

Chapter 161: Li Shentan, the abandoned son of the Li Consortium

The atmosphere in the room stiffened for a while. Honestly, not even Ren Xiaosu expected such a reversal. The strange frequency the two mental patients were communicating on actually connected.

How... unexpected.

As a matter of fact, the scriptures seeking group was becoming more and more complete. Chen Wudi had not only gathered his master and his three disciples, he even considered they would need the carrying pole as well.

Ren Xiaosu thought all that was needed now were the two baskets 1 and the White Dragon Horse to join the group.

At this moment, Yan Liuyuan looked at the girl and said with a smile, "Little girl, what are you called in this life?"

"I'm Si Liren," the girl replied.

"What's your superpower?" Yan Liuyuan continued asking.

"I have extraordinary strength," Si Liren said proudly.

When Ren Xiaosu heard this, he felt a little hesitant. The last person who said something like that was still tied up and held in a bedroom...

However, Ren Xiaosu felt he could not be too arbitrary. She had successfully reunited with Chen Wudi after all...

Yan Liuyuan smiled and said, "How strong are you? Can you show us?"

Si Liren made a noise of agreement as she casually lifted Wang Dalong. Wang Dalong was so frightened he kept screaming.

Yan Liuyuan said with a sigh, "Looks like Friar Sand is the one who's getting carried around by the carrying pole in this reincarnation."

Next to them, Xiaoyu smiled and said, "Liren, are you hungry? Do you want Big Sis to cook something for you?"

"I'm not hungry," Si Liren said cutely.

Luo Lan could not accept this. He just could not understand why the people he worked so hard to rescue always ended up joining the Western Paradise scriptures seeking group.

After so many days of planning, Ren Xiaosu got the better end of the deal? Why did all the supernatural beings keep flocking to Ren Xiaosu?!

“I don’t believe it. This little girl must have taken a blind guess!” Luo Lan shouted.

“But no one colluded with her beforehand or anything...” Ren Xiaosu said awkwardly. “She was brought here by you and hasn’t left your line of sight either.”

“Chen Wudi mentioned the White Dragon Horse earlier,” Luo Lan said, “so she might have guessed something from that.”

In Luo Lan’s view, how could there be such a coincidence in this world? ‘If you shouted out “carrying pole,” I would shout out “senior apprentice brother?” Who are you fucking trying to bluff?! Is this some kind of comedy?!’

Luo Lan looked at Ren Xiaosu, but Ren Xiaosu immediately said, “Why are you looking at me? I don’t know what’s going on either.”

It would be justifiable to say that one person was acting crazy, but two people acting crazy together? That was just too strange. At some point, Ren Xiaosu started to believe he might really be the reincarnation of Tripitaka.

Of course, he was very sure this was impossible.

Suddenly, Yan Liuyuan pointed at Luo Lan and asked the girl, “Who is he?”

The girl looked at Luo Lan. “Benbo’erba.”

Luo Lan was confounded and nearly broke down. Ben? Ben, my ass! How could she have also gotten this right?

Yan Liuyuan then pointed at Ren Xiaosu and said, “Who is he?”

“Master!” the little girl said with a sweet smile.

“Who am I?” Yan Liuyuan asked the girl while watching her closely.

“Oh, you’re Little White Dragon,” the girl answered matter-of-factly.

It was Yan Liuyuan’s turn to laugh. “Sadly, I’m not.”

The girl was stunned. She was at a loss. At this moment, they heard clapping come from outside the shop. A handsome young man walked in with a smile on his face. “Sure enough, we can’t fool everyone. Liren, come back over here.”

In that instant, the atmosphere in the room became tense. Ren Xiaosu did not even notice when the young man had stepped in.

Simultaneously, Luo Lan, Tang Zhou, and his men raised their guns and aimed at that young man as though they were facing a formidable foe.

It was not that Luo Lan was getting nervous, but that he knew of his identity as a Demon Whisperer!

Luo Lan clearly had not bothered rescuing this young man, so how did he escape from that room? Or was it...

Suddenly, Luo Lan understood. It was likely this young man was not under the control of the psychiatric hospital and had already gained control over everyone in it.

That magical hypnotism was able to control others silently. Although the staff of the psychiatric hospital had been wary enough of him, they might not have even known they were already under his control.

This Demon Whisperer was not released by Luo Lan. He was capable of freely passing through the hospital doors since a long time ago.

Hypnotism like this was truly enough to make all of the powers that be afraid.

Stronghold 109 was probably going to become even more chaotic.

They saw the young man smiling while being held at gunpoint. He said, "Let me introduce myself. My name is Li Shentan, the abandoned son of the Li Consortium. I don't have any malice towards you all."

Ren Xiaosu looked at Luo Lan. This guy was actually with the Li Consortium? Ren Xiaosu realized who this person was. He was probably that very dangerous person Yang Xiaojin had talked about. However, she had not mentioned he was from the Li Consortium.

Luo Lan whispered, "He's a Demon Whisperer, and he's extremely dangerous."

Actually, Luo Lan was also very puzzled. Even he was unaware that Li Shentan was actually with the Li Consortium. But why did someone from the Li Consortium get locked up in the psychiatric hospital? Wasn't this the Li Consortium's own territory?

It seemed like there was much more behind this "abandoned son" phrase he mentioned.

The girl named Si Liren had already returned to Li Shentan's side. It seemed he had purposely allowed the girl to get saved by Luo Lan. But what was their motive in doing that? Was it just for the sake of locating where they stayed?

Ren Xiaosu suddenly had a feeling of being exposed. Li Shentan knew about Chen Wudi and knew what he had said before. He even knew Chen Wudi identified Luo Lan as Benbo'erba!

What a terrible feeling this was. It felt as though everything was in his control.

But how did he know about all that? Did the Qing Consortium get infiltrated? With his power, it would be a piece of cake for him to obtain intel from members of the Qing Consortium.

Ren Xiaosu asked calmly, "What do you want?"

Li Shentan looked at Ren Xiaosu and said with a smile, "It's just that the two of us are getting a little lonely in this stronghold. Now that so many friends have gathered here, I feel we should come out to greet everyone."

"Alright, the introductions are over." Ren Xiaosu prepared to see them out. He did not have any intention of crossing paths with this Demon Whisperer.

But for some reason, Ren Xiaosu felt like a huge burden had been lifted off his chest after learning that Si Liren was not really a "carrying pole." He truly did not want to be Tripitaka.

Li Shentan seemed quite surprised about Ren Xiaosu's attitude, but he wasn't particularly bothered.

He suddenly said to Ren Xiaosu with a smile, "Somehow, I get the feeling there's something very special about you."

It was Ren Xiaosu's turn to be surprised. "I'm super handsome?"

"No, no, no." Li Shentan pointed at his head and said with a laugh, "You're very special here, so... let's meet again if fate allows. On top of that, Boss Luo, I didn't hypnotize any of your subordinates, so don't worry too much."

Curious, Ren Xiaosu asked, "Why didn't you leave the psychiatric hospital before now?"

Li Shentan gave it some thought and said, "Because it wasn't the right time to come out." Li Shentan then led Si Liren out and walked off into the darkness.

Before they left, Si Liren even turned around and waved to everyone. "Bye bye, everyone. I'm very happy to have met you all!"

Ren Xiaosu realized from Li Shentan's words that he must have something he needed to do since he decided to leave the hospital. Could it also have something to do with the Li Consortium's research results?

Luo Lan let out a sigh beside him. "It was all for naught in the end. I had better keep chatting up Dong Funan. I think she's still the more reliable one."

Ren Xiaosu remained speechless as he stared at Luo Lan. He hesitated over whether he should tell Luo Lan that Dong Funan was actually not reliable either.

Chapter 162: Rebuilding Stronghold 113

In the end, Ren Xiaosu did not tell Luo Lan the truth about Dong Funan. He thought it would be better to wait for the seven-day deadline to pass before saying anything to him. What if Luo Lan caused a ruckus when he saw Dong Funan with a bloody nose and bruised face?

At this moment, Dong Funan, who was locked up in the room, wanted nothing more than to get married to Luo Lan on the spot as long as he could take her away. But Chen Wudi had tied her up too securely

this time. Moreover, Wang Fugui even found some medicinal herbs and stuffed them into her mouth. It numbed her mouth so much so that she could not make a sound!

There were plenty of medicinal herbs in the shop to spare. However, what Dong Funan couldn't understand was why everyone in this family was so proficient at what they did!

Even though Wang Fugui was a kind person, he had lived as a refugee for a long time. So he definitely had a few tricks up his sleeve.

The refugees were different from the stronghold's residents as they faced imminent danger the day they were born.

Luo Lan chatted with Dong Funan for a while through the door but found that it was meaningless to keep talking by himself. He got bored after a while.

Ren Xiaosu chuckled, "Drink some water if you're thirsty."

Luo Lan sat in a chair in the yard and sighed. "It's a little surprising that Li Shentan broke out of the psychiatric hospital. I was trying to be really careful when I went there since I was afraid he would get out and cause trouble."

"I'm curious about something." Ren Xiaosu asked, "Didn't y'all know that he's from the Li Consortium?"

At this moment, Luo Lan carefully recalled the past records he had read about Li Shentan. He confirmed there was no mention of the Li Consortium in the intel he received. However, he suddenly remembered the three video clips he watched. At that time, he could even feel the person's sense of loneliness and abandonment through the television screen.

Luo Lan said, "Did you hear him describing himself as the abandoned son of the Li Consortium? Could it be possible that he was institutionalized by the Li Consortium?"

"Why would the Li Consortium imprison one of their own?" Ren Xiaosu asked.

"How would I know?" Luo Lan said disconsolately, "The inner workings of an org aren't as perfect as you think. Infighting and plotting can be found everywhere. If you want to come out on top within the 'family,' you have to sacrifice brothers and sisters to advance."

"Then how many brothers and sisters have you and Qing Zhen sacrificed?" Ren Xiaosu asked with a smile.

Luo Lan replied in a suddenly solemn voice, "Qing Zhen and I don't have any other choice. He was born to be a leader, so he should get to the top of the mountain to view the scenery from up there."

"What about you then?" Ren Xiaosu said, slightly stunned. He realized just how protective Luo Lan was of his younger brother.

Luo Lan had said his life was not worth a thing when Wang Fugui requested to get rewarded for their lifesaving favor to them. But when Qing Zhen's name was brought up, Luo Lan immediately turned generous.

"Me?" Luo Lan smiled. "All I have is this worthless life. I'll live no matter what happens." Luo Lan did not sound indignant at all. It was as though he thought it was right and proper of him to do so. His younger brother should be regarded as high and mighty, while he was just a worthless person.

"Oh, yes." Luo Lan glanced at Ren Xiaosu. "Don't be too conspicuous these days. Even the Yang Consortium has arrived in this stronghold, and there are still people from the Pyro Company hiding somewhere as well. Now that the Demon Whisperer has come out to make trouble, who knows what's going to happen?"

Ren Xiaosu stared blankly at him. "Do you think it's right for you to say this to me? Aren't you the most conspicuous person in the stronghold right now!"

"Hahahaha, is that so?" Luo Lan started laughing. "Am I that outstanding?"

Ren Xiaosu was taken aback. 'Why are you so proud of that!'

"By the way, the people from the Saboteurs are here too." Luo Lan got furious. "Someone targeted and destroyed two of my two vehicles from a distance. It must be those people from the Saboteurs since they're the only ones who would do such things with no apparent reason!"

It was at this moment that Ren Xiaosu finally found out that Yang Xiaojin might be a member of the Saboteurs. But he thought of a question. Luo Lan had mentioned earlier that the Yang Consortium was also here, so could Yang Xiaojin have anything to do with the Yang Consortium too?

"What about your Qing Consortium?" Ren Xiaosu looked at Luo Lan. "Has the Qing Consortium sent you alone?"

"Who are you looking down on?" Luo Lan snapped, "So what if it's only me? I can take on 1,000 people, alright?"

"Sure, sure, I meant to say, didn't the Qing Consortium send anyone to support you?" Ren Xiaosu asked.

"No, they're busy dealing with matters in Stronghold 113 and the Jing Mountains."

...

The terrain of Stronghold 111 was neither flat nor regular. The landscape's topography was higher in the west and got lower towards the east, with the entire stronghold built next to a mountain. The mountain at Stronghold 111 was called Mt. Ginkgo. When the ginkgo leaves turned yellow in autumn, the entire mountain would turn golden. The Qing Consortium's headquarters were located here on the mountainside.

At this moment, a large convoy set off from the city towards Mt. Ginkgo. The pedestrians in the stronghold pushed and shoved to get to the front to have a look. They knew these big shots of the Qing Consortium were members of the board of directors.

At this time each month, these executives of the Qing Consortium would usually drive to Mt. Ginkgo to attend a meeting. They would discuss matters that determined the life of the organization.

By evening, the huge manor atop Mt. Ginkgo was brightly lit. There were 13 men, made up of the young, middle-aged, and old, seated quietly within the conference room.

A huge tiger head made into a specimen from a dead tiger hung above them on the wall of the conference room. Humans had always enjoyed such repulsive hobbies. Before it died, the tiger was considered the king of beasts. However, it ended up becoming humanity's plaything after its death. This was the power of humanity.

The entire conference room looked magnificent and grand. It was as though this place was never affected by The Cataclysm, and those who were here had always held authority in their hands.

The elder seated in the seat of honor was tapping his fingers on the table. "How is Qing Huai's progress?"

"They've went around the Jing Mountains two days ago, and it's estimated they'll reach Stronghold 113 by today." A middle-aged man said, "When the post-disaster rebuilding team arrives, they'll head with them to the Jing Mountains to locate the creature that appeared in the volcano's crater. Now that the creature has fallen back into a slumber, it seems like it doesn't intend to leave the crater anymore. We suspect it has some sort of reliance on the temperature within the volcano."

"Can Qing Huai handle it?" the elder in the seat of honor asked calmly. "The coal mines near Stronghold 113 are extremely important, so they must be rebuilt as soon as possible."

"Qing Huai has already gone there with a combat brigade. It shouldn't be a problem dealing with a few hundred Experimentals," the middle-aged man replied.

"Since the resources near Stronghold 113 are extremely important, the post-disaster rebuilding work must be completed as quickly as possible. Qing Yun, coordinate with them to allocate some refugees to work over there," the elder said.

A young man who was sitting at the end of the table smiled and said, "Alright, I understand." The young man's hair was neatly slicked back. Under the lighting, his smooth hair appeared elegant and crystalline.

"You've got to adopt a cautious attitude when handling this matter. If anything goes wrong, you won't be sitting here in the future." The elder frowned.

The young man lowered his head. "I understand."

Someone nearby laughed and said, "You don't have to be that harsh on the young ones."

The elder did not answer. Instead, he switched topics and asked, "What is Qing Zhen doing now?"

“He doesn’t have anything to do other than go to the theater to listen to songs every day,” someone replied. “He listens to random songs with nothing specific in mind, nor does he have a favorite performer he watches.”

“OK.” The elder nodded calmly. “Let’s leave him out to dry for now. That young man is getting too arrogant and needs to be suppressed. He needs to learn that the power of money might come from an exchange system, but the power of authority is given by the consortium. Without a home, there will be no rules, nor will there be any authority to speak of.”

The others did not express their views on this. But at this moment, someone knocked on the door of the conference room.

The elder said softly, “Come in.”

The person who walked in was a secretary. The elder’s frown deepened as the secretary whispered something into his ear. He looked up at the others present in the meeting and said, “The 7th Combat Brigade led by Qing Huai was attacked by the Experimentals. They’re currently retreating with more than half of their force having taken casualties.”

Chapter 163: A series of strange happenings

All of the Qing Consortium’s executives were talking and laughing in the conference room a moment ago. But now, all of them fell silent.

Qing Huai was considered the best candidate of the middle generation to lead soldiers into battles. The troops under him were also more elite. Everyone had thought the 7th Combat Brigade would definitely head into Stronghold 113 and eliminate the Experimentals. But they did not expect there to be bad news coming back from the front line before the meeting was even over.

“How could the 7th Combat Brigade, made up of several thousand people, get ambushed by a few hundred Experimentals?” someone wondered. “Could this information be false? We all know the 7th Combat Brigade is equipped with the best gear, and its combat capability is the strongest as well.”

Naturally, the person who spoke knew the most powerful units in the Qing Consortium had been the 5th Combat Brigade under Qing Zhen and the 6th Combat Brigade under Luo Lan. But those brigades didn’t exist anymore.

The 5th Combat Brigade had already been disbanded, and all of their soldiers had been separated and reassigned to other brigades, whereas the 6th Combat Brigade had perished in the earthquake.

In reality, everyone had been reluctant to make a move on Qing Zhen because he and Luo Lan each possessed a relatively stronger military force that they dreaded. But now that something had happened to Luo Lan, Qing Zhen would be left to fend for himself.

However, they were unaware that not all of Luo Lan's soldiers had perished in the disaster at Stronghold 113. The earthquake only split the military base in two, forcibly separating the combat troops and making it impossible for them to join up with the other.

At present, the displacement in the ground that stretched from the Jing Mountains was known as the Stair of the Jing Mountains. It was as though the stairs had been forcefully squeezed out of the ground like a crease in the plains.

It was almost foreseeable that this place would become a new mountain range within the next few centuries or millennia.

But the Qing Consortium would not give up on this place until they discovered new coal mines.

That elder in the conference room calmly said, "The number of Experimentals has exceeded our estimation. There are probably close to a thousand of them. When Qing Huai and his men were setting up camp, the Experimentals attacked them with lightning speed. Qing Huai hadn't expected that the Experimentals would initiate the attack. Right now, I suspect that a new life form has emerged from the hordes of Experimentals... one that has intelligence."

"It seems Stronghold 113 has become their lair." Someone sighed. "Why don't we get Qing Zhen to deal with those Experimentals? He's a veteran, after all."

When the elder looked at the person who suggested that, a kind of inexplicable pressure descended on the conference room. The elder said, "Qing Yun, take the 1st Combat Brigade with you. How can the will of the organization compromise with an individual? From today onwards, Qing Zhen is not allowed to take a single step out of his villa."

The other executives in the conference room began to have their own considerations. Qing Zhen had proven his capabilities to the organization over the years. But with the will of the organization changed, this capable young man could only end up a dignified prisoner.

But they felt that if Qing Zhen had been the one sent to Stronghold 113, the outcome of the mission would be completely different.

Qing Zhen and Luo Lan had suffered a terrible loss in the incident in the Jing Mountains. But who could have expected natural disasters like an earthquake and volcanic eruption to happen? This was an act of nature.

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At this moment, a convoy of vehicles carrying goods and supplies were driving slowly towards Stronghold 109. A black figure was clinging to the undercarriage of a large truck. This person was Xu Xianchu, who had traveled on a long and arduous journey to Stronghold 109.

Xu Xianchu clenched his teeth and persisted. It was not easy to cling to the undercarriage, but he was determined to sneak into Stronghold 109. At a time like this, who would expect Xu Xianchu to enter Stronghold 109 like this?

In reality, no one in Stronghold 109 was particularly interested in arresting Xu Xianchu like he had anticipated. After all, this place was not controlled by the Qing Consortium. Even if Lu Yuan was diplomatic towards them, he was not going to actively follow up on this case.

Moreover, everyone felt Xu Xianchu would not attempt to get into the stronghold by force. Hence, Ren Xiaosu discovered that even though the Public Order Division had put up a wanted poster of Xu Xianchu when he visited the jewelry shop, they only instructed the shop owners to report to them should someone come to sell unknown sources of gold. If they wanted to carry out stringent checks, it would probably be much stricter than this.

This was why Xu Xianchu went with the most correct judgment based on his common sense.

The private troops on guard duty would be changing shifts soon.

Xu Xianchu knew exactly what the private troops' behavior was like. This applied to almost all of the private troops in the world since all the organizations in the world were almost the same.

When he was still at Stronghold 113, he had observed that the private troops would usually check the cargo trucks very carefully when they were passing through. But their inspection would get a lot slacker during the shift change at night. In fact, many contraband items were transported into the stronghold during that time frame. Some people would even purposely bribe the private troops in hopes that they would turn a blind eye to their activities.

Xu Xianchu had guessed that it would be the same for the private troops in Stronghold 109. Of course, he was not a 100% sure of that. But if he wanted to infiltrate the stronghold, this was the only time he could do it. If he could not get in, he would just be forced to run away again. It was not like those private troops could stop him anyway.

Sure enough, it was just as Xu Xianchu had predicted. This goods and supplies convoy was not even given the most basic of inspections as it entered the stronghold.

This made Xu Xianchu both relieved and suspicious at the same time. It seemed to him like the management of the private troops in Stronghold 109 was slacker than that of Stronghold 113.

After the convoy drove noisily into the stronghold, Xu Xianchu climbed into the cargo container from underneath the truck. These vehicles were similar to coal trucks, with an open-air hauler.

Xu Xianchu sat in the container and thought about the next phase of his plan. As he was exhausted from fleeing, all he wanted was to find a secluded place where he could eat something and get some rest.

When he looked at the goods in the container, Xu Xianchu suddenly had some doubts. Everything here was sealed in wooden boxes, so he could not see what was in them.

Xu Xianchu took out his dagger to pry open a wooden box. He was stunned when he saw the goods, because they were all filled with guns and ammunition!

All of a sudden, the truck deviated from the convoy. The rest of the vehicles continued driving forward, but the truck he was in had separated from the main group and was headed for who knew where.

Xu Xianchu immediately knew something was wrong. This truck was not delivering the firearms to the Li Consortium. If it were, it would not have to do it in secret. Someone must be smuggling all of these weapons in!

Before he could figure it out, the truck came to a halt. Then he heard a voice come from outside the truck, "Hurry up, unload the goods and place them in the warehouse. Find an opportunity tomorrow to distribute them."

The side door of the container opened up with a rumble. Right after, Xu Xianchu and Luo Lan stared at each other.

As it was in the wee hours of the morning, Luo Lan looked into the container while shining a flashlight. He wanted to have a clearer look at the person inside the container. Then—

Luo Lan shouted, "The fuck! Xu Xianchu?"

Chapter 164: The Qing Consortium is too petty!

Luo Lan was still quite famous in Stronghold 113 and would often attend public events such as ceremonies and galas. The private troops would then assume the role of security personnel at such events. So Xu Xianchu had seen Luo Lan before.

But Xu Xianchu was a little stunned. He could never have expected to encounter Luo Lan at this place! But he quickly realized there was an inevitable connection behind this seeming coincidence.

The time Xu Xianchu chose to infiltrate Stronghold 109 was when the private troops were laziest in carrying out their inspection duties. Hence, many people usually chose this time frame to smuggle items into the stronghold.

Currently, the Qing Consortium could only rely on smuggling to transport firearms into the stronghold controlled by the Li Consortium. So by stowing away in a vehicle that was used for smuggling, he ended up meeting Luo Lan, who was just receiving a batch of smuggled firearms.

But surely this truckload of firearms would be enough to launch a small-scale battle, right? Was the Qing Consortium going to attack Stronghold 109?!

The most difficult thing for Xu Xianchu to accept was that he got recognized at a glance even when his face had already become so dirty!

In that instant, Xu Xianchu jumped out of the container. He kicked Luo Lan in the chest and ran out onto the street. The Qing Consortium's troops would not be able to react yet. If he did not get away at this moment, he might not be able to escape from them later on.

After getting kicked, Luo Lan groaned and fell to the ground. He did not forget to yell to the people around him as he lay on the ground, "Hurry up and catch him! We must capture him no matter what! That's Xu Xianchu!"

The Qing Consortium's troops immediately unholstered their guns that were already fitted with silencers and chased after him like a pack of hunting dogs!

Xu Xianchu, who was fleeing up ahead, was frightened to death when he looked back. Although he had a shadow clone that could shield him from bullets, it would not work if too many shots were fired at him!

Xu Xianchu was very puzzled. He had only been a little curious about the secret of the Jing Mountains back then. However, he had not trespassed into the perimeter the Qing Consortium had set up. Could they get any pettier than this?!

As they made a mad rush through the streets, the Qing Consortium's troops did not dare to shoot freely. Even if their guns were equipped with silencers, they would still cause quite a bit of noise if the bullets hit any surface. They would probably have to retreat into the sewers again if the Li Consortium's combat troops were alerted.

The position where Luo Lan and his men were stationed was not too far away from Ren Xiaosu's shop. So Xu Xianchu and his pursuers arrived at the door of the shop after running for just a few kilometers.

Ren Xiaosu had been alarmed by the commotion outside. He furtively raised the roller shutter door and watched what was going on. But suddenly, a figure ran past the door. Ren Xiaosu looked in the direction of where it came from and was surprised to see more than ten troops in their black uniforms chasing after whoever had just run past.

Wait a minute, weren't those troops from the Qing Consortium?

After the troops had also run past the shop, Ren Xiaosu raised the roller shutter door and saw the last person, Luo Lan, running over while panting. Ren Xiaosu laughed. "Who are you chasing after?"

"Xu, Xu Xianchu!" Luo Lan panted as he said, "Ren Xiaosu, I will pay you 100,000 yuan if you get Chen Wudi to help me capture Xu Xianchu!"

Ren Xiaosu froze. So that was fucking Xu Xianchu earlier? Why did he come to Stronghold 109?!

He asked with a strange expression, "Are you sure it's Xu Xianchu?"

"Yes! It's definitely him!" Luo Lan confirmed.

Ren Xiaosu was put in a difficult position. He would have to help, but it was not the Qing Consortium he should be helping. In fact, it was Xu Xianchu he wanted to help escape right now! After all, if Xu Xianchu were caught by the Qing Consortium, Ren Xiaosu would probably be in deep fucking shit!

So he had to help Xu Xianchu...

Suddenly, the voice from the palace said, "Quest: Help someone in dire straits escape."

Ren Xiaosu wondered why the palace had already judged Xu Xianchu to be someone who was in dire straits. That somehow made it sound like he was in quite a pathetic state right now.

He said to Luo Lan, "You can carry on pursuing Xu Xianchu as you wish, but I will not get involved in matters between you two." He then lowered the roller shutter door while ignoring whatever Luo Lan was cursing from outside. Ren Xiaosu immediately went to the backyard and climbed over the wall. He ran along the roofs in the direction Xu Xianchu had fled.

In reality, the most important thing to Ren Xiaosu right now was to not let Xu Xianchu fall into the hands of the Qing Consortium...

Chen Wudi also wanted to go out to have a look. However, Yan Liuyuan looked at him and said, "Your master asked you to keep a close watch over the White Bone Specter. If you allow her to escape, I'm guessing he'll have to recite the headache spell for three days and nights once he gets back..."

Chen Wudi became obedient as soon as he heard that. Dong Funan's hopes were raised only to be dashed again. In fact, she was still capable of escaping from here. Although she was securely tied with rope, she could still break free of them with some effort. But what was the use of freeing herself from the rope? She couldn't defeat Chen Wudi! Dong Funan even suspected Chen Wudi might be the strongest supernatural being around at the moment.

Frankly, Dong Funan wanted her freedom back. To hell with sucking blood. She would be a vegetarian for the rest of her life if it meant she could get her freedom back.

Earlier tonight, Ren Xiaosu had a good, long chat with her, during which he essentially let her know that the black medicine used to treat her wasn't for free and that she had to work to pay it off.

As for how she was going to pay it off? The arrangement would be for her to wash the dishes under the supervision of Chen Wudi...

Dong Funan was really driven to despair. Just based on Ren Xiaosu's ferocity, it was no different from how the organizations exploited the refugees! She would like to have asked what he did with the money Luo Lan paid him. However, her mouth was still so numb she could not speak a word. Ren Xiaosu told her that if she did not say anything, he would consider her to have given him her consent.

At this moment, Dong Funan was hungering for freedom more than anything else. It would be fine if she only had to face Chen Wudi. But right now, the one she was most worried about was actually Yan Liuyuan.

It was easy to fool Chen Wudi as he was so simple-minded. If she were alone with Chen Wudi, she could probably coax him to let her go. However, Yan Liuyuan would have his eye on her at all times and was an extremely clever and alert person. She could not deceive him a whit.

By this time, Ren Xiaosu had pushed his speed to its limits as he leaped and bound over the roofs. In just a few short minutes, he could already hear the footsteps of the Qing Consortium's troops.

He glanced at Xu Xianchu, who was up ahead, and was surprised to see he was running with all he had while Luo Lan and his men chased him from behind. However, Ren Xiaosu was a little puzzled by this. Logically speaking, Xu Xianchu's current physical fitness should have exceeded that of ordinary humans. So why was he running so slow?

Ren Xiaosu did not know that Xu Xianchu was famished. Why else would he be running so slow?

As Ren Xiaosu kept up with them, he wondered what he should do to save Xu Xianchu without offending Luo Lan at the same time. 'Wait a minute, don't I have a godlike power for hitting someone in secret?'

A moment later, Luo Lan suddenly saw a hand stretching out from the shadows of the roof's eaves next to him. It slapped his forehead, making him tumble to the ground.

Luo Lan realized this was the power used to open doors in the shadows. But wasn't this power unique to Luo Xinyu? He shouted in fury, "Luo Xinyu, fuck your grandpa! Aren't you people from the Saboteurs done yet!"

Chapter 165: Ren Xiaosu, you're a good guy

In reality, Ren Xiaosu did not mean to slap Luo Lan's forehead. His intention was just to open a Shadow Door next to Luo Lan and pull him to a stop. After all, they had a good relationship going. Moreover, Ren Xiaosu also felt a vague sense of respect for Luo Lan and his soldiers. Even though he wanted to save Xu Xianchu, Ren Xiaosu did not want to cause them too much trouble.

It was purely just a slip of the hand that he slapped Luo Lan's forehead. It was because he still didn't have full control of the Shadow Door.

However, it was wonderful that it made Luo Lan think it was Luo Xinyu who did it. This girl and Yang Xiaojin had already sabotaged him so many times in the past. If Ren Xiaosu could make the Qing Consortium pay more attention to them, he really would not mind slapping Luo Lan's forehead a few more times.

Ren Xiaosu kept closing and reopening the Shadow Door. In an instant, the Qing Consortium's troops felt insecure. They were all afraid the Shadow Door would suddenly open next to them.

All of a sudden, the mysterious Shadow Door caused the Qing Consortium's troops to fall into disarray. All of them were left wondering where the hand would appear next!

But it wasn't only them who thought this way. Even Ren Xiaosu himself was unsure of where the Shadow Door would open next.

Ren Xiaosu sighed. By not even knowing where the Shadow Door would appear, he had achieved the highest realm of mystery!

The Shadow Door superpower was really useful since it was impossible to defend against.

In fact, even if Luo Xinyu, who was the originator of the power, used it, she might not be able to use it as effectively as Ren Xiaosu, because she could not open the door as many times as he could. As such, she had always used Shadow Door sparingly.

But Ren Xiaosu did not know that. He thought Shadow Door would not tap into his willpower at all.

Tang Zhou looked at Luo Lan and asked, "Boss, what should we do now?"

Luo Lan said resentfully, "Did you see that? We're at a huge disadvantage without a supernatural being on our side. Why are all of you so weak? Shouldn't at least one of you have had your superpowers awakened?"

Tang Zhou replied, "Yes, yes, we'll try our best to do so..."

Although Luo Lan was disgusted by them, nobody minded it. Boss Luo had always been a jerk anyway.

Luo Lan sighed. "Let's retreat for now. If we continue chasing him, who knows if monsters might start appearing as well."

"Boss," Tang Zhou wondered, "is Xu Xianchu a member of the Saboteurs as well? Why did Luo Xinyu suddenly appear the moment we started pursuing him?"

"That's impossible," Luo Lan refuted. "Seeing how pathetic Xu Xianchu looked just now, he's definitely not a member of the Saboteurs."

"That's true." Tang Zhou nodded.

Ren Xiaosu finally felt relieved when he saw Luo Lan and his men giving up the chase. As long as Xu Xianchu did not get caught by them, everything else would be easy to handle. He glanced in the direction Xu Xianchu had escaped and carefully considered things for a moment before chasing after him.

Ren Xiaosu still felt a little bad for making Xu Xianchu the scapegoat when he was in the Jing Mountains. After all, Xu Xianchu had become the Qing Consortium's most wanted criminal without even offending anyone. Although Ren Xiaosu had been forced to do so, it did not mean he felt good about it.

Xu Xianchu would have to continue taking the blame, but Ren Xiaosu should still repay him for being the scapegoat, right?

Ren Xiaosu kept looking out for Xu Xianchu's whereabouts as he made his way forward on the roofs. When he spotted Xu Xianchu, he was surprised to find him hiding on the rooftop of a ranch-style house and gasping for breath. He looked utterly exhausted.

He whisper shouted, "Xu Xianchu!"

Xu Xianchu sprang to his feet and put his guard up. Ren Xiaosu quickly said, "It's me! Ren Xiaosu!"

Xu Xianchu was stupefied. Then he looked like he had met a family member again. "Ren Xiaosu, what are you doing here!"

“Um, it’s a long story. Stronghold 113 collapsed not long after I got back there, so I had no choice but to flee here.” Ren Xiaosu jumped over to the roof Xu Xianchu was on and asked, “Why did you come here too?”

“Don’t bring it up.” Xu Xianchu said miserably, “I planned to go to Stronghold 112 at first, but that place collapsed as well. Then I headed to Stronghold 111 only to discover the Qing Consortium had already marked me as a most wanted fugitive.”

In fact, Ren Xiaosu felt a bond of friendship when he saw Xu Xianchu. After all, they had traveled together while they were in the Jing Mountains. Although their time spent together was very short, the adversity they went through got them to know each other better and deepened their relationship.

He said to Xu Xianchu, “So you fled here from Stronghold 111? But how did you bump into Luo Lan?”

Xu Xianchu was speechless. “I was hiding in a smuggler’s truck that just so happened to be used by that Fatty Luo to traffic firearms. Eh, were those firearms brought here to deal with you?! I didn’t expect Luo Lan would actually come here just to arrest you. You should be careful. He’s brought in a lot of firearms!”

From Xu Xianchu’s perspective, he would not know why Luo Lan had brought so many firearms into the stronghold. Since Stronghold 113 had collapsed, Luo Lan, as a member of the Qing Consortium, should have returned to Stronghold 111.

Xu Xianchu was unaware that Luo Lan couldn’t return to the Qing Consortium for now. He would be placed under house arrest like Qing Zhen if he returned there.

Xu Xianchu was also unaware of how great a mess Luo Lan had already caused in Stronghold 109, as well as how he was preparing to deal with the remaining people from the Pyro Company who were still hiding in the stronghold.

He had overheard Luo Lan cursing at Luo Xinyu, so he kind of knew it was probably because of Luo Xinyu that he managed to escape so easily. Before this, Xu Xianchu did not know Luo Xinyu was also a supernatural being. After all, he did not go into the Qing Consortium’s perimeter in the Jing Mountains. But now he realized Luo Xinyu might not be that easy to figure out either.

So Xu Xianchu thought Luo Lan had smuggled in the firearms so he could arrest Ren Xiaosu and Luo Xinyu with them.

Worried, Xu Xianchu said, “It must’ve been hard for y’all to escape the pursuit of the Qing Consortium, right?”

Ren Xiaosu said calmly, “Yeah, it was really difficult....”

“Why do you think the Qing Consortium is sparing no effort to pursue us?” Xu Xianchu brought up the biggest question weighing on his mind.

Ren Xiaosu reacted with a strange expression. “I’m not sure either....”

Now, Xu Xianchu took out half a loaf of cornbread and asked, "Are you hungry?"

For some reason, Ren Xiaosu choked up with emotion. "I'm not hungry. Xu Xianchu, you're a good guy."

In that instant, Ren Xiaosu even thought of surrendering himself to the Qing Consortium. He took out a letter and a stack of money from his pocket. "Take this with you."

Xu Xianchu was taken aback. "What's this?"

"There's 5,000 yuan here and a letter." Ren Xiaosu said, "Take this letter to Stronghold 178 and look for a man named Zhang Jinglin. He'll see to your future prospects."

This was something Zhang Jinglin had promised Ren Xiaosu. But now Ren Xiaosu was going to give it to Xu Xianchu.

When he thought about Mr. Zhang, Ren Xiaosu felt that a person like Xu Xianchu would definitely have a chance to shine when he got to the Northern Frontier.

In the first place, Ren Xiaosu's group did not have much money to speak of. Although their business was slowly getting on track, they had not really made much.

Although he had smelted quite a few gold bars, he could not give them to Xu Xianchu. Otherwise... Xu Xianchu would guess what had happened...

Xu Xianchu asked, "Stronghold 178? I was just thinking of trying my luck there. Although I don't know who Zhang Jinglin is, let me thank you in advance! Ren Xiaosu, you're a good guy!"

"Gratitude received from Xu Xianchu, +1!"

When Ren Xiaosu saw the gratitude token, he got mixed feelings.

But at this moment, a few dark figures on a roof were slowly approaching them in the distance. Ren Xiaosu looked around and was surprised to find that they had already been surrounded by those people. However, he had never come across any of them before.

When those people got closer, Ren Xiaosu noticed the logo of a small flame on the bosom of their shirts.

Chapter 166: The price of freedom

When Ren Xiaosu saw the Pyro Company's logo emblazoned on their chests, he was startled.

During this recent period, Ren Xiaosu had gotten a rough idea of the type of organization the Pyro Company was. Their lust for the blood of supernatural beings had placed them way high on Ren Xiaosu's to-be-wary-of list. Ren Xiaosu was relieved when he heard the Li Consortium had expelled the members of the Pyro Company from the stronghold, because he was worried Chen Wudi would attract their attention after his identity was exposed.

Later, both Luo Lan and Yang Xiaojin mentioned there were still some of the Pyro Company's members hiding in the stronghold. And tonight, they had targeted him and Xu Xianchu.

Xu Xianchu asked in a whisper, "They're from the Pyro Company?"

Xu Xianchu was obviously not as knowledgeable as Ren Xiaosu about the outside world. Ren Xiaosu made a sound of affirmation. "Be careful, they're not good people. They specialize in catching supernatural beings."

Taken aback, Xu Xianchu said, "Oh, I see." Xu Xianchu then unholstered the gun he had brought from Stronghold 113. On his journey thus far, he had not used it much at all.

Although firing the gun might attract more trouble, they couldn't worry about that at this time.

Ren Xiaosu observed the layout of their surroundings and noticed the roofs were mostly even in height. The four members of the Pyro Company were each standing in the north, south, east, and west and looked like they were going to beleaguer Ren Xiaosu and Xu Xianchu. It didn't look like they were planning on letting either of them off. They might have to fight to the death tonight. However, Ren Xiaosu did not want to show that he had the power to summon a shadow clone in Xu Xianchu's presence.

One of the young men laughed and said, "We have never failed when 'Midnight' strikes. Why don't the two of you just surrender and save us the trouble?"

Xu Xianchu hesitated before saying, "Midnight? But dawn's breaking. Something might be wrong with your watch."

The young man from Midnight was visibly taken aback. He suddenly realized Xu Xianchu might not even have heard of the team called Midnight before.

Ren Xiaosu wondered where this dumb person hailed from. 'If you want to fight, just fight! What are you being all cocky about?'

But at this moment, Xu Xianchu and Ren Xiaosu suddenly raised their guns and fired. It was as though they had discussed this beforehand and did so without any hesitation!

The loud and clear gunshots cracked through the night, as if trying to scare awake the sleeping stronghold.

Being in a battle meant fighting to the death without the need for superfluous words. You didn't need to attach any meaning to it or consider the consequences. The moment you placed yourself in a battle, the only consideration was to win!

But the moment Ren Xiaosu and Xu Xianchu raised their guns and fired, their respective targets dodged the bullets by tilting their heads to the side at the same time. They had calculated the trajectory of Ren Xiaosu's and Xu Xianchu's shots in an instant, and their reactions were so fast they could move at will.

They barely budged, only tilting their heads to the side to dodge the incoming bullets.

Ren Xiaosu's heart slowly sank. No wonder they were blabbering on and on. They were actually this formidable?

In fact, he could also judge the short-range trajectory of a shot based on the angle the shooter was aiming at. But if their opponents were all at this level, he realized he and Xu Xianchu might not be able to defeat them.

Although Xu Xianchu had Shadow Clone, his current strength was quite weak and would probably end up becoming a hindrance between the two of them.

Ren Xiaosu looked at the Midnight members and remembered what Yang Xiaojin had mentioned to him about how the Pyro Company's plans had only been messed up by Luo Lan because Midnight was not there. It seemed like she was serious about that.

He silently examined his options on how to deal with this tough situation before him in his mind. But the four Pyro Company members around him seemed very calm and not in a rush. This put a tremendous amount of pressure on Ren Xiaosu.

If they tried to run away, it might work out for Ren Xiaosu. However, it would be rather difficult for Xu Xianchu to get out of here safely.

Moreover, since he had been targeted by them, could he really avoid future trouble?

They likely targeted Xu Xianchu due to Luo Lan's pursuit. However, it looked like they had now made a spontaneous decision to capture Xu Xianchu. If Ren Xiaosu departed now, the Pyro Company would probably start searching all over the stronghold for him.

Ren Xiaosu said calmly, "What are y'all planning to do by taking us away?"

"Contribute to the survival of mankind." The young man who was the leader of the group smiled and said, "Just think about it. How glorious will it be for your genes to be the last common ancestor of mankind as it survives in the population with the breakthrough of genetic modification. All of humanity will remember you."

Ren Xiaosu smiled and said, "So are y'all also the beneficiaries of genetic modification?"

"That's right." The young man smiled and said, "It will be such a great achievement to go down in the annals of history, and the price for that is nothing more than the loss of freedom."

"What if I choose freedom instead?" Ren Xiaosu asked. Then he tore off a piece of cloth from the bottom of his shirt. He was thinking of tying it around his hand to let it flutter in the wind.

The young man looked at Ren Xiaosu and said, "If you choose freedom, I'm afraid you'll have to pay a price you can't afford."

The nearby residents seemed to have been awoken by the gunshots. In the dark of the night, many of the households suddenly turned on their lights. Ren Xiaosu believed the Li Consortium or other major powers would start arriving soon.

Ren Xiaosu calmed down completely. He looked at the young man and said, "The price of freedom is what makes freedom even nobler."

The cloth that had been fluttering stopped moving. The atmosphere seemed to solidify as the wind stopped.

Ren Xiaosu muttered silently in his mind, 'Now!'

In that instant, killing intent struck like lightning from afar.

The young man who was speaking suddenly saw his chest burst apart as his blood sprayed out in a fan shape and splattered onto the roof.

A bullet had rifled in from several hundred meters away. It wasn't until Ren Xiaosu saw the blood spraying into the air that he heard the gunshot.

The crimson blood contrasted starkly with the dark of the night.

'Thanks.' Ren Xiaosu gave a brilliant grin. He said to Xu Xianchu, "Go and handle the left side."

As soon as he finished speaking, Ren Xiaosu jumped to the roof on his right. An opening had appeared in the perimeter formed by the four people. This was the way out created by Yang Xiaojin!

There would not be another shot from the sniper. Ren Xiaosu knew that even with Perfect Firearms Proficiency, it would be impossible to hit a fast-moving supernatural being over several hundred meters. Unless, of course, Yang Xiaojin was a god! As such, Ren Xiaosu could only rely on himself.

Because of Ren Xiaosu's actions, the battlefield was suddenly split into two. Of the three remaining Midnight members, one stayed behind to deal with Xu Xianchu while the other two chased after Ren Xiaosu.

Ren Xiaosu did not stay put on the roof because he was planning to go all out. He needed to find a place where he would not be seen by others. It was his trump card in this battle!

When Ren Xiaosu jumped down into a small alley, the two members of Midnight following and jumping down as well. But just as they were about to pursue him, they discovered that Ren Xiaosu did not continue running. He stood there alone and trapped them in the alley!

They looked at each other and wondered where this young man's confidence came from. He dared to challenge the two of them all by himself?!

Chapter 167: Dead end

The alley was only wide enough for about three people to pass through, and it was a dead end.

Ren Xiaosu sized up the two supernatural beings from Midnight as they stood in the dead end. To be honest, he had not seriously fought other supernatural beings before, so he would like to see how he measured up to them. Only by fighting them would he have any idea.

Ren Xiaosu was never a coward. If he were, he would never have survived in the wilderness for such a long time.

Since he could not ignore the problem, he would kill those who caused it. Such was the law of the wilderness.

The two supernatural beings looked at each other and opened fire on Ren Xiaosu in unison. They had already failed once tonight. If they failed again, they would most likely face the fate of obliteration as well.

The walls on either side of the alley were made up of slate-gray bricks, and Ren Xiaosu had no space to avoid being shot. But in that instant, the shadow clone in the palace separated from Ren Xiaosu and appeared in front of him.

Ren Xiaosu and the shadow clone were standing in a perfectly straight line. When the bullets hit the shadow clone, it was as though they had been fired into the deep sea. The bullets could not penetrate it to cause any damage to Ren Xiaosu whatsoever.

But as the bullets hit the shadow clone's body, Ren Xiaosu felt like they were directly hitting him. He could only frown and endure the pain for now.

The intense pain continued to spread through his limbs and bones. But the more the pain, the more sober Ren Xiaosu felt.

It seemed like the two supernatural beings from Midnight had not expected that Ren Xiaosu's superpower could summon a shadow clone. The reason they had been hunting them was so they could capture Xu Xianchu. The Qing Consortium issuing an arrest warrant for Xu Xianchu, as well his appearance and superpower, was no longer a secret. It made the Pyro Company extremely interested in Xu Xianchu.

They had thought the man Luo Lan had been pursuing was Xu Xianchu, but they did not expect it would turn out to be this person in front of them!

They sneered and threw their pistols to the ground. Then they each drew a long sword from their waists. When it came to hunting supernatural beings, they were the best at it.

Suddenly, Ren Xiaosu saw one of them taking off his black leather gloves. What were supposed to be hands under the gloves had turned out to be black claws? Was he still human? Could this be a result of their genetic modifications?

One of the Midnight members laughed and said, "Your courage is admirable."

Ren Xiaosu looked at the two supernatural beings in silence. He simply lifted his hand into the air and grasped something. Then he yanked it out!

The two supernatural beings saw Ren Xiaosu draw a mysterious black saber out of thin air. What kind of power was that? The two of them frowned as they had never seen a supernatural being with two completely different superpowers before.

“Why do you have two types of superpowers?” one of the Midnight members asked as he frowned.

Ren Xiaosu smiled and said, “Not two types, but three types.”

During the conversation, Ren Xiaosu activated a tiny Shadow Door next to his wrist. He raised his saber and stabbed it through the Shadow Door.

Shink! The man he was speaking to stared blankly at the saber’s tip that poked out of his chest as blood flowed out. What kind of devious superpower was this?! He could stab him in the back from right in front of him!

The remaining Midnight member was stunned at the sight. He could never have expected that two of their members would get killed so easily!

Not a moment later, the shadow clone rushed him fierce as a train. The remaining supernatural being from Midnight jumped into the air, intending to bypass the shadow clone and kill Ren Xiaosu!

But before he could leap over the shadow clone’s head, the supernatural being saw the shadow clone leap up from the ground as well. He kicked the shadow clone with one of his feet, but the shadow clone took the kick without any fear and grabbed his ankle.

The excruciating pain spread from the supernatural being’s ankle and swept through his consciousness. The shadow clone’s hands were crushing his ankle like a pair of pincers.

With a crack, he was shocked to discover his ankle had really been crushed!

Importantly, their bones and muscles were much tougher than that of most other supernatural beings. In normal battles, they were the ones who could withstand the most attacks. But now the tables had been turned!

Never mind the fact the ghostly shadow clone could block bullets, it could even crush his ankle with its bare hands too? Just how terrifying was its strength!?

Meanwhile, Ren Xiaosu, who was initially on high alert, was stunned. Why were these people so weak!

The shadow clone did not stop after crushing its opponent’s ankle. It grabbed his broken ankle and ruthlessly pulled him down towards the ground. As they fought in midair, their movements were so fast that afterimages could be seen. Their powerful moves even felt like it was causing the air around them to combust and explode.

The shadow clone and the supernatural being were trading blows. But the supernatural being suddenly realized that while he was nearly beaten to a pulp, his opponent was still acting like it suffered no damage. During this time, he did not even have the chance to use his power.

When the two of them landed on the ground, the shadow clone's feet touched the floor first. However, it did not stop there as it immediately sprinted at the supernatural being again, grabbing him with its hands and slamming his body into the wall of the alley. With a boom, cracks formed on the wall.

The cracks were like a horrible spiderweb that appeared on the wall. The supernatural being who was stuck in it looked like a picture that had been hung on it!

Before he could recover from the shock, he saw the shadow clone take a small step backwards. The shadow clone bent forward with one foot in front. When it moved again, it charged ruthlessly at him like a cannonball, leading with its shoulder to deal maximum damage.

The supernatural being's abdomen caved in rapidly. It was evident just how terrifying the force of collision was!

Just as Ren Xiaosu was about to heave a sigh of relief, he felt the air behind him ripple like water.

Ren Xiaosu immediately looked behind himself and barely spotted the outline of a supernatural being charging at him with a sword. It turned out Midnight did not only have four members. There was another one lurking in the shadows with his superpower.

"Are they done yet?" Ren Xiaosu sneered.

His abdomen muscles tightened as he twisted his body around and slashed his saber.

His iron will roared through the air. No one knew what would happen in the next moment except for Ren Xiaosu.

With a clang, the supernatural being was shocked to find the sword he usually relied on to fight had broken upon impact with the mysterious black saber like it was made of paper. Right after, he saw his arm separating from his body, and the severed arm was spurting blood like a pump!

His previously transparent body revealed itself in midair, leaving him with nowhere to hide!

Ren Xiaosu already knew the black saber was extremely sharp when he used it to kill the Experimentals. The items his mysterious mind palace gave him had never disappointed him before.

Then Ren Xiaosu tensed his legs as he rushed forward, exuding a huge aura of pressure. Before his opponent could come back to his senses, Ren Xiaosu had taken his enemy off the ground and nailed him to the brick wall at the end of the alley with his black saber!

Ren Xiaosu pulled the black saber out from the wall and corpse, letting it fall awkwardly to the ground because it had lost its support.

Right now, the entire alley seemed to be stained with blood. Ren Xiaosu stood there in silence with only one thought in mind: 'These people from Midnight don't seem strong at all.'

As the saying went, it looked like they were heroes, but they turned out to be zeroes.

The supernatural beings were so weak they got defeated even though they had fought three against one. He wondered why they were so cocky in the first place.

Chapter 168: Gaining a new understanding of Ren Xiaosu

Ren Xiaosu recalled his shadow clone and climbed back up onto the roof. Xu Xianchu was sitting up there and gasping violently for breath. His opponent was already dead, his neck snapped like a pastry twist. 1

Ren Xiaosu looked at a tall building in the distance and waved at it. Then he said to Xu Xianchu, "Let's go to where I live first so that you can take a bath and change clothes. If you wanna get to Stronghold 178, you'll have to fill your belly before you set off."

Xu Xianchu said emotionally, "Thank you!"

"Gratitude received from Xu Xianchu, +1!"

Ren Xiaosu was seriously considering if he should persuade Xu Xianchu to stay behind just so he could say "thank you" to him every day.

However, Xu Xianchu continued, "But I can't stay around any longer. After tonight's battle, they might lock down the entire stronghold even more securely. It'll be impossible for me to leave when that happens, so now is the best opportunity to ;leave."

Ren Xiaosu said with some regret, "Aren't you gonna wait a bit more?"

"I'll only implicate you if I stay any longer." Xu Xianchu said sincerely, "Ren Xiaosu, if we're fated to meet, we'll meet again!"

Ren Xiaosu thought for a while and nodded. "We'll probably see each other again at Stronghold 178, so take care!"

After this exchange, Xu Xianchu left without even looking back. As for how he was planning to leave, it didn't seem like it was going to pose a problem to Xu Xianchu since he was a former private army officer.

At this moment, Ren Xiaosu could hear shuffling footsteps on the streets in the distance. It seemed that the troops from the stronghold were almost here. Ren Xiaosu was really hoping all of the other major powers in the stronghold would fight among themselves. Then no one would have the energy to worry about him once everyone started fighting for their lives.

After Ren Xiaosu and Xu Xianchu left, a security team from the stronghold's Public Order Division finally arrived. They quickly sealed off the scene and sent their men to inform the Li Consortium.

They could tell something was wrong just by looking at the battle that had taken place here. This was not a fight between normal people; it was a clash involving supernatural beings. Furthermore, the

people from the Public Order Division realized that this was not something they could interfere with when they saw the Pyro Company's logo on the clothes of the dead victims.

In reality, the Public Order Division also knew something was stirring in the stronghold. There was the massacre at No. 4 Psychiatric Hospital, and the explosion set off by the Pyro Company when they were attempting to capture some supernatural beings. With these cases put together, even a fool would know it was better not to get embroiled in whatever was going on if they wanted to live.

As a matter of fact, the Public Order Division was made up of average people, and they were only equipped with small-caliber firearms that could be used to deal with run-of-the-mill thieves. But if they encountered a supernatural being, they would definitely end up getting slaughtered.

On the rooftop of a high-rise building in the distance, Yang Xiaojin had just stowed her gun. Beside her, Luo Xinyu was holding the railing and wondering, "Don't you find it strange? Although that wasn't the main force of the Midnight task force, that kid still killed them too easily. Did we underestimate him too much?"

"Mhm." Yang Xiaojin was thinking about something as she looked out at the battlefield in the distance. "True, it was a little unexpected. I used to think his combat strength was not that high, so I didn't expect him to take on three opponents at the same time. Although I didn't exactly see what happened in the alley, Ren Xiaosu must've faced three opponents if Xu Xianchu only took on one of them."

"It's standard for Midnight to have five members per team when conducting missions. They've always liked outnumbering their opponents, after all," Luo Xinyu said in a bored voice. "Somehow, they managed to screw it up this time. After this incident, I reckon they'll finally understand the principle that numbers mean nothing in the face of absolute power when dealing with a supernatural being."

"I had wanted to carve out an escape path for him." Yang Xiaojin was also quite surprised. "But I never imagined he'd end up massacring all of the Midnight members."

"That lad's really bloodthirsty." Luo Xinyu said, "It was so apparent in his eyes when we were making our way into the Jing Mountains. Once there are any signs of a threat, he tries to rid the problem. A supernatural being born of the wilderness has always been more ruthless than those who had their powers awakened in a stronghold."

Yang Xiaojin said, "It was probably caused by the environment he lived in. He's only trying to survive, that's all."

"Why are you so eager to explain him on his behalf?" Luo Xinyu said in amusement, "This lad's already powerful enough by himself, and he even has that Chen Wudi, whose combat strength is unknown, on his side too. That already makes their small group quite powerful. Should we draw both the Li Consortium and your Yang Consortium's attention onto them so the focus won't be on us?"

"They just want to live a stable life in the stronghold. Don't give them any unnecessary trouble," Yang Xiaojin said calmly.

“Hahahaha,” Luo Xinyu burst out laughing. In reality, she didn’t intend to do anything and just wanted to see Yang Xiaojin’s reaction.

Yang Xiaojin said calmly, “It’s a little strange. Even now, no one’s discovered what kind of superpower he has.”

Luo Xinyu asked in surprise, “Don’t you know what his superpower is?”

“And why would I know it?” Yang Xiaojin glanced at Luo Xinyu.

“You two have such a good relationship, so I thought he would tell you about it.” Luo Xinyu chuckled.

“You two are deskmates, with one being the student councilor and the other the class monitor...”

Yang Xiaojin looked at her. “The Li Consortium’s combat troops will get here soon. Let’s go.”

“Alright, alright.” Luo Xinyu activated Shadow Door and led Yang Xiaojin away from the rooftop in a flash.

Tonight, Yang Xiaojin and Luo Xinyu had both updated their understanding of Ren Xiaosu. They had guessed he was a supernatural being, but they never expected him to be so strong.

Something kept bugging Ren Xiaosu during his battle with Midnight. He felt that Midnight’s effectiveness had been exaggerated as they were obviously not that strong, yet they acted as though they were the best.

But in fact, there was a misunderstanding since Midnight was quite well-known. As a matter of fact, this fighting force had successfully captured three supernatural beings in the past.

On most days, this unit would be considered the second echelon 1 to the Pyro Company’s main force.

...

On the same night, the Li Consortium acted out of the norm and imposed martial law across the entire stronghold. During this critical period, they even ordered a curfew on all residents. Those who went out after 10 PM would be treated as criminals and arrested!

At first, the Li Consortium did not want to split up their forces as they wanted to focus all their manpower on protecting the research results. After all, that was their utmost priority right now.

But the frequency of incidents happening in the stronghold was increasing. No matter how good they were at enduring it, they couldn’t sit idle this time.

In fact, the reason Luo Lan’s group kept causing trouble everywhere was so the Li Consortium would be busy up to their ears. Finally, it would get to the point where they would have no choice but to split up their manpower.

And after Ren Xiaosu’s battle with Midnight tonight, the Li Consortium simply could not hold back anymore.

Even before the sun came up, a regiment of soldiers were patrolling the streets. When they discovered any suspicious persons, they would go up and interrogate them.

The private troops and Public Order Division had cut short their leave, with one-third of the Li Consortium's ORBAT also mobilized for this operation. All of a sudden, it felt like a war was about to break out in the stronghold. The loose strings had all tightened.

Ren Xiaosu could feel the tension outside the shop as a storm brewed in the stronghold.

Chapter 169: Reforming Dong Funan

Early in the morning, Ren Xiaosu reexamined his mind palace to discover the quest to help someone in dire straits to escape had been completed.

“Quest complete. Awarded 1.0 Strength.”

This was a long-awaited fitness improvement reward. During the night battle with Midnight, Ren Xiaosu had realized the importance of having a good fitness.

During a battle, the most important and essential traits were strength and speed. When he had overwhelming strength and speed, his opponent might not even get a chance to use their superpower.

Furthermore, the fitness of the shadow clone was double that of Ren Xiaosu's own physical fitness. This meant it was a multiplier of his strength and speed. The greater Ren Xiaosu's fitness was, the stronger and faster the shadow clone would be! When Ren Xiaosu's strength increased by one, the shadow clone's strength would increase by two.

Currently, Ren Xiaosu's Strength attribute had reached 8.5, and his Dexterity was 5.1. If he faced the two supernatural beings from Midnight again, he would probably have it easier.

However, he clearly remembered the quest was still incomplete when he parted ways with Xu Xianchu yesterday. It looked like Xu Xianchu had finally left Stronghold 109. As such, the palace passed its judgment and decided the quest was completed at this moment.

But didn't the quests used to be considered complete as long as he showed the attitude to finish it? Why was it different this time? Could the palace feel bad about the fact Ren Xiaosu had been making Xu Xianchu the scapegoat all this while?

But Ren Xiaosu was glad Yan Liuyuan did not fall sick after making a wish this time. In fact, Yan Liuyuan had made a wish as usual again last night. This was not something Ren Xiaosu could stop him from doing as Yan Liuyuan had a mind of his own regarding such matters.

So Ren Xiaosu could have actually tried dodging the bullets instead of using his shadow clone to block the bullets in the alley last night. However, as he was worried the luck factor would cause Yan Liuyuan to suffer, he didn't depend on that. And since nothing happened to Yan Liuyuan, it meant Yang Xiaojin's presence on the battlefield was not due to his wish.

Ren Xiaosu looked at Dong Funan, who was washing dishes in the kitchen. He was in a bind regarding how to handle this woman.

Wang Fugui asked Ren Xiaosu, "Will Chen Wudi be fine by himself when y'all go to school?"

Ren Xiaosu gave it some thought before asking, "You're worried he'll kill her, ain'tcha?"

Wang Fugui chuckled, "Never you mind."

After breakfast, Ren Xiaosu took the streetcar to school alone while Wang Dalong and Yan Liuyuan rode the bicycle to school together. In the morning, Ren Xiaosu had instructed Wang Fugui to purchase as many bicycles as he could once the week's allocated dose of black medicine has been sold for a high price. Furthermore, he wanted everyone to learn how to ride a bike.

Who knew when the day would come when they would need to escape? Those bicycles would come in handy at that time.

They not only had to buy the bicycles but also maintenance tools to repair the bicycles and mend the tires. This was in case the bicycles broke down and became unusable while they were escaping.

Ren Xiaosu got rather excited when he imagined the sight of a group of people riding on bicycles to escape.

...

When Ren Xiaosu arrived in class, Yang Xiaojin was already at her seat. She looked up at Ren Xiaosu and asked, "Did anything strange happen other than the battle with Midnight yesterday?"

Ren Xiaosu was stunned. "What do you mean?"

"Last night, the Qing Consortium suddenly upped the reward for the capture of Luo Xinyu for some reason." Yang Xiaojin said calmly, "But the Qing Consortium definitely wouldn't adjust the reward for no reason. There must be something that happened that we're unaware of."

"Hmm..." Ren Xiaosu said nonchalantly, "I don't know about that. All I did was save Xu Xianchu. Luo Lan's group was initially chasing after him, but they couldn't catch up to him in the end."

Yang Xiaojin stayed silent for some time. She wasn't actually expecting an answer from Ren Xiaosu. It was just that she and Luo Xinyu were a little perplexed by this.

"Thank you." Ren Xiaosu thanked her sincerely. Whether or not he could defeat Midnight by himself, he still had to thank Yang Xiaojin for coming to his rescue.

Yang Xiaojin acknowledged him as though it was no big deal. "Why did you save Xu Xianchu? Do you have some other motive for doing so?"

Ren Xiaosu said righteously, "What other motives could I have? We're friends, after all, and traveled as a group while we were in the Jing Mountains. No matter what, we're teammates. If something were to happen to you, I'd also risk my life to save you!"

Yang Xiaojin cast him a glance. "OK."

And so the matter was considered wrapped up. Ren Xiaosu heaved a sigh of relief. He was starting to make more and more people his scapegoats now.

Then Yang Xiaojin asked, "What are you planning to do with Dong Funan?"

When Yang Xiaojin had previously brought her up to Ren Xiaosu, she realized he was not fearful of Dong Funan at all. At the time, she even wondered where Ren Xiaosu's confidence came from. But now it seemed like Ren Xiaosu had more secrets than she had imagined. Moreover, Chen Wudi was likely to be very powerful as well.

"I was just thinking about it." Ren Xiaosu felt a little speechless when this was brought up. "I can't keep her with us forever."

"Why don't you hand her over to us then?" Yang Xiaojin asked.

"Why? Are y'all doing studies on supernatural beings as well?" Ren Xiaosu was taken aback. To be honest, he did not have a good impression of organizations that conducted research on supernatural beings.

"We don't do studies on supernatural beings." Yang Xiaojin said slowly, "We only reform them."

Ren Xiaosu looked at her in a daze. They could be reformed? How would they reform them? By forcing them to go through physical therapy? He said, "I can hand her over to you, but not just yet." He counted on his fingers. "In four days."

"OK," Yang Xiaojin agreed.

At first, Ren Xiaosu intended to ask Yang Xiaojin if there was any compensation for selling Dong Funan to them. But when he thought about how Yang Xiaojin had come to his rescue last night, he did not say anything about receiving compensation.

At this moment, Jiang Wu walked in from outside the classroom. She stood at the lectern and said, "Final exams will officially start tomorrow. I'll announce everyone's examination room and number in a while. Your exam numbers are sorted alphabetically by last name, so you don't have to come to class tomorrow and can head straight to your stated exam room. I wish all of you luck on your exams."

During this period, the entire class had been studying very hard, except for Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin, who did not really pay any attention to the lectures. There were a lot of debates and controversies from outsiders about their class, especially regarding Jiang Wu, who was often ostracized by the faculty.

Therefore, these students who had a close brush with death were very motivated to do well for themselves. Speaking of which, it was quite hilarious too. In the entire class, they were all good students except for the class monitor and student councilor, both of whom did not study hard at all.

Jiang Wu stood at the lectern and said, "Some of you have asked about the university's admission criteria, so I went to check it with the university in Stronghold 109..."

The classroom fell silent. These days, as long as you were an aspiring student, you'd be ambitious enough to attend university, because being a university student in the current day meant having knowledge, status, and money.

Chapter 170: Straight-A student, Yang Xiaojin

Ren Xiaosu asked Yang Xiaojin quietly, "What's university life like?"

Yang Xiaojin gave it some thought and said, "Classes are rather flexible, but the exams can be extremely strict. There are relatively fewer students admitted into universities, and most of them will continue research with their advisers after graduation. It's said that universities were very lenient with their admissions in the past, but now they're recruiting fewer and fewer students over time. They've become more like a research base these days, and there are only around 20 universities scattered across the hundreds of strongholds in existence. The heads of these universities have already begun to streamline their student recruitment and organizational structures. They go all-out to make breakthroughs in their identified fields of research."

"Oh." Ren Xiaosu nodded. "Do the students get any subsidies?"

"Hmm..." Yang Xiaojin realized her words had fallen on deaf ears. After talking so much, Ren Xiaosu's only focus was on whether the students would get any subsidies? She said calmly, "No, there are no subsidies."

"Are you serious?" Ren Xiaosu did not believe her.

Yang Xiaojin said lightly, "You are not suited for scientific research, so don't go and be a burden to the other university students."

"How can you say that!" Ren Xiaosu said unhappily, "Why am I a burden?!"

Yang Xiaojin ignored him. Jiang Wu, who was standing at the lectern, said, "If you want to qualify for the university in Stronghold 109, there are only four subjects you'll be tested on: math, physics, chemistry, and biology. Each subject has a maximum score of 150 points, and the cutoff point for admission last year was 560 points. That is to say, if you want to qualify for university, you'll have to score above 140 points in each subject."

Ren Xiaosu gasped. He had taken a mock exam the day before and could only manage to score 140 points in total on four subjects...

He looked at Yang Xiaojin and asked, "How can I get 140 points in every subject?"

Yang Xiaojin glanced at him. "You can get that by skipping a few multiple-choice questions per section."

Ren Xiaosu was speechless. He couldn't understand it at all. Was a hopeless student like her who paid no attention in class qualified to act as though she were a model student?! 'We aren't that different!'

However, Ren Xiaosu felt that something wasn't right. He decided to ask his mind palace, "What is Yang Xiaojin's proficiency in math?"

"Intermediate."

He was very happy when he heard that from the palace. Although her intermediate proficiency in mathematics was definitely better than his, she still wouldn't be considered a model student.

Eh, wait a minute!

Ren Xiaosu rephrased his question. "What is Yang Xiaojin's proficiency in math at the senior high level?"

"Perfect."

Ren Xiaosu realized that by adding in the two words "senior high," the assessment was completely different! Fuck! In fact, senior high math was considered the most basic level of mathematics.

"What's Yang Xiaojin's proficiency in physics at the senior high level?"

"Perfect."

"What is Yang Xiaojin's proficiency in chemistry at the senior high level... Forget it, I'm not asking anymore." Ren Xiaosu sulked. When a hopeless student like him saw Yang Xiaojin sleeping in class every day, he felt a warmth in his chest, knowing that someone else would be accompanying him at the bottom of the class.

But at this moment, he realized he was the only hopeless student in class.

When does one feel the loneliest? Times like these are when one feels loneliest.

Yang Xiaojin glanced at him and then asked, "Are you aiming to go to uni?"

Ren Xiaosu replied, "I'm not qualified."

Yang Xiaojin was surprised.

...

For the following day's exams, Ren Xiaosu went to the examination room after locating it. When he looked around, he found no one he knew in the entire classroom. For today's exams, Ren Xiaosu had come with the mindset of just participating. The results were not as important as the fact that he attempted it.

In the past, examinations were also held in the town's school, but they were all conducted by Zhang Jinglin in the form of an oral test. In contrast, the examinations here were conducted on test papers.

Ren Xiaosu felt that Zhang Jinglin was just trying to save money on buying paper, so he tested the students by asking them questions one by one. After all, paper was not exactly cheap these days.

How would Zhang Jinglin feel if he learned his image in Ren Xiaosu's mind was like this?

At this moment, a girl who was seated behind Ren Xiaosu patted him on his back. "Student?"

Ren Xiaosu turned around and looked at the girl. "What's the matter?"

"Um, how are your grades? Can you let me copy your answers?" This girl was relatively good at communicating, so she started a conversation with Ren Xiaosu.

The school had segregated the students to prevent those who knew each other from cheating. However, that would not stop everyone's enthusiasm to cheat.

All of a sudden, the voice from Ren Xiaosu's mind palace said, "Quest: Help your fellow student complete her exam."

Ren Xiaosu was shocked on the spot. He wondered whether the palace had positive or negative fundamental values. How could it even encourage him to aid someone in cheating?

But for Ren Xiaosu, nothing else mattered as long as there was a quest for him to do.

Ren Xiaosu looked at the girl and said, "Don't worry, I'll let you copy mine!"

The girl beamed with joy. "Thank you so much!"

"Gratitude received from Li Mo, +1!"

Ren Xiaosu thought, 'This is killing two birds with one stone. Not only can I complete the quest, but I also earned a gratitude token.'

When the exams began, Li Mo was surprised. She observed Ren Xiaosu from behind and discovered he was writing diligently and answering the test questions. What a good student!

Halfway through the examination, Ren Xiaosu shifted his body to the side and allowed Li Mo to copy his answers.

When she finished copying and felt satisfied, the bell finally rang. Then the teacher went around to collect the tests.

Li Mo looked at Ren Xiaosu happily and said, "I never expected you would answer all the questions. You're amazing. Did you know how to do all of them?"

Ren Xiaosu smiled and said, "No, I don't."

Li Mo was confused.

It didn't matter whether he knew the answers or not. He just had to complete the quest. The palace's quest required him to help a fellow student "complete" the test, so Ren Xiaosu could not leave any questions blank. What would he do if the palace judged him to have failed the quest if he did not answer a question?

To be honest, it was really quite tiring to fabricate answers for every question on the test.

On his way back home at night, Ren Xiaosu saw Xiaoyu waiting at the door of the shop. When she saw Ren Xiaosu, she reacted as though her savior had arrived. "Xiaosu, you've finally returned. Old Wang has been arrested."

Ren Xiaosu frowned. "What's going on? Tell me all the details."

"Many people from the Public Order Division came over today." Xiaoyu explained, "They said we didn't obtain a license from the stronghold to sell the drugs and that the in-house doctor did not have any medical qualifications. So they arrested the person in charge here."

Ren Xiaosu let out a sigh of relief. Although Old Wang getting arrested was a serious matter, it was fine as long it wasn't related to supernatural beings.

He was most worried that his secret would get exposed and lead to the Li Consortium targeting him. If that happened, it would truly be a serious matter.

"Did they say anything before they left?" Ren Xiaosu asked.

"Those people from the Public Order Division said that you'd have to make a trip down to their office once you got back." Xiaoyu said.

Ren Xiaosu thought for a while and said, "There's no hurry. Fatty Luo should be coming over to the shop later. I'll ask him about what's going on first."

He also wanted to get Wang Fugui out quickly, but he could not be rash when dealing with this matter. He had to check out the situation with Luo Lan first before deciding on the most suitable way to handle it.