

48 Hours a Day

Chapter 14: Desert Island Survival VIII

That nameless giant fowl was so ugly it was off-putting tasted surprisingly good.

Zhang Heng had been seafood for so long he had almost forgotten what chicken tasted like. The 'chicken' soup he boiled for dinner brought back memories.

Actually, strictly speaking, the meat of this creature was much tougher than chicken meat. Its texture was actually closer to that of pigeons.

But to Zhang Heng who nearly went crazy thinking about meat, this was the most delicious chicken he had ever tasted. Unable to finish the entire 15 catty 'chicken' at one meal, Zhang Heng removed the internal organs, soaked the flesh in seawater and then smoked it. The 'chicken' jerky now hung under the eaves of his house.

Behind the house, Zhang Heng found a plot of land that received a good amount of sunlight and planted the potatoes he saved. He also burnt some grass and wood, sprinkling them over his crops as fertilizer. Finally, he fenced up the plot of land, looking forward to see the surprise it would bring him after about half a month.

Early on, Zhang Heng had recorded the time on the wall of the cave but he could not move the wall to his new dwelling so he relied on the watch on his wrist.

With the watch's scientifically unexplainable toughness, Zhang Heng had used it to whet stones in the earlier days on the island. By looking at the positions of the hour hand and the seconds hand, he could use a simple calculation to determine the date. Today, it had been 201 days since he was 'washed ashore'.

The clothes he was wearing was the first to crumble, then his shoes acquired a large hole. He was lucky to have been in the tropics, he did not need to worry about temperature even if it was winter. Zhang Heng even settled on going about the day completely nude.

His skin was now a tan shade of bronze, his beard unkempt and his hair a frizzy mess. He looked a little scruffy.

Today afternoon, Zhang Heng put down whatever he was doing, and climbed onto a cliff by the beach. He sat down with his legs crossed, staring into the distance.

After about half an hour, the old friend he had been waiting for appeared.

The adventurer was struggling against the waves, looking as if he could drown at any time.

Zhang Heng looked at the silhouette rising and falling with the tide, conflicted.

The great philosopher, mathematician and historian Russel¹ once said that his life was governed by three pure yet overwhelmingly strong passions: the longing for love, the search for knowledge and the unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind.

Thing for Zhang Heng, right now, was much simpler.

There were only two things that was going to keep him alive for these five-hundred days—exploring the center of the island, and seeing the man in the water who would appear every forty days. The former kept him busy and kept his mind from wandering; the latter reminded him that he was not alone.

So many time, Zhang Heng had been tempted to save the adventurer.

Saving him meant having someone with him for nineteen days, providing him with the much-needed interaction, company and warmth from a creature of the same kind.

But Zhang Heng had never taken any action.

He thought about a movie he had seen called 'Cast Away'. The plane that the protagonist boarded had crashed and he was washed ashore with a heap of packages. To survive, he opened up all the packages leaving only one because it symbolized hope to him.

Seeing the adventurer every forty days held the same meaning to Zhang Heng.

He had been on this island for more than two hundred days. That would be the equivalent of five rounds of game time for the average player. He was still very far from the day of return to reality.

If he recurred the man now, the man would die after nineteen days, and he would be truly and completely alone for the rest of his days on the island.

Even after his Wildlife Survival Skills had reached Level 1, he was still lacking in many ways (for example, he really wanted a game console, even if it was just Tetris or Snake). Still, levelling up was not as pressing as it was when he had first arrived on the island.

In contrast, he needed a helper to explore the island. He could it alone, of course. But it would definitely be much safer when there are two people.

Zhang Heng had planned to bring the adventurer with him into the forest after he had rescued him.

He was able to confirm from his encounter with Ed and the lad in shorts that while both of them were wilderness survival experts, the areas of their knowledge differed. The skills and knowledge that Ed had imparted were basic survival skills, whereas the lad in shorts was more inclined towards construction and creation. Having observed the adventurer's dressing, Zhang Heng surmised that he was probably an expert in exploration. It would be awkward for him to save the person now.

Zhang Heng had to suppress the burning desire to save the man as he watched the waves swallow his for the fourth time.

With one last look at the spot where the explorer had disappeared, Zhang Heng jumped down from the cliff and continued his archery practice.

It took him three months to get his accuracy up to 90% at thirty meters.

As a result, there was no notification of any skill upgrade. But this did not discourage Zhang Heng. He had already expected it. This game was very demanding benchmark for skills. English, which he had learnt for fourteen years, and his native language, was only graded only as Level 1. But considering how many languages there are in the world, this classification seemed fair enough.

The same applied to surviving the wilderness. Zhang Heng felt that it everyone in the world was thrown to this island, even if he was not the last person alive, he would at least be on of the top ten survivors. But again, his skills were severely skewed. If he was placed in another type of harsh environment, he might not have done that well, take the polar regions or a desert. He would barely be able to survive. That was the biggest difference between him and experts.

Therefore, Zhang Heng was in no hurry to level up his archery skills.

Once he had mastered his thirty meters shooting, he began practicing on moving targets.

At first, he used the fishes swimming near the coral reefs as practice but after two shots, he was reminded that what he could see above the water was actually a deflected. If he continued to practice like that, his archery skills would go crooked.

Then he turned to practicing on crabs. But these crustaceans were the kind of prey that does not move if the enemy remains still. They proved to be terrible practice targets. Zhang Heng never even considered practicing on birds mainly because they mostly stood on tree tops. If he missed, it would be very difficult for him to retrieve his arrows.

In the end, Zhang Heng settled on the broken pottery pieces, stringing them up on branches so that when the wind blows, they would sway.

This made it very difficult to shoot.

It took Zhang Heng two months of practice to learn the ropes. During this period of time, he caught another hideous looking 'fowl' in perfect condition. Somehow that creature had gotten into Zhang Heng's vegetable plot, probably to munch on some free breakfast, but got its head caught in the fences instead.

Zhang Heng thought about and decided that he was in no hurry to eat it, so he tied the creature's leg to a wooden pole. Now he had an upgraded moving target.

Zhang Heng wrapped the head of his carbonized arrows and then began an inhumane attack on the 'fowl'.