

## Chapter 52: Face bugs

To Liu Bu, Luo Xinyu, and the others who lived in the stronghold, a rat was synonymous with dirtiness. Traditionally, they were creatures that scuttled around in the sewers and represented plague, disease, miasma, and so on.

Although Ren Xiaosu also did not eat rats, it was only because he had seen them feeding on carrion before. It left a terrible impression on him. But to the other refugees in town, their natural mindset was that rats in the wilderness were food all the same. These rats stole food from humans and even preyed on other living creatures, so there was no difference between them and any other wild animals.

Since there was a shortage of food in town, they would even turn to eating termites, not to mention rats. This rat would look just like a walking piece of meat to them.

Compared to those in the stronghold, the refugees' perception of food was different. The refugees felt that anything could be eaten as long as it didn't kill them.

The pickup was now destroyed, and the provisions had been shot to smithereens by the soldiers. Even if there were still food left, no one would dare retrieve it at the risk of being attacked by the wolves. As such, they would have to bear with the hunger and starvation that was to come.

However, Ren Xiaosu was not afraid. Anyone but him could starve in this wilderness.

At this moment, Ren Xiaosu was looking at Yang Xiaojin. Earlier, he thought that she wanted to save him when she pointed a gun at the driver. But when she pointed the gun at him as well, he realized she only needed a guide who was familiar with the environment.

Or maybe Yang Xiaojin had realized it would get more difficult to find food from now on, while Ren Xiaosu had displayed skill in this aspect. That was why she had to bring along someone who could find food for her.

As persons specialized in different professions, being skilled with firearms did not necessarily mean that they would be skilled at wilderness survival as well. But as it happened, Ren Xiaosu was also skilled at wilderness survival.

Ren Xiaosu wondered what his wilderness survival proficiency would be if it were classified as a skill.

He asked in his mind, "What's the proficiency of my wilderness survival?"

"It can be evaluated. You're at master level," the voice from the palace crisply answered.

Ren Xiaosu was momentarily stunned as he did not expect that it could be assessed. He had never thought that his wilderness survival skill would be at master level. It felt amazing.

For some reason, Ren Xiaosu was getting suspicious of Yang Xiaojin's identity. As someone living in the stronghold, she acted too decisively and never did anything sloppily.

It was still the middle of the night, so everyone was extremely tired. Since the wolves did not dare to enter the canyon, they stopped to rest after walking several kilometers in.

They stopped because they had to discuss the countermeasures to adopt. On top of that, they were afraid of what was beyond the canyon. They wanted to delay walking through the canyon for as long as they could.

“We can only keep going forward,” Xu Xianchu said as he stood in the canyon. “This canyon is called the Howling Canyon. It looks calm now, but all of you have seen how strong the wind can get around here. I wouldn’t be surprised if someone’s been blown out of this canyon before.”

“But there doesn’t seem to be any wind here at night,” Liu Bu wondered. “From the evening until now, there hasn’t been much wind. By parking the vehicles side by side to act as a shield, the wind shouldn’t be much of a problem for us.”

“That won’t do. We can rest here for now but we have to leave before dawn,” Xu Xianchu refuted. “And we don’t have any food left. Our top priority is to make it out of the canyon so that we can look for food. It doesn’t seem like there’s any food in this canyon.”

“Now that you mention it, I’m getting a little hungry,” Liu Bu murmured.

During the night, everyone sat around the campfire that was set up. Because of their fear, they did not have much appetite. But it was five to six hours past dinnertime, and everyone had expended a great deal of stamina and energy while making their escape, so they were all a little hungry.

“If I had known, I would have gone to get the food supplies first,” someone complained. “Although the pickup was shot beyond recognition, the food was still edible.”

“What can we do now? We still have almost a fortnight’s journey ahead of us. What can we eat and drink?” Liu Bu asked.

With this question, everyone turned their eyes to Ren Xiaosu. In everyone’s opinion, Ren Xiaosu was amazing at surviving in the wilderness. Didn’t Ren Xiaosu catch a large fish?

However, Ren Xiaosu pointed to the rat at his feet. “Do y’all want to eat this?”

Everyone fell silent, but they knew they would definitely eat the rat if they were at their wits’ end. This was the reality of things.

In fact, everyone in the convoy knew that Ren Xiaosu would definitely be unwilling to help them look for food. After all, the convoy did not provide Ren Xiaosu with any food before this. Not only did they ostracize him, they also deliberately made fun of him and constantly put him in difficult positions. As such, how could they expect that he’d help them find food?

Some people suddenly started to grumble in their heads about Liu Bu. ‘What was wrong with giving Ren Xiaosu some food when there was plenty of provisions in the pickup? Look at how things have turned out.’

They had also never thought they would end up in this situation. Although they did not say anything at the time, they were all laughing when Liu Bu refused to provide Ren Xiaosu with any food.

Ren Xiaosu sneered in his mind at the time. 'It's every man for himself out here.'

"Let's take a break for now. At dawn, we'll pass straight through the canyon," Xu Xianchu decided.

"Once we get out of here, we'll all have to be careful. Let's be sure that there's no more danger before we talk about food. One or two days isn't enough to make us die of hunger."

When there was a shortage of food in town, Ren Xiaosu saw someone eating tree bark and roots. After that, they even ate soil before eventually dying.

Ren Xiaosu knew exactly what would happen to people when they got hungry. Right now, they would not eat the rat. But in another two days, they would get so desperate they would even eat soil.

At this moment, Yang Xiaojin went over to Ren Xiaosu and handed him a dagger. Ren Xiaosu was taken aback. "Are you giving that to me?"

"I'm just lending it to you," Yang Xiaojin said.

"Conditions?" Ren Xiaosu asked. These two people conducted themselves in a very straightforward manner. Love and hate didn't exist for no reason in this world, so there must be a reason why Yang Xiaojin was lending her dagger to Ren Xiaosu.

"Food," Yang Xiaojin said.

"Then it's not enough to just lend it to me." Ren Xiaosu shook his head and said, "You'll have to give it to me."

"Sure." Yang Xiaojin turned around and left.

Ren Xiaosu was stunned. In fact, Yang Xiaojin had already planned to use the dagger as a trading condition right from the start. When she said that she would lend it to him, it was only to leave some room for negotiation.

Ren Xiaosu did not know whether to laugh or cry. He felt that he must be more careful when dealing with Yang Xiaojin in the future.

He inspected the dagger and could tell it was of much better quality than all of the metal weapons he had ever seen in Old Wang's grocery store. He figured this even though he did not understand much about knives.

Ren Xiaosu put the dagger back into its sheath and hid it up his sleeve. All of a sudden, Ren Xiaosu looked horrified. He looked above the cliff, and everyone followed his gaze. "What's that up there?"

Right as he finished speaking, the rattle of hard shells grinding against each other could be heard inside the canyon. Xu Xianchu shone a bright flashlight over his head and saw an uncountable black swarm of insects crawling down the cliff walls.

No one here had seen these bugs before. The patterns on the back of the black bug's shells resembled the human face. Their mandibles were opening and closing as they wildly rushed down at the group of people at the bottom of the cliff wall. It was as though they were following some sort of command, as some of them leaped from a height onto Ren Xiaosu and the others.

Ren Xiaosu pulled out his dagger and sliced apart a huge bug that had lunged for him. Then he shouted, "Run!"

"What the hell is that?!" Liu Bu was scared to death.