

First Order 1031

## Chapter 1031 - Qing Shen And Qing Zhen

What kind of person was Luo Lan in the past? He could remain in bed in the stronghold without moving for three days straight and had led a comfortable life back in Stronghold 113. Basically, other than matters concerning the Qing Consortium's combat brigade that he led, there was nothing else that required his attention.

Based on what he said, his younger brother was around for everything. All Luo Lan needed to do was enjoy himself until the day he died.

But when Luo Lan started putting himself through this grueling training, everyone realized his innate willpower was very strong.

Zhou Qi had previously speculated that if the world of supernatural beings was really determined by their mental fortitude, then the higher that was, the greater their potential.

This willpower did not fully manifest itself as "toughness." For example, Li Shentan had never shown himself as someone tough before. It was just that the mental patient's inner world was extremely complicated.

Zhou Qi looked at Luo Lan and suddenly started looking forward to the heights the fat man could reach.

"I've always had a question that I'm very curious about." Zhou Qi asked, "If we measure the threshold between normal people and superhumans based on the Saboteurs' willpower theory, Qing Zhen should

also have awakened as a superhuman. In my opinion, his mental capacity is much larger and more complicated than most people in the world, so why hasn't he awakened his power yet.... Or could it be that he's already achieved it but did not tell me about it?"

After saying that, Zhou Qi fell into deep thought. If Qing Zhen were really a supernatural being, he would not have needed to engage Zhou Qi's help back at Mt. Ginkgo.

At this moment, Luo Lan was panting heavily as he threw his heavy field pack onto the ground. He was on the verge of collapse. The accompanying doctor who was close by immediately packed the first aid box and prepared to come over, but he was stopped by Luo Lan with a gesture. That was because the topic they were discussing right now was not something that others should hear.

Luo Lan said, "First of all, I've confirmed that my younger brother has not awakened any powers yet. He might hide something like that from others, but he will definitely not keep it from me."

"Then why has he not awakened his power?" Zhou Qi asked.

"He probably doesn't think it's necessary." Luo Lan sighed and said, "Y'know, if other people suddenly tell me that superhumans are no big deal, I'll definitely think they're being hypocritical. Although they say they look down on such people, they actually want to become superhumans more than anyone else."

"Did Qing Zhen ever say something like that?" Zhou Qi asked.

"No." Luo Lan laughed bitterly as he lay on the ground. When he was finally able to catch his breath, he continued, "But there was a time when I heard someone with the condition to awaken their power could do so after going through a long period of arduous cultivation and trekking for tens of thousands of kilometers. So I asked Qing Zhen if he wanted to give it a try, but he said it was unnecessary since he did not have the time for that. He did not look down on supernatural beings, but I know what he meant. In Qing Zhen's opinion, even if he were not a supernatural being, he could still achieve whatever he desired. So there was no need for him to waste his time to go through that process of awakening."

Luo Lan felt there were probably not a lot of people in the entire Alliance of Strongholds who were as confident as his younger brother.

At this moment, the sound of a vehicle driving came from the outside of the mountains. Luo Lan sat up and looked towards the road where the sound was coming from. This valley had already been sealed off by the Qing Consortium's troops, so whoever could drive in here in such a manner must be Luo Lan and Qing Zhen's trusted aides.

However, Luo Lan and Zhou Qi were a little surprised by the person who had arrived. It was actually Qing Zhen sitting in the back of the off-road vehicle!

"How does he have the time to come here?" Zhou Qi muttered.

"No, that's not my younger brother," Luo Lan refuted. "Tell the guards around us to stay away."

Zhou Qi raised his eyebrows. "Do I need to excuse myself too?"

Luo Lan said, "No need. You're one of us."

Zhou Qi raised his eyebrows again.

When the vehicle drove over, Qing Shen jumped out of it and walked over with a smile. He looked at Luo Lan's expression and said with a smile, "How did you distinguish between me and your brother?"

After making sure no one was around, Luo Lan said, "The two of you come from different environments, so your personalities are quite different. Your behaviors are totally different. Strangers might not notice it, but I do."

After that, Luo Lan even inspected the scar on the back of Qing Shen's hand. Qing Shen had deliberately left this mark to reassure Luo Lan and gain his trust.

Luo Lan let go of Qing Shen's arm and said, "What are you doing here?"

"Your younger brother asked me to come and see if you were alright. After all, everyone heard about how you've been training like crazy out here. He was afraid you'd cripple yourself in training." Qing Shen

laughed as he found a small folding chair and sat down. His white suit was spotless, and from the way he dressed, Qing Shen looked no different from Qing Zhen at all.

Currently, Qing Shen's existence was the Qing Consortium's top secret. Most of the time, Qing Shen would be the one showing up to solve the Qing Consortium's problems. Meanwhile, Qing Zhen remained hidden in the shadows.

This also left Luo Lan a little puzzled. Based on his younger brother's character, he must be taking every step cautiously like he did now because he had sensed great danger coming.

Qing Zhen was not a quiet person, but he had gone completely silent as though he were playing a game of chess with an invisible opponent.

Luo Lan asked Qing Shen, "Where's my younger brother?"

Qing Shen said with a smile, "I'm just his double. If even you, his older brother, don't know his whereabouts, how could I possibly know? A double doesn't have much authority, right?"

Luo Lan was a little puzzled. "I've always been very curious. Logically, with your talent and the training you received at the Pyro Company, you should be able to live very well wherever you go. Why'd you choose to come to the Qing Consortium to be a body double for someone else?"

After all, there was no freedom in being a body double. Qing Zhen would still be the one making the arrangements for any operations.

If Luo Lan did not know what Qing Zhen was capable of, he might still be worried that Qing Zhen could get replaced by Qing Shen. But now, he realized Qing Zhen was much more cautious than he had imagined. Zheng Yuandong, Qing Zhen's bodyguard, had already received orders that he could kill this body double at any moment if he went past a certain security perimeter.

The security perimeter was well-guarded, so Qing Shen would not have any opportunity to try to replace Qing Zhen.

Qing Shen did not mind this at all. It was as though he had never thought of seizing Qing Zhen's authority by replacing him. Therefore, this left Luo Lan a little puzzled as to what he was really after.

However, Qing Shen did not directly answer Luo Lan's question. Instead, he said to Luo Lan with a smile, "Your current diligent and hardworking attitude feels more like the Luo Lan from more than a decade ago. I'm a little curious about something. What happened to you over a decade ago that made you suddenly act like a bum? I know it's actually just your disguise. After all, you secretly helped Qing Zhen with so many things behind his back. That's not something a bum is capable of. Why're you willing to hold yourself back and serve as Qing Zhen's foil?"

Luo Lan sneered and said, "I'm happy doing so. What business is it of yours? I'm the one asking you here: What's your intention for serving as his double?"

Qing Shen smiled. "That's right, I'm happy doing so as well, so what business is it of yours?"

## Chapter 1032 - Lunatic

Actually, it had always been a mystery to Luo Lan why Qing Zhen's clone would join the Qing Consortium. Back on the Sacred Mountains, Li Shentan's clone and Chen Wudi's clone had also appeared. However, they were hostile the moment they met. In the minds of those two clones, they were actually eager to prove they were superior to their original selves.

That was because the Pyro Company had told them they were born from the genes of Li Shentan and Chen Wudi, but they should be more powerful than their original selves because they were enhanced by the blood of God.

But as long as their original selves were still around, the clones would just remain as clones, and Li Shentan and Chen Wudi's clones were not willing to live in the shadows of others.

But as it turned out, those clones were indeed no match for their original selves. Just as Ren Xiaosu had said, it was because their willpower was different.

Meanwhile, Qing Zhen's clone, Qing Shen, was more puzzling. Right from the beginning, he had no hostile intentions towards his original self. Furthermore, he said he wanted to go to the Southwest immediately after he met them. It was as though he had foreseen something and said that Qing Zhen would need him as his double.

This puzzled Luo Lan a great deal. He once had an opportunity to ask him, "Have you never thought of taking his place?"

At that time, Qing Shen answered with a smile, "I'm different from the other two clones. I'm smarter than them, so I know the difference between me and Qing Zhen. Sometimes, having self-awareness is also a form of wisdom, isn't it?"

All this while, a minority of those who knew about Qing Zhen's clone gradually felt that Qing Zhen's charisma was probably too strong. As such, even his clone was won over and willingly became a part of the original's plan.

However, Luo Lan somehow felt that things were not that simple. It was not that he suspected Qing Shen of having any evil intentions, but that he felt that he had some other motive.

Recently, Qing Shen had been interacting with Luo Lan quite a bit due to his role as Qing Zhen's body double. After getting to know each other better, he would occasionally crack some jokes.

Although there was still some estrangement between them, it was no longer as tense as before.

Luo Lan looked at Qing Shen's annoying expression and suddenly asked, "You seem to understand the two of us brothers quite well, don't you?"

"Of course." Qing Shen said with a smile, "I even know you two arranged for a fight with the other members of the Qing Consortium when you were young. You led Qing Zhen and went to look for Qing Yi and his elder brother to beat them up. In the end, you got beaten up badly instead, yet you kept Qing Zhen protected. Later, you two became friends with Qing Yi and his brother after the fight and had a lot of dealings with each other in private. However, the old fogeys of the Qing Consortium's board did not know about this. I guess you all became friends because you could sympathize with one another. After all, you were the marginalized members of the Qing Consortium, so you couldn't compare to those in Qing Yun's group."

Currently, Qing Yun was dead, while Qing Yi had become the Qing Consortium's military commander. He was now subordinate only to Qing Zhen and Luo Lan.

Meanwhile, Qing Yi's elder brother was the principal of the Qing Consortium's university in Stronghold 111. Qing Zhen had invited him to take a role with the Board, but it seemed that Qing Yi's elder brother preferred working at a place like the university.

Qing Shen, the clone, said with a smile, "The amount of attention the Pyro Company paid to you two is beyond your imagination. Of course, the Pyro Company also had other goals. At that time, they had already started searching for the hosts for those three drops of God's blood. But you might not have expected that you were actually the focus of their attention at the beginning. It was only later that it switched to Qing Zhen. Of course, the facts have proven that Qing Zhen is indeed more capable. You won't get angry if I say that, right?"

"I already know that my little brother is much more capable than me, so there's nothing wrong with admitting to it," Luo Lan remarked. "But why would the Pyro Company target nobodies like us? There were clearly many more successful candidates they could've chosen."

"I don't know either. They only said that the younger the candidates were, the better. Otherwise, they would've cloned Zhang Jinglin," Qing Shen answered. "But I've always been curious about something. Is it fun to participate in a gang fight? Why do you always fight in the streets until your face is all bruised and swollen? You're clearly a member of the Qing Consortium, yet you still stooped to the level of those street thugs...."

Luo Lan turned unhappy. "Why do you keep bringing up me getting beaten until my face was all bruised and swollen? You should at least see how badly I beat up my enemies first, right? They were even more seriously injured than me! Besides, there's something wrong with the phrasing of your question. What's so fun about a gang fight? That's a world of loyalty and revenge. You wouldn't understand!"

Qing Shen smiled and said, "I would've liked to have joined you all in a gang fight too, but it's a shame that I wasn't born into the world at that time. But according to the Pyro Company's statistics, you've participated in a total of 17 fights and lost five of them."

"Is the Pyro Company sick in the head? Why would they even record something like that? Did they have too much funding or what?" Luo Lan said with a dark expression, "Also, my little brother isn't as smiley as you. If you want to be my little brother's body double, you should act more professionally. Quit with the smiling! By the way, to differentiate between the two of you, I'll call you Third Brother Qing!"

Luo Lan had given the clone a nickname purely because he wanted to annoy him, and the name "Third Brother Qing"1 was really quite unpleasant to hear.

However, Qing Shen did not mind at all. Instead, he said with a smile, "Who's Second Bro? Qing Zhen? Then you're the eldest? I'll call you Big Bro from now on then."

Luo Lan was stunned. Why didn't Third Brother Qing have any temper at all? It was as though he was a person who did not know how to get angry. He carefully sized up Third Brother Qing and said, "You don't seem to have my little brother's character at all. Instead, you're like a lunatic that I know!"

"Lunatic?" Third Brother Qing recalled, "Are you referring to Li Shentan?"

"Yes, exactly." Luo Lan laughed.

"Speaking of Li Shentan, it seems like there hasn't been any news of him in a long time," Third Brother Qing recalled. "I wonder where he went?"

"I heard he went typhoon watching," Luo Lan answered casually.

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At this moment, in a mountain range to the south of the Central Plains, mist covered the top of the densely forested mountains. This place was south of the Zhou Consortium.

Over the many years since The Cataclysm, the city that was originally here had gradually collapsed, and a vast arboreal ecosystem had overtaken the ground it used to stand on.

Some people said the southern coastline had changed. Before The Cataclysm, the landmass was much larger. But now that the sea level had risen, much of the landmass had been flooded with water. Coupled with the tectonic movements, the landscape here was completely different.

But not many people had really gone there to have a look. After the climate change, the wilderness and forest to the south of the Zhou Consortium had become much more dangerous. There were poisonous creepy-crawlies everywhere, and a huge miasmic zone became a natural barrier to visitors.

At present, only a tiny group of herb collectors would venture out here. It was as though this place had become a forgotten, secret realm.

Two people, an adult and a child, were slowly advancing through the forest. Si Liren floated in midair and looked at the endless forest in front of her. She sighed and said, "Li Shentan, did you point us in the wrong direction again?"

"You're not allowed to call me Li Shentan. You have to address me as Big Brother Shentan. That's more endearing!"

## Chapter 1033 - Herb Collectors

Li Shentan and Little Liren were both wearing light blue outdoor jackets. It was still quite difficult to find such professional outdoor gear being sold in the strongholds. Mainly because there were very few

people who needed them. Only some large garment factories would produce such clothing for the rich in the strongholds to use when they went out into the wilderness.

"When you find the right path, I'll start calling you Big Brother Shentan." Little Liren said stubbornly, "But before that, you're just Li Shentan."

Li Shentan said snappily as he walked, "But does the problem lie with me alone? You could have flown up to the sky to lead the way, but look at what's happening now?"

Logically, the two of them should definitely not have lost their way. After all, Little Liren knew how to fly. No matter how complicated the terrain between the mountains and forest was, it should not confuse someone who could see everything from above.

But how did it in fact turn out? Si Liren could even fly in the wrong direction even though she was up in the air.

It was a very long way, and if the orientation at which she was flying deviated even a little, it would still make them go around in a circle. This was what troubled Li Shentan the most!

Later, Li Shentan, the lunatic, came up with an idea. "Since you can even end up flying in circles when you're flying straight, why don't you just fly around in a curved direction? That way, we might somehow be able to find a way out."

And then, they completely lost their way.

To be honest, if it wasn't for this terrible idea, they wouldn't have been so lost. Liren was still young and did not have much ability to distinguish right from wrong. If she were a few years older, she would have rejected Li Shentan's suggestion mercilessly on the spot when he came up with such a horrible idea.

Little Liren muttered, "Don't come up with reckless ideas like that in the future!"

Li Shentan said resentfully, "I don't understand. How could we have deviated from our route with you flying in the sky?"

"Li Shentan, are you blaming me?" Little Liren asked.

"No." Li Shentan said dejectedly, "Forget it, forget it. Don't worry, we'll get out of this place someday."

Fortunately, the two of them were supernatural beings, so it was not difficult for them to find food in the forest. Although their meals were a little lacking, they did not have to starve to death.

Li Shentan sighed and said, "If only Ren Xiaosu could come with us to watch the typhoons. At least he wouldn't get lost. Moreover, he's very good at roasting meat found in the wilderness..."

"Then why don't we head to the Northwest first and invite him before heading to the coast?" Little Liren asked.

Li Shentan asked blankly, "Can we still go back?"

That's right, they did not know where they were at all, so they could not go back even if they wanted to. Little Liren flew up into the sky and had a look. It was just the forest all around them, and it was impossible to see the end of it.

Although these two people were very powerful, they had spent most of their lives in a psychiatric hospital and had an extreme lack of common sense. This was why Li Shentan suddenly started missing Ren Xiaosu.

In Li Shentan's opinion, Ren Xiaosu was close to being skilled in all the areas he was bad at.

"There's snakes around us," Little Liren said as she looked at the treetops in front of her.

Li Shentan suddenly got nervous. "Hey, come stand closer to me."

He said that not because he was afraid Little Liren would get ambushed by a venomous snake, but because the metallic box Little Liren was carrying could make all kinds of venomous creepy-crawlies scatter.

Although Li Shentan did not know why it worked this way, the venomous creepy-crawlies in the forest seemed to be quite afraid of Chen Wudi even though he was in his petrified form.

Li Shentan was stuck fast to the box. After getting lost in the forest during this period, he would even lie down next to the box to sleep. He even wanted to hug it to sleep.

It was quite funny. The legendary figure who was known as a demigod in the world of superhumans was actually afraid of snakes.

Moreover, even the noxious night air would get dispelled in the miasmic zone around Chen Wudi. In Li Shentan's words, Chen Wudi was practically invulnerable to all evil. He could basically do whatever he wanted in a place like this that was overrun with venomous creepy-crawlies.

However, Little Liren asked Li Shentan doubtfully, "But isn't it a little disrespectful of you to use Big Brother Wudi as a talisman?"

Li Shentan said nonchalantly, "Why would that be? Little Liren is so cute, so of course he'll be willing to protect you."

"But is he willing to protect you?" Little Liren continued wondering.

Li Shentan thought for a while and said, "Well, I'm also very cute!"

All of a sudden, Li Shentan stopped in his tracks. He took out a pair of shoes from his backpack and put them on for Si Liren. "Someone's coming. Let's act normal. Who knows, they might be able to take us out of this place."

Si Liren said, "But you can just hypnotize them."

"No, I've already promised Ren Xiaosu to be a good person, so how can I hypnotize normal people just like that? If they're good people, wouldn't I end up opposing the good side?" Li Shentan said righteously.

"Then what if they're unwilling to bring us out?" Si Liren asked.

"Then they're bad guys," Li Shentan said firmly.

Li Shentan helped Si Liren put on her shoes. Si Liren landed lightly on the ground with the large box on her back. Then she said in distress, "But I can't pretend to be normal while carrying Big Brother Wudi."

"Don't worry about that." Li Shentan said, "If someone asks, just tell them that the box is very light."

Li Shentan could not spontaneously come up with any good ideas either, so he decided to just cast aside that worry for now.

After a few minutes, the slashing of overgrown weeds came from within the forest. As the forest was too dense, almost as dense as a tropical rainforest, it was quite difficult for humans to walk inside it.

Li Shentan and Si Liren remained where they were and waited quietly. After a while, someone emerged from the dense foliage, but when the other party saw Li Shentan and Si Liren, he was stunned. "Don't kill us. We've ventured into your territory unintentionally, but we're only here to gather herbs."

Li Shentan was slightly taken aback. He and Si Liren looked at each other. "We don't kill people, and this isn't our territory either."

Around eight more tanned herb collectors emerged behind the man. Then he said, "Then you two are... eh, I've seen that style of clothing before. Some big shots from the strongholds put on such clothes when they come into the wilderness. Are you two stronghold residents?"

Li Shentan laughed. "That's right, we came from a stronghold, but we got lost in the forest. Can you please tell us where we are and how far this place is from the Zhou Consortium?"

The herb collectors looked at one another and said, "The Zhou Consortium's Stronghold 83 is about a 100 kilometers away from here. How did you end up getting lost here?"

"It's a long story. Can you lead us out of this place? As a reward, I can do magic for you all along the way," Li Shentan said in seriousness.

The herb collectors chuckled. This was the first time they had heard of someone offering to do magic as a reward. However, they did not mind. One of the men who looked like the leader of the group said with a smile, "It's not a problem to take you two out of here. It's just that we need to gather some medicinal herbs in these mountains. After we're done collecting them, you can follow us and head north."

Carrying the large case on her back, Si Liren smiled sweetly. "Thank you!"

Everyone's attention was drawn to the box. Someone wondered, "What's in this box? Why did you carry such a large box into the wilderness?"

Li Shentan thought for a while and said, "It's for storing our magic props!"

The herb pickers clearly did not believe him.

Surprisingly, the pickers did not continue asking about it. Instead, they started searching for an open area to set up camp. One of them said to Li Shentan, "We're gonna set up camp here for tonight. We'll continue heading into the mountains tomorrow morning."

Li Shentan looked at the herb collectors and suddenly sighed.

How could any normal person not want to continue asking if they saw such a large box being carried around?

Putting everything else aside, just the quality of this box's material alone was extraordinary. If a normal person were to see it, they would definitely think it contained something extremely valuable.

But the herb collectors seemed unusually honest and did not query them any further.

When the campfire started burning in the open area, the herb collectors went to gather firewood separately. However, it was not easy to find dry firewood in this dense forest. Essentially, they just looked for pine trees and chopped them down to use the pine oil to fuel the fire.

Amid the crackling of the campfire, a man said to Li Shentan and Little Liren with a smile, "I'll go search for some spices. Let's roast something to eat later."

Li Shentan replied with a smile, "There's even ready-made spices up here in the mountains?"

"It's obvious that you stronghold residents don't really venture out into the wilderness." The man said with a hearty laugh, "There's nothing in the mountains that you can't find. There's peppercorn, star anise, and chili peppers growing here. If you really search, you can find anything you want. Moreover, when you squeeze some of the berry juices over the food, it can really bring out the flavor. I'll go and find some for you two to try."

"Alright, thanks, bro," Li Shentan said.

An herb collector took advantage of this downtime and asked nonchalantly, "By the way, what are you doing out here?"

"We heard the typhoons in the South are particularly spectacular to watch. Occasionally, seawater can even get sucked up into the sky by waterspouts. Apparently, this phenomenon is known as the Dragon Draining Water," Li Shentan said with a laugh.

The herb collectors around the campfire were stunned. They looked at one another and thought to themselves that this was the first time they had heard of someone wanting to go watch typhoons.

Li Shentan asked in return, "By the way, when you saw us just now, you said you had unintentionally entered our territory. Why'd you say that? Do people still live here?"

The herb collector said with a smile, "We also heard about it from other old-timer herb collectors. The area in this vicinity of slightly over a 100 kilometers is known as Xiuzhuzhou. It has a lot of river systems running through it, but the number of miasmic zones is very high too. Occasionally, there will also be swamps, so herb collectors don't usually venture here. We only came here because the stronghold suddenly offered a high price to purchase 11-flavored medicinal herbs. Those aren't found anywhere but Xiuzhuzhou."

Li Shentan realized that in the 200 years since The Cataclysm, herb collection should have become a very mature profession. It seemed like there was some sort of inheritance of skill going on too.

However, the herb collector continued, "Previously, an herb collector said that there's actually still people living in Xiuzhuzhou. They have some mysterious skills that allow them to live in the wilderness. According to him, those people can breathe in the miasmic zones without any problems and even manipulate venomous creepy-crawlies to train their gu poison arts."

"How did that old-timer herb collector know all that?" Li Shentan asked.

Another herb collector nearby said, "I'm the most suited to talk about this. After all, this story was passed down from my grandpa's time. He said that there was an aristocrat in the stronghold who needed a medicinal herb to treat his illness, so they had to go into Xiuzhuzhou to search for it. But at that time, no one dared to come to this place. As such, the aristocrat offered a reward of two gold bars. Only then did two herb collectors volunteer to come into these mountains to search for the herb.

"Those two herb collectors were away in Xiuzhuzhou for a full six months, and everyone thought that they were dead. But they didn't expect him to come back alive, and it was only him.

"According to him, the other herb collector who went into the mountains with him died in the miasmic zone on their way there. Meanwhile, he was saved by a group of people from the Lian tribe and spent half a year recuperating.

"The Lian tribe is a little strange. They're actually a matriarchal society<sup>1</sup>, and there's something mystical about them. We've only heard of superhumans appearing in the Central Plains in recent years, right? But during my grandfather's generation, he said that all women in the Lian tribe trained in gu poison arts<sup>2</sup> and corpse refinement! Moreover, their corpse refinement techniques consist of creating bronze, silver, and gold corpses."

Li Shentan raised his eyebrows. "If it's that terrifying, how did that herb collector come back alive? He should've been turned into a corpse."

"This is what you don't know about them." The herb collector said with a smile, "The elder who came back said that even though the Lian tribe sounds terrifying, the women there are all very pretty and good-looking. Furthermore, they only practice corpse refinement to prevent foreign enemies from attacking them. Therefore, the elder once reminded us that if we really entered Xiuzhuzhou one day and encountered people from the Lian tribe, there's no need to panic. We just have to tell them that we didn't intrude into their territory on purpose and they won't hurt us. Moreover, if fate wills it, they might even treat us warmly. According to him, they're very hospitable people."

The herb collector winked at him. There was probably something more to this "warm hospitality" he mentioned.

"I see." Li Shentan felt the explanation sounded a little mystical. Why did this Xiuzhuzhou where the people of the Lian tribe lived sound like a paradise?

But if what the other party said was true? Xiuzhuzhou would be quite an interesting place then, and Li Shentan would really like to go and have a look.

If it weren't for the fact that there were a lot of herb collectors here, he would have shouted into the forest to ask if there were any ladies from the Lian tribe willing to come out and meet him.

However, Li Shentan had some doubts about this. He felt that people who practiced corpse and gu poison refinement would be quite ruthless.

The old herb collector was probably not telling the truth.

Since they practiced corpse refinement, where would the corpses come from? Could someone have given that old herb collector some benefits and deliberately made him sing praises of the Lian tribe? Then everyone would want to seek out that utopia, and the Lian tribe could easily entrap some people to refine them into corpses.

Li Shentan suddenly felt that he was very smart. This explanation made a lot of sense, didn't it?

An herb collector sighed and said, "Now that the Central Plains are in a state of war, many people who've heard this story want to seek refuge in the sanctity of Xiuzhuzhou. We're not only here to gather herbs this time; we also want to try our luck in finding that place."

Li Shentan was stunned. "War? There's a war?"

The herb collectors laughed. "How long have you been lost in the mountains? Why don't you know about this? The Pyro Company and the Kong Consortium in the North have almost been completely annexed by the Wang Consortium. Based on everyone's estimations, they'll probably be fully annexed within a month. And also, the Zhou Consortium was plunged into chaos by that future commander of the Northwest. Currently, the Zhou Consortium is in a constant state of internal strife. The Wang Consortium will probably annex the Zhou Consortium next after they're done with the Pyro Company and the Kong Consortium."

Li Shentan muttered to Si Liren, "Oh no, I actually missed out on something so exciting!"

As he spoke, Li Shentan had a vexed expression on his face. How could he have missed out on joining Ren Xiaosu to cause chaos in the Zhou Consortium?!

So if they did it together once more, it would mean he did not miss out on anything. This logic was impeccable!

Li Shentan said, "Why don't we skip the typhoon watching and head to the Northwest to look for Ren Xiaosu? After that, we can go to the Zhou Consortium together to create trouble again."

Little Liren looked at Li Shentan quietly. "... Are you serious?"

During the whispered conversation, the herb collector who went out to search for spices returned. He was holding a few bright-colored berries in his hands. Then he applied it onto the roast meat and handed a portion to Li Shentan and Si Liren. "Have a taste, it's delicious."

Li Shentan did not accept the roast meat but took out a silver coin with a smile. The woman on the obverse of the silver coin looked very gentle and beautiful.

He said to the herb collectors, "Thank you for your hospitality. Why don't I perform a magic trick to show you all my gratitude?"

He flicked the silver coin high into the air with his thumb. As it spun, it rang with an extremely pleasant sound.

Li Shentan looked at the herb collectors and said with a smile, "I'll start asking, and you'll answer me. What will happen after eating these berries?"

"Whoever eats it will start vomiting and foaming at the mouth before dying," the herb collectors answered in a daze.

"Why did you give me this to eat?" Li Shentan asked.

"Because the two of you must be carrying valuables on you, and the box you're carrying must be filled with treasures," the herb collectors answered. "You two are probably superhumans, but even superhumans will die if they eat these berries."

Li Shentan understood that the other party had assumed he and Si Liren were superhumans. However, they were very bold to even dare to plot against superhumans using their proficiency in medicinal knowledge.

He felt a little pity. He had just said he would not hypnotize these people, yet he still hypnotized them in the end.

However, Li Shentan felt that these were not good people, so he did not violate his agreement with Ren Xiaosu! Perfect!

All of a sudden, Li Shentan looked into the dark forest behind him and saw a human face hanging upside down from a treetop in the distance. It was an extremely terrifying sight.

But in the moment it took for Li Shentan to blink, that figure disappeared from his view.

#### Chapter 1035 - Abduct Them To The Prosperous Northwest!

As the campfire flickered in the dark of the night, the light and heat it emitted spread into the forest. However, it looked like there was a huge mouth in the forest that was looking to devour the light bit by bit.

In the boundless darkness of the forest, the lonely campfire was the solitary source of light.

As Li Shentan had turned around too late, he did not see what the human face that was hanging upside down from the canopy looked like, nor how the other party had vanished.

As such, Li Shentan shouted in that direction, "Um... Can you show yourself again? I didn't see clearly just now!"

The forest was empty and no one responded to Li Shentan's request. It was as though no human face had ever appeared there.

Seeing no response, Li Shentan was a little disappointed.

Next to him, Little Liren looked at Li Shentan with a puzzled expression. "What are you doing?"

Li Shentan replied, "I think that was a pretty interesting magic trick. Pity I didn't get it."

Little Liren's eyes widened. "You think that person is doing magic for us?"

"Probably?" Li Shentan sat back down at the campfire. "Are you scared?"

"A little." Little Liren said, "But only a little. If anything ghostly really tries to approach us, I'll beat it to a pulp."

"Impressive, impressive," Li Shentan praised.

He decided to ignore the human face that appeared in the forest for the time being. He looked towards the herb collectors standing around the campfire in a daze and muttered while sizing them up, "How should we deal with them?"

"Why did they try to poison us?" Little Liren asked.

Li Shentan patiently explained, "They're probably seeking reincarnation."

Si Liren was silent for a moment, then said with a deadpan expression, "Answer me properly."

"Grandpa mentioned there's actually many treasures hidden in this mountain range in the South." Li Shentan said in seriousness, "Before The Cataclysm, human civilization was spread across the entire continent, and there was practically nowhere they did not develop and build upon. So while we're

seeing mountains here now, there must be up to several dozen cities buried under the forest. There should be a lot of gold and silver buried underneath, as well as valuables and information that can be found in this place."

"When they saw us two superhumans appear here while carrying a large metallic box, they must've thought we had found some treasure here." Li Shentan said, "Thus, a criminal intent was formed."

The forest south of the Zhou Consortium had turned into an utterly deserted land. Even the Zhou Consortium's troops could not bear the venomous creepy-crawlies and noxious vapor in the forest, let alone junk dealers who collected treasure.

In the early years, junk dealing was a very popular industry. Many people who thought they were capable made a living by looking for the treasure left behind by the Pre-Cataclysm civilization. Most of the current mob bosses had started off this way.

However, there were not many "treasures" that could be found anymore, so the junk dealing profession gradually ceased to exist.

People also used to come to Xiuzhuzhou where this forest was located. But as the number of deaths increased, others stopped coming. If it weren't for the fact that Li Shentan and Si Liren had brought along Chen Wudi, who was invulnerable to all evil, they wouldn't actually be able to stand the harsh environment out here either.

However, rumors of treasure buried in this forest were still circulating among the refugees.

"But finders keepers, so why did they try to rob us?" Si Liren mumbled.

"Because they're the real bad guys," Li Shentan remarked. "But we can't kill them yet because we still need them to lead us out of the forest. We won't get lost this time, right?"

"Then are we leaving right away?" Little Liren asked.

"Of course not." Li Shentan said with a glint in his eyes, "Didn't you hear what they said? The Lian tribe of Xiuzhuzhou sounds quite interesting. If the Lian tribe can really fight as well as these herb collectors claim, there'll be other uses for them."

"Like what?" Si Liren wondered.

"Didn't you hear them constantly going on about the Prosperous Northwest when we were at the Sacred Mountains? We can abduct the people of the Lian tribe to the Prosperous Northwest. Ren Xiaosu will definitely be surprised when he receives such a gift." Li Shentan got excited and said, "So it's decided then!"

Actually, when Li Shentan said the herb collectors were seeking reincarnation, he was fundamentally not wrong in saying so.

If these people knew the superhuman they were facing was the Demon Whisperer, they would probably not have dared to try to poison him.

Over the years, even the most outstanding hitman was unable to kill Li Shentan, let alone these amateurs who suddenly got the idea of killing him.

Right now, Li Shentan had not only gained control of the herb collectors, he even wanted to abduct the entire Lian tribe to join him in the Prosperous Northwest.

Li Shentan thought for a while and said, "How do we find those people of the Lian tribe? I'm definitely sure the Lian tribe exists, but where are they? Oh well, I'll just wait for them to come and find us."

After that, Li Shentan looked at the herb collectors and said with a smile, "The night is still young and I can't sleep. It's rather boring out here in this wilderness with nothing to do, so why don't you guys put on a talent show for me? Like doing the splits, singing and dancing, or something?"

In an instant, the herb collectors started singing and dancing. Their out-of-tune voices sounded like dreary cries and screams in the forest.

A dark figure in the forest had been approaching the campfire slowly. But when it saw what was happening at the campfire, it quickly retreated like a frightened animal.

Li Shentan looked back in the direction of where the dark figure had disappeared off to and said melancholically, "Did it get intimidated by us? I thought it would feel very welcomed by our warm atmosphere."

He then suddenly stood up and commanded the herb collectors to chase after the dark figure together with him.

Little Liren tacitly flew up into the sky immediately. Her eyes locked onto the target below as she gave directions to Li Shentan, who was giving chase below.

As the two sides sped through the forest, the dark apparition traversed through the forest like it was running on flat ground.

"What a big detour." Li Shentan muttered, "Where's it trying to lead us?"

Li Shentan pursued it at an unhurried pace and didn't seem like he was anxious.

More than 20 minutes later, Si Liren suddenly hovered in the air. When Li Shentan caught up with her from the rear, she landed on the ground. "There's a hole in the ground up ahead. Some lady dressed in strange clothing went inside."

The other party had also noticed Si Liren flying in the air. She knew that if someone had been watching her from above throughout the chase, she could not escape at all. Therefore, she found a hole in the ground to shake off Si Liren's pursuit.

"Is it someone from the Lian tribe?" Li Shentan slowly walked to the wide entrance of the underground tunnel that stood more than two meters tall. It was clear that the squarish entrance was man-made. However, it looked extremely dilapidated, probably because it was constructed a long time ago.

"Eh, this might be the entrance to the ruins left behind by human civilization before The Cataclysm." Li Shentan wondered, "Do you think there could be any treasure inside?"

"It doesn't lookit. What treasure could there be in such a rundown place?" Si Liren said.

"There must be!" Li Shentan said firmly, "C'mon, let's go in and have a look."

After that, Li Shentan took out a flashlight from his backpack and walked straight into the underground tunnel. As he walked, he kept muttering, "If there's any treasure in here, we can present it as a gift when we get to the Prosperous Northwest."

Little Liren grumbled, "Grandpa always said you're biased and would side with outsiders rather than your own family. He really wasn't wrong about you. Can't you leave some money for Grandpa? I heard he's quite short on cash."

Li Shentan thought for a moment. "If there's any treasure in here, we'll share half of it with Grandpa!"

But before he could walk much further in, Li Shentan's expression turned strange. He saw some mottled words on the wall he was shining his flashlight on.

Underground Parking Garage.

Chapter 1036 - Black Tuxedo

Li Shentan and Si Liren both lacked common sense, and their thinking had always been unconventional. To strangers, their actions did not seem logical at all.

But it did not mean they were dumb. They still knew what an "underground parking garage" was.

This was a place where people used to park their vehicles before The Cataclysm. How could there be any fucking treasure in here!

"Are we really going inside? It's so dark. What if there's a trap?" Little Liren said worriedly.

Then she watched Li Shentan cup his hands around his mouth and shout into the underground parking garage, "Hey, is there a trap inside?"

After waiting a dozen seconds, there was no response from inside. Only the sound of his voice continued echoing in the empty underground parking garage.

Hearing that, Li Shentan said in seriousness, "There shouldn't be any traps!"

Little Liren was speechless and said helplessly, "Are you implying that just because no one answered you, there's no trap?"

"More or less." Li Shentan nodded with a smile before walking toward the dark underground parking garage without hesitation. "Wait for me here with the herb collectors. She's still inside, so I'm going in to catch her!"

When Little Liren, who was standing behind him, heard this, she did not insist on following him in. Rather, she continued hovering outside the underground parking garage because she knew that Li Shentan had absolute confidence in capturing that lady.

If Li Shentan said that he could capture her, he could definitely do so.

The white beam from the flashlight swept across the underground parking garage. The vehicles parked there had already turned into piles of scrap metal. They were so badly corroded it was difficult to tell that all of them used to be vehicles.

Li Shentan paced slowly around the ruins. In the darkness where the flashlight could not reach, there would occasionally be sounds of slight disturbances. By the time he flicked it over, there would be nothing there anymore.

At the beginning, he thought this place was probably where the Lian tribe's settlement was. But now it seemed like it wasn't the case at all. The other party was just trying to lure him here.

This was the hunting ground the other party had carefully selected, so she must be very proficient at hunting in the dark.

Li Shentan shouted into the darkness, "Why don't we step forward and talk about the Prosperous Northwest plan?"

As his words trailed off, he tilted his head slightly to the left. Amid the whooshes, an unknown, sharp object brushed past his ear and disturbed Li Shentan's messy head of white, medium-length hair.

"I just want to talk. Why are you getting so worked up?" Li Shentan muttered.

But no matter what he said, the whooshing from the sharp weapons continued coming at him from within the darkness. Li Shentan attempted to search for the enemy's figure with his flashlight while dodging the attacks.

But that girl from the Lian tribe hiding in the darkness was like an apparition. He could not see her at all.

Li Shentan thought for a moment and said, "Stop thinking about fighting and killing all the time. Why don't I perform a magic trick for you?"

In that instant, a huge cloud of smoke went off around him. The apparition in the darkness seemed to be a little confused, so she did not continue sneaking in attacks at Li Shentan with her concealed weapons.

A moment later, the young lunatic emerged from the smoke. At some point, he had changed into a black tuxedo.

Li Shentan's lips curled. "I'm gonna start looking for you." He closed his eyes and switched off his flashlight.

In the completely dark underground parking garage, the air stilled. When another sharp weapon came flying at Li Shentan, he no longer tried to dodge it. Instead, he took out a playing card and flicked it.

The gray Joker on the playing card had a maniacal smile on its face, silently mocking its target.

In the blink of an eye, when the card and the sharp weapon collided in midair, that smiling Joker sliced through an iron nail and split it in two!

"I can do that too," Li Shentan said with a smile with his eyes closed before vanishing on the spot.

With that, the apparition in the darkness suddenly turned from one to two.

The two sides kept attacking each other with the nails and cards in total darkness. The sound of metallic clinking could be heard in the air as the collisions sent fiery sparks flying.

The girl from the Lian tribe seemed to have sensed great danger as she started running towards another exit in the darkness. But at this moment, the roles of hunter and prey swapped. The cards flew towards her from within the boundless darkness and forced her to dodge quickly.

The girl somersaulted and twisted in the darkness with great flexibility to avoid the attacks. Then she flitted past the pillars in the underground parking garage and darted off into the distance like a swallow in flight.

But a second later, something suddenly lit up in front of her. She saw Li Shentan hanging upside down from the ceiling of the parking garage. He was using the flashlight to illuminate his entire face from under his chin, making him look extremely pale and terrifying.

Li Shentan smiled and said, "Found you!"

The young girl from the Lian tribe let out a scream. She had only wanted to scare the white-haired young man. However, she did not manage to do so and was instead frightened by him using the same method.

Before the startled young girl could say anything, a silver whirlpool resembling a bright kaleidoscope appeared in Li Shentan's eyes at the snap of a finger.

Li Shentan said softly, "Quiet."

It was as though someone were whispering in her ear. The eyes of the girl from the Lian tribe turned vacant and she became quiet.

When Li Shentan lightly landed back on the ground from the ceiling, he raised his flashlight and shone it at the young lady as he carefully sized up her.

She was dressed in very strange clothing that was stitched together from pieces of cloth, making it look extremely incongruous, like patchwork. As her top did not cover her navel, Li Shentan could even see her well-defined abs. Meanwhile, the pair of shorts she was wearing revealed the young lady's slender but firm thighs.

After staring at her for a long time, Li Shentan muttered, "You're quite pretty.... I want you to answer some of my questions. Why didn't you use any other forms of attacks? Don't they say that the people of the Lian tribe are adept at corpse and gu poison refinement? So why did you only attack me using concealed weapons?"

The girl from the Lian tribe replied, "I only came out to gather medicinal herbs and did not expect to encounter any outsiders, so I didn't bring my gold corpse with me."

Li Shentan muttered, "Gold, silver, copper. Based on this sequence, you seem to hold quite a high position in the Lian tribe.... What about gu poison? Why didn't you use it?"

"The conditions for using the gu poison are very harsh. I didn't have any chance to use it," the girl from the Lian tribe answered.

"What's your name?" Li Shentan asked.

"Lian Yi."

"It sounds very nice," Li Shentan complimented. "How many people are there in your Lian tribe?"

"More than 1,300."

"How many of them know how to practice corpse and gu poison refinement like you?"

"About 400," Lian Yi answered.

Just as Li Shentan was about to continue questioning Lian Yi, he heard Si Liren shouting outside the parking garage, "Li Shentan, have you caught her yet?"

Li Shentan quickly changed out of his tuxedo and put on his outdoor jacket again. "If Little Liren sees me like this, she'll definitely say I'm showing off again!"

When Li Shentan led Lian Yi out of the underground parking garage, Little Liren looked curiously at the girl from the Lian tribe. "She's alone?"

"Mhm." Li Shentan nodded. "She claimed she came out to gather medicinal herbs. Initially, she was just being playful and wanted to scare us when she encountered us."

But to Lian Yi's surprise, not only did she fail to scare this lunatic, she even ended up becoming his captive.

Si Liren pursed her lips and said, "She's already an adult, so why's she still acting so childishly?"

The words spoken from Little Liren's mouth sounded extremely odd. However, Little Liren had a look of maturity on her face as she made a matter-of-fact remark.

Si Liren was a little more mature than other children her age. After all, if she were any less mature in the company of a lunatic like Li Shentan, the two of them would probably be beyond redemption.

Li Shentan found an open area outside the underground parking garage and sat down. Then he continued questioning Lian Yi, "Did your tribe take in some foreign herb collectors at one point?"

"Yes," Lian Yi answered, "but it was only during the early years when there were a lot of active herb collectors in the area, and some of them accidentally got lost and entered Xiuzhuzhou by mistake. We haven't seen any more of them in recent years."

"So by allowing those people to go back, did you intend to use them to trick others into coming here so you'd have candidates to practice corpse refinement on?" Li Shentan asked again.

"No, we've never harmed any strangers before in our practice of corpse refinement. We had only started practicing corpse refinement so that our tribespeople who died from illnesses could live forever," Lian Yi said.

This answer took Li Shentan by surprise. He had assumed with the greatest malice and speculated the Lian tribe was a malevolent group, but it was not as he had imagined.

Meanwhile, their idea of using corpse refinement to let their fellow tribespeople who had died of illnesses to live forever seemed to fit very well with some of the obscure tribal mindsets.

Perhaps the Lian tribe had become sealed within this wilderness by the forested mountains after The Cataclysm, making them live a life of seclusion from the rest of the society, and they later came to possess such special means of survival.

The strength and technique displayed by Lian Yi when she used her concealed weapons was extremely shocking. Honestly, not many people could battle a superhuman like Li Shentan with such intensity. After all, he had mastered control over his own subconsciousness.

At the beginning, Li Shentan had shouted "is there a trap inside" into the underground parking garage. It was at that time that he started hypnotizing her. But to Li Shentan's surprise, his hypnosis did not succeed.

This made Li Shentan realize the young Lian Yi was probably a relatively stronger superhuman as compared to those in the Alliance of Strongholds. However, he was more powerful than her.

As for how he apprehended Lian Yi after that, there was no need to mention it. If it were any other superhuman who had come here, they would probably have died at her hands long ago.

There was also a peculiar reason as to why Li Shentan was so powerful now. It was just as he had said to Ren Xiaosu before: "I believe the brain's potential corresponds to how powerful a supernatural being can become. There's too many functional areas in the brain that humans are still unaware of, so when they unlock that potential, it will signal the dawn of a new world."

He had previously determined that when the brain reached 20% of its potential, humans could control external objects without any physical contact. When the brain reached 70% of its potential, humans would become on par with gods.

If they wanted there to be light, there would be light.

When the brain reached a 100% of its potential, those humans would evolve into a world consciousness and become an omnipresent force.

This was what Li Shentan had theorized, and he had only revealed it to a few people.

Right now, Li Shentan's superpower was only hypnosis, but he could always use it in a way that surpassed the power's limits, which was actually very illogical.

But he was able to do that because he not only hypnotized others but also himself.

To be precise, he hypnotized his own subconsciousness to fully unlock his brain's potential.

Of course, this was a very slow process. That was because if he forcibly increased the rate at which he unlocked his brain's potential, it would cause his body to collapse. Even Li Shentan would find that quite difficult to bear. Therefore, he precisely controlled the balance between how much his physical body could bear and raising his mental strength.

He could only unlock the next stage after his body had reached a certain level of endurance.

Many people thought the Demon Whisperer was powerful because he was born with that power. But they never expected that Li Shentan actually had an entire set of theories and methods that he could continuously use to strengthen himself. Moreover, after his verification, he found his theory to be correct.

At this moment, a loud rustling came from the trees around them.

Li Shentan's hair immediately stood on end. "Snakes! Why's there so many snakes?!"

He hugged the box Little Liren was carrying so the snakes would not approach him.

A second later, a figure with a silvery face flew out of the forest and threw a heavy punch straight at Li Shentan's face!

"Is that a silver corpse?"

Li Shentan was forced to let go of the box and turned to face the enemy that had appeared out of nowhere. He knew that Lian Yi's tribespeople must have arrived.

Facing the silver corpse, Li Shentan took out a silver coin from his pocket and flicked it into the air with his thumb.

A sharp ringing reverberated through the forest. But to Li Shentan's surprise, the silver corpse seemed to be a natural "nemesis" of hypnotists. It was not afraid of being hypnotized at all.

Li Shentan exclaimed and was sent flying a dozen meters away after taking a punch to the face. Then dozens of silver and copper corpses emerged from the forest and pinned Li Shentan down firmly on the ground.

The corpses' appearances were not that terrifying, and they did not have the sharp and vicious fangs he had imagined. Other than a strange skin tone, they basically maintained their appearances from when they were still alive. One of them was a short and fat copper corpse that looked rather cute.

When Little Liren saw that Li Shentan had been punched in the face, she almost exploded with anger. But to her surprise, she actually saw Li Shentan winking at her even though he was being pressed on the ground.

A voice came from the forest. "Little girl, don't act rashly. We don't wish to hurt you."

Si Liren said sweetly, "OK! I won't move!"

The person in the forest did not get too close and said from afar, "You! White-haired young man! What have you done to our chief?"

"Uh, I only... hypnotized her." Li Shentan said with a smile, "We were just having a friendly discussion regarding the Prosperous Northwest. We might've had some disagreements during the conversation, so I helped her calm down a little."

Honestly, Li Shentan had not expected Lian Yi to actually be the chief of the Lian tribe. Wasn't she a little too young for that? Could the position of chief be hereditary?

Or did Lian Yi become the chief because she was the strongest among them?

He remembered that Lian Yi had said she was a gold corpse user. But after looking carefully, he did not see any gold corpses among the corpses.

Since Lian Yi possessed a gold corpse, she should be the strongest of these people.

"Hmph!" A woman in the forest sneered, "You had better dispel your hypnotism. If anything happens to our chief, we'll feed you to the snakes here."

"I'll dispel it immediately, but you'll have to get them to free one of my hands," Li Shentan said helplessly.

"Don't try any tricks," someone in the forest sneered.

The silver and copper corpses released one of Li Shentan's hands. When he snapped his fingers lightly, Lian Yi came back to her senses as though she had suddenly woken up.

Someone asked eagerly, "Chief, are you alright?"

Lian Yi nodded her head. "I'm fine."

She looked around her surroundings. When she saw that Li Shentan was being restrained, she suddenly got angry. "How dare you scare me instead! That was over the line! Keep him under watch and take him back to the village stronghold to be my consort!"

Li Shentan was shocked. "Eh?!"

Si Liren's eyes widened and her jaw dropped as she fell into a complete shock!

## Chapter 1038 - Legacy

Li Shentan had thought that if he offended the Lian tribe's chief, she might retaliate with a series of actions against him, such as tying him to a wooden stake and whipping him, or hanging him up and refusing to give him any water to drink.

But he was not afraid of that. The people from the Lian tribe had underestimated his power of hypnotism and thought they could really place him under captivity with these copper and silver corpses.

If they actually attempted to kill him, the people from the Lian tribe would get defined as "bad people" in Li Shentan's mind, and he would not feel any guilt about hypnotizing them to join the Prosperous Northwest together.

Li Shentan had promised Ren Xiaosu to be a good person and live with a ray of light in his heart. As such, everything he did now would have to be based on this philosophy and match its logic, so he could not hypnotize the good people, only those who were bad.

Although Ren Xiaosu was not here to keep an eye on him, they were still carrying Chen Wudi with them.

Little Liren had previously asked him: "When will Big Brother Wudi wake up?"

Li Shentan's answer was that Chen Wudi would wake up once certain conditions were met.

It would have to be something that could convince someone who had sealed himself away that it was meaningful for him to wake up, and that the world still needed him as a ray of light.

Therefore, Li Shentan told Ren Xiaosu that Chen Wudi might wake up when a widely acknowledged fiend like him truly turned good. At that time, the Demon Whisperer would finally receive his salvation as well.

With Chen Wudi "spectating," how could he hypnotize good people so casually?

But now, she didn't even intend to take revenge on him. Instead, she wanted to bring him back to become her consort?!

Li Shentan suddenly felt that Lian Yi did not seem normal either. For some reason, he even felt like he had encountered his own kind.

But what the hell was this? If any other man heard about this, his first reaction would probably be: "Such a good deal exists?!"

Lian Yi was a very beautiful girl, and her tanned skin even added a very unique charm to her.

How was this revenge? She was clearly returning injury with kindness!

Of course, Li Shentan was not a lecher. It was just that he found it a little difficult to determine whether Lian Yi was a good or bad person. As such, he could not use his hypnosis on her anymore.

Li Shentan turned his pleading gaze to Little Liren next to him, but Little Liren asked Lian Yi with great interest instead, "The romance novels I've read don't have as bold a plot as this. If you have a baby together after bringing him back, whose surname will the baby take?"

"The baby will take the surname of our Lian tribe, of course," Lian Yi replied proudly. "In our Lian tribe, women are the head of the family."

Li Shentan mouthed to Little Liren, "Get these silver and copper corpses away from me."

Little Liren nodded upon seeing this. Then she said to Lian Yi, "In that case, hurry up! Take him back and marry him already!"

Li Shentan was confused.

With that, Little Liren revolted against Li Shentan. She even seemed like she was extremely looking forward to the marriage.

The women of the Lian tribe immediately looked at Little Liren with an even kinder gaze. Someone even promised to roast some meat for her after they returned to their village stronghold.

As such, dozens of copper and silver corpses escorted Li Shentan to the south of Xiuzhuzhou. Meanwhile, Lian Yi, Little Liren, and the others chatted and laughed happily as they followed behind.

Li Shentan stared blankly ahead and said melancholically, "That little girl has revolted!"

At this moment, Little Liren carefully sized up those copper and silver corpses. Then she asked Lian Yi and the others curiously, "Are these your former relatives?"

"You could say that." Lian Yi replied, "Actually, we don't know some of them either. For example, the gold corpse that I control was actually passed down through the generations. The reason why we were able to survive and escape all the way here from the Southwest before The Cataclysm was due to the existence of the gold corpse. You can say that he's our ancestor we respect a great deal."

When Li Shentan, who was walking in front of them, heard that, he was stunned. "The gold corpse existed before The Cataclysm?"

Lian Yi frowned. "Don't interrupt when the women are talking."

Li Shentan was speechless.

He wondered if the men of the Lian tribe really did not command any standing.

However, Little Liren still helped him to clarify his doubts. "But supernatural beings have only appeared in recent years. How did you guys gain such a powerful power before The Cataclysm?"

"That's nothing new." Lian Yi thought for a moment and explained, "During the Pre-Cataclysm times, our tribe was not the only one that could wield powers beyond common skills. There was a Rider who went by the name of Ren He who visited our village and was already very powerful at that time. He could not be beaten even with two of our village's gold corpses fighting him. That happened before The Cataclysm, so he had already become a supernatural being before that. I'm not making this up. It was recorded in the chronicles of our tribe."

"Oh, I see." Li Shentan nodded. It seemed that a tiny fraction of people had already possessed superpowers before The Cataclysm. However, the Rider's way of unlocking those powers was different from his. Based on his deduction, the Riders' progression was to complete a set of specific tasks to unlock the shackles within their bodies.

The Riders and the Lian tribe were a little unique in the current era. The majority of superhumans relied purely on "luck" to awaken their powers, while the Riders and the Lian tribe had developed a mature inheritance system.

The existence of such legacies should be extremely rare. Since the world was so big, he wondered if similar legacies also existed outside the Alliance of Strongholds?

Li Shentan had never paid attention to these matters before, but he thought that maybe he could ask Grandpa Hu Shuo if he knew anything about these interesting stories.

Li Shentan suddenly said curiously, "But it looks to me like you're very skilled. It shouldn't be easy for someone as skilled as you to fall sick, or maybe even never. You said you practice corpse refinement to

keep your dead relatives around. But since you guys don't fall sick, how would you have any relatives who passed away from sickness?"

Lian Yi did not tell him to shut up this time but replied coldly, "Do you think we wish to see our relatives dying from illnesses? There's only a few hundred people in our tribe who can practice corpse refinement. The rest are just normal people. I only encountered y'all this time because I was out gathering medicinal herbs. Many of our tribespeople become sick during the seasonal transition from winter to spring. No matter how hard we try to look after them, they aren't able to recover fully. It makes us really worried as well."

"What kinds of illnesses?" Li Shentan asked.

"Currently, we have more than twenty villagers suffering from sore throats and fevers," Lian Yi said.

Li Shentan was stunned. "Isn't that just a simple fever? It might be caused by viruses, mycoplasma, germs, or fungal infections. They should recover after taking some antibiotics. Even if antibiotics aren't available in your tribe, you guys should definitely have developed some folk remedies for treating illnesses since you've survived for this long."

"We migrated here from other places. As we couldn't find the herbs used to treat the illnesses here, we could only test out the different herbs that we find here to see which works." Lian Yi said, "But after so long, we still haven't found any suitable herbs to treat them with. In fact, some of our tribespeople even died after consuming poisonous plants."

Li Shentan suddenly felt that this might be the opportunity for him to coerce the Lian tribe into joining the Prosperous Northwest!

"Have you ever considered that even though you can turn your fellow tribespeople into copper corpses after they pass away from their illnesses and keep them around to commemorate them, they're actually still dead?" Li Shentan asked. "So wouldn't it be better to treat them medically with scientific methods while they're still alive? I know of a place that has a pretty good standard of medical treatment. It's called the Northwest..."

Lian Yi glared at him. "Our Lian tribe will not leave Xiuzhuzhou. Even if we lack medical care here at Xiuzhuzhou, it's still better than leaving to suffer the hardship of war."

When Li Shentan heard that, he knew he could not just use a simple ploy to lure her to the Prosperous Northwest.

From the looks of it, the Lian tribe was quite determined to avoid the rest of society.

However, he was still a little curious. "By the way, you just said you went to gather herbs. Have you found some medicinal herbs to treat the illnesses?"

Lian Yi answered, "It's not enough to make them recover fully just yet, but it can help ease their suffering. This medicinal herb is also quite miraculous. It can help ease their pain quickly when applied on external wounds, but they'll become quite immobile after the application."

Li Shentan thought to himself, 'Isn't that just an anesthetic?'

So it appeared the Lian tribe's way of treating a fever was just to use anesthesia? By numbing the patients, they would not feel pain anymore, and that was equivalent to curing their illnesses?

Li Shentan pondered this for a long time and realized he could not fault the logic of such a method!

The village stronghold of the Lian tribe was located ten kilometers south of the underground parking garage. From the outside, it did not look like there was anything special about the small stronghold. However, it looked quite unique and refreshing as it was situated amid lush greenery.

Most of the households in the village were two-story buildings constructed out of trees. Some of the windows were open, and colorful floral garlands hung on the window handles. It looked like the flowers had just been freshly plucked.

Curious, Si Liren asked, "Why are there garlands hanging on some of the windows but not the others?"

Lian Yi answered, "The houses with the garlands identify the women who are open to walking marriages."

Walking marriage was probably a very unfamiliar term to the Central Plains people.<sup>1</sup>

Over here, only the women were allowed to live on the second floor of their houses. Once they opened their windows and hung out the garlands, it signified men could climb in through the windows in the middle of the night to consummate the marriage. If the garlands on the windows were no longer there and got replaced by a hat instead, it would mean the woman in the house had already chosen her partner, and no one should disturb them.

In the village, the women called their male lovers "ah'zhu," while the men called their female lovers "ah'xia."

When the men went to their ah'xias' homes to spend the night, they would have to leave before dawn the next day. Otherwise, it would be considered very rude.

This was why there was a very strange phenomenon going on in the village. During the day, all the men would be cooped up at home, and it was possible that seven brothers could be cooped up together until they headed out to find their ah'xias at night.

If one of the seven brothers had not found their ah'xia yet, he would be the only one left at home during the night. This would put them in an exceedingly miserable state.

A grand bonfire party was held every night in the village to create opportunities for the tribespeople to find their ah'xias and ah'zhus.

As a result, it was very joyous in the village every single day... that was, if no one was sick.

In this village, the men did not have to do any work. A lot of people thought that in a matriarchal society like this, the women could enjoy everything like a queen bee. But actually, the women here were very hardworking. They were very capable and used their copper and silver corpses to provide themselves with free labor.

Many people would probably have the same thoughts as Li Shentan if they heard about the Lian tribe's corpse refinement practice. They would probably assume the copper and silver corpses were definitely used for killing people like how such things were described in tall tales.

But in fact, the copper and silver corpses of the Lian tribe were mostly used only to farm.

In the village, other than the gold corpses, the rest of the corpses were basically just tools for labor.

Li Shentan looked at the short and fat copper corpse not far away and suddenly felt that it was getting cuter.

Back at the teahouse in Luoyang City, he had heard stories about corpse refinement. However, those stories were all related to fighting and killing. He did not expect that when he came into actual contact with corpse refinement, this term would suddenly become so down to earth.

When Lian Yi and the others escorted Li Shentan back, many people from the village came to watch and asked what was going on.

When everyone found out that Lian Yi had finally found her ah'zhu, they gave her their most sincere blessings.

"Hey, wait a minute," Li Shentan said to the crowd, "why are you all making it sound like we're already married? You don't have to give your blessings so early. Surely there's still some leeway regarding this matter, right?"

These words were like a dying patient telling their doctor they could still be saved.

But the crowd ignored him and continued giving their blessings to Lian Yi.

Under normal circumstances, women from the Central Plains would definitely become very shy in this situation. However, Lian Yi did not feel that way. She accepted all of their blessings calmly and promised she would definitely bear a child soon.

These words dumbfounded Li Shentan!

What did she mean by they were going to have children soon?!

Just who was the lunatic here? Why did it feel like the woman was much crazier than him? Li Shentan felt offended.

When everyone escorted Li Shentan to Lian Yi's place, he realized she lived in the largest house in the entire village. In the middle of the house was a fireplace built out of stone. The fire within was burning brightly.

To the Lian tribe of Xiuzhuzhou, the tribal leader's fireplace symbolized the prosperity of the entire Lian tribe. It must not be extinguished, or it would mean the tribe would suffer a great calamity.

When Lian Yi reached home, she said coldly to Li Shentan in front of everyone, "You're my first ah'zhu and will also be my last, so this is your honor. Why do you look so unhappy? If I didn't think that you were handsome, I wouldn't have gone through all that trouble."

Lian Yi's vision allowed her to see in the darkness, so Li Shentan's dashing appearance in his tuxedo in the underground parking garage charmed her.

The women of the Lian tribe were straightforward and direct. If Lian Yi said she wanted him to be her consort, he would have to be her consort.

Off to the side, a middle-aged woman from the Lian tribe said, "Chief, I think this person is a little fierce. You have to be more careful than usual. Watch over him more often and discipline him more than normal."

Li Shentan looked at her in a speechless manner. 'Why are there so many "mores"? Just how worried are you, really?'

But Lian Yi shook her head and said, "Don't worry, I've already refined the Scarlet Gu and can use it on him."

When the womenfolk of the Lian tribe heard this, they were relieved. "Chief is still the best. You even managed to refine the Scarlet Gu."

With that, Lian Yi took out a small cinnabar box from her house. Li Shentan asked frostrily, "Whaddafuck?"

Lian Yi was stunned. After thinking for a long time, she replied, "Wannafuck? Yes."

Li Shentan was surprised. 'Lady! Should you be talking like this in front of all these people? More importantly, that's not what I was asking! What I wanna know is, what is this Scarlet Gu used for?!

Chapter 1040 - Scarlet Gu

"What is this Scarlet Gu?" Li Shentan asked after calming himself down.

If the Scarlet Gu were some kind of venomous worm Lian Yi intended to use on him, it would prove she was a bad person.

And if she were a bad person, he could hypnotize her without feeling guilty, right?

The women thought he could no longer put up a resistance after being apprehended, but the problem was that the Demon Whisperer's hypnotism was not something normal people could understand. With just a few words, he could hypnotize everyone here!

Lian Yi looked at Li Shentan and said, "Since we're going to live together in the future, I might as well tell you. The Scarlet Gu is a secret skill that our tribe does not impart to others. The Scarlet Gu is as small as a needle. If it flies up next to you on a normal day, you might not even notice it. After you refine the Scarlet Gu, you can make it suck your blood and let it parasitize your target's body. Then the target will fall head over heels with the person controlling the Scarlet Gu and won't abandon her."

Li Shentan was stunned. The most complicated thing in the world was probably emotion, so how could someone possibly manipulate the emotions of others with just a tiny worm?

Moreover, it did not seem like this thing was considered harmful. This woman could not truly be defined as a bad person if she only wanted to use the gu worm to gain his affection.

What was the definition of a bad person in Li Shentan's eyes? Someone who did things to hurt others.

But what Lian Yi wanted to do was probably what a lot of men would consider bliss.

What should he do? Although he still felt he could not use hypnotism on her, he really did not want to be the target of her gu poison.

He turned his gaze to Little Liren and realized she was looking excitedly at the cinnabar box in Lian Yi's hands. It was as though she could not wait to see him get implanted with the gu worm!

Lian Yi told Li Shentan, "You don't have to worry that it'll harm your health. Once it drinks my blood and parasitizes your body, not only will it make you healthier and stronger, it will also give you the ability to

refine corpses. At that time, you and I will be on equal footing, and we can govern the village stronghold here in Xiuzhuzhou together."

Li Shentan had a strange expression on his face. It was as though Lian Yi was saying to him, "Look, Xiuzhuzhou is the land I've conquered for you."

Scarlet Gu had an extremely special place in the Lian tribe. It helped maintain the relationship between two people, making sure they would never abandon one another. Under normal circumstances, the matriarch's ah'zhu was no different from a normal man who commanded no social standing in the village. But after the matriarch used the Scarlet Gu on him, he would become a respected person.

The logic behind this was that men who did not have the Scarlet Gu implanted in them were still unreliable and untrustworthy. But men who had the Scarlet Gu were good people and could enjoy the same high status as women.

Speaking of which, this was one of the unique customs of the Lian tribe.

But as a result of this, Li Shentan was even more unwilling to use hypnotism. Not only was Lian Yi about to gift him her tribe, she was even going to present him the entire village stronghold. Where else could he find such a good person in the world? If he were to use hypnosis on someone like that, wouldn't he become the enemy of good? The opposite of good was evil!

However, he really did not want to be implanted with the gu worm!

Li Shentan slowly calmed down and said to Lian Yi, "I don't believe it! I don't believe that your Scarlet Gu is that magical!"

Lian Yi got angry. "Why don't you believe me?!"

"Who in the world dares to proclaim they can control the emotions of people?"

"Scarlet Gu can do that!"

"I don't believe it!"

Lian Yi was so angry she wanted to hit someone. "Then I'll show you."

With that, Lian Yi drew a dagger from her belt and pointed it at Li Shentan. "Put your hand out for me. I'll let the Scarlet Gu drink your blood and parasitize me. I'll show you the Scarlet Gu really works! You'll see if my feelings for you are genuine!"

Li Shentan stretched out his hand. "Sure!"

But Lian Yi started laughing strangely. "Do you really think I'm that stupid? Pin him down."

Li Shentan said helplessly, "Wait a minute, let's talk nicely."

If this were any other place, Li Shentan would not have felt so helpless. If he had encountered bad people, he would just kill them. How could it have possibly become so troublesome?

But it just so happened that this strange tribe in Xiuzhuzhou was actually intent on giving him control of the village stronghold even though they looked extremely ferocious.

How nonsensical!

Li Shentan calmed down and said, "It's like this: I know a way to treat your people. Why don't we leave the matters between us for later? Can you let me treat their illnesses first? As the tribal chief, you can't possibly disregard the lives of your own people, right?"

Lian Yi was stunned. "You have a way to treat them? Don't lie to me. If you don't have any idea of how to do it, just hurry up and submit to me. We'll hold the wedding celebration tonight to help our sick villagers get better soon."<sup>1</sup>

Li Shentan nearly broke down. He was a legendary superhuman from the Central Plains, the Demon Whisperer, who could make people blanch at the mention of him, as well as a child whisperer. How did he end up having to get married to help the sick recover?!

Why was everything that happened since they arrived in Xiuzhuzhou so abnormal?!

"If I say they can be cured, they'll definitely be cured." Li Shentan said, "Can you have these copper and silver corpses release me first? It will only take a moment for you to understand."

After some thought, she summoned her gold corpse to stand guard next to Li Shentan in case he tried some trick. Only then did she have the rest of the corpses free him.

Li Shentan looked at the gold corpse and saw it was actually a benevolent-looking old man. Other than his golden skin tone, there was nothing unusual about him.

He took out a satellite phone from his backpack and dialed Hu Shuo's number and put the call on speaker. "Grandpa!"

Hu Shuo was clearly a little surprised. "How rare of you to call me. Did something happen?"

Li Shentan took a deep breath and said, "I have been abducted to the south of Xiuzhuzhou to get married. They even said I'll have to father some children soon...."

Hu Shuo chuckled. "That's good."

Li Shentan grew annoyed. He was fine with Little Liren not wanting to help him, but why was his grandpa also cheering for his abductors?

All of a sudden, Lian Yi said in a clarion voice, "Grandpa."

Li Shentan looked at Lian Yi in shock. 'Who the hell are you calling Grandpa?!'

However, Hu Shuo did not mind at all. Instead, he laughed out loud on the phone and said, "Hello! I still have some matters to attend to in the Central Plains. After I'm done, I'll go and visit you all. I can help take care of your children—"

"Let's talk about why I'm calling you first," Li Shentan interrupted. "It's like this: There's more than 20 people in this village suffering from headaches and fever. Grandpa, can you send over some medicine, antibiotics, or something to treat their inflammation?"

Hu Shuo thought for a moment and said, "That won't be a problem. The Wang Consortium has been very strict with their drug controls recently, but I should be able to get my hands on some."

"No." Next to them, Lian Yi shook her head and said, "Grandpa, you can come, but we won't allow other outsiders to visit Xiuzhuzhou as they please. You can't reveal the location of our village to them."

Li Shentan looked at Lian Yi helplessly. "Is the location of the village more important than the lives of over 20 of your tribespeople?"

Lian Yi pursed her lips and did not say anything. She seemed to be in a dilemma as well.

The people of the Lian tribe had been living in Xiuzhuzhou for over 200 years. This place was a utopia, and they really did not want it to be disturbed by outsiders.

It was OK if someone had gotten lost and wandered in, but how could they let more people know about this location?

Li Shentan sighed and said, "Grandpa, is there any way to make the antibiotics ourselves?"

Hu Shuo thought for a moment on the other end of the line and suddenly replied, "You guys definitely can't make antibiotics like penicillin, tetracycline, and so on. However, there's an antibiotic you can really produce. Allicin! This antibiotic is mostly used in agriculture in the Central Plains. Since we can't send any medicine in, that's really the best option you have for now."

In some cultures, if an elderly relative is ill, young couples move up the wedding date in the belief that it might help their recovery—a practice called