

First Order 501

Chapter 501 80/20 split

Ren Xiaosu cast a sidelong glance at Zhou Yingxue. Seeing her attitude, he did not know what to say. "Go ahead and pretend to be the sniper. I have no objections."

"Then after the mission is accomplished, the reward..." Zhou Yingxue carefully probed.

"We'll split it. I'll get 80% while you get 20," Ren Xiaosu said while looking at her.

"I'm only getting 20%?!" Zhou Yingxue said in disbelief.

"You have a problem with that?" Ren Xiaosu looked at her seriously.

"No, no I don't!" Zhou Yingxue knew her own capabilities well enough. Although she was good at assassination, infiltration, and intelligence gathering, she was not someone who could handle a target like the member of an organization's Board of Directors. Therefore, just as Ren Xiaosu had guessed, Zhou Yingxue had only latched onto him because she realized he was trying to keep his identity hidden, so she took the initiative to act as his front. It was a win-win situation!

Ren Xiaosu looked at her and suddenly said, "Do you want to gain entry to the Anjing House?"

"Yes!" Zhou Yingxue's eyes lit up. "I heard that after getting into the Anjing House, even if you don't complete a mission, you'll still receive a fixed amount of money!"

Ren Xiaosu snapped, "Dream on! You definitely still have to contribute something. But if you really want to get in, I can help you!"

"What do you want in exchange?" Zhou Yingxue asked. She realized Ren Xiaosu wanted to get into the Anjing House as well!

"Alright, go back to your own tent. We'll talk about other matters after you get into the Anjing House," Ren Xiaosu snapped.

With that, he chased Zhou Yingxue out of the tent. What would it look like if he kept being seen with a woman alone? If word of this got out, what would he do if he suddenly got sniped?

At this moment, the other A-rank hitmen outside were not yet asleep. They had quietly watched Zhou Yingxue enter Ren Xiaosu's tent earlier. After a dozen minutes, she came out again as though nothing had happened. When Zhou Yingxue exited from the tent, she was even tidying her hair.

The A-rank hitman named Wu Tong sighed. "As if he's a spotter. He's clearly a boy toy."

One of the hitmen said indifferently, "It isn't that uncommon. Many hitwomen also seek comfort after all the dangerous work they've performed. Don't hitmen also visit brothels? It's all about equality."

Another person said, "I'm just afraid that that boy toy will drag us down when he gets into the stronghold."

“What’s there to be afraid of?” Wu Tong smiled and said, “We’ve already discussed this, in fact. My informant has arranged for a way to get us into the stronghold together, but I told the two of them that we’ll have to find our own way into the stronghold. If he’s really a boy toy, we’ll see if Zhou Yingxue can get him into the stronghold on her own. If he can’t get in, he can’t drag us down.”

“Hehe, Old Wu is so wise!”

At this moment, Ren Xiaosu was lying down in his tent. He was holding a pistol in case anyone showed up and sneak attacked him in the night.

Any slight movement would not escape his notice.

Ren Xiaosu could not trust the other four hitmen at all. It was very likely that one of them might have ulterior motives.

When Zhou Yingxue came over, he was not lying when he said he wanted to help her gain entry into the Anjing House. He really had a plan.

As a matter of fact, his goal was to eventually get the Anjing House to help him find Wang Fugui and the others, and the reason why he had been hiding his identity all this while was that he was afraid Wang Fugui and the others would get captured if the other party found out about his identity.

According to Zhou Yingxue, when a hitman reached A-rank, a paper crane would deliver a new cell phone to them.

Other people might think the paper cranes were just folded pieces of paper that could not perceive their surroundings, but Ren Xiaosu knew those who had received the new cell phones would probably have their appearances memorized.

He could hide his face, but that would still arouse the suspicion of others. Therefore, he might as well push Zhou Yingxue to the front while he operated behind the scenes. At least, that would leave him with some room to maneuver.

Both stood to gain, so it was indeed a win-win situation for everyone.

When they set off again the next day, the other A-rank hitmen looked at Ren Xiaosu and Zhou Yingxue with curious gazes. However, Ren Xiaosu did not pay much attention to them and just focused on playing the role of an assistant.

But to Ren Xiaosu’s surprise, Zhou Yingxue seemed like she was really hooked on acting as the boss. She even asked Ren Xiaosu to make tea for her! It was as though she did not feel burdened acting in this way. Then she would hurry over at night to apologize.

Actually, Zhou Yingxue found that letting others assume she was a sniper did not really make her feel that awesome or satisfied. Instead, she got the most kick out of having Ren Xiaosu make tea for her.

Other people might not know Ren Xiaosu's identity, but how could she not know? To have a supernatural being who was almost legendary brew tea for her, there was probably no need to mention just how great it felt!

It was just that when she apologized at night, her arms got a little sore. Since she acted that way during the day, Ren Xiaosu thought he might as well not chase her away and just let her massage his legs until midnight. Only then did Zhou Yingxue learn to restrain herself a little.

Ren Xiaosu realized Zhou Yingxue was quite an interesting character. She was the kind of person who would get cocky with just a little praise.

There was an old saying specifically for people like Zhou Yingxue. Spare the rod and spoil the child. They would constantly test the limits of how far they could go without getting punished.

When the team arrived outside of Stronghold 73, the members parted ways. They hid the vehicle in the wilderness to the north, specifically covering it with a green camouflage tarp.

After the others left, Zhou Yingxue switched back to her role as the maid. She busied herself around Ren Xiaosu, even taking out an apple from her backpack and peeling it for Ren Xiaosu to eat.

Ren Xiaosu looked at Zhou Yingxue. "What methods do you spies usually use to sneak into the strongholds? You probably don't have to resort to hiding underneath a truck, right?"

Zhou Yingxue said, "That's basically how we do it, unless we have a lot of connections in the area. In that case, the private troops will secretly let us in and receive a reward for their help. Some of the private troops can even receive hundreds of thousands of yuan each time they accept a bribe. That's basically enough to cover 20 years of their salary."

"Then do you have any ideas?" Ren Xiaosu found a tall hill to observe the vicinity of Stronghold 73 with his spotting scope. To his surprise, he saw the other four hitmen board a vehicle in the wilderness that had driven out of a slaughterhouse.

It turned out they already had a way to get into the stronghold. It was just that they didn't want Zhou Yingxue and him to get in the same way as them.

However, this wasn't a big problem as the four hitmen were not obliged to give them any help either. The problem was that Ren Xiaosu had realized the security check at the stronghold's gate was extremely strict. Other than that vehicle from the slaughterhouse, the other vehicles that were going in and out of the stronghold were all required to open up their cargo holds for inspection. It would not be realistic to think they could get in by hiding underneath a truck.

It would be easy for him to solve this problem since he could just scamper over the walls and get in. But what about Zhou Yingxue? As the spotter, he couldn't possibly leave the sniper outside and get in by himself, could he? Would there still be a need for him if that were the case?

However, Zhou Yingxue said, "I can control a plant to open up an underground tunnel. The stronghold with the deepest walls is Fortress 178, but even the foundation of Fortress 178 only goes down 27 meters. My plants can easily dig a tunnel through that."

Ren Xiaosu started to look at Zhou Yingxue in a new light. So it turned out her superpower to control plants was actually quite useful. However, this floral supernatural being was still a little stranger than he had thought. She could dig tunnels

Chapter 502 Zhou Yingxue's suppressive fire

In this world, strange superpowers were constantly emerging. Without seeing it with their own eyes, no one would know just how many strange beings there were in existence.

When night fell, Ren Xiaosu quietly led Zhou Yingxue outside the stronghold. Then Zhou Yingxue "took" out a seed and threw it onto the ground. Without needing to dig any holes or water it, the seed started sprouting immediately and grew rapidly.

Ren Xiaosu could hear the muffled sound of the earth rumbling, but he could not tell that anything was going on underground. The plant that sprouted from the ground did not seem like it had grown very tall and looked at most as large as a coriander plant.

However, when Zhou Yingxue pulled the green plant out of the ground, the ground suddenly opened up into a one-meter-wide tunnel. Zhou Yingxue said, "Just jump right in. I plucked it out early, otherwise, it could have used its roots to create an even larger space underground."

Ren Xiaosu asked, "What's the largest size it can create?"

"About the size of a room," Zhou Yingxue said.

Ren Xiaosu pondered about a room being created at will several dozen meters under the ground. This fucking power would be such an easy way to build a bomb shelter!

"You head down first." Ren Xiaosu said to Zhou Yingxue, "I'll follow you."

Zhou Yingxue pursed her lips at the thought of him not trusting her.

However, she did not make a fuss about it. She just contorted her body and crawled into the tunnel. As she was crawling inside, she caught a glimpse of some light behind her and wondered if Ren Xiaosu was secretly peeking at her from behind. Although Zhou Yingxue was cursing at how shameless he was, she did not dare to protest.

But when they got out of the tunnel, Ren Xiaosu said to Zhou Yingxue, "Head to the rendezvous point first. I still have something I need to attend to."

After saying that, Ren Xiaosu handed a long case to Zhou Yingxue and told her that there was a sniper rifle inside it. He wanted her to carry it with her.

The main purpose of doing so was to confuse Wu Tong and the others. After all, Zhou Yingxue's current persona was that of a sniper, so carrying the long case on her back would only make her look more like one.

After he dealt with that, Ren Xiaosu left Zhou Yingxue behind in the stronghold alone. She hurriedly planted some plants to cover the entrance of the tunnel but was left with a sense of helplessness. Didn't Ren Xiaosu promise to help her with the mission? So why did he leave right after getting into the stronghold?

Fortunately, this wasn't the Wang Consortium's stronghold. Otherwise, she wouldn't be so sure that she could avoid all of the surveillance cameras on her own.

Zhou Yingxue rushed all the way to the rendezvous point. How the Zhou Consortium's strongholds differed from the Wang Consortium's strongholds was that even if you were to sneak into one of the Zhou Consortium's strongholds, no one would care about you even if you openly swaggered down the streets.

If it were the Wang Consortium's strongholds, the artificial intelligence would probably have already reported the presence of an intruder to the police.

After arriving at the meeting place, Zhou Yingxue knocked on the door and went inside. The other hitmen asked, "Where's your assistant?"

Zhou Yingxue answered calmly, "I got him to handle some matters." What else could she say?

The hitmen looked at each other and laughed in their heads. That boy toy really couldn't get into the stronghold after all!

However, they did not explicitly remark about it. After all, Zhou Yingxue was a superhuman and a sniper at that, too, so of course they could not afford to offend her.

Wu Tong brought out a huge map and said, "I have an informant on my side who helped me find out about Zhou Xilong's daily routine. Every morning, he sets off from Red Pine Lane and passes by Jiangnan North Road, Liberation Avenue, and Sanyang Road before arriving at his office. At night, he attends some social engagements, but the location isn't permanent. However, he tends to return home to his residence at Red Pine Lane after that."

Zhou Yingxue quietly observed the reactions of the other hitmen and noticed they looked a little distracted. It was obvious they had already been briefed, but Wu Tong was just repeating it to her.

The four people before her had already formed a clique.

Wu Tong continued, "We have two plans. One is to ambush him on his way to the office, and the other is to ambush him at the entrance of Red Pine Lane when he returns at night. Both plans have their pros and cons. The morning plan is more likely to succeed as he'll definitely pass through that route every day, but the disadvantage is that it won't be convenient for us to retreat after taking action in the

daylight. The night plan will give us the advantage to retreat safely. Visibility in the night is worse, so it'll be more difficult for the enemy to pursue us."

After Wu Tong finished speaking, Zhou Yingxue said, "Have you all planned the retreat route yet?"

"No, but the same rule applies. We'll leave based on our own capabilities." Wu Tong smiled.

"Then let's go with the night plan." Zhou Yingxue smiled calmly and said, "We can't throw away our lives over a mission, right?"

"Alright, since the superhuman has said so, we'll prioritize the night plan and carry out the decapitation strike in the villa at Red Pine Lane," Wu Tong said and nodded.

"How many people are there escorting him every day? And how many guards are stationed at the villa?" Zhou Yingxue asked with a frown.

Wu Tong said, "They have a total of seven guards spread out between two vehicles. The vehicles are bulletproof, and it's always the same person sitting by the target's side. That's probably his aide or the superhuman that was mentioned in the mission brief. As for what the superhuman's power is, we aren't sure either. These people also stay overnight in the villa."

At this point, a person next to Wu Tong said to Zhou Yingxue, "There's a tall building in the vicinity of Red Pine Lane. The four of us will attack the villa sometime during the night. At that time, Ms. Zhou, you can choose your preferred sniping spot and provide us with suppressive fire. If anyone uses the windows as cover and tries to stop us, we'll be depending on Ms. Zhou to help us take care of them. Our proposed time of operation will be tonight."

In fact, the most difficult part of a decapitation strike was how to get ahold of the target's schedule and how to identify their location. Once they could find the target, everything could proceed smoothly.

The person they were going to kill this time was not an elusive target. Wu Tong's informant had even made preparations for them beforehand, so that saved them a lot of trouble.

Therefore, since all the preparations were in order, they might as well strike fast.

Furthermore, the plan the four had come up with was definitely not that simple. They probably did not want to say it because they did not want Zhou Yingxue to know about their plan.

Zhou Yingxue said calmly, "No problem."

But after saying that, she started panicking on the inside. They were going to take action tonight, but Ren Xiaosu had yet to come back from whatever he had gone to do. How was she supposed to provide suppressive fire for the others?

However, Zhou Yingxue thought that even though she had not been specially trained to handle a sniper rifle, it shouldn't be a problem for her to hit a nearby target with the help of a scope. After all, she was trained as a soldier in the Yang Consortium's military, so she had handled a sniper rifle before.

She quietly left the safe house. After locating Red Pine Lane, she scouted for a tall building nearby. It wasn't easy for her to find an observation spot that was close enough, but when Zhou Yingxue went up to the rooftop and opened the case that Ren Xiaosu had given her...

She discovered it was filled with bricks...

Zhou Yingxue was so angry she nearly wanted to curse out loud. That shameless Ren Xiaosu! Never mind that he had disappeared, but he did not even leave her with a sniper rifle? Was she supposed to rely on these bricks to provide suppressive fire for the rest of the team tonight? Use the bricks to smash the glass windows of the villa?!

503 Stirring up the biggest trouble in Stronghold 73

Indeed, Wu Tong had already formed a clique with the other three members. They had excluded Zhou Yingxue from the mission planning and had her provide suppressive fire for them instead. On one hand, it did not matter even if Zhou Yingxue was of no help to them. Wu Tong and the others had actually planned to kill Zhao Haocheng before they conducted the mission here. This meant the four of them were confident of completing the mission by themselves.

Of course, Wu Tong and the others were now looking forward to what Zhou Yingxue could do after she had killed Zhao Haocheng with a single shot a few days ago while they were moving at high speed. That shot was simply ruthless. It would be good if she could contribute by providing suppressive fire for them.

On the other hand, Wu Tong's preparation for this mission seemed to have involved the upper echelons of the stronghold. Therefore, Wu Tong was not keen on letting Zhou Yingxue know about his connections.

Zhou Yingxue could also guess that this was the case. Wu Tong's informant had already found out about Zhou Xilong's schedule before they got here. So it was obvious the informant was not a normal person.

Moreover, Wu Tong and the others had decided to make their move on the very same day they entered the stronghold because they had received very reliable news that two bodyguards were going to pick up their target's daughter from school today. After that, the bodyguards would send the target's daughter to his ex-wife's place for the weekend before returning on Monday.

This was a godsend.

Now that their clique had excluded her, Zhou Yingxue was happy to get some peace and quiet. Of course, it would also be better if she could complete the mission with their help. After all, she would still get rewarded when Wu Tong and the rest finished the mission successfully.

But the problem was that even if she were going to remain a bystander in this battle, it would be better to do so with a sniper rifle in her hands. What was she supposed to do with a case of bricks?

But right now, it was not how the mission would turn out that made her angry! It was because Ren Xiaosu was really too undependable!

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Ren Xiaosu had already located the target of the D-rank mission outside of Stronghold 73. All he needed to do now was to kneel in wait for more cell phones to be delivered to him.

Other people would subconsciously think of the 20,000 yuan reward when they saw a D-rank mission get issued. But it was different for Ren Xiaosu. His thoughts turned straight to getting his hands on several more cell phones instead!

Didn't Zhou Yingxue say a cell phone could fetch up to several hundred thousand yuan on the black market? Therefore, this was much more valuable than completing a mission!

Earlier in the tunnel when Zhou Yingxue saw a light behind her, she thought Ren Xiaosu was trying to sneak a peek at her. But actually, Ren Xiaosu had received a notification for a mission at Stronghold 73. Moreover, a C and D-rank mission had been issued at the same time.

Ren Xiaosu planned on completing the D-rank mission first, then move on to finishing the C-rank mission. However, he did not know if he could make it in time.

In his opinion, Zhou Yingxue and the others would definitely need a few days of preparation to complete their A-rank mission. After all, it was only wise to be cautious when it came to an A-rank mission.

Truthfully, Ren Xiaosu could not have expected them to pick tonight to execute the mission.

But so what? What could be more important than him stealing more cell phones?

This time, Ren Xiaosu did not use his previous cell phones to conduct the missions. Instead, he switched to a cell phone he had just gotten today to accept the missions. In any case, the mission rewards were always paid out each time a mission was completed, and it was always credited to an anonymous account too, so it did not really affect him.

In the dead of night, Ren Xiaosu thought about his situation carefully. He would also admit that he had gone overboard. His actions did not help him in keeping a low profile.

Ren Xiaosu changed into a hoodie and covered his head with the hood. Although there were no surveillance cameras in Stronghold 73, he still had to be careful, right?

After completing the D-rank mission, Ren Xiaosu rushed over to conduct the C-rank mission. After confirming the mission had not been done by anyone yet, Ren Xiaosu felt quite happy. Was it because there were no C-rank hitmen in Stronghold 73? Why was there no one competing for the mission?

In the end, something a little unexpected happened. When Ren Xiaosu saw the mission details, he realized his target this time was a mob boss in Stronghold 73. There was no point in reasoning with such a person, and all that he needed to do was to go up to him and finish the job.

However, he did not expect that when he pushed open the door of the gang's headquarters in a spa care center, the entire gang would be in the middle of a meeting.

Ren Xiaosu saw a group of men with tattoos standing in the lobby and being lectured by the target. When the group of men saw someone push open the door and enter the spa, they all turned around in unison and looked at the uninvited guest with an imposing manner.

In Ren Xiaosu's mind, wasn't this just a gang? Why would criminals be holding a meeting?!

Time waited for no man, and Ren Xiaosu's time was very precious!

Oh well, better to just attack first and think about it later! Ren Xiaosu even closed the door behind him after going in!

There were already a few C-rank hitmen lying in wait outside the spa. It was not that they did not want to perform this mission, but that they were too scared to do it. No matter what, they would have to wait for the meeting to end first, right? There were dozens of people inside, after all.

In the end, they saw Ren Xiaosu, who was wearing a black hoodie, walk right into the lobby. As Ren Xiaosu covered himself very well, they did not manage to see his face clearly.

No one thought that Ren Xiaosu would be a hitman. After all, none of the C-rank hitmen would be so bold and aggressive as him to go straight into the lobby to accomplish the mission.

However, immediately after Ren Xiaosu went inside, they heard some loud gunshots...

The C-rank hitmen outside all pissed their pants. "That person who just went in is a hitman just like us?"

"There's dozens of people inside, and he went inside just like that?"

"He's definitely gonna rest in pieces!"

"So are we still gonna conduct the mission or not? I didn't expect to meet such a formidable counterpart here."

"Why don't we just give up? Police sirens are already wailing in the neighboring street. I don't want to get arrested with them."

But before they could come to a decision, these hitmen saw Ren Xiaosu push open the door of the spa from inside. Then he headed north as if nothing had happened and disappeared amid the pedestrians. There wasn't even a drop of blood on him.

In the duration that the spa's door was open just now, the C-rank hitmen vaguely heard some screams and saw traces of blood on the inside.

Actually, these C-rank hitmen should be glad they had not made a move earlier. Because of that, they were not exposed to Ren Xiaosu as C-rank hitmen. Otherwise, he would have taken them all down as well.

When the few C-rank hitmen saw the terrible situation in the spa and heard the police sirens getting closer, they turned around and left. They had encountered a fearsome outsider today, so they realized they could not stay here any longer.

“Is this something a C-rank hitman does?”

“Is this something a human does?!”

...

“No one does something like that!” Zhou Yingxue uttered indignantly as she sat on the roof with a brick in hand.

It was about to turn dark, yet Ren Xiaosu’s figure was still nowhere to be seen. If he had gone to the meeting place and saw that the team was not there, he should have rushed over to Red Pine Lane. After all, the target’s address was specified on the attached map in the mission briefing.

But even after waiting for a long time, she still did not see Ren Xiaosu anywhere.

At this moment, instead of Ren Xiaosu turning up, Zhou Yingxue heard the sound of gunshots in the distance.

The gunshots were so sharp that Zhou Yingxue suddenly looked up. She stood on the roof and looked in the direction of the gunshots while wondering if something had happened to Ren Xiaosu.

Zhou Yingxue subconsciously thought of Ren Xiaosu not because she was hoping that something would happen to him, but because she was truly very worried. Would it affect them if something unexpected were to happen in Stronghold 73 just as they were about to carry out their mission?

And right now, in Stronghold 73, Ren Xiaosu was the biggest question mark of all.

Chapter 504 A black swan even

Zhou Yingxue’s guess was pretty accurate. The gunshot she heard was from Ren Xiaosu as he completed his mission at the gang’s headquarters. Moreover, this commotion had caused the stronghold’s troops to be deployed.

The entire stronghold’s management was alerted as they never expected a shooting would happen in their peaceful stronghold.

Would the gunshots affect the A-rank mission?

The short answer would be “yes.”

Zhou Yingxue waited on the rooftop while Wu Tong and the others blended into the crowd on the street below. They had planned on pretending to be pedestrians to observe their surroundings. But when the gunshots rang out, all of the stronghold residents headed home. Only Wu Tong and the others were left standing in the streets as they continued to stubbornly pretend to be pedestrians.

Someone shouted at them from a window, “People, hurry on home already. Don’t be wandering around out here! It’s dangerous! Didn’t you hear the gunshots?”

Everyone else had left after they heard the gunshots. As such, the few who remained out on the streets stuck out like a sore thumb.

Quick-witted, Wu Tong gave some hand signals to the hitman beside him and pretended to be deaf and mute.

Wu Tong was embittered. He did not know what was going on. The missions he usually did would proceed quite smoothly, but why was nothing going well this time?

Zhou Yingxue was rejoicing up on the roof with the brick in hand, thinking of how fortunate she was to not be downstairs.

However, the gunshots did not only affect Wu Tong and the others. It also affected Zhou Xilong's schedule.

The target, Zhou Xilong, was a very cautious person to begin with. He would usually take seven bodyguards with him whenever he went out in the stronghold. If that wasn't being cautious, what was?

Of course, the most cautious person Ren Xiaosu had ever met was still Qing Zhen. He went as far as moving into the military barracks and living there.

Ren Xiaosu also did not expect the gang to possess guns. Even though the strongholds in the Southwest and Northwest were chaotic, gun control measures there were still quite strict. It would be fantastic for a small gang to own knives.

But of course, this gang only had two guns in their possession. In normal times, the deterrent of guns was much greater than their actual power. Actually, the members of the gang did not dare to fire the weapons either. At most, they would bring it out to the wilderness to feel its might. These guns were actually secretly bought from the private troops.

If it weren't for the fact that the situation called for the guns to be used, they would probably not get to use them again in the future.

But unfortunately, the first time the mob boss fired his gun in the stronghold, nobody but him ended up dying.

At this moment, Ren Xiaosu was making his way to the meeting place. He did not know that Zhou Yingxue and the others had already headed over to Red Pine Lane.

A vehicle from the Public Order Division drove past him, but it did not notice him. From his appearance, he was just a normal young man who did not look like a hitman.

Ren Xiaosu turned around and looked into the distance. The sunset cascaded in the evening sky as the golden glow enveloped his skin like warm seawater.

He did not care how great a commotion he had caused in the stronghold. All he felt was that everything was going pretty smoothly today!

...

Wu Tong and the others did not see Zhou Xilong's convoy returning home even late into the night. It was as if the gunshots that rang out earlier had caused their target to quickly move to another location.

Furthermore, his informant even called him on the satellite phone to inform him that someone had already picked up Zhou Xilong's daughter an hour ahead of schedule while she was still attending class. It seemed that Zhou Xilong was already alerted.

Seeing that they could not complete the mission today, they decided to retreat. Zhou Yingxue waited until more pedestrians reappeared on the streets before leaving the rooftop with the long case slung over her back.

When they arrived back at the outside of the safe house, they saw that the lights were on. Wu Tong frowned. "Could someone have leaked the news and compromised my safe house?"

"I don't think so." A hitman said, "I can hear someone cooking inside...."

Everyone was at a loss for words. What kind of strange situation was this? Disregarding the fact that someone had barged into the safe house in the middle of the night, the intruder even ended up cooking inside?

They could even smell the aroma of food!

"Fuck! Let's just go in and have a look." Wu Tong clenched his teeth and took out a key to open the door. If the Zhou Consortium had already discovered his safe house, then it meant they had enough information on him. If he did not check out the situation right now, he would have to leave the Zhou Consortium's territory to seek refuge elsewhere.

As soon as he entered, Wu Tong saw Zhou Yingxue's assistant walk out of the kitchen. Her assistant greeted him, "Hey, you guys are back already? Have you eaten yet? I didn't cook for y'all. Also, your stove's gas tank's almost empty. Remember to fill it up tomorrow."

Everyone was dumbfounded. They looked at Zhou Yingxue to hear her calmly say, "I had him contact an informant, so he was late."

"Mhm." Ren Xiaosu nodded. "That's right."

Zhou Yingxue asked, "Have you gotten in touch with the informant? Did he say why there were gunshots in the stronghold today? That incident seems to have affected our mission as Zhou Xilong did not appear as planned."

Ren Xiaosu realized something. "Oh, yes, I was told the gunshots were caused by a gang war. Someone took out an entire gang at the spa."

Everyone heaved a sigh of relief. So it was due to a black swan event like that.

The “black swan event” referred to an unexpected event that resulted in a series of severe chain reactions.

Ren Xiaosu termed this a tiny moth event. In any case, they were both sort of grayish and could also fly.

Zhou Yingxue pulled Ren Xiaosu onto the balcony and muttered, “Was it you that caused all that? Do you know how badly it would affect me if you suddenly left? They said they were going to conduct the mission today, but you ended up not being around. I nearly started panicking because of that! What if they really made a move today and you didn’t make it back on time?”

Ren Xiaosu said calmly, “Look, even though they said they were going to conduct the mission today, I made sure they couldn’t. It doesn’t matter what they say.”

Zhou Yingxue was stunned. ‘How can you be so overly confident!’

...

Outside the stronghold, a convoy of vehicles was driving in from the west. They had yet to hand over the customs documents to enter the stronghold when Luo Lan, who was sitting in the vehicle, exclaimed in admiration when he heard the gunshots, “This is so exciting! The strongholds in the Central Plains are not as safe as I would have imagined. There’s actually a shooting happening in broad daylight?”

Next to him, Zhou Qi rolled his eyes. “Aren’t you worried that you’ll get hurt in such an exciting place? You must be aware that you only answer to one person in the Qing Consortium now, and that you’re above everyone else. You’ll get to enjoy a lifetime of glory and wealth. As the saying goes, ‘The son of a wealthy family does not sit under the eaves; a gentleman does not stand under a shaky wall.’[1]”

Luo Lan chuckled. “Where’s the fun in that? What I like most are exciting places like these. In the past, the Southwest was quite an interesting place, and just thinking about it makes me so excited! Now that the Southwest has come under the control of the Qing Consortium, the matters I have to handle every day have become so trivial. Matters like a power struggle between the Public Order Division and the Audit Department or an applicant recommendation from a certain family seeking a good job position! What kinda nonsense is that!”

“But that’s a good thing. If someone asks you for help, it means there’s money to be had!” Zhou Qi’s eyes lit up.

“Am I someone who lacks that bit of money?” Luo Lan gave Zhou Qi a sidelong glance. “You have to take a long-term view of things. We’re people destined for bigger things.”

“Was that why you volunteered to Qing Zhen to come to the Central Plains? And he even agreed to it too?” Zhou Qi said in a speechless manner.

“Of course. I came to the Central Plains to stir up trouble. I wouldn’t go anywhere if there was nothing promising about the place!”

“So why have we come to Stronghold 73?” Zhou Qi asked with a frown.

“Hehe, that Zhou Xilong from the Zhou Consortium has always advocated for the research and development of nuclear weapons. Although we probably won’t get along with someone like that, we should still support him a little so the Zhou Consortium can help deflect some attention from us. That would be a good thing for us too.” Luo Lan smiled and said, “That’s why we’re meeting Zhou Xilong this time. The appointment is set for tomorrow.”

[1] People important or revered should not put themselves in a dangerous situation.

Chapter 505 Liberation Park

“You won’t be running off to do other missions again, right?” Zhou Yingxue stared intently at Ren Xiaosu’s expression, as though she were trying to figure out something.

Ren Xiaosu was unhappy. “How can you use the word ‘run’? I also have proper business to attend to!”

“What proper business?” Zhou Yingxue was curious. She really wanted to know why Ren Xiaosu had caused all that trouble today.

“The D and C-rank missions, of course,” Ren Xiaosu said seriously.

Zhou Yingxue felt really helpless upon hearing that. ‘You’re already a legendary supernatural being, so why are you still competing with the D and C-rank hitmen for their missions? Are you not ashamed?’

Ren Xiaosu asked, “How did the four of them do today? Did they behave strangely?”

“Nothing out of the ordinary. They just scouted the vicinity of the villa at Red Pine Lane in preparation for the assault tonight. As the streets were emptied of pedestrians after the gunshots rang out, we decided to retreat first,” Zhou Yingxue explained.

“Alright.” Ren Xiaosu nodded. Then he ordered, “Be careful of these four people. I think that if any accidents happen during the mission, they’ll likely join forces and try to turn us in.”

“Yes, Master.”

Zhou Yingxue suddenly stopped speaking. The moment she said those words, she instinctively felt that something was off!

Ren Xiaosu looked at Zhou Yingxue in surprise. “What did you just say?”

“Nothing.” Zhou Yingxue nearly cried at her own stupidity. “Slip of the tongue.”

Ren Xiaosu gazed at her silently for half a minute. “Let’s eat. I’ve cooked your share.”

The two of them walked back into the house. Zhou Yingxue immediately turned cold and aloof.

“Assistant, bring me my food.”

Ren Xiaosu was speechless. Zhou Yingxue did not even need any cooldown time for her to switch roles? Wu Tong, who was next to Ren Xiaosu, looked at him and said, “Bring us our food too.”

But Zhou Yingxue said calmly, "I'm the only one who can order my assistant around. You guys aren't allowed to. If you want to eat something hot, go make it yourself. You're all grown men, so why are you commanding my assistant?"

From Zhou Yingxue's point of view, Wu Tong and the other three people had deliberately not shared their method of getting into the stronghold, and there were still other things they did not discuss with her. They were clearly trying to draw a line between them, and there was nothing wrong with doing so. 'But since you're being so clear about it, I definitely have to be clear as well.'

Moreover, she was worried that if Wu Tong really forced Ren Xiaosu to cook for the four of them, they might not need to eat in the future.

Ren Xiaosu said, "Sorry, I only prepared enough for two."

The dishes were simple: spicy and sour shredded potato, scrambled eggs with tomato, and stir-fried wild boar.

This wild boar was that herd Ren Xiaosu had encountered on his way here from the Northwest.

Wu Tong and the others ended up dryly chewing on hardtack next to Ren Xiaosu and Zhou Yingxue as they quietly watched them enjoy their hot meal. Wu Tong said coldly, "This is a safe house. We have to be careful, so don't use the kitchen as you like."

Ren Xiaosu said, "Since this safe house is a home, don't you think it'll look suspicious if no one cooks when the lights are on at night, or if the stove's gas tank isn't even changed once a year? Don't underestimate the observation skills of your neighbors. They know full well the situation of your house. They probably even remember which day you made dumplings on."

Zhou Yingxue asked as she ate, "Did your informant say what Zhou Xilong's next plans are?"

Wu Tong glanced at her. "What's the maximum effective range of your sniper rifle?"

Zhou Yingxue said arrogantly, "Any target within two kilometers won't be a problem."

Ren Xiaosu was shocked when she said that. He only had Master Firearms Proficiency, not Perfect like Yang Xiaojin. 'What a bold claim on my behalf!'

When Wu Tong heard what Zhou Yingxue said, he felt relieved. "Tomorrow, Zhou Xilong will be heading to Liberation Park as per his original plan. He'll be meeting a VIP there. It's a private meeting. When the time comes, the intelligence agency Zhou Xilong commands will be all over the entire park, so there might be over a 100 people there."

"That many?" Zhou Yingxue asked with doubt, "Then shouldn't we execute the plan another day?"

Wu Tong looked at Zhou Yingxue and Ren Xiaosu. "When there's a lot of people, the enemy's vigilance will be at its lowest. We'll have to rely on Ms. Zhou's sniping this time."

...

At 4 AM sharp, a number of sanitation workers entered Liberation Park to empty the trash cans there as well as clear the fallen leaves and litter.

However, the sanitation workers today seemed a little special as they were all made up of strapping young men.

Outside Liberation Park, a few ice cream trucks were already parked in the lot early in the morning. They looked like they were here to sell ice cream, but in fact, there were more than a dozen staff members busily working inside them.

“Position 10, test the audio equipment again,” someone inside a truck said into an earpiece.

Then he heard a voice say “testing, one, two, three” in his earpiece. The person in the truck said, “Audio equipment checks are complete. Set up the next surveillance point.”

Such work was a common occurrence for intelligence agencies all around. They were setting up the location for surveillance to avoid any problems during the private meeting to be held later in the day.

It so happened that the surveillance points had blocked all of the entrances and exits of the park, as well as any “infiltration points” within Liberation Park.

When dawn broke, some of the field crew in the vehicles changed into sportswear and took turns heading to the park for a morning jog. They looked just like normal stronghold residents going about their daily activities. Only five people remained inside the vehicles to monitor the surveillance feeds. When they discovered any suspicious people, they would immediately lock on to the target’s appearance in the surveillance footage and run it through their database records.

Such work continued for nearly six hours before Zhou Xilong’s convoy arrived at the entrance of Liberation Park. After he got out of the car, he slowly walked in with two bodyguards protecting him. It was already 10 in the morning.

Zhou Xilong was a middle-aged man, and his hair had already greyed. He was dressed in a navy blue suit that made him appear especially solemn. The bodyguard next to him was still deploying the field crew by giving orders into his earpiece. “Position 6 needs to be filled by a squad. Position 7, pull out, you guys aren’t blending in at all. Go back and write a self-criticism and submit it to me.”

This person was just like the “director general” for Zhou Xilong’s operations, with all the field resources being deployed by him.

Zhou Xilong sat down on a bench in the park. The nearest high ground was 1.2 kilometers away, and the snipers from the field team had already occupied two high-rises within that range.

But the person Zhou Xilong was meeting did not appear even after a long time. However, Zhou Xilong was not in a hurry either. He just sat calmly on the bench while his bodyguard stood right behind him.

Not only that, but there was also a fully armed secret service on standby for orders in the nearby bushes.

It wasn't until 11 AM that Luo Lan's convoy suddenly appeared at the park's entrance. That plump figure led 12 of his subordinates into the park casually. When he encountered the field crew dressed in plainclothes, it was as though he did not see them at all.

Luo Lan was wearing a pair of sunglasses while Zhou Qi was yawning behind him. There was even a lipstick mark on the back of his neck that had not been wiped off.

Chapter 506 To shoot or no

Luo Lan came over to Zhou Xilong at the bench and sat down happily while the rest of his subordinates scattered to keep watch.

Just as Zhou Xilong thought that Zhou Qi, who was following Luo Lan, would stand behind Luo Lan like his bodyguard had, Zhou Qi actually nudged Luo Lan to the middle of the bench so he could sit down as well.

Zhou Xilong was even more surprised that Luo Lan was actually willing to make some room for Zhou Qi.

All of a sudden, the three of them were huddled together on the bench, looking as odd as they could be. Luo Lan's large figure nearly even squeezed Zhou Xilong onto the ground!

Zhou Qi closed his eyes to catch up on sleep. "You guys go ahead and chat."

Luo Lan laughed out loud. "This is the chief secretary of our Qing Consortium, Zhou Qi."

Zhou Xilong smiled and said, "Oh, so it's a brother of our clan. May I know what business brought Boss Luo here to the Central Plains?"

"It's nothing much." Luo Lan smiled and said, "It's mainly because some of us in this world were born to be friends, so here I am to make a friend!"

"Although the Zhou Consortium and the Qing Consortium are very close, we're still separated by a mountain range and won't get to see each other. Why would the elder brother of the Qing Consortium come to be friends with our Zhou Consortium?" Zhou Xilong said noncommittally.

Luo Lan smiled and replied, "I'm not here to be friends with the Zhou Consortium. I'm here to be friends with you, Zhou Xilong."

"Oh?"

"I've always been a blunt person." Luo Lan said with a smile, "I heard Brother Zhou's group is supportive of the research and development of nuclear weapons within the Zhou Consortium but has never been able to convince the conservative Zhou Shiji to do so. That's why I'm here to help you."

"How so?"

"Let's not talk about that yet. I'd like to know why Brother Zhou supports the research and development of nuclear weapons?" Luo Lan said, "From what I know, there haven't been any wars in the Central Plains for over a decade now. The Wang Consortium to the north has always been on good terms with

everyone, the Qinghe Group is content with that little area they occupy, and the Kong Consortium is very far away from you guys. Brother Zhou, who is it that you want to attack by developing nuclear weapons?"

Zhou Xilong said calmly, "Must I use it to attack others? Building a nuclear power plant is also a good thing."

"Hehe." Luo Lan smiled and said, "Actually, I know what you're thinking and who your enemy is. In this aspect, we have a common goal."

Zhou Xilong did not answer. Instead, he asked, "Does the Qing Consortium really have a nuclear base? I heard that even the Saboteurs have not found it yet?"

"Yes." Luo Lan smiled and said, "Of course!"

"Then why didn't you all use it against the Li Consortium and the Yang Consortium?" Zhou Xilong asked.

"Um..." Luo Lan was hesitant.

"Even if you had some reservations against those two, why didn't you use it when you battled the Experimentals?"

Luo Lan stopped talking.

Zhou Xilong laughed hard. "So do you really have one?"

The consortiums in the Central Plains had always been wondering if the Qing Consortium had successfully developed a nuclear weapon. Had it really been developed already? Or was it a lie to make others stay away from them?

There were two reasons for suspecting this. On the one hand, the Saboteurs had yet to find the Qing Consortium's nuclear base.

In recent years, the Saboteurs had already destroyed five nuclear test sites in the Central Plains and assassinated around ten extremist scientists. Suddenly, everyone was deterred by the danger they were put in and no one dared to publicly declare they wanted to develop nuclear weapons anymore. But even so, Zhou Xilong still went about his life with a group of bodyguards protecting him every day and even spent large sums to hire supernatural beings as his bodyguards too.

Therefore, since the Saboteurs could not find it, did that mean the Qing Consortium was trying to mislead everyone?

On the other hand, the Qing Consortium's war efforts in the Southwest were well-known. But in this war, the Qing Consortium did not even use any heavy payload tactical ballistic missiles. If they really had any, why did they not use them?

Luo Lan said seriously, "In the Southwest, I once used a particle beam produced by nuclear fusion shot through an astronomical distance to wipe out hundreds of millions of bugs."

Zhou Xilong didn't understand but thought it was amazing. "Was it during the previous bug infestation?"

Next to them, Zhou Qi finally opened his eyes. "Weren't you just drying your blanket in the sun? That's an old joke from before the Cataclysm. How many more times do you want to repeat it..."

Zhou Xilong was confused.

...

At this moment, Ren Xiaosu, who was 1.8 kilometers away, was leading Zhou Yingxue up a tall building.

Before entering the building, Ren Xiaosu took a look at the pedestrians outside. Then he stopped in his tracks for a moment. However, he did not say anything.

When they arrived on the rooftop, Ren Xiaosu chose the best observation spot and silently overlooked the park through his spotting scope.

Zhou Xilong's subordinates did not have this area under surveillance as the high ground here was too far away.

It seemed they also believed there were very few snipers in the world who could hit a target from such a long distance. The snipers who could do this would not want to attack Zhou Xilong rashly either. After all, Zhou Xilong was not the leader of the Zhou Consortium.

Zhou Yingxue was munching on melon seeds as she asked, "What do you see? Let me take a look too."

As she spoke, she carefully discarded the melon seed shells into a small bag to prevent anyone from using them to get her DNA samples and input it into a database.

Ren Xiaosu suddenly put down the spotting scope. Although it was very far away, and others might not be able to recognize that person, how could he not recognize that large figure of Luo Lan?

He wondered why this fatty had suddenly come to the Central Plains. And he was even with the mission target, Zhou Xilong? So when Wu Tong said that Zhou Xilong was going to meet a VIP today, he was actually referring to Luo Lan!

Wait! The mission text message said Zhou Xilong was an advocate of nuclear weapons development. That did seem related to Luo Lan.

At this moment, Wu Tong and the others were loitering in the vicinity of Liberation Park. However, they did not enter the park according to their plan even after a long time. Ren Xiaosu put down his spotting scope and picked up his sniper rifle again.

Zhou Xilong was right in his sights. If he took the shot at this moment, Ren Xiaosu was confident he could hit Zhou Xilong.

This was the reason why the various organizations were always very annoyed with snipers from opposing forces. It was simply too difficult to guard against them.

The role of a sniper on the battlefield at the front lines was not that of stealth. But in a decapitation strike, even supernatural beings would have to be wary of the presence of a sniper. After all, not even they could not withstand a shot from a sniper when they were defenseless.

But if he took the shot, what would happen to Luo Lan? He would probably get arrested by the Zhou Consortium immediately, right?

However, Luo Lan would definitely not get into any big trouble. After all, the Qing Consortium was not to be trifled with due to their influence in the Southwest. Without any warning, the Qing Consortium had become the largest force in the entire Alliance of Strongholds.

However, Luo Lan would certainly get locked up.

Zhou Yingxue continued munching on melon seeds and asked, "Are the conditions not right for shooting?"

"They're fine." Ren Xiaosu said, "But the person next to Zhou Xilong is my friend."

Zhou Yingxue was stunned. "So you're gonna give up on the mission..."

Before she could finish speaking, she saw Ren Xiaosu look into the scope. He was starting to seriously calculate the ballistic trajectory.

The melon seeds in Zhou Yingxue's mouth dropped to the ground. Was that really his friend?

So, was a friend or the mission more important?

Ren Xiaosu had already made his decision. Money was the most important.

Besides, he still had his follow-up plans.

Chapter 507 Master, save me!

Ren Xiaosu did not take the shot immediately because the distance was way too far. Even Yang Xiaojin had once said even she could not guarantee she could land a hit if the range was greater than 1.6 kilometers. As the bullet would have to travel over a really long distance, it would take two to four seconds for the bullet to reach the target after pulling the trigger. This timing was completely dependent on the bullet's travel speed.

In that time, the bullet would be affected by various factors. It would no longer be traveling in a straight line but a graceful arc. The factors that would affect it would be things like Coriolis effect, gravity, wind speed, etc. Therefore, it would be hard to guarantee that nothing would go wrong during the bullet's flight.

Luo Lan and Zhou Xilong were just too close to each other. Completing the mission was one thing, but Ren Xiaosu did not want to accidentally injure Luo Lan in the process.

This private meeting lasted for nearly an hour. Ren Xiaosu did not know what specifically Zhou Xilong and Luo Lan had said to each other, but they eventually shook hands and parted ways.

Next to him, Zhou Yingxue was complaining they had been chatting for too long. What was there so much to talk about between two grown men? She had even finished an entire bag of melon seeds!

But she suddenly felt like the air had frozen. It was at this moment that Ren Xiaosu pulled the trigger.

The bullet flew through the air for a while.

Zhou Yingxue suddenly turned around and looked at Liberation Park. She could not see the bullet's trajectory and could only feel Ren Xiaosu's concentration and determination from a moment earlier.

The young man's profile was well-defined. While he was completely focused on his task, his profile was like a work of art.

In Liberation Park, blood suddenly burst out of Zhou Xilong's chest when Luo Lan had gotten a dozen meters away from him. When the bullet penetrated his body, a pink mist exploded in the opposite direction of the shot.

When Luo Lan heard the commotion behind him, he spun around and looked at Zhou Xilong's body in shock. He had a speechless expression on his face. "My friend I just fucking made!"

After an hour of discussion, both parties had finally confirmed the preliminary goals of the Qing Consortium and Zhou Xilong's collaboration, and their professional negotiation teams still needed to iron out a lot of details later.

However, just as they had come to an agreement, the other party died!

Luo Lan instinctively hid behind a tree and raised his hands. "I didn't fucking do it!"

His associate was dead, but so be it. However, if he were implicated as well, that would be fucking bullshit!

As Luo Lan was shouting, his subordinates behind him surrounded him, huddling closely around him. They began to slowly move out of the park. Their defense was so tight that no one could see where Luo Lan was within the crowd of people.

Even Zhou Qi had already condensed a stream of water vapor at his fingertips, set to kill at any moment.

However, before Luo Lan and the others could walk out of the park, they were immediately stopped by Zhou Xilong's subordinates who said they were going to be arrested.

Luo Lan's people wanted to resist, but Luo Lan just laughed and said, "This is their fucking stronghold, so where can we run to? C'mon, let's go with them. We're innocent, anyway, so we'll definitely clear our names!"

Meanwhile, on Ren Xiaosu's side, he did not sit idle after killing Zhou Xilong. He decisively turned his gun on Wu Tong and the others. In just ten seconds, Wu Tong was the only remaining one of the four A-rank hitmen!

Ren Xiaosu turned around and pulled Zhou Yingxue by the arm. "It's time to retreat!"

Zhou Yingxue followed Ren Xiaosu down the stairs in a daze. As they headed down, she realized there were a lot of dead people in the stairway. These people were all dressed in casual clothes but there were pistols scattered around their bodies.

“Who are these people?” Zhou Yingxue was stunned. “Are they from the Zhou Consortium? Why did they appear here? And who killed them?”

There were probably a dozen bodies lying in the stairway, but she had not heard anything just now.

Ren Xiaosu said with a sneer, “They were probably sent by Wu Tong’s informant to stop us. Once we completed our mission, they would surround this building and apprehend us. Then we would be scapegoated. If someone accidentally gunned us down amid the chaos, the case would be closed as such. The dead cannot testify, after all. The gun, ballistics, and rifling can all be matched to us, and the officer who caught Zhou Xilong’s killers would probably get promoted two ranks as well.”

Zhou Yingxue was a little confused. So it turned out that something so dangerous had taken place just now while she was munching on melon seeds?

“Did you stop for a moment before entering the building just now because you had already realized these undercover people were around?” Zhou Yingxue asked.

“Yes.” Ren Xiaosu nodded.

“Is that why you decided to shoot Wu Tong and the others? But why didn’t you kill Wu Tong?” Zhou Yingxue asked.

“You said that you had a way to track down Wu Tong yesterday. Are you still confident in that?” Ren Xiaosu asked.

“Yes!”

The two of them ran downstairs. Ren Xiaosu had already pulled the hood over his head again, while Zhou Yingxue also covered her face with a scarf.

The moment they exited the building, Ren Xiaosu checked the surroundings as they made a frantic run for it. There were already several undercover personnel approaching them. However, they seemed to be afraid of shooting openly in the streets.

But after just two steps, Ren Xiaosu realized Zhou Yingxue was not following behind him anymore. When he turned around, he saw around six undercover personnel between her and him.

Zhou Yingxue panicked. “Master, save me!”

Ren Xiaosu turned around impatiently and fired at them. Zhou Yingxue was a supernatural being, so why was her combat strength so weak!

Stronghold 73 once again descended into chaos. After yesterday's turmoil, the residents already knew what they had to do. They quickly returned home to hide when they heard the gunshots.

On the streets, vehicles from the Public Order Division passed by from time to time. The staff of the Public Order Division who were in charge of the stronghold's security were frantically searching for something. Using a building that was 1.8 kilometers from the park as the center, they launched a manhunt that radiated out.

However, during this manhunt operation, they only found the more than 20 corpses of the Public Order Division's undercover personnel and nothing more.

The killer seemed to have disappeared into thin air and was nowhere to be found.

At the same time, Stronghold 73 was put on lockdown, with no vehicles or personnel allowed to leave the stronghold. The four gates in the north, south, east, and west of the stronghold were also closed at the same time. Without the personal written order of the leader of the Zhou Consortium, Zhou Shiji, the gates were not to be opened.

When night fell, the residents of Stronghold 73 were still panicking.

Wu Tong stayed hidden for an entire day before quietly entering another safe house he had prepared. But just as he was about to heave a sigh of relief and close the door behind him, a cold, hard gun pressed against his back. He heard a familiar voice behind him. Ren Xiaosu said with a smile, "It was really difficult to find you. Go on in. Raise your hands above your head and place them where I can see them. Let's have a talk."

Wu Tong broke out in a cold sweat. "What do you want?"

Ren Xiaosu smiled and asked, "Can you ask that informant of yours where Luo Lan is locked up for me?"

Zhou Yingxue's voice rang out behind him, "Master, you wanna save Luo Lan?"

Wu Tong was shocked. He had thought Ren Xiaosu was just a boy toy, so why did the two's identities suddenly switch? Ren Xiaosu had actually become the "master" based on what Zhou Yingxue just said?! Why did it fucking sound like a maidservant in the olden days addressing her employer? What was with this feudalistic form of address! But just what kind of a person could make a superhuman address him as "master" willingly?

Ren Xiaosu said with a smile, "Of course I'm going to save him. He's my friend!"

Chapter 508 The informan

Inside the quiet house, a dim yellow light was shining. Ren Xiaosu pointed his pistol at Wu Tong, with the two of them seated in chairs across from each other.

A professional killer like Wu Tong would have gone through all kinds of escape training. For example, he could distract the enemy to evade gunpoint.

To people like him, being held at gunpoint might not necessarily mean death. In such a situation, they would have to find an opportunity to get away.

But when Wu Tong faced Ren Xiaosu and Zhou Yingxue, he suddenly felt very helpless. These were two superhumans, so even if he could actually evade gunpoint, the outcome would still be the same.

It was terrifying for two superhumans to team up for a mission.

No, they were not teaming up. This was one superhuman subservient to another. She even addressed him as her “master.”

To be honest, Wu Tong would also like to have a similar maidservant. Although Zhou Yingxue’s looks could only be considered above average, she had a good figure!

But this was no time to be thinking about that. Ren Xiaosu said to Wu Tong with a smile, “You didn’t expect us to find you, huh?”

It was all thanks to Zhou Yingxue that he found Wu Tong. Although Ren Xiaosu’s combat prowess was very strong, he did not have any expertise in searching and tracking people.

But Zhou Yingxue’s skill helped Ren Xiaosu make up for the lack of that.

She was able to conjure up three types of seeds in total. One was similar to the Brambles and could sprout from underground to kill enemies, and the second type could dig tunnels and open up an area that could be used as an underground hiding spot.

The third type would grow into a short four-leaf clover after being planted, and Zhou Yingxue could crush the four-leaf clover to extract a juice that could be smeared on a target’s body. They would then emit a grassy scent for up to three days that only Zhou Yingxue could smell.

No matter how far the target went, she could follow the scent and find them.

Ren Xiaosu thought about it and realized not every supernatural being had an extremely powerful combat skill. It seemed that some supernatural beings were born with no talent in that area at all.

At this moment, Ren Xiaosu was looking across at Wu Tong. Wu Tong appeared rather calm, which was to be expected of a hitman who could reach A-rank.

Wu Tong asked, “We’re on the same team. Why’re you pointing a gun at me?”

Ren Xiaosu was amused. “Shouldn’t you know what you’ve done? Since I’ve already killed the other three, I don’t plan on leaving you a way out.”

“You killed them?” Wu Tong’s pupils constricted. “You’re the sniper? Then Zhou Yingxue...”

He looked at Zhou Yingxue. Zhou Yingxue had started munching on melon seeds off to the side again.

Ren Xiaosu asked, “I don’t have many questions for you. There’s only two. If you answer them to my liking, I’ll give you a quick death. But if you don’t, I’ll drag out your death over three days and three nights.”

Wu Tong calmed down. This was the first time he had ever encountered such an interrogation method. 'If you have to interrogate someone, at least lie about letting the interviewee live.'

But the more it was like that, the more he could not muster up any resistance.

"Alright, let's begin. I want you to ask your informant." Ren Xiaosu said, "Ask him where Luo Lan is being detained. Since he knows about the meeting at Liberation Park, it must mean that he holds a very important position in the stronghold. How do you usually contact him?"

"On the satphone," Wu Tong answered, having decided to cooperate. He took out the satellite phone from his backpack. "I'll ask him for you now."

After the call was made, Wu Tong said, "Luo Lan has been imprisoned in the housing block at Houguan Lake. The Zhou Consortium is too scared to do anything to him. They're still providing him with good food and drink. They arrested him because they suspected he had brought some assassins in with him. But the Zhou Consortium isn't stupid either. They know Luo Lan doesn't have to do something like that."

Ren Xiaosu nodded. Actually, anyone who was smart would know Luo Lan's motive for coming here. So Fatty Luo would have no reason to finish off an ally he had just made. There was no enmity between them at all.

But before finding the real culprit, it was impossible for Luo Lan to be released. He was still one of the suspects in this attack.

Ren Xiaosu continued asking, "So who's your informant?"

Wu Tong was also a thug. Since he was about to die, why would he care about his informant's life? "He's the director of the Public Order Division here. The overseer position in Stronghold 73 has been vacant for a while now, so he's set his sights on it. If someone assassinated Zhou Xilong, it would definitely shock the entire Zhou Consortium. So if he can solve the case, he'll be very highly regarded for sure. He might even have a chance to fight for the position as the stronghold's overseer."

"Man dies for money; birds die for food." Ren Xiaosu nodded. Wu Tong had planned on conning Zhao Haocheng into becoming a scapegoat for the mission. After Ren Xiaosu killed Zhao Haocheng, Wu Tong was worried about where to find another scapegoat. But in the end, Ren Xiaosu and Zhou Yingxue came knocking on his door and offered themselves up.

That was why Wu Tong was so happy at that time.

"Did Zhao Haocheng really kill your friend?" Ren Xiaosu asked.

"He did kill his teammates, but that teammate was not my friend. I lied to you," Wu Tong said calmly.

"That makes sense." Ren Xiaosu nodded again. How could a ruthless person like Wu Tong care about avenging a friend? All he had in mind were probably only schemes and fame.

At this point, Ren Xiaosu signaled for Zhou Yingxue to turn off the recording pen. He even carefully recalled the entire conversation and was quite certain he did not reveal his identity once. Only his voice was recorded.

Zhou Yingxue took out the recording pen and turned it off. Wu Tong said anxiously, "Since I cooperated so readily, can I—"

Before he could finish speaking, he saw Ren Xiaosu had already stood up and left without even looking at him. Meanwhile, Zhou Yingxue carefully placed the melon seeds back into the bag before attaching a silencer to her pistol and shooting him in the chest.

Wu Tong's vision blurred. He could vaguely make out Zhou Yingxue's slender figure turning away as she followed that young man out the door and into the darkness of the night.

He faintly heard Zhou Yingxue say to that young man, "Master, I'm a little hungry."

The young man replied angrily, "You're still hungry after eating so many melon seeds?!"

"I didn't really eat that much..."

Wu Tong's consciousness stopped there as it returned to nothingness.

Actually, there was nothing wrong with the operation this time, all except for one person he had not taken into consideration, the young man.

Actually, what Wu Tong did not know was that Ren Xiaosu was actually quite disappointed with his answer.

Ren Xiaosu had thought some mastermind behind the scenes was controlling him. But in the end, the other party was only the director of the Public Order Division. In Wu Tong's eyes, that was a big shot in the stronghold. But Ren Xiaosu felt like he had killed the directors of several Public Order Divisions already.

Moreover, from the moment Ren Xiaosu stepped into this chaotic world, the people he had come into contact with were figures like Qing Zhen, Luo Lan, Yang Xiaojin, and Zhang Jinglin. He was patently uninterested in a lowly director of a Public Order Division who was only interested in scheming his way up.

All of a sudden, the palace issued a mission. "Quest: Save a friend in trouble."

Ren Xiaosu walked down the busy streets. Even if he did not get this quest, he would still go and save that person.

Chapter 509 No, you must leave!

Stronghold 73's Houguan Lake was a famous neighborhood. Ren Xiaosu had planned to take Zhou Yingxue straight there, but Zhou Yingxue insisted that she was hungry.

Zhou Yingxue explained patiently, "Well, think about it. After we rescue Luo Lan, we still have to plan a good escape route. After all, this is the Zhou Consortium's territory. Even if we manage to escape from Houguan Lake, we'll still be inside their stronghold. So let me eat something first, and I'll come up with a detailed escape plan while eating...."

Ren Xiaosu thought for a moment. "Alrighty."

It had to be said that sometimes, Zhou Yingxue played a really good supporting role. For example, tracking, gaining easy access into the stronghold, carrying around a recording pen, all of that was really great. If only she wouldn't keep munching on melon seeds all the time! That would have been even better.

Furthermore, Zhou Yingxue loved money more than he did.

As Zhou Yingxue ate her piping hot noodles, she took out her cell phone and said, "The reward for killing Zhou Xilong has already been paid out. Wu Tong's phone has also been unlocked, so you can check how much money he has in his account when you have the time. I wonder if the others also received their rewards on their phones."

Earlier, Ren Xiaosu only wanted to ask some questions after entering Wu Tong's safe house, but Zhou Yingxue was already a step ahead by getting his account first.

Ren Xiaosu asked, "Wu Tong was mainly active in the Zhou Consortium's territory. Are we still gonna withdraw the money from his account at the Zhou Consortium's bank?"

If they did that, it would increase their chances of being exposed.

"No need." Zhou Yingxue shook her head. "We can go back to the black market to retrieve the funds. There's the Zhou, Kong, and Wang Consortiums' banks there, and they aren't even monitored by any surveillance cameras."

"Don't listen to what they say about having no surveillance there." Ren Xiaosu curled his lips. "The consortiums are dirty liars. There must be hidden cameras around somewhere. After opening a bank branch in the black market, how can they not want to know who's retrieving funds from them? That can become very important information for them."

Zhou Yingxue nodded. "That's true. Wu Tong is also an experienced A-rank hitman, so I think his account must have a lot of money in it."

"Mhm."

"I'm going to the bathroom." Zhou Yingxue looked at Ren Xiaosu like she was asking him for permission.

"Go ahead."

In the end, Zhou Yingxue was gone for over 20 minutes. Ren Xiaosu sat quietly in the hotel and thought that Zhou Yingxue must have run away. The reward this time was very generous, and she had even

gotten ahold of Wu Tong's account, so if Zhou Yingxue wanted to run away, there would be enough reason for her to do so.

Ren Xiaosu sighed. It looked like he would have to search for another candidate to join the Anjing House on his behalf.

He did not chase after Zhou Yingxue. On the one hand, the woman had been very cooperative with him during this period. On the other hand, Zhou Yingxue's mother was seriously ill and she badly needed the money. Considering these factors, Ren Xiaosu felt there was no need for him to leave Zhou Yingxue with no way out.

She was just a normal girl in this chaotic era.

But at this moment, a voice interrupted Ren Xiaosu's thoughts. "Let's go, Master."

Ren Xiaosu looked up at Zhou Yingxue in surprise. "You didn't run away?"

Zhou Yingxue thought for a moment and said, "And you didn't plan to hunt me down?"

"Why would I hunt you down?" Ren Xiaosu did not know whether to laugh or cry as he stood up. "But I'm curious about why you didn't run away. This amount of money should've been enough to make you consider that, right?"

Zhou Yingxue gave it some thought and said, "I did consider running away, but I wouldn't be able to live well on my own in this world. So since I met someone this strong, I have to stick close to him."

Actually, Zhou Yingxue was preparing to run away just now. She had waited in the bathroom for a while to see Ren Xiaosu's reaction and if he would spare no effort in hunting her down.

In the end, Zhou Yingxue realized Ren Xiaosu had no intention whatsoever of doing so. Then, having thought of something, she decided to come back here.

Only now did she suddenly feel she truly wanted to follow Ren Xiaosu and sincerely work together on more missions.

...

When the two of them arrived at Houguan Lake, Zhou Yingxue saw the tight defense that had been set up there. It was just a housing block, but there was actually an entire company armed with loaded guns stationed out here?

"Master, how do you plan on saving Luo Lan?" Zhou Yingxue asked as she crouched in the greenway.[1]

But right as she finished speaking, she saw Ren Xiaosu stand up and walk towards the entrance of the gated neighborhood at Houguan Lake. Zhou Yingxue nearly went crazy! Was Ren Xiaosu just going to barge in?

Could this be how the mind of a legendary supernatural being worked?!

At this moment, Luo Lan was sitting in the yard of a villa smoking a cigar. Beside him, Zhou Qi said, "We've already prepared troops to rescue you from here. After we fight our way out of Houguan Lake, we'll head west. There will, of course, be some people staying behind in the stronghold to fend off the pursuers. Once we get out of the stronghold, Qing Zhen's people will come and pick you up."

Luo Lan stayed quiet.

Zhou Qi smiled and said, "What's wrong? Too scared to leave? Are you afraid you won't be able to clear your name once you leave?"

Luo Lan thought for a moment and said, "That's only one of my concerns. Even an idiot knows I didn't do it. Zhou Shiji is a smart person, so he won't be so stupid to assume that. But have you ever thought about it? If we really fight our way out of here, the hundred or so people we have lurking in Stronghold 73 will be sacrificed. Besides, even if we can leave the stronghold, the Zhou Consortium will definitely keep pursuing us. If they don't, their reputations will be tarnished. This is a bloody path we're taking, and I'm not gonna treat the lives of my subordinates as a joke."

Zhou Qi frowned. "What's with the soft-heartedness? You're the elder brother of the Qing Consortium's head and should never have put yourself in such a dangerous situation in the first place. Your subordinates risking their lives for you is all for the sake of a greater cause!"

"No matter how great the cause is, is it more worthwhile than human lives?" Luo Lan pressed his cigar into the ashtray. "If there's someone who wants me dead, I won't hesitate to leave. But since I know that the Zhou Consortium won't kill me, why should I force my subordinates to take such a risk for me?"

Zhou Qi pursed his lips. "Whatever! There aren't even any women in this crappy place! Boring!"

Luo Lan smiled and said, "Besides, as you've said, if I were to run away, the Zhou Consortium would definitely think that I have ulterior motives. Although everyone knows I didn't do it, I simply won't be able to explain myself once I leave."

But at this moment, a figure suddenly jumped into their yard and carried Luo Lan away!

As the person ran off, he even said, "Don't just stand there! I've already knocked out the guards outside. Let's get out of here already."

Luo Lan exclaimed, "Ren Xiaosu, put me down! I can't leave yet!"

Zhou Qi had never seen Ren Xiaosu before, but when he heard Ren Xiaosu's name, he trembled. Why had this ruthless person suddenly appeared in Stronghold 73?!

When Ren Xiaosu heard what Luo Lan said, he frowned and asked, "Why can't you leave?"

"If I leave, isn't that as good as admitting that I'm a criminal?" Luo Lan whisper-shouted.

Ren Xiaosu thought about it carefully. It did seem like that would be the case. But if he did not save Luo Lan, what would happen to his quest?!

Thinking of this, Ren Xiaosu said firmly, "No, you must leave!"

Luo Lan was surprised.

Chapter 510 Don't worry, I'll definitely be there

It was too late to turn back. It was no longer up to Luo Lan to decide on whether they were leaving. At the very least, Ren Xiaosu would have to complete his quest first.

Honestly, not even Ren Xiaosu himself would have expected he would sabotage Luo Lan twice in one day.

But right now, he could not care about that. As Ren Xiaosu ran outside carrying Luo Lan, Zhou Qi and the others looked at one another in dismay. The subordinates who had pledged to protect Luo Lan with their lives were suddenly at a loss of what to do. If it were an enemy that took Luo Lan away, they could at least shoot him. But this was Ren Xiaosu they were talking about. They would often even hear Luo Lan mention this person!

When they ran outside, the subordinates saw that many of the Zhou Consortium's soldiers were unconscious on the ground. But why had they not heard anything at all just now?

By the time they reached the entrance of the neighborhood of Houguan Lake, Zhou Yingxue was already waiting there with a stolen van. Although it was a seven-seater van, they ended up cramming 14 people into it. In an orderly fashion, they started heading off according to the planned escape route.

Without any sacrifices or intensive combat, Ren Xiaosu had rescued Luo Lan just like that.

This was because of the Zhou Consortium's bad supervisory control. And Zhou Shiji did not feel that Luo Lan needed to flee.

In the back row of the van, Luo Lan asked, "Xiaosu, what's with all the drama? And what're you doing at Stronghold 73?"

"Oh, I was just passing by," Ren Xiaosu said nonchalantly.

Luo Lan was a bold but careful person. He suddenly felt that something was off. "How did you know I was placed under house arrest? Wait a minute, were you the one who fired that shot during the day?"

"Hahahaha, how's that possible?" Ren Xiaosu laughed in embarrassment and said, "Would I possibly do something that would get my friend into trouble?"

Luo Lan said skeptically, "Really?"

Ren Xiaosu quickly changed the subject and asked, "What are you doing at Stronghold 73? Doesn't the Qing Consortium need people in their own territory at the moment?"

“Oh, I’m just here on vacation, as well as make some friends along the way.” Luo Lan did not hide it from Ren Xiaosu. “We feel that the Wang Consortium has become rather ambitious these days, so we’re taking some precautions.”

“Then what are your next plans?”

“We’ll stay in the Zhou Consortium for a while before heading to the Kong Consortium, then our last stop will be the Wang Consortium.”

Ren Xiaosu was surprised to hear that. “Didn’t you say that they’re getting ambitious? Then why are you walking into their trap?”

Luo Lan said with a smile, “You have to take some risks in order to gain something. Also, the Wang Consortium won’t do anything to me for now. I’m just going there to walk around and see if the Wang Consortium is as united as the rest of the world claims.”

As a matter of fact, Ren Xiaosu really admired Luo Lan. The guy was truly a brave person who would venture wherever it was dangerous. Everything he did was for the sake of the Qing Consortium.

At some point in time, Ren Xiaosu felt that after Qing Zhen rose to become the Qing Consortium’s leader, Luo Lan had started replacing him as the Shadow of the organization.

Luo Lan would help do all the dirty work Qing Zhen could no longer handle.

Ten minutes after they left the neighborhood of Houguan Lake, the voice from the palace said, “Quest complete. Awarded 1.0 Dexterity.”

Ren Xiaosu was overjoyed. The quest was completed just like that? He was now another step closer to surpassing 20 points in both the Strength and Dexterity attributes. He wondered what skill the palace would activate for him when he surpassed that level.

As of now, Ren Xiaosu’s Strength was 13.5 while his Dexterity was 13.1!

“Stop the van,” Ren Xiaosu said.

Zhou Yingxue was surprised. However, she did not question anything and stepped on the brakes.

Ren Xiaosu said to Luo Lan with a smile, “Since y’all don’t wish to flee, you can just go back.”

Luo Lan was confused.

Everyone in the van was stunned. What the hell was this?

Ren Xiaosu handed Luo Lan a flash drive. “There’s an audio recording on this. I interrogated someone named Wu Tong who was an A-rank hitman hired by the Anjing House. Their team of five came here to Stronghold 73 and colluded with the director of the Public Order Division to assassinate Zhou Xilong. The audio recording on there is the evidence you can use to clear your name.”

Luo Lan froze. “The Anjing House hitmen? How did you manage to find them?”

“There’s also three people who got sniped outside the park. They should be carrying cell phones that are unique to each A-rank hitman from the Anjing House.” Ren Xiaosu said, “Wu Tong’s body is in a house at 67 Lüshun Road. You can tell the Zhou Consortium the truth about all this.”

With the evidence in hand, the Zhou Consortium would have no reason to keep Luo Lan under house arrest. In fact, this had been Ren Xiaosu’s original plan. If the palace had not assigned him the quest, he would have handed the flash drive over to Luo Lan, and the matter would have ended just like that.

Luo Lan held the flash drive in his hand and said in shock, “If you had this, why didn’t you take it out earlier? Wouldn’t it have been better to just give it to me then?”

Ren Xiaosu said in seriousness, “If I didn’t save you from there, how’d you have known that I’m a good friend!”

Luo Lan quietly uttered, “Those A-rank hitmen usually work in a group of five. You said that there’s three people dead outside the park and another body in a house at Lüshun Road. Then, you must be the fifth?”

“It’s not me.” Ren Xiaosu shook his head.

Luo Lan was so angry he laughed. He stared at Ren Xiaosu and said, “Swear to me!”

Ren Xiaosu said in seriousness again, “The fifth hitman is a loser!”

In the driver’s seat, Zhou Yingxue said unhappily, “Master, how can you say that about me!”

Immediately, everyone’s eyes turned to Zhou Yingxue.

Luo Lan gave a hollow chuckle. “Alright. I was wondering why the sniper didn’t shoot when Zhou Xilong was sitting on the bench. It would’ve been easier to hit him while he was sitting still, yet the sniper waited for Zhou Xilong to get up and start moving before opening fire. So it actually turned out that I was too close to the target and you were worried I might accidentally get injured.”

Ren Xiaosu praised, “Fatty Luo, your intelligence is truly extraordinary!”

“Extraordinary? My ass!” Luo Lan snappily opened the door and got out of the van. “If I want to look for you, where should I go?”

“The black market outside of the Qinghe Group.” Ren Xiaosu thought for a moment. “I should be there waiting for new missions most of the time.”

“Alright, I’ll go there to find you.” Luo Lan gave a wave of his hand and walked off towards the villa at Houguan Lake with his men.

Both parties did not say anything further, and Luo Lan did not blame Ren Xiaosu either. He knew Ren Xiaosu was also unaware that he was here to look for Zhou Xilong to work together before he had accepted the mission. It was already good enough that he had a friend in this world who worried about accidentally injuring him while pulling the trigger.

This was an era where personal interest came first, and men were accustomed to people cutting off friendship, love, family ties, and dispensing with dignity and justice.

Luo Lan suddenly turned around and said with a smile, "If you see my name appear in a mission assignment someday, what will you do?"

Ren Xiaosu raised his eyebrows. "Don't worry, I'll definitely be there."

"Hehe," Luo Lan laughed. "That's all I need to hear. I'll see you again in the black market!"

Luo Lan knew full well that when Ren Xiaosu would come to look for him, it would definitely not be to carry out the mission.

Then he led his men back to the villa at Houguan Lake. However, the place was already completely sealed off at this moment. Luo Lan looked at the middle-aged man in front of him and said with a smile, "You must be Zhou Shiji, right? How rare for the Zhou Consortium's leader to personally come out to welcome me back. If I say I was just out for a stroll, I wonder if you'd believe me or not..."