

Chapter 141: Silencing witnesses

With Yang Xiaojin and the Qing Consortium both here in Stronghold 109, and the Pyro Company audaciously seeking to collect the blood of supernatural beings as well, Ren Xiaosu nearly forgot this stronghold was actually under the control of the Li Consortium. Ren Xiaosu was a little curious about what could have attracted all these people here and the events that might be unfolding soon.

Until now, Ren Xiaosu had only met with the stronghold overseer whose name was Lu Yuan. There was no trace of anyone from the Li Consortium. Could the Li Consortium not know about what was going on in the stronghold? Surely that couldn't be possible!

So why didn't the Li Consortium make an appearance to control the situation? With so many different powers gathered here, it felt like some kind of matchmaking session. As the host, why wasn't there any sign of the Li Consortium?

It was at this moment that a student on the streetcar said, "There's still half a year until exams. I wonder if we'll qualify for uni?"

"Haha, I've already given up," said a student dressed more casually than the others. His collared shirt was mostly untucked while his hair was pretty long. As he spoke, he kept brushing his bangs to the side. "My dad already said he wants me to go to his factory and climb the ranks after I graduate from high school."

"What does your family's factory produce?" someone asked.

That student laughed and said, "We make clothes. My family's factory processes 10% of the fabric brought in from the outside. A lot of the clothes we make are even exported to the other strongholds to be sold."

"That sounds awesome!" the other student exclaimed. "But it hasn't seemed like it's very safe outside the stronghold in recent times. Are the clothes your family make still going to get exported?"

"It's true that it isn't safe outside the stronghold anymore. My dad says we won't be exporting anything out in the short term."

Ren Xiaosu took a look at them. Zhang Jinglin once said that the smokestack industries 1 were all outside the stronghold, while the industries that did not cause serious pollution were within it. Of course, it wasn't an absolute.

Sometimes, Ren Xiaosu thought the strongholds seemed to survive on the basis that the refugees had to suffer on the outside. Life outside was an abyss of suffering while everything on the inside was peaceful and prosperous.

The refugees living on the outside were only allowed to get involved with the most basic production of raw materials, while all further processing was to be carried out inside the strongholds. This would mean that whatever items the refugees needed, they would have to buy it with money from the stronghold.

In this way, whatever hard-earned money of the refugees would eventually flow back into the hands of the stronghold. To the big shots of the corporations, this was all but a simple game.

Actually, Ren Xiaosu did not feel that most people in the strongholds had any value at all. So why would the corporations find it necessary to support so many people?

But unlike how Ren Xiaosu had imagined it, those who lived in the strongholds had always lived in one since the strongholds started. However, a consortium was not necessarily a consortium at the beginning.

By the time the corporations started growing and gaining power, the masses in the strongholds had already formed a unique way of life. Even if the corporations wanted to change that, they would find it extremely difficult to do so.

The difference between the majority of a stronghold's residents and a town's refugees was none other than that those who were born in the strongholds had won before the race had even started.

The students in front of them looked like they were affluent second generations of the stronghold. Wang Dalong had been an affluent second generation in their previous town. But now, it seemed like Wang Dalong was doing much worse when compared to these people.

At this moment, one of the girls realized Wang Dalong was staring at her with an obsessive gaze. As such, she glared back at Wang Dalong. But even so, Wang Dalong did not look away. He was extremely focused on her.

Then Ren Xiaosu heard the students changing the subject. "Have you heard about the new transfer student in Class 12-2 1?"

"Are you talking about that girl?" The other boys suddenly became interested in this topic. "I saw her from a distance two days ago. I heard she had transferred over from another high school."

"But she's always wearing that cap, so I couldn't get a clear look at her face."

A girl who could provoke a group of boys into discussing her would definitely be pretty to a certain extent.

However, when Ren Xiaosu heard this, he got an odd feeling...

At this moment, the driver at the front of the streetcar shouted, "We've arrived at 13th High!"

Ren Xiaosu led Yan Liuyuan and Wang Dalong out of the streetcar. As it only took them four stops to get from the shop to the school's entrance, Ren Xiaosu wondered whether they should walk to school in the future.

Then Yan Liuyuan discovered Ren Xiaosu had abruptly stopped in his tracks. He turned around to where Ren Xiaosu was looking and was surprised to see a cap-wearing girl looking straight back at Ren Xiaosu.

Ren Xiaosu had already made a guess on the streetcar, but he really had not expected to bump into Yang Xiaojin here! Instead of catching up with one another, Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin both reached for their waists, ready to pull out their guns. However, both of them had a sudden, simultaneous realization that they were here to attend school.

In fact, Ren Xiaosu's gun was not holstered at his waist. He kept it in the storage space in his mental palace.

Yan Liuyuan was confused. Wasn't this cap-wearing girl the person from before who was with the celebrity called Luo Xinyu? Why did she appear here then? Furthermore, she even caused Ren Xiaosu such panic?

Instantly, Ren Xiaosu got a thought in his mind. He could sense that Yang Xiaojin seemed to be a little surprised and might even be thinking of silencing him.

Ren Xiaosu could guess why Yang Xiaojin would have such a reaction. Clearly, Yang Xiaojin was the transfer student those students had mentioned.

This girl had come straight to Stronghold 109 after getting out of the Jing Mountains. Furthermore, she was even allowed direct entry into the stronghold.

Getting into the stronghold could easily be explained with Luo Xinyu's superpower. But surely that power wasn't going to help Yang Xiaojin enroll for school as well, right?! Who could possibly have such an awesome superpower?

As such, her organization must have already infiltrated into this stronghold. By investigating how Yang Xiaojin's student application was handled, it might be possible to find out who was secretly backing her in Stronghold 109.

Although they were once teammates and had been connected by a temporary alliance, their relationship wasn't exactly that close, to be honest. So it was normal that Yang Xiaojin would react in such a way to protect herself and her companion in the organization.

Ren Xiaosu felt a little helpless. He hadn't expected to meet this cap-wearing girl here either. Perhaps this girl might not even know he already had an idea of who had left the note under the door.

The two of them were caught in a deadlock outside the school's entrance. Quite a few students gave them strange looks as they passed by. Since Ren Xiaosu felt this wasn't going to lead anywhere, he initiated a reconciliatory action.

He slowly brought his hand out from behind his waist to show he wasn't holding a gun. Yang Xiaojin looked at him calmly but did not put her hand down. Ren Xiaosu had a look at the pedestrians around them before attempting to talk about something else to ease the situation further. "Return the dagger to me."

Yang Xiaojin raised an eyebrow. Honestly, she had not expected Ren Xiaosu to talk about this.

At this moment, several students walked over. When they saw Yang Xiaojin, they greeted, "Hey, why are you standing out here?"

Yang Xiaojin calmly pointed at Ren Xiaosu. "He's trying to rob me."

Ren Xiaosu reacted, "Huh?!"

Chapter 142: Transfer student, Ren Xiaosu

When the group of students heard Ren Xiaosu was trying to rob Yang Xiaojin, they turned hostile. They even shouted for the other students to gather. It looked like they were about to turn him in to the law.

More and more students came over to watch the commotion. One of the reasons was that Yang Xiaojin got quite popular after her transfer, and the other reason was that people just loved watching a commotion.

Ren Xiaosu panicked on the spot. "We know each other!"

If he got into trouble for suspected robbery on his first day of school, that would be such an injustice. More importantly, Ren Xiaosu did not expect Yang Xiaojin to be so ruthless that she would bluntly accuse him of attempting to rob her! Besides, how could she say he was trying to rob her? The dagger was his in the first place. He had traded food to her for it! 'I can let slide you taking back the dagger for yourself, but what's with your accusation?'

The students had doubtful looks as they glanced at Yang Xiaojin before casting their eyes to Ren Xiaosu. "You two know each other? It doesn't look like it."

"We really know each other." Ren Xiaosu hurriedly said, "Isn't it just a misunderstanding? I'm also a student of 13th High."

"Since you say you know her, tell us what her name is," a male student demanded.

"Yang Xiaojin!" Ren Xiaosu was amused. Yang Xiaojin's biggest flaw in her plan was that he already knew her name.

However, the male student sneered. "How dare you pretend that you know her? Her name is Ren Xiaosu."

Ren Xiaosu felt like he'd been struck by lightning and nearly broke down.

He looked at Yang Xiaojin in disbelief. But he realized Yang Xiaojin wasn't embarrassed at all. It looked like nothing to her as she focused on watching Ren Xiaosu make a fool of himself.

'But if your name on the student application is Ren Xiaosu, what the fuck should I be called? Are you not ashamed?!'

One student looked at Ren Xiaosu and said, "You say you're also from 13th High, but why aren't you wearing a uniform? Which class are you in and what's your name?"

Ren Xiaosu calmed down a little by this time. He quieted his thoughts before saying, "If I say that my name is also Ren Xiaosu, I doubt you guys will believe me..."

At his side, Yan Liuyuan was almost tearing up with laughter. It was at this moment that he made a careful assessment of Yang Xiaojin. It seemed like his brother had had quite a few run-ins with her.

Yan Liuyuan felt this farce playing out in front of him wasn't really that big a deal. It was pretty interesting to see Ren Xiaosu getting upstaged like this. There were simply too few people who could get an edge over Ren Xiaosu like that. This cap-wearing girl was definitely not a normal person. Besides, normal people would never need to use a pseudonym either.

While Ren Xiaosu was trying to explain himself to the others, Yan Liuyuan ran before Yang Xiaojin. "Hello, big sis. I'm Ren Xiaosu's younger brother, and my name is Yan Liuyuan."

Yang Xiaojin did not even blink when she was sabotaging Ren Xiaosu. But when she saw Yan Liuyuan, she turned pleasant and cheerful. She said in a soft voice, "Mhm, hello. I'm your big brother's good friend."

Yan Liuyuan turned around and took a look at Ren Xiaosu, who was caught inside the crowd. Was this really what a good friend would do?

In the end, the large group of people forcefully brought Ren Xiaosu to the Academic Affairs Office. At the office, the teacher flared up when he was told that someone had tried to rob a student. But when he saw Ren Xiaosu's admission papers, he became polite.

He had received the notification yesterday that there would be a student admitted to the senior high section, and another two students to be admitted to the junior high section. He was informed of this news by the principal himself. Furthermore, he was reminded repeatedly that these three students were extremely important and were closely related to Lu Yuan, the stronghold overseer.

Although the actual controller of the stronghold was the Li Consortium, the daily running of the stronghold was presided over by Lu Yuan as long as it did not affect the consortium's interests. It could be said that he had power over the life and death of many people.

Perhaps, the consortium had never thought much of Lu Yuan before. But to the everyday man on the streets, Lu Yuan was still the most admirable existence they needed.

But what puzzled the teacher at the Academic Affairs Office was, didn't someone named Ren Xiaosu already get transferred into the school? When he saw the school application form in front of him, he felt a little confused.

Ren Xiaosu felt that this matter between him and Yang Xiaojin was still not over!

"Teacher, which class am I going to be in?" Ren Xiaosu asked.

The Academic Affairs teacher smiled and said, "Let's go, we're going to Class 12-3. Come, let me introduce you to your new classmates."

He called over another teacher to take Yan Liuyuan and Wang Dalong to the junior high section while he personally led Ren Xiaosu to the senior high section. It was at this moment that Ren Xiaosu remembered something. What was it that those students on the streetcar had said? The new transfer student was in Class 12-2?

How lucky for him to not have been assigned to the same class as Yang Xiaojin. Otherwise, if there were two Ren Xiaosus in a class, the teachers would probably break down, let alone Ren Xiaosu.

When Ren Xiaosu entered the class, the teacher who brought him here said kindly, "There's an empty seat in the third row from the back. You may sit there for now. In our school, we assign seats to the students based on their results. After the upcoming exams, you may choose where you wish to sit if you do well."

"OK, thank you, Teacher," Ren Xiaosu said politely. He had seen Yang Xiaojin on the way here when he passed by Class 12-2 next door, and she was sitting in the very last row all by herself.

The two of them exchanged a fiery look full of belligerence.

That said, Yang Xiaojin seemed like she was truly unafraid that Ren Xiaosu would go and tell on her to the Qing Consortium. No, Ren Xiaosu felt he had better get Yan Liuyuan and the others to leave first. Who knew what kind of tricks Yang Xiaojin might try again?

Ren Xiaosu sat at his desk. On his left was a female student similar in age to him. On his right was the hallway.

"Hello, I'm Cao Yuqi. What's your name?" The female student greeted Ren Xiaosu.

"I'm Ren Xiaosu."

Cao Yuqi asked, "Are you a transfer student?"

Ren Xiaosu was silent for a moment. "Uh-huh."

"Which school did you transfer from?" Cao Yuqi followed up with, "East City?"

Ren Xiaosu hesitated for a moment before saying, "I transferred from 5th High."

"5th High?" Cao Yuqi was stunned. "But there's no such school in our stronghold."

This time, it was Ren Xiaosu's turn to be stunned. 'There's a 13th High, so why wouldn't there be a 5th High?! How does the numbering in this stronghold work?'

Actually, there used to be a 5th High School in the stronghold, but it merged with 6th High School later as they were too close to each other. In recent years, the population in the stronghold had constantly been growing. As such, a residential building was built on the former site of 5th High School after it got demolished.

But how would Ren Xiaosu know that? He was just making things up!

“You...” Cao Yuqi looked at Ren Xiaosu suspiciously. “So which school did you really transfer from?”

“8th High?” Ren Xiaosu said.

Cao Yuqi would know something was wrong even if she were a moron. She was startled for a bit before asking, “Don’t tell me you’re from outside the stronghold?” As Cao Yuqi said that, she inched further away from Ren Xiaosu. The rumors of refugees carrying diseases had been flying all over the place for the past two days!

Chapter 143: Perverse

The entire stronghold was already fervently discussing the matter of the refugees. Some things might not sound too serious when it first started spreading, but it would get scarier and scarier as it passed on from one person to another.

For example, some people who were worried about the refugees entering the stronghold at the beginning would say, “Will the refugees bring in diseases from the outside or something? After all, there’s a saying that all refugees are contaminated.”

When it reached the next person, it would become: “This is bad! The refugees have brought diseases into the stronghold!”

When it spread to the third person: “Several dozen people have already died from the disease the refugees are carrying!”

As it spread: “The refugees want to kill everyone in the stronghold with their disease!”

Cao Yuqi put some distance between herself and Ren Xiaosu. But as fellow classmates and deskmates, how far could she possibly distance herself?

In the face of Cao Yuqi’s questioning, Ren Xiaosu did not answer or lie. He did not say he was a refugee because he always believed there was nothing wrong with being one in the first place. This wasn’t up to him. Besides, it wasn’t something disgraceful either.

Ren Xiaosu might change into a new set of clothes and try to integrate into this society, but he would not deny who he was. If he did, he would have denied all 17 years of his life thus far.

So at this moment, Cao Yuqi was looking at Ren Xiaosu in silence as she knew she had guessed correctly.

‘He’s a refugee!’ Cao Yuqi was at a loss. Her new deskmate had turned out to be a refugee!

Honestly, Cao Yuqi was even hoping to switch seats. But at this moment, a bent old man walked in. The old man placed his lesson plan on the lectern and said slowly, “The final exams will be here soon, so let’s review trigonometric functions today.”

Ren Xiaosu was startled. 'What are functions?'

Tang Zhou had asked Ren Xiaosu if he wanted to start with the 12th grade curriculum. At the time, Ren Xiaosu confidently said he had studied well during his time in town. When it came to learning, he said it would absolutely not be a problem for him. But now, Ren Xiaosu realized what Zhang Jinglin had taught him was quite different from what was being taught here in the stronghold.

In reality, Zhang Jinglin could not be faulted for that. Zhang Jinglin himself wasn't a proper teacher either. Moreover, their class consisted mainly of the younger boys and girls such as Yan Liuyuan and Wang Dalong, so there wasn't a need to follow a lesson plan meant for higher grades.

When a student got to Ren Xiaosu's age in town, they would usually stop schooling and start helping out at home. It was only Ren Xiaosu who had an abnormal thirst for more knowledge.

All these reasons led to Ren Xiaosu unable to understand what was being taught in class at this moment!

The entire lesson felt like he was making his way through a fog. Ren Xiaosu had always been extremely attentive when attending classes. He wanted nothing more than to remember everything that was taught in Zhang Jinglin's lessons.

But it was different this time. He also wanted to take in all of what had been taught for trigonometric functions, but he just didn't have the ability to do so. He couldn't make sense of it at all!

When he had come to school to process his admission, the Academic Affairs Office issued him new textbooks. However, these textbooks were all for 12th grade classes. Even if Ren Xiaosu wanted to catch up on his knowledge, he would have to start with the 10th grade curriculum.

During class intermission, Ren Xiaosu's deskmate hurriedly left her seat. Several students gathered in the corner of the classroom and started chattering. At times, some of the students in the group would let out a gasp, exclaim, or frown.

Ren Xiaosu didn't even have to wonder to know they were discussing his status as a refugee, and the harm he might bring to them as one.

People in the stronghold did not treat refugees nicely. This was Ren Xiaosu's feeling after interacting with them. There were even times when he felt living in town was much freer. Of course, with the current threat of the Experimentals and wolf pack, it might not be safe to live in town.

The refugees living in the town outside Stronghold 109 probably did not know the wilderness was filled with many things that could threaten their lives.

Therefore, Ren Xiaosu, Yan Liuyuan, and the others could only bear with it for now. This was because they hadn't found a safe haven yet to replace the protection the stronghold offered them.

After the class intermission, it felt like every one of the students knew Ren Xiaosu was a refugee. Everyone's attitude towards him became colder.

Some of the students who had wanted to reach out to get to know Ren Xiaosu were now left with a complex mix of emotions.

More importantly, in order to strengthen their own social class, the consortiums had inculcated into everyone the idea that refugees were of a lower class. They would often intentionally or unintentionally spread the idea that refugees were “contaminated” and used this as a reason to refuse entry to them into the strongholds. This also helped them to avoid getting caught in a moral outrage.

“I would like for the refugees to come into the stronghold too, but they’ve been contaminated. If we allow them to come in, that would be irresponsible of us to everyone else.”

The stronghold residents were used to hearing similar statements.

However, Ren Xiaosu wasn’t really bothered by it. Although he would like to get to know more people at school, he wouldn’t force it if others weren’t willing to make friends with him. After all, he and Yan Liuyuan had solely relied upon each other all these years. It didn’t matter to him what others thought about them.

After school ended on the same day, Ren Xiaosu grabbed his backpack and left the class. It wasn’t like he was anxious to get home. He just didn’t want to lose sight of Yang Xiaojin.

On that night in the Jing Mountains, Ren Xiaosu clearly remembered how terrifying it was when he saw Yang Xiaojin taking a sniper rifle out of thin air. If he allowed Yang Xiaojin to get a step ahead of him in locating a commanding point, he would probably end up dead!

In Ren Xiaosu’s opinion, Yang Xiaojin was very likely looking to silence him.

This was because Ren Xiaosu was very sure that if he told Luo Lan that Yang Xiaojin had been admitted into 13th High School, not only would Yang Xiaojin’s plan fail, something would also happen to the person who helped her with her school enrollment.

Ren Xiaosu believed the Qing Consortium still had some hidden influence within this stronghold. If they knew about Yang Xiaojin’s whereabouts, Qing Zhen and Luo Lan would definitely not miss this chance to exterminate a threat.

When he left the class, he happened to spot Yang Xiaojin coming out of the class next door. A smile appeared on Yang Xiaojin’s face under her cap. She did not make her way out of school but instead went in the opposite direction as she headed to the top floor of the school building.

The rooftop became quiet and secluded after school.

Ren Xiaosu frowned as he was unsure of what Yang Xiaojin was planning.

After school, the students started pouring out of the compound. As it was only 5 PM, many students stayed behind at school to play basketball or soccer.

Ren Xiaosu got a thought when he saw this scene. He wondered how the refugees outside would feel if they knew the people in the stronghold were actively seeking enjoyment in their lives during a time when refugees were struggling to even fill their stomachs.

Therefore, the walls of the strongholds not only stopped the dangers of the wilderness from coming in, but also prevented the refugees from knowing what was going on inside. It didn't let them realize just how comfortable it really was inside a stronghold.

But Ren Xiaosu thought this seemed a little distorted. It felt like the recent disaster had caused humans to put on an even greater pretense of peace and prosperity.

It was just like how an oppressed and poor person who got rich overnight would likely choose to splurge and squander without limits. This was a kind of psychological perverseness 1 that needed fulfilling.

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Chapter 144: Each other's secret

In the crowd of those making their way out of school, the figures of Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin going in the opposite direction to the roof stood stark. But since everyone was in a hurry to leave school, no one paid any attention to it.

As Ren Xiaosu followed Yang Xiaojin, he realized she had a great figure, and she was tall as well.

Yang Xiaojin glanced at him when she was turning the corner at the stairs. Ren Xiaosu immediately looked away.

Upon reaching the rooftop, Yang Xiaojin pushed open the rusty metal door and walked outside. Ren Xiaosu followed and suddenly felt as though his horizons were broadened as he stood outside on the rooftop overlooking the stronghold. This was the first time he was able to do so. Although the school building wasn't that tall, it was high enough to be able to see into the distance.

At this moment, Yang Xiaojin threw something at Ren Xiaosu. It was the dagger she had stolen from Ren Xiaosu.

"We're even now." Yang Xiaojin sounded very calm. She did not explain why she had taken back the dagger, nor did Ren Xiaosu ask about it.

The two of them stood on the rooftop and were locked in a stalemate.

Suddenly, the sound of footsteps came from behind where Ren Xiaosu was standing. He turned around to look and was stunned to discover two students, a male and a female, holding hands as they came up via the stairway. It looked like they were a couple?

When the couple saw there were others around, they did not seem to mind and continued heading up towards the roof. As a result, Ren Xiaosu shut the door leading to the rooftop.

The couple was dumbfounded when they saw the door get shut in their faces.

When Ren Xiaosu closed the door securely and turned back towards Yang Xiaojin, he discovered she was already pointing a small silver pistol at him.

Ren Xiaosu immediately recognized the type of gun it was—a SIG Sauer P238. This was once the most classic model of SIG Sauer and was known as the “pretty lady” among handguns.

But Ren Xiaosu did not panic. He said, “If we wanted to kill each other, we would’ve already done so. Aren’t we both here because we want to reconcile?”

If Yang Xiaojin had really intended to shoot, she wouldn’t have gone through the trouble of throwing the dagger back to him. Ren Xiaosu was feeling unusually calm at this moment.

Yang Xiaojin put away her gun again and said, “How did you manage to escape from the Qing Consortium’s defense perimeter?”

“I kept running all the way out.” Ren Xiaosu played dumb.

“What happened in the Jing Mountains after we left?” Yang Xiaojin asked.

“Countless Experimentals came rushing out, and there was even a monstrous creature that appeared from the crater of the volcano.” Ren Xiaosu briefly mentioned, “A lot of shocking incidents occurred. You can’t possibly imagine how terrifying that creature in the crater was.”

“I can imagine that,” Yang Xiaojin corrected him.

Her answer stunned Ren Xiaosu, Yang Xiaojin sounded very firm. Could Yang Xiaojin also have seen something the size of that creature before?

Ren Xiaosu asked, “Are you worried that I’ll squeal on you to the Qing Consortium?”

“I’m not afraid of that now.” Yang Xiaojin said, “Because you also have a secret you’re afraid the Qing Consortium will find out about.”

“What secret?” Ren Xiaosu suddenly felt as though something was off, and he had missed out on some details!

Yang Xiaojin started smiling. There was even a hint of arrogance to it. “When Luo Xinyu and I went back the way we took to the Jing Mountains, we discovered the wolf pack had been waiting at the mouth of the canyon all along. If it weren’t for Luo Xinyu’s ability to jump through the shadows, we would probably have had to take a detour to get around them. But calculating the time you took to get back, you must’ve already reached the town before Stronghold 113 was destroyed. First, you couldn’t have run that quickly if you were just a normal person with greater strength. Second, if you were really a normal person, you couldn’t have gotten past the wolf pack for sure.”

Ren Xiaosu tensed up. Yang Xiaojin continued, "Therefore, you're also a supernatural being. It was just that you kept your powers more hidden than Luo Xinyu and me. It was no wonder you dared to join the expedition to head to the Jing Mountains. It was because you had a hidden trump card."

"I didn't meet any wolves on my way back." Ren Xiaosu said calmly, "I just ran through the canyon. The face bugs can't move fast either, so I had already run past them by the time they crawled out of their caves."

Yang Xiaojin looked seriously at Ren Xiaosu and said, "I'm not listening."

Ren Xiaosu was speechless. There was nothing he could do about it. After all the explanation, all it took were three words for it to be refuted.

But Yang Xiaojin suddenly said, "I'm not saying all this to threaten you. I just want you to understand that everyone has secrets. So don't do anything stupid that'll make both of us suffer."

"Deal!" Ren Xiaosu said. In fact, that was what he wanted as well. As long as everyone got along peacefully, everything would be fine.

They had gotten along rather well in the Jing Mountains, so there was no need to fight to the death now just because they were out of the mountains.

Moreover, if Yang Xiaojin and those working with her really wanted to make a move, he would be more handicapped since Yan Liuyuan, Xiaoyu, and the others were all normal people.

Of course, Ren Xiaosu knew he could not drop his guard just because of this temporary ceasefire. After all, Yang Xiaojin was someone who could even steal back a dagger she had given away, so what else could she be capable of?

After the talk, Yang Xiaojin got ready to go downstairs. As she went past Ren Xiaosu, she noticed his grip on the dagger tightened.

Ren Xiaosu asked, "Why is the Pyro Company offering to buy the blood of supernatural beings? And why did you all make an attempt on Qing Zhen's life?"

"The danger in Stronghold 109 is greater than you think." Yang Xiaojin said, "Do not recklessly provoke the Pyro Company, nor sell your blood to them. That's all I can say about it. As for the matter between us and Qing Zhen, you're still not fit to involve yourself yet."

"What other danger is there?" Ren Xiaosu was startled. Could there still be other forces at play other than the Pyro Company?

"Don't be so nosy." Yang Xiaojin said, "Besides, I doubt you have much free time to care about other matters. You might have underestimated how much the stronghold residents ostracize the refugees."

Ren Xiaosu started pondering. It seemed like the refugees coming into the stronghold was still not over yet?

He looked down at the school entrance. A girl wrapped in a scarf and wearing a pair of sunglasses stood there. When the girl noticed him looking in her direction, she waved at him in greeting.

Just by this familiar greeting, Ren Xiaosu knew it was Luo Xinyu...

Ren Xiaosu decided to clear the last of his doubts. Or to be accurate, this was something he wanted to know deep down. "Why have supernatural beings started appearing?"

Yang Xiaojin stood at the entrance of the rooftop and turned around to look at Ren Xiaosu. She pointed a finger at her head and said, "Humans have always been weakening their physical attributes during evolution. You've said this before when we were in the Jing Mountains, and so has that Mr. Zhang from Stronghold 178. That's the price to pay for wisdom."

"I know that." Ren Xiaosu nodded. At that time, Yang Xiaojin had also hinted that Zhang Jinglin was not a simple man. So she had already guessed his identity back then, but she wasn't sure about it yet.

For some reason, Ren Xiaosu felt that this conversation was extremely important. The girl seemed to be using what he already knew to help him uncover the truth of this world. Ren Xiaosu started to get serious.

"Therefore, if a price has been paid, it naturally means there's been a harvest," Yang Xiaojin explained.

Ren Xiaosu was a little taken aback. "What do you mean?"

Yang Xiaojin laughed. She pushed her cap down further and said, "When a disaster comes, mental strength becomes the highest caliber of weapon humanity has in the face of danger."

Chapter 145: Bicycle

In the evening, when Ren Xiaosu led Yan Liuyuan and Wang Dalong back to the shop, he realized that something was off. Why were there so many people at the shop?

After they took over the running of the shop, they had informed a lot of those who came to see the doctor that the shop would not be doing any more consultations in the future. As such, the popularity of the shop died down very quickly. For the past few days, he and Old Wang still hadn't decided about what to do with the shop.

As Ren Xiaosu walked in, he noticed people crowding around Wang Fugui. Wang Fugui was explaining something to them.

"Boss, you're finally back!" Wang Fugui's eyes gleamed when he saw Ren Xiaosu.

"Um, why are there so many people here?" Ren Xiaosu asked.

Wang Fugui pulled Ren Xiaosu aside and whispered, "Didn't we sell off one dosage of the black medicine the day before yesterday? As a result, people have already started finding their way here."

“That can happen?” Ren Xiaosu was a little confused.

“Men always openly share such things over a meal.” Wang Fugui smiled and said, “All you young men have such high libidos, you don’t understand the pain of the middle-aged and older men. They’re all in the same boat! Besides, our black medicine does not have any side effects after taking it. That makes it so much better than the other medicines out there.”

“But we still can’t sell too much of it.” Ren Xiaosu rejected the idea and said, “Tell them that only one dosage will be sold per week. We can’t sell any more than that.”

Seeing that a great business opportunity couldn’t be completed, Wang Fugui was upset. If Ren Xiaosu could give him more of the black medicine, he would guarantee their shop would become the largest healthcare product store in the stronghold.

What sort of a concept was it to monopolize the healthcare products industry in a stronghold?

But since Ren Xiaosu said no, there was nothing that he could do about it. Wang Fugui explained to the customers that if they wanted to buy the black medicine, they would have to wait until next week.

Suddenly, a customer said, “I’ll pay 800 yuan to reserve next week’s medicine. Keep it for me until you have it ready!”

Wang Fugui’s eyes lit up. They could even do that?

Even as a shrewd businessman, Wang Fugui did not realize there would be such a strong demand for the black medicine from these middle-aged men in the stronghold!

When the others heard someone offer 200 additional yuan to make a reservation, their interest immediately subsided. Although they wanted to buy it, they didn’t want to be a sucker just to get it. So after the person who made the reservation paid the deposit, the others quickly dispersed.

Then from nearby Yan Liuyuan said, “We can’t use that kind of simple porcelain vial anymore. We’ve got to hold the black medicine in the best container so that it’ll create hype! The more mysterious-looking this black medicine is, the better!”

“Liuyuan is so smart!” Wang Fugui said excitedly, “We probably won’t need to sell anything else in the future. One dosage of the black medicine per person will be enough to make us rich!” Wang Fugui seemed to have sensed a great business opportunity.

“OK.” Ren Xiaosu nodded. “Do as you deem fit. I don’t know anything about doing business anyway. By the way, where’s Chen Wudi?”

“He headed out as soon as y’all went to school.” Wang Fugui said, “I don’t know where he went, but I couldn’t locate him. Don’t worry, though, he’ll definitely be back when it’s mealtime. He’s extremely punctual...”

Ren Xiaosu was stunned. “He only remembers when it’s time to eat?”

Wang Fugui hesitated for a moment before saying, "It's not that. He doesn't come back because he wants to eat."

Ren Xiaosu was confused. "Didn't you just say that he'll definitely be back when it's time to eat? If it isn't to eat, why else would he be coming back?"

A next moment later, Chen Wudi walked in from the outside with his arms full. Wang Fugui looked at the figure of Chen Wudi in a daze and said, "To bring us food..."

He heard Chen Wudi shout at the top of his voice, "Master, I'm back from alms begging."

Ren Xiaosu was speechless. Ren Xiaosu saw a big bundle of food in his arms that included buns, Chinese burritos, and even a small bag of pickles. There was quite a large variety of food.

But what Ren Xiaosu could not figure out was just how deeply immersed Chen Wudi was into his character.

When Chen Wudi shoved all the food into Ren Xiaosu's arms, Ren Xiaosu was dumbfounded. "Where did you get so much food from?"

Ren Xiaosu had been worried that Chen Wudi would consume too much of their food. But taking a glance, he realized just how self-sufficient Chen Wudi was!

"I got it when I went begging for alms." Chen Wudi chuckled.

"People just give food to you when you ask for it? Are they that generous?" Ren Xiaosu asked curiously.

"They didn't give it to me for nothing. I said that I would help them subdue evil," Chen Wudi said.

Ren Xiaosu was shocked. "Did you display your powers?"

"No. Master, didn't you instruct me not to do so?" Chen Wudi explained.

Finally, Ren Xiaosu heaved a sigh of relief. He was really worried Chen Wudi would get targeted by the other organizations. "Then how did you manage to get the food from them?"

Chen Wudi thought for a while. "I took it by force."

Ren Xiaosu was speechless. Wait a minute! It seemed like this idea of begging for alms was also taught to Chen Wudi by him. At that time, Ren Xiaosu got Chen Wudi to seek out those refugees to beg alms from while they were escaping here.

So Chen Wudi's definition of begging for alms was what Ren Xiaosu had taught to him back then?

At this moment, Ren Xiaosu was a little worried the police officers from the stronghold's Public Order Division would rush in and take Chen Wudi away. As he wasn't entirely sure of how Chen Wudi had begged for alms, he didn't know whether his attempts would constitute robbery or not.

“Um...” Ren Xiaosu said earnestly, “You better not go out for the time being.”

“Why?” Chen Wudi asked.

“First, we are not running out of food yet.” Ren Xiaosu said, “Second, it’s better that you keep a low profile for now.”

“Master, I can’t. It’s too boring at home. Pigsy and the others all have things to keep them busy with, but only I have nothing to do,” Chen Wudi said aggrievedly.

Ren Xiaosu was caught in a dilemma. “Then if you go out, you mustn’t go around to beg for alms anymore, do you understand?”

“OK,” Chen Wudi promised. He could ignore other people’s words but not that of his master’s.

After Yang Xiaojin’s reminder, Ren Xiaosu became even more worried the other organizations would target Chen Wudi, especially by that mysterious Pyro Company.

It wouldn’t be too bad if it were just the other organizations, but the Pyro Company seemed to be specifically targeting supernatural beings.

But fortunately, this place was not the Pyro Company’s territory.

At this moment, Xiaoyu walked in from outside. She waved at Ren Xiaosu to come over, saying, “Xiaosu, come look at the present that Big Sis bought for you.”

When Ren Xiaosu saw it, he was stunned. No one knew where Xiaoyu had bought the bicycle from. But since she didn’t know how to ride it, she had to push it back here with all her effort.

“Big Sister Xiaoyu, why did you buy this thing? It can’t be cheap, right?” Ren Xiaosu asked curiously.

“It’s fine, Big Sis still has some savings of her own. With this, it’ll be easier for you to get to school in the future,” Xiaoyu said happily. It was as though she had received a gift herself.

The moment she pushed the bicycle out into the backyard, Yan Liuyuan went up to her. “How do you ride this thing? Wouldn’t it be difficult to balance on with only two wheels?”

Ren Xiaosu asked, “Does anyone know how to ride this?”

As the group of people gathered around the bicycle, Wang Fugui and Xiaoyu both shook their heads.

Ren Xiaosu tried riding on it several times but found that he could not grasp the concept. He thought that maybe he should ask Jiang Wu or Yang Xiaojin for some advice tomorrow.

Chapter 146: Helping out a classmate

The next day, Ren Xiaosu discovered that the atmosphere in the classroom was a little strange the moment he walked in. The students who were in intense conversations fell silent.

Ren Xiaosu walked over to his own seat, seemingly unaffected, and buried his head in a book. He was thinking that if he couldn't keep up with the lessons in class, he would have to start learning from scratch. Therefore, Ren Xiaosu got Wang Fugui to purchase some 10th and 11th grade textbooks for him yesterday so that he could start self-studying today.

While he was studying by himself, Ren Xiaosu had a hunch that his fellow classmates seemed to know that something was about to happen. However, all of them tacitly chose to keep it from him.

And whatever that was going to happen was definitely not going to be in Ren Xiaosu's favor.

There were four periods scheduled in the afternoon, one for Chinese, one for geography, one for mathematics, and one for physics. The Chinese class was still manageable, but Ren Xiaosu still couldn't understand anything that was taught in math and physics.

Meanwhile, Ren Xiaosu felt the geography class was a little odd. He was startled to discover that what was being taught in the lessons were totally different from what he knew. Moreover, the entire subject seemed to be very loosely strung together.

There wasn't even a complete map to be found in the geography textbook, and the topics only touched on matters found in the vicinity of Stronghold 109, as well as some knowledge of economic geography 1.

Ren Xiaosu guessed that some of the global information in this stronghold might have been lost. Just like how the Li Consortium would never share their topographical maps with the Qing Consortium, the other consortiums would maintain secrets from each other.

Ren Xiaosu was different from most students. A normal student would only seek to learn whatever knowledge was presented in the textbooks. But when Ren Xiaosu read them, he would consider the geopolitics affecting the different consortiums.

Suddenly, Ren Xiaosu had a realization. He knew he could no longer look at problems from the point of view of a normal student.

Ren Xiaosu inadvertently turned his head at this moment and saw Cao Yuqi looking pale. It was as though she were enduring some sort of pain while holding her belly with her left hand.

At this moment, the long-awaited palace finally spoke again. "Quest: Help out a classmate."

Ren Xiaosu was starting to find the voice from the palace to be very endearing. After all, the palace always gave him a great gift whenever it spoke.

Ren Xiaosu pondered it for a moment before asking Cao Yuqi, "Do you have a stomachache?"

Cao Yuqi gave him a look but did not say anything, as though it were taboo to speak with him.

Meanwhile, Ren Xiaosu was paying full attention to any possible reactions from the palace in his mind. As long as the quest wasn't completed yet, he wouldn't give up asking.

“My fellow classmate, is it because you don’t have toilet paper? I have some over here,” Ren Xiaosu said. He was thinking that Cao Yuqi had an upset stomach.

Cao Yuqi could not help but roll her eyes at him. “It’s not an upset stomach.”

“Oh.” This was beyond Ren Xiaosu’s understanding. “Then what’s the matter? Are you sick? Why don’t I send you to the hospital?”

“Stop asking.” Cao Yuqi said impatiently, “What I have is incurable.”

Incurable? Ren Xiaosu was stunned. ‘Is it that serious?’

Honestly, Cao Yuqi was starting to regret being so hostile towards Ren Xiaosu. He was showing so much concern to her, yet she replied so harshly to him. As the saying goes, don’t bite the hand that feeds you. They were ostracizing Ren Xiaosu due to his refugee status mainly because some of these ideas had been instilled in them by their parents or simply out of fear.

However, just as Cao Yuqi was thinking of softening her tone, she suddenly saw Ren Xiaosu getting up to walk to the lectern.

It gradually quieted down in the classroom as everyone looked at Ren Xiaosu. They were all waiting to see what he was up to.

Ren Xiaosu went up to the lectern and said to his classmates with a face full of grief, “Everyone, our classmate Cao Yuqi has been diagnosed with a terminal illness. I hope that since all of us are classmates, we can offer her our support by donating some money.”

Cao Yuqi was confused.

The students in the classroom were confused.

All of the students’ eyes landed on Cao Yuqi as she nearly broke down on the spot.

‘What terminal illness are you talking about!?! It’s just my Aunt Flo visiting! Don’t you have any common sense?!’

Of course, she wasn’t exactly sure if Ren Xiaosu really did not know, or if he was doing this on purpose.

At this moment, the voice in Ren Xiaosu’s mind palace said, “Quest complete. Awarded Perfect Skill Duplication Scroll!”

Ren Xiaosu’s eyes lit up. It was completed just like that? And the reward was even a Perfect Skill Duplication Scroll?!

He really made a killing this time!

He could copy skills from so many people in this stronghold. For instance, Yang Xiaojin and Luo Xinyu, both of them were supernatural beings with superpowers! No matter whose power he learned, it would be well worth it!

But Ren Xiaosu did not really want to use this Perfect Skill Duplication Scroll on Yang Xiaojin. On one hand, he was much more interested in Luo Xinyu's power to travel through shadows. With it, he could easily take Yan Liuyuan and the others freely through the high walls of the stronghold.

In that way, he would have the freedom of going in or out of the stronghold. This would be equivalent to him gaining the initiative to do whatever he wanted!

Moreover, it would be really powerful to have a power that allowed him to cover distances in just one step when fighting battles. This would make enemies unprepared and defenseless.

Also, Ren Xiaosu did not want to use this Perfect Skill Duplication Scroll on Yang Xiaojin because he knew she had many skills above master level, of which many were even nonsensical skills!

If he randomly copied another skill like Nursery Rhymes Singing, Ren Xiaosu would have nowhere to cry.

He had discovered the previous time when learning Xu Xianchu's power that if the other party did not have a master-level and above skill on them, the Skill Duplication Scroll would automatically choose to learn their superpowers instead. Therefore, from a risk-reward point of view, it was a better choice to learn from Luo Xinyu.

During the next class intermission, the incident that happened in Ren Xiaosu's class spread to the class next door.

Ren Xiaosu saw Yang Xiaojin standing in the hallway when he went out for a breather. She was wearing a cap and leaning against the railings in the hallway while looking at Ren Xiaosu.

Cool and composed initially, Yang Xiaojin started trembling uncontrollably.

"Go ahead and laugh if you want," Ren Xiaosu said calmly.

"Hahaha," Yang Xiaojin laughed as she returned to her classroom. Ren Xiaosu was left alone as he gazed out at the school's athletic grounds. This was the first time Ren Xiaosu had witnessed Yang Xiaojin laughing so happily.

For some reason, Ren Xiaosu felt that instead of trying to get along with those "classmates," he had been better off working together and guarding against Yang Xiaojin in the wilderness.

When the bell rang, Ren Xiaosu turned around and walked back into class. Suddenly, the sound of footsteps and chattering came from outside the class. It sounded like a group of people were heading to their classroom.

Cao Yuqi revealed a joyful look as she seemed to know what was about to happen.

The homeroom teacher of their class appeared at the classroom door. He waved to Ren Xiaosu, who was inside the classroom, and said, "Ren Xiaosu, come outside for a while."

Chapter 147: Switching classes

Ren Xiaosu walked out of the classroom and was surprised to see a large group of middle-aged people standing behind the homeroom teacher.

The homeroom teacher deliberated for a moment before saying, "These are some of the parents of your classmates. It's like this: Everyone has mentioned how you might have brought in germs from outside the stronghold, so it's everyone's wish that you consider transferring to another school."

Ren Xiaosu wondered, "Transfer? Transfer to where?" With this matter exposed, there probably wouldn't be another school willing to accept him, right?

A male student's parent said, "If no schools are willing to accept you, you should stop going to school. It won't be very nice if everyone's safety gets affected all because of one person."

Ren Xiaosu gave a mental sigh. All of this was probably within Yang Xiaojin's expectations, so it was no wonder she said the stronghold held a subconscious ostracism of the refugees and that it would be even harsher than he could imagine.

Only when he saw these parents appearing here that he realized why his classmates had all kept quiet when they saw him. They had probably gone home last night and told their parents about this, resulting in the parents immediately deciding to come down to school together so they could force him to drop out of school.

To these parents, Ren Xiaosu was nothing but a refugee. With so many of them stepping forward regarding this matter, the school would have no choice but to accede to their demands.

Nowadays, as long as you dared to make a scene, there wasn't anything that couldn't be solved.

Ren Xiaosu looked at the parents and said, "And if I don't want to transfer schools?"

Honestly, these parents would've been dead if this were the wilderness. The rules of the wilderness were much simpler than in here. It was much more direct!

However, the parents did not care about Ren Xiaosu. They looked at the homeroom teacher and said loudly, "If you people don't make him transfer schools, how are you going to answer for it when an epidemic spreads? Furthermore, all of the resulting medical expenses will have to be borne by you. If you don't compensate, we'll sue you in court!"

Ren Xiaosu was contemplating this. He had once encountered the term "court" while studying in the town's school and knew it was a place that presided over justice and fairness. However, there was never a place like that in town.

He never could have expected that the first time a term like "court" would get associated with him would be over a lousy matter like this.

The students had quietly walked out of the classroom as well. They were watching the conversation happening over here because they were also hoping to find out how this matter would get resolved.

The 12th grade homeroom teacher was in a pickle. The teacher of the Academic Affairs Office yesterday had told him before that Ren Xiaosu was related to Lu Yuan. Who could have thought that the student enrolled by Lu Yuan would turn out to be a refugee?

The homeroom teacher thought that maybe he should pass the buck. He said softly to the parents, "This student's admission was arranged for by Lu Yuan. Why don't you all go and speak to him instead?"

The parents looked at one another. They did not know about this prior to being told. If they had known that Ren Xiaosu was enrolled in school by Lu Yuan, they probably wouldn't have taken on such a threatening tone.

But before they thought of how to handle it, a person suddenly squeezed through the crowd of people. When Ren Xiaosu turned around to see who it was, he discovered it was Jiang Wu.

Jiang Wu looked at the parents and said, "What are you trying to do?"

"We're not trying anything." A parent said, "We can't possibly have our children attend school with a refugee, can we?"

"Why not?" Jiang Wu got so angry her face flushed red. "Aren't all of us people? Who says a refugee will definitely spread diseases? Did any of your children get sick after returning home last night?"

The parents seemed to back off a little at the mention of this. "They didn't, but I've heard people in the stronghold fell sick."

"You heard?" Jiang Wu raised her voice a little. "Just because you heard about something gives you the right to destroy the future of a student?"

"What future does a refugee have?" The parents were also beginning to get angry. "Who the hell do you think you are?"

"I'm a teacher of this school!" Jiang Wu said.

Ren Xiaosu's homeroom teacher had already stopped speaking. He was so happy someone had stepped in for him.

A parent said, "Since you're a teacher, why are you arguing with us over a refugee?"

"I don't know about any refugees or stronghold residents." Jiang Wu stood her ground and said, "All I know is that he is a student!"

As Ren Xiaosu watched, he suddenly felt that Jiang Wu was stubbornly cute and even a little silly.

But if it weren't for this persistence and steadfastness, Ren Xiaosu would not have helped her when they were still wandering in the wilderness. If it weren't for Ren Xiaosu's help, Jiang Wu and her students would probably have died out there.

Ren Xiaosu felt a little touched, because he had finally seen something positive in someone in this troubled world.

Before that, there was also Wang Fugui and Xiaoyu.

Chen Wudi would probably count as half, while there was no need to mention Yan Liuyuan. What Yan Liuyuan and he had was as good as a sibling relationship.

A parent suddenly said, "Since you're protective of him, why don't you let him go to your class?"

Jiang Wu said without any hesitation, "That was what I came over for. I'll go and apply for Ren Xiaosu to transfer to our class right away."

A voice sounded from the crowd. "I'm also going with you to apply to transfer to your class."

Ren Xiaosu turned to look and was astounded to discover it was Yang Xiaojin who had spoken.

When one of the parents heard Jiang Wu say that, they sneered. "As a teacher, you're really irresponsible about what you say. You might be willing to let him into your class, but will your students' parents allow it?"

Jiang Wu hesitated for a moment before saying in a soft voice, "My students no longer have parents. All I need to do is seek their consent."

This point hit Jiang Wu's soft spot. The happiness her students experienced after escaping from death had slowly turned into longing for their families. This was a pain that could never be separated from any disasters. All they could do was to hide it within themselves until the pain slowly lessened.

Suddenly, a hubbub occurred beyond the crowd. Twenty-something students walked next to Jiang Wu. "Teacher, you don't need our consent to let Ren Xiaosu join our class. We'll support you and support Ren Xiaosu as well."

The other students from the other class muttered, "Why are you guys siding with a refugee so much?"

One of Jiang Wu's students said in a serious tone, "Side with him? We're not siding with or helping him. And he doesn't need our help either. You people are utterly clueless about the outside world. I find it to be really sad."

In the eyes of Jiang Wu's students, they were merely standing up for Ren Xiaosu out of gratitude. If not for him, they would not even be here sitting in class and attending school.

The number of people who made the getaway was in the thousands. But how many of them made it to Stronghold 109?

What they remembered most about the escape was what Jiang Wu had said to them, "As long as we follow that young man, we'll definitely get there."

In the end, they did manage to survive.

All of the students' parents standing in the corridor were stunned. This had turned out far too different from what they had imagined.

Chapter 148: Unrest in the stronghold

Be it Ren Xiaosu's own classmates or these parents of the students, none of them could have expected anyone to stand up for Ren Xiaosu.

Honestly, if their roles had been reversed and they were placed in Ren Xiaosu's position, they believed no one would bother to speak up for them.

Yang Xiaojin folded her arms and stood in the hallway as she watched the situation with interest. She might have guessed this would happen, but little could she have expected such a conclusion.

The parents were a little embarrassed. Right now, they did not know what they should do. Meanwhile, the students were all looking at Ren Xiaosu in a daze. All of them were wondering what kind of backing this teenager had.

Jiang Wu looked at Ren Xiaosu's actual homeroom teacher and said, "We'll have Ren Xiaosu transfer to our class, so why don't you handle the paperwork with the school?"

This was most welcome to the homeroom teacher. He said with a smile, "Sure, I'll get to it in a bit."

But before he could heave a sigh of relief, he heard Jiang Wu say coldly, "A teacher who can't even protect his own students. I feel ashamed for you. You didn't even put in a good word for him."

The homeroom teacher choked until he turned purple, yet he couldn't come up with a retort to what Jiang Wu said.

When Ren Xiaosu returned to the classroom to retrieve his belongings and got ready to change classes, he went over to Cao Yuqi. Cao Yuqi suddenly had an ominous feeling.

Ren Xiaosu took a deep breath and said earnestly, "Get well soon."

"Pfft." Yang Xiaojin felt like she had never had such a good laugh in years as she did today. It was as though all of the funny moments over the years were concentrated on Ren Xiaosu. However, she did not hang around long and went to pack her belongings as well.

On the way to the new class, Jiang Wu said to Ren Xiaosu, "If you have any difficulties in your classes, you can let me know. I can give you remedial lessons on any subjects you don't understand."

Ren Xiaosu considered it for a moment before saying, "There's indeed something that I would like to seek advice from Ms. Jiang."

"Which subject?" Jiang Wu asked.

Ren Xiaosu froze. "Cycling?"

Jiang Wu stopped in her tracks and looked quietly at him. She had thought Ren Xiaosu might ask her for help on things like math or other subjects, but never could she have expected that he would want to learn how to ride a bicycle. He was truly a young man who always surprised others.

Yang Xiaojin walked beside Ren Xiaosu and asked, "You bought a bicycle?"

Ren Xiaosu gave her a look. "What are you playing at? Shouldn't we be trying our best not to be in the same class, Ren Xiaosu?"

Yang Xiaojin smiled gleefully and said, "I don't mind."

"Who cares if you mind or not!" Ren Xiaosu wanted to curse at her.

Due to switching classes, Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin ended up becoming deskmates. Even Ren Xiaosu had to accept this was probably fate at work.

After afternoon classes, Jiang Wu went with Ren Xiaosu, Yan Liuyuan, and Wang Dalong to take the streetcar back to the grocery store. While on the way to meet them, Yan Liuyuan seemed to have heard about what happened in school as well, so he thanked Jiang Wu the moment he saw her.

This was in gratitude to Jiang Wu for helping his brother out of a tight spot.

Frankly, Yan Liuyuan was really starting to dislike the people in the stronghold more and more, with the exception of Jiang Wu and her students. Oh, and of course, not including Yang Xiaojin either.

Back at the shop, Ren Xiaosu couldn't wait as he made Jiang Wu teach everyone how to ride a bicycle. Ren Xiaosu asked everyone to learn how to cycle since it was an extremely useful skill.

Ren Xiaosu thought that if they had to travel between the strongholds, a motor vehicle would definitely be their first choice of transport.

But the problem was that there was no way for them to get their hands on one. Besides, motor vehicles required gas to operate and had other limitations as well, while they also had no idea who they could learn driving from.

So the next best available option would be a bicycle as their first-choice mode of transport. It wasn't difficult to repair, could be used for a long time, and was also easy to learn!

More importantly, it was something they could afford to buy right now!

The bicycles cost around 3,000 yuan in the stronghold and were considered to be in the range of luxury goods. Therefore, it could be seen just how determined Xiaoyu was when she decided to gift one to Ren Xiaosu. Most people could not bear to spend so much money like that, and Xiaoyu was even the type who would often haggle for up to half an hour just to get a 20 cent discount on her grocery shopping trips.

The group of them watched as Jiang Wu effortlessly rode the bicycle through the street in front of the shop. Chen Wudi even squatted down in front of the shop, looking extremely determined to learn how to cycle.

Jiang Wu explained to them the basics of riding a bicycle. She said, "To ride a bicycle, you first have to master your balance. On top of that, your eyes must not be focused on what's in front of the bicycle, but what's ahead of you. Overcome your fear..."

While Ms. Jiang Wu was demonstrating, she exhibited the unique charm of a mature woman.

When Jiang Wu finished the demonstration, everyone went over one by one to get some hands-on practice. What surprised Ren Xiaosu was that Yan Liuyuan managed to learn it on the spot. This kid was able to ride the bicycle steadily after just seeing it get demonstrated once.

And what surprised Ren Xiaosu even more was that he himself was unable to master it.

To be precise, it wasn't that he couldn't master it. In reality, learning how to ride a bicycle was just a matter of time.

The truth was, most people would take several days or even longer to learn how to ride a bicycle. So Ren Xiaosu's progress was considered normal.

But what Ren Xiaosu could not accept was that even Chen Wudi the fool had successfully mastered cycling.

This made Ren Xiaosu look somewhat bad, but he was absolutely not going to admit it was his problem.

Ren Xiaosu mused over it for a while before turning to Xiaoyu. "Big Sister Xiaoyu, is there something wrong with the bicycle you bought?"

Big Sister Xiaoyu covered her mouth and giggled. She wasn't angry at him. If both Liuyuan and Chen Wudi could ride the bicycle, what could be wrong with it? However, she seemed to have realized Ren Xiaosu had a habit of passing the buck 1 .

Of course, she didn't know the previous person Ren Xiaosu had pushed the blame onto was now carrying an invisible cauldron on his back and trekking through the wilderness.

Jiang Wu smiled and said, "Actually, it takes several days to learn how to ride a bicycle. You'll master it in a few days."

As Jiang Wu's voice trailed off, a loud explosion boomed in the distance. It sounded like a bomb had gone off in the stronghold. Could it have been Yang Xiaojin's doing?

Ren Xiaosu subconsciously thought the bomb Yang Xiaojin had built might have been detonated. But upon analyzing the sound in greater detail, he realized it wasn't so!

He ordered Chen Wudi and Yan Liuyuan, "Arm yourselves with the pistols and close the shop's doors. Don't open them before I get back. Ms. Jiang, please stay and hide here for the time being in case

anything happens.” Ren Xiaosu then proceeded to leave the shop. As a supernatural being, he couldn’t stand on the sidelines. He had to go and see for himself to understand the situation firsthand. Only then could he make the right decisions. Only by doing so could he ensure that everyone could carry on surviving.

The location of the explosion should be several kilometers where they were. But with Ren Xiaosu’s current speed, he should be able to get there in a matter of minutes.

While Ren Xiaosu was making his way there, he noticed a building that was about a dozen stories tall. This was one of the tallest structures in the stronghold, and it looked like it would make a good spot for him to observe the battle that had broken out.

Chapter 149: A brewing storm

Explosions kept reverberating throughout the stronghold from time to time. However, it did not sound as intense as the first one. While hurrying there, Ren Xiaosu saw several stronghold residents coming out of their homes. Everyone started gathering and were apparently discussing what had just happened.

Someone suggested that one of the factories might have caught fire, and the explosions were caused by the flammable substances within.

But Ren Xiaosu did not think it was as simple as that, especially not during a tense period like this. As a matter of fact, Stronghold 109 was currently a gathering place for a large number of dangerous people.

When Ren Xiaosu arrived at the foot of the high-rise building, he saw the logo of the Li Consortium’s bank slapped on it. But he wasn’t worried about that right now. He headed straight for the top by climbing up the façade of the building.

But when he got to the edge of the rooftop and was about to clamber over, the dark muzzle of a gun pressed against his forehead. Ren Xiaosu froze. He never expected someone else would be up here! He looked up and saw the familiar figure of someone wearing a cap.

Yang Xiaojin also looked surprised to see Ren Xiaosu up here. It had to be said she felt the two of them really seemed to have some sort of a strange unspoken understanding. The things they did and choice in locating a commanding position coincided with each other.

However, Yang Xiaojin had the absolute high ground at this moment. She smiled and said, “What are you doing here at this hour?”

“Didn’t both of us get attracted by the sound of the explosion?” Ren Xiaosu said calmly. He could be sure now that the explosion wasn’t set off by Yang Xiaojin. After all, it was still quite a distance from here to where the explosion had occurred.

Ren Xiaosu tried to dodge away from the barrel of Yang Xiaojin’s gun. But he was sure that based on her marksmanship, he would absolutely have no chance of avoiding it.

Yang Xiaojin said with a smile, “Let me ask you again: Is the dagger yours or mine?”

Ren Xiaosu answered in seriousness, "It's mine."

Yang Xiaojin was speechless.

Honestly, Ren Xiaosu hadn't expected Yang Xiaojin to still be thinking about the dagger at this time. Likewise, Yang Xiaojin never thought Ren Xiaosu would still claim ownership over the dagger in such circumstances!

"Come on up then." Yang Xiaojin holstered her gun away with a cold expression. She did not know how to deal with Ren Xiaosu anymore. She had only pointed her gun at him to scare him, but she wouldn't have pulled the trigger for real.

Ren Xiaosu climbed onto the rooftop and patted the dust off himself. "What happened? Why was there such a loud noise?"

"The Pyro Company is playing with fire." Yang Xiaojin explained, "An awakened supernatural being approached them to sell his blood. He thought the Pyro Company was really some kind of a charity organization, but they made a move on him on the spot. They tried to capture him but didn't succeed."

"So the Pyro Company is really using the 1,000,000 yuan reward as bait?" Ren Xiaosu was really glad he had not gone to sell his blood and had even stopped Chen Wudi from doing so. He sighed and said, "But how did the Pyro Company fail in their attempt to capture that person?"

For a company as powerful as them, would they really have attempted to catch a supernatural being without extreme preparation?

"Well, they succeeded at first. They injected a large dose of anesthetics into the supernatural being, but they never thought he would have a companion with him." Yang Xiaojin explained, "Those two supernatural beings must've known each other beforehand and made a plan to rescue the other person in case one of them got into trouble with the Pyro Company. You can call it a simple alliance of sorts."

This time, Ren Xiaosu understood. So even the supernatural being who went to sell his blood was prepared. He chuckled and said, "Then the Pyro Company has fucked up. Isn't this a good opportunity to pull a heist on them?"

"Don't look down on the Pyro Company." Yang Xiaojin shook her head. "The fighting force known as 'Dawn' that operates under the company is extremely strong even if only five of their men show up in the stronghold. Those two supernatural beings have survived until now only because Fatty Luo from the Qing Consortium is also messing around out there."

"Luo Lan?" Ren Xiaosu said in surprise, "What does he have against the Pyro Company?"

"Qing Zhen set up an ambush and captured over a 100 members of the Pyro Company last year." Yang Xiaojin said, "The Pyro Company and the Qing Consortium are actually adversaries, the type that will take it to the bitter end with each other."

This puzzled Ren Xiaosu a little. "What has Qing Zhen got against them?"

"The Pyro Company used this method to bait one of Qing Zhen's soldiers who had been on leave. The operation was successful, and it was so covert that Qing Zhen only discovered it after the Pyro Company had withdrawn their presence," Yang Xiaojin explained. "However, Qing Zhen managed to rescue that soldier during the ambush he conducted."

Ren Xiaosu was speechless. What kind of a timeline was that? It was way too messy. Were the struggles between the corporations really that intense?

Ren Xiaosu couldn't help but ask, "Then why did y'all target Qing Zhen? You're obviously against the Pyro Company, so wouldn't that make the enemy of your enemy your friend?"

Yang Xiaojin gave him a look. "Enemies are enemies. We don't form alliances."

It was at this moment Ren Xiaosu realized that Yang Xiaojin's organization had very clear goals or principles. Whoever encroached on their interests would probably get added to their hit list.

"You're getting curious, aren't ya?" A big sniper rifle appeared in Yang Xiaojin's hands. Her cheek stuck to the side of the menacing rifle in her hands as she looked into the distance through a telescopic scope nearly as thick as her arms. "The Pyro Company and Qing Zhen are both trying to control something they're absolutely incapable of controlling. Whether they succeed or fail, it'll still be disastrous."

Ren Xiaosu finally understood. So the mission statement of Yang Xiaojin's organization was to spread love and peace.

What nonsense! Ren Xiaosu absolutely did not believe anyone would be that selfless in this world!

At this very moment, Ren Xiaosu saw countless combat troops from the Li Consortium arrive at the battle site. They quickly closed off all the intersections and set up barricades and pillboxes around the area. Then, heavily armed platoons infiltrated into the middle of the battlefield in an unusually cautious manner.

Meanwhile, the location Yang Xiaojin had chosen happened to fall just outside of the lockdown perimeter. Ren Xiaosu knew he had been lucky in choosing this place to watch the battle from, but Yang Xiaojin probably did not depend on her luck for this. Instead, she must have known about the standard operating procedures of the Li Consortium's troops before deciding on this spot.

Ren Xiaosu asked, "The Li Consortium seems to have arrived a little late. Isn't this supposed to be their home field?"

"They have something more important to protect right now." Yang Xiaojin said calmly, "Anything that does not constitute a threat isn't going to bother them. Quiet now!"

Yang Xiaojin's breathing then became shallow.

Ren Xiaosu looked where her rifle was pointing and was surprised to see that a manhole cover outside the Li Consortium's perimeter had been pushed open from underneath. The first person who climbed out of it happened to be Luo Lan!

He saw Fatty Luo panting as he climbed out of the sewers, followed by Tang Zhou and the rest of their men. Tang Zhou was even carrying an unconscious person on his shoulder. They were running towards a vehicle that was parked nearby, and it looked like they were planning to use it to escape.

Chapter 150: Lunatic

Looking at the situation, this escape route should have been planned by Luo Lan and his men. The only thing that puzzled Ren Xiaosu was why such an important figure of the Qing Consortium like Luo Lan would be so familiar with the sewer system of the Li Consortium's stronghold.

Could it be that the Qing Consortium had planted many spies inside this stronghold? Or could it be that the Qing Consortium had ideas about the Li Consortium since a long time ago?

Yang Xiaojin took out a spotting scope from her pocket and passed it to Ren Xiaosu. Ren Xiaosu was startled. "Do you think I'm your spotter? Keep dreaming."

"Distance."

"...651 meters."

"Wind speed."

"Half value, 0.4 meters per second."

For a sniper, there were three types of wind 1: Full value, half value, and no value.

A full value wind meant it would affect the bullet's trajectory. Such winds would come from 2, 3, 4, and 8, 9, 10 o'clock. But for wind coming from 1, 5, 7, and 11 o'clock, the wind's effect on the bullet would be halved, thus being referred to as half-value wind. No-value wind was just as its name suggested. It did not have any effect on the bullet's trajectory. Such winds would blow from 6 and 12 o'clock.

As Ren Xiaosu finished speaking, he watched Yang Xiaojin make a rapid calculation of the compensation required for the shot. Ren Xiaosu wondered, "Do you intend to kill Luo Lan?"

With a loud bang, Yang Xiaojin answered Ren Xiaosu's question. The unexpected sound of the gunfire cracked through the night sky and nearly made Ren Xiaosu jump.

He looked at where Luo Lan was and discovered that Yang Xiaojin had not hit him. Instead, the shot hit the curbside off-road vehicle Luo Lan and his men had prepared.

Did she miss?

A moment later, the vehicle exploded. Ren Xiaosu realized Yang Xiaojin had not missed. She was aiming for the off-road vehicle's gas tank all along and had even used an incendiary bullet to do so.

Only this special type bullet was capable of igniting a gas tank, and no sniper would be so bored as to use incendiary bullets to snipe individual soldiers.

Luo Lan, who had yet to reach the vehicle, was furious. Who the fuck did that? He was so close to getting in the vehicle and making their escape, but it ended up getting blown up by someone instead! Who could be lunatic enough to do something like that?! Without a vehicle, how were they going to get away?! But he did not hesitate. Knowing that the noise here would quickly attract the Li Consortium's people, he decisively led Tang Zhou and the others back into the sewers.

Yang Xiaojin stowed her rifle swiftly as Ren Xiaosu watched helplessly. He said, "You came out at this hour of the night just to destroy Luo Lan's vehicle and make things difficult for them?"

Yang Xiaojin gave him a look. "That was so fun."

'Fun?! What was so fun about that, you crazy woman!' Ren Xiaosu watched as the Li Consortium's troops started heading over here from afar to encircle the area. It was at this time that Yang Xiaojin smiled and said, "Good luck."

A door then opened up in the shadows beside Yang Xiaojin. She held the hand that reached out of the Shadow Door and disappeared from Ren Xiaosu's sight.

That hand... was probably Luo Xinyu's, right?

Ren Xiaosu did not feel that good anymore. Again?!

Yang Xiaojin was not only making things difficult for Luo Lan and his men. After she revealed their location by firing that shot, she also implicated Ren Xiaosu as well!

Right then, Ren Xiaosu heard someone shout, "There's a sniper atop the bank!"

Hur hur, how fucking fun!

He immediately turned around and climbed down the building. If he didn't leave now, he would get surrounded by the Li Consortium in no time!

...

When Ren Xiaosu arrived back at the shop, he was drenched in sweat. He had sprinted all the way back here. Even with his current fitness, he still found it quite unbearable.

But he did not go in through the front door. Instead, he jumped into the backyard from the roof.

Ren Xiaosu discovered Wang Fugui and the others were still waiting for him out in the yard. Yan Liuyuan was the first one to come and circle around Ren Xiaosu. He was only able to set his mind at ease after confirming that Ren Xiaosu did not get injured. "Bro, what happened?"

"The Pyro Company clashed with some supernatural beings. The Pyro Company's intentions are indeed bad. A supernatural being went there to sell his blood but fell into their trap," Ren Xiaosu explained to them, simplifying the events.

Jiang Wu, who was standing nearby, did not say anything at all. As someone who had fled to Stronghold 109 with Ren Xiaosu, she figured out that Ren Xiaosu was not a normal person at the very least.

Moreover, since Chen Wudi claimed Ren Xiaosu was his master, then the master of a supernatural being should also be a supernatural being.

In reality, Jiang Wu did not know much about supernatural beings. She could only logic out the situation.

Ren Xiaosu looked at Jiang Wu and said, "Ms. Jiang, there shouldn't be any danger around here. Why don't I have Chen Wudi send you back first."

"Mhm." Jiang Wu nodded.

But at this moment, someone knocked on the door to the store. Ren Xiaosu frowned. The store had been closed for two hours now, so who could be knocking on the door? He went up to the door and peeked through the peephole and discovered that the people outside were Luo Lan and his men. Ren Xiaosu opened the door. He looked strangely at Luo Lan. "Why do you smell so bad?"

Luo Lan led Tang Zhou and the others into the store. But he seemingly did not want to tell the truth. "I tripped. Bring out your black medicine, I have someone here who's injured."

Ren Xiaosu pretended to ask, "What injuries? I heard an explosion in the stronghold just now. Could it be related to y'all?"

"Don't spout nonsense." Luo Lan nearly jumped. "We just tripped over!"

In fact, Luo Lan also knew what he said would not deceive anyone. For someone as smart as Ren Xiaosu, how could he possibly believe the lies he was making up?

But Luo Lan had no other choice. He couldn't admit to it, right?

Ren Xiaosu was amused. He purposely said to spite Luo Lan, "Eh, did y'all walk here? Where's your car?"

Luo Lan felt persecuted. "I sent it in for maintenance."

"What does maintenance mean?" Ren Xiaosu asked curiously.

"Things like cars require maintenance after a period of driving." Luo Lan gave him a look. "You don't even know something like that?"

"I've never driven a car before." Ren Xiaosu chuckled.

Then Luo Lan gave a look to Ren Xiaosu. "Don't speak a word about what happened tonight. Otherwise, I'll reveal that Chen Wudi is a supernatural being."

“Don’t you worry,” Ren Xiaosu said in irritation as he took the black medicine out. He scrutinized the unconscious person and wondered if it might have been one of the two supernatural beings involved in tonight’s incident.

Luo Lan did not dare bring this supernatural being to a hospital, so he had to come over to Ren Xiaosu’s place. The two of them had dealt with each other before. Even though Luo Lan was pissed off at Ren Xiaosu, he still found it more reliable to find Ren Xiaosu at this time.

Suddenly suspicious, Luo Lan asked, “Ren Xiaosu, why are you drenched in sweat? Were you outside just now?”

“No.” Ren Xiaosu pointed at the bicycle in the yard and said, “I was just learning how to ride a bike. Ms. Jiang came over specifically to teach us.”

“Oh.” Luo Lan nodded. “Ms. Jiang, you came over to teach them how to cycle?”

Jiang Wu smiled and nodded. “Yes, they’ve never ridden a bike before.”

Jiang Wu acted very natural, and there were no signs she was putting on an act.