

Chapter 121: Stupid or just playing dumb?

Luo Lan did not know that Qing Zhen had already ordered people to start looking for him, nor did he know that Qing Zhen was facing subjugation by the consortium's board of directors. He only knew the distant sweet potatoes smelled good.

He looked over to his trusted aide next to him and said, "Well... Tang Zhou, go and see if there are any more sweet potatoes that they haven't dug up from the field."

His trusted aide whose name was Tang Zhou said, "Why don't we just take some from them?"

"What do you know?" Luo Lan scolded angrily, "Am I that kind of person? If the consortium wants me to kill those from the Pyro Company right now, I would do it without batting an eyelid. But what would they say about me if it gets found out that I snatched food from a group of escapees?"

"But the sweet potato field has already been dug clean by them," Tang Zhou said awkwardly.

There were over 3,000 escapees in total. The sweet potato field was not the result of scaled up agriculture, but one that had sprouted up in the wild since who knew when.

It was not easy for these escapees who had been starving for several days to find something to eat. So they would definitely dig up everything they could find. Even if they could not finish eating the sweet potatoes, they could take them with them on the road. At the least, they would not have to go hungry again for the next few days.

Only people who had gone hungry before would understand what it felt like to be starving. Seeing that it was only a few days since their escape, all of the escapees had slimmed down quite a bit.

Only Ren Xiaosu and company did not seem like they had changed much in appearance.

Luo Lan thought about it for a long time. "Those of you who brought money with you, go and buy some from them."

Luo Lan did not have the time to bring anything with him during his escape. Otherwise, he would have put on pants. It was almost the same for the combat brigade soldiers as well. As the earthquake happened too suddenly, nearly all those who had the thought to retrieve their money were buried underneath houses.

The soldiers looked at each other as they pooled their money. Finally, they managed to come up with 4,000 yuan that was made up of whatever spare change they usually carried in their pockets.

Luo Lan looked at the money with glimmering eyes. "Tang Zhou, take some people over and buy the food. Be careful not to get attacked by them."

“Got it.” Tang Zhou led a combat platoon with him. The combat platoons that were lucky to survive had been reorganized into new teams. Although the wounded would not have to join the battles, at least two-thirds out of 200 troops could still fight.

Luo Lan did not forget to tell them, “Buy it at 50 times the usual price and don’t disgrace the Qing Consortium. We don’t take advantage of others.”

Food was obviously more important than money at this time, but whether offering 50 times the normal price was worth it would depend on the point of view.

They would get back human civilization someday and might even reach Stronghold 109 in another three days if they walked a bit faster. At that time, they would need money to buy things. Although the Qing Consortium only had a so-so relationship with the Li Consortium, they still had some businesses and assets in Stronghold 109. Therefore, the money issued by the Qing Consortium would still have some purchasing power.

The relationship between the organizations was very complicated. It was not like a stronghold controlled by the Li Consortium would not be influenced by the other organizations. Most of the time, the distribution of influence between the organizations was interconnected in a complex fashion.

As the various strongholds were in different locations, it meant they controlled different natural resources. So there was a mutual dependency between the corporations.

For example, the areas controlled by the Qing Consortium were mainly rich in vanadium titanomagnetite ore, halite, mirabilite, descloizite, sulfur, iron ore, asbestos, mica, gold, phosphorus, limestone, coal, and natural gas; while the Li Consortium-controlled south had nonferrous metals, coal mines, and an agriculture industry that produced an abundance of tobacco leaves.

But the most important fact was that the Qing Consortium was situated in a climate friendly basin. They controlled the planting of food crops such as rice, wheat, corn, soybeans, and cash crops like tea leaves. The Li Consortium had to purchase such food commodities from the Qing Consortium on many occasions. Although they also grew these crops, their own supply was inadequate.

Every organization placed a great deal of importance on agriculture. But it didn’t automatically mean that the land they controlled would be suitable for growing such crops just because it was a priority for them. Nature would not bend to suit human will.

Soon after, Tang Zhou and his men returned with a lot of sweet potatoes in their arms. Not many people would dare to refuse the request of the Qing Consortium when they saw their soldiers approaching them with guns and offering to buy their sweet potatoes. Moreover, the Qing Consortium was not lowballing them.

Luo Lan excitedly ordered the soldiers to throw the sweet potatoes into the fire. Then the group waited eagerly for them to be cooked.

Luo Lan counted the number of people and sweet potatoes they had, then said with a sigh, "Each of us can only eat half of one; no one is to eat more. The wounded can eat a whole sweet potato by themselves."

When the sweet potatoes were ready for consumption, Tang Zhou used a stick to retrieve one out of the fire for Luo Lan. "Here, Boss, eat up."

Luo Lan picked it up, broke it in half, and handed a piece to Tang Zhou. "We'll each have half."

"Boss, you don't have to share it." Tang Zhou was a little hesitant. "Are you going to eat half as well?"

"Cut the crap and take it. It's really hot!" Luo Lan looked at the others and said, "I have no time to prattle on with you. When we get to Stronghold 109, I'll take everyone out for a good time. Hehehe, we're bound for good fortune after surviving a huge disaster!"

The combat brigade's troops ate their sweet potatoes without a word.

Ren Xiaosu had been observing the actions of the Qing Consortium. But a woman in the escapee group suddenly screamed. It was followed by an audible slap.

They turned around and saw a middle-aged man tussling with a woman. He said, "You're still pretending to be decent after eating the sweet potato that I found? Your husband died in the stronghold! If it weren't for me, do you think you'd've survived until now?"

"I said that I would pay you for the sweet potato when we got to Stronghold 109!" said the woman through clenched teeth.

"What are you going to pay me with? When we get to Stronghold 109, everyone will still be penniless!"

Ren Xiaosu scowled. These two people knew each other? The man was probably slapped for making indecent advances on her just now. In his anger and embarrassment, he dragged the woman and headed for the secluded wilderness. The woman was crying out but couldn't put up a fight. However, everyone watched indifferently.

But then, a shout rang out beside Ren Xiaosu, "Stop it! So it's you, King of the Southern Mountains 1, who's causing trouble around here!"

This shout was so loud it kept ringing in Ren Xiaosu's ears. He looked at Chen Wudi with a stunned expression, only to see him rushing towards the two with his Golden-Hooped Rod out.

That middle-aged man could not react in time and got blasted to the ground by Chen Wudi's staff strike and nearly vomited blood!

Chen Wudi even held back a little. Otherwise, the man would have died on the spot.

But before Chen Wudi could bask in the glory of subduing a demon, the woman who got dragged out by the man became angry. She looked at Chen Wudi and said, "Why did you hit him?! Get lost!"

Chen Wudi felt a little aggrieved but could not understand what was going on with them. He could only walk back to Ren Xiaosu while hanging his head.

Everyone was surprised to see this outcome. Only Ren Xiaosu, who had read the original text of Journey to the West, felt that something was off. The King of the Southern Mountains was the demon king of the Hidden Misty Mountain, Bent Peak, and Linked Cave in Journey to the West. In the original story, this demon king took a liking to a farmer's wife and took her for himself.

However, Ren Xiaosu felt that something was odd here, because he realized that whenever Chen Wudi was about to hit someone, he would always assign them a demon name, such as Xiaozuanfeng, King of the Southern Mountains, and so on. When he wasn't going to fight them, the other party would just be a normal human being to him.

This seemed to be the logic of a mental patient for affirming their own "reasons" and "stance" on a matter. He was the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, so he must battle demons.

Ren Xiaosu stared blankly at Chen Wudi after he rejoined him. He thought for a moment and teased, "My disciple, what will you do if you start running out of demon names to use when you encounter more and more enemies?"

After all, there was only a finite number of demons in Journey to the West. Once he finished battling all of them, there would be no one left for him to fight.

Chen Wudi sank deep into thought as though this were a real possibility.

But after a while, Chen Wudi decided to bend his principles and said, "It's alright, I can just recycle the demon names."

Ren Xiaosu didn't know what to say.

Was he stupid or just playing dumb?! Didn't he say he would not acknowledge just anyone?

Chapter 122: Nightfall

"Master," Chen Wudi said as he sat down next to the campfire and stared at it in a daze, "I defeated the King of the Southern Mountains, so why did that woman tell me to get lost?"

Ren Xiaosu kept quiet. He wanted to tell Chen Wudi that human nature was complicated and some people were just not worth saving. But he was also worried that he would destroy Chen Wudi's innocence.

If there really were a Great Sage in times like these who ended up getting persuaded by Ren Xiaosu to become an ordinary mortal, he wondered if he would have done a good or bad thing.

Ren Xiaosu did not know if it would be a good thing or not if he managed to persuade a real Great Sage to become a normal person in this world.

But at this moment, Wang Fugui chuckled next to him. "You're too much of a busybody. You would've saved yourself a lot of trouble if you adopted the mindsets of 'none of your business' and 'none of my business' in your life."

"What do you mean?" Chen Wudi looked up, stunned.

"Look here." Wang Fugui said earnestly, "Why do you have to poke your nose into this matter for no good reason? If you don't poke your nose—"

"It's none of your business," interrupted Chen Wudi.

Wang Fugui was speechless.

"Hahaha!" Ren Xiaosu, Yan Liuyuan, and Xiaoyu were convulsing with laughter. It was great that Chen Wudi had already mastered the use of the phrase "none of your business."

As for whether he could learn "none of my business," Ren Xiaosu felt that it depend on whether Chen Wudi was willing to learn it.

The next morning, Ren Xiaosu and company got up early and roasted some sweet potatoes to eat. A lot of people preferred to sleep for a while longer than to get up and eat. In reality, if they did not eat in the morning during this season, their bodies would remain cold for the rest of the day.

Ren Xiaosu saw that the Qing Consortium's people had also gotten up. After all, the combat troops were different from the escapees in that they had a certain regimen to follow.

The conditions of the escapees were much better today. As usual, some of them still fell sick and went down with a fever, but it was not that many of them.

When the Qing Consortium started moving off, the escapees followed. Everyone silently and eagerly followed the Qing Consortium as they did not want to lose sight of them.

Ren Xiaosu glanced at the group of escapees and discovered that the "King of the Southern Mountains" who had been beaten up by Chen Wudi last night was lying on the ground taking his last breaths. The woman who was with him had already rejoined the larger group and blended into the crowd.

Lying on the ground with no help from anyone would lead to certain death.

Actually, if what this unfortunate fellow had said was true, that woman not only should have been taken good care of by him in the stronghold, she was also only able to escape the stronghold with his help. But once he was in trouble, that woman decisively abandoned him.

In a world like this, there was no saying who deserved death more.

Ren Xiaosu looked over to the Qing Consortium's people. The remaining two vehicles were now driving very slowly. Those who couldn't fit into the vehicles had to keep up next to them on foot.

But Ren Xiaosu was surprised to see Luo Lan walking on foot as well instead of riding in a vehicle!

Why? Was he working out to get fitter?

Then Ren Xiaosu made a careful observation. Just which soldiers were allowed to ride in the vehicles? There shouldn't be anyone more important than Luo Lan, right?

Ren Xiaosu was stunned by his observation. He saw the bandaged wounded in the back of the military transport truck and in the off-road vehicle. The truck was also half-loaded with firearms and munitions.

The firearms and munitions were definitely indispensable. Even if the soldiers were forced to walk, they would still have to bring those along with them. After all, those were their only means of protecting their lives!

The soldiers had helped Luo Lan force his way through a blockade of the face bugs, so Luo Lan allowed them to ride in the vehicles instead of himself.

The walking wounded still existed, but it was only because the vehicles were filled to the brim with people. Those who could still walk didn't get into the vehicles.

But the wounded who weren't in the vehicles were neither depressed nor resentful. It even seemed to Ren Xiaosu like they were chatting and laughing during the march.

Ren Xiaosu had thought Luo Lan would just abandon the wounded and drive straight to Stronghold 109 by himself. But what really happened was a total surprise to him.

These two brothers, Qing Zhen and Luo Lan... it was no wonder that even a supernatural being was willing to die for Qing Zhen.

In reality, Ren Xiaosu did not know the deceased supernatural being was not hired by Qing Zhen but was originally a soldier within the ranks of Qing Zhen's combat brigade. After awakening his power, he instantly became Qing Zhen's bodyguard and remained loyal and devoted to him.

That night, Ren Xiaosu felt an inexplicable sense of unease. Even Xiaoyu noticed his perturbation. Xiaoyu asked, "Xiaosu, what's the matter?"

"It's nothing." Ren Xiaosu looked at the campfire and shook his head. "I just feel like something's off."

But he couldn't figure out what was wrong.... It felt like he was back at the extremely dangerous Jing Mountains.

The night was pitch black, enveloping them like a prison cell.

"Let's go." Ren Xiaosu extinguished their campfire with his feet. "We can't stay here any longer tonight."

After much deliberation, he still believed his intuition, because his intuition had saved him on more than one occasion.

Zhang Jinglin had once said that scientists from before The Cataclysm proved “gut feelings” were real.

When Ren Xiaosu stood up and extinguished the campfire, the escapees around them stared at him with puzzled looks on their faces. Jiang Wu reacted the quickest to it. Before the others could figure out what was going on, she was already urging the students to follow suit.

Although she didn’t know what was going on, she knew that there was no wrong in escaping with Ren Xiaosu!

Someone wondered, “Has that young man gone crazy?”

“I have no idea.”

“Bro, where are we going?” Yan Liuyuan asked.

“I don’t know.” Ren Xiaosu said, “We’ll talk after we get out of here.”

But just as they separated from the group of escapees and were about to bypass the Qing Consortium’s campsite, Ren Xiaosu heard from behind him the sound of chains being dragged across the ground!

Furthermore, the sound was closing in!

“Run!” Ren Xiaosu yelled in a low voice. He was probably the only person among the countless escapees who knew what was coming from behind them!

When he saw a pack of Experimentals making a rush at him in the Jing Mountains, he instinctively retreated and fled. He didn’t even hesitate knowing that he would have to turn around and face the Qing Consortium instead! At that time, Ren Xiaosu could not determine exactly how many Experimentals there were. He only knew that if he did not run, he would surely die there!

Ren Xiaosu had been worrying about the wolf pack and Experimentals for the past two days. His worries would not dissipate until the day he got to Stronghold 109.

He had hoped that the destroyed stronghold would attract the Experimentals and wolves to it. But now, it seemed like all hope was lost. They could only make use of whatever time they had left to escape!

Although, Ren Xiaosu was a little confused by this. The Experimentals had only been active within the perimeter of the forest. Why had all of them come out now?!

Wang Fugui and the others did not know why Ren Xiaosu told them to run, but they had already started trusting him.

“What about the sweet potatoes!” Wang Dalong shouted as he ran.

Wang Fugui turned around and smacked away all the sweet potatoes in Wang Dalong’s arms. “How can you eat the sweet potatoes when you’re dead?! Quickly follow Ren Xiaosu!”

The sound of the chains coming from behind the escapees was growing louder. When everyone turned to look back, they saw the Experimentals scampering across the ground like spiders as they approached. They looked like demons!

It wasn't until this moment that the escapees started screaming in horror before fleeing for their lives!

But the size of the escapee group was too large. The people at the front were still unsure of what was going on, while those at the rear were already running madly for their lives. As a result, a lot of people were knocked down as they collided into one another!

Terrified screams could be heard at the back of the crowd. Hundreds of Experimentals had rushed into the group and started hunting and killing maniacally!

Once they killed someone, they did not hesitate to pounce onto others. It was as though they wanted to finish off all of the escapees!

When Ren Xiaosu looked back, he noticed another Experimental walking upright behind the maniacal Experimentals. It was staring at them coldly.

Ren Xiaosu realized someone else might be controlling these Experimentals. They had not yet lost all of their intelligence.

Chapter 123: Someone must be sacrificed

As Ren Xiaosu was the first to start fleeing, his group was consistently ahead of the other escapees. While getting away, he turned around once to have a look and could vaguely sense there were not as many Experimentals as when he had faced them in the Jing Mountains.

Did the volcanic eruption reduce their numbers?

But that was a good thing. Ren Xiaosu could not wish more for them to die inside the Jing Mountains. The more, the merrier!

As he ran with his group, he shouted at the Qing Consortium from afar, "Don't open fire. We have to escape together!"

Ren Xiaosu frowned as he was worried the Qing Consortium would start shooting indiscriminately. If the Qing Consortium troops took up firing positions, he would have to use his shadow clone to force his way out of this place.

Chen Wudi suddenly muttered as he looked at Ren Xiaosu, "Master, you have too much aggression in your current life.... But it's much better than your previous life where you were too indecisive."

Chen Wudi turned around to look and saw a bloody scene behind them. As the Experimentals murdered their victims, they did so in an exceedingly brutal manner. Blood was splattering everywhere!

The cries and screams sounded like they were all muffled as though purgatory were behind them.

Agony.

This was the agony of the mortal world.

Chen Wudi's Golden-Hooped Rod materialized in his hand. The idea of subduing evil was stirring in him. But as there were too many Experimentals, he couldn't possibly defeat them all by himself.

At this moment, a faint golden glow seemed to shimmer around Chen Wudi's body. Ren Xiaosu did not see it as he was busy protecting Xiaoyu and the others who were fleeing up ahead.

The glow came from the golden chainmail armor and the phoenix-feather cap as recorded in Journey to the West!

But before all of these could fully materialize, a golden band appeared on Chen Wudi's head! Then the golden armor and phoenix-feather cap vanished at the same time.

Chen Wudi stood still and looked at the ferocious Experimentals.

"Forget it, I'd better go to the Heavenly Palace to request reinforcements! Master, wait for me!" Chen Wudi turned around and ran away!

Ren Xiaosu turned his head and shouted at Chen Wudi, "Disciple, help our guys carry their luggage!"

If Wang Fugui, Wang Dalong, and Xiaoyu got slowed down during their escape, they might not be able to outrun the escapees!

Moreover, Chen Wudi's strength was even greater than Ren Xiaosu's, so it was not going to be a problem for him to carry a few of their luggage bags.

By now, the Qing Consortium had realized the chaos. Although the escapees had blocked their field of view, which made them unsure of what was happening, Luo Lan did not hesitate in this time of chaos. He ordered all of the Qing Consortium's combat troops to quickly retreat.

Even with the escapees rushing towards them, the Qing Consortium was still running ahead of them. As Luo Lan fled for his life, he shouted to those in the vehicles, "You leave first! It's quicker to get away with the vehicles!"

The wounded soldiers on the vehicles fell silent. Someone said, "We can't leave you behind."

Luo Lan panted as he said, "Hurry up and get lost! Why is a group of wounded people acting all melodramatic?"

The wounded soldiers in the vehicles could see from their relatively elevated position that the Experimentals were claiming the lives of the escapees with super high efficiency. Based on their speed, it would be impossible for normal humans to escape from their pursuit even if they ran with all they had.

It would have been good if the Experimentals were attracted by the humans at the back of the group who could not run fast enough. But the Experimentals did not seem hesitant in leaving behind their “food” they’d killed. They were looking to finish off everyone here!

The legendary saying, “You don’t have to run faster than the bear to get away. You just have to run faster than the guy next to you,” was no longer applicable. Everyone here had to die!

The wounded soldiers did not obey Luo Lan’s order to leave, decisively stopping the vehicles and unloading the firearms and munitions to the ground. Luo Lan’s trusted aide, Tang Zhou, ordered the combatants to quickly form a defensive firing line. He shouted, “I need two men to get in a vehicle and escort the boss out of this place!”

Tang Zhou’s decision was the correct one. With so many of them here, only one-third of their total strength could fit into the vehicles, while the remaining two-thirds could not outrun the Experimentals. Moreover, the group of escapees was getting killed so quickly it wouldn’t be possible to buy them much time.

Tang Zhou knew very well they couldn’t kill the Experimentals either. When Qing Zhen first caught an Experimental, he immediately fed the data to Luo Lan.

Hence, someone had to be sacrificed.

“What are you all waiting for? Waiting to die together?” Tang Zhou said coldly. He pointed at two of the younger soldiers and said, “You two, take the boss and leave!”

By selecting these two soldiers, he was giving them a chance to keep living. He picked them because they were still young and did not get a chance to savor life yet.

The other soldiers fell silent. They also knew the consequences of having to stay behind, but no one stepped forward to protest Tang Zhou’s decision.

“Fuck, let go of me!” Luo Lan was carried away by the two young soldiers. He immediately turned anxious as he tried to break free from the two soldiers. He said, “Are you trying to rebel? I, Luo Lan, have never been a deserter before!”

Tang Zhou smiled and said, “Thanks to both you and Boss Qing Zhen for taking care of me over the years.” He then said firmly to the two young soldiers, “Quickly get the boss into the vehicle.”

Ren Xiaosu had just led Xiaoyu and company to the front of the Qing Consortium’s people. Jiang Wu was also following close behind them with her students. However, the Qing Consortium’s soldiers did not care and allowed them and several other escapees to pass through the openings in their defensive line.

Tang Zhou looked calmly ahead as the escapees were chased down by the Experimentals. The Experimentals were getting closer and closer to them but he had to wait for an opportune moment.

“ platoons One through Five, get ready to shoot. Platoon Six, be on standby to replace them on the firing line. The wounded soldiers will be responsible for passing along ammo for reloading.” Tang Zhou’s calm

voice echoed in the soldiers' ears. Then he opened up a box on the ground and took out a rocket-propelled grenade launcher.

Tang Zhou smiled happily and said, "Luckily for us, we brought along this thing!"

The escapees were wiped out by the Experimentals in just a few minutes. Tang Zhou knelt on one knee and placed the RPG launcher onto his shoulder.

When the first Experimental appeared in his line of sight, Tang Zhou calmly said, "Open fire!"

With a loud bang, the grenade fired out of the launcher on his shoulder. The momentary burst of power whistled like it had been sent from heaven as the RPG hit hell via Earth!

Ren Xiaosu looked behind him and realized the Qing Consortium's combat troops were unusually calm and unperturbed in the face of death.

Clearly, this should have been a very touching sight, but there was hardly any drama. It was as though it were a trivial matter.

Luo Lan was dragged into the off-road vehicle by the two soldiers. Then they sped off for Stronghold 109.

But at this moment, a surprising turn of events happened. Ren Xiaosu suddenly saw as many as nine Experimentals approaching them from nowhere on both sides!

The Experimentals had circled around the sides of the Qing Consortium's defensive line, and four of the Experimentals rushed in from the rear at Tang Zhou. Ren Xiaosu knew it was all over for Tang Zhou and his men!

Chapter 124: 10,000 years from now!

Even though they had powerful firearms and explosives on their side, the Qing Consortium's combat troops stood no chance of survival if their defensive line was breached.

Some of the soldiers fired at the Experimentals, but their opponents swiftly dodged the bullets. It was simply too difficult to hit their targets.

Suddenly, a wounded soldier pounced up and grabbed both legs of an Experimental with a grenade in his other hand.

With a loud boom, the wounded soldier and Experimental were blown away by the explosion. Ren Xiaosu realized that not even the Experimentals could handle the destructive power of a grenade!

The four Experimentals that pounced onto the defensive line turned into just three. This gave Tang Zhou and his men some respite.

But Ren Xiaosu was most touched by how the wounded soldier still remained calm before his death. There was absolutely no sense of tragedy or any noble last words. It was as though he was just trying to accomplish a trivial task.

Ren Xiaosu didn't want to watch any further. The Qing Consortium was challenging his opinion of them.

He looked at the remaining Experimentals and saw one of them running fast as lightning in the direction of the departing off-road vehicle. It rammed itself straight into the vehicle during its pursuit.

When it collided with the off-road vehicle, Ren Xiaosu could even see the entire process of the vehicle's structure crumpling. A moment later, the off-road vehicle lost balance and flipped over. It seemed like the Experimental was completely unscathed!

That Experimental got off the ground and gave a few slight shakes of its head. Then it jumped onto the vehicle and started tearing through the vehicle's metal body. It seemed like it wanted to dismantle the vehicle.

However, Ren Xiaosu didn't care about what was going on over there, because the four Experimentals that had surrounded them were bounding over! Ren Xiaosu shouted, "Chen Wudi, cover the right!"

By the time Ren Xiaosu finished speaking, he was holding a black saber in his hands. It looked like he had pulled it out of thin air.

Instantly, the black saber came into contact with the Experimental that pounced at him from the left side. Its body was slashed in half at the waist by the black saber like a knife cutting through hot butter!

In the flurry, Wang Fugui was stunned by what he saw. So Ren Xiaosu really was a supernatural being!

Be it Ren Xiaosu's speed or strength, they had surpassed the realm of normal people!

In fact, Ren Xiaosu was not all that nervous while battling the Experimentals, because he had previously fought these things. With the four Experimentals standing on one side, it was exactly the same situation as before. The only difference was that this time, Chen Wudi was around to help share the burden of fighting them. There was not even a need for Ren Xiaosu to use his shadow clone in the fight.

His only concern was that Yan Liuyuan and the others might accidentally get injured during the fight. After all, they had no chance of striking back when facing the Experimentals.

Ren Xiaosu had raised his saber and slashed it down in one swift motion, dicing that Experimental in half at the waist. Then he shouted to Wang Fugui and the others, "All of you, run!"

Be it Wang Fugui, Jiang Wu and her students, or even Yan Liuyuan, they were all frightened by the terrifying Experimentals.

The Experimentals were clearly humanoid, as they had the same nose, mouth, arms, and body as humans. But be it their behavior or ferocity, it was obvious they were no different from beasts.

When Ren Xiaosu saw Wang Fugui and the others not budging, he shouted, "Go on, run!"

Yan Liuyuan was the first to react. "Let's go! Don't stay here and be a burden to my brother!"

As Wang Fugui ran with Yan Liuyuan, those words kept ringing in his mind. It seemed like Yan Liuyuan did not think they would be of any help to Ren Xiaosu. This was even as Wang Fugui and Yan Liuyuan possessed guns.

Seeing that they had started fleeing for their lives, Ren Xiaosu finally heaved a sigh of relief. But the danger had not passed yet!

Importantly, a lot of Experimentals got temporarily halted by Tang Zhou and the Qing Consortium's combat troops. But as their defensive line had been breached by the Experimentals from their rear, it would be difficult to say just how much longer they could hang on for. Seeing Tang Zhou and his men's defensive line weakening, the group of Experimentals chasing after the escapees also started rushing at the defensive formation!

Ren Xiaosu had a frown on his face. Even if Tang Zhou and his men could hold the line for a little longer, how fast could Xiaoyu and the others run? They would probably get quickly caught by the Experimentals.

Ren Xiaosu looked at the remaining Experimental he was fighting against. It seemed like it was hesitating after its companion got killed so easily. As such, it did not pounce at him again in attack for a long time. It started slowly backing off instead.

Ren Xiaosu did not intend to tussle with it either. He looked over at Chen Wudi and was stunned by the sight unfolding in front of him.

He saw the two Experimentals Chen Wudi was fighting already lying on the ground. Chen Wudi was stepping on them as he placed the Golden-Hooped Rod over his shoulder with one hand. There was a smug look to him.

This left Ren Xiaosu very surprised because he had felt Chen Wudi might not be that strong since he couldn't block a bullet. But now, his combat value was probably much higher than what he had imagined. Unfortunately, as he had no time to pay attention to Chen Wudi's earlier battle, he could not make a detailed assessment of him.

He heard Chen Wudi say, "You all will remember my name 10,000 years from now. My name is—"

"Stop being so long-winded!" Ren Xiaosu angrily interrupted.

"OK." Chen Wudi turned glum.

Suddenly, Ren Xiaosu heard someone shouting something. The shouting was coming from the overturned off-road vehicle.

Ren Xiaosu realized the Experimental that had been trying to tear through the metal body of the vehicle had disappeared. The off-road vehicle was shaking violently. It looked like the Experimental had found its way inside the off-road vehicle!

Save them? Or not save them?

The Qing Consortium's Luo Lan was inside the vehicle. Currently, Ren Xiaosu was a wanted man by the Qing Consortium, and they were looking to take him dead or alive. It would already be great if Ren Xiaosu did not take this chance to make a move on Luo Lan, so why could he possibly want to save him?

No, he could save him!

However, Ren Xiaosu had to first dump the Experimental he had just killed in a faraway place before rescuing Luo Lan. After all, the wound on the waist of the Experimental was too obvious. If Luo Lan saw it, he might instantly match Ren Xiaosu to the person in the Jing Mountains!

Since Luo Lan was also unaware of how many Experimentals were outside the car, Ren Xiaosu would just have to tell him there were two of them, both of which had been single-handedly killed by Chen Wudi.

Ren Xiaosu only rushed over after dumping the body. He saw the inside of the vehicle through the fissure. It was full of blood. A plump figure was wrestling with an Experimental inside the vehicle, but he wasn't going to last much longer.

The plump figure was Luo Lan, and the other two people in the vehicle had probably been killed by the Experimental when they tried to protect Luo Lan. That was where the blood in the vehicle came from.

At this moment, Chen Wudi rushed over and grabbed the vehicle with both hands. He let out a shout and tore the vehicle apart using the fissure!

"Kill it," Ren Xiaosu ordered Chen Wudi. After Chen Wudi received the order, he grabbed his Golden-Hooped Rod and smashed it onto the Experimental's head from behind. Its pale yellow blood splattered all over Luo Lan's face.

Chapter 125: Forced by circumstances

The reason Ren Xiaosu decided to save Luo Lan was because he intended to try to get into Stronghold 109 through Luo Lan!

Earlier, Ren Xiaosu noticed Luo Lan and the soldiers were getting along great. Moreover, he could feel their support for Luo Lan and Qing Zhen. People that well-supported must have something extraordinary about them. So Ren Xiaosu had been thinking if this lifesaving favor could resolve the enmity from before. If he couldn't resolve it, it would not be too late for Ren Xiaosu to personally kill Luo Lan. He also thought about whether to conceal his identity by using another name, for example. But after thinking about it, Ren Xiaosu rejected the idea, because Luo Lan had seen Yan Liuyuan and Xiaoyu before.

"Brother, give me a hand!" Luo Lan wiped his face and said, "I can't get out of the vehicle myself."

Ren Xiaosu pulled Luo Lan out of the vehicle. "Let's leave quickly. The Experimentals will break through the defensive line soon."

But Luo Lan broke free from Ren Xiaosu and looked at Tang Zhou's group in a daze. They were about to get overwhelmed by the Experimentals.

Concentrated gunfire and exploding grenades sounded from time to time at the defensive line they set up. The Experimentals still couldn't breach the Qing Consortium's defensive line for the time being.

This battle was enough to show how outstanding the soldiers of the Qing Consortium were.

Ren Xiaosu said calmly, "It's hopeless for them. If you rush over there now, they would just die in vain."

Luo Lan took a deep breath and said, "I have to! Thank you for saving me, but I can't leave yet!"

Ren Xiaosu could tell Luo Lan really cared about this group of soldiers. If he didn't, his first reaction wouldn't have been to check whether his soldiers were alright after hearing the Experimentals were about to breach the defensive line.

This was different from Ren Xiaosu's mindset of how an organization was run. He had thought they were just a group of snobbish and cold-blooded animals.

Chen Wudi turned around and looked at Ren Xiaosu. He asked, "Piggy and the others have run far away. What should we do?"

"Let's go." Ren Xiaosu took a look at Luo Lan and decided to give up on him. Luo Lan had already run back to the troops' defensive line. There was no need to die with Luo Lan just because he wanted to gain passage into the stronghold.

Ren Xiaosu could tell Luo Lan was terrified. If it were anyone else, they would be terrified as well. Now that all of the escapees had been wiped out, only a few people managed to escape successfully. This place had been reduced to ruins.

But Ren Xiaosu could not understand why a fatty like Luo Lan could overcome his fear and run straight towards death. This wasn't about putting on an act. He would really die if he went back there!

But when Ren Xiaosu and his group were about to leave, they suddenly heard the howling of wolves in the distance!

This howling came at such an extraordinarily abrupt time it made Ren Xiaosu's heart sink. Was the situation about to become worse?

But to his surprise, the Experimentals started to stop attacking when they heard the howling of the wolves. Then they quickly retreated and left the battlefield within a minute!

What was happening? Ren Xiaosu stood still as he watched the scene unfold. He wondered if it was possible that these Experimentals were afraid of the wolves.

Ren Xiaosu had thought things would get worse with the arrival of the wolves. However, he did not expect the wolves' presence to end up counterbalancing the Experimentals and holding them in check!

Ren Xiaosu did not wish to find out about what had happened between the wolves and Experimentals. He only hoped to get Stronghold 109 safely!

He said to Chen Wudi, "Wudi, go and tell Wang Fugui and the others—"

"Who is Wang Fugui?" Chen Wudi was taken aback.

"Go and tell Pigsy and the others... to not turn back. If something happens, they should continue escaping," Ren Xiaosu corrected.

It didn't seem like he could pass on the message effectively without referring to "dharma names 1."

Chen Wudi went on ahead while Ren Xiaosu followed Luo Lan to return to the Qing Consortium's troops.

"Boss, why have you come back?" Tang Zhou was gasping as he laid on top of a corpse. "Hurry up and leave. Those things could come back soon."

Luo Lan squatted down next to Tang Zhou. He looked around and saw that more than 90% of the soldiers who had escaped with him from the stronghold were dead.

As for the remaining five or six soldiers, all of them had been seriously injured. Even though they might still be alive now, they couldn't survive long enough to get to Stronghold 109.

The cruelty of the Experimentals was horrifying.

Squatting down next to Tang Zhou, Luo Lan said, "Do you have any words you want me to pass on?"

Tang Zhou smiled and said, "Boss, you said you'd treat us to a good time and show us the sensual pleasures of this world when we got to Stronghold 109. We're afraid we won't make it there anymore. So, Boss, please enjoy it on our behalf when the time comes."

Luo Lan was sorrowful. "I'd probably die in Stronghold 109."

The two of them broke into laughter as though they had cracked some lame joke.

Tang Zhou suddenly said, "We don't regret it."

"Mhm," Luo Lan grunted in response.

"Um, let me interrupt you two for a moment." Ren Xiaosu watched the two men and could not help but stop their conversation. "Actually, they won't have to die."

Tang Zhou and Luo Lan were stunned. They simultaneously looked at Ren Xiaosu. Tang Zhou started laughing and said, "Young man, stop joking. No one can stop my bleeding."

However, Ren Xiaosu ignored them and took out a vial. "I have an excellent medicine here for treating wounds. Don't worry, y'all won't die. But I won't be treating your wounds for nothing." Ren Xiaosu

looked at Luo Lan. "In return, I want you to get us into Stronghold 109 and obtain legal resident statuses for us."

But Luo Lan ignored the latter part of his sentence and stared at the black medicine in Ren Xiaosu's hand. This vial looked a little familiar to him.

Luo Lan's expression gradually turned from calm to shock. "This can also treat wounds?! Wait a minute, you're the magic hands that restore spring, Ren Xiaosu!"

Fucking "magic hands restore spring"! Ren Xiaosu nearly kicked Luo Lan to the ground when he was reminded him about that banner!

Still, Ren Xiaosu was one of the targets wanted by the Qing Consortium. Luo Lan could never have expected that Ren Xiaosu would appear here, and even rescue him at that.

Suddenly, Luo Lan remembered someone had mentioned before that Ren Xiaosu was a doctor back in town. This gave him some hope!

Seeing how Tang Zhou's group needed Ren Xiaosu to save them, Luo Lan resolutely humbled himself and tried to cotton up to Ren Xiaosu by saying, "With our relationship, I'm fine with however many people you wish to bring into the stronghold. Anything can be agreed upon as long as you save them!"

Ren Xiaosu was stunned. "What's our relationship?"

Luo Lan was also left speechless by that question. He hesitated awhile before saying, "A doctor-patient relationship..."

Ren Xiaosu speechlessly threw three vials of the black medicine to Luo Lan. "Apply these to their wounds."

Luo Lan hesitated for a moment. "It won't have that side effect, will it?"

"No, hurry up and apply the medicine on them. If the Experimentals or wolves come back, no one is gonna get out of here alive!" Ren Xiaosu was starting to get impatient. In reality, he decided to treat Tang Zhou and his squadmates' wounds because he wanted Luo Lan to owe him a favor. Even though the off-road vehicle had overturned, the transport truck was still in good condition. After he finished treating Tang Zhou's group, he could get them to drive the truck and pick up Yan Liuyuan and the others. It would be much easier for everyone this way.

"Wait a minute." Ren Xiaosu suddenly thought of something. "You guys won't be arresting me after you've recovered from these injuries, right?"

"No." Luo Lan hurriedly shook his head and said, "We're actually just after Xu Xianchu, but you being wanted as well was purely a coincidence!"

Ren Xiaosu reacted with an odd expression. "That's a good thing..."

He could only say in his head, 'Big Brother Xu Xianchu, I'm sorry.'

Although this might inconvenience Xu Xianchu a bit, what else could Ren Xiaosu do? He was forced by the circumstances!

Chapter 126: A lunatic wouldn't admit they're crazy

When the black medicine was applied to Tang Zhou's wounds, he felt like was brought back to Earth from the underworld.

The black medicine's ability to stop pain was incredibly amazing and it applied a cooling sensation to a wound.

Tang Zhou looked up at Ren Xiaosu and said in shock, "Is this really the type of medicine Boss usually takes?!"

Luo Lan grew angry and snapped, "Will you die if you don't speak? Shut up!"

"Which of the wounded knows how to drive?" Ren Xiaosu interrupted them. "If y'all don't wanna die, get in the truck quickly and let's get out of this place."

Everyone stayed quiet. A wounded soldier who could still move struggled to get up and climbed into the driver seat of the transport truck. Ren Xiaosu frowned and said to Luo Lan, "Can you drive instead? He might die while driving with the shape he's in."

Luo Lan said helplessly, "I don't know how to drive...."

"You don't know how to drive?" Ren Xiaosu said with some disbelief, "You're such a big shot in the stronghold, but you don't even know how to drive?"

"There's no relation between being a big shot and knowing how to drive, right?" Luo Lan said in a speechless manner, "Oh, wait, it is related. It's because I don't need to drive myself when I go out, so I didn't need to learn how to drive."

Ren Xiaosu had no time to argue with him right now. "Hurry up and get into the truck."

In the Qing Consortium's records, Ren Xiaosu was just a relatively stronger refugee. Xu Xianchu was the one who was supposedly the most dangerous of all.

When the truck passed the spot where Ren Xiaosu and Chen Wudi had killed the Experimentals, Luo Lan even counted how many there were. A total of three Experimentals had been killed, including the one that pounced on the off-road vehicle.

Logically, Ren Xiaosu would not have the ability to do this. Luo Lan suddenly recalled that the young man next to Ren Xiaosu looked a little familiar. But he could not remember who it was since he was still in a state of shock.

Soon after, the truck drove over to Xiaoyu and company. Ren Xiaosu's head poked out from the back of the military transport truck. He said, "Hop in!"

Jiang Wu stood there and watched Yan Liuyuan and company climb in the truck. She said hesitantly, "Can you let us in as well? Or just let the students get in. There's no need to worry about me."

As Jiang Wu believed they were not related in any manner to Ren Xiaosu and his group, it would only take a word from him to determine whether they would be allowed into the truck. She knew she had to make this request.

Ren Xiaosu looked at Jiang Wu for a bit, then said, "That's what I intended all along."

"Thank you! Thank you very much!" Jiang Wu got excited and urged the students, "Everyone, hurry up and get into the truck. Remember to thank him for saving our lives!"

The group of students climbed into the back of the truck and saw it was more than large enough for everyone to sit in. Only Luo Lan, who was sitting in the corner, kept grumbling softly, "Isn't this supposed to be my truck?"

Why did it seem like Ren Xiaosu was making most of the decisions here?

But Luo Lan had to bow out. He realized at this moment that Ren Xiaosu had an absolute advantage over the people in the group.

When Ren Xiaosu was giving treatment to Tang Zhou's group, he deliberately took away all their weapons.

Every student who climbed in would say a few words of thanks to Ren Xiaosu. He found he gained more than 20 gratitude tokens in just a short time. The students were all sincerely grateful to him.

Sometimes, Ren Xiaosu thought it might be the teacher, Jiang Wu, who had influenced them to be this way. As just a normal person caught in the disaster, this female teacher had displayed the most glorious aspect of human nature.

Ren Xiaosu, who lived in the chaotic town, felt somewhat envious.

By now, Ren Xiaosu had earned 56 gratitude tokens from everyone, including the gratitude tokens Tang Zhou, Luo Lan, and their soldiers gave. The gratitude tokens he reaped for this side quest came in much quicker than the previous one.

When everyone got into the truck, it started moving again. Everyone was sitting quietly. Everyone would feel different emotions after such a close brush with death. Only after near-death encounters would people yearn to live.

Xiaoyu and Yan Liuyuan took out some food from their bags and handed it to Ren Xiaosu and Chen Wudi. They knew Ren Xiaosu and Chen Wudi needed food to replenish their strength after the battle.

The others swallowed hard when they saw the food, but no one dared to ask for a share. Even Luo Lan did not say anything.

But all of a sudden, Luo Lan's eyes flashed as he gave Chen Wudi a look. He finally remembered who he was!

"Aren't you that lunatic from Third Psychiatric Hospital?" Luo Lan sat up straight. "Your name is... yes, your name is Chen Wudi!"

As the actual controller of the stronghold, how could Luo Lan not know about the existence of No. 3 Psychiatric Hospital? Moreover, all of the information on the supernatural beings who had been detained would be reported back to him. The content of the information was meticulously detailed and would even include their daily life, words spoken, and behavior displayed!

Even for the Qing Consortium, supernatural beings were an extremely important resource. Whether they had been made use of or studied upon, the Qing Consortium could not ignore the existence of such people.

Luo Lan figured out something at this moment: Who exactly had killed the Experimentals?

However, he was only seeing what Ren Xiaosu wanted him to see.

Chen Wudi looked at Luo Lan. He had not really taken a careful look at Luo Lan earlier on. In addition, Luo Lan's face was stained with yellow blood at that time. Only after he had wiped his face clean did Chen Wudi finally recognize Luo Lan. "It's you, Benbo'erba 1!"

"Ben? Ben, my ass!" Luo Lan grew heated. He had read Journey to the West before, alright? "You lunatic, don't spout nonsense. Who the fucking hell is Benbo'erba?"

Ren Xiaosu gave Luo Lan a glance. He remembered that whenever Chen Wudi was about to hit someone, he would always assign a demon name to them.

Chen Wudi looked at Luo Lan unhappily. "Please address me as the Great Sage in the future. On top of that, I'm not a lunatic."

Luo Lan snapped, "No lunatic would admit they're crazy. You say you're the Great Sage who protects his master so you people can go to the Western Paradise to obtain the Buddhist scriptures? In that case, you must first have a master, right? So where is your master?"

It fell silent in the vehicle.

Then, Ren Xiaosu looked at Luo Lan and said, "I'm his master."

Wang Fugui said, "I'm Pigsy."

Wang Dalong's gaze kept wandering back and forth between Wang Fugui and Ren Xiaosu. He hesitated for a few seconds before saying, "I'm Friar Sand..."

Luo Lan was confused.

Just how many mentally ill people were there in the truck? Luo Lan was dumbfounded. "Are you serious?"

Suddenly, the soldier in the driver seat shouted, "We have a situation up ahead!"

After that, Ren Xiaosu heard a sharp braking sound. It was as though the driver had come across an unbelievable sight.

"What's going on?" Ren Xiaosu asked in a serious tone.

"There are a few cars ahead," the driver answered. "No, there are a few damaged cars ahead of us. It looks like they came from the direction of Stronghold 109."

Chapter 127: Gaining legal resident status in the stronghold!

Damaged cars?

After hearing what the driver said, many of those in the truck were startled. How could there be cars around here?

"All of you, stay in the truck." Ren Xiaosu turned to Chen Wudi and said, "Wudi, get out with me and look."

The truck was already stationary. After jumping off the back of the truck, Ren Xiaosu discovered Luo Lan had also jumped down with them. The three of them slowly advanced towards the damaged cars. But before they even got close, Ren Xiaosu could smell blood in the air.

Just as the driver had mentioned, three cars were blocking the road up ahead. They were all badly damaged and dripping with blood.

"Be careful," Ren Xiaosu said. As he spoke, he inspected the nearby pavement to see what on earth could have attacked the convoy.

"Strange," Luo Lan said in surprise, "these are indeed vehicles from Stronghold 109, but why did they send them out at this hour? And they were even headed in the direction of Stronghold 113?"

At present, Luo Lan had no idea that Qing Zhen had threatened the Stronghold 109 overseer. Lu Yuan, who was the overseer of that stronghold, had no choice but to hold off the pressure from the Li Consortium and send out a small group of private troops to search for Luo Lan's whereabouts.

However, they ran into an accident.

The three cars were parked in a crooked manner on the road. The trio of Ren Xiaosu, Chen Wudi, and Luo Lan did not see any bodies and were only greeted by a trail of blood that led into the depths of the dark wilderness.

The bloodstains had already dried. Judging by the color, Ren Xiaosu deduced that the battle must have taken place around half a day ago.

Wait a minute! Ren Xiaosu noticed a strand of white fur on the ground. Following, his expression turned to one of great shock. "This is the fur of a wolf!" Ren Xiaosu retreated with Chen Wudi. He finally realized what the bloodstains leading into the wilderness meant. It was the blood of the victims as they got dragged off in the mouths of the wolves.

What were the wolves doing here half a day ago?

But Ren Xiaosu didn't care think too much. He just wanted to get back to the truck and get out of here!

"Wait a second for me!" Luo Lan whispered.

Ren Xiaosu watched him jog all the way over to the three cars. It seemed that he was looking for something in them.

A second later, Luo Lan took out a device Ren Xiaosu hadn't seen before. "I found it!"

When the three of them returned to the truck, Ren Xiaosu asked, "What were you searching for in their cars?"

"Hehe," Luo Lan chuckled. "A satellite phone! I hope the PIN on this hasn't been changed from the original '1111,' or I won't be able to use it. We're going to have to take a gamble."

Ren Xiaosu examined it. So this was what the legendary satellite phone looked like? But what was that PIN Luo Lan mentioned? Ren Xiaosu had never even remotely heard of it before.

When the truck started moving again, Luo Lan said in surprise after keying in "1111" on the satellite phone, "It works!" Right after, he dialed another series of numbers with a sense of familiarity. He had memorized this number a long time ago.

"Who are you calling?" Ren Xiaosu asked.

"My little brother," Luo Lan replied and then waited patiently for the call to connect.

Suddenly, a man's voice could be heard on the other end. "Hello, who is this?"

"I'm Luo Lan. Get my little brother on the line!" Luo Lan said in delight.

Very quickly, someone else spoke on the phone. "Where are you?"

"I'm trying to escape. I can probably get to Stronghold 109 in a day and a half at the latest," Luo Lan replied. "How is everything on your side? Have you made it out of the Jing Mountains yet?"

On the other end, Qing Zhen paused and said, "I'm still in the Jing Mountains.... Xu Xianchu, god fucking damn you!"

The call volume of the satellite phone was a little loud. Ren Xiaosu felt a little guilty after hearing what Qing Zhen said. He knew exactly why Qing Zhen was still stuck in the Jing Mountains. He was the one who slashed all of their vehicles' tires.

Apparently reining in his emotions, Qing Zhen asked calmly, "Whose phone are you calling from? Have Lu Yuan's men picked you up?"

Only then did Luo Lan realize the three cars were sent out by Lu Yuan under Qing Zhen's orders. He answered, "Something happened to Lu Yuan's men along the way. I found this satellite phone in one of their cars."

Qing Zhen did not care about what happened to Lu Yuan's men. He thought for a while and said, "Reorganize yourselves once you get to Stronghold 109, and don't return to the Qing Consortium for the time being."

"Why?" Luo Lan was taken aback but reacted quickly. "Have those old fogeys of the Board decided to punish you?"

"They're just going to put me under house arrest in Stronghold 111," Qing Zhen said in a relaxed tone. "But a lot of people have been very unhappy with you. If you go back now, you might receive a heavier punishment. Since they don't know you're still alive, you should stay at Stronghold 109 for the time being."

"OK," Luo Lan acknowledged in a low voice.

"By the way," Qing Zhen said, "when you get to Stronghold 109, tell Lu Yuan to arrest Ren Xiaosu, Xu Xianchu, Yang Xiaojin, and Luo Xinyu. I suspect these four people might've headed there after escaping from the Jing Mountains. After all, Stronghold 111 and 109 are the nearest to the Jing Mountains."

Luo Lan gave an embarrassed glance at Ren Xiaosu: "Ren Xiaosu is right next to me...."

Qing Zhen was silent for a while, then asked in bewilderment, "You've caught him already?!"

Luo Lan got even more embarrassed. "You might not believe it when I say this, but based on the current circumstances, I'm probably the one who's been caught...."

Qing Zhen was speechless.

Ren Xiaosu looked calmly at Luo Lan, who was stressed a great deal, as he quickly sought to explain it was Ren Xiaosu who saved him. He would probably have died if not for that action.

Qing Zhen finally understood what had happened. Qing Zhen said from the other end, "Tell him we'll forget all the unpleasantness between him and our Qing Consortium. On top of that, I, Qing Zhen, now owes him a favor and a life."

"They want to enter Stronghold 109 and become legal residents there," Luo Lan said.

"You can speak directly to Lu Yuan." Qing Zhen did not seem too concerned about this matter.

Phew! Ren Xiaosu heaved a sigh of relief. The name of the Qing Consortium had been weighing on his mind recently.

It was quite terrifying to be on the radar of such a huge corporation. Who in this era would be willing to go against a corporation that controlled over 20 strongholds?

Of course, Ren Xiaosu was even more determined now to not let Qing Zhen find out he was the one who slashed all of their vehicles' tires that night. Just based on how Qing Zhen had sworn at Xu Xianchu earlier, Ren Xiaosu got the feeling this matter wasn't over yet.

But Ren Xiaosu remembered what Qing Zhen just said. He wondered where Yang Xiaojin would go after escaping from the Jing Mountains. Would it be to Stronghold 109 or Stronghold 111? Or perhaps somewhere even further away?

Since there were limitations to Luo Xinyu's power to travel through the shadows, Yang Xiaojin and she couldn't have gone too far, right?

Ren Xiaosu glanced at Yan Liuyuan and Xiaoyu. Everyone heard the conversation between Luo Lan and Qing Zhen. At this very moment, there was visible excitement in both Ren Xiaosu's and Yan Liuyuan's eyes. They understood they were no longer going to be refugees. From this moment onward, they would become legal residents of Stronghold 109!

Chapter 128: Headache spell

Ren Xiaosu's motive for rescuing Luo Lan was so they could get into the stronghold through him. Now that his objective was achieved, his wish could finally be considered fulfilled.

As for how Luo Lan and Qing Zhen would convince the Li Consortium and Stronghold 109's overseer, that would be up to them. After all, the corporations had business dealings with one another all the time, so they would have to give each other some face.

From Qing Zhen's tone, it felt like it wasn't a particularly difficult matter to handle.

Nearby, Wang Fugui let out a sigh and said softly, "Some issues can be extremely difficult for us to handle but are only a matter of words for people in their world."

Luo Lan said, "If we promise you something, our Qing Consortium will see it gets done. Would a large organization need to lie to a few refugees like you?"

All of a sudden, Wang Fugui asked Luo Lan, "Xiaosu saved your life, isn't that right?"

"Yeah," Luo Lan said in a surprised manner.

"Boss Luo is a big shot," Wang Fugui said as his eyes revealed a certain shrewdness. "Since your life is so valuable, it would not be enough to just get us into the stronghold. If this matter gets out, other people will feel that the Qing Consortium is being stingy."

When Wang Fugui escaped from town with Ren Xiaosu, he had explicitly expressed to Ren Xiaosu the value he could bring to the group. Now was finally the time to show it.

In reality, Wang Fugui knew all about his own shortcomings. He had never seen much of the world before and would appear very crude by bargaining with a big shot like Luo Lan. In fact, Luo Lan might even be mentally mocking him for daring to ask for help when he was not qualified to do so. But that didn't matter to him. Wang Fugui had to help Ren Xiaosu obtain the most favorable conditions to the best of his abilities. For this reason alone, he was willing to be shameless.

From the conversation between Qing Zhen and Luo Lan, Wang Fugui realized that obtaining legal resident statuses in the stronghold was no big deal for these big shots. So he wondered if they could get even more out of them.

"What else do you all want?" Luo Lan relaxed in the cargo bed and looked at Wang Fugui. "But you had better not make unreasonable demands!"

Wang Fugui felt hopeful at the words. He said, "We want a shop. The Qing Consortium must have a lot of properties in Stronghold 109, so it shouldn't be a problem to get us a shop!"

Luo Lan downplayed, "My life isn't worth as much as one shop."

Old Wang was a little taken aback. Luo Lan was being rather shameless if he put it that way. As a refugee, Wang Fugui could be shameless. But how could a big shot of the Qing Consortium behave so shamelessly as well?

But Wang Fugui didn't know that the most shameless people in the world were actually those who belonged to the organizations. Otherwise, it would not have been possible for them to make an organization in the first place.

Wang Fugui asked Luo Lan, "Your younger brother just said he owed Ren Xiaosu a favor and a life, right?"

"What is it you're trying to say?" Luo Lan was feeling speechless.

"Is the favor and the life that your younger brother mentioned worth a shop?" Wang Fugui asked.

Luo Lan went quiet for a long time before answering, "Yes."

Although he could be shameless about himself, it was not so when Qing Zhen's name was mentioned.

"I'll prepare a simple shop for you all." Luo Lan said, "But our Qing Consortium does not owe you anything more after that."

"OK." Ren Xiaosu decisively accepted it. This would be a stable income stream for them in the stronghold. Even if they didn't use the shop to do business, the rent they could obtain from it would probably be enough for their daily living expenses. Furthermore, he had promised Old Wang he would reopen a grocery store for him.

However, Wang Fugui still seemed unsatisfied. He said to Luo Lan, "How much do you think the lives of your five subordinates are worth?"

Luo Lan got annoyed. "Couldn't you have finished saying it in one shot? Alright, I'll give you a big shop that's in a good location. Don't ask me for anything more, or I'll die here right in front of you!"

Wang Fugui wanted to go even further, but Ren Xiaosu tugged at him. It was best to stop asking since they had gotten what they wanted.

If they really made Luo Lan angry, he might just go back on his words after they got to the stronghold. At that time, Ren Xiaosu and the others would not be able to do anything about it.

Ren Xiaosu had chosen to save Tang Zhou and his soldiers because he realized Luo Lan was a little sentimental. Luo Lan would feel grateful to him after he saved them.

Ren Xiaosu suddenly saw Chen Wudi, who was seated opposite him, looking at Luo Lan in a hostile manner. It was as though he wanted to subdue evil right now.

He noticed some changes in Chen Wudi's appearance, but he could not immediately tell what the difference was. Wait a minute! Ren Xiaosu asked, "Eh, Wudi, is that a golden circlet on your head? Where did it come from?"

Before this night, he was quite certain Chen Wudi did not have a golden circlet on his head.

Ren Xiaosu suspected this item had also materialized out of Chen Wudi's imagination. But unlike the Golden-Hooped Rod, this golden circlet was different as it didn't actually disappear.

"The golden circlet was given to me by the bodhisattva. Master, don't you know that?" Chen Wudi looked like he expected this to be common knowledge.

"...I do," Ren Xiaosu answered. 'But that's not what I was asking!'

Ren Xiaosu intended to make up an excuse to get past his questioning. After all, his current role was Master Sanzang, so how could he possibly not know where his disciple's golden circlet came from?

Then, Chen Wudi looked at Ren Xiaosu seriously and asked, "Master, do you still remember how to recite the headache spell?"

Ren Xiaosu nearly broken down. 'How am I supposed to know that spell?!'

In the original text of Journey to the West, there was no mention of the specific contents of the spell when Guanyin 1 taught it to Tripitaka. Ren Xiaosu saw a sparkle of excitement in Chen Wudi's eyes as he anticipated what was about to come. Ren Xiaosu tested him by reciting, "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers 1?"

"Ahhh!" Chen Wudi clutched his head and cried out, "Master, stop it! Master, stop it!"

Ren Xiaosu sat there with his mouth agape. He thought to himself, 'Chen Wudi, you're playing along quite well.'

Ren Xiaosu realized that everyone else was giving him strange looks. Some students even sank deep into thought over this.

This bodhisattva was probably some kind of comedian, right?!

Luo Lan felt like his intelligence had been greatly insulted. He could not understand why a lunatic like Chen Wudi would regard Ren Xiaosu as his master!

If he had to believe that Ren Xiaosu, Chen Wudi, Wang Fugui, and Wang Dalong were the reincarnations of Tripitaka and his disciples, he would rather kill himself by smashing his head here in the truck!

The truck had been driving for dozens of kilometers before they slowly came to a stop. Luo Lan asked, "Can we afford to take a break now? Won't the wolf pack catch up to us?"

Ren Xiaosu was reminded about the strangeness of the wolves' behavior. He gave it some thought before saying, "Let's take a short rest. We only have one driver, so it won't be good if he gets exhausted. Besides, if the wolves come chasing after us, the vehicle probably can't outrun them if we keep driving."

Actually, Ren Xiaosu was constantly wondering in his mind. He had previously thought that the wolves had not attacked the escapees only because they had gone back to what was now the ruins of Stronghold 113.

But by the looks of it, it seemed the wolves had been keeping close to them all this while. There was even a time when the pack overtook their group.

But why didn't the wolves attack the escapees?

There was no logical explanation for it!

Unless there was someone in the group the wolves were unwilling to attack!

Chapter 129: Instigating Chen Wudi's defection

While everyone was resting, Ren Xiaosu found a hilltop where he could look around to spot the whereabouts of the wolves.

But when he reached the top of the hill, he was stunned. Ren Xiaosu did not really expect the wolves to be nearby.

He saw the silvery Wolf King standing in the wilderness and staring at him quietly. Even the wind seemed to have stopped blowing for it.

But very surprisingly, Ren Xiaosu did not get the feeling the Wolf King had any intention of attacking them this time. It just glanced at him quietly before turning around to run back into the wilderness.

The Wolf King looked extremely strong and powerful. Using some of the bushes that it stood next to earlier as a reference, Ren Xiaosu was startled when he realized his estimation was not wrong. This Wolf King had grown to a size larger than a cow.

Why? What motives did the wolves have in following them?

Ren Xiaosu had thought something did not feel quite right. Although the wolves did not dare to pass through the canyon, Ren Xiaosu found they had been waiting there all along when he returned from the mountains beyond the canyon.

At the time, Ren Xiaosu wondered if they bore a grudge against him after he had escaped from them the previous year. But now, it seemed like the situation was far more complicated than that.

Whatever! Ren Xiaosu thought it was going well as long as the wolves did not attack them. As for what that reason might be, he had no intention of delving any deeper into it.

He would be bidding farewell to the wilderness in another day or so. After that, he would be entering the stronghold he had always been dreaming of to live a life without fear or worry.

Then their lives would start getting better with each passing day. Ren Xiaosu had promised Yan Liuyuan he would lead him to a comfortable life someday.

When he returned to the vehicle, everyone had disembarked from the truck to stretch themselves. Although it was not too crowded inside the truck bed, there was still some discomfort from being stuck in it for an extended period.

Wang Fugui approached Ren Xiaosu and said solemnly, "Thank you, Xiaosu. Thank you for taking me and my son with you into the stronghold."

"Gratitude received from Wang Fugui, +1!"

Ren Xiaosu looked at Wang Fugui and said, "You don't have to be so polite with me. We're not only going into the stronghold, we're also going to reopen your grocery store."

Wang Fugui shook his head. "It won't be my grocery store but yours. Listen to me, Xiaosu. You've earned that grocery store in return for risking your life. It's enough for me to be your shopkeeper in the future. I have nothing more to ask for, except that you remember to give me a high salary."

Ren Xiaosu was startled. He had not expected Wang Fugui to reject him when faced with such an enticing deal.

While Wang Fugui continued thinking about how to persuade Ren Xiaosu, Ren Xiaosu said, feeling touched, "OK, let's do it as you say."

Wang Fugui was speechless. Ren Xiaosu was still the same shameless, money-loving young man he knew.

But at this moment, Ren Xiaosu added, "You'll get a 30% share in the shop, and the money you get from selling those antibiotics will be yours to keep too."

He was not exactly giving out shares to him for nothing. First of all, Ren Xiaosu did not have any talent in running a shop, while Old Wang had been running one all his life. So Ren Xiaosu felt he should let the

professional handle it so he could spend his time on other things. In fact, what Ren Xiaosu wanted to do now was not to earn money but to go to school.

...

Luo Lan made use of this time to size up Chen Wudi while Ren Xiaosu was away. He was already quite familiar with Chen Wudi. Be it his daily routine or hobbies, someone had reported this information to him before.

Luo Lan had been quite envious that his younger brother had a supernatural being for a bodyguard. It felt really nice to even just think about that.

Unfortunately, the supernatural being had been serving in the military base under Qing Zhen's command. However, Luo Lan was not that lucky.

And now, Luo Lan was starting to have such ideas again after finding out Chen Wudi was able to take on three Experimentals all by himself.

Chen Wudi was just a fool. As a big shot of the Qing Consortium, couldn't he easily fool a fool?

As Ren Xiaosu had never displayed his superpower in front of Luo Lan before, he was only a skilled and ballsy refugee in Luo Lan's eyes. What did he do to deserve such a powerful supernatural being like Chen Wudi as his follower? And it was even a master-disciple relationship too!

Luo Lan was richer and more handsome than Ren Xiaosu. He was also an organization's big shot with power beyond imagination. A person like him should have a follower like Chen Wudi instead!

Thinking of this, Luo Lan went up to Chen Wudi and chuckled. "Hey, Wudi, since your master is so poor, why don't you follow me instead?"

Chen Wudi glanced at Luo Lan and said, "I don't wanna talk to Benbo'erba."

Luo Lan was annoyed. 'Fucking Benbo'erba! Are you still not done with that yet?! Just what is with a mentally ill person's train of thought? Can't it be a little more normal?!'

When Ren Xiaosu came back, he saw Luo Lan sitting right up against Chen Wudi. He smiled and said, "What, you wanna go with us to the Western Paradise to obtain the Buddhist scriptures too? If you really wanna, we're still missing a White Dragon Horse.... No, you don't look like White Dragon Horse." So saying, Ren Xiaosu turned his head and looked around. When he saw Wang Dalong, his eyes lit up. "We're still missing a carrying pole 1 and two baskets. So why don't you be the bamboo basket instead!"

Luo Lan got so angry he turned around and left. He suddenly felt he was not crazy enough to get along with Ren Xiaosu and the others.

Early the next morning, the truck was ready to set off again. This time, they were going to head straight for Stronghold 109!

When their other vehicles broke down, they siphoned the gas from them into the other vehicles that were still working. As such, the gas in the truck's tank was more than enough to cover this leg of the journey.

Ren Xiaosu started imagining what it would be like to live in the stronghold. He suddenly asked Jiang Wu and her students, "What on earth is it like inside a stronghold?"

Jiang Wu thought back and said, "Students can attend lessons in the stronghold without worry. During their break, they can even play basketball and sweat it out in the schoolyard. When the girls see the boys they like, they will cheer for them. Actually, the teachers already know those students have developed feelings for each other, but they sometimes choose to turn a blind eye to it. Of course, the majority of the teachers will still choose to call the students' parents."

"Call their parents?" Ren Xiaosu was stunned. "Why would they call their parents?"

"To tell the parents so they'll punish their children," Jiang Wu said with a smile.

"Oh." Ren Xiaosu nodded. "Fortunately for me, I don't have parents."

Jiang Wu choked on her words as she did not know how to continue the conversation! But for some reason, she felt a little sad for him. So this young man had been living in the desolate wastelands in such manner with absolutely nothing to fall back on.

Ren Xiaosu shouted, "Everyone, get into the truck! We're setting off!"

Then he saw Luo Lan bow three times in the direction of where they came from. He was doing that for the soldiers of the combat brigade who had died for him.

Actually, Luo Lan had not shown any signs of exceptional sadness along the way thus far. It was as though he were still very optimistic about things.

But when Ren Xiaosu saw this, he felt that Luo Lan was not showing his sadness simply because he did not want to appear weak.

Chapter 130: A brush with death

"The town is right in front of us." Yan Liuyuan's eyes were shimmering as he leaned forward from the back of the truck and peeked through the transparent window between the cab and cargo bed.

Upon hearing that, all of the people who were nodding off in the back of the truck were jolted awake.

Everyone did not have it easy their entire journey here. There wasn't even a place for them to lie down for one day, and everyone was always in a state of anxiety and constant worry. What if the wolves or the terrifying Experimentals caught up to them again?

Even if there was a supernatural being like Chen Wudi around, he probably couldn't hold off so many Experimentals, right?

Although Ren Xiaosu told them they would be fine, everyone was still uneasy until the moment they finally saw “human civilization” again. An emotion welled up inside them. It was a kind of happiness that came after a brush with death.

Naturally, some people were puzzled too. For example, Luo Lan and Jiang Wu wondered why Ren Xiaosu would make the judgment call that the wolves would not be attacking them again when they didn’t even see him doing anything about it. Furthermore, the wolves really did not come to attack them!

Jiang Wu had already experienced it so many times along the way. The young refugee made many decisions correctly as though he had prior knowledge.

If she didn’t have her students catch up with Ren Xiaosu in advance on the evening the Experimentals attacked, they would have probably died there.

During their escape, Yan Liuyuan, Xiaoyu, and the others in their group did not suffer much. The other escapees had not brought anything with them on their escape. Of all the escapees, only the five of them were carrying a full set of luggage, and it was clear they were well-prepared. This made Jiang Wu envy Yan Liuyuan and the others. If Ren Xiaosu had led her and her students as well, they would probably have suffered a lot less.

Of course, she knew that Ren Xiaosu did not have such an obligation to them. Furthermore, he had already helped her with many things, such as searching for food and letting them get into the truck. Jiang Wu knew full well it was due to Ren Xiaosu’s credit that she and her students got to Stronghold 109 alive. She turned to the students and said, “Everyone, come and thank Ren Xiaosu. You should all know you’re only alive because of what he did.”

The students looked at Ren Xiaosu. This refugee, the same age as them, had truly earned their genuine admiration.

“Thank you!”

“Thank you so much!”

“Gratitude received from Xie Guangkun, +1!”

“Gratitude received from Chenghe, +1!”

“Gratitude received from...”

Ren Xiaosu was on cloud nine. “You’re all too polite, too polite!”

Within a minute, Ren Xiaosu suddenly said as he counted the number of people, “There are still two people who haven’t thanked me yet. Hurry up and...”

Jiang Wu did not know whether to laugh or cry. Although she was very grateful to Ren Xiaosu, she sometimes felt that his brain might really be wired differently from others.

The military transport truck drove on the road that cut through the center of town towards the stronghold's gate. Yan Liuyuan leaned out of the back of the truck and looked outside. "Bro, this place is just like our town."

What he meant by "just like" probably referred to the shacks and living conditions in town.

Ren Xiaosu used to think the sights in town were awful, but the same sights here felt warm and fuzzy to him now.

He was a little different from the others. After venturing out to the Jing Mountains, he didn't even get to rest before he came back and encountered the disaster at the stronghold. It'd been half a month since he had gotten any proper rest.

Even someone with an extremely strong will like him would feel worn out.

Jiang Wu said hesitantly, "Did you guys used to live in a place like this?"

Everyone in the stronghold knew there was a town outside, but they did not know what the town actually looked like. That was because not everyone could pass through the stronghold's gate as they wished.

So Jiang Wu had thought the town was some dilapidated place with squat buildings. She had never expected there would be no buildings at all. The majority of the homes here were run-down.

So they had been living in a fairy tale heaven the entire time, while Ren Xiaosu and company lived in hell.

Xiaoyu smiled and said, "But life was not that hard. Our Xiaosu was even a substitute teacher in town. If nothing had happened to the stronghold, he would probably have become the new teacher."

Her words surprised Jiang Wu even more as she looked closely at Ren Xiaosu. Honestly, she only thought that Ren Xiaosu was capable. She did not expect he was even a teacher. In that instant, Ren Xiaosu's image in her head became even greater.

This was the social status that came along with a social identity. If Ren Xiaosu were only a "drug dealer," he would definitely not gain any respect from others.

Grumpy, Luo Lan jumped out of the vehicle. The more he looked at Ren Xiaosu, the angrier he became. He was clearly just a refugee, yet he had a supernatural being as his disciple and even a beautiful female teacher with eyes only for him.

He marched up to the gate in an awe-inspiring manner and shouted to the people at the gate, "Tell Lu Yuan to come out and see me!"

It seemed like the man at the gate was a town resident. He was stunned as he stared at Luo Lan. "Who is Lu Yuan?"

Luo Lan's face darkened. He shouted, "Where's the town administrator? Get him out here!"

Ren Xiaosu also jumped out of the vehicle and immediately saw the figure of a town administrator. After all, the demeanor and attire of the town administrator were totally different from those of the refugees. Ren Xiaosu told him, "We came from Stronghold 113. This is Luo Lan of the Qing Consortium. Report this to your stronghold overseer." Ren Xiaosu then turned around to Yan Liuyuan and the others and said, "Y'all don't have to get out of the vehicle. We'll be driving straight into the stronghold."

Jiang Wu was slightly taken aback, because Ren Xiaosu cast a glance at her when he spoke. She realized Ren Xiaosu was hinting something to her.

Luo Lan had only promised to let the six of them into the stronghold. He didn't include Jiang Wu and her students. If someone made a fuss about it, Jiang Wu and her students might just end up refugees in the future.

But right now, they had the backing of Luo Lan. Everyone just needed to remain in the truck while they entered the stronghold. No one could say a thing about it. The people of Stronghold 109 would probably just think the truck was carrying the Qing Consortium's people!

Usually, they would check their IDs before allowing them into the stronghold, but Ren Xiaosu was going to gamble that Lu Yuan would not dare to check Luo Lan.

The high and mighty stronghold overseers were poor bastards caught in between the various organizations at such a time. They wouldn't dare offend any of them.

When Ren Xiaosu finished speaking, he got back into the truck to get some rest. Meanwhile, Luo Lan, Tang Zhou, and their soldiers waited outside for Lu Yuan to come out. The wait lasted an hour.

For some reason, Ren Xiaosu always felt the way Luo Lan carried himself was extremely similar to that of his younger brother, Qing Zhen. In Ren Xiaosu's eyes, the cocky looks on their faces were exactly the same. It was just that Luo Lan always seemed to be a level below Qing Zhen.

After all, Qing Zhen had been surrounded by a large number of combat troops, and he could feel the intimidating aura blow against his face; whereas when Ren Xiaosu saw Luo Lan for the first time, he was already in a pathetic state.

Of course, Ren Xiaosu was still unaware he had flushed Qing Zhen's image down the drain. This was also the reason why Qing Zhen was so determined to arrest Xu Xianchu by any means necessary.