

Chapter 195 Thank Profusely

I explained the situation to the fire chief. When he heard that I was former special forces, he immediately gave me a full set of equipment. The firefighters were all conscripts, and while they had more experience in fighting fires, I had more experience in rescue operations.

The fire chief was grateful. If I could not save Zhao Zichen, he would lose his position.

The crowd had grown. Seeing me start putting on the fire equipment, they pointed at me and whispered among themselves. Then, when I made my way into the park, they gasped collectively.

Their cheering was quickly drowned out by the roar of the flames. Even though I was kitted out in a firefighting suit, I could feel my eyebrows start to singe when I went near the tongues of flame that reached thousands of degrees. Before I could take a step, I felt my swear pour like a waterfall in my suit. It felt like I could not breathe and I gasped, but I could only breathe slowly through the gas mask.

It was dark in the burning park. Black smoke clung to the area like a reluctant lover. I had to use my intuition to identify my surroundings. The temperature of the dense smoke reached a thousand degrees. The roiling smoke curled up a magnolia tree, and in a matter of seconds, the magnolia tree was alight.

My heart thumped loudly, and I was unsure if it was because of fear or because of the heat. I felt a terror that I had never felt before on any of the dozens of battlefields I had fought on. Because I could raise my hands in surrender when an enemy had his gun aimed at me, but fire would never listen to my pleas.

This was Hell on earth.

Within minutes, I could no longer hear the sounds of the people not far away. I could only hear the roaring rush of wind and fire.

According to the firefighters, Zhao Zichen and the others were still alive and should be in the center of the park. There was an open plaza there, where foreign circus troupes would perform. Later, after some environmental advocacy, the animal performances were stopped. However, the wire fences set up for audience safety were still there.

They would not normally be locked. The Black Dragons must have done it.

Those bastards were prepared to do anything!

But to get to the very center of the park, I needed to go through a wall of flames. The orange tongues of fire seemed to lick at the sky threateningly, and they swayed in the wind.

Bang, bang, bang...

Just as I paused, I heard a steady banging sound above the roar of the fire. It sounded like someone was hitting something against a metal railing.

It must be Zhao Zichen! Besides them, there was nothing else alive here.

Even so, the fire was so strong here that if I stepped through the flames, I was likely to get burned through the fire suit.

I grit my teeth and made a few attempts, but I was unable to approach the flames. When I stepped a few steps closer, a wave of heat smashed into me, almost bringing me to my feet.

Zhao Zichen's S.O.S signal was still going, banging out against the railing I was near. I picked up a rock and hit the railing twice, and the other party immediately changed the rhythm of their signal.

Great. It meant that Zhao Zichen was still alive.

On the other hand, death by smoke inhalation took a mere matter of minutes. I needed to get them out fast.

Suddenly, I remembered that there was a small ditch by the open plaza. Water was stored there all year round. Maybe there was still water there!

I dared not delay, relying on my memory to lead me to the correct place. The ditch was still there, and there was water inside.

It was not a shallow ditch, but it still had a depth of about 1.8 meters and I could not wade through it. I had to peel off the fire suit, keeping the gas mask, and swim over shirtless.

When I removed the fire suit, I felt like a roast chicken that was almost done cooking. I hurriedly plunged into the water. The fire had even warmed the water.

As I expected, when I popped my head out of the water, I saw the open plaza surrounded by wire fencing. Zhao Zichen and his men who were trapped must have heard the sound of the water, and they all turned to me.

"Zhang Chao, it's you?!"

Zhao Zichen was extremely shocked to see me. His men behind him had to pick their jaws off the floor.

I could understand how they were feeling. If I was in their position—trapped in this fire—and Zhao Zichen came to save me, I might even fall to my knees in supplication. Anyone would feel small and weak when facing death.

"There's no time to explain. The firefighters weren't moving fast enough. How are your men?"

"Ergouzi fainted, but everyone else is fine. We were locked up by Jiang Ming's men,"

Zhao Zichen said, bringing me to the locked gate. The smoke here was so thick that we covered our noses and did not dare to talk. This smoke was more fatal than the fire.

I took a look. Damn it, this U-lock was thicker than a child's arm.

No wonder the firefighters needed to get hydraulic cutters. There was no way to get these open by hand.

When I came out of the water, I still had some beads of water on me. Now that the water had evaporated, I could feel the burning heat of the flames licking at my back like long forked tongues.

I grit my teeth. I could no longer tell if it was sweat or water on my face.

Zhao Zichen took out his phone and typed a message out for me: "They used this lock on purpose. It can't be pried open. They want to kill us."

After typing this, his phone flashed and went black. The high temperature had shorted out the electronics.

I was seeing for myself the ruthlessness of Jiang Ming.

Gang violence was no laughing matter. Tong City had lost lives to gang violence in recent years, but that was nothing compared to Jiang Ming's viciousness.

He was like a hyena in the grasslands, sending chills down everyone's spine.

Zhao Zichen had no choice but to use sign language to speak to me. I was surprised to find out that he knew sign language.

"Grab a rod to pry it open."

Maybe they were under Zhao Zichen's orders. The other survivors of the Red Lanterns did not speak. While their faces were black with soot, no one seemed to be in any life-threatening danger.

I signed back in reply, "No need for such trouble. I'll deal with this lock."

Zhao Zichen frantically signed back, "Jiang Ming is so determined to kill me. How can you break this lock?"

I did not say anything, reaching into my pocket and taking out a bunch of keys. Before they became too hot to hold, I quickly straightened a small wire connected to the keys and stabbed it into the U-lock. I jiggled it around a few times, and the lock opened.

Zhao Zichen was still frozen in place and could not react when the gate opened.

I waved at everyone to move, and they started reacting. We could talk when we were safely outside. I took them back the same way I came. After swimming through the ditch, we ran through the smoke in our wet clothes.

Soon, the main gates of the park appeared before us. The firefighters had finished their preparations and were ready to enter and save us.

Cheering erupted from the main gates. Everyone was so happy that the people were rescued, that they did not seem to care whether the fire continued to burn.

Several people rushed forward to pour water on me, and to give me water to drink. The fire chief was so grateful that he thanked me profusely and bowed so low to me that he almost touched the ground. Just then, Zhao Zichen mumbled, "Damn..."