

First Order 791

Chapter 791: Trinity Institute

Ren Xiaosu did not tell Wang Shengzhi about his conversation with Lingling.

For some reason, he believed Lingling was not that simple. There were probably some lies in its conversation with him. The only thing that puzzled him was that the other party seemed to really know some secrets of his.

Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin did not continue living in Stronghold 61. Since they had a new task now, they wanted to finish it quickly.

Moreover, according to the Great Hoodwinker, Kong Erdong was already planning to put the blame on Wang Yun so he could answer to the Kong Consortium's frontline soldiers.

After all, the Kong Consortium had even lost one stronghold at the front lines. If there were no one to take responsibility for it, it would probably be very difficult to convince the masses.

After all, the Kong Consortium had lost more than 20,000 soldiers in just half a month. These soldiers had family and friends, and some of them were even members of the Kong clan. Kong Erdong would have to sacrifice someone to appease everyone's anger. Although Kong Erdong was the Kong Consortium's leader, it did not mean he could disregard everyone's grumblings.

However, Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin would definitely not head straight to the Kong Consortium just like that. Would Ren Xiaosu simply drop his guard because he wanted to rescue Wang Yun?

It was not like Wang Yun was Yan Liuyuan anyways.

Inside Stronghold 64, a convoy of vehicles were driving toward the gate.

There were seven vehicles in the convoy with two or three people sitting within each of the five vehicles at the front. These people were all wearing glasses and looked very refined.

An elderly person around the age of 60 was part of the convoy, and he looked like the oldest among them. There were also some people who looked younger in their early twenties.

There was only one woman in the entire convoy and she looked rather young. She was sitting in the front passenger seat in one of the vehicles and reading a book.

A young man was rambling about something behind her, but the girl remained indifferent throughout.

At this moment, the convoy was stopped at the gate by a young man and a young woman. They looked like they were worn out from their journey.

The elderly person in the car asked, "Get out and ask them what's the matter."

Before anyone could get out of the vehicle, the young man headed straight over to them with an envelope in hand. The elderly person looked through the window and saw the young man knocking on it enthusiastically.

After he rolled the window down, the young man said excitedly, "You must be Mr. Wang Jing. I have a recommendation letter from Mr. Cao Qingju. The two of us will accompany you to the Kong Consortium for the medical exchange this time! My name is Ren Xiaosu!"

Wang Jing sized up Ren Xiaosu. "You're Cao Qingju's student?"

"That's right." Ren Xiaosu nodded and said, "I'm a resident at Stronghold 61's Third Central Hospital, and also a student of Mr. Cao Qingju's!"

The people in the vehicle were visibly shocked. The young man and the young woman in the car also turned their heads and quietly sized up Ren Xiaosu.

Ren Xiaosu could not help wondering if he had said something wrong. Why was everyone looking at him like that?

This identity was arranged for him by Wang Shengzhi, so there shouldn't be any problems, right?

Wang Jing slowly frowned. "You look quite young. How'd you become a resident?"

A resident physician was not a very high-ranking position in Wang Jing's eyes and could at most be considered a junior position, with attending physicians and associate chief physicians above it. Noting that the two youngsters next to him were only interns, the young man before him had most probably obtained his position through Cao Qingju, right?

It was a golden opportunity for these two interns to be able to go to the exchange at the Kong Consortium this time, and it was almost similar to being sponsored for one's studies abroad. So a lot of people tried all sorts of means to become a part of the team, but Wang Jing rejected all of them.

The two young persons next to him were considered the youngest and brightest among the current batch of students of the Wang Consortium, which was why he brought them along.

Wang Jing looked at Ren Xiaosu. Although he did not really want Ren Xiaosu and the girl beside him to join this medical exchange, Cao Qingju was a highly respected figure with a very special status. As such, he could not turn them away.

As a result, Wang Jing said, "Get in then. You can take the car at the back. If you have any questions along the way, you can approach Meng Nan."

The girl sitting in the passenger seat politely greeted, "Hello, I'm Meng Nan."

Ren Xiaosu smiled and nodded. "Hello, nice to meet you. It seems like y'all have some stuff in the vehicles back there, so we'd better drive our own vehicle and follow you."

Only then did everyone notice a brand-new off-road vehicle parked by the side of the road. It was even the latest luxury model by the Wang Consortium.

Wang Jing watched as Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin got into their car. The young man at his side said enviously, "That car is really expensive. I've seen it before at the auto show."

Wang Jing gave him a look, and the young man went silent. He could tell Elder Wang did not seem to like the young man and woman.

Wang Jing said calmly, "Liang Ce, you need to be able to endure loneliness in order to study medicine. Don't get fascinated by the temptations of the world. Once you enter this field, don't think about how much money you can make and what material benefits you can get to enjoy. What you should be thinking about is how to treat illnesses and save people."

"I understand, Teacher," Liang Ce answered with his head lowered.

Wang Jing lamented as he watched Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin get into their vehicle, "I wonder what Cao Qingju is thinking, letting someone that young become a resident. The medical field requires one to accumulate clinical experience to grow. Perhaps being young is an advantage in other fields, but in our field, experience is an invaluable asset. Never mind, let's not worry about them. Our ideals are different from theirs."

Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin had essentially become synonymous with nepotism in the eyes of this group. Honestly, even Ren Xiaosu himself believed this arrangement was not appropriate.

As the convoy moved off, Yang Xiaojin held a document. "Wang Jing, the person in charge of this medical exchange, is the vice president of Trinity Institute. This medical exchange was actually started by the Trinity Institute with the aim of improving the participants' medical skills. Because of the special nature of this field, the consortiums often encourage such exchanges and even actively allocate funds to them for the purpose. The Wang Consortium also has a Trinity Fund set up specially for this cause. Although it's not big in scale, the funds are used to help the refugees in town gain access to a doctor."

"Oh." Ren Xiaosu nodded. "So it's actually a semi-charitable organization. That puts them in a different light then. Since we're heading to the Kong Consortium with a group of doctors, we better keep a low profile when taking action. Otherwise, if we get exposed, we might even drag them down with us. Even if Wang Shengzhi did not consider this, we should think about it."

"Mhm." Yang Xiaojin nodded. "Currently, Wang Shengzhi... seems like he doesn't care how he achieves his goals anymore. I read up about that man quite a bit, but it feels like he's quite different from the impression I had. He used to care about how he achieved his goals. But now it's almost like he's racing against time."

After the stronghold gate was raised, the convoy drove east.

Shortly after Ren Xiaosu and the others left the stronghold, Wang Run led a group of ten elites and set off from the north gate. They took another route and headed towards the Kong Consortium.

As Ren Xiaosu's handler this time, Ren Xiaosu could ask him for any information he needed. In Wang Shengzhi's words, Wang Run was to fully cooperate with Ren Xiaosu to complete the assassination mission.

However, what Wang Shengzhi did not say was that Wang Run had also been assigned another mission for this trip. If Ren Xiaosu failed or got into an accident, Wang Run would become the trump card for this mission.

Chapter 792: Crazy black medicine

Ren Xiaosu initially thought they would follow the Trinity Institute convoy and head straight to the Kong Consortium.

But to his surprise, this group of people actually stopped at the town outside the stronghold.

When Wang Jing got out of the vehicle with Liang Ce's help, the townspeople greeted him one after another. Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin looked at each other. All of the refugees here actually addressed Wang Jing as "Elder Wang" when they saw him.

Following, the group unloaded the folding tables and chairs from the vehicles at the back. Then all of them put on their white coats and equipped themselves with stethoscopes.

Ren Xiaosu was dumbfounded by the sight. He went up to Meng Nan and asked, "Ms. Meng Nan, may I ask what's happening here?"

However, Meng Nan was stunned by his question. "You're also a member of the medical system. Don't you know it's the usual practice for us to head outside to give treatment to the refugees?"

"Oh, I know that. But I've never participated in one before, so I was a little lost," Ren Xiaosu said.

A middle-aged man in the group came over to shake Ren Xiaosu's hand and said politely, "Hi, my name is Sima Gang. I'm in charge of today's outdoor consultation. If you encounter any difficulties, you can let me know."

With that, Sima Gang led Ren Xiaosu over to an empty table. "This is where you'll be sitting. Just shout for me anytime if you need help."

Only then did Ren Xiaosu realize it was not only these people who needed to attend to the refugees, even he was required to do so. Meanwhile, the medical interns, Meng Nan and Liang Ce, would be assigned to carry out the basic chores.

Wang Jing stood in front of them and said, "I know this is the first time some of you are participating in such activities. The refugees are not dressed as cleanly as you all, nor do they have enough water to take a shower every day. So, if any of you feel any mental discomfort, please control yourselves. As doctors, it's our duty to treat and save people."

Liang Ce looked like he was boiling with excitement. "Yes, sir!"

The refugees in town had already formed a long line. Wang Jing took the lead and sat down behind a table while Liang Ce ushered the refugees to the doctors' tables one by one.

Many of the refugees had old injuries from when they were working in the factories. It was just like Ren Xiaosu when he was living back in Stronghold 113's town. The refugees did not have any money to see a doctor, so they could only delay treatment. Sometimes, even a fingernail-sized wound could end up festering and become infected, leading to the refugees losing their lives.

During the consultation, Wang Jing looked around at the others. When he saw the doctors he brought along for this exchange did not despise the patients, he finally felt relieved.

But what surprised him a little was that the young man who drove that luxury off-road vehicle did not seem to despise the filth and smell of the refugees at all.

At this moment, Yang Xiaojin was sleeping in the vehicle with her pistol within reach. It seemed that every time she came out into the wilderness, she would immediately enter a completely tense state of alert.

Meanwhile, Ren Xiaosu could only stare blankly at the refugees in front of him. The other doctors were busily attending to the patients at their tables one after another, but the patients on his side were totally stuck!

Ren Xiaosu was completely speechless inside. How could he possibly know anything about attending to patients?! Treating their external injuries would not have been a problem. But as this was only a voluntary consultation at the moment, surely he couldn't resort to using the black medicine just to put on an act, right? That would be too great of a price to pay!

"Doctor, my heart has been beating very fast recently. What's wrong with me?" a refugee asked.

Ren Xiaosu hesitated for a while before saying, "Could it be a guilty conscience?"

The refugee sitting across him turned anxious. "Are you here to attend to patients or accuse people?"

"Haha, I was just kidding. Calm down!" Ren Xiaosu said, "Actually, you're not sick at all. You're probably just too tired from work and got a little flustered, but you'll be fine after resting."

The refugee asked, "Should I avoid any types of food then?"

Ren Xiaosu was taken aback. "No, no, eat whatever you like while you can. There's no need for a special diet."

The refugee was confused.

Eat whatever you like while you can? The refugee nearly broke down on the spot!

He ran over to Wang Jing in tears, hoping for a second opinion.

Ren Xiaosu was helpless. He really did not know how to handle a consultation. However, he could not tell Wang Jing directly that he was here on a mission to kill Kong Erdong, and that they had better cooperate with him, right?

At this moment, a refugee at the neighboring table stood up and grasped Sima Gang's hand while saying sincerely, "Thank you, I'm so grateful! Thank you so much!"

Sima Gang adjusted his glasses and said with a smile, "No worries. You may take your prescription and collect your medicine over there."

Sima Gang noticed Ren Xiaosu's shocked expression out of the corner of his eye and wondered if this kid was impressed with him. At this thought, Sima Gang's confidence as a doctor grew even greater. "Next, please."

However, he did not know that Ren Xiaosu was not looking at him but the refugee who kept saying thanks.

Ren Xiaosu suddenly noticed all the refugees here had sincere expressions on their faces. Someone even purposely came over to deliver some eggs to Wang Jing, saying it was so fortunate Wang Jing had come to town last year and treated him. It was because of him that he survived.

Someone else thanked another doctor for treating his father three years ago.

This was where Wang Jing and the others had been performing their charitable work for many years, so the refugees here were grateful to these doctors from the bottom of their hearts!

How many... gratitude tokens would that be worth!

Ren Xiaosu suddenly said to Liang Ce, "Please assign all patients with wounds to me."

Liang Ce was stunned. "There's still quite a lot of patients with wounds. You can't attend to all of them."

"I'll have you know that someone once sent me a banner with the words 'magic hands restore spring.' I don't even remember how many patients I've treated over the years. Enough talking, just send the patients over to me quickly!" Ren Xiaosu said in high spirits.

At this moment, Wang Jing received a complaint about Ren Xiaosu. He immediately got up and walked toward Ren Xiaosu to see what was going on. Then he saw Ren Xiaosu treating patients one after another with the black medicine. Be it slash wounds or burns, the medicine worked wonders immediately after it was applied!

Wang Jing stopped a patient who had been treated by Ren Xiaosu earlier and asked, "What kind of medicine was applied to your wound?"

"I'm not sure. Just, after the medicine was applied, I felt a cooling sensation and the pain went away immediately." The refugee said excitedly, "I had been injured for half a month. It was so painful that I couldn't even sleep well at night. I'm so grateful to y'all!"

Wang Jing was stunned. He looked at Ren Xiaosu, then at the refugee again before saying to Liang Ce, "Get our friend here to rest close by. Follow up and see if there's any adverse side effects from the application of the medicine."

Wang Jing suspected Ren Xiaosu might have used some banned drugs on these patients. It might relieve their pain temporarily, but there could still be complications later on. As such, he thought it was better to keep them under observation for a little longer.

Wang Jing quietly stood off to the side and did not even attend to the patients anymore. He just kept his eyes on Ren Xiaosu.

He saw Ren Xiaosu treating the patients one after another with extremely high efficiency. This young man even called Meng Nan over to act as his assistant and help him stitch up the patients' wounds.

What surprised Wang Jing the most was that no matter how dirty the patient's hands were, the young man would still grasp their hands warmly and listen to them express their gratitude before they bade each other farewell!

Chapter 793: This medicine must not be taken orally!

Three hours later, news of the outdoor medical consultation had spread to the surrounding factories. Many of the workers were allowed to take time off to go over to seek treatment.

When some of the factory managers heard Elder Wang Jing had come to town, they even took the initiative to pay him a visit. This alone was enough to show just how respected Wang Jing was in the Wang Consortium.

While they were taking a break at noon during lunch, Wang Jing went to check on several of the patients who had stayed behind for observation.

With a patient's agreement, he scraped the black medicine off his wound. Wang Jing was stunned. He saw that the wound, which used to be in quite bad shape, had scabbed over. This meant it was already in a state of healing.

Several of the doctors who had come along asked puzzledly, "How did the wound heal so quickly? Could it have started healing before the patient received treatment?"

"That can't be." Liang Ce said with certainty nearby, "I saw his wound earlier. It was so seriously inflamed at the time that it couldn't have coalesced."

Wang Jing spun around and looked at Ren Xiaosu. Where did this young man hail from? Could he really have been recommended by Cao Qingju because he had some kind of unique talent?

Come to think of it, why would a highly respected authority in the medical field like Cao Qingju suddenly want to engage in nepotism and ruin his reputation?

Thinking of this, Wang Jing heaved a sigh of relief.

He went to check on the other patients as well and it was pretty much the same for them. Their wounds had already started healing three hours after the medicine was applied. The medicine was way too miraculous!

At this moment, one of the doctors said, "I think it might be because this medicine is more effective. It seems that someone in the Southwest managed to gather some rather miraculous herbs that had mutated. It can... ahem, make men perform better."

"Haha, there's even something like that? Why hasn't it spread to our Central Plains yet?"

"Haha, whatever. With this medicine, a lot of physical trauma cases can be handled easily. I wonder what this medicine is made with."

At first, the wounded refugees were quite uneasy about what was going on. But when they heard that, everyone cheered up. "Then can we leave now?"

"Yes," Wang Jing said with a smile, "go back and recuperate. Remember not to let your wounds get wet and don't eat any spicy food."

After that, Wang Jing looked at one of the wounded patients running off to thank Ren Xiaosu again.

Wang Jing realized that whenever a patient thanked Ren Xiaosu, Ren Xiaosu would have a blissful smile on his face. This really reminded Wang Jing of how he looked when he was younger.

Every time he treated a patient back then, he would feel a sense of accomplishment. Whenever a patient thanked him, Wang Jing would feel so happy that he could down three bowls of rice.

Wang Jing felt this was a quality good doctors should possess!

Initially, Wang Jing did not really like Ren Xiaosu. But now, he realized Cao Qingju's discerning eye had found him a treasure instead.

Wang Jing suddenly had the thought of taking Ren Xiaosu in as his protégé. But on second thought, he suspected Cao Qingju might have already taken the young man under his wing. So he realized he could not be too rash.

While pondering, Wang Jing walked up to Ren Xiaosu to chat with him. When he got closer, he saw Ren Xiaosu beaming with joy in a daze and reciting, "A grateful heart, thankful to you..."

When he heard that, Wang Jing's admiration for Ren Xiaosu grew even bigger!

But Wang Jing was unaware that Ren Xiaosu was taking stock of his gratitude tokens.

At first, Ren Xiaosu did not want to use the black medicine on the refugees because he felt he stood to lose. But he did not feel that way anymore. He would receive at least two gratitude tokens for treating one patient. Where else could he find as good a deal as that?

In just one morning, Ren Xiaosu's gratitude tokens increased from around 400 to more than 1,100!

At this moment, Ren Xiaosu felt that Wang Shengzhi's arrangement for him was simply too good. He should totally follow this medical exchange group to the Kong Consortium!

To think he had blamed Wang Shengzhi earlier!

"Young man, may I ask what medicine you applied on their wounds?" Wang Jing asked.

Ren Xiaosu came back to his senses. "Oh, it's my secret ancestral remedy!"

"Can I have a look at it?" Wang Jing asked.

"Sure." Ren Xiaosu took out the black medicine and handed it to Wang Jing. "But only a look."

When Wang Jing was handed the black medicine, he took a look and a sniff. Then he even scraped some off with his pinky, wanting to have a taste of it.

But before Wang Jing could put the black medicine into his mouth, Ren Xiaosu quickly stopped him.

"Elder, this medicine must not be taken orally!"

Wang Jing was starting to find Ren Xiaosu really likeable. He smiled and said, "Why not? Are you afraid I'll find out what your medicine is made with?"

"Ahem, no, it really must not be taken orally," Ren Xiaosu said in a serious tone. Honestly, he was really worried that Wang Jing, who was already so old, would not be able to bear the effects of the black medicine.

Wang Jing shook his head and laughed. "Don't worry, I'm not after your prescription."

During the conversation, the stronghold gate opened, and people from the Wang Consortium actually delivered boxed lunches out to them from the stronghold. It seemed that someone inside was aware that Wang Jing would be holding a consultation in the refugee town, so they prepared the meals in advance.

Ren Xiaosu was holding his boxed lunch when the young man named Liang Ce suddenly came over. "Bro, that medicine of yours is magic."

Ren Xiaosu looked at Liang Ce strangely. Why had he become so enthusiastic all of a sudden?

Then he heard Liang Ce say, "Can I also come and help you later in the afternoon?"

As he said that, Liang Ce's gaze drifted over to Meng Nan at the same time. Meng Nan was eating her boxed lunch grumpily. She looked to be keeping her distance from everyone.

"Oh!" Ren Xiaosu immediately got the hint. Since Liang Ce was so enthusiastic, and Ren Xiaosu was still overjoyed by the gratitude tokens he had received, how could he refuse? "You wish to work with Ms. Meng Nan, right? No problem."

Liang Ce blushed. "You can tell?"

“Only an idiot couldn’t tell. But why don’t you just go and talk with her directly? She’s not doing anything right now anyways,” Ren Xiaosu asked curiously.

“She’s a little sick today, so she’s quite moody,” Liang Ce said bitterly.

Ren Xiaosu immediately realized what he was talking about again. So it turned out that even medical students could not solve the ancient problem of Aunt Flo visiting!

However, Ren Xiaosu considered himself somewhat experienced in dealing with such matters. “When a girl’s Aunt Flo visits and causes her discomfort, just ask her how could she possibly have a tummy when she’s so slim. I guarantee that she’ll be pleased!”

Liang Ce’s eyes lit up. “Really?”

“Yes.” Ren Xiaosu continued eating his lunch.

Liang Ce hesitated for quite a while before walking over to Meng Nan and asking, “Nannan, you don’t feel well?”

Based on Liang Ce’s prediction, Meng Nan would probably say she was experiencing cramps or something. Then he would just have to read off the script!

However, Meng Nan looked up at Liang Ce and said calmly, “Mhm, I have a slight headache.”

Liang Ce was stunned. This answer was different from what he had expected! In that case, how should he respond?

The young man thought for a couple seconds before saying, “You’re so slim, how can you possibly have a brain!”

Meng Nan was flabbergasted.

Ren Xiaosu, who was eating his lunch, spat rice all over the ground!

Chapter 794: Save Wang Yun?

Frankly, Ren Xiaosu could already tell the girl named Meng Nan was not particularly interested in Liang Ce.

Or rather, most women were not particularly interested in men their age. That was because girls usually matured earlier while men tended to be more childish than girls of the same age.

But this did not mean there was no chance for Liang Ce. As long as he persevered, he might be able to move the other party when his luck got better.

Right now, Ren Xiaosu felt that Liang Ce stood no chance at all. After all, who could fall in love with someone so dumb?

Liang Ce walked back over to Ren Xiaosu sadly. He knew he was done for the moment he uttered those words, but he could not blame Ren Xiaosu for it since there was nothing wrong with what Ren Xiaosu had taught him. He was the one who did not execute the line.

Ren Xiaosu comforted him softly, "Don't worry, there's still plenty of time until we reach the Kong Consortium. You'll get another chance."

"I hope so." Liang Ce gave a long sigh.

"I'm very curious about something." Ren Xiaosu asked Liang Ce, "How often does the Trinity Institute go to the Kong Consortium for an academic exchange?"

"Once every three years, I think that's how the name of Trinity Institute came about," Liang Ce replied. "It's been held for over three decades, and there's always some medical takeaways gained after each exchange. It seems like this is the only way for the medical field to get past the consortiums' technological roadblocks. In the early years, the consortiums did not allow such academic exchanges to be organized. Back then, Elder Wang's father pushed for it to happen by staging a sit-in in front of the head of the Wang Consortium's official residence. He said that any technology in the world could be clamped down on except for medical knowledge, because it involves the lives of hundreds of thousands of people to even millions of them. What could be more important in the world than the lives of people? Afterwards, he sat in protest at the entrance for three days and passed away after suffering a heart attack. That was what led to the medical exchange becoming a tradition and also how the Trinity Institute came to be."

This was the academic freedom Wang Jing's father had traded his life for.

Ren Xiaosu looked at Wang Jing. So that man had inherited his father's will and spent his entire career working hard for this cause?

Was this why Wang Shengzhi assigned Ren Xiaosu to the medical exchange group? Because it would be a good cover for them to travel to the Kong Consortium since there was already precedence of the medical exchange program spanning back several decades, and it happened that it was time for it to be held again this year?

Ren Xiaosu suddenly asked, "I saw that y'all gave away the medicine for free to the patients. Is it all paid for by the Wang Consortium?"

"No,"—Liang Ce shook his head—"Elder Wang Jing raised the money through charity dinners. All of the donations received would be used entirely on purchasing medical supplies to treat the refugees outside the strongholds. That's why everyone is getting such respect from the Wang Consortium refugees. But even so, the amount of medical supplies is still inadequate for the number of refugees."

At this moment, Wang Jing went to check on the medical supplies they brought along. "How much medicine do we still have left?"

Meng Nan put down her boxed lunch and took out a ledger. "We still have two-thirds left."

Wang Jing was taken aback. "There's still so much of it left?"

Under normal circumstances, the medicine they brought along would be used up by the end of the morning. But it seemed they did not use much this time.

However, Wang Jing realized it was probably due to that young man's contribution. Ren Xiaosu had used his own medicine to treat the patients' injuries without having to draw from their inventory at all.

Some refugees had gathered outside the makeshift medical tents. All of them had rushed over from the various factories to see the doctor. As some of the factories were situated quite far away, it took them almost two hours to get back here.

Wang Jing turned around and saw Ren Xiaosu taking out a huge box from the trunk of the luxury off-road vehicle. He asked, "What's in this box of yours?"

"Oh, it contains my family's ancestral medicine." Ren Xiaosu beamed as he looked at the patients waiting outside.

Wang Jing was touched. Even though the young man sounded really easygoing, Wang Jing knew his medicine was probably extremely valuable.

This person named Ren Xiaosu might be young, but he was so kind. How admirable!

Wang Jing said, "I would like to ask you something. Are you Mr. Cao Qingju's student?"

Ren Xiaosu was stunned before saying with a smile, "No, no, I'm not qualified to be Mr. Cao Qingju's student."

Wang Jing was absolutely delighted. "Good, that's really great!"

They probably still had a month together for this exchange, so Wang Jing felt he would have enough time to observe this young man.

Ren Xiaosu did not continue chatting with Wang Jing. After all... how could Wang Jing be more important than earning gratitude tokens?!

"Liang Ce, come here and give me a hand. Meng Nan, you'll suture the patients' wounds. Hurry up and get the patients over!" Ren Xiaosu shouted.

Liang Ce was immediately overjoyed. However, Meng Nan did not say anything. She just took out her medical equipment immediately and prepared for suturing.

The refugees came and consulted Ren Xiaosu about their injuries one by one, and Ren Xiaosu treated them one after another. When the treatment was completed, he would calmly accept their thanks and watch them as they left.

In just an afternoon, Ren Xiaosu's gratitude tokens increased from a 1,000-odd to more than 2,000.

Ren Xiaosu had thought he was still far off from unlocking the palace's next weapon. Where was he supposed to find 10,000 gratitude tokens?

But now he realized Wang Shengzhi had actually given him a big gift!

All of a sudden, Ren Xiaosu heard the voice from the palace say, "Host has received 1,888 gratitude tokens in one day. 'A Grateful Heart' achievement unlocked. Awarded: Five Basic Skill Duplication Scrolls!"

Ren Xiaosu was stunned for a moment. Why hadn't he heard of such a thing before? There was even a reward for unlocking an achievement?

Before this, Ren Xiaosu knew there were still a lot of secrets waiting to be discovered about the palace. For example, he unintentionally gained the "City Crusher" powerup when both his Strength and Dexterity attributes hit 10 points each.

And there was even an achievement system?!

Ren Xiaosu asked in his mind, "What other achievements can I mass unlock... No, I mean, are there any other achievements for me to unlock?"

"Unauthorized to answer," the palace answered emotionlessly.

"Alright," Ren Xiaosu said, feeling like he hadn't gotten enough rewards yet. Although the reward was only the Basic Skill Duplication Scroll, it gave out five.

Thinking of this, Ren Xiaosu became even more enthusiastic in his work. By evening, his gratitude tokens had finally reached 3,000. This was because he had been using gratitude tokens to trade for the black medicine. Otherwise, he would've had even more!

Ren Xiaosu thought happily that if Yang Xiaojin wanted to use the black bullet next time, he would no longer have to be despised by her for being too stingy.

As the sky darkened, Wang Jing came to Ren Xiaosu and said in concern, "Xiaosu, why don't you get some rest? You've been working the entire day, so it's best that you take a break. Our health is our most precious asset."

Ren Xiaosu said with a strong sense of righteousness, "When it comes to saving lives, do my personal sacrifices really matter that much!"

Wang Jing felt deep veneration for him. "My young friend, I really admire your noble character and integrity!"

"Don't stand on ceremony, Elder Wang. I'm willing to stay in town for a few more days to attend to more patients!" Ren Xiaosu said in a serious tone.

Yang Xiaojin got out of the vehicle and pulled Ren Xiaosu aside. She asked in a whisper, "Aren't we gonna save Wang Yun?"

Ren Xiaosu asked, "Who's Wang Yun?"

Yang Xiaojin was speechless.

Chapter 795: Black Robe

The Trinity Institute convoy set up camp in town for the night before leaving the next morning.

Ren Xiaosu was more than willing to settle down in this town for another half a year to unlock all the weapons in the palace before leaving.

But reality was cruel. As there was not an infinite number of patients in a town, unless Ren Xiaosu went around chopping people up, basically all the patients had been treated.

So Wang Jing only planned to stay in town for one day. After that, they would have to head to the Kong Consortium for the medical exchange with their fellow doctors.

Ren Xiaosu did not want to leave. He insisted there was still fish that slipped through the net in this town that needed their treatment.

Wang Jing lamented emotionally that this was the first time in his decades of practice that he had heard someone describe patients as "fish that slipped through the net."

But based on Ren Xiaosu's fanatical attitude towards treating patients, he thought it was still understandable.

When they set off again, the others clearly became more friendly towards Ren Xiaosu. After all, when they attended to the patients yesterday, Ren Xiaosu took on almost half of the workload all by himself.

Initially, everyone thought they would be unusually busy yesterday. But in the end, they found themselves with nothing much to do at all by the afternoon.

Who would want to give the cold shoulder to a colleague who was more than happy to work? Everyone would rather give Ren Xiaosu compliments and let him take on more of the work.

Liang Ce was sitting in the backseat of Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin's car. He exclaimed like a big boy who had not seen the world before, "These seats are made of genuine leather! Even the windows and seat controls are operated electronically! This is so awesome!"

Ren Xiaosu thought to himself, '*Well, of course!*' Wang Shengzhi had asked him to assassinate someone like Kong Erdong. Anyone else would probably ask Wang Shengzhi to pay an astronomical sum for that. But he did not request anything at all, so the other party had to afford him the highest form of treatment.

"I don't quite understand something." Ren Xiaosu started trying to pry for more information out of Liang Ce. "Don't y'all know that the Kong Consortium is currently at war with the Pyro Company? Why do you still want to go to the Kong Consortium at a time like this?"

Liang Ce lamented, "We know that, but Elder Wang insisted on going. It's always during this period that the medical exchange is held, and there's nothing anyone can do to prevent it. I didn't used to be on the list for the exchange, but someone more outstanding than me was unwilling to go, so I was put in as a replacement. I guess that's also why Meng Nan is unhappy. But I don't think it'll be that dangerous. Stronghold 31, which we're heading to, is in the core of the Kong Consortium."

Ren Xiaosu was taken aback. "What does this have anything to do with Meng Nan?"

"Oh, a lot of people know that Meng Nan likes that person. That guy's a family member of the Wang Consortium and comes from a rich family. And he always tops the ranking in school." Liang Ce said bitterly, "If I were a girl, I would probably like such a guy as well."

Yang Xiaojin glanced at Liang Ce through the rearview mirror as she drove. "If you didn't listen to Ren Xiaosu's terrible idea yesterday, you would probably still have some hope during this exchange."

With that, Liang Ce felt even more bitter.

Liang Ce sighed and said, "I think I'm a little depressed."

"Think?" Ren Xiaosu replied as he looked at the map, "You're depressed for sure."

Liang Ce was speechless.

...

Ren Xiaosu looked at the map and felt that Liang Ce, Wang Jing, and the others might not have realized the danger of going on this medical exchange. Although Stronghold 31 was located in the core of the Kong Consortium, there would surely be some stray deserters and wounded personnel escaping after the troops at the front lines were defeated.

Ren Xiaosu had already been through several wars, so he knew full well that if these deserters and wounded wanted to avoid being court martialled by the Kong Consortium, they would have to flee south to somewhere that the Kong Consortium could not reach them.

With the war going on in the North, it would not only be deserters who would be forced to head southwards, but a large number of refugees and stronghold residents would do the same as well.

After all, the entire history of human migration was basically linked to wars.

While Ren Xiaosu and the others were making their way to the Kong Consortium, that unknown group from the north finally crossed the vast grasslands and was now standing at the boundary between the grasslands and the Central Plains.

A man who was nearly two meters tall and holding a huge axe in his hands said to the black-robed person beside him, "Our advance troops have already arrived at the predetermined location. But, Black Robe, how am I to believe that your subsequent plans will succeed when there were so many deviations earlier? Our expeditionary army has not come south to die but to seize this fertile land in the South."

This person was a muscular man with light brown hair, and his physical features made him look very different from the Central Plains people.

It was early spring now, and the weather in the North was still rather cold. But even though this person was topless, he did not seem to feel cold at all. The hair on his chest was so thick he almost looked like a brown bear that walked upright.

According to their plan, they were supposed to engage in close combat with the nomads and then conquer the grasslands with their expeditionary army's strong physical advantage.

Right after that, they would seize the nomads' livestock and use them as supplies for their army. Then they would enslave the nomads to build a forward operating base for them so their expeditionary army's main forces at the rear could pass through without any obstructions.

But the nomads ran away after encountering them just once. This truly was a bit unexpected. They had fled so swiftly the expeditionary army did not even get to see which way they went.

The man who looked like a brown bear said, "And, Black Robe, you've never mentioned that there was someone who could control wolves here. If our advance troops had encountered the wolves, they might not even have defeated them."

As he spoke, he did not seem threatened by the nomads at all. They had only retreated that day because of the wolves' sudden appearance.

Black Robe remained silent as he looked out towards the Central Plains. It seemed like he was thinking about something.

After a while, he stroked his gold-laced sleeves and said with a hoarse laugh, "There's nothing to fear about the nomads. When the main forces of the expeditionary army arrive, will we have to fear the wolves? If they really come and provoke us, I'm sure you all can rip off their skin and make it into boots."

"What about the Central Plains?" Someone asked, "I've observed that the Central Plains is vast in territory and abundant with resources. You've also said that their technology is much more advanced than ours."

"But the Central Plains people are not united." Black Robe said with a laugh, "You all might not know this, but when I left the Central Plains, it felt like a great war was going to break out there. Some time ago, I trekked across the lands and made some secret observations. As expected, the Pyro Company has started fighting with the Kong Consortium while the Wang Consortium eyes them hungrily from the sidelines. So we've arrived at the exact right time. Normal firearms are no threat to you at all, and weapons like heavy machine guns can be handled with some simple tactics."

“Moreover,” Black Robe continued, “when our advance troops take over their border towns during the chaos, their weapons will become our weapons. The vast territory of the Central Plains was actually meant for our expeditionary army to take over.”

As he spoke, Black Robe pointed at the Central Plains. When his arm was raised, his grayish skin was revealed under his sleeve.

The bearish man turned around and walked off toward the advance troops. “Don’t be making empty promises. When the war starts, you better watch out for your own back. With that small body of yours, you’re gonna get killed really easily.”

The group of Northerners started laughing. Black Robe’s expression was shrouded within his hood.

Chapter 796: Dawn of a chaotic world

In the evening, the Trinity Institute convoy set up camp next to the road at a spot chosen by Wang Jing. Ren Xiaosu noticed that the location of the campsite chosen by the authoritative medical figure was quite particular.

Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin looked at each other. He whispered, “The terrain is flat, and we’re on relatively high ground. Although it’s close to a water source, it avoids the path where wild animals might take to get to the water source. He’s definitely experienced.”

Off to the side, Wang Jing was giving pointers to the doctors on how to set up their tents. He said with a smile, “I’ve made a lot of trips to the Kong Consortium over the years. You guys can take the opportunity during this trip with me to experience the vast world outside the strongholds. At the same time, you should also learn how to set up camp in the wilderness. As I’m getting older, there’ll come a day when I can’t even walk anymore. At that time, you’ll have to lead the medical exchange group to the Kong Consortium.”

A middle-aged man adjusted his glasses and said with a smile, “You’re still going strong, so you can bring us on a few more trips, I’m sure.”

Wang Jing shook his head. “No, I can’t anymore. My health is declining by the year, and my legs are starting to hurt as well. I can’t compare to you young people at all. The distance from Stronghold 64 to the Kong Consortium is 310 kilometers. Even if the cars don’t break down along the way, it still takes three days to arrive there. If anything happens, we still have to repair the vehicles by ourselves. I remember when I was young, we encountered a sudden blizzard on our way there. As it was spring, we did not bring along any snow chains for the trip. In the end, we got stranded for half a month on this 310-kilometer journey. It wasn’t until the snow had completely melted that we finally managed to get to the Kong Consortium.”

The doctors standing next to him listened quietly. Although these stories were of no practical help to everyone, they sounded very interesting.

Ren Xiaosu was putting on an act off to the side as he clumsily set up the tent while Yang Xiaojin started a campfire. As the saying goes, the insider knows the ropes, while the outsider just comes along for the ride. With Wang Jing’s years of experience in camping, he was a little surprised to see Yang Xiaojin’s

proficiency in getting a fire started. However, he did not say anything. After all, this girl was only tagging along with Ren Xiaosu and was not considered a member of the Trinity Institute.

Wang Jing did not think too much of it either. He only felt the girl was quite good at her task.

He continued sharing his past experience, "Back then, the roads we took to get to the Kong Consortium were in terrible shape. We were trapped in the snow and couldn't move at all. At that time, our relationship with the Wang Consortium was pretty bad, so they were unwilling to come and rescue us. They were probably thinking it would make us back off from organizing the medical exchange. We didn't have enough food and clothing to go around in the wilderness. In the end, we even ran out of gas. It was so cold we nearly froze to death in our cars. You guys know Dong Li, right? He's the director of the First Hospital in Stronghold 62? He used to be an excellent cardiac surgeon. But during the trip, he suffered frostbite on two of his fingers and could not perform any more surgeries after that.

"There was another time when we encountered bandits along the way. Fortunately, they only robbed us of some medicine before letting us go on account that we were doctors. Ever since then, all of our Trinity Institute's doctors started practicing shooting after we got back. Didn't you guys ask me why I needed to bring a gun for the medical exchange? That's why."

A middle-aged doctor next to him said with a smile, "Why do you all think Elder Wang always brings me along whenever he comes out? Is it because of my medical skills? No, it's because I'm the best shooter among us!"

Wang Jing rambled on and on in the wilderness, sharing mainly interesting anecdotes that happened during the academic exchanges in the past years. The stories were more vivid than Ren Xiaosu had imagined, and it sounded like they had it much tougher as well.

Curious, Ren Xiaosu asked, "Don't you find it tiring after all these decades? What is it that you're after by working so hard?"

Since Wang Jing intended to train Ren Xiaosu, he decided to say a few more words. "This is for the cause we believe in. Now that the medical field is declining and with so many things still waiting to be researched, how can we just shut ourselves in? Besides, is what we do really that tough? Ancient folklore mentions a great person who thrice passed by a house without entering. Do you know who that was?"

Ren Xiaosu had never really read about ancient folklore, and there were no books that touched on them in Stronghold 88's library either. He thought for a moment before saying, "The God of Wealth?"

Wang Jing was stunned. "Although your answer is wrong, it seems you do have some life experience...."

However, right at this moment, Ren Xiaosu was stunned. He turned to look at Yang Xiaojin. Then he realized she had also noticed that someone was quietly approaching.

Yang Xiaojin was already slowly reaching behind her back where she kept her pistol. She whispered, "Are we taking action?"

He stopped Yang Xiaojin and turned to Wang Jing with a smile. "Are you carrying a gun? May I have a look at it? I've never seen one before."

The middle-aged man who spoke earlier laughed and said, "Guns are not for playing with. Since you've never held one before, it'd be bad if you accidentally fired it."

Wang Jing waved it off. "It's alright, he just wants to have a look. If he's going to be traveling on this route often in the future, he'll have to start learning how to handle firearms sooner or later."

Everyone could hear the implied meaning behind Wang Jing's words. He was basically saying he would frequently let Ren Xiaosu go on the medical exchange in the future!

With that, Wang Jing took out a pistol from under his arm. As a doctor, he actually carried a gun around with him all the time. However, Ren Xiaosu was not surprised. He and Yang Xiaojin had already noticed it.

Ren Xiaosu said with a smile, "Is it loaded? Can I try firing it?"

The middle-aged man said, "It's better if you go back to the stronghold's shooting range to practice first."

Just as his words trailed off, Ren Xiaosu saw a red dot appear on Liang Ce's chest. A voice came from the forest north of the campsite. "All of you, stand up and place your hands behind your heads. Put your guns down on the ground. If not, I'll kill him."

Ren Xiaosu stared at the red dot on Liang Ce's body. The intruder was actually carrying a gun with a laser sight? Would normal people possess something like that? Could they really have encountered army deserters from the Kong Consortium?

With the gradual migration of the Northerners to the South, it was no longer bandits who were running rampant in the wilderness but deserters.

The world was about to descend into chaos as the smell of gunpowder filled the air.

Everyone in the campsite stood up and placed their hands behind their heads.

Liang Ce was a little nervous. He looked around but did not know who could save him. He swept his gaze to the middle-aged man who claimed to be a good marksman earlier. However, he saw the man had already put his gun obediently down on the ground.

The person in the forest started to approach the campsite. Ren Xiaosu said in a low voice, "It sounds like there's only one person nearby. I'll make my move directly. If he has other companions hiding in the distance, can you take care of it?"

Yang Xiaojin gave a slight nod.

Honestly, Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin really did not think deserters would be much of a threat. If not for the fact they were trying to get into the Kong Consortium's stronghold with their identities hidden, the deserter pointing a gun at them would already be dead.

They saw the deserter walking out of the forest. His uniform was tattered with holes, and the camouflage paint on his face was mixed with dust. His face was so dirty his expression could not be seen.

Yang Xiaojin examined the other deserter's military uniform and confirmed, "It's really a deserter from the Kong Consortium's military."

The deserter strolled up to them and said coldly, "I'm sorry, everyone. I don't have a choice either. The war in the North has gotten too chaotic. I need to go to the South and try to build a life there, so please hand over all your money."

Then the deserter looked at their vehicles. When he realized there was a Red Cross sign on them, he was overjoyed. "You're doctors? Are there medical supplies in the cars? You, go and move all the medicine into a vehicle."

Liang Ce was forced to do so as he had a gun pointed at him. When the deserter saw the medicine in the vehicles, he got very excited. With this amount of medicine, he could easily become rich when he got to the South!

Wang Jing and the others did not say anything throughout this. If the deserter were only after their medical supplies, there was no need for them to put up a fight. They could just give them to him.

But then the deserter said to Liang Ce, "Bring over two jerrycans of gas from the other vehicles and load them into the trunk as well!"

Liang Ce continued to do as he was told. Ren Xiaosu thought that guy was really unlucky. He was even the first one to get targeted during a robbery.

The deserter kept his gun up and looked around the campsite. He suddenly saw Meng Nan and Yang Xiaojin. When his gaze landed on the latter, he almost could not take his eyes off her. He said to Yang Xiaojin, "Get into the car and quietly drive for me. I'll let you go when I get to the South—"

Bang!

The deserter looked down at his chest in a daze before falling backwards slowly.

Liang Ce was trembling all over as he looked at Ren Xiaosu. However, he saw Ren Xiaosu also looked terrified. A wisp of smoke was still coming out from the muzzle of the gun in his hand.

Liang Ce said nervously, "Didn't you say that you've never held a gun before?"

Ren Xiaosu said in a trembling voice, "Yeah, I've never held one before. I admit that I took a gamble there. But he was threatening my girlfriend just now, so it was either you or him that had to die tonight..."

Liang Ce did not know whether to laugh or cry. However, he still said solemnly in the end, "Thank you!"

"Gratitude received from Liang Ce, +1!"

Chapter 797: Oath

To Liang Ce, Ren Xiaosu had helped him avoid a crisis. After all, the deserter had been pointing a gun at him throughout the ordeal. If it came down to a fight, he would definitely have been the first one to die.

Besides, Liang Ce felt it was understandable that Ren Xiaosu had opened fire to protect his girlfriend. If the deserter had tried to take Meng Nan away, he would probably have risked his life to fight him as well.

Ren Xiaosu handed the pistol back to Wang Jing in a fluster. "I'm sorry, I didn't consider the consequences just now. If I didn't manage to kill him, I would have implicated everyone."

However, Wang Jing did not take the pistol back from him. He said with a smile, "You were right to shoot. However, you don't have to return the gun to me. You can keep it. This gun was handed down to me by my father. But I think you're more suited to owning it now."

Ren Xiaosu said in surprise, "But I don't know how to use a gun."

"It doesn't matter whether you know how to or not. What's important is that you have the courage to open fire." Wang Jing sighed. When he said that, the middle-aged man beside him felt a little ashamed.

At the beginning, he did even want to let Ren Xiaosu handle a gun. But in the end, he threw down his gun while Ren Xiaosu was the one who resolved the crisis.

It was apparent that Wang Jing had brought him along in recent years because he was the best shooter among them. But what good was that?

Wang Jing waved it off. "You don't have to feel embarrassed. After all, we're doctors, and we've never killed anyone before. This is only normal."

Ren Xiaosu nodded to himself. Wang Jing was really quite a reasonable person, and what he said was true as well.

Wang Jing said to the middle-aged man and Liang Ce, "Carry this man's body into the forest. We'll be staying here for the night, so it won't be nice to leave the corpse at the campsite."

"Sure." Liang Ce nodded in acknowledgment. The medical field was a little unique. Normal people tended to be afraid of dead people, but surgeons were used to seeing them. So they were not afraid of the dead but the living.

Wang Jing looked north and lamented, "It looks like the world is really going to get chaotic soon."

“Elder, why do you say that?” Ren Xiaosu asked.

“Recently, there have been people getting transferred away from the various hospitals. You know about that, right?” Wang Jing asked.

Ren Xiaosu nodded, pretending to know...

“Actually, these doctors have been temporarily redeployed by the Wang Consortium to join the military.” Wang Jing said, “Apparently, they don’t have enough medics, so they got the doctors in the strongholds to take their place. This is only the first batch. There will still be a second round of deployments after that.”

“The Kong Consortium and the Pyro Company are at war right now. Perhaps the Wang Consortium is making preparations in advance? However, I don’t think the Wang Consortium will be affected by the flames of war,” Ren Xiaosu speculated. In his opinion, the unfortunate ones were the Kong Consortium and Pyro Company. Currently, the Wang Consortium was just sitting back and waiting to reap the benefits.

But when Wang Jing heard his speculation, he shook his head. “I probably know more about this than you all. Those doctors and nurses have actually been deployed to the north.”

“To the north?” Someone was puzzled. Ren Xiaosu examined everyone’s expressions and noticed they seemed like they were hearing this news for the first time.

Wang Jing explained, “Yes, to the north. They’re heading to Stronghold 176! Rumor has it that a new enemy has appeared there. Awhile ago, the nomads came to deliver news that enemies from farther north will be coming to attack.”

“The nomads?” One of the doctors became angry when he heard that. “They’ve just killed so many people at Stronghold 176, so how can we believe their words?”

“This time, the nomads are not lying.” Wang Jing said with a sigh, “After getting the news, the Wang Consortium sent their scouts north and actually found traces of the enemy. Furthermore, someone said all of the nomads living in the grasslands have migrated east so they can avoid this disaster.”

Wang Jing was a medical authority who would usually come into contact with high-ranking officials. Some of the Wang Consortium’s big shots would even specifically look for Wang Jing to handle their treatment. He must have heard the news from those big shots.

Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin looked at each other. Then Ren Xiaosu asked in a low voice, “Before The Cataclysm, there used to be a vast territory up in the north. But from some of the old newspapers dating back some years ago that I read in Stronghold 88, it was said that the disaster had affected the Northern Territory much more seriously than here. How could anyone have survived there?”

Yang Xiaojin replied, “I doubt any of us has ever been that north before, so that’s probably just speculation. After all, the newspapers that reported it were not Hope Media, so their credibility must be taken with a pinch of salt.”

Honestly, probably no one in the entire Central Plains would have expected enemies from farther north of the grasslands to come attacking one day.

Ren Xiaosu had thought this chaotic war in the Central Plains would only involve a few consortiums. But he never expected there to be such a turn of events.

Ren Xiaosu looked at Wang Jing and said, "Is that why you've been frowning all this time?"

"Yes, even though we spend an entire lifetime learning how to save lives, we end up realizing how insignificant we are in the face of war. You can save 10 people today, but thousands of people will perish just in a small-scale war, with thousands more injured as well," Wang Jing said.

When a young doctor nearby heard this, he became a little despondent. "Then have we studied medicine for nothing?"

Wang Jing patted him on the shoulder. "How could it be for nothing? We'll still save as many people as we can. Each of us was required to take an oath when we entered the profession. Do you still remember the oath you took back then?"

The young doctor said, "Of course I remember it. Health entrusted. Lives confided. I will do my utmost to alleviate human suffering and promote human health, safeguarding the sanctity and honor of medicine. I will heal the wounded and rescue the dying regardless of the trials and tribulations. As long as my life endures, may I commit myself to advancing the well-being of the entire human race."

The oath was still not over. Wang Jing immediately said with a nostalgic look in his eyes, "I aspire to be a candle that burns brightly from tip to end."

Ren Xiaosu was stunned. That was what Zhang Jinglin said to him as well. So it turned out this was an oath taken by doctors in this era of the wastelands. Only at this time did he remember that Zhang Jinglin used to be a medic who was unwilling to open fire when he served at Fortress 178 a long time ago.

Ren Xiaosu felt an inexplicable sense of respect for Zhang Jinglin. It was just like when he met Jiang Xu.

In the past, he always held a pessimistic view of this world. But gradually, he realized it was because he had too little life experience and had not met enough people yet, so he was unaware there was still hope in this world.

Wang Jing waved everyone in. "Let's settle down and eat. After you're done eating, rest early. We continue our journey tomorrow."

At this moment, Liang Ce and the middle-aged doctor named Sima Gang returned to the campsite. Ren Xiaosu signaled to Liang Ce and said in a low voice, "You like Meng Nan, right? Right now, while the impact of the crisis hasn't subsided yet, she'll certainly be quite affected. Have you heard of the misattribution of arousal^[1] before? It means that when a person is in danger, their heart will involuntarily beat faster. At this moment, when she meets another person, she'll think that she has a romantic interest in that person. Hurry over to her."

Yang Xiaojin glanced at Ren Xiaosu. "You sure are full of tricks."

Ren Xiaosu quickly explained, "It's just something I saw in a book.... I thought we were giving Liang Ce some advice? I'm just applying what I've learned."

As Liang Ce had also heard of the misattribution of arousal before, his eyes lit up. He turned around and walked towards Meng Nan. However, he saw her silently sitting next to the campfire, hugging her knees. It looked like she was still affected by what had happened just now.

Liang Ce sat down next to Meng Nan and asked softly, "Are you scared?"

Meng Nan's expression softened a little. She nodded her head and replied, "A little. I used to listen to songs all night when I felt scared. When I saw a cadaver for the first time when I started studying medicine, I was so scared I couldn't fall asleep for the entire night. But as long as I listened to songs, I would not feel that scared anymore. I forgot to bring along my portable music player this time. Can you chat with me?"

Liang Ce got excited. "There's no need for that, I brought a portable music player with me!"

Ren Xiaosu was speechless. As was Yang Xiaojin.

Then Ren Xiaosu watched Liang Ce walk to the car to retrieve his portable music player for Meng Nan before sitting down by the campfire alone.

He suddenly believed this guy deserved to be single.

Chapter 798: Small fries

Ren Xiaosu looked at Liang Ce, who was sitting happily by the campfire. He asked puzzledly, "What are you so happy about?"

The campfire cast a red-orange glow on Liang Ce's face, adding a festive sense to his happy look. He replied with a laugh, "I'm just happy that I could help Meng Nan!"

These words left Ren Xiaosu dumbfounded. He said in a speechless manner, "How old are you this year?"

Liang Ce replied, "25, why?"

Ren Xiaosu asked again, "How many girls have you courted over the years?"

Liang Ce said, "Three, I guess. I started at the age of 16, but I failed every time."

"Then did you come to realize anything after failing to court these three girls?" Ren Xiaosu was trying to guide Liang Ce to reflect on himself.

But Liang Ce thought for a moment and replied, "I'm a good person."

"Pfft." Even Yang Xiaojin could not bear listening to any of this further. She said, "You shouldn't have given her the portable music player just now even if you had it. Didn't you hear her say that she wants you to chat with her? Why did you give her the portable music player when she said that?"

Only then did Liang Ce manage to react. He slapped his thigh and said in annoyance, "Oh yeah, why didn't I think of that? Then what should I do now?"

Ren Xiaosu comforted, "Wash up and go to sleep."

Liang Ce was speechless.

The guy turned his pleading gaze to Yang Xiaojin. Yang Xiaojin thought for a moment before saying, "From today onwards, you should start being a little more proactive. Since you aren't the type who can make a girl fall for you at first sight, you must make up for it by putting in more effort. She'll definitely feel insecure on this trip away from home. If you chat more with her, you'll be able to leave a good impression."

Ren Xiaosu sighed. This was the first time he saw Yang Xiaojin talk so much with strangers. It seemed that even Yang Xiaojin could not stand it anymore.

However, Ren Xiaosu asked Yang Xiaojin softly, "Am I the type that can make girls fall for me at first sight?"

Yang Xiaojin rolled her eyes and went into her tent to sleep.

The next morning, Liang Ce rushed out of the campsite to relieve himself after waking up. Then he went to wash his hands at the riverbank.

Meng Nan also walked over to the riverbank. When Liang Ce saw her, he remembered Yang Xiaojin's advice for him to be more proactive. As such, he took the initiative to greet her. But he got nervous as he did not know what to say. After hesitating for a while, he greeted Meng Nan, "Did you pee on your hands too?"

Meng Nan was confounded.

Ren Xiaosu, who was watching all of this from afar, sighed to Yang Xiaojin, "I have a feeling that these two are drifting further and further apart under our guidance...."

In the morning, the convoy set off again. Not long after they left, rustling came from the forest in the north. Some people were making their way through the forest.

The morning sun shone through gaps in the canopy and onto the ground, and static was buzzing in the forest. A heavily armed soldier with thick camouflage paint on his face said on the radio, "Coast is clear. Targets have departed."

"All clear."

"All clear here as well."

At several other locations, soldiers were replying on the radio.

A voice crackled in the earpiece, "1st Squad, search for the deserter's corpse and check for any clues at the campsite. 2nd Squad, set up a defensive perimeter."

After that, the platoon in the forest sped up their march. Five soldiers in khaki combat uniforms entered the campsite to search for any suspicious traces, while the other five soldiers began searching in the forest.

“We’ve found the deserter’s corpse. The wound is on the left chest, but the bullet didn’t hit the heart. It looks like the shooter was an amateur.”

“We found nothing unusual at the campsite either. There’s no suspicious markings and no traps. Although the location of the campsite is quite good, they’re not well-versed in setting up their tents. The campfire’s position was also very random. They’re unlikely to be professional soldiers.”

Behind them, the commander thought quietly. The reconnaissance troops he led were specifically sent here to check on the Trinity Institute. His mission was not to assassinate these people but to check whether there were any suspicious individuals among the Trinity Institute convoy.

As it was currently a sensitive period, the Kong Consortium did not want any suspicious people getting into Stronghold 31.

This medical exchange program should have been canceled as the Kong Consortium had informed Wang Jing in advance. However, Wang Jing insisted on going there and replied that if they were not allowed to attend the exchange, he would sit in front of Stronghold 31’s gate until the Kong Consortium agreed to let them in.

It seemed the higher-ups did not want to endure the pressure of public opinion. After all, the Trinity Institute’s influence in the North had been increasing over the years, and it was also getting more and more recognized by the people. Kong Erdong wanted to leave his name in the annals of history, so he was particularly concerned about his reputation.

If Wang Jing really died in front of the stronghold while protesting, Hope Media would definitely report on this matter thoroughly.

As such, the field personnel of the 3rd Military Intelligence Division were deployed. Their mission was to carry out an early investigation. If they discovered any suspicious people among the academic exchange group, they would pose as bandits and kill everyone in this group in the wilderness. This way, the Kong Consortium would not be implicated at all.

The previous night, they had set up camp quietly in the forest to the north. They had already noticed the deserter when he was making his way here from the North, but they did not stop him. Instead, they deliberately used him to test the academic exchange group by letting him go over to the Trinity Institute’s campsite.

If this deserter carried out a massacre, it would save them a lot of trouble. What did the lives of everyone in this academic exchange group have anything to do with them?

They watched the situation unfold through their binoculars and saw Ren Xiaosu shoot the deserter dead in panic.

On the surface, there didn't seem to be anything unusual. Other than the deserter being a little stupid, the members of the academic exchange group had all behaved normally.

"Captain, should we pursue them?" a soldier asked over the radio.

"Let's wait until I report this matter to our superior." The commander said calmly, "We still have to wait for orders from the higher-ups to kill Wang Jing."

After that, he dialed the satellite phone and reported the situation here.

After a long silence, the officer on the other end said, "Let them go. There's no need to complicate things further. I'll arrange for someone to check their identities at Stronghold 31. You all can report to the front line."

"Roger that." The commander ended the call and said on the radio, "Attention, everyone, we're withdrawing. We've been ordered to report to FOB 3 and take a new mission there."

With that, this well-trained platoon quickly retreated and headed north.

Forward Operating Base 3 was one of the important forward operating bases for the Kong Consortium's war efforts against the Pyro Company, with the Pyro Company's military controlled zone located just a little farther north of it.

After these people left, "Old Xu" walked out from behind a large tree in its white mask and silently looked in the direction these people had left in.

Ren Xiaosu had discovered their presence the previous night. Otherwise, he would not have taken so much effort to put on such a convincing act.

Initially, he wanted to take care of these people directly. But thinking that his target was Kong Erdong, it would be better not to alert the enemy over these small fries.

But these people were also quite ruthless. They had deliberately allowed the deserter through so he could kill them at their campsite.

Chapter 799: Is his future really in the Prosperous Northwest?

When Ren Xiaosu saw this platoon, he realized the internal situation of the Kong Consortium was far tenser than he had imagined. These people had reached an unusual level of vigilance.

Therefore, it would probably be a little difficult to assassinate Kong Erdong later. Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin had discussed it earlier and decided to focus on saving Wang Yun first. Whether they could kill Kong Erdong would have to depend on luck.

The Great Hoodwinker was walking down the streets of Stronghold 31. Although he was no longer carrying his white banner around, he was still dressed shabbily like an old vagrant.

The Great Hoodwinker made many turns on the long street and headed east along Lishan North Road.

Along the way, the Great Hoodwinker even bought two roasted flatbread pastries and ate them as he walked. While walking, he scrutinized the streets and buildings of Stronghold 31 as though he were on a tour.

After two kilometers, the Great Hoodwinker suddenly turned into a small alley on the left. He only stopped when he came across a small hair salon.

The hair salon looked extremely out of place in this dilapidated alley, and there was even a flickering LED signboard with the word "Massages" hanging on the entrance.

The hair salon on the ground floor was a remodeled unit in a residential building that was five stories high.

The Great Hoodwinker looked up to confirm there was a natal lily flowerpot out on the second-floor balcony. Only then did he dare to enter the alley without worry.

Upon reaching the second floor, the Great Hoodwinker took out a key to unlock the door of Unit 201. The layout of the house was no different from that of a normal household.

After the Great Hoodwinker entered the room, he immediately looked around to confirm no one was in the house. Then he went into the kitchen and found a rolling pin that he used to tap on the floor.

Dong, dong, dong. A hollow sound came from one of the ceramic tiles in the living room. The Great Hoodwinker used his fingernail to gently lift up the entire tile.

But something unexpected happened at this moment. A flying needle suddenly shot out from underneath the tile. The Great Hoodwinker could not dodge in time and was hit squarely. He immediately raised his head, but he looked extremely comical with the steel needle dangling from his cheek.

The Great Hoodwinker said angrily, "If you want to arrest me, just arrest me. Why did you have to disfigure my face?!"

As soon as he finished speaking, the Great Hoodwinker could hear the sound of windows breaking upstairs, followed by the sound of clothing rubbing against ropes. Eight heavily armed combatants had rappelled down from the top of the building and crashed through different windows on the second floor one after another!

"Don't move! Get down! Put your hands behind your head!" the combatants roared.

But the Great Hoodwinker utterly ignored them. Even though he was being held at gunpoint, he dashed towards the balcony in a ghostly blur. The combatant on the balcony started firing at him decisively. But to their surprise, not a bullet hit the Great Hoodwinker.

The Great Hoodwinker's footsteps were heavy. As he charged onto the balcony, the floor tiles in the house were all shattered.

The combatant on the balcony did not have time to think. The Great Hoodwinker had already collided into him in this narrow space. In an instant, the combatant felt his organs get crushed and his throat get compressed. He felt like he was about to vomit out all of his organs from the unbearable pressure!

A moment later, the collision sent the combatant and the Great Hoodwinker flying off the balcony. The two of them landed in the alley outside!

The Great Hoodwinker heaved a sigh of relief. "You're hoping to apprehend me with that bit of skill?"

He looked coldly at the troops who had surrounded him from both ends of the alley. The muscles on his body were bulging, but before he could make a move to break out of the encirclement, the Great Hoodwinker's expression changed drastically. He pulled out the steel needle from his face and slowly fell to the ground in disbelief.

Before he closed his eyes, he could hear the combatants shouting around him, "The target has passed out, the target has passed out. Mission accomplished. Tell the secret prison to get ready to receive a B-rank target!"

These people grabbed the Great Hoodwinker and loaded him into a black vehicle. As the person in charge of escorting him was still worried, he administered a dose of anesthetics to the Great Hoodwinker before heaving a sigh of relief.

The vehicle drove all the way east. Their destination was the secret prison at the easternmost side of Stronghold 31. It was a multipurpose training hall before The Cataclysm, but it was later dug up and transformed into the most sinister and terrifying place in the Kong Consortium.

In the words of the Kong Consortium's own people, none of the criminals who entered the secret prison were ever seen again.

When the convoy arrived at the secret prison, the prison gate slowly opened and allowed the convoy to pass through it quickly.

Although the surface of this secret prison resembled a huge stadium, there was a sloping road in the middle of it leading downwards into darkness, making it look like there was no end in sight.

The person in charge of escorting the Great Hoodwinker met with the secret prison's warden at the venue and quickly handled the handover procedures. "This person's identity is unknown, but he should be a core member of the other intelligence organizations. We already caught his informant. It's that young man we sent here previously. This time, we waited at his informant's house and managed to apprehend him. During the arrest, that guy was way too unflinching. Our 1st Military Intelligence Division assesses him as a B-rank threat, so make sure to watch over him carefully. The director will come and interrogate him personally soon."

The warden nodded. "Don't worry, prisoners who get sent here don't have a chance of escaping even if they have wings. Outlaws and superhumans can only behave obediently like lab rats."

With that, the warden gestured for someone to carry the Great Hoodwinker down into the basement.

As they walked through the long passageway of the prison, the inmates on both sides of the corridor got up and leaned against the metal bars to have a look at who was so unfortunate as to end up here.

It started getting rowdy in the prison, and the warden frowned slightly. The prison guard next to him raised his baton and swung. An inmate who was holding the cell's metal bars had his fingers broken by the baton.

Wang Yun was standing quietly in his individual cell and looking at the warden and his subordinates as they passed through the corridor.

When he got a clear look at the person they were bringing in, Wang Yun became so agitated the veins on his neck started bulging. *'Karma, this is fucking karma! Hahahahaha! Let me tell you this: You were way too fucking horrible!'*

Wang Yun stomped furiously in his cell and started laughing hysterically without saying a word.

The warden said to the prison guard next to him, "Record that Wang Yun might know this prisoner. Have the 1st Military Intelligence Division conduct a surprise interrogation on Wang Yun. They might uncover some new clues very quickly!"

Wang Yun was violently slapping the door of his cell. He wanted to tell the warden he knew the Great Hoodwinker and could share information about this man to redeem himself!

But then Wang Yun froze.

The Great Hoodwinker, who had his hands and feet shackled by tailormade cuffs, was initially unconscious. But the moment he heard Wang Yun's voice, he opened his eyes and winked at Wang Yun.

When Wang Yun looked at him again, the Great Hoodwinker was already back to his unconscious state. It was as though Wang Yun had just hallucinated it.

Wang Yun no longer gloated or raged anymore.

He was an extremely smart person. So he immediately understood the Great Hoodwinker was here to rescue him.

Wang Yun looked outside and did not say a word. Was his future really in the Prosperous Northwest?

So the other party's purpose for setting him up was so they could burn all his bridges.

Chapter 800: Rescue!

As the secret prison was located underground, no sunlight could reach the inside throughout the day. The inmates in the prison only had dim incandescent white lights to look at every day. Some who had been locked up in here for over 10 years now looked extremely pale, and their bodies had also become frail.

In normal prisons, there would be recreation time for the inmates to relax every day. They were even allowed to play basketball, table tennis, and read books or newspapers.

But it was different here. First of all, prisoners were prohibited from coming into contact with any forms of paper media. That was because the prisoners who were detained here were a little special. They could have people on the outside using newspapers, books, and the like to transmit information to them.

The people locked up here were intelligence personnel such as Wang Yun and the Great Hoodwinker.

The secret prison was originally a branch under the Kong Consortium's intelligence agency, also known as the 4th Military Intelligence Division. But later, it split away due to the unique nature of the secret prison.

Of course, the warden was still under the jurisdiction of the intelligence agency's director. But the staffing and progression here had established an independent system of its own.

For example, Wang Yun, who had been active in the intelligence agency for such a long time, had only worked in the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Divisions but had never been posted to the secret prison before.

Besides, the staff in the secret prison would not be posted to work in the other branches either.

At this moment, the prisoners were collecting and dining in the secret prison's chow hall under the watchful eyes of the prison guards.

Wang Yun was carrying a stainless steel tray as he walked quietly among the group of prisoners. A young man in front of him turned around and said with a laugh, "Director Wang, I heard someone say yesterday that you've joined us on the inside. The two of us were destined to meet."

Wang Yun looked at him expressionlessly. "Who are you?"

"Director Wang has such an excellent memory, so how can you possibly not remember me?" The young man laughed and said, "You were even the one who personally put me in here two years ago. Have you forgotten?"

"If I act like I don't know you, you should also pretend not to know me." Wang Yun sighed. "Since we're in here together, why do you have to make things difficult for yourself, huh? Cai Wensheng?"

Just as the other party had said, with that memory of his, how could Wang Yun possibly forget those who he had personally put in prison? It was just that he was extremely annoyed right now and could not be bothered to deal with someone like him.

Cai Wensheng and his buddies looked at one another and laughed. "Director Wang is still as arrogant as ever even though he's been imprisoned. It looks like we're gonna have some fun together in the future."

Wang Yun suddenly realized something. "Oh, I remember now. I wasn't personally involved in your arrests back then, so you guys don't know that I'm a superhuman!"

Cai Wensheng's expression changed at the words. He really did not know about this. Otherwise, he would not have provoked Wang Yun for no good reason.

Three superhumans were being held in this secret prison, and they were basically the most notorious inmates in the prison.

The emergence of supernatural beings not only changed the situation of the outside world, but it also affected the social structure within prisons. Here, supernatural beings were natural bullies who normal people would not want to mess with.

In any case, the people who came in knew they definitely couldn't get out of here for the rest of their lives, so any conflicts would be dealt with even more ruthlessly when they happened.

Furthermore, Cai Wensheng heard from the prison guards that the Kong Consortium intended to sacrifice Wang Yun as an offering to bless their war efforts. Even if Wang Yun were to kill a handful of people in the secret prison now, no one would care to stop him.

Cai Wensheng paled. Just as he was about to say something, he saw Wang Yun give a wave of his hand in frustration and say, "Hurry up and get lost. I can't be bothered with trash like you people right now."

After that, the prisoners who were lining up for food in front of Wang Yun quietly opened up a path for him. After Wang Yun got his food, he sat down at a table and looked around. Quite a lot of people in this prison really were put in here by him.

But as he was thinking, someone placed a meal tray down across him before sitting down to eat in a carefree manner.

Wang Yun's expression darkened when he saw the Great Hoodwinker sitting opposite him.

However, he did not say anything and just waited.

After Cai Wensheng collected his food, he looked for an empty table with lingering fear in his heart. When he walked past a prisoner, Wang Yun's pupils turned silver-gray, and a ball of air suddenly gathered at Cai Wensheng's feet, tripping him over.

Cai Wensheng fell to the ground, and his full meal tray scattered all over the floor. He turned around and looked at the inmate who had just walked past him. "How dare you trip me?"

The man, who was pent up with anger towards Wang Yun, could no longer tolerate it any longer in the face of a normal inmate. He immediately got up to beat the guy up with his buddies.

An uproar broke out in the chow hall. The spectating prisoners started banging on the tables as though they wanted the two groups of people to fight even more ferociously.

It wasn't until this moment that Wang Yun turned his head to the Great Hoodwinker with his teeth clenched and said, "Do you know you're still being watched since you've just come in? If you come and look for me with so many prison guards watching you closely, we'll both get interrogated and tortured later!"

While talking, Wang Yun drew away most of the air around them to create a near-vacuum.

The vacuum enveloped the two of them like a shield, and their conversation could not be heard unless someone went up close to them to listen.

The Great Hoodwinker took a sip of the seaweed and egg drop soup and said, "We're getting out of here soon anyways, so what's the point of caring about all that? Don't worry, I'll take you to the Prosperous Northwest after we finish eating this meal!"

Wang Yun calmed down a little at the words. He said, "Cover your mouth while speaking. I remember that the warden here is good at lip reading. That skill of his was recorded in the files from more than 10 years ago."

The Great Hoodwinker covered his mouth and said, "With that memory of yours, it will be such a pity if you don't join the Prosperous Northwest."

Honestly, if Wang Yun were just a good-for-nothing, the Great Hoodwinker would not have gone all out to rescue him. If a person like him were to go to the Northwest, there would simply be no chance for spies from the other intelligence organizations to survive.

Wang Yun looked at the Great Hoodwinker and said, "Do you have a plan to escape from here?"

"Yeah," the Great Hoodwinker took a bite of braised potatoes and said, "I already checked out the information about this place. From a structural point of view, although this place resembles a bank safe, there are two passageways where the gates are not that secure. The three-centimeter steel gates might be able to stop normal supernatural beings, but they can't stop me. After we finish eating, I'll charge out of here with you."

Wang Yun frowned. "Wait a minute, did you know the gates of those two passageways were replaced with 15-centimeter ones last year? Furthermore, an additional gate has been added, and explosives have been planted between the two gates to prevent superhumans from escaping. If anyone tries to barge their way through the first gate, the sitting intelligence director will be alerted and press the detonator he's holding, turning both of us into dead people in that enclosed passage."

The Great Hoodwinker said in shock, "Such a thing exists?"

Wang Yun replied in annoyance, "Can you not speak to me in such a shocked tone!"

"Hahaha, this is bad news. I was too careless." The Great Hoodwinker said in embarrassment, "Why didn't you update the blueprint for the secret prison after the modifications were done?"

Wang Yun covered his head in despair. "Stop speaking. My emotions are very unstable right now. The back of my head hurts when I hear you talking...."