

Chapter 91: Fighting alone

Xu Man was very cautious. He first pretended not to have found anything and walked past the shopping mall. When he confirmed that he was far away from it, he immediately called for support to try to surround the mall.

The platoon carefully made their way back, while the other five platoons were closing in as well. The wireless communications equipment they had in their helmets was far more convenient than they could imagine.

Xu Man slowly led the soldiers towards the main entrance as though they had come back after a normal patrol of the area and there was nothing unusual about their movements. Their combat boots were hard bottomed, so it was impossible for them to stay completely silent while walking on the concrete surfaces. So it was better to pretend they were on a normal patrol.

However, when Ren Xiaosu heard these footsteps again, he let out a sigh in his head. He knew that anyone in this world who depended on luck would not live for long. If he were still thinking the other party hadn't discovered him yet, that would be too stupid of him.

For the Qing Consortium's troops to suddenly return, it didn't matter how unconcerned they were trying to act. Ren Xiaosu immediately understood there must be a reason for it. In that instant, Ren Xiaosu felt his heart ache. He slowly laid down the jacket he had used to wrap up the gold with onto the floor. He decided to abandon it.

Now that he had to run for his life, he couldn't risk his life for the gold.

Even if he had great strength, carrying a bundle of gold would affect his speed, or worse, his sense of balance.

Ren Xiaosu had always treated money as just a tool. He liked it, but he would never indulge in it. It had always been so for him.

Not only was he abandoning the gold, Ren Xiaosu was even planning on discarding the jacket. If he slowly took out the gold jewelry from inside the jacket, it would make too much noise.

He turned around and ran lightly into the depths of the shopping mall. This mall was huge and spanned several stories as well.

The outside of the building was probably surrounded already. Ren Xiaosu wouldn't use his life to test whether anyone standing behind the doors. What if a hail of gunfire swept over him the moment he opened one? That would be the end for him. Therefore, Ren Xiaosu had to run upstairs.

From his memory, there was another building next to this shopping mall that was similar in height. This mall had been located in the most prosperous business center of the city, so it wasn't the only building around the area.

Ren Xiaosu was not a reckless person. Xu Man might pick up that someone was hiding in the mall from his keen observation, but Ren Xiaosu had similarly picked out his getaway route beforehand.

The gap between the two buildings was around 20 meters, and Ren Xiaosu was confident that he could leap over based on his current strength and dexterity.

Xu Man slowly led the troops into the mall. They had their tactical flashlights on as they slowly infiltrated into the darkness within.

But not long after entering the building, Xu Man noticed the jacket and gold Ren Xiaosu had abandoned on the ground.

He said on the communications channel, "We've got confirmation on the target's trail. The target has noticed we're after him and is currently on the run in another direction! Target is extremely cautious!"

Qing Zhen's voice sounded on the communications channel. "Have you discovered who it is yet?"

Xu Man hesitated for a moment before saying, "It might be that refugee, Ren Xiaosu. I've not set eyes on the target yet, so I can't confirm."

"How did you guess it's Ren Xiaosu without seeing him?" Qing Zhen asked, "Did you find some clues?"

Xu Man hesitated and said, "We discovered a stash of gold here.... I'm guessing only that kid would be so interested in gold."

Qing Zhen started laughing. He agreed with Xu Man's judgment. Xu Xianchu and Yang Xiaojin were obviously after the secret of the Jing Mountains. The two of them would definitely not be interested in something like gold. At least, it wouldn't be their immediate goal.

Who would run this far out here and experience so much danger and terror all for the sake of making off with a bag of gold?

If Ren Xiaosu were to hear this, he would be the first to object. Gold was so adorable, so why couldn't he hope to make off with some?!

Luo Lan and Liu Bu had mentioned that Ren Xiaosu was just a refugee, but Qing Zhen did not entirely believe them.

He was a suspicious person, so even if everyone said Ren Xiaosu was just a refugee, he would still not underestimate Ren Xiaosu. Ren Xiaosu could have been pretending all this while and might not have been the ordinary refugee they claimed he was.

Everyone who appeared here could possibly be here for the secret of the Jing Mountains. They could all have another identity.

However, Qing Zhen laughed. He suddenly felt that Ren Xiaosu really might not be interested in the secret of the Jing Mountains. At least to him, gold ranked above the secret of this place.

Qing Zhen said, "This Ren Xiaosu is pretty interesting. Capture and bring him to me."

"Roger."

A moment later, the Qing Consortium's troops stormed into the shopping mall like black vipers!

"Target is escaping to the second floor."

"Target is escaping to the third floor."

Xu Man was listening in on the comms to receive updates on the operations. By this time, the troops had discovered Ren Xiaosu's footprints. Inside the building, the floor was covered with layers of dust accumulated over the years, and anyone who stepped on it would leave behind their footprints.

It was a good thing to have discovered Ren Xiaosu's whereabouts. But Xu Man was considering something. This building had six floors, and the total height was probably between 30 and 40 meters. If Ren Xiaosu kept escaping upwards, he might end up having nowhere to go once he reached the top!

Was Ren Xiaosu an idiot? Why would he escape up to a dead end?

As Xu Man led the combat troops up, he recalled the details of his encounter with Ren Xiaosu. When this young man discovered he and the soldiers had returned to this building, he gave up on the gold without any hesitation and even started fleeing as quickly as possible.

This person loved money, but he was not greedy. When he realized he was in danger, he did not take any chances and abandoned the gold.

Based on the logic of most people, they might bring the gold along with them as they made their escape for a while. They would only make the decision to discard the gold when they realized it was a hindrance to their escape. This was human nature.

However, Ren Xiaosu wasn't like this. The way he had abandoned the gold was decisive.

Xu Man understood this young man he encountered was not simple. The target had a very strong survival instinct, as well as a no-nonsense and sober reasoning process.

Besides, even if their target of capture were really an idiot, he would still treat that person as the smartest person around. This was the kind of mindset to approach any combat situation!

So since Ren Xiaosu was escaping upstairs, did that mean there was a route of escape up there?

This was clearly a separate building by itself, so where could Ren Xiaosu run to?

That wasn't right!

Xu Man suddenly remembered there was a building beside the mall, and it was just over a dozen meters away and slightly shorter than the one they were in. Could Ren Xiaosu escape by jumping over?!

Xu Man did not think of this before because he had believed Ren Xiaosu could not leap across to the nearby building since he himself couldn't do so.

The misconception here was that humans tended to judge other people based on their own abilities. If they could not do something, they would think others couldn't do it either.

But while Xu Man could not do it, that did not mean Ren Xiaosu couldn't do it either!

Xu Man said loudly in the comms channel, "Outside platoons, go and lock down the adjacent building!"

Chapter 92: Intentions revealed! A midnight assassination!

Surrounding the adjacent building now might already be too late.

But what Xu Man couldn't understand was, if Ren Xiaosu could really leap across the building, then just what kind of strength and speed did he have?

Xu Man said to the other soldiers of the platoon he was leading, "You guys keep chasing him upstairs!"

He then turned around and headed downstairs, running straight for the adjacent building. Xu Man firmly believed that Ren Xiaosu wouldn't wait to get caught on the roof. That young man would definitely jump to the next building!

Just several moments after he rushed out of the building he was in, he looked up and saw Ren Xiaosu flying overhead. The young man's speed in the air was shockingly fast, and his body was comfortably outstretched to the extreme. Then he lightly landed on the roof of the building across the lane! In that instant, Xu Man thought he saw a bird flying.

Xu Man drew in a deep breath. He ran towards the adjacent building while saying on the comms channel, "Target Ren Xiaosu will need to have his powers reassessed! I repeat! Target's powers will need to be reassessed!"

This young man was far from what they had imagined him! This was absolutely not a level of strength that their commonly designated F-class threats could reach!

Xu Man rushed into the building and ran like mad up the stairs to the roof. But everyone who was in this ruined city heard a loud sound come from out of the blue. The sound reverberated through the city and out into the distance, as though a death knell had suddenly sounded.

Xu Man stood in the dark building and looked around. He was puzzled. What was that sound? It sounded like it came from somewhere nearby!

...

A few moments ago, while Ren Xiaosu was in midair after leaping across to the next building, he saw someone standing atop a fractured skyscraper in the distance before him.

He had intended to head to that fractured skyscraper in the first place, so he wasn't really that far from it at this point.

A moment later, he landed on the roof and stood there as he looked at the breach of the skyscraper. The broken and twisted rebar made the skyscraper look like it was a demon's tentacles piercing the sky.

On top of that fracture, a cap-wearing girl plucked a large sniper rifle out of thin air. Then she placed a foot onto the edge of the crumbled wall and used both her hands to lift the large rifle onto her raised leg for support!

Locked and loaded, she took aim!

Ren Xiaosu did not know how Yang Xiaojin had conjured the sniper rifle. He looked in the direction Yang Xiaojin was aiming and saw Qing Zhen, who was wearing his white suit and standing in the spotlight!

Ren Xiaosu was standing in the middle between Yang Xiaojin and Qing Zhen, so he could just barely make out the situation at Qing Zhen's location.

So... Yang Xiaojin wasn't here for anything else. She wasn't here to visit her relatives, nor was she here for the secret of the Jing Mountains. Right from the beginning, her purpose was to kill this young man wearing the white suit!

Ren Xiaosu had given it deep thought before and deduced there must have been an organization backing Yang Xiaojin. Moreover, the organization would also have its own intelligence agency. So this could explain why Yang Xiaojin knew about Qing Zhen's whereabouts and that he would appear here.

Right now in the hinterlands of the Jing Mountains, this cap-wearing girl had finally revealed her intentions and was about to create her greatest assassination attempt!

Ren Xiaosu's Advanced Firearms Proficiency made him suddenly think at this moment. He looked in the direction of the suit-wearing young man and considered the many factors affecting a long-distance shot on a target. The distance between Yang Xiaojin and the suit-wearing young man was at the point where the shooter would have to consider compensating for the Earth's rotation. If there wasn't any point of reference, how should the shot be carried out?

At this moment, Luo Xinyu, who wasn't far away from the suit-wearing young man, had her head lowered. Her long hair was draped in front of her and blowing in the light breeze. When the wind stopped blowing, Luo Xinyu's hair would also stop moving. Ren Xiaosu realized that the moment was now!

At some point in time, Luo Xinyu had freed herself from the shackles on her hands. She pulled out a black dagger from her dense hair and thrust it at the bodyguard beside Qing Zhen. But the bodyguard did not back down. Instead, a white light started glowing in his hands as he conjured two fan-like objects and aimed it at Luo Xinyu with killing intent.

Beside them, Liu Bu was dumbfounded with shock. He could never have expected the Luo Xinyu he knew to suddenly become like she was someone else. Where did that delicate and fragile Luo Xinyu go?! Was this someone else impersonating her?!

The dagger Luo Xinyu was holding looked like a work of art. But in her slender hand, the dagger somehow seemed to be imbued with so much power.

When the combat troops around them saw this development, they raised their guns and took aim at Luo Xinyu. If Qing Zhen's bodyguard could not stand up to her, they would fire their weapons in Luo Xinyu's path to prevent her from assassinating Qing Zhen!

But Luo Xinyu was not going to kill anyone. She had apparently done this to give Yang Xiaojin an opening. Be it Qing Zhen's bodyguard or those troops, none of them were expecting the assassination attempt to come from the top of a far away skyscraper.

Luo Xinyu only feigned an attack before making her retreat. Almost instantly, she stepped back into a shroud of shadow in the building behind her and disappeared. It was as though the door she opened in the shroud of shadow allowed her to cross spacetime!

It was Luo Xinyu's power. Perhaps even Ren Xiaosu did not expect another supernatural being to be hidden on their team. Furthermore, it was even the person whose acting was the best.

This turn of events overwhelmed everyone. But at this time, Qing Zhen spun and looked at the top of the skyscraper. He could feel a sharp pain in his temples!

With a pull of the trigger, the muzzle flash from Yang Xiaojin's sniper rifle was like a fire-breathing dragon in the dark of night that suddenly brought on the bloodshed!

That bodyguard noticed the muzzle flash in his peripheral vision and immediately gave up on chasing after Luo Xinyu to return back to Qing Zhen's side.

The duty of a bodyguard was to protect rather than to kill enemies. That bodyguard roared with rage, "Sniper!"

The distance between Yang Xiaojin and Qing Zhen allowed the bodyguard to react in time. Even though a bullet was fast, it was all relative. With the distance extended, a bullet meant for killing would still have to travel across the dense air of the night sky!

The bodyguard threw his own body in front of Qing Zhen to shield him, with those two glowing hand fans made of white light held out in front of his chest. He could have tried to push Qing Zhen aside, but Qing Zhen was just a normal person, so that would have been too slow.

Time stilled.

A sniper rifle's bullet that was the length of a hand tore through the air of this world. The energy from its rotation distorted the air all around it as it penetrated through the night sky!

The spotlight illuminated the area around Qing Zhen like a stage. Meanwhile, that bullet seemingly penetrated through the gaps of the light beams as it arrived onstage after traveling a 1,000 meters.

With a loud impact, the rotating bullet slammed into the glowing white fans with great force. The white fans started crumbling apart bit by bit.

At one point, the bodyguard even felt like he could see the patterning on the silver hand-length bullet.

Right after, the bullet spun through his muscles and heart. It continued to pass through him as it exited the wound with a splatter of blood. This bullet that had traveled over 1,000 meters had the extraordinary capability to pierce through this supernatural being's power and body before it finally fell to the ground.

Those two white fans were extremely tough, but they were still unable to stop death.

The blood flew through the air and splattered onto Qing Zhen's white suit, staining it red. The spots of blood on the white suit made it look just like plum blossoms that had just bloomed in the winter forest.

But even at this moment, Qing Zhen was still looking as calm as ever. It was as though the bullet was not coming for him in the first place.

"What a pity," Qing Zhen said and sighed. The people beside him could not tell what he meant. Was he talking about the supernatural being who was his bodyguard who had just died? Or was he referring to his white suit?

Chapter 93: What a scam!

A normal 7.62 mm bullet had 2,600 joules of kinetic energy upon firing, while a 12.7 mm bullet could reach 15,000 joules of kinetic energy.

But actually, even with such simplified data available, it would still be very difficult for people to imagine how powerful a bullet from a sniper rifle was when it hit and passed through someone.

Qing Zhen's bodyguard was a supernatural being. But what was very shocking was that at a time when the various organizations were arresting these supernatural beings, Qing Zhen had started using them for his own purposes.

At this moment, this silent tiger of the Qing Consortium with a notorious reputation even among the other organizations was standing in the limelight as though this were his stage. He bent over to pick up the bullet off the ground and said with a smile, "The Saboteurs have finally set their sights on me?"

The people around Qing Zhen were taken aback. So it was the Saboteurs who did this? That obscure legend of a group that was being discussed by the organizations?

Qing Zhen turned to look at Liu Bu. He said with a smile, "As her agent, you didn't even know your client is a supernatural being. You're pretty stupid then. Rest in peace. There is no place for a useless person... in this era."

Qing Zhen grabbed Liu Bu by his hair and stabbed the hand-length bullet into Liu Bu's eye with his bare hands. Liu Bu could only let out a short cry of pain before he stopped moving.

Both of Qing Zhen's hands were bloody.

...

Right now, Ren Xiaosu was standing atop the roof as he dumbfoundedly watched Yang Xiaojin dismount her gun and stand up without any delay. It was as though she already knew it would be very difficult to make another attempt on Qing Zhen's life even if she were to keep shooting at him.

A second later, the sniper rifle's muzzle swung over. It was aimed straight at Ren Xiaosu, who was on the roof. Ren Xiaosu sensed a trace of the girl's mischief behind the scope.

Ren Xiaosu panicked. 'Shouldn't you fucking be taking another shot after failing to complete your mission? Why are you aiming at me?!'

But Yang Xiaojin appeared to be very calm. She had failed, so whatever happened wasn't worth looking back on.

The rifle was fired with a cracking sound. But this time, there wasn't anything spectacular about the gunshot. This was because Ren Xiaosu stood there without moving, and the bullet didn't hit him either.

As Ren Xiaosu knew all about Yang Xiaojin's firearms proficiency, he knew she hadn't fired this shot to kill him. It was to draw a clear line between them in front of the Qing Consortium?

If it were really that, then wasn't this done too hastily?! Or could it be that she was just doing this out of spite for Luo Xinyu's sake?!

All of a sudden, Ren Xiaosu saw Luo Xinyu, who had just disappeared, appear on top of the skyscraper. She waved at Ren Xiaosu like she was greeting him before taking Yang Xiaojin's hand and bringing her into the shadow with her.

Ren Xiaosu was absolutely stunned by what he had seen this time. He looked at the top of the skyscraper that was now empty, then looked over at the numerous Qing Consortium's combat troops coming for him. 'You guys are just gonna leave like that? Aren't you gonna bring me along too?!'

Seeing the large force of the Qing Consortium's combat brigade approaching, Ren Xiaosu wanted to cry. 'You two may escape with your superpowers after attracting such firepower, but have you considered that you might be inconveniencing for others?!'

What a scam!

Honestly, Ren Xiaosu could never have imagined that Luo Xinyu and Yang Xiaojin were in on it together. Even Yang Xiaojin's assassination attempt on Qing Zhen didn't leave him so surprised.

At this time, Ren Xiaosu remembered the first time he met Luo Xinyu and how he had requested to switch Wang Congyang with someone else for the expedition. Back then, Luo Xinyu had secretly given Yang Xiaojin a look no one but Ren Xiaosu had noticed.

Later on, when they were eating fish together, Yang Xiaojin called Luo Xinyu over to have some as well. When someone harassed Luo Xinyu, Yang Xiaojin stood up for her just in time.

At the time, Ren Xiaosu had thought Yang Xiaojin was only doing this because they were both women. He never expected these two people already knew each other, and they even put on such a great act in front of everyone!

They did not exactly cover all details with their acting, but it was still enough to fool Ren Xiaosu, Xu Xianchu, and Liu Bu.

Luo Xinyu was only a girl. So many soldiers of the private army had died, but Luo Xinyu survived until the very end. This in and of itself should have aroused Ren Xiaosu's suspicions.

Before he learned of this outcome, those shreds of evidence were hidden in plain sight, but he didn't pick up on them. But after what happened here, and upon remembering, the details popped into his mind.

Ren Xiaosu watched with a pained heart as the dense, dark group of troops neared. He had been too careless!

The saying was indeed true: The prettier the animal, the deadlier it was. So this rule was not only true for the wilderness!

And these two girls had been keeping Liu Bu around because he helped to lessen the suspicion on Luo Xinyu. In the end, Luo Xinyu helped Yang Xiaojin determine Qing Zhen's location and even helped her gain an extra moment of time.

The only surprise was that they had not expected Qing Zhen to have a supernatural being who would protect him even at the expense of the being's own life.

What was so extraordinary about Qing Zhen that a supernatural being would follow him?!

Right at this time, the rusty iron door on the roof was shattered by someone ramming into it. Ren Xiaosu raised his gun and opened fire in that person's path, blocking his route. He looked around him and let out a curse. "Fuck!"

Not a second later, Xu Man arrived through the shattered door onto the rooftop. When he saw Ren sprinting for the side of the roof, he attempted to shoot at him to stop him. In the end, he couldn't match Ren Xiaosu's speed as he tried to take aim at him!

In the ruined city, the troops in their black uniforms were making their way towards him like snakes hunting prey. Ren Xiaosu could no longer wait. He had to get out of here before they surrounded him!

Back when Ren Xiaosu, Yang Xiaojin, and Xu Xianchu penetrated into the city perimeter, he thought he would be the fastest person to get away from here in the event they had to escape.

However, that wasn't the case at all. Yang Xiaojin and Luo Xinyu had a trick up their sleeves!

Ren Xiaosu leaped off the rooftop. The rooftop on the adjacent building was a drop of several dozen meters from the one he was on. However, Ren Xiaosu was confident he would be fine!

Xu Man rushed to the edge of the roof in the hope that he could fire another shot at Ren Xiaosu. But by the time he reached the edge, he could only see Ren Xiaosu's receding figure running off into the distance towards the edge of the city. Xu Man shouted on the comms channel, "Target is escaping at my ten o'clock! Shrink the perimeter and lock it down!"

In the forest outside of the city, the Qing Consortium's perimeter lockdown was still in effect. Over there were countless troops waiting for any signs of unknown danger that approached. But to everyone's surprise, that danger turned out to be a refugee escaping towards them.

Before this, almost no one regarded this refugee to be any danger at all.

Ren Xiaosu was making a mad dash through the city streets and alleys. Ever since he jumped off the rooftop, he was trying his best not to head for higher ground. This was because he didn't want to end up becoming a live target for the troops.

As he ran, he kept thinking about how Xu Xianchu didn't seem to have made any moves. It would have been good if there were someone else sharing a load of this firepower at this time!

This ruined city was a huge chessboard, and Ren Xiaosu was a small chess piece running around on it. On this chessboard, the other white chess pieces on his team were gone. Meanwhile, those heavily armed black pieces were all looking to hunt him down and kill him.

Chapter 94: Xu Xianchu at your service! Who dares challenge me!

Ren Xiaosu scampered towards the forest at the edge of the city. He was heading north to Stronghold 112, also where the active volcanoes were.

He knew combat troops would for sure be waiting for him up front. The net they had set would slowly open as he arrived.

But Ren Xiaosu had no other choice. Only by getting there would he have a chance of survival!

But all of a sudden, a violent rumble came from the depths of the Jing Mountains hinterlands. Ren Xiaosu raised his head at the mountains in the distance and saw a fiery light erupting from within the mountain range!

'Wait a minute, the volcano is about to erupt!'

Should he keep running forward, or should he turn around?

Ren Xiaosu clenched his teeth. At this time, why should he worry about the volcano? Only by staying alive could he consider other matters!

Behind him, Xu Man also froze for a moment when he saw what was happening at the volcano. Heading within range of the volcano during an eruption was extremely dangerous. Much less going further, they wouldn't even be able to turn around and escape if the volcano really erupted.

A lot of people thought that only the living creatures around the main mountain would be affected during a volcanic eruption, but that was only because they underestimated the true power of one!

Perhaps the entire area spanning tens to hundreds of kilometers around would go up in a fiery sea!

However, Xu Man only hesitated for a moment before saying on the comms channel, "Keep advancing!"

Having fled to the edge of the city, Ren Xiaosu turned around and glanced at the city behind him. The black ironsand-like torrent of Qing Consortium troops was almost reaching him. Without further hesitation, Ren Xiaosu turned and went straight into the forest in the north!

As the scattered Qing Consortium troops stationed in the forest started narrowing down the perimeter lockdown, their tactical movements had an unusual sense of depth.

Their movements seemed to have been practiced hundreds to thousands of times, with the platoons knowing exactly who would be advancing and who would be providing cover from behind.

The platoons in the northern forest had already received orders to round up and capture Ren Xiaosu. Even though the sound of an eruption was currently coming from the volcano behind them, it did not affect them from carrying out their orders.

At this moment, Xu Man's voice came on through the comms channel. "Target's 100-meter sprint time is 3.92 seconds, and he has an unknown strength. All units, kill on sight."

Perhaps even Ren Xiaosu could not imagine the kind of technology the Qing Consortium had in their hands. Within the ranks of their troops, there was someone who specialized in evaluating the power and speed of their targets from afar.

However, Ren Xiaosu had still not revealed his true strength and capabilities yet, so this didn't allow the troops to fully assess him for now.

Qing Zhen had been quite interested in Ren Xiaosu. Moreover, there was also his relationship with Zhang Jinglin to consider, so Qing Zhen was actually thinking of keeping Ren Xiaosu for other purposes.

But right now, he did not want to wait anymore.

There was only a thin line between capturing him and killing him on sight.

The seven platoons in the forest pulled back their charging handles at almost the same time and pointed their muzzles downwards, ready to raise their rifles and shoot at any moment.

In addition, these seven platoons had switched their communications channel to a different frequency. This was to prevent any outside communications from interfering with their operations. At this moment, these 210 soldiers formed an independent ORBAT 1 that could act first and report later.

This had always been the practice of the combat troops under Qing Zhen's command. Qing Zhen's opinion was that if an independent ORBAT was not even allowed to make their own decisions, then the war machine would not truly have any combat effectiveness.

Many people within the Qing Consortium ranks had criticized his military command before, but Qing Zhen had never accepted their point of view. He did not accept it in the past, and he would not accept it in the future either.

However, what many of the important figures in the Qing Consortium did not know was that this form of command made many of the soldiers willing to work for Qing Zhen. He would often make them feel like they were trusted.

At this time, Qing Zhen was looking at Liu Bu, who was lying in a puddle of blood. Some of the troops were carrying out another detailed search on Liu Bu's corpse. In the end, someone found a folded figure of a tattered doll and said, "This was the thing that he was carrying around."

Qing Zhen frowned and said, "What the hell is this?!"

It seemed that not even someone like Qing Zhen had ever seen such a thing before...

...

The troops in the forest were slowly shrinking the perimeter lockdown and had switched on their tactical flashlights.

Based on the information Xu Man had gathered from Liu Bu, Ren Xiaosu should have a gun on him. Other than that, he also seized three magazines of ammo from the private troops.

But the Qing Consortium's troops were not afraid of being live targets by switching on their flashlights. After all, Ren Xiaosu, who was alone, definitely could not kill all 30 of them in one fell swoop. If he dared to fire at them, their comrades would instantly open fire at Ren Xiaosu and turn him into Swiss cheese!

In the forest, the seven platoons were gradually moving closer to the city. Meanwhile, Xu Man was leading six platoons towards the forest in an attempt to corner their target. To catch one person, they had mobilized several hundred soldiers. Ren Xiaosu was getting an unprecedented kind of treatment.

However, they still underestimated Ren Xiaosu's capabilities in the wilderness.

The reason why Ren Xiaosu had agreed to be the expedition's guide was also due to his self-confidence.

Although the Qing Consortium's troops were fearsome, they still lacked far too much experience in the wilderness as compared to Ren Xiaosu!

When the six platoons that Xu Man was leading got closer to the seven platoons coming from the forest, a black shadow suddenly crashed into them.

That black shadow was thick as ink, but its movements were demonically fast and nimble. It was as if the trees in the forest were not an obstacle for it at all.

The platoons on the northern side did not hesitate and fired straight at it. But the black shadow was prepared for it and simply sidestepped to the right, making the bullets miss.

The black shadow did not stop after it sidestepped, and it leaned forward. Taking a stride, it pushed off and rushed into the crowd of the most frontline platoon!

What could be done when the enemy had the most powerful firearms and explosives? This was a question Ren Xiaosu had asked Zhang Jinglin before. At that time, Zhang Jinglin said, "You should, of course, run right into their midst, because they won't shoot indiscriminately at you. Their comrades are all around them, while everyone else is an enemy for you!"

Ren Xiaosu was unsure if Zhang Jinglin's advice was a joke or what, but it seemed like it would work in his current situation.

He saw every one of the troops unsheathing their combat knives as a result. As the black shadow was moving too fast, they were indeed worried about friendly fire.

But to Ren Xiaosu's shadow clone, these normal human beings were too slow, as well as too weak!

The black shadow was completely fearless of being sliced by the knives. It only needed one punch to end a life. Suddenly, the black shadow raised its leg and kicked one of the troops in the chest. That soldier was sent flying five meters away just like a kite cut from its line!

The other troops were frightened by this. The power in that kick was overwhelming!

Xu Man, who had arrived just in time, saw a blur of this black shadow from afar. When he finally managed to get a clearer view of it, he was a little puzzled. Weren't they chasing after Ren Xiaosu? Why didn't anyone mention that Ren Xiaosu had such a power?

Right at this moment, Ren Xiaosu roared, "Xu Xianchu at your service! Who dares challenge me!"

Chapter 95: Dead ends everywhere

Ren Xiaosu had given it careful consideration before he resorted to using the shadow clone. It wasn't because he was afraid that he would reveal himself as a supernatural being, since why would he care about that if he was close to death?

He was only afraid that he would reveal his power that could copy other people's powers. Ren Xiaosu only pretended to be Xu Xianchu because he knew that Xu Xianchu had not been captured yet, while he was sure that the Qing Consortium had already found out about Xu Xianchu's powers from Liu Bu.

Ren Xiaosu had already come across several supernatural beings. Yang Xiaojin could pull an unparalleled sniper rifle out of thin air, Xu Xianchu could create a shadow clone of himself, Luo Xinyu could travel through the shadows, and Qing Zhen's bodyguard could materialize white fans in his hands.

Ren Xiaosu got a false sense that supernatural beings were a dime a dozen.

But his superpower was different. A superpower that could copy other people's superpowers, just how would that be rated? Ren Xiaosu did not know.

If the Qing Consortium discovered he could copy other people's powers and took an interest in him, who knew what they might do to him.

When Ren Xiaosu was escaping, he was wondering about how many supernatural beings existed in this world. Was it a lot?

But upon careful consideration, it didn't seem to be so. It was probably the Jing Mountains and Qing Zhen that attracted all of them over here.

When Xu Xianchu heard Ren Xiaosu's roar, his doubts from earlier were all answered. He immediately updated everyone through the comms channel, "The intel earlier was wrong. Target isn't Ren Xiaosu, it's Xu Xianchu!"

In reality, they had determined Ren Xiaosu to be Ren Xiaosu simply because they thought that as a refugee, he would be more interested in the gold. However, there wasn't any direct evidence to prove that his identity was Ren Xiaosu. First of all, they had never seen what Ren Xiaosu looked like. Second, even if they had seen Ren Xiaosu and Xu Xianchu before, Ren Xiaosu's face was dirty beyond recognition. Moreover, Ren Xiaosu was wearing Sun Junzheng's uniform, so he was actually dressed in the same outfit as Xu Xianchu.

According to the intel the Qing Consortium had gained, Xu Xianchu was known to be able to create a shadow clone of himself to fight in battles. Furthermore, its combat strength was extremely strong, and it could even block bullets.

Although this shadow clone of Ren Xiaosu's was black in color and different from Liu Bu's description, Xu Man felt that this could be due to the lighting. Perhaps, this shadow clone would turn gray in the daytime.

When the troops of the Qing Consortium heard Ren Xiaosu courageous declaration of "Xu Xianchu at your service! Who dares challenge me!", they thought their target wanted to challenge them to a fight to the death. However, their target turned around and fled!

Several shots had brushed past Ren Xiaosu, but he remained unharmed so far.

He knew that it wasn't because he could duck well, nor that the Qing Consortium's troops were bad at aiming. It was because Yan Liuyuan's wish... was taking effect.

Ren Xiaosu frowned in worry as he wondered how Liuyuan was doing. He had to quickly get away from the Qing Consortium and stop risking things here.

Only when he ran out to about a 100 meters away did he finally recall his shadow clone!

The shadow clone was running rampant in the crowd, and Ren Xiaosu was not even controlling it to aim at the vital points of the enemies anymore. Instead, he made it use its body to ram them into a pulp.

Remember, Ren Xiaosu's strength was nearly equivalent to three adult men's, and the shadow's attributes were double that!

So there wasn't a need to aim for the vital points. Whoever the shadow clone ran into, it would give that person broken bones all over his body.

In the perimeter the Qing Consortium had set up, the shadow was fighting by itself like a lone sampan. The soldiers felt like it would start waning away at any moment, but the shadow clone surprisingly battled on like it could go on forever no matter how much it got beaten up or how many injuries it received.

There were many troops standing between Ren Xiaosu and the shadow clone. When Ren Xiaosu recalled it, the shadow clone smashed into everyone in the crowd like a train on tracks!

With the shadow clone recalled, Ren Xiaosu would have to merge with it. Likewise, when Ren Xiaosu wanted it to be released, it would only be able to come out from behind him.

When the shadow clone came back to Ren Xiaosu's side, there were a lot of injuries and scars on its body. Ren Xiaosu could feel the injuries it suffered like they were his own, and the pain was unbearable. While the shadow clone was making its escape, it was also shot at by the troops a few times. The pain nearly made Ren Xiaosu cough up blood!

Large beads of sweat were rolling down his face and back as Ren Xiaosu endured the pain while continuing to make his escape.

It was no wonder Xu Xianchu's shadow clone made him look all pale after it shielded him from the bullets. So there was actually a "side effect" from using the shadow clone as well.

But what Ren Xiaosu didn't know was that if Xu Xianchu saw this, he would be incredibly surprised.

Xu Xianchu had tried it out for himself once before. After the shadow clone experienced a high intensity workout, it would lead to the main body feeling mentally exhausted. When that happened, the main body would experience nausea, vomiting, chest tightness, and the user would feel that they might be better off dying!

But Ren Xiaosu's shadow clone was utterly different from his.

Ren Xiaosu had once asked the palace whether his mental strength could be assessed. In the end, the answer he got was: "Unauthorized to answer."

...

Ren Xiaosu continued making his escape in the forest, and the pain brought on by remerging with the shadow clone did not fade away even after a long time. It was at this time that Ren Xiaosu realized he should not use the shadow clone without good reason. If he intended to let the shadow clone take his place in death, then he would have to be prepared for the pain it would bring him.

If the shadow clone died once, he would have to "die" once as well.

Ren Xiaosu was violently gasping. He had been injured before, but this pain was much more intense than how a real wound felt.

But Ren Xiaosu was comforted in the fact that the shadow clone did not dissipate even after all the injuries, so he still had an ally in battle.

The Qing Consortium's troops behind him were like a pack of black hunting dogs that continued hounding him. If Ren Xiaosu were not advancing at a faster speed than them, he would already be in a lot of trouble. Ren Xiaosu did not run in a straight line. Instead, he was trying to slowly shake off the dogs that were chasing after him. Soon, the Qing Consortium's troops began to wonder which direction Ren Xiaosu was.

It was only at this point that Ren Xiaosu was able to breathe a sigh of relief. After all, it was way too stressful to be chased by several hundred people. He was prepared to hide in the forest for a while to catch his breath.

But it was at this moment that he suddenly heard the rattling of chains up ahead.

Ren Xiaosu stopped in his tracks and clutched his chest as he let out a sad laugh. 'What the fuck...'

He lamented, "Dead ends are everywhere in life."

Ren Xiaosu had seen the Experimental that Qing Zhen had locked up in a cage from afar. However, he did not hear what Qing Zhen had said at that time, so he didn't know there was more than one of these Experimentals.

Ren Xiaosu thought that the greatest obstacle in his path as he escaped northwards would be the volcano, but how could he have guessed it would turn out to be these Experimentals?

Based on the source of the sounds, Ren Xiaosu instantly knew that the enemy was coming from three directions. In that sense, it meant he had encountered at least three of these Experimentals!

The rattling of chains was getting closer and closer. Ren Xiaosu could once again hear the sound of the Experimentals' saliva dripping onto the decomposing leaves on the forest floor.

The shadow clone stood side-by-side with him. Ren Xiaosu made a rough estimation in his mind and thought that the shadow clone might be able to take on two of those Experimentals. However, he did not know whether he could go up against the remaining one all by himself.

There were three Experimentals ahead and several hundred people behind. All of them were looking to do Ren Xiaosu in.

Chapter 96: I want to thank myself seven times

Although Ren Xiaosu had a gun with him, his location would immediately be identified if he fired a shot. In that case, the Qing Consortium's people behind him would all get attracted, and it would really be over for him once he got caught in between them and the Experimentals. Moreover, if the Experimentals attacked from a close distance, a gun would be of less use than a dagger.

He instinctively moved his hand to the dagger Yang Xiaojin had traded him for food. However, this action shocked Ren Xiaosu a great deal. The dagger was no longer there!

Ren Xiaosu started thinking back. When Yang Xiaojin split up with them, she had pretended to accidentally bump into him. The dagger was probably stolen away by her at that time.

Ren Xiaosu did not know whether to laugh or cry. This girl was really not one to accept being on the losing end. She had clearly said that she'd trade the dagger for his food, yet she actually stole it back?! Where did the trust between fellow human beings go?

How heartless of her...

Ren Xiaosu felt that Yang Xiaojin's skill at stealing must also be very high, as no one in town had ever managed to steal Ren Xiaosu's stuff without him knowing.

He gave a mental sigh. What should he do now that he didn't have the dagger?

What Ren Xiaosu didn't know was it would be very difficult to cut through the skin of these Experimentals using an ordinary blade. Even a bullet fired at it would instantly be stopped by the muscles under the surface of their skin.

Direct headshots wouldn't work either since the toughest bones in the body are part of the skull. These Experimentals had always been unafraid of the threat of bullets, unless they were shot in the eye.

However, the speed of these Experimentals was far different from Ren Xiaosu's. There was almost a zero percent chance that he could hit them in the eye with a shot.

His firearms proficiency was only at the advanced stage, not the perfect stage.

All of a sudden, Ren Xiaosu felt a brush of wind behind him. He reflexively bent over as a noxious gust of wind went over his head.

Once Ren Xiaosu stabilized his footing and looked to see what it was, he was shocked to discover that an Experimental had somehow gotten close to him, but there were no chains on this Experimental's arms.

It had become his mindset that the Experimentals would have chains on their arms, and it would be possible to know of their presence once they got close. However, Ren Xiaosu had not expected that not all Experimentals would have chains on them. Furthermore, an Experimental without chains could even travel in a forest without making a sound. Just this fact alone made it terrifying!

When Ren Xiaosu felt around on his back, he frowned. He had still gotten scratched a moment earlier, and there were five lines of blood.

He started reminiscing about town. Although it was also rather dangerous there, people would only take advantage of you if you showed your weakness to them.

But it was different here. Everywhere there were people looking to end you!

Ren Xiaosu tried to retreat. But with each step back, those four Experimentals took two steps forward. At some point, Ren Xiaosu realized the appearance of these Experimentals here was not a coincidence. They were coming for him!

Those four Experimentals were all crawling on their hands and legs, while the unchained Experimental had silently crawled into a tree looking just like a large spider.

Ren Xiaosu could not understand something. Just what kind of a place could turn a living human being into something like that?

At this moment, a platoon passed by just several hundred meters behind Ren Xiaosu. However, it seemed like they had lost track of Ren Xiaosu's whereabouts. So they were unaware of the situation Ren Xiaosu was in even though they were only a few hundred meters apart.

Ren Xiaosu was observing the reactions of these four Experimentals. When the platoon passed by, the Experimentals all stopped in their tracks. It was as though they also didn't wish to be disturbed by the troops during their hunt!

Ren Xiaosu got a strange feeling about this, but he didn't have the time to explore it. While the Experimentals were distracted by the combat troops, Ren Xiaosu decided to order his shadow clone to attack them.

Ren Xiaosu decided he would strike first!

He was hoping he could lure these Experimentals over to where the Qing Consortium's troops were. However, he was more worried those few hundred people would annihilate all of the living creatures in their line of fire.

Compared to the few hundred Qing Consortium troops, Ren Xiaosu was more willing to face these four Experimentals!

When his shadow clone rushed at the three Experimentals on the ground, the Experimental in the tree leaped down at Ren Xiaosu.

Ren Xiaosu took a small step backwards. The muscles in his left leg tensed up the moment it landed on the ground, and all of the strength in his body was raging. When the Experimental got in front of him, Ren Xiaosu threw his fist out at his opponent and punched as hard as a cannon shot.

But he had underestimated the dexterity of the Experimentals. His opponent twisted its body in midair and forcibly avoided Ren Xiaosu's punch. It even managed to stretch its hand out and grab hold of Ren Xiaosu's arm!

Ren Xiaosu was startled before pulling back his punch and taking another small step backwards. At the same time, he raised his leg and kicked the Experimental several meters away. The Experimental laid on the ground and twitched a little before getting on its feet again to jump at Ren Xiaosu!

All of a sudden, Ren Xiaosu felt a burst of pain throughout his body. The tearing feeling going through his bones made him break out into a sweat as his muscles started trembling.

He saw his shadow clone tussling with the three Experimentals as they ripped and snatched at the crouched shadow clone's body. One of the Experimentals was even biting on the shadow clone's waist!

The shadow clone had enough strength to lift up an Experimental with a single hand. It picked one of them up and slammed it ruthlessly onto the ground. However, this Experimental was even harder than Ren Xiaosu imagined. It didn't even look like it was hurt after being slammed like that!

This was the disadvantage of not having a weapon. Ren Xiaosu couldn't kill off these Experimentals, so it would be difficult to say who might end up dying.

Ren Xiaosu wanted to get home, even if the path back was filled with blood and thorns.

Because there were no sharp objects to kill the Experimentals with, the shadow clone's strength eventually ebbed away due to the fact that it was facing the three terrifying monsters of the Experimentals at once.

These monsters were biting onto the shadow clone and not letting go. Ren Xiaosu felt like every bite was bitten on his own body.

The unbearable pain was being transmitted to his central nervous system from various parts of his "body" and was generating a complex array of signals that ran wild through his neural network. This in turn affected the normal function of his willpower.

Raising his hand became slow, and his hands were trembling as well. The Experimental in front of him had many of its attacks blocked by Ren Xiaosu, but it gradually realized its enemy's actions were starting to slow down and become weaker.

Ren Xiaosu's eyes had reddened. He endured the severe pain and was nearly in tears.

In all his years, Ren Xiaosu had never cried before. He never even shed a single tear. He grabbed a tree branch next to him for support and caught his breath. Everyone here was hellbent on killing him.

The Experimentals wanted him dead.

The Qing Consortium also wanted him dead.

But importantly, he didn't want to die.

The shadow clone was not omnipotent. Or perhaps, no superpowers in this world were omnipotent.

Ren Xiaosu needed a weapon, even if his gratitude tokens only stood at 93.

He said to the palace, "Give me the weapon."

The voice from the palace said calmly, "You have 93 gratitude tokens at the moment. Unauthorized to unlock the weapon."

"Hey... I said give me the weapon." Ren Xiaosu's voice sounded like it was sinking into the ocean. "I'm telling you now that I'm dying, so give me the weapon."

At this moment, time seemed to have frozen. Ren Xiaosu saw the Experimental that was leaping at him slow down, moving so slow that it looked like it was stationary.

The voice from the palace finally said, "Detecting the smell of death. Do you want to activate the seal?"

Ren Xiaosu said in confusion, "Activate what seal?"

"Unknown."

"Then what is the price for activating this seal?"

"Loss?"

"Lose what?" Ren Xiaosu said in surprise, "You have to at least tell me what I'll lose, right? Only then can I decide whether I want to activate the seal or not."

"Everything."

Ren Xiaosu suddenly sneered at the palace. 'How much blood have I bled in the wilderness in all my years of survival? How many tree roots and wild vegetables have I eaten? Yet you're telling me now that I will have to lose everything? Why do I have to listen to you! Based on what! And besides, do you know what everything represents? Gold, money, the gun I have, Yan Liuyuan, Sister Xiaoyu, and even these clothes I'm wearing! You're just a lousy palace. Why would you need my clothes?!'

The palace did not speak anymore. Ren Xiaosu felt a little awkward. Shouldn't it at least haggle?

Ren Xiaosu looked at the forest in the night, then looked at that intent to kill that was getting ever closer. The frozen “time” was gradually beginning to thaw while the speed of the Experimental that was leaping at him was becoming faster.

That Experimental opened its mouth to reveal a set of vicious teeth as it tried to devour Ren Xiaosu’s organs and even suck all of his blood and marrow dry.

‘Am I really on the verge of death?’ Ren Xiaosu thought as he stared at it.

But he still hadn’t lived yet!

The next moment, a wan smile appeared on Ren Xiaosu’s face. ‘Isn’t it just seven thanks?’

He said calmly in his mind: “I want to thank myself seven times.

“First, I want to thank myself for never shying away from an opportunity.

“Second, I want to thank myself for not being afraid when facing danger.

“Third, I want to thank myself for not compromising in the face of adversity.

“Fourth, I want to thank myself for being principled in the face of temptation.”

Ren Xiaosu’s mental voice was getting louder and louder, to the point of being thunderous as it shook the entire palace.

“Fifth, I want to thank myself for never being hypocritical.”

In that instant, Ren Xiaosu heard his own heartbeat beating loud as a drum.

“Sixth, I want to thank myself for always staying clear-headed and never hesitating.”

He heard the sound of the wind again as it brushed against his skin. The researchers in the city who were inside the research lab suddenly raised their heads. They detected a huge energy surge in the north that felt like the rising sun!

Ren Xiaosu said calmly and determinedly, “Seventh, I want to thank myself for always keeping my head up and taking on whatever the quagmire of life throws at me!”

The voice from the palace stayed silent for a moment before saying, “Gratitude received from Ren Xiaosu, +7!”

“You’ve received rights to unlock the weapon. Confirm unlock?”

“Unlock!” Ren Xiaosu roared.

Suddenly, it was as though the “lock” on time melted away. Ren Xiaosu watched quietly as the Experimental before him came leaping at him. He stuck out his hand and grabbed at nothing, as though he had gained some sort of inexplicable power.

The next moment, a black saber appeared in Ren Xiaosu’s hand. In that instant, Ren Xiaosu grit his teeth and swung it horizontally with all his power. The muscles in his body were pumping hard to the extreme, and the veins on his forehead were pulsating nonstop!

With a slash, the tearing sound of leather and skin reverberated through the forest. That originally ferocious Experimental was split in two by the black saber!

Ren Xiaosu was enraged. Life and death, that was basically the essence of everything in this world!

The look in the Experimental's eyes was one of confusion. It seemed like it couldn't understand where the saber in Ren Xiaosu's hand had come from, nor could it understand why one slash was all it took to end it.

Pale yellow blood trailed down the black saber and dripped onto the ground of decomposing leaves. Ren Xiaosu held the saber up and looked at the battlefield.

For some reason, when Ren Xiaosu held this saber that had appeared out of thin air in his hands, another saber also appeared in his shadow clone's hand.

That black saber and his black shadow clone seemed to merge perfectly into one entity.

The second the shadow clone's saber appeared, the three Experimentals engaging it wanted to give up attacking. But it was already too late for them.

The shadow clone swung its saber down and split the Experimental in front of it in half. It did not stop, taking a quick step forward and holding down another Experimental by its neck. That Experimental was being pressed ruthlessly against the ground and could not move.

The Experimentals had great strength, but when one was held down by the shadow clone, it was as though it was a helpless beast on the verge of death. The shadow clone chopped off the Experimental's head.

The last remaining Experimental escaped into the forest, but Ren Xiaosu knew it wouldn't get all that far.

Ren Xiaosu stood in place and stared into the darkness of the night before him. The pain he had suffered earlier was still stimulating his nerves, but this was the first time he experienced the joy of the battle!

So this was what it meant to be a supernatural being.

At this moment, the voice from the palace said, "Side Quest #2 has been activated: Collect 1000 gratitude tokens to unlock the intermediate form of the weapon."

Chapter 97: Reevaluating the level of danger!

The battle between Ren Xiaosu and the Experimentals was still going to attract the Qing Consortium's people over. After all, there would be noise made in any intense battle. Although the Qing Consortium's combat troops had lost track of Ren Xiaosu's position, they had been keeping up with their search all this while in the forest.

When someone heard the sound of the fighting, the first thing they did was to send a command over the communications channel for everyone to gather.

Like black ironsand that was attracted to a magnet, the Xu Man-led Qing Consortium combat troops quickly moved towards the point of the incident. But they were disappointed the target was already gone by the time they arrived at the scene of the battle.

Let alone mistaking Xu Xianchu as Ren Xiaosu at the beginning, they had even lost track of Xu Xianchu now. This made Xu Man feel extremely depressed.

It had been some years, but this was the first time Xu Man had encountered this many unexpected things while carrying out his mission.

Xu Man advanced forward with great difficulty inside the forest. They trampled on the decomposing leaves and twigs, making a lot of noise. Xu Man pulled down his protective goggles and took a look around, then suddenly gasped.

He saw the corpses of several Experimentals up ahead that had been dismembered by some sharp object. The pale yellow blood of these Experimentals splattered on the ground was actually not obvious, but the broken bodies shocked everyone a lot.

Xu Man said, "Gather the body parts and put them together to see how many Experimentals fought in the battle."

Based on Xu Man's guess, Xu Xianchu must have encountered these Experimentals soon after his retreat. After that, the battle occurred.

By this time, the troops had picked up the pieces of the Experimentals' corpses and put them together.

"Four Experimentals." Someone said, "One of the Experimentals' arms couldn't be found, but it should be around here somewhere."

"There's only a single set of shoeprints here. The Experimentals were naked, so we suspect the number of humans who participated in the battle should be just Xu Xianchu," someone analyzed.

Xu Man nodded. He spoke on the open comms channel, "Boss, we might have to reevaluate Xu Xianchu's power. He killed off four Experimentals by himself." Xu Man looked at the ground at a leaf and continued, "But Xu Xianchu is also hurt. There are traces of his blood here."

Qing Zhen stood outside of the spotlight's focus. The place was bright as day, and he thought for a long time before saying, "Being able to take on four Experimentals and kill them all is really quite shocking. Upgrade Xu Xianchu's danger rating to B. Remember to bring back a sample of Xu Xianchu's blood to place it into the records."

"Roger." Xu Man arranged for the people around him to get samples of the blood for safekeeping from the leaf on the ground.

In this era, the DNA contained in blood was extremely vital.

Qing Zhen had folded his hands behind his back. He stood in place and wondered, “Xu Xianchu and Yang Xiaojin have both appeared. Luo Xinyu has also revealed herself to be part of the Saboteurs Syndicate. But what about Ren Xiaosu? Has anyone of you seen Ren Xiaosu!”

They did not know Ren Xiaosu had successfully made Xu Xianchu the scapegoat. The supernatural being they recognized to be a B-class threat was actually Ren Xiaosu.

What was the concept of being a B-class threat? All of the supernatural beings who had been marked as a B-class threat were considered extremely dangerous people.

Xu Man answered on the comms channel, “We didn’t see Ren Xiaosu. It might be possible that he didn’t even come into the perimeter we set up.”

“That could be possible.” Qing Zhen nodded. If they were to go back to their initial assessment of the targets, Ren Xiaosu would just be an unimportant F-class threat. In that case, it would be quite normal that he had chosen to retreat after finding the perimeter the Qing Consortium had set up.

Liu Bu had also mentioned that Ren Xiaosu had always insisted on avoiding the Qing Consortium.

Qing Zhen smiled. If only they had caught Ren Xiaosu; that would have been great. He might have become a bargaining chip they could use against Zhang Jinglin in the future.

It was a well-known fact throughout the entire Northern Frontier that Zhang Jinglin placed a lot of importance on friendship.

But it wasn’t a big deal even though they hadn’t caught him. Be it Stronghold 112 or Stronghold 113, they were both controlled by the Qing Consortium. Once Ren Xiaosu got back, their Qing Consortium would still be able to get their hands on him at any time.

Xu Man looked up ahead in the forest. Ren Xiaosu’s footprints showed that he was heading straight in the direction of the volcano. It seemed that he had already escaped north.

He did not keep pursuing. From the looks of the bloodstains at the battle site, “Xu Xianchu” must’ve not been badly hurt. Even if they continued after him, it would be too late.

However, Xu Man was rather shocked by this. During the day when so many of the troops took on just one Experimental, three of their soldiers had died while another thirteen were injured. But now, there was someone who could kill four Experimentals single-handedly!

Moreover, the wounds on these Experimentals were all very similar. They had tested it out before and found that even an extremely sharp combat knife would have to be wielded with great strength to tear through the skin of the Experimentals.

The secret of this “Xu Xianchu” ran far deeper than anyone could imagine. Xu Man had already decided to hold the upper management of Stronghold 113’s private army accountable for this matter. How could they not know there was such a terrifying supernatural being in their own ranks?

At this time, Xu Xianchu was still in the dark about the consequences he would be facing. Unlike Ren Xiaosu and Yang Xiaojin, he was actually the one who didn't break into the perimeter of Qing Consortium's operations.

Xu Xianchu did want to find out about what was happening in the Jing Mountains. But after not managing to break into the perimeter at the beginning, he thought about how he might not be able to get out once he got in. In the end, he decided to just go around the perimeter and head towards Stronghold 112.

He had his shadow clone carry him the entire way as he hurried to his destination. By the time Ren Xiaosu retrieved the gold, Xu Xianchu had already gone around the city and arrived at the rear of the Qing Consortium. So Xu Xianchu knew nothing of what was happening in the city. He also did not know he had been put on the Qing Consortium's threat list, nor that he was really high up on it as well.

If he knew about this, he might just have turned back to fight Ren Xiaosu to the death.

Xu Xianchu, who was being carried by his shadow clone, had a niggling feeling that something was wrong, but he didn't know what it was....

"Let's fall back." Xu Man said, "Set up the defensive line. It's almost time for the Experimentals to start getting active. We still don't know where their hideout is."

Xu Man seemed to understand that even with these four Experimentals dead, that did not signify it was the end of them. The number of Experimentals was far more than anyone could imagine.

But right at this moment, Xu Man suddenly heard the sound of rapid footsteps from some hundreds of meters up ahead. It sounded like someone was running in a great hurry!

He flicked the beam of his tactical flashlight over and was surprised to see Ren Xiaosu being piggybacked on his shadow clone and fleeing.

Xu Xianchu was stunned. What was with this? Why was this "Xu Xianchu" running back here? Didn't he already escape?

When Ren Xiaosu saw Xu Man and the soldiers from afar, he started deviating from his original path. He had intended to go around on the left side of the platoons to bypass the Qing Consortium's soldiers.

But Xu Man did not hesitate. He immediately pulled the charging handle of his gun back and prepared to shoot.

But when Ren Xiaosu heard the sound of guns being cocked, he immediately said, "Why the hell are you shooting at me? Look at what's behind me!"

Xu Man suspiciously looked at what was behind Ren Xiaosu. He saw dark shadows moving in the forest as he heard the loud dissonance of chains being dragged around.

Xu Man immediately knew that this was bad. Did you fucking go and poke the Experimentals' nest?!

Chapter 98: Recreational activities of the Experimentals

The countless Experimentals scuttled through the shadows in the forest like a large, dense group of spiders. Faced with this sight, even a highly experienced soldier like Xu Man paled.

For someone like Xu Man who could grasp the situation, he knew immediately that “Xu Xianchu” had accidentally walked into the current hideout of the Experimentals. That was why he attracted all of them.

Those who didn’t would fucking think that Ren Xiaosu had called for backup and come back to seek revenge!

But because of this, Xu Man could confirm “Xu Xianchu’s” identity even further. After all, as Liu Bu had said, Xu Xianchu once used his shadow clone to carry himself as they walked. It was just that easy and relaxing.

Honestly speaking, Ren Xiaosu himself also had not expected that Liu Bu would somehow end up helping him to conceal his identity and even end up selflessly paying the price with his life.

Those Experimentals were chasing after Ren Xiaosu in a frenzy. Their saliva was flying all over the place as they scampered across the ground.

When Xu Man saw this, the first thing he did was to call out on the comms channel, “Attention, everyone in the vicinity of the city, set up a defensive line!”

There were a lot of Qing Consortium troops in the forest, with up to several hundred of them. But it seemed like there were even more Experimentals than them!

But at this time, Xu Man had notified those in the city to set up a defensive line instead of issuing the command for those who were here to evacuate?

Xu Man said on the comms channel, “All units onsite, stay in your assigned positions as per your platoon orders to defend and fire. We have to buy some time for those who are still in the urban area!”

As Ren Xiaosu ran like mad, he watched the Qing Consortium troops stop in their tracks and kneel down to adopt a shooting stance. Without any other defensive fortifications, they started using their own bodies as shields.

Ren Xiaosu’s speed while his shadow clone piggybacked him was much faster than the Experimentals could travel. Thus, he was able to successfully veer off his initial trajectory when the Qing Consortium troops opened fire and avoided being caught in their line of fire.

However, Ren Xiaosu felt rather shocked at heart. So this was the difference between an organization’s combat troops and soldiers from a private army? The combat troops of an organization would actually sacrifice their own lives and safety in order to gain more time for their brothers in arms! What was it about that suit-wearing young man that he could lead a force like that?

In reality, Ren Xiaosu had thought too highly of an organization's combat troops, or rather, the soldiers under Qing Zhen's command had given Ren Xiaosu a false impression that soldiers belonging to an organization were very united and fearsome. The truth was, these soldiers serving under Qing Zhen were in fact also considered the best of the best within all of the organizations' militaries.

Xu Man was a very combat-oriented warrior, but that didn't mean that he was unafraid of dying.

One of the most important qualities in combat was an understanding of the overall situation so that a correct decision could be made.

He understood this. If he stayed to buy time for those in the city, he would very likely end up dead. But if he were to retreat, his comrades in the city would not have enough time to prepare for the situation and even more people would die as a result.

Qing Zhen had already ordered the troops to fortify the defenses, such as building simple bunkers and enclosures that were all necessary.

But Xu Man knew well that they had incorrectly estimated the number of Experimentals here in the Jing Mountains. According to their information, there should only be about a hundred or so Experimentals here.

The records of the Pyro Company's research laboratory only showed 87 living specimens back then!

Could it be that the Pyro Company had purposely leaked this false information to lure the Qing Consortium into a trap after they were unable to get ahead of them to restart this research lab? Importantly, Qing Zhen had killed many of the Pyro Company's people over the past two years.

Of course, Qing Zhen was not a fool either. He had brought several times more people out here than was originally planned. Qing Zhen wasn't going to die in such a place.

What Xu Man was worried about was not Qing Zhen's safety, but the heavy losses that Stronghold 112's combat brigade might suffer.

At the moment, Xu Man's open communications channel was live. As such, he could hear Qing Zhen's calm voice speaking in his helmet, "Go and save them, then slowly retreat to the edge of the city. I was prepared for this."

Xu Man heaved a sigh of relief. He said on the tactical communications channel, "Hold the line! Reinforcements will be here soon!"

If they could defend long enough, they wouldn't die. Or at least, most of them wouldn't.

If it had been another big shot of the organization, their first response would probably be to abandon the lone fighting force out here.

Ren Xiaosu took advantage of the chaos to bypass the perimeter the Qing Consortium's troops were defending, and his shadow clone made a mad dash south. Ren Xiaosu had initially thought that it would be safer for him to go north, but who could have guessed that it would be even more dangerous.

When the Qing Consortium came into the Jing Mountains, they had deliberately avoided the volcanic area because the poisonous gases there could not be warded off. So this volcanic area became the only place where the Qing Consortium had not conducted a sweep. Who would have thought that those Experimentals were hiding in the vicinity of the volcanoes?

However, these Experimentals were not lured out by Ren Xiaosu. He had only encountered them along the way while he was heading north. These several hundred Experimentals were clearly looking to attack all humans who were in the Jing Mountains at this time!

Ren Xiaosu did not know what attracted them out, or if they were awoken when they realized the volcanoes were about to erupt. Ren Xiaosu didn't care. Even if he had to face the face bugs or the wolf pack, it was still a better option than facing the Qing Consortium or the Experimentals!

He could handle four of them, but taking on several hundred Experimentals was way out of his league! If he didn't have his shadow clone to carry him as he made his escape, Ren Xiaosu might have laid down on the ground and pretended that he was an Experimental too. These Experimentals might just fall for it since their intelligence had lowered to such a point.

Ren Xiaosu wondered why there were so many of these Experimentals. It was quite obvious that Xu Man did not expect there to be so many of them either, so could it be that they had been breeding all these years? Were those Experimentals unchained at their limbs the ones born later?

Ren Xiaosu wasn't being overly imaginative. He just didn't understand why. These Experimentals didn't have many recreational activities to do deep in the mountains and forests anyway, so other than reproducing, what else could they do?

After he killed those four Experimentals, Ren Xiaosu felt like he couldn't be more invincible. But just half an hour later, that sense of superiority was crushed by reality.

Ren Xiaosu: I am invincible!

Reality: No, you're not.

The rest of the Qing Consortium's troops headed north to save Xu Man and his men.

Meanwhile, Ren Xiaosu made use of this gap to escape south, which would bring him back on his original route to Stronghold 113.

Yang Xiaojin's and Luo Xinyu's whereabouts were unknown, while Xu Xianchu was leisurely taking another route as he left the Jing Mountains.

This adventure had ended up more like a farce. However, it did reveal the true nature of the world to Ren Xiaosu.

He only knew about the Pyro Company and Qing Consortium for now, but there were many more organizations and strongholds out there. This world was much bigger than he had thought it to be.

While Ren Xiaosu was making his escape, he suddenly heard another loud rumble from the volcano behind him. This time, the ground even started shaking.

He saw the volcano erupting as lava spewed out of the crater into the air. Clumps of magma cooled rapidly after reacting with the cold air and solidified into hot rocks. Shortly after, a hail of meteorite showers started pouring down, and the forest turned into a sea of fire!

Chapter 99: Going home!

At this moment, Ren Xiaosu could only count himself fortunate to have escaped quickly enough and was even glad to have encountered those Experimentals along the way. Otherwise, he wouldn't have been able to avoid the volcanic eruption zone.

The built-up pressure in the volcano finally erupted. Qing Zhen watched the sights from the ruined city and said with a sigh, "What a pity."

No one knew what he was feeling pity for this time.

Someone beside Qing Zhen asked, "Boss, what do we do now?"

But just as the question was asked, an earthshaking roar of a creature came from the crater of the volcano. The sound of that roar seemed to travel dozens of kilometers in an instant!

Ren Xiaosu looked back in surprise. At the peak of the volcano, he suddenly saw a huge claw grabbing onto the edge of the volcano's crater. It looked like it was something trying to climb out!

There was actually a creature hidden inside that volcano? What kind of creature could possibly live in magma? Something that terrifying had even appeared now? Then what kind of terrifying existence could that creature he had encountered at the river but not seen with his own eyes be?

Qing Zhen sighed and said, "Such a thing actually exists? Let's temporarily pull out of the Jing Mountains from the west. The mission is a failure."

Qing Zhen's trusted aide who was standing next to him said in shock, "Just what the hell is that...."

"Yan Tao, call that useless brother of mine," Qing Zhen said as he kept his gaze on the volcano. "If that thing crawls out, or a large number of Experimentals get forced south because of the eruption, Stronghold 113 will be in danger."

The trusted aide whose name was Yan Tao wondered if Qing Zhen really thought the stronghold would fall. He instinctively went to retrieve the satellite phone but discovered that the usually working satellite phone couldn't make any calls.

The heatwave caused by the volcanic eruption began to sweep through the entire mountain range. Keep in mind that there wasn't only one volcano in the Jing Mountains. Seeing this, Qing Zhen said, "Let's leave this place first!"

This sea of fire looked like it was about to bury the secret of the Jing Mountains.

Xu Man and the others who received their orders to retreat continued firing in an orderly manner as they did so. They did not start panicking because of the volcanic eruption. Caught in this dangerous situation, they became even calmer.

When they finally came out of the forest and arrived at the edge of the city, someone who was with Qing Zhen triggered a remote in their hand. In an instant, a line of fire was lit as the dividing line between the city, and the forest started burning.

The explosives the Qing Consortium had buried here beforehand were detonated all at once and completely contained the Experimentals to the north of the forest. Even for creatures as strong and tough as the Experimentals, half of them were still killed or wounded by the explosives detonating. As for the remaining wave of Experimentals that had not been affected by the explosion, they could only watch from behind the wall of fire as the Qing Consortium's personnel made their retreat.

The Experimentals did not linger here for long. Instead, they went back into the forest, seemingly to look for another route to bypass this area.

Panting, Xu Xianchu returned and came up to Qing Zhen. He lowered his head and said, "Sorry, I didn't manage to bring Xu Xianchu back."

"It's OK." Qing Zhen shook his head. "Get in the car, we'll head west. There should be another route there that can bring us back to Stronghold 112." Qing Zhen then turned around and left. The sound of his leather shoes tapping on the ground gave an aura of calm to his footsteps.

A large convoy of military transport trucks and off-road vehicles, as well as many other heavy machines, were parked at the edge of the city.

Xu Man did not move. Qing Zhen turned around and looked at him. "You want to ask me why I got our people to save you? Don't feel too touched by that. It's just business between us. I only got our people to save you because I still have use for you."

Xu Man stammered as though he was going to say something.

In the end, Qing Zhen laughed and said, "Save your words of loyalty. I've never believed in that."

But at this time, a soldier up ahead shouted, "This is bad! Our vehicles can't be driven anymore. Come over and take a look at what's happened to the tires..."

Xu Man was startled. "What happened? Are the tires punctured? We brought along tire jacks and machinery to patch up tires and fill them with air."

The soldier said with a bitter expression, "It's not a puncture. Our vehicles' tires have been slashed..."

Xu Man and Qing Zhen were confused.

The smile on the previously calm Qing Zhen stiffened. "...Xu Xianchu, this is the first time I've been so keen on killing someone. Xu Man, bring me my uniform..."

Qing Zhen and Xu Man knew that "Xu Xianchu" had escaped south, but they really hadn't expected something like this to happen.

In Xu Man's opinion, it should have been enough to just puncture the tires. But rather than that, their opponent had chosen to slash the tires?!

By slashing the tires, it would mean that everyone from the Qing Consortium would have to leave the Jing Mountains on foot. It wasn't really that dangerous, but it would definitely make them look pathetic, especially if they were wearing a white suit.

Xu Man whispered in a soft voice behind Qing Zhen, "This mission failure might make the consortium punish you."

Qing Zhen did not mind that. "It's fine, those old fogies will still need someone to do their work for them. I'll just treat it as taking a vacation for some time."

"How are we going to handle that Ren Xiaosu?" Xu Man asked.

"If he doesn't die in the Jing Mountains, he'll definitely find a way to get back to Stronghold 113." Qing Zhen thought for a moment before saying, "When the satellite phone works again, tell Luo Lan to keep a watch out for now. As for how to handle him, I still haven't thought of it yet. Also, get him to quickly send Zhang Jinglin away. That person must not die under our watch. It's quite possible that someone has already been sent out to assassinate him."

...

Ren Xiaosu was indeed the person who slashed the tires of the Qing Consortium's vehicles. At that time, the Qing Consortium's people were still busy fighting the Experimentals, so he decided he might as well do it.

Besides, Ren Xiaosu had been running from the Qing Consortium's pursuit for some time, so he couldn't vent his anger if he didn't get his revenge!

The volcano behind him was still erupting. The moon in the sky was already covered by the plumes of ash and smoke in the air. Moreover, the volcano's eruption seemed like it was getting more and more violent.

Ren Xiaosu was a little puzzled. What was that roaring creature in the volcano's crater? Even at the end, he did not see it fully emerge out of the crater.

As he left the city, he watched the Qing Consortium detonate explosives at the edge of the city. Ren Xiaosu once again witnessed how terrifying explosive weapons were in the possession of humans.

Ren Xiaosu kept heading back south via the original route he had taken here. He suspected there could still be a few sporadic Experimentals along the way, just not as many as the entire nest he had stumbled upon. In fact, Ren Xiaosu was no longer as scared.

With his shadow clone's super strength and dexterity wielding the black saber, his destructive power was incalculable.

With the two skills stacked, it became a much more powerful combination. Somehow, this seemed like the path forward for Ren Xiaosu. However, this path might be littered with many more twists and bends.

On the way back to Stronghold 113, it wasn't the Experimentals that would be the most dangerous to encounter, but those face bugs and the wolf pack.

Ren Xiaosu recharged himself while being carried on his shadow clone's back. Meanwhile, the shadow clone was going so fast that it felt like it was floating in the air. It even looked like its legs were casting an afterimage behind it as it ran.

Although this made Ren Xiaosu look like he was disabled and needed to depend on someone to carry him, he did not care...

In between, he even went back to the cave they had spent a night in. There, he discovered that a line of elegantly written words had appeared at the top of the cave: "It's right behind you."

These words were not here before, and they looked like they were still fresh in the rock. In Ren Xiaosu's memory, he remembered that Yang Xiaojin had fallen behind on the day they set off from here. For some reason, he suddenly felt that this line of elegant writing must have been made by Yang Xiaojin to scare people for fun.

"How mischievous, eh?" Ren Xiaosu continued on his way back south after having a look here.

An hour later, the forest fire caused by the volcanic eruption spread southwards. The entire Jing Mountain range had become a sea of fire. Ren Xiaosu could vaguely hear the sound of wild animals running behind him. It sounded like they were escaping to the canyon. However, this didn't really bother Ren Xiaosu.

It had taken them a long time to get here, but it felt much faster when he was going back. It only took half a day before Ren Xiaosu reached the canyon again. He looked into the canyon and that shimmer of light above the towering cliff walls. Ren Xiaosu did not hesitate any further.

As long as he was fast enough, the face bugs, wolf pack, or even loneliness could not catch him to him!

The shadow clone carrying Ren Xiaosu ran through the canyon like a gust of wind. The face bugs atop the towering cliff walls sensed the aura of a human and swarmed out. But as soon as they came out, Ren Xiaosu had already made it out of the canyon!

The face bugs were left silent on the cliff for a long while. All of them were communicating with their feelers with one another. "Did a person pass by here just now?"

“The fuck can that be a person?!”

The moment he passed through the canyon, dawn broke. In the sky, golden rays of light penetrated through the cloud cover. When Ren Xiaosu saw this sight, he felt a little more spirited. He had gained a lot in his trip to the Jing Mountains this time, even though he didn't stay for long.

But when he got back to the canyon again, it suddenly felt like it had been a long time since he was here. It felt like a century had passed.

He wondered how Yan Liuyuan and Sister Xiaoyu were doing at home. Ren Xiaosu was really anxious to return home.

Ren Xiaosu could dimly sense some movements coming from the forest. He was startled before realizing that the wolf pack had stayed around the entrance of the canyon all this while, as though they were waiting for him to come back!

Soon after, the slowly approaching wolves watched as Ren Xiaosu, who was laying on his shadow clone's back, ran through the gaps in their pack. They didn't even have time to react!

The wolf pack stopped in their tracks and quietly watched Ren Xiaosu's receding figure as he left. He was even faster than they were....

The Wolf King also fell silent. Had they been waiting here for nothing all these days?!

Chapter 100: Image down the drain

“Liuyuan, see what I brought you.” Wang Fugui's voice rang out from afar before he could be seen in the school.

When Yan Liuyuan opened his eyes under the blanket, he refused to get out of bed.

Xiaoyu was folding clothes and saying, “It's time to get up, Liuyuan.”

“I don't wanna! Let me sleep for a while more!” Yan Liuyuan murmured.

Xiaoyu laughed and said, “If you get up 15 minutes earlier each day, you'd have gained an additional 90 hours a year that you could use to do something you like doing. Think about it, what do you like doing the most?”

Yan Liuyuan pondered for a long time before saying with uncertainty, “I like sleeping the most...”

“Get up already!” Xiaoyu frowned and said, “You're even more annoying than your brother!” Xiaoyu lifted Yan Liuyuan's blanket. The warm air inside escaped all at once, and Yan Liuyuan unwillingly got out of bed.

It was winter now, and the winter temperatures in this era were extremely cold. In Yan Liuyuan's memory, there would always be people freezing to death in the streets or in their shacks during winter each year.

The shacks were only built out of tree branches or metal frames, while the four walls were wrapped with broken rags and cloth. This construct was completely unable to shield anyone on the inside from the wind.

During those years, he and Ren Xiaosu were always shivering in their shacks from the cold. Ren Xiaosu even took all of their summer and winter clothing out to wrap it around Yan Liuyuan. But even so, it was still very cold.

But whenever he thought of those times, Yan Liuyuan would always feel overjoyed.

He recalled what Ren Xiaosu said to him at that time: “The happiness of humans does not stem from enjoyment but the suffering we go through. When you’re going through the worst moments of suffering and taste sweetness, you would desperately want to keep living no matter what. That sweet taste of things might not be much to other people, but it is the greatest happiness that you know at that moment.”

Sometimes, Yan Liuyuan felt that if Ren Xiaosu were born inside the stronghold, he would probably be a philosopher like Mr. Zhang had described in class before.

Wang Fugui walked in with two sweet potatoes and greeted them. “Xiaoyu, I brought one for each of you. Eat them while they’re hot.”

“Uncle Fugui,” Yan Liuyuan took the sweet potato from him and asked, “Why do you like eating sweet potatoes so much? You roast them every day.”

Wang Fugui said with a wide smile, “When I was still a child in the town outside of Stronghold 107, there was a famine, so my father and I escaped all the way here to seek help from our relatives. Back then, it still wasn’t so dangerous on the outside. Once, we dug up two sweet potatoes in the wilderness and my father roasted them for me to eat. At that time, I felt that sweet potatoes were the most delicious thing in the world.”

Ever since Wang Fugui came running over to the school wearing his jacket and trying to bribe Wang Congyang over the gun firing at midnight, the way Yan Liuyuan addressed Wang Fugui had changed.

Wang Fugui also realized this change and was secretly delighted.

He had taken a great liking to these two brothers. Compared to that silly son of his, they were so much better. Witnessing how Ren Xiaosu protected Yan Liuyuan in their struggle to stay alive over the years, he felt that the two of them really did not have it easy.

Wang Fugui watched Li Xiaoyu and Yan Liuyuan as they ate the sweet potatoes. Suddenly, he looked around the school and said with a sigh, “With Mr. Zhang gone, our town won’t have a teacher anymore.”

Yan Liuyuan said unbothered, “What’s so bad about that? When my brother gets back, he’ll take over as the teacher.”

Zhang Jinglin had already been sent away by Luo Lan for being the hot potato that he was. The day he was sent away was probably the most sensational day the town's refugees had ever seen.

Quite a few military transport trucks and off-road vehicles stopped outside the school's entrance and that big shot from the stronghold whose name was Luo Lan bowed politely to Zhang Jinglin.

The refugees couldn't have expected that their town's Mr. Zhang would be someone so important. If they had known, they wouldn't have scrimped on tuition and also sent their children to attend classes at the school.

Who knew if they might have built some kind of connection?

Thinking of this, many of the refugees decided they would send their children to school. The logic they had was this simple: They wanted to send their children to school not for knowledge, but for building connections.

But before they could fantasize any further, Luo Lan sent Zhang Jinglin away that same day.

Yan Liuyuan and Xiaoyu, who were living at the school, were utterly ignored by everyone. Even after Zhang Jinglin left, Wang Congyang did not come to give them any further trouble.

But even so, a lot of unfamiliar refugees started appearing at the school's entrance, peddling fruits or vegetables. Wang Fugui had seen some of them before and knew they usually worked at the factory. However, they were all pretending not to know one another here.

It was at this time that Wang Fugui realized the stronghold's control over the town wasn't as simple as he thought it was. Some of the refugees had been bought as eyes for those in the stronghold.

In normal times, these people were just ordinary refugees. But once some among the refugees wanted to start a rebellion or organize a strike, they would immediately inform those in the stronghold and turn over the names of those troublemakers.

It was no wonder the two previous strikes had been suppressed so quickly by the private army from the stronghold. It was because they had eyes here.

Wang Fugui remembered the faces of these people and took note not to offend them, nor ever tell them what he was really thinking.

It was not only those refugees watching at the entrance. There were also a few people who clearly looked tougher and more ruthless than the private troops of the stronghold. Wang Fugui speculated they might very well be people from the Qing Consortium.

Speaking of Ren Xiaosu, Wang Fugui frowned. "There's someone up ahead who works in a factory near the Jing Mountains who just got back. He said that there seems to be something going on over there and that a volcano in the mountains erupted. The entire sky above the Jing Mountains is filled with dark clouds now."

However, Yan Liuyuan said in a very relaxed tone, "My brother will be fine for sure."

That was because the wish he made was to use his own life to ensure that Ren Xiaosu would return safely.

Since he wasn't dead yet, it meant Ren Xiaosu was fine.

If he told Wang Fugui and Xiaoyu about this, they would probably not believe him. But neither would Yan Liuyuan spill his own secrets.

Wang Fugui thought for a moment before saying, "True, a kid like Ren Xiaosu would definitely live on to be a scourge for a millennium."

But right at this time, Wang Fugui felt the hairs on his back of his neck stand on end. Wang Fugui calmed himself and stifled his doubts, then whispered Yan Liuyuan and Xiaoyu, "You two better be careful. If you wish to leave town, let me know. I'll help you to think of a way. I don't think that these people out here are here for you two. They should be targeting Ren Xiaosu instead."

Wang Fugui was very smart. He thought about it over and over again before deducing that those people outside the school entrance were just like a net waiting for someone to get caught in it.

Zhang Jinglin had been sent away, so who else could this net be for if not Ren Xiaosu?

"They want to arrest Ren Xiaosu? Why?" Xiaoyu nearly exclaimed.

Wang Fugui considered it for a long time before saying, "Could Ren Xiaosu have caused trouble for those in the stronghold in the Jing Mountains?! That's quite a possibility!"

However, the truth still exceeded Wang Fugui's imagination. Not only did Ren Xiaosu cause trouble for those people in the band, he even caused trouble for the Qing Consortium.

At this moment, Qing Zhen was standing on one of the mountain slopes with a helpless expression. "Just how fucking long do we have to continue walking until we get back to Stronghold 112?!"

Xu Man sighed and said, "Boss, even you've started to curse and swear."

Disconsolate, Qing Zhen said, "My image has gone down the drain!"