

48 Hours 611

Chapter 611 Happy To Meet You, Ma'am

"You betrayed us and asked someone to ambush us?"

Wendy saw the scene before her, and her expression suddenly changed as she stared at the old cowboy.

For some reason, her gaze caused the sheriff to be embarrassed to look at her. He turned away. "I am doing it for your own good. If your father were here, he would've agreed with me."

"Oh, I thought it was going to be something new this time. It turns out it's all the same thing again. Stop telling me that you are doing this for my own good. Do you know what annoys a woman the most, sheriff?". "What could that be?"

"Making assumptions," Wendy snapped coldly. "You have no right to force yourself into my life, sheriff."

"I know that you can make yourself sound convincing, but no matter what you say, ma'am, you can't change what will happen next. I will ask Joseph to send you home, then Jonathan and I will invite Mr. Zhang to stay in town for three to five days. He will get to enjoy the best that Glen Town has to offer. Until I finish the matter at hand, I will help you to find your father. As for Mr. Zhang, he is free to go anywhere he wants." "How dare you do such a thing?!" Wendy yelled in a burst of anger. "I can understand your resentment and disappointment. Sometimes, the world disappoints us. It is the price of growing up," the sheriff said and waved at Joseph.

The deputy was still a young boy with a small mustache, probably only seventeen or eighteen. Upon hearing what the sheriff said, he tidied up his messy hair before walking down from the rock wall.

"It's good to meet you, ma'am. Although I may not look like one, I can guarantee that I am also an excellent gunman. I learned my way around the gun from the sheriff. I will be responsible for your safety when you head home."

"Okay, you can tell her the rest while you escort her home," the sheriff urged.

Wendy then glanced at Zhang Heng, who nodded at her.

"Don't worry about me. Precinct coffee should taste good. I will..."

"Dolan," said the sheriff.

"I'm going to spend a nice week with Sheriff Dolan," Zhang Heng added, blinking at Wendy.

The latter took a deep breath and looked at the sheriff, "I will not give up like that. Watch me."

"With all due respect, if you were my age, you wouldn't have cared about those meaningless words. Send my regards to your mother for me. Well, time to go." The sheriff nodded at Joseph.

It wasn't until the two exited the river valley that the sheriff turned around to look at Zhang Heng, "I know some people don't like yellow-skinned men, but today is your lucky day. I am not that kind of person. As long as you stay put and obey my orders, I will guarantee your safety in the town. But if you dare mess with me... I don't mind turning you into a corpse in this river valley. No one in this land will care if you are alive or dead. Don't forget how you just got onto Bacchus' bad side last night, and

everyone in the bar saw it. If you died here, the people would think that it had to be Bacchus's people who killed you."

"It seems that you are not as innocent as you look, sheriff," Zhang Heng said. "When you first showed up in front of us, I thought you were an upright law enforcer."

"Upright law enforcer?" the sheriff snorted. "No one in this land can be upright forever. Otherwise, I would have been a corpse long ago. People are very complicated. Everyone has a secret they want to keep to themselves. I bet you have some secrets as well... I forced the kid to go home for her own good, and for your own good, I suggest you shut your mouth for the time being."

Zhang Heng raised his eyebrows and said nothing after that.

The sheriff dismounted his horse and walked towards him. At the same time, he warned Zhang Heng, "Jonathan is a sharpshooter. He can shoot a running hare from fifty yards. If I were you, I wouldn't want to put his marksmanship to the test."

Zhang Heng looked up, seeing the young man who was holding a rifle.

Jonathan was obviously nervous, stiff as a scarecrow as he aimed Zhang Heng. There was a high chance that the sheriff was just bragging. The sheriff first unbuckled the holster around Zhang Heng's waist. Then, suddenly, there was a frown. "Hold on, don't you have two guns? Where is the other one?"

"You don't want to know the answer to that," Zhang Heng replied. The next moment, he dropped down from Radish and hid behind it.

The sheriff's reaction was quick. Having not the time to pull out his pistol from his waist, he drew Zhang Heng's revolver from its holster and pulled the trigger without hesitation. Unfortunately, it wasn't loaded.

The scene where Zhang Heng fell to the ground after getting shot would remain only an imagination. At the same time, a knife was placed against the sheriff's throat.

"Did you really think I would have handed you a loaded revolver, sheriff?" scoffed Zhang Heng.

After he successfully threatened the sheriff, he quickly hid behind him. Radish was still blocking Joseph, and as a result, the deputy could not take his aim at Zhang Heng no matter how sharp of a marksman he was. Zhang Heng did a quick take at the terrain, then dragged the sheriff to the back of a giant stone, drawing out the sheriff's revolver at the same time.

"Do you know what you are doing?" The sheriff asked, panting.

"Of course, one of my specialties is that I always know what I'm doing."

"For a child, you are willing to turn into a wanted criminal?"

Zhang Heng laughed when he heard those words. "Take a wild guess here. When I stand before the judge, don't you think the jury might be interested in that hidden side of yours? I don't know what the hell you did with Matthew, but you obviously have a more sordid past than mine. You know, you should work on your lying, sheriff. Now, I don't think you will escalate this matter. Am I right?"

The sheriff was rendered speechless.

“Also, if you don’t want to watch that child die on the rock wall, I advise you to ask him to put down his gun and surrender.”

Right after Zhang Heng said that he heard the sound of a horse galloping from afar, Wendy and Lighting were back at the entrance of the river valley.

“How is that possible?”

The sheriff and Zhang Heng were bewildered.

Wendy was also taken aback when she saw what was happening. She almost dropped the revolver in her hand.

“Why are you here?” Zhang Heng asked.

“Ah, didn’t you give me the revolver to take care of the enemy and to help you out?” Wendy was at a loss.

“Did you kill deputy sheriff Joseph?! Wait, since when did I ask you to kill him? I gave you the revolver to protect yourself, in case that guy had some malicious intent.”

“You blinked at me, and I thought it was a signal to do it.”

Zhang Heng was at a loss too. Initially, he planned to save Wendy after dealing with the problem here. Since Wendy was now here, he decided to kill the sheriff and the gunman in one go.

“Also, I didn’t kill that guy. I just tied him up and left him where there was no one.” Wendy then said to the sheriff, “I hoped when you told me that there are no wolves and bears here, it is not a lie. Otherwise, you are probably going to pay the price for your lies.”

Zhang Heng breathed a sigh of relief when he heard that Wendy didn’t kill the young deputy sheriff. In other words, it was not too late to change the plan. He realized that Wendy was different from the ordinary girl. At such times, ordinary people would choose to treat the gun as a last resort. However, Wendy took the initiative to attack her enemy, but she also rushed back to “rescue” him. Zhang Heng could not reprimand her for it and could only sigh in the end.

“You are really braver than I thought, ma’am.”

Chapter 612 Because... I Like It?

“Sheriff, I saw his accomplice. Shouldn’t I shoot?” Jonathan on the rock wall said nervously.

“Of course not, you idiot, she is only 12 years old. Do you want your head to be on the gallows? Put your gun away and come down,” the sheriff said, a tinge of urgency clouding his voice.

“Yes, sheriff.” Relieved, Jonathan hurriedly climbed down.

Zhang Heng, however, did not remove the knife away from the sheriff’s neck.

“Give them your gun,” said the sheriff.

At the order, Jonathan handed the rifle to Wendy. "Are you satisfied now?" the sheriff asked coldly.

Zhang Heng nodded, "But you may not be happy with what I will do next."

The sheriff figured what Zhang Heng would do. The expression on his face changed instantly. "I dare you?"

However, as soon as the lawman finished speaking, Zhang Heng pulled the trigger, and the sheriff saw his beloved white horse fall in a pool of blood. "Sorry, I had to make sure you won't come after us. After all, I don't really want to go to the police station for coffee." Zhang Heng did not stop there, proceeding to eliminate Jonathan's horse.

The sheriff looked extremely agonized. "Why didn't you kill your old horse and ride my good horse then?!"

"Because... this is how I think?" After the brutal murder of two poor hardworking animals, Zhang Heng frisked the sheriff and Jonathan. After making sure that they were not in danger, he finally put away his revolver.

He first picked up the revolver that he dropped on the ground and then took the rifle from Wendy.

When Wendy saw Zhang Heng stretching out his hand at her, she reluctantly returned the revolver.

"Can you give me the sheriff's rifle?" Wendy asked in a low voice.

"No, I don't want to be shot in the back by my ally," said Zhang Heng said. "You have never learned to shoot. Now would you want a gun?"

"I have seen my father hunting, I know how to use one... and I just subdued a deputy sheriff."

use 0

e

.

"He won't be a deputy after this."

Undoubtedly, the sheriff was unhappy that his deputy had been knocked down by a girl who had just turned twelve.

"You should not blame him, sheriff. It's not his fault. He just picked the wrong opponent."

Wendy looked like a victor. She then said to Zhang Heng eagerly, "The kid named Joseph has a horse too. Shall we go back and kill it?"

"There's no need for that. They wouldn't dare come after us with only one horse. Am I right, Sheriff?" Zhang Heng said.

"I will avenge my horse, kid," the sheriff warned. "I may not be able to take you to court, but that's not the only way I can deal with you."

"Is that right? Remember, I can take you to court," Zhang Heng said.

“Either that or you tell me what secrets are between you and the child’s father. If you do that, I will give you a gun to protect yourself. It’s a long walk back to Glen Town.”

“It’s for your own good. You should’ve listened to me and taken this kid home,” the sheriff growled.

“They won’t hurt Matthew, but they will hurt you both!”

“They, who are they?” Zhang Heng asked. “I can only tell you so much.” The sheriff kept mum after that, making it clear that he wanted to utter nothing more. “I hate people who can’t finish their sentences,” Wendy frowned.

“Me too, but he has undeniably revealed some useful information. At least we now know that your father’s disappearance is related to a group of people. And they obviously know each other. Your father went to see them, and he probably voluntarily followed them as well. This group of people is dangerous. He is right. You probably shouldn’t have gone looking for your father in the first place.”

“You can’t be 100% sure,” snorted Wendy.

“Yes.”

“This could also mean that my father might still be in danger. And you also said that he’s probably with a group of not so nice people. They are going to do whatever they want.” “Maybe,” replied Zhang Heng, silently admitting that Wendy’s guess wasn’t unreasonable. “I want to find my father then,” Wendy firmly insisted, then asked Zhang Heng, “Are you scared?”

“I haven’t felt fear in a long time.”

“Then are you going to use this as an opportunity to ask for more pay?”

“No, now, I have my reasons to keep investigating this matter. Whether you pay me or not, I will not give up on this case,” Zhang Heng shook his head.

“Why?”

It wasn’t easy to explain to Wendy about his main quest. He might have just gotten a clue relating to the lucky horseshoe. It appeared that Wendy’s mission was now tied to his main quest.

“I’m bored, and I want something interesting to do.”

“I can’t return home now, so I can help you,” Wendy said.

“I doubt it.”

Despite that, Zhang Heng couldn’t deny that Wendy came in handy. Although her combat skills were negligible, Zhang Heng had never seen Matthew before. Bringing her around would make him much easier to locate. Not to mention how the relationship between Wendy and Matthew may neutralize some of the threats.

On another note, Wendy might also cause him unnecessary trouble. The good thing was that she was way more mature when compared to her similarly-aged counterparts. She had the most stubborn temperament Zhang Heng had ever seen.

Though the two hadn't spent a long time together, her ability to "cause trouble" had given Zhang Heng a headache.

However, Zhang Heng did not force Wendy to go back. He was different from the sheriff, knowing very well that even if Wendy were sent home by force, she would definitely find a way to come after him again. It was better to make her stay by his side. At least, he could keep an eye on her. So Zhang Heng said nothing about it. "Let's go. We have wasted enough time. Time to continue our journey."

After that, he handed his empty revolver to the sheriff. While the sheriff was looking at him in a hostile manner, Zhang Heng took out a box of bullets and threw it at the rock wall.

"You are welcome."

He then mounted Radish that was still eating some grass. The old horse had no idea that it had almost gotten killed thanks to Zhang Heng's inadequate riding skills. Seeing Zhang Heng clamped its abdomen with his legs, Radish stopped eating the grass reluctantly, glanced at the green grass in front of it once more time, and set off on the journey.

And Wendy followed Zhang Heng obediently with Lightning

"Tell me about your father again," asked Zhang Heng without turning around. His eyes darted around the tall rock walls on both sides, making sure that there were no more ugly surprises. "Okay, Mr. Zhang Heng."

Chapter 613 Unfriendly Town

After two days, Zhang Heng and Wendy finally reached their destination.

Gazing at the small town from a distance, Zhang Heng said, "Did your father tell you that he came here to talk business?"

"Yes, he said that before he left." Wendy nodded, hesitating before she continued, "Do you think he lied?"

"It's unlikely. Didn't you send a telegram to the sheriff here? He did say your father had left."

"Okay."

"At least it tells us that he has something to do with all this. Let's head to the town to check it out."

As Zhang Heng and Wendy rode on, they passed a crop field that wasn't growing very well. It seemed the weather was not the only reason that caused the plantation to fail. All the crops were wilting, and the strangest thing was that there was not one farmer around.

Zhang Heng asked Wendy to wait. As for him, he got off his horse, walked towards a house, and knocked on the door. Nobody answered it, and after a couple of times trying, Zhang Heng drew the revolver from his waist, opened the door, and quickly dashed to the side. He waited for a few seconds, but no one came out of the house.

Zhang Heng raised his head, took a quick look at the house, then put away the revolver.

"How is it?" Wendy asked from behind.

“Safe. There is no one in the house,” Zhang Heng said. Unlike the uninhabited town he passed by at the start of this quest, there was no sign of evacuation here. Zhang Heng even saw a half-flipped book placed upside down on the table.

Wooden toys were also strewn all over the ground.

At that time, Wendy had dismounted the horse and walked into the house, “Where has everyone gone to?”

“I don’t know,” Zhang Heng said. He walked around the house but saw no blood, nor was there anything else suspicious.

“Let’s leave.”

The two then left the farmhouse and closed the door.

Wendy glanced at the nearby fields again and muttered, “How did the crops grow so badly? Perhaps nobody looked after them? I wonder what the annual harvest looks like?”

“I’m afraid not.” Zhang Heng said, “Have you noticed, other plants along the way are not growing well too.”

“How did that happen?”

Zhang Heng turned and looked at the well next to him. Scooping a bucket of water from it, he found the water to be muddier than the ordinary well water, and it tasted salty as well.

One sip was all it took for Zhang Heng to pour the rest away. “The water here is polluted. That’s why the plants are not growing well.” “Do people cause it, or is it natural?”

“For now, I’ve no idea, but the townsfolk should have an explanation.” Zhang Heng mounted Radish again. “Let’s go. I see smoke coming from the town. I think there should be someone we can talk to.”

Wendy and Zhang Heng entered the town about a quarter of an hour later. The small town named Bliss looked no different from any other western hamlet of the era.

Although somewhat deserted, there were at least some people living here. Zhang Heng went to the hotel and booked two rooms first. He left his luggage and miscellaneous items too inconvenient to be brought to the room at the lobby. This time, he didn’t let Wendy go alone to ask for more information about the place.

The latter stood at the window and looked at the street below.

“Am I seeing it, right? I feel everyone we’ve met along the way has been all but very hostile to us.”

“Really, I’m Chinese. People are very hostile to me no matter where I go,” Zhang Heng said, counting the bullets in his bag at the same time. Meanwhile, Wendy was trying her hardest, convincing him to teach her the right way to fire a gun. In the end, Zhang Heng succumbed to Wendy’s persuasion, finally teaching her everything about shooting, pistols, and rifles. He had to admit, Wendy was indeed quite a

talented shooter, not to mention how fast of a learner she was—a lot better than Zhang Heng’s mediocre horsemanship.

Each time they stopped to rest by the road, she would ask Zhang Heng to lend her his gun for some target practice. And she even managed to hunt down two hares for dinner.

“I also noticed the thing that you told me earlier.”

“I don’t like the look in their eyes,” Wendy said. She saw the woman on the balcony across the street hanging her clothes. The woman hastily retreated into her house, slamming the door and shutting all the windows, giving the most nervous of glances. “Is that an outbreak here? Chickenpox, or perhaps something more terrible like leprosy... When I was born, there was a chickenpox outbreak in the town that I lived in. I heard from my father that they would gather all the sick in one room to prevent them from infecting the healthy. Every day, they would send someone to deliver food and water to them until...” Wendy paused, “...the people inside were all dead. That was no treatment! It was murder.”

Zhang Heng had also heard all about leprosy, the infamous disease. Let alone the 19th century, countering this disease in the modern-day was still a daunting task. Those living in the countryside were terrified when they heard about this disease. In this era, where medical know-how was still in its infancy, apart from isolation, there was almost no other way to tackle leprosy.

“Be careful. This town is indeed unusual.”

“We leave as soon as we find my father. So where should we go next?”

“Let’s look for the sheriff since no one wants to talk to us. But before that, we have to go to the grocery store to replenish supplies.”

The owner of the grocery store was cleaning the shelves. When he saw Zhang Heng and Wendy walking towards him, he immediately came down the ladder and hung up the closed sign. Within seconds, he, too, like the others, shut and locked the door.

But right before the door latched, a hand stretched into the crack of the door, blocking it from closing.

“Sorry, sir, we are closed,” the owner said while attempting to close the door with increased strength. However, he wasn’t nearly as strong as Zhang Heng. In the end, the door was slowly pushed open from the outside.

“It seems we are lucky enough to get here before the shop closed.” Zhang Heng walked into the shop with Wendy before the owner could argue with them.

Leaving with no other options, the owner could only serve them and hoped they would leave his shop as soon as possible. He then wiped away the sweat from his forehead. “Anything I can help you with?”

“I want to buy four... no, six boxes of bullets.”

“Caliber?”

“Two boxes of 44-40 Winchester, four boxes of 0.45-inch Colt long bullets, thank you.”

“That’s a lot of ammo... going hunting by any chance?” While taking the ammunition from the shelf, the owner reluctantly tried to strike up a conversation with them.

“Are there any hunting grounds around here?”

“Not as far as I know. If you want to hunt, you’ll have to go further.”

“Well, looks like we won’t be going hunting then,” Zhang Heng said. He then turned and looked at Wendy beside him. “You want some licorice?”

“I’m not a kid anymore!” Wendy frowned.

“It doesn’t mean that you are a child if you like to eat sweets. I know a guy, and I honestly don’t know how old he is. Anyway, he is older than anyone you have ever met. He has a sweet tooth, and he can devour all kinds of sweets like a bottomless pit.”

Chapter 614 They Are Not Used To Outsiders

Zhang Heng took the ammunition and half a can of licorice candies.

A second later, he received a system notification.

(Bought licorice candy at the grocery store. Game points: +3. Visit your character panel for more information...)

Zhang Heng was getting more and more confused by this unique achievement system. Earlier, he had been given some tobacco to chew. Besides being curious about how the famous chewing tobacco tasted, he wanted to see if he could earn game points from this unique experience.

As a result, nothing happened. In retrospect, he unwittingly obtained three points from purchasing a can of licorice candy and bullets from the grocery store. The randomness was unexpected-it was no wonder those guilds still failed to decipher the game-point system even after studying it for so long. “What’s the matter?” Wendy, standing beside him, asked.

“It’s nothing; eat your licorice.” Zhang Heng handed her half a jar of candy, then told the shop’s owner, “Do you know where the people in the farmhouses outside of town have gone to?”

The latter’s hand began to tremble involuntarily when he heard Zhang Heng’s question, the bag of flour he held almost fell to the ground. Luckily Zhang Heng managed to catch it before it landed.

With a brief thanks, the boss took the bag of flour from him.

“The plague broke out in the town some time ago, and the infected were quarantined.”

“It seems we did guess it right. It really is a plague. How bad is it?” Wendy asked. “Everything is under control for now.”

“Is there a doctor in the town? Where are the sick taken to?” asked Zhang Heng.

“The church in the town. They are temporarily quarantined there, and the doctor is taking care of them. You better stay away from that

place.”

“Don’t worry. We want to live a lot longer than this,” Wendy chuckled. “May God bless you.”

“Much obliged, ma’am.”

After Zhang Heng paid for the stuff, the two left the grocery store. Not too long after commencing their journey, Wendy felt that her boots were uncomfortable, and she was about to squat down to fix them when Zhang Heng suddenly spoke up. “There’s no need to do it now. Let’s walk a little longer.”

“Why?”

“The boss still spies on us from the store. Don’t look back, and don’t make any unnecessary moves.”

“He’s watching us?” Wendy was dumbfounded.

“To be precise, he is observing our movements and reactions,” Zhang Heng said. “If you had just told a lie, you would pay special attention to the audience’s reaction as well.”

“Lie? Are you talking about the plague?” “Well, it’s interesting. It seems the people in this town are attempting to hide something,” Zhang Heng frowned. “I don’t know what the role of the sheriff in this hoax is.”

Five minutes later, Zhang Heng and Wendy arrived at the police station in the town. In broad daylight, the thick-bearded sheriff was flirting with a woman in his office. Wendy was startled when she walked into the police station. The woman was lying on the bearded sheriff’s chest, and they looked like they were about to do something really intimate.

“Let’s get up. Here comes somebody. I’ll have to start work now, babe,” the bearded sheriff cooed, proceeding to pinch the woman’s thigh. The latter giggled, got up, and gave a flying kiss to the bearded sheriff.

The sheriff then patted his dirty uniform and wiped the badge on his chest. “Is there anything I can do for you two?” he asked.

He was also the first average person that Zhang Heng encountered after he came to this small town. He was different from the residents that he saw earlier. Other than the fact that the sheriff must’ve not showered for god-knows-how-long, he looked pretty unspectacular. As for his little hobby, there was nothing wrong with that. After all, being a sheriff was a 24-hour job in this era. Considering how he was the de-facto person in charge of the town, the concept of working hours did not apply to him.

“Could you be Sheriff Harper? I heard a sheriff is a short man,” Wendy said.

“You have good eyes, ma’am. I am not Sheriff Harper. Sheriff Harper is too old and has retired. I am his successor. You can call me Loew.”

“Sheriff Harper is retired? But I just sent him a telegraph a week ago,” Wendy’s eyes widened. “Yes, I didn’t expect this to happen as well. He was the first group of residents to settle in this town. He has contributed a lot to this place, and those who live here shall always remember his dedication. So, what brings you to the fine town of Bliss?”

“Actually, we are here to find someone, Sheriff Loew.”

“Really, who?”

Wendy glanced at Zhang Heng, and the latter nodded. So, she continued, “We’ve come to find my father. He’s been away from home for a long time. Before he left, he told us he would come here to discuss business with someone.”

“Oh, that’s too bad. Perhaps you could tell me his name, and I will see what I can do for you.”

“My father’s name is Matthew Robbins, a rancher from Lincoln County. He wears a gray shirt and has a pair of old-looking boots. He is about thirty-five years old. And he has a scar on the right of his belly.”

“I wrote everything down, and I will investigate this matter right away. You can rest in the hotel and wait for news. I should be able to get back to you tomorrow morning,” replied Sheriff Loew as he winked at Wendy. “Can I ask you one more question? What’s wrong with the people here?” Wendy could not help but ask.

“Oh, don’t take it to heart. They are just a little xenophobic. Just wait until they know you more. After all, something terrible just happened in town.”

“I heard about the plague. It’s really unfortunate.”

“We will get better. We always do. Those who thrive on these lands are courageous.”

“Even without your observation prowess, I can tell he’s lying.” In the room, Wendy quietly asked Zhang Heng, “How could Sheriff Harper retire at this time.”

10

“Hmm.”

Zhang Heng cleaned the barrel of the Winchester rifle, not looking up as he spoke.

“What should we do next? You know that there is something wrong with the sheriff. So, why would you tell him about your father.”

“We can’t hide it from him. After all, I have sent them a telegram before. Our purpose here is not a secret, but telling him would give him a false sense of security. Even though we have doubts about the town’s situation, we should continue to pretend that we trust the fake sheriff. And by the way, we get to see who his accomplices are.” “What do you think?” Wendy frowned.

“If I’m right, they will come to us tonight,” Zhang Heng said. “For your safety, I should let you leave first. However, if I do that, they will be suspicious of us. If Sergeant Dolan did not lie, they should know your father and not harm you. Just get ready. If things go south, you should leave the town with Lightning right away. I will stay behind to deal with them.”

Chapter 615 Night Combat

“What about you?” Wendy asked. Zhang Heng was not precisely an expert horserider. If the situation turned ugly, he probably wouldn’t be escaping on horseback. “I may be desperate to find my father, but I don’t want you to risk your life either. If things don’t work out here, we can always get out of this town. We can still seek help in the other towns nearby.”

“Where? Rensselaer or Spurs? These two are the nearest towns, but they only have one sheriff. Or were you thinking about going back to Glen and ask Sheriff Doland, whose horse I killed, for help? Let’s not talk about his stand first. Once we leave, they will surely suspect something isn’t right.”

Zhang Heng was just finished cleaning the rifle. “Don’t worry. I can handle it.”

“How? You said before that they could be a whole group of them-five, seven... Worst-case scenario, there could be dozens of them, and you’re only one man. Not to mention your horseriding sucks.”

“Thank you for reminding me of the unfortunate fact, but thank your lucky stars I don’t plan to run.”

“Are you out of your mind? You’ve only got three guns!”

“And six boxes of ammunition. That’s enough,” Zhang Heng retorted. “Their biggest mistake would be to make a move at night.”

“Why?” “You’ll see,” Zhang Heng answered calmly.

Wendy was a little distracted throughout dinner. Zhang Heng’s words kept replaying itself in her mind, and no matter how hard she thought about it, she could not figure out how Zhang Heng planned to eliminate an enemy that outnumbered him.

If they were planning to attack Zhang Heng and Wendy tonight, they would come prepared. Even if Zhang Heng could ambush a couple of them, there was no chance of a victory once the rest joined in.

However, the person concerned did not seem worried at all.

Night fell quickly. To avoid raising suspicions, Zhang Heng and Wendy returned to their respective rooms.

Zhang Heng loaded bullets into the firearm he just serviced. Picking up a stool, he sat by the window. The curtains were drawn, leaving only a tiny slit that allowed him to look down at the street below. Once he was in position, he took out the (Filter Lens).

This small D-grade item was one example in which grade did not represent an item’s function. With Zhang Heng’s shooting and archery skills, the more he used it, the handier it became. His field of vision within 300 meters became completely unhindered by factors including natural light and weather, so fighting in the dark was pretty much a breeze.

In fact, this would become his most significant advantage tonight.

Zhang Heng was ready. All that was left to do now was to wait for the prey to come. Lowe, the fake sheriff, and his men were earlier than Zhang Heng expected. It was not even midnight yet when they arrived in front of the hotel. They probably thought that they were going to win, hands down.

That was expected. What kind of danger could the strange combination of a Chinese man and a little girl pose?

Wendy did as was instructed, and blocked the window to keep stray bullets from hitting her. She even flipped over the heavy desk in the room, thus using it as a barricade for the window. As she built her little fort, she became a little less anxious, but her heart was still racing.

She pressed an ear against the wall, but all she heard was silence from Zhang Heng's room next door.

It was so quiet that Wendy wondered if Zhang Heng had left. Soon, though, her thoughts were interrupted by the hooves of horses arriving downstairs. A wave of panic washed over the girl. There was still no sound coming from the room next door.

Zhang Heng did not open fire but waited for Lowe to enter the building.

There were a total of six men. Two guarded the entrance, while another two watched over the first floor, ready to jump in whenever needed. Lowe and another guy walked up to the second floor, terrorizing the stricken innkeeper. Just as one of the men guarding the door made a gesture for him to keep quiet, the poor man collapsed onto the ground.

Wendy saw the men stopping briefly in front of her room through the crack in the door, then walking away. Clearly, Lowe and his men didn't see her as a threat. In their opinion, once they got rid of the easterner, the battle would be over.

Wendy felt that if she had a gun, she might be able to take the men on the other side of the door by surprise and kill them. Unfortunately, even though her marksmanship had improved, Zhang Heng said that he would not give her a gun to defend herself this time.

And this was actually what worried Zhang Heng the most. He did not care if Wendy could help or not-he was even concerned this kid might be too bold for her own good. If she had a gun, she would indeed allow all hell to break loose. It was a common problem amongst most firearms dabblers-once they had a gun in hand, an inconsolable urge to do something would overwhelm them.

Zhang Heng experienced that once in the river valley, he was not about to go through that again.

SCI

Wendy's heart was in her throat. She kept screaming in her mind for Zhang Heng to start shooting at the men outside her room, but yet, all seemed eerily still next door. Lowe and his companion looked at each other. The latter stepped back, kicked the door open while Lowe prepared to fire his rifle. To their surprise, however, there was no one in the room.

Lowe and his companion entered the room and saw the empty stool by the window. "Where did that bastard go?"

The answer to his question was a gunshot, followed by Lowe's companion dropping to the ground with a thud.

Lowe was startled. He wasn't caught off-guard by the ambush, but by the fact that the gunshot had come from above. By the time he thought of aiming his rifle at the ceiling, it was too late. Zhang Heng released his left hand from the beam and jumped down, firing a shot right in Lowe's face.

The men downstairs hastily drew their weapons when they heard the gunshots, but Zhang Heng moved quickly. Instead of aiming at his assailants, he aimed at the kerosene lamp on the table downstairs. The lamp shattered as he pulled the trigger, plunging the entire hotel into complete darkness. Then, abandoning the men downstairs, Zhang Heng repositioned himself by the window again.

When the two men keeping watch outside heard the gunshots, one of them dismounted his horse, and the other scanned the windows, ready to fire.

Instead of opening the window, Zhang Heng fired through the glass, shattering the window and killing the armed man. The other one, who had just dismounted, crouched down, thinking that the shooter should not be able to see clearly in the darkness. But Zhang Heng pulled down the trigger guard, reloaded his weapon, and then with a click, the hammer was depressed, the trigger returned its position, and the barrel closed. The fourth bullet was discharged, and Zhang Heng had completed three kills.

The other two men downstairs had their weapons drawn, but they were like headless chickens without a source of light.

Zhang Heng leaned against the door, noted their positions, and killed them, one after the other. He had the complete advantage at fights like this. He barely even broke a sweat.

Chapter 616 Passerby

Wendy finally heard the long-awaited gunshot. However, the fierce battle that she imagined did not take place. The gunshot lasted less than a minute before it ended.

After that, peace was restored. Wendy was nervous, not knowing who the final winner was. Suddenly, she heard someone knocking at the door. Fear kicked in once again. Immediately, she looked around and grabbed the fruit knife on the table.

"I hope you won't stab me when I go in," Zhang Heng's voice came from outside the house.

Wendy was relieved, but instead of opening the door immediately, she asked, "Are you the only one outside?"

"You can take a look under the crack of the door."

Wendy ducked the moment she heard Zhang Heng's instruction. Through the crack, she saw only a pair of shoes outside the house. She then opened the door but still hid the knife behind her back.

"It's over," Zhang Heng, who was outside the door, said, handing a revolver to Wendy at the same time. "I killed the other people and caught the guy who pretended to be a sheriff. I am about to interrogate him. In the meantime, I need you to keep an eye on the boss. We are still trying to figure out the relationship between this group of people and the town people. Maybe they still have accomplices. So it's always right to be more cautious."

"Since you are going to question him, can I listen outside the house?" Wendy asked.

"No, the interrogation will probably be a bit inappropriate for children," Zhang Heng said. "It's better that you wait outside. I'll tell you the results later."

Zhang Heng did not wait for Wendy's reply. He turned around and closed the door before he left.

Wendy walked out of the room and went downstairs. Instantly, she saw bloodstains from the corpse that Zhang Heng had dragged to the kitchen. She then moved a chair and sat in front of the innkeeper, now paralyzed by fear. In fact, there was no need to keep an eye on him all the time. His two allies had

just expired before him, one of them shot in the head, with his own brain matter splattered over his face. The innkeeper's legs had gone so soft that he could no longer stand up for now.

However, Wendy decided to do something to make sure that the innkeeper would not escape. She then waved the revolver in his hand and threatened, "You better stay put. I will kill you if you dare to move. Don't put my marksmanship to the test."

About twenty minutes later, a gunshot came from the second floor, and Wendy saw Zhang Heng walking out of the room. "How did it go?" Wendy stood up. "Did he tell you anything about my father?"

"Well, I've figured everything out, but some people need saving first. I will explain when I come back," Zhang Heng said.

"Saving people? Where?"

"The church... the missing farmers are there, and there are four guards too."

"Is my father there too?"

"No, your father is not in town, but he should be in no danger for the time being."

Before Zhang Heng left, he added, "After I leave, I need you to lock the hotel's doors. Don't let anyone approach and don't trust the people in the town."

"Okay," Wendy nodded.

After Zhang Heng finished speaking, he hurried out of the hotel with his weapons in a bag.

Wendy then watched him disappear into the night. When she turned around, she saw that the innkeeper's face was pale. "It's over, it's all over!" he kept muttering. "What's over?" Wendy asked. The boss was indifferent when he heard this and just murmured, "We're all going to hell."

Instead of heading to the church, Zhang Heng first went to the grocery store he visited during the day. He barged in and stuffed the three shotguns and five revolvers on the shelf into his bag, even grabbing some ammunition with him. The grocery store owner, still in his pajamas, heard the commotion, and walked downstairs.

He was bewildered when he saw Zhang Heng, oblivious to what was going on. He then asked, "You...what are you doing?"

"I'm borrowing something from you, and I will return them to you when I'm done with it." Zhang Heng put the last box of bullets into his bag and picked it up.

The boss reacted, and his eyes widened, "Are you robbing me?! In our town? Are you not afraid of being arrested by the sheriff?"

"The Sheriff of Bliss is dead a long time ago. You guys are the ones that caused his death. I don't think I need to worry about him anymore. If you are talking about the fake sheriff, I don't think he would have any objections," Zhang Heng shrugged.

After speaking, he kicked open the grocery store door, put the bag of weapons and ammunition on Radish, and headed towards the church alone.

As he approached the church, Zhang Heng jumped off the horse.

He had not learned to shoot while riding a horse, but he used to wander on the sea, which makes his balancing ability better than the average person. It will be a matter of time before he mastered this skill. However, before that, he could only dismount and fight.

The church's door was closed tightly, and a faint light squeezed out from it.

Zhang Heng walked towards the door and fired a shot at the sky. About half a minute later, the door was opened slightly, and a gun emerged from the crack. The man turned left and right, and he saw no one was outside. The one-eyed gunman then poked his head out carefully.

Immediately, Zhang Heng killed him with a single shot.

After that, his left hand drew the revolver around his waist and dangled it from the gap. Zhang Heng then adopted the same strategy as before. First, he broke the kerosene lamp and filled the church with darkness. He then used his Filter Lens to look at his surroundings. With ease, he killed all three gunners inside the church.

When Zhang Heng put away his Filter Lens and re-ignited the kerosene lamp, the light revealed the people imprisoned inside the church. Most were blacks, and there was a girl, weeping in the corner, her body covered with nothing but tattered rags.

Zhang Heng quickly took off his coat and put it over her. He then looked at the side of the pulpit. There was a strong man who looked like the leader of this group. When Zhang Heng walked into the church, a few of them looked at the strong man in panic. Clearly, they were used to letting him take charge.

"How many of you are being imprisoned here?" Zhang Heng asked.

"There are twenty people on the first floor, and thirty on the second, but most are women and children. They killed half of the men." The strong black man who said that had a hint of anger flashing in his eyes. "Okay, pick someone who can fight. Both men and women are fine." Zhang Heng threw the sack that used to store all his guns and bullets on the ground and pointed at the corpse on the floor, "Arm yourself; the sooner, the better. We will leave here in five minutes."

"Sir, are you the bailiff nearby?" someone asked.

"No, I'm just a passerby." Zhang Heng replied, pulling the brim of his hat.

Chapter 617 The Past

As they walked into town, the farmers that Zhang Heng rescued from the church ran into another group. The tension in the air was palpable, where both sides had their weapons pointed squarely at each other.

The muscular black man standing in front shouted, "Davidson, you bastards! You conspired with the Cook gang to kill us all!"

The guy named Davidson, probably the leader of the town's residents, retorted in his defense. "Listen to me, Nikkor, we just wanted to teach you a lesson. I did not expect things to turn out this way. We made a mistake; we should never have trusted the Cook gang."

“Try telling that to those who are now dead!” Nikkor hissed. “Now, those bastards have all been killed by a good man named Zhang Heng. Why are you standing in our way?! Are you planning to finish what they started and kill us all?”

“Of course not. We just wanted to have a chat with you. We were just discussing giving you 5,000 dollars as compensation for the losses you’ve suffered. Of course, we know the money will never remedy the pain of losing family and friends... but at least it can make your life a little easier.”

“As long as you’re here, our lives will never be easier!” Nikkor barked in a fury. “And it’s not like you’re offering to compensate us out of kindness. Whatever it is you have to say, might as well say it now!”

Davidson nodded. “Whatever happened to Sherriff, Harper was a tragedy, but given the circumstances at the time, we had no other choice...”

Nikkor interrupted by spitting on the ground. He looked at each person standing before him, to which no one dared meet his gaze—they all had their heads lowered. “You bastards! You shot him thirty-two times! Every single one of you has a hand in it. They shot their own sheriff! In fact, they didn’t kill him immediately. They deliberately avoided the vital organs and left him to bleed to death. I must admit that you white folk really do know how to have fun with a f*ckin human being... it really opened my eyes.”

“What could we have done?” the owner of the grocery store cut in. “Those men from the Cook gang were looking at us with guns their hands. If we didn’t do what they say, they were going to kill us too!”

“Nikkor,” Davidson continued, “Every one of us here feels guilty for what happened that day. Our conscience torments us—we’ve already been punished, and there’s nothing we can do about it. All we can do is to look forward -as long as we can reach a consensus. Sheriff Harper, like everyone else, died in the hands of Cook as well. We will let all of you go.” “Why? Are you worried that other people would find out about all the good things you’ve done? Does your conscience torment you? Do you even know what real punishment is? When each and every one of you get hanged on the gallows for the crimes you’ve committed, that the real f*cking punishment then.”

“Is this really necessary, Nikkor? If I remember correctly, none of you were exactly best friends with Sherriff Harper. Let’s not forget that he also hated blacks and has locked up many of your people.”

“That’s true; Harper was one god-awful, in-bred old bastard. I’ve thought about shooting that bald head of his many times, but when the Cook gang wanted to kill us... Except for Mr. Matthew, only this old bastard stood up against them... of all the people in the whole town, he was the only one. You have to admit, that old bastard had the b*lls, but you had to go kill the only person in the whole town who had them.”

“We didn’t have a choice...” the storekeeper muttered

“You always have a choice. You had guns, and there were more of you. Yet, you did not even fight back,” Nikkor sneered. “You are a bunch of mother*fckin’ cowards. Now, either you get out of our way, or we start fighting. Enough of all this nonsense.”

“Nikkor, it’s not that simple,” Davidson explained. “You don’t understand the situation we are faced with. That guy named Zhang Heng had only killed Cook members who stayed back to guard the town. There are still more than 30 of them out there! These men are cold-blooded murderers, not farmers or

miners like you and I! When they come back, we will have to face their wrath, so right now, we must unite and stand together to face whatever's coming for us. It is the only way we can save our town."

"Is there a screw loose in your brain, Davidson? How can we work together after everything that has happened? Might as well be pointing the guns at their own heads. Who knows what could happen?! When things turn bad, who's to say that you won't turn against us? You people would do anything to keep yourselves alive."

While the men argued, Zhang Heng had already snuck back to the hotel.

Wendy quickly removed the table, barricading the door.

"Did anyone come by when I was away?" Zhang Heng asked.

"Yes, the owner of the grocery store; he came by not long after you left, but he didn't knock. He's gone off to search for someone else. What happened outside? There were a lot of people," Wendy asked.

"Bliss' residents are mainly miners and their families. The mines have polluted nearby water sources, resulting in large areas of crops to die. The remaining ones are no better. The local farmers are angry. The relationship between the two miners and farmers became increasingly tense. From time to time, there would be some uh... conflicts. Then six months ago, a miner boy and a farmer girl went out to play together, but only the boy returned. The girl never came back. The girl's father believed that the boy killed her, so he went to the boy's house with a few of his friends and killed the boy. Naturally, the boy's brother fought back. Two days later, the girl returned home safely. It turned out that she had a disagreement with the boy and, in a fit of anger, she walked away from him and lost her way.

"So, this time, it was the miners turn to demand an explanation... with guns. When the farmers heard the news, they gathered a force as well. Conflict broke out between the two sides, with many wounded. Every now and again, the farmers would go down to the mines and cause trouble, and the animosity between them kept growing.

"About a month and a half ago, an old hunchbacked man appeared in town. He overheard the miners complaining about the whole thing, so he told them that he could help them solve their problem. All they had to do was pay him 6000 dollars. He said he could hire people who could teach those farmers a lesson, so they would never cause the miners any more trouble again.

"The miners talked it over and thought it was a feasible plan, so they pooled their money, and the hunchback brought the Cook gang here. They seized the farmers intending to kill them and their families. Then, to prevent the miners from reneging, the Cook gang forced the miners to kill their own sheriff. It was... very brutal. I won't describe it in detail, but I think their real motivation wasn't just to earn the six thousand dollars. It was your father."

"So, my father's related to all this?" Wendy asked in surprise. "Not this, but to the Cook gang's leader Cook. It all makes sense now. Do you remember the one-armed man from the Cook gang who was hanged? He was in Lincoln County for a reason. I'm guessing that it probably has something to do with finding your father. The guy who pretended to be the sheriff didn't know about Cook and your father, but there is no doubt that they know each other. Oh, maybe Sheriff Dolan from Glentown is involved too. The three of them are old acquaintances. Cook threatened to kill the farmers unless your father does something for him."

Chapter 618 Lucky Horseshoes

"What do they want my father to do?" Wendy asked impatiently. "...help them find a group of people," said Zhang Heng, whose expression became a little weird all of a sudden.

"Who are those people?"

"More than a month ago, there was a robbery in Shining Silver Town. A group of masked men robbed a bank and looted forty kilograms of gold. However, few people knew that they also took something that they are not supposed to take. That thing belongs to the Cook.

"Cook wants your father to help him find that thing, but he seems to have other plans too," Zhang Heng said.

"But... the timeline does not match. As far as I know, the one-armed man came to Lincoln County very early and lived next to our house..." Wendy frowned, "...wait; you're saying that the Cook has been watching my father all these years?"

"I'm afraid that's the truth." "Until Cook lost whatever they had, they contacted my father and asked him to come to Bliss. My father is half Indian, and that makes him a master tracker. After that, they used the lives of the farmers in the town to threaten my father, forcing him to help them to find someone!"

Thus, Wendy finally figured out the ins and outs of this matter.

"Twelve days ago, Cook left ten people to keep an eye on the farmers, and he left town with your father and the remaining thirty-odd."

"So my father only needs to help Cook to find whoever they're looking for, and he'll be set free?" Wendy asked.

"It's not that simple, I'm afraid," Zhang Heng shook his head. "Cook ordered their men who stayed behind to kill everyone in half a month. After that, they were supposed to leave Bliss and meet in Lincoln County." "Huh?" Wendy's eyes widened. "What are they doing in Lincoln County?"

"You haven't seen it yet. Cook doesn't actually care about the thing he lost," Zhang Heng said. "Your father has been their goal from the very beginning. They plan to go to Lincoln County to avenge the one-armed man executed not too long ago. If they pull it off, your father, who is with them, will be treated as their accomplice. In simple words, he has nowhere to go other than to stay with Cook's Gang."

"So, what should we do then?"

Wendy's reaction was calmer than Zhang Heng expected. Although worried about her father, she did not lose her mind. Instead, she said, "If you can help me resolve this, I can call the shots and give you half of my family's land and the cattle that live on it."

"At this point, there is only one way to solve this problem. We need to stop them before they arrive at Lincoln. However, even if I can't handle thirty-odd people at the same time. We have to look for help."

Two days later, Zhang Heng and Wendy rushed back to Glen Town.

“Haha! Look who we have here,” the sheriff outside the police station sneered. “I have been waiting for this day to arrive! Well, it hasn’t

expect to avenge my horse so soon.”

“You know Cook, the leader of the Cook Gang, don’t you?” Zhang Heng asked directly.

“Well, how did you know about that?” After hearing Zhang Heng’s question, the sheriff’s face changed drastically, and he quickly glanced around. Seeing that there was no one following them, he was relieved.

“Your secret did surprise me,” Zhang Heng said. “The sheriff of Glen Town is in cohorts with the notorious Cook Gang.”

“You know nothing, kid. Don’t comment on the past of others. You were not there when it happened,” the sheriff snorted coldly.

“Then tell me, tell me everything about that mysterious past so that we can rescue Matthew,” Zhang Heng continued. “I think I have made it very clear. I will bring my past into the grave with me,” the sheriff shook his head.

“You are so stubborn and unwilling to cooperate. Are you 100% sure that Cook will not kill Matthew? There is something worse in this world than killing a person, and that is ruining his life. I don’t know the nature of Cook and Matthew’s relationship, but I do know that Cook is messing up Matthew’s life. As we speak, Cook is taking his people and Matthew to Lincoln County, preparing to avenge their recently executed member. Needless to say, you should know what it means.”

“What? Is Cook planning to attack Lincoln County?! Lincoln is not a small town like Glen county seat.”

“They’re not going there to conquer the place. They just want to loot it. By the time the armed forces arrive, they will be long gone. Considering Matthew’s tense relations with the townsfolk, what would they think when they see him showing up with Cook and his gang?”

The old cowboy fell silent after hearing this.

After waiting a while, Zhang Heng was about to give up. The sheriff then quickly said, “I know, Cook has always wanted Matthew to be his successor. He’s been training Matthew since he was young.”

“My father used to be part of the Cook Gang?!” Wendy instantly became dumbfounded. “He is not the only one. Matthew, Cook, and the three of us were the first members of the Cook Gang. No, at that time, we were not called the Cook Gang, but the Lucky Horseshoes. We didn’t form the Lucky Horseshoes to burn, kill, or loot. Vengeance was our true purpose.”

“Vengeance?”

The sheriff looked at Wendy, “Your father rarely talks to you and your mother about the past, right? Regarding his past, he worked in Cook’s ranch before meeting your mother. That was also the time where he met the love of his life-Mary. They got married, and soon after that, Mary was pregnant with a child. At that time, Matthew was the happiest man in this world. Matthew and I were good friends, and

they were ready to let me become the child's godfather. However, no one expected misfortune to hit so quickly.

"Once, Cook and Matthew brought their cattle to be sold in a town five hundred miles away. When they returned, they found their homes ransacked, and Mary was gone. At first, they thought it was a robber who did it, but they found out things were not that simple. All signs pointed to Ruben, the only son of Union Pacific Railway Company's director.

That guy was a playboy. He always claimed that he came here to supervise and inspect the railway project, but the truth was that he and a group of evil friends would come to hunt for animals and visit the brothel. When he saw Mary, Ruben couldn't take his eyes off her. He and his friends flirted with Mary several times, but Matthew was there to help her every time.

"What Matthew and Cook did not expect was that as soon as they left the town, Ruben would abduct Mary. They later found Ruben and asked him to release Mary. However, Ruben denied all accusations. That bastard didn't want anyone to find out about the crime he committed, so he killed Mary without hesitation. It wasn't until a week later that we found Mary's body in the woods. Wild dogs had mauled her corpse. And the child she carried, only three months old at that time, was killed as well."

Chapter 619 A Tale of Vengeance

"We've thought about using the law to solve this, but the United Pacific Railroad Company is very powerful. With only one sentence, they decide if they would build the railways for your towns. And the towns with railways usually develop faster than other towns that don't have one. Following that, there would be more immigrants moving in, thus, increasing the production of goods. It would be hard for us to send those goods to other towns without the system.

We were in a small town with less than 50 people at the time. Everyone was hoping that a track would pass the town and make our lives easier. Reuben obviously knew about this, so he blackmailed the town's sheriff into concealing his crime." The sheriff seemed to dwell in his memory. He paused for a while before continuing, "The town's sheriff was Mr. Thompson. He and the United Pacific Railway Company were on the same side, and he was a loyal dog of theirs. So, Sheriff Thompson insisted that Mary be taken and killed by the robbers nearby.

"Later, we attempted to unite the townsfolk in making Thompson and United Pacific admit to their crimes. Unfortunately, nobody wanted to stand with us. Everyone wanted a railroad more than making them pay for crimes. That was when the Lucky Horseshoes was born. Cook told the f*cking sheriff that if no one could give us the justice we deserved, we would create our own justice.

"...apart from us, Cook wrote to two of his friends at the time. Once they received his letter, they quickly rushed to the town. Coupled with another cowboy who worked for Cook, there were a total of six of us, the founding members of Lucky Horseshoes."

Upon hearing that, Zhang Heng interrupted the sheriff, "Is the horseshoe-shaped imprint on your chest a result of joining the Lucky Horseshoes?"

Zhang Heng saw that mark when he searched the sheriff at the entrance of the river valley. He suspected that the latter was related to his main quest.

“Yes, that’s right,” the sheriff admitted, “Matthew and Cook had it on them too, but Matthew later carved out a scar at the spot to get rid of it. This happened after he left the Lucky Horseshoes. In short, once everyone had reached, the six of us covered our faces, and in the dark, we headed to Reuben’s residence. We planned to kill all of them while they were drunk and defenseless. However, the situation spiraled out of control. There were a total of ten people in Reuben’s residence. Other than the two playmates, the rest were security personnel assigned to him by his father. Needless to say, these guards were all useless.

“Matthew rushed to the frontline and killed the only two still awake in the room. After that, we started killing every single one of them. However, besides Reuben’s man, we didn’t expect two prostitutes to be in the house. I had an argument with Cook if they should be killed or not. Cook said that they could’ve been there when Mary was killed, but I said we couldn’t possibly be sure. We were there for revenge, not to kill innocent people. When we argued, one of the prostitutes attempted to sneak out of the house while we were distracted. So, one of Cook’s friends went after her and shot her dead. When he came back, he killed another prostitute.

“Then... Sheriff Thompson rushed over when he heard the gunshots. He pulled out the gun and wanted to shoot me. I had no choice but to kill him before he killed me. By that time, everything was messed up. Cook told us that it was too late to turn back after all that we had done. Everyone in town knew our grievances with Reuben. When the new sheriff came to the town, all of us would be sentenced to death. Since that would be the case, it was better that we simply killed everyone in town.”

“So, you really killed the entire town?” Wendy asked.

“Yes, we slaughtered all the men and women, from the elderly to the children. We mercilessly butchered all those who could breathe and walk. I will always remember that night. Everything in front of me was red. We left no soul alive by the time we were done. I told you that we lived in a small town, so we all knew each other. I even talked to some of them during the day. And that night, I had to kill them with my hands.

“During the early phase of the battle, we were gaining the upper hand. But later, more and more people who heard the gunfire armed themselves to retaliate, especially the last two families. They had many sons, and they blocked the door with tables and beds. After that, they started to shoot at us from the window on the second floor. It was a bloody battle that lasted until dawn. In the end, only three people were left alive in the town. And they were me, Matthew and Cook.

Everyone else was either injured or dead. I didn’t know what that was about. What I know is that the massacre was more than just vengeance.” The sheriff’s eyes were filled with regret as he spoke. “After the incident, the three of us sat in the middle of town and looked at each other. No one said a single word. Afterward, Cook dragged his wounded leg, returned home, and took the money he saved to split amongst us. Then, in the afternoon, the three of us went our own separate ways. “Matthew and I chose to remain anonymous, living the lives of ordinary people. Matthew went to Lincoln County, opening a ranch with the money he received from Cook. Not too long after that, he got married and had a child. As for me, I wandered aimlessly for a while before finally coming to Glen Town.

I drove out the two gangsters harassing and extorting the residents in a bar, and I was elected as sheriff by the locals. In the end, I decided to live here. As for Cook... I learned that he formed a gang later on.

He told everyone that his gang was responsible for the small-town massacre. I knew he only did that to protect us, especially Matthew. Cook liked Matthew very much and always treated him as his son. After Mary died, Matthew became Cook's only remaining kin.

"I don't know why he wanted to disrupt Matthew's peaceful life. More than ten years have passed since then. It doesn't make sense to me," the sheriff frowned.

"But he did go and look for Matthew," said Zhang Heng. "If you want to stop him, you'll have to stop them before they reach Lincoln County. I have fifteen people on my side, and they can get to Glen Town by afternoon. How many people can you bring with you?"

The people Zhang Heng was looking for were the miners and farmers of Bliss. When it came to this matter, he could not seek help from other law enforcement officers. Still, fortunately, after a long night of negotiations, Bliss's residents finally reached a preliminary consensus to help to deal with Cook's gang. They selected fifteen of their best marksmen. Zhang Heng and Wendy took off to Glen Town first to look for the sheriff. The rest followed them from behind.

"Four, it was the four people you saw that day," said the sheriff. "They are the only people who can be completely trusted."

"Sorry, are you talking about the guy who got tied up by me and later, thrown by the side of the road?" Wendy murmured, "Is that guy reliable? He looks no older than me."

"It's better than nothing. It means we'll have twenty people. Although they outnumber us by a bit, I think it's good enough that we start a fight with them," Zhang Heng said.

Chapter 620 Fate

In the vast expanse of the Gobi, a group of people was riding on their horses. Having been wandering in the wild for a week, everyone looked exhausted and worn out. However, they were getting closer and closer to their final destination, Ghulja.

However, when they arrived at their destination, they found that Ghulja had already been engulfed by flames, leaving behind only a ground filled with burnt bodies.

Matthew got off his horse, stood in the middle of the town, and looked up. There were broken houses everywhere, and no living creatures could be found.

"I told you that they all died in the fire."

Zhang Heng would have definitely recognized the one who just spoke. The bailiff named Morton that he encountered by chance on the first night he entered this world. However, he didn't look like he was in a perfect state. His eyes were bruised, the bridge of his nose was broken, and at least four or five teeth were missing from his mouth. He was tied on a horse, and he wasn't talking properly since his teeth were missing.

"I don't believe your tale about the mysterious Oriental gunman... I've lived in Lincoln County for so long, and I have never seen such a person," Matthew frowned.

"As I said, if it weren't for that night, I wouldn't have believed that such a strange person lived in this world. He is like a mysterious ghost. No one knows where he comes from. I followed the direction he

came from and asked the nearby towns, and no one had ever seen such a person! He seemed to have suddenly materialized in the Gobi. He killed seven good shooters in the bar and carried forty kilograms of gold and the thing you were looking for. When I met him, I did hear him say that he was going to Lincoln County.”

“Then let’s go to Lincoln County,” said the hunched old man.

“No, I won’t go to Lincoln County with you.” Matthew shook his head. “I know what you are trying to do here. Cook, you deliberately revealed my name to Bliss’ folk when you kidnapped this man over here,” Matthew pointed at Morton on horseback, “Using this method to get me stuck with Cook’s Gang?”

“You are a Cook Gang member and one of its founders,” the old hunchback casually said.

“No, I have nothing to do with your gang, and Lucky Horseshoes has nothing to do with Cook’s gang either,” Matthew said. “Are you putting up an act right now, Cook? You and this guy named Morton? You both are ganging up to make me stay in Cook Gang. You went through so much trouble just to trick me into going to Lincoln County with you.”

“You think too highly of me, boy,” the old hunchback muttered. He then took out a box of chewing tobacco, “I am not from the United Pacific Railway Company. Hence, the bailiff here will not serve me. While traveling, I’ve been thinking about getting you to go to Lincoln County with me. However, it seems that the problem has been resolved. it’s all probably fate.”

“I don’t believe in shitty fate,” Matthew responded.

“I didn’t believe it before as well. But if it were not for fate, we would all be sitting together in your house now. You will be holding your son, and I will be holding my granddaughter. We would be drinking cold beer and having a laugh over daily life. And Mary... Mary would be preparing dinner in the kitchen.”

Cook paused, “But you are right. Fate doesn’t exist. This is a dog-eat-dog world. I do not regret establishing the Cook Gang; I only regret that I did not do it earlier. I allowed myself to be blinded by the happy life that I once had. Just like you now. The cruel reality will wake us up one day. I heard that you married another woman in Lincoln County, and she gave birth to a daughter.”

“This is between us. Don’t involve them,” Matthew warned.

The old hunchback smiled. “It is not me you should be worrying about, but the fate you spoke of. Aren’t you afraid that what happened to Mary will happen to them again?” Matthew fell into silence upon hearing this.

“Look how fragile your so-called happiness is. There are too many powerful people in this world, like the directors of the United Pacific Railroad. You are just an ant under their feet, Matthew. You don’t know when the world will crumble upon you. Know where I went after the three of us were separated?”

“Where?”

“I took the train to the east coast.”

“Then why come back?”

“What, did you really think I headed to New York to enjoy my retirement?” The hunched old man laughed. “No, I will carry out my revenge to the end. I am going to kill United Pacific Railroad’s director. I have come up with a plan for myself if I get caught. Since Mary is no longer in this world, I don’t want to live anymore... Things have gone smoother than I thought. I slipped into the target’s house without much effort. Those from the East Coast are different from us.

Their alertness is almost nonexistent. Before I kill him, I even had the opportunity to indulge his wife before him. And then I noticed the way he looked at me, so frightened and helpless, like a puppy in the rain. At that moment, I suddenly realized that I had become his fate.” “What are you trying to say here?” “Matthew frowned.

“My point is that if you wish to get rid of this tragic fate of infinite loops, you have to become fate itself,” Cook said. “Join us, Matthew, stop being a fate’s pawn. We have forty fearless men with us. With their excellent marksmanship, the entire west is our hunting ground.

“Since you already have more than forty allies, why do you want me to join your gang?” “Because we are related, Matthew. I have always treated you as my son. Your bloodline makes you less popular in town. I took you in and taught you how to use a gun, ride a horse, and let you marry my daughter. You were like me when I was young. Join us, and I will continue to guide you.”

“Guide me to? To hell with you?”

“This ending is not too bad. If we work together, we can kill the devil even if we tumble in the depths of hell.”

The old hunchback looked with anticipation at Matthew.

Then the latter shook his head. “No, Cook, I still have a wife and a daughter. I can’t be a robber with you. The revenge is over. We killed an entire town. It’s over. The love I have for Mary is no less than you. Because of this, I’m pretty sure she doesn’t want to see you like this. You just inflict whatever pain you have suffered on others. What different are you from Reuben then?”

“I’m stronger than him. That’s why I survived,” the old hunchback replied. “On this land, only the strong win the right to survive. Unfortunately, Matthew, you are not strong enough. But it doesn’t matter. You will be strong enough soon. Come on, son. Let us both welcome a new future together.”