

# 48 Hours a Day

## Chapter 18: Desert Island Survival XII

Zhang Heng was not surprised mainly because he was aware that this was just a game and he would not have been surprised if they had found Winnie the Pooh in the forest.

But, at the moment, Zhang Heng could not deny that everything around him right now was so realistic. If it had not been for his extra twenty-four hours causing a major complication and lengthening the span of the game, he would not have detected any bug at all.

Other than the huts and stone tools, the pair also found a small, almost 1-hectare lake nearby. Bell tasted the water and said, "It's drinkable. This is a freshwater lake. No wonder they built their village nearby."

Zhang Heng's eye, however, was drawn to something half-buried in the mud by the lake.

"This tribe... Did they already possess the skills to smelt metal?"

Zhang Heng pulled out the item and found that it was a piece of very rusty ironware. It appeared to have been attached to a piece of wood but the handle was beyond recognition.

Upon inspection, Zhang Heng found himself clueless as to what that item was.

Bell was not all-knowing: he did not know what the thing was used for either. So, he could only analyze. "From the look of the craftsmanship, they are most probably still in the stone age era. This piece of metal may not have belonged to them."

It was getting late so they did not continue further but found a place nearby and started a fire for cooking.

The closer they were to their destination, Zhang Feng found himself in a tangle of emotions.

For the past one year, he had relied on the objective of exploring the center of the island to keep himself working hard on improving his archery skills, and exercising to keep in shape until it became essentially almost like second nature to him. But to say that he was concerned about what was in there was not entirely true either.

In light of this, Zhang Heng often envied Ed, Bell and the guy in shorts. They could comfort themselves that perhaps tomorrow a ship would dock at the island, or perhaps there was something on the island that could bring them home. On the contrary, player Zhang Heng knew very well that unless the time was up, he was not going anywhere.

When he thought about how they were going to solve the mystery tomorrow, he was both emotional and excited—he had been thinking about this day for the past one year, after all—but most of all, he was at a loss.

Once this was over, what was he going to rely on to survive?

Thank goodness four-fifths of the time had already passed, leaving only another hundred over days to go. Even if he did not have a goal to work towards, he should be able to bite the bullet and pull through.

On the third morning of the expedition, Zhang Heng rose early but when he opened his eyes, he saw that Bell was already up.

“Morning, Zhang,” the explorer greeted him excitedly. “I just took a walk around the lake again. Guess what I found?”

“Er... new breakfast?”

“That’s actually true. I caught a catfish so that we can have a change of flavors. But other than that, I also found something else.” Bell placed two rusty little balls on Zhang Heng’s palm.

“What is this? Marbles?”

“This is a bullet.”

“How are solid bullets fired?” Zhang Heng asked. He was not a fan of weapons but he had some basic knowledge about them. Modern weapons relied on the ignition of gunpowder in the bullets to be fired. Without gunpowder, the bullet could not penetrate anything.

“Remember that thing you found by the lake? I know what it is.” The explorer was beaming in excitement. “It’s a matchlock—widely used in the fifteenth, sixteenth century Europe. The gunpower and cartridge for this type of weapon are filled separately, and then the match cord is lit up... At that time, the slave trade was booming, and the aboriginals here must have been attacked and captured by the slave traders and then sold off to farmers.”

The speculation seemed reasonable and in accordance with what they had seen. Zhang Heng decided to accept this friend’s statement as the truth. However, later on that day, when they finally arrived at the heart of the island, they came across a structure that resembled an altar with a mountain of bones stacked up on top of it.

Zhang Heng turned to his companion. “Were your fifteenth, sixteenth century European slave traders this ruthless?”

“... This is not the work of the slave traders. This was a dark and bloody period. As far as I know, slave traders do, in fact, kill those who try to resist captive in order to scare the others. Sometimes, they would also kill the ones who were too old or too young, those too inconvenient to transport.” Bell walked up to the altar and picked up a skull. “But this... this is not their practice.”

“If it’s not the slave traders who killed aboriginals of the island, then who did? Could they have done it themselves?”

Zhang Heng’s question stumped the both of them.

The architectural style of the altar was very similar to the ruins they had stumbled on by the lake.

“Alright, say the slave traders arrived on the island, and these aboriginals saw that they could were no match for the enemy so they came to the altar and ended their own lives... It’s a little far-fetched.”

Bell walked to the center of the mound of bones, bent down and wiped away the dust on the stone floor. “This is something else. It’s a totem depicting a half-human, half-snake creature. It looks like it could be the gods that these aboriginals worshipped.”

Zhang Heng was a little disappointed. Although he did not care too much for whatever was in the heart of the island, finding the indigenous ruins that had no use to him caused him to feel dispirited.

He had prepared for this for one an entire year, and it was a dangerous journey coming here. He was even nearly swallowed by a python. In the end, all they found was just a bunch of bones and some altar.

But seeing how excited Bell was by all that, Zhang Heng kept this opinion to himself.

The pair had plenty of food and water. There was still more than half of the food they had brought with them, and then on the way Bell killed quite a number of ‘games’, which might have looked like things that most people would be reluctant to put in their mouths, were actually surprisingly okay.

Zhang Heng was contemplating whether or not to cut directly through the forest to the other end of the island then travel along the coastline to return to their dwelling when a dark shadow suddenly emerged from behind the altar and sprung for the explorer.

Zhang Heng jumped. He did not need Bell’s scientific explanations to recognize what that thing was—jaguar, the king of the rainforest, with a likeness to a tiger, armed with sharp teeth and claws that could tear into a caiman. It was that large predator at the top of the food chain.

Bell’s reflex was very quick. The explorer rolled across the floor and evaded the beast’s lightning attack, then drew the knife at his waist.

Zhang Heng quickly drew his bow and arrow, but another jaguar appeared.

This time, Bell's face fell.

What?! Zhang Heng felt a wave of nausea come over him. By right, the explorer's death was still four days away. Why had these cats showed up so early? Did they get the wrong script?

But there was no time for him to think about these things right now. Bell was in grave danger. No matter how good he was there was no way he could fight off two jaguars alone. Zhang Heng raised his bow and shot at the second jaguar.

The cat dodged the arrow swiftly. Zhang Heng had already expected that. They were both now about 27 or 28 meters away from each other. If he had shot at Mickey Mouse from this distance, his accuracy rate was about 50—60%. But the jaguar was much nimbler and lither than the Dodo bird.