

First Order 821

### **Chapter 821: A new quest**

Releasing the prisoners from the secret prison was not a spur-of-the-moment decision for Ren Xiaosu. After all, the prisoners here hated the Kong Consortium to the core, so letting them out would definitely aid Ren Xiaosu's cause.

However, Ren Xiaosu was not going to let them out without any conditions.

Ji Zi'ang and the others followed Ren Xiaosu back to the cell block when Wang Yun said at the back of the group, "There's a total of 313 prisoners held in this secret prison. I don't suggest releasing 17 of them because they're either spies of the Wang Consortium or the Zhou Consortium. Moreover, they're extremely capable individuals. As I recall, when we interrogated those 17 people, they would deliberately reveal some information about the Northwest to throw us off. It will not be good for the Northwest if we let them out. When they return to their consortiums, they might become a potential threat to the Northwest in the future."

At this moment, the Great Hoodwinker felt that all the suffering that he had been through was worth it.

With an extremely intelligent supernatural being like Wang Yun working for the Northwest, many things would become much simpler. That was because taking Wang Yun away was equivalent to stealing the Kong Consortium's entire intelligence database.

Wang Fengyuan was in charge of the intelligence agency in the Northwest, with the Great Hoodwinker and him each overseeing foreign affairs and domestic affairs respectively. As such, the Great Hoodwinker knew very well that if they had to obtain the intelligence that Wang Yun knew through the usual means, who knew how much it would cost them?

It would probably cost them a lot of money and effort and even the lives of hundreds of spies.

Now that Wang Yun had started taking the initiative to think on behalf of the Northwest, it signaled a very good start to the relationship. When the Great Hoodwinker thought of this, he felt very happy!

Ren Xiaosu said thoughtfully, "Wouldn't it be really cruel to keep them locked up in here, though?"

"I hope you aren't getting soft at a time like this," Wang Yun said coldly.

Ren Xiaosu was taken aback. "Oh, that won't happen. You worry too much." He then walked towards the cell block. When he reached the first cell, Ren Xiaosu looked in through the prison bars.

Looking at the pale face of the prisoner inside, it was obvious that he had not been exposed to sunlight for a long time. The inmates here had to be very eager to get a whiff of fresh air.

Only those who had lost their freedom before would know how precious it was.

At this point, all the prisoners knew something had happened in the secret prison. When they saw through the metal bars of their cell gates that Ji Zi'ang, the Great Hoodwinker, and Wang Yun had

regained their freedom, they immediately shouted, "Let us out! We'll do anything for you if you let us out!"

"Please let us out!"

Beginning with one person shouting, the entire prison erupted with other prisoners shouting. Ren Xiaosu said to the prisoner in front of him in a serious tone, "Thank me three times. As long as you are sincere, I'll let you out."

Nearby, Wang Yun, Ji Zi'ang, and the Great Hoodwinker were all confused. What the hell was this? Did you come to the prison in the middle of the night so you could be a good Samaritan and do good deeds?

The prisoner in the cell was also a little confused, but it was not difficult for him to say thank you. It was not something insulting like asking him to call the other party "daddy," so he said decisively, "Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!"

"Gratitude received from Liu Qianhe, +1!

"Gratitude received from Liu Qianhe...

"Gratitude received from..."

Ren Xiaosu was overjoyed. Why had he come to the prison in the middle of the night? Wasn't it precisely so he could earn some gratitude tokens?

However, he was not greedy. After all, time was tight, and he could not afford to spend too long in this place. As such, Ren Xiaosu threw a bunch of keys over to Wang Yun. "You can remember which key opens which doors, right?"

"Yes, I can." Wang Yun nodded.

"Open the doors." Ren Xiaosu said. He could have just used the black saber to do it, but he did not want to reveal his weapon or how it looked like in front of these people. All the prison guards who saw it were dead, and only the Great Hoodwinker and some of the others knew about it. Since they were all going to join the Prosperous Northwest, so what if they had seen it?

Ren Xiaosu went on to the next cells and released the prisoners one after another. What gratified Ren Xiaosu was that these people were all very sincere in their gratitude, with only a few who were not sincere in thanking him.

Calculating the rate, Ren Xiaosu's gratitude tokens, which were originally close to 4,000, would likely get close to 5,000 after this wave of thanks he received in the secret prison.

Wang Yun saw Ren Xiaosu walk to the next cell and reminded him, "The person locked up in there is one of the 17 I mentioned." Then Wang Yun looked on coldly. He wanted to see how Ren Xiaosu would handle it.

When Ren Xiaosu got to that cell, he instantly threw a grenade into it before the prisoner inside could say anything.

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With a boom, the cell exploded with a huge cloud of dust. Wang Yun and Ji Zi'ang were shocked!

What did Ren Xiaosu say just now? His exact words were "Wouldn't it be really cruel to keep them locked up in here, though?" So Ren Xiaosu's idea was to... give them a quick death?!

Could this be the legendary "say the nicest things and do the most terrible things"?

Only at this moment did Wang Yun realize he had misunderstood the future commander of the Northwest. Why the fuck did he have to worry about that guy getting soft? He was clearly a ruthless fucker!

It was no wonder those damn fucks in the Northwest would acknowledge this young man. Wang Yun claimed to be a ruthless person, but even he could not compare to Ren Xiaosu.

Wang Yun muttered, "You..."

Ren Xiaosu turned around in surprise. "What?"

"Nothing," Wang Yun said, sounding a little annoyed.

"Mhm, remember to remind me when you identify the next person," Ren Xiaosu said as he walked calmly towards the next cell.

After the explosion, the prisoners in the other cells started panicking.

Ren Xiaosu was all smiles as he looked at the prisoner in the cell in front of him and said, "Say thank you and I'll let you out."

The prisoner in the cell asked nervously, "What happened next door? Why did he get blown up?"

Ren Xiaosu replied with a smile, "Because he didn't want to say thank you."

The prisoner was confused.

The Great Hoodwinker was speechless. Wang Yun was speechless. Ji Zi'ang was speechless.

Honestly, just based on the things Ren Xiaosu did here today, it made him appear even more of a madman than Li Shentan was.

In the eyes of the prisoners, Ren Xiaosu had broken into the prison just so he could make them thank him. But if they did not thank him, he would blow them up. No matter how they looked at it, he seemed crazy.

The prisoner gulped and said, "Thank you."

“Gratitude received from Qi Jiesheng, +1!”

Ren Xiaosu waved it off. “Alright, let him out.”

When Qi Jiesheng saw Wang Yun opening the cell door for him, he was overjoyed. He did not expect that he would be able to regain his freedom just by saying thanks!

But when he pushed open the door and came out, he heard Ren Xiaosu arguing with the prisoner next door. Although the prisoner in that cell thanked him, Ren Xiaosu did not receive a single gratitude token!

Ren Xiaosu said with a dark expression, “How can I let you out if you don’t even thank me sincerely?!”

The prisoner in that cell was also short-tempered. “How am I not sincere? How do you determine that I wasn’t sincere in my thanks?”

All of a sudden, the voice from the palace intoned, “Quest: Obtain 66 gratitude tokens from the prisoner before you.”

Ren Xiaosu was stunned. Wasn’t this making things difficult for him? The other party had not even given him a sincere thanks yet, so how was he going to get 66 gratitude tokens out of him?!

However, Ren Xiaosu suddenly recalled an incident from the past. After a moment’s silence, he said, “I thank your mom!”

When the prisoner in the cell heard that, he got agitated. “I thank your eight generations of ancestors!”

“Gratitude received from Zheng Xiding, +1!”

Ren Xiaosu said expressionlessly, “I thank your grandma’s leg!”

From the cell came, “I thank your grandpa!”

“Gratitude received from...”

Ren Xiaosu said, “Thank you for your banana skin!”

From the cell came, “Thank you...”

Off to the side, Ji Zi’ang, Wang Yun, and the others suddenly realized Ren Xiaosu had actually started arguing with that prisoner in the cell. In this gloomy secret prison, the future commander of the Northwest completely abandoned his image and continued exchanging insults with the prisoner for over a 100 rounds until the guy in the jail cell broke down!

Wang Yun said in a daze, “This is your future commander of the Northwest?”

But Ji Zi’ang laughed. “I find him rather interesting.”

**Chapter 822: Retreat**

The prison break featuring a theme of gratitude was finally coming to an end after more than an hour. The Great Hoodwinker took off the warden's watch and checked the time. It was already 4 AM.

Ren Xiaosu was satisfied with completing the quest the palace had assigned him. This time, the reward was two allocatable attribute points. He added one point to each of his Strength and Dexterity attributes. Currently, his Strength was rated at 14.5 while his Dexterity was 14.1.

Although the palace did not give him a Skill Duplication Scroll this time, Ren Xiaosu did not find it sad. After all, a Perfect Skill Duplication Scroll was rare in itself. Furthermore, every attribute point Ren Xiaosu could get was a tangible improvement for him.

If "Old Xu," the black saber, City Crusher, and his other powers were considered his "skyscraper" skills, then Ren Xiaosu's physical attributes could be considered the "foundation."

While they were heading outside, the Great Hoodwinker looked at Ren Xiaosu. "This warden is still alive. How should we deal with him?"

Ren Xiaosu took a look at the warden. Actually, he was feeling very conflicted, because he really wanted to duplicate his superpower. If the conditions allowed, he even wanted to lock him up until he got his hands on three Perfect Skill Duplication Scrolls, which he could then use on the man.

When the Great Hoodwinker saw Ren Xiaosu hesitating, he asked, "Are you keeping him alive because you wish to convince him to join the Prosperous Northwest?"

"That's impossible." Wang Yun said from nearby, "This warden is the illegitimate son of the Kong clan's second ancillary branch. How could someone like him possibly join the Prosperous Northwest with us?"

Ren Xiaosu glanced at the warden who was lying on the ground and said bluntly, "Just kill him. We don't want him getting to our comrades in the future."

Since they were enemies, Ren Xiaosu did not feel bad about having him killed. He only felt bad that he would have to pass up on that power.

However, they were about to face the problem of how to escape from the city. With Stronghold 31 in a state of chaos, Ren Xiaosu could not possibly let the Great Hoodwinker bring such a potential threat back to the Northwest.

With that, Wang Yun shot a blast of air through the warden's eardrums.

Then Wang Yun looked at Ren Xiaosu. "What do you plan to do next? The Kong Consortium will definitely learn about the incident at the secret prison. I believe the Kong Consortium's troops will be here soon. I saw you were not in a hurry when you released the prisoners just now, so you must be very confident of what to do next. Tell us about your plan."

Ren Xiaosu was stunned. "I don't have a plan."

Wang Yun felt stifled. He realized the people from the Northwest did not seem to like planning at all!

He said with a dark expression, "Then what should we do? Send ourselves to our deaths by going out there and facing the Kong Consortium's garrison troops? Do you know that there's a reinforced brigade here in Stronghold 31!?"

Ren Xiaosu said, "Oh, you're talking about that? I doubt they'll care about us now. Don't worry, I've already done all the prep work. Look, I broke into the secret prison an hour ago, but no one came to stop me, right?"

Wang Yun thought it really was the case. He wondered again, "After I was arrested, it was Wang Ziyang who took over my position, right? Did you get the detonator from him? How could no one from the intelligence agency go after you?"

"Oh!" Ren Xiaosu said with a smile, "They did come after me. But those people are dead."

Wang Yun fell silent. He somehow felt that this future commander of the Northwest was bragging to him!

As a matter of fact, the intelligence agency was the strongest force in Stronghold 31. They even had two supernatural beings within their ranks, so there was no need to mention their other combatants.

Ren Xiaosu swaggered out of the secret prison and said, "Don't worry, y'all will understand once we get outside the secret prison."

At this moment, the sound of an engine came from nearby. Yang Xiaojin had found an off-road vehicle in the secret prison. She looked at everyone and said calmly, "Are you all planning to walk to the other prison? Get in."

Ren Xiaosu was amused. His girl was quite thoughtful.

Everyone squeezed into the vehicle, with Ji Zi'ang, the Great Hoodwinker, and Wang Yun sitting in the backseat. The Great Hoodwinker sat between them and said, "You two, move aside a little!"

"I don't have any space here!"

The three people nearly got into a fight in the vehicle over such a trivial matter!

But the moment the off-road vehicle drove out of the secret prison, the Great Hoodwinker and the other two shut up. They looked at the stronghold that was engulfed in flames and heard explosions in the distance. Everyone had a shocked expression on their face.

The walls of the stronghold were damaged. Everyone could see through the flames from far away that the towering walls in the distance had been blown apart.

As the vehicle drove on, they even saw countless stronghold residents fleeing in the streets.

Gunshots could be heard intermittently. No one knew where a battle had broken out in the stronghold.

The sight before them was like an oil painting of the Middle Ages before The Cataclysm that looked extremely thick and heavy. Under the backdrop of the red-orange flames, it was as though the God of Death had passed his judgment upon the Kong Consortium.

Wang Yun muttered, "Future Commander, is this the prep work you mentioned?"

To be honest, Wang Yun was a little unconvinced with Ren Xiaosu a second ago. Although he had witnessed Ren Xiaosu's capability in the Sacred Mountains, he was dumbfounded by the Great Hoodwinker's unprepared prison break. As a result, he was a little worried Ren Xiaosu would be the same.

But now, Wang Yun was convinced. In order to save them, the future commander had actually destroyed Stronghold 31?!

It was no wonder no one did anything about the secret prison after it was broken into!

Earlier, he had foolishly doubted the future commander's ability to kill the intelligence agency's personnel who were pursuing him. How could he have such thoughts?!

This was the Stronghold Destroyer he was talking about!

There might be some names in this world that were given badly, but there was really no such thing as a bad nickname!

Ji Zi'ang looked at the burning flames and asked in a daze, "What exactly is going on? What happened?"

"This is not to my credit either." Ren Xiaosu explained sincerely and modestly, "The Pyro Company suddenly attacked Stronghold 31. I analyzed that the main forces of the Pyro Company might arrive at daybreak, so we had to be faster and get y'all out before that. By the way, Wang Yun, can you point the way to the other prison?"

Wang Yun calmed himself down. "Turn left."

Yang Xiaojin turned the steering wheel, and the vehicle suddenly veered left and sped off into the distance.

There were only three hours left until dawn, so it was going to be a race against time.

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In Stronghold 61 of the Wang Consortium, Wang Shengzhi was sitting in his official residence and flipping through some documents. In recent times, the Wang Consortium's authoritarian only slept three hours a day. He cherished every minute and second he could get.

There were seven telephones on the table in front of him. All of the calls that were made to him would first be screened by the artificial intelligence before being transferred to the different telephones.

Suddenly, a dark red telephone rang. Wang Shengzhi looked up and saw it was the intelligence agency's dedicated line.

He slowly put the receiver to his ear and said, "This is Wang Shengzhi."

Wang Run's voice came from the other end of the line. "I'm currently protecting Wang Jing and the others in the villa. Ren Xiaosu..."

Wang Shengzhi listened to Wang Run's report on the Kong Consortium's situation. The longer he listened, the more he was surprised. It was as though something extremely unexpected had happened.

At this moment, Yang Anjing pushed open the door to his study and asked, "What happened?"

Wang Shengzhi thought for a moment and summarized, "Stronghold 31 will probably be gone soon."

Wang Shengzhi had asked Ren Xiaosu to kill Kong Erdong so the Kong Consortium would get plunged into chaos. As long as Kong Erdong died, the Kong Consortium would only take three months to fall based on the current situation.

But from the look of it, the prediction of three months was too conservative.

Wang Shengzhi thought for a moment and said, "Since the goal has been achieved, it's time to retreat."

"Roger that."

### **Chapter 823: Ren Xiaosu's supporters**

In the villa at Stronghold 31, Wang Run looked at Wang Jing and the others after hanging up. Wang Jing asked, "Who exactly are you?"

Ever since Wang Run brought his men to the villa, he did not explain anything to the group from the Trinity Institute. He only showed his intelligence agency's identification from the Wang Consortium and instantly took control of the villa to prevent Wang Jing and the others from going outside. He also prevented unknown people from approaching the villa.

Just as Ren Xiaosu had said, there were indeed people with bad intentions who wanted to rob the residential neighborhoods amid the chaos. But after Wang Run and his men killed two of them and left their corpses at the entrance, no one else dared to approach the villa.

Wang Run had received orders to pull back. He looked at Wang Jing and the others but did not say anything.

Wang Run turned around and gave two tactical hand signals to his subordinates. Then everyone quickly gathered their equipment and disappeared into the darkness outside the villa.

Although Wang Run had received Ren Xiaosu's orders to protect Wang Jing and the others, Wang Shengzhi's words carried more weight than Ren Xiaosu's. Since the boss had ordered them to retreat, he would retreat.

Wang Run left behind two automatic rifles and four magazines for the Trinity Institute group. In his opinion, these weapons would be more than enough to deal with the rioters.



When Wang Jing heard the chaos in the stronghold, he sat slowly on the couch and said, "I'm afraid the medical exchange will be cut short."

Someone suddenly asked, "Elder, have you seen Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin? Why haven't we seen them throughout all of this?"

However, Wang Jing did not reply. He already had an answer in his mind.

Previously, he thought Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin were only here to carry out a simple mission. After all, the couple looked so young.

But from the look of it, Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin's mission was not simple at all.

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Outside the prison in Stronghold 31, Ren Xiaosu, Yang Xiaojin, and the others were hiding in the shadows on the sidewalk. They were observing the situation. The lights in the prison were on, and huge spotlights illuminated the surroundings as bright as day.

Wang Yun looked at Ren Xiaosu expectantly. "Future Commander, what do we do now?"

But before Ren Xiaosu could say anything, Ji Zi'ang spoke first. "I haven't displayed any useful powers since being rescued by you all. Why not let me handle this situation?"

"You?" The Great Hoodwinker was stunned for a moment. "I know that you're an earth-type superhuman, but superpowers don't seem to be your forte, right?"

The Great Hoodwinker was implying that Ji Zi'ang's superpower was likely run of the mill. Otherwise, the Kong Consortium could not have captured him.

Ji Zi'ang was stunned before saying with a bitter smile, "Looks like I've been underestimated. Back then, I was supposed to rescue an important person from the secret prison. In the end, I failed miserably when I encountered that warden. After that, I found out later that there was actually no one important imprisoned here at all."

Then Ji Zi'ang got up and walked towards the prison in Stronghold 31. With a point of his finger, a quarter of the impregnable prison structure was turned into sand.

The bricks were no longer sturdy, and the foundation started crumbling. Nothing could hold together.

Ji Zi'ang said to Wang Yun, "Quick, use your Air Blast!"

Wang Yun did not hesitate. His eyes turned silver-gray, and a blast of air shot out from his clasped hands and smashed the crumbling prison, blowing out a cloud of dust.

In just an instant, the well-defended prison fortress looked like a cake that had a piece carved out of it. It was so damaged it looked like a cross section!

A commotion broke out among the inmates of the prison. Some of them started fleeing frantically while others took advantage of the chaos to attack the prison guards who had oppressed them.

The well-defended prison had instantly collapsed. The Kong Consortium's people probably never expected that their prison would get turned into a pile of ruins in such a way!

When the Great Hoodwinker saw this, he was shocked. "We've picked up a treasure!"

When the Great Hoodwinker first arrived at the secret prison, he did not think much of Ji Zi'ang's superpower. It was because the intelligence report had mentioned that Ji Zi'ang was captured too easily, so it was difficult for anyone to think he was very strong.

But now that he thought about it, it was not that Ji Zi'ang was not strong, but that the warden's power was too strange and impossible to guard against.

Ji Zi'ang and Wang Yun were already rushing towards the prison complex, with Ren Xiaosu, Yang Xiaojin, and the Great Hoodwinker following them.

Ren Xiaosu suddenly asked, "I think you should've been able to rescue the two of them as well, right? Although the warden's power is strange, it doesn't really affect a pure strength-type like you. Although there were explosives planted in the passageway, the person holding the detonator might not have detonated them so precisely and trapped you inside. Besides, you're not an unreliable person, so how could you not know that there were explosives buried in the passageway of the secret prison?"

The Great Hoodwinker chuckled and said, "What is it that you're really asking, Future Commander?"

"Why did you have to wait for me to come and rescue y'all?" Ren Xiaosu was puzzled.

The Great Hoodwinker might look like a quack in this currently chaotic world, but he was not slipshod when it came to getting things done. Take the trip to the Sacred Mountains for example. The Great Hoodwinker could even accurately identify the route they should take when in thick fog. This showed that he was a very well-prepared person.

Therefore, Ren Xiaosu felt the Great Hoodwinker could not have accidentally ended up being caught and put in the secret prison and even neglected the modifications done to the place.

The Great Hoodwinker said with a smile, "What's the point of me rescuing them? I'm only in charge of our Fortress 178's fieldwork, so I don't need those two to owe me anything."

Ren Xiaosu pondered for a moment. "So you'd rather have them owe me a favor?"

"That's right." The Great Hoodwinker nodded. "Although almost half of the people back at Fortress 178 have started supporting you, there's still some veterans who don't approve of you. After all, you're still too young, and you haven't received any systematic military training or learned warfare before. But of course, they aren't objecting to it either. They just need you to prove yourself with more achievements."

In the past, you could keep fighting alone. But when you return to Fortress 178 in the future, you'll need your own supporters."

Ren Xiaosu did not say anything. The Great Hoodwinker continued saying with a laugh, "I will send these two people back to the Northwest. Together with Wang Yun's 200-odd elite subordinates, they'll be your strongest force in the future."

"Was this what you and Wang Fengyuan planned?" Ren Xiaosu wondered, "Why are you two thinking so much instead of gathering intelligence?"

"No, no, no." The Great Hoodwinker shook his head. "We are not trying to gain political credit or something. You've misunderstood. We don't have such practices in the Northwest."

Ren Xiaosu wondered, "Then what are y'all doing this for?"

The Great Hoodwinker said in seriousness, "It was Commander Zhang's idea."

This time, Ren Xiaosu was stunned. He did not expect Zhang Jinglin to start making such early plans for him so he could successfully take over at Fortress 178.

Zhang Jinglin was still young, so it would not be a problem for him to be the commander for another 15 to 20 years. So why did the other party start searching for dependable supporters for him so early on?

Was Zhang Jinglin quite sure he was up for the job?

#### **Chapter 824: We are all comrades!**

Actually, after the Kong Consortium had arrested Wang Yun, they made a very glaring mistake, which was to lock up all of his 200-odd subordinates in the same prison complex.

According to proper procedures, these people should have been separately detained. This was because they were elites of a military who got transferred to work under Wang Yun and had carried out many missions with him. On one hand, they were very united, and on the other hand, they were very strong in combat.

When Wang Yun was held in the secret prison, he was not too worried that his 200-odd subordinates would not have enough to eat and wear. After they were sent to the standard prison in Stronghold 31, they immediately became the most unruly force there.

Those so-called leaders and bosses among the inmates in the past could only play second-fiddle in front of them.

The so-called prison bullies of the past, who were mostly murderers, all knew they could do whatever they wanted since there was no chance of them being released from prison. Moreover, they were extremely vicious as well, so much so that the other prisoners were afraid of them.

However, these people had only killed one or two people at most, while those who killed more than three people were already considered mass murderers. Meanwhile, Wang Yun's subordinates...

All of them had taken more than five lives on average...

Therefore, when the 200-odd subordinates of Wang Yun's entered Stronghold 31's prison and realized they had too much free time, they decided to unite the prisoners in Stronghold 31 first out of boredom.

The prison guards were extremely relaxed during this period as the prisoners they were watching did not even get into brawls anymore. It was as though they had banded together as a group.

After all, this prison had never been unified by anyone before.

They were over 200 professional soldiers. They even assigned the prisoners into platoons and put themselves in charge as their platoon commanders. They were basically managing the prisoners like they managed soldiers in the military.

When the warden found out about this, he was filled with worry. A few days ago, he had submitted a transfer request to move the 200-odd people away. However, he did not know if the document had even reached his boss, Kong Erdong. In any case, there was no follow-up on the matter.

Right now, the 200-odd brothers-in-arms were getting a little restless when they heard gunshots going off in the stronghold.

When they discovered the prison had been breached and heard the familiar sound of the air blasts, they perked up. In just the short duration of a minute, they immediately organized all the prisoners to start rioting against the prison guards.

Some people went to pull the power switch, while others broke off table legs to use as weapons. People were also lying in wait for the prison guards coming to suppress the riot to arrive.

When the prison guards entered the cell blocks, they were immediately surrounded by the prisoners. The prison guards realized the people in front of them did not look like a mob anymore. They were definitely a group of well-trained soldiers.

Actually, the prisoners were not that capable. It was mainly because the prison guards were not good at combat and could not compare to professional soldiers.

At this moment, Wang Yun's trusted deputy, Zhang Yanhe, was giving orders one after another from the rear. Meanwhile, his comrades kept leading their troops to attack the remaining areas that had not yet been taken.

Zhang Yanhe said excitedly, "Comrades, I can already hear the sound of Director Wang's attacks. He must've come to save us. Everyone, let's do this! Let's kill these prison guards first. We'll have our revenge!"

Ren Xiaosu listened to the battle cries of the inmates in the prison from afar. He had thought it would take him some more effort to break into this prison, but he did not expect that he would end up not having to do it himself.

Wang Yun and Ji Zi'ang entered the prison together through a breach. The already precarious situation in the prison immediately became worse. How could the normal prison guards withstand the combined attacks of two supernatural beings?

When Zhang Yanhe saw Wang Yun, he was overjoyed. He immediately joined up with Wang Yun and asked, "Sir, how did you get out of the secret prison?"

Wang Yun looked at his comrades and said with a smile, "It's a long story. Are all of our people here?"

"They're all here!" Zhang Yanhe said, "Total strength: 289. Present strength: 289! Sir, what should we do now? Where are we headed?"

"To the Northwest," Wang Yun said.

For some reason, when Wang Yun mentioned the Northwest this time, he suddenly felt a sense of belonging. It was as though that was exactly where he should be going, and that the Great Hoodwinker's prophecy about his future being in the Prosperous Northwest was really true...

"The Northwest?" Zhang Yanhe and the others looked at each other.

Wang Yun explained, "The fact that I was able to escape this time, including all of you getting rescued, was because of the Northwest. Come with me to see our future commander."

With that, Wang Yun and Ji Zi'ang led over 200 people and rushed out of the prison. At this moment, when a prison guard who was hiding in the shadows saw them trying to escape, he raised his gun and got ready to shoot.

Zhang Yanhe was the first to notice the prison guard. Seeing that the gun was pointed at Wang Yun, he immediately pushed Wang Yun away and tried to shield his superior.

But before he could push Wang Yun away, Zhang Yanhe could already see bleeding appearing on the prison guard's chest. He was stunned. "A sniper? Why's there a sniper?"

Wang Yun's heart was still throbbing with fear. He got a little carried away by the reunion just now. Fortunately, Yang Xiaojin had intervened, or the joyous occasion of their reunion today would have become a funeral instead.

Zhang Yanhe asked, "Sir, where did you get the sniper from?"

Wang Yun told Zhang Yanhe, "I didn't. That's our future commander's wife. The two of them rescued me from the secret prison. The chaos in Stronghold 31 was their doing as well."

"The two of them?" Zhang Yanhe and the others were stunned. "Sir, you mean these two?"

They had already walked up to Ren Xiaosu. After Yang Xiaojin confirmed it was safe, she stood up from the lawn and put away her sniper rifle.

Wang Yun said, "Thank you for saving our lives, Future Commander!"

His 200-odd subordinates bowed in unison. "Thank you, Future Commander!"

Ren Xiaosu broke into a grin. The typewriter in the palace got so busy it could not stop typing. It seemed like every one of their gratitudes was sincere!

He walked up to them and shook their hands warmly. "We're all comrades. The Northwest welcomes you all!"

Watching this from the side, Yang Xiaojin suddenly felt that Ren Xiaosu had become a veteran. Wang Yun turned to Yang Xiaojin and said, "Come, let's thank Future Commander's wife as well!"

Yang Xiaojin waved it off. "Just thank Ren Xiaosu."

Although Yang Xiaojin did not know why Ren Xiaosu liked being thanked by others so much, she knew it was definitely useful to him. Zhang Yanhe took the lead and bowed to thank Ren Xiaosu again. This left Ren Xiaosu grinning from ear to ear.

With a great harvest of gratitude tokens tonight, he had broken past the 5,400 mark!

He was getting close to unlocking the third weapon!

Seeing that it was about time, the Great Hoodwinker asked, "Future Commander, how are we leaving this place?"

This question stumped Ren Xiaosu. He had planned to use the steam locomotive to send Wang Yun and the others out of the city. But now that the steam locomotive, Old Xu, and the Shadow Door had all been sealed, it would take at least half a month before they could be used again. so he could not send them out anymore.

As such, the Great Hoodwinker, Wang Yun, and the others decided to head back into the prison to steal some vehicles. There were large buses used for transporting prisoners there, and five such vehicles would be enough to carry the nearly 300 of them. Once they got out of the stronghold, someone arranged by the Great Hoodwinker would naturally come and receive them.

### **Chapter 825: Slipped by**

Ren Xiaosu instructed the Great Hoodwinker, "When y'all leave the stronghold, you must be careful to avoid the battle zone between the Pyro Company and the Kong Consortium. Right now, the Pyro Company has just destroyed the stronghold walls in the north, but I don't think that that's their only objective. So be very careful not to bump into them."

"Mhm, I will take note of that." The Great Hoodwinker said.

Wang Yun's subordinates had already driven the buses out from the prison, and they even snatched walkie-talkies from the prison guards. This way, the five vehicles could communicate more closely while driving.

However, Wang Yun was a little puzzled. "Future Commander, you mean you're not coming with us?"

Ren Xiaosu explained, "There's still a medical team from the Wang Consortium in this stronghold. They're very respectable people, so I can't just leave them to die here in Stronghold 31."

"Is it worth helping the Wang Consortium's people?" Wang Yun asked doubtfully.

Ren Xiaosu said in a serious tone, "Those people have been working their entire lives trying to save the wounded and the dying. I can't just watch them get implicated. I don't know about the Wang Consortium's people. All I know is that these people are all very respectable."

The Great Hoodwinker looked like he wanted to say something. However, he did not try to dissuade him.

Meanwhile, Ji Zi'ang patted the Great Hoodwinker on the shoulder and got into the bus with a smile. "No matter how many times you might've tried to hoodwink me, it's only now that I feel I made the right decision to go to the Northwest. Come on, let's go. Future Commander, we'll meet again in the Northwest!"

In the end, Ren Xiaosu ordered the Great Hoodwinker, "After the buses leave Stronghold 31, it's best to head south first. Not only are the Pyro Company's people coming from the north, but new enemies will also be appearing there as well. I suspect that those enemies are even more terrifying than we can imagine."

"Mhm, I'll be careful," The Great Hoodwinker said as he got onto the bus.

Ren Xiaosu watched as the five buses drove off into the distance. He turned around and got into the off-road vehicle with Yang Xiaojin as they prepared to rescue Wang Jing and the others.

He wondered if Wang Run had followed his instructions to protect Wang Jing. Logically speaking, since Wang Jing was an esteemed medical figure of the Wang Consortium, Wang Run should be protecting him seriously, right?

...

At the same time, the Pyro Company in the north had broken through the cordon of the Kong Consortium and headed south by blending in with the escaping stronghold residents.

It had to be said that the Pyro Company's strategy was really wise. They had first destroyed the stronghold walls to make the stronghold residents panic. As a result, the large number of the fleeing residents became their cover.

This caused the Kong Consortium to always have some scruples when they opened fire to stop them. It was only after the Pyro Company had broken through two defensive lines that the Kong Consortium finally made up their mind to shoot down the civilians together with them. However, it was already too late.

When the battle turned into street-to-street fighting, the Kong Consortium's garrison troops, who had lost the protection of a proper defensive line, were no longer able to pose any threat to the Pyro Company's elite strike troops.

All of a sudden, the Pyro Company's troops split up and continued advancing through the different streets. Someone on the communications channel asked, "Sir, what's our target now?"

The T5 combatant said coldly, "It'll still take some time before the main forces arrive. The Kong Consortium's reinforcements stationed 40 kilometers away should be here soon. We must create more chaos in Stronghold 31 before dawn so they can't form an effective resistance."

"Then what should we do?" someone asked.

The T5 combatant thought for ten seconds and finally decided, "We'll attack the Kong Consortium's intelligence agency and blind them first. When two armies face off, the one with the better intelligence will have the upper hand. As long as we paralyze the Kong Consortium's intel network first, the Kong Consortium will definitely lose this war!"

Saying that, the T5 combatant immediately turned towards where the Kong Consortium's intelligence agency was located. During this time, they encountered two more attacks from the Kong Consortium. In the end, they still managed to penetrate past their attackers.

At this moment, the Kong Consortium realized they were simply no match for the highly mobile Pyro Company Special Forces in street battles.

Furthermore, when the Kong Consortium observed the direction in which the Pyro Company was going, they were surprised to discover they were heading for the intelligence agency.

After the Pyro Company finally made it to the intelligence agency, the T5 combatant saw corpses strewn around the street and abandoned vehicles that had exploded. The intelligence agency headquarters were also emptied out.

"What's going on?" The T5 combatant was clearly taken aback. They were the only Pyro Company team that had come to Stronghold 31 this time.

They had come to paralyze the intelligence agency, but someone actually beat them to it!

His subordinates checked the corpses to verify the identities of the deceased. Before they came here, they had already done their preparation work. One minute later, they said, "Sir, the Kong Consortium's intelligence director, Wang Ziyang, is dead."

"The newly appointed director of their 1st Military Intelligence Division has died."

"The newly appointed director of their 2nd Military Intelligence Division has died."

The T5 combatant raised his voice on the communications channel. "All units, take note that there might still be another elite fighting force in the stronghold. They've carried out a decapitation strike against the intelligence agency with extreme precision. I'm afraid that the Kong Consortium's intelligence agency has already fallen!"

"Who could have done this?" someone wondered.

"Probably the Wang Consortium's elite troops. Be careful. Avoid them if you bump into them. The most important thing now is to destroy the Kong Consortium," the T5 combatant said solemnly. In his opinion, the other group should also be very strong and have quite a few people. Otherwise, it would be



impossible for them to wipe out an entire intelligence agency that was situated in the center of the stronghold!

This made the T5 combatant a little hesitant. That was because he did not hear about the Wang Consortium having a fighting force as strong as this in the vicinity.

“What do we do now?” a T4 combatant asked on the radio.

“Attack the secret prison.” The T5 combatant pondered for a moment before answering, “Releasing the prisoners inside will be enough to give the Kong Consortium a headache.”

But after running for nearly half an hour, they realized the secret prison had also been turned into ruins when they got there. Immediately, there was a chill in the T5 combatant’s heart. Why were the Wang Consortium’s elite troops always a step ahead of them?

Moreover, how many people from the Wang Consortium were here? After destroying the intelligence agency, they still had the strength to break into the secret prison? The secret prison had already been demolished beyond recognition, and several hundred prison guards had died tragically in there. Could the Wang Consortium have an entire independent regiment hidden in the stronghold?!

At this moment, only the stronghold walls in the north were damaged. The walls at the other parts of the stronghold were all intact. Therefore, the Wang Consortium must not have come in from the outside of the stronghold. They must have already been lying in ambush on the inside.

“Let’s head to the other prison.” T5081 did not hesitate any further. In any case, their mission was to pin down the Kong Consortium’s garrison troops so they would not be able to organize their defenses. Here in Stronghold 31, the Wang Consortium was not their enemy.

However, when T5081 arrived and stood outside the normal prison, he was shocked. At some point, he even wondered if the Wang Consortium had really infiltrated Stronghold 31 with an entire independent regiment.

T5081 said in a daze, “Is the Kong Consortium’s intelligence agency useless? They don’t even know that their stronghold had been infiltrated by so many of the Wang Consortium’s people?”

However, the aftermath of the destruction to these two prisons was starting to give the Kong Consortium a headache, especially the intelligence agents that were set free from the secret prison. These people could even make a bunch of bombs with a single trip to the hardware store. It seemed like everything was about to go down in Stronghold 31!

### **Chapter 826: The average Ren Xiaosu**

To be honest, T5081 felt his scalp go numb at this moment. Everything he had planned to do was already done by someone else. Moreover, he was still unable to figure out where the other party was hiding, how many people they had, the number of supernatural beings among them, and what they were planning.

This feeling was not good at all. In fact, it was really strange. Someone had clearly helped him do what he wanted to do, yet he could not feel happy about it!

“Sir, what should we do now?” a T4 combatant asked weakly over the radio.

The aftermath of the inmates’ release from the two prisons was starting to tire the Kong Consortium out. As the Pyro Company did not want to go head-on against the garrison troops, it suddenly felt like they had nothing better to do.

In their plan, they were prepared to face death this time when they came to Stronghold 31 for their mission.

Moreover, their mission objectives were supposed to be executed one right after another, leaving them with no chance to catch their breaths. Every member of the Pyro Company here was prepared to go all out, but in the end, there was nothing for them to do at all.

Who could they go and reason with in this case?!

T5081 said, “No wonder we suddenly encountered an ambush on the rooftops after entering the stronghold. But we realized later that the Kong Consortium did not know we were coming, so that ambush on the rooftops was actually not targeted at us....”

“Then did we take the bullet for someone else?” a T4 combatant wondered.

“Not exactly.” T5081 sighed and said, “Did you guys realize that when we broke through the northern defensive line, the Kong Consortium’s garrison troops seemed to be really slow to react and did not attack us with all their might right away? It felt like their reactions were somewhat delayed.”

“It did feel like that. Some of the tactical troops did not seem to be fully prepared.”

“I understand what happened now.” T5081 said, “It’s because the garrison troops of the Kong Consortium were alerted to other disturbances in the stronghold and were planning to rush over to reinforce their fellow troops. As a result, that helped us disperse their forces.”

Actually, even Ren Xiaosu himself did not know that he had actually contributed somewhat to the destruction of the stronghold.

In his opinion, the destruction of the stronghold this time was entirely caused by the Pyro Company and had nothing to do with him at all. Although he also wanted to demolish the stronghold, wasn’t the Pyro Company one step ahead of him?

Therefore, he was not going to be held responsible for it this time.

T5081 pondered things for a moment before saying, “Let’s go. Since the objective has been accomplished and the stronghold is in chaos, we’ll just directly attack and take out Kong Erdong!”

Although their operation this time was called a decapitation strike, it was actually referring to destroying Stronghold 31 rather than killing Kong Erdong.

On one hand, there was no need to kill him. Even if Kong Erdong were to survive until the Pyro Company's main forces arrived, there would be nothing he could do. It would also be too troublesome since if they went straight for Kong Erdong, the garrison troops would definitely be guarding him closely. Although the Pyro Company's special forces were really strong, they still couldn't take on a reinforced brigade.

But now... they really had nothing better left to do!

T5081 thought that since there was nothing to do, why not just go and kill Kong Erdong instead!

In any case, the garrison troops were already scattered all over the place.

At this moment, all of the fleeing residents were trying their best to escape southwards due to the battle going on in the northern part of the stronghold. As a result, Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin's off-road vehicle nearly got stuck on the road.

"After we pick up Wang Jing and the others, let's head straight west. I'll blow up the city gate once we get there. We can't escape from the southern gate anymore. I'm afraid that a large number of escapees will be causing a jam over there." Ren Xiaosu said, "But it's a pity that we won't have a chance to kill Kong Erdong anymore."

Yang Xiaojin nodded. She looked out of the car window at the escapees fleeing amid the flames. "Let's put the matter of Kong Erdong aside for now. The outcome that Wang Shengzhi is seeking has already been achieved. It doesn't matter if Kong Erdong dies or not. Besides, I believe that Wang Shengzhi will definitely be very surprised."

Based on Wang Shengzhi's plan, it would take a long time for the Kong Consortium to fall into chaos after Kong Erdong was killed. But things were different now. They had skipped a step and reached the end goal.

Speaking of which, this could be considered a one-stop service, and it so happened that Ren Xiaosu was the service provider.

When the off-road vehicle drove into the residential neighborhood, Ren Xiaosu saw the bodies of rioters hanging at the entrance. Blood was dripping from them. It was an extremely terrifying sight.

"This should be the work of Wang Run and his men to warn the other rioters." Ren Xiaosu guessed that other than Wang Run and his men, no one else in the vicinity would be so ruthless.

When the vehicle came to a stop at the entrance of the villa, Ren Xiaosu shouted inside, "Don't shoot! It's me!"

Surprised voices rang out from the villa. "Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin are back!"

Wang Jing opened the door and carefully looked at Ren Xiaosu. He did not ask where he had been and immediately checked to see if he was alright. "Are you injured?"

“No.” Ren Xiaosu chuckled and said, “About that... Yang Xiaojin and I just went out for a stroll. We didn’t expect something like this to happen all of a sudden. As a result, we were stuck outside, and it took a long time to find our way back.”

Everyone from the Trinity Institute had looks of disbelief on their faces, but no one knew how to refute his explanation.

When Ren Xiaosu did not see Wang Run around, he looked at Wang Jing and asked, “By the way... didn’t someone come and protect all y’all?”

“Yes, but they left after receiving an order.” Wang Jing said, “They... were they sent here by you?”

“Hahaha,” Ren Xiaosu laughed awkwardly. “How could that be? I only found out by chance when I encountered them earlier. They said that they were coming here to protect you, Elder Wang. Look, everyone, pack up your belongings and leave this place quickly. Stronghold 31 is done for. If we don’t leave now, we’ll be buried along with this stronghold.”

Ren Xiaosu then realized the people from the Trinity Institute had already packed their luggage and loaded it into the vehicles. After Ren Xiaosu distributed a walkie-talkie to each vehicle, the convoy immediately set off.

The convoy drove all the way west. The atmosphere in the vehicles was extremely silent.

All of a sudden, Liang Ce asked, “Ren Xiaosu, you—”

“I didn’t do it! I’m just a normal cardiac surgeon!” Ren Xiaosu denied.

“...I haven’t even asked anything yet.”

But at this moment, a row of black vehicles passed by the Trinity Institute’s convoy. Liang Ce was about to say something when he saw Ren Xiaosu staring intently at the passing convoy.

That convoy of black vehicles was heading east at a very fast speed. It looked like they were escaping.

Ren Xiaosu had chosen to head west because that was where the Wang Consortium was. However, other people might not choose to flee in that direction. If they were from the Kong Consortium, escaping east would be the highest priority, because there was another Kong Consortium stronghold 120 kilometers to the east.

Ren Xiaosu broke the silence by saying to Yang Xiaojin, “Don’t y’all slow down. I’m heading out for a while.”

Yang Xiaojin asked thoughtfully, “Kong Erdong?”

“That’s right, that was his license plate. I would guess that he doesn’t intend to go down with Stronghold 31. He’s already fleeing!” With that, Ren Xiaosu opened the door and jumped out of the vehicle. He then ran all the way towards Kong Erdong’s convoy.

In the vehicles at the back of the Trinity Institute convoy, everyone looked silently at Ren Xiaosu who had just gone past them.

Liang Ce was speechless. Didn't he just say he was just a normal cardiac surgeon?!

...

### **Chapter 827: Stronghold 176 has fallen**

Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin's vehicle was leading their convoy. Therefore, when Ren Xiaosu jumped out of the front passenger seat, the other vehicles behind them could see him.

A middle-aged doctor who was driving suddenly saw someone jump out of the vehicle in front of him. He was immediately shocked. "Wait, what's Ren Xiaosu doing?"

"What's he trying to do?"

Through the windows, Wang Jing saw Ren Xiaosu waving at the convoy as he ran. He was signaling for everyone to keep driving. Then everyone's gaze followed him as he sped to the rear of the convoy.

Other than the drivers, everyone else turned around and leaned against their seats to see what exactly Ren Xiaosu was up to.

Then, just as they turned around, they saw Ren Xiaosu leap up and land right on top of one of the black vehicles!

Immediately after, they saw him brandish a black saber out of thin air. He held it tightly with both hands and stabbed it straight down into the backseat of the vehicle through its roof.

After that, Ren Xiaosu did not stop and turned around to run away. Everyone could even hear the sound of that convoy braking sharply. The screeching of the tires that had locked up made everyone cringe uncontrollably.

Even though they were dozens of meters away, Wang Jing and the others could still hear the heart-wrenching cries of people in that vehicle. "Boss! Boss, are you OK?!"

Ren Xiaosu did not hesitate at all. He forcefully caught back up with the Trinity Institute convoy that was still speeding ahead and got into the vehicle at the front. Everything had happened in a flash.

Liang Ce and Meng Nan, who were sitting in the back of the lead vehicle, were dumbfounded. They looked at Ren Xiaosu who was sitting in the front passenger seat as though nothing had happened. Liang Ce muttered, "As I recall, Ms. Xiaojin seemed to have mentioned the name Kong Erdong just now?"

"Mhm," Ren Xiaosu answered calmly.

"So you killed Kong Erdong? You killed the boss of the Kong Consortium?" Liang Ce exclaimed.

Ren Xiaosu turned around and looked at Liang Ce with an expression like he was saying, “Why are you so surprised?” This time, Liang Ce could not take it anymore. His reaction was clearly to be expected. *‘It would not be normal if I still remained so calm after you had killed Kong Erdong!’*

Liang Ce turned around and had a look again. They were getting farther and farther away from that black convoy. Kong Erdong’s subordinates who were with him got out of their vehicles. They had an expression of “who am I and where am I” on their faces, and it did not seem like they intended to chase after Ren Xiaosu either.

Everyone in the Trinity Institute group finally understood that Ren Xiaosu was not here for the medical exchange. He was here to kill someone!

But Wang Jing could not understand why a killer would be so proficient in cardiovascular surgery and be so good at treating external injuries.

“So where are we going now?” Liang Ce asked.

Ren Xiaosu said without hesitation, “Back to the Wang Consortium!”

The Kong Consortium was already done for. When the fighting had broken out in Stronghold 31, Kong Erdong, the highest-ranking official of the Kong Consortium, did not even have the intention to defend their position to the death. As such, the fate of the organization was also sealed.

Even if there were future successors, Ren Xiaosu did not think that anyone would be able to turn the tide. It had to be known that not only was the Pyro Company situated next to the Kong Consortium, but the Wang Consortium’s troops were also eyeing the border.

...

At this moment, the Pyro Company’s special forces were chasing after clues to track down Kong Erdong. They first went to Kong Erdong’s residence but found it was already empty. There was no sign of him at all.

They only found out later that Kong Erdong had quietly left his residence ten minutes ago when they caught two people from the Kong Consortium. To stay low, Kong Erdong did not even bring any garrison troops with him. His intention was for them to continue pushing back the Pyro Company’s troops.

When the Pyro Company finally caught up to Kong Erdong’s convoy, Kong Erdong’s subordinates had already dispersed. Only the vehicle that Kong Erdong was in was left behind, along with his corpse inside.

T5081 examined the scene in silence. He realized Kong Erdong’s death was caused by someone stabbing a sword into his head from the roof of the vehicle and that no large-scale battle had broken out here.

“How many people does the other party have exactly?” T5081 wondered, “Surely they couldn’t have done so much damage with just one or two people, right?”

Suddenly, a T4 combatant who was also a radiotelephone operator came up beside him. "I've received a call from the higher-ups."

Saying that, the T4 combatant handed him the radio set's receiver. T5081 took it and said, "Sir? This is T5081."

"What's the situation?" the person on the other end of the call asked.

"We've already breached the northern walls of the stronghold. The Kong Consortium's intelligence agency has been wiped out, and all the inmates in the secret prison have been released. The normal prison's inmates have been released as well. Kong Erdong is dead!" T5081 said.

"It went so smoothly?" The person on the other end of the call sounded a little surprised. He had not expected the special forces to successfully kill Kong Erdong after completing their mission objectives!

T5081 pondered it for a moment before explaining, "Actually, other than breaching the stronghold walls, we did not do any of the things I just mentioned. When we went to the intelligence agency's headquarters, the people there were already dead. When we went to the secret prison, the place had already been attacked..."

After a long explanation from the T5 combatant, the person on the other end of the call wondered, "Then can I interpret it this way? Other than breaching the northern walls, you all have failed to achieve anything?"

There was a few seconds of silence on both ends. The T5 combatant answered with a struggle, "Yes..."

"Do you know who did it?"

"I don't know..."

"Alright, remain in Stronghold 31. The main forces are almost approaching 5 kilometers north of the stronghold. After the encirclement is complete, coordinate with the troops in the west to open up the gate and assist the main forces to complete the occupation of Stronghold 31."

After that, the other party hung up.

After the T5 combatant finished answering the call, he wanted to find someone to rant about. He had wanted to claim the credit for himself, but if someone were to step forward with the truth in the future, his position in the Pyro Company would be in danger.

Fortunately, everything went smoothly. No matter what, Stronghold 31 was already in the Pyro Company's possession.

But at this moment, as though the timing were impeccable, while the Pyro Company was going all out in their attack on the Kong Consortium, the northern tribe started attacking Stronghold 176 with all their might as well. First, the Experimentals under the command of the black-robed wizard destroyed the defensive line of the Wang Consortium's garrison troops. Then thousands of burly men appeared on the horizon and took only 15 minutes to charge to the front of the stronghold.

The already broken defensive line could not stop the northern tribe from entering the city. The Wang Consortium's garrison troops quickly regrouped in the stronghold in an attempt to drag the burly northerners into a street fight and slowly wear them down.

But to everyone's surprise, these people were actually able to break through the walls just with their bodies. Everyone in this tribe was like a small tank charging around with a large axe in hand. This caused the Wang Consortium's hastily reformed defensive line to collapse again!

Standard automatic rifles could only inflict minimal damage on their bodies. Most of the bullets were stuck on the surface of their skin while the heavy machine guns were extremely dependent on their line of sight and positioning. Stronghold 176 had fallen.

### **Chapter 828: Encountering the main forces of the Pyro Company!**

The devastation in Stronghold 176 had far exceeded everyone's imagination.

In just three hours, corpses were strewn all over the stronghold.

Just a month ago, Stronghold 176 had fallen once before. However, Yan Liuyuan restrained his subordinates and did not allow them to go on a killing spree. The tribe that went around slaughtering the residents was also hanged by Yan Liuyuan.

But it was different this time. The northern tribe had gone on a killing spree in Stronghold 176 and massacred everyone in the city.

Amid the screams, Stronghold 176 turned into a living hell.

In the past, there would always be trails of white smoke puffing out from the chimneys of the factories in the stronghold. But today, there were no longer signs of that white smoke. Instead, it was replaced by a cloud of black smoke that seemed to be everywhere in the air. Fires were burning all around the stronghold.

After over a 100 years since the Alliance of Strongholds was set up, a massacre of a stronghold had finally happened.

The Wang Consortium's garrison troops did not engage in a bloody battle with this northern tribe to the very end. They only had time to see the enemy plant a flag of a white bear at the highest point of the stronghold before immediately retreating south in an attempt to join up with the main forces of the Wang Consortium's reinforcements that were on their way over.

There were not many garrison troops stationed at Stronghold 176 to begin with. The speed at which the Wang Consortium mobilized their troops to the north was a step too late in the end.

To the north, the burly man who commanded the expeditionary army's advance guard walked into the city with his giant axe in hand. He looked at his deputy beside him. "Where's Black Robe? Why don't I see him around?"

"He was supposed to coordinate support for us in the stronghold, but we did not see him after we stepped inside. Later on, even those death row convicts under his command disappeared without a trace," the deputy commander said.



The burly man, who was almost two meters tall, sneered. "He's so secretive. I wonder what the general sees in him. Why does he indulge that fella so?"

The deputy commander reminded him with a serious expression, "Commander Valentin, please don't ever question the general's decision in public again."

"Go and find him." Valentin said, "Yegor, if you can't figure out what he's up to before sunset, I'll deploy you back to your company."

Yegor did not say anything further. He carried his giant axe and led a group of men away. Meanwhile, Valentin sat on top of a pile of rubble and admired the ruins of Stronghold 176. This was the work of the expeditionary army.

At this moment, there were too many casualties in Stronghold 176. So no one noticed that the gray Experimentals had not killed everyone they encountered. Rather, they captured some of them and brought them to an underground laboratory.

The incandescent light in the underground laboratory was flickering, and the Experimental who was shrouded in a black robe was standing at an operating table. Hundreds of humans were tied up on the ground as they screamed in fear.

However, no one could hear their cries for help. The Wang Consortium's garrison troops had been defeated, so no one would come and save them even if they heard their pleas.

Dozens of strong-looking Experimentals were crawling around in the huge laboratory. They were patrolling the premises to prevent any humans from escaping.

Black Robe was a little surprised as he did not expect to find such a well-equipped laboratory in Stronghold 176. However, it seemed the controllers of the stronghold only had the equipment, while the research they carried out was totally worthless.

But it was different now. This research laboratory had become more important due to his arrival. In Black Robe's eyes, this was probably the only thing worthy of praise that he had for the useless stronghold overseers.

He picked up a syringe and slowly pushed the tiny bubbles out of it before walking towards a young woman.

Black Robe knelt down next to the woman and said with a hoarse laugh, "As a new subject of my kingdom, you should feel honored."

The woman begged, "Please let me go. I still have my parents to take care of. I don't want to die."

"It's alright. You'll soon forget these human emotions," Black Robe said.

When the woman saw the gray face under the black robe, she immediately retreated in fear. However, her hands and feet were bound, so she could only struggle in vain. She shouted, "Monster! You're also a monster!"

Black Robe slowly got up. The word "monster" pissed him off. He let the woman in front of him continue to struggle and did not say a word throughout.

Eventually, he waved his hand and an Experimental next to him bounded over and tore the woman to pieces. Blood splattered onto the ground of the laboratory in an extremely terrifying manner.

Meanwhile, Black Robe silently walked towards the next person.

He injected the drug into the humans one by one. Then their blood vessels slowly turned gray. It was like a strange gray worm was crawling through their blood vessels. After that, their skin also started graying. Under the incandescent light, they looked abnormally sick.

Suddenly, an Experimental came in through the door. It crawled in front of Black Robe and roared. Black Robe frowned and said, "Bring them out from another exit and wait for my call in the wilderness."

With that, he immediately walked out of the laboratory and returned to the surface. When he saw Yegor walking over, he asked in a hoarse voice, "You were looking for me?"

"Commander Valentin wants to know what you're doing," Egor said coldly.

Black Robe calmly explained, "I was just looking around the place."

"Is that so?" As he spoke, Yegor ordered his subordinates to search the laboratory behind Black Robe and the underground building, but they found nothing inside.

After Yegor received confirmation that there was nothing suspicious, he said, "Commander Valentin said that you'd better not be up to any tricks under his watch."

Black Robe said with a hoarse laugh, "Don't be nervous. You don't have to be so afraid of me. The general trusts me very much, doesn't he? Instead of coming to look for me, why don't you chase after the Wang Consortium's garrison troops that have fled? I think that this is the biggest mistake you all have made because they will spread the news very soon and bring more people from the Central Plains back here. At that time, even a force as strong as the expeditionary army will shed rivers of blood. It'll be a tragic battle to fight."

Yegor turned around and left. To be honest, he did not even want to stay a second longer with Black Robe. When he spoke to Black Robe, he felt like a venomous snake was winding around his skin. The slithery and cold feeling sickened him.

...

The convoy from the Trinity Institute successfully escaped from the chaotic zones in Stronghold 31. When they arrived at the western gate, it had been left open. It seemed that Kong Erdong was not the only one who had tried to escape. A large number of stronghold officials had also fled.

Ren Xiaosu checked a map in the front passenger seat and said, "It's best that we don't take the same route back to the Wang Consortium. I suspect that we'll encounter a large number of Kong Consortium deserters there. Since the Pyro Company can reach Stronghold 31, Stronghold 32 must've already fallen. Currently, the Kong Consortium deserters will probably number in the thousands, and they'll cause a lot of trouble for the escapees. We should detour farther south and try our best to avoid the routes that the deserters will most likely choose to wait at."

But just as he finished speaking, Yang Xiaojin, who was next to him, stomped on the brakes. All of a sudden, the entire convoy from the Trinity Institute came to a stop.

Ren Xiaosu looked up and was surprised to see a group of Pyro Company members surrounding them!

At some point, the Pyro Company had surrounded Stronghold 31!

### **Chapter 829: The Pyro Company retreats!**

The Pyro Company in front of them was not just a small part of the advance guard. Ren Xiaosu could even see a continuous stream of military transport vehicles and mechanized troops behind them.

This was part of the Pyro Company's main forces!

As there was no source of intel, Ren Xiaosu did not know when the Pyro Company had captured Stronghold 32. He guessed that the stronghold must have fallen sometime during the night before the Pyro Company launched a blitzkrieg on Stronghold 31.

This was intricately linked to the T5 combatant's plan to lead the special forces to complete the decapitation strike. Their goal was to catch the Kong Consortium off guard.

Still on the brakes, Yang Xiaojin asked, "Should we escape?"

"We can't get away anymore." Ren Xiaosu sighed. If it were just the two of them, they could easily leave right now. But they still had the Trinity Institute led by Wang Jing behind them.

If the two of them were to escape just like that, Wang Jing and the others would definitely end up in a bad state.

The Pyro Company was right in front of them. Even if their off-road vehicles were high-performance models, they still couldn't escape from the other party's mechanized troops.

It was a pity that his steam locomotive was still sealed. Otherwise, he would not be in such a dilemma.

The doctors in the vehicles were panicking. When had they ever been caught in such a situation before? Someone kept asking Wang Jing over the walkie-talkie, "Elder, what should we do now?"

"Why don't we go and talk to them? We're just doctors, after all. What does the war between the Pyro Company and the Kong Consortium have to do with our medical team from the Wang Consortium?"

Wang Jing did not know what to do either. Even though he had been in many dangerous situations before, it was nothing compared to being caught up in a war.

However, he quickly said through the walkie-talkie, "Everyone, be careful not to expose Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin's identities. Remember, they're members of our medical team. They're just two ordinary doctors. If anyone deliberately reveals any information to the Pyro Company, don't blame me for not showing mercy when we return to the Wang Consortium."

When Ren Xiaosu heard Wang Jing's voice, he fell silent. He did not expect Wang Jing's first thought would be to protect him.

Everyone watched Ren Xiaosu suddenly open the car door. Then he raised his hands above his head and walked towards the Pyro Company's troops. He shouted, "We're the medical team from the Wang Consortium's Trinity Institute. We're here on a medical exchange with the Kong Consortium. Please don't harm us. We can hand over all our weapons. We aren't combatants, so please don't kill the innocent."

Everyone in the vehicles was shocked. Seeing that the Pyro Company's soldiers were pointing their guns at the convoy, none of them would have the courage to step forward and face the Pyro Company's main forces alone.

But this young man had a courage that the average person did not have.

Yang Xiaojin glanced at Ren Xiaosu and slowly got out of the vehicle as well. She raised her hands to indicate she was unarmed.

Ren Xiaosu was also very nervous at this moment. He was very worried the Pyro Company's main forces would indiscriminately shoot at any suspicious targets.

After all, it was wartime now and nothing could be certain.

At the rear of the convoy, Wang Jing took the lead and got out of the vehicle. He also threw the automatic rifle Wang Run had given them on the ground.

Two platoons from the Pyro Company quickly approached them. One of the platoons was responsible for watching over everyone from the Trinity Institute while the other carefully searched all the vehicles. They even cut open the seats of the vehicles with their tactical daggers. In the end, they discovered the vehicles were only filled with medical equipment and medicine.

It was only then that a Pyro Company officer walked over slowly. He immediately saw Wang Jing and asked, "Are you the person in charge of this medical team?"

"Yes, I am." Wang Jing said in a neither servile nor overbearing manner, "I'm the vice president of the Trinity Institute and the director of Stronghold 62's First Hospital. We came here as part of the Trinity Institute's usual medical exchange program, but we didn't expect a war to break out."

"Your ID?" the Pyro Company officer said.

When Ren Xiaosu heard that, he heaved a sigh of relief. At least, the attitude the other party was showing did not seem like he was going to kill anyone indiscriminately.

Ren Xiaosu had taken a gamble when he got out of the vehicle. In the past, Ren Xiaosu always had a very polarized impression of the Pyro Company. One was that they were unscrupulous when doing their missions, and the other was that they would stand up for humanity in times of trouble. It was very paradoxical behavior.

He thought to himself that since he could not get out of this situation through violence, he would have to reveal himself as a member of the medical team and see how the Pyro Company would handle them.

If the other party still wanted to take action against them, he would have to try his best and fight his way out.

At this moment, Wang Jing handed his identification to the Pyro Company's officer. The officer read it and said, "In principle, we will not harm any medical personnel. But how can I be sure that you all are medical professionals? Your ID could be forged."

Wang Jing was a little put on the spot. "Why don't you get someone to test us? I'm sure that all of us can pass the test."

Suddenly, an officer jogged over to the Pyro Company officer and whispered something to him. The Pyro Company officer's expression suddenly changed as he immediately said to his deputy commander next to him, "Gather all of these doctors into a truck. Everyone, retreat to the North immediately!"

Ren Xiaosu was stunned. What was going on? Why were the Pyro Company's main forces retreating to the North? Were they not going to occupy Stronghold 31?

The officer handed Wang Jing's identification back to him. "All of you have been temporarily conscripted. From now on, no one is allowed to act on their own."

Someone from the Trinity Institute said anxiously, "Why do we have to go north? We've already shown you our identification. We're only doctors! We don't know how to fight a war!"

The Pyro Company officer said coldly, "A new war has broken out in the North. Stronghold 176 has been massacred, and our Pyro Company has entered a Level One combat readiness state. It just so happens that we have wounded soldiers in the war against the Kong Consortium and we don't have enough medical supplies left. Everyone, please rest assured and focus on saving the wounded and dying among our troops. Isn't it all the same no matter where you treat your patients?"

Someone wondered, "Isn't Stronghold 176 the Wang Consortium's territory? What has it got to do with the Pyro Company?"

The officer glared at the person who spoke. "This time, we're facing a foreign enemy. Our Pyro Company has to make them pay in blood for the Central Plains people who died in Stronghold 176."

After that, the officer jumped onto a military off-road vehicle and sped northwards.

Following, the two platoons escorted the group from the Trinity Institute into a military transport truck and headed north with them.

Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin looked at each other. They looked out of the truck and saw Stronghold 31 getting farther and farther away from them. What kind of war had caused the Pyro Company to give up on Stronghold 31 when it was already theirs for the taking?

Surely these people had not come here in the middle of the night to give the Kong Consortium a Valentine's Day surprise, right?

Wait a minute. Ren Xiaosu suddenly remembered that Wang Jing had once mentioned... the enemies north of the grasslands.

But Stronghold 176 was not exactly next to the Pyro Company. Why did the Pyro Company, who looked like they had a deep-seated resentment against the Wang Consortium, give up on such a huge interest so decisively?

### **Chapter 830: Under the cover of the Pyro Company**

The military transport truck wobbled unsteadily as it drove northwards. Cold wind poured in through the gaps of the cabin's canvas and made everyone feel the biting cold of the night.

The doctors of Trinity Institute had already fallen into deep sleep. Ren Xiaosu looked at the long convoy of Pyro Company troops behind them. The headlights of the vehicles were constantly swaying in the dark as they bounced up and down on the bumpy ground.

The Pyro Company probably felt that doctors did not have much combat capacity, and with their weapons already confiscated, they did not have to worry about them causing any trouble.

Or perhaps the Pyro Company had already verified the identity and purpose of the Trinity Institute through their intelligence network. In short, the Pyro Company did not even assign any guards to watch over Wang Jing and the others.

At this moment, the Pyro Company did not know what kind of people they had actually brought into the Pyro Company.

Honestly, the kind-hearted Ren Xiaosu really did not want to bring harm to the Pyro Company while hiding among them. But the Pyro Company seemed to disagree.

The Pyro Company had already been traveling for three days straight and did not stop to rest throughout the journey. Every vehicle was assigned with three drivers working three shifts so that the convoy could keep moving for all 24 hours of the day.

Each day, the troops would only take an hour to reorganize during mealtime before setting off again.

Wang Jing and the others were only doctors, so they could not withstand such a torturous journey. Wang Jing went down with a fever the next day, but as their medicine was confiscated, they could not treat him.

While everyone was worrying over what to do, Ren Xiaosu braved up and approached the Pyro Company officer while the troops were reorganizing. The officer looked at Ren Xiaosu and asked, "What's the matter?"

Ren Xiaosu secretly stuffed a watch into his hand and said, "The weather's too cold, and one of our people has fallen sick. He's running a fever. Can you give me 13 blankets? After all, we're now considered military doctors. In the future, we'll have to treat your comrades. It won't do y'all any good if we die while traveling to the front line."

In the end, the officer looked at the watch and handed it back to Ren Xiaosu. "We were negligent in this matter. We forgot to distribute the gear to you all. I'll get someone to bring them over to you later."

Ren Xiaosu was stunned. He did not expect the other party to return the watch to him. After all, watches were also considered a type of currency in this day and age. Although it was not a hard currency like gold, it could still be exchanged for money at a pawnshop. And it would fetch a good value too.

Seeing that the other party was not particularly difficult to talk to, he probed, "Sir, we've never fought in a war before. Will we be a burden if we follow y'all to the front line?"

That Pyro Company officer chuckled. "You still want to go to the front line when you're so weak? Don't worry, we won't make you go there. In four days, I'll send you all to the makeshift medical center at the rear of the front line as we planned. The flames of war will not reach you there. We're conscripting you all not to fight, but to do what you're best at."

"Alright, thank you. You're absolutely right. How can weaklings like us head to the front line!" Ren Xiaosu expressed his gratitude.

However, Ren Xiaosu secretly thought to himself that a doctor's mission was to dedicate their limited life to an unlimited cause in the medical field. Meanwhile, what he was best at was actually to limit the lives of others.

Thinking about it this way, it really did seem like he had something in common with doctors. Both had something to do with the limit of lives.

For a moment, he even wanted to go to the front line to see if the northern tribe was strong enough.

Half an hour later, not only did a Pyro Company soldier send over more than a dozen blankets, he sent over six antibiotic pills as well. The Pyro Company soldier said coldly, "You guys better pray that you don't fall sick. Medicine is already so scarce, and once we start fighting those people from the north, there won't be any left for you all."

This left Ren Xiaosu a little surprised. Not only did the Pyro Company officer refuse to accept his watch, he even had a surprise for him.

Ren Xiaosu had not intended to ask for any medicine in the first place, because he already had some in his storage space, so he could secretly feed it to Wang Jing.

After everyone wrapped themselves up in the blankets, they looked at Ren Xiaosu with gratitude.

They knew very well that regardless of Ren Xiaosu's purpose at the Kong Consortium, the Pyro Company would still have attacked Stronghold 31. If not for Ren Xiaosu, they might have been killed when the rioters went to the residential neighborhood.

Ren Xiaosu was also the one who braved up and negotiated with the Pyro Company for supplies. For a moment, Ren Xiaosu, who was the youngest among them, became everyone's pillar after Wang Jing fell ill.

Over the past three days, what made things even worse was that Sima Gang and Liang Ce kept vomiting for an entire day while sprawled over the back of the truck. This was due to motion sickness. It was only when they had nothing more to vomit that they started getting used to the bumpy ride.

The two of them did not feel much when they were riding in the off-road vehicles earlier, but it was different in the military transport trucks, especially when they were traveling on the bumpy roads. There were even potholes created by artillery shelling, so it could be imagined just how intense the war between the Pyro Company and the Kong Consortium was.

While Liang Ce and Sima Gang were vomiting, Ren Xiaosu could see the driver of the vehicle behind them laughing at their expense. It was as though he were some military veteran gloating at the new recruits.

Actually, this also surprised Ren Xiaosu a little. In the past, he had always thought the Pyro Company members were just a group of emotionless war machines. But now, Ren Xiaosu felt that these people were no different from other people.

However, there were also times when Ren Xiaosu was unhappy with the Pyro Company while traveling with them. Every day during mealtime, they would have to wait for all the Pyro Company troops to finish eating before they could collect their meals.

But sometimes, the chow squad would start packing up in advance before the hourlong break was over so as not to delay their advancement. As such, Ren Xiaosu and the others did not manage to collect their meals. They could only hope they could collect their meals faster during the next break.

What left Ren Xiaosu speechless was that this was not a result of someone deliberately making things difficult for them. It was just that this was the Pyro Company's usual practice. It was not only them who did not get to eat. Even some of the Pyro Company soldiers who were delayed by their vehicle repair work would not get a hot meal if they arrived late.

The Pyro Company's various fighting forces strictly adhered to time discipline.

Along the way, Ren Xiaosu secretly gave a piece of chocolate to Yang Xiaojin that she stuffed into her mouth when no one was watching.

As he could not explain the source of the food, Ren Xiaosu did not give any of it to the others.

Although they often did not get to eat, Yang Xiaojin was never worried she would go hungry. She knew Ren Xiaosu had a lot of things hidden on him. No matter where he went, Ren Xiaosu would always be prepared.



Ren Xiaosu seemed to be carrying a warehouse with him. He could dig out everything from pork trotters, chocolate, and crackers, to grenades, heavy machine guns, and poker cards.

Yes, there were even poker cards among the items.

After witnessing the power of Explosive Poker, Yang Xiaojin felt that anytime playing cards appeared in Ren Xiaosu's hands, what everyone should do was not to call "landlord"[1] but to evacuate immediately.

"I heard from that Pyro Company officer that it'll take another four days to reach the front line in the North." Ren Xiaosu said to everyone as he leaned against the canvas in the truck's cabin, "When the time comes, we'll be assigned to a makeshift medical center at the rear of the front line. There's no need to worry about having to go onto the battlefield."

[1] In Fight the Landlord, one person calls "landlord" if they believe they have a strong enough hand to beat everyone else. The others become "peasants" and will try to collectively beat the landlord.