

First Order 811

Chapter 811: Decapitation strike

In the deep of the night, peace had not been restored to the stronghold yet. Ren Xiaosu looked out of the villa through a gap in the curtains and made sure Pei Wenjin had really taken all the sentries from the two hidden lookout posts away with him.

But before he could completely feel at ease, someone knocked on his room door.

When Ren Xiaosu went to open the door, he saw Yang Xiaojin standing there and was overjoyed. Was she taking the initiative to have an in-depth discussion with him about their ideals at this late hour?

Just as he was about to say something, Yang Xiaojin covered his mouth with one hand.

Then Yang Xiaojin took out a piece of paper with her other hand and waved it in front of Ren Xiaosu. Ren Xiaosu saw the words “tapping device installed in room” written on it. While he was momentarily stunned, Yang Xiaojin removed her hand and went back to her room next door.

Ren Xiaosu checked around the room. To be honest, he had not undergone any professional training in this area before, so he did not have any anti-reconnaissance skills like Yang Xiaojin or Zhou Yingxue.

After searching around for a long time, he was still unable to figure out where the bug was installed.

However, Ren Xiaosu found this a little deplorable. The Kong Consortium’s intelligence agency was too crafty. Their tricks were each more devious than the other.

Zhong Zhen had deliberately set a trap in the way the hidden sentries were positioned to mislead them. This time, Pei Wenjin was even more cunning. By taking advantage of the commotion in the stronghold, he came to the villa and conducted a thorough search of the place, putting on an extremely convincing act.

But in actual fact, it was just so he could get his men to install the tapping devices. This was probably Pei Wenjin’s real objective.

Since Pei Wenjin’s men had also searched the vehicles outside the villa just now, those cars would definitely have been bugged as well.

Wasn’t this as good as stopping them from talking? Ren Xiaosu felt a little helpless. They could not remove the tapping devices yet either, or the other party would realize they knew.

After all, how could a group of doctors possibly be able to discover the tapping devices?

After daybreak, the others started preparing their research documents for the medical exchange while Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin took the opportunity to have a stroll in the villa’s yard. Only when they found a place where they could not be eavesdropped on did Ren Xiaosu finally dare to say, “I was the one who created the commotion in the stronghold yesterday. I’ve already gotten in touch with the Great Hoodwinker, but it’s still gonna be quite difficult to rescue Wang Yun.”

“What’s difficult about it?” Yang Xiaojin asked.

Ren Xiaosu described a rough sketch of the situation to her. Actually, he felt it would not be difficult to get the detonator from the hands of the sitting intelligence director. The most challenging part was how should they get Wang Yun’s 200-odd subordinates out of the other prison?

Yang Xiaojin asked, “How do you plan on solving the problem of locating the detonator? It seems like you already have an idea?”

Ren Xiaosu said, “Look, there’s no point in us looking for the detonator. When we capture whoever’s holding it, we’ll still have to force them to tell us where the detonator is. Isn’t that too troublesome? We can just kill that intelligence director instead. Once he’s dead, it’ll take some time for the new intelligence director to inherit the detonator, so there’ll be enough time for us to go in and attempt a prison break.”

As for the steel gates and whatnot, they weren’t even worth mentioning in the presence of the black saber. So far, it only had some trouble cutting through Chen Liu’er’s Golden-Hooped Rod.

After listening to Ren Xiaosu’s idea, Yang Xiaojin was speechless. But when she thought about it carefully, it somehow made sense.

She asked again, “Then what about Wang Yun’s subordinates in the other prison?”

“Here’s what I think,” Ren Xiaosu said. “You see, it’ll be too noticeable if we walk on the streets with 200-odd people after breaking them out of the prison. In that case, why don’t we just find a way to demolish the stronghold? That way, there’ll be chaos everywhere and no one will notice us!”

Yang Xiaojin looked at Ren Xiaosu in silence. She thought Wang Shengzhi was probably not expecting such a big surprise from Ren Xiaosu when he sent him here to assassinate Kong Erdong.

Wang Shengzhi had only wanted Kong Erdong killed, but Ren Xiaosu was actually thinking of how to demolish the stronghold to conceal their operation!

But Yang Xiaojin had to admit that what Ren Xiaosu said was valid as well.

But how should they demolish it and where should they start?

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Meanwhile, a group of extremely elite troops were trekking across treacherous mountains in the wilderness north of the Kong Consortium.

The Kong Consortium was not stationing any of their troops in the Ningjin Mountains, because the mountains were towering and steep, and there were also three cliffs in the mountain range. The terrain here was even more terrifying than you could imagine. Not even infantry units could pass through it unless they were a team of T4-ranked combatants and above, much less mechanized troops.

Some time ago, the Kong Consortium had set up a checkpoint here because the Pyro Company's troops were physically much stronger, so it was likely they would pass through here.

Later, the Kong Consortium withdrew the checkpoint. It was not that they did not view the Pyro Company as a threat, but they realized they were at a huge disadvantage if they had to intercept the Pyro Company in this mountain range. In these mountains, the Pyro Company's combatants were agile as monkeys while the Kong Consortium's troops were clumsy as oxen. They could not even take advantage of the firearms they had.

Hence, the Kong Consortium withdrew from the mountain range and set up defensive fortifications on the plains around the mountains. Once the Pyro Company's troops emerged from the mountains and tried to attack Stronghold 32 in the north, they would immediately be met by a terrifying metal storm.

But even though these Pyro Company troops made up of several hundred soldiers were trekking across the mountainous terrain wearing heavy field packs, it was like they were walking on flat ground. The Kong Consortium's assumption was right. The Pyro Company really did have special forces made up of their T4-ranked combatants.

Moreover, their target was not Stronghold 32. The troops made a sudden turn at Mt. Dayu in the Ningjin Mountains and detoured around the defensive line waiting beyond the mountain range.

Then they headed straight to Stronghold 31, which was south of Stronghold 32.

The troops' mission was definitely not to attack and take over a city but to carry out a decapitation strike.

Just as Qing Zhen evaluated how nanosoldiers should be deployed, using powerful individuals on the main battlefield would be the dumbest decision. That was because it would reduce their value in a battle.

The Pyro Company troops were marching at a rapid pace. Even without any form of transportation, they could still travel 180 kilometers in a day.

In comparison, typical infantry could only travel about 40 kilometers in a day while carrying a heavy load in the wilderness. Even if they picked up their pace, they could at most travel about 70 kilometers a day.

In a war, this marching speed could be considered a long-range penetration.[1]

Correspondingly, the Pyro Company's main forces at the rear were getting restless. As long as the decapitation strike in the south was successful, a full-scale war between the Kong Consortium and the Pyro Company would break out!

At this moment, a person in a black robe was standing on the summit of a mountain and quietly watching the Pyro Company's strike troops moving away. He said with a hoarse laugh, "How can humans ever stop warring? Don't you all agree?"

Several gray Experimentals were hanging from the cliff walls behind him, roaring in response to their lord's mocking of the humans.

These Experimentals were different from those the Central Plains people had encountered. They had come from an icy prison located in the Far North. The ruler in the Northern Territory had allowed the black-robed wizard to turn thousands of prisoners into his personal army. It was as though the gods had scattered the seeds of plague onto the human realm.

However, it had never been easy to turn humans into Experimentals. Of a few thousand prisoners, only several dozen new Experimentals were successfully created.

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Chapter 812: War is coming

After careful consideration, Ren Xiaosu still felt that it was much safer to demolish the stronghold before proceeding with the rescue mission.

As for how to demolish it, he had not thought of it yet. For some reason, he felt it was easier to destroy an entire stronghold than tearing down a prison. Who knew where his confidence came from?

At the moment, Yang Xiaojin was driving with the convoy as they headed to the conference venue prepared by the Kong Consortium's medical institution. That was where the medical exchange would be held.

This time, Meng Nan and Liang Ce were sitting with them in their car. Ren Xiaosu sat in the passenger seat while those two sat in the backseat.

Honestly, Ren Xiaosu felt Meng Nan might be a little interested in Liang Ce now. Despite the fact that Liang Ce had already undone the "steel cord" used by Yue Lao to bring them together several times, Meng Nan was still willing to hang out with Liang Ce. This clearly meant something.

Along the way, Ren Xiaosu looked at the roadside and asked in confusion, "Why's there so many lights and decorations on the streets? Isn't the New Year over already? Does the Kong Consortium have other special holidays they're celebrating?"

"It's Valentine's Day." Liang Ce said curiously, "Ren Xiaosu, you're also a stronghold resident, so how do you not know about Valentine's Day? February 14th will be here soon."

Ren Xiaosu was stunned for a moment. He was indeed aware of the holiday. He had even heard about it from Wang Fugui, but he just forgot about it.

As he was not a stronghold resident, and the townspeople never celebrated this holiday, Ren Xiaosu did not have any concept of it at all.

To him, or maybe to all refugees, there were only two holidays that were celebrated in a year. One of them was the New Year, and the other was the Qingming Festival.

The former was to give the living a chance to have a new beginning, while the latter was to mourn for the dead.

Apart from these two holidays, everyone was too busy making a living to care about romance.

Ren Xiaosu was looking at the decorations on the streets and thinking about the war between the Kong Consortium and the Pyro Company. The ceasefire had only started a few days ago, and no one knew when the fighting would break out again. Were these people not aware that danger was near? How could they still be in the mood to celebrate the holiday?

However, Ren Xiaosu figured it out. Celebrating a holiday like this did not prove the stronghold residents did not have a sense of danger, nor that they were living too comfortably. It did not prove anything at all.

Just as he had said, why did he still buy new clothes and make dumplings for Yan Liuyuan every New Year even though they were so poor?

Wasn't it precisely because life was too tough that he wanted to create some happiness so there would be some hope in life?

Besides, whatever holidays the stronghold residents celebrated did not really concern him much.

Ren Xiaosu glanced at Yang Xiaojin. "Have you celebrated Valentine's Day before?"

Yang Xiaojin gave him a look. "What are you trying to ask?"

"Ahem, I was just asking," Ren Xiaosu said in embarrassment.

"I didn't have a chance to celebrate the holiday before." Although Yang Xiaojin was concentrating on driving, she still answered Ren Xiaosu's question.

Actually, Ren Xiaosu was only trying to ask Yang Xiaojin if she had any other relationships before him. It did not really matter if she did since he would not care about something like that. But it would be better if she did not have any, of course...

Ren Xiaosu quickly added, "Me neither!"

The convoy came to a stop at a building. As the representative of the Kong Consortium's medical field, Yang Shiruo was already waiting downstairs with a group of people to welcome them. This was to show their respect for Wang Jing.

Ren Xiaosu looked at Wang Jing's towering stature and thought this was the stage for Wang Jing and the others.

A medical exchange was actually a very boring event. It was so boring Ren Xiaosu almost dozed off. During the meeting, they would each make a statement of their breakthrough progress and share their cases, with nothing exceptional happening throughout the conference.

The meeting lasted until evening. Ren Xiaosu quietly left the villa again when everyone was asleep.

But this time, he was not going to meet with the Great Hoodwinker's agent. Instead, Ren Xiaosu was looking for Wang Run, the person from the Wang Consortium responsible for assisting him in assassinating Kong Erdong.

Ren Xiaosu should have gone to look for Wang Run yesterday. They had agreed to split up and enter the stronghold separately before immediately meeting up to exchange information. However, Ren Xiaosu had forgotten about it...

After all, he had even nearly forgotten about who Wang Yun and the Great Hoodwinker were, so it was not unusual that he would forget about Kong Erdong.

Ren Xiaosu stopped on the roof of a low-rise. It was obvious the garrison troops were patrolling even more intensely tonight. He realized there were people lying in ambush on the roofs of several buildings. It looked like the enemy already knew he would be getting around by moving from roof to roof. So they stepped up their defenses on many of the rooftops.

It looked like Zhong Zhen's death had left some impact.

This put Ren Xiaosu in a tight spot. He could still remember exactly how he nearly got shot by a sniper. It would be bad if he ended up dying here.

Wang Run was currently hiding at Nanxin Zhuang West Road. It would take Ren Xiaosu another 17 kilometers to get there, and he could still encounter a lot of hidden lookout posts on the roofs of buildings as he made his way there.

Ren Xiaosu noticed there were at least two people manning each of the hidden lookout posts, and the lookout posts were even in communication with one another. As the lookouts were basically arranged in the shape of a plum blossom, it would be very difficult for him to leave quietly if he tried to take some of them out.

He might poke the hornet's nest after taking out one of the hidden lookout posts.

Should he just not look for Wang Run? He was not planning on assassinating Kong Erdong right now anyway.

Thinking of this, Ren Xiaosu decisively turned around and returned to the villa to sleep.

At this moment, Wang Run was sitting solemnly in a hardware shop on Nanxin Zhuang West Road with nine of his men as they waited for Ren Xiaosu to link up with them.

These people were sitting motionlessly in a triangular formation in the shop like ten statues. They were each holding a pistol and wearing a thick black poncho.

Suddenly, someone asked, "Sir, why isn't that Ren Xiaosu here yet?"

Wang Run looked calmly at the shut roller shutter door of the hardware shop and said, "He could have been delayed by something. Since the medical exchange group arrived yesterday, at least that means

their journey went smoothly. There was a huge commotion in the stronghold last night, so it's likely he was discovered while coming here to look for us."

"But according to the map, the commotion yesterday happened in the east. Since we're on the west side, the directions don't match up." One of his men wondered, "Sir, could he have gone to the wrong place?"

Off to the side, one of them whispered, "Why do I get the feeling he's forgotten about us?"

"I don't think he'd forget such an important matter, but I do doubt his ability. It's not like he can do a job that would require the ten of us. Sir, why don't we just go and assassinate Kong Erdong?" someone asked.

Wang Run replied firmly, "The boss told me personally that we must cooperate fully with him during the mission. We'll only make a move if he fails the mission. This shows the boss trusts his ability very much. Everyone, please remember that the boss's main objective for us is to provide support. Besides, the 10 of us alone won't be enough to kill Kong Erdong."

"Then what do we do now?" a soldier asked.

Wang Run remained seated in the chair. "We continue waiting. He'll definitely be here!"

Suddenly, the crack of gunfire rang out in the stronghold. Wang Run immediately stood up.

At this moment, Ren Xiaosu was standing on a tall building with no one around. He was surprised to see several hundred shadows leaping and scuttling across the roofs. They were heading towards the center of the stronghold!

And they even got involved in a battle with one of the Kong Consortium's hidden lookout posts!

Chapter 813: Long-range raid!

In the dark of night, Ren Xiaosu watched from afar. When the Kong Consortium's hidden lookout posts came into contact with those heavily armed black shadows, they were immediately wiped out. They could not inflict any significant casualties on those people.

Ren Xiaosu could not help but wonder where these hundreds of super soldiers had suddenly come from. Seeing their strong physical fitness and combat capabilities, it was not a power any organization could easily possess.

If it weren't for the fact the attackers did not have silvery strands on their faces, Ren Xiaosu would have thought it was the Qing Consortium's new nanosoldier regiment that had come to attack the Kong Consortium.

In his impression, only nanosoldiers could fight in a large-scale group battle like this.

No, Ren Xiaosu felt that he had forgotten to consider something. It was the Pyro Company!

He saw these hundreds of super soldiers freely traversing across the buildings. Even though they were met by suppressive fire, it did not stop them at all. In an instant, they broke through the hidden lookout posts' ambush set up by the Kong Consortium. The people in black moved like a swarm of locusts on the rooftops, dense and terrifying.

However, it seemed these people did not expect to encounter a battle on the roofs either. At the beginning, the battle was a little rushed. But they quickly adjusted themselves.

At this moment, on a rooftop over 300 meters away from Ren Xiaosu, a T5 combatant said with a dark expression, "Did a spy appear within our ranks? Why're there so many people intercepting us on the roofs in the middle of the night?"

"We can't know, but there isn't any logical explanation for it other than spies. The Kong Consortium has never placed lookout posts on the roofs before." A T4-ranked commander shook his head and said, "It seems like they already knew that we'd be coming. What should we do now?"

The T5 combatant sneered, "So what if they know of our whereabouts in advance? Let's switch to the backup plan and have our troops attack the stronghold first to create chaos. After the garrison troops have been deployed, we can directly attack Kong Erdong's residence! Our forces have already launched their attack in Stronghold 32. According to the plan, it'll only take eight hours for them to get here to Stronghold 31. We won't have to consider retreating at all. Our troops will be here to back us up once we hold out for eight hours."

"Roger that." Several hundred T4 combatants assembled on the roof of a high-rise, looking exceptionally terrifying. A large number of the Kong Consortium's garrison troops were converging on this location as the alarm had already sounded not far away.

But these Pyro Company troops who were here for the decapitation mission did not remain around for longer. They continued making their way north, hoping to create an opening there when their sister corps arrived.

When Ren Xiaosu saw them leaving, he turned around and ran back towards Nanxin Zhuang West Road. His original plan was to send Wang Jing and the others away in six days before talking about how to rescue Wang Yun and assassinate Kong Erdong.

But with the sudden turn of events, even he was caught off guard.

Ren Xiaosu was not an indecisive person. In an instant, he immediately understood that the best chance to make the rescue and assassinate the target was tonight!

When he arrived at the entrance of the hardware shop at Nanxin Zhuang West Road, he knocked lightly on the roller shutter door three times before knocking another two times harder. "The Prosperous... wait, I got the code wrong. Sorry, let's start over. I want to buy a ladder. Do you have any in stock?"

Someone inside raised the roller shutter, and Ren Xiaosu bent forward and went in. When Wang Run saw that it was really Ren Xiaosu, he quickly walked up to him. "What exactly is going on outside?"

Ren Xiaosu explained, "I suspect that the Pyro Company has started the battle with the Kong Consortium in advance. I saw several hundred Pyro Company combatants on my way here, and they look like they're probably all T4 combatants and above. Currently, they are heading north."

"What're they doing here?" Wang Run frowned and pondered it for a moment. "We didn't receive any intelligence prior to this. How did the Pyro Company break through the Ningjin Mountains and get here?"

"Don't ask what they're here for. I suspect it must be to kill Kong Erdong." Ren Xiaosu said worriedly, "Hurry up and give me all intel related to the Kong Consortium's current intelligence director, as well as information about the secret prison and Stronghold 31's prison."

Wang Run was stunned. "Since they're going to kill Kong Erdong, we should just follow them to see if they are successful. The information you're asking for does not seem like it has anything to do with Kong Erdong."

Ren Xiaosu said in a serious tone, "Look, how can a few hundred of them be able to accomplish anything by themselves when there's a reinforced brigade currently stationed in Stronghold 31? No matter how powerful they might be, they still can't defeat a brigade. If I release all the prisoners from the two prisons, wouldn't it help them create chaos? I heard that the people in the secret prison are dangerous, and there's several supernatural beings among them too. After being locked up for so long, they've gotta have hatred for the Kong Consortium, right? They'll definitely take revenge."

"That does seem to make sense." Wang Yun was stunned. However, he wondered, "But is it necessary for us to step in and do that?"

"Yes, we definitely have to. This is called leveraging a situation, understand?!" Ren Xiaosu said.

Wang Run gave it some thought before turning around to say, "Give him the intelligence he wants."

Afterwards, one of Wang Run's men retrieved some information from a laptop. Ren Xiaosu stood in front of the computer and looked at it quietly. It wasn't until he confirmed he had memorized the information that he turned around and opened the roller shutter door to leave.

Before leaving, Ren Xiaosu said, "All of you, go to the villa where Wang Jing and the others are staying. When it gets chaotic in the stronghold, many residents will start looting the malls. The more vicious ones will even rob the neighborhoods and steal all the valuable items they can get. The battle between the Pyro Company and the Kong Consortium will probably not affect them, but I'm worried that something will happen to Wang Jing and the others."

Wang Run was taken aback. "You do not have the authority to give us orders."

"Then will you take responsibility if we fail to assassinate Kong Erdong?" Ren Xiaosu said coldly. "Don't worry, I'll complete the mission."

With that, Ren Xiaosu left the hardware shop.

Wang Run suddenly asked from behind, "Why didn't you come and rendezvous with us yesterday? Did you forget about it?"

"Hahahahaha, listen to what you're saying. How is that possible!" Ren Xiaosu then disappeared without a trace.

Only Wang Run and his men remained in the hardware shop. Wang Run mumbled, "Judging by his reaction, that guy actually forgot about us..."

After leaving, Ren Xiaosu did not head straight to the location identified in the intel provided by Wang Run. Instead, he went back to find Yang Xiaojin.

No matter how important the mission or the rescue, he would still have to join up with Yang Xiaojin first.

But before he could return to the villa, he already saw Yang Xiaojin waiting on a roof on the route he had to pass through. Ren Xiaosu asked in surprise, "Why are you here?"

"I knew you would go back for me, so I waited for you here to save you some time," Yang Xiaojin explained.

For some reason, a strange, unspoken understanding had always existed between Ren Xiaosu and the girl in front of him.

Ren Xiaosu said with a smile, "I was still thinking about how to stir up trouble in the stronghold so that we wouldn't get noticed. But in the end, the Pyro Company turned up to help us. Our plans will be carried out tonight."

"What do you need me to do?" Yang Xiaojin asked.

"Fight alongside me."

Chapter 814: Defection

There were three things Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin needed to do.

The first was to kill the current intelligence director.

The second was to break into the secret prison and release Wang Yun and the Great Hoodwinker. With their strength combined, those two would definitely be a great help to them. Moreover, the Great Hoodwinker already wrote in his letter that he would try to persuade several other supernatural beings in the secret prison to join them in the Prosperous Northwest.

And the third task would be to rescue Wang Yun's 200-odd subordinates with the newly recruited personnel.

After listening to Ren Xiaosu's analysis, Yang Xiaojin asked, "Can the Great Hoodwinker convince the other supernatural beings in the secret prison?"

Ren Xiaosu thought for a while and replied, "I think it should be quite difficult. But judging by how confident he sounded in the intel that he relayed to me, we'll believe him this one time. And even if those people do not want to join the Prosperous Northwest, they'll still create chaos so that they can escape from here. Having the stronghold in chaos is much better than not."

"Mhm." Yang Xiaojin nodded. "Then we'll do it according to your plan."

At this moment, the Great Hoodwinker was saying to the supernatural being in the next cell over, "Listen to me, bro, do you believe in fate..."

The supernatural being in the next cell said in a low voice, "No."

The Great Hoodwinker was stumped. He thought for a moment before saying, "Let's restart the conversation. Do you believe in destiny..."

"No."

The Great Hoodwinker was getting a little frustrated. "Why is it that you don't believe in anything? Let me tell you this, you'll get into trouble if you're like this!"

However, the other party said slowly, "We're all in the intelligence field, so I already know about you. Great Hoodwinker, you've persuaded quite a lot of people to join the Northwest over the years, so it's not like you really need me."

"You're different." The Great Hoodwinker said, "I came here specifically for you this time!"

On the other side of the prisoner, Wang Yun suddenly said, "Don't believe him. He actually came here for me."

The Great Hoodwinker was dumbfounded by Wang Yun's sudden rebuttal. "If you don't wanna help me, so be it. But can you not mess things up for me?"

The supernatural beings were all locked up in the same row of special holding cells. The entire cell was made of metal, and it was extremely strong.

Wang Yun had tried to escape before, but he could not get out with his powers.

However, there were still some flaws in the design of the cells. By locking the supernatural beings next to one another, it could eventually lead to potential trouble. Back when the secret prison was built, the supernatural beings were not as powerful as they were now.

Later the Kong Consortium wanted to remodel the secret prison so they could isolate the supernatural beings from one another. But when they realized the supernatural beings were living together peacefully and that the cells were really sturdy, they dropped the plans.

The Great Hoodwinker explained patiently, "I came here for the two of you this time. Your name is Ji Zi'ang, right? You're the former director of the Zhou Consortium's 2nd Military Intelligence Division. Later, you were transferred to the 3rd Division to handle field operations after killing a merchant who

took advantage of a woman in the stronghold. Following that, the Zhou Consortium member who was backing that merchant wanted to ensure there wouldn't be any further trouble, so he sold information of your operation to the Kong Consortium which eventually led to your arrest. Am I right?"

The man named Ji Zi'ang fell silent. He ignored the Great Hoodwinker.

The Great Hoodwinker said in a slightly arrogant tone, "Not just anyone can join the Northwest as they like. However, I admire you and feel that you're a suitable talent for the Northwest. That's why I made the trip here! If you follow me back to the Prosperous Northwest, you won't have to work in the intelligence agency anymore. You can just serve on the Discipline Supervision Committee. Take charge of whatever cases there might be if you come across any injustice. If I don't keep my word, you can cut off my son, Zhang Xiaoman's, head and kick it like a ball!"

Ji Zi'ang stayed silent again for a long time as he looked at the cold and emotionless prison he was in.

As this place was underground, there was no sunlight here all day. He seemed to have nearly forgotten what it felt like when the sun touched his skin. When the cold wind in the prison grazed him, it felt like an ant or a spider crawling on his skin. It was a feeling that would make anyone feel uncomfortable.

Every second he lived, he wanted to get out of this place. But how? The secret prison was a hell that confined him within it.

Ji Zi'ang said dejectedly, "It's useless no matter what you say. Let me tell you this: Once you're in here, don't even think about getting out. We can't get out even if the three of us work together."

The Great Hoodwinker's voice came from the next cell over. "My calculations predict that someone will definitely break in and get us out within three days. If I'm correct, you'll come with me, alright?"

Ji Zi'ang did not answer.

The Great Hoodwinker said again, "I've already killed that Zhou Consortium member who set you up on your behalf. Your wife and child are still alive, and I've already brought them to the Northwest. Ji Zi'ang, let me ask you again. If someone comes and saves us within three days, will you leave with me?"

Ji Zi'ang was taken aback. "They're still alive?"

Wang Yun and the Great Hoodwinker suddenly heard Ji Zi'ang start pounding on the metallic walls crazily in the neighboring cell. It was so violent the entire secret prison seemed to be shaking. Ji Zi'ang said in a loud voice, "Great Hoodwinker, you better not be lying to me. If I find out you lied to me, we're gonna have some fun here in the prison for the rest of our lives!"

The Great Hoodwinker sneered, "Your son placed first in his class this year, and your wife is working in a factory at Fortress 178. I heard that your wife has quite a lot of suitors, but she rejected them all and said that she'll wait for you to find her. I guess it'll still be fine in the short term, but in the long run, a widow and her son..."

Although the Great Hoodwinker said something provoking to Ji Zi'ang, Ji Zi'ang did not get angry. He slowly calmed down and asked, "You said someone will come and rescue us within three days?"

“Hehe.” The Great Hoodwinker lay on his cold and hard bed using his arms as a pillow and said with a laugh, “It might not even take three days.”

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Scenes of chaos played outside the Kong Consortium’s intelligence agency as people constantly walked in and out of it. Stronghold 31 was in a state of chaos. The sound of gunfire and explosions rang out as though the flames of war had arrived.

Residents were everywhere in the streets fleeing from their homes. Apart from the north, a large number of residents had gathered at the south, east, and west gates. All of them wanted to escape before the Pyro Company arrived.

At this moment, the ones who were the busiest were the intelligence agency and the garrison troops. The garrison troops would have to fight the battle, while the intelligence agency was being held accountable for the breach.

The current intelligence director, Wang Ziyang, walked out of the building in a hurry, with a dozen-odd subordinates following behind him. Someone eagerly put on his trench coat for him and asked, “Sir, where are you going at this time?”

Wang Ziyang barked, “Where am I going? I’m going to see the boss and clean up the mess for you idiots! The Pyro Company’s troops snuck into the stronghold, yet we were totally unaware of it. The boss even called me to ask if I’ve teamed up with the Pyro Company!”

The group of people from the intelligence agency fell silent. Everyone knew that after this incident, there would probably be a major shake-up in the intelligence agency.

Wang Ziyang stared coldly at the group of people in front of him before getting into the car without saying a word.

But not long after his car drove out, the driver stepped hard on the brakes. When Wang Ziyang was about to curse out loud, he saw through the windshield a young man and a young woman walking towards them from the end of the long street. The young man was even carrying a black saber with a smile on his face. “This license plate is correct.”

The young man looked at Wang Ziyang’s stunned expression through the windshield and said with a smile, “The photo matches as well. It’s him alright!”

Chapter 815: Everything has changed

The Kong Consortium’s newly appointed intelligence director, Wang Ziyang, used to be the director of the 1st Military Intelligence Division. After he was promoted, he recommended Zhong Zhen to Kong Erdong to take over his former position.

Unfortunately, Zhong Zhen had been killed after taking office for only just a few days. He had not even warmed his seat!

In the morning, Wang Ziyang was still lamenting that Zhong Zhen had a really unfortunate life.

But now, Wang Ziyang suddenly felt his life might not be any better either.

He was not stupid. When he saw Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin walking towards him without any fear, his heart slowly sank.

In this era that was gradually shifting towards superhumans, those who could approach him like he was a lamb awaiting slaughter were definitely superhumans, such as these two in front of him.

At this moment, his car was only two streets away from the intelligence agency. Wang Ziyang tried his best to calm down a little and said, "Go, turn back towards the intelligence agency!"

But just as he spoke, an explosive shot rang out on the street. Wang Ziyang looked over in surprise and saw the young girl had raised a black sniper rifle at some point in time and taken out the car's engine!

Clouds of white smoke spewed from under the hood. By the time the smoke dispersed, Wang Ziyang saw the two figures appear next to the car.

Wang Ziyang's heart had frozen cold. If the other party could open fire so wantonly near the intelligence agency, it was obvious they must be very confident of themselves and were not afraid of reinforcements arriving.

The driver gulped and said, "Sir, our vehicle is bulletproof!"

Wang Ziyang's eyes lit up when he heard this. But before his eyes could fully brighten, he heard a screeching sound as the young man sliced the car apart with the black saber in his hand.

The driver was dumbfounded by the sight of this. Wasn't this a bulletproof car? How could anyone possibly cut it apart with a saber?

Moreover, it looked as though the other party had sliced through the car like a hot knife going through butter.

Ren Xiaosu pried apart the sliced open vehicle and said with a smile, "You must be Wang Ziyang, right?"

Ren Xiaosu even shook hands with Wang Ziyang. Yang Xiaojin watched from the sidelines and felt like Ren Xiaosu was an official from the stronghold who visited the refugees to comfort them.

Wang Ziyang was absolutely dumbfounded by this offer of a handshake.

Ren Xiaosu continued, "You should be Wang Yun's former competitor too, right? In the future, Wang Yun will also be considered a member of the Northwest, so I'll send you his regards—"

Before Ren Xiaosu could finish speaking, Wang Ziyang immediately reacted when he heard Wang Yun's name mentioned, "Wait a minute, you came to kill me because you want to break into the prison, right? I'll hand over the detonator! I have it here with me!" As he spoke, he took out a small box that was about the size of a cigarette case from his breast pocket.

When Ren Xiaosu opened the box, he saw a black remote control inside.

Ren Xiaosu was amused. "You're pretty smart. Well, then..."

Bang!

When the sound of the pistol rang out, Wang Ziyang was killed on the spot. His splattered blood stained the interior of the car and windows red.

Right after, Yang Xiaojin fired another shot at the driver.

"Why did you kill him?" Ren Xiaosu said with a wry smile, "I was planning to bring him with us to the secret prison. Who knows, he might've come in handy."

"Since we've already killed him, let's just go." Yang Xiaojin waved it off. "Don't waste time dwelling on the past. Haven't you seen Mu Wan'ge's movies? The villains always die because they talk too much."

Ren Xiaosu was amused at how Yang Xiaojin was still as adamant as ever.

The people from the intelligence agency heard the gunfire and rushed out. From afar, they could see that the windows of the car were covered in blood. The so-called bulletproof car had also been sliced apart and was lying in a heap on the road.

Although the young man and young woman were getting farther and farther away, they did not dare to chase after them!

"Calling for reinforcements. Everyone from the 1st and 2nd Divisions, you are to pursue the perpetrators!"

...

Stronghold 176.

The Wang Consortium had finished repairing the damaged city walls. However, the huge walls were riddled with different colors after they were patched up, making it look extremely hideous and mottled.

The stronghold was completely quiet. Ever since the Wang Consortium took over, the entirety of Stronghold 176 had been placed under full lockdown. It was even worse recently, so the residents in the city felt like another war might break out soon. However, they had no idea who the war would be fought against.

Some people heard it was no longer the nomads who would attack this time. It was just that they could not understand something. Weren't there only nomads up in the North?

Dozens of spotlights had been erected on top of the walls. The huge and glaring lights were aimed towards the north like sharp swords.

This feeling was like a sign that danger was imminent.

All the trees within ten kilometers in the north had been chopped down to ensure the spotlights could illuminate a clear view of the surroundings. All of the felled trees had been brought into the stronghold to use as new defensive fortifications.

There were cold and unfeeling heavy machine guns and artillery set up next to the spotlights, as well as heavily armed soldiers standing by for the arrival of the enemy. Everyone was extremely tense for fear of missing out on any details.

The Wang Consortium's commander stood atop the city walls with a cold expression. Even though he was wearing thick black leather gloves in the middle of a spring night, it was still difficult to keep out the chill.

Next to him, his deputy commander expelled a breath of cold air and asked in confusion, "Sir, we should've just given up on Stronghold 176 at this time and used the mountainous terrain behind us to form a defensive line instead of staying here. What if the other party has heavy weapons? Then we'll become obvious targets."

In modern warfare, city walls had become something of little value. It was less effective than a defensive line built using the complex terrain of the mountains.

The commander said, "Our scouts did not discover the enemy carrying any heavy firearms. Right now, it seems the stronghold walls are still quite useful. Moreover, it's already too late for us to organize an evacuation of the hundreds of thousands of stronghold residents."

"Why should we care about these people?" The deputy commander said with a sigh, "It's not like this place was originally our stronghold anyway."

"It's ours now." The commander said calmly, "If we want to face the upcoming war with the Kong Consortium, the Pyro Company, or even the Zhou Consortium, labor is what we need the most. If the dead can work in the factories, I don't mind retreating to Mt. Daniu at the rear."

With that, the commander turned around to the city where a river meandered across the stronghold. It was so dark it looked like a dividing line that split the stronghold in two.

At the same time, a patrol in Stronghold 176 suddenly heard the sound of water splashing. When they looked at the river, they saw dozens of gray-skinned figures crawling out. Then those figures let out an earth-shattering roar, as though a war horn had been sounded.

Someone shouted, "How did they break through the defenses we placed in the river?"

"Open fire!"

The patrol hurriedly opened fire. But when the bullets hit the enemies, it only penetrated as deep as the surface of their gray skin.

In the blink of an eye, this patrol was torn apart by a new generation of Experimentals that had pounced on them.

They were the masterpiece of the black-robed wizard. In the past, people from the Central Plains were relatively weaker, so although the Experimentals created from them were also strong, it was still unsatisfactory.

But now everything had changed.

Chapter 816: Director Pei! Director Pei has fallen in the line of duty!

Dozens of gray “ferocious beasts” started wreaking havoc in Stronghold 176, and most of the patrol troops in the streets were wiped out the moment they encountered them. When the other tactical troops tried to encircle these intruders, and having just pinpointed their location in the stronghold a moment ago, the bloodthirsty Experimentals broke through another line of defense.

It was not that the Wang Consortium’s garrison troops were slow in their reaction but that the new generation of Experimentals were too mobile.

Scouts had reported back that this group of Northerners seemed to have evolved differently from those in the Central Plains. The Central Plains had outstanding individuals who were on their way to godhood, but the Northerners seemed to have evolved as a whole species. That was why they had so many strong warriors carrying giant axes.

At present, no extremely powerful individuals had been discovered among this group of Northerners, but that was not a sure thing either.

This group of Experimentals kept up their attacks inside the stronghold as though they would never run out of strength. However, the Wang Consortium’s garrison troops soon realized the wild beasts were not killing people indiscriminately at all. Instead, they were approaching north with a plan!

Just as the commander was about to order the troops atop the northern walls to divert their firepower onto these ferocious beasts, he was told they had already climbed up the northern walls.

The Wang Consortium’s defensive line in the city was fragile as paper in the face of these powerful wild beasts.

But it was not the Wang Consortium’s fault. It was just that the times had changed.

...

As Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin moved forward with their operations in Stronghold 31, noisy engines were roaring behind them. Upon killing the intelligence director, Wang Ziyang, they had poked the hornet’s nest. They started facing a frenzied siege by the entire Kong Consortium’s intelligence agency!

These people from the intelligence agency did not even join the garrison troops in their encirclement of the Pyro Company’s T4 special forces!

After their director had been killed on their agency’s doorstep, the murderer even managed to escape. If this matter were to get out, the Kong Consortium could never hold their heads high in the intelligence realm again.

Ren Xiaosu shouted as he ran, "Turn left, turn left! Are these people crazy? Why are there more and more of them?!"

The two of them ran into a small alley, but before they could pass through it, someone was waiting there for them.

The enemy was dressed in a black suit. When he saw Ren Xiaosu, he immediately raised his gun to shoot him.

But just as he was about to pull the trigger, Yang Xiaojin, who was right behind Ren Xiaosu, brought her sniper rifle up and took a step to the side to move clear of Ren Xiaosu. Right after, she opened fire without taking aim. She was using the sniper rifle like a shotgun!

The man who was about to shoot Ren Xiaosu was sent flying backwards like a piece of paper.

After Yang Xiaojin opened fire, she did not stop there. She whipped around and faced the route they'd come by and waited quietly.

When the pursuers saw Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin slip into the small alley, they got out of their vehicles to chase them as the vehicles would not fit through.

But as soon as they rushed in, they saw the cap-wearing girl cradling a sniper rifle. With a loud bang, the sniper bullet hit two members of the intelligence agency, splattering their blood everywhere.

After the armor-piercing bullet penetrated the two people, it did not come to a stop. It was rotating with such great force that it snapped a street lamp in half. The creaking sound it made as it fell was shrill.

Yang Xiaojin did not blink throughout all of this. "Alright, they won't dare to chase after us for the time being. Let's go." Then Yang Xiaojin led the way out of the alley and continued hurrying toward the secret prison.

However, they underestimated the intelligence agency's determination to pursue them. Just a minute later, the sound of engines roaring crazily behind them could be heard again.

And vehicles were also heading towards them from the front!

"You take the front and I'll take the back." After that, Yang Xiaojin turned around and stood behind a newspaper stand that acted as her cover while Ren Xiaosu charged at the off-road vehicles in front.

He was greeted by two oncoming vehicles, one ahead of the other, with a driver in each of them.

The drivers did not turn away when they saw Ren Xiaosu charging. It seemed like they were planning to run him over!

The distance between Ren Xiaosu and the vehicles was closing. Just as he was about to collide with the vehicle in front, Ren Xiaosu suddenly slid right and avoided it. Then he raised his black saber horizontally and allowed it to make contact with the vehicle's windshield.

This scene played out like the driver intended to drive into the saber. When the black saber was done slicing through the vehicle like tofu, the driver sitting inside was beheaded.

When the driver at the back saw sparks emanating from the saber slicing through the vehicle in front of him, he was scared shitless. But it was too late to step on the brakes.

The driver saw the saber-wielding young man getting closer and closer, but he could only scream in horror inside his vehicle. He tried to adjust his sitting posture to dodge the incoming blade, but how could he possibly avoid it in such a tight space?

Standing in the distance, Ren Xiaosu swung his saber and flicked off the bloodstains before turning around to look at the two totaled vehicles that had brushed past him.

Without any drivers controlling them, the two vehicles continued heading towards the pursuers behind Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin due to their great inertia!

When the pursuers who were driving saw the two out-of-control vehicles were about to crash into them, they hurriedly turned their vehicles to avoid a crash. But when they did so, the fuel tanks of their vehicles got exposed.

Yang Xiaojin, who was taking cover behind the newspaper stand, smirked. She knew this was the opportunity Ren Xiaosu had created for her.

Breathe.

In just an instant, all of Yang Xiaojin's bodily responses reached equilibrium. Her body was like a sophisticated machine that only served her will.

When the sniper rifle rang out, the first vehicle exploded into a fireball, and none of its four passengers were spared.

The glow of the flames illuminated the other vehicle's four passengers' eyes red-orange. But before they could see the flames fully engulfing the other vehicle, they could feel a powerful explosion erupting from under their seats.

The burning vehicles suddenly became a flaming barricade that blocked off all the other pursuers in the rear.

Yang Xiaojin looked at Ren Xiaosu. "I don't think they're gonna give up. I just had a quick glance; there should still be hundreds of them. It's quite annoying to have them keep chasing us around like this, so it might be better to beat them into submission."

"Where should we do that?" Ren Xiaosu asked, taking some time to think.

Yang Xiaojin raised her hand and pointed to an eight-story building not far away. "Let's head up there and end this battle within 10 minutes."

Ren Xiaosu was smiling on the inside. This girl next to him had said in such a domineering way that they would end the battle within ten minutes even though they were facing the entire forces of the Kong Consortium's core stronghold's intelligence agency. But he did not think anything was wrong with what she said.

But they were taking on an entire intelligence agency!

Just as Ren Xiaosu was about to say something, he saw that Yang Xiaojin had already nimbly climbed up the building along the outer wall. She looked down at Ren Xiaosu from above and said, "What are you standing there for? They've already detoured to surround us."

Ren Xiaosu smiled and climbed to the roof of the building as well. He could see some shadowy figures on the nearby streets but could not see their faces in the darkness. Without any hesitation, he conjured up his black sniper rifle and started firing at the enemy with Yang Xiaojin for suppressive fire.

But the moment he fired a shot, he heard someone exclaim from a street away, "Director Pei, are you alright?! Director Pei! Someone, get over here. Director Pei has been shot! He's fallen in the line of duty!"

Chapter 817: Director Kong! Director Kong has also fallen in the line of duty!

1

Translator: Legge

Ren Xiaosu was nearly dumbfounded by this shout in the middle of the night. He had randomly opened fire without knowing who the target was, so how did Pei Wenjin end up getting killed?

While the scope on the black sniper rifle was, in fact, equipped with night vision, Ren Xiaosu did not bother distinguishing his target since there were so many people.

Could it be the palace had some other attributes he was unaware of?

At first, Ren Xiaosu thought this might be a ruse. But later, he realized a group of people in the west had really turned chaotic after that shout. Some of the enemy combatants who had almost made it to the bottom of their building even turned and went back!

Next to him, Yang Xiaojin asked curiously as she took out her targets one by one, "Was that luck or?"

"Hahaha, how can it possibly be luck?" Ren Xiaosu said excitedly, "This is what you'd call skill, you know? Skill!"

1

Yang Xiaojin rolled her eyes. She did not want to listen to Ren Xiaosu's boasting any further. "There's a lot of enemies to the east. Let's suppress that side together first and disperse them."

“Mhm, OK.” Saying that, Ren Xiaosu raised his black sniper rifle and aimed it at a random person in the east.

As soon as he fired the shot, he heard a cry from the east as well. “Director Kong! Director Kong, are you OK? Someone, get over here. Director Kong has been shot! He’s fallen in the line of duty!”

3

The troops were being led by the newly appointed Director Kong of the 2nd Military Intelligence Division and Pei Wenjin to flank the building from the east and the west respectively, but both directors were killed by these two shots from Ren Xiaosu. This instantly caused the entire intelligence agency that was pursuing them to panic.

Suddenly, the impression they had of the two snipers on the roof of the building became terrifying. As if they knew Ren Xiaosu was just shooting at them blindly! They absolutely thought the two snipers had planned to kill the two directors!

Moreover, once Director Pei and Director Kong were killed, there was no one left to give orders at the scene.

Although the 1st and 2nd Division had appointed temporary deputy directors, they did not dare to give any orders for fear of getting targeted and taken out by the snipers.

After all, it seemed the two snipers had purposely chosen to shoot at the high-ranking officers!

After their director was killed in action, someone looked at the deputy director and said, “The director is dead, so you’re now the acting director!”

The deputy director panicked and said, “I don’t want to be the acting director. Why don’t we just retreat?”

Bang!

When Ren Xiaosu fired his third shot, the others could only watch helplessly as the bullet ripped through the new director, leaving his body a mangled mess.

3

In an instant, the people from the intelligence agency did not dare to stay around any longer and decided to retreat!

With that, Yang Xiaojin could not help but turn around and look at Ren Xiaosu in silence. “Was that really skill?”

Earlier, Yang Xiaojin did not believe Ren Xiaosu was skilled enough to take out three directors. But now, she had no choice but to believe it.

However, she realized Ren Xiaosu seemed to be dazed and thinking about something. Ren Xiaosu looked at Yang Xiaojin and said, “Luck is also partially a skill, right?”

That's right! The key point of this was luck.

1

Perhaps it was possible to hit one or two high-value targets with the shots that he took. But with all three of his shots, which were taken randomly, those who were killed were always somehow the highest-ranking officers. This was definitely not Ren Xiaosu's own luck.

This was such a familiar sight to him. Ren Xiaosu had also experienced being extremely lucky in the past. It was as though whatever he did would always have some sort of a miraculous effect.

At that time, he was still living in Stronghold 113's town with Little Liuyuan.

The moment Director Kong was shot dead, Ren Xiaosu realized Yan Liuyuan was the one who made a wish to protect him!

Yang Xiaojin also realized it at this moment. "Are you saying... it's Liuyuan?"

"Yes," Ren Xiaosu nodded. "Although I don't know where he is, he must still be alive! I can't randomly fire at enemies anymore. Otherwise, he'll suffer from the backlash!"

Yang Xiaojin knew how much Ren Xiaosu cared about Yan Liuyuan. Now that Ren Xiaosu was sure Yan Liuyuan was still alive, she was also very happy about it.

Ren Xiaosu was a little confused. "What should I do now? Why don't we go and look for Liuyuan?"

Yang Xiaojin smiled. "But you don't even know where he is. Besides, the Great Hoodwinker and Wang Yun are still in the secret prison. Let's complete our mission in Stronghold 31 first. What you need to do now is keep living. As long as you're still alive, you'll definitely meet him again."

"Yes, we'll definitely meet again as long as we're alive." Ren Xiaosu looked at the fleeing troops. The Kong Consortium's intelligence agency had completely collapsed.

A lot of people knew the intelligence agency was pursuing two superhumans. In their opinion, with hundreds of combatants going after them, so what if the two were really powerful? After all, Pei Wenjin and Director Kong of the 2nd Military Intelligence Division were also superhumans.

But in the end, the Kong Consortium's people were so shocked their jaws dropped. Pei Wenjin and Director Kong were taken out on the spot. It was even said they were dead before they had a chance to use their superpowers.

After tonight, yet another tale would start spreading in the world of superhumans. It would be about a legendary couple working together to completely wipe out the Kong Consortium's intelligence agency.

But honestly speaking, Ren Xiaosu did not really find these people to be that strong. It almost didn't feel like they posed much of a threat to them at all.

There was actually a misunderstanding somewhere in this. Pei Wenjin and Director Kong were not weak at all. They were just helpless against those sniper rifles.

The two of them also did not expect to die so suddenly!

But at this moment, the rumbling sound of something collapsing came from outside the northern walls of the stronghold. Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin both looked over at the same time and saw a surge of fire that illuminated the clouds in the night sky.

The entire stronghold was in chaos. At least half of the stronghold residents had remained in their homes in hopes that the mayhem would subside soon.

But when they realized that even the stronghold walls had collapsed, they could no longer sit still.

Tens of thousands of people rushed out of their homes and ran madly southward. They wanted to get as far away as possible from the fighting. Meanwhile, the few hundred T4 combatants had blended in with the escaping residents under the lead of the T5 combatant.

These combatants pretended to be stronghold escapees. The garrison troops had set up a defensive line in the streets with machine guns. When the company commander at the front saw the vast number of stronghold residents, he shouted, "Do not fire yet! I repeat, do not fire yet!"

The company commander picked up the radio and sought instructions from his superior: "Battalion Commander, we've encountered many stronghold escapees here. What should we do?"

The battalion commander said coldly over the radio, "Open fire."

But in the time the call was made, the Pyro Company's troops had already followed the escapees to the front of the defensive line.

They no longer hid among the crowd of escapees. Like a predator, they finally bared their fangs to their prey.

In the blink of an eye, dozens of T4 combatants leapt forward under the command of the T5 combatant and rushed into the defensive line at breakneck speed. The machine gun emplacements in the defensive line became utterly useless!

The defensive line in the stronghold gradually collapsed under pressure from the fleeing escapees. This was the reason why the Pyro Company started the chaos at first. As there were only a few hundred of them, it would be impossible for them to clash head-on against a reinforced brigade even if they were all T4-ranked combatants.

But with the escapees, it was entirely possible.

Ren Xiaosu looked at the chaos that had broken out in the stronghold and said with a sigh, "Let's go. We gotta save the Great Hoodwinker and Wang Yun first. It's almost dawn now, so the main forces of the Pyro Company will probably be here soon."

Chapter 818: What the Northwest is like

In the secret prison, the Great Hoodwinker yelled, "Are we not allowed to have dinner anymore? Hey, does your Kong Consortium still care about human rights? Prisoners are human too, alright?!"

However, it was completely quiet in the corridors of the prison. No one answered the Great Hoodwinker, nor did anyone come out to make him be quiet.

"That's strange." The Great Hoodwinker muttered, "Even the prison guards here have left as well?"

At this moment, two prison guards came from the gate at the end of the corridor and walked straight through it.

The Great Hoodwinker shouted, "Hey, if you don't let us out for dinner, at least deliver our meals here!"

However, the two prison guards did not even look at the Great Hoodwinker and left through the other end of the corridor.

"I wonder if those people still have any humanity left in them?" the Great Hoodwinker lamented as he leaned against the cell's bars.

"Something is wrong." Wang Yun, who had been silent all this while, suddenly said, "Those people were walking much faster than usual, and their stride was about one centimeter wider too. Something must've happened that we're unaware of."

The Great Hoodwinker was stunned. "Y'know, you're even more unbelievable than me right now, huh? You actually remember how wide their usual stride is?"

"I can remember how they used to walk and replay it in my mind to compare with how they're walking now. It's like overlaying two pieces of film and playing it at the same time. If it's different from before, I can tell straight away at a glance."

"It would be such a pity if you don't join the Prosperous Northwest," the Great Hoodwinker admired. "Honestly speaking, don't you think it's a waste of your talent working for a measly organization like the Kong Consortium?"

"Why's it a waste of my talent when our Kong Consortium is part of the tripartite power in the Central Plains with the Wang Consortium and the Zhou Consortium?" Wang Yun said coldly.

"Then do you know how big our Northwest has become?" The Great Hoodwinker said arrogantly, "The entire Northwest belongs to our Fortress 178, and we have been fending off external enemies all these years. What has the Kong Consortium done? They only think about exploiting the people every day. Let me ask you this: Why did the Central Plains start building strongholds in the first place? Was it really because y'all wanted to keep out the so-called wild animals? I don't think so. That's nothing but a lie to fool the people."

Wang Yun did not say anything more. They were all smart people, so there was no need to refute this.

The Great Hoodwinker continued, "Back then, there was indeed a bug epidemic, and the wild animals really did injure a lot of people. But did the various forces really not have the ability to eliminate those threats at that time? Weren't they just trying to seize territory for themselves by building the strongholds? After building the strongholds that gave them a natural class superiority, the people outside the strongholds would have to keep working for them generation after generation. It's just like how the Zong Consortium supported the bandits to induce fear in the refugees. They left them with no choice but to rely on the protection of the strongholds."

"Not all of them are like that," Wang Yun replied.

"But most of them are," the Great Hoodwinker said with a sigh.

It became quiet again in the corridor. After a long time, Ji Zi'ang suddenly asked in the next cell, "When did you save my wife and child? Did they suffer any humiliation in the Zhou Consortium?"

"Around a year ago. But I think it's better that you don't hear about it." The Great Hoodwinker said as he lay back down on the cold bed and crossed his legs, "Although our Northwest often goes around encouraging people to join and support the development of the border areas, sometimes even resorting to underhanded tactics to do so, if your wife and child did not encounter any danger, we would not have taken them away to a distant land thousands of kilometers away. But don't worry, the things you were most worried about did not happen. Your son is very healthy. I even saw him attending the school's sports meet when I was back at the Northwest."

"You all were already planning to recruit me a year ago?" Ji Zi'ang asked.

"Oh, it was even earlier than you think," the Great Hoodwinker replied. "Ever since you killed that merchant, we've started preparations to recruit you. But before our preparations were complete, you got set up and were sent straight to the secret prison."

"Tell me, what kind of place is the Northwest?" Ji Zi'ang said in a low voice, "Since you want me to go there, you should at least tell me what the place is like."

"The Northwest?" The Great Hoodwinker had a reminiscent look on his face. "Actually, when I first got to the Northwest, I thought that only an idiot would want to stay there. At that time, I really had no place to turn to. I was chased there by an enemy and ended up immediately joining the military. I thought that no matter how powerful my enemy was, they couldn't possibly dare to provoke the damn fucks of Fortress 178, right? Fortunately for me, Fortress 178 happened to be recruiting for the military, so I enlisted.

"Later on, my former commander at the boot camp I was attending believed that I was a frivolous person and thought I needed to go through more hardship to train me up. After graduating from boot camp, he sent me directly to the border outpost.... Now that I think about it, I have the urge to curse out my former commander. He's such a jerk! Is that outpost a place fit for humans?"

Ji Zi'ang said, "Keep talking about the Northwest."

“Well,” The Great Hoodwinker recalled, “the outpost was probably the toughest place I’ve been in the Northwest. The farthest outpost can only be reached after walking for 15 days via the mountain paths from Fortress 178. At temperatures 30 below zero, there can even be ground blizzards. Sometimes, if you missed your footing, you would fall into a crevasse. Back then, I used to set out at 8 o’clock every morning to trek across five mountains that stood 5,000 meters above sea level for my patrol duties. After that, I trekked back down the mountains at 5 PM to return to the outpost. It was like that on the first day, the second day, the third day, and...”

The Great Hoodwinker went silent for a while before saying, “Day after day, our boring lives went by just like that. At Dashan Outpost, I experienced an unprecedented sense of loneliness. But now that I think about it, that loneliness was also a source of strength. Have you ever heard of the saying ‘a decade of chewing ice is not enough to cool one’s passion’? Actually, a lot of people only know what it means, but they don’t know how miserable it is to have to chew ice. When we went on our patrols, we couldn’t bring our canteens with us, because the water would just freeze inside. If we wanted to quench our thirst, we could only do it by melting snow in our mouths.

“Later, I heard that the sentries of Fortress 178 would always ask for a photo from the girl they liked before leaving for the outpost. Regardless of whether the girl liked them back or not, she would give them the prettiest photo of herself. That way, the sentry guards could stare at the photos and not go crazy from the isolation. But as I wasn’t fucking from the Northwest at that time, I wasn’t aware of said tradition. When the others looked at the photos they were given, I could only scratch my feet....” The Great Hoodwinker actually chuckled as he related this.

Ji Zi’ang suddenly said, “Who would want to go to such a forsaken place? Since you felt so bitter back then, why didn’t you leave? Aren’t you afraid I’ll go back on my word after learning about how bad it is in the Northwest?”

The Great Hoodwinker turned serious. “It’s because you’ll truly be happy there. Because you’re protecting your compatriots behind you in that remote place. When your commander drops by for a visit, he also has to personally navigate the mountain paths that you previously walked. You might not believe it when I say this, but I saw Commander Zhang trekking on foot for 78 days that year to visit all 178 outposts outside of Fortress 178. He even made dumplings for each of us. Because of the high altitude, it was difficult to cook the dumplings. But for me, Zhang Husheng, that was the most unforgettable meal of my life.”

Chapter 819: Prison break!

“May I ask if both your bosses from the Zhou Consortium and the Kong Consortium will do likewise?” The Great Hoodwinker asked calmly. “All the former commanders of Fortress 178 had to go through the gates of hell, training with or fighting alongside the Razor Sharp Company before earning the right to command our comrades to risk their lives for them. On this point alone, which consortium can do the same? Take our current future commander of Fortress 178 for example. He had also come up through the ranks of the Razor Sharp Company.”

“You mean Ren Xiaosu, right?” Wang Yun said. When he found out Ren Xiaosu was Chen Wudi’s master, he had already guessed the name. After all, Ren Xiaosu would have left behind some clues back when he

was with Chen Wudi. Other people might overlook it, but Wang Yun's memory was so good he could not forget it even if he wanted to.

"Since you've already guessed it, and we'll be on the same side anyway after leaving this secret prison, there's no need for me to hide it from you." The Great Hoodwinker said, "During the war in which the Zong Consortium was destroyed, the future commander fought as a soldier of the Razor Sharp Company the entire time. He would charge to wherever there was danger, which convinced the masses. Back then, Commander Zhang had already identified him as his successor, but didn't he still harden his heart and send him to the front lines? That's because there's a saying that those who have not gone through life and death with their comrades are not worthy of others dying for them."

Ji Zi'ang sighed and said, "I really didn't know that Fortress 178 has this tradition. I'm impressed."

"Hehe," The Great Hoodwinker laughed. "That's why I told you before that the Northwest is different."

Whenever the Great Hoodwinker shared about his experiences in the Northwest, he would always get really excited when he spoke. That was because it was the most glorious time of his life.

At this moment, Ji Zi'ang asked, "When you said that someone will come and save us within these three days, was that already planned?"

Wang Yun ridiculed from the other side, "As if he could have any plans! I wonder why the Northwest would fully entrust you to oversee the field intelligence unit. How stupid can they be!"

"Hey," The Great Hoodwinker said unhappily, "look, I just came in so that I could figure out the situation. Anyway, isn't it good enough as long as we can get you guys out?"

"Who's coming to rescue us?" Ji Zi'ang asked.

"Future Commander." The Great Hoodwinker said firmly.

Ji Zi'ang was taken aback. "How many people will your future commander be bringing?"

"Uh," The Great Hoodwinker said awkwardly, "it might just be him alone."

"Isn't there the saying 'the son of a wealthy family does not sit under the eaves'? Since he's the future commander of the Northwest, why would he still risk his life to come and save you?" Ji Zi'ang said doubtfully, "Why do I feel that he won't be coming?"

"He'll definitely be here." The Great Hoodwinker said firmly, "Otherwise, he wouldn't have been designated as the future commander!"

"Then how's he going to get us out from this secret prison all by himself?" Ji Zi'ang suddenly felt that the Great Hoodwinker really was a little unreliable just like Wang Yun had said. After all, this was the Kong Consortium's secret prison. How could a person possibly break in when there were several hundred heavily armed guards in this well-defended fortress?

Furthermore, the secret prison was located in Stronghold 31. Even if Ren Xiaosu could really break in and get them out, what about the aftermath? They would still get hunted down by the entire stronghold once they got out.

Disregarding the garrison troops, even if it were just that group of people from the intelligence agency going after them, the few of them would not be able to handle it!

The Great Hoodwinker remarked, "Don't worry, he'll definitely have considered all of those problems."

Ji Zi'ang was left speechless. He wondered where the Great Hoodwinker's confidence came from. He actually trusted that so-called future commander of his so much. But he still said, "If he really shows up, I suggest that all of us break out of our cells and assist him. You two arrived at this prison later than me and have not fought the warden before, so you don't know how uncanny the warden can be."

"Uncanny?" Wang Yun was taken aback. Although he knew the warden was a supernatural being, there was no information regarding his superpower in the records.

Ji Zi'ang said, "Don't you all feel that while your physical fitness has improved after you came here to the secret prison, your powers are slowly getting suppressed bit by bit? When I fought him, my superpower suddenly lost its effect. Furthermore, it took quite a while before my power came back. Why else do you think they can lock me up in here?"

"Something like that actually happened?" The Great Hoodwinker muttered, "It's fine, our future commander will take care of him."

Ji Zi'ang was stumped. He could not understand why the Great Hoodwinker would still think everything was fine even after what he had just told him!

Ji Zi'ang said helplessly, "Then do you know when your future commander will be arriving?"

Just as he finished speaking, a rumbling noise went through the secret prison. It left the entire prison complex shaking. Dust fell from the ceiling onto the Great Hoodwinker and the others, covering their faces in dirt.

It was clear that the explosion was caused by a bomb going off. Immediately, alarms went off everywhere in the entire secret prison.

The Great Hoodwinker started laughing. "There he is!"

Countless prison guards ran through the corridor. These people used to be stationed at various parts of the prison, but at this moment, they were all rushing in the same direction.

When they passed through the corridor, the Great Hoodwinker sneered, "Did I allow y'all to pass through?"

With that, his muscles tensed up as he raised his leg and kicked at the cell door in front of him. With a boom, the cell door made from a special metal was sent flying by the Great Hoodwinker. It smashed into two prison guards who happened to be passing by and crushed them!

Wang Yun did not sit idle either. When several of the prison guards passed by his cell, a sudden explosion went off in their ears.

Wang Yun kept compressing the air around the prison guards and shot them into their ears, blowing their heads up from the inside.

There were still dozens of prison guards in the corridor. They were supposed to assemble when the alarm sounded, but they did not expect that the strong prison cell could not contain the old man standing in front of them.

They wondered how the people of the 1st Military Intelligence Division had even managed to capture him. Unless he fucking duped them into capturing him?!

The Great Hoodwinker stood casually in the corridor and chuckled, "Don't go and cause trouble. Stay around and play with me instead."

...

Moments before the first explosion went off in the secret prison, the warden had been patrolling the prison with 10 of his prison guards. There were nearly 80 prison guards standing guard around the passageway. They had already been informed that the stronghold was in a state of chaos, so the entire prison was on high alert.

But all of a sudden, the gate in the passageway was forcefully blown open. When that heavy steel gate was blasted apart, it flew straight into a wall of the secret prison like a massive piece of shrapnel and embedded into it!

This scene was simply too shocking!

A strong smell of gunpowder immediately filled the entire passageway and started spreading into the secret prison. The warden took out his handkerchief to cover his mouth and nose as he looked coldly in the direction of the passageway.

A moment later, to everyone's surprise, a steam locomotive drove through the wide passageway!

Chapter 820: A useless power

No one expected a steam locomotive to emerge from the smoke-filled passageway!

Honestly, the warden was surprised to see the alloy gate get blown apart. Someone had clearly detonated the explosives in the passageway between the two gates, resulting in a huge explosion going off within the enclosed space.

But wasn't the detonator held by Wang Ziyang, the intelligence director? If someone had detonated the explosives, it would mean that... Wang Ziyang was most probably done for.

As the warden was stationed in the secret prison, he was somewhat clueless about current affairs. He knew something had happened outside and that someone had attacked Stronghold 31. However, he did not expect that even Wang Ziyang had met with misfortune.

When the steam locomotive crashed out of the passageway, the smoke from the blast rolled across its body like flowing clouds. It was a grand sight.

However, the most shocking thing was that there was a man in black who was fully wrapped up and standing at the front of the train with a sinister-looking heavy machine gun!

Someone in the smoke-filled passageway shouted, "Wang Congyang, open fire!"

With that, the machine gun the man in black was holding started spitting a barrage of fire. The prison guards who were still in a state of shock just a moment ago died before they could even react!

The combined might of the steam locomotive and the heavy machine gun made it resemble a mobile fortress. Its power was definitely much greater than the sum of its parts.

After going through the entrance of the passageway, the steam locomotive arrived at the square of the secret prison. This secret prison was located under an abandoned multi-purpose training hall and occupied an extremely large area. It also happened to be an excellent place to make use of the steam locomotive.

The warden was livid as he looked at the steam locomotive. He did not expect that someone would dare to act so insolently in his territory!

They even drove a train in here!

The warden suddenly materialized a flying needle and shot it at the steam locomotive.

That flying needle was extremely thin. If one did not look carefully, they would not see it. Furthermore, it was extremely fast, even faster than the steam locomotive itself!

In this chaotic secret prison filled with dust and smoke, a flying needle attack would easily catch the enemy off guard.

The flying needle directly hit the man in black who was firing the machine gun mercilessly at the front of the train. The warden sneered in his head and just thought there would be a few more prisoners in the secret prison after this attack. It felt no different to him from the past.

But when the flying needle hit the man in black, it emitted a silvery glow and enveloped him. Right after, the man in black disappeared into thin air!

Ren Xiaosu, who was hiding in the passageway and did not get onto the steam locomotive, was stunned!

That man in black was "Old Xu," but Old Xu suddenly returned to the palace and stood there motionlessly. No matter how Ren Xiaosu tried to summon it, there was no response at all. And there was even a fine silver needle stuck in Old Xu's forehead.

Ren Xiaosu said in a low voice, "Something strange is going on. There seems to be a supernatural being in this secret prison capable of sealing other people's superpowers!"

Some time ago, when he was battling on Wangchunmen Boulevard in Luoyang City, his steam locomotive was also stopped by someone. However, that supernatural being definitely did not stop it as easily as the warden this time.

Little did Ren Xiaosu know that while he was stunned, the warden was also very shocked. Just as Ji Zi'ang and Ren Xiaosu had guessed, the warden's superpower could negate another superhuman's power as long as his silver needle hit the wielder or touched the materialized power of the opponent. Afterwards, the superhuman would not be able to use that power for some time.

Even for Wang Yun whose power was controlling the air, the warden's flying needles could seal it. This was the reason why he, as the warden, was able to oversee the secret prison!

But the warden did not expect the man in black to actually be a manifestation of someone's superpower. He thought it was a living person.

The warden thought quietly. He could form one flying needle every three days and store up to three needles in his mind. Now that he had used one of them, there were only two left.

However, he was certain there were only two intruders. Now that he had gotten rid of one of them, he would take out the steam locomotive next!

Thinking of this, the warden did not hesitate to manifest a second flying needle and shoot it at the steam locomotive.

The warden could finally heave a sigh of relief. After taking care of two supernatural beings in a row, the outcome was decided!

When Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin emerged from the passageway, the warden said with a smile, "The two of you are really brave to walk in here after losing your powers. Your courage is really admirable..."

Before he could finish speaking, the warden sensed that something was amiss. He suddenly turned around and shot out a third flying needle when he saw the Shadow Door that had opened up behind him at some point in time.

When the flying needle hit the Shadow Door, it disappeared as well.

Ren Xiaosu had thought the other party's flying needle would simply pass through the Shadow Door. He did not expect the warden's flying needles that could seal the powers of others would turn out to be so strange.

The warden was getting a little flustered, because he saw Ren Xiaosu drawing a black saber from out of thin air while the girl conjured up a large black sniper rifle.

The warden could not understand this at all. Didn't he seal off three superpowers? But why did it seem like the other party had an endless amount of powers?!

This was way too strange!

Honestly, if the warden's superpower were to encounter other supernatural beings, he would definitely have the upper hand in a one-on-one battle against them. After all, he had three opportunities to seal their powers, and the flying needles could also hurt people.

But his opponent this time was Ren Xiaosu. Even Ren Xiaosu could not be bothered to count how many superpowers he had now.

To put it bluntly, the three flying needles were not enough to deal with him at all.

Ren Xiaosu said to Yang Xiaojin who was next to him, "Judging by his expression, he's probably used up all his flying needles."

Next to him, Yang Xiaojin said in surprise, "He only has three of them? It seems like his power is quite useless then."

"Yeah, it's pretty useless." Ren Xiaosu nodded.

When the warden heard what they said, he felt offended. His superpower was useless? Did he not helm this prison for so long without any incidents precisely because his superpower was unique? The Kong Consortium treated him like their trump card, so how did it suddenly end up being called useless when used against the two of them?

The problem clearly lay with you two, alright?!

While thinking, the warden suddenly heard a gust of wind behind him. When he turned around, he was surprised to see the Great Hoodwinker's foot getting closer and closer until it made contact with his cheek.

Then the warden's face was kicked out of shape before he flew like a ragdoll.

The Great Hoodwinker eagerly looked at Ren Xiaosu. "Future Commander, you're finally here!"

Ren Xiaosu looked at the unconscious warden and the footprint on his face. Then he looked at the sincere Great Hoodwinker and his expectant gaze. All of a sudden, he got the goosebumps all over his body.

Ji Zi'ang, who was behind the Great Hoodwinker, looked at Ren Xiaosu. "Hello, my name is Ji Zi'ang. I'll be returning to the Northwest with the Great Hoodwinker this time."

Ren Xiaosu quickly smiled and went forward to shake his hand. "Hello, I didn't expect another supernatural being to come along for free for rescuing Wang Yun. You're too polite."

Nearby, Wang Yun's face darkened. "So how are you going to save my subordinates?"

Ren Xiaosu consoled, "What's the hurry? We'll definitely get them out. But we must first release the prisoners in this secret prison so that they can go out and create more chaos."