

First Order 641

### **Chapter 641: A brewing storm**

There were also a few other Riders facing the same situation as Wu Dingyuan.

Wen Meng was also stopped on the way back. However, he was caught in a dilemma before he could even see the other party.

While they were returning to the stronghold, a large number of paper cranes suddenly descended from the sky. When the Qinghe University students behind him saw the paper cranes, their first reaction was to cheer. They did not know why there were so many of these strange paper cranes flying towards them.

Only Wen Meng's expression changed. He did not expect the head of the Anjing House would actually come here personally.

He asked aloud, "Is the Anjing House also trying to seize our Qinghe's satellites?"

But no one answered him. The paper cranes landed on the shoulders of the students and even occasionally used their "beaks" to preen their wings like they were really feathered.

Wen Meng said to the students in a low voice, "Don't touch them!"

But it was too late. One of the students was already reaching out towards the paper crane on his shoulder out of curiosity. When his finger came into contact with it, he let out a cry of pain and retracted his hand.

His finger was bleeding profusely after getting cut by the sharp edge of the paper crane.

Wen Meng went over to have a look. Fortunately, it was just a shallow cut. The person controlling the paper cranes was warning him not to act rashly but had unintentionally hurt someone in the process.

To this day, the head of the Anjing House was still an extremely mysterious person. No one knew what kind of person he was, and they only knew that his superpower was controlling paper cranes.

Wen Meng frowned. He understood the other Riders who were out traveling were probably facing the same situation as him now.

Abandon the students and head straight for Luoyang City? Wen Meng was caught in a dilemma. He was unsure if the other party would really kill the students.

He took out his satellite phone and called Li Yingyun. "I've been intercepted by the Anjing House at my position. There's more than 20 students here with me."

Old Li replied, "Stall them right there then. Actually, it's a good thing they're not coming to Luoyang City. At least that way, some of the battles won't have to happen in the stronghold."

Outsiders might not care about the rise and fall of Luoyang City, but Old Li and the others had grown up here, so of course they hoped Luoyang City would not get destroyed.

Therefore, if everyone were to start fighting their battles in the stronghold, who knew what kind of destruction the stronghold would suffer? Since the other party had chosen to hold back the Riders in the wilderness, and upon considering the bigger picture, it might be better to get caught in a deadlock with the enemy outside. The rest would have to depend on Old Li and the others.

The ongoing situation at Luoyang City was originally hushed up, and not many people knew Luoyang City was currently at the center of a whirlpool of events.

But gradually, more and more people started paying attention to this place.

As a result, no one noticed that a group of the Pyro Company's elites had suddenly set off for the Northern Plains.

The Pyro Company's elites were extremely cautious in their actions. They did not even bring along any supplies or support personnel with them. The soldiers in the group were all at least T3-level combatants, with there being ten commanders whose combat strength was ranked at T4.

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Due to the events at the orphanage, Ren Xiaosu skipped his classes for the day. But to him, this was actually not considered skipping classes at all. After all, Jiang Xu did not give any lectures today.

However, Zheng Hang was going to get in trouble for sure. Their class had a full schedule today. There were four periods in total, and all four teachers marked attendance at the end of each lecture. Zheng Hang seemed to have vanished into thin air for all of them.

Zheng Hang's classmates wanted to tell him the bad news, but they could not get through to his phone at all.

It was not that Zheng Hang had gone into hiding, but that Qin Sheng had cut off his cousin's phone line so that his happiness could be prolonged a few more days...

After all, Ren Xiaosu was still using his cousin's student pass for now. It would not be good if Zheng Hang accidentally let slip the arrangement.

The next day, Ren Xiaosu resumed going to class. The second lecture of the day was Jiang Xu's Humanities and Political Science class.

As usual, the students would raise some questions during the lecture.

But this time, no one asked about current affairs related to politics. Instead, they directly asked about what was happening inside Luoyang City.

After all, two intense battles between superhumans had taken place in the span of three days. The students could not figure out why this was happening.

A girl asked, "Professor, what exactly is going on in Luoyang City? Didn't you say we wouldn't be affected?"

Jiang Xu said from the podium, "I hope all of you will not assume you're going to be completely safe. Everything I'm telling you right now might cause you to panic, but one of you was correct. We might be living in an ivory tower here, but the perpetrator is not going to be stopped by that."

Everyone was stunned. Which of their classmates had said that to Jiang Xu?

Jiang Xu smiled and said, "Zheng Hang was the one who said that."

Immediately, the entire class turned their attention to Ren Xiaosu. And Ren Xiaosu looked at Jiang Xu speechlessly. What was this old man trying to do? Why did he suddenly single him out in front of the class?

This confused the students a little. Jiang Xu had even specially come to the school to have lunch with Ren Xiaosu. Could it be that Jiang Xu really admired that guy?

But he was only a bum who had come to class to earn some money for helping others mark attendance.

Jiang Xu continued, "Students, I suggest that if any of you discovers someone committing a crime, you should immediately run in the direction of the garrison troops enforcing the lockdown. Although the garrison troops might not be strong enough, it's still better than running around wildly."

After Jiang Xu went back to Hope Media yesterday, he had given the matter very careful thought before deciding to take Ren Xiaosu's advice. He was no longer going to tell the students to focus on their studies but teach them how to avoid any danger that might arise during this chaotic battle.

When these words came out of Jiang Xu's mouth, it undoubtedly depressed the students. However, Jiang Xu felt the students should know about these things.

Actually, Jiang Xu wanted to tell them that if they discovered someone committing a crime on campus, they should quickly run to Ren Xiaosu's side. However, he could not say that.

"Professor." A male student suddenly asked, "I read in today's Hope Media newspaper that during the arrest of the criminal last night, it was the hostage that got killed first. Is that true?"

Jiang Xu smiled and said, "Yes." His gaze drifted towards Ren Xiaosu. He only found out this morning that the person who had killed the hostage was actually Ren Xiaosu.

But he could not tell that to the students either.

However, Jiang Xu explained, "There was a problem with that hostage. You probably know about the fugitive who got tripped by a superhuman the day before yesterday, right? That fugitive was the hostage who got killed last night."

The students were stunned. Something like that actually happened?

After class, Jiang Xu waved at Ren Xiaosu again. "Zheng Hang, let's have lunch together."

The students watched silently as Ren Xiaosu and Jiang Xu walked out of the classroom. They were suddenly at a loss as to how to react. They could not accept that a bum was being so highly regarded by Professor Jiang

While Jiang Xu and Ren Xiaosu were walking, he asked Ren Xiaosu, "I heard you didn't come to school yesterday?"

"Mhm." Ren Xiaosu told him about what happened at the orphanage.

But as they were talking, an explosion boomed from very far away. Based on the sound, it came from more than five kilometers away from the school.

Immediately after, the screams and wails of students could also be heard coming from the school grounds. Ren Xiaosu spun around and saw students scattering in all directions.

Ren Xiaosu and Jiang Xu looked at each other. The real chaos was just about to begin.

#### **Chapter 642: A mysterious superhuman**

Before today, all of the violence that occurred in the stronghold was more like a form of probing. There were scattered incidents across different locations, but none of them were enough to threaten the foundations of Luoyang City.

Just like the time when Zhang Baogen tried to kill someone, he had only done so as a hired gun.

Something like this probably happened because someone had wanted to see how quickly the garrison troops and the Riders would react.

But it was different now. The entire stronghold looked like it was caught in a premeditated move as chaos erupted everywhere.

This was the moment the slaughter would truly begin.

Ren Xiaosu frowned and said, "There's nothing in Qinghe University that they're after, so why did they start a killing spree here in the school? And why did they choose to do it in the daytime? I'm afraid that this is just a move to disrupt the Qinghe Group's plans. These people are not truly making their move yet."

Jiang Xu said, "I share the same thoughts as you. There's still five hours until the sun sets, but the most critical moment is probably still nighttime. Go and save those students. They're innocent."

After that, Jiang Xu watched Ren Xiaosu dash off towards where the chaos started.

The students were fleeing in all directions. Perhaps due to what Jiang Xu had said in the lecture, the students in his class started leading the way after the chaos broke out and fled in the direction of the garrison troops. While running, they even called out to the other students to follow them.

However, the enemy's plan was very meticulous. Before the students could escape to the area where the garrison troops were stationed, thugs rushed out from different directions and chased them around in a disciplined pattern. In the end, most of the students were driven into Teaching Block 11.

Ren Xiaosu suddenly rushed into their encirclement. However, the thugs did not think much of it. They only thought he was a flustered student trying to escape, so they chased him into the teaching block as well.

Ren Xiaosu did not choose to make a move immediately because there were too many students crowded here. If a battle broke out here, a lot of students could get killed in the crossfire. So he decided to wait for a better opportunity.

Roughly a dozen thugs had appeared. They did not seem like they wanted to restrain the entire school's students either. They only rounded up a few hundred students so it would be easier to control them.

Shortly after, the entire teaching block was seized by the armed thugs. They then steered all the students in and crammed them into a lecture hall where they were kept locked up.

Guns pointing at them, the students did not dare to resist and obediently followed the thugs like sheep.

All the students in the teaching block were squeezed into this lecture hall and were shivering in fear. They did not know when the thugs had entered the school and why the garrison troops were not taking any action.

Some of the students saw through the windows that the thugs outside were all masked. After the thugs had searched the entire building, they stopped killing and just locked them up like this.

As if they had a plan, the thugs immediately dismantled the tables and chairs in the classrooms and piled them up at the four entrances of the teaching block. After these temporary barricades were built, the thugs even set up heavy machine gun nests inside the building!

By the time the garrison troops arrived, the well-trained thugs had already completed locking down the entire teaching block. They had even built a defensive bunker on the roof of the building. Although what was happening in the bunker couldn't be seen, there were definitely thugs occupying the high ground armed with heavy weapons.

The garrison troops' commanding officer looked around and realized the location the thugs had chosen to defend was definitely planned. That was because the tallest building on the Qinghe University campus was Teaching Block 11.

The other teaching blocks were only five or six stories high, while Teaching Block 11 was a newly built building that stood eight stories tall.

Therefore, even if the garrison troops' snipers were to be deployed, all the other suitable sniping spots would be within range of the thugs. If anyone were to take up a position on the roof of another building, they would definitely get targeted by the thugs.

Moreover, Teaching Block 11 was ingeniously located away from the various security posts, so the garrison troops were unable to react in time.

It wasn't until the thugs had taken control of the entire teaching block that the first wave of garrison troops arrived.

Qinghe University was way too big. No matter how well-defended it might be, it would not be able to cover all the bases unless an entire army was stationed there.

But if a large number of troops were to be stationed here, what would happen to the rest of Luoyang City?

It could only be said that there were too many people with ulterior motives in Luoyang City right now.

The garrison troops' commanding officer pondered things for a moment. Those people were definitely professional soldiers. If they were not professional soldiers, they would not have such strong coordination skills. He wondered how many people the Xu clan's relatives had sneaked into the stronghold over the years. This was going to be such a headache.

Once the garrison troops arrived, they evacuated the unaffected students who were not rounded up in the teaching block to a safer location. The entire teaching block was cordoned off from a distance away, with roadblocks and defensive bunkers set up as well.

Suddenly, Old Li's voice blared over the radio frequency, "There should be a superhuman on our side in the campus at this moment. If he makes a move, you must cooperate fully with him. He's not a member of our Riders but someone who came from outside to help. With him around, you all should be able to quickly put an end to the crisis there!"

The garrison troops were surprised by this. The way Old Li put it, it sounded like he regarded that superhuman very highly. "Can you tell us if he has any special characteristics, or get him to join up with us quickly? We don't see any superhumans coming to assist us yet."

Old Li was obviously taken aback when he heard that. Shouldn't Ren Xiaosu be at the school right now?

The commanding officer said in a low voice, "Sir, could he have left when the chaos broke out?"

"That's impossible." Old Li frowned and said, "Just stick to your original plan and wait until he appears. Remember, if he makes a move, you all must cooperate with him."

"Roger," the garrison troops' commanding officer replied. However, he was a little puzzled as to why Old Li was so confident this external help could successfully resolve the current crisis.

Left with no other choice, the garrison troops could only start formulating a rescue plan. A soldier looked at Teaching Block 11 and said, "Sir, could that superhuman... be locked up in the teaching block as well?"

The garrison troops' commanding officer was stunned. He looked at Teaching Block 11 and thought there might really be such a possibility.

Before the garrison troops could come up with a detailed rescue plan, a loudspeaker from the teaching block spoke, "Tell the Qinghe Group to hand over control of the seven satellites to us before nightfall. Otherwise, we'll kill a student for every minute of delay."

Ren Xiaosu thought to himself inside the lecture hall that these people were truly trying to stall for time. Why else did they not get the Qinghe Group to accede to their request immediately instead of waiting until dark?

Under normal circumstances, the thugs should be making strong demands immediately after taking control of the situation. Yet these thugs were giving the Qinghe Group five hours to give in to their demands.

More and more garrison troops started converging on the various locations where chaos had broken out. There were as many as three incidents of thugs holding a large number of hostages inside the stronghold.

Ren Xiaosu did not know where the other two locations were. He felt that since the other party had meticulously planned this, there must be some hidden purpose behind the hostage situation.

At this moment, everyone in the lecture hall was panicking. Some of the students were already in tears. A female student sobbed softly, "Will the Riders come and save us?"

Ren Xiaosu, who was in the lecture hall, looked out of the window and remarked, "They'll definitely come and save us. But I heard that they straight-up killed a hostage when they encountered a hostage situation yesterday."

Immediately, the cries in the classroom got even louder.

Weren't they being held hostage right now?

### **Chapter 643: These thugs are done for!**

As soon as a commotion broke out in the lecture hall, a thug immediately came in from the outside with his gun up. The thug said coldly, "If you want to cry, cry. If the Qinghe Group doesn't hand over the satellites, I'm afraid you all won't even have the chance to cry."

With that, the thug with the gun went back out.

Ren Xiaosu watched quietly. Most of the time, the thugs did not even come into the lecture hall and were just scattered at different locations in the teaching block. He was a little puzzled. Were these thugs not afraid the students in the lecture hall would try and save themselves?

Or were these thugs so confident the students they had rounded up would not cause them any trouble?

That couldn't be. Ren Xiaosu felt these thugs were still very professional at their jobs. Arrogant people would definitely not be picked to carry out an operation that had been in the works for years.

Ren Xiaosu pretended to be despondent as he observed the students in the lecture hall.

In the end, he realized that although there was a person in the classroom who was also very young and wearing a school uniform, his expression did not look like he had been taken hostage at all. It felt like he was just acting afraid, but his eyes kept darting around in observation of the "schoolmates" around him.

Moreover, this person's disposition was also very obvious. When a professional soldier was placed among a group of ordinary students, they appeared like a stone on a plate of white sand. Inside the crowded lecture hall, his posture remained ramrod straight, while the contours of his face exuded a sense of strength. One look and it was obvious he had received high intensity training for an extended period based on his extremely lean body.

Ren Xiaosu thought to himself that it was no wonder the thugs did not really step into the lecture hall. It turned out that they already had the situation inside under control. The thugs really were meticulous in their operations.

When the student impersonator in the lecture hall looked at Ren Xiaosu, Ren Xiaosu immediately started wailing. He said to the student next to him in a sobbing tone, "What should we do now? Will these thugs really kill us? I don't wanna die yet...."

Seeing this, the impostor shifted his gaze away to observe the others instead. It was as though he was somewhat disdainful of a coward like Ren Xiaosu.

At this moment, a student said, "Do you guys think the Qinghe Group will hand over control of the satellites?"

"I don't think so." Someone sighed and said, "After all, how can the lives of a few hundred students be more important than the satellites?"

"But the Qinghe Group's members will not sit back and do nothing. They aren't that kind of people," a female student retorted.

"But the Qinghe Group is still a consortium," someone said.

As the students were discussing, a thug walked into the lecture hall holding a video camera. He had a thick layer of camouflage paint applied on his face and taunted the students, "I can offer you all a chance to save yourselves right now. Will you all take it?"

The students were stunned. No one dared to answer for a long time.

So the thug continued, "I want you to look into the camera and beg the Qinghe Group to hand over their satellites to us. Pressure them! This way, we'll get control of the satellites and you'll be saved. Wouldn't that be the best for both of us? As for the satellites that the Qinghe Group will lose, what would that matter to you?"



The students fell silent. Ren Xiaosu thought to himself that these people were obviously not expecting to get their hands on the satellites by doing this. They were only making sure they would not miss out on any opportunity to create chaos for the Qinghe Group.

These students weren't that stupid, right? Even if they did as the other party requested, they might still not be saved. In that case, why should they become tools?

But Ren Xiaosu was wrong. The students only kept quiet for a minute before someone suddenly cried into the video camera, "Please hand over the satellites! I don't want to die!"

When one person started speaking, several more students also started pleading into the camera.

Ren Xiaosu sighed. The students were not in the wrong either. After all, who wouldn't want to live? It was just that the people from the Qinghe Group would probably be a little disappointed. These were the university students they had been nurturing, after all.

In comparison, Xu Zhi, who Ren Xiaosu had encountered with Zhou Yingxue, had more backbone than these students.

After the thugs were done recording, they left in satisfaction. Soon, the garrison troops outside saw the thugs throw a thick paper package out from behind the defensive bunker.

A soldier from the garrison troops went to retrieve it, and the thugs did not open fire.

Old Li had already rushed to Qinghe University. The other two locations where chaos had broken out were handled by Zhang Qingxi and Qin Sheng, while the remaining Riders stayed behind at the Qinghe Group's headquarters.

Old Li took the package from the soldier and had him move away before opening it layer by layer. When he saw a videotape inside, he heaved a sigh of relief.

"There must be some playback equipment in the school. Hurry up and find it." Old Li said, "I wonder what those thugs are up to. Why did they throw a videotape out to us at a time like this?"

While waiting for the playback equipment, Old Li kept looking around for Ren Xiaosu. However, he could not find him at all.

"That's strange. Didn't Qin Sheng say Ren Xiaosu has been attending school every day?" Old Li was a little puzzled. Could Ren Xiaosu really have run away? But that did not seem in character at all.

Two minutes later, the garrison troops managed to find a classroom where there was playback equipment installed. Old Li and the commander of the garrison troops hurriedly rushed over and inserted the tape.

Very quickly, Old Li was able to see the students in the video begging the Qinghe Group to hand over the satellites in exchange for their release. Old Li and the garrison troops' commanding officer got mixed feelings.

“They’re still just children, so it’s quite normal that they want to live.” Old Li also sighed.

But just as he finished speaking, he jerked his head up and roared, “Wait, rewind it!”

The soldier who was playing back the video was a little puzzled by Old Li’s reaction, but he did as he was told.

When the video was rewound back to the 1 minute, 31 second mark, Old Li shouted for the soldier to pause the tape.

Old Li looked at the television and muttered, “It’s over!”

The commanding officer of the garrison troops wondered, “Sir, our rescue plan hasn’t even started yet, so why did you say that it’s over? Please trust us. We’ll definitely complete our rescue mission! From the day I joined the military, protecting the citizens of Luoyang City has been my duty—”

“I’m not saying it’s over for us, I’m saying these thugs are done for!” Old Li interrupted

The officer was stunned. What the hell was going on?

Weren’t they just worried about the thugs killing the hostages a moment ago? How did it suddenly become the thugs who were done for?

The garrison troops’ commanding officer stared at the television but could not figure out what clues were hidden in this scene.

Old Li raised his head and stared intently at the image on the screen. He saw Ren Xiaosu hidden among the crowd with only half his face showing.

If one did not look carefully, they really would not discover that Ren Xiaosu was in there. But as Old Li had been looking for Ren Xiaosu all this while, he managed to spot some clues in the recording.

He felt these thugs were really unlucky to have taken Ren Xiaosu hostage.

Old Li turned around and walked out of the classroom. He said to the garrison troops’ commanding officer, “I need to hurry off to another hostage situation. After you’re done here, update me. I won’t waste any more time here. Calm the students down, and if any parents come over to cause trouble, tell them that their children will be saved very soon.”

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## **Chapter 644: The hunt begins**

Old Li departed just like that. He had come to Qinghe University to take a look because he was worried about Ren Xiaosu’s nonappearance.

Now that he saw Ren Xiaosu being held hostage, he could finally feel at ease.

Although it sounded awkward, the logic behind it wasn't.

It was not that Old Li did not care about the safety of these students, but that Luoyang City was in desperate need of manpower right now, so there was really no need for him to waste any more time here.

After the thugs in the teaching block threw out the videotape, they started waiting for the Qinghe Group's reaction. But even after waiting for a long time, the Qinghe Group did not respond to their demands at all.

Moreover, the thug manning the bunker on the roof of the building said that someone he suspected to be a Rider, Li Yingyun, had left the garrison troops' defensive bunker and hastily departed the school grounds.

The thugs in the teaching block were a little puzzled. The Qinghe troops did not storm the building nor make any response to their attack on the school. Just what were the Qinghe people planning?

"Something's not right." The leader of the thugs said coldly, "Send more men up to the rooftop. Li Yingyun has departed from the garrison troops' position, and no one has made any attempts to negotiate with us yet. They're likely preparing to assault us. Make sure that if the garrison troops attack, we hold them off no matter what!"

With that, the person next to him led another ten people upstairs.

The thugs were proper professional soldiers, so they knew full well how difficult it would be to attack a school building without using artillery.

The Qinghe Group would probably not resort to artillery either. After all, there were still several hundred students here. If they fired at them, the thugs might not die, but the students would definitely get wiped out.

The Qinghe Group would surely not be willing to bear the pressure of the public's opinion by killing their own students, right?

The leader of the thugs still felt a little uneasy. He somehow felt that something had gone wrong somewhere. Old Li's quiet departure still gave him some sort of an ominous feeling.

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"Drag a student up to the roof of the building and kill them in front of the garrison troops." The thugs' leader sneered and said, "I'd like to see just what they're up to."

"The higher-ups want us to drag out the situation until evening. If we act on our own like this and cause the garrison troops to respond with some drastic measures, it won't be good if we disrupt the higher-ups' plan," his deputy next to him said.

“I want to follow the original plan too, but Li Yingyun’s unexpected response is making me a little uneasy. Just do as I say and kill a student to test their reaction. It shouldn’t be a problem.”

The deputy immediately led some men to the lecture hall. The moment he entered, the noisy classroom fell silent, the students waiting like lambs to the slaughter.

The deputy sneered and said, “We’ve already shown the recording to the Qinghe Group, but they didn’t react. Look, we’ve already expressed our sincerity, but they won’t accept it. They could have just handed over the satellites to us, but the Qinghe Group doesn’t seem to care much about you people. Men, grab a student and bring them up to the roof!”

The two thugs next to him grabbed a girl near the door and tried to pull her outside. The girl struggled hard, but how could she possibly be a match for these thugs?

The girl cried out, “Where are you taking me? What are you trying to do!”

The students beside her just stood there quietly. A few of the boys wanted to step forward, but their bodies only jerked forward a little. In the end, they still could not find the courage to speak up against the thugs.

“Let go of her! Take me instead!”

When this voice rang out, even the thugs were stunned. The deputy turned to look at the crowd of students, and his gaze landed upon Ren Xiaosu, who said those words. It wasn’t that he had identified Ren Xiaosu at a glance, but the moment Ren Xiaosu spoke, the students around him quietly stepped away and cast the attention on him. They were all afraid the thugs would identify the wrong person.

The deputy looked at Ren Xiaosu with interest. “You want to be a hero? Sure! Bring him up to the roof together with the girl.”

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When some of the students saw it was Ren Xiaosu, they were stunned. “Isn’t that the guy attending class in place of Zheng Hang? Why is it him?”

Some of Yang Xiaojin’s classmates were also among those who had been locked in here. They could never have expected the person who stepped forward so bravely was actually not a student of Qinghe University, strictly speaking.

Ren Xiaosu stepped out of the crowd and stood in front of the thugs. One of the thugs with an automatic rifle slung around him came over to grab Ren Xiaosu by the arm.

When the thug approached him, Ren Xiaosu silently counted a total of four thugs in the lecture hall. Three of them had come over from elsewhere, while the other one had been standing guard at the entrance from the beginning.

No, wait! There was another one hiding among the students.

There were a total of five of them!

Just as the two thugs were about to touch Ren Xiaosu, they suddenly realized he was grinning.

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Before they could figure out why the young man was smiling, Ren Xiaosu suddenly raised his hands and accurately struck their throats with his knuckles. With a crack, their necks twisted weirdly!

The other thugs tried to point their guns over at Ren Xiaosu, but they saw a metallic layer of armor suddenly cover the young man in an instant.

The armored hand grabbed the chest region of the clothes of the two thugs and then pushed forward. The powerful force caused the two remaining armed thugs to lose their balance, and their backs smashed against a wall.

The two thugs were like toys being trampled on by a monster, unable to put up any resistance at all!

With a loud crash, the armored being broke through the walls of the classroom with the two thugs in its grip and rushed out into the corridor.

The two thugs felt as though their thorax had been wrung like a rag as they coughed up blood nonstop. Their automatic rifles were now slung loosely around their necks while their heads slumped to the side.

All of a sudden, the classroom was filled with dust and smoke. The students were so shocked they could not say anything. They could only stare at the large hole in the wall of the lecture hall blankly.

The sight of Ren Xiaosu killing the thugs was way too violent. That kind of power was so extreme that it shocked all the students out of their minds.

Wait a minute! Some of the students finally reacted. Wasn't this the legendary superhuman from the Northwest?

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What was he doing here?!

Before this, everyone had been enthusiastically discussing Ren Xiaosu for several days. But they could never have expected the subject of their discussions would appear right in front of them.

Yang Xiaojin's classmates were extraordinarily shocked. Actually, they were the ones who were the most shocked of all in the entire lecture hall!

When the other thugs outside heard the commotion, they quickly started closing in on the classroom. Only the thugs manning the machine gun nests remained behind to stand guard. It would take at most 15 seconds for the thugs to arrive at the classroom.

Ren Xiaosu sneered inside the armor when he heard the sound of their footsteps nearing. However, he did not immediately try to block them off. Instead, he went back into the lecture hall and grabbed the thug who was hiding among the students and broke his neck!

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A girl looked at Ren Xiaosu's armor and said in fear, "W-Who are you exactly?"

Ren Xiaosu grinned in the armor and said, "Me? I'm the guy that Yang Xiaojin likes."

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As the footsteps approached, the students watched the steel armor rush out through the hole in the wall again. A wild animal was starting a hunt!

### **Chapter 645: Standing up for Yang Xiaojin**

The guy Yang Xiaojin likes?

The students in the lecture hall were completely dumbfounded. This was a topic that had been discussed several months ago at Qinghe University. At that time, someone had confessed to Yang Xiaojin and was mercilessly rejected by her. As a result, Yang Xiaojin seemed to have pitted herself against most of the university's students.

When everyone discussed this topic in private, they would always say Yang Xiaojin was being too arrogant. How dare she look down on all the students of Qinghe University?

At that time, Yang Xiaojin said, "You think that the president of the Student Council is outstanding because you guys haven't had a chance to see the outside world yet. The guy I like has never led a pampered life."

Yang Xiaojin even seemed to look down on Xu Zhi.

But now, the guy Yang Xiaojin liked had finally appeared. He showed up in front of everyone in an ubermensch fashion and told them he was the man they had been talking about and worshipping in recent times, that he was the guy Yang Xiaojin liked.

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This scene made it seem like Ren Xiaosu was not here to save them. Instead, it was as though he had heard them mocking Yang Xiaojin behind her back and was here to stand up for her!

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Otherwise, he wouldn't have specifically emphasized he was the guy Yang Xiaojin liked!

So it turned out Yang Xiaojin was not lying, nor was she just being conceited. The guy she liked was someone from a totally different world than them.

In that case, this young man must also like Yang Xiaojin since he came all the way here just to stand up for her.

This also proved that Yang Xiaojin was not an ordinary person!

At this moment, many of the girls present started to envy Yang Xiaojin...

Gunshots continuously rang out outside the lecture hall, and it felt really intense and overpowering.

But from the beginning to the end, it was the people who fired their weapons that cried out in pain. The students could still hear the muffled sound of bones being smashed against the wall of the lecture hall. Every time it happened, they would tremble in shock.

They could even imagine the sight of the steel armor slamming the thugs against the wall and shattering their bones.

1

Outside the teaching block, the garrison troops who had surrounded it from a distance away suddenly heard a commotion coming from the building. First, it was the sound of walls shattering, followed by cries of surprise, and then gunshots.

Gradually, the gunshots lessened. They saw the façade of the teaching block suddenly crumble before a thug was thrown out from inside. The thug fell from a height of over several dozen meters down to the ground where he twitched twice before stilling.

From the exterior of that façade, the garrison troops were surprised to see steel armor shine past on the inside. Immediately after, more cries of the thugs could be heard again.

“Just what is going on?” The garrison troops’ commanding officer muttered, “We didn’t see that thing go in, so how did it suddenly appear in there?”

“Sir, do you remember what we were guessing earlier? We said the superhuman Officer Li was looking for might be inside the teaching block?” the deputy commander said.

All of a sudden, the garrison troops’ commanding officer figured out many things. It was no wonder Li Yingyun said the thugs were done for after he watched the video. Old Li must have noticed the superhuman was among the students in the recording!

That was why Old Li left and headed off elsewhere without any worries. He felt he was no longer needed here!

This armored being was not something unfamiliar to everyone. It had been a hot topic among the garrison troops for the past two days!

1

“Second Company, provide cover.” The commanding officer shouted, “We’re going to storm the MG nests. We should not keep troubling our friend by letting him do all the work. First and Third Company, follow my lead! We’re charging in to provide combat support!”

But as soon as he was done shouting, he saw the steel armor emerge from the hole in the wall.

“Hold on, what’s he up to now?” The commanding officer was stunned.

He saw the steel armor climb up the exterior wall without the need for any holds. The other party was just using its steel fingers to grab the façade wall and climb upwards. The cement wall was just like a piece of tofu that kept crumbling towards the ground as the armored being made its way up to the roof.

“How crude. Is he trying to save time by not taking the stairs?” A soldier muttered, “Battalion Commander, are we still charging in?”

“... I don’t think there’s a need anymore! ”

1

As he was speaking, the armored being climbed to the roof of the building. Ren Xiaosu used both hands to support himself on the ledge and leaped onto the rooftop. At this moment, the afternoon sun was still shining brightly in the sky. The garrison troops saw the armored being leaping up as it blocked their line of sight with the sun. This made the back of the armored being appear very dark like it was shrouded in shadow, while the sun’s rays dazzled the edges of its silhouette!

It was as though the armor was emitting a glow!

Subsequently, all the garrison troops heard the sound of machine gun fire coming from atop the building. Then more than a dozen thugs on the roof were thrown down until the gunfire stopped!

The armored being slowly walked to the edge of the roof and looked down quietly at the garrison troops below.

Blood was still flowing down the exterior of the armor. The dark crimson blood gave the metallic armor an even greater aesthetic of violence. The young man was waving at the garrison troops in his steel armor, indicating that it was safe for them to enter the building to rescue the hostages.

1

“Go, go, go! Let’s quickly clear the battlefield and see if there’s any casualties among the students.” The commanding officer took the lead and rushed forward. They knew there were probably no survivors among the thugs inside the building.

Ren Xiaosu jumped down from the roof of the teaching block in his armor, his landing cracking the ground. He looked at the garrison troops who had rushed over and said, “I’ve left one of them alive for you. He looked like he might be the leader of the thugs, so he should know a lot of things. If you get any useful info from him after the interrogation, have Qin Sheng update me ASAP.”



The garrison troops' commanding officer hurriedly nodded. "Yes, we'll definitely interrogate them as soon as possible."

This officer's humble attitude made him seem like a fanboy standing in front of his idol.

1

The students inside were led out of the building. Everyone had complicated expressions as they glanced at the armored being. Their faces looked exceedingly awkward.

After Ren Xiaosu was done handing over the situation to the garrison troops, he turned around and left in his armor. Then the voice of one of the garrison troops rang out from the perimeter, "Ma'am, you can't go in there. This is a restricted zone!"

"Out of my way! My master is in there!" Zhou Yingxue roared.

How could an average soldier possibly stop Zhou Yingxue? She pushed the soldier aside and ran towards Ren Xiaosu. "Master, are you alright? I heard something happened at the university, so I immediately rushed here from home!"

When the students saw this scene from afar, they were so dumbfounded they stopped thinking. Master? A maid? This young man was actually the person who saved Xu Zhi?

1

So they were actually praising the same person all this while?

As a matter of fact, many students at Qinghe University were jealous of the young man who had a maidservant!

Earlier, it was the girls who were envious of Yang Xiaojin. But now, it was the boys who were envious of Ren Xiaosu. Never mind that he had such a beautiful girlfriend like Yang Xiaojin, he even had a pretty maid with such a good figure too.

Zhou Yingxue's looks could only be considered above average, but with that figure of hers, it would also make her more attractive.

But some of the girls started wondering if Yang Xiaojin knew the guy she liked had a maid who served him.

### **Chapter 646: Nothing to do with justice**

Ren Xiaosu and Zhou Yingxue quickly disappeared from everyone's sight. After the chaotic battle started, no pedestrians could be seen loitering on the streets anymore.

"Why did you come here?" Ren Xiaosu asked.

"I was about to cook for Wang Yuchi and the others at home, but I heard an explosion go off." Zhou Yingxue explained, "At first, I wasn't really bothered by it. After all, it had nothing to do with me. But

later on, the neighbors ran out from their houses anxiously. Some of them said that there was an incident at Qinghe University and they wanted to go look for their children. That was when I thought if you would be OK.”

For the past few days, with nothing much to do at home, Zhou Yingxue had turned nanny to Wang Yuchi and the others and would cook for them every day to replenish their nutrition so they could focus on their entrance exam.

As a result, Zhou Yingxue’s status shot up in the eyes of Wang Yuchi and the students.

Putting all else aside, Zhou Yingxue was indeed very good at cooking. In the past, she was purely lazy and did not want to cook. But now something seemed to have gone wrong with her head. She actually got down to preparing their meals every day and would even tell Ren Xiaosu to gain his approval.

Ren Xiaosu thought for a moment and said, “The battle today was unavoidable, but this is still just the prelude. Night is when it’ll probably be the most critical moment. Go back and keep an eye on Wang Yuchi and the others. We were only doing the Qinghe Group a favor to begin with. If we end up letting Wang Yuchi and the others get hurt because of helping others, that would really not be worth it.”

Although Wang Yuchi and the others also had nanomachines, the problem was they did not have a lot. They did not even have enough to construct armor.

Meanwhile, the superhumans involved in this chaotic battle had yet to make their moves, so there must still be a greater conspiracy abound. If Wang Yuchi and the others got dragged in by these people, they could very well die.

Ren Xiaosu thought that since Wang Yuchi and the other students’ synchronization rate had improved, could he maybe get some nanomachines from Luo Lan to equip them with? After all, Wang Yuchi and the rest would still need to further their studies at Qinghe University in the coming days.

But of course, nanomachines were very precious, and the Qing Consortium’s production rate was not that high yet. The amount of nanomachines needed to construct armor would be enough to equip several dozen standard nanosoldiers.

However, Ren Xiaosu felt Luo Lan would probably not reject his request.

“Alright, hurry back.” Ren Xiaosu said, “And be careful on the way.”

“Master, are you worried about my safety?” Zhou Yingxue was overjoyed.

Ren Xiaosu raised an eyebrow. “Why do you have so many questions?”

“Alright, I’ll go back right away.” Zhou Yingxue happily headed off in the direction of the courtyard house.

After just two steps, she thought of something and turned around to say, “The soup I made is still sitting on the gas stove. Master, come back earlier and have some soup after you’ve dealt with those people tonight.”

Ren Xiaosu thought it sounded really weird. How did dealing with supernatural beings suddenly feel like it was something that he did every day? She actually made it sound that simple?

It was not easy at all, alright? With so many organizations gathered here this time, no matter how powerful an individual was, they could still easily fail tonight.

Ren Xiaosu called Qin Sheng and said, "The situation at Qinghe University has been resolved. How are things on your side?"

Qin Sheng answered, "The other party's rounded up several dozen hostages and taken cover inside a building, so it won't be easy to attack them. The situation is a little tricky at the moment."

"Mhm." Ren Xiaosu acknowledged that he understood. The reason he was able to eliminate the thugs without harming the hostages was entirely because he had taken them out from the inside. If he were to attack from the outside, he could still have taken them out. However, it would definitely be unavoidable that the enemy would kill some of the hostages. "Then what do y'all plan to do?"

The young Qin Sheng said ruthlessly, "Before it gets dark, and if we don't have a better plan, we'll have no choice but to force our way in. It's better to have dozens of hostages dead than letting the enemy lead us by the nose like that. What they're attempting right now is probably to keep the garrison troops busy by threatening to harm the hostages. We can't let them have their way."

Ren Xiaosu heaved a sigh of relief. It was good that the Riders were willing to make an assault. He was most worried that the righteous Riders would suddenly soften up and not bear to let the hostages come to harm.

But the truth was that even if the Riders had agreed to the thugs' conditions, would they really let the hostages go? The thugs were all ready to give their lives for their cause. Since they dared to take so many people hostage in someone else's territory, they probably did not intend to get out alive. In that case, it was only natural they would drag some of the hostages down with them before they died.

If the Riders did not force their way in, they would lose a lot more by trying to save the few.

The Riders were not bound by virtue, and this was the main reason Ren Xiaosu was willing to be friends with them.

Ren Xiaosu asked, "Do you need my help with the assault?"

"No." Qin Sheng said calmly, "If they weren't holding any hostages, just these people alone wouldn't be a match for me."

"Alright then, keep me updated." Ren Xiaosu hung up.

Qin Sheng looked at the building in front of him quietly. He had also just heard that Ren Xiaosu had resolved the hostage crisis at Qinghe University. Zhang Qingxi sighed next to him and said, "Our outsider friend that came to our aid has successfully resolved a crisis without a single hostage dying. Meanwhile, we can only choose to sacrifice the hostages held in there. The difference between him and us is obvious."

Even the aloof Zhang Qingxi was starting to admire Ren Xiaosu a little.

There were still three hours until nightfall. At almost the same time, Old Li and Qin Sheng launched a simultaneous attack at both locations while the garrison troops charged in. Against the strong fire support, the thugs who were holding the hostages in the building attempted to organize a resistance but to no avail.

The garrison troops did not resort to using any artillery. Instead, they used heavy machine guns to penetrate the walls of the building!

Perhaps the Qinghe Group would have to face the questioning of the hostages' family members after the chaotic battle was over, but they would have to get through the night before they could discuss what came after.

Today, the Qinghe Group suddenly shed their usual gentle nature and revealed their courage.

Every Rider had to go through a near-death experience before they could leave their names at the top of that cliff. Qin Sheng and the others were thrilled as they faced the hail of bullets.

What were the Riders? A lot of people's definition for them was "justice," but only they themselves knew that Riders were born from faith. Be it wingsuiting or free soloing, everything they did was to challenge death over and over again.

As the Riders started attacking, Ren Xiaosu arrived at the entrance of Hope Media's headquarters.

After the chaotic battle had broken out at the school, Jiang Xu immediately rushed back to Hope Media to take charge of the situation. When Ren Xiaosu arrived, Jiang Xu put down everything on hand and went downstairs to welcome him. "How are things at Qinghe University?"

Ren Xiaosu grinned and said, "None of the hostages died, and the crisis has been resolved."

Jiang Xu also smiled. "Admirable."

The Hope Media staff were watching from afar as Jiang Xu conversed with Ren Xiaosu. They were all wondering who this young man was since he got welcomed personally by the chief editor himself.

Jiang Xu asked, "Why are you here at Hope Media now?"

"Qin Sheng, Old Li, and the others don't require my help for the time being." Ren Xiaosu explained, "I thought about it and decided to come here to ensure that y'all'll be safe."

"Alright." Jiang Xu did not decline. "I'll continue with my work then. There's too many things I need to organize and report about today."

"Mhm, just get me a chair."

Inside the headquarters of Hope Media, everyone was busy with reporting the truth of this day. They rushed to do the typesetting for an additional print run of their newspaper.

Meanwhile, the young man sat down in a chair at the entrance of the building and waited for any uninvited guests to come and seek death.

### **Chapter 647: Rock solid**

Ren Xiaosu was not standing guard in the lot of Hope Media's headquarters for no reason. If the aim of those people with ulterior motives in the stronghold were to cause chaos in Luoyang City, it would be impossible to achieve that by just holding some insignificant residents hostage at some insignificant locations.

Just like right now, the Riders were no longer hesitating and had chosen to fight back with force.

Putting aside the hostages they were holding, the hostage takers were absolutely not a match against the professional troops and superhumans.

So would the enemy not have thought of that if Ren Xiaosu and the others could think of it?

So if they really wanted to keep the garrison troops and Riders at bay, they would have to capture the most important people.

Who were the most important? To the Qinghe Group, Xu Ke was the most important, and so was this group of people behind Ren Xiaosu at this moment.

The Riders were the toughest cadres of the Qinghe Group. If anyone were scheming to take on the Qinghe Group, they would surely use their toughest fists to crush the enemy to pieces.

Meanwhile, Hope Media was the essence, energy, and spirit of the Qinghe Group.

Previously, when Ren Xiaosu was chatting with Jiang Xu, he found out Hope Media was jointly established by him and Xu Ke after a discussion. This busy group of people were still holding the fort down amid the chaos, not for meager salary or fame, but for their ideals.

As the sky darkened, the lights in the building lit up. Under the illumination of the lights, hundreds of people were fighting for their dreams.

Were they not afraid? How could that be? Fear was a basic human instinct. It was just that they could not abandon their ideals.

Today's Hope Media newspaper was a little special. There were three editions published in just one day. The first edition was the usual publication, while the other two editions were relatively thinner and only reported about the incidents happening in Luoyang City.

Once the draft was approved, it would be immediately transmitted to the Hope Media branches across the Alliance of Strongholds via satellite and published locally in those territories.

Jiang Xu was doing this because he wanted to use the power he had to shout to the world for them to see what was happening in Luoyang City.

However, Hope Media's branches across the various territories also met with some resistance. The Kong Consortium's printing factories suddenly started to reject the publication of Hope Media's newspapers.

The Kong Consortium did not firmly reject it either. Instead, the printing factory indicated they had run out of their stockpile of paper and were really sorry they could not continue printing today. They could only continue tomorrow.

It was obvious they were only looking to get through the day. No one knew whether Hope Media would still be around by tomorrow.

Of all the organizations in the Central Plains, only the Pyro Company remained silent. It was as though they were not involved at all.

In the past, everyone thought the Pyro Company and the Qinghe Group would always look out for each other. However, they did not expect the Pyro Company would choose to stand by and do nothing at a critical moment like this.

No one knew what the Pyro Company was up to, nor did anyone have the energy to pay attention to them. Everything would have to wait until the night was over!

Jiang Xu was up on the top floor of the building. As he had to go through too many drafts, he was unusually fatigued.

The deputy chief editor stood in front of the floor-to-ceiling window in Jiang Xu's office and looked at Ren Xiaosu, who was sitting in the lot downstairs. The clothes the young man was wearing were not expensive at all. In the eyes of many stronghold residents, he might even look a little down and out. The chair he was seated in was just an old wooden chair and did not give him an imposing look.

But for some reason, when the deputy chief editor, Ji Yi, saw the figure of this young man, it looked like he was shouldering a responsibility that was as heavy as a mountain.

"Chief Editor, who's that young man?" Ji Yi asked.

"It's the person whose lines appeared on the fifth page of our newspaper." Jiang Xu also stood up and went to the window.

"He was the one who said that?" Ji Yi was stunned. "Then what's he doing? Why's he sitting in our front yard?"

"He's protecting us." Jiang Xu looked at Ren Xiaosu's figure and said with a smile, "Tell everyone not to be afraid. No one will be able to take a step into our Hope Media headquarters tonight."

"You trust him that much?" Ji Yi asked doubtfully.

“At first, I thought he might have said those words because he heard them from somewhere else. So I only thought highly of the phrase itself but not him. I somehow felt the line was something this era sorely lacked.” Jiang Xu suddenly changed the subject. “Later on, I slowly understood it wasn’t a coincidence that those words came out of his mouth. Enough already, let’s continue working. We still have a lot to do.”

The employees moving about in Hope Media’s headquarters could all see Ren Xiaosu at the entrance. The employees sitting at the windows would also occasionally turn to look at Ren Xiaosu’s back whenever they felt tired.

For some reason, their anxiety would lessen a little.

A female editor who had learned how to draw even sketched Ren Xiaosu’s back while she was taking a break.

There was a sense of stability, calm, and confidence.

It was as though no matter who came, they could not rattle that young man.

When night fell, Old Li and Zhang Qingxi finally completed their sweep of all the thugs. Many of the hostages were either dead or injured. Fortunately, members of the Qinghe Group’s staff immediately came to get the situation under control. This allowed Li Yingyun and the others to escape the questioning of the hostages’ families.

At this moment, Ren Xiaosu heard gunshots ringing out again. The cracks tore apart the night sky that had just calmed down.

He turned to look at the bright crescent moon hanging high in the sky.

At the same time, the Hope Media staff upstairs saw Ren Xiaosu stand up. Everyone was a little puzzled. That female editor who drew a sketch of Ren Xiaosu’s figure earlier said to her colleague nearby, “He’s getting up. Is something about to happen?”

As soon as she finished speaking, they saw a group of thugs appear out of nowhere and rush into the yard with loaded weapons.

And behind them, there was another person dressed in a combat uniform walking over alone. It was as though he was taking a stroll in the park.

Just as Ren Xiaosu had expected, the other party would definitely make a move on Hope Media if they wanted to truly create chaos. Moreover, the world of superhumans would only begin after night fell!

The thugs came rushing towards the Hope Media headquarters like they were a group of wild animals. But when they rushed into the yard, they were stunned. A young man was standing calmly in front of them.

Ren Xiaosu said, “This is the worst place that y’all could’ve chosen to attack.”

All of a sudden, the thugs opened fire on Ren Xiaosu. When the editors upstairs saw the gunfire, they screamed.

But in the blink of an eye, they saw the young man who had been sitting in the lot for a long time suddenly leap into the air. In an instant, he turned into a steel beast and smashed right into the group of thugs!

When the cold metallic armor clashed with a human, there could only be one outcome, the shattering of bone.

Everyone in the Hope Media headquarters stopped everything they were doing and stood at the windows to watch Ren Xiaosu.

A male reporter picked up a chair and shouted, "All of you men, follow me downstairs! We've got to help him!"

But as soon as he finished speaking, Jiang Xu arrived at their office. He said coldly, "Why are you all standing there and watching the fighting? Isn't it chaotic enough already? Hurry up and get back to whatever you were busy with. Do you think that young man is here to protect us? No, he's here to protect what we're doing, fighting for the truth! Put away your unnecessary hotbloodedness and continue with the only thing you are worthy of right now. Even if you die, you have to die in pursuit of the truth."

#### **Chapter 648: Being foolish for once**

Actually, Ren Xiaosu did not really care for the truth. He was born in this era of sorrows and had been through the saddest moments of it.

The situation he was in was the truth.

When he first heard Hope Media was responsible for reporting the truth, Ren Xiaosu did not think much of it. Would knowing the truth help fill people's stomachs?

Therefore, Jiang Xu was wrong. Ren Xiaosu was not protecting the truth but this group of people behind him that reported the truth.

Whether or not the truth was reported was not important to Ren Xiaosu. He just did not want to see these people who were fighting for their ideals dying just like that.

They could die of old age and illness, but they should not die as a result of being used by others.

This was probably the first time Ren Xiaosu was fighting for people he did not know. However, Ren Xiaosu felt tonight was particularly meaningful. It was as though he was also participating in that great undertaking and fighting alongside the people behind him.

He still remembered asking Jiang Xu, "Do people really care about the truth?"



Jiang Xu replied with a smile, "That's their business."

It turned out the world was not actually so dark he could not see any hope in it. Along the way, he was still able to encounter people who were blazing torches of light!

Could a disaster really destroy humanity? Maybe, maybe not.

But should humans who survived the disaster really give up their beliefs? Absolutely not!

*'Wudi, if you were here, you would probably be very happy, right? Because this group of people behind me are just as foolish as you were. Haha, they're so foolish that it's silly!'*

2

"Fight for the truth?" Ren Xiaosu muttered to himself with a smile, "That sounds pretty good!"

In this murky world, he was also willing to be foolish once in a while.

Ren Xiaosu, in his armor, grabbed one of the thugs to use as a shield. He raised his black saber as he faced the oncoming tide of enemies. Holding that extremely sharp saber in his hand, it looked like he was flying an eternal black banner.

Ren Xiaosu said with a smile, "I still don't know who your backer is, but y'all have come to a place where you shouldn't be. So all y'all are going to die tonight."

The dark clouds in the sky finally covered the crescent moon. It signaled a change!

A second later, Ren Xiaosu crashed into the crowd of thugs again, swinging his saber at them. He was harvesting their lives with every slash!

Jiang Xu stood at the floor-to-ceiling window and quietly took in everything that was unfolding. He could sense the strength in the young man's body did not come from the fibers in his muscles, but rather, a result of his strong will.

Jiang Xu turned around and looked at all his colleagues in the office. He said with a smile, "From today onwards, we're no longer alone."

As they could not do anything about Ren Xiaosu, the thugs started calling for reinforcements on their radios. Initially, they were supposed to seize control of four strategic locations at nightfall, with four supernatural beings leading them. However, Ren Xiaosu's appearance had completely disrupted their plans.

Hope Media was exceedingly important, and it could be considered the most important step in the plan for the people behind tonight's events. If they could not take down Hope Media, they could not control the cadence of the garrison troops.

Gradually, the thugs from the other locations started converging. It was as though there was an endless stream of enemies Ren Xiaosu could never finish killing. Sparks were sent flying as the steel armor met with the hail of gunfire from his enemies. As the bullets landed on Ren Xiaosu, the flashes that sparked off made it seem as though he had donned battle armor made of fire.

However, no one could get past him and enter Hope Media's headquarters!

Some of the thugs wanted to break into the building from the back, but when they climbed over the wall of the backyard, they realized there was already someone wearing a white mask waiting for them in the shadows.

"Oh no, it's that white mask!" someone said in despair.

These thugs were all elites of the consortiums, so how could they not know a person wearing a white mask had recently appeared out of nowhere? This was someone else who had made a name for himself in the various organizations, and not even the Pyro Company could do anything about him.

More and more thugs rushed to the Hope Media headquarters, but they still ended up dead nonetheless.

Their faces kept changing, but the only thing that remained constant was the steel armor that was battling them relentlessly and White Mask protecting the back.

Ren Xiaosu single-handedly fought against all the minions in the stronghold until the corpses of the enemies formed a mountain around him like a throne.

The world currently referred to Zhang Jinglin as the Ruler of the Northlands, but Zhang Jinglin himself claimed that the Ruler of the Northlands was someone else.

Suddenly, a supernatural being hidden among the thugs came attacking from a diagonal position. When this supernatural being arrived in front of Ren Xiaosu, he projected a wave of dirt from the ground and tried to bury Ren Xiaosu in it.

But before he could complete his move, the dirt wave had been completely smashed apart. Ren Xiaosu said coldly, "You overestimate yourself."

With a slash, the supernatural being fell.

The thugs finally started panicking a little. They considered the supernatural being their trump card and wanted to deal a fatal blow to Ren Xiaosu. However, Ren Xiaosu proved to them through practical action that supernatural beings were nothing special. The one in front of them was just one of the many he had killed.

Ever since the battle at Stronghold 146, Ren Xiaosu had not experienced such a high intensity battle in a long time. But this time, he did not feel any fear at all. Instead, he enjoyed it to his heart's content.

With Ren Xiaosu guarding this place, not even a god could get in!

Gradually, the nanomachines on Ren Xiaosu's body started crumbling like dust. This was a sign they were about to run out of power.

However, the cute little fellows still followed their master's will and completed their final mission.

Every nanomachine that was about to fall off would transfer its remaining energy to the nanomachines that could still continue fighting. It was their final gift to Ren Xiaosu, or even a farewell of minute proportions.

To the nanomachines, this was as good as burning their life force away.

When a supernatural being who was hiding in the shadows saw Ren Xiaosu's steel armor starting to crumble, he was finally unable to hold back and attacked him. The red saber in his hand seemed to have some kind of magical power imbued within. When it connected with the black saber, it did not get severed at all. Instead, it suddenly turned into a red stream of liquid that quickly spread towards Ren Xiaosu's body. It was trying to get to Ren Xiaosu's body through the gaps in the armor!

But just as the red liquid came into contact with the nanomachines on Ren Xiaosu's arm, the nanomachines automatically detached themselves and turned into a silvery liquid that started fighting back against the red enemies.

It was a battle happening in the microscopic world. In just an instant, the nanomachines successfully devoured the red blob.

Immediately after, that supernatural being suffered backlash from his power and fell to the ground with a cry of pain. A saber slashed down on him, and he was severed into two. He could not even figure out how his ever successful sneak attack had ended up in failure.

There were no more enemies coming onto the battlefield to replace the previous combatants. This time, the thugs who had planned to seize control of Hope Media had all been taken care of by Ren Xiaosu. The masterminds of the plot would probably not have expected that their opening plan of the night would get thwarted by a young man single-handedly.

Ren Xiaosu panted as he stood in the lot with his saber in hand. He burst into laughter. "Y'all're weak!"

A gust of wind blew over, and the grayish nanomachines on the ground were blown into the distance like dust. Ren Xiaosu watched them "leave" before whispering, "Thank you."

The battle tonight was still far from over, but he was thankful the cute little guys had accompanied him for part of the journey. From here on out, he would have to rely on himself.

#### **Chapter 649: A brief moment of calm**

The first wave of danger that came after nightfall had passed. Ren Xiaosu stood in the lot of Hope Media, a little tired.

The masterminds' original plan was probably to create chaos so they could attract the attention of the garrison troops and the Riders. After that, they would descend on this place to take down Hope Media in one fell swoop.

Due to the importance of Hope Media, it would be enough to pin down the Riders for a while.

This way, they could carry out the next step of their plan. That would leave the garrison troops and the Riders with no time to catch a breather.

But the other party probably did not expect their plans would fall into disarray at such a time. Not only did they fail to seize control of Hope Media, but they even activated the other two groups of thugs to try and kill Ren Xiaosu by overwhelming him.

After all, the firepower of over 300 automatic rifles was truly not something a superhuman could handle alone. But in actual fact, it was only enough to destroy Ren Xiaosu's armor.

As such, their original plan of attacking from all points failed due to this sudden turn of events. The entire plan had gone down the drain, and their covert combatants had all died in vain along with it.

This left the masterminds of this operation a little confused by the situation. All of the plans they had made were thwarted because of the appearance of a superhuman from the Northwest. This actually left them in a dilemma right now.

And why did that person wearing the white mask also appear here? What was his relationship with the Qinghe Group? Why had they not heard anything about this before?

Never mind that the legendary superhuman from the Northwest had come to help the Qinghe Group; what was with the appearance of White Mask as well?

Some people had suspected Ren Xiaosu was the same person as White Mask. But now, Ren Xiaosu had proven they were not the same person. After all, they had both appeared at the same time.

In the past, White Mask would always mysteriously appear before disappearing without a trace.

The opponent's strong physique and fearlessness against firearms made everyone shudder. The most terrifying thing was that everyone suddenly realized the person had not even displayed what kind of superpower he had. Was it because his opponents were too weak that he did not need to use his power?

But of course, what they did not know was that "Old Xu" did not have a superpower at all. It was just that he was very strong physically and could run really fast. This was double the happiness. If Ren Xiaosu were to have City Crusher activate too, that would be four times the happiness.

It was not that "he" did not want to use his power, but that "he" really did not have any, and neither did "he" need it.

After the battle, there was a brief moment of calm. The enemy needed some time to reconsider the situation and tweak their subsequent plans.

When the battle ended, all of Hope Media's staff quietly went to the windows again. They saw the sight of the young man's back and the countless bodies of enemies lying on the ground.

Their blood had stained the entire front yard red. The sight in front of them was strangely magnificent, exuding a heroic and violent beauty.

This time, Jiang Xu did not harry everyone back to work. Instead, he walked over to a window and looked at Ren Xiaosu together with the rest of his colleagues. He saw Ren Xiaosu turn his head up to look at them from the middle of the carnage before breaking into a smile.

That smile amid the bloodshed was extremely bright and made them feel secure.

The female editor who sat at the window looked at the sketch in her hand that depicted Ren Xiaosu's back when he was sitting down in the yard earlier. Now that she was looking at it again, she somehow felt the old wooden chair he was sitting in did not look not as crappy as it used to.

Jiang Xu previously asked the deputy chief editor, Ji Yi, to tell everyone to focus on their work. As long as the young man downstairs was still around, no one could enter the building to harm them.

At that time, almost everyone felt the chief editor was just comforting them. How could one person possibly protect the entire building?

But as such a miracle happened right before their eyes, they had no choice but to believe it.

The female editor turned around and looked at Jiang Xu. "Chief Editor, can we report about this young man's battle?"

Jiang Xu thought for a moment and replied, "You can write about it, but you can't describe the details of the battle. Furthermore, you can't reveal any details of his identity."

"Then is this OK?" The female editor picked up her sketch. "Using this as the accompanying picture for the article? You always say we should be truthful in our reporting. The accompanying picture is kinda blurry, but I feel that since he's been fighting for us until now, even though his name can't appear in the newspaper, it shouldn't be a problem to include this as an accompanying picture, right?"

Jiang Xu looked at the sketch and smiled. "You may do so." Jiang Xu thought about how Ren Xiaosu even had fans at Hope Media now.

Li Yingyun and Qin Sheng rushed over from elsewhere with the garrison troops behind them.

When the two of them stepped into the lot and saw the corpses all over the ground, they were shocked. Ren Xiaosu was the only one left guarding the building in the lot, as White Mask had already disappeared.

"Brother Xiaosu, did you kill all of them?" Qin Sheng asked.

"Mhm, they wanted to break into the Hope Media headquarters, so I just killed them. I was under a lot of pressure this time, so I didn't manage to leave any survivors for y'all," Ren Xiaosu replied.

“That’s alright, we captured someone alive at another location.” Old Li looked at the bodies strewn all over the ground and did not know what to say. “It was smart that you came here to stand guard. Otherwise, it would’ve been really troublesome today. Come on, the garrison troops will take over from here. Let’s go inside and get some rest first.”

Ren Xiaosu examined Old Li and realized he looked a little tired as well. There were bloodstains on his body, and it looked like he had also been involved in a battle earlier.

After the garrison troops took over the defensive duties to protect Hope Media, Ren Xiaosu let out a sigh of relief. “Was there any outcome from the interrogation?”

“They’re very tight-lipped, so we didn’t get much information,” Qin Sheng said, shaking his head. “However, we realized the Wang, Kong, and Zhou Consortiums must’ve agreed to a temporary pact. It seems like they want to get rid of the Qinghe Group first before battling it out among themselves. The thugs from this afternoon might look like they’re the same ones as those who took action tonight, but they’re actually not from the same consortium. Even the four groups of people that took action tonight are not all from the same consortium. The three groups of thugs that attacked Hope Media belong to the same group, while the other group we took care of was acting independently.”

This made the situation even more dangerous in the stronghold. Although this was the Qinghe Group’s home field, and they also had their own professional troops stationed here, the other three organizations had temporarily joined forces.

“Have there been no updates from Xu Ke’s side?” Ren Xiaosu was referring to the fact that these people were obviously here for the satellites. But up until now, there was still no threat directed at Xu Ke.

In other words, no matter how intense the battles were so far, it was still just a prelude to the main event.

“We have three Riders guarding the Qinghe Group’s headquarters, so it won’t be that easy to break into the place.” Li Yingyun said, “As for what those consortiums are really up to, we can only wait for them to make their move. By the way, there’s definitely spies within the Qinghe Group, but we can only wait until they reveal themselves before we can get rid of them. Since you’ve already put yourself out in the open, they’ll likely target you through whatever minor things that can be linked to you. Didn’t you bring some people into Luoyang City with you? Will they be fine? Why don’t you go back and keep an eye on them?”

Ren Xiaosu was stunned. Did he mean someone would try to harm Zhou Yingxue and the others?

Then, he thought about his maid’s current power level and shook his head. “Well, I’m really not worried about that at all.”

## **Chapter 650: A new plan**

In Luoyang City, several people were conspiring inside a dark room.

In the dim lighting, a person said calmly, "I suspect your Kong Consortium did not even bring out your trump card this time. If three of your teams can't even handle taking Hope Media, what's the point of our cooperation?"

"Didn't your Zhou Consortium's people also fail to take Qinghe University?" A middle-aged man sneered and said, "We all encountered the same superhuman, so we should know full well that person is not that easy to deal with. Instead of blaming each other, why don't we focus on planning what comes next?"

Next to them, a young man burst into laughter and said, "Second Brother Kong is absolutely right. That superhuman from the Northwest is far stronger than we expected, so it can be considered an unforeseen hiccup in the plan. However, his strength alone is still limited. Actually, the three of our consortiums still have more aces up our sleeves, so why don't we think about how we should play our cards next?"

"I think that person from the Northwest isn't here for the satellites." The middle-aged man said, "It feels more like he's here to help. Or, it could also be that he's hoping to add to the chaos in Luoyang City like we are."

"No matter what, he stands against us. Who knows, the Northwest might end up losing one of their high-ranking officers tonight." The person from the Kong Consortium said calmly, "Summon the Xu clan members and ask them if there have been any strange happenings with the Qinghe Group and the Riders recently. Since we didn't manage to capture Jiang Xu, we'll have to find out any other clues we can. We need to get ahold of some of their important figures so we can continue restricting the movements of the garrison troops and the Riders. After all, this is the Qinghe Group's home field, so we had better not be careless. We should take them out one by one."

After saying that, he ordered his subordinates to bring in the Xu clan members. The Kong Consortium's representative looked up and asked sternly, "We only came to Luoyang City this time to help you all seize authority because you needed our help. Don't just make us do all the hard work while you watch and not contribute to the cause at all. Let me ask you, did the Qinghe Group and the Riders do anything unusual recently?"

The representative of the Xu clan members thought for a moment and said, "There really was something like that. You should also know that the Qinghe Group has a telecommunications business arm that sells satellite phones to the rest of the world. The person in charge of this business is named Yang Ruilin. As I have business dealings with him, I had a meal with him several days ago. After the meal, I had my private chauffeur send him home. However, he did not return to his own home but went to stay at a hotel instead."

The Kong Consortium's representative was speechless. "What's so unusual about a secret rendezvous with a lover at a hotel? If you don't have anything important, don't use such gossip to make up something for us to hear."

But the young man from the Wang Consortium interrupted, "Second Brother Kong, let's continue listening to him first."

“As he did not go back home that night, I also thought he had kept a lover at the hotel.” The Xu clan representative explained, “In our line of work, we always prefer having leverage over others. So after the chauffeur returned and told me about this, I sent someone to the hotel to get a few clandestine photos of him and his lover’s secret rendezvous. But I discovered their entire family of three were all staying in the hotel. It wasn’t some secret rendezvous with his lover at all. That Yang Ruilin is Xu Ke’s trusted aide, so I suspect the hotel is used as a secret base for protecting the core members of the Qinghe Group.”

“The problem is not with the hotel.” Second Brother Kong frowned. He was not an idiot and immediately figured out what was illogical. As stronghold residents, they did not live in their own home but stayed at a hotel instead? “Look, isn’t this how a temporary safe house is usually arranged? When a stranger enters a new stronghold, in order not to be discovered, the informants use their own residences as temporary safe houses for the other party. Or perhaps there’s a more important person that needs to be secretly protected. As there’s the worry of the existing safe houses getting exposed, they temporarily vacate a location where people have been living.”

No one present at this meeting was average, and no average person would get sent here to handle something this important either. Second Brother Kong had only relied on a simple clue to deduce what was really going on.

Of course, this was also a common tactic used by the intelligence agencies for many years, so it was not considered odd at all.

The young man from the Wang Consortium looked at the Xu clan representative. “Indeed, it does look like that’s the case. Where is Yang Ruilin’s family home? We’ll send someone over right away. Regardless of who might be living there now, we need to quickly figure it out first.”

The Xu clan representative smiled and said, “I’ve already checked that out for you guys. A young woman and a group of teenagers are living at Yang Ruilin’s house now.”

Second Brother Kong laughed and said, “Haha! We’ve been searching high and low all this while only to find it this easily. They’re probably the family and children of a core member of the Qinghe Group. They must be very important for the group to have kept them tucked away so well. As long as we can get our hands on them, so what if we can’t capture Jiang Xu?”

The Wang Consortium’s representative heaved a sigh of relief. It had to be said that the failure to capture Jiang Xu had put everyone under a lot of pressure, so much so that their subsequent plans were temporarily halted. He said to the others, “Send a few more people over. We must ensure that nothing goes wrong in this operation.”

As he spoke, a subordinate was already delivering the orders. The covert operatives hidden in Luoyang City started moving, and even the superhumans rushed off towards Junmin Alley.

Second Brother Kong looked at the Xu clan spokesman and said amiably, “You wanted to settle down at the Wang Consortium’s stronghold in the future, right? Let me welcome you on behalf of the Wang



Consortium. After this operation is complete, the Wang Consortium will be sure to reward you handsomely.”

Then a different member of the Xu clan said, “I also noticed something strange. I’m in charge of the Civil Affairs Department of Luoyang City. Yesterday, someone from the Riders suddenly came to inform me that one of the orphanages will no longer fall under the jurisdiction of the Civil Affairs Department. After that, the Riders even transferred a sum of money directly into that orphanage’s account. Does that count as abnormal?”

“Of course, of course it counts!” Second Brother Kong started laughing heartily. “At a critical moment like this, anything the Riders do is surely not a small matter.”

With a major war imminent, the Riders were actually giving their attention to this small orphanage? How could this be normal? Shouldn’t they be putting aside all matters that were not related to the war for now?

Therefore, there had to be something about this orphanage as well!

“Go, tell Xin Yi to lead his men to the orphanage and round up everyone there. Failure is not an option!” Second Brother Kong said fiercely.

Although everyone did not show it on their faces when Ren Xiaosu exerted pressure on them, they were actually very nervous and worried their operation would fail.

But now everyone felt like they had finally found a way out of this predicament!

Instantly, countless sleeper agents started rushing towards Junmin Alley and the orphanage, and this included quite a few supernatural beings too.

It was unknown how many superhumans the other forces had sent, but the Kong Consortium’s superhumans made up 60% of them.

Of course, they still had their aces up their sleeves. Those were for when they started fighting the other two consortiums after they had taken care of the Qinghe Group.

The Zhou Consortium’s, the Kong Consortium’s, and the Wang Consortium’s representatives sat in the room and looked at each other with smiles. All of them had their own agenda in this war.