

### **Chapter 49: Stop here, ye who live**

For now, the convoy was traveling at a rapid pace. On one hand, this stretch of road was a little smoother to travel on. On the other hand, everyone felt that as long as they drove fast enough, they could leave the danger behind them.

As the setting sun cast rays from the sky heading into evening, the convoy finally emerged out of the woods and saw the towering cliffs and canyon ahead of them.

The cliffs were like giant stairs that had been yanked out of the ground. When they got out of their vehicles, they had to crane their heads so far back their necks felt strained before they could see the top of the cliffs. But when they gazed to the left and right, they couldn't see the end.

These were nature's stairs. It was like you could climb into heaven by taking this staircase.

The Howling Canyon looked like a thin black line as it stretched out into the distance. But when they approached it, they realized that the canyon was so wide that five or six cars could pass through it side by side.

A howl and whistle was produced when the strong mountain winds blew through the canyon. If someone were standing at the mouth of the canyon, they would hardly be able to stay upright and would almost certainly get knocked over by the wind.

The magic and magnificence of nature were given full expression with this display.

Suddenly, Liu Bu shouted, "Everyone, come look at this."

Liu Bu stood next to entrance of the Howling Canyon and pointed at a section on the cliff wall while shouting, "There's something written on here!"

Everyone went over and saw that someone had carved the words "Stop here, ye who live" as large as a person's head on the cliff wall.

Xu Xianchu looked at Ren Xiaosu. "Who carved this into the cliff?"

Ren Xiaosu shook his head. "I didn't see these five words when I was here last year."

"Why did you come here?" Liu Bu shrieked. "Do you know how far from town this is? You shouldn't have ventured out this far even if you were out hunting. Who the hell are you, really? You must have kept your identity from us!"

Ren Xiaosu nodded and said, "Yes, there's something that I haven't told y'all yet. I'm actually... the heir of the dragon."

Liu Bu, Xu Xianchu, and Luo Xinyu were speechless.

“There are too many doubts about you right now.” Xu Xianchu pointed his gun at Ren Xiaosu and said, “You must explain exactly why you came out here last year. This area is off the beaten track. Stronghold 113 has not sent anyone to this place in many years, and even though this is the only route linking Stronghold 112 to Stronghold 113, no one from Stronghold 112 has been to our side this past year either. You’re likely the only person who’s been here this year, so did you carve these words into the cliff?”

Ren Xiaosu thought for a moment and said, “The words are carved in a very high place. I can’t reach it without moving a rock over to stand on with how short I am. Besides, I’m just as surprised as y’all are about these five words. I’m also incredibly puzzled about who did this.”

Ren Xiaosu wasn’t lying about this. He truly did not carve these words.

“You haven’t given us an explanation of why you came to this place!” Liu Bu roared. “Do you know how far from town we are?”

Everyone looked at Ren Xiaosu. Although they had driven at a slower pace than jogging, they still covered a pretty long distance in three days. There was no reason for Ren Xiaosu to come to this place.

Ren Xiaosu stayed silent for a moment before saying, “Last year, I encountered a pack of wolves when I was at the Yuns. They pursued me until I reached this place.”

This was also the truth.

“You’re bullshitting.” Liu Bu retorted, “How could a kid like you survive an encounter with the wolves? Tell me, why did the wolves let you go?”

“I wasn’t their target at the time. I just happened to be there. I ran into the woods in a hurry, thinking they would ignore me. I didn’t expect them to chase me. As for how I survived... after I entered the Howling Canyon, they stopped chasing me. I hid in there for two days and only came out after they left. I don’t know my way around the inside of the canyon since I haven’t gone that far in myself.”

Everyone was stunned. Even the wolves stopped chasing when they reached this place? Could something terrible really lurk beyond this canyon?

Perhaps some kind person had gone in and discovered the secret of the Jing Mountains, so they left behind a mess on the canyon’s cliff wall to warn others not to proceed further.

Everyone believed Ren Xiaosu’s explanation, but he wasn’t telling the full truth this time. Back then, he had indeed been pursued by the wolves, but the truth was that they continued chasing him instead of stopping here.

In fact, Ren Xiaosu also wasn’t sure how he had survived. He had lost his consciousness shortly after the wolves caught up to him. When he woke up, he was injured all over but the wolves were nowhere to be seen.

He was at death's door when he finally struggled back into town. It was only at that time that he realized the horror of the wolves. But it was also after this encounter with the wolves that the black mist started appearing in his mind.

Ren Xiaosu had spent the entire year thinking about whether there was any link between the black mist in his mind and him losing consciousness at that time. What exactly had happened while he was unconscious?

Someone suddenly said, "Do you guys know anything about those supernatural beings? Maybe the writing was left behind by one of them. It's not surprising since they can walk around freely in the wilderness. Some of these supernatural beings have long surpassed the realm of normal human beings."

The person who spoke was a soldier. However, Xu Xianchu looked at him in fury. "That's a military secret."

"Why are you still pretending? Didn't the whole lot of us get sent here because we're all ostracized? How much longer do you think you can stay an officer?" The soldier sneered and said, "Even if we can complete the mission, do you really think that Ma Xin will let you off when you return?"

Ren Xiaosu was stunned. The chain of command of the private army was such a mess that the enlisted confronted the officers as they wished? Unknowingly, Ren Xiaosu's impression of the private army worsened. The schoolteacher, Mr. Zhang, had described that the armies from before The Cataclysm were well-disciplined, which in turn made them into a unified, strong unit.

Xu Xianchu looked at that soldier. "Even if he doesn't let me off, I'll make sure you get cast out before I do. You'd better shut your trap now. Otherwise, I'm going to treat you as a deserter and punish you accordingly."

The soldier fell silent, but Liu Bu and Luo Xinyu started to get curious. "We heard that three supernatural beings were arrested in our stronghold by the private army some time ago. What happened to them?"

Xu Xianchu deliberated before saying, "It's none of your business. We were just carrying out our superiors' orders."

"Then are we still heading in?" Liu Bu pleaded, "Sir, why don't we turn back? It's too dangerous in there!"

Xu Xianchu finally showed signs of wavering. He looked at the sky and said with a sigh, "Since it's getting late, let's set up camp here for the night. We'll discuss whether to stay or go, then make a decision. How about that?"

Liu Bu and the others agreed. As long as they were not going forward, they were fine with any decision.

Ren Xiaosu gazed deep into the canyon. The straight canyon walls on either side looked like they joined with the sky. A small ray of light shone in from a crevice at the top, but this ray of light faded as it made its way down into the canyon. The deeper he looked into it, the darker it became.