

48 Hours a Day

Chapter 8: Desert Island Survival II

Zhang Heng's eyes fluttered open and he found himself lying face down on a foreign beach.

The saline waters bathing him was soaking into his clothes, as a hermit shell in a conch shell scurried past in front of him.

Zhang Heng was in a terrible condition. Upon regaining his consciousness, he was gripped by an intense thirst and hunger, overcome with exhaustion. It felt like he had been drifting in the ocean for days.

He found a dry spot and plopped down against a large rock facing the direction where he was washed ashore—all he could see was a vast, boundless ocean.

What is this? Some survival reality TV-show film set?

Maybe it was the after-effects of that lemon water, or maybe because he had not eaten for too long, Zhang Heng's head felt heavy and groggy. Forcing himself to calm down, he began to mull over everything that had happened to him.

He had done as that strange fellow in Tang suit had requested, and had come to this *Sex and the City* bar as the old man's representative to participate in some obscure game. When he finally found the person, he was drugged, and then cast on this desert island.

But the question was—how would doing this benefit them? And that mysterious voice he heard in his head just now, the one that sounded like a game login, did he imagine it? If that was not the case then what did it mean?

His body was still his, but the sports attire he was wearing had been replaced with a pair of beach shorts and a floral T-shirt. The swiss knife he was carrying in his pocket for emergencies was nowhere to be found either.

The only item that had not gone missing from his person was that watch on his right wrist.

Zhang Heng looked down at his watch and froze momentarily.

The date on the analog face had not changed—it remained on Thursday, the same night he visited the bar, and it had only been a minute since he had blacked out.

Zhang Heng looked at his watch again and noticed that the seconds hand was not moving.

Was it broken?

That was a surprise. He had done one too many experiments on the watch and found that it could never be adjusted and that the time on the watch was always accurate. He was the only one who could see the extra twelve hours on the watch face and no matter what he did—subjecting it to fire or soaking it in water—the watch could not be damaged or destroyed. It was so durable it was unlike anything from this world.

Once, he even threw the watch from the top of a building down onto the concrete pavement 200 meters down below. In the end, the watch survived the fall without a scratch, and even made a dent in the hard, concrete surface.

He was convinced that the watch would outlive him and continue ticking until the end of the world. He never thought that there would come a day that it would ever stop functioning...

But in his panic, he was suddenly struck by a thought. Again, his mind returned to that mysterious voice in his head. The person had mentioned that the time flow rate was 480.

Zhang Heng raised his eyebrows. Could the person have meant it literally?

If anyone else wanted to verify this, they may have to wait for the forty days to be up. But Zhang Heng had his own way to do that.

He pressed his fingers against the inside of his wrist and, after twenty minutes, confirmed a frightening thing—his watch was not broken. It was just moving according to the real-world time. When converted to the time here, one second was now eight minutes.

So... this really was just a game?

Zhang Heng was stumped. The scenery before him was so realistic—the golden sand, the coconut trees swaying in the wind, the drenched T-shirt clinging to his body, the uneven rock surface that was causing his back to ache, the hunger and enervation that shrouded him so that he feels the passing of life so clearly it was almost tangible.

In any case, his priority right now was to find a way to recover some physical strength.

Right now, thinking alone required a whole lot of effort.

He knew he needed to eat and rehydrate. But although he was mentally stronger than most people, he was still just an ordinary university student. A modern man like him had no clue how to live on a desert island; he could not distinguish which plant was edible and which one was not, he did not even know how to hunt, or look for water source, how to build a shelter...

Thank god, though, that at least he recognized the coconut tree.

There were some twenty meters to his left, with a couple of the fruits hanging from the trees still green. The water inside could quench his parched tongue and throat, and the flesh could provide him with much-needed energy and vitamins.

Zhang Heng picked up a small rock the size of his palm at his feet and aimed it at a leaning coconut tree that may have been swept sideways by a typhoon.

He managed to dislodge the coconuts with the rock.

There were seven of them, about three to four meters above the ground.

Normally, a task like this would not have been difficult at all, but considering his current physical condition, it took Zhang Heng a lot of effort to knock those coconuts down.

By the time he cracked these green coconuts open, one by one, on the rock to get to the water inside, half an hour had already passed. After he had drained the fruit, Zhang Heng scraped the meat of the coconut with a rock and scarfed them down. When he was done, some of his energy returned, allowing him to consider his current plight.

He could no longer tell if he was in a game or in the real world.

If this was all make-believe, it did not explain realness of the senses he was experiencing and his physical state, nor the strange flow rate on his watch; but if he was in the real world, then how could whoever who got him here get him from his dorm to this deserted island in a blink of an eye?

Zhang Heng shook his head to clear his mind. He would just do it the old way—set the unsolvable questions aside first.

Like what the old man in the café said, whether this was a game or reality, he needed to figure out a way to survive.

He was just an average modern person who lived on his own in the city. Could he really be able to overcome this enigmatic natural world veiled in mystery?

Zhang Heng's lips drew upwards into a bitter smile. He had always been a glass-half-full kind of guy but in his current circumstance, Zhang Heng

was not convinced that he could hold out for forty-days on this remote little island behind him.

As a matter of fact, even four days would be a stretch.

He lacked the knowledge and skills to survive out here in the wild, he was in a poor physical state, and he was all alone. Right now, Zhang Heng kind of hoped that he was in a game. Because, normally, an outstanding game should not have sure-death circumstance, especially since this was just the beginning of a novice checkpoint.

As if in response to his expectation, three little black dots appeared in the distant waves.

Zhang Heng tossed the coconut shell in his hand aside and got to his feet. Shielding the top of his head from the hot sun, he sprinted towards the beach as fast as he could. He squinted his eyes to focus on the dots, who were actually three people floating in the waters.

They were all foreigners—male.

One of them was dressed, from head to toe, in Gore-Tex and hiking boots, and he had what looked like a dagger hanging from his waist. The wind and waves were too big for Zhang Heng to be sure. Among the three of them, he was the one who seemed the calmest. The other two were an expressionless laddie in shorts, and a stark-naked bald uncle.

The three of them were in a precarious situation, as they struggled to get ashore. For some mysterious reason, the only thing they could do was float, as the current pulled them back.

Zhang Heng knew that he had to make a decision. Although the coconut had helped his body recover some energy, saving three people in one breath was not realistic. Right now, his strength only allowed him to attempt to rescue one of the three people.

In the end, he decided to save the naked fella for a very simple reason—he was nearest to the shore.

