

Epilogue

This one really had been the worst.

Trying to calculate how close a shave it had been would result in an underflow error.

After trudging across the 40-degree desert and returning to the maintenance base zone, Quenser spoke to Frolaytia who rested a carbine on her shoulder and held her long, narrow kiseru in her mouth.

“Here you go, Frolaytia. One piece of shit’s head. Just like you ordered.”

He tossed it her way.

That man had acquired a vast fortune by selling weapons all so he could rise above the existing hierarchy of power and have his way.

And this was where it got him in the very, very end.

(I’m not giving up.)

Not psychologically anyway.

That was all Quenser had.

And that was why he had not stopped working toward survival all that time.

Tricks would get you nowhere. He knew that.

He was not like that man.

That was a baseless belief born of self-consciousness and every investor and gambler probably believed the same thing. But even if it was an empty illusion, he needed to rely on it to keep himself going.

Meanwhile, Frolaytia caught the severed head in one hand and gave a casual comment.

“Oh, I see Rosa made it out okay.”

“To be honest, she’s more useful than Heivia. You should definitely buy her some better food and

toys.”

“Clearly she’s too valuable to have left with you...”

“Speaking of Heivia, where’d he get off to during all this!? I think you should make him go without food for a week!”

“I’m glad to see your friendship is strong enough to trust he’s still alive, but going without food that long would kill him. Go stop by the med room later to see him. The new uniform for the medics may have been a mistake. Everyone’s so busy staring at the nurse’s butts they refuse to leave.”

“...”

“Wait, Quenser. Don’t try to carve up your stomach with that knife. And besides...”

“Yes? Is there more???”

“That’s, um, quite the getup there. Why are you dressed as a maid???”

He started coughing and looked away. He needed to change the subject and fast. Quensette of Love and Justice had to remain hidden from the world! ...Because if she was not, Monica would be so jealous of her popularity she might just curse him. Femininity? No one could ever learn that he and that childhood friend had once puzzled over some menstrual products together!!

“Oh, could that legendary maid everyone’s talking about online actually be-...”

“Let’s stop that line of thought right this instant, Frolaytia. The truth is an awful thing.”

“Y’know, some volunteers are putting together a team to search for that legendary maid, so how do you plan to fix this? They’re on the verge of working themselves to death and I feel like the legendary maid is the last ray of hope keeping them going.”

“If they find out, those exhausted potatoes will murder me, so let’s keep this quiet, okay!?”

This secret gave Frolaytia leverage over the lovely maid, but she looked less than pleased.

She may have been having trouble finding an effective way of playing that card.

He had to change the topic while he could.

“Frolaytia, what’s with the carbine? Was there some chaos on the base zone too?”

“I was thinking about using the confusion to murder a certain Information Alliance officer, but you ended the battle a little too quickly. Honestly, I was so close too!”

That was it right there.

He felt like he had wasted his time giving any thought at all to good and evil on the battlefield. The world was made up of people trying to take advantage of that. It was all groundwork set up for deception and camouflage. Only those who could hide could survive.

Or maybe it was Woodstock who had actually been facing the issue of good and evil. But that was what had made them stand out so much. The result could not have been more obvious: they had vanished into the South American desert.

Quenser latched onto that.

“What happened to the people on the farms?”

“They’re pretty clever. As soon as they realized they couldn’t win, they used a satellite connection to start broadcasting some live footage. Imagine what this result looks like when you don’t know what led up to it. If we ‘mopped up’ the people in those mansions with a flamethrower, the young wives back in the safe countries would start screaming about their firm opposition to the slaughter of civilians.”

There had been a lot more noncombatant maids and nuns than Frolaytia had estimated. Quenser was honestly relieved that this would end without those people being “mopped up”.

Experiencing life in the target area was a bad thing. The atmosphere there was infectious. He could tell he was starting to sympathize with the losing side, but it was not an easy thing to rid yourself of.

He recalled hearing that kittens and chicks looked so cute because those were the only ones that were not abandoned by their parents and survived the natural selection process.

However...

“The engineering group that supported the Parasite Plan and built the Gangster must be there. We can’t just ignore them. If they spread out across the world powers and are secretly recruited by military labs, their infection will still spread. The arms dealer will simply have found another way to operate. They will still work their way into the world powers and build an Object in a safe environment.”

Those engineers had already caused so much trouble. Even if they had a ball-and-chain attached to their ankle like Hina and even if their GPS position was constantly being monitored, Quenser had a feeling they would still find a way around it. They could easily include a secret ROM or virus inside what appeared to be an obedient Object. And with an Object, it would be too late once the problem rose to the surface.

With the carbine resting on her shoulder, Frolaytia winked and removed the long, narrow kiseru from her alluring lips.

“The world powers apparently plan to pool their funds and build a prison. It will exist on the shared land of Antarctica and it will run on only the shared international laws. Everyone is hurting financially after being played for fools by the arms dealer. Because firing a main cannon is a lot like throwing stacks of cash around. They’re all rushing toward a major public works project to fight a recession. Plus, it is the end of the year. A public works project crossing borders will create a complex stream of money. They’ll be able to launder their public funding all they like.”

“...”

“That was quite the speech back there, Quenser. But the monsters at the top are far greedier than you think. The officers at their desks are supposed to find a way to make up for a loss by earning twice as much. So the economy won’t collapse even as we waste so much money throwing stacks of cash around the whole year round. Those four giant blobs of fat won’t let it happen.”

Quenser had to wonder what he had been doing.

Obedying the world powers was easier, but then you had those blobs of fat holding you down.

But while breaking free of those rules gave you freedom, it also placed a dreadful risk on your shoulders.

He was a battlefield student.

He wanted to be an Object designer.

His goal was to break through the hierarchy of commoners, nobles, and royals and end up a winner in life. But was that dream really so innocent a thing? Would he end up a slave of the world powers or a ghost of Woodstock?

“Disillusioned?” asked Frolaytia with a scoff.

Just like Quenser, that busty silver-haired officer had placed herself on the battlefield for her own reasons.

“But if you stop moving forward, you will be left behind. People as greedy as us can never be saints who are satisfied meditating in some secluded corner of the world.”

<http://tl.rulate.ru/book/5253/775211>