

# 48 Hours a Day

## Chapter 17: Desert Island Survival XI

Zhang Heng woke up from his sleep and saw Bell roasting the python that nearly swallowed him the night before.

“Zhang, you’re awake just in time for breakfast.” The explorer stirred the bonfire with a stick to adjust the flames, and then pointed at the thing next to him that was still dripping with blood. “Snake skin. I just peeled it. After I wash it, we can use it to make a water bag of some sort, it’ll be much more impervious than pails; or we could use it to make clothes. It can keep us cool—very useful in hot weather.”

“Thank you for last night.” Zhang Heng found a place to sit on the ground. The red marks around his arm were still visible.

“Oh, don’t worry about it. You saved me from the sea. If we want to survive in the wilderness, we have to help each other, right?” Bell said as he passed a roasted snake skewer to Zhang Heng.

He was about to refuse when a thought struck him—this might be the only chance in his life that he got to eat a python without being thrown into jail. So, he accepted it.

He took a curious bite and found that it tasted pretty good. It did not have a strong smell and tasted a bit like chicken, only chewier.

When he thought about how this creature nearly took his life last night, Zhang Heng decided to have a second helping.

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After breakfast, the two set off again.

Bell continued to play the role of a capable guide, clearing the path in the front with his knife and explaining the various organisms they encounter to Zhang Heng along the way.

“The python we ran into last night is not the only predator in this forest. When pythons eat, they normally swallow their prey head-first. Because of their poor eyesight, they sometimes eat prey that are too big for their stomachs to handle and their belly would explode. But snakes have very good digestion. They could digest bones and flesh all together without a problem. The animal bones we saw back there, some of them are still in perfect condition. It didn't look like they were the python's victims.”

Zhang Heng quietly noted down this trivia. Many things seemed to be of little use but you never know when the time would come that you would actually come to use it.

For example, Ed and the guy in shorts never taught him how to salt out of seawater; it was something he had seen from a video on some bullet screen website. Using heat, crystallization and repeated filtration process, you could obtain relatively pure food-grade salt and make food much more appetizing.

Speaking of which, when Zhang Heng was in primary school, he had visited Xishuangbanna with his grandfather. The forest park there left a deep impression on him.

But that place was developed by man, and only a small portion of it was opened to the public for safety reasons. This was the first time Zhang Heng had been in an all-natural forest like this. Like Bell said, the colony in this place was rich and it really opened Zhang Heng's eyes.

For instance, along the way, he spotted a little amphibian with a semi-transparent belly that gave Zhang Heng a view into its heart, liver and digestive system. What was more incredible was that the frog's body was only about 1-2milliliter.

“Glass frogs generally reside in the tropical rainforests of Central and South America. To date, 134 types of glass frogs have been identified.

Among which, sixty of them are on the verge of extinction,” said the explorer as he carefully placed the tiny creature back onto the leaf.

“What about this?” Zhang Heng pointed at a bump growing on a Banyan tree like a tumor. There was a new shoot growing out of it.

“Oh, staghorn fern. A type of epiphyte. They are tender green when they are young, and turn light brown when they mature. They mostly live on the trunks and branches of other trees. It’s commonly found in tropical rain forests.”

Other than that, Zhang Heng also saw: a colugo. This thing was neither cat nor monkey with wings like a bat’s that enclosed its neck, limbs, and tail. Spreading them allowed the mammal to glide in the air. It looked rather playful; a *Bagheera kiplingi*, a species of jumping spider and the only species of spiders with a herbivorous diet—they eat nubs at the tip of leaves. The name was too difficult to pronounce. Zhang Heng had Bell repeat it three times and was still doubtful; bird-of-paradise whose cries sounded like gunshots. When Zhang Heng first heard it, he nearly jumped out of his skin. But the bird was very beautiful, especially its feathers that changes colors...

Even Bell could not help but exclaim, “This place is a biological paradise! This is the first time I’ve seen so many tropical plants and animals from different regions gathered in one place! This is unbelievable! Biologists would love this piece of land.”

Just then, Zhang Heng felt something underneath his feet. He bent down to pick it up and saw that it was the tooth of some animal with a circular hole at the bottom.

“This thing looks man-made. Naturally formed holes are generally not that regular.” Bell took the tooth from his companion and examined it. “I know that some aboriginals would wear the teeth of the animals they hunted around their neck to show off their strength. The more powerful their game is, the more powerful they are deemed to be. That way, when it comes to choosing their partners, it would be easier for them to pick their desired mate. I have a friend, who went hunting a lion alone so that

he could marry the most beautiful girl in their tribe. He never came back.  
”

There was indeed a reason for the smaller population of foreigners. Zhang Heng made no comment about this. Instead, he asked a question that he was more concerned about, “Are there aboriginals living on this island? Could they be cannibals?”

Bell shook his head. “The chances are small. The island is not very big. You said that you’ve been living on this island for more than a year now. If there were other people on this island, there’s no reason that you haven’t met them yet... Also, this thing looks like it’s quite old.”

“So, you’re saying that there were aboriginals living here?” Zhang Heng could feel sweat dripping down his back. If those aboriginals were still alive, they could have captured him and Ed to make soup on the first day they arrive on the island.

‘Mm, let’s keep going further.’ Bell was also interested to find out. The possibility of a lost civilization appealed to the explorer in him. He nearly forgot that they had come to search for a way to leave the island.

The two continued towards the heart of the island.

As of now, they were already nearly halfway into their journey, and the deeper they went, the more evidence of human civilization they found.

Bell took a look at the completely eroded little huts, and the moss-covered stone wares and tools, and could tell that a long time ago, an aboriginal tribe had once lived here in the forest of this island.

What happened to them? Why have they all disappeared? The explorer was getting more intrigued by the minute.