

## First Order 541

Chapter 541 The dust settles After leaving Stronghold 73, Ren Xiaosu did not care about what would happen in the stronghold. While he was on his way to join back up with his maidservant, the Anjing House was still issuing missions to deal with the Pyro Company through their text messages. From that, it could be seen that the battle in Stronghold 73 did not end with the cave-in at East Lake.

However, two days later, the Anjing House finally stopped sending out any further texts with regards to Stronghold 73. Thus, Ren Xiaosu concluded the battle should have completely ended and that the Anjing House and the Pyro Company would be withdrawing from Stronghold 73.

As for whether there was truly any laboratory data at the site, Ren Xiaosu suddenly had a feeling there should be.

This was because he did not see any of the Riders since the chaotic battle broke out.

After all, finding the research laboratory had been the goal from the start for that group of people. But once the battle began, they went missing. This had to be because they had gone to search for the true location of the laboratory.

Moreover, Ren Xiaosu felt the Riders and the Pyro Company only shared the same goal but were not truly united in their cause. If there were no laboratory there, the Pyro Company would not have been able to convince the Riders to show up.

Therefore, it was probably also in the Pyro Company's plan for the Riders to head straight for the laboratory while they plotted and fought to the death against the Anjing House.

A corpse of a Pyro Company member was in Ren Xiaosu's storage space that he prepared for Zhou Yingxue to complete her mission. The two of them were discussing how to pose the body so it would look more natural.

But then, the Anjing House sent out a text, "Due to an unexpected person deliberately breaking the rules, the requirement of killing the Pyro Company members to qualify for next year's trials has been rescinded. Qualification for the trials will still be determined by the completion of five A-rank missions within the year."

Ren Xiaosu was stunned. He had fucking spent so much effort to help Zhou Yingxue disqualify the other A-rank hitmen, but in the end, this text from the Anjing House had made his work all for nothing?!

Ren Xiaosu was a little angry. How could a large organization like that not have the most basic form of credibility!

When Zhou Yingxue saw the text, she looked up at Ren Xiaosu and asked, "Master, what exactly did you do in Stronghold 73?"

In the blink of an eye, Zhou Yingxue realized the person in the text who broke the rules must have been her master and not anyone else!

Ren Xiaosu's face darkened. "Is that the kind of person you see me as?"

"Yes, absolutely!" Zhou Yingxue said with certainty.

Ren Xiaosu was speechless.

This time, Ren Xiaosu had overplayed his hand. The Anjing House had more than 30 A-rank hitmen show up at Stronghold 73. Minus the 11 who died, there were still 26 of them remaining.

But of the 26, only two managed to qualify for the trials next year.

If there had been more than five hitmen who completed this mission, the Anjing House would probably not have gone back on their word. It was purely because of Ren Xiaosu's meddling that they were forced to rescind their own rules, and that was not something the Anjing House wanted either!

When Ren Xiaosu came back to the hotel, it seemed he had been noticed by someone in the tour group. Not long after his return, Li Ran actually came over to look for Zhou Yingxue. She forced Zhou Yingxue to chat with her for two hours straight before leaving, which nearly drove Zhou Yingxue crazy!

Ren Xiaosu chuckled and said, "Looks like the relationship between you two improved a lot while I was away."

Zhou Yingxue rolled her eyes. "She obviously came to see you, Master."

"Oh yes," Ren Xiaosu took out a bunch of cell phones and said, "all these cell phones have completed the mission with one or two Pyro Company member kills on them. Go and calculate how much reward money we can get from these."

Zhou Yingxue stared blankly at the 20-plus cell phones in front of her. She could roughly understand why the Anjing House had rescinded the rule. "Master, didn't they say that only 40 people from the Pyro Company were there? Yet you have more than 20 cell phones here?"

"There were more than 40 of them." Ren Xiaosu shook his head and said, "I think over 80 Pyro Company members showed up. The Anjing House's intelligence report gave the wrong info." Only after Ren Xiaosu explained everything to Zhou Yingxue did she realize her master's trip to Stronghold 73 was really dangerous.

"Good thing you didn't go into the tunnel," Zhou Yingxue rejoiced. "However, the Pyro Company and the Anjing House aren't easy to deal with at all. I just hope we won't be dragged in again the next time they fight."

Zhou Yingxue picked up the cell phones Ren Xiaosu had handed her one by one and counted the reward money earned. "There's 15 Midnight and 6 Dusk member kills in total. Originally, a reward of 150,000 yuan was offered for each Midnight member killed and 500,000 yuan for each Dusk member killed. However, the Anjing House suddenly doubled the reward money, so we have a total of 10.5 million yuan." Zhou Yingxue beamed in delight. As a matter of fact, her share of this 10.5 million yuan reward would be more than 2 million yuan. All she did was lie around the hotel with nothing to do and money still came to her. Where else was she supposed to find another master like that?

“The Anjing House will definitely notice that there’s something suspicious with this batch of cell phones. After all, there were not that many Pyro Company members killed by the A-rank hitmen, yet this group of B and C-rank hitmen seem to be playing in god mode or something. It’s clear that there’s something strange going on.” Ren Xiaosu asked, “I think that these accounts might’ve been placed under surveillance. How can we safely transfer the money out?”

Zhou Yingxue explained, “That won’t be difficult. The most straightforward and crude way would be to go to the casino in Luoyang City and transfer the money using the anonymous accounts’ passwords. The casino will then exchange the money for chips that you can either deposit into your new account or take with you. That casino should be owned by the Qinghe Group, so there’s a lot of privacy. Although there’s an administrative fee, I think it’s absolutely worth it.”

Ren Xiaosu frowned. “Even if it’s the Qinghe Group, we can’t completely place our trust in them. They might have a good reputation, but we don’t really know what goes on behind the scenes.”

“Don’t worry.” Zhou Yingxue shook her head. “The other consortiums tried to pressure the casino into freezing some accounts. But the casinos did not bow to the pressure of those consortiums and only took orders from the Qinghe Group.”

“We’ll talk about it when we get back.” Ren Xiaosu said, “Record these accounts and passwords first, then delete the texts and find an opportunity to sell this batch of cell phones. That’ll be another lump sum earned.”

“We can sell these off in the local black markets. If we sell them in batches at the various strongholds, we won’t need to sell them at too low a price.” Zhou Yingxue was absolutely nailing her role as the support teammate right now. Ren Xiaosu did not know much about the Central Plains, so with a former intelligence officer like Zhou Yingxue by his side, he could learn more about how things worked here.

“Where we going next?” Ren Xiaosu asked.

“Our next stop will be Stronghold 73 where we’ll stay for four days while Li Ran attends an audition. After that, we’ll head to Stronghold 74 for another concert,” Zhou Yingxue said.

Ren Xiaosu was speechless. Did Stronghold 73 have some sort of grudge against him? This was the third time he’d be going to Stronghold 73!

Hopefully, the storm at Stronghold 73 would have subsided by the time they got there.

## **Chapter 542 Debriefing**

Since it was a concert tour, there were concerts scheduled. However, Ren Xiaosu still took time to relax amid the frantic schedule. While the others in the group were busy up to their ears, he stayed in the hotel and read.

Fang Zhi, Li Ran’s assistant, wanted Ren Xiaosu to go to the concert venue to help out, but Ren Xiaosu mercilessly rejected him.

At this moment, a Pyro Company fighting force was convening a meeting to analyze the battle at Stronghold 73.

An after-action review was an extremely important process for all military commanders. It was just like how students specifically kept a notebook to record their mistakes to remind themselves not to repeat the same errors.

In the dark conference room, everyone was sitting upright.

This place did not really look like your usual conference room. It felt more like a prison instead.

One of the attendees said, "We've successfully gotten our hands on the lab data this time. I have to say that Commander's plan of creating a diversion to secretly make our move was a wonderful strategy. Furthermore, Commander has also established our Pyro Company's dominance on that filth out there. They probably won't even think about going against us again in the future. I feel that this is really down to the great contribution of Commander!"

The commander glanced at the person who spoke, then calmly said, "This is not the time to bootlick. I want a detailed report of the casualties we suffered."

His adjutant next to him said, "We have 43 dead, 4 seriously injured, and 17 others who suffered minor injuries."

The commander frowned and said, "The casualties are much worse than we expected. One-third of our casualties during this operation came from the elite Dusk unit."

"It was mainly because of that person in the white mask that we suffered so many casualties," the adjutant calmly encapsulated. "But compared to the casualties, HQ should be rewarding us for our success this time instead of punishing us."

Everyone's eyes lit up. This meant they could obtain access to better gene mods as well as greater authority.

The concept of authority within the Pyro Company was a measure of one's status. Currently, their commander only had P3 authority, with the P4 and P5 personnel outranking him. If he wanted to become a big shot like them, there was still a long way to go.

The commander read through the battle summary and asked, "Who fought against that person in the white mask that day?"

His adjutant replied, "This is where it gets a little strange. Those who fought against him are all dead, so it's difficult for us to even find out what the opponent's superpower is."

Silence fell over the conference room. Anyone who had fought that person directly was dead? So that made it difficult to find out anything useful about the other party?

The most useful information they had was that the other party was a masked male, with his gender determined via his height and physique.

“Designate this person as a T4 threat.” The commander said, “Report this information to HQ.”

Just as P1 to P5 represented the Pyro Company’s internal authority levels, “T” represented the combat power of an individual, or the threat that they posed. The previous person designated as a T4 threat was Li Shentan from the Southwest.

As for T5, no one was assessed to be at that threat level yet.

However, the Pyro Company firmly believed that such a person would definitely appear in the Era of Gods.

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At the same time the Pyro Company was conducting its after-action review, the Anjing House was also having theirs. In a residential area, several people had gathered around a dining table and were discussing as they ate. “We still have much to learn from our experience this time. Based on our assessment, the Pyro Company has already obtained the lab data with the help of the Riders. However, the Riders still haven’t found what they wanted and have already returned to Luoyang City.

“What was unexpected that day was that the Pyro Company’s infiltration methods were even more brilliant than we knew. Otherwise, we wouldn’t have made the wrong assessment of how many people they had in the stronghold. Therefore, we must be more careful in the future. The Pyro Company is an extremely strong opponent, so don’t underestimate them.

“Another thing is, someone kept using different cell phones to receive the rewards for the mission that day. This led to us getting the wrong impression of how many people had responded to our mission that day. We only learned later on that a person in a white mask that came to mess things up had stolen a bunch of C and B-rank hitmen’s cell phones before the battle broke out. Therefore, he was the one who killed over 20 of the Pyro Company members.”

Vanilla frowned as he listened to this. Only now did he say, “He killed so many people single-handedly? Just how godly is he? Why is he so powerful? Do you have any more detailed information about him?”

“His identity is unknown, but his height is estimated to be between 182 to 185 centimeters. According to the A-rank hitmen, he has an extremely strong physique, so it’s very likely that he’s a superhuman with extreme physical strength.” A girl at the dining table touched her newly regrown canine teeth and said, “Our A-rank hitmen didn’t engage in combat with him directly, so the Pyro Company should have more information about him.”

This girl’s canine teeth were a little strange-looking. They were much longer than the other teeth she had and made her look like a vampire.

Vanilla sat in his chair with his arms crossed and said, “You have to keep an eye on this superhuman. Moving in and out of the chaotic battlefield so casually, it’s like everything is just a game to him. The strength of a person like that is truly terrifying.”

The girl with the long canine teeth said, “However, that person killed many of the Pyro Company’s members for us. So the boss intends to pay out all the rewards so we can foster this relationship and continue observing him.”

Playing with sugar syrup next to them, the old man pursed his lips and said, “How are we going to keep an eye on him? We don’t know what he looks like, and he owns so many cell phones as well, so how are we going to track his movements? Do you know which cell phone he’ll be using for the next mission?”

“Wait a minute.” The girl with the long canine teeth was stunned. “There was also a D-rank hitman in Stronghold 61 who liked to steal the cell phones of the other hitmen. The boss even went down to Stronghold 61’s town specifically to investigate. Could he be that person?”

Vanilla was at a loss. “Do you really think that guy has nothing better to do and became a D-rank hitman? Why do I find it hard to believe...”

In fact, the Anjing House had also suspected Zhou Yingxue before. After all, when she went to Stronghold 73 to kill Zhou Xilong, the D-rank hitmen over there were similarly wiped out.

From the looks of it, the suspicions on Zhou Yingxue could be eased for the time being as they had temporarily identified the suspect to be male. After all, Vanilla had seen Zhou Yingxue before. With her figure, there was no way she could disguise herself as a man even with a mask on.

In that chaotic battle, the man in the white mask had become the focus of the Pyro Company and the Anjing House after they sat down to analyze the situation. Everyone wanted to find him, but there weren’t any good leads on where to start.

The radiance of that white-masked man even concealed the role that Ren Xiaosu’s original self had played on the battlefield. Just like that, Ren Xiaosu’s participation that night had been ignored.

Vanilla asked, “Can we investigate those anonymous accounts? As long as he tries to withdraw the money, we can find his whereabouts.”

“We’re already on that, but what I’m most worried about is that he’ll go to the casino at the Qinghe Group to get the money out. If he does that, the last lead we have will be cut off.”

### **Chapter 543 Hope Media**

It had already been a week since the cave-in at East Lake. Ren Xiaosu kept himself cooped up in the hotel every day as if he had nothing to do with that incident at all.

However, Zhou Yingxue remained very busy. As Li Ran’s bodyguard, Zhou Yingxue had to constantly be by Li Ran’s side while she attended all sorts of events. For some reason, the media in the stronghold went crazy and started tracking Zhou Yingxue as well. They even gave her the title of the most beautiful female bodyguard, which made her feel flattered for a few days.

After several concerts, Li Ran was starting to look a little tired.

However, before setting off on the journey to Stronghold 73, Li Ran did not board her own minivan. Instead, she got into Zhou Yingxue and Ren Xiaosu's car. This surprised Ren Xiaosu a little.

With Li Ran sitting in the same car as them, he couldn't speak casually anymore. After all, he was supposed to be Zhou Yingxue's assistant.

Ren Xiaosu wondered, "Isn't it more comfortable for you to take the minivan?"

The seat in the minivan had been modified so it could be used as a bed for resting by reclining it fully. One could sleep through the entire journey and find themselves arriving at the destination when they woke up, so how much more enjoyable could it get?

However, Li Ran gave a very good excuse. "I'm worried we'll encounter danger in the wilderness, so I wanted to take the same car as my bodyguard. That way, if we encounter any danger, you guys can protect me immediately. Besides, any potential attacker would expect me to be in that minivan. If someone really attacks the convoy, they'll target the minivan first, and I'll be able to escape from danger."

Ren Xiaosu said in a speechless manner, "As if there's that many bandits targeting convoys in the wilderness of the Central Plains."

However, Li Ran's reasoning was legitimate, so they couldn't really refuse to take her in their car.

After they set off, Ren Xiaosu and Zhou Yingxue remained silent. Li Ran was reading the newspaper in the backseat of the off-road vehicle, and she kept flipping through the newspaper noisily.

Ren Xiaosu could not help but turn around and look. Li Ran immediately pretended to be reading the news seriously. However, Ren Xiaosu was surprised to find that the entire page facing him was full of news about Li Ran's successful performances. From the looks of it, it was even featured as the headliner!

It was no wonder she was flipping the newspaper so noisily. So it turned out that she was trying to show off.

The most eye-catching picture on the front page was Li Ran's photo. It was probably taken during one of her concerts as she was in her performance outfit that looked really dazzling.

Ren Xiaosu turned back around and resumed resting with his eyes closed. Behind him, Li Ran coughed twice and said, "This newspaper from Hope Media is very influential and can be bought in all of the Zhou, Wang, and Kong Consortiums' strongholds. Also, I heard their newspaper is sold at all newsstands in the Pyro Company's strongholds."

Zhou Yingxue rolled her eyes as she drove. What this woman was obviously trying to say was that she was amazing for being able to get on the front page of such a newspaper.

Yet Ren Xiaosu's interest was piqued by the other aspects of this discovery. "What's up with this Hope Media? Which organization do they belong to?"

From his point of view, the various consortiums were still relatively isolated from one another. After all, if he wanted to go to the strongholds of the other consortiums, he would have to apply for a visa beforehand.

So why was this Hope Media able to cast such a wide net?

“It is a business arm under the Qinghe Group.” Li Ran smiled and said, “The last leg of our tour was set at Luoyang City because we also wanted to pay a visit to the chief editor of Hope Media.”

Ren Xiaosu was enlightened. So it was a business arm under the Qinghe Group? No wonder.

A mouthpiece like a newspaper would have to adopt a neutral stance in order to be distributed in so many strongholds.

It would be very difficult for the newspaper industry of the Wang Consortium to make any headway in the Zhou Consortium’s strongholds. After all, a public opinion mouthpiece should not be influenced by external forces.

Moreover, the Qinghe Group also owned more than half of the satellites in service to the Alliance of Strongholds. In terms of the speed of their news dissemination, they truly crushed all the other newspaper companies.

The dissemination of news had always been focused on speed and accuracy. Whoever could deliver the news faster would have the advantage.

Ren Xiaosu asked, “Can I have a look at the newspaper?”

Li Ran was delighted on the inside, but she said in a reserved tone, “Of course.”

However, Li Ran was disappointed when Ren Xiaosu flipped through all the pages except for the entertainment section and the front page! He had to be intentionally ignoring her. That must be it!

Zhou Yingxue was amused. She knew full well that her master was not interested in entertainment news at all.

After Ren Xiaosu finished reading today’s newspaper, he went to get more of the previous days’ newspapers that the entourage had stored and spent the entire day reading them.

Hope Media’s newspaper was also quite ruthless. The current affairs pages’ were filled with articles that pointed out contemporary issues, with the Wang Consortium, Zhou Consortium, and Kong Consortium all criticized. Not even the Pyro Company escaped their scathing opinion.

Ren Xiaosu was puzzled. “The chief editor of a newspaper like that hasn’t been beaten to death yet?”

“When Hope Media first started, people threatened them. However, the chief editor still continued writing this way. I heard he was kidnapped once and locked up for three days and three nights, and they broke his legs too. In the end, after he was released, the style of the newspaper’s articles remained



unchanged.” Li Ran explained, “After that, for some reason, everyone stopped caring about him. It’s also because of Hope Media’s truthful reporting that they were able to expand so rapidly.”

Ren Xiaosu was stunned. They actually did not kill the chief editor? Was it because the organizations still wanted to maintain their reputations?

To be honest, he didn’t really understand this.

However, after reading so many newspapers, Ren Xiaosu became interested in Hope Media’s publications, because just a few days’ worth of newspapers had helped him learn a lot about the Central Plains.

For example, the Wang Consortium and Fortress 178 had already signed a treaty on the construction and repair of the highways and railroads. Both parties had been preparing for this for a long time, and it was said that by the middle of next year, the highways would preliminarily be opened to traffic. The full completion date, however, would have to wait another five years.

From the looks of it, the Wang Consortium had a really urgent demand for resources from the Northwest.

In Hope Media’s newspaper, there was also a report about the cave-in at East Lake. However, the reporter did not seem to know the entire story and only wrote about the reactions of the various consortiums.

In his reading, Ren Xiaosu even saw reports about Luo Lan. However, the articles regarding the guy were basically all gossip. In the newspapers, the man seemed to be characterized as a nouveau riche from the Southwest who had come to the Central Plains to enjoy life.

However, at the end of the article, it was stated that perhaps Luo Lan’s purpose in coming to the Central Plains was not that simple.

Ren Xiaosu felt that Hope Media’s newspaper was really good. He decided that from now on, he would have to pick up the day’s newspaper whenever they passed by a stronghold.

Only Li Ran was left sulking at the back of the off-road vehicle. This was because she carefully watched Ren Xiaosu flip through the newspapers during the entire journey and realized that it was not that he did not read entertainment news, but that he did not read entertainment news related to her!

Regarding this, Zhou Yingxue also got it wrong. Ren Xiaosu was actually quite concerned about entertainment news. He was really looking forward to seeing Luo Xinyu’s picture appear in the entertainment sections of the newspapers. But unfortunately, there weren’t any.

Chapter 544 Meeting Wang Congyang again  
The tour group arrived at Stronghold 73 on the same night. On their way here, another two vehicles suffered breakdowns. Fortunately, they had employed a mechanic and brought maintenance tools with them this time. Otherwise, they might have gotten delayed again.

When they arrived at Stronghold 73, the outside of the stronghold was a different sight. There was not just a town outside now, but a large military encampment had been set up as well. It felt like thousands of troops were stationed out there.

If the tour group wanted to get into Stronghold 73, they would have to pass through this military encampment first. However, they got stopped at the entrance of the camp to be interrogated and inspected first.

There was no problem with their customs documents, but everyone would have to go through a body search as well. Fortunately, the military personnel here were a principled bunch. Seeing that there were women in the group, they sent the military camp's female nurses to handle the body search for the women.

In the end, it was the plainclothes guards protecting Li Ran's team who had their daggers and pistols all confiscated. They were told that they could come to the military camp to get them back once they left the stronghold.

What surprised Li Ran and the others was that not a single weapon was found on Zhou Yingxue and Ren Xiaosu.

However, they were still not allowed to enter the stronghold after the security checks were complete. As there was a curfew in the stronghold right now, they had to wait until daybreak in the military camp. Only after 7 AM would the stronghold's gate be opened.

Seeing that the stronghold was right in front, and that they had already booked the hotel in advance, Li Ran could not stand it anymore. They were already exhausted from traveling for the entire day, yet they still had to wait in the barracks until daybreak?

But just as the soldier was done letting them know, a convoy passed through the military base and drove straight into the stronghold. After the stronghold's gate was opened, it came back down again. Li Ran was stunned for a moment before asking, "Didn't you say the stronghold gate would not be opened? Then what was with that convoy?"

"They're our Zhou Consortium's people," the Zhou Consortium soldier said calmly.

It was only natural for the Zhou Consortium's people to get privileged treatment at their own strongholds.

Li Ran asked Fang Zhi softly, "Can you contact the film crew in the stronghold and get them to think of a solution?"

In the end, Fang Zhi took the satellite phone and went outside to call the film crew. When he came back, he said helplessly, "They told us to settle such issues by ourselves."

Li Ran went silent for a moment. She did not expect the film crew to be so heartless when the other party was clearly on good terms with the big shots of the Zhou Consortium. She thought for a while and said, "Try paying these soldiers and see if they can make an exception."

But at such a time, no one dared to accept any bribes. The soldier explained that something big had just happened in the stronghold, and if they had read the newspapers, they would have known about the cave-in at East Lake. Therefore, no one dared to make any mistakes at a time like this.

They did not even dare to accept bribes!

Nothing could be done about the situation. At this moment, Li Ran was finally feeling a sense of helplessness in the face of a consortium. In the face of absolute military power, money and connections did not seem that useful anymore.

However, Ren Xiaosu did not mind at all. He just sat down at the side and continued reading the newspapers. It was as if the soldiers coming and going were invisible to him.

In the morning, Ren Xiaosu even shamelessly asked the officer for a copy of Hope Media's newspaper after it was distributed in the base.

The Zhou Consortium troops were quite disciplined. They were only carrying out their duties by holding the tour group outside the stronghold. As there were also Li Ran's fans within the base, no one would deliberately make things difficult for them.

Ren Xiaosu saw in today's newspaper that the Zhou Consortium's troops had intercepted and wiped out a small group of Pyro Company members that were preparing to pull out of the stronghold. However, they did not find any laboratory data on them.

This made Ren Xiaosu wonder if there was really any laboratory data in Stronghold 73 at all.

When the stronghold's gate was opened, Li Ran and the others immediately entered the stronghold and headed to the hotel they had booked. In just one night, dark circles had already appeared under Li Ran's eyes. Zhou Yingxue, on the other hand, seemed fine. After all, a supernatural being's physical fitness far exceeded that of a normal person's.

On the way to the hotel, Ren Xiaosu froze.

"What's wrong?" Zhou Yingxue asked.

Ren Xiaosu started rolling up the car window. Li Ran had already returned to her minivan, so he did not have to be so cautious with his words anymore. "Did you see that man? I want you to smear some of the four-leaf clover's extract on him. I need to know his whereabouts."

Zhou Yingxue nodded. "Alright, but, Master, who is that?"

"You don't know him." Ren Xiaosu said, "His name is Wang Congyang. I didn't expect him to appear here."

As they spoke, Zhou Yingxue's car fell out of the convoy and stopped by the side.

Then she pretended she was going to buy breakfast and walked past Wang Congyang. Zhou Yingxue did not even come into contact with Wang Congyang and simply flicked a drop of clover extract onto his clothes.

After that, Zhou Yingxue continued to get breakfast before slowly walking back to the car. “Master, do you want buns or fried dough sticks? I bought some of each.”

“Buns, I guess,” Ren Xiaosu said with a frown.

From afar, Wang Congyang blended into the crowd after passing them by. He had quietly turned around to observe Zhou Yingxue buying breakfast before returning to her car. Then the car drove off and gradually disappeared from the streets.

Wang Congyang carefully checked himself to see if there was any tracking equipment placed on him. After confirming there was nothing, he smiled. He was probably being too suspicious.

When they arrived at the hotel, Li Ran did not even catch up on sleep and brought Fang Zhi straight out.

Zhou Yingxue was grumbling in Ren Xiaosu’s room, “She’s off to meet that director in private. She doesn’t want me to go with her as her bodyguard this time since she’s obviously afraid the director will take a fancy to me and invite me to play a role in his production. She’s so petty!”

Ren Xiaosu glanced at her and said with a smile, “You want to act in a movie? I do know a director myself, so if you really want to act in one, I can bring you to meet him when we’re done here. I saved his life once.”

Zhou Yingxue pursed her lips. “Master, when did you save a director? Why didn’t I know about it?”

“There’s a lot of things that you don’t know.” Ren Xiaosu turned around and asked, “Are you sure that everything’s OK with the four-leaf clover extract? Don’t make any mistakes on this matter. I’ll need you to lead me to him tonight so I can find out what he’s up to.”

“Is this Wang Congyang someone very important?” Zhou Yingxue asked.

“It’s not that he’s important; I just had a feud with him. But I’m more curious about what he’s doing here at Stronghold 73.” Ren Xiaosu thought for a moment and said, “I saw him as well near East Lake the other time, but I lost track of his whereabouts during the chaotic battle. I’m very sure that he was there for the lab’s data, but now that the battle has concluded, why hasn’t he left yet? Stronghold 73 is obviously not a safe place anymore for supernatural beings to hang around. If anything goes wrong, the Zhou Consortium might even start hunting them down.”

So Ren Xiaosu wondered if the matter of the research laboratory was not over yet.

The answer to this question could only be revealed tonight.

## **Chapter 545 Déjà vu**

“Then I’ll join you to fight tonight, Master,” Zhou Yingxue said confidently. “I’ll catch up on some sleep first so I don’t embarrass you later.”

When Ren Xiaosu heard the word “fight,” he suddenly felt that he was like some hooligan on the streets picking a fight with someone else.

But at this moment, there was a knock on the door of Zhou Yingxue’s room next door. Zhou Yingxue stood up curiously and went out to check. “Who would be knocking on my door at this time? We just checked in, and it shouldn’t be time for housekeeping yet, right?”

With that, Zhou Yingxue opened the door and saw a group of people outside who immediately rushed into Ren Xiaosu’s room under the lead of a middle-aged man when they saw her.

Li Ran, who was standing behind these people, had a dark expression on her face. She had just gone to see the director of the film crew in the morning, but as the director had found out in the papers that she had a superhuman as her bodyguard, he immediately had her bring them to the hotel. He wanted to interview Zhou Yingxue so he could add more content to the documentary regarding superhumans he was making.

Li Ran did not know how to turn him down, so she had no choice but to take the crew and director to the hotel before her audition even started.

When the director saw Zhou Yingxue, he smiled happily and shook her hand. “You must be Ms. Zhou Yingxue, I’ve heard a lot about you.”

However, when Zhou Yingxue saw the other party’s outstretched hand, she took a step back and said warily, “Speak properly, and don’t get touchy with me.”

How could she, Zhou Yingxue, casually hold the hand of another person? Her master was still in the room, and it would be bad if he saw that!

When Zhou Yingxue did not accept his handshake, the middle-aged man did not get angry. Instead, he introduced himself, “Hello, my name is Mu Wan’ge, and I’m a director...”

Then he incidentally saw Ren Xiaosu, who was sitting by the window, looking back at him calmly.

Ren Xiaosu thought that since he had worn a large hood last time, and it was also nighttime, the other party should have only seen his face below his nose in that chaos. Under such circumstances, the other party would probably not recognize him.

However, he realized he was wrong. He saw the way Mu Wan’ge was looking at him was not that of a normal person.

“Savior!” Mu Wan’ge exclaimed.

This exclamation frightened Zhou Yingxue, Li Ran, and the others. Everyone watched in a daze as Mu Wan’ge walked towards Ren Xiaosu. Li Ran was absolutely dumbfounded by this. How did Ren Xiaosu suddenly end up as his savior?

What kind of fucking twist was this?

However, what made her a little unhappy was that the director who was acting all snobby with her just now was getting poilter and politer with Zhou Yingxue and Ren Xiaosu with each passing moment.

Li Ran knew Mu Wan'ge was obsessed with supernatural beings and even wanted to direct a movie featuring a full cast of such people. But there was no need for such a big-time director to act so politely to supernatural beings, right?

Moreover, what did Mu Wan'ge call Ren Xiaosu just now? Savior?

Hang on a minute! Ren Xiaosu was Mu Wan'ge's savior?!

Li Ran asked, "Director Mu, why are you—"

However, Mu Wange cut her off and said to everyone behind him, "Can all of you please go outside for now? I have something to say to this young man."

With that, he chased everyone out of the room. Li Ran was confused. Wasn't she supposed to be the one in the limelight today?

Mu Wan'ge turned around and said to Ren Xiaosu warmly, "Savior!"

Ren Xiaosu shook his head. "You've got the wrong person."

"How can people like us who are involved in the visual arts possibly recognize the wrong person? Even if you had only revealed your chin that night, I would still recognize you." Mu Wan'ge rubbed his hands together gleefully and said, "Can I have your autograph?"

"No," Ren Xiaosu tactfully declined. In fact, he was even considering whether he should resort to silencing this person. Although, that was just a fleeting thought. It was a good thing that Mu Wan'ge did not know about "Old Xu." Otherwise, he would really have to seriously consider doing so.

Mu Wan'ge said seriously, "Don't worry, I'll keep your involvement a secret, I swear to God! However, I would really like to ask if you would consider participating in my movie..."

But Ren Xiaosu was really uninterested in such matters. He got up and said, "It's best that you keep it a secret or else. You know exactly what I'm capable of. If my identity gets out, you won't have anywhere to run."

After that, Ren Xiaosu pushed open the door and walked out. He passed through the crowd at the door and gestured for Zhou Yingxue to follow him.

After the two of them left, the people outside still did not know what was going on.

Mu Wan'ge walked out of the room and asked Li Ran warmly, "Do you want to be the female lead?"

Li Ran answered blankly, "Of course."

“How about this? If you have a way to get them on set, or even take a role or two, I’ll make you the female lead.” With that, Mu Wan’ge left as well.

Li Ran was extremely confused. Why did it feel like she was suddenly thrown into the deal as an extra? It was like buying jade and getting a free lucky bracelet as a gift.

Mu Wan’ge said to the film crew as he walked, “Did you guys capture any footage of their backs on camera just now?”

“Yes, but somehow, I have a feeling that their relationship isn’t exactly that of a bodyguard and her assistant.” The staff mumbled, “I feel like the female superhuman is subconsciously taking orders from the young man. With just a glance, she followed him and left.”

Mu Wan’ge took a deep breath. Of course, that was exactly how it was! The young man was pretending to be an assistant precisely because he was trying to keep his identity hidden. He recalled the scene from that night and wondered how such a superhuman could possibly be an assistant to someone.

As he watched Ren Xiaosu leave with Zhou Yingxue, Mu Wan’ge imagined the mysterious youth leading the way while his beautiful attendant followed. This should be exactly how the mysterious wild world in a movie should look like.

Mu Wan’ge thought for a moment and said, “Destroy all the captured footage. Secretly filming a person like that without their permission could get you into fatal trouble if you’re discovered!”

Zhou Yingxue was following Ren Xiaosu and asking nonstop, “Master, did you really save that director? Then can you get him to arrange for me to be the female lead in his movie? And let that Li Ran act as a maid to me or something?”

“Master, when did you save him?”

“Master...”

Ren Xiaosu could not help but turn around and glare at her. “If you don’t shut up and concentrate on tracking down the target, I’ll cut your share from 20% to 10%!”

Zhou Yingxue immediately shut up and began searching for the scent of the four-leaf clover to locate Wang Congyang’s whereabouts.

The two of them walked for nearly 30 kilometers in the stronghold before they finally started closing in on Wang Congyang.

Zhou Yingxue observed the source of where the smell was coming from and wondered, “I think Liberation Park’s right up ahead. That’s where Zhou Xilong and Luo Lan had their meeting. Wang Congyang is right there!”

Ren Xiaosu took Zhou Yingxue up to the rooftop of a building where he set up his sniper rifle and observed the situation in the park. Meanwhile, Zhou Yingxue was munching on melon seeds next to him.

Ren Xiaosu felt an uncanny sensation. "Why am I getting a feeling of déjà vu?"

#### **Chapter 546 The Pyro Company's research laboratory**

Ren Xiaosu remembered that it was exactly the same situation as the previous time. After he had set up his sniper rifle, Zhou Yingxue started munching on melon seeds next to him. Back then, after the two of them accomplished their mission and went downstairs, Zhou Yingxue even shouted for him to save her when she got surrounded by enemies.

Ren Xiaosu gave Zhou Yingxue a displeased look. "Stop munching on melon seeds. Take the spotting scope and check on the situation down there."

When the two of them looked into the park, Ren Xiaosu immediately spotted Wang Congyang. He was sitting on a bench and reading a newspaper as though he were a normal resident enjoying the fresh air in the park.

However, Wang Congyang stayed in the park for the next five hours, and this made Ren Xiaosu even more certain that there was something up with his trip here. A normal person would not come to sit on a park bench for five hours if they had nothing to do. Besides, sitting there for so long would definitely make their butt hurt too!

Just as the sun was about to set, Zhou Yingxue suddenly said, "Master, a few suspicious people are approaching from the south side of Liberation Park."

Ren Xiaosu took the spotting scope from Zhou Yingxue and looked over. She was not wrong. There really was a group dressed in black jackets and beanies approaching the park. As they walked, their arms did not swing naturally with their footsteps. This was clearly because they had guns hidden under their armpits.

On the other side of the park, Wang Congyang suddenly stood up and left.

There had to be some kind of connection between these two groups of people. Ren Xiaosu supposed they were up to something in Liberation Park.

But what could be here in Liberation Park? It was clearly just a normal park.

Right after, Ren Xiaosu saw someone among the people in black jackets take out a pocket-sized device resembling a cell phone. After fiddling with it for some time, one of them drew a circle on a certain patch of grass in the park.

After they finished, they quickly left. But they didn't go too far away and ate at a nearby restaurant. It was as if they were waiting for something.

"Are they thinking of digging up the area marked by the circle?" Zhou Yingxue asked. "It's just that there's still normal stronghold residents out in the park now, so they can't do anything about it. They're probably waiting until the curfew is in effect before making a move."



“But why did Wang Congyang appear here? Could he be the one leading the group that’s trying to dig for something in the park?” Ren Xiaosu analyzed, “There’s a very strong possibility that he’s the mastermind behind this operation. Don’t the masterminds in the field of intelligence also coordinate operations from behind the scenes? They don’t join the operations directly, right?”

“That’s right.” Zhou Yingxue nodded.

Ren Xiaosu’s interest was piqued. Whatever Wang Congyang was trying to dig up must be very valuable, right?

“Master, what are we gonna do?” Zhou Yingxue asked.

“We’re gonna snatch the prize from him, of course.” Ren Xiaosu chuckled. Wang Congyang had looked for trouble with him on several occasions before. If Ren Xiaosu went easy on him this time, that wouldn’t make sense, would it?

“Then how should we do it? Go down there after they’re done digging?” Zhou Yingxue asked.

“No, I’ll go and deal with Wang Congyang first. When they get frightened off, we can dig up the lawn and find out what’s underneath,” Ren Xiaosu said with a smile.

With that, he led Zhou Yingxue downstairs and walked to where Wang Congyang would be.

However, they did not expect to bump into Wang Congyang right after walking past two streets!

Ren Xiaosu wore the hood over his head and even deliberately pulled up the zipper really high. With his head lowered while walking, the other party could only see his chin at most.

Ren Xiaosu and Zhou Yingxue remained standing in their spot while Wang Congyang also did the same. The two groups stood there in a deadlock.

However, although Wang Congyang did not recognize Ren Xiaosu, he recognized Zhou Yingxue!

He had already been suspicious of Zhou Yingxue in the morning. Now that he saw a familiar face again, he realized in an instant that he had been followed!

A group of students who just finished their evening self-study session passed by. Some of the students even looked curiously at the three of them, but they did not pay too much attention to it. They had to hurry home since it would be curfew soon.

Just as the students walked past Ren Xiaosu and Zhou Yingxue, Wang Congyang suddenly turned around and ran!

Ren Xiaosu did not know whether to laugh or cry. Wang Congyang was still as careful as ever. He did not even intend to fight and only thought of fleeing!

Ren Xiaosu sighed and said, "We've alerted him." Zhou Yingxue and he could not go after him as it would be too obvious to start a chase in the streets at this time. In fact, it might even cause the Zhou Consortium's troops to come after them. Importantly, there were also supernatural beings among the Zhou Consortium troops.

Next to him, Zhou Yingxue cautiously said, "Master, my four-leaf clover extract only allows me to determine the general direction, not the distance to the target. I wasn't expecting him to be walking towards us either."

"Never mind." Ren Xiaosu took a look at the sky. "Since we've alerted them, the people who would be doing the digging should also have left. Wang Congyang would surely have found a way to contact his partners about us. Let's head to the park right away and see what exactly they're after over there. You don't have to follow me. Just head back to the hotel first. It'll get a little dangerous there."

What Ren Xiaosu was trying to say was, even if Zhou Yingxue was also a supernatural being, she would only be a hindrance to him. After all, her combat power was way too terrible.

But Zhou Yingxue thought her master was pretty concerned about her safety.

"Master, I'll come with you," Zhou Yingxue said obediently.

"Get lost!"

"Alright, alright!"

...

Ren Xiaosu found a public bathroom and changed his attire. He also summoned his shadow clone and dressed it as well, even putting a Pigsy mask on it.

The white mask from before could not be used as it would draw animosity from anyone who saw it.

Under the cover of the curfew, Ren Xiaosu hurried towards Liberation Park, running behind his shadow clone.

But what left Ren Xiaosu surprised was that before he got there, he could already hear the sound of digging.

Wait! Did Wang Congyang not notify his partners to leave? Why was that group of people still digging up the ground over here?

He ordered his shadow clone to go over. When the group saw his shadow clone approaching in its mask, they were not surprised. After all, they were carrying out something sneaky, so who would want to expose their identities to the consortiums?

The people in black jackets looked at the shadow clone, and one of them said, "You must be Wang Congyang, right? Where's your steam locomotive?"

Ren Xiaosu was stunned when he heard this from where he was hiding. They had mistaken his shadow clone for Wang Congyang?!

Could it be that Wang Congyang was not with them? And as a result, Wang Congyang did not let them know that he had been discovered?

But why did these people want Wang Congyang's steam locomotive? It was as if they also needed it for something besides using it to confirm his identity.

However, after some thought, he gritted his teeth and conjured the steam locomotive out of thin air. He also deliberately controlled the train to not make any loud sounds. The leader of the black-jacketed people sized up the steam locomotive and nodded in satisfaction. "Alright, your identity has been verified. After we get the data out from the ground, we'll board your steam locomotive and force our way out of here. You said that your steam locomotive can reach a maximum speed of 120 kilometers per hour, so the Zhou Consortium's troops will definitely not be able to catch up to you in the wilderness. When we get out of the stronghold, there will be people from the Company coming to back us up. The research data will be placed in your steam locomotive, and since you've already accepted the payment, you'll have to ensure that it's delivered without a hitch."

During their conversation, someone struck a metal cover in the ground while digging. The other party lifted the metal cover and entered inside. Fifteen minutes later, someone crawled out of the ground carrying a silver box with a logo of the Pyro Company on it!

Ren Xiaosu was dumbfounded. So these people were the Pyro Company members in disguise. So it turned out that there was really a Pre-Cataclysm research laboratory in Stronghold 73. Moreover, due to the Zhou Consortium's blockade, the Pyro Company was not yet able to transport the research data out. Therefore, that was their reason for finding Wang Congyang. They wanted to use his steam locomotive to barge out of the stronghold!

Had Wang Congyang switched industries to providing delivery services?!

### **Chapter 547 Amusement park train ride**

Ren Xiaosu ordered his shadow clone to wait beside the pit that had been dug up by the Pyro Company. The Pyro Company had three of their people remain outside while six members entered the pit. On the inside, they started shifting the research data into silver boxes before moving it out of the underground laboratory.

Ren Xiaosu wanted to have his shadow clone peek into the laboratory to check on the situation. However, he was stopped by the three people standing guard outside. "You're only responsible for the transportation of the data. Don't be poking your nose into other matters."

His shadow clone nodded and stood quietly by the side. Ren Xiaosu thought to himself that he would just have to wait for these people to load the research data onto his steam locomotive.

The research data that so many people were after and was worth an astronomical price was actually going to be personally handed over to someone else by the Pyro Company's own people. Just how much would they hate Wang Congyang once they realized this?

The members of the Pyro Company nearby did not suspect anything. In fact, they were already being very cautious about the operation. Upon meeting "Wang Congyang," they first confirmed his identity by having him reveal his superpower. This was not something anyone could impersonate.

After all, everyone's powers were unique. Even if there might be similar skills, it would be for superhumans who controlled elements such as water and fire.

But there couldn't be two people with the same Steam Locomotive power, could there?

As they continued to excavate the ground, boxes were continuously sent up. A Pyro Company member looked at the shadow clone and said, "We'll pay 50% of the reward to your account first. Once we're outside the stronghold, the remaining 50% will be paid out. Are you still using the same account that you provided to us previously?"

Ren Xiaosu turned anxious. How could he allow the money to be transferred to Wang Congyang's account? The job was obviously going to be done by him, so it should be transferred into his own account.

His shadow clone quickly used a tree branch to write out a string of numbers on the grass. There were even five words at the end of it: Blessed be the good man.

The Pyro Company member chuckled at the sight. "You want to use a new account, right? Sure!"

As he spoke, he gestured for the person next to him to transfer the money into the new account. Based on their agreement, the job was quoted at two million yuan. Therefore, one million yuan would be paid as the deposit first.

The Pyro Company member sized up the shadow clone. "I've long heard that you, Wang Congyang, are extremely cautious. I didn't expect you to be so cautious that you'd wrap yourself up so tightly, though. You don't even want to speak? Why? Are you afraid someone will identify your voice?"

The fact that the shadow clone could not speak had been misunderstood by the other party as Wang Congyang's cautiousness.

All of a sudden, Ren Xiaosu thought Wang Congyang's identity could prove quite useful in the Central Plains.

As for whether Wang Congyang would get into any trouble after that, it was none of Ren Xiaosu's business!

All of the research data underground was finally transported out. The members of the Pyro Company loaded up 13 boxes of research data onto the steam locomotive.

However, before they could start pulling out of the stronghold, several bright flashlights approached from outside Liberation Park. The Pyro Company members immediately frowned and looked at “Wang Congyang.” “You betrayed us?”

The shadow clone shook its head.

One of the Pyro Company members carefully looked at the source of the light. “It’s a Zhou Consortium patrol. They might just be on a routine patrol. Should we kill them or just leave?”

“Kill them.” One of them drew a saber from his belt. “T4138, take five people with you to cut those troops off at the rear and eliminate them. The other three of us will leave on the steam locomotive first. Once you’ve taken care of them, the six of you can seek refuge in the safe house and wait there for any new Stronghold 73 missions.”

“Understood,” T4138 and the others said respectfully.

“You’ll need to give them the chance to fire at all of you. Only then can you draw their attention to Liberation Park, and we’ll be able to escape the stronghold with the research data, understand?”

“Understood!” T4138 and the others replied.

Ren Xiaosu was listening from nearby. He found it quite novel that these people were actually addressing each other by their code names.

Under the cover of darkness in Liberation Park, the six Pyro Company members quietly made their way over. Before the patrol troops could even get close to the steam locomotive, they were ambushed.

...

The platoon had been patrolling around Liberation Park in their usual patrol formation, 30 soldiers marching in two parallel rows. Due to security guidelines, the safeties on these soldiers’ guns were all on.

Furthermore, the first two bullets in their magazines were blanks that would only be fired as a warning.

It wasn’t that they were stupid, but that the security guidelines throughout the stronghold were all like that.

However, when they passed by the woods in the park, they heard some sudden movements behind them. The platoon commander turned around and saw that six of his comrades at the back of the platoon had already had their throats slit.

Furthermore, the culprits did not run away and even smiled at them!

“Contact! Open fire!” the platoon commander shouted.

As he shouted, everyone in the platoon disengaged the safety on their guns. However, the six people who had ambushed them were like apparitions. The soldiers couldn’t get a bead on the enemies due to how fast they were moving.

A gust of wind blew and the leaves rustled. The enemies' footsteps sounded like they were just beside them, yet the patrol troops could not figure out where the enemy was.

Gunshots suddenly rang out inside Liberation Park. Ever since the tunnel cave-in at East Lake, the atmosphere across Stronghold 73 remained extremely tense. But what was unexpected was that even after imposing such strict security, there were actually still people committing murder. Furthermore, the victims were the Zhou Consortium's patrol troops!

...

Upon hearing the gunshots, a member of the Pyro Company standing next to the shadow clone said to it, "Let's go, Wang Congyang. We'll charge out from the east gate and break through the walls before turning southeast. There'll be someone picking us up once we get far away."

The shadow clone took the lead and boarded the steam locomotive. The Pyro Company members kept an intent eye on "Wang Congyang" in the conductor's seat in case he tried any tricks.

Meanwhile, Ren Xiaosu took advantage of the moment they were boarding the train to get to the side of it and grab ahold of the exterior.

The steam locomotive started moving. However, the Pyro Company members realized the steam locomotive was not heading out of Liberation Park. Instead, it was just circling the park.

When the Pyro Company members realized this, they frowned and said, "Why aren't we leaving? What are you driving around the park? Do you think you're operating an amusement park train ride?!"

In the end, they saw "Wang Congyang" pull a black saber out of thin air.

A Pyro Company member sneered and said, "So you're planning to double-cross us, huh? But don't you think you should ask yourself if you're capable of doing so? There's three of us but only one of you. You're already using your Steam Locomotive, and we're aboard the train as well, so don't tell me you can still knock us down."

Actually, this Pyro Company member's logic was not wrong at all.

A superhuman could only have one power. Now that they were all aboard the steam locomotive, Wang Congyang's physical fitness might not even match theirs as soldiers who had been genetically modified. So if Wang Congyang were trying to double-cross them in this situation, it would be as good as suicide.

The only thing they did not expect was that the person in front of them was not Wang Congyang. Or more accurately, this person in front of them was not even human.

Then the steam locomotive came to an abrupt halt. Due to the immense inertia, the three Pyro Company members staggered forward a couple steps before charging the shadow clone!

## **Chapter 548 Brothers-in-cauldrons**

When a steam locomotive suddenly came to a stop while traveling at high speed, if the inertia couldn't be precisely predicted beforehand to adjust for one's center of gravity, then there would definitely be a huge loss of balance.

Balance was one of the most important things for every combatant.

Not to mention a battle between supernatural beings, even if it were just a battle between normal people, a combatant who had lost their balance was as good as a fish on the chopping board.

The Pyro Company members had extremely good physical fitness, and normal supernatural beings could not compare to them. Therefore, at the moment of imbalance, they quickly used their feet to adjust their center of gravity so they would not end up in a particularly sorry state and bump into the shadow clone's blade.

But as long as they were thrown off even a little, they would definitely expose an opening.

The shadow clone zipped past the three of them with the black saber in hand while the Pyro Company members tried their best to slash at its body. But to their surprise, they discovered that there was no sound at all when their sabers struck the shadow clone's body. It was as though the three of them were not brandishing swords but pieces of paper instead!

The shadow clone's black saber was already closing in towards them. One of the Pyro Company members instinctively raised his arm in hopes of slowing down the black saber's attack. However, when the black saber slashed across his arm, it did not feel like it had slowed down at all.

"Such sharpness..." That Pyro Company member was shocked. "It's you! Just who on earth are you? Why are you always going against our Pyro Company!"

But just as he finished speaking, he lost consciousness.

Ren Xiaosu had already clashed with the Pyro Company on more than one occasion. The Pyro Company had long known there was someone capable of using a sharp weapon to cut a human in half.

While the storyteller's incredible tales sounded quite believable sometimes, there were not many swords in reality that were capable of that. Therefore, slashing a human in half across the waist was usually due to great strength by the wielder and not because the blade was really sharp.

As for the Pyro Company, they had discovered during the recovery of their dead that the skeletal structures were cleanly cut across at the waist. This was all down to the might of the saber itself!

When the three Pyro Company members died, Ren Xiaosu gave a wave of his hand and the steam locomotive disappeared with a poof. He stuffed all 13 boxes of the laboratory data into his storage space and left before the Zhou Consortium's troops could arrive at Liberation Park.

Furthermore, Ren Xiaosu took the corpses of the three Pyro Company members away with him.

The other party had recognized who he was just now. Although they still had not figured out his identity, if the Pyro Company found their corpses, they would surely know it was not Wang Congyang's doing.

That wouldn't do. He had to blame him entirely!

Not long after Ren Xiaosu left, the six members of the Pyro Company who were in charge of taking out the patrol team also fled. They still did not know what happened over here and thought the mission was a success.

When they returned to the safe house, they contacted their headquarters and reported the situation on their side. In the end, the P3 commander who oversaw the operation told them the steam locomotive did not leave the stronghold at all. In fact, it did not even leave the park.

Only then did the Pyro Company realize that something had happened! It had all gone wrong!

The commander on the other end of the satellite call asked coldly, "The superhuman responsible for escorting them is called Wang Congyang, right?"

The six members of the Pyro Company answered in panic, "Yes, it's Wang Congyang. His power allows him to conjure a steam locomotive. We all saw him do so with our own eyes."

"OK, I'll send out an internal memo for his arrest." The commander hung up. Then he said to the person next to him, "The deposit of one million yuan has already been paid. Follow up and investigate the recipient's account."

...

At this moment, the girl with the canine teeth who was in the residence stared at the screen in front of her. She was stunned because a deposit of one million yuan suddenly appeared in one of the accounts on the surveillance monitors.

Strange, wasn't this one of their Anjing House's anonymous accounts that they were monitoring? The account holder did not accept any new missions, so where did the money come from?

She made a call to find out the source of the funds. But upon checking, she realized the one million yuan was paid out from the Pyro Company's account.

What the hell? Didn't this account holder kill a lot of people from the Pyro Company previously? Why did the Pyro Company send him the money then? To thank him for not killing the rest of them?

This was way too strange! She had to tell the boss about it quickly.

As for the Pyro Company, they were also checking on the account details. It was really easy to obtain information on these consortiums' bank accounts.

Of course, the Anjing House was different from the Pyro Company. The Pyro Company was an organization on the level of a consortium. Therefore, their account number was always public. The girl with the canine teeth was able to find out about this with a simple check.

Meanwhile, Anjing House's accounts were all secret accounts. When the Pyro Company searched for the account, they could not determine who it was registered to.



However, looking at the transaction records of the account, on the night of the cave-in at East Lake, someone had transferred 300,000 yuan into the account. This was obviously the reward paid out by the Anjing House to a hitman for killing a member of Midnight.

So the Pyro Company linked it to the Anjing House.

When the P3 commander reported this matter to the higher-ups of the Pyro Company, they were extremely angered. This was because if Wang Congyang were really a member of the Anjing House, then the Pyro Company would have lost in their conflict with them this time!

It didn't matter how many of their members died. The laboratory data was what mattered most of all!

If Wang Congyang were really from the Anjing House, then it was equivalent to him scamming the laboratory data out of their hands. The higher-ups of the Pyro Company felt like their intelligence had been utterly insulted!

...

Wang Congyang was in the wilderness outside of Stronghold 73 at the moment. When he realized he was being followed, he immediately gave up on the mission and fled.

For someone like him, what could be more important than his life?

But as he walked on, Wang Congyang felt that something was amiss. He suddenly raised his hand in the isolated wilderness, and a huge black cauldron appeared out of thin air.

Wang Congyang was dumbstruck. What the fuck was this! Wait, a black cauldron? Why did he feel like he had seen this before?

Since Wang Congyang and Xu Xianchu were former brothers-in-arms, he was also quite concerned about Xu Xianchu's news.

Wang Congyang knew Xu Xianchu had a similar black cauldron. Reportedly, the black cauldron was extremely powerful and could be used as a shield against bullets and attack people too.

But why did he also have a black cauldron? Even though he had heard before that some supernatural beings could have two powers, this was ridiculous!

Besides, for Xu Xianchu and him to each have a black cauldron, what the hell was that about? Wouldn't that make them brothers-in-cauldrons?

Unlike Xu Xianchu, who happily accepted the black cauldron, Wang Congyang felt that there had to be something fishy. The appearance of this black cauldron was definitely not because he had awakened a new power but due to some external factor!

However, he couldn't figure out what that external factor was.

At the same time, the Zhou Consortium troops had started sealing off Liberation Park. Then a supernatural being followed the troops into the park.

The commander of the Zhou Consortium troops said politely to the supernatural being, "Mr. Li, you may begin now."

The person called Mr. Li was a middle-aged man who did not really look too impressive. However, he was a rather spirited man.

He raised his hand and waved it to produce a white mist. Gradually, the white mist started displaying some weird images at the pit dug by the Pyro Company. Through the images, it showed the Pyro Company members discussing something with "Wang Congyang," and a steam locomotive was even parked next to them.

### **Chapter 549 Backlash**

If Ren Xiaosu were present, he would immediately understand this supernatural being named Mr. Li had the power of retrocognition. He was capable of replaying an earlier scene of anything that happened in an area.

Within that white mist, a projection of the Pyro Company members and "Wang Congyang" was replayed accurately scene by scene.

"Mr. Li, can you make it go back a little further to the beginning. We want to see the entirety of what took place here," said the Zhou Consortium commander. Someone beside him had already set up a camera to record the projected imagery.

Mr. Li nodded. The projection within the mist reversed as the motion of the "people" inside became distorted.

The projection in the mist kept reversing until it reached a point when "Wang Congyang" appeared while the Pyro Company was excavating the ground.

Mr. Li shook his head. "I can only make it go back this much. Fortunately, there weren't too many people here. Otherwise, I couldn't even focus the projection properly."

"Alright, thank you." The Zhou Consortium commander said politely, "Can you also please translate what they were saying?"

Mr. Li already had his assistant who could read lips standing by. When the Pyro Company member opened his mouth to speak in the projection, the assistant interpreted what he said based on the shape of his mouth. "You must be Wang Congyang, right? Where's your steam locomotive?"

"Alright, your identity has been verified. After we get the data out from the ground..."

Everything the Pyro Company member had said was interpreted. From the beginning to the end, "Wang Congyang" had not said a single word.

Following that, they discussed killing the patrol troops and then "Wang Congyang" led the Pyro Company members to leave.

The projection stopped at this point. It seemed that Mr. Li's power had reached its limit. However, something unexpected happened during the last scene. Another blurry figure emerged from the woods and grabbed the exterior of the train carriage as it left.

"Who is that?" the Zhou Consortium commander said in surprise. "We didn't spot him. Where was he hiding?"

Mr. Li pointed to the woods nearby. "He was hiding over there the whole time. We didn't see him because he didn't show up until the end."

"That's strange. So who could this person be? Was he tailing the Pyro Company? Perhaps someone from the Anjing House?" The Zhou Consortium commander frowned. "But Mr. Li, why couldn't we see his face clearly? It looks like his body is entirely shrouded in a layer of fog."

Mr. Li also found it a little strange. He walked closer and carefully observed the figure of Ren Xiaosu who had grabbed hold of the exterior. He realized the other party was indeed shrouded in a layer of fog, making it difficult for anyone to get a clear look at his appearance and clothing. They could only tell that it was a person.

"This has never happened before." Mr. Li asked, "Why is this person so special?"

"We found traces of blood on the ground nearby, but we didn't find any bodies. Furthermore, the steam locomotive did not drive out of the park." The Zhou Consortium commander said, "So we suspect that something might have happened inside the park after the steam locomotive drove off. Can you create more projections and show us what might have really happened at that time?"

Mr. Li shook his head. "I can only use my power once a day. But even if I use it again tomorrow, we'll have already passed the time limit to recreate the scene."

The Zhou Consortium commander asked, "Then can you think of something so we can get a clearer look at this blurry figure? I think he might be the key figure in this matter."

"I'll try my best," Mr. Li said.

At this moment, the projected steam locomotive was parked right in front of them. In it, the figure of Ren Xiaosu was still grabbing the exterior. It was like a scene from a movie that had been paused.

Mr. Li stood in front of Ren Xiaosu and waved his hand again, trying to disperse the fog around Ren Xiaosu.

But when he focused on Ren Xiaosu, the blurry figure suddenly moved. In the projection, the steam locomotive was still paused. However, Ren Xiaosu turned his head and looked calmly at Mr. Li.

The look in his eyes was so cold it was extremely intimidating. With just a quiet look, Mr. Li felt as though he were being stared down by a terrible beast.

Only the eyes of the blurry figure were incomparably clear!

Mr. Li spat blood and collapsed to the ground. "I can't do this anymore! I can't get a clear look at all! This is so strange. Just who on earth could this person be? Why can he counter my power!"

Uproar broke out all around. No one had expected such an outcome.

In the past, everything would always proceed very smoothly whenever Mr. Li helped them with an investigation. It was really easy to find criminals with his assistance. However, they failed this time, and Mr. Li even suffered backlash from using his power.

The circumstances in which Mr. Li's superpower came about were actually quite odd. He was just a normal researcher in the past, but when his wife was robbed and killed one night, Mr. Li became so heartbroken that he swore to catch the murderer.

However, the Public Order Division's staff said no surveillance cameras were in the area that day the robbery took place, so it made it very difficult for them to catch the murderer.

In the end, Mr. Li's power was awakened, and he led the Public Order Division to find the culprit behind the crime.

After that, Mr. Li did not keep this power to himself. Every day, he would assist the Zhou Consortium in handling some of the more difficult cases they were facing, and the Zhou Consortium would pay him for his services as well.

Due to the fact the projections were only visual and without sound, he even hired an assistant who could read lips.

Meanwhile, Ren Xiaosu, who was already cooped up back in the hotel, started.

Zhou Yingxue asked, "What's wrong, Master?"

Ren Xiaosu frowned. "It felt like someone was watching me a moment ago, but that feeling went away very quickly. I'm not exactly sure what happened either."

Zhou Yingxue glanced at the window, but the curtains were drawn. "I've already checked the room. There aren't any surveillance cameras around."

"OK." Ren Xiaosu nodded and took out the 13 boxes containing the research information.

Zhou Yingxue was stunned. "Master, what is all this?"

Ren Xiaosu briefly told her about tonight's happenings in which the Pyro Company had tried to transport the laboratory data out of the stronghold and how a fight had broken out between him and the Pyro Company members.

Zhou Yingxue was speechless. So it turned out that so much had happened tonight. "Master, I thought you were just going for a little excavation trip, but I didn't know a battle would actually break out! How dangerous!"

“Mhm, it was really quite dangerous for them,” Ren Xiaosu replied absent-mindedly. His attention was already on the research information in front of him.

“So, Master, is this the lab data?” Zhou Yingxue asked with her eyes gleaming. “So if we sell this data, wouldn’t we have nothing more to worry about for the rest of our lives?”

“Only if you’re still alive to not have to worry.” Ren Xiaosu said calmly, “Once you sell the data, a lot of people will definitely target you. The Pyro Company will probably hunt you down to the ends of the earth as well. Don’t assume that you can do it so well that no one will find out. There’s no such thing as an absolute secret.”

Therefore, if Ren Xiaosu really wanted to sell the laboratory data, he only had two choices. One of them was Fortress 178, but he wasn’t sure if they would be interested in it.

The other was the Qing Consortium.

Ren Xiaosu would only feel at ease if he were selling it to either of these parties.

### **Chapter 550 Wanted: Wang Congyang**

Ever since Ren Xiaosu snatched the laboratory data out of the Pyro Company’s hands, everything seemed to have calmed down, and it became peaceful again in the stronghold. Other than the Zhou Consortium issuing a warrant for Wang Congyang, there didn’t seem to be anything else that cheered Ren Xiaosu up.

In the dead of the night, Ren Xiaosu was alone in his hotel room going through the Pyro Company’s research data. He was quite curious about the Pyro Company because he had once faced the monsters this organization had created. That group of Experimentals was still forcibly occupying the wilderness in the Southwest, and it was unknown when they would become a threat to humanity once again.

If he did not get rid of such a terrifying existence, there would probably be a much greater calamity in the future.

Therefore, Ren Xiaosu was very curious about what the Pyro Company really did.

However, when he browsed through the data, he was surprised to discover it was different than he had imagined. This life sciences research laboratory had genuinely been researching anti-cancer drugs. Furthermore, based on some of the research papers’ background and significance, the Pyro Company had no other objectives but to treat patients and save lives.

There was nothing in the data to suggest they were against humanity. If Ren Xiaosu were to just look at this information, he would probably think the Pyro Company was a typical medical institution whose mission was to treat and save lives.

This was quite different from the Pyro Company Ren Xiaosu knew.

But it wasn’t like Ren Xiaosu was starting to feel that the Pyro Company was a benevolent organization after reading through the information. Instead, he was wondering why the Pyro Company had become the current organization they were after The Cataclysm.

It was very difficult for Ren Xiaosu to have a good impression of the Pyro Company's mass abduction of supernatural beings. Disregarding the other things they did, that matter alone was enough for Ren Xiaosu to hate them.

At this moment, Ren Xiaosu suddenly saw a separate document on its own. The document's content was very short, but in it, it was stated that Laboratory No. 39 had made a breakthrough in cancer treatment. The single nucleus cells in a patient were turned into binucleated cells and managed to reach a state of equilibrium. However, the treatment's conditions were extremely particular and difficult to replicate.

Ren Xiaosu was stunned. There seemed to still be a lot of cancer patients after The Cataclysm, possibly due to the aftereffects of radiation from nuclear fallout.

But he did not expect the Pyro Company to have already found a treatment for cancer before The Cataclysm.

However, what were these particular conditions the Pyro Company was referring to?

While Ren Xiaosu was reading through the information, Li Ran and the others seemed to have returned to the hotel after a banquet. Many of them had too much to drink and were being rowdy in the hallways. However, this did not affect Ren Xiaosu at all.

But in the middle of the night, Li Ran actually knocked on his door again in another drunken stupor. Ren Xiaosu simply pretended to not be in the room so he could have some peace and quiet.

The next morning, Li Ran's assistant, Fang Zhi, came over to invite Ren Xiaosu to the film set on the pretext of touring the place.

Zhou Yingxue would definitely have to go since she was Li Ran's bodyguard. However, Ren Xiaosu was not interested and rejected him.

It was probably Director Mu Wan'ge's idea to have him go down to the film set.

When Fang Zhi realized he could not convince Ren Xiaosu, he lied that Li Ran and Zhou Yingxue were in danger on set and asked him to hurry over to help them. However, Ren Xiaosu shot him a look and closed the door without even bothering.

Like hell I'd believe you! Both the Pyro Company and the Anjing House had already pulled out of the stronghold, so what kind of danger could there be? Even Wang Congyang had probably run far away by now, while the underworld criminals have started to keep their distance from Stronghold 73.

You could say Stronghold 73 was one of the safest strongholds in the entire world right now, and that wouldn't be an exaggeration at all.

After the film crew wrapped up for the night, it became Mu Wan'ge's turn to harass him personally. He was constantly talking about having Ren Xiaosu play some role in his production.

After Ren Xiaosu chased Mu Wan'ge away, he asked Zhou Yingxue speechlessly, "When will that Li Ran set out for the next stronghold?"

Zhou Yingxue said, "According to the schedule, we should've set out two days ago. After all, the concert in Stronghold 74, which is the farthest west one, is slated to take place in seven days. We were only supposed to be here for the audition, but due to some unforeseen circumstances, this director suddenly became very enthusiastic towards Li Ran. In fact, he even arranged a very good role for her in his current production, and they're working overtime to film the scenes right now."

Ren Xiaosu gazed up at the ceiling. He knew the "unforeseen circumstances" was probably referring to him.

However, when Zhou Yingxue mentioned Stronghold 74, Ren Xiaosu got a little uneasy. He felt like something bad was about to happen. However, it was only a fleeting thought. He would definitely not try to persuade the tour group to change their schedule with something so baseless.

But it was not that he had no evidence to support that thinking. When the Zhou Consortium's reinforcements did not head to Stronghold 73 and were redirected to Stronghold 74 to set up the defenses there, Ren Xiaosu was very puzzled. It was as though the Zhou Consortium knew something was going to happen at Stronghold 74.

Ren Xiaosu told Zhou Yingxue, "If anything happens at Stronghold 74, ignore Li Ran and her team's wishes. Get the situation under control and take them away with you."

Could the Zhou Consortium have received news about the possibility of a Qing Consortium invasion? After all, the Qing Consortium was the closest to Stronghold 74.

Ren Xiaosu asked, "So when are they planning to leave for Stronghold 74? Aren't they gonna hold a concert there? They have to get there early to make preparations, don't they?"

"No need. It's all handled by the concert promoter." Zhou Yingxue said, "They plan to set out in five days."

Ren Xiaosu gazed at the ceiling again. He would have to be harassed for another five days?

He got up and said to Zhou Yingxue, "Stay here and protect her. I'll head to Stronghold 74 first. I can do some missions or steal some cell phones while I'm there. I remember you telling me that there's also a black market at Stronghold 74, right? I'll go there and sell off some of the cell phones first."

Zhou Yingxue panicked. "Master, are you going to leave right now? But I've already told them I'll bring you to the set..."

Ren Xiaosu silently gazed at Zhou Yingxue.

Zhou Yingxue knew she had said the wrong thing again. "Director Mu promised me that as long as I convince you to join the crew, he'll give the female lead to me and cast Li Ran as the supporting actress."

Ren Xiaosu got furious. Mu Wan'ge actually succeeded in turning Zhou Yingxue against him? He looked at Zhou Yingxue with disappointment. "Do you really wanna be the female lead that badly?"

With that, Ren Xiaosu turned around and left. After he went out of the stronghold, he suddenly remembered he had forgotten to ask Zhou Yingxue where Stronghold 74 was.

Furthermore, all of their vehicles had been detained by the Zhou Consortium, so he did not even have a car he could drive.

Walking in the wilderness, Ren Xiaosu got angrier the more he thought about it. He really wanted to go back there and give Mu Wan'ge, Zhou Yingxue, and Li Ran a good thrashing.

But right then, Ren Xiaosu heard the roar of an engine behind him. He turned around and saw an off-road vehicle approaching.

As the vehicle passed Ren Xiaosu, it came to a stop. A middle-aged man looked at him and said with a polite smile, "Where are you headed, young man? Why are you walking by yourself?"

Ren Xiaosu thought for a moment and said, "I'm going to Stronghold 74."

While speaking, Ren Xiaosu started sizing up the other party. There were only two people in the vehicle, one of which was a middle-aged man, while the other was a young man who looked to be about the same age as Ren Xiaosu. The two looked like they were father and son.

The middle-aged man smiled and said, "We happen to be heading to Stronghold 74 too. Get in, we'll give you a ride."