

### **Chapter 701: Reorganizing on site**

“Who would believe that he went to jump rope? As if anyone would do that at a time like this!” Cheng Yu’s assistant whispered at the side.

Cheng Yu asked in a daze, “What? Has he ever considered the timing when it comes to jumping rope?”

Regarding Ren Xiaosu’s excuses, if it were anyone else saying it, Cheng Yu would definitely not believe them. To go and jump rope during a life and death situation, how could that even be possible?!

But for some reason, when it was Ren Xiaosu who used this excuse, Cheng Yu felt he could not completely write it off. That was because Ren Xiaosu was really prone to acting up whatever the situation might be.

But right now, Cheng Yu did not want to give any attention to Ren Xiaosu. He wanted to know more about who in the group White Mask was trying to protect!

Cheng Yu had personally witnessed the combat strength of White Mask before. Therefore, now that they were caught up in a real crisis, he would have to tag along with the person protected by White Mask. That way, he could benefit from the protection the other party was getting.

It was not that Cheng Yu was weak and useless. As a member of the Anjing House, he was constantly thinking about how to seek protection from others mainly because he was not strong in combat to begin with. Moreover, the Sacred Mountains was a really dangerous place.

While everyone was rescuing the wounded in the cocoons, Luo Lan, Ren Xiaosu, and the others hid in the white fog and muttered to each other softly, “Why are we saving them?”

Ren Xiaosu gave him a look. “If we start losing people this early in the expedition and the rest become unwilling to enter the Sacred Mountains, I’ll end up having to go in there by myself.”

Actually, Ren Xiaosu knew Luo Lan and Zhou Qi were hoping to send these people from the consortiums to their deaths. Why else would Zhou Qi just stand by and watch as the attack happened?

As a matter of fact, Zhou Qi was a superhuman with water powers. Although the white fog felt eerie, it was just water vapor. It could be said that Mt. Shenchi was Zhou Qi’s home turf.

Moreover, Zhou Qi was one of the earliest superhumans to awaken his powers. With top-notch physical fitness and mental strength, it would not have been difficult for him to deal with some tarantulas.

Ren Xiaosu even believed that Zhou Qi could sense the attacker was a group of spiders through the fog with his power. However, he did not do anything about it.

Ren Xiaosu could understand this. To Luo Lan, the other organizations were all his enemies. As long as he stood by and did nothing, he would have helped the Qing Consortium weaken their enemies, so why wouldn’t he do that?

However, Ren Xiaosu was going into the Sacred Mountains to save Yan Liuyuan, so he had to cherish every bit of help he could get.

“Got it.” Luo Lan nodded. He asked again softly, “Is White Mask your friend?”

Ren Xiaosu thought for a moment and grunted, “Mhm.”

He did not go into detail, but there was no need to hide some things from Luo Lan. Only at this moment did Luo Lan finally feel a little at ease. “Previously, when you said you weren’t able to protect me, I thought...”

Ren Xiaosu said in surprise, “When did I say that?”

Luo Lan was stunned. “When I gestured to you that day...”

“Weren’t you asking me to take a leak with you?” Ren Xiaosu asked puzzledly, “Could you have meant something else?”

Luo Lan was confused.

At this moment, someone shouted in the white fog, “They’re awake, they’re awake!”

Ren Xiaosu led the way and walked towards the voice. Everyone was around the cocoons, and someone had already cut all of them open. The people in the cocoons had opened their eyes, but they were still unable to speak or move. It was only their eyes that were moving.

Whatever else happened, it was very fortunate they managed to survive the attack.

Ren Xiaosu looked around and silently noted the people who did not look like they were in a terrible state. There were more than 60 people in the entire group, but seven of them did not look like they went through a vicious attack at all. These seven people were most likely supernatural beings, and one of them happened to be Wang Yun, who had secretly left behind some markings along the way.

Of course, it was also possible they had not encountered the tarantula attack.

“Why can’t they move?” Cheng Yu’s assistant asked.

Ren Xiaosu came forward to say, “Maybe it’s because I haven’t performed yet. Step back a little, let me do a split for y’all....”

Everyone was astonished. *‘You’re really great at catching opportune moments to perform your talents, huh!’*

Cheng Yu chose to ignore Ren Xiaosu and said to everyone, “Everyone, take turns carrying the injured who can’t move yet. We can’t stay in Mt. Shenchu any longer, so it’s better to leave as soon as possible.”

However, Luo Lan stopped him. “Wait. I suggest we set up camp here and build onsite defensive fortifications.”

“Why’s that?” Cheng Yu asked with a frown.

“First of all, you definitely won’t leave this place in a day or two.” Luo Lan looked at the Great Hoodwinker. “We have to listen to the guide on this matter. Let’s get his opinion first on how long it will take before we can leave this place.”

“Even at full speed, it will still take a little more than two days,” the Great Hoodwinker said.

“Instead of making everyone take turns carrying these dozen-odd wounded and wearing down our stamina, why don’t we set up camp here and wait for them to recover first? We have no idea what’s waiting for us up ahead. We’ll have to face whatever danger there might be in our best condition.”

Luo Lan might not know about other things, but he was very good at leadership and decision-making in times of danger.

Cheng Yu gave it some thought and asked, “What if those spiders come back again?”

“Since White Mask saved those people from the tarantulas’ nest, it means he probably took care of the spiders,” Luo Lan analyzed. “So we don’t have to worry about them anymore.”

Luo Lan made this decision based on his understanding of Ren Xiaosu. He knew Ren Xiaosu must have also gone to the nest just now, so he definitely did not believe he went to jump rope. Seeing how calm and composed he was at the moment, the spiders were definitely not going to pose a threat anymore.

Cheng Yu looked at the others. “What do you guys think?”

“I support reorganizing on site. I also think that since White Mask saved them, those spiders are definitely done for,” Song Qiao said.

More importantly, Song Qiao’s assistants were still fully paralyzed. Without the support of his assistants, he was unwilling to move forward.

Many of those present shared the same thoughts as Song Qiao.

“I would like to ask a question.” Cheng Yu looked at everyone. “Which of you is being protected by White Mask? Can you get him to officially join the team so we can advance and retreat together? He’s alone in the wilderness, so it will be a little troublesome if he gets ambushed while sleeping, right? By joining the team, we can all look out for one another.”

However, no one responded to Cheng Yu.

Cheng Yu examined everyone’s expressions and tried to identify the person being protected by White Mask. When his gaze landed on Ren Xiaosu, he immediately skipped him as he assumed White Mask could not possibly be protecting a lunatic like him.

Cheng Yu felt Wang Yun and the other middle-aged man were the prime suspects. Both of them looked like they did not fear anything.

After the chaos, these two people remained the calmest.

Seeing that no one responded to him, Cheng Yu shouted right at the white fog, "I know you're nearby. Since our common target is the Pyro Company, why don't we travel together?"

### **Chapter 702: Fulfilling a teammate's wishes**

Cheng Yu's voice calling out to White Mask rang through the white fog. Everyone held their breaths as they wondered if White Mask would agree to travel with them. If there were such a supernatural being in the group, it would definitely be safer for everyone.

No one doubted the strength of White Mask. After all, while everyone was busy saving themselves in battle just now, he went to the spiders' nest to rescue more than a dozen of their teammates.

But how could Ren Xiaosu possibly let "Old Xu" stay in the team to protect this group of people? Old Xu's most important role right now was to be a scout. An undying scout that traveled alone in the wilderness could help Ren Xiaosu avoid a lot of danger.

As time ticked by, Cheng Yu felt a little disappointed when White Mask did not show up even after a long time. "Although I don't know who he is protecting, since we're all on the same team, I hope we can still look out for one another in the future."

An assistant next to Cheng Yu muttered, "When White Mask appeared just now, that young man who's always jumping rope also went off somewhere. Could White Mask be here to protect him?"

"That's impossible." Cheng Yu shook his head. "Why would such a person be protected by an expert like White Mask? However, we can't underestimate this young man either. I think he has a very close relationship with Luo Lan. When Luo Lan encountered danger, his first reaction was to stand behind him."

"Then should we still persuade White Mask to join us?" the assistant asked.

"Forget it." Cheng Yu sighed and said, "It's not like we can force someone like that to do our bidding."

But even though Cheng Yu had given up, it did not mean the others had as well. A middle-aged man looked at everyone in the group and said, "I know White Mask must have something to do with one of you here. Why don't we do it this way instead? I'll offer five million yuan for him to join the group. I won't ask him to deliberately protect anyone either, but just travel together with us."

This was an extremely strange request. Ren Xiaosu pondered it for a moment. The other party seemed to be spitefully offering five million yuan for White Mask to appear, but other than that, he had no other conditions.

Wouldn't this money be given away for nothing then? Could the middle-aged man have an ulterior motive?

At the side, Wang Yun said with a smile, "Old boy, your offer is too petty. Would such an expert care for that five million yuan? If White Mask really shows himself for this five million yuan, I, Wang Yun, will walk doing a handstand for a day."

Suddenly, the palace in Ren Xiaosu's mind started speaking. His expression also became very weird after he heard what it said.

"Quest: Fulfill the wishes of your teammate."

Ren Xiaosu pondered it. The palace did not explicitly say which of the teammates' wishes to satisfy. Was it the middle-aged man's wish to get Old Xu to join the team, or was it Wang Yun's wish to do a handstand?

However, this quest seemed very easy to complete.

In the white fog, everyone heard the sound of approaching footsteps. They turned their heads to look in that direction and saw the silhouette of a figure become clearer as it got closer.

Wang Yun was surprised.

Old Xu walked up to the middle-aged man and stretched out his hand. The middle-aged man did not break his promise and took out a small box. "There's a Wang Consortium bank card inside to access an anonymous account with exactly five million yuan in it."

Old Xu nodded and looked towards Wang Yun calmly.

Wang Yun felt uncomfortable at that moment. Why did he get the feeling that the other party had suddenly appeared just so he could make him walk while doing a handstand?!

Actually, if the palace had announced the quest was completed after the middle-aged man paid up, Ren Xiaosu would not have needed to make Wang Yun do a handstand. But as it stood, the quest was still not completed.

With everyone's attention on him, Wang Yun gritted his teeth and sneered. "Fine, you're targeting me, right?!"

After that, he really got upside down and did a handstand. In fact, Wang Yun's balance was not only good, but he also seemed to be able to walk upside down very naturally.

Cheng Yu looked at Old Xu in bewilderment before looking at Ren Xiaosu, who was standing not too far from him. He found White Mask's style felt quite familiar.

At some point, Cheng Yu even felt a little scared. He was afraid the other party would suddenly start singing nursery rhymes together with Ren Xiaosu.

However, everyone felt a little more at ease now that Old Xu had joined the team. It was as though their group was boosted by someone really strong.

The main reason was that Old Xu's reputation had been soaring recently. There were still too few supernatural beings who could take a T5 combatant head-on and win.

Ren Xiaosu quietly sized up Wang Yun. He realized Wang Yun's expression was unusually ferocious like he was bearing a grudge.

But Ren Xiaosu did not care. It was Old Xu that made him do a handstand, so what did it have anything to do with him?

The relationships between the various teammates in the group were becoming clearer. Luo Lan and Ren Xiaosu were in the same group, and Wang Yun had four other companions hidden within the group. One of them might even be a supernatural being.

The remaining people were roughly divided into six groups. The largest group was made up of nine people, while the smallest group had three.

When they did not encounter any danger, these people would act as though they did not know each other. But earlier, they had subconsciously banded together to fight the spiders. This was an instinctive reaction when facing danger.

The wounded in the cocoons had been rescued. Although they could not move yet, there were already people volunteering to take care of them.

In a place like this, who would be so kind as to take care of someone not related to them? It would definitely have to be their friends who stepped forward to help.

While everyone was taking care of the wounded, Wang Yun quietly walked upside down into the white fog. Since the fog had not dispersed yet, no one would realize that someone had stepped away.

After leaving the group, Wang Yun somersaulted forward and landed firmly on his feet again. He sneered, "I, Wang Yun, will definitely get revenge for suffering such humiliation!"

As he quietly made his way back, he made two markings—a horizontal bar and a concentric circle—along the trail of hardtack crumbs he had left.

The first marking meant the danger ahead had been temporarily resolved, while the second marking was him requesting a replenishment of supplies.

Along the way, in order to leave a trail, he had scattered most of the dry rations he had brought with him. Wang Yun had calculated his provisions would last another day at most.

But this was where the advantage of having support troops behind him came in. He did not have to worry about his provisions like the others.

But come the following night, Wang Yun was sitting by the campfire and watching as the others ate their food while he had run out of rations.

Ren Xiaosu even asked him why he was not eating anything, but Wang Yun just smiled and said he was not hungry. He could not possibly tell him he had used up his rations to leave a trail, right?

For the entire day, Ren Xiaosu and the others remained onsite as they waited for their teammates who had been paralyzed by the spider venom to recover.

During this period, Wang Yun ventured into the white fog alone on more than one occasion. He took out a small bamboo whistle that he used to produce the sound of insects flapping their wings. However, he still did not see the reinforcements he had been waiting for.

Wang Yun felt that something had gone wrong somewhere, but he did not know what exactly happened.

Could his comrades have retreated because they thought it was too dangerous?

No, they were still very trusted comrades of his, having traveled extensively together for all their missions. Otherwise, he would not have entrusted his life to them either.

They must have been delayed by something. Who knew, they might just arrive by tomorrow!

### **Chapter 703: Assassination attempt**

While Wang Yun was starving, the middle-aged man in the next tent, who had spent five million yuan to get Old Xu to join the team, brought over some food he had just heated up to cotton up to “him.”

But no matter what the middle-aged man said, Old Xu did not respond.

First of all, Old Xu actually couldn't speak. Furthermore, Ren Xiaosu could not care less.

The middle-aged man kept mumbling to himself for a long time. He was just trying to make the point that he hoped they could work together and conspire for greater causes, and after that, there would be other rewards they could talk about.

But Ren Xiaosu thought to himself, *'I don't care for things like rewards. Who knows if you'll even be able to get out of here alive after this!'*

However, Ren Xiaosu was secretly sizing up the middle-aged man. He was still a little puzzled. Did the other party offer Old Xu five million yuan just so “he” would travel with the group? Although the other party tried to cozy up to Old Xu after that, Ren Xiaosu felt that things were not that simple.

When the middle-aged man carried the food over, Ren Xiaosu made Old Xu to receive it before placing it to the side. After this, the middle-aged man would deliver food to Old Xu three times a day.

However, the middle-aged man did not know Old Xu was only a shadow clone that did not need to eat at all.

Therefore, when the others saw Old Xu putting aside the food the middle-aged man had given to him without even touching it, they thought to themselves it must be really difficult to deal with White Mask. He was way too unfeeling.

Only Wang Yun's eyes gleamed when he saw the food placed next to Old Xu.

In these one and a half days, Wang Yun had gone to the place where he made the markings five or six times, but there was still no response from his troops.

His spirit had hit rock bottom. He was even wondering if something had happened to his support.

If his 200-odd subordinates were OK, they would not have left him behind here. So they must have met their demise.

Wang Yun did not view his subordinates as ants like the others in the organization. These 200-odd comrades had been fighting alongside him for many years, so they had a very close bond. Now that their fate was unknown, Wang Yun, as their commander, felt an endless sense of sorrow.

Moreover, he did not even know who had killed them.

Of course, Wang Yun did not know his group of subordinates were currently enjoying themselves at a place 40 kilometers north of the black market. They were currently obsessed with hunting for the past two days since they had nothing better to do anyway.

Wang Yun looked at the food beside Old Xu and gulped silently. It was not that he was weak-willed, but the hunger was really starting to make him feel a little flustered.

Mt. Shenchu was also a very strange place in that there was not a single living creature in the vicinity of the mountain. It was probably because of the appearance of exotic creatures like the tarantulas that had disrupted the balance of the ecosystem in Mt. Shenchu.

Such situations often happened in the past as well. For example, the Zhou Consortium used to have rich aquatic biodiversity to their south. The consortium's Stronghold 73 was even located at the intersection of three rivers.

However, the Wang Consortium's spies secretly released a large number of suckermouth catfish fry into the Zhou Consortium's aquatic ecosystem and even secretly introduced water hyacinth into their waters. This caused the Zhou Consortium to suffer a continuous decrease in their water supply yearly.

Back then, because of this matter, the Zhou Consortium even criticized the Wang Consortium in their official newspaper for over half a year.

Right now, the tarantulas were also considered an invasive species in Mt. Shenchu. Furthermore, they might even have been genetically modified by the Pyro Company. Without any natural predators, they had turned Mt. Shenchu into a wasteland.

Wang Yun had realized there were no birds on Mt. Wuzhai. This was actually also due to the presence of the tarantulas in the mountains.

At the campsite during the night, the multiple campfires that were burning made the fog less heavy. At least within the campsite itself, everyone was able to see each other's faces clearly.



Wang Yun was nestled inside his own tent and quietly looking at the food in front of Old Xu through a gap in the tent flap.

In the dead of the night, an air current was swept up from nowhere and slowly moved towards Old Xu.

However, the air current did not come into contact with Old Xu's body. Instead, two pieces of hardtack were swept up as though they were lifted by the wind and made their way back to Wang Yun's tent effortlessly.

Wang Yun used his power while carefully observing Old Xu at the same time. When he realized there was no reaction from him, he felt relieved.

After all, White Mask had forced him to walk upside down yesterday. If he were to be discovered stealing his food now, that would really be too embarrassing.

Wang Yun recalled that he had not been this humiliated in a long time.

However, he would have to survive first. He still had to find out the fate of his 200-odd subordinates and avenge them!

Thinking of this, Wang Yun opened the wrapping carefully and placed the hardtack into his mouth. Then he paused for a moment and wondered if the food might be poisoned.

However, Wang Yun was famished. He comforted himself by thinking how this food was not meant for him in the first place. That middle-aged man looked like he was a bootlicker, and it was obvious he was trying to curry favor with White Mask, so it wasn't necessary to poison him, right?

However, Wang Yun felt that something was off the moment he took the first bite. He quickly spat out the hardtack. However, the neurotoxin in the hardtack had already affected him. His mouth went numb, and his mind was starting to get a little confused.

With his remaining consciousness, Wang Yun stared at the hardtack in his hand, then at Old Xu. "What the hell..."

Then his eyes closed and he slipped into darkness.

Not far away from Wang Yun's tent, the middle-aged man who delivered the food to Old Xu was sitting inside his tent. He was holding a firearm with a thermal scope attached in his hands. The gun was loaded with anesthetic bullets that he aimed at Old Xu from across the tent.

Using the thermal scope to aim was entirely so that Old Xu would not detect his attacking intent.

With the tents separating them, no one would notice as he took aim at his target.

The middle-aged man knew full well that if a powerful supernatural being like White Mask even had a line of sight with the firing weapon, it would be impossible for them to be hit.

Faced with such a supernatural being, he had to be extremely cautious.

But the middle-aged man was caught by surprise. He could not find anyone on the thermal imaging screen!

What the hell was going on? Was the other party human? Or was his power able to interfere with the thermal imaging?

However, the middle-aged man did not have time to think too much about it. He had to take action tonight, and he had to do so without making any mistakes.

Since he had already come this far, the middle-aged man decided to just aim at Old Xu based on his intuition. The distance between the two of them was at most seven to eight meters, so he felt he would not miss!

With a swoosh, a tranquilizer dart pierced through the tent and stabbed into Old Xu's body.

Ren Xiaosu's eyes opened in his tent, but he did not move. He just made Old Xu slowly fall sideways onto the ground.

A moment later, the middle-aged man rushed out of his tent and ran towards Old Xu. He dragged Old Xu, who had fallen "unconscious," on the ground and fled towards the darkness of the night outside the campsite. The strength he exhibited was clearly that of a supernatural being's.

This commotion woke a lot of people up. Those who were responsible for keeping night watch also saw what happened, but none of them seemed to have any intention of getting involved.

They watched helplessly as the middle-aged man dragged Old Xu out of the campsite. It was as though he were running into the darkness of the wilderness.

Then the middle-aged man took out a flare gun and fired it into the sky. In an instant, everyone in the campsite understood this middle-aged man had reinforcements outside!

With that, everyone became even more unwilling to rashly head into the darkness to save Old Xu.

#### **Chapter 704: The Pyro Company's serial numbers**

Although everyone in the campsite hoped to have a strong ally like White Mask to enter the Sacred Mountains with, he would be of no value to them if he fell here.

A stampede of footsteps came from the distance. It sounded like the middle-aged man's reinforcements had arrived.

Everyone in the campsite felt a sense of pity that a powerful supernatural being like White Mask was actually going to fall here.

Based on his combat strength, there were very few who could match him in a head-to-head duel. Such a supernatural being should have become a prominent figure in this world, but he ended up dying before his potential was fulfilled.

Perhaps he got stabbed in the back like this due to his conceitedness.

“He’s probably done for,” someone said.

“Aye, he was too arrogant.”

“Prepare for battle. I think we might get attacked as well!”

Everyone tensed up.

But to their surprise, a sudden wail came from the direction the middle-aged man ran off in. Continual gunfire could then be heard.

“Ah!” A scream rang out, and everyone in the campsite trembled in shock.

“Ah!” Another scream was heard. Everyone could only silently look into the darkness of the night as their hearts skipped a beat with every scream that rang out.

Cheng Yu could tell the scream belonged to the middle-aged man.

As the screams went on and on, Cheng Yu said with a look of commiseration, “That sounds really tragic....”

Everyone was stunned as they did not expect such a reversal. Wasn’t White Mask shot unconscious by a tranquilizer? What was with this sudden turn of events then?

Judging from the current situation, it was clearly the middle-aged man that was being absolutely thrashed!

Some of them suddenly regretted their inaction. White Mask was probably just putting on an act earlier. If they had lent a helping hand in his time of need, wouldn’t they have gained a valuable friendship?

Unfortunately, this assumption was not valid either.

The screams gradually subsided.

Ren Xiaosu, who had not stepped out of his tent throughout all this, sighed. He had suspected the middle-aged man was a spy the Pyro Company had planted in the group. The Pyro Company had been prepared to deal with this group of people from both within and without. However, the spy kept pushing back the plan as he feared White Mask.

Today, the middle-aged man had first delivered some food to Old Xu. But when he saw that Old Xu did not take the food, he decided to just use a tranquilizer gun on him.

As the higher-ups had instructed him to obtain a sample of White Mask’s DNA, the middle-aged man dragged Old Xu, who had fainted to the ground, into the wilderness. Little did he know that it was actually the Grim Reaper he had dragged with him.

Ren Xiaosu felt that if the middle-aged man had chosen any other target among the many supernatural beings in the camp, he would not have ended up in such a miserable state.

Of course, he could also understand the Pyro Company was probably very eager to get their hands on the DNA sample of White Mask, so they decided to take action in advance.

The battle came to a close. Everyone in the campsite was looking in the direction of where the battle had taken place in shock.

Eventually, a figure appeared in the fog. White Mask slowly took in the eyes of everyone in the campsite as though it was silently mocking them for not saving "him." After all, over a dozen of them here had been personally saved by Old Xu.

These people couldn't make eye contact with White Mask due to their guilt.

However, Ren Xiaosu did not continue acting cocky here and had Old Xu throw several badges onto the ground. There was a hollowed out carving of a flame logo on the badges.

This was something Old Xu had found on the bodies of the enemies "he" had just killed. It was proof the middle-aged man was actually a Pyro Company spy.

Cheng Yu walked over and picked up the Pyro Company's badges. "So they're really from the Pyro Company."

In truth, everyone had already thought of this possibility. Since so many of the consortiums' people had managed to sneak into the group, what was there to stop the Pyro Company from doing the same?

It had been proven on many occasions that the person overseeing the Pyro Company's battle strategy was really smart. He might even have prepared a contingency plan and was only waiting for the Anjing House to make the next move.

Thinking of this, many people on the team started to have thoughts about retreating.

If it weren't for the fact the leaders of their organizations were seeking immortality and had given them an irrevocable order, they would probably have left already.

Cheng Yu looked silently at the others in the campsite. Everyone was either sitting or standing around as they looked at him. He wondered if there were still others from the Pyro Company among them.

"As everyone knows, all members of the Pyro Company are required to have their serial numbers tattooed near their ribs." Cheng Yu said in a low voice, "This is the recognized brand all Pyro Company members carry. Be it T31092 or T5102, the serial numbers will definitely be found under their left rib cage. So to prevent the Pyro Company's spies from remaining in the group, we're going to conduct a body check today to see if anyone has said tattoo under their left or right rib cage."

It was not a secret the Pyro Company members were marked with a serial number under their left rib cage. Many people knew that after joining the Pyro Company and confirming they could be genetically

modified, the tattooing of the serial number would be the first step they had to go through. This was unavoidable.

Furthermore, the Pyro Company's method of confirming the serial number would amaze anyone as well, because they could determine whether you were a T3 or a T5 by simply checking your genetic sequence. They could accurately determine your future potential with very little chance of error.

The Pyro Company always believed that talent determined each person's potential and that the gulf between a T1 and T5 was naturally present.

As for whether there were any ranks higher than T5, this was not something that was known to the public. But people guessed there might be a T6 rank as well.

Although Cheng Yu's suggestion to conduct a body check violated their privacy, no one rejected it, nor would they have any reason to.

The men would check on the other men, while the women would check on the other women. No one would want a Pyro Company member around them, after all.

The body check process went very smoothly. During this time, Cheng Yu and his assistants were constantly on guard in case any Pyro Company members tried to make a run for it. However, after a full inspection was carried out, they did not discover a single person with a tattoo on their ribs.

Cheng Yu thought for a moment and suddenly said to Old Xu, "Can you please go and check on the corpse of that middle-aged man just now to see if he has a tattooed serial number on his body?"

Old Xu nodded and walked over. After a while, he returned with a piece of skin with the words "T31029" tattooed on it.

Cheng Yu heaved a sigh of relief. "This crisis has been temporarily resolved."

He had gotten Old Xu to go and check because he was worried the Pyro Company did not tattoo anyone they trained as spies.

After all, everyone knew the Pyro Company members had such tattoos on their bodies. What if this common knowledge was actually deliberately spread by the Pyro Company? They could then easily use the opportunity to stab you in the back while you had your guard down.

But from the looks of it, it was true that everyone from the Pyro Company had a tattoo on their bodies. At the least, that middle-aged man had his serial number tattooed on him.

"Wait a minute, why are we missing a person?" Someone carefully counted the number of people present. "We can't miss out on checking anyone during this inspection. One of the guys is missing. Don't tell me he has already escaped?"

When Ren Xiaosu heard this, he looked around at everyone. He suddenly realized the missing person was that young man who had secretly left those markings.

Cheng Yu also realized Wang Yun had disappeared. He walked to the entrance of Wang Yun's tent and lifted the door curtain. He discovered Wang Yun lying inside the tent and foaming at the mouth. There was even a bitten piece of hardtack lying at the side.

"What happened?" Cheng Yu felt for Wang Yun's pulse at his neck. "He's still alive, but why did he suddenly get poisoned?"

#### **Chapter 705: Singing nursery rhymes together**

Wang Yun had been unconscious for quite a while. Before the middle-aged man attacked "Old Xu," Wang Yun had already started foaming at the mouth. Now that the skirmish was over, he still had not regained consciousness.

Fortunately, the middle-aged man had seemingly not wanted to take Old Xu's life. Therefore, the poison in the hardtack was only to paralyze "him" and not to kill.

A group of people surrounded the unconscious Wang Yun, with four of them being his subordinates. They had stopped pretending and quickly checked on Wang Yun's condition. They were only relieved when they could confirm Wang Yun was only unconscious.

After they checked him, the four of them looked at each other in dismay. Ever since they joined the team, all of them acted like they did not know each other and did not even communicate with one another.

But they did not find anything unusual with Director Wang Yun these few days. How did he suddenly get poisoned after taking a bite of the hardtack?

Could this be the doing of Director Wang Yun's two other competitors in the Kong Consortium?

Although they had left the Kong Consortium, their supplies for the expedition were still collected through the logistics department of the intelligence agency. Judging by the methods of his two competitors, it would not have been difficult for them to poison the supplies as well.

Now that the race to become the intelligence director was at its most intense stage, poisoning an opponent to death could not be ruled out even if it might sound a little crazed.

Wang Yun did not tell them he had been starving for a day and a half either. After all, as a senior officer, it was a little embarrassing he ended up in such a state. Wang Yun thought it would be very easy for him to settle a matter like that by himself.

Therefore, his subordinates did not think too much about it. All they felt was that their superior might have been plotted against by a political opponent.

One of them muttered, "Director Wang's supplies and ours were mixed together. I'm afraid that some of our hardtack could be poisoned as well."

"But nothing happened when we ate them before," someone replied.

“The other party might not have poisoned too many of the rations.” The person who spoke first explained, “It might only be one-tenth of the hardtack that was poisoned. But would you dare to bet your life on which ones are poisoned and which ones are not?”

There were still others around them, but these four people no longer pretended. Previously, they had acted like they did not know each other. Now that something had happened to their superior, there was no need to continue acting anymore.

“I wonder when Director Wang will wake up?”

“Director Wang is a superhuman, so he should be fine.”

It wasn't until the next morning that Wang Yun slowly regained consciousness. When he saw his four subordinates keeping guard by his side, he bluntly asked, “How long have I been out for?”

“One night.” One of his subordinates recounted what had happened the previous night. “Sir, did you get poisoned by the hardtack we brought along for the expedition?”

Wang Yun was still a little weak. He hesitated for a moment before saying, “Yes.”

There was no way he could say he had used his superpower to steal someone else's food in the middle of the night and even got poisoned in the process. He could not bring himself to say something so embarrassing.

Some people in the camp had already woken up to pack their belongings.

Wang Yun examined the campsite. He knew everyone in the campsite must know by now that the five of them were acquainted, so he looked at his subordinates and said, “I haven't eaten anything all night. Go and get some food and water for me.”

In fact, Wang Yun had not gone hungry for just one night. He was so hungry right now he could not take it anymore. Since his subordinates' identities were exposed, he should just quickly get some food from them.

However, one of his subordinates answered, “Sir, we'll get you some water first. We mustn't eat from our rations anymore. What if the rest of the food was also poisoned? I'll go and get rid of the remaining supplies immediately!”

“Get rid of it?” Wang Yun was stunned.

“That's right. Since you were poisoned, it must've been your competitors' doing. That's why we can't eat our rations anymore,” the subordinate said matter-of-factly. “But that's alright. We'll go out again in the morning to see if we can find any food nearby. Don't worry, survival in the wilderness won't be a problem for us.”

With that, the subordinate went off to throw away all the rations they had brought.

Wang Yun wanted to cry but no tears came out. He was really at a loss of how to explain it. Moreover, he had just admitted he got poisoned after eating his own rations.

His subordinates threw away the rations they had brought with them. Yet, there were not even any signs of living things here in Mt. Shenchu. Wang Yun felt he would have to get out of this place as soon as possible. It did not matter where they went, but it should at least be a place where they could find food.

Wang Yun thought that if he became the first supernatural being to starve to death in this new era, he might as well kill himself right now!

"Help me up." Wang Yun struggled to get up with the help of his subordinates. He walked to the center of the campsite and asked Cheng Yu, "What's your next plan?"

Off to the side, Luo Lan chuckled and said, "We're getting ready to leave now. Those who were captured by the tarantulas earlier are also able to move slowly now. Although their movements are not nimble yet, the Pyro Company has probably already set their sights on this place, so we can't stay here much longer. How did you get poisoned? Look at your pale face. Shall we wait for you to recover and rest until the morning is over?"

"There's no need to wait!" Wang Yun said firmly, "We're leaving Mt. Shenchu immediately!"

"You're quite strong," Luo Lan muttered as he went to look for Zhou Qi to pack his things.

When Wang Yun heard what Luo Lan said, he nearly spat out a mouthful of blood. Strong? Wasn't it all because he was fucking forced into such a situation?!

Ren Xiaosu looked at Wang Yun and the others, then whispered to Yang Xiaojin, "I saw that guy's subordinates throwing away all their food just now. Could someone have really poisoned them?"

"That's possible." Yang Xiaojin said nonchalantly, "It looks like it."

"Then I have a bold idea. They might not have anything left to eat now, but I still have quite a lot of rations," Ren Xiaosu said.

"Why? You're thinking of earning his money?" Yang Xiaojin glanced at Ren Xiaosu. "Why do you need so much money?"

"It's useful, of course." Ren Xiaosu said, "You think we don't have to spend money in the future? I heard that getting married, having children, and buying a house are all things that involve money! How can I let our children lead a difficult life..."

When Yang Xiaojin heard this, she immediately rolled her eyes. She knew Ren Xiaosu was trying to take advantage of her through his words again. She got so angry that she nearly laughed. The guy in front of her was so cowardly in his actions, but he was really not shy at all with his words.

Ren Xiaosu walked up to Wang Yun and said, "Look, someone must've poisoned the rations that y'all brought along. We happen to have extra rations with us. We can sell them to you!"



Wang Yun's eyes lit up. "Thank you, we happen to need it. May I know how much you're selling it for?"

"One million yuan..." Ren Xiaosu was just about to say he would sell 50 hardtacks for one million yuan when he heard the palace issuing a new quest.

Nearby, Cheng Yu was watching the conversation. He felt Ren Xiaosu was really ballsy to even quote such a price. One million yuan was a lot of money, so Wang Yun was unlikely to accept it.

Then he heard Ren Xiaosu say, "Actually, you don't have to pay for it. If you sing nursery rhymes with me, I'll give you 50 hardtacks."

Cheng Yu was confused. So was Wang Yun.

### **Chapter 706: New power!**

Cheng Yu looked at Ren Xiaosu in bewilderment. Previously, this guy only sang nursery rhymes by himself. But now, he was actually using the hardtack to make others sing along with him?!

Thinking of this, Cheng Yu suddenly had some qualms about the future.

Meanwhile, Wang Yun paled. As the director of the Kong Consortium's 2nd Military Intelligence Division, what would it say about him if he started singing nursery rhymes with others for some hardtack?

Wasn't this guy totally undermining him?!

Ten minutes later, Ren Xiaosu was saying loudly, "Stop, that's not the right phrase. You missed a word. Let's start over!"

Wang Yun sang, "A snail carrying its heavy shell..."

When Wang Yun's subordinates saw this sight, they felt their superior was really capable of bearing the humiliation. In order to get them food, he was even willing to sing nursery rhymes with someone.

Just now, Wang Yun's subordinates had advised him to ignore the young man. However, Wang Yun said impassionedly that as their senior officer, how could he let his subordinates starve with him? He was not that type of person.

His subordinates were a little touched. They realized their loyalty to Wang Yun was really not for nothing.

Wang Yun felt that if Ren Xiaosu had asked him to sing the nursery rhymes by himself, he would definitely not have accepted it. It was just like if someone were to throw some food in front of him and make him eat it for their own entertainment, Wang Yun would rather starve in such a situation.

But these circumstances were a little different. Since Ren Xiaosu was going to sing along with him, the sense of humiliation was not as bad anymore.

However, he just could not understand what was wrong with the young man before him.

Honestly, even Ren Xiaosu himself did not understand what was wrong with the palace.

When the others in the campsite saw this strange sight, they did not know what to say for a long time. After Ren Xiaosu and Wang Yun finished singing, Luo Lan immediately shouted to everyone, "There's no time to lose. Let's set off quickly!"

When Ren Xiaosu wiped out the Pyro Company members last night, Luo Lan privately asked Ren Xiaosu how many of them there were. In the end, Ren Xiaosu said several dozens of them had been killed. There should even be quite a few Dusk team members among them.

This place was very close to the Sacred Mountains to begin with, yet Ren Xiaosu still managed to kill so many enemies at their own doorstep. Could the Pyro Company tolerate that? They would surely send more people over!

Therefore, if they did not leave now, they might not be able to leave anymore. They would have to get out of here quickly and engage in guerrilla warfare with the enemy along the way.

Although it was also dangerous in the Sacred Mountains, that seemed to be a better option than staying here in the fog.

The Pyro Company clearly had a way to find them in the fog at any time. Meanwhile, the Anjing House team could do nothing about the fog.

Cheng Yu asked the Great Hoodwinker, "Have you really never gone into the Sacred Mountains before?"

The Great Hoodwinker thought for a moment and said, "Actually, I did venture inside a little, but only a little."

Cheng Yu was speechless when he saw the look on the Great Hoodwinker's face. The man really did not speak a single word of truth.

Not long after they set off, the fog on Mt. Shenchu gradually started to disperse. Just as the Great Hoodwinker had mentioned, Mt. Shenchu was not always shrouded in fog, with the fog dispersing for about a day once every three days.

"Let's hurry up." The Great Hoodwinker said, "We were initially two days from getting out of the mountain, but that was due to the heavy fog's presence. Now that it's dispersed, let's make up for the lost time. We might even be able to get out of here in about a day or so."

"This is the first piece of good news since we hiked up the mountain." Cheng Yu sighed. It was as though the gloom in his heart had also dissipated.

He looked at "Old Xu" among the crowd of people. Ever since the previous night, Old Xu had kept quiet. Since setting off, he had been walking at the front of the group and did not interact with anyone

Just as they were about to leave Mt. Shenchu, everyone heard the sound of the tarantulas attacking again. Everyone was extremely familiar with this sound, so they turned nervous.

The sound of their legs skittering on the ground sent a tingle down everyone's spines.

But before the tarantulas could get close, White Mask took out a small black box, and a strange sound emitted from it. Then the tarantulas retreated in fear.

This surprised everyone. Someone asked what the black box was, but Old Xu never answered them once.

But gradually during the journey, everyone started to get the feeling there was nothing White Mask could not handle.

Cheng Yu inexplicably felt at ease as he looked at Old Xu's back. He turned around and had a look at Ren Xiaosu and Luo Lan, who were at the back of the group. He wondered what Luo Lan was even thinking when he got this young man to be his backer.

If he wanted to be backed by someone powerful, at least get White Mask to do it. What was the point of finding an entertainer who only knew how to sing and dance?!

Cheng Yu suddenly felt it was perfect to describe Ren Xiaosu as an entertainer who sang and danced.

However, Ren Xiaosu did not notice Cheng Yu's expression. Just as the entire group stepped onto the boundary between the Sacred Mountains and Mt. Shenchu, he finally heard the palace announce, "Side quest completed. As all of the host's penalty quests were completed perfectly, a new power will be awarded: Ear Picking."

When Ren Xiaosu heard the initial part of the announcement, he perked up spiritedly. But when the rest of it was said, he got confused and even had a bad feeling about it.

Furthermore, another one of the display cabinets on the walls of the palace lit up. In the display cabinet, an exquisite ear pick hovered within. It was even glowing faintly

Ren Xiaosu's expression turned ferocious. Other people had skills that were called Diamond Dust, Rising Dragon Punch, and so on, all of which sounded especially cool.

But when it came to his skills, how did he end up with one that had such a boring name like "Ear Picking"? If any outsiders heard about this, they would probably think that he was some ear-picking specialist working at a spa.

In the future when he fought others, his opponent would identify themselves by saying, "I'm a T5-ranked combatant of the Pyro Company's Dawn team."

Ren Xiaosu would introduce himself, "Hello, I'm Ear-cleaning Specialist No. 1 at your service."

That wouldn't sound too proper at all!

He asked the palace in his mind, "What is this power used for?"

However, the voice from the palace answered, "Unauthorized to answer."

Ren Xiaosu could not help but say, "You awarded me this power, so why can't you tell me what it's used for?"

“Unauthorized to answer.”

This time, Ren Xiaosu started feeling unhappy. For the past seven days, he did not even care about his pride and carried out those penalties every day. Did the palace think it was easy for him to sing and dance? Yet in the end, all he got was a lousy power like that, and he couldn't even find out what it did?

*'Aren't you letting me down this way?'*

*'If I wanted to get an ear pick, I could have spent a few cents to buy one. Why would I need the palace to give me one?'*

Ren Xiaosu took the ear pick out of the palace and held it in his hand to examine it for a while. Then he started picking his ear.

While he was picking his ear, Luo Lan, who was walking next to him, tried to pat him on the shoulder. But when his hand was about 30 centimeters away from Ren Xiaosu, it got pushed away by an invisible force.

Luo Lan was stunned.

Ren Xiaosu was also stunned!

He quietly looked at the ear pick in his hand and remembered an old saying: “Don't touch someone when they're picking their ears.”

## **Chapter 707: Shrine**

Regarding his new power, Ren Xiaosu had come up with many possibilities of what it might be. For example, he thought it could be a short-duration powerup like City Crusher, or a tool-type trap like the Brambles, or even something like the Potato Shooter.

But he really did not expect to get such a strange power.

Ren Xiaosu imagined a situation of himself in battle. While several hundred, or even several thousand people were fighting to the death, only he would be standing there calmly on the battlefield and picking his ears.

If he were the enemy, he definitely couldn't stand the sight of this. Ren Xiaosu felt that if his enemy was still nonchalantly picking his ears while under attack, he would definitely get very angry as well.

*'Bro, what are you doing? We're in the middle of a battle, so why are you picking your ears? Can you show some respect, please!'*

Therefore, Ren Xiaosu felt he had better be cautious when using this power in a group battle. After all, this was something that would surely attract a lot of hate.

Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin dropped to the back of the group as they walked. He wanted to test out how this power would work while the others were not paying attention.

“Punch me.” Ren Xiaosu said as he picked his ears, “Put some strength into it.”

Yang Xiaojin did not say anything when she heard that and directly threw a punch at Ren Xiaosu. But just as Luo Lan had tried to pat Ren Xiaosu just now, that tight fist was stopped by an invisible force when it was 30 centimeters away from Ren Xiaosu.

Ren Xiaosu thought to himself, *‘This girl is really ruthless. I only told her to punch me, but she’s going straight for my face.’*

However, the fist did not remain stationary when it came 30 centimeters in front of him. Instead, it bounced backwards, catching Yang Xiaojin off guard before she could dampen the force.

Ren Xiaosu was amused. This power actually had a counteraction too?

It seemed that Ear Picking was quite an effective defensive power.

“Try picking up a rock and smashing me with it.” Ren Xiaosu said proudly, “Use more force.”

“Mhm.” Yang Xiaojin nodded.

With that, Yang Xiaojin picked up a rock from the ground and threw it. Ren Xiaosu saw the rock coming closer and closer to him. When it was almost 30 centimeters away, he was just about to say something when he saw the rock break through the 30-centimeter barrier.

*Thunk!*

The rock smashed Ren Xiaosu’s chest and sent him flying backwards.

When the people ahead heard the noise, they quickly looked back and wondered if someone from the Pyro Company had come to ambush them. However, Ren Xiaosu quickly stood up and said, “I’m fine, I’m fine!”

Everyone looked at the rock that was still rolling on the ground, then at Yang Xiaojin. It turned out the couple was just having a lovers’ spat. Only then did they not pay any more attention to the commotion.

Ren Xiaosu frowned as he looked at the rock. So it seemed the rock could hit him once it left the hands of the thrower. In other words, Ear Picking could not block firearms and artillery fire.

“Hold the rock and hit me with it,” Ren Xiaosu said.

Yang Xiaojin held the rock and swung it towards Ren Xiaosu. This time, Ear Picking activated again and blocked Yang Xiaojin’s hand 30 centimeters away from him.

It seemed the power was still useful against melee weapons.

Yang Xiaojin asked softly, “Is it a new power? Whose power did you copy?”

“I didn’t copy it. It’s something that was awarded to me after the past few days of penalties I had to perform.... You can say it’s a form of compensation,” Ren Xiaosu explained. “It seems that this power is only useful in close combat. It can’t defend against firearms.”

But who still engaged in close combat these days? It was probably only supernatural beings that did that, right?

For example, the Pyro Company’s members, or people like Xu Xianchu and some others.

Therefore, this power could only be used against specific people in specific circumstances, so it was not as effective as the armor.

Of course, there might be other uses Ren Xiaosu had not discovered yet.

Cheng Yu, who was walking in front of the group, turned around at this moment. When he saw Yang Xiaojin holding a rock in her hand, he lamented to his assistant, “I really can’t grasp how young people interact these days.”

When the group finally crossed from Mt. Shenchi into the outermost perimeter of the Sacred Mountains, everyone stopped in their tracks.

That was because they were surprised to discover that all of the plants in the vicinity of the Sacred Mountains were extremely tall. Ren Xiaosu looked at a plant as tall as a person and said in a low voice, “That’s a coriander.... Why is it so tall?”

It wasn’t that Ren Xiaosu had never seen coriander growing in the wild before, but they would grow to waist height at most.

He broke off a coriander leaf and discovered a milky white liquid flowing out from the torn off part of the leaf.

“This can’t be eaten.” Ren Xiaosu said to Yang Xiaojin, “In the wilderness, nine out of ten plants that produce such a white sap will kill whoever eats it. The plants here have all evolved, but it’s not evolving in the way that humans wish to see.”

Plants also had their own defensive capabilities. For example, in order to avoid being eaten by insects, many plants would give off a strange smell or turn poisonous.

At this moment, something seemed to crawl through the dense foliage. Ren Xiaosu controlled Old Xu and directly rushed in while Cheng Yu and the others followed close behind.

But after pushing through the dense foliage for about a 100 meters, they lost track of whatever they were after.

“Look, there’s a shrine[1] here,” someone said in surprise.

When everyone turned around to have a look, they were surprised to see there was a shrine built from stone about half a person's height at the feet of that person. A statue was sitting quietly in the middle of the shrine with its eyes closed and holding a seal in its hand.

"Does anyone know what kind of shrine this is? What god is housed in it?" Cheng Yu asked. He never really understood much about religion.

"Never seen it before." Everyone shook their heads.

Luo Lan happily squatted in front of the shrine and made some observations. He said, "This thing here looks quite strange. See, it has six fingers on its hand."

As he spoke, everyone looked. It was no wonder everyone was a little spooked out just now. So it turned out the hand of the statue in the shrine was a little deformed. There was actually another slender finger below its pinky finger.

Someone reached into the back of the shrine to see if there was anything there.

Typically, such shrines would be filled with items when it was being consecrated. The main contents of these items were jewelry, scriptures, jade artifacts, and gold and silver livers and lungs that represented the internal organs of the shrine.

Therefore, if these items could be found at the back of the shrine, they would be considered very valuable antiques if taken out to be sold.

At this moment, someone stepped back in panic and tripped over some grass. "Did you guys see that? I think the statue opened its eyes and looked at me just now?!"

Luo Lan turned to look at the statue's eyes, but they were closed. "You must be suffering from a mental breakdown, right? Its eyes aren't open."

But suddenly, the person who had fallen to the ground grabbed his own throat as blood started seeping out from the corners of his eyes.

This person who was still alive and jumping a moment ago had died in the blink of an eye!

Cheng Yu was bewildered. His assistant wanted to check on the person but was stopped by him. It was only when Ren Xiaosu controlled Old Xu to check his pulse that "he" confirmed he was really dead.

The group who was chattering just a moment ago fell silent. Everyone looked at the statue in the shrine and noticed it apparently wore a strange smile.

## **Chapter 708: Poisonous bugs**

No matter who it might be, anyone who went into the Sacred Mountains would be filled with a sense of wariness and fear of it. Even Ren Xiaosu was no exception.

That was because no one knew what might be lurking in these mountains. Furthermore, the Sacred Mountains had already been demonized by the outside world as well.

So everyone could not help but feel a little spooked when someone mysteriously died at this moment.

Seeing the two lines of blood mixed with tears on the face of their dead teammate quickly solidifying, many people subconsciously stepped away from the shrine. They did not even dare to look at the statue's eyes and the expression on its face, as though afraid they would be the next to die if it opened its eyes again.

However, there was also a hooligan in this group who was born without fear for the divine. Luo Lan cursed as he walked up to the shrine and said, "I don't believe in demons and gods. When our ancestors abolished these divine beings back then, it wasn't like any of them came forward to protect their temples."

Then Luo Lan kicked at the shrine and caused it to collapse!

The people around him looked at Luo Lan speechlessly. They thought that if the god of the shrine were to start blaming anyone, they had better not be implicated by his actions.

But after the shrine collapsed, a strange sound could suddenly be heard. Right after, a black tide surged out of it. Ren Xiaosu took a closer look and realized they were some strange black bugs he had never seen before.

When Cheng Yu saw this, he immediately called out to a superhuman with fire powers to burn them with fire. The black bugs started squeaking as they burned in the flames.

But as bugs were really afraid of fire, no matter how much they tried to struggle, they still ended up dying very quickly.

The person who attacked the bugs had been exposed when facing the tarantulas, so everyone knew of his identity as a supernatural being.

Luo Lan started laughing loudly next to the burnt pile of bugs. "Didn't I say there were no such things as demons or gods in this world? Look at how frightened you all were just now. Why did you even come to the Sacred Mountains when you're such cowards?"

Cheng Yu looked at Luo Lan. "Boss Luo, you already knew it was the bugs that killed the guy?"

"I didn't know about that, actually." Luo Lan chuckled and said, "But didn't you guys notice? The guy who died just now was the first to reach behind the statue to see if there were any treasures. I immediately thought there must be some kind of poisonous substance hidden behind it. That was why he started hallucinating and thought the statue had opened its eyes. After that, he died because the toxin from the bugs had spread through his entire body."

In truth, even though Luo Lan seemed like he didn't care most of the time, he still managed to show his quick-wittedness and meticulous nature on many occasions.

Everyone in the group heaved a sigh of relief. Although someone had died this time, it still sounded more reassuring to hear it was the bugs that killed him rather than divine forces. At the very least, it was something they could deal with.



“Are there any friends here with years of experience in wilderness survival?” Cheng Yu asked, “I’m guessing that most of you lack experience in this aspect, right? If any of you are good at wilderness survival, please come forward and tell us how to avoid the poisonous creatures in the wilderness.”

Many people thought supernatural beings should be proficient in everything, but the truth was that most of the supernatural beings here did not even have any military experience. Before they became supernatural beings, they were just normal people. They were then taught combat skills after they were recruited by the consortiums.

And under normal circumstances, they would usually have private vehicles ferrying them to any job assignments they had to handle. They would even have normal soldiers escorting them, so it would not be too much to say they had most things provided for them.

Ren Xiaosu took a step forward. Cheng Yu looked at Ren Xiaosu and said, “If you’re thinking about performing, forget it.”

“Perform? What?!” Ren Xiaosu snapped. “I just wanna tell y’all, starting from tonight, everyone should clear the grass around them before they go to sleep. It would be best if y’all can sleep on the ground where a campfire was burning. I think there will be plenty of poisonous bugs out here, so hopefully, y’all won’t end up sleeping forever.”

“I thought you were going to say something weird,” Cheng Yu’s assistant muttered. “As you can see, there’s so many weeds here. If we have to clear them before going to sleep, it will probably take an hour or two. It’s already tiring enough during the day, and we still can’t rest well at night?”

What Cheng Yu’s assistant said was very fitting to their situation. The weeds here were overgrown, and it would really be too troublesome to clear them. Not too many people were willing to spend two extra hours to set up camp after walking for an entire day. Moreover, everyone’s tents were also quite enclosed, so they felt there was no need to put in so much effort.

Someone at the side said, “I brought some insect repellent with me. It should be quite effective.”

“I also brought a lot. I don’t mind sharing it with everyone, but not for nothing. Whoever wants to use my insect repellent will have to keep watch in place of me tonight,” someone said.

Over the past two days, it seemed the threats from within the team were not that great anymore. At the very least, there would not be any internal strife until the real benefit presented itself.

So some of those who were particularly exhausted attempted to trade their insect repellent for some extra sleep. After all, keeping watch at night was also very tiring.

Ren Xiaosu glanced at them and said, “Don’t be blindly dependent on the insect repellent. You don’t even know if these bugs are really afraid of it.”

He knew full well that most of the insect repellent found in the market now was just mosquito repellent. Many poisonous bugs were not afraid of stuff like that.

Furthermore, after the bugs had evolved, their bodily functions became different from before. The previous dosage of insect repellent might not be enough to deal with the poisonous bugs in the Sacred Mountains.

When it was time to set up camp at night, Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin worked tirelessly to clear away all the weeds. Ren Xiaosu asked Yang Xiaojin to take a break, but she said she was not tired. Moreover, she enjoyed clearing the area where they set up camp with Ren Xiaosu.

Only a few people in the entire campsite followed Ren Xiaosu's example. Ren Xiaosu had thought that Luo Lan and Zhou Qi would complain about being tired and start slacking off. But in the end, those two cleared their areas the most meticulously.

In Luo Lan's opinion, it was safer to listen to Ren Xiaosu's opinion when traveling in the wilderness. There was nothing to lose by being farsighted.

Ren Xiaosu looked at Zhou Qi and said, "Can you secretly drain out the moisture around our tents later on? Don't leave any moisture in the ground either, it will be safer that way."

Zhou Qi did not make it difficult and directly agreed.

When the others in the campsite saw Ren Xiaosu and the others working up a sweat, someone muttered, "Aren't these people tired? They've been working for almost an hour already." As he said that, he also sprinkled some insect repellent in a circle around his tent.

At this moment, Luo Lan asked softly, "Xiaosu, I never had the chance to ask you this, but why do you insist on going into the Sacred Mountains?"

Ren Xiaosu took a look at Luo Lan. He thought that if he had not insisted on coming to the Sacred Mountains, Luo Lan would probably have left. At that time, Luo Lan had been calling for the team to depart and return. He was really serious about withdrawing from the expedition.

But when Ren Xiaosu decided to continue on, Luo Lan immediately changed his mind.

Putting all else aside, Luo Lan was truly impeccable when it came to his friends. Therefore, Ren Xiaosu did not intend to hide the reason from him. "I suspect that Liuyuan is the person that the Pyro Company captured this time."

### **Chapter 709: The mysterious stone statue**

"Wait." Luo Lan was stunned when he heard Ren Xiaosu's reply. "Didn't they say they had captured the No. 001 Experimental? When did it become Liuyuan?"

Ren Xiaosu gave him a look. "Keep this a secret. It's because I'm guessing that Liuyuan might be the No. 001 Experimental. As for why I guessed so, I can't tell you the reason before I'm sure of it." Then Ren Xiaosu looked at Zhou Qi.

Zhou Qi immediately looked unhappy. "I'm also very tight-lipped, alright? Don't worry, you and your maid saved our lives in Stronghold 61. I, Zhou Qi, know what I have to do."

When he said that, Ren Xiaosu felt the tension around them easing.

He quickly changed the subject. "That's why I'm going to save Liuyuan this time. Actually, there's no need for y'all to put yourselves in danger with me. It will be enough with these people paving the way."

"That won't do." Luo Lan said righteously, "The Pyro Company has gone too far. How could they actually abduct cute little Liuyuan? I won't take this lying down. We're gonna have to turn the entire Sacred Mountains upside down!"

Ren Xiaosu looked out into the night and wondered how Liuyuan was doing now. If the Pyro Company had really captured Liuyuan, he would probably really turn this entire place upside down.

"Future Commander, what are you thinking about?" the Great Hoodwinker asked.

"I was thinking that it would be great if we can successfully find Yan Liuyuan. When the time comes, I want to bring him back to the Northwest and lead a good life there. We won't have to get involved in the affairs of the Central Plains anymore," Ren Xiaosu said with a sigh. These were his heartfelt words. He wanted nothing more than to have some peace.

However, when the Great Hoodwinker heard this, his eyes lit up. "Future Commander, are you serious?"

Ren Xiaosu was surprised to see the Great Hoodwinker getting up and going towards the outside of the campsite. "Where are you going?"

"I'm going to send out a signal to notify our troops from the Northwest to come and flatten the Sacred Mountains and help Future Commander find your younger brother!" The Great Hoodwinker said firmly.

Ren Xiaosu did not know whether to laugh or cry. "Alright, alright, why are you still trying to make an impression at a time like this? By the time Fortress 178's troops arrive, what time would it be?"

"Hehe, I'm just expressing Fortress 178's stand on their behalf," the Great Hoodwinker said with a smile.

The night passed peacefully, but the next morning, Ren Xiaosu was awoken by someone screaming in the campsite.

When he came out of his tent, he was surprised to see a woman standing at the entrance of someone's tent. She was pointing at a statue on the grass patch and exclaiming, "Quick, come and see! Why is there another statue in front of this tent? Didn't the shrine get smashed yesterday?"

Ren Xiaosu went closer to have a look and asked Luo Lan, "You were the one who smashed the shrine yesterday. Do you still remember it?"

"Yes." Luo Lan nodded and said, "At that time, I only kicked over the shrine from the outside, but the statue in it was not damaged. However, a lot of bugs started crawling out after the shrine collapsed, so no one really checked out the statue in detail after that."

“Is this the statue from yesterday?” Cheng Yu squatted in front of the statue and examined it carefully. “I think it really is. Look, there’s some freshly broken off edges on its body. It was probably caused by Luo Lan when he knocked down the shrine yesterday. But why has this statue appeared here?”

Cheng Yu turned around and looked at the tent behind him. At this moment, the tent flap was closed with a zipper, but even with such a big commotion outside, it did not wake the person in it?

He reached out to pull down the tent flap, and his expression suddenly changed and he couldn’t help but take two steps back.

He saw the person in the tent had died at some point in time. There were two lines of blood and tears on his face that looked almost exactly the same as the person who died yesterday. What was different today was that the unknown bugs were still crawling back and forth between the victim’s eyes and nostrils. It also looked like there was something wriggling under the skin of this person’s face.

Cheng Yu turned around and looked at the statue in bewilderment. The statue seemed like it was smiling at the deceased in the tent. It was extremely eerie!

No one knew why this statue had followed them to the campsite. After all, they were several kilometers away from the shrine.

This time, everyone was getting anxious. No one could explain what was going on.

After knocking down the shrine yesterday, everyone had felt a sense of relief. But now, they realized they had underestimated the situation.

When the woman who discovered the statue in the morning saw the deceased in the tent, she covered her mouth and started crying. It was obvious this man and woman knew each from before. Judging from the woman’s pained expression, they were most likely a couple.

Off to the side, Song Qiao said, “This person also tried to touch the shrine yesterday, but he wasn’t as fast as the other guy. Could it be that this statue is looking to kill anyone who disrespected it?”

Luo Lan sneered, “Then it should have come to look for me first. I’ve already destroyed its shrine, so why didn’t it come and seek revenge on me? Don’t always try to link everything to mysticism. In my opinion, there might still be spies from the Pyro Company in our group. There’s someone trying to make us live in fear every day to wear us out!”

What Luo Lan said was not without logic. Once a person lived in a state of fear for long enough, they would even lose their ability to think normally. In the end, they would just end up as fish on the chopping block.

“But didn’t those bugs get burnt to death yesterday? Where did these bugs come from? Besides, look, there’s also insect repellent scattered around his tent. Are these bugs actually not afraid of the insect repellent?” Cheng Yu wondered.

“It’s pointless to think about that now.” Luo Lan sneered, “I’ll smash this statue right here. Let’s see who else can use it to play tricks on us.”

Then Luo Lan picked up a huge rock and threw it at the statue. With a loud crash, the rock and the statue shattered.

But someone exclaimed, "Look, there's a skeleton hidden inside the statue!"

Luo Lan squatted to have a look at it. That person was right. There was indeed a white skeleton underneath the statue that was also smashed to pieces.

"Seems like this statue was made with a human. I think there were people who did this on purpose. The child's skeleton inside the statue is a 'sacrifice' that was used as a medium for the so-called gods." Wang Yun said nearby, "I read it in a book once, but that was really long ago, so I can't remember the details exactly."

Luo Lan sneered, "You can't remember? Or do you not want to say it?"

Wang Yun clearly had a photographic memory. Since he had mentioned the usage of such a strange practice, how could he not know about its origins?

While everyone was discussing, Luo Lan looked at Ren Xiaosu, who was frowning at the side. "What's wrong? Did you discover something?"

"No." Ren Xiaosu shook his head. "I'm just worried that since someone could move a stone statue into the campsite without anyone noticing, that person would have the ability to kill anyone silently as well."

Ren Xiaosu was most concerned that even he did not know how the statue had gotten into the campsite.

### **Chapter 710: Murder motive**

Last night, it was Ren Xiaosu and the Great Hoodwinker who were keeping watch. In the first half of the night, Ren Xiaosu was very sure the statue had not appeared in the campsite yet. He found the Great Hoodwinker and asked, "You didn't hear anything during the second half of the night?"

"I really did not." The Great Hoodwinker shook his head. "Even though I joke around a lot, I'm still very careful when I'm outside. I couldn't possibly be unaware if someone had carried such a huge statue into the campsite. To be honest, I didn't even see anyone moving around last night."

"Where were you keeping watch?" Ren Xiaosu asked.

"Over there." The Great Hoodwinker pointed to the three o'clock of their campfire.

Ren Xiaosu walked over to the campfire and sat down. He realized the position where the Great Hoodwinker was keeping watch was great. He could almost see the entire campsite from here. However, there happened to be another person's tent standing between this position and the tent where the incident happened.

"Forget it, there's no point in getting to the bottom of this now." Ren Xiaosu shook his head and said, "I've never believed in demons and gods before, and I believe that everyone here except for the Great

Hoodwinker does not believe in them either. So let's assume that this was done by a person. In that case, we have to consider the murder motive."

The Great Hoodwinker said helplessly from nearby, "I don't believe in demons and gods either."

Yang Xiaojin glanced at him and said, "A fortune teller like you is claiming you don't believe in the divine?"

"Isn't that just bluffing?" the Great Hoodwinker explained awkwardly.

"Let's talk about the murder motive first." Ren Xiaosu changed the subject and said, "Did any of you pay any attention to the deceased previously?"

"I noticed him before." Yang Xiaojin said, "He was with the woman who discovered the statue. I saw them exchanging looks with each other before, and there were three others with them as well."

"Can you make a guess as to which organization those people belong to?" Ren Xiaosu felt the person's death might also have something to do with the conflicts between the organizations outside the Sacred Mountains.

Luo Lan whispered, "Those people maintained their cover really well. Also, there should be a lot of experts hidden among the people sent by the consortiums this time. They're probably hiding their identities for now in order not to attract any trouble, so there's no way to determine which organizations they belong to. Besides, the organizations are not the only ones in the underworld. In every black market, there's always one or two low profile but powerful teams. They don't serve the consortiums nor involve themselves with the matters between the organizations. They only work on obtaining intelligence or taking missions, then get paid for their work done. Today, they can help the Zhou Consortium kill the Wang Consortium's people, and tomorrow, they can help the Wang Consortium kill the Kong Consortium's people. However, those people generally prefer taking on neutral missions. For example, a lot of them are interested in this current mission we're on."

"Wouldn't this mission offend the Pyro Company? How is it neutral?" Ren Xiaosu wondered.

"Some of them are here not because they're after the No. 001 Experimental. They only came here to map out the territory of the Sacred Mountains to sell for money. Also, they can take advantage of any situation along the way by following the other organizations. That was why a lot of people in the black market were very interested in coming on the expedition," Luo Lan explained. "These people have no intention of competing with the consortiums for the prize. They're just here to pick some exotic flowers and plants and draw up a map before they go back."

"Then I'm afraid that the deceased is not one of those people," Ren Xiaosu said firmly. "I suspect that someone in our group was responsible for the situation last night. There must be some conflict of interest between them, but we just don't know what it's about, that's all. Y'all should keep an eye on the dead man's partner for the next two days and see who she's watching keenly."

If someone lost their partner, it would make them lose their minds, especially if it was a woman.

Some men with aloof personalities might be able to act as though nothing had happened, but that woman had clearly lost control of herself in the morning. Whoever she kept her eye on for the next two days would probably be the most suspicious person responsible for this incident.

On the same morning, the woman requested the superhuman with fire powers from before to help her cremate her lover. This delayed the group for the entire morning, but no one said anything about it.

They continued on their journey in the afternoon. As it was still winter, the days were much shorter, so they did not actually manage to cover much ground.

When they set up camp again at night, Ren Xiaosu and the others gathered around and started whispering among themselves.

Luo Lan said, "I discovered the woman kept staring viciously at that young man with a photographic memory while we were traveling in the afternoon."

"So it's true that when you lose your sense of rationality, you'll get easily figured out." Ren Xiaosu sighed. At this moment, he was a little grateful to Yang Xiaojin. Back when he found out Yan Liuyuan might have been captured, he was probably just as irrational as that woman. Fortunately, Yang Xiaojin had reminded him.

"Does anyone know that young man?" Luo Lan said, "I've seen the people around him serving him like they're his subordinates. That guy is really like a member of the consortiums. Moreover, I can see that they're all very efficient when they're packing up. They're likely to be the soldiers of some consortium."

Next to them, the Great Hoodwinker suddenly laughed, "What a coincidence. I happen to know who he is. That man's name is Wang Yun, and he's the director of the Kong Consortium's 2nd Military Intelligence Division. He's really capable to have become the director of an intelligence division at such a young age."

"I've heard of Wang Yun before. He's a supernatural being, but I'm not sure what kind of power he has." Luo Lan nodded and looked at Ren Xiaosu. "Do you think he was the one responsible for what happened last night?"

"It's difficult to say." Ren Xiaosu said, "First of all, since that woman has started suspecting Wang Yun, Wang Yun must have a motive to kill that person. Do y'all know much about the Kong Consortium? Does Wang Yun have any enemies?"

"I'm not sure if he has any enemies, but I do know that Kong Erdong, the director of the Kong Consortium's intelligence agency, was killed in an accident some time ago." The Great Hoodwinker said, "When I saw Wang Yun here, it made me quite curious. He's clearly one of the most favored candidates for the role of the intelligence agency's director, so what's he doing out here?"

"Then it makes sense." Zhou Qi said with a smile, "Who knows, the person who died might have been sent by Wang Yun's competitor to stir up trouble for him on the way. But as he was discovered, Wang Yun made a move on him first."

“Hehe, I knew it! I knew there were no such things as demons and gods in this world,” Luo Lan said.

Wang Yun had regained his energy. He sat by the campfire with a grim expression as he watched his subordinates clearing the grass.

Yesterday, no one cared when Ren Xiaosu said they should clear the grass before sleeping. But today, everyone actually spent over an hour tidying up their campsite as they were afraid that they would get killed by the poisonous bugs in the middle of the night.

Ren Xiaosu was sizing up Wang Yun from afar. Meanwhile, Wang Yun, having apparently sensed Ren Xiaosu’s gaze, looked up at him, greeting him with a smile.

Ren Xiaosu said to the Great Hoodwinker, “You get some rest tonight as well. I’ll keep watch for the entire night.”

“That’s not such a good idea, is it?” The Great Hoodwinker said, “Can you last the day tomorrow?”

“I can handle it.” Ren Xiaosu said, “Don’t worry, I’m much more energetic than all y’all. Also, I’m more confident at keeping watch since we’ve just entered the Sacred Mountains. Y’all will still get your chance to keep watch after I’ve figured out the actual situation here in the Sacred Mountains.”