

First Order 891

Chapter 891: The barbarians' trap!

P5092 felt that he did not have any selfish motives when speaking to the other party as he was not interested in the position known as the commander-in-chief of the military corps.

But just as he had said before, politics followed people. Even a lowly P4 deputy commander dared to sneer at him and assumed he was envious that the 6th Division would take all the credit for winning the war.

Even someone as calm as P5092 would feel a bit angry when he encountered a dumbass colleague like that.

Off to the side, Ren Xiaosu asked, "Are they sure that the person they captured is the highest-ranking officer of the expeditionary army's advance guard?"

"Yes, they've verified it." P5092 explained, "They claim he admitted it after an interrogation."

"Interrogation?" Ren Xiaosu wondered, "How could it be that easy to interrogate a high-ranking officer of the barbarians? They captured him not long ago, right? And he confessed that easily?"

"I suspect there's something fishy about this matter." P5092 said, "I suspect the person who was captured is not the highest-ranking officer of the expeditionary army's advance guard at all. It should be a trap. Those defeated barbarians who are retreating north are obviously trying to lure our Pyro Company troops there."

"Then you should tell them not to go there." Ren Xiaosu said matter-of-factly, "Wouldn't it be better to adopt a cautious and steady approach? Aren't you P5s all very rational? How could they get carried away by their victory?"

P5092 looked at Ren Xiaosu helplessly. "We can't stop them anymore. Do you think we're all cast from the same mold? That's not how it is. All P5s grew up in their own family environment and had different upbringings. It's just that the Pyro Company felt that we were suitable to be commanders."

"Oh, I see." Ren Xiaosu nodded. "Then you're much more capable than them. At the very least, you're still able to analyze the situation carefully."

Just as P5092 had guessed, with the position of commander-in-chief of the military corps still up for grabs, the other P5 division commanders started clamoring for glory recklessly upon seeing that the barbarians were beaten.

In the process of pursuing the northern barbarians, the 7th and 1st Divisions even fought over who would get the honor of utterly defeating them.

P5092's so-called position as the acting commander of the military corps was not enough to control these people.

An acting commander without an official appointment lacked credibility. Moreover, most of the other division commanders always regarded P5092 as their strongest competitor, so they could not wait to oppose him at this time.

P5092 said, "I can't stop them anymore due to my status. If I try to dissuade them from pursuing the enemy, it might backfire and stir up their competitive spirit."

"Then what do you plan to do?" Ren Xiaosu asked.

P5092 turned around and said to his adjutant, "Tell the artillery at the rear to leave the Great Wall immediately and join up with us. All the soldiers of the infantry brigade are to start digging trenches where we are. We need to quickly set up a defensive line here!"

P5092 was really decisive. In an instant, he made the decision to set up a temporary defensive line here.

P5092 explained to Ren Xiaosu, "Even if the barbarians did not set a trap for us to the north, there's nothing wrong with establishing a defensive line here. After all, we're still only facing their advance guard at the moment. There will be more battles to fight in the future, so we have to shift our defensive line northwards sooner or later."

"If the barbarians really did set a trap for us in the north, we can receive our defeated Pyro Company troops here and reorganize them to defend the Great Wall again." P5092 said, "We've deployed half of our Pyro Company forces this time. Although it might seem like we still have the other half stationed behind the Great Wall and have sufficient forces to fight the war, we know internally that the soldiers of the remaining six divisions are mostly recruits. Some of them have never even been in battle before, so I have to do my best to ensure that some of our Pyro Company veterans make it back."

P5092 was trying to preserve as many members of the Pyro Company as possible.

At this moment, the rest of the Pyro Company troops were rapidly pursuing the barbarians northwards. P5092 quickly spread out a map on the ground and made some markings on it with a red pen. "I've already figured it out. It's late at night now, and there were no elderly barbarians when we encountered their troops at the beginning. Then the elderly barbarians started appearing later into the night. But there was only a small number of them as they were afraid we would notice that something was wrong in advance.

"After that, the ratio of their elderly got higher and higher. By the time that 'Valentin' was captured, all of the barbarian troops were replaced by their elderly. The barbarians did not come to kill us but were sent here to die!

"Only when the barbarians suffered enough casualties would the other division commanders believe they were truly losing. Our Pyro Company estimated there to be about 150,000 barbarians in the expeditionary army. Based on the sitreps so far, we've killed an estimated 50,000 barbarians in the forest. The Wang Consortium troops are definitely still engaged in battle with a group of them as well. Apparently, they're fighting a tough battle there too. So, many of the P5 commanders think the barbarian troops are close to defeat, which is why they're pursuing them without holding back.

“However, of the 50,000 barbarians we had killed, more than 30,000 of them were killed around the time Valentin was captured. Therefore, I suspect that our Pyro Company troops slaughtered 30,000 of the barbarians’ elderly.

“These barbarians are so ruthless.” P5092 lamented, “As the northern tribe moves southwards, their elderly become incapable of fighting. They contribute no productivity and are unable to bear the arduous journey and war. All they do is consume large amounts of food by staying in the group. So they might as well send their elderly into battle and use them as decoys to secure the final victory. But what’s scariest is that the old barbarians seem to be doing this willingly!”

After hearing so much from P5092, Ren Xiaosu suddenly looked north. “If the barbarians are willing to trade the lives of tens of thousands of their elderly in order to win a battle, they must be absolutely confident of their ambush in the north. I suggest that the 3rd Division retreat south of the Great Wall, because no one will be able to escape the barbarians’ encirclement.”

Since the barbarians had paid such a heavy price, how could they possibly let anyone from the Pyro Company return alive?

But P5092 shook his head. “No, even if only one division can make it back alive, I would still receive them here. If all six of these divisions get wiped out, it would really be the end for the Pyro Company.”

“What if only one brigade manages to make it back? Or none at all?” Ren Xiaosu asked.

“That’s not possible.” P5092 said, “Although I don’t understand the barbarians as well as you do, I know what war is like. Even though five of our divisions have gone to pursue the barbarians, some of them will be more aggressive in their pursuit while others will sit back and observe the situation. If there’s people rushing off to the front, there’s naturally those who stay at the back. Regardless of how many barbarians there are, our forces won’t be annihilated. I’ve studied the terrain to the north, and there’s no areas large enough to trap 40,000 people in to wipe them out. So the barbarians are probably planning to pursue our troops back here to the forest, slowly picking off those who escape their encirclement. That way, the barbarians’ main forces will also incur the least casualties.”

Ren Xiaosu nodded. “Since you’re so confident, I’ll go north and investigate for you.”

“I’m counting on you.” P5092 gave him a solemn salute. “The success or downfall of the Pyro Company lies in this battle, and it might even affect the future of mankind in the Central Plains.”

Chapter 892: War chariots

Right now, P5092 was in a race against time.

If all his speculations were right, he would have to complete the construction of the defensive line in the forest before the Pyro Company troops got beaten back.

However, this was as good as putting himself in a dangerous situation. When the barbarians chased the Pyro Company troops back here, the 3rd Division would have to provide covering fire for all of the defeated Pyro Company troops.

If it weren't for the sake of helping the Pyro Company preserve more of its strength, P5092 could easily have retreated back to the Great Wall where it would be much safer.

It was precisely because of this action that Ren Xiaosu was sure that P5092's ideals of keeping humanity's flame alive in the Central Plains was not just talk.

Too many people in this world talked the talk of ideals without walking the walk. There were also too many people in this world who called upon others to practice kindness and virtue but were lowlifes in reality.

Ren Xiaosu admired those who had ideals and were willing to pay the price to uphold them. This was the reason why he was willing to help Jiang Xu, Wang Jing, and P5092.

But when Ren Xiaosu headed north with Yang Xiaojin to investigate, not even the 3rd Division's soldiers who had been tagging along with him felt that the two of them would have much of an effect on a battle involving tens of thousands of people.

Before leaving, P5092 reminded Ren Xiaosu seriously, "I know you're very powerful, much more powerful than most of the supernatural beings I've met. In the future, you'll have a place in the history of this superhuman world. But in a battle involving tens of thousands of people, there really isn't much a single individual can do. So don't push yourself too hard. Your utmost priority is to survive."

Ren Xiaosu nodded and replied, "Don't worry, I won't overdo it. I'm just going there to investigate, so there won't be any danger."

"Mhm, I wish you a safe return." P5092 said, "From the most rational point of view, you're one of the most important people from the Central Plains to be kept alive. You definitely have higher priority over other people. I hope you can understand this fact."

With that, Ren Xiaosu headed north. On his way there, he lamented to Yang Xiaojin that while everyone was said to be equal, the Pyro Company had probably determined which classes of humanity were worth keeping alive by assigning them a priority level.

Perhaps, superhumans, scientists, and the like were top priorities for the Pyro Company to protect.

This obsession was so weird it seemed contradictory to the concept of human rights. But after Ren Xiaosu had worked together with the other party for a long time, he did not know how to refute it.

It could only be said that everyone with ideals in these wastelands adhered to their own principles and followed their own paths.

From a bird's eye view, the other five Pyro Company divisions could be seen marching quickly in the wilderness.

The mechanized infantry's E-33 armored vehicles and E-34 tanks provided cover at the front of the formation like mobile fortresses that kept pressing forward.

Meanwhile, the infantry followed closely behind the armor.

This was the most common form of cover that infantry units adopted in battle when working with armor. Once they discovered signs of the enemy, the armored vehicles and tanks would become the best bunkers for providing suppressive fire.

As the tanks rolled across the ground, the tracks dislodged soil and left trails behind them, riddling the ground with holes.

North of the Pyro Company, the barbarians were fleeing for their lives. Amid loud explosions, the ground around them was bombarded by the tanks. From time to time, heavy machine guns firing from the armored vehicles would send rocks and dirt flying all around.

As the two sides fought each other ferociously, the barbarians, even with their superior physical fitness, were unable to shake off the Pyro Company's troops.

When a division commander of the Pyro Company saw this, he was overjoyed, because as long as this situation continued, it would only be a matter of time before they wiped out the barbarians.

Today's battle went much smoother than expected.

However, not all five of the division commanders were blinded by this seemingly easy victory. The 1st and 4th Divisions had already started slowing their advance and gradually fell diagonally behind the rest.

To avoid stirring up the rebellious thoughts of the division commanders, P5092 did not directly call and order them not to give chase. It would have been futile.

But he could try other methods, such as getting the 3rd Division to quickly contact their acquaintances in the other divisions to start spreading rumors of the barbarians setting a trap.

All the Pyro Company officers had graduated from the military academy, and those who had graduated in the same class were posted across the entire military. Without any communication restrictions currently in place, it was not exactly difficult to contact someone since even the company-level troops were issued with their own communications equipment.

So when the rumors began to spread to the other five divisions, some of the P5 commanders started reassessing this pursuit. Most importantly, they also felt the operation tonight had gone too smoothly.

But right at this moment, a group of the expeditionary army's troops were waiting to the north with dozens of large cages made from a special metal by their sides.

Inside those cages, gigantic, heavyset brown bears had just woken up.

They were not domesticated brown bears. When they woke up, they started roaring angrily at the barbarians standing outside their large cages.

The expeditionary army's troops had placed a pile of black spherical objects behind the cages. The surfaces of those objects was rough like a ball of dung rolled by dung beetles.

Dozens of barbarians lit the black balls with torches at the same time. In an instant, the black balls started burning and releasing a large amount of pungent white smoke.

When the northerly wind arrived, the barbarians stood upwind of the white smoke as it blew towards the cages.

When the brown bears in the cages caught a whiff of the smell in the white smoke, they furiously slammed themselves against the cages and deformed them!

Before The Cataclysm, brown bears were one of the largest and heaviest animals on land. They could reach a length of 2.8 meters and weigh up to 800 kilograms. Its sense of smell was seven times keener than a hound's.

At that time, brown bears were the dominant beasts among land animals.

After the cities in the North were battered by nuclear weapons, the brown bears in the wilderness had evolved to a frightening level. Very few people were aware that the land where the expeditionary army lived was the place that suffered the most during The Cataclysm. It was a devastating sight everywhere.

The Pyro Company's higher-ups had speculated that this was probably the reason why the barbarians' civilization and technology had regressed entirely while their physical fitness collectively evolved.

Suddenly, a brown bear broke through its metal cage and caught a barbarian who was standing a little too close off guard and crushed him under its paw.

As the brown bear had a keen sense of smell, it instinctively detected something unpleasant in the white smoke.

At this moment, the battle cries of the Pyro Company troops to the south attracted the attention of the brown bears.

Eventually, all of the brown bears broke out of their metal cages. Driven by the white smoke, they dashed madly southwards like war chariots running amok.

Chapter 893: Fighting back

Before The Cataclysm, brown bears could already grow to a length of 2.8 meters. How terrifying was it now that they could grow up to 6 meters after The Cataclysm?

Most mattresses used by humans only measured 1.8 or 2 meters in length.

When these brown bears ran madly in anger and hunger, even the ground trembled.

After the brown bears evolved, they gained stronger muscles, internal organs, and even tougher bones. When one of the brown bears broke free from its cage, the barbarian who got crushed under its paw was like a baby in front of it.

That white smoke was produced by igniting an unknown material. While it enraged the brown bears, they did not break through the white smoke to attack the barbarians to the north. Instead, they quickly rushed in the southerly direction of the Pyro Company troops.

Just like back on Mt. Dashi, the barbarians were able to disperse schools of fish with a small bone fragment from an unknown creature. And now, the barbarians mastered a way to drive away bears. This northern tribe seemed like they only knew how to fight savagely, but they secretly had a unique trump card.

The Pyro Company troops kept pursuing north without stopping. They were still separated from the brown bears by thousands of barbarians who had been chased here from the forest.

However, when the barbarians heard the sound of heavy footfalls north of them, several dozen old barbarians took out goatskin pouches.

The goatskin pouches were meant for storing water. But when they opened the stopper and poured the contents on the ground, it was all blood!

This was the blood of brown bear cubs!

The barbarians had been plotting this for a long time. They first replaced their elites on the battlefield with the elderly barbarians and misled the Pyro Company troops into thinking the expeditionary army was close to defeat. Then they lured them north before releasing the brown bears that had been starving for days.

But this was still not enough. The barbarians took the brown bears' cubs they had captured and killed them in front of their parents. This was to make the brown bears remember the scent of their cubs' blood. After that, they quickly injected an anesthetic into them before they became completely enraged.

When the barbarians poured the brown bear cubs' blood onto the ground, the Pyro Company troops behind them did not think too much about it. They simply believed the blood was from the barbarians.

When the Pyro Company troops stepped on the blood as they pursued the barbarians, their boots were stained with the scent of the blood.

The Pyro Company troops could already hear the sound of heavy footsteps approaching from in front. After the 6th Division's P5 commander received this news, he immediately ordered his troops to be on the alert and slow down their pursuit.

He suddenly remembered P5092's warning and thought to himself, *'Could the barbarians really have laid an ambush for us?'*

For a moment, he felt a little regretful. Actually, he knew the 6th Division had already pursued too far. The five Pyro Company divisions had separated from one another.

But not everyone could remain calm and collected at all times like P5092, Zhang Jinglin, and Qing Zhen. Otherwise, there would be famous military leaders everywhere.

As the saying goes, time makes the man. Such heroes emerged among tens of millions of people. In the annals of history, others could only serve as these heroes' foils, and some would not even qualify to serve as their foil.

A moment later, the Pyro Company soldiers farthest ahead could see the brown bears. When the brown bears caught a whiff of the scent of blood on the soldiers' feet from a distance, they wholly ignored the barbarians running in front of them and rushed straight for the Pyro Company troops with a furious roar!

This made P5031 of the 6th Division wonder why the brown bears did not attack the barbarians but headed for them directly instead. Could the barbarians control the brown bears?

Normal humans were unable to differentiate between the scent of bear blood and human blood, nor could they guess at what the barbarians were trying to do. However, the scent of the cubs' blood was like a constant stimulant to the brown bears' nerves with every second that passed.

The Pyro Company troops did not bother with the fleeing barbarians anymore and focused their firepower on the brown bears instead.

However, even the heavy machine guns could only penetrate about 20 centimeters into the brown bears' skin. At this stage, it could not even pierce through the fat layer of the bears!

Although they could make the brown bears bleed a little, it was at most like being pricked by a needle. There was absolutely no chance of killing them this way.

Furthermore, after smelling the scent of their cubs' blood, the more they got hurt by the Pyro Company's increasingly intense firepower, the more enraged they became.

As the Pyro Company had pursued the barbarians too closely, they were only a few hundred meters away from the brown bears when they appeared. For the brown bears, this distance could be covered in less than ten seconds.

The dozens of brown bears were loping like huge prehistoric beasts. As they trampled the ground, their paws hit the ground and thundered, producing a drum beat.

An E-34 tank locked onto a brown bear and opened fire. With a loud explosion, the tank shook from the recoil of the barrel. The armor-piercing bullet pierced straight into the organs of the brown bear before detonating.

As blood splattered everywhere, the brown bear fell limply to the ground. But it kept staring in the direction of the Pyro Company until its death because it smelt the scent of its cub over there.

The armor-piercing bullets were meant to be used on enemy tanks, but they were now used to fight the bears instead.

P5031 was slightly relieved. Since firearms and explosives could still work effectively against the bears, it was good news. Then he ordered all the E-34s to fire on the brown bears.

Amid the chaos, dozens of E-34s launched a round of artillery fire. As explosions boomed, the sight of the nighttime artillery fire resembled a brilliant fireworks show. It was just that there was a huge killing intent within it.

The tank shells traced a straight, red-orange trajectory in the night.

But the brown bears wised up. They changed direction while attacking.

Although some of the brown bears suffered severe injuries to their legs, they were still able to move quickly in anger. Only hatred in their scarlet eyes and the scent of their cubs' blood kept them going.

Moreover, there was barely any distance between the two sides. In the blink of an eye, the brown bears charged into the Pyro Company troops!

A huge shadow loomed over the Pyro Company troops as the soldiers were forced to look up at the brown bears when observing their movements. The moment they made contact with the brown bears, the foremost Pyro Company infantry started to fall. It was not that they were weak but that the weapons they were holding were totally useless against the brown bears. After the soldiers finished firing all the rounds in their magazines, the brown bears were still unscathed.

But if the brown bears wanted to kill them, there was no need to make any unnecessary movements. All they needed to do was charge at the soldiers and trample them under their paws!

When a brown bear approached an E-34, it knocked it over easily with just a nudge of its shoulder.

Although the soldiers who encountered the brown bears started to despair, an unusual burst of power surged in their desperation.

P5031 quickly ordered, "Use the RPGs and howitzers. Deploy the Razor Sharp Company and attack. Don't be afraid of death!"

He finally calmed down. Although the brown bears were difficult to deal with, they were not impossible to kill.

Some soldiers even rushed at the brown bears with satchels of TNT. The Pyro Company had always been fearless in battles, so there was no retreat to speak of for them.

But at this moment, the expeditionary army to the north had received the barbarians who were fleeing from the Pyro Company. A high-ranking general of the expeditionary army looked at his compatriots who were in a sorry state and said calmly, "Good work, all of you. The expeditionary army will remember how you risked your lives to secure victory for us. Go and rest now."

After that, he turned around and looked at the main forces of the expeditionary army. These were not only the troops who had been attacking the Pyro Company's front lines initially but also troops who had rushed over from the Wang Consortium's front line at Mt. Daniu. The general said, "It's getting impossible to live at home in the North, so let this fertile land become our new home. Gentlemen, kill the enemy!"

With that, the general personally charged south, wielding his gigantic axe in hand.

The dozens of brown bears were just weapons they used to charge at the enemy's formation. The real battle was only just starting. However, it was too late for the Pyro Company to set up a new defensive line while the brown bears rampaged through their ranks.

Chapter 894: There's glory even in death

The general of the expeditionary army had been planning for today's battle for a long time. A lot of people thought the barbarians did not know anything about the Central Plains, but those people were unaware that the intelligent Experimental had already helped them map out what it knew of the north and told them about the situation in the Central Plains.

So when the expeditionary army started fighting on two fronts at the beginning of the war, they gave the Central Plains people the impression that they were arrogant enough to actually start a total war by attacking two organizations at the same time.

But right from the beginning, the attack on the Wang Consortium's front lines was just a ruse. They intended to take out the Pyro Company first.

After the destruction of the Pyro Company, the barbarians would gain control of their existing developments and technology. There would be no need for a massacre like the one at Stronghold 176 to happen again, and the barbarians would rule over the Pyro Company's subjects as nobility.

When the time came to fight the Wang Consortium again afterwards, not only would they have the advantage of being more physically fit, but they would also possess the Pyro Company's advanced weapons.

Therefore, defeating the Pyro Company was an extremely important part of the expeditionary army's battle plans. They could not afford to mess up.

But at the beginning, the general of the expeditionary army was more inclined to take out the Wang Consortium first. However, the Experimental somehow managed to persuade him to finalize this battle plan in the end.

As for what the Experimental was after, no one really knew.

The expeditionary army was already charging. If the Pyro Company had set up a defensive line early and stopped them with their firepower, the expeditionary army would definitely suffer heavy casualties even if they won.

But the problem was that the brown bears had turned extremely violent due to the loss of their cubs. It felt like they did not care about their lives as they attacked the Pyro Company troops with everything they had.

Although the Pyro Company managed to kill most of the brown bears by using their firearms and explosives, their defensive formation had fallen into disarray.

Hence, when the expeditionary army arrived, the Pyro Company could only engage in close combat with the barbarians since their guns were no longer useful. After all, the expeditionary army and the Pyro

Company were already jumbled together, so it was difficult for the soldiers to ensure that they would not shoot their own comrades.

The camouflage uniforms the Pyro Company wore were khaki in color while the barbarians were draped in gray animal hides. There were so many troops in khaki and gray that this sight stretched all the way to the horizon.

When the two sides collided, it was as though two completely different waves had crashed into each other.

When a Pyro Company soldier ran out of ammunition, he drew his saber from his belt and fought a barbarian. However, the barbarian was much stronger than him. After the barbarian dodged the long saber, he grabbed him by the neck with one hand and used him as a shield.

The Pyro Company soldier's face reddened from suffocation. But even as he was dying, he was still trying his best to slash the barbarian.

When the barbarian saw he was still struggling, he swung an axe at his head.

This fight was a microcosm of the war going on, but the person involved might be a husband, father, or son whose family was waiting to be reunited with him back at home. However, he would no longer be returning home.

As the Pyro Company had been fighting this battle for several hours already, they were nearly out of the ammunition they carried with them. A large amount of their ammunition had already been expended on the old barbarians at the beginning of the battle.

Even though the Pyro Company's soldiers were facing this predicament, they would continue fighting the barbarians to the bitter end as long as they did not receive the order to retreat.

A much taller and muscular barbarian suddenly rushed out of the crowd. As he moved, he sent Pyro Company soldiers flying off to the sides.

However, those soldiers struggled back to their feet and picked up their dead comrades' sabers once more before limping into a charge at the barbarians.

After that, they died of exhaustion.

Before dying, a soldier recalled the time he first joined the military. Every Pyro Company soldier had to place their hand over the flame logo on their chests and take the oath: "From today onwards, I am an honorable soldier of the Pyro Company. I will fight for the survival of mankind and fight so that humanity may get to see a new dawn.

"From today onwards, I am willing to relinquish my name so that I may protect the Central Plains."

Indeed, everyone had joined the Pyro Company for the sake of protecting the Central Plains. Everyone was here to lay down their lives for their grand ideals with no regrets.

More and more Pyro Company soldiers were getting killed, but the expeditionary army's general realized they were seemingly unable to defeat the Pyro Company troops fully. If it were a typical military unit that had suffered so many casualties, the soldiers would have started routing.

Once the Pyro Company engaged in close combat with the barbarians, the expeditionary army's victory was almost certain. But why didn't the Central Plains people retreat? Did they think they could defeat the expeditionary army?

At this moment, a staff officer said anxiously to P5031 in the command vehicle, "Sir, why don't we pull back? Please give the order to retreat. Our soldiers can't hold out for much longer. It'll be too late if we don't leave now!"

But P5031 sat in the command vehicle and started laughing bitterly. "Leave? Where would we go? I never thought I would get carried away by my own interests one day. Fortunately, these barbarians have knocked some sense into me."

In the command vehicle, the staff officers and P5031's adjutant were all stunned on the spot. They did not know why P5031 would suddenly say that.

Amid the silence, P5031 jumped to his feet and adjusted his uniform. It was as though he had figured out something, and that got him excited again.

P5031 said to one of the staff officers, "Put me through to the entire division."

"Roger." The staff officer pressed the red button on the control panel.

P5031 said on the radio, "Brothers, I'm sorry. It was because of my wrong decision that we ended up in this predicament.

"I would really like to order the infantry brigade to stay behind and provide cover while the rest of the troops retreat together. This way, I might still be able to survive. But I can't say that because I know you all will be humiliated to death by the pursuit. The barbarians have come prepared. They will not let us leave.

"So, can every one of you still remember the oath you took? Today, you and I will fight for the survival of mankind. 6th Division hereby pledges to hold off the enemy for half an hour so the other division will have enough time to retreat.

"This way, even though our 6th Division will perish, the other divisions will still have a chance to escape!

"When they retreat back to the Great Wall, they will definitely find another chance to avenge us.

"I would like to thank everyone for their trust over the years. Comrades, let's fight to the death together. There's glory even in death.

“Today, I’m willing to relinquish my life and be put to rest here. After today, I’ll be out here in this wilderness keeping watch over the Central Plains with the rest of you.”

With that, P5031 turned off the radio and drew his saber before stepping out of the command vehicle.

His spirits lifted as he said with a smile to his adjutant next to him, “I’m sorry. Please inform the other divisions to withdraw quickly. Our 6th Division will buy them some time to retreat.”

After that, he raised his saber and charged towards the expeditionary army.

After staring dumbly at P5031 for a few seconds, his adjutant quickly contacted all the other divisions. After that, he and the staff officers drew their sabers as well.

Everyone knew the battle had descended into chaos by this point, so issuing any further commands to the troops would be pointless. All they could do now was to give their all and fade away like a brilliant supernova. They needed to inspire the soldiers so they could muster up strength in desperate times like these.

A veteran watched P5031 charge into the enemy. The words his division commander had just said kept resonating in his ears. He then joked, “Damn, maybe it’s not so bad to die here. Charge!”

“Let’s go then! Let’s buy some time for our comrades at the back to retreat!”

“Charge!”

Chapter 895: The Pyro Company’s past

The 6th Division had fought an extremely tough battle. Or rather, it was tougher than Ren Xiaosu had imagined. Encountering the barbarians was a very terrifying thing even for close to 10,000 soldiers, especially when they were almost running out of ammunition.

When Ren Xiaosu got to the vicinity of the battlefield, it was too late. He saw the soldiers rushing fearlessly towards the barbarians with a sudden surge of courage.

With P5031 dead, the surviving 6th Division soldiers managed to buy the rest of the Pyro Company troops half an hour to retreat.

Importantly, the soldiers did not even have any ammunition left. When they faced the barbarians, they could only use their sabers to slash them, punch them with their fists, and bite them with their teeth.

To everyone in the 6th Division, this half an hour was extremely long. However, as Ren Xiaosu watched from the sidelines, he felt they no longer had any regrets.

Ren Xiaosu did not make a move because it was already too late. In the face of tens of thousands of expeditionary army troops, his strength was really too minute. Trying to save the 6th Division would be a fool’s errand. so he had to face the reality of the situation.

Young people grew up by learning how to accept reality.

Life consisted of three stages. The first was understanding that the world did not revolve around their parents, and that parents were not almighty.

Parents also had times when they felt troubled and depressed. They would never tell you about their sufferings at work during the day.

They would also feel helpless at times, unable to do anything in the face of the world.

The second stage was understanding that the world did not revolve around themselves and learning how to accept reality.

No one was the protagonist of the world. Being told “may your dreams come true” would always remain as well wishes. Young people would have to start understanding that life was just a lonely journey of clearing obstacles and overcoming hardships.

They would have to experience countless ups and downs in the endless journey of life and face countless situations in which they were too powerless to make a choice. This was the reality of things.

The third stage was understanding that the world did not revolve around their own children.

Children could not take over in fulfilling their parents’ regrets because they were also normal people.

At this moment, even Ren Xiaosu felt a little helpless against tens of thousands of barbarians. The expeditionary army covered the entire wilderness, and there seemed to be an endless stream of them. Hence, he chose to leave with Yang Xiaojin.

Perhaps there were some other things they could do within their power. But since 6th Division had already chosen to sacrifice themselves, Ren Xiaosu did not have to forcefully reverse the situation.

“The 6th Division is almost wiped out.” Ren Xiaosu said on the radio, “They aren’t trying to flee but have instead stayed behind to buy some time for the other divisions to retreat.”

P5092’s calm voice rang out over the radio, “This is the wisest choice as he knew he couldn’t escape. Perhaps he can get out of there alive. But nearly all his soldiers will end up dead or injured. When he thinks of this for the remainder of his life, he’ll wallow in sorrow in a living hell. If it were me, I would’ve made the same decision as well.”

Ren Xiaosu grimaced. “Are you even human? Why are you suddenly analyzing everything so calmly at a time like this?”

“This has nothing to do with human nature.” P5092 continued calmly, “He’s paying the price for his wrong decision, and close to 10,000 Pyro Company soldiers will pay the price along with him. As a high-ranking Pyro Company commander, I always thought that if the Pyro Company got defeated in this war, he would have to bear the main responsibility for it. But as a human, I admire his choice in this moment. There’s no contradiction.”

“Alright then.” Ren Xiaosu headed south. He sometimes felt the Pyro Company members were a little schizophrenic. These people could actually allow the personalities of a normal person and a brave war machine to coexist within their bodies.

P5092 said, “This is the education we received from youth. We attended the Pyro Company’s preschool, elementary school, middle school, high school, and university. Everything we went through decided that we’ll be fighting here today for the survival of mankind in the Central Plains. After that, those who qualify for genetic modification will enter the military while those who didn’t will take up positions in other places.”

Ren Xiaosu was taken aback. Did this mean they were indoctrinated from youth?

P5092 continued on the encrypted channel, “Do you understand how hypnotism works? Actually, this is the same as hypnotism.”

Ren Xiaosu thought to himself, *‘Of course I know about that. One of my friends is even the Demon Whisperer whose expertise is hypnotism.’*

P5092 said, “We went through more than a decade of special education just so we can do battle today. Over a decade of our lives felt like the prelude to hypnotism. After we joined the military that day, we had to give up our names and go by serial numbers assigned to us. From then on, we became an unfeeling part of a war machine just like our emotionless serial numbers. The ceremony during which we gave up our names was like the snap of the finger to go into hypnosis. Everything officially started the moment we heard it.”

“Don’t y’all regret it?” Ren Xiaosu was stunned. Only then did he realize the Pyro Company soldiers also had names before they joined the organization.

In his opinion, giving up one’s own name was really unbelievable.

“There’s nothing to regret,” P5092 said.

“Then what was your name before you joined the military?” Ren Xiaosu asked.

“Ling Han,” P5092 said.

“How about I call you Ling Han from now on?” Ren Xiaosu asked.

But to Ren Xiaosu’s surprise, P5092 said after a long pause, “Just call me by my serial number. I actually prefer the name P5092 more. It’s an honor for me.”

“Sure.” Ren Xiaosu laughed. “What moves do you think the barbarians will make next? Where should I go?”

“Go to the south. The 7th and 5th Divisions are still in danger at the moment. Since the expeditionary army has painstakingly set a trap for us, they won’t be held back so easily. They definitely still have a contingency plan since they don’t actually want any of our Pyro Company soldiers to get out alive.” P5092 said, “Please help to bring back the four remaining divisions. I’ve concluded that the Pyro

Company will not get caught in a hopeless situation if at least half our forces make it back. Furthermore, nothing must happen to those four division commanders. If it becomes necessary to replace them, we'll have another big problem on our hands.

"Alright." Ren Xiaosu said in a serious tone, "I give you my promise."

"The 3rd Division has already set up a defensive line here. You just need to escort them back and leave the rest to me." P5092 said sincerely again, "I'll be depending on you."

Currently, the Pyro Company was beset with troubles both internally and externally. They were facing a shortage of supplies within the ranks and had been defeated by the enemy on the battlefield. Even if all the Pyro Company troops could retreat to the Great Wall, the next phase of the war would get exceptionally difficult.

That was because they had wasted too much of their firepower on the old barbarians, and it undoubtedly made their shortage of supplies even worse.

But to actually request Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin to escort tens of thousands of Pyro Company soldiers? This idea sounded a little too crazy. He wondered what P5092 was thinking.

Ren Xiaosu turned off the radio and said to Yang Xiaojin, "Let's go."

Yang Xiaojin asked, "Where are we going now?"

Ren Xiaosu laughed. "To fight for the survival of mankind in the Central Plains."

Chapter 896: I'll buy y'all some time

With the protection of the 6th Division, the 7th, 5th, 1st, and 4th Divisions finally got a rare chance to catch a breather as they retreated. After learning that the 6th Division had been ambushed, the four P5 commanders were made aware they had fallen for the expeditionary army's trap.

So what they needed to do now was definitely not to mourn for the dead soldiers of the 6th Division, but to race against time.

Only if they managed to return south of the Great Wall could the Pyro Company continue dealing with the expeditionary army.

Among them, the 1st and 4th Divisions were in a better situation. When they were pursuing the barbarians, they had slowly fallen behind the rest, so they were the fastest now when they needed to retreat.

The 1st Division's commander, P5077, was lamenting to his adjutant as he ordered his troops to retreat in an orderly manner.

He stood in the command vehicle and looked into the distance. When he saw all his soldiers showing signs of fatigue, P5077 said, "If only I had listened to P5092 earlier; that would have been great. How could we let our own interests get to our heads in the face of a big battle? We're the ones at fault."

“Sir, it’s useless to say that now. Our utmost priority is to retreat.” His adjutant said, “Fortunately, our troops are quite far away from the battlefield. I estimate we can reach the Great Wall in another two hours. At that time, the firepower on the walls will be able to stop the barbarians from pursuing us any further.”

“Hopefully...” P5077 said.

But just as he trailed off, the infantry brigade commander at the rear suddenly radioed the command vehicle, “Sir, our flanks are under attack. It’s the expeditionary army!”

“What’s going on?” P5077 frowned and asked, “Why are there barbarians here?”

“They must’ve been lying in ambush here since early on and only appeared now.” The commander of the 3rd Infantry Brigade said anxiously, “Fortunately, they were one step too late. Their main target is the 7th Division behind us, so our troops should be able to shake them off quickly. Sir, awaiting your instructions. Should we go and support the 7th Division or continue retreating?”

P5077 immediately ordered someone to bring over a map. He took a serious look at the nearby terrain and gasped, “It’s not that these barbarian troops are late, but that we retreated faster than they expected! The troops that appeared on the flanks meant to surround all of us. Don’t tussle with them. They must be one of the expeditionary army’s main forces. If we get held back here, we’re all gonna get wiped out!”

“Roger!” the infantry brigade commander answered.

A chill ran through P5077. If 6th Division had not pledged to provide cover for half an hour, their 1st and 7th Divisions to the rear of the west flank would definitely have been caught in an encounter with the northern barbarians’ main forces. Then they couldn’t have retreated so quickly.

If they had been late by half an hour, the barbarians’ main forces that suddenly appeared at this moment would show up at their rear and block their escape route back to the south.

But things were different now. The 1st Division had gotten out of the barbarians’ encirclement in advance.

P5077 said, “Contact the other divisions immediately and find out their situations!”

Soon, the staff officer received replies from the various divisions. “4th Division to the rear of the pursuing forces just like us got out of the encirclement in advance. But the 7th and 5th Divisions are still caught within the encirclement area. The enemy troops have enveloped them from both flanks. If we had been late by half an hour, none of our four divisions would have escaped. They estimate the encirclement was carried out by a total of more than 15,000 barbarians.”

In other words, the 7th and 5th Divisions each had to face an army of over 7,000 barbarians.

A 15,000-strong force of the expeditionary army was enough to stop 40,000 Pyro Company troops that had run out of ammunition and food. Although they might not be able to kill everyone, it should not be a problem to drag things out until more of the northern expeditionary army’s army arrived.

Only at this moment did the significance of the 6th Division soldiers who had pledged to provide cover for the rest become obvious.

P5077's adjutant looked at him. "Sir, should we go back and reinforce the 7th and 5th Divisions?"

P5077 sat in his chair and stayed silent for a long time before saying, "Retreat, continue retreating. 6th Division sacrificed themselves to give us this extra half an hour, so we must cherish it! Get 7th Division on the line!"

At this moment, the highest-ranking commander of the 7th Division, P5067, was looking back at the expeditionary army that had appeared to their rear and flank. Amid the chaos, the soldiers could only fight hastily. As the difference in strength was too vast, many of the frontline soldiers were killed as soon as they made contact with the barbarians.

When the call connected, the person on the other end said, "I'm 1st Division's P5077. Our troops are just south of you all, but we can't turn back to reinforce you."

P5067, who was heavily surrounded, laughed. "You guys go ahead. We'll leave it to you all to protect mankind south of the Great Wall."

P5077 said in a low voice, "Old buddy, do you know what you're up against?"

"Of course I know." P5067 laughed and said, "But we can't just let P5031 get punished all by himself, right? It's clear that all of us have made the wrong decision, so we have to pay the price for it."

P5077 hesitated for a while. "But..."

"No buts." P5067 said firmly, "Since 6th Division could hold off the barbarians for half an hour, our 7th Division can also do the same for everyone. Have your troops continue to retreat. I repeat, have your troops continue to retreat."

After that, P5067 hung up. He got his subordinate to get his saber for him and then pressed a red button in the command vehicle. "It's a great honor to have served with everyone. 6th Division has already been wiped out. Now, it's time for our 7th Division to step forward. Since 6th Division bought us half an hour, let's also do the same for the 1st and 4th Divisions.

"Time is very precious, isn't it? Everyone says that a moment of time is worth an ounce of gold. I don't have that much money to be able to buy time, so I can only trade for it with my life.

"Comrades, we'll fight to the death today. The glory of protecting mankind in the Central Plains is our Pyro Company's to enjoy!"

But at this moment, someone from the troops at the front suddenly connected with the command vehicle on the radio. "Sir, some outsiders have entered the battlefield all of a sudden! I repeat, some unknown people have entered the battlefield!"

"Who are they? How many of them are there?" P5067 was stunned.

The “unknown people” referred to people other than the Pyro Company and the expeditionary army’s forces. It could mean that they were from the Wang Consortium, the Zhou Consortium, or anyone else. But no matter what, they were people who should not have appeared here.

“Sir, there’s only two of them. One of them is the legendary White Mask,” the frontline soldier reported.

P5067 quickly walked out of his command vehicle and climbed on top of it. Then he raised his binoculars and looked towards the front line in the distance.

He was surprised to see two people walking towards the battlefield with sabers in hand. They did not look like they were in a hurry and seemed unexpectedly calm.

Be it the Pyro Company or the expeditionary army, there were thousands of soldiers from both sides. As such, these two individuals looked a little weak and lonely.

Moreover, a lot of people who paid enough attention to news about superhumans knew that White Mask was not an actual person but someone’s superpower, and that someone was an important figure in the Northwest.

When he realized the other party was only a single individual, P5067 felt the person entering the battlefield was even more lonely than before.

P5067 suddenly saw the other party apparently say something to the frontline soldiers through the binoculars. He immediately asked, “What’s he saying?”

A frontline commander said with much struggle over the radio, “He told us to retreat. He said he’ll buy some time for us.”

As they spoke, the sound of a sniper rifle firing came from the distance.

Chapter 897: Daybreak

“Go on and retreat. I’ll buy y’all some time.” When Ren Xiaosu said this to the frontline Pyro Company soldiers, everyone thought he was extremely arrogant.

Their enemies were the elites of the expeditionary army that numbered more than 7,000 strong. Even if it were a supernatural being that came here, they would probably get surrounded and die of exhaustion as well.

But for some reason, everyone felt the other party was extremely calm when he said that. It made them feel like they could not doubt him at all.

While he was busy talking, a barbarian took advantage of Ren Xiaosu’s distraction and charged at him with a huge axe. But before he could get close to Ren Xiaosu, a sniper bullet arrived first and blew off his head.

Not only were the barbarians not frightened by the sight of their comrade dying, but even more of them started surrounding Ren Xiaosu.

But Ren Xiaosu was still saying calmly to the soldiers of the 7th Division, "I have P5092's black ID here. Tell your commander that 3rd Division has already set up a defensive line 15 kilometers to the rear. As long as y'all can retreat there, you'll be safe for the time being."

The soldiers stared dumbfoundedly at Ren Xiaosu, because while Ren Xiaosu was talking, White Mask kept circling around him and slaughtered the enemies. Moreover, not a single barbarian could get close to him with the sniper providing such close cover.

Ren Xiaosu frowned. "What are y'all still standing around for? Just go."

As soon as he finished speaking, an airborne axe flew through the crowd and headed straight at Ren Xiaosu's back.

When a Pyro Company soldier was about to warn him, he saw Ren Xiaosu turn around and catch the flying axe nonchalantly. Then he threw the axe back, and it landed in the forehead of a barbarian!

"Report the situation here to your commander quickly. Tell him that I'll deal with these barbarians," Ren Xiaosu said.

The Pyro Company soldiers were shocked. They were not soldiers from 3rd Division and had never fought with Ren Xiaosu before, so they did not know how fearsome he was.

Some time ago, they had heard about White Mask. Rumors had it that the person was capable of destroying a stronghold, hence his nickname of Stronghold Destroyer. He was someone on par with the Demon Whisperer.

But if they did not witness it with their own eyes, it would be really difficult to get a sense of how terrifying the power behind the nickname was.

Right now, the other party's calmness on the battlefield formed a stark contrast with the nervousness of the soldiers. For some reason, everyone suddenly felt a little relieved.

At this moment, P5067's voice rang out over the radio, "Retreat! Do as he says and retreat!"

With that, the 7th Division really started retreating on all fronts. When Ren Xiaosu saw this, he felt relieved. Then he started controlling Old Xu to kill the barbarians and help the Pyro Company soldiers shake off their pursuit.

If it were any other superhuman here, the number of barbarians in the expeditionary army alone would be enough to exhaust most of their mental strength. But coincidentally, not even Ren Xiaosu had experienced the limit of his willpower before.

But as the battlefield was too vast, Old Xu and Ren Xiaosu were unable to attract the attention of all the barbarians by just fighting at the outer perimeter.

As such, there were still many barbarians pursuing the retreating 7th Division soldiers.

"What should I do?" Ren Xiaosu laughed. "I'm just gonna charge right in."

After that, Old Xu started killing its way into the inner perimeter of the expeditionary army. Old Xu was no longer afraid of getting hit by any stray bullets between its brows. Although the pain of being hacked would gradually be transferred back to Ren Xiaosu, he had gotten used to the pain since the time he acquired the Shadow Clone power.

This habituation was paid for in blood.

Old Xu was invincible when facing the barbarians. It would be extremely stupid if it were to get hit squarely between its brows by them.

When Old Xu penetrated through to the rear of the expeditionary army's formation, the barbarians chasing after the Pyro Company troops were forced to return to defend. If White Mask that had appeared out of nowhere were to get to the rear and pose a threat to their commander, it would be over for them.

But in the perimeter that the expeditionary army had set up, White Mask fought like a lone sampan floating in the sea. Although it might get a little rocky at times, it would not capsize.

No matter how many times the barbarians hacked Old Xu, they could not kill it.

Gradually, the barbarians even felt a hint of fear when facing Old Xu. They were wondering if the person in front of them was immortal? Why couldn't they kill "him" at all? It was as though there was no end in sight to this battle.

Finally, Old Xu single-handedly dragged back all the expeditionary army's forces that were chasing after the Pyro Company troops!

As for Ren Xiaosu's main body, he still had some other trump cards to play.

P5067, who was organizing the evacuation of his troops, was observing the rear with his binoculars from time to time and paying attention to the battle on Ren Xiaosu's side.

However, he was surprised to find that White Mask had charged into the crowd of barbarians while the young man was picking his ear.

P5067 held up his binoculars, his jaw dropping. He thought of himself as a rather strong person who was already close to the level of a T5 combatant. This would make him the strongest among all the division officers.

As he had also fought a T5 combatant before, he felt he could become as powerful as them if he went through another round of genetic modification.

So P5067 was always very proud of his combat strength.

However, he never thought that someone could give him such a shock.

The young man was actually facing the expeditionary army's barbarians that numbered in the thousands all by himself and picking his ear leisurely? This was an extremely shocking sight.

Many of the Pyro Company soldiers were also watching this happen. The soldiers who were standing closer could even hear Ren Xiaosu say to the barbarians with a laugh, "Why don't all y'all attack at once?"

The despair of the Pyro Company soldiers from earlier was in stark contrast to Ren Xiaosu's calmness at this moment.

Those barbarians who were facing Ren Xiaosu were furious. This was the first time the expeditionary army had been looked down upon so much by someone. The other party actually picked his ear while facing the elites of the expeditionary army?

Arrogant! How arrogant!

Ren Xiaosu said to the barbarians as he leisurely picked his ear, "Do y'all know something? Actually, I agree with the saying that be it good or evil, they can only be determined when discussed in the same framework. I know that your living conditions in the North are worsening, so you've to come to settle down in the South. But as y'all've killed too many people, you leave me with no choice but to kill you."

After that, Ren Xiaosu took out a heavy machine gun from somewhere and swapped out his black saber

In the flash of an eye, Ren Xiaosu opened fire while picking his ear. He expended all of the heavy machine gun's bullets at once!

"Actually, I disapprove of the Pyro Company too. Do you know something?" Ren Xiaosu said, "I always feel that humans are all living beings who shouldn't only exist for the sake of war. When war arrives, they can be forced to take up arms. But they shouldn't be preparing for war from the day they're born."

"But now, I've come to experience all sorts of feelings." Ren Xiaosu continued, "Because they will really step forward when the world calls for them. I feel that these people deserve to live a little longer and witness the victory of this war with their own eyes. At that time, our Central Plains people will send you all crawling back to the North.

"Now, we'll do unto you as you did unto us."

The barbarians were soldiers that engaged in close combat. On rare occasions, they would resort to axe throwing to do combat. However, the speed of flying axes was within Ren Xiaosu's reaction speed. Moreover, with enough barbarians around, the enemy would not have a chance to throw their axes either. Otherwise, their axes could end up hurting their comrades if Ren Xiaosu dodged them.

So Ren Xiaosu had enough confidence and trump cards when facing this entire expeditionary army.

His Ear Picking power was a natural enemy of the barbarians.

If he were to face any other consortium's troops, Ren Xiaosu's Ear Picking would not be effective, because it would become useless if the other party was using firearms.

But it was different for the expeditionary army.

If the creatures in the wilderness were actually part of a food chain, Ren Xiaosu would be the natural predator of the barbarians.

As the young man faced the thousands of warriors from the expeditionary army on the battlefield, the first rays of sunlight shone through the clouds, signaling daybreak.

Chapter 898: Ren Xiaosu's new skill combo

The 7th Division managed to evacuate safely. Although thousands of soldiers still died in the battle, the barbarians were unable to continue pursuing them after Old Xu had charged into their formation. They had to go back to eliminate Ren Xiaosu and Old Xu.

When the expeditionary army was forced to give up pursuing the 7th Division, they found it unbelievable that their over 7,000-strong army would get held back by two people.

Of course, the expeditionary army was still unaware that those two people on the battlefield were actually the same person.

While retreating, P5067 kept looking back at the battlefield until he could no longer see anyone anymore.

His adjutant lamented, "That was probably the most unforgettable sight I've seen in my life. He could even pick his ear leisurely while facing a group of the barbarians' army by himself. It shows how confident he is and feels like he isn't threatened by the expeditionary army at all. The era of 'The Rise of Gods' has really arrived...."

P5067 agreed with what he said. He had never seen anything like this before. That young man was picking his ear in the face of several thousand troops! Moreover, he felt that something like that was totally unprecedented and would never be seen again.

P5067 sighed emotionally and said, "No wonder he's on par with the Demon Whisperer. Furthermore, the shock he brought has an even greater impact than Li Shentan. After all, his is a direct combat superpower. Let's hope he can successfully get away after holding off the expeditionary army for half an hour."

"Someone said that all supernatural beings were going to get ranked. When the time comes, I'd like to see what that young man's ranking is. If he doesn't make it to the top three, I'm gonna say that the ranking has no credibility at all!" the adjutant said firmly.

For now, as long as Ren Xiaosu could hold off the barbarians for half an hour, the 1st and 4th Divisions in the south and the 7th Division would successfully reach the defensive line 15 kilometers to the rear and join up with P5092 of the 3rd Division.

But unfortunately for the 5th Division, they would definitely not be able to escape since they did not have Ren Xiaosu's help. As such, their division commander also made the decision to provide cover and try to buy some time for the other divisions to retreat.

In short, if everything else went smoothly, the 1st, 4th, 7th, and 3rd Divisions could return south of the Great Wall.

However, they still needed to race against time, because the 6th Division that was holding off the expeditionary army's main forces in the north had likely been completely wiped out by now, and the barbarians in the north would start pursuing southwards again.

At this moment, Ren Xiaosu looked extremely calm as he stood in the crowd of the barbarians' troops. His confident look left the barbarians feeling uncertain.

However, this was probably the stacked effect brought on by his Ear Picking power. He also thought that if it were his enemy picking their ears when facing him, he would probably feel bewildered as well and wonder if the other party had any other aces up their sleeves...

After all, even Ren Xiaosu himself felt he was being way too arrogant by picking his ear in the middle of a battle.

But there was nothing he could do about it. Ren Xiaosu did not want to do it either, but this was his superpower. If he did not pick his ears here, he would probably have died already.

Therefore, both the expeditionary army and the 7th Division had actually misunderstood him.

While he was pondering, the barbarians around him kept up their attacks with their axes. The barbarians used all of their strength to try to kill Ren Xiaosu right here, right now. But when their axes came within 30 centimeters of Ren Xiaosu, they encountered an invisible resistance.

The barbarians tended to be very forceful when they swung their axes. At this moment, Ren Xiaosu's Ear Picking reflected all of the forces back and instantly caused a barbarian to lose grip of his axe and dislocate his wrist!

As the expeditionary army always solved their problems through the use of force, they had never encountered such a strange situation like this before.

The barbarians did not really understand much about supernatural beings in the Central Plains. All they had was a rough idea. Right now, the puzzled barbarians only felt that this supernatural being from the Central Plains was way too powerful. They wondered how many other supernatural beings in the Central Plains could face an entire army alone like that?

The crack of the sniper rifle had stopped. This was something Ren Xiaosu had specifically instructed Yang Xiaojin to do. Once the 7th Division managed to get away, she should immediately stop shooting. That was because he would be heavily surrounded at that time. If the expeditionary army's main forces sent out many of their barbarians to look for the sniper, Yang Xiaojin would be in danger.

Ren Xiaosu looked at the vast number of barbarians around him. If he were to kill them one by one, how long would it take for him to finish killing all of them?

He had already finished firing all of the heavy machine gun rounds, but it was only enough to kill a few hundred barbarians at most. There were still several thousand of them left at this moment.

Although he could continue picking his ears and Old Xu was also very fast at killing enemies, the problem was that the 6th Division in the north was probably wiped out. Very soon, the expeditionary army's main forces would get here.

At that time, it would not just be thousands of barbarians surrounding him, but tens of thousands.

Just the thought was terrifying!

So Ren Xiaosu had to resort to more lethal means.

The barbarians, who were attacking Ren Xiaosu without any success, suddenly saw this Central Plains person in front of them take out four small cards from nowhere. The red and black patterns on the cards appeared exceptionally vivid.

A barbarian suddenly wondered, *'Aren't those playing cards? What's he holding in his hands? Four threes?'*

In fact, poker was a global game, so almost everyone knew what playing cards looked like.

A moment later, the barbarians surrounding Ren Xiaosu suddenly watched him open a Shadow Door in front of them and was about to throw the "quad threes" in his hands into an unknown place.

But something unexpected happened. Ren Xiaosu was surprised to find that as he was picking his ears, he felt like he was being enveloped by a layer of transparent energy. He could not put his hand through the Shadow-Door, seemingly rejected.

Then the barbarians watched Ren Xiaosu suddenly stop picking his ears in front of them. Then he put his hand through the Shadow Door and threw away the playing cards before quickly picking his ears again.

His actions were so quick it was as though he had been scalded by the ear pick...

Immediately after, Ren Xiaosu repeated the actions countless times as he threw out the bombs one by one into the crowd of the expeditionary army.

If Old Xu and City Crusher were a skill combo, then Ear Picking, Shadow Door, and Explosive Poker would be his new combo.

As the Explosive Poker was Ren Xiaosu's trump card to make up for his lack of an area-of-effect attack, he would occasionally draw some playing cards when he was bored. He had dreamed of getting the legendary pair of jokers to form the "King Bomb."¹

For example, if he had 4,086 gratitude tokens, he would use 86 gratitude tokens to buy some Explosive Poker cards when he had nothing to do, leaving a round figure of 4,000 tokens.

He had gained quite a lot of gratitude tokens when traveling with the Trinity Institute. Therefore, he had many Explosive Poker cards in his possession now. But unfortunately, he had not been able to obtain the King Bomb even after drawing several hundred playing cards.

Not only had he not obtained the King Bomb, but the highest card he had gotten in the Explosive Poker deck was only a 10. He did not even get to see any of the face cards.

Some time ago, he had thrown out “quad sevens” while in Stronghold 74, and the cards caused a small mushroom cloud to appear. The explosive range reached up to a 100 meters in diameter. All of the buildings within 50 meters of the epicenter were razed to the ground, so the blast was really quite terrifying.

This time, Ren Xiaosu threw out the “quad threes,” “quad fours,” “quad fives,” and “quad sixes” in his hand first to blow up the barbarians. Instantaneously, explosions went off everywhere among the expeditionary army’s troops. They were not even aware of how the bombs got among them.

Although these bombs were quite powerful, bombs below “quad sevens” could all be substituted with weapons such as grenades and other explosives. Therefore, they were not particularly important.

Chaos descended upon the expeditionary army’s forces. The barbarians tried to avoid the bombs, but no one knew where they would appear at the next moment.

Chapter 899: Didn’t you only say you would buy us some time?

As they battled, the sky began to brighten.

The expeditionary army had Ren Xiaosu surrounded, and there were so many barbarians that when Ren Xiaosu looked around, he felt like he was being enveloped by a horde.

The barbarians’ understanding of superhumans was that they would sometimes get exhausted too. If they could kill a powerful supernatural being like Ren Xiaosu by simply outnumbering him, the other main forces of the expeditionary army would face less resistance when they attacked the South in the future.

So even if they could not hurt Ren Xiaosu, they did not allow him to leave, nor did they make to retreat.

The barbarians had split up into two groups. One group circled Ren Xiaosu while the other circled Old Xu. In contrast, the battle at Old Xu’s side was much more intense.

As Old Xu barged around, the barbarians who came into contact with the black saber would either lose an arm, a leg, or be left with huge wounds on their bodies.

It was a bloody scene.

Meanwhile, it was much more reserved at Ren Xiaosu’s side. He kept activating Shadow Door and throwing out Explosive Poker cards around him. He would drop the more powerful bombs further away and the less powerful ones closer.

Outside the encirclement, some of the barbarians who could not clearly see what Ren Xiaosu was doing were blown to pieces before they could even figure out what was happening.

When Ren Xiaosu threw the Explosive Poker cards through the Shadow Door, the numbers and colors on the cards' surfaces suddenly exploded with intense heat and light. Immediately after, a huge blast sent the barbarians flying into the air.

After throwing the low-numbered cards, Ren Xiaosu looked at the dense crowd of barbarians and thought to himself, *'Since I've come this far, I might as well kill more of them.'*

Thinking of this, he took out four "tens"!

When he previously threw the "quad sevens" bomb, it had caused a small mushroom cloud to erupt. All of the buildings within 50 meters were razed to the ground and turned any surface within a 100 meters barren. Looking at the vast number of barbarians, Ren Xiaosu threw the "quad tens" right at the outermost perimeter through the Shadow Door before throwing himself prone.

The barbarians were a little baffled when they saw Ren Xiaosu suddenly drop to the ground. But a second later, a huge heatwave suddenly approached from the outer perimeter. A visible, circular layer of dust continuously radiated out after the Explosive Poker cards went off, and a transparent shockwave swept along the ground in a ripple. Meanwhile, huge flames instantly vaporized the barbarians closest to where the Explosive Poker cards were dropped.

With a loud explosion, the ground where the Explosive Poker cards landed caved in by more than 10 meters. The change in air pressure at the center of the explosion caused dust and debris to surge into the sky, forming a huge mushroom cloud.

Inside the mushroom cloud, red-orange flames were flashing within the dark gray dust and smoke. A faint, thunderous rumble even came from the inside.

Even though Ren Xiaosu had already gone prone in advance, he was still sent flying several dozen meters away by the terrifying explosion's shockwave together with the barbarians around him.

He immediately felt his entire body burning with pain. There was a suffocating pain in his chest and abdomen as well.

Honestly, although he was the one who threw the Explosive Poker cards, he did not expect it to be so shockingly powerful!

With this explosion alone, more than half of the expeditionary army's main forces were instantly killed. The remaining barbarians were dumbfounded.

This was the first time Ren Xiaosu saw the elite warriors looking at a loss. The barbarians seemed to be shouting something, but Ren Xiaosu's ears were ringing, so he could not hear what they were saying.

Seeing that there were still a lot of surviving barbarians around him, and that they were about to surround him again, Ren Xiaosu suddenly could not find the ear pick the palace gave him!

He said over the radio that he brought with him, "Cover me while I retreat! If we drag this on any longer, the expeditionary army to the north will be here soon!"

However, Ren Xiaosu realized the explosion would definitely affect the wireless communications equipment. Yang Xiaojin definitely could not hear what he just said.

Ren Xiaosu looked around and decisively activated City Crusher in an instant. Old Xu took advantage of the moment when the barbarians were distracted to start a massacre and slaughtered through the crowd to make its way to Ren Xiaosu. Then it picked Ren Xiaosu up and ran south.

When the barbarians came back to their senses, they wanted to give chase. But the sniper hiding in the unknown suppressed them again and forced the pursuing troops to take cover, pinning them down fully.

Although their communications had been cut off, Yang Xiaojin knew what she had to do at the appropriate moment.

A commander of the barbarians said coldly, "It's only a sniper. We still have so many men, so let's break through the suppressing fire directly. Go and capture those three people!"

But just as he finished speaking, the barbarians realized the gunfire had stopped when they rushed out from their cover. Meanwhile, the two people who ran away from them had disappeared as well.

The barbarians were stunned for a moment. So the Central Plains people could actually run this fast when they were fleeing?!

Everyone looked back at the commander and waited for further instructions. But before the commander could make a decision, they could hear a heavy and rapid footfall coming from the north.

The commander's face sank. He knew very well what the consequences of his failure would be.

...

The troops of the retreating 7th Division also heard the explosion behind them. When they turned around, they could even see a huge mushroom cloud rising into the air through gaps in the forest.

A large amount of smoke and dust billowed up into the sky. This suddenly darkened the brightening sky again.

As P5067 stared dumbfoundedly at this sight, his adjutant said, "I understand why he said he would hold off the expeditionary army for half an hour by himself. So it turns out he brought explosives with him. To be able to cause such a huge explosion, he must've brought along a lot of explosives. If he was aiming to detonate them among the barbarian troops, I guess he would definitely be caught in the blast as well."

P5067 was silent for a moment. "He's a hero. He sacrificed himself to buy some time for us to escape."

To them, Ren Xiaosu must have perished with a large number of barbarians while hugging the explosives in his arms. They suddenly felt a sense of bitterness.

In the course of a day, too many people had departed from the world.

But just as they were mourning in silence, they saw Ren Xiaosu, who was covered in dirt, suddenly emerge from the forest behind them. Together with Yang Xiaojin, they ran all the way past the 7th Division's troops.

When Ren Xiaosu ran past the command vehicle, he shouted, "What are y'all still standing there for? The expeditionary army is right on our heels! Run already!"

As his ears were still ringing, Ren Xiaosu felt that his voice was a little soft. So he would shout every time he wanted to say something.

P5067 looked at Ren Xiaosu and almost could not react in time. "Wait, what about the barbarians that intercepted us?"

"Blew half of them up." Ren Xiaosu said, "I've helped y'all hold them off. Although I was only able to delay them for 20 minutes or so, I killed enough barbarians to make up for it. Hurry up and run."

After that, the soldiers of the 7th Division watch Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin sprint off again and quickly disappear off into the distance in front of them.

P5067 continued to retreat the 7th Division. Along the way, he and his adjutant remained silent for a long time.

Of course it was a good thing that Ren Xiaosu did not die. But didn't he only say he would buy the 7th Division some time? How did it end up with him killing half of the barbarian troops then?

Chapter 900: P5092's thoughts

While it might seem ferocious to have killed several thousand barbarian troops, Ren Xiaosu understood the situation he was in. It was not that easy to get the "quad tens" bomb from the Explosive Poker deck, and he had only managed to gather this set of "quad tens" after spending hundreds of gratitude tokens to draw the cards. As for getting the even more valuable bombs, he had only obtained a single jack through the draws so far.

So if he really wanted to get the King Bomb, he would probably have to spend tens of thousands of gratitude tokens.

But Ren Xiaosu was also hugely looking forward to unlocking the third weapon. Although he had more than 5,000 gratitude tokens, it did not make sense to use everything in exchange for the Explosive Poker cards.

Unless he were in grave danger, he would not resort to using the Explosive Poker cards to save himself.

Moreover, the ear pick given by the palace was now missing. Ren Xiaosu asked the palace, "If the ear pick is lost, can I still use Ear Picking?"

The voice from the palace answered, "Yes, but there is a cooldown time until the ear pick is restored."

“How long’s the cooldown?” Ren Xiaosu asked.

“Seven days.”

“Alright then, looks like I should try not to have a direct confrontation with the barbarians in the next seven days,” Ren Xiaosu said with a sigh.

He received internal injuries again. If it weren’t for the fact that he wanted to keep Old Xu hidden in the forest in case there was an opportunity to strike, he would have had Old Xu carry him while running away.

Right now, Ren Xiaosu’s body could barely engage in high-intensity battles. His combat capacity in a battle was still not as powerful as Li Shentan’s, after all.

If Li Shentan were here, he could easily hypnotize a group of the barbarians’ main forces and have them fight an attrition battle among themselves until he was the only one remaining.

Unfortunately, Li Shentan was currently waiting for the typhoon season in the South. No one knew what kind of mentality it took to purposely wait for typhoons to arrive. Based on the timing, the typhoons would probably arrive at the south coast only in July or August. As such, it would probably be very difficult to see Li Shentan again before that.

It was very difficult to guess what a lunatic was thinking.

In the past, many of the consortiums were glad the guy was a lunatic. He was not willing to participate in any political struggles and did not have any thoughts of world supremacy. Otherwise, many of the consortiums would be in trouble.

That was the status the Demon Whisperer commanded in this currently chaotic world...

He was someone even the consortiums feared.

At this moment, Ren Xiaosu, Yang Xiaojin, and the 7th Division, who were making their escape with them, were about to arrive at the defensive line set up by the 3rd Division.

From afar, Ren Xiaosu could already see P5092 ordering the soldiers in the defensive line to open up a path for the 7th Division. Meanwhile, the 1st and 4th Divisions continued to retreat after a quick reorganization. The evacuation would not end until everyone safely returned south of the Great Wall.

Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin jumped behind the makeshift defensive line constructed with sandbags by the 3rd Division. He said, “I’ve brought the 7th Division back as promised. Including your 3rd Division, there’ll be four divisions retreating back to south of the Great Wall.”

P5092 had said that as long as four of their divisions managed to retreat, the Pyro Company would still have a chance of winning this battle.

However, P5092 shook his head and said with a smile, “It’s three divisions. The 3rd Division will stay here and provide cover for the other troops to retreat.”

“You want to sacrifice yourself?” Ren Xiaosu frowned. He thought to himself, *‘Why is this person going back on his word? Haven’t we agreed that he’ll join the Prosperous Northwest? Why does he insist on dying here?’*

Ren Xiaosu was prepared to knock P5092 unconscious and carry him away. Since he had already done everything he needed to do, what was the point of him staying here?

Calculating the time, the troops led by Zhang Xiaoman should have arrived at the vicinity of the Wang Consortium’s defensive line by now, so he should also be joining up with his comrades.

However, P5092 explained, “It’s not that I want to sacrifice myself, but my 3rd Division is an artillery unit. After we intercept the barbarians here, all of our ammunition will definitely be expended. And we can’t possibly tow the artillery back when we evacuate since that’d delay our retreat. So the 3rd Division can only function as an engineering unit in the rear after we lose our artillery.”

“You should’ve said so earlier.” Ren Xiaosu immediately understood that P5092 was only implying that the 3rd Division’s combat strength would drop, and they would practically become useless after they abandoned their artillery here. “But I can only do so much. I’m sorry that I couldn’t save the 5th Division.”

“There’s nothing to be sorry about.” P5092 shook his head. “The entire Pyro Company should remember this favor of yours. If it weren’t for you, 7th Division would’ve been held back by the barbarians, and we wouldn’t stand a chance of fighting anymore.”

“Alright, let me rest for a bit first.” Ren Xiaosu leaned against a tree and panted in exhaustion. After a night of fighting, charging at the enemy, and then fleeing, the effects of his internal injuries and physical exhaustion started surfacing.

After a brief conversation with P5092, the 7th Division’s commander also retreated south. Another 20 minutes later, Ren Xiaosu suddenly asked P5092, “What’s the barrage range that you’ve determined?”

“4,500 meters, but we have to wait for the barbarians to get closer before firing.” P5092 said, “We can’t send out our scouts anymore. As the forest is too dense, visibility is only about 700 meters. It’d be a little dangerous to open fire like that.”

“What distance do you plan on waiting for the barbarians to get to before opening fire?” Ren Xiaosu asked.

“It’s best if they get to within 2,000 meters of us,” P5092 answered.

Ren Xiaosu thought for a moment. He remained silent for another couple minutes before saying, “You can give the order to open fire now.”

P5092 was stunned. However, he did not doubt Ren Xiaosu. Instead, he decisively ordered all the artillery troops to launch a simultaneous attack.

There would be no depth to the attacking pattern, and they only sought to immediately bombard the front with all their firepower so the expeditionary army would think there was a Pyro Company ambush set up here. After that, the 3rd Division could evacuate safely.

When the expeditionary army hesitated about whether to attack, the 3rd Division would have already gone back behind the walls.

The only problem was that no one even saw the barbarians yet. Would there be any problems now that Ren Xiaosu gave them the clearance to fire?

If it were any of the other division commanders here, they would definitely trust their own eyes more.

But the 3rd Division was different. The intel Ren Xiaosu had given them had never been wrong before. So even if they could not see anything, they still strictly carried out the order!

When the artillery weapons started firing one after another, the entire forest was filled with the pungent smell of gunpowder.

The sound of the artillery fire was stimulating and inspiring, especially when they were fired in unison. The power that burst out of the barrels seemed like it could even tear the sky apart.

Ren Xiaosu waited in silence. After six rounds of artillery fire, P5092 decisively gave the order to retreat. Meanwhile, the artillery were abandoned in the forest having already completed their final mission.

It was not that P5092 did not want to tow them back but that he could not do so. When he deployed the artillery troops from behind the walls, he had already thought of this outcome.

While the barbarians did not dare to continue advancing, the 3rd Division retreated at full speed. On their way back, Ren Xiaosu suddenly asked, "What's the battle plan after we return to the Great Wall? Is there anything else I can help you with?"

P5092 was stunned. Then he said with a smile, "I don't know. There aren't any plans. We'll have to wait for instructions from HQ."

Ren Xiaosu looked at P5092 putting on a relaxed expression and sensed there was something on his mind.