented item be? Especially in this setting, where the women at the banquet wore expensive jewelry and luxurious gowns. Compared to them, Emily, dressed in what felt like a bargain bin outfit, felt like an ugly duckling that had stumbled into a swan lake.

Luke chuckled softly. "A beautiful lady should be adorned with beautiful ornaments. Come with me."

"What are you doing?"

"You'll see in a moment."

Without waiting for a response, Luke pulled her out of the hotel and into the Hermès clothing store next door.

Dresses of various colors were lined up on the racks. There were all styles: off-the-shoulder, backless, low-cut, mixed-style, trendy... a dizzying array.

Luke wasn't interested in fashion culture, but he knew one thing: anything good is usually very expensive.

And so, the purple low-cut dress, priced at **thirty-five thousand dollars**, became Emily's exclusive possession. Clothes make the man, and the girl, having changed, was stunning.

A sheer shawl covered her bare shoulders, partially concealing them and making her skin look even more rosy and fair. Her hair cascaded down, tied behind her with a bow. The purple gown clung to her body, abruptly cinching at the waist, accentuating curves that were captivating.

"Truly beautiful!"

Luke exclaimed sincerely. The waiter and the store manager were full of praise as well.

Emily lowered her head, her heart pounding, her cheeks flushed like they were painted with rouge.

Luke looked her over repeatedly, still feeling slightly dissatisfied.

"I still feel like something is missing."

The waiter and the store manager exchanged glances and smiled simultaneously.

"Please wait a moment!"

Crystal shoes inlaid with diamonds, a silver bracelet from a top French jewelry company, an amethyst pendant, crescent earrings...

A woman makes jewelry dazzling, and jewelry makes a woman captivating.

The moment Emily walked out of the dressing room, clutching the hem of her skirt, even the well-traveled Luke was struck dumb.

What is beauty?

This was beauty.

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