

48 Hours 901

Chapter 901: Yonaguni

“There is a yakiniku restaurant in about 700 meters. They serve Ishigaki beef in an Okinawan style. What do you think?” Zhang Heng turned to ask Han Lu after thanking the old couple.

“Sure,” Han Lu said. After that, she no longer talked to the bewildered local guide that stood beside her. She then curiously asked Zhang Heng, “I have no idea that you can converse in Japanese. What is going on...”

“Oh no... I learned it myself.” Zhang Heng knew what Han Lu meant. So, he quickly explained.

“You know too many things. Don’t you need to sleep?”

“I need to sleep too, but I have 48 hours to spend every day.” Zhang Heng waved his hand, stopped a taxi, put all the clothes and shoes he bought into the trunk, and opened the rear door.

“Hehe.”

Han Lu thought that Zhang Heng was telling a joke. She merely shook her head and got into the car.

Zhang Heng had got in the co-drivers seat and told the driver where they wanted to go when he received a WeChat message. When he opened the message, he thought it was Fan Meinan who replied but saw a photo from the bartender instead. Judging from the setting of the shot, it should be in the bar’s lounge.

There was no one in the photo. Only a blade was placed in its holder. Zhang Heng figured out that the blade in the picture was the Ordinary Blade that he had spent many game points on so the bartender lady could find someone to recast it for him. After doing some calculations, Zhang Heng realized that six days had passed since the end of his last quest. According to the bartender’s promise, she was supposed to update Zhang Heng about the blade two days ago.

Since the swordsmith needed to place the entire blade into the furnace for recasting, Zhang Heng did not insist on retaining its original shape. And now, the look for the blade was similar to the Heng Dao from one of the four types of blades made in the Tang Dynasty. Zhang Heng had wanted his new blade to look like a Heng Dao since the Changdao was mainly used to deal with cavalry. The Zhang Dao was too short, however. As for the last blade, Yi Dao was usually used for decoration. So, Zhang Heng chose the Heng Dao as his new blade’s final form since it was most commonly used by the soldiers in the Tang Dynasty.

The shape of the Heng Dao was very similar to the Tachi, except that the blade was straight and extremely tough. However, its sharpness couldn’t be compared to a Tachi; hence Zhang Heng found a balance between the two blades. But strictly speaking, Zhang Heng’s new blade neither adopted the crafting technique of the Tang Dao or the Tachi. It did, however, inherit some of the characteristics of the blades in terms of their appearance.

The light in the photo was kind of dim. However, Zhang Heng could still see some of the extraordinary features of the new blade. Although it didn’t look that flashy, Zhang Heng felt that his blood flow speeding up after staring at it for a while. After completing so many quests, Zhang Heng believed that he

controlled his emotions well, and it was rare that he would be affected by external factors. It was rare that he had a physiological reaction to a photo.

For some reason, Zhang Heng also felt a strange sense of familiarity from the blade. So, he sent a message to the bartender. "Is this a success or a failure?" he asked.

The latter replied after a while, "Well, it's your blade. I'm not particularly eager to instill my opinion on an item that the owner has not claimed. So, let's wait for you to see it for yourself. Also, remember to bring me a souvenir from Japan."

"Sounds good to me."

Zhang Heng was relieved after listening to what the bartender told him. Since he had casually asked for a gift, it meant that the blade's recast had probably had a decent outcome. There was a high chance the blade would turn out to be a Grade-C game item, meaning that the 4,000 game points he spent on recasting the blade could've been well worth it.

If he wanted to examine the blade, Zhang Heng had to wait until he returned to China. After lunch, Zhang Heng and Han Lu returned to the hotel to clean up and check out. After that, they headed to Naha Airport.

Yonaguni Island was where the two were heading, and it was located within the Yaeyama Islands of the Ryukyu Islands, at the westernmost point of Japan. However, the island was actually closer to Taiwan, which was only about 60 nautical miles away. And they could even see the mountains on the opposite side.

Since the island was sparsely inhabited, Naha had no direct flights to Yonaguni Island, so the two had to fly from Naha to Ishigaki Island. From Ishigaki Island, they would board another flight for forty minutes before they reached their destination.

Getting to such a spot turned out to be quite the hassle. When they arrived at the island, however, they realized that all the hard work that they put in was worth it. Yonaguni Island was quite small, with an area containing less than thirty square kilometers. Having a population of less than two thousand, the island boasted a pristine and well-preserved ecology.

Other than being surrounded by hallowed waters for diving, it also ranked the world's second-best marlin fishing waters. This island would attract throng sea fishing enthusiasts each year, including marlin fishing competitions held from time to time. Still, the island was visited by few tourists, where one could walk a long distance without seeing a soul. Zhang Heng and Han Lu were surrounded by large empty beaches and black volcanic rocks. And they also spotted wild Yonaguni horses that were free to roam around the island. They were not afraid of people.

The waters surrounding this island were as clear as a transparent sapphire without any impurities. Zhang Heng felt like they had arrived at the edge of the world. Han Lu was tired of walking, so she found a place to sit and rest while the sea breeze embraced her. And she also saw a lighthouse nearby. She then stretched her body comfortably.

"I've wanted to come here a long time ago. This is what I call a vacation. I don't need to think about anything else, and I can avoid seeing the people I don't like."

“Yeah.” Zhang Heng nodded, removed his shoes and socks, and walked among the rocks in his beach pants.

“What are you doing?”

“Preparing for dinner.”

“Dinner? Here?” Han Lu was taken aback. She thought Zhang Heng must be joking. “But we have nothing here, and it’s almost dusk now. We won’t be able to get back to our hotel before dark.”

“Don’t worry, there are horses everywhere on this island, and they are short-bred. It means they have a good temper. We can look for two horses and ride back to the hotel later.”

“...”

Han Lu clearly did not believe Zhang Heng’s words. However, she watched on curiously as he prepared their dinner by the beach.

Zhang Heng did all these things on a whim. He remembered the first dungeon he entered and survived for more than five hundred days alone on the deserted island. Right now, his circumstance was different from the deserted island. Although he prepared no tools for dinner preparation, he saw myriad things he could use here on this beach. Besides, he had even brought a fishing rod.

Zhang Heng first collected some oysters from the reef as a starter. After that, he spotted some Gazami Crabs in the sea. A crustacean that had a large body packed with flesh, it was known as the best-tasting sea crab that could be found on the beach. As for king crabs and snow crabs, they usually hid under the deep sea. Zhang Heng also managed to reel in a few fish as the main dish. He skewered them with wooden sticks and grilled them on the fire.

Soon Han Lu smelled the roasted seafood. She took a few whiffs, and her stomach started to grumble. However, she still managed to keep a sane mind. She then asked, “Are you sure these things are not poisonous?”

“Don’t worry. I picked non-toxic fishes, and they are very meaty as well,” Zhang Heng replied. After that, he handed Han Lu two oysters.

“It’s okay to have them raw.”

Chapter 902: Relationship Advice

Han Lu had been to Japan a number of times for vacation, and she tried most of the dishes it had to offer. However, this was her first time tasting such a natural dinner at the seaside. And she did not see Zhang Heng using any condiments while he cooked. To her surprise, the seafood actually tasted good.

Although she could still smell the food, the umami flavor of the seafood was well-preserved due to Zhang Heng’s simple cooking method.

“A friend told me that nature is like a treasure house. No matter where you are, as long as you pay attention to your surroundings, you can always find shelter and food to fill your stomach,” Zhang Heng explained.

“Well, if the world suddenly ends, I’m sure your friend will be the last to die,” Han Lu replied as she filled the lid of the thermos with some seafood soup and blew at it.

It was almost dusk and the sun was about to sink into the sea. With its glow coating the sky with gorgeous blush and the fishing boats returning from afar, the scenery was absolutely breathtaking. The seafood soup in Han Lu’s hand was starting to get cold. After taking two sips of it, she said, “I have decided that from now, I’m going to make time and come here for a few days every year. How about you? Do you want to come with me?”

“I’m not sure if I can make time for it,” Zhang Heng replied candidly.

In fact, he had already realized something huge during New Year’s Eve. After the conversation with Han Lu on the plan, he had confirmed the crazy conjecture that he had earlier.

There was a high possibility that he was not blood-related to his current father and mother. Zhang Heng did not know how others would react to such news. A lot of kids had heard their parents making jokes about picking them up from the trash can or that they were a free gift from a mobile credit top-up. After that, the kids would feel sad for the whole day, feeling that something very precious had been taken away from them.

Fortunately, it wouldn’t be long before their parents picked the kids up and told them that it was just a joke. At that moment, the relieved kids would see the sunshine pouring into their window again.

However, sometimes, the story did not come with a happy ending.

For example, Zhang Heng now could clearly feel his emotions gradually leaving his body. And it became harder and harder for him to feel the changes in his feelings. Even so, he could still feel the long-awaited sadness come rushing at him.

This sadness was not that strong, comparable to when a student failed a subject in his final exam. At best, it was just a surface wound. However, the wound would stay there permanently without receiving any healing.

Zhang Heng was also now forced to face a new problem.

Who was he, or what was he?

There was no doubt that the scientific expedition to Greenland eighteen years ago was related to him. If his current parents picked him up from no man’s land, it would be impossible for a human baby to survive in such a harsh environment.

The old man in a Tang suit, or Cronos, had planned the encounter between his parents and him. In other words, he obviously knew what would happen afterward. Zhang Heng did not know if Cronos had done anything to him while he was growing up. If that was the truth, that would mean someone had put in a great effort to arrange his life., just like Truman in “The Truman Show.” And what was his guardian angel, Chronos’s purpose in doing such a thing to him?

Zhang Heng faintly felt that all of these questions would be answered after his next trip to Greenland, but they might not be the answers he expected. This was also the reason why Zhang Heng promised Han

Lu to come on a vacation with her. This was probably the last time he could calmly appreciate the natural scenery and relax entirely without any distractions.

“Your biggest shortcoming is that you’re too honest,” Han Lu remarked while drinking the seafood soup from the lid of the thermos in one go, “And you are my best friend’s son.”

“...”

“Forget it. I know that we both come from very different worlds. I have to admit that your mysterious aura and sense of danger are the biggest reason why I’m attracted to you. No. I’m not the only one. The girls named Shen Xixi and Fan Meinan are like the moths helplessly flying toward the flame...” Han Lu said. “I’m just curious, is there anyone in this world who can truly understand you?”

Zhang Heng went silent for a while.

“Something has happened to me. I’m trying to figure it out. Before that, I can’t deal with the emotional problems.”

“Hmm,” Han Lu snorted with a noncommittal tone. “Have I told you the story of my first love?”

“I don’t think so.”

“If you are willing to lend me your ears, I’m willing to tell you all about it. During high school, I liked a boy in my class. He wasn’t tall or handsome, and he didn’t seem to have any outstanding abilities. But I don’t know why I liked him so much. He, for no reason, was extremely pleasing to my eyes, especially when he talked to me.” Han Lu closed her eyes. “His voice is like the sea breeze here, blowing at my face gently and warmly.”

“I was on cleaning duty one day after school. After cleaning the classroom, I turned off the lights, checked the doors and windows, and locked the door before leaving the classroom. After that, I saw him standing at the corner of the second floor. He stopped me, and I could see him was blushing. He then gave me a book of a compilation of Borges’ poems. I thought that he must’ve liked Borges as well. Although it sounds silly now, that book was not the point. The point was that I found the note that he hid in the book. I was guessing that note was the love letter that he wrote me.”

“Did you accept the love letter?”

“No.” Han Lu shook her head.

“Why?”

“Because I felt I wasn’t ready yet. We were too young, and I wanted to explore the world and escape my mother’s control. I wanted to... be better, come back later, and accept the love letter confidently.” Han Lu paused.

“At that time, I was busy making plans for our future. However, I forgot that sometimes we would not be able to meet the person again once we missed them. And to be honest, even if he is still waiting for me now, I don’t think I like him that much anymore. Looking back now, he was indeed quite ordinary. After returning to China, I asked someone to inquire about him. Apparently, he failed his college entrance examination. After graduation, he used his family’s influence to enter a state-owned

enterprise. He's now probably a small-time leader or something. It's not a bad achievement for an ordinary person, but he doesn't appeal to me anymore...

"However, I still think of him from time to time, thinking what it would've been like if I had accepted that letter. Of course, I know that a relationship between a young couple would not last long. We would probably break up like other couples. However, I just couldn't stop thinking about it. If we really managed to walk to the end of the tunnel, got married, have children, and live a dull life together, it's actually not that bad."

Han Lu stretched her feet into the sea and stretched her waist comfortably, "I'm just giving you a piece of advice. Never go and deal with some other things first before you take care of your relationship. A relationship is like ice cream. If you don't eat it, it will melt eventually."

"Thank you," Zhang Heng said. He could not explain that his problem was related to his feelings. With the current situation, no matter who he chose, his feelings would still disappear in the end.

Chapter 903: Dive

After finishing up the special dinner, Zhang Heng found a pair of wild horses nearby. Han Lu stared on in shock as Zhang Heng briefly trained and tamed them. He then asked Han Lu to mount the smaller horse. As for him, he rode the bigger one.

Han Lu looked a little nervous. She had ridden horses before and practiced equestrianism for a period of time. However, she was riding a well-trained horse with complete equipment such as saddles and reins at that time. This was her very first time riding a wild horse with no proper equipment.

While sitting on the steed, she did not even know where to put her hands and feet.

"Just grab the horse's mane. Once you do that, they won't run on their own," Zhang Heng explained while leading the way. The two horses that he found should have a mother-child relationship. With the mother leading the way, her child would follow obediently.

In the end, the two managed to return to their hotel before the sun completely descended below the horizon. And early the following day, Zhang Heng and Han Lu came to the pier after a simple breakfast. They then rented two sets of diving equipment and a boat.

Han Lu wanted to see humpback whales and hammerhead sharks, one of the signature sights on this island. With luck, one could see hundreds of hammerhead sharks swimming past above your head all at once.

These sharks had a strange T-shaped head with an eye and a nostril at each protrusion end. It made the hammerhead shark look unique. Known to be an extremely aggressive species, there have been cases of hammerhead sharks attacking humans. The sharks attacked only because they had been spooked. Under normal circumstances, as long as the diver did not attack first with a harpoon, the sharks mostly left the divers.

The humpback whales, on the other hand, had a gentler personality. They looked similar in appearance to the Kun in the game advertisements everywhere on the Internet, or maybe Kun was designed based on the appearance of humpback whales. Sometimes, these whales would jump out of the water, a spectacular sight to behold, especially when they did it in a group.

The humans had never figured out why the humpback whales behaved as such. As of now, the only explanation for this particularly unique behavior was that the humpback whales did that for social purposes. Besides, the male humpback whales would show off their masculinity by jumping out of the water to attract their potential mates or express certain emotions. Other than that, some said that the whales leaped out of the water to breathe.

Whether it was hammerhead sharks or humpback whales, their behaviors were often cyclical. Usually, the people on the island would encounter near Yonaguni Island from January to March each year. Unfortunately, Zhang Heng and Han Lu traveled here on a whim, and it was now June. Even though the uncle who drove the boat tried very hard to look for them, the search yielded no result. Han Lu seemed a little disappointed, and in the end, she could only look for a shallow spot near the coast to dive under. Although the corals and the undersea gave a breathtaking view, they weren't too different from the spots she had dived in earlier.

Seeing that Zhang Heng and Han Lu were not too happy with the diving spot, the uncle who drove the boat took the initiative to talk to Zhang Heng since he received a generous service fee from Han Lu.

"Why don't I bring you guys to see the undersea ruins?"

"What underwater relic?" Zhang Heng asked.

"About half a century ago, a diving guide found some ancient ruins near the sea on the west side of Yonaguni Island. It looked like a pyramid or a city. Some people said it was evidence of the existence of Mu, but others said it's the magical work of nature. No matter what the legend is, the place is worth seeing."

Zhang Heng translated what the uncle told him to Han Lu, who nodded after listening. "I believe I have heard of such a thing. Since we can't find hammerhead sharks and humpback whales, it might be worthwhile to go and check out the ruins. However, we have been diving for quite a long time. Let's go there tomorrow and prevent ourselves from getting fatigued."

The ecology on Yonaguni Island was well preserved. Obviously, the island's natives loved their island a lot. However, the economy here wasn't very developed, with only two industries keeping the island alive, and they were fishing and tourism.

It was the tourist off-season right now. As soon as the fishing boats went out for their deep-sea fishing run, literally not a soul would be at the docks. If the two went to explore the undersea ruins, chances were they wouldn't be meeting other divers. Han Lu's diving wasn't that awful, having just got her AOW certificate, and she had used up to sixty bottles of oxygen.

However, she was still an amateur. As for Zhang Heng, Han Lu did not know how good he was at diving. Zhang Heng had mentioned that he would not hold her back. However, before they went diving in the morning, Zhang Heng still read the diving manual, and at the same time, asked her lots of questions about diving equipment.

Considering how dangerous undersea ruins could be, Han Lu decided to hire a diving guide for safety reasons. Zhang Heng made no objections. Although he was confident with his diving, he would feel safer if someone more experienced looking after them.

So in the afternoon, the two of them came to the diving club on the island. And she learned her lesson this time. Han Lu hired a female diving guide, whose English name was Nellie. She seemed to be younger than Zhang Heng. Due to the long-term exposure to the sun, her skin was tanned. She looked to be in the best of shape, though. It was said that she had started diving with her father before she was even twelve. Having eight years of diving experience under her belt now, she was a responsible diving guide.

The two parties quickly agreed on the fee, and the next day, the three met again at the pier. After that, they sat in the same boat and went to where the ruins were located.

Nellie possessed a cheerful personality. While talking about diving precautions, she could not help but get Zhang Heng to ask Han Lu what skincare products she used. She seemed to be envious of Han Lu's skin. Although Nellie was younger than Han Lu, the harsh environment caused her to have worse skin than her.

Han Lu was elated when she heard Nellie asking her about the skincare products she was using. And she even mentioned that she would give Nellie a set of skincare products when she returned to the island. The three chatted throughout the entire journey, and they finally arrived at their destination after a while.

The uncle parked his boat at a safe spot. Today came with great weather, where the wind and waves were calm, and the sun shone brightly on them. Looking down from the boat, they vaguely saw a huge black shadow under the sea. It seemed the ruins were located right beneath them.

The three of them rechecked their diving equipment. After confirming everything was fine, they put on fins and masks and plopped into the water one after the other. When everyone was in the water, Nellie made a gesture, signaling them to prepare to dive. After Heng and Han Lu responded with an okay sign, the three began their dive toward the ruins.

Chapter 904: Underwater Ruins

It was June, and the sunlight was still reasonably sufficient. The three felt a little stuffy in their wetsuits, but the stuffiness somehow disappeared the moment they entered the sea. As they dived deeper into the ocean, the temperature around them began to drop as well.

With a much higher thermal conductivity than air, a human would lose more heat in the water than on land. Fortunately, their diving suits helped them fight off the cold. Usually, casual divers like them would not dive too deep into the sea. Every ten meters deeper, the pressure would turn up a notch. After diving deeper than thirty meters, they risked suffering from nitrogen intoxication. The ordinary diving cylinder would typically be filled with compressed air consisting of 21% oxygen and 79% nitrogen. Under high pressure, nitrogen would enter the diver's body, and at the same time, breathing pure oxygen under a high-pressure environment for too long would cause oxygen poisoning.

The undersea ruins that Zhang Heng and the others were about to explore this time were probably located at a depth of about 25 meters. Diving to such depths was usually not risky, and with Zhang Heng's swimming and diving skills he had honed in the Black Sail dungeon, he could dive to this depth in a single breath without any diving equipment. However, he would not be able to stay underwater for too long, still needing to emerge to catch a breath after taking a glance at the ruins.

Strictly speaking, this was not Zhang Heng's first dive. When he was a child, he followed his parents to see corals in Sanya. It was a purely parent-child leisure activity, though, where the dive depth was less than eight meters. The time he spent underwater was also very short, which was only twenty minutes. Throughout the entire diving experience, he was accompanied by a coach.

Zhang Heng's only long-duration dive with diving equipment was when he entered the Apollo training camp. NASA had made use of an underwater environment to simulate a zero-gravity environment. Not only did Zhang Heng have to stay underwater for a long period, but he was required to complete a series of given tasks.

Hence, Zhang Heng did not feel unfamiliar when he went underwater again.

Whether it was the zero-gravity environment or the quietness, the seawater almost isolated all the noise. In the midst of a dive, each diver could only hear their own breathing, especially during exhalation, where the sound of the bubbles exiting the tube could be somewhat relaxing.

Nellie behaved very professionally. She would stay no more than two meters away from her clients throughout the entire dive, paying close attention to their physical and mental conditions. After confirming that they were encountering no troubles during the dive, she pointed to the ruins that weren't too far away and signaled them to follow her.

In fact, there was no need for her signaling. The moment they dived into the sea, it was difficult for them to ignore the sight in front of them. The ruins appeared to be a vast underwater palace taking the shape of a pyramid. With a rotting, decrepit exterior, the structure was said to date back to about 10,000 BC.

If these ruins were built by the people who lived here, they might have mastered the building techniques the Egyptians possessed when building the pyramids. However, the Egyptians had only started building their first pyramid around the third millennium BC.

This was why many experts firmly believed that the stone structure in front of them was simply a masterpiece of nature. After witnessing the well-aligned stone steps and the smooth and square stone wall, however, Han Lu was more inclined to believe that a mysterious lost civilization must've left them behind.

She even spotted some structures that looked like gates and roads. Nellie then gestured to Zhang Heng and Han Lu to get closer to the ruins while she picked up the underwater camera to take a photo of them with the ruins in the background. After that, they swam towards the gate.

Han Lu followed Nellie with her video recorder, while Zhang Heng looked at the time and direction on the dive computer and followed them. The three soon passed the stone gates.

These structures were supposed to serve as the city gates, but they turned out to be made of giant stones stacked together. Schools of tropical fishes of all manner of color scooted around them. Zhang Heng even saw a tiny sea hare.

As its name suggested, this sea creature appeared as cute as a little rabbit with ears, though it did not mean that there were no ugly sea hares. Not even an iron lady like Han Lu or a young girl like Nellie

could resist such a cute creature; hence, they started snapping pictures wildly like a photographer shooting Victoria's Secret models on a runway.

In the end, they stayed there for about a minute before moving forward. After that, the three of them swam through a narrow spot. Only two people could fit side by side in the narrowest spot in the ruins. Once they swam through that, their vision suddenly widened, as though they had entered to an underwater palace.

They saw walls made of rocks and the seawater above them reflecting the sunlight when they looked around. Nellie, who led the way in the front, stopped moving, put her left and right hands together, and quickly moved her thumb up and down. She was trying to tell them that there were turtles in front of them. Han Lu then swam towards Nellie, and that was when she saw two turtles between the stones. So, she too signaled Zhang Heng behind to come over quickly.

However, it seemed Zhang Heng was lost in his thoughts and did not see Han Lu beckoning at him. For some reason, when he first saw the underwater ruins, the feeling of *déjà vu* struck him. It wasn't too strong at first, but the feeling resurfaced when he arrived at this huge open space. And this time, Zhang Heng knew where his *déjà vu* came from.

He had a weird dream in the alien quest before. In the dream, he came to a seaside town with a gloomy atmosphere. After he gathered the Shadow Sets, he returned to that seaside town again. He was feeling right now as when he traveled back to the seaside town for the second time.

Considering what happened later in that small town, this was not a good sign.

Being a well-known diving spot that welcomed throngs of tourists each year, there were no recorded accidents here so far. Still, Zhang Heng did not want to doubt his instinct.

After that, he decisively gave Han Lu and Nellie a thumbs up to tell them that he wanted to surface. Nellie felt a little strange, not knowing why Zhang Heng wanted to go up so suddenly. She then gestured to him, asking what difficulty he might be encountering. Han Lu, on the other hand, was more experienced in dealing with a situation like this. She and Zhang Heng had experienced the death dream together, and after that incident, she trusted him unconditionally. She also knew that there was a crazy and dark world beneath the ordinary one.

Therefore, upon seeing this, she did not question why Zhang Heng made such a decision. Instead, she quickly made an upward gesture as well. However, they saw that Nellie's face had suddenly changed, and she was anxiously making a downward gesture.

Chapter 905: Red Tide?

During diving, there were different probabilities that one would encounter the sea current, depending on the diving location. As the name suggested, the descending current was also known as the down-current. Supposedly, the air bubbles exhaled from the diver's mouth would ascend to the surface of the sea. However, if there were currents around the divers, their air bubbles would disperse around them in a ring shape. After that, the air bubble would drag to the bottom of the ocean by the down-current. The two turtles not far away could sense that something was not right. So, they quickly swam back to the crack between the rocks. And at the same time, the three's vision began to become blurry.

Fortunately, except for Zhang Heng, the other two were experienced in dealing with down-current. It was not the first time Han Lu has encountered ocean currents. Therefore, she did not become panic as a newcomer would. She quickly attached her body to the stone wall, grabbing whatever she could find like a gecko.

Nellie turned on her portable flashlight, flashed at the big rock closest to Zhang Heng, and signaled Zhang Heng to swim towards it. As for herself, she quickly swam towards the big rock as well. Their descending speed was not that fast, indicating that the ocean current they encountered was not that strong. Upon realizing that, Nellie was relieved. On the other hand, Han Lu and Zhang Heng managed to keep calm as well.

The most dangerous thing when one encountered an ocean current was to fall into panic mode. Not only would it not help with anything, but the random struggle would accelerate the consumption of oxygen, and the wrong moves would most likely cause more trouble. Han Lu had experienced diving before; hence, Nellie was not too worried about her. The person she was really anxious about was Zhang Heng. The moment he asked to go back up, they were hit by the undercurrent.

But fortunately, Zhang Heng did not panic so far. The moment he received Nellie's instructions, he quickly swam to the big rock with her. About a minute and a half later, Nellie felt that the ocean current had begun to settle down. So she gestured to ask Zhang Heng how much oxygen he had left.

Zhang Heng then glanced at the residual pressure gauge, and it showed that he still had about 120 bar of oxygen. The three of them did not stay underwater for too long, and they did not dive below 25 meters. Therefore, the oxygen in their cylinders was still sufficient. It was nowhere near the warning line.

But now that Zhang Heng had decided to ascend, Nellie, as a dive guide, certainly had no reason to continue diving. But before they ascended, the two needed to meet up with Han Lu at the stone wall first.

Before the ocean current hit them, the seawater was crystal clear. However, after the undercurrent swept their diving spot, there was now a lot of sand and impurities floating in the water. Therefore, it caused their visibility to drop drastically. So, Nellie quickly turned on her flashlight again. However, it seemed like her flashlight was running out of power. It flashed a few times before it became stable.

However, when Nellie moved the flashlight to the rock wall where Han Lu was supposed to locate, she found out that Han Lu was gone. Nellie blinked her eyes, and she could not believe what she just saw. When the ocean current hit them, Han Lu was the first person to find a place to stabilize herself. At that time, she was supposed to be out of danger. After that, the three of them were separated for less than two minutes. In such a short time, it did not make sense for Han Lu to leave her position.

Nellie then shone the flashlight in other directions. They were trying to look for Han Lu, but it yielded no result. And at this moment, Nellie saw Zhang Heng gesturing to her and pointed to the top of her head. Nellie thought that Zhang Heng had discovered where Han Lu was. But when she looked up, she saw a strange sight that she had never seen in her life before as a diver. The seawater above them was turning red at a speed visible to the naked eye.

Was that a red tide?

Nellie lived by the sea. Although she had never seen red tides in person, she had heard about this natural phenomenon before. The red tide was generally caused by the phytoplankton, bacteria, or protozoa in the sea. The seawater would turn red when it exploded or multiplied within a short period of time. It was very harmful to the environment.

However, this sea area was a famous diving spot on Yonaguni Island. The residents of the island had always placed great importance on the ecological environment. For so many years, there had never been a red tide in the nearby sea. Under normal circumstances, the red tide would appear at the upper levels of the sea. However, Nellie saw that the red tide was approaching them fast.

Soon the two of them were surrounded by red seawater. The color of the red seawater was actually very close to human blood. The worst part was that their visibility had further deteriorated. Nellie could only see less than two meters in front of her. She could barely see Zhang Heng's figure.

Even with Nellie's rich diving experience, she couldn't help but feel a little anxious now. It was mainly because this weird "red tide" had appeared at the wrong time. It had made their search for Han Lu become even harder no.

Nellie wanted to take Zhang Heng to ascend to the surface first and come back to look for Han Lu by herself. It was because Zhang Heng requested to ascend before they encountered the ocean current. However, it would take quite some time to get back to the surface because the pressure at different depths was different. The deeper the divers dived, the more nitrogen would dissolve into their blood.

There was a possibility that they might suffer from nitrogen intoxication. If they went up too fast, the pressure would decrease rapidly, and the nitrogen in the blood would precipitate and cause thrombosis. If a diver suffered from such a complication, their lungs would burst in the worst-case scenario.

Therefore, one needed to take a break during the ascension to the surface of the seawater. It would take as long as seven minutes for Nellie to send Zhang Heng back to the boat and return undersea to look for Han Lu. Let's not talk about whether she could return to the exact same spot while being affected by the red sea water. She did not even know if Han Lu was still nearby her. Besides, the remaining oxygen in her gas cylinder might not be enough to support her to search for too long.

Under normal circumstances, Nellie could choose to bring Zhang Heng to search for Han Lu. Due to the red seawater, she might not be able to see Zhang Heng if he went a little too far. In such a bad situation, Nellie did not have the confidence to take care of Zhang Heng while looking for Han Lu.

Han Lu was now gone, and he did not want to lose Zhang Heng too. After some thoughts, Nellie decided to bring Zhang Heng back to the boat first. Besides, she was hoping that Han Lu had returned to the boat on her own. Maybe she would be able to see her again when she resurfaced. And to be honest, even if she took Zhang Heng to risk finding Han Lu now, the only thing that she could rely on was her luck.

Just when Nellie was about to bring Zhang Heng back to the boat, she seemed to spot a dark shadow flashing past her left eye.

Could it be Han Lu? The hope in Nellie's heart was lit up once again. Although the shadow passed by quickly, she saw that the person was wearing a diving suit.

Chapter 906: Flashlight

It was not the peak season for diving in Yonaguni Island. This could be seen from how well the diving shops were doing. Zhang Heng and Han Lu were only the second group of tourists to dive here in the past week. And as far as Nellie knew, the first group of divers would be flying home at noon.

If she were right, the three of them would be the only divers in this area. It was precisely why Nellie figured that Han Lu was the person that had just passed. A fourth person wasn't present in these waters, so Han Lu was probably only two or three meters away from them. Thus, Nellie had high hopes that Han Lu was fine. And she even subconsciously ignored how the shadow moved earlier.

A human couldn't swim so fast in the sea. However, at this moment, all Nellie cared about was to locate Han Lu. Even if she noticed the figure's unreasonable speed, she tried to convince herself that it was the ocean currents. And because of that, Han Lu needed their help more than ever.

Nellie then gestured for Zhang Heng to follow her. However, she saw him stretching out his hand to stop her there. After that, Zhang Heng clenched and crossed his fists in front of his chest. He then pointed in the direction where the dark shadow had just disappeared with his fist.

Zhang Heng was trying to tell her that she was about to do something extremely dangerous. Since Nellie spotted the black shadow, Zhang Heng certainly didn't miss it with his exceptional observation ability. And unlike Nellie, Zhang Heng's eyes actually captured the black shadow's movement. Although it appeared for less than a second, Zhang Heng had already figured out what it was.

That shadow was the half-man and half-mermaid monster he encountered in the mysterious and hazy seaside town during the trial of the Shadow Set. Zhang Heng did not expect to see a monster like that in the real world. The situation now also differed from the time he fought against hundreds of enemies alone. When that particular monster entered the water, they would stop flopping clumsily, and they would start swimming like a fish.

After completing the Black Sail quest, Zhang Heng had become quite the swimmer. At least he could now swim faster than the people that did not live by the sea. Unfortunately, no matter how good he was, he would never be able to beat the genetically mutated offspring of humans and monsters.

They possessed the biological characteristics of many marine creatures. The webbed fins that looked like diving flippers were actually the creature's feet. And compared to human divers, they did not need oxygen cylinders, relying on their gills to breathe in the water. And their movement speed was at least twice as fast as on land.

On the contrary, Zhang Heng wasn't as agile as he was on land. He felt the resistance of the water restricting his every move. At the same time, he needed diving equipment to stay underwater. All these meant it wouldn't be that easy for him to gain the upper hand here. Zhang Heng could still handle one of them, but if they swarmed at him like what happened at the seaside town, he would be in big trouble.

Hence, the reason he was so vigilant now.

After seeing Zhang Heng's gesture, however, Nellie mistakenly thought that the red tide had caused him to be nervous and that he wanted to go up. Nellie could put herself into his shoes. Initially, Nellie wanted to bring Zhang Heng back to the boat too. However, she made that decision before she saw "Han Lu." Now that she knew "Han Lu" was nearby, Nellie would feel really bad if she gave up searching for her right now, especially when the amount of oxygen in the cylinder was still sufficient.

So Nellie tried to calm Zhang Heng down while telling him through hand gestures that Han Lu was nearby them. However, Zhang Heng was still showing her the same gesture. And Nellie started to get a little impatient. The red seawater around her caused her to be more irritable than usual. Suddenly, when she saw a flashlight flashing from a distance, Nellie immediately turned on her flashlight to respond. After that, she planned to swim toward the light source.

But as soon as she turned around, Zhang Heng quickly pulled her back. And the suppressed anger in Nellie's heart finally exploded. She did not know what Zhang Heng and Han Lu's relationship was, but since the two were vacationing at Yonaguni Island together, they were definitely not simply ordinary friends. Now, when Han Lu was in danger, not only did Zhang Heng refuse to rescue her, but he also tried to stop Nellie.

Nellie tried to put herself in Han Lu's shoes, and she felt a chill run down her spine when she thought of what Zhang Heng had just done. So she broke free from Zhang Heng's grip in a fit of anger and swam toward the direction of the other flashlight.

At this moment, her heart was filled with rage. And she even forgot to ask Zhang Heng to keep up with her. In fact, there were no other thoughts in her mind now. All she wanted to do was to swim forward as an evil spirit possessed her.

Nellie was a reasonably good diver, but unlike Zhang Heng, who always paid attention to his surroundings, she just wanted to find Han Lu. So, the two soon separated in the red seawater. Zhang Heng was a little helpless. He noticed that Nellie was emotionally abnormal, but he could not do much underwater, and he couldn't knock her out as well. As for Zhang Heng, he was not sure whether it was because of his gradual loss of feeling or something else. He seemed to be immune to the surrounding red seawater.

And after losing Han Lu and Nellie, Zhang Heng became calmer and calmer. That was because he knew those half-human, half-mermaid monsters were targeting him. Just like in the strange dreams and the Shadow Set's trial, he was always the target.

However, Zhang Heng did not give up looking for the whereabouts of the two women. Since he was on vacation in Japan, he did not bring most of his game items. And even if he did, using them underwater would be difficult. There was no Lego for him to assemble here, and he could not fire his Paris Arrow underwater.

However, Zhang Heng was lucky that he brought his Filter Lens and Betty's Shell with him. These two items were now in the thigh pocket of his diving suit, and the pockets were sealed with Velcro.

Hence, he opened his pocket and first took out the Filter Lens. It was the game item that he needed the most right now.

[The field of vision within 300 meters is not affected by factors including light, natural environment, etc.]

This did not sound like an impressive effect, and it was not lethal as well. However, anyone who had played real-time strategy games knew the importance of vision, especially in the current circumstance where Zhang Heng could see nothing.

Zhang Heng took a deep breath, took off the mask, equipped the Filter Lens, and put the mask back on again. He then raised his head slightly, pressed the upper part of the mask with his fingers, and started to exhale with his nose. The bubbles soon gathered at the upper part of the mask, squeezing the out seawater from the bottom. After repeating it twice, the seawater in the mask was drained.

Chapter 907: Wall Carving

When Zhang Heng opened his eyes again, he regained his vision, and it was clearer than before the red tide appeared. This was the first time he used his Filter Lens underwater. Initially, he was worried that the red tide did not fall under the natural category, but now, it seemed that the lens worked well in this red tide.

The red tide disappeared before him, and the seawater became transparent to him within 300 meters.

Zhang Heng soon found Nellie, who had separated from him earlier. The latter now swam toward the ruins. And in front of her, Zhang Heng's old friend, a half-man, half-fish-frog monster, was holding a flashlight, flashing at Nellie to draw her closer to him.

Zhang Heng did not spot other monsters beside him for the time being.

The other good news was that after a short observation, Zhang Heng noticed the red tide did affect the monster. However, its visibility in the red tide was still higher than that of humans, and he could probably see three to four meters in front of him.

This was also why he could see Nellie, but Nellie couldn't see the monster.

However, Zhang Heng still could not see Han Lu nearby.

After Zhang Heng took a good look at the place, he saw there was no other place for Han Lu to hide. He also knew that Han Lu's disappearance must be related to the monster. If he followed this monster, he might be able to find Han Lu.

Zhang Heng did not hesitate anymore, swimming toward Nellie the moment he put on his mask. At the same time, he paid attention to the distance between himself and the monster in front of him, keeping himself out of its field of vision.

Zhang Heng saw that Nellie, led by the monster, had come to the stone wall where Han Lu was standing earlier. Just when Zhang Heng thought that they had no way to go, the stone wall began to tremble. The one-foot-wide crack that could only fit a turtle began to expand, just like a giant beast opening its mouth. The half-man, half-fish-frog monster who led the way entered the crack. After that, he took out a flashlight to continue to draw Nellie closer to him. No matter how dumb Nellie was, she felt that something wasn't right once the crack widened in front of her.

She hesitated for a moment outside the crack, but her desire of finding Han Lu overpowered her fear. Hence, Nellie gritted her teeth and swam to the crack. However, the light disappeared soon after she entered.

Nellie's mind began to sober up after being affected by the red seawater for quite some time. It was then that fear started to kick in. The diving guides were not life-saving talismans for the divers. It was

true that they were responsible for helping the divers to deal with some threats, but they couldn't deal with all of them.

When these threats were too dangerous for them to handle or that they knew they might lose their lives over it, the guides needed to know that it was time to let go. This was just a job, after all, and a specific price had to be paid if they wanted to play the hero. The current situation was obviously beyond what Nellie could handle. She was in an unfamiliar tunnel, surrounded by strange rocks, and the visibility was very low.

Nellie did not know how long this tunnel was, whether there was a fork in the path, or where it would take her. After she swam for a short distance, her diving computer reminded her that she was going deeper into the ocean. And that was not a good sign. Suddenly, Nellie remembered she left Zhang Heng outside.

This was also one of the main reasons why she decided to turn around.

But when she returned using the same way she entered the crack, she discovered something that frightened her. The crack on the wall was now closed again, returning to a width of about only one foot. Nelly could no longer stay calm this time. She tried to squeeze her hands into the gap to attempt to widen the crack. Since it did expand earlier, it meant that walls were probably movable.

The reality, however, was always harsh.

No matter how hard she tried, the crack remained unmoved, as if it had never expanded before. Nellie consumed a lot of oxygen as she used all of her strength in an attempt to free herself. The fruitless attempts left her with frustration. But fortunately, she was an experienced diver, and she had dealt with underwater crises before. Even in such a harsh environment, she did not collapse like one of those rookies.

After realizing that the crack in front of her would not open again, Nellie calmed herself down, checked her residual pressure gauge, confirming her direction with her dive computer, and continued to swim along the underwater tunnel.

Now, she could only hope that there were other exits ahead of her. Nellie turned on the flashlight, illuminating the paths ahead to look for an exit. At the same time, she hoped her flashlight could get in touch with "Han Lu" again.

Instead of seeing Han Lu, though, she saw something else. The underwater ruins on Yonaguni Island caused a great sensation when they were first discovered. Since there was still no critical evidence to prove that the ruins were left behind a lost civilization, they thought that the neatly built brick walls and steps were just something that nature had formed.

In order to prove that the ruins were actual, some enthusiasts even forged ancient coins and pottery, decorated with fancy patterns that they designed. These fake relics, however, wouldn't be able to pass modern scientific tests. Nellie now knew that what she was seeing couldn't possibly have been forged by modern people.

The carvings on both sides of the stone wall were old. Simple to understand and concise, it told the story of mermaid-like creatures hunting sea beasts. Other than that, some of the pictures told of love stories between humans. At least, that was how Nellie deciphered it.

The mermaid gifted something to the woman on the shore. After the two married, the woman gave birth to a couple of kids, who returned to the sea after they grew up. Nellie had heard of a few mermaid legends, and she thought them to be quite romantic.

The carvings on the wall mesmerized a stunned Nellie. Even though the carvings had been baptized by time and current, they still looked incredibly real. If she were not in danger, Nellie would definitely want to stop and enjoy it.

In fact, she had already taken out her underwater camera to snap a couple of pictures of the carvings. These carvings were tantamount to ending the ancient ruins' debate on Yonaguni Island, whether it was the magical craftsmanship of nature or something made during early civilizations. Any of those pictures could cause a huge uproar on the shore.

Before she could do that, however, she had to think of a way to keep herself alive.

Chapter 908: Changes And Weapons

The fear of death diluted Nellie's joy of her wall carving discovery.

She did not stay in the same place for too long. After snapping photos she wanted of the wall carving, she continued to swim forward. However, the wall carving's story did not end there. Although Nellie was focussing on finding a way out, she glanced at the wall carvings from time to time. Unless she kept her vision completely dead ahead, she'd inadvertently catch a glimpse of those carvings.

The dive computer showed that she had arrived at a depth of 35 meters. This place was also nearly ten meters deeper than the place they were previously at, meaning that the water pressure had also increased considerably. Nellie had also almost depleted all the oxygen in her tank.

At the same time, the content of the wall carvings had turned from romantic to gloomy. The multitude of grown-up children had now returned to the sea, where they were gathered at a place. After that, they chose to follow one of the two leaders. One of them looked like the monster that Zhang Heng spotted earlier, but it was larger in size. The second leader was a giant snake with nine heads.

Speaking of Hydra, after the famous villain organization in the Marvel universe, the second most famous Hydra had to be the monster in Greek mythology. Later, it was reflected in the wall carvings. Under the leadership of the huge monster mermaid and the Hydra, the creatures caused a lot of trouble and held many disgusting rituals. They went as far as to use fishes and some sort of gold to earn the opportunity to reproduce with them.

These monsters paid most of their attention to the reproduction of their offspring. They had no idea why they could not reproduce among themselves; hence they had to deceive humans to get what they wanted. Sometimes, they would pretend to be pirates, attack coastal towns, and kidnap their residents.

Nellie felt a little disgusted after looking at the wall carvings. She no longer felt that their actions were romantic. What really frightened her, however, were the following carvings: the mermaids prayed and summoned something to disorient the pearl divers, then lured them to their lair for copulation.

When she saw that, Nellie felt a chill sent up her spine. She started to be lost in panic, paralyzing fear hitting her like a massive tide. Although the wall carvings had no color, Nellie knew what the mermaid had summoned.

It was the red tide.

In other words, she was now experiencing the same phenomenon the pearl divers had experienced, just like what the carvings depicted. Even though Nellie knew she needed to stay calm when encountering danger underwater and that she had been telling other divers the same thing, remaining calm at this moment seemed almost impossible. Her hands couldn't help but tremble as they held the flashlight.

Compared to dying here, it was undoubtedly more terrifying to be forced to reproduce with those monsters. Nellie did even want to go forward anymore. Still, there was only 60 bar of oxygen remaining in her cylinder. As a professional diver, Nellie knew that every second she delayed would reduce her chances of returning to the shore alive. Despite all that, she could not get herself to start moving.

The thing in front of her had been waiting for her for a long time. When the monster flashed the flashlight at Nellie again, fear completely overtook her mind. With her reflexes taking over, she automatically turned around and fled before she even knew it.

But the monster could clearly see that Nellie was attempting to make a run for it. A black shadow began to swim towards Nellie from the end of the tunnel, much faster than her speed. As the creature gracefully moved its flippers, the water around it would be automatically dispersed. Although it had come up behind Nellie, it did not immediately attack her.

Instead, it kicked the water and passed Nellie. It then turned its head around and gave Nellie a creepy smile, almost causing the poor girl to suffer a cardiac arrest.

When Nellie saw what the creature looked like, she almost screamed out loud. She then saw an arm stretching out from the rock next to the monster. It grabbed the monster's by the fin on its back and smashed its head against the rock. The massive impact stunned the ugly monster completely, especially after its head was smashed on the rock. The grim smile on its face was frozen in place.

Due to water resistance, it didn't suffer any serious injuries. Instead, the attack only served to provoke its bloodthirst. Attempting to free itself, it kicked the rock with its legs and swung its claws behind it to attack its assailant. Zhang Heng, however, clearly moved faster. Seeing the monster in a confused state, he quickly jumped on its back.

After that, he grabbed a sharp stone with his hand and stabbed the monster's eye, blinding one of its eyes immediately. And before the monster could react, Zhang Heng swiftly stabbed another eye. This final stab blinded the monster completely; the intense pain it experienced caused it to roll around. It started flailing wildly on its back, causing the two to hit the rock wall.

Nellie was completely astounded by the sight before her eyes. She recognized that the person who saved her was Zhang Heng, but she did not know how he appeared here. Zhang Heng appearing here was even more surprising than seeing the monster. Nellie didn't sense anyone following her, not to mention the fact that Zhang Heng had tried to dissuade her from going after the beam.

Nellie also knew that it wasn't the time to dwell on such questions. Now, although Zhang Heng had blinded the monster as soon as he showed up, he got into some trouble after that.

If Zhang Heng, who had just obtained Lv.3 assassin skill, had fought this monster on land, he would've trounced it. However, he was now fighting with it underwater and weaponless at that. His every move was tremendously slow compared to on land, and spontaneously grabbing weapons around him to damage a monster covered in scales and thick skin would prove more than daunting.

Fortunately, Nellie, who was beside him, had also noticed this problem. So, she immediately tossed her diving knife to Zhang Heng. The knife Nellie carried wasn't meant to be used for underwater fighting but to deal with tangled seaweed, nets, or ropes. Little did she expect that it would come in handy in such a critical situation.

Zhang Heng decided he wouldn't dismount the monster's back because it wasn't currently in a frenzied state. If he came down from its back right now, there was a high probability the monster would injure him. So, while distracting the struggling monster beneath him, leading it to the wall, he caught the knife thrown by Nellie.

Before the monster could hit the stone wall again, Zhang Heng stabbed its heart with the knife.

The razor-sharp stainless steel blade proved more lethal than the stones, piercing the monster's skin with relative ease. The monster then struggled for a while before spurts of its blood dyed the surrounding waters red.

Soon, the monster gradually struggled less, and in the end, stopped moving completely.

Chapter 909: Thrones

Zhang Heng got rid of human-frogfish monster with the knife. After that, he checked his diving equipment, especially the oxygen cylinder, and confirmed that it was not damaged when the monster threw him around earlier. After all these were completed, Zhang Heng gestured to Nellie and asked if she was fine.

Nellie was a little confused, but she could not ask all those questions underwater. However, she did feel good to meet her partner again. If it were not for Zhang Heng's interference, Nellie believed she would've died or ended up like one of those pearl divers where they were snatched by those hideous and terrifying monsters.

Unfortunately, this was not the time for her to feel relieved or express her gratitude to Zhang Heng. Nellie had consumed a lot of oxygen when she attempted to open up the crack on the rock wall with her hands. She also figured that Zhang Heng too must have used up a considerable amount of oxygen during the fight with the monster earlier. The two were still trapped in the tunnel and if they failed to return to the surface before they exhausted all the oxygen in the cylinder, they would die here with all those terrifying wall carvings around them.

Nellie had initially thought that Zhang Heng would develop a gentlemanly demeanor, that he'd take the initiative to find a way out for them. To her surprise, however, Zhang Heng gestured to her to go first. It seemed he intended to continue hiding behind her. It explained why he followed behind her earlier and refused to show up. Clearly, he was using her as bait.

But Nellie wasn't stupid. She quickly realized why Zhang Heng did such a thing to her. She had seen the human-fish-frog monster swim faster than the Olympic champion. If it weren't for the sneak attack just now, and even if Zhang Heng could hurt that monster, he couldn't stop it from escaping, let alone kill it.

Though Nellie managed to find out the truth, she still couldn't get rid of the fear ravaging her mind apart. She has been an avid diver for so many years, and she had encountered her fair share of strange underwater creatures. However, this was her first time encountering a real monster under the sea—a part fish, part human monster. Whenever she thought of the creepy smile the monster flashed her, Nellie could not help but shudder. What she saw and heard during this dive had completely subverted her common sense and cognition.

Part of the reason why Nellie chose to be a diving guide was her father's influence. The other was her passion for diving and the underwater world. There were many hidden beauties under the sea, waiting to be unfurled by divers. To Nellie, every dive was a new sweet encounter.

Those were Nellie's thoughts about the ocean before she encountered this human-frogfish monster. Now, she had witnessed first hand the horrors hidden in the calmness of the ocean. As long as she remembered that monsters still lurked at the bottom of the sea, she was unsure if she could muster enough courage to go into the sea again.

As of now, she could not afford to think of such a thing. All she had to do right now was to move forward and find a way out. Fortunately, she now knew that Zhang Heng was behind her and that he would rescue her whenever she was in a crisis. Unconsciously, it gave her a touch of comfort. When she saw how calm Zhang Heng was, the courage in her heart was reiterated.

Nellie could not figure out how Zhang Heng did not feel afraid when he fought with the monster. Considering that Zhang Heng almost had zero diving experience, most people would've allowed fear to petrify their bodies. It was great that Zhang Heng did not run away. Nellie completely did not expect Zhang Heng to stand up against the monster, and that he showed no hesitation when he attacked it with only a stone that he picked.

Nellie could not help but wonder about Zhang Heng's identity. Was he a soldier or policeman? Or, was he a frogman who received special underwater training? He certainly didn't look like a military man. In fact, when she took a good look at him, Nellie found she couldn't figure out what temperament Zhang Heng possessed. He was like a drop of water that could blend into the sea anytime, anywhere.

Other than that, Nellie also wanted to apologize for her previous misunderstanding of Zhang Heng. At that time, all she wanted to do was to save Han Lu and she believed he had stopped her out of selfishness. She now realized that Zhang Heng's motive was pure and simple. He was simply trying to remind her of the threats she was about to face. Nelly regretted not listening to Zhang Heng's advice. If she did that, she wouldn't have exposed herself to unnecessary danger.

Those thoughts ran through Nellie's mind as she swam ahead.

Considering how little oxygen remained in the cylinder, she neither swam fast nor slow. Nellie's anxiousness crept up again when the dive computer reminded her that the depth was increasing.

Fortunately, when she reached about forty-five meters deep, she felt that she was swimming upward in the tunnel, which also meant that they had finally stopped diving deeper into the ocean. At this point,

Nellie knew that she could not turn around anymore. Even if the crack opened up miraculously, she probably wouldn't make it to the surface before she exhausted all the oxygen in the cylinder. Hence, she could only hope that there was another way to go back to the surface at the end of the tunnel.

Compared with Nellie's anxiety, Zhang Heng, who followed behind, was much calmer. Looking at the wall carvings, these half-human, half-fish-frog creatures would abduct ordinary people to reproduce with them from time to time. Since the people they abducted could not stay underwater as long as they could, they would've definitely found a secret place to store them.

Since these creatures were targeting him, it was obvious that they were using Han Lu to threaten him. If they wanted to do that, they had to keep Han Lu alive. That was also the reason why Zhang Heng deduced that the end of the tunnel was not a dead end.

And he was right about that.

The two swam a little further, when Nellie suddenly realized that her vision had widened suddenly. At the same time, the red tide gradually disappeared. When Nellie glanced at her surroundings, she realized that she was in a building. It was a magnificent underwater palace. Unlike the ruins that they had come across before this, this palace was manmade at first glance.

The ancient stone pillars were supporting the dome of the palace. Those stone pillars were so big that they required at least three to four people to circle them. They were at least twenty meters tall, and there were dozens of them around the palace.

Other than that, the top of the palace was occupied by a giant stone carving. It was different from the easy-to-understand wall carvings that she saw earlier. The carvings on this stone were more obscure and incomprehensible. It looked like an interstellar map or just some unintelligible graffiti. The frantic drawings seemed like they were going to break the stone wall. Nellie stared at it for a while, and she felt dizzy. So, she had to withdraw her gaze quickly.

After that, she laid her eyes on the two thrones behind the hall.

They were made of some kind of gold-like metal, still shining bright after thousands of years. Since they were as big as the stone pillars, Nellie knew that they were not meant for humans. Then, Nellie remembered the leader of those human-frogfish monsters that she saw on the previous wall carvings.

These two thrones were meant for them.

Chapter 910: Memory Fragments

Those human-frogfish monsters were scary enough. But compared with the other two monsters on the wall, they were probably as cute as a Mickey Mouse mascot taking photos with tourists in Disneyland. Nellie couldn't acquire an intuitive understanding when she looked at the wall carvings. Now that she saw the two thrones, she finally gained a better understanding of the size of the creatures that were supposed to sit on the thrones.

Even on the vast seabed, they could definitely be considered giants. Nellie felt like a mouse breaking into a cattery. Fortunately, the owner of the cattery was not home today. Hoping that they would never come back, she even started to worry about Yonaguni Island. Considering that evil of such magnitude lurked beneath the island, it was a miracle that Yonaguni Island remained unharmed for so many years.

But seeing these two thrones was not without good news. Nellie had been worrying about whether there was an exit at the other end of the tunnel, and she could finally breathe a sigh of relief. That was because no matter how wide the crack expanded, the giant creatures would never be able to fit through the entrance or the exit.

So there had to be another exit here. Nellie quickly looked around with her flashlight, and she soon found that exit. Located on the right side of the throne, it happened to be blocked by two stone pillars. Since those pillars were so massive, they could only be found if someone paid close attention to them.

It was a big black hole, enough for an adult sperm whale to swim through. When Nellie stood close to it, she could feel the ocean current. In other words, it must be connected to the outside world. Nellie's eyes lit up immediately when she saw it. The compressed air in her cylinder was running low, with only less than 30 bar left.

She would never see the sun tomorrow if she failed to find an exit. Before she entered the cave, Nellie looked behind to make sure that no one was in the hall. Zhang Heng, too had also swum out of his hiding spot. However, she did not feel too good about the current circumstance.

Looking at the magnificence of this underwater palace and based on his previous understanding of those monsters, Zhang Heng didn't think that this place could only have one guard. That being said, they never encountered a second monster while they were on their way out. Either they were lucky enough to come when those monsters were out hunting, or those monsters were hiding at the end of the exit, waiting to ambush them.

Of course, Zhang Heng hoped the former conjecture was what really happened. He did, however, prepare for the latter situation as well, having already taken out Betty's Shell from his pocket. This was the second game item he had brought with him other than the Filter Lens. Unlike the Filter Lens, Betty's Shell was designed to be used underwater.

This game item originated from a certain Celtic ancient god in the Black Sail quest. It would consume the user's anger and summon a storm at sea for fifteen minutes. The power of the storm was directly connected to how angry the user was.

Actually, this game item had become more and more useless to Zhang Heng. It was because his feelings were gradually disappearing. Whether anger or joy, not much of it was left in him. Even the empathy he possessed before was slowly leaving him as well. In the recent quest he completed, Zhang Heng no longer carried the shell with him. This game item was simply an object representing one of his life's milestones, and he had also had it for more than ten years. Hence, Zhang Heng did not want to sell it for money, hoping that he could make a final use of it this time.

Besides, he had also noticed the two thrones, which gave him a strong sensation of déjà vu. This time, some memory fragments even permeated Zhang Heng's mind. It seemed this wasn't the first time he had been here, standing in this palace.

And during that time, the king and queen did not sit on the thrones. Instead, they were crawling at his feet, almost as though they were his most devout believers. The human-frogfish monsters, on the other hand, couldn't even get close to this hall. Just looking up at the great figure in the center of the hall would plunge them into eternal madness and frenzy.

This was a strange feeling, especially when Zhang Heng found that he was looking down from a higher-up spot. In order not to ruin the palace, he had to lower crouch on his back. From his perspective, the king and the queen looked like a pair of toddlers that had just learned how to walk.

Zhang Heng deliberately looked at the queen a few more times because the latter gave him a stronger sense of familiarity as if he had met her before. This sense of familiarity did not come from the memory fragments but it came from Zhang Heng himself. Before he could delve deeper into the memory, Nellie's gestures snapped him back to the reality.

Zhang Heng nodded, knowing that there was very little oxygen left in his and Nellie's cylinders. They had to give it a go no matter what lay in front of them. So next, Nellie went first and Zhang Heng followed behind her. They then dived into the big hole in the wall that symbolized their last hope.

Unlike the narrow tunnel, this tunnel behind the cave was spacious enough. The numbers counting the depth of their location on the dive computer were also rising steadily. After the previous traumatizing moment, their luck seemed to be improving. The hope of getting out of trouble was right in front of them.

Nellie could not help but start to speed up, and the blurry light above their heads became clearer and clearer. After swimming up for a certain distance, the dive computer showed that they were only twelve meters from the surface. Nellie went around a huge coral reef and found the missing Han Lu.

Han Lu wasn't looking too good. Appeared to be entangled in a discarded fishing net, she couldn't seem to get rid of it with her own strength. Fortunately for her, her breathing equipment still worked as intended. Just like the other two, she was still alive.

Upon seeing this, Nellie hurriedly swam to Han Lu's position. She looked at Han Lu's residual pressure value first, and she found out that there was only less than five bar left. In other words, if they had come a few minutes later, Han Lu might've suffocated to death.

So Nellie gestured to comfort Han Lu, and at the same time, began to help the latter untangle the fishing net. However, when she swam to Han Lu's side, the latter panicked even more and started to struggle desperately. At the same time, she kept tapping Nellie on the shoulder as if she wanted her to turn around.

Nellie turned her head around with some hesitation. Although the oval tunnel exit looked pitted, like a honeycomb, nothing was out of the ordinary. It was quiet and within reach. Nellie knew that as long as she swam for another twelve meters, they would be able to get out of trouble and see the sunlight again.

But the next moment, cruel reality shattered all her beautiful fantasies.

A large number of black shadows charged out of the beehive-like tunnel, like worker bees leaving the hive. They were so many of them that they blocked the sunlight from reaching her, plunging her world into darkness again.