

The First Order

Chapter 4: Luck is a type of skill too

“I might possess some kind of skill too,” Ren Xiaosu said.

Sitting at the entrance of the shack, Yan Liuyuan was stunned as he lifted the curtain door to gaze at the starry sky after the rain. “You mean...”

“I’m still not sure. I have to try it out and see.” Ren Xiaosu sat down beside Yan Liuyuan. “According to the legends in town, someone could pull a train out of thin air. I didn’t believe it in the past, but after I met you, I thought that it might be a possibility. Now that I might also have a strange skill, this feels very weird to me.”

Yan Liuyuan’s skill was luck.

It was a very baffling skill to comprehend. When Yan Liuyuan made a wish for Ren Xiaosu to return from a successful hunt, a sparrow would mysteriously drop at his feet even though he did not do anything while walking out in the wilderness.

However, this skill had a side effect. Yan Liuyuan would usually get a fever that would not subside or suffer some other minor illnesses or mishaps after he made a wish.

This was why Ren Xiaosu wanted to protect Yan Liuyuan at the beginning. At first, he did not believe it. But later, he had no choice but to accept this truth.

Suddenly, a shooting star flashed across the sky. Yan Liuyuan subconsciously put his hands together to make a wish. However, he was stopped by Ren Xiaosu. “Don’t you go making any wishes. Something is going to happen to you if you do.”

Nowadays, Ren Xiaosu rarely depended on Yan Liuyuan’s luck as he was capable of hunting with great success. He did not need Yan Liuyuan to cast his skill anymore, and Yan Liuyuan wouldn’t go against his wishes either.

The skinny Yan Liuyuan watched the shooting star vanished, lost in thought. “Why do shooting stars come and go so quickly? What if people can’t make a wish in time?”

Ren Xiaosu thought for a while and answered, “They probably move so quickly because they don’t actually want to listen to anyone’s wishes.”

Yan Liuyuan turned his head and gave Ren Xiaosu a blank stare.

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Yan Liuyuan was Ren Xiaosu's night watchman, but it did not mean that he had to keep watch throughout the night. Ren Xiaosu would take turns with him. After all, Yan Liyuan still needed to attend school during the day.

This was an excruciating situation, as not getting enough sleep was a huge problem. But to survive in such an environment, be it Ren Xiaosu or Yan Liuyuan, they had no choice but to take these actions.

In the early morning, Ren Xiaosu led Yan Liuyuan outside. They took their valuables, including Ren Xiaosu's big cauldron, with them.

It was expected for someone to rummage through their shack by the time they returned at night.

"I heard that the people living in the stronghold don't shut their doors at night because no one will steal their things." Yan Liuyuan was carrying a bedroll on his back while he looked at Ren Xiaosu holding the cauldron he carried wherever he went. These were almost all of their belongings.

Yan Liuyuan would usually carry the bedroll with him whenever he went to school. It was almost the same situation with the other students as well. Everyone was accustomed to this.

"Bullshit." Although Ren Xiaosu looked forward to living in the stronghold, he refused to believe there was a place where people would leave their doors open at night. "Some people have the mindset that even the farts of those who live in the stronghold smell good and that the air there is sweet."

"But you still shouldn't be carrying that cauldron on your back everywhere you go," Yan Liuyuan said.

"What do you know?" Ren Xiaosu explained, "It wasn't easy for me to get my hands on this cauldron. I can cook meals and catch sparrows with it. If we lose it, how are we going to spend our days?"

Ren Xiaosu held the cauldron over his shoulder with one hand while clutching the large sparrow upside down in his other. Along the way, many people were looking at Ren Xiaosu with envious eyes.

It was important to realize that humans were no longer at the top of the food chain.

There were rumors that the sparrows of the past were smaller than the size of a palm. But these days, even a bird like that could kill people by pecking them.

Not everyone could catch a sparrow or had the patience to lie in wait in the wilderness for an entire day to catch one. They all hadn't seen meat and fish dishes in a long time, so it would be a lie if they were not envious of Ren Xiaosu.

Ren Xiaosu led Yan Liuyuan to the stronghold's city gate. The towering walls made them feel miniscule and oppressed.

Once they reached this place, there were noticeable changes in the architecture, and they could even see brick houses.

As they approached the stronghold, the place began to look cleaner, tidier, and wealthier. The people living here were likely related to the people living in the stronghold. Perhaps they were good at flattery or had relatives living inside.

But no matter what, these refugees were all known as "contaminated" and were not allowed inside the stronghold.

Ren Xiaosu walked into a shop with a "grocery store" sign above the entrance. All sorts of items, such as cigarettes, matchsticks, metalware, food, and clothing, were sold in here. But the prices were very expensive.

The old man in the shop was over the moon when he saw Ren Xiaosu. "That looks like a rather large sparrow!"

Ren Xiaosu threw the sparrow onto the glass counter. "How much can I get for this?"

"Oh my, don't be so rough. That's an expensive piece of glass you're throwing it onto," Old Wang said, pained. He picked up the limp sparrow and put it onto the metallic scale beside him. "1.74 kilograms. Not bad, Xiaosu."

At this moment, the clawlike fingers of Old Wang's wrinkled hands instinctively started making some calculations on an abacus. The abacus beads were pushed around, ticking and tacking. "The market rate today is 200 yuan 1 per 500 grams, so I'll pay you 700 for this catch!"

"Make it 900." Ren Xiaosu said firmly, "It's almost winter, and there are fewer sparrows out there these days, so 900 yuan is the lowest I will sell it for."

Old Wang was unhappy as he pushed his abacus in front of Ren Xiaosu and said, "I'll be sending this sparrow into the stronghold for the aristocracy to eat. Although there's a lack of meat in the stronghold, there's still a fixed price for everything. We have to do it by the book."

Right as Old Wang finished speaking, he saw Ren Xiaosu take the sparrow back and get ready to leave the shop. He quickly yanked the sleeve of Ren Xiaosu's ragged jacket. "Where are you going?"

"I'm going to check the price at Old Li's grocery store," Ren Xiaosu said.

Old Wang's grasp tightened even further. Someone from the stronghold's management had specifically given notice that they would be coming out to collect exotic animals today. This news wasn't promulgated to him alone.

Old Wang smiled, his wrinkles appearing. "How much do you want to sell it for?"

Ren Xiaosu still wanted to leave. "We'll talk again after I ask around."

Old Wang smiled amiably. "Then won't Liuyuan be late for school? Alright, 900 yuan it is!"

"What did you just say?" Ren Xiaosu asked calmly.

"Then wouldn't Liuyuan be late—"

"The sentence before that."

"How much do you want to sell it for?"

"1200."

Old Wang was confused

A moment later, Old Wang was feeling the pinch as he counted the money. He wet his fingers with his saliva and counted the cash over and over again, afraid that he would get the amount wrong.

The final transaction price was 1198 yuan. Ren Xiaosu had also given some concessions of his own.

A sparrow fetching 1198 yuan was not the result of the inflated prices, nor was it because of the large size of the sparrow. More importantly, it was because the people in Stronghold 113 did not normally get the chance to eat such exotic animals.

Things were precious because they were scarce. Old Wang would never ,ale a bad business deal. When he resold this sparrow to a powerful customer, he would still be able to earn a small profit from it and even gain their favor.

Old Wang stuffed a stash of loose change into Ren Xiaosu's hands unwillingly. Nobody knew what he was thinking when he lowered his voice and whispered, "Xiaosu, the next time you catch a sparrow, don't kill it. Some aristocrats want them alive and will offer an even higher price to buy them in that state!"

Ren Xiaosu was taken aback. “Why would they want a live sparrow? So that they can kill it themselves?”

“No.” Old Wang shook his head and said, “You don’t know, right? There are people who keep them as pets!”