

First Order 451

### **Chapter 451 The spy in the sewers**

The Zong Consortium was still tightening their encirclement. In the buildings on both sides of the streets, some residents watched silently as Ren Xiaosu flitted past them so quickly they could only see his afterimages. It shocked them when they realized it was just a young man who had turned Stronghold 146 upside down.

Could it be that this supernatural being had already surpassed the strength of the consortium's troops?

Gradually, the Zong Consortium's troops set up blockades along several traffic arteries, even mounting heavy machine guns at many key spots. The western part of Stronghold 146 had turned into a "cage."

Ren Xiaosu narrowed his eyes and sprinted. He tried breaking through two defensive lines of fire, but the problem was that there seemed to be an endless stream of Zong Consortium soldiers remanning the positions.

All people would get exhausted no matter what. Even Ren Xiaosu, who had a strong level of fitness, would get tired as well.

However, the Zong Consortium's troops were also at a loss. The platoons who had not encountered Ren Xiaosu yet were terrified because they realized most of the troops on the radio that encountered him were dead. Was the enemy really human?

But when Ren Xiaosu found himself getting lost on the streets, a manhole cover on the ground was suddenly pushed aside by someone underneath it. Ren Xiaosu found the sight to be extremely familiar.

The person in the manhole waved wildly at him. "Here! Over here!"

Ren Xiaosu jumped straight down. But the moment he got into the sewers, he grabbed the person by the neck. "Who are you?"

The grip on the man's neck was so strong his face reddened. "Boss Luo wanted me to bring you a message."

"What message?" Ren Xiaosu lifted him effortlessly.

"He said that you had better not die. If you want to die, make sure to leave some black medicine for him."

Ren Xiaosu was so annoyed he laughed. "Which way do we go?"

"Left, go left!"

Ren Xiaosu confiscated the person's weapons and went left all the way. It was not that he was returning kindness with enmity, but that he had to be extremely cautious at this moment. Who could know if this fellow were sent by the Zong Consortium to trick him on purpose?

The man did not get angry even though he was being carried around like that. “Mr. Qing Zhen told me that you’d definitely come to Stronghold 146 someday. That was why he asked me to help you when I saw you. However, I really did not expect that you would cause such a big commotion.” “Oh? Did I cause a big commotion?” Ren Xiaosu said absent-mindedly.

“Is that not big enough of a commotion?” The man said with a wry smile, “Currently, the higher-ups of the Zong Consortium living in the stronghold feel unsafe as they’re afraid you’ll kill them if they drop their guard. Before I came to pick you up, you killed several hundred of the stronghold’s garrison troops, didn’t you? Even though the buildings provided you with cover as you took on the brigade by yourself, you’re still the most fearsome person I’ve come across in my life. You might as well be called the God of War.”

Ren Xiaosu’s eyebrows twitched. This guy was really good at flattery. However, it seemed that this person also held a rather high position in the Zong Consortium since he knew so much. How else could he be so knowledgeable about the higher-ups? He asked the spy, “Where does the left lead?”

“We have to get out of their perimeter first.” The spy said, “I’ve already prepared a safe house for you where you can wait for things to die down.”

“I don’t have time to wait any longer.” Ren Xiaosu said, “Tell me, where are those Zong Consortium higher-ups?”

The Qing Consortium spy who was being carried around turned anxious and said, “The Zong Consortium’s higher-ups? You still think you can kill all of them at this point? There’ll be at least half a brigade of soldiers guarding them while the other half tries to capture you. Do you really think you’re a god?”

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Ren Xiaosu fell silent. Noticing no response, the Qing Consortium spy said with a wry smile, “What’s more, the Zong Consortium higher-ups are all currently scattered across the stronghold. Once you kill any of them, the entire stronghold’s forces will descend upon you again. At that time, I won’t be able to get you out of their perimeter again. Mr. Qing Zhen said I could prioritize my own life over the mission.”

As Ren Xiaosu listened to him speak, he continued walking without saying a word. Then he asked, “Which direction leads to the garrison base?”

The Qing Consortium spy gasped. “Are you thinking of attacking their base while it’s empty?!” What was at the garrison base? There were ammunition depots, and the strategic headquarters was located within it as well. Even if Zong Cheng were not there, he could still cause some trouble to the garrison brigade of Stronghold 146 by killing some of their staff officers and commanders.

Ren Xiaosu understood this might not be the most important thing he should be doing, but attacking the enemy’s weak point was still his best option right now.

Who could have thought he would be so bold as to venture into the enemy’s garrison base by himself? No matter how brave someone might be, they wouldn’t do something like that, right?

Ren Xiaosu understood that he might only get a chance if he could create enough chaos to make the Zong Consortium's troops constantly run about.

He was running out of time. The Zong Consortium's troops would probably cross the Gobi soon and arrive at Fortress 178. The only way to make Zong Cheng recall them was to hit them hard here!

Time waited for no man!

However, the spy rambled, "Even if the base is almost defenseless, there are still at least 500 troops stationed there. If you go, you'll be committing suicide." "Which way?"

"Turn right up ahead."

Ren Xiaosu took out six vials of black medicine and stuffed them into the spy's hands as they walked. He did not have time to repack the black medicine, so he gave them directly to the spy after trading for them in the palace

"Thank you," Ren Xiaosu said.

The spy said happily, "Hehe, don't mention it. Put me down after we get up close. I know how to find my way back." With the black medicine in hand, Boss Luo would definitely reward him handsomely when he got back to the Qing Consortium. He would have almost nothing to worry about for the rest of his life.

Putting everything else aside, Mr. Qing Zhen and Boss Luo would never treat their loyal servants badly.

Ren Xiaosu thanked the spy as he had risked his life to rescue him. This was despite the fact that he had not used his trump card yet, and it would still prove very difficult for the Zong Consortium brigade to encircle and trap him.

But if he sustained an injury while breaking through the encirclement, and if the enemy used hounds to chase after him, that would only make his next plans harder to carry out.

Moreover, the spy had taken a great risk in the circumstances. Since the spy was willing to risk his life to rescue him, he would bear it in mind.

After walking for a dozen kilometers and taking many turns, the spy said with great familiarity, "Here we are, the Zong Consortium's garrison base is right in front of us. Although the sewers also pass underneath the base, the center is reinforced with rebar grates, and there's no way to get through them. You'll have to figure out how to get in yourself."

Ren Xiaosu nodded and finally put him back on the ground. "Go back and tell Fatty Luo and Qing Zhen that I'll repay them in the future."

As of today, the brothers no longer owed him any more favors. Instead, it was Ren Xiaosu who owed Qing Zhen and Luo Lan a great big favor. Whether it be the help the Qing Consortium gave to capture

the Beiwan River, or the spy they sent who risked his life to assist him, Ren Xiaosu could no longer ignore these two brothers.

A moment later, the spy saw Ren Xiaosu draw a black saber out of thin air. He started slashing, and he cut through the rebar grating in front of him like it was paper. The Qing Consortium spy's jaw dropped. So it turned out the area he couldn't get into was no obstacle for Ren Xiaosu at all. Come to think of it, he was someone who fucking dared to take on a brigade by himself!

Before Ren Xiaosu proceeded any further, he looked back at the spy and asked, "Friend, what's your name?"

"Zheng Yuandong," the spy said. "I'll remember you." Then Ren Xiaosu turned around and walked into the darkness.

452 Strategies revealed!

The Zong Consortium's troops were double timing it deep in the Gobi. They had already charted out this route and knew there was an oasis that could even allow their mechanized infantry to travel through.

If not for this route, they would only be able to launch a surprise attack with their infantry. However, that strategy would be significantly less effective.

Before the Cataclysm, it seemed that this path used to be a forest. No one knew who it was who planted so many trees here that it created oases, but it eventually helped to create some form of life out here.

However, it started turning back into a wasteland after many years of neglect.

Actually, not many people cared whether this place would revert back into a desert. More importantly, this disappearing oasis had presented the Zong Consortium with a final opportunity to achieve their ambitions.

The Zong Consortium's higher-ups termed this "Heavens' Route" as it was an opportunity given by the Heavens for them to usurp Fortress 178.

The Zong Consortium had not been preparing for nothing over the past few years. If they did not have a contingency plan like this, they would not have dared to poke at Fortress 178 so much in recent years.

"We'll arrive at South Lake soon. After we pass there, we'll stop for a two-hour reorganization before heading straight for Fortress 178!" The Zong Consortium's general said delightedly to his deputy commander next to him, "In this war, we'll be the ones to get recognized for our outstanding contributions. Without our painstaking planning all these years, and our crossing of the Gobi to deal a fatal blow to Fortress 178, we'd probably only have a very slim chance of winning!"

"Sir, you really are wise," the adjutant laughed reservedly.

When he laughed, he ended up eating a mouthful of sand. They had been traveling in the Gobi for several days already. Even with the cover of the oasis that was disappearing, it was still a very tough journey to make. But no matter how much they were suffering in these moments, it would still be worth it. They would definitely go down in the annals of history!

The Zong Consortium's general said in high spirits, "This battle will be a good opportunity for us to make a name for ourselves!"

As the mechanized infantry in the rear continued to roll over the hard ground, it swept up a large cloud of sand and dust in the desert. When the Zong Consortium's general listened to the sound of the armored vehicles moving across the gravel road, he found it extremely sonorous and pleasant.

He asked his adjutant, "Notice anything unusual? This is a critical period, so we have to be even more careful."

"Don't worry." The adjutant said, "We've become so familiar with this place over the years, and Fortress 178 doesn't have any military facilities in the Gobi at all, so how would those damn fucks know we are?"

But a moment later, they heard an ear-piercing noise approach them. These combat troops were the Zong Consortium's most elite fighting force, and the soldiers were the highest quality in the military.

So when the ear-piercing noise screeched, all of them were horrified. It was the sound of missiles flying through the air and heading towards them. "We're under attack! We're under attack!"

A few loud explosions boomed as several missiles landed on their column. Suddenly, the Zong Consortium's troops were enveloped in a large cloud of dust and smoke.

The Zong Consortium's general was already prone. He did not understand why a group of soldiers from Fortress 178 was lying in ambush here.

As he lay on the ground, he had a quick look around at his surroundings. When the dust and smoke dissipated slightly, he saw black dots appearing on the horizon in three directions. Fortress 178 had come prepared!

The Zong Consortium's general was surprised when he realized they had actually walked right into Fortress 178's trap that wrapped them up into a bag!

The incoming mechanized infantry of Fortress 178 swept up a huge cloud of smoke and dust on the road. The Zong Consortium's general immediately ordered his troops to launch a counterattack. But when an artillery shell flew towards their enemy, a black cauldron suddenly appeared in front of the targeted troops and blocked it.

However, that huge black cauldron did not stay put there. It flew around in the air and blocked another five or six artillery shells in succession. It was very difficult to even catch a glimpse of a flying missile with the naked eye, yet all of the artillery shells were blocked one after another!

When the artillery shells impacted against the black cauldron, they exploded. Once the wind blew, the gray smoke from the explosion dissipated immediately.

Many of the Zong Consortium's soldiers were stunned. What the fuck was that?!

“Xu Xianchu?!” The Zong Consortium’s general was bewildered. “How can Xu Xianchu possibly be here? Isn’t he at the rear of our Zong territory?! Didn’t someone report that they spotted his shadow back there?!”

Someone in the Zong Consortium headquarters had mentioned this. They said that Xu Xianchu had disappeared from the battlefield, and it seemed like Zhang Jinglin had made some other arrangements for him. It was likely that Zhang Jinglin had seen through their intentions and sent Xu Xianchu to stop their advance through the Gobi.

But when someone suddenly relayed some new intel with claims that Xu Xianchu was seen with that company in their rear displaying his superpower, they were relieved.

But the Zong Consortium general in the Gobi could never have expected that Xu Xianchu would suddenly appear in front of him like magic.

Did this Xu Xianchu know how to fly?!

At the same time, Xu Xianchu, who had just blocked the artillery shells from landing, was clamoring for war at the rear of the troops. “Attack without mercy and surround them from three directions! We may let this Zong general slip away, but their troops must be destroyed here in the Gobi! Charge!”

When the soldiers of Fortress 178 witnessed for themselves that their commanding officer could even block artillery shells, their morale gained a huge boost. However, Xu Xianchu was just putting on a brave front at this moment and doing his best to hold on. It was obvious that he was experiencing pain all over his body from the backlash transmitted by the black cauldron. In fact, it was nearly not tough enough to withstand the force of the artillery bombardment. But he knew well that whether Stronghold 178 could win the war all depended on whether his army could score a beautiful and resounding victory here!

Xu Xianchu had been lying in ambush here for nearly a month now, and all of the men from Fortress 178 were stretched to their limits.

However, was Fortress 178 able to stand intact in the Northwest for so long because of how well-equipped they were? No, so was it because one of their troops was worth a hundred of the enemy’s? It was not that either.

It was because they could endure hardships more than any other troops in the world. It was because they treated hardship as a routine while living in the harsh Northwestern frontier!

This was going to be a vicious battle where their final strategies were revealed.

Zhang Jinglin just received news from Xu Xianchu’s troops that they were exchanging fire with the enemy. Because of the surprise, the ambush troops of Fortress 178 had gained the upper hand!

Wang Fengyuan looked at Zhang Jinglin. “Will Ren Xiaosu blame us?”

It was obvious what Wang Fengyuan was getting at. Actually, with this contingency plan, the Zong Consortium’s trump card would be easily staved off as long as they stepped into the trap Fortress 178

had set up. Once that happened, Fortress 178 would no longer be in an as perilous situation as they were expecting.

There hadn't actually been a need for Ren Xiaosu to head to Stronghold 146 at all.

When Zhang Xiaoman called them the other day, Ren Xiaosu had volunteered to head to Stronghold 146 to take out their Board members. Zhang Jinglin had wanted to stop him, but he could not reveal his plan.

Back then, Zhang Jinglin and Wang Fengyuan were thoroughly investigating the issue of the spy. Even though they knew there was a spy among the commanders, they did not manage to discover who it was. So to ensure their plans would not be leaked to the Zong Consortium, Zhang Jinglin could not talk about their plans to the Razor Sharp Company at that time.

During that call, any details that were brought up could easily get caught by the spy. As such, Zhang Jinglin decided he could not let the soldiers of Fortress 178 bear such a risk.

453 A potential estrangemen

Earlier, more than a dozen units of Fortress 178's fighting forces had secretly left the forward operating base. For example, Zhou Yinglong had instructed the Razor Sharp Company to launch an attack on the Beiwan River on the pretense of heading out for their cross-country training. Then they never returned to base again. Likewise, the independent regiment Xu Xianchu was previously in was deployed to the western side of Blackstone River.

The deployment of these troops was actually to make it difficult for the spy to figure out the situation. Once these troops left the forward operating base, all communications with them would be handled personally by Wang Fengyuan.

Furthermore, Zhang Jinglin had stopped eating for two days and lost quite a bit of weight in order to deceive the spy as well.

It was also at this time that they locked onto Li Xiang as a suspect. When Li Xiang went to eat, he would pretend to casually ask Lin Yuze, the manager of the chow hall, "How has the commander's appetite been recently?"

As an infantry brigade commander, Li Xiang was not authorized to participate in the drafting of battle plans. So he could only use Zhang Jinglin's appetite to gauge whether Fortress 178 had any contingency plans.

This was because it was known to everyone in Fortress 178 that Commander Zhang's appetite would drop whenever he was troubled.

If the spy were not caught, that plan could only remain hidden in his head. But Zhang Jinglin knew that if he did not reveal his plan, he would not be able to stop Ren Xiaosu.

By the time the spy was caught, Ren Xiaosu had already split from the Razor Sharp Company and could no longer be contacted.

Therefore, Wang Fengyuan immediately consulted with Zhang Jinglin on Ren Xiaosu after they caught the spy.

But it was too late by then. Zhang Jinglin could only hope that Ren Xiaosu would survive by himself.

Wang Fengyuan whispered, "Fortunately, he got the Razor Sharp Company somewhere safe. Otherwise, this would've weighed on my conscience for the rest of my life if those glorious troops had gotten wiped out."

"That was expected of him," Zhang Jinglin said calmly.

Zhang Jinglin knew this deep down. The moment Ren Xiaosu decided to head to Stronghold 146, he would definitely have arranged for the Razor Sharp Company to be placed somewhere safe. This was just like how the young man had arranged for Li Xiaoyu and Yan Liuyuan to stay at the town's school back then. Zhang Jinglin understood this young man very well.

Just as expected, Ren Xiaosu went to Stronghold 146 alone. Meanwhile, Wang Fengyuan had received reliable intel from their spy hiding in a residential building that the garrison troops of Stronghold 146 were conducting a citywide search for Ren Xiaosu. However, Ren Xiaosu had fought his way out of the predicament and was nowhere to be found.

Zhang Jinglin looked at Wang Fengyuan and said calmly, "Even if he blames me, I'll still accept it. I have my duty to uphold, so I can't be indecisive."

Zhang Jinglin had a clear picture of what his priorities were when it came down to Ren Xiaosu and everyone else at Fortress 178.

Wang Fengyuan was stunned. He was worried if this would estrange the young man from Fortress 178.

When Wang Fengyuan looked at Zhang Jinglin, he realized he was not as calm as he had claimed.

It was just that he was pretending to fool the spy. Now, he was really worried.

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The battle in the Gobi did not end that quickly. The Zong Consortium troops who were tasked with crossing the Gobi were extremely tough soldiers. Even though they had been ambushed, they were still able to immediately form a strong defensive line to fight back and retreat at the same time.

This mission was the Zong Consortium's entire hope for the war. Therefore, every soldier here not only had to go through a strict political assessment but also undergo extremely tough military training as well.

But Xu Xianchu was not surprised by that as he already knew what kinds of troops he would be facing.

Actually, there were still some flaws with Fortress 178's plans. For example, would the absence of a key supernatural being from the main battlefield like Xu Xianchu impact their plans negatively?



However, Zhang Jinglin was left with no other choice. Xu Xianchu's mastery of command in small-scale military operations, as well as the application of his superpower in a small-scale engagement's attack and defense, were outstanding. Therefore, Xu Xianchu was definitely the best candidate to command the ambush troops in the Gobi.

But what Zhang Jinglin and Xu Xianchu had not expected was how Ren Xiaosu had helped to plug that gap.

Of course, it remained to be seen whether Xu Xianchu would feel grateful to Ren Xiaosu after he found out.

The battle in the Gobi continued. The Zong Consortium had waited too long for this day, and so had Zhang Jinglin.

But if the Zong Consortium was staking everything on the Gobi mission as their final resort to turn the tables, it could only be said that they had made the wrong decision.

Actually, Fortress 178 had already gotten closer to winning the war now that it had progressed to here.

After Zhang Jinglin's plan to catch the Zong Consortium in their own trap was completed, Fortress 178 suddenly made significant progress in the battle at Mt. Wuchuan.

When they were previously trying to capture the summits, Fortress 178 had faced tough battles. At that time, the Zong Consortium generals were even thinking that Fortress 178's troops did not seem so tough after all.

Actually, Fortress 178's weapons and equipment were not as good as what the Zong Consortium had. Moreover, the Zong Consortium outnumbered Fortress 178 by more than two to one. However, the Zong Consortium generals consciously chose to ignore those conditions and felt that as long as they could defeat Fortress 178, it would show that they were more powerful than them.

But in that raging storm of a battle, the Zong Consortium suddenly realized the Fortress 178 troops were seemingly undefeatable.

No matter how many troops they piled on them, Fortress 178's soldiers who were stretched to their limits were still able to go a little further.

Even though some of the positions had changed hands many times, the actual duration it took Fortress 178 to win back a position was only two to four hours. Meanwhile, it might take up to a full day and night for the Zong Consortium to win it back from Fortress 178.

There were clearly far fewer Fortress 178 troops on the battlefield, but even when the Zong Consortium troops barely managed to win back a position, they would find some of the enemy soldiers pretending to be dead while clutching explosives in their arms just so they could perish together with the Zong Consortium soldiers.

This kind of war with no end in sight was like fighting an enemy that could never be defeated. Just the thought of it would terrify anyone.

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After the successful ambush of the Zong Consortium troops in the Gobi, Zhang Jinglin immediately ordered the mechanized infantry that were reorganizing themselves to fully deploy onto the battlefield. Zhou Yinglong had fought hard to open up safe passage for them to proceed. These mechanized infantry would deal the Zong Consortium troops a fatal blow. It would be the straw that broke the camel's back!

And surprising many people, the pontoon bridge on the Blackstone River had been rebuilt in just three days. Originally, they had estimated it would take 15 days before the mechanized infantry could cross again.

When Zhou Yinglong went for a break in the rear, he even fell asleep on his meal tray while eating. The medics in the rear quickly carried him away. After cutting open his uniform with scissors, they realized the newly promoted brigade commander had sustained tiny wounds all over his body. There were two pieces of shrapnel stuck in his thigh that weren't removed until now.

The nurse cleaning his wounds was shocked when she saw his injuries.

There was another nurse working in the temporary medical center who was the wife of one of the troops. She looked at her husband's wounds and scolded him tearfully for being careless while bandaging it.

The soldier said impatiently, "Can't you stop crying? I have to rejoin my squad after you're done bandaging my wounds. We're the ones who took those positions. Now that we're close to victory, I can't let those li'l bastards claim all the credit!"

"Get lost then, go claim your credit! I'll settle the score with you when we get home." After the nurse tied a bowknot to finish off the bandage, she chased her husband off tearfully.

454 I can't say

Some of the commanders who had already returned from the front line were discussing the battle that took place in the Gobi. This was something they were not even aware of previously.

Back then, some of them had realized Xu Xianchu had gone missing. But with nearly a 100,000 troops deployed all over the battlefield, and Zhang Jinglin splitting up more than a dozen units to various locations to mislead the enemy, everyone did not think much of it at the time.

It wasn't until today that they realized Xu Xianchu had been sent to the Gobi to the northwest!

At this moment, Wang Fengyuan came into the chow hall with his meal tray. Lin Yuze, the manager of the chow hall, asked proudly while serving him, "How was my acting?"

"It was perfect." Wang Fengyuan laughed heartily. "The commander told me it was all thanks to you that we caught Li Xiang this time."

"Hehe, I've been paying close attention since that bastard sneakily asked me about the commander's appetite." Lin Yuze said as he scooped up a large ladle of meat for Wang Fengyuan, "But still, it was all thanks to your subsequent actions. Otherwise, we could only have remained suspicious of that person."

“There’s no need to be humble.” Wang Fengyuan shook his head. “After all, we only knew who to investigate after he displayed some unusual behavior.”

At this moment, a large group of commanders gathered around Wang Fengyuan. “You asshole, you must’ve known about the commander’s plan from the start, right? Why were you so tight-lipped? You didn’t tell us anything at all.”

Wang Fengyuan snapped, “What if any of you turned out to be spies? Even now, I still suspect there’s a spy among you people.”

The commanders around him got annoyed for a while. But as they were used to Wang Fengyuan’s manner of speaking, they never took it personally since a long time ago.

When Wang Fengyuan was flushing out the spy, his methods were brutal and he did not give a damn about anyone. He was only answerable to Zhang Jinglin.

Even back at Fortress 178, Wang Fengyuan lived in seclusion every day and never had a drop of alcohol. Wang Fengyuan used to have a wife, but there was one night when she overheard him talking in his sleep. It turned out Wang Fengyuan was also a very ruthless person. He actually separated from his wife right after that and only occasionally visited his child during the day.

At that time, Wang Fengyuan’s child just got born. Whenever he went to visit his child after that, the child would only address him as uncle. However, Wang Fengyuan never once complained no matter how unbearable it felt and spent his life in seclusion for over a decade.

When his subordinates sometimes saw Wang Fengyuan smoking alone outside the office, they always felt that he had a lot of things weighing on his mind.

Next to him, Chai Zhilong, who was the commander of an infantry brigade, asked, “Fengyuan, since it’s no longer a secret, why don’t you share with us what happened? We were all worried when Commander Zhang stopped eating for two days.”

Wang Fengyuan smiled ambiguously at them. “I think there’s no harm in sharing it with y’all now since the commander’s given me permission to talk about it.”

Sharing their victorious exploits at this moment would surely boost the morale of the troops. When someone heard that Wang Fengyuan was willing to share, they said excitedly, “Tell us, did the commander really go hungry for two days? Didn’t y’all have Lin Yuze serve him some food secretly?”

Wang Fengyuan did not know whether to laugh or cry. He did not expect this group of people to actually be concerned about this matter instead. He said, “Who said that the commander’s appetite gets affected whenever he’s troubled?”

The commanders looked at one another. “That’s not true?”

Wang Fengyuan smiled. The other commanders suddenly realized the rumor was a trap. For example, by letting an opponent think that you had the habit of touching your nose when you were bluffing in three-card brag, you could fake a tell to lure your opponent into a trap and deal them the fatal blow.

Of course, that was only the most basic example. The rumors of Zhang Jinglin having no appetite whenever he was troubled had been circulating in the stronghold for nearly 20 years. However, that was proven to be false today.

Wang Fengyuan said, "When the commander is really troubled, he'll smoke more than two packs of cigarettes a day. That much is true."

However, Chai Zhilong, who was next to him, pointed at Wang Fengyuan and chided him jokingly, "You're fucking laying a trap for us, right? When I was serving as an orderly for the commander, he could also smoke two packs of cigarettes if he was in a good mood!"

Wang Fengyuan raised his eyebrows. "You've revealed the commander's personal habits without permission. Go and pen a 3,000-word long apology letter."

Chai Zhilong's expression immediately changed. "But I never said anything!"

Wang Fengyuan ignored his protest. Rules were rules.

Chai Zhilong pulled a long face.

Reveling in schadenfreude, someone patted Chai Zhilong on the shoulder, then turned to ask Wang Fengyuan, "Tell us then, how did Commander Zhang discover that the Zong Consortium was planning to use the Gobi to get to Fortress 178? Hasn't Commander Zhang been away from the fortress for more than a decade? Didn't he only just return? Besides, no one at Fortress 178 has mentioned something like that before."

Wang Fengyuan sneered. "The plan itself was given to the Zong Consortium by Commander Zhang several years ago. When the Zong Consortium began provoking us more frequently, Commander Zhang guessed their FOB in the Gobi had most likely finished construction. That was when he decided to come back."

The commanders realized Commander Zhang had not been idle outside either. Everyone turned their gaze to Wang Fengyuan again. So it turned out Wang Fengyuan must have been keeping in touch with Commander Zhang ever since he secretly left Fortress 178. However, this bastard was so tight-lipped the others were totally unaware.

"Bastard, I didn't expect you to be so good at bluffing when you're so terrible at intelligence gathering," Chai Zhilong muttered.

Chai Zhilong stunned himself. Wait a minute! Wang Fengyuan had been the intelligence director for over a decade now and was always complaining to others about how difficult it was to gather intelligence. Although he also started making some progress in recent years, no one knew exactly what progress he had made.

Everyone would always make fun of Wang Fengyuan in private, saying the intelligence agency of Fortress 178 was where one waited for retirement.

But today, it seemed that Wang Fengyuan and Commander Zhang were really the prescient people. If Wang Fengyuan was not capable, wouldn't Commander Zhang have removed him from his post long ago?

How could Commander Zhang be so careless in his duties?

When they thought of this, everyone started seeing Wang Fengyuan in a different light.

So it seemed that even the Zong Consortium's plan to cross the Gobi was leaked by Zhang Jinglin to them? Could it be that Commander Zhang had intended to destroy the Zong Consortium for a long, long time?

But Commander Zhang had still not returned to Fortress 178 at that time, right? So was Wang Fengyuan responsible for all this?

"When did that happen?" someone asked.

Wang Fengyuan thought back and replied, "I don't remember."

The commanders around him scowled. 'As if you would fucking forget! Like hell we'd believe that!'

But then a commander asked about something unrelated. "Fengyuan, you must've known there was someone like Ren Xiaosu, right? Tell us more!"

Wang Fengyuan thought for a moment. "I still can't talk about it."

"Is it because he's not gotten out of danger yet? I heard he went to Stronghold 146 by himself. Is it true?" Chai Zhilong asked.

"Yes." Wang Fengyuan did not hide this from them. After all, the Zong Consortium knew about this as well.

Chai Zhilong muttered, "That kid is way too fierce. He even dares to go to Stronghold 146 by himself? Then what's he doing now? Did you get our agent in the north to give him some help?"

Wang Fengyuan shook his head. "I can't say."

He had already said all that he could say. The rest of the information would have to be kept secret. The commanders around Wang Fengyuan dispersed. They also needed to reorganize themselves as quickly as possible since they were still required to fight on the northern front. After all, even though they were close to victory today, they still had not captured any of the Zong Consortium's strongholds.

455 Sneaking into the Zong Consortium's military base

As Fortress 178's troops emerged victorious at the front lines, Ren Xiaosu, who was moving through the sewers, had finished cutting through the rebar grating in front of him. He was quietly infiltrating deep into Garrison 146's military base.

Every time he passed by a manhole cover, he would listen carefully for any movements overhead.

Ren Xiaosu could clearly hear footfalls above him as Zong Consortium soldiers walked around in their hard-soled boots.

Since he could not just climb up there, he could only estimate the number of garrison troops remaining in the base based on the movements above his head. He needed to do this so he could find a good opportunity to take action.

Through his careful observation, Ren Xiaosu realized the soldiers here still maintained an extremely strict patrolling routine even when the rest of the troops were conducting a citywide search for him.

Approximately every five minutes or so, a platoon would walk past overhead. The margin of error in their timing did not exceed ten seconds.

Sometimes, light from spotlights outside would seep in through the two holes on the manhole cover and illuminate Ren Xiaosu's face.

Ren Xiaosu cautiously found a manhole cover where the patrols seldom passed by and got a bold idea.

The manhole cover above his head was welded shut, leaving only two holes for drainage purposes. If it were anyone else who had infiltrated into this place, they would definitely be driven to despair. It was no wonder the Qing Consortium spy from earlier had not even thought about infiltrating the military base through the sewer system.

Fatty Luo's trusted method for escape and concealment back at the Li Consortium did not seem like it would work in this military base.

But not even this was enough to stop Ren Xiaosu. He did possess the black saber, after all. It was precisely because the defense here was the tightest that he chose to break in from here to get aboveground.

This was because even the Zong Consortium's soldiers would not expect someone to break in quietly through the manhole covers since they were welded shut, especially when the sewer system was reinforced with rebar grating.

Ren Xiaosu started to slowly and effortlessly cut open the manhole cover with his black saber.

Then he waited in silence. Suddenly, he heard footsteps slowly approaching the manhole cover he was under. When the enemy passed by, Ren Xiaosu flipped open the manhole cover quietly and leaped out.

He pounced onto the enemy like a cheetah. Before the spotlights could sweep across again, he had already broken the neck of his enemy and dragged the corpse into the sewers, closing the manhole cover after him.

His shadow clone had assisted him throughout the entire process. After the manhole cover was closed, it went all quiet again aboveground as though nothing had happened.

Ren Xiaosu had a quick look at his surroundings when he was aboveground just now.

His current position was at the edge of the base. Most of the buildings here consisted of one-story barracks, but there was a narrow five-story tower that stood out from among the structures. Could that be the administrative building of the garrison troops' headquarters?

Ren Xiaosu mentally estimated that he was around 200 meters away from the tower.

Ren Xiaosu made a decision. Although he had not yet seen where the ammunition depots of Garrison 146 were, he knew he should set his sights on that narrow tower if he wanted to destroy the central command of these troops.

Right now, Ren Xiaosu needed to get a change of clothes. Only by changing into the Zong Consortium's khaki uniform could he minimize his chances of being suspected.

Even if it could make the enemy hesitate for only 0.1 seconds, that would still be worth it. Sometimes, that 0.1-second reaction time could determine the difference between life and death.

He quickly took the uniform off of the Zong Consortium soldier he had just killed and happily prepared to change into it.

He did not even use the black saber earlier because he was worried the clothes would get stained with blood.

But Ren Xiaosu was stunned. Not for any other reason but because he realized the enemy was a little too short and his uniform was too small.

Ren Xiaosu was 18 years old and a supernatural being as well. He had grown from his original height of 178 centimeters at the age of 17 to 184 centimeters. This was considered very tall even among males, especially in an era where malnutrition was prevalent.

This meant it might not be easy to find the right size of uniform.

But Ren Xiaosu was not someone who was easily discouraged. Since the plan was still feasible, he would have to find a way to execute it no matter what!

However, he would have to act quickly. Once the Zong Consortium discovered that a soldier had gone missing, his plan would have more or less failed.

When he grabbed a second Zong Consortium soldier, Ren Xiaosu frowned again and let out a sigh. 'No! This soldier is still too short.'

And the third soldier Ren Xiaosu grabbed, 'No! This one's too big!' This soldier's uniform made Ren Xiaosu look like he had put on a costume. Although Ren Xiaosu was built, his physique was still thin because his strength and agility were evenly balanced.

Ren Xiaosu was not expecting much anymore, but when he caught the fourth person, he saw a glimmer of hope in his plan. 'The size of this person is just right this time!'

"Phew." Ren Xiaosu finally heaved a sigh of relief. He was worried he would end up capturing and bringing all of the soldiers in this base down into the sewers he was hiding in.

But at this moment, an alarm blared in the garrison base. It seemed the missing personnel had already attracted the attention of the Zong Consortium garrison troops.

Ren Xiaosu quickly got changed and took the soldier's access card before climbing out of the sewers. Then he walked to the tower as casually as he could.

The patrolling platoons that were on rotational break quickly reassembled at the barracks. Immediately, an even more rigorous search team armed with live ammunition was formed.

Troops were relaying the orders as they passed each other, "We have some soldiers who went missing. Search every corner of the base immediately!"

"Conduct a blanket search and follow up on any tracks that are found!"

"The enemy might've already infiltrated our base!"

Ren Xiaosu felt these Zong Consortium troops were really quite alert. But it was not a big problem as he had already gone into the tower he identified earlier.

The tower was illuminated with incandescent white lights inside. When Ren Xiaosu was about to swipe his access card to pass through the security entrance, the guard outside eyed him suspiciously as though he found this person a little unfamiliar. "Sir, please show me your ID."

Ren Xiaosu tried to bluff his way through. He looked at the guard and said calmly, "You don't know me? Can you say you recognize every soldier in the base?"

The guard replied earnestly, "Well, sir, it's true that I can't recognize every soldier in our brigade, but I can still recognize the regimental commanders when there's so few of them."

Ren Xiaosu was slightly taken aback. Did he kill yet another regimental commander?! He had not even gone through boot camp before, so how could he know how to recognize the Zong Consortium's military ranks? Moreover, the regimental commander he killed was also wearing a standard combat uniform like the rest of the soldiers. It was just that there was a slightly different insignia on his collar. So he thought it was just an ordinary officer like a platoon commander or a non-commissioned officer with an appointment. However, he did not expect it to be a regimental commander.

A second later, Ren Xiaosu gave a mental sigh. For such tightly guarded places, it seemed it would really be impossible to sneak past the defenses. It was not that his plan was unfeasible but that the enemy's security was too tight.

Since he could not sneak in, he would just have to kill his way in!



Ren Xiaosu suddenly made his move. Before the guard could react, Ren Xiaosu landed a knifehand strike onto his opponent's neck. The strike whooshed through the air.

The guard collapsed onto the ground lifelessly. Ren Xiaosu looked up at the surveillance camera and knew that from this moment on, the soldiers in the entire base would start pursuing him with all their might.

But before that happened, Ren Xiaosu would first cripple the military's central command in this tower.

He would rather face a defenseless base than head out to the stronghold to face the massive search force. He was only hoping that his arrival would send Stronghold 146 spiraling into chaos.

Only amid the chaos would he have a glimmer of hope to clinch victory.

456 Breakthrough!

The alarm in Garrison 146's military base was getting more and more deafening. It even got to the point where almost half of the stronghold could hear it now. When the residents furtively opened their windows and looked out towards the base, they heard the heavy footsteps of soldiers running around. The troops that were originally searching for Ren Xiaosu in the stronghold were rushing back towards the base.

Some residents were bewildered by this. When they heard during the day that the Zong Consortium troops had been unable to capture the young man who had broken into the stronghold, everyone found it unbelievable. After all, there was an entire formation of Zong Consortium troops stationed here, while the other party was only a single person.

Yet they couldn't even capture him?

At that time, the person who brought up the matter said, "My brother-in-law is a regimental commander in the Garrison 146 troops. He was the one who told me about it."

However, many of those he told did not believe it and felt he was just bragging. They said that if his brother-in-law were a regimental commander, then their father would be the brigade commander.

After all, the situation was so chaotic that everyone was getting extremely unsettled, and it felt like the war was starting to affect the people in Stronghold 146. As such, no one really took that young man's words seriously.

After all, who would believe that a brigade could not even deal with a lone enemy who had entered the stronghold?

But at this moment, they were finally a little convinced after hearing the ear-piercing alarm.

The young man had not only escaped the pursuit of the garrison troops in the daytime, he was even bold enough to attack the base of the Zong Consortium's garrison?

After Ren Xiaosu killed the guard at the entrance, he immediately headed upstairs armed with his black saber. When someone saw him kill the guard through the surveillance camera, they rushed down. The alarm in the tower blared as well. All of a sudden, a commotion broke out in the administrative building.

Two of the soldiers who rushed down had their guards up in the stairway. They had seen clearly through the surveillance camera how unbelievably skilled the enemy was. When the enemy took out the guard earlier, he even smashed the brick wall beside him at the same time.

But before they could even come face to face with Ren Xiaosu, they saw a hand reach out of a shadow cast by the stairway's handrail. It then dropped a grenade at their feet!

An explosion blasted in the tower. Ren Xiaosu did not have time to tussle with these Zong Consortium soldiers who were hiding in the shadows and trying to shoot him. It would be too troublesome if the enemy's troops managed to group up and surround the tower.

The troops in the tower all rushed down, with some of them adopting a defensive formation in the stairways and corners while they waited quietly for Ren Xiaosu to show up.

However, this method would only be effective when dealing with normal enemies. Against Ren Xiaosu, that was too passive a tactic.

Ren Xiaosu was rapidly taking down the enemy troops one by one. The soldier in the control room who was in charge of monitoring and reporting Ren Xiaosu's movements could only watch as he ran through the corridors like a ghostly presence, and his every move was also ferocious like a beast's.

Through the surveillance feed, he watched an officer rush out of a room holding a pistol. But the moment he stepped out of the room, a black saber slashed onto his shoulder and his arm fell onto the ground together with the gun.

Right after, the young man kicked the officer so forcefully his entire body was mangled.

How much strength would he need to be able to do that? The bones in a human body were extremely tough!

As grenades exploded one after another, the soldier in the control room saw the security monitors turning black one by one. However, he could do nothing to stop the young man's advance.

Every few seconds, a security monitor would either go black or turn into static.

The soldier in the control room suddenly felt like he was watching a paranormal movie. Such scenes would usually take place right before the appearance of a ghost as it slowly wrang the fear out of its victim's heart until it bled.

Earlier in the day, this soldier had heard about how his fellow comrades of the search party were unable to apprehend the wanted criminal.

When everyone was eating in the chow hall, they even made fun of their comrades outside the base for being too weak and unable to capture a single person.

But when he saw with his own eyes how fearsome the enemy was, he understood what havoc a person like him could cause in the stronghold's city by relying on the blind spots the buildings provided.

Without intense firepower suppressing him, no one could do anything. This young man was practically invincible in the smaller battles, so it required the deployment of a much larger force to kill him.

Wait a minute! The enemy had already moved to... The soldier in the control room was startled. He picked up his gun and looked behind him only to see the locked door of the control room being slashed open right at this moment.

That black saber left a terrifying crack in the steel door, and the soldier inside was met by Ren Xiaosu's cold stare through it.

He was so nervous with keeping his eye on the security monitors that he forgot the enemy had already arrived at the control room's doorstep. The soldier was scared out of his wits even though he only saw part of the enemy's face through the crack.

After slashing through the closed steel door, Ren Xiaosu did not even bother to enter when he saw there was only one person inside. He just threw a grenade in through the crack before he continued moving forward.

Ren Xiaosu used to use the grenades sparingly as he had very few of them on hand.

But when he led the Razor Sharp Company to destroy three military factories some time ago, they seized so many grenades it was unimaginable for Ren Xiaosu. Right now, even he was unsure of how many grenades he had exactly.

No one from the Razor Sharp Company would fight Ren Xiaosu for the grenades. They just handed all the grenades they found over to Ren Xiaosu.

At this moment, the battle at Mt. Wuchuan had benefited Ren Xiaosu's cause as the number of troops in Garrison 146 had decreased by several times after their soldiers were deployed to the front lines.

There were usually two supernatural beings stationed at the garrison base as well. However, only one remained at this moment, and that supernatural being was none other than Zong Cheng himself. It was just that no one knew where he was right now.

So Ren Xiaosu did not encounter any particularly effective resistance as he made his way upstairs in a killing spree. After all, he could casually drop grenades anywhere in the building as he wished while the enemy had to be cautious.

There was a large amount of information stored here, and many of those who were in the building were the Zong Consortium's own people. As such, they still harbored fantasies that as long as one of them could gun down Ren Xiaosu, he would definitely be done for. But none of them managed to hit Ren Xiaosu, and most of them died before they could even see him.

Besides, half of those in the administrative building were clerical staff officers, while the remaining half consisted of officers equipped with pistols and some normal garrison troops. As soldiers guarding a place like this, the garrison troops were not equipped with grenades at all!

Blood was flowing down the stairway and trickling onto the next level with audible dripping sounds.

After Ren Xiaosu rushed up to the third story, a person stealthily climbed out of a closet in an office on the second story. He did not even have the courage to put up a fight just now. At this moment, he realized he might still have a chance to escape. The explosions had already moved on to the upper floors!

The chubby officer finally managed to get out of the closet after some struggling. But when he walked to the corridor, he suddenly slipped and fell heavily onto the ground.

Due to the sticky blood that was flowing on the ground, the floor was very difficult to walk on. If one could not find their balance, they would surely slip and fall.

When the chubby officer landed on the ground, he let out a cry in pain. But he regretted it immediately as he wondered if that would have attracted the enemy's attention. But the enemy was already upstairs, surely he wouldn't turn back to kill him, right?

But before he could stop worrying, he suddenly saw someone throw a grenade out of a shadow next to him!

457 Restoring the armor

Silence fell over the administrative building. As Ren Xiaosu strolled through the bloodsoaked environment, the enemies in the building had apparently all died. Only the sound of blood flowing could be heard in the background.

While he walked up the stairway to the fourth story, Ren Xiaosu realized he encountered almost no resistance. He felt that this was a little odd.

He found a locked door between the third and fourth stories, and it seemed like it was not usually accessible to even the officers of this building.

Clang! Ren Xiaosu cut open the door. Before proceeding up to the fourth story, he hid stealthily behind a window and took a look outside. He saw more than a 100 soldiers already gathered below the tower.

With a glare, Ren Xiaosu began to search through the entirety of the fourth story. It would still take a while for the brigade outside the base to get back. If there were 500 Zong Consortium soldiers in the base, there would only be about 300 soldiers below the tower after taking into account the 100 or so troops he had just killed.

To be honest, Ren Xiaosu was hoping he could attract an even greater number of Zong Consortium troops back to the base. This was so he would get a better opportunity to kill the Zong Consortium's higher-ups once he rushed out of here. As such, Ren Xiaosu believed that his plan of breaking into the Zong Consortium's base had achieved its goal of disrupting their plans.

When he slashed open another locked door, Ren Xiaosu was startled. He instinctively thought of ducking into the corner to hide as he saw 30 soldiers standing inside this spacious room!

But Ren Xiaosu realized what was going on. After he broke into the room, the soldiers did not even move. They just stood like statues.

Ren Xiaosu cautiously looked at them and was shocked to discover he actually knew these soldiers! Weren't these the Yang Consortium's nanosoldiers?!

When Yang Xiaojin was assigned to exterminate the bandits, her third uncle had sent a platoon of nanosoldiers to ensure her safety.

But Ren Xiaosu never saw those nanosoldiers again after Yang Xiaojin suddenly took him on another route to the valley.

But shouldn't these nanosoldiers have continued marching north with Zong Cheng? Even if they had failed to exterminate the bandits or encountered something unexpected, it didn't make sense that they would be standing here like statues.

Suddenly, Ren Xiaosu remembered what Zhang Jinglin had told him. "We have evidence to suspect that Zong Cheng's superpower allows him to gain control of others."

A conjecture popped up in Ren Xiaosu's mind. Could these nanosoldiers have fallen under the control of Zong Cheng to become his trump cards?

At this moment, the voice from the palace in his mind said, "Nanomachines not paired to a consciousness have been detected. Would you like to establish a connection?"

Ren Xiaosu was stunned for a moment. In the past, he could only reset the nanomachines of nanosoldiers who had died, so why was it different this time?

Wait a minute! Ren Xiaosu remembered what the palace had said. He realized the condition required for the palace to reset the nanomachines was not dependent on whether a person was dead but whether there was any consciousness controlling them.

And these nanosoldiers had been put into some kind of a sleep mode after being controlled by Zong Cheng. Therefore, were their "consciousnesses" forcefully suspended by Zong Cheng as well?

Living like this could not be more miserable since they did not have control over their own lives.

"Reset them!" Ren Xiaosu answered.

Since his last battle in the wilderness, Ren Xiaosu often missed the feeling of having those nanomachines. That was because the armor was like a lifeline that could allow him to ignore the effects of standard firearms for a short duration!

Although he missed having them, he had not had the opportunity to search for more new nanomachines. He had almost given up hope, so he was surprised he could actually reunite with the nanomachines here in the Zong Consortium today.

As the saying goes, you search high and low only to find it when you least expect it.

“Removing remote access protocol...”

“Resetting to factory settings...”

“Restarting system...”

“Pairing successful.”

As a silvery stream gathered towards Ren Xiaosu, he could feel that familiar power returning to his body.

He heard shuffling footsteps from downstairs again. It sounded like the troops gathered outside had run out of patience and were going to launch an assault.

But Ren Xiaosu chose to ignore them this time and focused on receiving all the nanomachines.

What were several hundred Zong Consortium soldiers in the face of the armor? Ren Xiaosu felt a sense of security spreading in him.

Once he regained this power, the Zong Consortium’s higher-ups living in Stronghold 146 had better start praying hard for themselves!

This was Ren Xiaosu at his peak! And Stronghold 146 was destined to be his final battlefield in the Northwest!

No! Ren Xiaosu suddenly felt it was unnecessary for the Zong Consortium higher-ups to even pray anymore. They might as well just prepare for their deaths.

But before all of the nanomachines were fully integrated into his body, the nanosoldiers in the room suddenly charged at him. It seemed like they had received a command from someone. Ren Xiaosu frowned. Zong Cheng must have reached somewhere close enough for him to control the nanosoldiers!

Zong Cheng!

When this name flashed through Ren Xiaosu’s mind, all he felt was a killing intent.

Although all of the nanosoldiers charged at him, these nanosoldiers without nanomachines were fragile as a paper to Ren Xiaosu.

At the same time as the nanosoldiers were activated, a man darted in from outside to coordinate with them to kill Ren Xiaosu. This person that had just arrived was Zong Cheng!

Ren Xiaosu sneered as he drew out his saber to slash at him. But the moment Zong Cheng came into the room, he suddenly realized something was not right. He backed off immediately and just managed to dodge Ren Xiaosu’s black saber that was coming at him!

Zong Cheng stared blankly at the nanosoldiers who were heavily injured and shouted at Ren Xiaosu, “Where’d all the nanomachines go? Why have the nanomachines in these nanosoldiers disappeared?”

Ren Xiaosu guided the remaining stream of nanomachines into his blood vessels while explaining patiently, "Isn't it normal that there's no nanomachines in nanosoldiers? You don't get a wife in a 'wife cake.'[1]"

Ren Xiaosu was now certain that even though Zong Cheng could control others, he could not control them in the way he could control his shadow clone, whose sensory perception would give feedback to his own senses.

Otherwise, Zong Cheng would not have rushed into the room at all.

Zong Cheng was not in the mood to crack lame jokes with Ren Xiaosu at a time like this. When he realized that one of his trump cards had been nullified, he leaped out of a window in the hallway behind him without hesitation. He had decisively jumped from the fourth story in an attempt to join up with the garrison troops below to escape. He knew full well he was no match for Ren Xiaosu!

Jumping from the fourth story was better than dying on the spot!

But this time, Ren Xiaosu would definitely not allow him to continue living.

If he missed this chance to get him, Zong Cheng would probably conceal himself and escape from here. At that time, it would be difficult to find him again in the sea of people.

So for Ren Xiaosu, this was his only chance to get him.

Ren Xiaosu instantly covered his entire body with the armor and stood by the window. He saw Zong Cheng limping towards the Zong Consortium's defensive line while shouting at them, "Kill that man at the window! Fire at him!"

But as the hail of bullets hit the armor, they could only see sparks flying!

Under the gazes of the Zong Consortium's soldiers, a huge and massive armored being suddenly leaped and crashed down in front of them without any fancy moves.

With this leap, Ren Xiaosu took out the Zong Consortium's defensive line in the most dominating fashion!

### **Chapter 458 Killing spree**

Zong Cheng was a supernatural being the Zong Consortium's higher-ups had been watching closely since his appearance. Because his superpower allowed him to control others, this was an extremely useful skill in the eyes of the authority figures.

Although this was a time where supernatural beings were rising up in the world, and their individual combat prowess was also being magnified to the extreme, they were still only human.

No matter what powers a supernatural being had, they would inevitably possess a physique far superior to a normal person's, and that was why Zong Cheng dared to jump down from the fourth story. If it were

a normal person, they would have fractured all of the bones in their body. However, Zong Cheng only sprained his foot.

Zong Cheng was normally the person in charge of the brigade garrisoned at Stronghold 146 due to his status as a family member of the Zong Consortium's main branch. As he was also a supernatural being, all the soldiers and officers of the brigade followed his lead.

In the eyes of the Zong Consortium's soldiers, Zong Cheng was a powerful and mysterious person. When Zong Cheng received the news and rushed back to the base, many of the soldiers felt the situation would get under control as he was back.

No matter how powerful the enemy in the administrative building was, would they not be able to handle him with a supernatural being and several hundred elite soldiers on their side?

But the reality was that Zong Cheng had jumped out of the window in an extremely pathetic manner after they had just formed the defensive line at ground level. His previously glossy hair was also in a disheveled state while his expression betrayed a look of fear.

As a core figure of the Zong Consortium, he usually portrayed himself as a very powerful man. However, he was not actually as powerful as everyone thought.

Zong Cheng's jump dealt a severe blow to the morale of the entire garrison. This was even more damaging than any physical injuries they could receive. They suddenly felt that the enemy they were facing was invincible.

If even a supernatural being like Zong Cheng was trying to escape, what could these normal soldiers do against the enemy?

But Zong Cheng did not care about that. Since his trump card was now lost, he only thought about fleeing.

This was when a huge object leaped out of the window from the fourth story and landed on the defensive line below. No one expected the enemy would be so strong that he could just tear apart their defensive formation so easily.

With such an imperious gesture, the enemy's intentions were fully laid out even if he did not say a word: I dare to stand before you for I fear none of you!

Although the soldiers at the defensive line were badly shaken, they still knew what they had to do. They immediately consolidated their firepower and started shooting at the armored being.

After some modifications by Wang Yuchi, An Yuqian, and the rest of the students, the armor looked even more menacing now and exuded an aura of violence.

The armor no longer had a flat and smooth surface. Instead, it was made up of a dense honeycomb structure that was carefully engineered by An Yuqian. To others, the surface of the armor looked just like a dull matte finish. But upon closer inspection, they would discover it was made up of countless honeycombs.



A physical structure like this not only required fewer materials to build but was also far more useful for shock absorption than a smooth and flat surface.

As countless bullets rained down at the armor, Ren Xiaosu's gaze remained dead set on the escaping Zong Cheng.

Zong Cheng was limping towards the outside of the base, and it could be seen that he did not care about the survival of the soldiers behind him.

As he was a supernatural being, he could run faster than normal people even with a sprained ankle. At this moment, Zong Cheng was enduring the pain in his ankle as he fled desperately to join up with the Zong Consortium's main forces in Stronghold 146.

He had injured the soft tissue in his ankle during the jump and torn his cartilage. If he continued running like this, he might not be able to fully recover. But even if he had to lose his leg from overexertion, it was still better than losing his life!

Not only that, Zong Cheng even commanded the other soldiers to intercept the enemy as he made a run for it.

Ren Xiaosu glanced at the Zong Consortium soldiers in front of him and suddenly charged towards Zong Cheng.

The Zong Consortium soldiers who tried to block Ren Xiaosu were weak as toys. In just a few seconds, Ren Xiaosu broke through the defensive line.

Moreover, Ren Xiaosu was throwing grenades at the enemy as he fought them, as though it cost him nothing at all.

Even at this moment, Ren Xiaosu had still not forgotten he was here to wipe out the troops of Stronghold 146. If he could kill the Zong Consortium's higher-ups as well, that would be even better.

Now that he was in his peak condition, he would kill as many Zong Consortium soldiers as he could. Only by doing so would the Zong Consortium be afraid of him. When he would try to kill the Zong Consortium's higher-ups later on, he would face less resistance from the troops.

At this moment, the Zong Consortium's base was no longer able to organize any new forces to stop him. The remaining soldiers who luckily survived could only watch in fear as Ren Xiaosu continued his pursuit of Zong Cheng.

They suddenly realized that this supernatural being that had appeared out of nowhere must have had some sort of a feud with their brigade commander. And the brigade commander they usually feared so greatly was not as strong as they had imagined!

Of course, they could never have expected that Han Yang, the person their brigade commander relied on the most, had already been sniped by Yang Xiaojin in the wilderness. Furthermore, those 30 nanosoldiers were like a gift Zong Cheng had been putting aside for Ren Xiaosu and waiting for him to claim.

If Zong Cheng had controlled other supernatural beings, that would have really given Ren Xiaosu a headache. But to him, those nanosoldiers were no threat at all but a pleasant surprise!

When Zong Cheng reached the gate of the base, he was overjoyed. He saw that some of the troops from the search party had returned at this moment as reinforcements!

He shouted at them, "The enemy is right behind me! Kill him!"

Approximately 500 of the Zong Consortium's troops had returned. As this was a battalion, Zong Cheng was finally able to feel more at ease.

As he had controlled the nanosoldiers, he knew full well that the usage of the nanomachines was limited by a power source. If a nanosoldier were to fully unleash the power of the nanomachines, they would only last around ten minutes. With the number of troops here, he could easily pile them on him and finish him off.

And the enemy was all by himself. The last time the Zong Consortium attacked Ren Xiaosu in the wilderness, he had only managed to get away because he had Wang Congyang's steam locomotive supporting him!

And besides, that supernatural being who could trigger a giant earthquake was not in Stronghold 146 either!

At the thought of Wang Congyang's name, Zong Cheng still grew angry. Although Wang Congyang claimed he had a grudge against Ren Xiaosu, he still helped him secretly!

And because of Wang Congyang's seizure of Zong Wu's assets, the higher-ups had indirectly pushed the blame on him as well. Someone privately reminded him that the elders felt he should have killed off Wang Congyang when he made his move on him back then. How could he have allowed such a powerful supernatural being to get away?

But there was no time to think about that anymore. He would just have to kill Ren Xiaosu first!

But when Zong Cheng turned around, he suddenly saw a steam locomotive breaking through the Zong Consortium's formation and charging at him!

The Zong Consortium troops who had just returned did not even have time to react as more than half of them got crushed like they were toy blocks.

Zong Cheng was a little bewildered. Why had the steam locomotive suddenly appeared here when he did not see Wang Congyang around?

### **Chapter 459 Destroying the formation**

When he saw the steam locomotive approaching, Zong Cheng had an epiphany. After considering the doubts that had accumulated in his mind in recent days and analyzing them further, he surmised that the steam locomotive was probably not Wang Congyang's doing at all. Instead, it was probably Ren

Xiaosu's own power!

Although Zong Cheng did not really want to accept such a presumption, he had no other choice.

And once this presumption was established, many things that happened previously could finally be explained. For example, why had Xu Xianchu's shadow clone appeared at two different locations? Xu Xianchu had admitted before that he could not control the shadow clone beyond a distance of one kilometer.

And for example, Wang Congyang's steam locomotive was known to only have four carriages, but why did the Zong Consortium's troops keep seeing one that had 16?

Therefore, Ren Xiaosu's superpower was that he could copy the superpowers of other supernatural beings!

This made Zong Cheng even more fearful. If supernatural beings were the gods of the world, what kind of existence would a supernatural being that could outrageously copy the powers of other supernatural beings, and even further enhance them, be?

When Zong Cheng attacked Ren Xiaosu's group, he did not give a fuck about this young man. His target had all along been Yang Xiaojin and the organization backing her, the Saboteurs.

Now, Zong Cheng realized that he had made a huge mistake.

Suddenly, Zong Cheng stopped a military off-road vehicle that was speeding back to the base. He dragged the Zong Consortium soldier out of the driver's seat and threw him onto the ground. Then he drove the vehicle away!

As the night curfew had already been imposed on Stronghold 146, there were no pedestrians out on the streets. Only the Zong Consortium's soldiers could be seen patrolling.

But no matter how many soldiers came back as reinforcements, Zong Cheng was not going to turn around anymore. He just shouted into the vehicle's walkie-talkie and commanded all of the Zong Consortium soldiers in Stronghold 146 to come back to hold off Ren Xiaosu.

Zong Cheng thought to himself, 'There should be an extent to how much supernatural beings can use their superpowers, right?' For example, he could only control 30 to 50 people with his power. In that case, there also had to be a limit for the Steam Locomotive. Didn't it get blown into thin air after being bombed by the land mines in the wilderness?

As long as he had enough soldiers, he could crush Ren Xiaosu.

Zong Cheng regained his composure slightly. One by one, the Zong Consortium's troops started returning to the base, with the largest consisting of a full company, while the smaller groups were made up of individual platoons.

These sporadic forces would not be enough to stop Ren Xiaosu. Zong Cheng looked at his surroundings and immediately ordered through the radio, "I'm leading the target towards Zijing Road now. All soldiers

in the vicinity of Zijing Road, organize a defensive formation immediately and mount HMGs. Make sure to stop the steam locomotive that's chasing me!"

This would be the most effective method. Zong Cheng knew he could not run away aimlessly and should instead lead Ren Xiaosu to where the Zong Consortium's soldiers were the most concentrated so they could take him out while he was exhausted!

It was destined to be a sleepless night in Stronghold 146 tonight. The alarm that blared through the night, along with the explosions and gunfire, would make it difficult for any residents in the stronghold to fall asleep.

As some people watched quietly from a residential building on the street, they got a strange feeling. During the day, it was the Zong Consortium that was chasing after the young man. But now that it was nighttime, why had it suddenly become the young man chasing after the Zong Consortium soldiers while driving a train?

Why had the roles suddenly reversed?

Clarion and pleasant clangs of metal rang out as the steam locomotive traveled. This was the first time the residents in the stronghold witnessed a superpower with their own eyes.

A child leaning against the windowsill shouted to their parents, "Daddy, it's a toy train!"

There were railroad tracks and trains that operated between Stronghold 146 and Stronghold 145, and many of the residents had taken them before. But in recent years, the Zong Consortium had been preparing for the war so intensively that the trains had become an exclusive means of transport for the military.

When the adults heard their child's words, the father said with a complicated expression, "My child, that is a real train."

Zheng Yuandong, the Qing Consortium's spy, was standing at a window somewhere in the stronghold. He had just witnessed with his very own eyes an off-road vehicle of the Zong Consortium fleeing with a train chasing behind it.

Zheng Yuandong had heard of car chases before, but this was the first time he saw something like that, and this one even involved a train.

Zheng Yuandong was probably one of the few who really knew what was happening here. He was the one who had personally led Ren Xiaosu into the base, while the steam locomotive had come charging out of there. Without even needing to analyze, he guessed what was going on.

It was just that he could not understand why this young man was being so vicious.

After Zheng Yuandong led Ren Xiaosu to the garrison base, he went back and reported to Luo Lan that it was probably the end for that kid. After all, he would definitely be done for by barging into such a tightly defended base by himself.

At that time, Luo Lan remained silent for a while before saying, "I understand. He made his own choice."

Even an idiot could sense the sadness in Luo Lan's tone when he said that.

But what was he supposed to tell Boss Luo now?

He could say, "I'm sorry, I made a mistake. It wasn't the end for that young man. It's the Zong Consortium that was done for..."

Zheng Yuandong quietly climbed to the roof of a building. He was moving freely on top of the buildings and could leap five to six meters across buildings with a single step even though the gap felt like a gulf.

Although he was not a supernatural being, he was one of the toughest spies in the Qing Consortium's secret troops.

Zheng Yuandong chased after the train for the entire time and saw for himself how the steam locomotive was smashing through every obstacle. The young man in the train calmly pursued the off-road vehicle in front of him and even threw several grenades from time to time.

Ren Xiaosu had already put away his armor and stored the nanomachines back into his body to recharge it for the next battle. When he turned his head, he saw Zheng Yuandong leaping and scurrying across the roofs. He smiled and waved at Zheng Yuandong. He also signaled for him to stay away in case he accidentally got hurt.

Just what kind of mental fortitude did he need to have to remain smiling in the face of all the danger around him?

He wanted to tell Luo Lan every detail about today's events so the Qing Consortium could reassess the capability of this young man from an objective point of view!

Ren Xiaosu had pursued Zong Cheng until they were in the vicinity of Zijing Road. The traffic lights were still flashing at the huge intersection, while the neon lights on the surrounding buildings were still lit up.

Hundreds of Zong Consortium soldiers stood guard at this intersection armed with a massive amount of weapons as they waited for the strange steam locomotive to enter their kill zone.

Even Zong Cheng could not help but step on the brakes when he saw the formation up ahead and wondered if they would be enough to stop Ren Xiaosu!

But before the steam locomotive could arrive, something strange suddenly landed at the Zong Consortium's position via the Shadow Door.

A soldier looked over and caught sight of it. He was surprised to see four playing cards lying on the ground.

He saw four "sixes," with the spade, heart, club, and diamond suits shining extraordinarily bright.

At first, some of the soldiers did not even realize what was going on. They thought it was their fellow comrades who had accidentally dropped the cards and were wondering who had brought them here. If their commanding officer found out, they would probably be severely punished.

But before they could figure it out, they saw the four “sixes” grow brighter and brighter. With a loud boom, the Explosive Poker instantly blasted close to a 100 people into the sky!

### **Chapter 460 Proxy murder**

The explosive power and destructive range of these Explosive Poker cards were a dozen times greater than those of a grenade!

It would be great if a grenade thrown into a defensive position could blow up a few people. So if Ren Xiaosu still had to rely on his grenades here, he would probably get shot to death first in a confrontation with the defensive line.

Ren Xiaosu had been keeping these four “sixes” as his trump card for a long time. He had always decried how difficult it was to get the higher value cards from Explosive Poker. He had been looking forward to witnessing the might of the Jokers. However, gathering four “sixes” proved to be the limit after he tried collecting the cards for a long time.

In that instant, a huge shockwave surged outwards like a tidal wave. Some of the residents in the surrounding were secretly watching from their homes. But when that shockwave swept through, the people hiding behind their windows were pushed backwards.

The glass windows of the off-road vehicle Zong Cheng was in were instantly shattered while the body shook nonstop.

He heard a ringing in his ears and suddenly lost his sense of hearing!

Looking at the Zong Consortium’s defensive position burning up in flames in front of him, Ren Xiaosu rammed straight through it, sneering as he stood in the cab unit.

The Explosive Poker’s four “sixes” were powerful enough to destroy this formation of a few hundred people.

Ren Xiaosu estimated that a little less than half of the soldiers at this position were fortunate enough to not die. But what could they do even if they survived? These Zong Consortium soldiers had already lost their fighting spirit after the blast.

They did not even have the ability to think straight anymore.

Zong Cheng’s ears were still ringing as he stepped on the gas and continued to escape. Fortunately, he was pretty far away from the defensive line when the blast occurred, or he would have died in the explosion.

Ren Xiaosu had tried to use the Shadow Door to kill Zong Cheng by dropping some grenades on him. However, as the two of them were moving at high speeds, and with the Shadow Door having some margin of error as well, Ren Xiaosu did not manage to succeed even after several attempts.

But Ren Xiaosu gave up trying when he noticed the situation at Zijing Road and wondered where Zong Cheng would lead him in the course of his escape.

It was not that he was intentionally teasing Zong Cheng. But if he were to only kill him, that would probably have too small an impact on the overall situation of the war.

Ren Xiaosu's reason for coming to Stronghold 146 was to resolve the problem Fortress 178 was facing. He was unaware that the Zong Consortium troops in the Gobi had already been intercepted by Xu Xianchu, nor did he know about the might of Zhang Jinglin's contingency plan.

So now that Ren Xiaosu was in enemy territory, he decided he had to seriously consider the big picture as well after he had calmed down.

Where could Zong Cheng escape to in his panic? Where would the Zong Consortium's fighting forces in Stronghold 146 be concentrated? At the side of the Zong Consortium's higher-ups, of course!

Zheng Yuandong had told Ren Xiaosu before that half of the brigade at Stronghold 146 was trying to capture him while the other half was in charge of guarding the Zong Consortium's Board members.

At this moment, the soldiers searching for Ren Xiaosu were still scattered across the stronghold, so Zong Cheng could not organize them effectively within a short time. Therefore, in Zong Cheng's eyes, it would only be possible for him to be saved by the troops who were currently guarding the Zong Consortium's higher-ups.

Actually, Zong Cheng had just realized this as he was fleeing from Ren Xiaosu. Looking into the rearview mirror, he found that the steam locomotive behind him was constantly keeping its distance. In a way, it felt like Ren Xiaosu was walking a dog.

He had planned on leading Ren Xiaosu to a place with the largest number of troops so they could wear him down. But now, it felt more like he was leading Ren Xiaosu to attack the Zong Consortium troops in the stronghold.

Zong Cheng's face was covered in blood. His scalp had been cut by shrapnel that got blasted out of the massive explosion. With the blood flowing down his face, Zong Cheng appeared even more savage.

He was not stupid, so he immediately understood the scattered defensive forces had given Ren Xiaosu a sweet taste of things to come. Now, his opponent was deliberately letting him lead the way so he could find the other troops in the stronghold, which was where the Zong Consortium's higher-ups were!

Zong Cheng was stuck between a rock and a hard place. While he watched the steam locomotive in the rearview mirror, he considered whether he should continue heading to where the Zong Consortium's higher-ups were. If he led Ren Xiaosu there and dragged in the Board members, he would probably bear the consequences after the war.

But Zong Cheng got the thought, 'But where else can I go now?' Although the Board members' residences were at three separate locations, and even though some of them were elders from the same family branch as him, what choice did he have?

He could only head to where the elders of the Board were. After all, their troops were more elite and orderly.

Zong Cheng was struck by another thought. Since there were more than 2,000 soldiers in the defensive forces guarding the elders, that should be more than enough to stretch Ren Xiaosu's mental strength to the limit, right?

In fact, Zong Cheng was not wrong to think this way. From any normal person's point of view, there should be limits to a supernatural being's power no matter how ferocious they were. Moreover, Ren Xiaosu had just been chased around by the search party in the stronghold. If he was really as powerful as a god, why would he have needed to hide from his pursuers?

In reality, the Zong Consortium had committed a strategic mistake tonight. They did not expect that Ren Xiaosu would actually head to the Zong Consortium's base. Due to the search party being scattered across the stronghold, Ren Xiaosu had gained the upper hand there. Furthermore, the Zong Consortium made another mistake, which was Zong Cheng misjudging Ren Xiaosu's mental strength.

He thought he could completely wear down Ren Xiaosu by having an overwhelming number of people on his side. But actually, not even Ren Xiaosu knew the limits of his mental strength.

Zong Cheng calmed down a little. Since he had judged that Ren Xiaosu would soon get stretched to his limits, he could probably make an issue out of this matter to boost himself.

Although the crisis was imminent, politicking could still turn bad happenings into good outcomes.

He only needed to lead Ren Xiaosu to the territory of the other two Zong Consortium factions. On the one hand, he could wear down Ren Xiaosu with the number of troops standing guard there, and on the other hand, he could dispose of his dissidents with Ren Xiaosu's "help"!

As a matter of fact, it was not always smooth sailing for him and Zong Xiang in the Zong Consortium. That was because the Zong Consortium's third and fourth houses had joined forces to fight against their main branch, which was the most authoritative in the organization.

As there were still more than a 1,000 soldiers combined under those two family branches, they should be more than enough to wear Ren Xiaosu down in two separate battles. After that, his main branch would swoop in and clear up the mess before he opened up peace talks with Fortress 178. In that way, not only would the influence of his main branch not decrease, it might even grow stronger. Then, after a few years of rebuilding, he could make a comeback!

When he thought of this, Zong Cheng yanked on the steering wheel and drove in another direction.

The pursuit had been going on for almost an hour. Zong Cheng was speeding to the third house's territory with Ren Xiaosu chasing him. The troops outside of the third ancillary branch's manor had



already set up Czech hedgehogs to stop any vehicles from entering. They also had guards standing by with heavy weapons in waiting.

When Zong Cheng was about to arrive at the manor, he shouted on the radio, "Move the hedgehogs away and let me through!"

The soldiers were somewhat hesitant, but Zong Cheng yelled again, "I'm Zong Cheng, Commander of the 107th Combat Brigade. I'm ordering all of you to move the hedgehogs away right now and prepare to face the enemy!"

Although the troops guarding outside the third ancillary branch's manor were also under the 107th Combat Brigade, they were mainly responsible for protecting the manor. As the battalion commander was the eldest son of the third ancillary branch, he didn't really heed Zong Cheng's orders.

An officer just stared at Zong Cheng from the forward position as the off-road vehicle approached. However, it did not look like he would be stepping aside. He did not have any intention of letting Zong Cheng through.