

First Order 481

Chapter 481 A-rank mission

A middle-aged man and a young man were riding their motorcycles and heading towards Stronghold 63, which was more than 300 kilometers away from Stronghold 61.

The two men were covered in a layer of dust as though they had been sleeping out in the wilderness for several days. But even so, the middle-aged man's eyes were brimming with a radiating vigor. He looked extraordinarily energetic.

Traveling eastwards from Stronghold 61, that yellowish tinge of brown between the prodigious mountains could hardly be seen anymore. The landscape was starting to be covered in greenery, and rivers could be seen running from time to time. The scenery of the wilderness refreshed those who saw it.

It was said that this place was a large sanctuary for birds before The Cataclysm, with an excellent ecological environment as a conservation park.

It was the birds that needed human protection at that time. But when humans encountered birds now, they needed to protect themselves.

Although birds rarely initiated attacks on humans, they bore grudges. There was someone in the past who had stolen some eggs in the wilderness and ate them. As a result, he got chased by a flock of birds for more than a 100 kilometers. In the end, that person was covered with peck wounds and a thick layer of bird droppings all over him.

The bird droppings were plastered all over his body and it made him look like a statue.

After parking their motorcycles in the wilderness, they camouflaged themselves with a green tarp. It would be too eye-catching if they rode their bikes for the rest of the journey from here, so they could only proceed there on foot.

Enjoying the scenery of the mountains, the middle-aged man suddenly said emotionally, "I see in lush mountains such charm allure, I expect they see the same in me!" [1]

The young man next to him opened his mouth and thought of asking his master if he had quoted the poem in the wrong situation, but he did not dare to speak up in the end.

The middle-aged man continued, "Disciple, do you know why I bought a new cell phone this time and gave it to you instead of your junior brother? You should know that this phone is truly a treasure. Without it, it would be really quite pointless to be a hitman. If you can get into the Anjing House with it someday, that would mean you've really succeeded!"

"I don't know," the young man answered honestly and shook his head.

"It's because you don't talk nonsense," the middle-aged man praised. "Your junior brother always likes to talk back to me. I'll be sending him to the construction site to hone himself."

“Master, are we here to carry out a mission this time?” the young man asked.

“Of course.” The middle-aged man said proudly, “It’s mainly to let you see the world and gain some experience. You’ve been my disciple for many years, and now that you’ve learned how to kill people, you naturally have to carry out a mission on your own. For now, Master will bring you along to do a few D-rank missions. You should learn as much as you can as we go along!”

“Master,” the young man said meekly, “will the missions be too difficult?”

“Difficult?” The middle-aged man laughed and stroked his handlebar mustache. “How can it be difficult when I’m a C-rank hitman doing a D-rank mission? Do you know that some hitmen remain at D-rank their entire lives and are unable to advance to C-rank?”

The young man’s eyes lit up when he heard this. “Then when will Master be promoted to B-rank?”

The middle-aged man looked at his disciple and hesitated. “Soon, I’ll get there very soon.”

“Master, if you’re already this strong, how powerful are the A-rank experts?” the young man asked as he was always curious to find out about such things.

The middle-aged man suddenly sighed and replied, “A-rank hitmen are all superhumans or extremely terrifying characters, so I definitely don’t stand a chance. I once witnessed an A-rank expert killing someone, but I didn’t even understand how they did it. Of course, even among the A-ranked hitmen, there’s only a small number of superhumans.”

As the two of them talked, they arrived at the town outside Stronghold 63. The middle-aged man sneaked a glance at his cell phone. “We’ve just received a mission. It’s at a factory nearby! Let’s go, we have to set off immediately! There will be people competing for these D-rank missions!”

They dashed to the nearby factory. The young man was still a little worried. “Master, the target is already in the factory. Shouldn’t we infiltrate after it turns dark? We’ll be seen easily if we go in like this.”

“What’s there to be afraid of? How have I always taught you? Don’t worry, it would be a joke if a C-rank expert like me can’t even complete a D-rank mission!” The middle-aged man sneered with a haughty expression on his face.

But as they were about to arrive at the factory, someone suddenly called out to them, “Hey... are you two here for a mission?”

The middle-aged man immediately turned around and fired a pistol fitted with a silencer without hesitation. But in the blink of an eye, he saw the masked youth who had spoken a moment earlier disappear. He did not even manage to land a shot at him!

“It looks like you’re really here for the mission.” The young man said with a laugh from behind them, “You two should rest for a bit. I’ll be confiscating your cell phone so you won’t fight with me for missions in the future.”

After that, a gust of wind blew from behind the middle-aged man. He immediately realized the young man had gone to their rear to try to knock him out!

Although he realized it, his body couldn't keep up with the events!

The opponent was a superhuman! This speed was beyond the limits an average human could reach!

The middle-aged man found that his body couldn't keep up with his opponent's movements even after he had trained for so many years. The young man was simply too fast!

However, this middle-aged man was also considered a veteran. He had placed a thin layer of steel plate around the inner collar of his shirt. First, that could prevent someone from slitting his throat with a dagger, and second, it could stop them from targeting his carotid artery!

In order not to kill them, Ren Xiaosu held back from using his full strength. However, he realized the middle-aged man did not pass out and was only grimacing in pain after landing a blow!

Meanwhile, his disciple had already fainted. The middle-aged man turned around and made a run for it.

While Ren Xiaosu was surprised, the middle-aged man nearly wanted to curse out loud. How was this a fucking D-rank mission? Huh?

Didn't the Anjing House verify the hitmen's identities before distributing the cell phones? Had they fucking gone crazy to hand a D-ranked cell phone to a superhuman? What the hell was wrong with the Anjing House?!

Besides, why would a superhuman come and attempt a D-rank mission? Just how much more shameless could you get? Did you lack this bit of money?!

However, his opponent did not seem to be going all out for the kill. Otherwise, he could have just killed them instead of knocking them out. The middle-aged man knew his opponent had held back.

Thinking of this, the middle-aged man did not even try to resist anymore. He immediately shouted, "I have money, I can give you money!"

But as soon as he said that, his vision went dark and he lost consciousness.

Ren Xiaosu squatted down next to them and started searching their bodies. To his surprise, he actually found two cell phones on them. This was a great harvest.

Ren Xiaosu decisively placed the cell phones into his storage space and continued to wait for more victims.

When the middle-aged man came to, he found another four or five people lying next to them. He quickly slapped his disciple to wake him up and then patted himself down to see if his opponent had left him anything.

The middle-aged man was overjoyed when he realized his money was still there. Could it be that this superhuman was not after money?

But a moment later, he was dumbfounded. His two cell phones were gone!

At this moment, the middle-aged man finally understood this superhuman was actually guarding the mission so he could seize everyone's cell phones!

It was over! They were all done for!

To think that he even bragged to his disciple that it would be a simple mission. In the end, they did not even get the chance to lay eyes on the target for the mission. Just which goddamn superhuman had come to pull this prank on them!

All of a sudden, Ren Xiaosu noticed a text message on his cell phone: "The targets in Stronghold 63 are from the Pyro Company's Midnight squad. They are currently located in the residential building at 476 Xianyang Street. A-rank. Reward: 500,000 yuan. Up to three people can work in a group for the mission, and all will receive rights to use the safe house and be protected by us upon being pursued by the enemy."

Chapter 482 The more chaotic, the merrier

Ren Xiaosu was stunned when he saw the mission to kill the Pyro Company's Midnight squad. The organization behind the cell phone must really have a grudge against the Pyro Company. Why else would they offer such a high bounty for them?

He had fought Midnight before, so Ren Xiaosu roughly knew how strong they were.

These people might seem like supernatural beings, but they were only genetically modified and possessed a stronger physique than normal people. Although they were far more powerful than normal people, they still couldn't hold a candle to supernatural beings.

After all, the current level of power that supernatural beings had was far more explosive and stranger.

Yang Xiaojin once said the Pyro Company had even more powerful fighting forces within their ranks, but Ren Xiaosu could not really judge as he had not encountered them before.

The reward this time was secondary. More importantly, the hitmen could earn a one-time right to seek refuge with the Anjing House.

Who had not faced a dangerous situation in their lives? Even Ren Xiaosu had encountered such situations many times.

For example, after getting injured, anyone would require an extremely safe place to recuperate. At such times, deaths were the most likely to occur because even supernatural beings could get killed by normal people.

Therefore, having a secret safe house and trusted protection would definitely be everyone's first choice.

Was the Anjing House trustworthy? At the very least, they had an extremely reliable reputation among all hitmen. Why else would everyone want to join them?

Therefore, the Anjing House's offer of protection for those who completed this mission would definitely tempt many people.

It was rare for a hitman to meet a good end, and this was something every hitman knew.

Ren Xiaosu frowned when he saw the text. The mission happened to be posted at Stronghold 63, which was right next to him. However, it was an A-rank mission, so he couldn't accept it even if he wanted to.

He would have liked to take on the Pyro Company too. After all, Yang Xiaojin seemed to have a grudge against them.

However, he was only D-rank right now. Including the mission just now, he would be considered as having completed two missions at Stronghold 63. Even though he should be able to get promoted to C-rank, he was still far from getting to A-rank.

Therefore, this mission did not seem like it had anything to do with him...

Wait. Ren Xiaosu suddenly realized that even though he could not accept the mission, he could still go and watch how the A-rank experts conducted their mission since the address was made known to him.

When he got there, he could just hide in the shadows and watch those hitmen take on the Pyro Company. The fiercer the fight, the better!

At this moment, one of the greatest characteristics of human beings was vividly reflected in Ren Xiaosu—he just wanted to watch chaos ensue. The more chaotic it was, the merrier.

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Just as Ren Xiaosu made up his mind to sneak into Stronghold 63, a person in a house somewhere muttered, "That 1583850 has completed yet another mission. According to the timeframe, he's already completed five missions within 60 days. Should we promote him to C-rank?"

The man next to him said, "Didn't you notice that ever since he went to Stronghold 63, those D-rank missions in the vicinity have also been delayed for more than 20 hours before they were completed? Moreover, it seems the six account holders who accepted the mission initially have all disappeared as well...."

"Mhm..."

The person next to him said, "I definitely won't believe it if you say it had nothing to do with him. He must be the one who stole the other hitmen's cell phones at Stronghold 61."

The Anjing House was not stupid. These suspicious missions were all completed by the account holder 1583850, so even a fool would know there was something wrong with this guy!

After what happened at Stronghold 61 a while ago, they had begun investigating the case. Even though their boss had personally made a trip there, she was still unable to catch the culprit.

“We better consult with the boss to see how we should handle this.”

When they sent a text to their boss, she replied, “Don’t alert him. Promote him to C-rank and then observe what he gets up to. Don’t group send him any more details of D-rank missions either in case he tries to harm the other D-rank hitmen.”

The two people in the house asked again, “What if he kills the other hitmen?”

Their boss replied, “He won’t.”

Anjing House had encountered many hitmen with different personalities. For example, some of them had unique fetishes or could get extremely unruly. But as long as they could complete their missions, the Anjing House would not be too bothered.

It was just that the candidate they encountered this time was a bit too much.

The two members of the Anjing House in the building were responsible for assigning missions and allocating resources, and this residence was their safe house.

Since their boss did not give any clear indication, they would just have to go with their boss’s instructions.

When Ren Xiaosu received the text saying he had been promoted to C-rank, he had already quietly sneaked into Stronghold 63. He wanted to observe what would be taking place here.

When Ren Xiaosu sneaked into a stronghold this time, he did not have to hide under a vehicle. He could just leap over the walls and into the stronghold now.

The Wang Consortium’s stronghold looked even more prosperous than the other strongholds. At 10 PM, colorful neon lights were still flashing in the streets and illuminating the night in the stronghold, making it seem like day.

However, the difference between this Wang Consortium stronghold and the other places was that there was a surveillance camera installed on the streets every 100 meters.

Furthermore, Ren Xiaosu heard that if people stayed in a hotel or ate in a restaurant in the Wang Consortium’s strongholds, they would need to swipe their ID cards. All the people in the stronghold city were like a dataset being supervised by an artificial intelligence.

Regarding the Wang Consortium, Ren Xiaosu had heard much about them. For example, every young man here who was of suitable age would be required to serve in the military.

If they chose to default on their service, their entire family would be implicated and get expelled from the stronghold.

In addition, if anyone encountered a thief on the streets, whoever was nearby would be obligated to catch them once the artificial intelligence issued a warning. If an adult man saw a thief but pretended not to see them, he would get punished as well.

If an elderly person fell down on the road, the person next to them had to offer their help. If the elderly person turned around and accused that person instead, then it would be the elderly person who would be sentenced.

All of this was judged by the pervasive artificial intelligence.

There were thousands of laws like these all across the Wang Consortium's territories, and everyone had to memorize them and take a test on them during their school years.

The storyteller said this was based on the Legalism school of thought that originated from the State of Qin from before The Cataclysm. The governance of the organization was based on the rule of law.

They did not believe in human nature and only trusted rationality and law.

Ren Xiaosu was at a loss of words regarding this system. Of course, it was a good thing that everyone should stand up for others. However, he would be unwilling to live in a stronghold like this.

It was not that a system like this was bad. In fact, it was actually quite good since the stronghold residents could lead a very safe life at the minimum.

However, Ren Xiaosu would not be able to get used to it. He had no intention of judging the good and bad sides of a governing system for the various consortiums. He only felt that there would not be enough freedom if his every action fell under the supervision of others.

Ren Xiaosu could not walk around freely in a stronghold like this. That was because the legendary artificial intelligence's database did not have his profile. Once the surveillance cameras detected his presence, it would sound the alarm.

Moreover, if a hitman could not carry out a mission perfectly and avoid all the surveillance cameras in a stronghold like this, they would definitely end up being wanted by the entire Wang Consortium. The artificial intelligence would also be able to help analyze where the hitman was hiding.

Ren Xiaosu was curious to know how the A-rank hitmen would assassinate someone in a stronghold like this.

Chapter 483 What's with the posturing?

The bounties paid out for missions conducted in the Wang Consortium's strongholds had always been higher than those conducted at other strongholds. This was because most of the hitmen were put in a very dangerous position for conducting a mission here. Furthermore, they would have to escape from all strongholds under the jurisdiction of the Wang Consortium after completing such missions. If they got spotted by the surveillance cameras again when entering the Wang Consortium's strongholds, an arrest order would be immediately triggered.

Ren Xiaosu realized there would be surveillance cameras appearing on the tall buildings of this stronghold from time to time. It seemed that the Wang Consortium had also taken into consideration that there could be supernatural beings like him flying over roofs and scaling walls. So he had to remain extremely cautious to avoid getting spotted by them.

However, Ren Xiaosu felt that as long as the cameras were not placed everywhere and covered all the blind spots, he would have a chance to take advantage of it.

At the bottom of the text he received earlier, a map with the approximate location of 476 Xianyang Street was attached. It was simple and easy to understand.

Ren Xiaosu lithely advanced in the direction of the neon lights. During this period, his presence was almost captured by the cameras several times. Fortunately, the speed of the cameras' rotation was relatively slow and he managed to get to the vicinity of the mission's target.

Ren Xiaosu found a 12-story building and climbed to the roof with his bare hands. After ensuring there were no surveillance cameras on the roof, he carefully laid in wait there.

This location was not exactly the best spot to observe 476 Xianyang Street from. That was because there were some buildings blocking his view, and the distance was 900 meters away. Usually, snipers would not choose to shoot from this distance. Moreover, the target was Midnight, whose strength surpassed that of normal people.

However, Ren Xiaosu did not choose to go to the best observation spot since if he could judge where the best positions were, the A-rank hitmen would surely know as well. Who knew if there might already be someone waiting there at this moment?

476 Xianyang Street was a apartment complex five stories high. Ren Xiaosu could not tell which floor the Pyro Company's Midnight squad was hiding in, so he could only wait patiently in the shadows.

To be honest, Ren Xiaosu was a little impressed by the Anjing House at this moment. He wondered how they managed to discover the whereabouts of the well-hidden Midnight in a sea of people.

Ren Xiaosu conjured up his black sniper rifle out of thin air and quietly scanned the surroundings of 476 Xianyang Street through the scope. However, he was puzzled by why there were no suspicious people around. The faces of the pedestrians walking past were never repeated and no one loitered around in the vicinity either.

Something was strange. Could it be that he was the first qualified account holder of the cell phones to arrive at the scene because he was the nearest to the target?

Ren Xiaosu sat on the top of the building with his large sniper rifle and continued to wait quietly.

No one would expect a strange person could have sneaked his way into the middle of an A-rank mission. He wasn't here to do the mission and just wanted to watch the commotion.

Suddenly, Ren Xiaosu turned serious when he saw five people walking out of the apartment complex. The demeanor of the Pyro Company's Midnight squad was totally different from that of the normal

stronghold residents. Normal people might not notice it, but how could Ren Xiaosu, who often dealt with supernatural beings and elite soldiers, not be able to tell? Moreover, Midnight had always been a group of five, and it just so happened that there were five of them here.

Ren Xiaosu placed his sniper rifle in position and began to slow his breathing. Yang Xiaojin had said that controlling one's breathing was one of the keys to unlocking the shackles of the body.

If no one from the Anjing House came here to carry out the mission, then he would not mind helping Yang Xiaojin kill off some members of the Pyro Company.

He had nothing better to do anyway.

All of a sudden, fireworks shot up into the sky in the western part of the stronghold for some reason. The brilliant fireworks made crackling sounds as they burst open in the sky and emitted a colorful glow. This loud sound caused all of the stronghold residents to look to the west.

Not far away, a flash suddenly came from a tall building just as the fireworks exploded in the sky. A member of Midnight was immediately killed on Xianyang Street.

Ren Xiaosu quickly shifted his scope and saw that that building was the most ideal location for shooting. With a firing distance of 600 meters, it had the best view of that building at Xianyang Street.

A young man was lying on the roof of the building. It looked like he was already taking aim at his next target. Ren Xiaosu could even tell that the sniper was using a Blaser R93 Tactical.[1] The best feature of this gun was that the bolt action design allowed for much steadier follow-up shots.

Bang! Another shot rang out from 600 meters away. Then another member of Midnight was sniped dead before they could even find a place to take cover.

Ren Xiaosu pondered this for a moment and realized snipers were actually among the A-rank hitmen. In truth, it was rather expensive to train a sniper these days. Meanwhile, this sniper who could maintain his accuracy even though he was firing continuously and at such a fast rate was definitely not an amateur. He might even previously be the trump card of a certain elite unit.

But how could the Pyro Company be so easy to deal with? No matter how powerful and sneaky a sniper was, how could they possibly wipe out the entirety of Midnight on their own?

But before Ren Xiaosu could dwell further on it, he suddenly saw through his scope a person climbing up the building across from where the sniper was located with his bare hands. In an instant, the sniper was attacked and killed by the person.

This person's speed and strength were far superior to the Midnight squad that Ren Xiaosu had previously fought!

Ren Xiaosu was taken aback. The information provided by the Anjing House was erroneous. It turned out there was more than one team from the Pyro Company here, and they actually had a contingency plan too! Moreover, it was a technologically advanced fighting force that was lying in ambush.

The members of Midnight that were shot by the sniper were merely bait.

Seeing that the member of the Pyro Company on the opposite building had killed the sniper, Ren Xiaosu got an ominous feeling. Wasn't it said the Pyro Company's fighting forces always consisted of five people per team?

Then where were the other combatants? When he looked at the member of the Pyro Company on the opposite building through his scope, that combatant suddenly turned around and grinned at him. Then he made a throat-slitting gesture.

In that instant, another person pounced from the edge of the building onto the rooftop where Ren Xiaosu was. The enemy was dressed in black, and it was as though he had merged with the night.

But an even darker shadow suddenly appeared from the darkness beside him. When the shadow raised the black saber in its hand and slashed, it cut the approaching member of the Pyro Company in half.

From the beginning to the end, Ren Xiaosu did not even turn around to look. He continued to maintain his steady breathing.

Distance: 617 meters. Wind speed: 15m/s. Humidity...

The moment the opponent made that throat-slitting gesture, Ren Xiaosu pulled the trigger with a sneer. From a distance like this, the firepower of his anti-materiel sniper rifle[2] was enough to ignore any external factors, unless strong winds were blowing.

With a shot, the exhaust from the sides of the gun swept up the dust around Ren Xiaosu. Meanwhile, that member of the Pyro Company was sent flying backwards by the huge inertia of the bullet.

Ren Xiaosu was afraid his enemy would be wearing a bulletproof vest, so he even resorted to using armor-piercing bullets that could shoot through tanks.

Seeing that the enemy was utterly dead now, Ren Xiaosu stowed his gun and muttered, "What the fuck is with your posturing!"

Ren Xiaosu quickly moved in another direction as he said that. As the gunshot was incredibly loud, it would attract the attention of many people.

Meanwhile, three members of that advanced fighting force from the Pyro Company still had not shown themselves.

Chapter 484 Breaking free from fate!

Ren Xiaosu had only entered Stronghold 63 because he wanted to take a look at the commotion that would be happening. After all, he would not get any reward for completing the A-rank mission. Meanwhile, it was clear the Anjing House had had a feud with the Pyro Company for some time. As such, he was unwilling to get embroiled in this dispute.

But that member of the advanced fighting force from the Pyro Company had to make that provocation and even sent someone after him. This could not be tolerated.

Ren Xiaosu put away his sniper rifle and relocated to another position. As he left, he continued observing Xianyang Street. He was surprised to see an old sugar painter^[1] sitting by the roadside boiling sugar syrup to make snacks for children. He suddenly reached into the pot with his ladle and scooped out a spoonful of caramelized sugar. Then he quickly painted something on an aluminum plate in front of him with the large ladle.

In the blink of an eye, the old man finished drawing a lifelike peacock. Right after, the sugary peacock on the aluminum plate suddenly flapped its wings and flew up into the sky!

The peacock drawn with sugar syrup had actually come to life.

The amber-colored peacock flying in the sky immediately pounced in front of the remaining three members of Midnight.

However, the old man did not stop there as he reached into the pot with his ladle again. He scooped out another spoonful of golden syrup and painted a dragon on the aluminum plate!

Ren Xiaosu was taken aback for a moment. This was the first time he had seen such a magical superpower. It seemed possible to draw anything as long as one believed it was alive!

When he was observing through his scope earlier, he thought the old man was just a normal artisan. There were even many children who went to buy the old man's sugar paintings, and everything looked very normal at that time.

But now, he displayed an even more magnificent side of the superhuman world to Ren Xiaosu!

The amber dragon did not attack Midnight but stood close guard next to the old man. Then he started drawing a tiger.

However, Ren Xiaosu felt the old man might be reaching his limits soon. He seemed to be having difficulties as he painted the tiger.

At this moment, five people suddenly jumped out of a window from a nearby residential building and surrounded the old man. Ren Xiaosu was shocked. This should also be the Pyro Company's contingency plan, right?

In that instant, Ren Xiaosu realized the Pyro Company's Midnight squad had actually been used as bait to capture the superhumans who came to encircle them!

Across the entire Alliance of Strongholds, everyone knew the Pyro Company was particularly interested in superhumans. And Ren Xiaosu had already faced Midnight before. What they really wanted was the genetic data of superhumans. They wanted to create even more powerful human beings, and this was the evolutionary path they had chosen.

Therefore, this mission might appear on the surface like it was the Anjing House looking to exterminate the Pyro Company. But actually, it was a trap set by the Pyro Company to kill their superhumans.

Although the Pyro Company used to have a presence in the Southwest, Qing Zhen had clearly expressed his disgust for them. He even fought a tough battle with the Pyro Company and drove them out of the Southwest.

Hence, the influence the Pyro Company had in the Southwest was extremely weak. The enemy they faced there was Qing Zhen, someone who controlled an entire military and was skilled at war.

But here in the Central Plains, the Pyro Company called this their territory!

Furthermore, the Pyro Company seemed to have an endless number of genetically enhanced soldiers. They possessed a stable way of creating superhumans, and it was an advantage no other organization could compare with.

Actually, only the Qinghe Group could compare with them. However, it seemed the Qinghe Group didn't possess a lot of superhumans, and they did not really care about the competition for resources in the region either. Usually, they would not attack others unless they were provoked. Furthermore, they did not hold any political stances.

Ren Xiaosu had already jumped over to another rooftop. He could hear footsteps behind him shuttling between the roofs, and they belonged to the members of the Pyro Company who were chasing after him.

His opponents were getting closer and closer.

The entirety of Stronghold 63 was in chaos now. When the residents on the streets who were enjoying their nightlife heard the gunshots, they quickly fled from the scene of the assassination while screaming.

The night became chaotic, and even the colorful neon lights suddenly appeared dull and depressing.

All of a sudden, Ren Xiaosu came to a stop. He pulled out his large, black sniper rifle again and aimed it at the members of the Pyro Company who had surrounded the old man.

As he was moving at a very rapid pace while fleeing, his heart rate had increased.

He took a deep breath.

The moment before the sniper pulled the trigger, the hormones, blood, muscles, and heart in their body would all have to serve the will. At that time, even the chaotic night sky would come to a standstill.

Ren Xiaosu pulled the trigger and a thick layer of smoke burst out from the muzzle with a bang. As the bullet passed through the rifling of the barrel, it started spinning rapidly, carrying with it a huge amount of kinetic energy.

In the rifling, the grooves were the spaces that were cut out, and the resulting ridges were called lands. In the black sniper rifle's barrel, the perfect angle and twist rate made the bullet start spinning the

moment it was fired out of the chamber, This allowed the bullet to break free from any external restrictions with its immense kinetic energy and let the shot go further and more accurately.

It was breaking free from fate!

The elongated bullet passed through the gap between two buildings and squarely hit a member of the Pyro Company. The spinning bullet quickly penetrated through his muscles, and the massive friction of the bullet ripped the muscle fibers like it was cotton!

Death!

Through the scope, Ren Xiaosu saw a young man in a black suit and white shirt on Xianyang Street break off the pole of a metal street lamp on the side of the road with a wave of his hand. Then it floated over next to him as though it were a weapon.

But before he could rush to the old man's rescue, he realized a sniper was helping them kill their enemies.

The young man was stunned for a moment before asking through his earpiece, "Did we send any other snipers here?"

Someone replied through the earpiece, "No, there's only one A-rank sniper who accepted the mission, but he's already dead. But the sniper who opened fire just now avenged him."

"That's strange. Where did that sniper come from then?" The young man looked in the direction of where the bullet came from, but that building was already empty.

Suddenly, another three figures flashed across the roof of that building. The young man said worriedly into his earpiece, "I'll take care of the Pyro Company members on Xianyang Street first. The sniper to my 7 o'clock is being pursued by three members of Dusk. Can anyone go to his aid?"

"It's too late. He's too far away from us."

Everyone stopped talking. Due to the distance, they could only pray the sniper would get lucky and not be caught by the members of the Pyro Company.

The battle was chaotic. Even the Anjing House members could not fully understand what was happening on the battlefield. There were not many talents like Qing Zhen in the world who were strategic geniuses, after all. Most people only knew how to adapt their plans as the battle developed.

It didn't matter if it was the Anjing House or the Pyro Company; they were all the same.

However, neither of them could have expected that the sniper who had appeared out of nowhere would become the key to turning the tide of the situation.

At this moment, Ren Xiaosu was frequently jumping across various buildings as he fled all the way west. But a second later, he halted in his tracks.

It was not that he could not run anymore, but that he did not want to continue running.

Chapter 485 No more running!

Ever since he escaped from Stronghold 146, Ren Xiaosu had not experienced getting chased by anyone in the past two months. The more he thought about it, the more he felt that something was odd. Didn't he only come here to watch the commotion? Why did the Pyro Company start chasing after him then?

Although he had shot and killed another member of the Pyro Company just now, they were the ones who attacked first!

'I might have been holding a sniper rifle on the roof, but it was only because the view was clearer through the scope. I really did not intend to attack anyone! I don't care whether you believe it or not, I only wanted to have a look! So since I was only here to have a look, and you all tried to attack me, I'm forced to fight back!'

In the entirety of Stronghold 63, it was estimated that there were only ten people from the Pyro Company's advanced fighting force in total. However, the Pyro Company ended up splitting half of their forces to attack him even though the Anjing House was the one attacking them...

Who was he supposed to bring the attention of this injustice to?

Ren Xiaosu thought about it carefully. Could he defeat the three members of the Pyro Company? Yes!

When he thought of this, Ren Xiaosu wondered why the hell he should keep running.

Ren Xiaosu came to a stop on the roof of a building. The three members of the Pyro Company were chasing after him in a triangular formation when they saw Ren Xiaosu stop in his tracks and were bewildered.

Although they did not witness how Ren Xiaosu killed their comrades earlier, they knew he must be an extremely powerful supernatural being if he could kill two members of their Dusk squad in a row.

As the three members of Dusk came to a gradual stop, the two sides were now facing each other on the roofs of two buildings, separated by a gap of more than 20 meters.

Ren Xiaosu's fighting spirit was so fired up that it felt like an intimidating presence that could fill people's hearts with fear. Suddenly, the three members of Dusk were a little afraid to chase after him anymore.

Thinking about it calmly now, the three of them had only pursued the enemy when they saw him running away just now. But now that they had caught up to him, they were finally able to consider if they could defeat him or not.

As sirens rang out in the distance, a continuous stream of Stronghold 63's security forces started heading over to encircle the area. They were looking to capture all the members of the Anjing House and the Pyro Company in the stronghold.

The three Dusk members looked at each other and got ready to make a move. No matter how powerful their opponent was, he was all by himself at this moment. As they were genetically modified super soldiers, how could they not take care of one person if the three of them attacked all at once?

“We can’t wait any longer. If we don’t kill him today, we’ll be seen as defective goods when we return.”

“Kill him!”

But before they could come to a decision, they saw Ren Xiaosu slowly take a few steps back. The three Dusk members wondered, “Is he going to run away again?”

Then they unexpectedly saw Ren Xiaosu starting to charge towards them from the opposite building.

Those few steps back that he took were actually to facilitate his run-up!

“Open fire!”

The three of them aimed their silenced guns at Ren Xiaosu and started shooting rapidly. With their physiques, they could easily match Ren Xiaosu’s movement speed as they kept their aim on him.

But before they could even pull the trigger, Ren Xiaosu’s armor immediately covered his entire body.

In the eyes of the three Pyro Company members, the figure leaping over from the opposite rooftop gradually got larger. Then it suddenly turned into an indestructible armored being that no one could lay a finger on.

This turn of events was really shocking. When the bullets from the pistols hit the armor, they could only leave behind a white mark without causing any substantial damage.

“Wait, it’s him!” A member of the Pyro Company roared, “What’s he doing here!”

After the battle in the Northwest, any organization that had paid attention to the situation there would know there was a young man who could conjure up a set of armor and had single-handedly destroyed a stronghold.

Any organization with ambition would have to keep abreast of such developments, after all. Although the Northwest was a remote place, it would be extremely stupid of them if they did not even know about an important development like that.

Not only that, but they also had to purchase the information and intel regarding this young man from the various secret intelligence organizations.

But to their surprise, the two secret intelligence organizations that were usually the most familiar with the happenings in the Southwest and Northwest expressed they did not have any specific information about this young man.

After Fortress 178 marched into Stronghold 146, the first thing they did was not to take over the resources of the stronghold but to search for all of the wanted portraits of that young man and destroy them.

When the members of the Pyro Company realized the enemy they were facing turned out to be that legendary figure, they immediately turned gloomy!

One of them shouted into their radio, “We’ve encountered—”

Before he could finish speaking, a black shadow dashed into them from behind. The black saber pierced the chest of the person speaking, and blood instantly filled the alveoli of his lungs. When he tried to speak, blood started gushing out of his throat.

The remaining two people quickly fled in two different directions. Their speed was comparable to that of the best of the best among superhumans and might even be a tad faster than them.

In an instant, their powerful brains figured out their best escape routes.

However, they were shocked to find they could only cover two steps before they were quickly caught up to. Although they were fast, Ren Xiaosu was even faster!

Even without activating City Crusher, Ren Xiaosu’s physical fitness had almost placed him above all the other members of Dusk.

As fireworks shot up into the rousing night sky again, the chaotic mixture of sirens, gunshots, screams, and shouts filled Stronghold 63 with the smell of blood and smoke.

Ren Xiaosu and the shadow clone brushed past each other as the two figures blocked the two escaping members of Dusk separately. Their movements were so exact that they looked like two sets of synchronized machines!

Since he had used his armor here, he could not allow any of the Pyro Company members present to leave alive.

Seeing that these two members of Dusk had jumped off either side of the roof to the other roofs, Ren Xiaosu and his shadow clone jumped after them. The strong force they generated as they leaped off from the rooftop even shattered the waterproof layer of the rooftop.

When Ren Xiaosu got ahead of the Dusk member in midair, he turned around and slashed his saber. His opponent had wanted to pull out a saber from his belt to block the slash, but Ren Xiaosu pressed down on his hand in the air. No matter how hard he tried, he could not draw the saber from his belt. Then Ren Xiaosu stabbed the black saber into his heart fast as lightning.

‘Why are you so strong?’ This was the only thought the member of Dusk had before he died. Ren Xiaosu kicked off him in midair and flew towards the roof on the opposite building. Due to the great inertia, he slid for five to six meters on the building’s rooftop on one knee before finally stopping.

Meanwhile, his shadow clone on the other side was even more efficient at killing its victim. Even Ren Xiaosu had to admit that his shadow clone’s physical fitness was much stronger than his...

Ren Xiaosu panted as he recalled his shadow clone while he stood on the rooftop. Afterwards, he quickly fled the stronghold. After experiencing so much tonight, he had no need to risk his life here anymore.

As for who would come out victorious in the battle between the Anjing House and the Pyro Company, that had nothing to do with him.

Chapter 486 Leaving with a flick of his robes after the deed is done, / Deeply hiding his glory and fame.

Ren Xiaosu felt that copying the power of the shadow clone was the wisest choice he had made ever since he was able to duplicate the superpowers of other supernatural beings.

Having lived in this chaotic world for so long, his shadow clone had achieved many great feats for him. Without it, Ren Xiaosu could not have done many things.

Of course, the shadow clone also had its shortcomings. For example, it could not use the sniper rifle independently since it couldn't calculate the complex trajectory of a shot and other external factors. As such, the accuracy of its shots had always been poor.

When Ren Xiaosu left the stronghold, he even went past the troops of Stronghold 63 that were heading over to encircle the enemy. However, the soldiers below could not see him at all as he was leaping across the roofs of buildings.

A superhuman who was among the troops suddenly looked up into the sky. He had a feeling that something had leaped over their heads. However, the other party was moving too fast, so he thought he might have been hallucinating.

"Did you all see anything unusual over our heads just now?" the superhuman asked.

"No." The soldiers shook their heads.

"Forget it, let's deal with the problem at Xianyang Street first. If we encounter any resistance, kill on sight! Set up checkpoints at all the main thoroughfares!"

After escaping from the stronghold, Ren Xiaosu did not even bother staying in town to watch. He just continued running all the way into the wilderness.

If he was going to leave, he would have to do so decisively. So Ren Xiaosu decided to head straight for Stronghold 61 where he could wait and see while things settled down.

On the way, he even received a C-rank mission that was to be carried out in Stronghold 63. However, he instantly decided he would give that up this time.

Hitmen had to complete three C-rank missions within 90 days before they would get automatically promoted to B-rank. But Ren Xiaosu thought that since Stronghold 63 was already such a mess, he would not want to go back there to carry out that mission no matter what!

...

At this moment on Xianyang Street, the amber-colored dragon that was painted from the sugar syrup grabbed a member of Dusk and threw him into its mouth. Then it crushed the enemy's bones to pieces.

Only one of the three remaining members of Midnight was left. He was still firing his weapon and trying to shatter the golden dragon. But even as the amber dragon was hit by the bullets, it only shed bits and pieces of sugar while still maintaining its ability to fly.

Meanwhile, the tiger the old man had just painstakingly painted stood guard next to him. The old man said palely, "I can't hold on much longer. Quickly finish them off!"

Although the peacock, dragon, and tiger all looked extremely ferocious, the old man was already at his limits. To be honest, he did not expect another team of Dusk members to ambush them from nearby!

This old man was only an A-rank hitman. He was also only risking his life this time for the sake of joining the Anjing House.

Next to him, the young man who could manipulate metal said with a smile, "Please calm down, old man. They don't have a way out anymore."

The young man strolled towards Dusk along the empty boulevard. One of the members of Dusk tried to shoot him, but his gun flew out of his hand and floated in front of the young man.

Then the Dusk member tried to draw the saber from his belt, but even that was seized by the young man.

The leader of Dusk sneered, "Vanilla, it's such a pity that we failed to finish you off the previous time."

The young man named Vanilla said with a smile, "That just means that the Heavens haven't failed me. You didn't expect that I would appear here, right? Remember to bring a ceramic saber next time."

The moment he finished saying that, all the sabers and metallic objects floating next to Vanilla flew towards Dusk.

But at this moment, the members of Dusk revealed their extremely powerful physiques. The metallic objects that were rapidly flying over could not even touch their bodies once they dodged.

Although Vanilla could manipulate metal, and even a large quantity of them at once, the speed at which he controlled the metal was still not fast enough!

However, the remaining three members of Dusk decisively turned around and started retreating after dodging Vanilla's attack. Meanwhile, the young man who could manipulate metal did not chase after them.

The old man panted and said, "Why didn't you finish them off?"

"There will naturally be supernatural beings from Stronghold 63 who will encircle them. If we go after them, how are we gonna get out of this place?" Vanilla smiled and said, "We need them to attract the attention of Stronghold 63 right now. Besides... haven't you realized that I couldn't land a hit on them at all..."

“Alright then, I’m going to retreat as well.” The old man said, “All the members of Midnight have already been killed, along with a member of Dusk as well...”

Vanilla said with a smile, “Don’t worry, the boss will definitely reward you accordingly.” At this moment, he heard a voice speaking in his earpiece. Vanilla was stunned for a moment before saying to the old man with a smile, “Congratulations, 1383792. The boss has said you can participate in the next round of trials to gain entry into the Anjing House. You may come with me to the safe house now.”

The old man was surprised. “Really?”

“The Anjing House has never made promises lightly, so please follow me. Once you’ve officially joined the Anjing House, you will get your own code name. To be honest, it’s really quite difficult to remember your current name and number.” Vanilla turned around and walked off.

...

The pursuit in Stronghold 63 would still continue for some time, and there would be two or three superhumans involved in the chase. In Vanilla’s opinion, the Pyro Company members would suffer terribly even if they did not die.

As the Anjing House had been dealing with the Pyro Company for a long time, they were not in a hurry to eliminate them. In fact, neither side was able to do this now, so they could only slowly scheme against each other.

After they left, a few sporadic paper cranes started flying around in the night sky. Some of them quietly tailed the Pyro Company members while the rest went to the places Ren Xiaosu had fought at.

The paper cranes first went to the rooftop where Ren Xiaosu had been attacked. Then it followed Ren Xiaosu’s escape route all the way to the place where he had killed three members of Dusk.

The small and delicate paper cranes circled around the rooftop, as though they were recording all the details of the location without missing any corners.

Soon after, the paper cranes fluttered their wings and flew higher into the sky. They cautiously flew up several hundred meters before continuing to fly towards Stronghold 61 where they would update the information they saw to their host.

A day later, someone in a house received a new text message. The more they read it, the more shocked they were. “The boss said the sniper who appeared that night wiped out the entire Dusk squad? I wonder where this superhuman popped out of?”

“Surely not, right? Didn’t they say that even Vanilla could do nothing about them since they were so determined to escape?”

“And the boss also said that this guy’s an incredibly skilled sniper. It seems that he can adjust his heart rate while moving about on the battlefield. A powerful sniper who also has an extremely strong superpower in close combat. Just where did such a monster pop out of? Why haven’t we heard of him

before?” The person reading the text said, “By the way, the boss was asking if anyone went to do that C-rank mission in the vicinity when it was assigned later on?”

“It’s been completed, but not by 1583850.”

“Do you think that 1583850 could be this superhuman?”

“I don’t think so. Why would such a ruthless superhuman bother with our D-rank missions? Do you think they’ve got nothing better to do?”

Chapter 487 A mysterious hitman

the smoke in stronghold 63 had already dispersed. a small battle was not enough to cause much damage to the stronghold, after all. moreover, the civilians were not affected by the battle between the two sides, so casualties involving the stronghold residents were as good as negligible.

but to the wang consortium, the actual controller of stronghold 63, this was a challenge to their authority by the anjing house and the pyro company.

if people like the elderly sugar painter and vanilla, who could manipulate metal, were to enter any strongholds under the wang consortium’s jurisdiction again, a citywide search would be immediately triggered once they got identified by the surveillance cameras.

the reason why the price for killing a target in the wang consortium’s strongholds was so high was that most hitmen could only conduct one mission in them.

not everyone could parkour—fly over roofs and scale walls—like ren xiaosu.

at this moment, hundreds of employees were sitting and busying themselves in a huge control room within stronghold 62. in this control room were several hundred security monitors, and the all-white interior radiated a strong sense of technology.

wang shengyin pushed in wang shengzhi in his wheelchair. he looked at the staff members and said with a smile, “show me the ai report from last night. let’s see what it says.”

“when the anjing house assassin known as vanilla entered the stronghold, the ai issued an early warning and signaled that this person had trespassed into the stronghold. he sneaked in on a truck that was transporting frozen pork.” a staff member said, “we’ve already located the truck, but the owner is nowhere to be found. there’s a specially modified compartment in the truck, so vanilla must have hidden in it to enter the stronghold.” with that, the staff member handed a document to wang shengzhi.

the whole analysis report was fully documented. other than that elderly sugar painter, the others were all identified by the surveillance and they had received advance warning of the intrusion.

wang shengzhi had actually predicted a long time ago that this small battle would take place. however, the staff members did not understand why it was allowed to happen.

perhaps wang shengzhi had planned to let the pyro company and the anjing house build even more resentment between their two organizations.

wang shengzhi was flipping through the report when he suddenly noticed the final analysis. he saw nine photos, and in each one of them a blurry figure was captured leaping across roofs.

the staff member next to him explained, "this person constantly kept his activities to the roofs and was even so cautious that he avoided all our surveillance cameras on the roofs of the buildings. these photos were only taken by a surveillance camera on a tall building in the distance after our ai spotted him."

wang shengzhi nodded and looked at the follow-up analysis report: "the suspect is 1.84 meters tall and possesses an unknown power. the six pyro company members who died that night were likely killed by this person. this includes one member of midnight and five members of dusk. this suspect is extremely dangerous, and it is recommended that we go all out to pursue him."

"did you manage to find any trace of this person's whereabouts after that?" wang shengzhi asked while looking up.

"no." the staff member shook his head. "the ai's analysis showed that he should have already fled from the stronghold."

"is he a member of the anjing house?" wang shengzhi asked.

"no, please turn to the last page of the report. the ai analyzed all the participants of the battle and which organization they belong to. he's the only one with no known links to any organization," the staff member said while shaking his head.

wang shengyin looked curiously at the blurry figure while standing behind wang shengzhi. she said, "why do i feel like this person looks so familiar? it's as if i've seen him somewhere before."

everyone looked at wang shengyin in a stunned manner, only to see her shaking her head and saying with a laugh, "the pictures are too blurry, so i probably mistook it for someone else."

wang shengzhi shook his head and said with a smile, "since this person is classified as extremely dangerous by the ai, we must be careful when we find him next time."

...

when ren xiaosu returned to stronghold 61, he did not head home immediately but went to the tavern instead. ren xiaosu had not had a warm meal for several days, so he needed to get something to eat first.

before he even reached the tavern, ren xiaosu could already see ms. xiaolu sitting by the window from a distance. it seemed like she was folding something on the table with her head down. when she heard the sound of footsteps, she looked up and saw ren xiaosu.

but just as ren xiaosu was about to greet her, he heard xiaolu shout before sweeping everything on the table into her arms. then she ran into the backyard of the tavern.

ren xiaosu could only wave at the air with his raised hand.

as he walked into the tavern, the storyteller was relating a story to the customers. "everyone here might not know that something major has taken place in stronghold 63. it's said that the pyro company and anjing house have been at loggerheads with each other for a long time, so both sides laid a trap for the other at stronghold 63. the pyro company wanted to capture the superhumans of the anjing house, while the anjing house was looking to take down the pyro company members in one fell swoop. an old man was seen waving his hand over an aluminum plate, and it turned out that the dragon he painted with some sugar syrup ended up soaring into the sky..."

ren xiaosu was stunned when he heard this. the incident at stronghold 63 had just happened two days ago, but the storyteller already knew about it?

however, he was not too bothered by it. after all, he already knew this storyteller was no ordinary person, and he was not particularly concerned about where his intel came from either.

it happened that he also wanted to hear how the news in the outside world portrayed this skirmish.

the storyteller continued, "however, the pyro company and the anjing house were not the protagonists of this battle. it was someone else! in the battle, although the pyro company had sent out a total of 15 members, a mysterious visitor ended up killing six of them single-handedly..."

ren xiaosu listened to the story and realized he was involved in at least half of the storyteller's tale.

at this moment, xiaolu reentered the tavern from the backyard. she sat down across from ren xiaosu and asked casually, "did you see what i was doing just now?"

"no." after ordering a bowl of lamb stew from the waiter, ren xiaosu smiled and said, "so what were you doing just now?"

"nothing much." xiaolu changed the subject, "you should quickly go home and have a look after you've eaten. recently, the townspeople have been saying that your yard is haunted. there's always the sound of people howling and screaming in there in the middle of the night, but no one dares to go in and check it out since they're afraid of being devoured by the ghosts."

ren xiaosu froze. how could a spooky event like this happen to him? but after a brief pause, he roughly understood what was going on.

ren xiaosu asked, "were there any other strange occurrences in town lately?"

xiaolu sneaked a glance at the storyteller before whispering, "don't tell grandpa that i was the one who told you. you had better be more careful these days. it seems that someone's been looking for you, but grandpa helped you to hide the truth."

ren xiaosu grinned from ear to ear. "thank you."

"grandpa didn't want me to tell you, so you must not tell him about this." xiaolu happily lowered her voice and reminded him.

a ways away, the storyteller was midway through the story. his voice clearly paused for a moment, and he nearly forgot about the latter part of the story that he was telling. what the hell was going on!

Chapter 488 Inclined towards certain subjects

Someone once mentioned that when one of the five senses of a person is “switched off,” the other senses become heightened. These five senses referred to sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch.

The human body did not only have five senses but also a legendary sixth sense, which was the soul.

Some people asked, “Do humans really have souls? Can humans really exist in the form of a soul or even have the ability to influence reality?”

Someone had once tried to gradually switch off their taste, hearing, sight, and so on with each passing year. After switching off his senses one by one, the remaining senses would be greatly enhanced. It was as though those deactivated senses ended up being concentrated on one sense, the sense of touch.

Then, at the moment when his emotions fluctuated the most violently, he ended his life, thus effectively ending his sense of touch as well.

Some people said that from that moment on, he existed only in the form of a soul, which was also the sixth sense. But no one could verify this since no one had ever seen the soul of that extreme person before.

Getting back to the topic of the five senses, some people’s hearing would become exceptionally good after they went blind. However, this was uncommon. Instead, people who went blind usually ended up with a better memory than that of able people.

The storyteller was the type who had great hearing and memory. So he could hear very clearly what Xiaolu said to Ren Xiaosu.

His granddaughter was actually whispering secrets to an outsider while trying to keep it from him?

After eating, Ren Xiaosu slowly walked back home. Although he was now a familiar face in town, the impression that most people had was that he was someone rich.

Previously, it was not only the refugees who came to seek help from him. There were also others from the world’s oldest profession that came knocking on his door in the middle of the night offering their services. However, he rejected all of them. Sometimes he would just drive them away without even opening the door.

As for the spooky event Xiaolu had mentioned... he already guessed what was going on.

Seeing that the lock on his house door was still intact, Ren Xiaosu opened the door with his key and headed straight for the backyard. There, he saw five people lying on the ground and smashed potatoes everywhere.

These five people were all normal people, and they were long dead from the Potato Shooter’s attacks.

However, Ren Xiaosu did not feel the least bit distraught when he saw a few bone knives scattered around the backyard. If a normal person were living here, they would probably have been killed by these people.

Everyone in town knew Ren Xiaosu was rich, so there would always be thieves trying to enter his house every now and then. In the past, Ren Xiaosu would have to kill them himself, then put their bodies away in his storage space and take them to the wilderness to bury.

But now, he did not have to do that anymore. The Potato Shooters would help him do all the dirty work.

The “haunting” was probably just the screams of these intruders when they got hit by the Potato Shooters after climbing into the backyard.

When Ren Xiaosu thought about it, he also felt that it must have been eerie that night.

A newly established recruitment office in town was offering high pay to workers to build roads.

Fortress 178 and the Wang Consortium had reached a consensus. The roads in the Central Plains would soon be extended to the Northwest, and there would be a highway for vehicles and a railway leading to the former Zong Consortium strongholds.

Due to the frozen ground, they could not build the railway further into the depths of the hinterlands of the Northwest. Construction would get too difficult, and the maintenance cost would be extremely high.

All of a sudden, Ren Xiaosu received another text message. “The targets in Stronghold 61 are from the Pyro Company’s Midnight squad. They are currently located in a residential building on 137 Lingbao Road. A-rank. Reward: 1 million yuan. Up to five people can work in a group for the mission, and all will receive rights to use the safe house and be protected by us upon being pursued by the enemy.”

Ren Xiaosu was stunned. This mission was very similar to the mission that took place in Stronghold 63 a few days ago. Moreover, the Anjing House increased the difficulty and reward of the mission this time. Previously, the mission allowed hitmen to work in groups of three, but that had expanded to a group of five this time.

Actually, the number of hitmen working together was not important. All it meant was that this mission’s reward would be given out as five sets!

It looked like the Anjing House was going all out against the Pyro Company this time. They had issued another mission with them as targets again this soon? Suddenly, it felt like these two heavyweight organizations were going to fight each other to the death.

It could also be because the ambush enraged the Anjing House and made them determined to clear out the Pyro Company from the Wang Consortium’s territory at all costs.

However, Ren Xiaosu did not plan on getting involved this time. He realized that every time he tried to stay out of something, trouble would automatically come looking for him even if he were just watching the commotion as a spectator.

He had caused too much of a commotion in Stronghold 63. If the Anjing House and the Pyro Company came looking for him together, he would be in deep trouble.

Furthermore, who knew if the Anjing House might have issued this mission at Stronghold 61 because they were trying to flush him out? How else could there be such a coincidence?

Therefore, Ren Xiaosu decided he would just stay home and catch up on sleep. In the evening, the sound of gunfire suddenly came from the stronghold. There were even loud explosions too, and this woke Ren Xiaosu up.

However, he headed to the tavern for dinner as though nothing had happened. When he arrived at the tavern, the storyteller was resting and eating dinner. It was nothing too special, just a bowl of biangbiang noodles.[1]

Ren Xiaosu smiled and said, "Where's Xiaolu?"

The storyteller did not answer him. Instead, he asked in turn, "Aren't you going into the stronghold to have a look?"

"Why would I go in there? I don't want to get involved in that mess." Ren Xiaosu chuckled as he said to the waiter, "I'll have a bowl of biangbiang noodles; make it extra spicy. I heard that y'all purchased fresh watermelons. Cut one for us. I'll have some together with Grandpa here."

The storyteller "stared" at Ren Xiaosu with his cloudy eyes. "Haven't you already had your fair share of messy situations?"

"Only when I'm forced by circumstance," Ren Xiaosu said with a laugh.

All of a sudden, the storyteller asked, "Let me ask you a question. If a watermelon is cut into three pieces, each portion will be 0.333, right?"

Ren Xiaosu was stunned. "That's right."

"0.333 multiplied by 3 equals 0.999. Then I ask of you: Where did the remaining 0.001 go?" the storyteller asked calmly.

Ren Xiaosu thought for a moment. "It's on the knife? Yes, it's on the knife!"

The storyteller paused for a while. "You're indeed inclined towards certain subjects...."

Ren Xiaosu suddenly turned serious. He was only fooling around earlier. Of course he knew about the recurring decimal sequence.[2]

But about being "inclined towards certain subjects," didn't that rumor come from the Northwest? The storyteller was obviously referring to something else by bringing that up.

Ren Xiaosu asked calmly, "So Grandpa already knows who I am?"

“People always say that only fearsome dragons cross the river, but how many river-crossing dragons can there be in the world?” The storyteller slurped up the remaining noodles in his bowl. “I’m warning you! A dangerous person like you better not get near my granddaughter!”

Then Xiaolu came in from the backyard with a watermelon. “Grandpa, the waiter said that you wanted to eat some watermelon? I’ve already cut some for you.”

The storyteller threw his chopsticks on the table. As if the watermelon was cut for me!

Chapter 489 Reacquainted with Zhou Yingxue!

ren xiaosu didn’t know whether to laugh or cry at the storyteller’s words. since when did he get any ideas about his granddaughter? that was absolutely untrue, alright!

but at this moment, the two of them noticed the intensity of the battle in the stronghold did not decrease even after such a long time. instead, it seemed to be getting even more intense!

ren xiaosu understood that the previous battle at stronghold 63 had only ended so quickly because of his sudden involvement. after all, the members of dusk were not weak. if typical superhumans encountered them, they might even end up dying at their hands.

the pyro company’s fighting forces had always had a huge advantage due to their numbers, probably because they could mass produce them.

ren xiaosu suddenly sighed and said, “an eye for an eye makes the world go blind.”

but the storyteller, who was listening intently to the sound of the fighting, replied with a serious look, “this is not about vengeance but a struggle between the ideals of those two organizations. you have to understand that without their ideals, they would not be known as an organization.”

ren xiaosu was stunned. perhaps that was the source of qing zhen and the saboteurs’ conflict as well. qing zhen saw nuclear technology as a gift from nature and felt that humans should make good use of it. however, the saboteurs felt that humans should not possess a weapon that was powerful enough to destroy themselves with. that was because there were no bounds to humanity’s greed and they would never be satisfied with what they had. even if qing zhen could ensure that he would not use them, could he do the same for his descendants?

if those gruff men of fortress 178 did not have the belief to guard their stronghold, they probably would not have such strong willpower either.

however, it was not something ren xiaosu should be considering right now. he never got the idea of establishing an organization before, so these were not things he needed to care about.

the battle was getting louder and louder. it was so loud that even the refugees in town stopped in their tracks outside the stronghold walls to watch what would happen next.

a raging fire was burning inside the stronghold. the blazing flames in the sky were so bright that the red glow illuminated the faces of the refugees dressed in rags.

“it seems the anjing house has not gained the upper hand in the battle yet,” the storyteller said with a sigh.

ren xiaosu asked, "grandpa, are you on the side of the anjing house?"

the storyteller said with a smile, "normal people would find it very difficult to have a good impression of organizations like the pyro company. no matter how good they might have been in the past, the current pyro company has already gone astray on the path of genetic evolution."

"do you mean that the pyro company used to be good?" ren xiaosu asked.

"apparently, even though they were also somewhat extreme during the pre-cataclysm times, they would still show some restraint in their behavior." the storyteller said, "when the world lost order after the cataclysm, their ambitions started growing too rapidly."

ren xiaosu muttered, "but it doesn't feel like they're that powerful..."

the storyteller was left speechless for a moment. he snapped, "how can you say that they aren't powerful when they're an organization that controls ten strongholds and has a ripple effect on the entire alliance of strongholds? you only think that they aren't powerful because you've killed several of their members before. but what if you're facing a 100 members of their advanced fighting forces? an organization that can mass produce super soldiers should never be judged based on the strength of an individual soldier. you have to multiply that by the numbers they have."

ren xiaosu smacked his lips. "alright..."

as soon as his voice trailed off, ren xiaosu suddenly heard the voice from the palace state, "quest: take in an injured person for three days."

ren xiaosu was stunned. it had probably been two months since he heard the palace assign him a quest. as a matter of fact, ever since he encountered the superhumans who could manipulate metal and summon a painted dragon at stronghold 63 a few days ago, he became really eager to learn their powers.

if he had that dragon painting power, it could come in quite handy to entertain his children with in the future! ahem, perhaps he had gotten a little too far ahead of himself.

even though he wanted to learn those powers, he could not do anything without a perfect skill duplication scroll. hence, the palace's quests were essential.

but there had to be a reason why the palace would suddenly assign him a quest to take in someone who was injured.

ren xiaosu got up to leave. the storyteller asked from behind him, "where are you going? didn't you say that you don't want to get involved in that mess?"

ren xiaosu snapped, "i'm going home to sleep!"

he wasn't looking to get involved in any chaos, but based on what the palace had said, it was a clear sign that trouble had come looking for him instead!

on his way back home, ren xiaosu kept walking past other refugees who were watching the ruckus from town. as the refugees did not have any activities to keep them entertained at night, they really hoped the fighting would go on for longer when they saw a battle going on in the stronghold.

after all, those big shots responsible for stirring up trouble had always looked down on the townspeople. even if battles broke out occasionally, the hostile forces would not do anything to the refugees. that was because they still needed refugees to work for them as they could not let the factories go unmanned!

when ren xiaosu arrived at the entrance of his home, he first checked the main door and found that the padlock was still intact. however, he caught a whiff of a sweet, metallic odor coming from the inside the house through the gap in the door. it was the smell of blood.

he opened the door with his key calmly. but as soon as he pushed open the door, he saw a pathetic figure attack him with a dagger from inside the house. to ren xiaosu's further surprise, two vines sprouted out from the ground as though they were trying to grab ahold of his ankles.

but the attacker seemed to have aggravated a wound with this surprise attack on ren xiaosu. this caused the attacker to lose control of their movement, and the vines that sprouted out of the ground also withered away.

ren xiaosu easily grabbed the attacker's wrist that was brandishing a dagger at him. however, he gasped when he realized the wrist was very slender. it turned out this was a woman's wrist.

however, ren xiaosu was not really someone who would go soft on women. he immediately landed a knifehand strike on the attacker's carotid artery so he could properly size her up afterwards.

however, he was surprised by what he saw. the attacker turned out to be an old acquaintance of his!

zhou yingxue!

why would that yang consortium spy, who had tried to get close to him by seducing him at stronghold 88 only to end up jumping rope with him, appear here? and she even looked like she had been seriously injured?

when stronghold 88 was destroyed, ren xiaosu had also apprehended zhou yingxue. but at that time, she had anxiously pleaded with him to allow her to go save her mother. as such, he let her off after some consideration.

he had not expected to encounter her again here.

ren xiaosu carried zhou yingxue to the backyard and saw the potato shooters were putting on their best behavior. zhou yingxue probably escaped being attacked by the potato shooters due to her power to manipulate plants.

zhou yingxue had even controlled two vines on the ground to attack ren xiaosu.

ren xiaosu snapped at the potato shooters, "did y'all not attack her just because she can manipulate plants? why are y'all so useless?"

the five potato shooters gently spat out a few potatoes as though they were trying to get back into ren xiaosu's good books. 'here, have some potatoes.'

ren xiaosu did not know whether to laugh or cry. what the hell was this?

he looked at zhou yingxue, who he had thrown to the side. then he listened to the gunfire that was still ringing out in the stronghold. the wang consortium's troops had probably been alerted now since the gunfire seemed to have only gotten even more intense.

Chapter 490 The mystery of the mission assignments

the fighting in the stronghold continued until late into the night, but even then, it did not stop. ren xiaosu could still hear gunfire coming from the stronghold in his yard every now and then.

ren xiaosu thought that if he had not been at stronghold 63 two days ago, that battle would probably have also lasted this long.

fortunately, the battle in the stronghold had attracted the attention of stronghold 61's garrison troops. otherwise, the enemy might have already come searching for zhou yingxue.

he wondered if zhou yingxue had been seen by anyone when she fled?

but how should he handle zhou yingxue now? after he tied her up, ren xiaosu suddenly remembered he had also bound her like this in their last encounter. always meeting under such circumstances just did not feel right to him.

zhou yingxue gradually came to. when she regained consciousness, she struggled for a bit in the chair and realized she could not move. then she looked up at ren xiaosu and said, "what are you trying to do? why are you here? are you here to arrest me? don't tell me you've joined the pyro company or the wang consortium?"

"hold it right there!" ren xiaosu said, "this is my fucking house. you were the one who intruded into my house in the middle of the night, so how dare you ask why i'm here? is that even appropriate? shouldn't i be the one asking what you're doing here? what are you plotting against me?"

when zhou yingxue heard that, she got so angry she nearly flipped. who was plotting against you?!

but zhou yingxue could not understand why this was ren xiaosu's residence. wasn't this place in the town outside stronghold 61?

in zhou yingxue's opinion, ren xiaosu was a much stronger supernatural being than her, so he shouldn't be living in a town like this.

but she had lost too much blood and could not think straight anymore. she only barely managed to argue back, "lie! continue lying! how can a person like you possibly be living here?"

after that, zhou yingxue quietly watched as ren xiaosu held up a key and lock. when he gently twisted the key, the padlock opened.

seemingly afraid that zhou yingxue could not see it clearly, ren xiaosu relocked the padlock and twisted the key again. just like that, he repeated the process many times.

it was like he was mocking zhou yingxue silently.

zhou yingxue could feel her head starting to hurt. “stop it, stop opening it already!”

she could not understand why there was such an annoying person in this world!

ren xiaosu chuckled and said, “this is the padlock on my house door. the plants in the backyard were planted by me. the chair you’re sitting in was made by a carpenter i hired. on the nightstand next to the chair are books from stronghold 88’s library that i stole—i mean, borrowed.”

with that, zhou yingxue was finally convinced. she kept quiet for a while before asking, “what’re you doing here? where did you all go after stronghold 88 was destroyed? were you the ones responsible for that?”

ren xiaosu asked, “you were partly in charge of the intelligence work at the yang consortium, so how can you not know that it was the li consortium’s nanosoldiers who were responsible for it? you must’ve encountered those soldiers that lost their minds that night, right? by the way, did you manage to save your mother?”

“yes, i got her out.” when zhou yingxue recalled that she had only managed to save her mother because ren xiaosu decided to let her go, her anger subsided a little.

but when zhou yingxue thought about it again, she felt that something was not right. ren xiaosu was the one who had tied her up at that time. she had just finished her grocery shopping and was about to return home to cook for her mother. however, she met this guy on the way and was knocked out by him!

zhou yingxue asked, “what do you want from me now?”

“come, i want you to answer some of my questions.” ren xiaosu smiled and said, “are you a member of the anjing house?”

“no.” zhou yingxue shook her head. “at least not yet.”

“then you must be an a-rank hitwoman, right?” ren xiaosu said with a smile, “since you’re a woman, it’s not convenient for me to body search you. where do you keep your cell phone? hand it over.”

zhou yingxue no longer possessed the charming aura she had back at the library. instead, she was wearing a tight-fitting, black t-shirt and a pair of pants that gave her a rather nimble look.

actually, zhou yingxue was not exactly the beautiful type and could only be considered slightly above average-looking. however, she possessed a certain demeanor that made her stand out.

zhou yingxue suddenly asked, "how do you know about the anjing house and the contract killers?"

"ahem." ren xiaosu said with restraint, "coincidentally, i'm also a contract killer myself."

zhou yingxue was really stunned this time. "you're also an a-rank hitman?"

"no, i'm a d-rank...." ren xiaosu took out a d-rank cell phone that he had snatched from someone but never used before.

zhou yingxue burst into laughter. "what? you're a d-rank?! you must be kidding, right? how can a supernatural being like you be a d-rank hitman?"

ren xiaosu said unhappily, "is it that funny? aren't we supposed to complete the missions and get promoted slowly? didn't you also start off as a d-rank?"

"of course not." zhou yingxue belly laughed. "when supernatural beings make their known identities, they'll be issued a new cell phone, and the missions assigned through them will also be different. you stole that phone from a d-rank hitman, right? you can't receive any a-rank missions. also, an a-rank hitman's cell phone is matched to their fingerprints."

"that can't be. i can receive a-rank missions too." ren xiaosu was puzzled.

hold on! actually, he had not received any a-rank missions before. but ever since he stirred up all that trouble at stronghold 61 and 63, he started receiving them.

he took zhou yingxue's cell phone from her right pants pocket. her phone was much more exquisite than his, and the camera's quality was also clearer. there was also an area reserved for the fingerprint scanner to unlock the cell phone.

so was he only receiving information about the a-rank missions because the anjing house had given him special treatment after realizing he was the one who stirred up all that trouble?

if so, he would have to be more careful when he performed his missions from now on.

although he could also get promoted to a-rank by declaring himself to the anjing house that he was a supernatural being like zhou yingxue, he did not want to expose his identity.

he had thought about stealing an a-rank hitman's cell phone, but the anjing house required a-rank hitmen to switch to new cell phones that had fingerprint verification software. each a-rank hitman would get a phone that could only be unlocked specifically by them.

therefore, every killer needed to change to a new cell phone after they got promoted to a-rank. if he had to swap for a new phone, he would have to deal directly with an anjing house member to get his fingerprint id set up. wouldn't his identity still get exposed?

ren xiaosu asked, "did a member of the anjing house personally hand you your new cell phone?"

“no.” zhou yingxue shook her head. “it was delivered to me by a white paper crane. the anjing house has never questioned the identities of the hitmen. whether they wish to keep their identities secret or publicize it, that’s all up to them.”

realization dawned upon ren xiaosu. so that’s how it was. it was all good as long as there was no need for him to meet them in person. and he could finally confirm that the supernatural being who controlled the paper cranes was from anjing house. he wondered what position that person held within the anjing house.

it was probably not an important position, right? after all, from the looks of it, that supernatural being was merely a messenger of sorts...

suddenly, zhou yingxue said, “untie me, please. i need to clean my wound. i’ll tell you whatever you want to know after that. if i don’t treat my wound soon, i’ll die....”