

First Order 581

Chapter 581 I can't leave

Throughout this storm, what disappointed the Hope Media reporter the most was that he had captured many photos of the escapees so that everyone would pay more attention to them, as well as the disaster itself. However, that was quickly forgotten, and it made the reporter a little sad.

After the Wang Consortium directed the blame at the Qing Consortium, everyone started waiting for the other consortiums to react. However, the other consortiums seemed to have suddenly lost their voices as they maintained silence over the matter.

The reporters who wanted to interview the higher-ups of the Kong Consortium and Zhou Consortium were also blocked from doing so.

Actually, it wasn't as though everyone was fucking stupid or something. Forget that you, the Wang Consortium, had suddenly joined the fray, but why did you have to drag the rest of us consortiums in as well in front of the reporters? The Qing Consortium really did have fucking nuclear bombs, alright?!

Moreover, they could not understand why the Wang Consortium would dare to jump into the fray when they knew the Qing Consortium had nuclear weapons. Were they not afraid of death?

Or could the Wang Consortium have something that bolstered their confidence? If they did not, the Wang Consortium would seem a little foolish with their accusations.

Before these questions were answered, they could only remain silent.

In recent years, the Zhou and Kong Consortiums were starting to feel pressure from the Wang Consortium. Otherwise, Zhou Shiji would not have taken the initiative to befriend Luo Lan.

However, after the nuclear bomb was dropped, the entire political situation was turned upside down. Suddenly, everyone could not tell who was friend and who was foe.

Or to be more accurate, other than themselves, everyone else was an enemy. It was just that they could not tell who the more threatening parties were.

Regarding the nuclear bomb, the Zhou Consortium felt very complicated. The Experimentals proved to be a very troublesome matter for them. If it weren't for this nuclear bomb, they would not even have known how to deal with it.

They would have been unwilling to bomb their own Stronghold 74, but the Qing Consortium had helped them solve that dilemma.

Everyone understood the Qing Consortium had only launched their nuclear bomb after the situation was deemed beyond saving, and from the looks of it, they did not want to cause any civilian casualties either. But by dropping the nuclear bomb, everything in the vicinity of Stronghold 74 was as good as destroyed.

Since the Qing Consortium was bold enough to use a nuclear bomb to deal with the Experimentals, why didn't they use it against the Experimentals while they were in their territory?!

Therefore, Zhou Shiji felt he needed to put aside his ties with the Qing Consortium for now and wait for the situation to become clearer.

The days passed, and the reporters from Hope Media went all the way to the Qing Consortium to ask how they viewed this matter and whether they would give up their nuclear weapons.

In the end, the Qing Consortium's answer was completely unexpected. The Qing Consortium's spokesperson questioned, "The nuclear bomb wasn't launched by us, so why is the Wang Consortium pointing fingers at us? Have consortiums these days started fabricating lies?"

The reporters were stunned on the spot. Just as everyone in the world was thinking this was the Qing Consortium's doing, the Qing Consortium actually denied it was them.

Thinking back, it did seem like there was no evidence pointing to the fact that this was done by the Qing Consortium.

The various consortiums were also left speechless. Everyone knew full well that the nuclear test sites in the Central Plains had been destroyed by the Saboteurs, and only the Qing Consortium was still equipped with a nuclear capability. However, it was also true that they did not have any evidence of that.

It was obvious the Qing Consortium was intent on denying responsibility for the strike. Who knew if they were trying to stall for time, or if they were just trying to plunge the situation into even muddier waters.

Before everyone could figure out what was going on, Luo Lan, who was currently visiting the Kong Consortium, actually started accepting public interviews.

Logically speaking, Luo Lan should really have been leaving the Central Plains and returning to the Qing Consortium's territory. Even Zhou Qi was trying to persuade Luo Lan to leave quickly.

If the consortiums were to issue a joint arrest order for Luo Lan, Zhou Qi could not protect him!

But not only did Luo Lan not leave, he even flamboyantly accepted the interviews. How infuriating!

When Luo Lan faced the reporters, he said in a heavy tone, "Don't be accusing our Qing Consortium so easily. Just because the Wang Consortium says it was us who launched the strike, does it really mean we did? A lot of people know the Saboteurs have been trying to destroy our nuclear test base in the Southwest, yet they still haven't found it, have they? But how are they going to find it when we don't actually have any of those? The Wang Consortium had better not falsely accuse us like that."

The reporters were dumbfounded. "Then what's your opinion on this matter?"

Luo Lan sounded even more depressed and nearly cried. "Whoever did it, I feel it was a really good move. According to the Hope Media reporters, Stronghold 74 had already fallen to the Experimentals at that time, right? That means that no matter whether there were any survivors, the Experimentals would

still tear them apart. Our Qing Consortium has fought quite a few battles with the Experimentals before. Back when the Li Consortium's stronghold was attacked by the Experimentals, our Qing Consortium also suffered heavy losses when we went over to reinforce them. It's a pity the Li Consortium did not manage to withstand the attacks of the Experimentals. In order to let the Li Consortium's residents continue living in peace, our Qing Consortium took control of their strongholds."

Based on what Luo Lan had said, they had only taken over the Li Consortium's strongholds out of a sense of justice. They had wanted to support the Li Consortium's fight against the Experimentals, but the Li Consortium was unable to hold on. In the end, it was all the Experimentals' fault!

His "compassionate" tone made him sound just like a good Samaritan.

Luo Lan said as he wiped away his tears, "No matter who blew up Stronghold 74, I, Luo Lan, will be the first to thank them for taking revenge for the residents of the Southwest and for taking revenge for the residents of Stronghold 74! They've even eliminated a future threat for humanity as well!"

Then Luo Lan bowed deeply to the camera and said, "Thank you all!"

The reporters were all dumbfounded. When the consortiums saw the reporters' articles, they wanted to scold Luo Lan for his shamelessness!

A member of the Kong Consortium who was standing beside Luo Lan said with a smile after the reporters left, "Boss Luo, you show no fear in the face of danger. After such a brouhaha, you can still act as though nothing happened and remain a guest at our Kong Consortium. I'm really impressed."

This was not a lie, as he really admired Luo Lan from the bottom of his heart. Disregarding everything else, he would have to give Luo Lan a perfect score just for his acting chops and courage!

The people from the Kong Consortium did not ask whether the Qing Consortium had any nuclear weapons. They had never depended on evidence to judge others. Everyone already knew this was done by the Qing Consortium after all, so there was no need for them to probe further.

However, Luo Lan narrowed his eyes. "This is only the start. It's not like I'll only be a guest here at your Kong Consortium, I'm also going to be visiting the Wang Consortium in a few days. Let's see who dares to lay a finger on me."

After the Kong Consortium's people left, Luo Lan immediately lay on the sofa and asked Zhou Qi, "I'm feeling really panicky now. Do you think they'll really tie me up?"

Zhou Qi did not know whether to laugh or cry. "Since you're so worried, let's hurry back to the Qing Consortium. Whenever you were out the past few days, the people in the stronghold have been pointing and talking behind your back. I reckon that once you go to the Wang Consortium, you'll be met with people throwing rotten eggs at your head! You must know the Wang Consortium's official media outlets have started painting the Qing Consortium as the villain now."

"I can't leave." Luo Lan stood up and looked out the window. "The Qing Consortium is on the cusp of a political storm. Qing Zhen still needs someone to stir up trouble in the Central Plains to buy him some time, so I can't leave yet!"

582 Destination: Luoyang City

"Old Li, I've always been curious about the relationship between the Riders and the Qinghe Group." Ren Xiaosu asked as they were leaving Stronghold 73, "The world says that the Riders are part of the Qinghe Group, but I feel that y'all are more like free agents?"

After the Zhou Consortium troops took in the escapees, Ren Xiaosu, Zhou Yingxue, Li Yingyun, and Qin Sheng left the group together. All of them did not really want to have any interaction with the Zhou Consortium troops, let alone be put through radiation tests.

Since Ren Xiaosu still had some matters to attend to at Hope Media in Luoyang City, the four of them decided to travel together.

Old Li replied to Ren Xiaosu's question, "Actually, it isn't really a secret, so it doesn't matter even if I tell you about it. Before The Cataclysm, the Riders and the Qinghe Group were only working under the same boss. Both parties did not have any relation to the other and they were more like two peer institutions. Later on, when The Cataclysm happened, the Riders helped the founder of the organization save the Qinghe Group. As such, the relationship between the two organizations became very close. Before that, both parties rarely interacted with each other."

"I see." Ren Xiaosu nodded.

Then Old Li sighed and said, "Back then, our predecessors died and got wounded just so they could protect the foundation of the Qinghe Group. Now that the Qing Consortium has achieved nuclear capability again, who knows when an apocalypse will once again befall humanity."

However, Ren Xiaosu shook his head. "I don't see it that way. I still feel that it depends on who uses the weapons. Based on my understanding of Qing Zhen and Luo Lan, they wouldn't abuse such weapons."

"Oh?" Old Li looked at Ren Xiaosu in surprise. "Brother Xiaosu, are you very familiar with the heroic duo of the Qing Consortium?"

Ren Xiaosu did not know whether to laugh or cry. What the hell was with that corny nickname?! The heroic duo of the Qing Consortium? He said, "I used to live in the Southwest but was forced to come to the Central Plains because of the Experimental invasion. I've interacted with Qing Zhen and Luo Lan before. While I don't think that they're good people, they're definitely not bad people either, so I ask that the Riders please not judge them with any bias."

Ren Xiaosu's relationship with Luo Lan could be considered quite good. So he was very willing to speak up for the Qing Consortium so they could have fewer enemies.

However, as Old Li was listening to him, he suddenly realized something else. He already knew that Ren Xiaosu's name only had a character's difference from Ren Xiaobei. Moreover, the young man beside him was also a supernatural being and looked very powerful as well.

Previously, Old Li did not think too deeply into it. This was because he felt that even if that Rider's heir had managed to live a long life, he should now be very old. At the least, he would appear as a middle-aged man, so he did not put too much thought into Ren Xiaosu.

But now, when he heard that Ren Xiaosu was also from the Southwest, he could not help having second thoughts about his identity. Old Li discreetly sized up Ren Xiaosu and thought, 'Hmm, he's rather handsome too...'

Could this be the person the Riders and the Experimentals were looking for?!

However, Old Li did not really say much and just kept the matter to himself. They would be seeing each other at Luoyang City anyway, so Old Li would have to ponder over the details first.

Ren Xiaosu casually asked, "I heard that the Qinghe Group is now under the control of the Xu clan. The Xu clan also said that they're only managing the organization on behalf of the major shareholder. Could the Xu clan really be so impartial and have no selfish motives?"

"I don't know about others," Old Li's thoughts got interrupted as he replied, "but in the Xu clan, Xu Ke's family is a very honorable one. They've never hankered for something that doesn't belong to them. However, it's harder to speak for the other members of the Xu clan. Although the organization's caretaker role has been passed down through Xu Ke's family for three generations, he still has other relatives who aren't satisfied with the status quo. Never mind, why am I telling you all this?"

Ren Xiaosu realized there were also conflicts at play within the Qinghe Group.

When they arrived at Luoyang City, Ren Xiaosu and Zhou Yingxue got registered at the gate before they were allowed into the stronghold. Due to the Riders accompanying them, everything proceeded very smoothly.

But when Ren Xiaosu saw a lot of people going in and out of Luoyang City, he asked Old Li, "These people look like refugees. Are they allowed to enter and exit as they please?"

"Oh, about that," Old Li smiled and said, "Many of them hold work or trader visas in the stronghold, so they can go in and out of the stronghold at any time as long as their papers are valid. Of course, they still have to leave before the gate closes at 10 PM nightly. Only those with student passes can stay in the stronghold until they complete their studies. After they graduate successfully, they can directly apply for residential ID cards and settle down in the stronghold."

Ren Xiaosu thought this was a rather novel practice. "How many young people from the other strongholds come here to take the college entrance exam? Can refugees take the exam as well?"

"Of course they can. The refugees are also allowed to attend university. Besides, Qinghe University has also specifically set aside some enrollment spots for the refugees. This is to encourage them to make use of their knowledge so they may change their fate. As long as they can get into the university, they have a chance of becoming stronghold residents," Qin Sheng explained. "Thus, supplementary classes are held outside Luoyang City as well. Some of the teachers in the stronghold love going into town to earn the extra income. This can also be considered a unique industry that can only be found in Luoyang City."

Ren Xiaosu nodded. So the refugees were also given a chance to improve their lives. Although it was a difficult path to take, it was still enough to give the refugees some hope.

Qin Sheng looked at Ren Xiaosu and continued, “We wanted to open up the stronghold in the past, but you also know that this’ll only make us enemies of the other consortiums. As such, we can only do it this way.”

“I understand.” Ren Xiaosu nodded. In this era, anyone who dared to stand out from others would definitely need the courage to do so. It was already difficult for the Qinghe Group to want to create a path for the refugees to climb, so what more could others ask of them?

Qin Sheng continued, “But even so, a lot of consortiums are still unhappy about it. They often send representatives to come and hold discussions with the Qinghe Group. They hope we can be like the other consortiums and forbid refugees from entering the stronghold.”

As they spoke, they stepped into the stronghold. The Qinghe Group’s vehicles were already waiting on the other side of the gate. Old Li had a car deliver Ren Xiaosu and Zhou Yingxue to the building of Hope Media’s headquarters. Meanwhile, they rushed off to join up with the other Riders for a meeting.

This was an internal meeting for the Riders. Too many things had happened recently, and some of them were related to their own group, so they had to quickly hold a meeting to reach a conclusion.

After bidding each other farewell, their journey together ended as they parted ways.

Upon arriving at Hope Media’s headquarters, Ren Xiaosu got out of the car and had a look. The building was a little run-down and far from the grand appearances of the other buildings in the stronghold.

It was hard to imagine this was actually the headquarters of the famous Hope Media.

Ren Xiaosu explained to the security guard at the door that he was here to place an advertisement in the newspaper. Almost immediately, an employee from the business department came out to receive him.

This staff member was not old and was probably around the same age as Zhou Yingxue. The person smiled and said, “Which company are you two from? What is it that you’d like to advertise with us? And what ad size are you looking to place?”

Chapter 583 The weight of a few words

The business department employee welcomed the two of them into the building. “Let me introduce myself. My name is Ying Yuzheng, the supervisor of the Business Department. Let’s head upstairs to talk.”

After Ren Xiaosu walked into the building, he made an observation of the internal operations of Hope Media. The staff were walking around without any particularly tight security in place like it was just a normal office building.

Importantly, Hope Media supposedly made many enemies over the years and offended countless organizations. Shouldn’t a company like this be more careful?

When they arrived on the seventh floor, Ren Xiaosu heard a loud, clear voice lecturing someone the moment he stepped out of the elevator.

An old man holding a cane was saying to a young man, “We journalists need to respect the truth. Don’t you know what was wrong with the draft you submitted yesterday? Have you investigated the source or verified the facts? It’s absolutely unacceptable to write an article based on your own assumptions in order to attract the attention of readers! Every newspaper that goes out from here must report the facts. When people pick up a copy of today’s newspaper from Hope Media in the future, they’ll immediately learn about what truly happened today. That’s what our job’s about!”

The young reporter said, “But the other newspapers—”

“Others are others, Hope Media is Hope Media!” The old man holding a cane said, “Don’t forget, what was your intention when you first entered the industry? Was it for fame and fortune? If you want fame and fortune, I’ll write a recommendation letter for you to go work at Qinghe Group! We at Hope Media must always respect the truth and record history factually!”

The young reporter stopped talking.

Ying Yuzheng said to Ren Xiaosu and Zhou Yingxue with a smile, “I’m sorry you had to see that. Our chief editor has a short temper. This way please.”

He brought Ren Xiaosu and Zhou Yingxue into a meeting room where Ren Xiaosu saw some large red words written on the wall: “Seek truth from fact.”

Ren Xiaosu did not think there was anything wrong with the chief editor’s anger towards the reporter. In fact, it made him trust Hope Media more.

Ying Yuzheng sat on the opposite side at the conference table and asked warmly, “What sort of advertisement are you two looking to place?”

“It’s very simple.” Ren Xiaosu smiled and took out a piece of paper to explain, “I only need this to be published at the bottom of the fifth page. The ad will take up a quarter of the page.”

Ying Yuzheng took the note from him. There were only two sentences written on it. “Don’t let the sorrows of our era become your sorrow as well.”

The second sentence was: “61.”

This was the solution Ren Xiaosu had thought of. Since Hope Media’s newspaper circulation spread across the Central Plains, then if Old Wang were also in the Central Plains, he would definitely read such an influential newspaper to keep up with the current affairs.

Wang Fugui might not look like a very serious person, but actually, he was really meticulous and dependable. In the past, when Ren Xiaosu was still living in town, he would often see Wang Fugui reading the official newspaper of the Qing Consortium when he went to his grocery store. His reason for doing so was so that he could keep up with recent happenings and not be out of touch with the times.

Thus, Ren Xiaosu thought of placing an advertisement in Hope Media's newspaper. Be it Yan Liuyuan or Wang Fugui, they would surely link it to him if they saw the message.

He had said these words to Yan Liuyuan in front of Old Wang. Xiaoyu would even occasionally bring it up in the presence of others, so it was a very iconic statement.

Meanwhile, the "61" below that statement was to indicate that he was going to settle down at Stronghold 61 soon. If Old Wang and the others saw it, they should go to Stronghold 61 to look for him.

This hint was not exactly obscure, but only Old Wang and Yan Liuyuan would know what it meant.

Ying Yuzheng looked at the note and wondered, "You're just gonna advertise this?"

Usually, those who approached Hope Media to publish their advertisements would do so to promote their businesses, such as selling clothes or cosmetics. As for the advertisement that Ren Xiaosu was looking to place, it did not seem to serve any purpose at all.

Could it be that he was a spy from some organization using the advertisement to transmit an encrypted message? Ying Yuzheng was a little hesitant. This was something Hope Media frequently encountered. For example, the Riders' earliest form of contact was through the use of Hope Media's newspaper to transmit their messages. If they decrypted the messages with their key, they could get the information they wanted.

However, no spy would be so attention seeking as to advertise on the fifth page of the newspaper. The first four pages did not accept any advertisement placements, while advertising on the fifth page would be extremely expensive.

Ying Yuzheng looked at Ren Xiaosu and said, "May I know the purpose of this advertisement?"

Ren Xiaosu smiled and said, "Just take it that I'm spreading a positive message."

"What does this '61' mean?" Ying Yuzheng asked.

"Oh, 61 refers to Children's Day. I would like to wish everyone a happy Children's Day in advance," Ren Xiaosu explained without batting an eyelid.

Like hell Ying Yuzheng would believe that! It was still a long way to Children's Day! He patiently said, "Sir, it's November right now."

"Mhm, we want the advertisement to be placed until June 1st of next year." Ren Xiaosu smiled and said, "How much would that cost?"

This shocked Ying Yuzheng. Beside Ren Xiaosu, Zhou Yingxue could feel her heart aching. How much would it cost to have this quarter-page advertisement running for more than half a year?!

Ying Yuzheng did a rough calculation before saying to Ren Xiaosu, "Sorry, this account is a little too big for me to handle. I can't make the decision, so please wait a moment."

Just the advertising fee alone would come up to over two million yuan. Furthermore, he could not figure out Ren Xiaosu and Zhou Yingxue's intentions for this advertisement.

Not long after Ying Yuzheng excused himself, Ren Xiaosu again heard the sound of a cane tapping on the ground outside the door. Right after, the chief editor pushed open the door and entered. The man's gray hair was neatly combed, and he was wearing a black tunic suit. He looked very spirited.

The chief editor came to the conference table and picked up the note. He asked, "Is this the advertisement our two guests want to place in our newspaper?"

Ying Yuzheng said, "Yes."

The chief editor was stunned when he saw the note. He could not help but mutter, "Don't let the sorrows of our era become your sorrow as well...."

He looked up at Ren Xiaosu. "Who made this statement?"

"I did," Ren Xiaosu said.

"Why did you say it?" The chief editor continued asking.

"Because I wanted to caution my younger brother not to be influenced by the sentiments of this era." Ren Xiaosu said in a serious tone, "I just feel that I should be sharing this with more people by publishing it in the newspaper."

The chief editor laughed. He was not going to be taken in by Ren Xiaosu's nonsensical reason. However, he fell in love with the statement at the first instance.

The chief editor held the note in his hand and looked at it for a long time before saying, "You can just pay 20% of the fees. 400,000 yuan will be the advertising cost for the word '61' while the rest can be waived. I won't ask you the reason for placing this ad, and I'll have it published until June 1st of next year."

Ying Yuzheng, who was standing off to the side, was stunned. A total of 1.6 million yuan was waived just like that!

Ren Xiaosu was also puzzled. "Why are you doing this?"

The chief editor waved the note in his hand and said, "This sentence alone is worth that much."

Ren Xiaosu was moved. So it turned out there were still people in this era who valued a sentence that much.

Chapter 584 Old friend, Magician Li Shentan!

During this period, too many things had happened in the territory of the Alliance of Strongholds. The war in the Southwest, the war in the Northwest, and the nuclear strike on Stronghold 74.

All of these events left everyone in a panic. While walking the streets of Luoyang City, the chief editor had heard the populace discussing these conflicts. This era was gradually crumbling, as was the order that humanity had recently reestablished.

He had reprimanded that reporter just now for fabricating news in an attempt to make a name for himself. Alright, rather than saying that he fabricated news, it was more of just listening to one side of the story and writing a draft without validating the facts. The headline was also very sensational.

That reporter said the other newspapers were also doing the same as it would help their newspapers to sell better, while the reporters who wrote such articles became well-known quickly.

But just because that was what everyone was doing, should they go with the flow as well? The chief editor would very much prefer to go against the flow!

The chief editor looked at Ren Xiaosu and said, "Alright, this phrase will be published in the papers starting tomorrow. My name is Jiang Xu, pleased to meet you. Or to be precise, I'm pleased I was able to come across a sentence like that."

Ren Xiaosu did not know whether to laugh or cry. What the other party was trying to say was that he was actually not that interested in Ren Xiaosu.

Ren Xiaosu stood up and got Zhou Yingxue to pay the 400,000 yuan. This sum had already been laundered by Zhou Yingxue, so it would not be traceable by anyone. As for the rest of the money, they would have to make a trip back to the black market before they could spend it, and it just so happened the black market was right next to Luoyang City.

After exiting the headquarters of Hope Media, Zhou Yingxue said excitedly by his side, "Master, that Jiang Xu is a legendary figure. He actually waived 1.6 million yuan in fees because of a statement you made. Master, you're amazing!"

"That's enough, there should be a limit to your flattery," Ren Xiaosu said.

"Alright!"

It was getting late. Ren Xiaosu was leading Zhou Yingxue straight to the hotel in Luoyang City when he suddenly felt some interest in this stronghold city. He decided he would go sightseeing for a day before leaving since it wouldn't affect his schedule.

They got two rooms, each for one person. The hotel in Luoyang City was as hospitable as the hotel back at the black market. Ren Xiaosu sat by the floor-to-ceiling window in his room and read the newspaper he had swiped from Hope Media's headquarters earlier. It was today's newspaper, and Ren Xiaosu thought that since he had already taken out a 400,000 yuan ad placement, taking a copy of their newspaper should not be asking too much, right? He had only taken it as a gift anyway.

The newspaper was still filled with analysis articles about Zhou Consortium's Stronghold 74. The Zhou Consortium had formed a new rescue team to head to Stronghold 74 to assess the possibility of rebuilding it. If that were not possible, they would have to find a new location to rebuild Stronghold 74.

Other than that, it was the usual articles criticizing the Pyro Company.

The other newspapers had basically forgotten about the Pyro Company. After all, nuclear bombs were the trending topic. However, Hope Media was different. In their articles, they were still hoping the Pyro Company could disclose their research and prove that their current studies did not violate scientific ethics.

The third page covered the Qing Consortium and Luo Lan. The journalist even praised Luo Lan for being bold and daring. But when Ren Xiaosu saw Luo Lan thanking the person who fired the nuclear bomb with tears in his eyes, he nearly laughed out loud. That fatso was way too shameless.

Eventually, Ren Xiaosu flipped to the entertainment section of the newspaper. The biggest news was that Li Ran had returned to Stronghold 61. The fans streamed onto the streets to welcome and greet their idol.

When night fell, Zhou Yingxue suddenly knocked on his door and said she wanted to eat out. Ren Xiaosu put down the newspaper and went out with her.

After Ren Xiaosu walked out of the hotel's main entrance, Old Li and Qin Sheng suddenly came out of the hotel's kitchen and went to the hotel's front desk to ask for Ren Xiaosu's room key.

The two of them were very cautious. Before they entered the room, they checked if there were any traps left behind by Ren Xiaosu. However, they found nothing.

"Search every corner and see if he left behind any hairs," Old Li said.

Hair loss was not an exclusive condition suffered by middle-aged men. If Ren Xiaosu had taken a shower in his room, some of his hair would definitely be on the floor.

The two of them put on gloves and searched through the entire room. Unfortunately, they could not find anything at all. Old Li wondered, "He took a shower after checking into the hotel this afternoon, but there isn't a single strand of hair on the floor of the bathroom. Could he have purposely picked up all his hair?"

Qin Sheng scratched his head. "Or maybe it's just that the quality of his hair is better? So, what should we do now?"

"What else can we do?" Old Li snapped at him. "We can only come back tomorrow and search again."

"What if he isn't the person we're looking for?" Qin Sheng asked.

"We have nothing to lose anyway." Old Li said, "We're just looking for his hair to get it tested so we can make sure."

"What if he's the one?" Qin Sheng asked.

"In that case..." Old Li frowned. They still did not know much about that young man, so it was difficult to say if they could accept such an outcome. Old Li sighed and said, "At least he's still a normal human

being. Furthermore, he doesn't look like a bad person. Although it doesn't seem like he can fight well, this outcome isn't too far from what we were expecting."

On their way here to Luoyang City, even though Old Li and Qin Sheng had chatted a lot with Ren Xiaosu, he looked really skinny and weak to them, and they felt he could not fight well either. Those in the Riders were all powerful superhumans, after all, so would a young man like that really be able to helm the organization? Old Li had some doubts.

As a matter of fact, although the Riders believed in Ren He, they did not necessarily have to acknowledge Ren He's descendants as their overlords. They still had to see what kind of person Ren He's descendant was.

For example, Riders like Zhang Qingxi and Wu Dingyuan might look kind, but each of them was more arrogant than the other.

However, Old Li and Qin Sheng did not know what Ren Xiaosu had done in the Northwest and Southwest. There was also the role Ren Xiaosu played in the farce between the Anjing House and the Pyro Company a while ago.

If they knew about all this, they would probably not think that Ren Xiaosu could not fight.

At this moment, Ren Xiaosu did not know what was going on in his room. Two of the famed Riders had sneaked into his room to search for his hair.

The nightlife in Luoyang City was bustling, much more flourishing than Ren Xiaosu had imagined. Not even Stronghold 73, which was built based on the framework of a consortium, could compare to it.

Perhaps, because free trade was allowed in Luoyang City, the industries here were more developed.

Moreover, the Qinghe Group's ethos was this as well. They encouraged innovation, creative thinking, and were business friendly.

The university here was also allowed much more freedom. It was unlike the other consortiums where all their students had to devote themselves to the organization's own research. Qinghe University was currently the only university in the entire Alliance of Strongholds that had always offered art subjects.

When Ren Xiaosu arrived at the town square, he even saw some people singing while playing the guitar. He also saw some people putting on a performance arts showcase and painting themselves with extravagant colors all over.

"Master, there's someone doing magic over there," Zhou Yingxue suddenly shouted joyfully.

But when Ren Xiaosu turned around and saw the performer, he immediately turned around and left.

The young magician smiled through the crowd and said, "Shouldn't old friends greet each other when they meet again?"

Chapter 585 Li Shentan's gift of gold

In the town square, Ren Xiaosu wanted to leave immediately at first. However, the magician's words made him stop in his tracks. He turned around and saw Li Shentan standing in the crowd with a card deck in his hand. He had suddenly stopped his performance he was putting on.

The crowd around Li Shentan looked at Ren Xiaosu. Meanwhile, Ren Xiaosu casually pulled his hood up so fewer people would remember his appearance.

When Li Shentan saw Ren Xiaosu stop in his tracks, he smiled. "Hang around for a bit and let me finish showing off my magic."

With that, the crowd turned back to look at Li Shentan. They saw the playing cards in Li Shentan's right hand suddenly surge into the sky like a water fountain. Although he only had one deck in hand, the cards hovering above everyone's heads and spinning around in the air enshrouded everyone underneath it.

Slowly, the cards converged like a whirlwind and headed towards Li Shentan.

The crowd let out a cry of surprise. They could no longer tell whether this was a magic trick or a magic spell, nor could they figure out what was causing the cards to spin around like that.

The dazzling whirlwind of cards finally enveloped Li Shentan, and the onlookers could no longer see his figure. All they could see were the cards spinning around rapidly.

Li Shentan, surrounded by countless cards, said with a smile, "Three... two... one!"

As soon as he finished speaking, the whirlwind of cards dropped to the ground. And Li Shentan was nowhere to be seen!

The crowd immediately cheered. They had never seen such amazing magic in their lives before.

Furthermore, everyone witnessed the magician disappearing into thin air despite being in such close proximity!

A girl screamed, "Cool, that was so damn cool! I've fallen in love with that magician! This must be real magic, right!"

Li Shentan had been performing magic in Luoyang City for quite some time now. Due to his amazing magic tricks and handsome appearance, many girls had become his fans. Even before night fell, a lot of people would already be waiting in the town square for his performance to start.

Meanwhile, Li Shentan never disappointed his audience either. His magic tricks were never repeated, and the audience could not even tell how he pulled them off.

Ren Xiaosu frowned. Even he was unable to tell how Li Shentan did that.

At this moment, Li Shentan's laughter pealed from behind him. "How did you like my trick?"

Ren Xiaosu turned around and asked Li Shentan, "How did you do that?"

"It was just misdirection," Li Shentan said with a humble smile.

But Ren Xiaosu knew it was definitely not as simple as misdirection. He just did not understand why Li Shentan would appear in this place. Moreover, he was clearly a legendary supernatural being, yet he liked doing street magic so much.

Li Shentan glanced at Zhou Yingxue, who was standing next to Ren Xiaosu. However, he did not ask Ren Xiaosu anything. Instead, he seemed to have thought of something and said, "Oh yeah, come with me. I have something I want to give you."

Then Li Shentan led the way to a small park next to the square. It was where many of the stronghold residents strolled.

Li Shentan was walking at the front and did not seem worried that Ren Xiaosu would just leave.

When they got to a place where there was no one around, Li Shentan took out a black cloth and threw it onto the grass. This action took Ren Xiaosu by surprise. What was Li Shentan up to?

Li Shentan looked at Ren Xiaosu and said with a smile, "Let me show you a trick."

With that, he blew the black cloth before lifting it up again. All of a sudden, a large pile of gold bars were lying on the lawn!

"This is for you." Li Shentan smiled happily and said, "Do you like it?"

Zhou Yingxue's eyes widened, but Ren Xiaosu, who had always been greedy, remained still. He only frowned and asked, "What do you want?"

"This was stolen from the Zong Consortium, but I wasn't the one who robbed them. It was a supernatural being named Wang Congyang who did it," Li Shentan said with a smile.

"Wang Congyang? Who did he rob?!" Ren Xiaosu suddenly felt like there were some very important details behind this.

"I think it was stolen from a brigade commander of the Zong Consortium. At that time, Wang Congyang drove his little train and knocked over the brigade commander's vehicle he was using for transporting away his assets. After that, he took half the gold while I took the remaining half. I know you like these things, so I kept it especially for you," Li Shentan explained with a smile. "I didn't lay a finger on any of it. The money for our daily expenses is all earned through my magic shows."

Ren Xiaosu suddenly understood something. Their Razor Sharp Company had once encountered the pursuit of an armored brigade within the Zong Consortium's territory. No one could understand why the armored brigade did not head to the battlefield at the front line and instead ran back to the Zong Consortium's territory to chase after them on his steam locomotive.

He realized now he had also taken the blame for Wang Congyang once before.

They were not fucking chasing after him at all. It was just that when the brigade commander saw the steam locomotive, he thought it was Wang Congyang driving it. As such, he pursued Wang Congyang to try to get his assets back!

Ren Xiaosu was speechless. Maybe he should not be using the powers he had copied from others so recklessly.

However, Ren Xiaosu still did not accept the gold bars. To be honest, he did not really want to have any dealings with Li Shentan, because it was extremely dangerous for a normal person to deal with a lunatic. You would not even be able to imagine what the other party might be planning by offering you the gold.

Ren Xiaosu changed the subject and asked, "Where's that little girl who's always with you?"

Ren Xiaosu was asking about Si Liren. Didn't those two used to be inseparable? As he spoke, Ren Xiaosu even looked up into the sky to see if Si Liren was floating in the air again.

Li Shentan explained, "Oh, she's been really into romance novels recently, so she doesn't come out anymore."

"Why did you come to Luoyang City?" Ren Xiaosu asked again.

Li Shentan said with a smile, "Because this place is more suitable for people like me who perform to make a living. Don't you think the residents of a stronghold like Luoyang City are much 'livelier' than the residents of the other strongholds? I feel really stifled when I'm in the other strongholds, like I'm waiting for the consortiums to skin me alive even when I'm sitting at home."

Zhou Yingxue remained standing behind Ren Xiaosu without saying a word. She knew it was not the time for her to speak. Meanwhile, Ren Xiaosu was watching Li Shentan very carefully. He always had the feeling that Li Shentan's motives were not that straightforward.

Could Li Shentan have been purposely waiting here for him? But that didn't make sense either. He had only come to Luoyang City by chance.

Ren Xiaosu then asked, "What are you planning to do in the future? Put on magic shows in Luoyang City?"

"No, no, no." Li Shentan said with a laugh, "I'm waiting for a miracle to happen."

It was Li Shentan who ended the conversation first. He said, "It's getting late. That little girl is still waiting for me to bring home sweet potatoes for her to eat. I'll leave the gold here. If you want it, you can just take it with you. If you don't want it, I can't do anything about that. We'll definitely meet again. Oh right, I suggest you make a trip to Qinghe University. There could be a reward waiting for you there."

After that, Li Shentan turned around and left without any hesitation.

His behavior was predicated on his whims.

Chapter 586 Li Shentan's awful hobby

Zhou Yingxue looked at Li Shentan's retreating figure and asked, "Master, who is he?"

"Li Shentan," Ren Xiaosu said calmly.

“Sounds familiar, but I can’t remember who that is,” Zhou Yingxue said as she thought hard.

“The Demon Whisperer.” Ren Xiaosu looked at the gold left behind on the lawn. In the end, he still took the gold and put it into his storage space.

When Zhou Yingxue heard the mention of the “Demon Whisperer,” she froze. “Master, so he’s the Demon Whisperer? He’s actually quite good-looking. He doesn’t at all look like the demons that are told in the legends. But wow, for a person like Li Shentan to gift you gold, Master, you must be so amazing.”

Ren Xiaosu shot a look at Zhou Yingxue. He was already feeling a little numb towards her frequent flattering.

In the dark of the night, Li Shentan carried the roasted sweet potatoes he had just bought and jogged all the way back to the little courtyard house he was staying at with Si Liren. At this moment, the young Si Liren was still reading her novel with relish.

Li Shentan grumbled, “I bought these sweet potatoes for you from such a faraway place. Shouldn’t you at least thank me for them? To prevent the sweet potatoes from getting cold, I even ran all the way back here!”

Si Liren put down her book and said with a smile, “Thank you, Big Brother Shentan!” She took the sweet potatoes from Li Shentan’s hands. Then she looked at him and wondered, “Big Bro, why do you look so happy?”

“I saw Ren Xiaosu.” Li Shentan said with a smile.

Si Liren pouted. “What’s there to be happy about seeing him?”

“I told him to go to Qinghe University.” Li Shentan looked very excited. “But I didn’t tell him for what!”

“And then?” Si Liren was puzzled.

“Think about it. If he brings his maid to Qinghe University without knowing who’s there, how interesting would it be if he happens to bump into Yang Xiaojin! That’ll be so fun!” Li Shentan’s eyes glimmered as he spoke.

Si Liren had been catching up on a lot of romance novels recently. When she heard what Li Shentan said, she got interested as well. “After that, Yang Xiaojin and Ren Xiaosu will turn on each other and a deadly pursuit begins in Luoyang City. When the sound of the sniper rifle rings out, Zhou Yingxue will be the first to slump to the ground?”

Li Shentan did not know whether to laugh or cry. “There’s no need for a deadly pursuit, right?”

“Aren’t all the female leads’ scenes written like this?” Si Liren muttered. “When will he be going to Qinghe University?”

“It’s late today, so I suppose he’ll go tomorrow,” Li Shentan guessed.

“Then let’s go and have a look too.” Si Liren blinked innocently.

Li Shentan thought for a moment and said, "They might not get to see each other. After all, Qinghe University is quite big, so the chances of them bumping into each other will be quite low."

"Then let's treat it like we're going out for a walk." Si Liren said, "I haven't been to Qinghe University before."

"What if I get recognized by the university students? I'm also very famous now, so a lot of girls will come asking for my autograph," Li Shentan said hesitantly.

Si Liren's eyes widened. "You're even starting to get burdened like a celebrity now?"

...

After Ren Xiaosu returned to the hotel, he did not sleep at all. The words Li Shentan had said to him kept ringing in his head. "Make a trip to Qinghe University. There could be a reward waiting for you there."

What was this reward about?

Due to a lack of information, Ren Xiaosu could not make any guesses.

These words seemed to have a hold on him, so when Ren Xiaosu woke up the next morning, he knocked on Zhou Yingxue's door and said he would be making a trip to Qinghe University. He told Zhou Yingxue she did not have to follow him and could continue sleeping.

But in the end, Zhou Yingxue got ready within two minutes and said she wanted to go and have a look as well since she had not been to Qinghe University before.

After breakfast, the two of them headed straight for Qinghe University. Old Li and Qin Sheng appeared at the hotel again and headed straight for Ren Xiaosu's room.

But they still found nothing this time. They did not even manage to find a trace of dead skin, much less hair!

Old Li wondered, "Could that kid be bald? Maybe he's been wearing a wig all this while?"

He and Qin Sheng were left looking at each other, lost. Qin Sheng said, "It could also be that he's quite cautious. He might have purposely swept up his hair like many hitmen do. They never leave behind any traces."

"Perhaps." Old Li said helplessly, "Let's go look for them and see if we can find anything out from them again. That Zhang Qingxi has pushed this matter entirely onto us, and the others are also quite concerned about it, so we have to get to the bottom of things."

Ren Xiaosu and Zhou Yingxue had already walked through the school gate of Qinghe University. No one stopped them from entering. This was unlike the universities of the other consortiums where they were completely off limits to outsiders. If anyone wanted to enter the campus, they would have to show their ID first. After they got in, they would be subjected to strict, routine checks as well.

Those universities might as well be called institutes of secrets instead!

The young men and women in the university were walking around on campus with relaxed and unrestrained smiles on their faces. There were even couples holding hands and walking past too.

Ren Xiaosu stood on campus and looked at these carefree university students. He suddenly felt that such a life seemed really far away from him.

The students here were dating, playing basketball, and dancing at socials together while he had to flee for his life from the pursuit of the Experimentals. He had even risked his life in the wilderness with the Razor Sharp Company and faced enemies and gunfire at Stronghold 146.

The contrast was like creatures living in two different worlds. But when Ren Xiaosu looked back on his path, he realized there was no turning back for him. It was that chaos that pushed him forward bit by bit.

His life had never given him any choices.

A moment later, Zhou Yingxue said, "Master, look, so many students are running in the same direction. I wonder why they're hurrying there."

Ren Xiaosu wondered if this was the "reward" Li Shentan was telling him about.

He said, "Come, let's go and have a look too."

However, Ren Xiaosu was a little disappointed when he arrived at the crowded place. He saw a lot of people crowding around a stage, and it looked like a debate was going on. The topic of the debate was whether humans should possess nuclear capabilities or not.

Due to the incident at Stronghold 74, a place like Qinghe University, where many ideological students were gathered, would definitely pay attention to such matters.

The university students on stage all stuck to their arguments, but Ren Xiaosu was not interested in such armchair strategists debating.

Should humans possess nuclear capabilities or not? This was something that not even Ren Xiaosu was sure about. But he knew it was already a thing, and he had also witnessed the power of it from a distance away.

No matter how intense the students debated the subject, nuclear weapons were inevitable.

Zhou Yingxue smiled with great interest and said, "Master, these students look like they're the same age as you or maybe even be a little older, but they all still feel like children who haven't yet grown up."

When Zhou Yingxue said that, she did not lower her voice. Several students nearby turned over and looked at them. Ren Xiaosu flipped up his hood in a bad mood and snapped at Zhou Yingxue, "Will it kill you to speak less? Is this the right time to be flattering me? At least keep your voice down!"

“OK...”

Chapter 587 Player

While the debate on stage was intensely ongoing, Zhou Yingxue said again, “Eh, that kid on stage looks a little familiar.”

Ren Xiaosu followed Zhou Yingxue’s gaze and looked over. Familiar?! That was the student, Xu Zhi, they had saved!

Xu Zhi, who was the president of the student council at Qinghe University, had returned from the black market after unsuccessfully waiting for Zhou Yingxue there.

Now that a major event was being held in school, he would have to show up. Furthermore, he was the moderator of this debate session.

“Oh, I remember now.” Zhou Yingxue said, “We saved him once. He paid the reward money and transferred it into my account promptly.”

This time, she mentioned it very softly. But as it was very crowded, everyone was standing in close proximity to each other. In the end, a few people still overheard her.

Someone looked at Zhou Yingxue and wondered what nonsense she was babbling about.

“Let’s go,” Ren Xiaosu said. He was afraid Zhou Yingxue would continue speaking carelessly in public.

Moreover, Ren Xiaosu had become uninterested in Qinghe University. He wondered why Li Shentan had said that to him. Could it be that he wanted him to come and listen to the debate so he would go and persuade the Qing Consortium to give up their nuclear weapons?

Since when had Li Shentan, the demon from the Southwest, become so compassionate?

That couldn’t be possible, right?

Just as they turned around to walk away from the crowd, Xu Zhi suddenly saw Zhou Yingxue’s back from the stage. Her back was way too familiar to him!

While the debate was still ongoing, Xu Zhi suddenly jumped off the stage, leaving the debaters dumbfounded.

Xu Zhi tried hard to break up the crowd in his attempt to find Zhou Yingxue, but she had already disappeared.

Someone asked, “What are you looking for?”

Xu Zhi asked anxiously, “Did you guys see a woman and a hooded young man around just now?”

Everyone looked at one another as though they had some inkling of the described people. “Two people were standing here just now, but it felt like they were looking down on us. They only listened to the debate for a bit before leaving. Why are you looking for them?”

Xu Zhi did not have time to explain further. "They saved me once." After that, Xu Zhi rushed off in search of them.

The commotion gradually turned into an uproar. It was known throughout Qinghe University that Xu Zhi had been kidnapped and that a mysterious young man with a maidservant had saved him. This news even caused quite a commotion and attracted the interest of many people.

Those two actually appeared here on the Qinghe University campus? Someone muttered, "Could Xu Zhi have mistaken someone else for them?"

"No." A girl who was standing next to Zhou Yingxue earlier said, "That woman also said it herself just now that they saved Xu Zhi!"

Eventually, no one paid attention to the debate anymore. As for whether humans should possess nuclear capabilities or not, that was no longer important. A lot of people had gone after Xu Zhi as they wanted to see what those two legendary figures were like.

Xu Zhi ran all the way out of the school, but he still could not find Ren Xiaosu and Zhou Yingxue.

Xu Zhi could only stand there on the road with a blank and depressed look on his face.

In a classroom somewhere else on campus, Yang Xiaojin was sitting at a desk next to the window. A girl in front of her suddenly turned around and asked, "Xiaojin, I heard there's a debate going on at Zhengde Square. The topic is about whether humans should use nuclear weapons or not. Should we go and have a listen together after class?"

Yang Xiaojin was taken aback for a bit. Although this girl was her classmate, Yang Xiaojin had always been a loner and did not know her well. Why did she suddenly invite her to attend a debate?

Yang Xiaojin only took a second before tactfully turning her down. "Don't have the time."

The girl in front of her said, "True, I guess the topic of nuclear weapons isn't really relatable to us. There isn't really a point in going to listen to the debate."

There weren't really any changes in Yang Xiaojin's expression. The topic of nuclear weapons truly had almost nothing to do with the average Qinghe University student, but it was not so for her. As a matter of fact, she had participated in two strikes to destroy the Li Consortium's nuclear test sites, and both of them ended in success too.

Her life experience meant she and these university students did not have much in common.

After the girl was turned down by Yang Xiaojin, she turned back to face the front. At this moment, the bell for the end of class went off. When the girl heard the pealing signaling the end of class, she was startled. Another girl next to her whispered, "Why did you suddenly invite her to go watch the debate together? You should've known that you'd be rejected."

That girl also whispered in confusion, "Yeah, why did I invite her?"

Li Shentan and Si Liren were sneakily crouching in the bushes under the lecture hall. Li Shentan was so anxious he said, "Why did the bell have to ring now of all times? The hypnosis has been interrupted!"

"Brother Shentan, your hypnosis is a little wonky this time," Si Liren also lamented.

"This time, I only managed to exchange one glance with the subject." Li Shentan sighed and said, "So this hypnotism method is still a little unstable."

"We won't get to see any drama then." Si Liren looked at Li Shentan helplessly.

"It's fine, there will definitely be a chance in the future..."

Li Shentan and Si Liren had come to Qinghe University early in the morning to set up a "chance" encounter with Yang Xiaojin's classmate to hypnotize them. The two of them thought of using this method to get Yang Xiaojin and Ren Xiaosu to bump into each other, but it ended up failing.

Li Shentan broke into laughter. "Those two clearly want to see each other again so much. They're so close right now, yet they won't get to see each other. It's really interesting just thinking about that!"

Si Liren waved her little hands around cutely and said excitedly, "I've read such tropes in romance novels!"

At this moment, Yang Xiaojin was about to walk out of the classroom. She suddenly frowned and thought the incident earlier felt a little off, but before she could figure out what it was, a male student suddenly stopped her at the door.

This young man was a well-known and experienced playboy at Qinghe University. And Yang Xiaojin was an exceptionally outstanding female student, so many people admired her. This guy was one of them.

Over the past few months, Yang Xiaojin had probably rejected more men than she had killed. Although, this analogy sounded a little inappropriate.

The male student handed Yang Xiaojin a love letter. "This is the second time I've mustered up my courage to come and see you. Maybe the girls in your class have some misconceptions about me. I'm really not a player like they say I am, so please give me a chance."

Yang Xiaojin glanced at the love letter he was holding in his hand and did not even bother taking it. She consoled the boy, "The girls in our class did not say anything about you. It's just as you said, you're not a player. Players need to be at least 1.8 meters tall."

The boy in front of her was petrified.

Several girls in the classroom were a little jealous. After Yang Xiaojin arrived at the school, the male students around them only had eyes for her.

But Yang Xiaojin had already said she liked someone. However, she never brought him to school. She had to be lying, right?

A commotion broke out outside the lecture hall. A girl darted through the hallway and said to the others as she ran, "Did you guys hear? The young man and his maid who saved Xu Zhi have come to our school. I heard Xu Zhi is searching for them like crazy right now."

"Really?" someone said in surprise.

"Quick, let's go and look for them too!"

Then a crowd of students streamed out of the lecture hall, with the majority of them being girls.

Yang Xiaojin thought of something as she followed them. But right when she got downstairs, the crowd of students happened to bump into Li Shentan and Si Liren.

When one of the girls saw Li Shentan, she exclaimed, "Magician! You're that magician!"

Everyone looked at Li Shentan and Si Liren, and someone muttered, "Could they be the two that saved Xu Zhi?"

Li Shentan was so handsome, and with the cute Si Liren by his side, she looked just like his maid. Although this did not quite tally with the rumors, the appearance of these two very unique people in front of them made it very easy for the students to relate it to what that girl had just said in the hallway.

Li Shentan was dumbfounded. What the fuck did this have to do with him?

But before he could say anything, many of the girls recognized him and ran over to ask for his autograph. Then he noticed Yang Xiaojin looking at him coldly apart from the crowd.

Just a moment ago, Yang Xiaojin wanted to see if it might be Ren Xiaosu they were talking about. But immediately after, she actually bumped into Li Shentan!

This disappointed Yang Xiaojin a lot. She was so disappointed she even wanted to shoot Li Shentan.

Li Shentan pushed aside the girls who had surrounded him and said with an embarrassed laugh, "Hahaha, I was just passing by!"

Yang Xiaojin looked at Li Shentan silently. Then Li Shentan took Si Liren's hand and said, "We're leaving right away!"

"Are you that afraid of me?" Yang Xiaojin raised her eyebrows.

"Haha, me? Afraid of you? What a joke." Li Shentan said as he turned around and walked away, "I'm just afraid of that boyfriend of yours!"

The girls surrounding him wanted to chase after him, but Li Shentan raised his hand and threw a barrage of playing cards into the air. When the cards fell to the ground, Si Liren and he were nowhere to be seen.

Yang Xiaojin, who was standing right there, was deep in thought. Just as she was thinking of asking Li Shentan something, she could no longer see a trace of him.

The girls nearby all looked at Yang Xiaojin. There had already been rumors going around during this period that the magician who had recently arrived was a superhuman. Reportedly, the amazing magic he performed was actually achieved through his superpower.

How could that scene of him disappearing into thin air just now possibly be a magic trick? Simply thinking about it, it felt more like sorcery!

But for such a person to actually say he was afraid of Yang Xiaojin's boyfriend, it made everything even stranger now. With just a few words, Yang Xiaojin became more mysterious to the surrounding students.

Some of the girls were bewildered. What kind of person was Yang Xiaojin's boyfriend exactly?

Yang Xiaojin was still feeling indignant and wanted to go after Li Shentan. However, she froze just as she was about to move off again. She saw a woman wearing a black cap standing not far away in the distance.

Yang Xiaojin rushed over and asked, "Aunt, what are you doing here?"

The woman wearing a black cap helped Yang Xiaojin tidy up her hair. Then she said with a smile, "Something cropped up. I need you to make a trip to the Southwest with me."

Chapter 588 I'll spend my entire life looking for him

"Why are we going to the Southwest?" Yang Xiaojin asked.

"We've already confirmed the Qing Consortium really does have nuclear weapons. Previously, we did not manage to locate their nuclear test site, so we have to get rid of this future threat immediately." The woman in the black cap said, "This time, we have to find whatever clues we can. Make a trip with me. The other members of the Saboteurs don't know the Southwest as well as you do."

Then Yang Xiaojin's aunt turned around and prepared to lead Yang Xiaojin away. But to her surprise, Yang Xiaojin did not follow along this time. Instead, she remained standing there silently.

"What's the matter? Have you forgotten our creed?" her aunt questioned.

"I didn't forget, but I have something more important I still need to do," Yang Xiaojin said softly.

Crowds were passing to and fro across the school's entrance, but these two people felt like they were separate entities from the bustling of the world. It was as though they did not belong in this peaceful world at all.

Yang Xiaojin's aunt looked at her and said, "What else can be more important than doing what we believe in?"

Yang Xiaojin did not answer this question. Instead, she asked, "Have you heard any news of Ren Xiaosu yet?"

Actually, this was also her answer of sorts. Yang Xiaojin looked at her aunt who had always been strong. Otherwise, she would also not have parted ways with the Yang Consortium.

Her aunt's original name was Yang Anjing, but as she felt it sounded too frail, she changed her name to Yang Anjing.[1]

Yang Xiaojin met her aunt's eyes. Her aunt stayed silent for a second before answering calmly, "No."

"I'm going to look for him. After I've found him, I'll head to the Southwest to meet up with you," Yang Xiaojin said.

Yang Anjing smiled and said, "You said you saw him getting pierced through the abdomen by a spear with your own eyes. Then you should also know how low the chances of survival are for someone who's had his abdomen pierced and was swept away by a flood. If it were you, could you survive that?"

"I wouldn't." Yang Xiaojin shook her head and said, "But he can."

"He's just a boy who hasn't grown up yet. Perhaps he said something that made you happy and unable to forget about him. However, no one can have such resolute and loyal feelings in this world. Even if he were fortunate enough to survive, he would definitely have someone else he likes now."

"He won't." Yang Xiaojin said firmly, "He's just like everyone else in this world. He's unique."

Yang Anjing fell silent.

Yang Xiaojin stubbornly said, "I'm sorry, Aunt. But I can't go to the Southwest yet. I still want to look for him. In the past, I also thought I could just attend school here quietly and not pay attention to the rest of the world until I forgot about him. But at some point today, I felt like he was just by my side. It was only at this moment that I realized I couldn't forget him."

"Then do you know where to start looking for him?" Yang Anjing asked.

"I don't know." Yang Xiaojin shook her head.

"And how are you going to find him?" Yang Anjing asked again.

"With my entire life if need be."

...

Just as Ren Xiaosu was about to leave with Zhou Yingxue, Old Li and Qin Sheng bumped into them. The moment they met, Old Li reached out to touch Ren Xiaosu's hair to test if it were a wig.

Ren Xiaosu looked at Old Li speechlessly as he pulled his hair. "What are you doing?"

"Oh," Old Li said, "your hair feels real nice. What's your haircare routine?"

“What haircare routine!” Ren Xiaosu did not know whether to laugh or cry. “Is that what you two came here for?”

Old Li changed the subject and asked, “How long are you planning to stay in Luoyang City? As your hosts, we should at least entertain you a little. Do you want us to show you around?”

“No need.” Ren Xiaosu smiled and said, “We were just planning to leave. There’s still some things that we need to handle.”

The sentences he had given to Hope Media’s Jiang Xu had already been published in the newspapers. As such, Ren Xiaosu wanted to return to Stronghold 61 as soon as possible to wait for Wang Fugui to arrive.

When Old Li heard Ren Xiaosu was planning to leave, he said, “Oh, then let us see you off. We can get a car for you two. What plans do you have in the future? Since we know each other so well, if I wanted to have a chat with you someday, there should at least be a place where I can go look for you, right?”

Ren Xiaosu thought for a moment and decided there was no need to hide his whereabouts from Old Li. He also intended to make friends with the Riders. “I’m going to the black market outside of Luoyang City first before heading straight for Stronghold 61.”

“Mhm, mhm.” Old Li hurriedly nodded. “Alright, I got it.”

Qin Sheng, who was next to them, suddenly said, “Brother Xiaosu, I guess you’ve heard about us Riders, right?”

Qin Sheng was the same age as Ren Xiaosu. In order to sound more friendly, he directly addressed him as Brother Xiaosu.

“What about?” Ren Xiaosu asked puzzledly.

“That we’re looking for someone.” Qin Sheng explained, “The Riders have been searching for that person for a long time. His name is Ren Xiaobei, and it’s only one character different from your name, Brother Xiaosu.”

“That’s such a coincidence.” Ren Xiaosu’s heart skipped a beat. “Why? Do you need me to help you look for him? Does he have any unique traits? If I see him, I’ll definitely let y’all know.”

Old Li scrutinized Ren Xiaosu’s expression and said, “We don’t know if he has any identifiable traits. We just know he looks quite handsome.”

For some reason, Old Li felt that Ren Xiaosu was suddenly very relieved.

Ren Xiaosu said, “If I encounter someone called Ren Xiaobei, I’ll definitely tell y’all.”

Actually, at some point, Ren Xiaosu also wondered if the person the Riders and Qinghe Group were looking for could be him and not Yan Liuyuan.

But Ren Xiaosu was more hoping that it would be neither of them. That was because a lot of people now knew this person had come out of the Pyro Company's laboratory. Even if he were still alive, he would be more than 200 years old. Would he not be regarded as a monster by others in that case?

But Ren Xiaobei's name was only one character different from his, while Yan Liuyuan addressed him as "brother" so confidently back then. Therefore, there must have been some complicated situation in between that left Ren Xiaosu unable to understand what was going on.

It was too messy, so Ren Xiaosu decided not to think about it for now.

As they chatted, they arrived at the stronghold's entrance. Old Li said, "We'll see you off here. Take care."

After they bade farewell to each other, Zhou Yingxue drove the off-road vehicle Old Li and Qin Sheng had gifted them to the black market. On the way, Zhou Yingxue asked, "Master, could that Ren Xiaobei person they're looking for be you?"

Ren Xiaosu shook his head and said, "That can't be. They mentioned that Ren Xiaobei looks quite handsome, so how could it be me when I'm very handsome?"

Zhou Yingxue was surprised. So that's why you were suddenly relieved earlier? It was because they said he only looked quite handsome? And then you felt they must definitely not be referring to you?

As Zhou Yingxue drove on, she could feel a sense of resentment growing inside her. However, Zhou Yingxue realized that ever since they parted ways with Old Li and Qin Sheng, Ren Xiaosu seemed to have a lot on his mind. As such, she did not say anything further.

Ren Xiaosu was gazing out the window, and no one knew what he was thinking.

The two of them did not head directly to Stronghold 61. Instead, they made a detour to the black market first to launder the reward money they had received from the Anjing House before setting off again.

Chapter 589 Submit to me

It was the tail end of November, and the entire Alliance of Strongholds had transitioned into winter. A large quantity of supplies were starting to be transported into the stronghold to prepare for winter, and the plants along the streets were starting to wither.

However, something strange was happening in Stronghold 61. In the past, the creeper vines would shed all their leaves by winter, leaving only the bare vines. But this year, the creeper vines looked even lusher than before. As the weather got colder and colder, they did not seem to be affected at all. Furthermore, they even started spreading over a wider area, adorning residential buildings and making them look beautiful beyond compare.

When a lot of the residents in Stronghold 61 heard about this, they went to take a look. Some of the Wang Consortium officials who were people pleasers reported this to Wang Shengzhi, saying this was a good omen. They were implying Wang Shengzhi had managed the Wang Consortium's strongholds really

well, so everyone's stomachs were filled, and there was no lack of clothes to dress the residents. As such, the Heavens sent this auspicious sign to them.

Wang Shengzhi laughed it off.

The refugee workers who were building railroads and highways in the Northwest were still busy with their work. The weather gradually getting colder did not seem to have much of an effect on them. Everyone was used to it, and besides, this was not the coldest time of the season.

However, the Northern Plains were already covered in snow and ice. This was an area situated outside of the Alliance of Strongholds that bordered Stronghold 176.

Stronghold 176 was also an independent stronghold not controlled by any organization. However, their reputation was usually not as prominent as Fortress 178's, probably because they rarely encountered any external threats.

A howling wind blew across the grasslands. Not only was there heavy snowfall, even the snow on the ground was getting swept up layer after layer by the wind. In the end, newly fallen snow covered the ground again.

The entire world was gloomy. The dark clouds in the sky resembled a black dragon roaring loudly, while the snow seemed like it would never end.

On the plains, over a thousand gigantic wolves were advancing in the snow step by step as they headed eastwards. Every once in a while, the wolves on the inside of the pack would come out to take positions on the outer perimeter of the group while the ones that were bearing the brunt of the blizzard's wind earlier would return to the center of the pack to keep warm.

After The Cataclysm, the weather was constantly bad. Even the thick fur on these wolves could not help them withstand the cold for long.

The wolf pack continued moving east, leaving behind their elongated pawprints on the snow, which were then covered again by the blizzard's snowfall.

Within the wolf pack, Yan Liuyuan was sitting on the back of the Wolf King. He was wrapped up in layer after layer of thick leather hides, turning him into a fat man. Only by doing this could he barely keep himself warm enough.

After the wolves caught their prey, Yan Liuyuan and Xiaoyu would skin them for their hide. As there were very few humans in the Northern Plains, and they were mainly scattered across a very large area, the other living creatures were able to flourish. So the wolves did not have to worry about not finding food out here.

When Yan Liuyuan saw that winter was about to arrive, he started collecting the fur-lined hides of the wolves' prey. But without any sewing tools, he could only wrap it around himself in a paltry manner.

Behind them, the wolves were also carrying rolls of sun-dried fur hides on their backs. Those were all of Yan Liuyuan's current "assets."

Yan Liuyuan turned around calmly and looked to the side. Xiaoyu was also similarly sitting on the back of a wolf like him. Xiaoyu asked, "Liuyuan, are you cold?"

"I'm not cold." Yan Liuyuan pulled down a scarf made of fur and smiled wryly. "Big Sister Xiaoyu, you've already wrapped me up into this state, so how could I still feel cold?"

At this moment, they noticed a pale yellow flame burning in the distance. That yellow-orange color exuded a sense of warmth in this gloomy world.

Yan Liuyuan said, "That should be the northern nomads. It's probably a small tribe, I think we should start with them." Then he patted the Wolf King below him. "Let's head over there and have a look, we might be able to get some grain from them. I'm a little sick of eating meat every day."

With that, the wolves started sprinting on the snow-covered ground. The sight of a 1,000 wolves running with their fur blowing in the strong winds was spectacular to behold.

The firepits inside the several dozen tents of the small tribe were burning, and there were small, metal, black pots over the fires with things cooking in them. The contents were gurgling in a subdued way that sounded very "textured."

But the people sitting in the tents were shocked. They could hear strange sounds mixed with the blizzard wind blowing outside.

Immediately after, the sharp howl of wolves pierced through the wind and reached everyone's ears.

The howling of wolves caused the expressions of the herdsmen in the tent to change. They often came across wolves out here in the north, but they had not met a pack of wolves that caused such a huge ruckus before.

Someone shouted in a tent, "Round up the horses and sheep! Don't let the wolves scare the animals. Quick, hurry and get our tribe's guns!"

As he spoke, the tribal chief drew an old pistol from his belt. He lifted the tent flap and was about to rush out to scare the wolves away.

The wolves in the Northern Plains would naturally retreat as long as you fired a few shots to wound some of their pack members.

But this time, as soon as the tribal chief ran out of his tent, he was rooted to the ground in a daze. He saw countless huge wolves standing quietly outside the tent. They were much larger than the grassland wolves he had seen before. In fact, they were so large they could even be mistaken for cows!

The tribal chief was so shocked he froze. He knew full well that the wolves in front of him were different. No matter how many shots he might fire at them, it would definitely not scare them away.

He had seen wolves before, but he had never seen such a huge group of dire wolves before. With so many of them, this was not a force they could fight against!

The tribal chief said in a trembling voice to his tribesmen behind him, "Tell the women and children to leave. All the men are to stay behind to buy time for the rest to escape. Ride on the horses and leave."

At this point, the tribal chief was in despair. How could the horses possibly outrun the wolves in this snowy weather?

Just as he was ready to die, the terrifying wolves in front of him actually parted ways and opened a path between them. Two even larger wolves carried a man and a woman on their backs as they slowly padded over.

All the herdsmen in the tribe were stunned. They could not understand anything. The wolves were actually controlled by someone?

Furthermore, the boy sitting on the back of the Wolf King even had a silver glow flowing through his veins. It made him look like he was a young god.

There had always been legends of gods being told in the grasslands, but the herdsmen had never actually seen one before. If this person in front of them was not a god, what other explanation could there be?

The herdsmen behind the tribal chief were all stunned. In this snowy weather, this unexpected scene made them temporarily lose their ability to think rationally.

The flames in the firepits inside the tents were swaying due to the strong winds outside. The women in the tents were hugging their children tightly and shivering in fear.

Meanwhile, the young man sitting on the Wolf King's back and the woman at his side looked really mysterious and powerful.

However, the tribal chief was unable to understand something. Could it really be that the gods had descended upon them?

Yan Liuyuan sat on the back of the Wolf King and came before the herdsmen where he looked down upon them. When the herdsmen no longer dared to look at him directly, Yan Liuyuan finally smiled and said, "The north is too cold. Submit to me and I'll bring y'all south to spend your next winter there."

Chapter 590 A miraculous sign

Whether it was the threat of the wolves or the admiration the nomadic tribe had for the gods, this first tribe Yan Liuyuan encountered after arriving in the plains had already submitted to him.

The tribal chief remained the tribal chief. Initially, that herdsman had volunteered to give up his position to Yan Liuyuan, but Yan Liuyuan rejected him with a smile.

The tribal chief was puzzled. "Didn't you come here because of..."

"Oh," Yan Liuyuan smiled and explained, "Your tribe is too small. What I'm aiming for is control over the entire plains."

As for why he wanted to control the entire plains, no one really knew.

At the beginning, the tribe members all avoided Yan Liuyuan and Li Xiaoyu in the fear they would offend them.

Everyone's reverence for Yan Liuyuan was more out of fear than respect.

But everyone slowly realized that aside from the young Yan Liuyuan, the woman named Li Xiaoyu who was with him was a really good person. When the weather cleared, she would also help everyone with their farm work and even joined everyone to collect cowpies to dry for keeping warm. Xiaoyu did not mind that cowpies were dirty. She would even sing children's songs to the kids. Her voice was sonorous and pleasant to listen to.

In Yan Liuyuan's opinion, the cultural gap of the nomadic people in the north was far greater than what the Central Plains people could imagine. There wasn't even the most basic of electrical power in this region, and the various tribes had to go through a lot of hardship to redomesticate livestock before settling back into a nomadic lifestyle.

The tribe Yan Liuyuan encountered did not even have a name. It was just naturally formed after a group of herders started living in groups for some generations.

However, Yan Liuyuan had heard there were also very large tribes in the grasslands. It was precisely these large tribes that Stronghold 176 was guarding against.

According to what Hassan said, their tribe was actually also part of a larger tribe. It was just that they did not usually interact with their people. However, the ruling tribe would come every spring to collect a tribute of cows, goats, and horses from them.

If they had to fight a war with the Central Plains, the large tribes would send someone over to inform them beforehand and request they gather at a designated location. Some of the guns their tribe had were given by those larger tribes, and the weapons were very old and worn. It seemed that they were stolen from the Central Plains people in the past.

Hassan looked at Yan Liuyuan and said cautiously, "When it's spring, and they send someone over..."

"It's alright." Yan Liuyuan smiled and said, "I'll handle it."

When Yan Liuyuan first became the ruler of this tribe, the herdsmen in the tribe had been quite worried. They were worried Yan Liuyuan might be overly brutal since he was someone who had a pack of wolves following him. Just based on that, it would seem that he was extremely vicious.

Moreover, there weren't enough cows, goats, and horses in the tribe to feed such a large number of wolves. What if this young man let the wolves devour all their livestock?

But in the end, after Yan Liuyuan took over the tribe, he dismissed the wolves and let them venture out to hunt for their own food freely. There were a lot of food sources out in the steppe, so there was no need for the wolves to eat the livestock of these herdsmen.

When some of the herdsmen saw that Yan Liuyuan had dispersed the wolves, they started thinking, 'Could this be the moment that Yan Liuyuan is at his most vulnerable? If we kill him right now, we won't have to pander to him anymore.'

But the tribal chief, Hassan, was more rational. "If we kill him, what if the wolves return to avenge him? Moreover, if a person can dismiss the wolves just like that, it shows that he's very confident in himself. This means he doesn't even see us as a threat."

The others finally gave up on the idea to assassinate Yan Liuyuan.

After a week, when Hassan ran off to report some matters to Yan Liuyuan, Yan Liuyuan looked at Hassan with a half-smile and said, "You're a smart man."

Hassan immediately understood what Yan Liuyuan was referring to. As a result, Hassan became even more humble in Yan Liuyuan's presence.

Yan Liuyuan had thought it would be a while before the people from the large tribes arrived. But on the third day after the blizzard stopped, someone arrived at the tribe on horseback with a scepter in hand.

The other party came to Hassan's tent and announced loudly, "By orders of the khan, all of you are to make your way to the royal tent next to the Jungar River within ten days to participate in the plundering of the South."

The nomadic tribes were not after money in their raids on the South. What they were after was the supply of daily necessities there. Yan Liuyuan had heard from Hassan that this year was too cold, so a lot of the livestock had died after the blizzard. If they did not go to the South to raid food, a lot of people would probably not survive past this winter.

They did not have to go and raid the strongholds either. After all, many of the Central Plains people's daily necessities could be found in the factories and farms located in the wilderness. Some years ago, the large tribe's leader was very stupid and liked to fight head-on with Stronghold 176 as they tried to rob the stronghold of their supplies.

In the end, that khan was caught in a crossfire and shot dead during a raid attempt. The firearms of the Central Plains people were definitely not something they could defend against.

But their new khan was different. He identified a route last year that allowed him to bypass Stronghold 176 and get directly behind them where they could plunder all they wanted.

By the time Stronghold 176's garrison troops realized what was going on, they already relied on the powerful mobility of their evolved horses to detour back to the grasslands.

It was this battle that established the authority of this khan. Many of the tribal leaders were finally convinced by him because of this.

However, the supplies they had stolen that time were not considered much to the whole of the Central Plains, so they did not really attract their attention and get targeted back.

And this time, after having tasted success, the khan actually started assembling all the tribes together to fight a war as soon as winter arrived.

The man holding the scepter looked at Hassan and said, "Why aren't you responding? Are you trying to disobey orders? It doesn't matter. When I get back and bring news of this to the khan, he'll wipe out your tribe. There'll be no need for y'all to go to the Central Plains at that time. Your livestock will be redistributed to the other tribes."

Hassan turned anxious. He quickly looked to Yan Liuyuan.

The person holding the scepter frowned. "Why are you looking at others?"

"This is our tribe's new chief, so we listen to him," Hassan explained.

The man holding the scepter looked at Yan Liuyuan. "He's just a little brat. Why would your tribe elect him as the new chief?"

Nearby, Xiaoyu sighed and went back into her tent. Yan Liuyuan said with a smile, "Go back and convey this to your khan. Our tribe will go to the Central Plains, but not now. It will be after I become the khan. I'll allow you to return with your life, but my guess is that you'll be blinded by an eagle after this. That's because even though you have eyes, you're still blind to what's in front of you."

Everyone thought Yan Liuyuan was just giving a snide remark. But at this moment, a shadow suddenly swept over them. The person holding the scepter looked up and saw an eagle swooping down at him. Before he could even exclaim in surprise, the eagle clawed out one of his eyes!

Yan Liuyuan's smile disappeared. "Go back and tell your khan he only has one chance to choose whether he wants to live or die."

Next to them, Hassan fell to his knees. All of the herdsmen copied Hassan and knelt as well. From their point of view, the sight of the eagle clawing the envoy was a miraculous sign!

It was a sign that a true god had appeared!