

48 Hours a Day

Chapter 9: Desert Island Survival III

When Zhang Heng dragged the buck-naked man to the beach, both of them were ready to drop.

Zhang Heng did not even know how he even managed to swim the final stretch of water. It was only when he knew near the man that he found out that the man's lumbar spine was injured, and there was a tear on his thigh where a coral had pierced him. The man could barely move; no wonder he had to drift along with the wave like a plastic bottle.

Getting him back to the beach was not going to be an easy task.

On the way back, Zhang Heng considered giving up several times, but the man was surprisingly optimistic and even cheered him on.

So, Zhang Heng gritted his teeth and dragged the man to shore.

For a while, the both of them slumped on the sand. Zhang Heng did not want to move at all, not even to lift a finger. If he could, he would have shut his eyes and dozed off.

But after about two minutes, the man in the buff spoke. "Hey, bro. We can't stay like this. We're not far from the equator. At midday, the temperature could go up to as high as 35 degrees. We'll lose a lot of water if we keep this up."

Zhang Heng said nothing a minute before replying, "I'll bring you to a shady area now." Then he took in two deep breaths, gathered up all the strength in his body and pulled the man to the bottom of a cliff where he used his own t-shirt to bandage the man's wound.

After that, Zhang Heng was completely drained of energy—he could barely even throw a stone. Fortunately, not far from where they were, he picked up a couple of coconuts that had fallen to the ground.

When the bald man saw Zhang Heng about to break the coconut, he opened his mouth to speak, but then stopped himself.

“Oh?”

“I don’t want to seem like I’m ungrateful or anything but if you can, please give me only green coconuts? The ones that have fallen from the tree are old. The milk-white water inside can cause diarrhea when consumed. On a resourceless island like this, it could be fatal.”

“You seem to know a lot about survival in the wilderness.”

“I served in the military for a while. I once spent more than two years crossing the Amazon forest, so, yes, I suppose I can be considered an expert in terms of surviving in the wilderness.”

Zhang Heng realized that he had made the right bet. There was no way that a well-made game would leave the players in a sure-death circumstance. The man in front of him was his hope of surviving on this island.

However, he could not help but wonder what the other two people could do.

After all, in terms of difficulty, saving this bald man was the easiest. Based on a game designers’ usual train of thought, the more effort you put in, the better the reward.

But Zhang Heng did not regret his decision at all. He understood that in his physical state, saving the naked man was already pushing the limits. Even if he could reach either of the two men who were further away, he would not have the energy to return to shore.

Moreover, so far, this man with a severely receding hairline seemed to be pretty easy-going.

Sometimes attitude is much more important than ability.

Sure enough, shortly after, his new companion said, “My friend, can you please find a green coconut for me? My throat is really dry. I will teach you how to find water later.”

“No problem.” Zhang Heng had taken the opportunity to rest for a moment, and had recovered some strength to be able to fulfill his companion’s request.

This time, he took down fourteen coconuts in one sitting, five for the man and three for himself. The remaining six were set aside as provisions.

After the naked gentleman had drunk from the coconut, his condition seemed to have improved a lot. He reached out a hand to Zhang Heng. “I haven’t introduced myself. My name is Ed Wilson, a British national, and formerly the captain of the British army in Afghanistan. You can just call me Ed. Thank you for saving my life.”

“Zhang Heng, Chinese. University sophomore. You’re welcome.”

Zhang Heng and the former captain of the British army in Afghanistan exchanged a friendly handshake.

Immediately after, however, the captain’s tone grew solemn. “Those two poor guys. Other than this little island, there’s no other land nearby. Not being able to get to shore means that it’s not going to end well for them.”

The Ed guy, however, seemed to be able to adjust his mental state pretty well. After only a brief moment of good, he recovered his cheerfulness. “Alright. As per our agreement, I shall fulfill my part and teach you how to find water. When I was at sea, I was able to visually estimate that this island is about 120 hectares. I noticed some animal tracks nearby the bushes which means that there may be a stream on the island. Follow the tracks and you’ll be able to find it. But that’s also bad news because it means that there may be predators. Night is coming soon—exploring the island without some sort of light like a torch would not be a wise move; you could get lost or be attacked by wild beasts...”

Ed patiently imparted his knowledge of survival in the wilderness to Zhang Heng, and even deliberately slowed down his speech so that Zhang Heng understood each word.

Even so, every now and then, Zhang Heng would interrupt Ed to inquire the meaning of certain words. Even though his parents worked abroad, the time that those two spent at home was too short to have seen to the improvement of Zhang Heng's foreign language proficiency.

As a result, Zhang Heng's English language level was only a standard Band 6. It was not too much of a problem for the everyday conversation but once jargons were added to the mix, Ed would have to explain the meaning of the words.

With one teaching and the other listening, twenty-minutes later, Zhang Heng finally learned how to find fresh water in the wilderness. Heeding Ed's suggestion, for the time being, the both of them would be using coconuts as their main source of water. At the same time, they also searched the cliff nearby and managed to find a few small water holes, and a cave.

The cavity was about ten square meters big and full bird droppings. The smell was unpleasant but the ground was higher, so they would not have to worry about being carried away by the tide when they sleep. Most importantly, the cave was sheltered against the wind, yet remained cool throughout the day and night.

As the sun set in the west, Zhang Heng used the last of the daylight to pick up a few more coconuts to add to the ones they had for dinner. After that, the two bid each other good night in the cave.

Growing up in the city, this was the first time Zhang Heng had ever slept out in the open. Even though his body and mind had been stretched to the limit and was in urgent need to rest, for a long time, he was still unable to close his eyes. Be it the stink of the bird doo-doo, or the hard rock he was resting on, the unidentified insect that was crawling up his arm in the darkness... everything seemed to be tormenting his mind, causing him to feel uneasy.

Ed suddenly spoke, “Zhang, did I tell you what the most important thing you need to survive the wilderness is?”

“What is it?” Zhang Heng had not heard any movement behind him and assumed that his companion had fallen asleep.

“Survival skills are very important—there is no doubt about it—but the most important thing is to always keep an optimistic outlook. When you feel like you’re suffering, think about happy things, tell yourself that perhaps tomorrow, a boat will pass by and bring me back to the civilized world.” Ed really was as optimistic as ever.

Zhang Heng sighed inwardly. If this really was a game, within forty days, there would be no boat passing by. But Ed’s words did help him feel much better. More importantly, he realized that he was not alone in this.

Zhang Heng had never been one to grumble and complain. He only needed to persevere on this island for forty days. With someone guiding him, he believed that he could do it. Zhang Heng pushed the negative thoughts and emotions out of this mind, and very soon, exhaustion kicked in, and he closed his eyes.