

First Order 411

Chapter 411 Selling medals

A sniper rifle was very novel to Ren Xiaosu and he really liked it a lot. Otherwise, he would not have asked to learn about it from Yang Xiaojin.

Although supernatural beings now existed in this era, they were still not powerful enough to ignore the power of a sniper rifle.

Ren Xiaosu was unsure of what that black-tipped bullet was used for. After all, he did not have the chance to try it out and could only wait until he got into the wilderness to find out.

At this moment, Zhang Xiaoman and the others were still drunk as they stumbled around the chow hall. Ren Xiaosu did not know whether to laugh or cry as he carried these people back to their barracks two at a time. Meanwhile, the troops at the forward operating base all watched in amazement as Ren Xiaosu made more than 60 trips between the chow hall and the barracks to carry everyone back.

On the same day, news of Ren Xiaosu carrying his comrades back to their barracks became the talk of the forward operating base.

In the evening, Zhang Xiaoman and the others were still drunk after waking up. But when they heard it was Ren Xiaosu who had carried them back, they quickly thanked him, "Xiaosu, thank you for bringing us back. We definitely won't drink that much again in the future. That was so embarrassing."

However, Zhang Xiaoman realized Ren Xiaosu had turned unhappy. He heard Ren Xiaosu say, "Keep drinking! How can a man not have alcohol?"

If they did not drink, where would he get all his gratitude tokens from?

Before the drinking session, he only had a little over 800 gratitude tokens. But afterwards, he still had more than 500 gratitude tokens even after the new weapon was unlocked!

Ren Xiaosu even wanted to tell Zhang Xiaoman that they should stop going into battle and just keep drinking every day if they could.

After unlocking the sniper rifle, the palace issued another side quest for the third weapon. This time, it would require 10,000 gratitude tokens to unlock.

Ren Xiaosu did not even know where he was going to get so many gratitude tokens from.

Suddenly, Zhou Yinglong entered the barracks where the Razor Sharp Company was staying. When he detected the smell of alcohol in the barracks, he frowned. "Zhang Xiaoman, get up right now."

Everyone from the Razor Sharp Company got out of bed and smartly stood at attention in two rows on either side of the walkway. Zhou Yinglong walked around and inspected them. "Look at how drunk you got! Do you know how to act like soldiers?"

Zhang Xiaoman muttered, "We're all heroes. Aren't we being assigned a new mission in another two days?"

Zhou Yinglong was so angry he laughed. "You aren't obeying the chain of command after drinking, eh? You have to add the word 'sir' when you're speaking to me!"

Zhang Xiaoman was stunned for a moment before saying, "Sir! I'm a war hero!"

With a loud crash, Zhou Yinglong kicked Zhang Xiaoman to the floor. "You better sober up. Your Razor Sharp Company will be assigned a new mission tomorrow. Come and report to me after your head clears up!"

Upon hearing that there was a new mission, Zhang Xiaoman immediately got off the floor. "Battalion Commander, what mission is it? Is it urgent?"

"It's a covert op. Come and talk to me after you've sobered up." Zhou Yinglong left the barracks with his hands folded behind his back.

The Razor Sharp Company's soldiers in the barracks all looked at one another. What was this covert op about?

In the past, covert operations like these would never be given to the Razor Sharp Company. Although they could handle the tough battles and defeat strong foes, infiltration and ambushes were not exactly what they were best at. So these covert ops were always carried out by the Reconnaissance Battalion. The soldiers in the Reconnaissance Battalion were savage. Whenever combat competitions were held in the military, the top ten places would almost always be taken by soldiers from the Recon Battalion.

So why was the Razor Sharp Company suddenly assigned to a covert op?

The next day, Zhang Xiaoman had a frown on his face after returning from Zhou Yinglong's place. He said to the soldiers of the Razor Sharp Company, "The main forces will be heading towards the Blackstone River in the north. Right across that river is Mt. Wuchuan, where the Zong Consortium's defensive line is set up."

"Then what about us?" Jiao Xiaochen asked.

"We'll set off this afternoon and head to the front line at Mt. Qiangwan and Beiwan River before crossing to the flank of the main battlefield. We're to destroy the bridge there to sever the supply lines east of the Zong Consortium. Then we're to join up with our main forces at Mt. Wuchuan."

"We're only one company. Do they really expect us to infiltrate deep into the rear to sever the supply lines there? And we have to blow up the bridge too? The bridge there is heavily guarded by Zong Consortium troops." Jiao Xiaochen was shocked. "Battalion Commander Zhou thinks too highly of us, right?"

"That's the order." Zhang Xiaoman said in a serious tone, "Pack up your stuff. We set off at 1600 sharp. We must reach the Beiwan River in seven days and blow up the Zong Consortium's bridge there. We

have to make sure that our main forces arriving at Blackstone River won't have any worries of a rear attack."

The Blackstone River and Beiwan River were in two completely different locations. Headquarters believed the potential price of breaking through at the Beiwan River was too costly, so they would rather build a pontoon bridge on the Blackstone River to attack the defensive line at Mt. Wuchuan, as it was much safer than going to Beiwan River.

The only thing they needed to worry about was that the enemies at Beiwan River might seize the opportunity to sneak attack the flanks of the main forces of Fortress 178 when the main battle broke out at the front line of Mt. Wuchuan. Hence, they sent the Razor Sharp Company to cut off this route to prevent the Zong Consortium from being able to temporarily cross the Beiwan River.

The only problem was that this operation was too difficult. It was akin to letting the Razor Sharp Company infiltrate deep behind enemy lines on their own.

However, Zhou Yinglong said that the operation to blow up Beiwan Bridge had to be carried out in secret. There would be a predetermined time for the operation, so the fewer people carried out this operation, the better.

At this moment, most of the people at the forward operating base did not know what strategy headquarters had drawn up. But all of a sudden, the Razor Sharp Company announced they were going out to head for a multiday ruck. The group put on their field packs and carried their weapons and ran out of the forward operating base. Everyone thought the Razor Sharp Company would take at most three days to return from their training. But after a few days passed, they finally realized the Razor Sharp Company was not going to be coming back.

The soldiers of the Razor Sharp Company trekking in the wilderness all had a new medal on their chests. The medals were engraved with the word "Shichuan" on them and were obtained by all soldiers who had participated in the Battle of Shichuan Village.

Fu Rao mumbled as he walked, "Hey, Captain, how much do you think this medal can fetch?"

Zhang Xiaoman gave it some thought and said, "This was the first true battle since our military started its campaign. Since the raid on Mt. Dingyuan was against bandits, the Shichuan Village battle should hold a greater significance. Furthermore, there's only a few hundred of these medals in total, so I estimate that it can be sold for up to 10,000 yuan."

"That's not too bad." Fu Rao was overjoyed. "I'll sell it once we get back."

Ren Xiaosu was stunned when he heard that. "Isn't this medal a symbol of honor? Are y'all going to sell it just like that?"

He pondered over how he thought the Razor Sharp Company had a strong sense of honor.

"What's the big deal?" Zhang Xiaoman chuckled and said, "Even if we sell the medal to someone else, would that make us feel any less honorable? Our third-class citations still exist, so wouldn't it be better

to exchange the medals for something more practical? Wouldn't it be nicer to use that 10,000 yuan to buy some lamb chops?"

When they were given medals, their third-class unit citations that had been withheld previously were reinstated. However, all of this was carried out in secret, and they would probably have to wait until this operation was completed before the decoration ceremony would be made up to them.

Ren Xiaosu thought to himself that these thugs from the Razor Sharp Company were too shameless. They would even sell their medals for money? Yet a company like this was so fierce and fearless when it came to combat.

Chapter 412 Sniper

Curious, Ren Xiaosu asked, "What kinds of medals are the most valuable? And who buys them?"

In Ren Xiaosu's opinion, who would be interested in these things other than soldiers in the military?

"There are loads of buyers who want them." Zhang Xiaoman said with a laugh, "Some of them are those who aspired to be soldiers but couldn't pass their physical, businessmen collectors in the fortress, or parents who buy them for their children as a coming-of-age gift. The entire Fortress 178 has a population of more than 2 million people, so don't underestimate their purchasing power."

Ren Xiaosu finally understood why the residents of Fortress 178 had a strange sense of respect for those in the military profession. Perhaps it was because these soldiers had always been protecting them.

Zhang Xiaoman continued, "However, some of the medals can't fetch a high price, like those that were given out to many soldiers, or the ones awarded for winning unimportant battles. Normally, families will only buy the medals that are worth a few hundred yuan for their children. But only the collectors are willing to seek out the kinds of medals like the ones we have. Shichuan Village was the opening battle of this war, and the number of people awarded with the medal isn't that many either, so there's definitely a much higher collection value to it."

"Then if our Razor Sharp Company achieved great things again in an individual battle, wouldn't we be awarded an even more valuable medal?" Ren Xiaosu asked.

"But of course." Zhang Xiaoman chuckled and said, "But how easy is it to do that? That would cost people their lives!"

Ren Xiaosu remained silent. The journey to Beiwan Bridge was a bumpy one. Along the way they passed by Shichuan Village, where the fire had extinguished. The entirety of the ruins were covered in a hazy darkness, making it seem like a purgatory of monsters.

Zhang Xiaoman looked at the town from afar and said, "I wonder what the world was like before The Cataclysm. Alright, stop watching! Everyone, go on alert! Who knows when we might stumble upon the enemy and end up in a battle?"

Shichuan Village was located more than 200 kilometers away from Beiwan Bridge. They would have to enter a mountain range first before they could stealthily infiltrate Beiwan River from here.

According to the intelligence reports, some of the Zong Consortium's combat troops were scattered through the mountain range as part of the concealed sentries and guerrillas.

The Razor Sharp Company had to try to avoid them, not kill them. But if they could not avoid them, then whoever was braver would emerge victorious in battle.

Two hours after passing Shichuan Village, the Razor Sharp Company arrived at the foot of a mountain. The mountain range here looked very odd, with the sunny side of the mountain covered in shrubs while the other side was the bare yellow body of the mountain itself.

But at this moment, Ren Xiaosu suddenly crouched in pain with a frown. Right after, a loud crack came from the mountains. Zhang Xiaoman was startled. "Everyone, scatter and take cover. There's a sniper!"

The difference between the sound of a sniper rifle and a normal rifle was enormous. So when the gunshot rang out, Zhang Xiaoman immediately reacted.

Zhang Xiaoman dragged Ren Xiaosu with him towards some rocks nearby. However, he wondered what made Ren Xiaosu react before the gunshot had even sounded.

Ren Xiaosu reacted like he was the one who had been shot. However, there were no injuries on him.

What Zhang Xiaoman did not know was that the sniper's target was not actually Ren Xiaosu, but his shadow clone!

Ren Xiaosu had discovered that if a bullet went between the shadow clone's brows, the backlash from the shadow clone would cause an even more intense pain to him. So he constantly controlled the shadow clone to make it move forward cautiously in case it was shot right between the eyes.

As for what would happen when it got hit between the eyes, even Ren Xiaosu didn't know. All supernatural beings were still in the process of exploring their superpowers.

However, it was different this time. While the shadow clone was scouting a few hundred meters ahead, a sniper headshotted it squarely between the brows.

After the shadow clone was shot, it turned into a ball of black mist and dissipated. At the same time, the black mist reappeared within Ren Xiaosu's mind palace and slowly started taking shape again.

From the looks of it, if the shadow clone were hit between the brows, it would result in the shadow clone dissipating immediately. Furthermore, it would take a long time for it to reform, taking around three days to get back to its original state.

The sniper's marksmanship was great. This should be an advance-level, or perhaps even a master-level, sniper.

After the shadow clone got shot, Ren Xiaosu did not even know where the opponent was. He could only roughly determine that the enemy was to his 12 o'clock.

However, now that his opponent had hit their target, he wondered if they would shift to another location.

Ren Xiaosu panted, "This shot was aimed at a target from 400 meters away, and the sniper's to our 12 o'clock, but I'm not sure if we're still within their effective range."

The effective range of a sniper rifle was really far. When deployed in the forested mountains, it had an intimidating and unpredictable power.

Next to him, seemingly unconcerned, Zhang Xiaoman said, "I didn't expect the Zong Consortium to actually have a sniper waiting here in this mountain range. This is gonna be a tough nut to crack!"

Their entire company split up as the soldiers hid separately behind some rocks. Fortunately, the presence of the sniper was revealed in advance due to the gunshot that cracked. Otherwise, one of their platoons could have been wiped out by now.

Then Zhang Xiaoman took off his helmet and slowly poked it out from behind the rocks.

Bang! The helmet was sent flying by the formidable sniper bullet!

"Dammit." Zhang Xiaoman said, "We're within the enemy's range!"

Jiao Xiaochen, who was ten meters away, shouted from behind the rocks, "Captain, what do we do now? This is a game of cat and mouse, and all we can do is hide here. Think of something, Captain!"

"You're the fucking mouse, dammit!" Zhang Xiaoman was also upset. But how could he have any good ideas? If he revealed his head even a little, he would fucking be dead!

The supremacy of a sniper on the battlefield was perfectly displayed at this moment. A single person could suppress an entire company and keep them hiding behind some rocks while waiting for their deaths. This was a situation where the enemy could hit you but you couldn't retaliate at all.

That was unless Zhang Xiaoman was willing to sacrifice his comrades as cannon fodder. By sacrificing a group of soldiers, the other troops could shift to a good tactical position.

Someone suggested, "Why don't we contact the FOB and get them to send some reinforcements?"

Zhang Xiaoman sighed and said, "They'd be too late. It'll take at least three days to get here from the FOB. By then, this sniper will probably have called for support from the Zong Consortium's guerrillas here in the mountain range as well."

"Why don't we wait and see who's more patient then, us or the sniper?" Jiao Xiaochen said, "Or we can take advantage of nightfall to move away from here?"

"You're such a fucking genius! You actually want to compete with a sniper on patience?" Zhang Xiaoman was so angry he laughed. "Since the sniper's hiding in this jungle, his scope will definitely be optimized for night vision. Gunning you down will be a game for him!"

What could he do? Did this mean that someone would have to die out here?

Ren Xiaosu took a deep breath. When Zhang Xiaoman saw Ren Xiaosu's chest heave, he knew this was going to be bad! But in that instant, he saw Ren Xiaosu's pupils turn crimson.

'City Crusher! Activate!'

A second later, Ren Xiaosu dashed out from behind the rocks at an unbelievable speed!

When Ren Xiaosu ran out, a sniper's bullet flew in as expected. But because Ren Xiaosu was moving too fast, the sniper's shot missed its target this time!

Chapter 413 Ren Xiaosu in the Battle Between Snipers

When Zhang Xiaoman saw Ren Xiaosu take a deep breath, he felt that Ren Xiaosu could be about to try something dangerous. He wanted to stop Ren Xiaosu, but he was afraid he might throw Ren Xiaosu's momentum off and end up harming him instead.

But to the surprise of everyone in the Razor Sharp Company, Ren Xiaosu darted out at a speed so quick it was blinding. He was moving way too fast!

Zhang Xiaoman was the only person who had noticed the unforgettable red glint in Ren Xiaosu's eyes. Was that his power? If that were the case, it would mean that Ren Xiaosu had two powers just like Xu Xianchu!

When Xu Xianchu revealed both of his superpowers, the men from Fortress 178 were all extremely envious of him and everyone was saying how he was the "chosen one" because of that. When most people did not even have any superpowers, Xu Xianchu wielded two superpowers of his own. He was truly a unique existence at Fortress 178.

But after today, he would not be the only one anymore. Zhang Xiaoman firmly believed that Ren Xiaosu must also have two superpowers!

Their Razor Sharp Company finally had such an impressive supernatural being as well!

However, Zhang Xiaoman could not help but worry about Ren Xiaosu's safety. Although charging out like this was a little better than being pinned behind the rocks, they were still quite a distance away from the sniper. If Ren Xiaosu were thinking about killing that sniper, it would probably be very difficult to accomplish.

But the moment Ren Xiaosu ran out, he said, "Stay right here and don't move! Wait until I get back!"

City Crusher's effective duration was only 30 seconds, and Ren Xiaosu calculated that the valley where the sniper would be "blind" was probably still about half a kilometer away. But if he had to avoid the sniper's shots, he would have to serpentine.

Sprinting across nearly 500 meters in the presence of a sniper was equivalent to suicide for the average person. But Ren Xiaosu had to take the gamble!

The sniper was hidden in the shrubs in the 12 o'clock direction like a sinister vulture. He was aiming at the Razor Sharp Company through his scope and observing their every move. After making sure there were no snipers in this company, he began the game of cat and mouse.

After the sniper fired a shot at the black shadow that he suspected was a supernatural being, the entire company got pinned behind some rocks. He wanted to slowly torture this group of people to their deaths.

The sniper knew he could lie among the shrubs for three straight days and nights, but he did not believe that this group of normal soldiers could do likewise.

Time would pass arduously slow for them if they just remained hidden behind the rocks and took cover. The sniper believed that in just six hours, the company hiding behind the rocks would break down and end up charging at him.

But that would be an inconsequential struggle.

However, events conspired against him. The sniper was not expecting someone so quick to appear from behind the rocks. He couldn't even adjust his sniper rifle to take aim at the target!

That figure serpentine wildly into the open ground as the sniper tried to shoot him twice but failed in both attempts.

Zhang Xiaoman and Jiao Xiaochen were not the types to sit back and do nothing. Zhang Xiaoman shouted, "Jiao Xiaochen, the sniper has a semi-automatic rifle! You only have one chance, protect Ren Xiaosu!"

Jiao Xiaochen did not utter a word. He understood what Zhang Xiaoman meant.

He waited silently for a moment before he heard the crack of the sniper rifle. Then Jiao Xiaochen raised his mortar and loaded a shell into it. With a loud bang, the mortar round was lobbed at a specific angle towards a hillside to their 12 o'clock.

Jiao Xiaochen did not know where exactly the sniper was. They only used that moment when the sniper fired his rifle at Ren Xiaosu to provide him some fire support.

They did not think the shell would actually hit the enemy, but as long as they managed to disrupt him, that would be enough for Ren Xiaosu to safely get across the open terrain!

Ren Xiaosu might be very fearsome, but their Razor Sharp Company was not useless!

After the mortar blasted, no gunshots came from the sniper anymore. Jiao Xiaochen muttered, "Did we blast the enemy dead with that mortar attack?"

"Fucking dream on!" Zhang Xiaoman joked. "If you can hit the enemy with a single shot, that'll be like Lu Yao falling in love with you. It's absolutely impossible."

"I'm already married. Why would you mention Lu Yao?" Jiao Xiaochen countered, "You're the one who's pining for her, right?"

“Which man in Fortress 178 doesn’t miss her?” Zhang Xiaoman looked at Ren Xiaosu and saw he had successfully run to a blind spot where the sniper could not see him. So he said, “Let’s remain safely hidden here and leave the rest to Ren Xiaosu. I believe he can take care of that sniper.”

Meanwhile, Ren Xiaosu was gasping for breath as he hid in the valley. The sniper had given him a lot of pressure, and if he had not activated City Crusher, he probably couldn’t have dodged the enemy’s bullets.

Ren Xiaosu had only decided to run out from behind the rocks after carefully considering it. Previously, he and Yang Xiaojin had experimented to see if she could shoot him while he was moving at high speed.

Of course, Yang Xiaojin would not really fire at him and only made a judgment call. If Ren Xiaosu did not activate City Crusher, Yang Xiaojin could shoot him with 100% certainty. But once he activated City Crusher, Yang Xiaojin’s hit rate was reduced to 70%. At that time, Ren Xiaosu was still a little dejected. Even though he activated City Crusher, he could only reduce Yang Xiaojin’s hit rate to 70%?

But Yang Xiaojin remarked that it was because she was the one holding the rifle. If it were any other sniper, it would not be bad if they could have a 10% chance of gunning him down while he was in his “City Crusher” mode.

At that moment, Ren Xiaosu did not know what to say.

However, this was the reason why Ren Xiaosu took the gamble. In the end, it seemed that Yang Xiaojin was not bragging when she said that. As expected, she was much stronger than most other snipers.

As Ren Xiaosu steadied his breathing, he started thinking about something. The sniper had probably already shifted to another location. After the sniper’s plan to pin down the company behind the rocks had failed, he would definitely have to engage in maneuver warfare.

Ren Xiaosu had to find and finish off this enemy. Otherwise, if they were to be constantly followed by a sniper during their march, who knew when the Razor Sharp Company would meet with disaster.

He crept in the shadows and headed to that mountain in the 12 o’clock direction in an attempt to find any tracks of the sniper. He had to be extremely cautious. If he were not careful, he might end up dead to his opponent’s rifle. Ren Xiaosu plucked two shrubs and smeared the crushed up leaves onto his face and clothes for camouflage.

He suddenly remembered what Yang Xiaojin had said to him. “When two snipers meet in the wilderness, whoever reveals themselves first will die. That’s the rule for all snipers.”

Ren Xiaosu took out the black sniper rifle from the palace and muttered to himself, “I should be considered a sniper too, right?”

So then, where would the sniper shift to after leaving that 12 o’clock position in the mountain range? Ren Xiaosu carried his sniper rifle and slipped into the mountains. This was going to be his first hunt as a sniper.

Chapter 414 Setting up a counter-ambush

When Ren Xiaosu was learning about sniper rifles from Yang Xiaojin, she gained a rough understanding of Ren Xiaosu's current skill level. In her words, his Advanced Firearms Proficiency was already beyond that of most other people in the world.

However, snipers had always enjoyed a special status as the most outstanding marksmen in the world. If anyone encountered one, they would have to take extreme caution.

Ren Xiaosu knew well that it was dangerous for him to hunt down that sniper in the wilderness. That sniper's marksmanship was probably much better than his.

But it did not matter. Ren Xiaosu was more adept at finding prey in the wilderness than his opponent was.

At this moment, Ren Xiaosu was crouching next to some shrubs and searching for any signs of the enemy's whereabouts.

The sniper was very careful not to leave behind any trash throughout the day.

The sniper must have been carrying some individual field rations, but there were no signs of any discarded packaging. Most likely, the enemy had brought all the trash with him after eating, in case the discarded packaging exposed his whereabouts.

Even when he was moving about in the wilderness, he was very careful not to leave behind any footprints on the soft mud. He would take the stone path whenever there was one and was even prepared to pass through a small stream to shake off anyone who might be following him.

Ren Xiaosu looked at the shrubs in front of him and noticed some fallen leaves in an irregular pattern on the ground. When he saw this, he felt more confident.

The chase had been going on for an entire day. The sniper did not know if he was being tracked, but he had not moved too far away from his original ambush spot. He was just going about in a large circle as his mind was still on the company that had come into the wilderness. That glory was going to be his.

If he could kill an entire company, he would probably get promoted to major.

However, he wasn't stupid. He had already called for reinforcements from the rear yesterday, and it was likely that the guerrillas coming to support him would arrive by today.

The situation yesterday was actually very dangerous. But fortunately for him, he had decided to leave the ambush site in advance. Otherwise, he might have died to the mortar attack.

The sniper was a little bewildered at the time. Just which fighting force was this company from? How did that spontaneous mortar attack drop so accurately on the spot he had ambushed them from?

But what was even scarier was that soldier who used pure speed to avoid his shots!

Actually, he had subconsciously thought of the famous Xu Xianchu from Fortress 178 when he first noticed that shadow clone through his scope. Even the bandits in the wilderness knew the shadow clone was Xu Xianchu's symbol, so how could he not know?

If he killed Xu Xianchu, his promotion to major would almost be secured.

A sniper was a special type of soldier. Although they knew supernatural beings were very strong, they also understood that supernatural beings could not withstand a sniper's bullets.

As such, the sniper subconsciously started searching for Xu Xianchu's presence in the group. But since he had never seen him before, he could not tell which person in the group was him.

As such, the sniper decided to get rid of the shadow clone first. If he could not defeat the shadow clone, he would retreat.

In the end, he successfully defeated the shadow clone, and this made him grow in confidence. So a supernatural being was nothing more than that?

After getting rid of the shadow clone, he thought the entire company's fate was in his hands. However, reality forced him to wake up.

Not everyone's dynamic visual acuity was as strong as Yang Xiaojin's, nor were their reflexes as fast as hers.

So when Ren Xiaosu sprinted out from behind the rocks, even the sniper found it difficult to catch a glimpse of Ren Xiaosu's figure.

He barely fired three shots, and all three shots missed. Then he quickly got up and left, entirely dropping the idea of engaging the enemy here. The sniper knew that this supernatural being was more powerful than he had imagined. He needed a better opportunity to strike.

The sniper glanced at the sky. After delaying for a day, the guerrillas should be arriving very soon.

But all of a sudden, a shriek came from the direction of Crow Pass. The sniper was lying within the shrubs and staying still, but when he heard the sound, he realized it was the guerrillas he had called for, and they had been attacked!

What was going on? Why would the guerrillas get attacked at Crow Pass?

He hesitated for a while but ultimately decided to head towards the site of the incident. But he immediately felt that something was off as soon as he got over the ridge and saw the situation at Crow Pass.

The sniper quickly turned around and went back behind the ridge to hide. A loud bang sounded in the distance as a bullet hit the position he was standing in a moment earlier!

It was a sniper! The enemy actually had a sniper too!

But that couldn't be right! He had been observing the company for a long time and was very sure there were no snipers in that group. How could they possibly hide something as large as a sniper rifle?

If the enemy forces had a sniper, he definitely would not have tried to ambush the entire Razor Sharp Company all by himself.

And at this moment, the guerrillas coming through Crow Pass to provide support were all surrounded by red vines hidden under the shrubs. There were also strange plants next to them spitting out khaki-colored fruits at them.

When the fruit hit their bodies, it was so forceful that it broke their bones. Anyone who got hit in the chest would find that their ribs cracked. Those who were injured would even spit out a mouthful of blood!

The troops who arrived weren't small in number. The sniper had called in to report the situation and stated that the enemy was a full company. As such, the guerrillas sent out two companies to meet up with the sniper to provide support. However, this group that was attacked first had arrived earlier as they were closer in the vicinity.

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They had thought that victory was already secured. Once the guerrillas arrived, they would definitely immediately finish off this unknown company from Fortress 178. But in the end, they did not even get to see the shadows of their enemy before this first guerrilla company suffered casualties to half their forces. The remaining half were still fighting the Brambles in a frenzy as they tried to escape the area controlled by the monstrous plants.

But Ren Xiaosu would not give them the chance to do so. After he threw a few grenades at them through the Shadow Door, Crow Pass turned silent again.

The sniper who was hiding behind the ridge was drenched in cold sweat. Were those brambles some sort of superpower? There were actually two supernatural beings in that company?

Moreover, the enemy seemed to have expected the arrival of these guerrillas and laid an ambush for them. And the true purpose of the attack on the guerrillas was to lure him out!

Fortunately, he reacted quickly, or else he would have died to that gunshot!

The enemy sniper's marksmanship might not be great, but he was sufficiently treacherous!

The Zong Consortium sniper could no longer remain composed. He could not even determine how many enemies there were in these mountains and how many supernatural beings were among them.

He picked up his radio and called back to the headquarters at Beiwan River. "Poison Wolf to HQ, requesting assistance! Xu Xianchu of Fortress 178 has been discovered. I repeat, Xu Xianchu of Fortress 178 has been discovered, and there's also the presence of another unknown supernatural being. One of the guerrilla companies has already been attacked! Please provide further assistance!"

The sniper did not dare to be overconfident anymore. He mentioned Xu Xianchu's name as he was hoping that the command center at Beiwan River would send more troops to finish off the enemy in this mountain range.

Chapter 415 Regardless of method

Ren Xiaosu regretted that his shot missed. His marksmanship still was not good enough. Merely calculating the wind speed 0.1 seconds too late had allowed the enemy sniper to get away.

The enemy sniper was also quite the ruthless person. Otherwise, he would not be wandering in the mountains alone.

After Ren Xiaosu fired off his rifle, he moved off to another location. From the side of a hill, he quietly observed the Brambles as the guerrillas battled them. As a matter of fact, he had placed more than a dozen Brambles at that mountain pass, as well as over a dozen Potato Shooters.

In the face of firearms, these plants actually turned out to be pretty useful. If the enemies did not have flamethrowers, it would be very difficult for them to kill the plants with bullets, especially the Brambles with their bloodsucking ability that made them extremely lethal. They made the enemies lose their ability to resist in a short time.

These plants were an essential item to bring on a trip to the wilderness and commit murder and arson with.

Ren Xiaosu had already unlocked his second weapon, while the third weapon was still far in the future. So Ren Xiaosu loosened his purse strings and got more generous with his usage of the gratitude tokens in order to kill more enemies. After he got back, he would have to get Zhang Xiaoman and the others to help him earn back even more gratitude tokens. All in all, the benefits would be greater than the costs.

In fact, only 20 gratitude tokens had been consumed in the destruction of this particular Zong Consortium company. When he led Zhang Xiaoman and the others to victory and headed back to base for their celebratory drinks, they could earn him a few hundred more gratitude tokens.

Ren Xiaosu regretted that he didn't kill the Zong Consortium's sniper this time. But that was alright. He still had time to slowly toy with him.

It was very difficult to advance under the cover of the shrubs on a hillside while staying crouched. The shrubs growing here were at most half the height of a full-grown person, so remaining crouching for an extended period hurt his back badly.

If it were the average person who was pursuing the opponent, they would probably expose themselves to the sniper very quickly. However, Ren Xiaosu was not the average person.

That afternoon, Ren Xiaosu continued tracking the enemy sniper and headed east along the mountain range. By evening, just as Ren Xiaosu couldn't determine whether he was heading in the right direction, he suddenly saw some hardtack crumbs on the ground.

Hardtack was a standardized food item in military field rations. It seemed like his opponent had replenished his energy at this spot.

For something like hardtack crumbs, even the person eating the hardtack would generally find it very hard to notice them as they were tiny.

This was the right direction. Ren Xiaosu crouched within the shrubs and looked around. He felt that he was very close to the sniper.

As the sun went down behind the distant mountains, the last sliver of twilight turned from red to gray. The moment night fell, the sniper noticed a helmet moving at where he had scattered the hardtack crumbs earlier. He sneered. Did he have to shoot at the helmet?

With a bang, a sniper bullet flew an unknown distance and towards the bottom right corner of the helmet. If someone were raising the helmet with their right hand, that person's body would have to be at the bottom right side of the helmet.

It was very quiet in the mountains, but the sniper was too far away to determine from the feedback if he had hit the target or not.

He asked on the comms channel, "Anyone lying in ambush in the vicinity heard the sound of a bullet hitting something?"

"Heard a bullet hitting flesh," someone replied. "We're about 300 meters away from the target and kinda heard it."

The sniper said on the comms channel, "Then the target should've been hit. Go over and check it out."

"Roger that." Some guerrillas moved quietly towards the spot the sniper had shot at.

A group of 120 soldiers from a guerrilla company was moving within the mountains. If one did not look carefully, they would not even notice the presence of this group.

Beiwan River was considered a key strategic location. Otherwise, there wouldn't be so many guerrillas hidden in this mountain range that led there. There would also definitely be more than one sniper lying in ambush.

This mountain range was not the only route to get to Beiwan River, and most troops could not even pass through here, including the armored troops that were fitted with heavy firepower. But even so, the Zong Consortium was still being extra careful.

The guerrilla company headed up the mountain to surround the identified target. The company commander said softly on the comms channel, "The enemy is a supernatural being, so it's very likely that he might not have died yet even though he's been shot. Make sure to be on guard. Second Platoon will approach from 3 o'clock to prevent him from breaking through our encirclement.

"It's late at night. If he breaks through our encirclement, the other platoons are to immediately put on your night vision goggles."

Even if the enemy might have been shot, the Zong Consortium's guerrilla company remained wary as they made their approach.

However, as the guerrilla company gradually tightened the encirclement, the company commander suddenly saw a ham hock at the spot where the bullet supposedly hit!

One of the guerrilla soldiers was stunned for a moment before asking on the comms channel, "Wait a minute, what's a pig's hindquarters doing here?"

"It's a trap!" The company commander shouted into the comms channel, "Retreat, retreat!"

However, it was too late for them to retreat.

A second later, they discovered thin, red, thorny vines hidden within the shrubs coming for them. At the same time, a strange plant started shooting potatoes at them!

What the fuck was this?!

The sniper listened in shock to his comrades' cries on the comms channel. He had already changed his ambush position with care. Through his scope, he once again saw the vines that looked like purgatory tentacles taking all life within its attack radius.

The Zong Consortium sniper was really afraid now. He did not even dare lift his head as he crawled into the distance and fled. He needed to rendezvous with the main forces of the guerrillas as this was not an enemy he could deal with!

That was two full companies that had perished! A total of 240 people died without knowing why they died.

However, the sniper could not understand how his opponent had carried that ham hock up the mountain!

Suddenly, grenades exploded behind him. The sniper was shaken. If grenades could be thrown at him, wouldn't it mean the enemy was really close?

The sniper could feel despair in his heart, but he did not give up. Instead, he just continued crawling forward and even used a slope to expeditiously roll down the mountain.

This time, Ren Xiaosu had won another small battle.

The sniper had deliberately scattered some hardtack crumbs on the ground in an attempt to lure Ren Xiaosu in.

However, Ren Xiaosu kept wondering why a sniper who had always been very cautious would suddenly drop some hardtack crumbs. So he felt that something was not right. That was why he had set a trap to counter that.

However, Ren Xiaosu still regretted things. He was still very far away from the sniper and was unable to ascertain his exact location, so he simply threw two hand grenades through the Shadow Door in the general area. But unfortunately, he didn't blow up his opponent.

Yang Xiaojin had said that snipers with an ego would sometimes insist on ending their opponents' lives on a battlefield by shooting them.

But Ren Xiaosu did not have the least bit of ego and was only interested in killing his enemy. As for how to finish them off, the method was not that important. After all, he only had Advanced Firearms Proficiency, so what was there to be proud of?

As a soldier of the Razor Sharp Company, he just had to do it the most straightforward way. There was no need to care about how to achieve the objective.

Chapter 416 Double kill

Since his opponent had called for two guerrilla companies as backup, he had to kill them all!

But Ren Xiaosu suddenly felt that something didn't seem right. Because he had been fucking pursuing a single sniper, he ended up killing two guerrilla companies instead?

How did he end up as the person behind the massacre of the guerrilla companies when he was just trying to kill the sniper?

If he continued hunting the sniper, would it mean that all the guerrillas in the entire mountain range were going to get wiped out?

But the problem was that if he did not get rid of the sniper, the Razor Sharp Company behind him could not risk trekking through this mountain range.

In fact, Ren Xiaosu knew it wasn't that the Razor Sharp Company could not do anything about the sniper. If they really decided to risk it all, how could a single sniper wipe out 180 people who were determined to charge forward? The sniper probably did not even have enough ammunition on him to achieve that.

But it was just that this time, Ren Xiaosu was hoping that everyone from the Razor Sharp Company could return to the fortress alive. That was why he was so persistent in hunting down the sniper who was a threat.

He even wiped out two entire companies of guerrillas in the process.

As he continued moving east, Ren Xiaosu got a day's march ahead of the Razor Sharp Company behind him. But that did not really matter since he could slowly make his way back and find the Razor Sharp Company after he had killed the sniper. He was no longer particularly worried about that sniper anymore. The mental state of a soldier on the battlefield was not unbreakable.

After the sniper had twice witnessed his comrades getting killed by the enormous Brambles, he was on the verge of a mental breakdown.

It was fortunate that he was a sniper, as having a strong mentality was always one of the key areas of training. As such, he could still keep his cool and continue fleeing.

If a normal soldier had witnessed such a terrifying scene, they would be terrified.

Many people who have not been in battle before would think there was no reason to be afraid of death. Even if their comrades were all dead, they would still fight to the bitter end.

But in fact, when they saw their comrades dying one after another next to them, the fear of an unknown death approaching would suddenly envelop them and devour all of those heroic words. They would not even have the ability to think properly.

This was what war was all about.

So the mental fortitude of recruits was completely different from that of veterans who had been in battle before.

Ren Xiaosu carefully followed the sniper. Even though he knew well that the sniper had already lost his will to resist, he was definitely not the only enemy hiding in this mountain range.

After rolling down the slope, the sniper did not even care to check for cuts or fractures and just fled to the eastern base as quickly as he could. The sniper rifle he was carrying in his hands felt particularly heavy as well.

The Zong Consortium sniper kept thinking about how to resolve his current predicament. He would definitely get summoned to a court martial after he returned.

He was the one who had called for reinforcements, and headquarters sent him two companies of guerrillas as requested. However, the guerrilla companies both encountered ambushes one after the other while he escaped alive.

The military police would probably take him away to be interrogated once he returned to the military base to see if he might be a spy.

To be honest, not even some spies could achieve what he did on the battlefield to such great effect.

Even if the military police ended up discharging suspicions of him being a spy, he would still end up a target for criticism for dereliction of duty. His bright future was definitely gone. It was all over the moment he opened fire on that shadow.

The sniper froze. While he was thinking about his situation, he seemed to have wandered into a clearing. This was a sniper's taboo!

Even though the clearing only measured a short five meters in size!

The sniper suddenly accelerated and bounded into the shrubs in front of him.

But then he noticed a flash of light in the distance in his peripheral vision. The Zong Consortium sniper's heart sank!

He felt a bullet passing through his abdomen, and the tremendous kinetic energy of the bullet surged through his body as his heart and lungs were torn to pieces.

This was the power of a sniper rifle. It could kill people in an instant without needing to strike them in the head.

But another sniper rifle boomed as well. Before the Zong Consortium sniper died, he showed a mysterious smile on his face. That was because he felt that someone would probably be taking revenge for him. Another sniper from the Zong Consortium had already arrived on the battlefield and confirmed Ren Xiaosu's position when he fired that shot just now!

This was an arrangement he made with the other sniper. He would act as the bait to atone for his mistakes and deliberately walk into a clearing to lure the sniper from Fortress 178 into shooting him.

As far as he could tell, his opponent's marksmanship was not that good. So he might still be able to survive if he moved quickly enough. This way, he wouldn't have to be summoned to court martial when he got back to the stronghold.

He was gambling. As long as they could finish off that sniper from Fortress 178, they would win the bet.

The sniper was so strong mentally that he was still thinking about how to fight back even though he had already caused the deaths of 240 of his comrades.

Unfortunately, the plan just barely failed.

A few moments ago, Ren Xiaosu decisively pulled the trigger from his ambush point when he saw the Zong Consortium sniper exposing himself in the clearing.

At the same time, the other sniper in the distant mountain also pulled his trigger.

However, Ren Xiaosu had become really cautious now. He could not afford to be careless anymore after being given the lessons that others had sacrificed their lives to teach.

Ren Xiaosu's position was exposed after he pulled the trigger, so he quickly grabbed his rifle and threw himself to the ground to his right right from his initial crouching position. A sniper bullet grazed the skin on the outside of his left thigh and hit the dirt behind him.

Ren Xiaosu could feel a burning sensation on his thigh. Even though the bullet had only grazed his skin, it tore through a fair bit of the muscle fibers in his left leg as well.

But Ren Xiaosu had no time to care about that. Ever since he started using the steam locomotive and shadow clone, he had experienced so much pain that his nerves were now as tough as steel!

Ren Xiaosu did not pause after falling to his right. Instead, he activated "City Crusher" once again and started a mad dash forward. The sniper continued firing shots at him. However, none of the bullets were able to hit the speedy Ren Xiaosu from a distance of over a 1,000 meters.

One shot, two shots, three shots... Ren Xiaosu kept his head on a swivel for the muzzle flashes in the distance as he ran.

When watching for a sniper, you should not depend on the sound of the shots since light travels much faster.

All of a sudden, he came to a stop and crouched like a statue. Then he raised his sniper rifle and took aim.

Yang Xiaojin had told him before that there was no need to be afraid when a sniper fired off a few shots in succession. When a sniper was forced to keep shooting at a fast-moving target, they could no longer aim their shots accurately at a target from over a 1,000 meters away by the fourth shot, because they had to adjust for the recoil.

Ren Xiaosu knew well that the chance of survival he fought for would only last for a brief moment.

As he inhaled, Ren Xiaosu heard only the sound of his own breathing around him.

Yang Xiaojin said that upon pulling the trigger, the heart rate, body temperature, sweat glands, and all other parts of the body should serve the will. In that moment, you could only dominate others by dominating yourself first.

Due to the hot and blazing afternoon sun, the crushed leaves Ren Xiaosu applied on his face had dried up. After he pulled the trigger, a pink mist erupted in the mountains in the distance. The mist seemed to form a rainbow in the shining sunlight.

Chapter 417 Comrades who shelter and protect

After Ren Xiaosu pulled the trigger and shot his enemy, he did not let his guard down. Instead, he turned around and ran into the wilderness behind him. No one stipulated that there could only be two Zong Consortium snipers here in the mountain range. Who knew if there were actually three of them?

At this moment, the wound on his outer left thigh that was grazed by the sniper's bullet was still bleeding profusely. He had to limp along.

It was not that he could not endure the pain, but that his left leg was a little weak now since the muscle fibers were torn. No matter how strong his willpower was, he could not mend the muscle fibers in an instant.

So it was still those same words. The most dangerous moment when walking a tightrope was always the last three steps. Only those who could finish those three steps would be qualified to walk on a tightrope.

Ren Xiaosu had already exhausted quite a bit of his energy in this battle. Whether it be ambushing the guerrilla companies or outwitting the snipers, he had not encountered so many twists and turns before.

In reality, his enemy was not an elite sniper. In Yang Xiaojin's words, there were no elite snipers in the entire Northwest, and none of them were a match for her.

Besides, Ren Xiaosu was also not a schemer. He had only ever learned how to fight and hunt. In the past, his targets had always been mindless animals. But this time, he was hunting down someone who had a mind of their own.

If a true hunter were here, they would probably have scoffed at Ren Xiaosu's efforts. For example, should he have risked his life after the enemy's third shot, should he have pursued the enemy this far, or did he actually have a chance to kill that sniper but didn't realize it?

If Yang Xiaojin were present, she would probably think those snipers were extremely stupid and bad shots.

But no matter what, Ren Xiaosu was still making progress and learning from his experiences.

The deaths of his enemies were more important than anything else.

Ren Xiaosu hid in the bushes behind the mountain ridge for a long time. He wanted to see if there would be a third sniper out there and how the Zong Consortium's guerrillas would react.

After all, two snipers and two companies of guerrillas had perished here, so they couldn't possibly allow Ren Xiaosu and the others to get arrogant.

But it was also possible that the guerrillas would simply give up on defending the Beiwan River when they saw their enemies were not to be trifled with. That was also a possibility, but it still depended mainly on how their opponent chose to react.

After waiting for a long time, Ren Xiaosu did not see any more guerrillas getting sent here. It was as though they had given up on defending this mountain range.

After some thought, Ren Xiaosu decided to head back and join up with the Razor Sharp Company first. He wondered what it was like at the rear now after he had been out here hunting the enemy for almost two days.

All of a sudden, he saw a large number of troops heading straight for him from the north. Ren Xiaosu was shocked to discover they had not fucking given up on the mountain range yet. Instead, they had been taking some time to gather the troops to send a regiment directly into the mountain range. They were planning to wipe out their enemies in these mountains! They intended to surround him!

He had overplayed his hand! They were actually sending a full regiment to go after one company? This was going overboard.

Ren Xiaosu's head was starting to hurt. The Razor Sharp Company was still thinking about passing straight through here to get to the Beiwan River to blow up the bridge? How were they supposed to pass through now?

He turned around and stooped low to make his escape. He had to get out of their perimeter first.

While running away, Ren Xiaosu wondered if he could plant some Brambles to kill some of the Zong Consortium's soldiers. As there were too many of them, it would be unrealistic to wipe out the entire regiment. But it would be good enough if he could kill a portion of them.

However, Ren Xiaosu realized the sniper might have already reported to his rear forces about the possibility of some terrifying plants being hidden within the shrubs when he sought reinforcements.

As a result, the soldiers of the Zong Consortium's main troops did not even walk through the areas where shrubs were growing. They traversed the shady side of the slope where there was no vegetation while remaining extremely cautious.

Moreover, Ren Xiaosu had noticed that some of the Zong Consortium's soldiers were even carrying flamethrowers! With these around, the Brambles would be rendered useless. A fire could wipe them all out.

Even plants had their natural enemies.

When he saw this, Ren Xiaosu thought he did not want to create any unnecessary trouble. So he ran all the way back to the other end of the mountain while limping.

The Zong Consortium's commander at the Beiwan River seemed to be really outraged by all of this. He seemed extremely determined to kill Ren Xiaosu no matter what.

While Ren Xiaosu was escaping, he realized these Zong Consortium soldiers always seemed to track down his exact location. Due to his injury, he was planning to shake off the Zong Consortium first before joining back up with the Razor Sharp Company. However, his plan was foiled.

During his escape, he hid on a ridge and observed his pursuers. He was surprised to see a dozen-odd Zong Consortium's soldiers holding leashes for several huge hounds. The hounds were so large they could drag people off by themselves. Even those well-built adult soldiers were unable to keep them under control with the leashes.

Ren Xiaosu felt that these hounds could even be ridden as mounts.

Ren Xiaosu suddenly realized it was the smell of blood. Due to his outer left thigh that had been grazed by the enemy sniper's bullet, an open wound had formed. It not only slowed him down a lot but also left behind a scent trail. Although he had already applied the black medicine onto the wound, that could not cover up the smell of blood.

It seemed like that was the reason why the Zong Consortium's soldiers were able to keep chasing after him.

However, Ren Xiaosu did not have any better ideas to deal with these hounds. He could not just get rid of the smell by throwing away his bloodstained clothes. He could only try to find a stream and follow it all the way back to where the Razor Sharp Company was.

But there was no such stream in the vicinity.

By the next afternoon, the Zong Consortium's soldiers let the hounds loose and allowed them to pursue Ren Xiaosu freely after realizing they still had not caught up with him after wasting so much time.

This put Ren Xiaosu in a fix. Even though he was injured, he could still move faster than the Zong Consortium soldiers. But the hounds were different. These animals had also fucking mutated!

The dozen-odd hounds did not have a single ounce of fat and could navigate through the mountains like they were moving on flat ground.

Ren Xiaosu looked at the shadow clone in the palace. The shadow clone had still not returned to its original form. He really had to be careful not to let anything hit the shadow clone between its brows again in the future. He would have to prepare a helmet for it just in case.

Seeing that the dozen hounds were getting closer, Ren Xiaosu made ready to fight!

He would not be afraid of these hounds if not for the Zong Consortium's firepower at their rear!

Ren Xiaosu would have to kill the hounds out here as he did not wish to lead the Zong Consortium to where the Razor Sharp Company was.

But at this moment, he heard the ratatat of a machine gun coming from the hills on both sides of Crow Pass. Ren Xiaosu even heard someone shout, "Ren Xiaosu, get over here! We'll cover you!"

He saw the Razor Sharp Company had already built a simple fortification on the hills on either side of Crow Pass. Fu Rao was shooting mercilessly at the hounds with a heavy machine gun he was wielding in his hands. In just a few seconds, he had already killed six or seven of the hounds that were chasing after Ren Xiaosu.

Ren Xiaosu heaved a sigh of relief. Was this what it felt like to have the support of comrades? When you needed to catch a breather, there would be someone standing behind you to shelter and protect you.

"What are you still standing there for? Get over here! Why are there so many fucking hounds chasing after you? Ren Xiaosu, how many enemies are pursuing you?" Zhang Xiaoman lamented, "Where did you go..."

Chapter 418 A triumph

After he limped up the hill, Ren Xiaosu hid behind the fortifications while panting. He said with a smile, "I killed the sniper. There were actually two of them out there. Oh, I also wiped out two guerrilla companies."

Zhang Xiaoman chuckled and said, "Stop bragging!" But when he saw over a 1,000 Zong Consortium soldiers pursuing behind the hounds, he immediately stopped laughing. "Did you really single-handedly kill two companies of guerrillas and two snipers as well?"

The members of the Razor Sharp Company were used to bragging all the time. So when Ren Xiaosu told them this shocking news, everyone thought that Ren Xiaosu was just boasting.

Ren Xiaosu said, "There are many more pursuers. We should retreat immediately."

"That won't do." Zhang Xiaoman laughed. "Since you're so fearsome, surely our Razor Sharp Company can't hold you back, right? No matter how many enemies come today, we'll wipe them all out!"

Ren Xiaosu realized that Zhang Xiaoman and his men had prepared extensively here. It looked like they were fully ready to spring this ambush.

"Captain," Jiao Xiaochen suddenly said as he looked out into the distance, "I think we better retreat..."

Zhang Xiaoman gazed at the large number of Zong Consortium soldiers in the distance. As they were still very far away, the soldiers looked just like ants.

Zhang Xiaoman realized the Zong Consortium would not have sent so many soldiers to eliminate their enemies in the mountains if Ren Xiaosu had just been talking big. It looked like they were extremely determined to annihilate the advance guard of Fortress 178!

Ren Xiaosu asked, "Why did y'all choose to set up the ambush here?"

Zhang Xiaoman replied, "We were worried the situation would blow up and you would end up being pursued by the enemy, so we set up an ambush here with the intent of coming to your aid. But who would have thought the situation would get this serious!"

"That's right." Jiao Xiaochen said, "We were thinking that it would be great if you could kill the sniper. Once you achieved that, the guerrilla companies would definitely come after you. At that time, we would've stopped the enemy here at Crow Pass and killed them all. But who would have expected that you'd already kill the guerrilla companies and even managed to attract part of the Zong Consortium's main forces after you? Haha, you're too amazing!"

Zhang Xiaoman asked with concern, "How's your injury?"

"Don't worry, I've already applied the black medicine on it." Ren Xiaosu said, "Let's make our escape now. There's too many enemy troops out there."

By this point, Fu Rao and the others had taken care of all the hounds. The Razor Sharp Company definitely couldn't handle so many Zong Consortium soldiers. So fleeing was their best option.

However, Zhang Xiaoman changed his mind again and said, "Then what are we still hesitating for? Let's go... But we can't just run away like this. We have to pull off a big one against the Zong Consortium soldiers before we leave. Jiao Xiaochen, set your mortars up. Everyone, get ready and prepare for battle!"

Ren Xiaosu frowned. "But there's too many enemies."

Zhang Xiaoman said in seriousness, "Do you think they'll be carrying heavy weapons? They're just guerrillas, while mechanized infantry can't enter these mountains. So we're assured of victory since we're fighting them from high ground."

“They’ve already heard our machine guns. They won’t charge up just to die, right?” Ren Xiaosu asked.

“Can’t you see that the commanding officer of those troops has already allowed emotion to rule his head? You’ve frustrated him.” Zhang Xiaoman said with a smile, “Do you think that everyone can become legendary generals? The Zong Consortium has been holing up in the North all these years and never fought a decent battle. Their officers are still far from being able to deal with spontaneity on the battlefield. Don’t think that every officer is a calm and intelligent person. If that were the case, there wouldn’t have been so many stupid battles in history.”

Ren Xiaosu fell silent.

Zhang Xiaoman said in amusement, “Do you think I’m belittling the heroes of the world? No, this is called knowing ourselves and knowing the enemy. If it were the Qing Consortium instead of the Zong Consortium, Commander Zhang might not be so willing to send out troops to open up the trade routes. If these were the Qing Consortium’s veterans, I would turn around right now and flee. But there’s also the strong and the weak among the consortiums. There must be a reason why the Zong Consortium was shoved aside by the Qing Consortium and the Yang Consortium. It’s not that we look down on them, but that they’re incompetent.”

Realized dawned upon Ren Xiaosu that in the minds of these boorish men from Fortress 178, the Qing Consortium’s troops were several times more capable than the Zong Consortium’s troops. To them, only the Qing Consortium was seen as a truly difficult opponent.

As though to confirm Zhang Xiaoman’s assessment, the approaching Zong Consortium soldiers continued to obey their orders and advanced forward using the cover of the valley. They did so even though they knew that their enemy possessed heavy machine guns.

They intended to wipe out the Razor Sharp Company with brute force!

Zhang Xiaoman waited for the enemy to enter their range. Once they did, he immediately issued the order to fire. Together with Jiao Xiaochen’s six mortar units, they mercilessly bombarded the Zong Consortium troops.

Although it was only a single attack wave, they nearly wiped out one of the Zong Consortium’s companies that came charging towards them. Only then was the enemy jolted awake.

The Zong Consortium troops retreated like the tide!

At this moment, Zhang Xiaoman got up and packed his belongings. “Let’s quickly leave this place. The Zong Consortium’s fucking mortars will be coming in soon. They should’ve adjusted the angle of their mortars by now. It’ll be too late if we don’t leave now.”

Ren Xiaosu was stunned by the sight. He had not said anything since Zhang Xiaoman’s decision to stay and fight. But at this moment, Zhang Xiaoman was actually running faster than a rabbit after “pulling off a big one.” There were no signs of that lofty spirit and soaring determination he displayed earlier.

Right after they retreated from the hill, the Zong Consortium's artillery fire plowed into where they just were.

Zhang Xiaoman breathed a sigh of relief. "Thank goodness we escaped fast enough. If not, we would've all died here. This time, we achieved great things. Including the companies Ren Xiaosu took out, we've defeated three companies of the Zong Consortium. Haha, that'll be worth another third-class unit citation after we return. Who knows, we might even be given a second-class unit citation this time!"

Ren Xiaosu asked, "Captain, weren't you worried that they'd attack us with their mortars first?"

"No, they couldn't determine our exact location at the start. Besides, they didn't have enough time to adjust the angle of the mortars, so they couldn't have hit us accurately."

But Ren Xiaosu suddenly said in seriousness, "Captain, although I don't know how well you know the Zong Consortium's troops, let's try not to underestimate them again in the future. What if shells rained down before we could make our escape? Wouldn't all of us have died? I really hope that we can all return alive."

Everyone looked at Zhang Xiaoman. The Razor Sharp Company had always followed Zhang Xiaoman's orders as they braved the dangers on the battlefield. Even during their military exercises, he would specifically do the missions in the most dangerous way as a challenge to themselves.

It was precisely such behavior that made outsiders refer to people from Fortress 178 as those "damn fucks."

Ren Xiaosu continued, "I'm not questioning the Captain's combat methods, but I just hope that we can exercise a little more caution. After all, we might end up dying if we encounter a brilliant opponent. Even if that's a one in a million chance, we still can't afford to take the gamble."

Zhang Xiaoman remained silent for a moment before saying, "Alright, we'll do as you say!"

The Razor Sharp Company's soldiers around him were shocked. Others had tried to persuade Zhang Xiaoman, but he never once heeded their advice.

"What are y'all looking at?" Zhang Xiaoman said unhappily, "Why is everyone staring at me? Am I that handsome? Retreat already!"

Since the Zong Consortium's mechanized infantry could not enter the mountains, they would not have to be afraid of their continued pursuit. The Razor Sharp Company could run faster than the Zong Consortium.

Chapter 419 All the world's a stage

Zhang Xiaoman said as he walked, "HQ has made wrong estimations of the number of the enemy troops stationed in the mountains. If you hadn't gone to scout ahead, the entire Razor Sharp Company would probably have been wiped out once we stepped into their perimeter. Speaking of, we still have to thank you for it."

“Gratitude received from Zhang Xiaoman, +1!”

Ren Xiaosu thought for a moment before saying, “That’s not really due to me. More importantly, we had to take out that sniper since we got pinned behind the rocks.”

“It’s not that we can’t do anything to the snipers. We could’ve charged out from behind the rocks together. His effective range is probably around a 1,000 meters or so, but we have six HMGs whose effective range isn’t any shorter than his weapon.” Zhang Xiaoman said, “Why are so many snipers on the battlefield not given automatic sniper rifles? Is it because they don’t want it? Of course not!

“It’s every elite sniper’s dream to be able to use a fully automatic sniper rifle. No matter how accurate a bolt-action rifle is, it’s not as good as a full-auto rifle on the battlefield. Even the best snipers are afraid of the HMGS operated by recruits. A long-range HMG with a tripod that can provide effective cover is a natural enemy of snipers.”

This was an ironclad rule formed from the sacrifice of countless lives on the battlefield. So some of the more decent snipers would not choose to fire continuous shots and left right after carrying out a decapitation strike, the mark of a truly vicious sniper. Like the two snipers Ren Xiaosu had encountered. They were purely used for intercepting scouts who might try to infiltrate from this place.

On the battlefield, snipers could be used in more than one way.

Based on Zhang Xiaoman’s original plan, the enemy sniper was hiding on the mountainside and trying to pin them down. But Zhang Xiaoman was willing to minimize their losses if need be. By charging out from behind cover, they could catch their enemy off guard.

“But a lot of people would be killed that way,” Ren Xiaosu said.

“How can there be no casualties in war? It’s just some people dying. What’s there to be afraid of?” Zhang Xiaoman chuckled. “If I can die on the battlefield, that would be an honor.”

How can there be no casualties in war? This seemed to be the conventional wisdom that Zhang Xiaoman frequently uttered.

However, that was where the problem lay. In his pursuit with the sniper, Ren Xiaosu decided to charge because he did not want anyone from the Razor Sharp Company to get killed. This was his obsession.

His thinking may have been naive, but that was just how he thought. If someone from the Razor Sharp Company got killed, it was like he would be unworthy of protecting anything anymore.

Zhang Xiaoman asked how there could be no casualties in war. To which Ren Xiaosu answered they wouldn’t know if they didn’t

try.

Regardless of what happened in the future, he had still managed to keep everyone alive this time.

Zhang Xiaoman looked at Ren Xiaosu and said in a serious tone, "Don't just talk about me. You can't continue risking your life like that either. You only live once, so we can't keep letting you charge into battle like this."

But Ren Xiaosu insisted, "I'll make sure that all of you survive."

Zhang Xiaoman felt something was wrong. Why did it suddenly seem like Ren Xiaosu was the company commander instead of him?

But now they were facing new problems. Since there was an error with the intel of the garrison forces in this mountain range, this route was no longer safe to take. However, they still had not completed the operation assigned to them by Zhou Yinglong to blow up the Beiwan Bridge.

"Bring the map over and let's figure out an alternate path to the Beiwan River." Zhang Xiaoman said, "We're only 200 kilometers away from the Beiwan River now, so it's really frustrating that we can't get to it when it is right in front of us."

Ren Xiaosu asked, "I've always been curious about something. This op should've been done by Recon, right? So why did they send our Razor Sharp Company?"

Ren Xiaosu had been wondering about this for some time. In his opinion, the Recon Battalion should have been the ones responsible for infiltration, carrying out long-range raids, and bombing bridges. So why was the Razor Sharp Company made to do it this time?

Even if Zhang Jinglin liked to order him around, he wouldn't have given such an illogical order, right?

Zhang Xiaoman looked at Ren Xiaosu and explained, "Commander Zhou has already left the FOB with the rest of the Forward Strike Battalion and headed northeast. From the looks of it, they'll pass through Shichuan Village to join up with us, but the Forward Strike Battalion suddenly changed their direction and advanced north after passing through Shichuan Village. They plan to arrive at Mt. Qiangwan within three days and assault it."

"Why?" Ren Xiaosu was puzzled. Mt. Qiangwan was not that far away from the Beiwan River. The mountain held a small base of the Zong Consortium, but it was extremely difficult to take due to the dangerous terrain. It could be regarded as an anchor in the vicinity of the Beiwan River, and the two locations had always closely supported each other.

"The Forward Strike Battalion and Razor Sharp Company have always been the advance guard of Fortress 178. The entire Forward Strike Battalion's march to the east is to create the false impression that Fortress 178's main forces are attacking the east. In that way, we can buy some time to build a pontoon bridge on the Blackstone River," Zhang Xiaoman said.

Ren Xiaosu finally understood. Be it the Razor Sharp Company's operation to bomb the Beiwan Bridge, or the Forward Strike Battalion attacking Mt. Qiangwan, all of it was a feint to cover up the true strategy. They just had to play their part well on this grand stage.

Ren Xiaosu suddenly thought of something. "Did any of you see Xu Xianchu at the FOB?"

“Old Xu?” Zhang Xiaoman wondered. “I don’t think I saw him. He could still be stationed back at the fortress. After all, our military presence at the fortress is rather low now, so it’s essential to keep some of our main forces garrisoned at the fortress.”

Ren Xiaosu got lost in thought. Would someone like Xu Xianchu, who could make significant contributions on the front, be made to defend Fortress 178?

He felt that Xu Xianchu had been assigned on a different mission.

At this moment, the radioman came running over carrying the radio set on his back and said, “Captain, the Battalion Commander would like to speak to you.”

When Zhang Xiaoman answered the call, he heard Zhou Yinglong ask, “What’s the situation over there now?”

Zhang Xiaoman reported, “There’s a large number of Zong troops garrisoned within the mountain range leading towards the Beiwan River. We’re trying to find alternate routes to pass through it and assessing whether there’s a possibility of blowing up the Beiwan Bridge.”

Zhou Yinglong asked, “Were there any direct confrontations with them?”

“You can say so.” Zhang Xiaoman said, “Ren Xiaosu killed two of their guerrilla companies. We also laid an ambush and killed another of their companies, so they’re just currently blind firing mortars at us. How ‘bout it, Battalion Commander? We ain’t embarrassed you, yeah?”

“Maggot, don’t you fucking get cocky.” Zhou Yinglong was so angry he laughed. “Before our troops here could even get close to Mt. Qiangwan, the scouts reported back to us that Mt. Qiangwan sent out reinforcements to the Beiwan River. After your attack there, the Zong Consortium probably thought our main forces were deployed to the Beiwan River! Let’s see how you shits are going to complete the op now!”

Zhang Xiaoman was stunned before turning anxious. “Battalion Commander, you should quickly start your attack on Mt. Qiangwan to lure the troops back there!”

“How the fuck am I supposed to lure them back?” Zhou Yinglong snapped. “We still have two days before we can get to Mt. Qiangwan. But thanks to y’all, we should have an easier time in our attack on Mt. Qiangwan.”

Zhang Xiaoman turned bitter. Orders were not to be taken lightly. Regardless of the situation, their objective was still to blow up the Beiwan Bridge. How were they supposed to launch their attack there now that enemy troops were concentrated at the Beiwan Bridge?

“I’m sorry,” Ren Xiaosu apologized as he glanced at the radio that was still transmitting. “It was all because of me that y’all are in this dilemma. Give all the TNT to me, I’ll go and blow up the Beiwan Bridge by myself.”

Zhang Xiaoman winked at him and said, "Are you apologizing because you've wiped out two of their guerrilla companies and killed two snipers as well? Matter of fact, without you, we'd've been surrounded by a regiment of the enemy. It's OK. We'll die together at worst. For the honor of Fortress 178, it's totally worth it!"

Zhou Yinglong had yet to stop transmitting. He roared, "Who are you putting on an act for when I haven't even hung up yet? What about dying together? Don't you feel embarrassed putting on such a heroic act? Quit acting already! Y'all will rest for the next two days. Once we attack Mt. Qiangwan and attract the troops back here, y'all will launch a breakthrough on the Beiwan River!"

Chapter 420 Arrival of the Qing Consortium

The Razor Sharp Company suddenly found themselves with a lot of time on their hands. They had never been this free before even when holding at the forward operating base. During that time, they still had to carry on with their physical and field training regimens. But right now, all they had to do was wait here quietly.

Ren Xiaosu and Zhang Xiaoman had put on an act for Zhou Yinglong because they knew that it would be impossible to blow up the Beiwan Bridge if Mt. Qiangwan had sent reinforcements to the Beiwan River.

No matter how capable their company was, they could not possibly fight against thousands of people with only 184 of them. Not even Ren Xiaosu could do that. Besides, they did not have that much ammunition to handle all those enemies either.

As for Zhou Yinglong, he was not a rigid person. He knew the Razor Sharp Company had done good enough. One company annihilating three companies of the Zong Consortium's combat troops without suffering any injuries themselves was something unheard of in the entire military.

Therefore, he ordered the Razor Sharp Company to find a safe place and regroup. The Razor Sharp Company would only continue advancing to break through at the Beiwan River after the Forward Strike Battalion drew the firepower of Mt. Qiangwan.

Even though the Razor Sharp Company had gotten very far away from the mountain range, they still did not dare to set up a campfire. If the enemy's scouts discovered them and used their firepower to attack them, they would surely suffer heavy casualties.

Zhang Xiaoman smiled mysteriously. He took out a small, silver flask and winked at the others. "Since we have nothing better to do, shall we all drink a little?"

Ren Xiaosu was stunned. He had not expected Zhang Xiaoman to be so bold as to bring alcohol to the battlefield. "Are you crazy? You can't drink now. We're in battle!"

This time, it was Zhang Xiaoman's turn to be stunned. Everyone would usually share the alcohol after he took it out, and that was that. But with Ren Xiaosu around, it was like someone was supervising them.

Zhang Xiaoman got upset. "I'm the company commander."

"Then go ahead and drink." Ren Xiaosu paused. "If you take even a sip, I'll report you to the Disciplinary Committee."

Zhang Xiaoman was speechless.

“We really can’t drink right now.” Ren Xiaosu said earnestly, “We don’t know when a bullet will come flying on the battlefield. Can you react in time if that happens?”.

Ren Xiaosu didn’t mind Zhang Xiaoman and the others drinking, but now was definitely not the time. He hoped to keep everyone in the Razor Sharp Company alive. So he could not afford to let things go wrong.

As they conversed, Ren Xiaosu snatched the flask from Zhang Xiaoman’s hands and stored it into his palace. “I’ll keep it for you for the time being.”

Then Ren Xiaosu went to relieve himself.

Someone laughed and said, “Ren Xiaosu behaves more like our CO.”

Someone else elbowed Zhang Xiaoman and said softly in a cheerful voice, “Captain, you lost your temper if we didn’t let you drink. Why were you so submissive this time?”

“It’s not like I can fucking beat him, can I?” Zhang Xiaoman snapped. “And what do you know? Have you forgotten who he is? He’s Ren Xiaosu! The one Commander Zhang assigned to the Razor Sharp Company!”

“So what?”

“What do you mean ‘so what’?” Zhang Xiaoman stared with eyes wide and said, “By assigning him to the Razor Sharp Company, it’s to show the entire army that he’s qualified to be the next commander. Seeing how fearsome Ren Xiaosu is, he will definitely survive until the end of the war. Even if you say he’s the heir of Fortress 178, that wouldn’t be an exaggeration. Never mind that we used to pick on him. Now that we’ve realized how qualified he is, we have to accept it, understand?”

Everyone pondered that and found it quite reasonable.

These gruff men from the Northwest might be a wild bunch, but they were still sensible. The other fighting forces of Fortress 178 might not be convinced by Ren Xiaosu yet, but their Razor Sharp Company had accepted him already. Zhang Xiaoman already regarded Ren Xiaosu as the next commander. Why else would he show such humility to him?

“To be honest, I admire Ren Xiaosu from the bottom of my heart.” Jiao Xiaochen said, “He doesn’t seem to have any problems except for being fond of people thanking him.”

“It’s no big deal saying thanks.” Zhang Xiaoman chuckled and said, “In this era, we should be happy that our lives can be saved in exchange for saying thank you. Since he likes to hear people thank him, let’s just thank him more.”

Ren Xiaosu came back from relieving himself. When he heard their discussion, he sat down right next to Zhang Xiaoman. “Then what are you waiting for? Why don’t we start now?”

Zhang Xiaoman was speechless.

Then, Fu Rao, who was in charge of nighttime surveillance, shouted on the communications channel, "This is bad! Something terrible has happened. There's a large number of troops headed here from the south. They look like an independent regiment!"

Zhang Xiaoman immediately got up. Fortress 178 had not stationed any troops to the south. If these troops were coming from the south, they would definitely be enemies.

He immediately asked, "How far are they from our camp?"

The voice on the comms channel said. "At most three kilometers away."

"What kind of troops are they? Are they from the Zong Consortium?" Zhang Xiaoman asked with a frown.

"No... their logo is that of a white ginkgo leaf." Fu Rao said: "It's the Qing Consortium's mechanized infantry."

"The Qing Consortium?!" Everyone was confused.

Shouldn't the Qing Consortium and the Yang Consortium be fighting to the death in the South? Why would they suddenly have the strength to come and join the northern battlefield? Could it be that the Qing Consortium and the Zong Consortium had joined forces?

The war between the Qing Consortium and the Yang Consortium was full scale. All of Qing Zhen's plans had been carried out as more than half of the Yang Consortium's industries were destroyed. At the beginning, the Yang Consortium could rely on their ammunition reserves to fight the war. But after just two months, the entire Yang Consortium ended up passive.

There was a shortage of ammunition at the front lines, while the strongholds that had not suffered from the war directly were also faced with a shortage of supplies.

Qing Zhen was truly brilliant. By supporting the bandits in the North, he had shaken the Yang Consortium to its core at the lowest possible cost. He had really caught them by surprise.

Zhang Xiaoman had said to Ren Xiaosu that if it were the Qing Consortium's troops they had encountered in the mountain range, he would have already fled.

It would be difficult to say who would win when an entire regiment of infantry faced another regiment. But there was no doubt that a company would lose against a regiment even if both sides had similar capabilities.

Therefore, an independent regiment from the Qing Consortium suddenly coming north didn't sound like good news.

Only Ren Xiaosu was still sitting quietly next to the campfire. Zhang Xiaoman said, "Let's retreat towards Mt. Qiangwan and join up with Battalion Commander Zhou. We can't fight against this independent regiment from the Qing Consortium on our own!"

But Ren Xiaosu piped up, "They might not be here to fight us."

"Are you crazy?" Zhang Xiaoman said in shock. "How can the Qing troops not be here to attack us when they suddenly appeared at a place so close to us?"

But Fu Rao suddenly said on the comms channel, "Wait a minute, Captain. Their mechanized infantry has stopped advancing. They've sent someone out to hoof it over to us."

Ren Xiaosu sighed and stood up. "They're probably here to look for me."

Everyone from the Razor Sharp Company was stunned. 'You're saying that the Qing Consortium traveled all the way north in the middle of the night with such a massive turnout of mechanized infantry just because they're looking for you?'

Ren Xiaosu looked south and waited quietly. In reality, he was also unsure of the Qing Consortium's intentions until he saw Tang Zhou.