

Ability 61

Chapter 61: A Handprint on the Heavenly Spirit Cover! (Part 2)

Zhang Zheng: ?

Wang Kai: ?

It's already strange enough to be electrocuted out of nowhere, but how can the position of the electric shock resemble a handprint?

"I've been a forensic doctor for over thirty years and seen countless corpses, including many electrocuted ones. The appearance of electric shock wounds can be quite unusual, but this handprint-like one is the first I've encountered. It's really strange."

"Of course, it's not truly a handprint, just abstractly resembles one since the bones are disintegrated and there's no palm pattern."

"Still, the world is full of wonders. Though rare, it's understandable. Two years ago, a person overseas was electrocuted and their cancer disappeared."

Zhang Zheng: ...

Wang Kai: ...

Who wouldn't find it strange?

However, neither they nor Forensic Doctor Wang connected this handprint-like electric shock wound to Lin Beichen, nor did they link it to a person.

Think about what?

Think about a person emitting electricity?

Think about a university student electrocuting a human trafficker's head, leaving a handprint?

If someone had such ideas, their brain might have been electrocuted.

"And, to electrocute a corpse like this isn't something a regular electric shock device could achieve. Besides, there's no other trauma on the body, and no high-voltage electricity around. There's only one possibility: a lightning strike. Although a lightning strike typically causes more severe injuries, if it hits at the point of dissipation, it might not be so severe."

"Anyway, he indeed died from electrocution. From the fatal injuries, there's no possibility of human interference, just... retribution, deserved."

After Forensic Doctor Wang hung up the phone for a while.

Zhang Zheng glanced out the window.

The dark gray clouds were even heavier now, and the accumulated rain was already coming down, the drops hitting the window.

At that moment, a flash of lightning streaked across the black sky like veins.

"Boom—!"

The thunder roared.

"A lightning strike?"

He felt the manner of death was truly bizarre.

Could it be...

Retribution?

Zhang Zheng stopped thinking about how Li Youquan died. Although his death was strange, the forensic doctor had already determined the cause of death. No matter how strange, it was settled.

Moreover...

Frankly speaking, Li Youquan was a human trafficker, worse than a murderer. Dead is dead, why question the forensic doctor's determination?

Why investigate the specific cause of his death?

He definitely wouldn't.

And police resources are precious; it's impossible to waste time on a dead human trafficker.

Moreover, he knew he had more important things to do—eliminate the human trafficker gang behind Li Youquan!

"Wang Kai, stay with your team and keep searching the surveillance footage, find that van with forged plates, see if we can get any useful information."

"Yes!"

"Also, Wang Kai, when our brothers were chasing Li Youquan's associates, did any of them get a look at their faces? Hurry up and confirm that."

"Already confirmed, Squad Leader Zhang."

Wang Kai shook his head and said confidently, "I've already asked around. They didn't manage to see their full faces, but some of the brothers saw the side profiles of two of them."

"Side profiles..."

Zhang Zheng thought for a moment and instructed, "Let the brothers who saw the traffickers' side profiles check the surveillance around the park, look for footage of Li Youquan's associates. Since they have strong anti-surveillance awareness, pay attention if they changed clothes. Those who saw their side profiles need to capture these images, where they're most likely to be off guard and expose themselves. Then get screenshots and try to restore clear headshots, compare with the database, or use any other method to quickly identify the rest of the trafficker gang. Only then can we proceed more effectively."

"Yes!"

"These human traffickers are extremely dangerous, a huge threat to every family. Each day they aren't caught, more families could be torn apart!"

Wang Kai understood Zhang Zheng's words, nodding solemnly.

Watching him leave the office, Zhang Zheng suddenly felt it necessary to report this to the director. If needed, support from the municipal bureau might be required for collaboration!

He picked up the landline and dialed: "Director..."

After reporting for a long while, Zhang Zheng's face suddenly fell: "Really, Director, he was struck by lightning. The forensic doctor confirmed it, I'm also very surprised, but it is indeed retribution."

Clearly, the director was shocked, not expecting such a coincidence. Nonetheless, there's no need to delve into it since the deceased was just a human trafficker.

After conversing a bit more, Zhang Zheng seemed to receive some orders, his expression turning serious. He quickly said, "You're right. This gang is very professional. Though the human trafficker's death doesn't directly relate to Lin Beichen, we can't rule out them targeting Lin Beichen for revenge. I'll arrange for someone to secretly protect Lin Beichen to ensure his safety during this time."

Moments later, hanging up, Zhang Zheng hastily called his subordinates and instructed, "Immediately assign an officer to secretly protect Lin Beichen."

"Understood, I'll go at once!"

...

At the same time.

After sending Zhou Ya back to school, Lin Beichen had returned to his dormitory.

As soon as he sat down, Han Yuan approached, circling around him and clicking his tongue, "Beichen, you really disappointed me. I thought you wouldn't come back tonight."

"..."

Lin Beichen gave him a speechless look without replying. Everything that happened today left him exhausted. After a quick wash, he climbed into bed.

This left Han Yuan puzzled.

"Not tired, buddy?"

Han Yuan looked up at Lin Beichen on the bed, asking with extreme envy and yearning, "Was today really that thrilling?"

"It was indeed thrilling."

Reflecting on today's events, Lin Beichen felt even more tired. As sleepiness overcame him, he couldn't hear Han Yuan chirping beside his ear anymore and quickly fell asleep.

When he opened his eyes.

He still heard Han Yuan's chirping voice.

If not for the bright sunshine outside the window, he would have thought he hadn't slept at all and just blinked.

Lin Beichen leaned over the bed and looked down. The three roommates gathered, with Han Yuan pointing and gesturing at a phone among them.

"What are you guys doing?"

"Oh, look who's awake!"

Han Yuan smiled mischievously.

The three roommates looked up at Lin Beichen, with expressions praising him: "Good job, you didn't embarrass us."

Lin Beichen: ?

What's going on?

Am I still dreaming?

Seeing his puzzled look, Han Yuan brought the phone to his face, teasingly saying, "Big hero, you're famous again."

"Famous?"

Lin Beichen moved his head back, looking at the phone screen almost hitting his face.

It was the class group.

The counselor had posted an announcement—

[Around 6 PM yesterday, Lin Beichen from Class 1 of Year 23 Physics, encountered a human trafficker forcefully abducting a child in Xiaoqianmen Park. Upon discovering this, he immediately chased after the trafficker and later assisted the Xiaoqianmen police in capturing the human trafficker.]

[Early this morning, the abducted child's parents specially sent a banner and a thank-you letter, and Xiaoqianmen police station called to commend Lin Beichen for his heroic act at a critical moment.]

[Lin Beichen's deeds exemplify the socialist core values, promote Huaxia's traditional virtues, strongly convey social positivity, and fully reflect the noble moral character and profound sense of social responsibility of contemporary university students.]

[Hereby, Lin Beichen is commended for his bravery, hoping all students will learn from him!]

"Lin Beichen is so brave, I really like him!"

"Oh my, look at Lin Beichen, not only is he good at studying, but he also has a good heart, truly outstanding."

"Where's Xiaoqianmen Park? Why did Lin Beichen go there? Studying?"

"Young hero, that's Lin Beichen."

"..."

Messages from classmates appeared one after another, like a barrage in a livestream.

Lin Beichen never expected.

Never expected this incident to reach the school so quickly.

Never expected the child's parents to ignore his advice and deliver a banner and thank-you letter so fast. Did they have the banner made overnight?

Even the police station called.

Isn't it supposed to be good news travels slowly, bad news travels fast? Why is it different for me?

Chapter 62: I Only Look at Lightning Protection

"It's not just our class that posted an announcement."

Han Yuan looked at Lin Beichen and added, "The school leaders asked the advisors of all grades and majors to post in every class group, to publicize your heroic deeds."

"What heroism? Just because others say it, you follow along?"

Lin Beichen stared at him speechlessly.

His three roommates wouldn't let him off the hook, bombarding him with questions. After finally dealing with them, he left the dormitory, thinking that the electric elements in the atmosphere remained relatively rich following the thunderstorm, and decided to take advantage of the time to

refine his liver in his secret little world. On the way there, he had a feeling that his liver training at school would not go as smoothly as before.

"Lin Beichen from Class 23 of Physics was involved in a clever and brave confrontation with a human trafficker yesterday at around six in the evening. He assisted the police in apprehending the trafficker. For his valuable act of bravery, we are praising him and hope that all the teachers and students of our school can learn from Lin Beichen..."

The broadcast on campus continually emitted the warm and comforting sound of a broadcasting student.

Posting group announcements in every class wasn't enough; campus radio also got in on the action.

Lin Beichen, as the top scorer with full marks in the college entrance exam, was already well-known in school. Now, he was known throughout Imperial Capital University.

"Look, isn't that Lin Beichen?"

"Hey, did you see that guy saying hi to others? Yeah, that's Lin Beichen."

"..."

Every few steps, Lin Beichen encountered students recognizing him, greeting him, and even following him for a while to chat. For a moment, he felt like a celebrity.

Seeing more and more people gather around him as he walked, Lin Beichen realized that he probably wouldn't go to his secret world for liver training today. He turned back to the dormitory, deciding to go out tomorrow when the hype had died down.

Moreover, just as he expected, in the following days, he wasn't as popular or as pursued; the students became calmer day by day.

Despite this, he still often encountered students greeting him or chatting with him along the way.

Finally making it to his secret world and starting liver training...

Frequently, students would pass by.

Previously, when students didn't recognize him, they might not care and leave directly, but now that they knew him, they naturally wouldn't ignore him and would focus on him.

Several times...

Passing students happened to see him in pain from liver training, got frightened and kindly called the school doctor, creating a big misunderstanding.

Frequent unexpected situations made him realize that his previous premonition had become reality.

Moreover...

Imperial Capital University hadn't had any thunderstorms nearby for several days, the campus electric elements were almost completely dissipated and hard to find.

Lin Beichen knew he couldn't go on like this, it was too disruptive. After some thought, he decided to leave campus and find a place outside to train his liver.

Dormitory 207.

Lin Beichen sat in front of his computer, checking the weather in various areas of the Imperial Capital. Since he was going to train his liver outside the campus, the best place would naturally be where thunderstorm weather prevailed.

"Hey?"

At this moment, his eyes lit up.

Imperial Capital's distant suburb, Yunmi County, would have thunderstorms starting the day after tomorrow and lasting for more than a week.

"Lasting a week? This is a great opportunity, rare indeed."

Lin Beichen decided to take leave for a period and go to Yunmi County to train his liver, staying until the thunderstorms ended, using this weather to push his liver training to the next level.

However, Yunmi County was quite large, so where exactly should he go?

He began to search.

It hardly took any effort before he decided on the place.

Wuling Mountain!

Wuling Mountain is located at the northeastern border of Yunmi County, near Longxing County in Beihai Province. It mainly consists of forests, with towering mountains and peaks as the backbone, clear streams and pools as the veins. It was once a Feng Shui forbidden land of the Qing Dynasty, sealed off for 260 years.

Lin Beichen felt it was the perfect place for his liver training.

At this moment, Liang Dong's voice rang above his head.

"Beichen, are you planning to go to Wuling Mountain for fun?"

"Yes, I want to take a look."

Lin Beichen nodded. Liang Dong didn't ask further and turned to do something else.

Lin Beichen thought about it; if he were to go to Wuling Mountain for at least a week, he definitely needed to prepare some supplies and equipment. Online shopping might not guarantee timely delivery, and if there were any issues with logistics, the goods might not arrive before departure, which would be a real problem.

Offline shopping is the safest bet.

Guaranteed to avoid any issues.

He glanced at the time; it was already past six in the evening.

Thinking that Yunmi County wouldn't start raining until the day after tomorrow, he still had the whole next day to prepare and wasn't in a hurry. He started to make a list to follow for tomorrow's shopping.

Tent, moisture-proof mat, gas stove...

The list was quickly completed.

The next morning, Lin Beichen left the dormitory with the list.

However, he was so focused on shopping that he didn't notice a man tailing him as soon as he left the dormitory, following him until he took a cab at the school gate. The man quickly got into a black Volkswagen parked at the school gate for several days and followed him.

This man wasn't a bad person, but Xu Wenliang, the police officer sent by Zhang Zheng to protect Lin Beichen secretly.

These days, while protecting Lin Beichen secretly, he naturally noticed some of his eccentric behaviors, feeling a bit puzzled internally. However, he wasn't here to monitor Lin Beichen as a suspect, and as it wasn't a criminal act, he didn't want to delve deeply. He simply thought: Indeed, he couldn't comprehend the world of geniuses.

However, pacing around the dormitory building every day while staying put, he gained a deeper impression of Lin Beichen——

Otaku!

Soon, the cab arrived at the largest department store in the Imperial Capital.

As soon as he walked in, he was greeted by a cacophony of noise.

Although it was a weekday, the mall was quite crowded.

There was noisy chatter and persistent announcements.

"High-end clothing at cost price, only ten bucks profit per piece, the lowest price in the entire mall!"

"Same brand, same quality, half the price, take your time to buy!"

"Two bucks each, grab anything for just two bucks!"

"..."

Lin Beichen walked amidst the bustling crowd, listening to the shouting, searching for the most important item on his list — a tent.

Soon, he found a store selling bags, which also sold tents.

The shop owner saw Lin Beichen standing in front of his store and thought there was business coming, quickly got up to greet him warmly, "Bro, do you want to buy a suitcase or a backpack? Come in and take a look."

Lin Beichen walked into the shop, looked at the tents, and said, "Boss, I want to buy a tent."

Upon hearing that he wanted to buy a tent, the shop owner got excited.

This was not only a business opportunity but a big one.

Tents had a much higher profit margin than bags; selling one tent could make the day.

"Dude, I have spring tents, Mongolian tents, pyramid tents, hiking tents, park tents, you name it. Which one do you want?"

Clearly, his warmer attitude reflected his enthusiasm changed by calling Lin Beichen with more excitement.

Lin Beichen didn't know much about tents. Faced with so many options, he wasn't sure how to choose and directly stated his requirements.

"The tent needs to be easy to carry and very waterproof."

Lin Beichen finished talking, seeming to remember something and added: "Oh, and there's one very important point, the tent must be able to resist lightning strikes."

He was going to absorb electric elements from the atmosphere to refine his liver, not to get struck by lightning. Perhaps in the future, he would master Thunder Skill and be immune to lightning strikes, but definitely not now. One strike from lightning in his current state would surely be fatal.

The shop owner: ?

Resist lightning strikes??

He had encountered customers with demands before, but asking for a tent to resist lightning strikes was a first for him.

Chapter 63: The Police's Suspicions

But this wasn't a problem for the backpack store owner.

Selling stuff just relies on a good sales pitch!

Having been in this department store for years, he had long mastered the skill of turning black into white and vice versa.

"This tent should be the one then."

The backpack store owner picked up a packed tent with one hand and started to introduce it: "This hiking tent is very portable as you can see, easy to set up, and has a sturdy structure. Plus, it's a double-layer tent, with the outer layer using the United States waterproof technology. Even in a heavy rain, it won't leak. As for thunder protection, young man, let me tell you the honest truth, if anyone tells you their tent is thunder-proof, they are just deceiving you. No tent nowadays is thunder-proof. However, this tent's frame is made of aluminum, which is highly conductive. If, by any small chance, although it's very unlikely, the tent does get struck by lightning, this tent would be safer than others. What do you think?"

There are no customer demands that he cannot meet, or rather, that he cannot smooth over with some convincing.

However, what he said was not exactly an exaggeration.

He was being pretty realistic.

Lin Beichen thought about it and felt satisfied, so he asked, "Boss, how much is this tent?"

Seeing Lin Beichen asking about the price, the store owner immediately deduced that he was inexperienced and rarely went out shopping, instantly judging that this kid in front of him was a ripe opportunity for a good swindle!

"This tent usually sells for 1288, but seeing that you're a student, I'll give you a cost price..."

Looking at Lin Beichen, his eyes lit up with the excitement of seeing money coming his way. With a pained expression, he said through gritted teeth, "808 it is, a fortune for both of us!"

The product was good, and he had no qualms about ripping people off!

The store owner's purchase price for the tent was just over three hundred, and it usually sold for over five hundred.

Lin Beichen laughed happily and said, "Boss, can you round it down?"

The store owner also laughed happily, thinking to himself, kid, the department store is deep water, you can't grasp it!

"Round off, huh..."

"Yes."

Lin Beichen nodded, "How about 88?"

After saying this, he laughed even more happily.

The store owner stopped laughing, his smile frozen.

"???"

He looked at Lin Beichen in utter confusion and somewhat angrily said, "Kid, you must be joking. I've been in business for decades, and this is the first time I've heard of rounding off from the middle."

"Boss, you were the one joking first."

Lin Beichen, having lived two lives, had plenty of experience and was not easy prey for the store owner.

"Give me a real price."

"..."

The store owner, feeling a bit guilty after Lin Beichen's words, finally realized that this kid in front of him was not to be underestimated.

"Pal, seeing that you're a savvy guy, I'll be honest, 666, for good luck, selling it at a loss to you."

"300."

"Eh?"

The store owner looked pained and said with a wry smile, "Pal, who haggles like that? This isn't just halving the price, you're cutting more than half off. This is impossible, 500, I really can't go any lower, any less and it's a loss!"

"350."

"450!"

The store owner tightened his grip on the tent, feeling nervous.

This time, Lin Beichen didn't immediately counteroffer. He wandered around the store, observing the store owner's state. Just when the owner thought he was going to agree on the price, Lin Beichen made another offer.

"380."

"400!!"

The store owner's eyes reddened; he found that this kid was even tougher to bargain with than those old ladies!

"Kid, 400, I really can't go any lower. The cost price of this tent is 400, if I sell for less, I'll lose money, might as well not sell it."

"390."

Lin Beichen added ten more.

The store owner didn't hesitate, simply waving his hand: "Not selling, not selling, I just won't sell it."

"Boss, are you really just 10 yuan short?"

"Kid, are you really just 10 yuan short?"

The store owner looked helpless, "400, if you want it, take it. If not, look elsewhere. I dare say no other store has tents as good as mine at this price. I'm already losing money selling it to you at 400."

"Then I'll look elsewhere."

Lin Beichen pretended to leave.

Store owner: ???

He didn't expect Lin Beichen to just leave like that, why wasn't he playing along?

Forget it!

The store owner thought about it and realized that even if he sold it, the profit margin was negligible. He became indifferent to the whole situation.

Lin Beichen wasn't really planning to leave. Seeing the store owner's state, he knew the price couldn't go any lower, so he smiled and said, "Never mind, it's too hot to shop around, 400 it is. Boss, please pack it for me."

"Okay."

The store owner, with no joy or sorrow left, spent all that effort just to sell it at cost price, what kind of reaction could he have?

Soon, the tent was packed.

Lin Beichen thanked him and left the store to buy the other items on his list.

...

The further Lin Beichen walked, the more he felt something was off, but he couldn't figure out what.

Until...

While haggling over a moisture-proof mat in another store.

Suddenly it hit him.

He overpaid for the tent and should have haggled more.

Instantly, his bargaining skill skyrocketed. By the time he left the store with the mat, the shopkeeper looked as if he'd just escaped a disaster, barely refraining from closing up shop right then and there.

Lin Beichen thought, now that's the proper reaction.

To compensate for the "loss" from the tent, he haggled fiercely in every store. By the time he finished gathering all the items on his list...

The entire department store knew:

A harmless-looking guy, possibly a student, was a ruthless bargainer, tougher than any bargaining granny, refusing to relent until he almost had the shopkeepers at a loss!

Of course, Lin Beichen was unaware of this reputation.

With a wave of his hand, he disappeared, leaving no trace.

When he returned to his dorm with the tent and bags of items, it was already evening.

His roommates were all in the dorm.

Seeing his haul,

Han Yuan couldn't help joking, "Beichen, did you go for some zero-cost shopping spree? How come you brought back so much stuff?"

Liang Dong spotted the tent and understood, asking in confusion, "Wait, Beichen, do you really need all this just to go to Wuling Mountain?"

"Wuling Mountain?"

Han Yuan and Wu You were hearing this for the first time, looking surprised.

Han Yuan asked, "You mean Wuling Mountain in Yunmi County?"

Wu You wondered, "Yunmi County? That's quite far. Why suddenly go there?"

"To study thunder."

Lin Beichen had already started packing, not even lifting his head, "Wuling Mountain is going to have thunderstorms for at least a week starting tomorrow, so I'll be there for a while, maybe a week, so I prepared more stuff."

Roommates: ...

They didn't think much of Lin Beichen's thunder research, knowing he was into that and had even mentioned it to the principal at the start of school.

But the duration...

They were envious.

A whole week!

At Imperial Capital University, if anyone could skip classes without getting scolded, and even have the professors' approval, it would be their roommate!

...

Meanwhile, in a car outside the school gate.

"A tent that's thunder-proof, what's he up to?"

"Doesn't he have to study? I rarely see him in class, always sitting around in a daze..."

Xu Wenliang sat in the car, musing over the day's observations, becoming more puzzled by the minute.

When he first met Lin Beichen, he thought the kid was a top student, humble and low-key.

But as he continued to observe secretly, he found the kid a bit strange!

But exactly how, he couldn't pinpoint.

Xu Wenliang found Lin Beichen puzzling but didn't dwell on it too much, as his job was to protect Lin Beichen from retaliation by criminal gangs, not to spy on or pry into his life.

"Let's report Lin Beichen's situation to the bureau first."

Chapter 64: Requesting Leave to Seek Enlightenment

Downstairs the dormitory building.

Xu Wenliang sat on the flower bed opposite the dormitory building, calling his team leader.

Lin Beichen had not left the school for several days, nor had he seen any suspicious persons, so Xu Wenliang hadn't reported anything.

Six days have passed.

Thinking it was time for a periodic report since Lin Beichen finally left the school today, he made the call.

Soon, the call connected and Wang Kai's voice came through.

"Hello, Liangzi, what's up, any updates?"

"Reporting to the team leader, there's no major situation."

Xu Wenliang heard a lot of noise on the other end, and Wang Kai sounded hurried. Realizing his leader might be busy, he got straight to the point: "Lin Beichen stayed on campus these past few days. Initially, he would occasionally go to secluded places around the school for unknown reasons, sometimes behaving strangely, showing signs of sudden pain. I thought he might be under attack from a distance or drugged, but later found this wasn't the case. Several times, students brought in the school doctor after seeing him like that, and they found nothing wrong. Since then, he's mostly stayed in. Today, he left school, went to a department store, and bought a bunch of camping gear. I don't know what he's up to, but he's back in the dorm now."

Strange behavior?

Bought a tent?

Wang Kai was puzzled for a moment, but then dismissed his doubts. Those were personal matters, nothing worth focusing on.

"As long as Lin Beichen's life isn't threatened, nothing else matters."

Having done the calculation, Wang Kai added, "Today should be the sixth day. If the traffickers wanted revenge, they should have struck already. We can almost lift the threat on Lin Beichen. Continue to protect him discreetly for a little longer, then report back before dusk tomorrow. We have a new development in the elimination operation and need more manpower."

The elimination operation referred to was targeting the human trafficker gang behind Li Youquan.

"Yes!"

Xu Wenliang responded.

The call just ended.

He saw Lin Beichen exiting the dormitory building and quickly followed him.

He followed all the way to the sixth teaching building.

Lin Beichen went straight to the third floor, knocked on the counselor's office door, and went in after hearing "Come in" from inside.

The counselor seemed to be surprised to see Lin Beichen, but quickly showed a very kind smile and asked gently, "Lin Beichen, what brings you here? Is there a problem?"

This was the genius who scored full marks in the college entrance exam, and also a brave young man. As his counselor, she was very proud of him.

"Counselor, I need to leave for a few days, so I would like to ask for leave."

Lin Beichen didn't really want to ask for leave, as he hadn't even attended classes since the start of term.

But this time was different. He would be leaving campus for more than a week. If he left without notice, it would be discovered during checks, causing more trouble than asking for leave.

"Leaving?"

The counselor didn't immediately grant the leave, asking, "Lin Beichen, where are you going? How many days?"

It was fine to ask for leave, but since it involved going out, she needed to know the details, as the school was responsible for students' safety.

"Wuling Mountain, probably about a week, maybe longer."

"Wuling Mountain in Yunmi County?"

Seeing Lin Beichen nod, the counselor asked, "That place, though scenic, can be fully explored in two or three days. You're asking for a week off? This..."

Seeing her determination to get to the bottom of it, Lin Beichen laid his cards on the table, ambiguously saying, "Counselor, it's not really a trip. From tomorrow, Wuling Mountain will have thunderstorms for over a week. I plan to study the natural phenomenon of lightning."

Research lightning?

Sure enough, the counselor was dazed for a moment but quickly remembered that Lin Beichen had mentioned lightning research when applying to Imperial Capital University.

No wonder he was a genius with full marks, his dedication was exceptional!

She wondered what he had achieved after such long research...

Could he make a name in the scientific community?

As his counselor, she felt a shared sense of pride and hope for his success.

"Alright, no problem."

She didn't hesitate, promptly issued a leave note, and advised, "Make sure to stay safe on the mountain, research is fine but don't get hurt. Or else, I won't approve such leave next time."

"Yes, I understand. Thank you, counselor."

Lin Beichen took the leave note, said goodbye, and left the office, heading back to the dormitory.

Xu Wenliang didn't know what he did in the office, and didn't care much, as long as Lin Beichen was safe. He followed him back to the dormitory building.

"One more day of protection, report back before dusk."

Thinking this, he watched through the night.

Early next morning, he saw Lin Beichen leaving the dormitory with a lot of bags.

"Early departure today?"

Xu Wenliang didn't think much, it was his last day of protection, he just followed.

Lin Beichen walked among the students heading to class with books and snacks, heading in the opposite direction to the school gate.

Several coaches were parked at the gate.

Xu Wenliang watched him board a blue coach.

The coach was a medium-sized tourist bus, with a white rectangular sign in the lower right corner of the window, reading "Imperial Capital University — Wuling Mountain Special Line" in red letters.

"Wuling Mountain?"

"Lin Beichen is going to Wuling Mountain?"

Xu Wenliang was briefly surprised, thinking no wonder he bought a tent and other camping gear yesterday—he was going camping at Wuling Mountain.

But soon, he realized an issue.

If he continued to follow Lin Beichen to Wuling Mountain, he couldn't return before dusk, let alone report back to the police.

Xu Wenliang quickly decided, given the urgent need for manpower for the elimination operation, considering the threat to Lin Beichen had been lifted, and not having seen any suspicious persons for days. Even he only just learned that Lin Beichen was going to Wuling Mountain, so he wouldn't follow him there.

However, he didn't leave immediately.

He continued to observe the surroundings and scrutinize people boarding the coach until it departed, finding nothing suspicious. Only then did he drive away.

Chapter 65: Seeking the Way in the Deep Mountains and Police Investigation

...

It's about 150 kilometers from the Imperial Capital University to Wuling Mountain.

The bus sped all the way and, after more than three hours, finally arrived within the range of Wuling Mountain.

At this moment, outside the bus.

The sky was overcast, thin dark clouds gradually gathered with the wind, and occasionally a bright flash appeared in the sky, accompanied by the rumble of distant thunder.

The mountains stretched majestically, surrounded by lush greenery and shrouded in mist, looking just like in Wang Wei's poetry: Boundaries among peaks change, differing ravines under different skies.

"Not late at all."

Lin Beichen looked at the weather outside the window with a bright mood. He took out his phone, snapped a photo, and sent it to the consistently lively dorm group chat.

——[F4 Boy Group]——

Lin Beichen: "Picture.JPG."

Lin Beichen: "I'm at Wuling Mountain, should be getting off in about ten minutes."

Han Yuan: "???"

Han Yuan: "I'm envious, really envious!"

Liang Dong: "The scenery looks great, I'll have to visit sometime."

Han Yuan: "@Lin Beichen, Wu You is watching a show and can't type, he asked me to tell you not to send such hate-inducing photos if you're bored."

Wu You: "..."

Lin Beichen: "..."

Lin Beichen, having nothing else to do, chatted with his dorm mates to pass the time.

Chatting happily.

Suddenly!

"Screech——!!"

With a sharp brake, the entire bus lurched forward.

Unprepared, he watched his phone, just in his hand a second ago, form a perfect arc and crash onto the front door handrail as the bus stopped.

"Crack——"

Not just the sound of the phone breaking, but also the sound of Lin Beichen's heart shattering.

"Driver, what are you doing?"

"My glasses, they're broken!"

"Seriously, driver, there's no car around. Why did you brake suddenly?!"

"So annoying, I think I bumped my head!"

"..."

Dissatisfied and angry voices instantly filled the bus.

Lin Beichen didn't say anything, he got up to find his phone. Without even taking a close look, he could already pronounce it dead at a glance.

The screen was shattered beyond recognition, the battery almost popped out.

It was a brand new Fruit 14 Promax he bought after his college entrance exams!

Lin Beichen felt he hadn't even gotten over the novelty of it yet.

Just then, the driver's apologetic voice rose above everyone's: "I'm really sorry, everyone. A state-recognized Grade II protected monkey suddenly jumped out of the shrubbery. My immediate reaction was to hit the brakes hard. I apologize, sincerely."

Seeing Lin Beichen's broken phone, the driver added: "Regarding everyone's losses... We'll discuss compensation with the park management once we reach the destination to ensure you're all satisfied."

Sometimes it's all about attitude.

Seeing the driver's sincere and proactive response, the passengers, being students from the Imperial Capital University, high in civility, didn't press further.

Lin Beichen thought to himself, just my luck, shaking his head and returning to his seat.

The bus grew silent again.

The bus set off once more and soon arrived at the destination. The driver got off and discussed with the park manager. They decided not only to compensate for the losses but also to waive the admission fees.

This solution was unanimously approved.

Everyone was happy.

Seeing the compensation hit his payment account, Lin Beichen left pleased, enjoying half a year's worth of phone usage for free, comfortably.

After leaving.

He didn't rush to go down the mountain and buy a phone, no hurry. After all, he came to toughen up, not for a vacation. It didn't matter if he didn't have a phone.

What's urgent now is to find a secluded spot to set up his tent before it starts to rain.

As he ventured deeper into the mountains.

Xiaoqian Police Station.

Several officers sat in front of the surveillance footage, continuously drawing on the map of the Imperial Capital, their expressions growing more excited and resolute.

After roughly half an hour, each officer's eyes brightened, nodding to each other.

Then, one officer, holding the map, found Wang Kai and said: "Team leader, we have a new lead."

Over the past few days of checking, the images of two members of the human trafficker gang were almost fully restored. Wang Kai was doing a database comparison when he heard the new lead, he quickly asked, "What did you find?"

"Through monitoring analyses and the cross-analysis of the fake license plate van's movements, we can pretty much confirm the gang's hideout is in Yunmi County!"

As he spoke, the officer laid out the Imperial Capital map on the table, pointing to the marked areas: "We then reviewed the surveillance footage of the fake license plate van in Yunmi County, noticing it disappeared for extended periods in several spots. After careful study, we believe this is the most likely hiding area."

Wang Kai followed where he was pointing.

Wuling Mountain!

"Wuling Mountain?"

"Yes."

The officer nodded, explaining: "Among all the potential locations, Wuling Mountain is where they were longest off the radar. Although a tourist spot, it is largely undeveloped, with vast untouched areas, ideal for hiding. Additionally, it lies at a geographical crossroads between the Imperial Capital and Beihai Province. If they fled to Beihai Province, it would become an interstate case, complicating our investigation."

Wang Kai thought carefully about everything he said and finally nodded: "Makes sense. Wuling Mountain is indeed the most likely hideout."

Then he pointed to the other marked spots, continuing: "However, we can't overlook these suspicious locations either. A cunning gang like this could have multiple hideouts."

"Yes, sir!"

Time flew by, soon reaching noon amidst the busyness.

Having a quick lunch, all officers returned to their desks, continuing with the case.

Wandering through the offices, Wang Kai, holding his boxed lunch, suddenly saw an unexpected figure, puzzled, he approached and patted his shoulder: "Liangzi, why are you back at noon? Isn't your reporting time in the evening?"

The figure was Xu Wenliang.

Seeing Wang Kai, he smiled: "Team leader, I came back early. I wanted to report to you, but you were too busy, so I joined the guys in their work first."

Finishing his report: "I was supposed to protect Lin Beichen for another half a day, but he left for Wuling Mountain early this morning. Considering our busy schedule and his safe period being over, I figured half a day wouldn't matter and returned ahead of time. Before leaving, I did confirm..."

As Xu Wenliang was reporting, Wang Kai's mind was stuck on one word—Wuling Mountain.

This morning, they identified the most likely hideout for the traffickers...

Is Wuling Mountain??

Why go now of all times?

If the traffickers are indeed in Wuling Mountain...

Isn't he walking right into danger?

As Wang Kai contemplated what to do.

The officer from yesterday rushed in with the Imperial Capital map.

Seeing his excited and joyful smile, Wang Kai had a bad feeling.

Before he could ponder more.

The officer reported: "Team leader, mission accomplished. After an overnight analysis, we can confirm the trafficker gang's hideout is indeed in Wuling Mountain!"

Chapter 66: Uncertainty and Shock! Lin Beichen Researching Thunder?

Wang Kai: ...

This really is running straight into trouble.

His heart was a bundle of mixed feelings. He was glad that the hiding place of the human trafficker gang had finally been roughly determined, and they could now focus on deploying their efforts. However, he also felt anxious and helpless as this hiding place completely overlapped with Lin Beichen's whereabouts!

"Wuling Mountain?"

Xu Wenliang was stunned for a moment, then he reacted and exclaimed, "The place Lin Beichen went to is Wuling Mountain!"

Seeing Wang Kai nodding.

His heart was filled with regret and remorse, and he said self-reproachfully, "Team leader, I'm sorry, it's my fault. Had I known, I would have gotten on the bus with Lin Beichen and gone to Wuling Mountain together with him. This way I could have protected him. Now he... sigh!"

"Now is not the time to talk about this."

Wang Kai patted his shoulder, comforting him, "Don't mention that we have only roughly determined that the human traffickers' lair is in Wuling Mountain. Even if it is completely confirmed, Wuling Mountain is so big; they might not necessarily run into Lin Beichen. The urgent matter at hand is to inform Lin Beichen and have him return to school as soon as possible. If he wants to travel, he can wait until after we catch these human traffickers."

As he spoke, he quickly found the inquiry record from Lin Beichen at that time and then dialed the phone number left on it.

"Sorry, the number you dialed is not reachable at the moment. Please try again later..."

The message from the phone sounded like a hook, tugging at the nerves of every police officer present.

Of all times, they couldn't reach him now?

This inevitably led them to more bad associations!

For a moment, the expressions of the police officers present were not very good.

Wang Kai, unwilling to give up, tried dialing several times from different locations, but each time the response was the same emotionless message.

"Sorry, the number you dialed is not reachable at the moment. Please try again later..."

The expressions of the police officers grew increasingly grim.

The atmosphere at the scene became more and more oppressive and somber.

At this moment, a police officer briskly ran up to Wang Kai and excitedly said, "Team leader, there you are, I've been looking for you. I've got good news for you."

He was previously involved with Wang Kai in the identity confirmation work of the human traffickers.

Upon hearing him speak of good news.

Wang Kai felt his heart suddenly race, but before he could process it further, the officer began to report.

"Those two human traffickers have had their identities confirmed through big data comparison!"

"They are truly not ordinary people!"

"Zou Huaide, 33 years old, a suspect in the major serial murder case in Guang Province five years ago, currently a fugitive."

"Li Wangxin, 35 years old, from Hei Province, cruelly murdered a neighbor's family of three over trivial matters three years ago, didn't even spare their dog. He is also currently a fugitive."

"I contacted the criminal police who investigated these two cases and conducted inquiries about these two individuals. Through the inquiries, it was found that they have many similarities."

"Both of these human traffickers are extremely brutal, their methods of killing are horrifying, and they are very meticulous. Not only have they managed to evade capture for so many years, but they also clean up the crime scenes and eliminate traces of their crimes. Besides, they have immense psychological resilience. The criminal police in charge of these cases had visited them for investigation, but according to their recollection, these two individuals showed no signs of being suspects, not the slightest bit suspicious."

Listening to his report.

The police officers present felt their hearts sink lower and lower.

They did not expect these human traffickers to have such a past; they were both ruthless murderers with multiple lives on their hands.

One a murderer in Guang Province, one a murderer in Hei Province...

How did these two from completely different regions come together?

And start trafficking children?

The police didn't understand.

But they understood that this human trafficker gang was far more complicated than they had imagined. At least, there were already two murderers among them, and the remaining four were probably no good either, not to mention there might be more accomplices who hadn't surfaced yet.

If, just if, Lin Beichen actually fell into their hands...

The mere thought sent chills down their spines, their hearts sank straight to the bottom.

For a moment, the atmosphere at the scene felt suffocating.

"However, although these two men have eluded capture over the years, they have left some traces. Based on cross-referencing their information, the first time they appeared together in the same time and place was two years ago. Since then, they have never appeared together again, only separately at different times and places. Still, the places they showed up were not far apart, essentially in the same region, until this time when they were seen together again. But apart from this time, their prior activities didn't seem to relate to human trafficking. Moreover, they seem to have close ties abroad, though it's unclear what exactly they're involved in..."

By this point, the officer had noticed the eerie atmosphere and spoke more quietly, finally asking cautiously, "T-team leader, did something happen? Is there a problem?"

"No problem, good work."

Wang Kai forced out an encouraging smile on his serious face and patted the officer on the shoulder.

By now, it wasn't just him; the other police officers.

After hearing the complete report, also sensed something was off.

"So Zou Huaide and Li Wangxin joined this human trafficker gang recently?"

"They have connections abroad? Does that mean the human trafficker gang is also connected abroad? Or just these two?"

"Do they still have ties abroad now?"

"We might need to upgrade the status of this human trafficker gang; they're not just any gang."

"..."

Everyone was discussing these matters.

Wang Kai didn't interrupt them because he also had doubts about these questions, letting them discuss in hopes of figuring things out.

Wang Kai knew the urgent matter now was to contact Lin Beichen, so he moved to a quieter place and tried calling Lin Beichen several more times.

Still couldn't get through.

"This can't go on."

Wang Kai grew increasingly anxious. Knowing more about the human traffickers made him worry more about Lin Beichen, even if there was no certainty that Lin Beichen would encounter them.

At this moment, he suddenly thought of something and quickly searched for a number, then dialed it.

"Hello."

Imperial Capital University President Hao Jianhua's voice came through.

Wang Kai promptly introduced himself and explained the situation, then asked, "President Hao, is there any other way to contact Lin Beichen?"

"Team Leader Wang, I will immediately ask Lin Beichen's counselor!"

Hao Jianhua had been sitting steadily on his chair but now stood up, his face serious and heavy.

Forget Lin Beichen; as the future star of Imperial Capital University, any student of the university being in great danger made him uneasy.

Parents sent their children to school expecting the school to be responsible and protective!

He took out his phone and directly called Lin Beichen's counselor.

Knowing the urgency, he skipped pleasantries and said directly, "Xiao Wang, do everything you can to contact Lin Beichen immediately, right now!"

"Ah... yes, yes!"

The counselor, pondering why the president had suddenly called, felt her heart skip a beat at his urgent tone, thinking Lin Beichen might be in trouble.

No time to think.

She quickly started trying to contact Lin Beichen, calling, sending WeChat and QQ voice messages, but couldn't reach him. Finally, even contacted Han Yuan and others, but they said Lin Beichen had stopped communicating in the dorm group hours ago and had no other contact numbers.

No one could reach him!

The counselor was almost in tears. She had casually approved a leave, and now he was missing!

"P-president, I can't reach Lin Beichen."

She said carefully, trying to comfort, either Hao Jianhua or herself, "It's probably fine? Lin Beichen said he was going to Wuling Mountain to research thunders for a week. He requested leave before going; maybe he's in an area with no signal?"

This was indirectly conveyed to Wang Kai.

Hearing this.

Wang Kai was stunned. Lin Beichen wasn't traveling; he went to Wuling Mountain for research?

Researching thunders?

Chapter 67: Various Parties Gather at Wuling Mountain!

For some reason, an image of Li Youquan's corpse appeared in Wang Kai's mind.

And that ridiculous electric shock palm seal...

But he didn't think much of it, assuming that the numerous discussions about Li Youquan's cause of death over the past two days had etched the term "thunder" deeply into his mind.

The pressing task now was to find Lin Beichen.

On the other side, Hao Jianhua, usually known for his gentle and good-natured demeanor, was also very agitated and angry, but didn't know who to blame in the moment.

After all...

Lin Beichen's "privileges" were approved by him.

"Principal Hao."

At this moment, Wang Kai called to him and said in a deep voice, "I will think of other ways. Please keep trying to contact student Lin Beichen from your side. If you reach him or have any situation, contact us at the police station immediately using this number."

"Yes, yes, I understand."

"Alright, thank you, Principal Hao."

With that, Wang Kai hung up the phone.

At this moment, he felt an overwhelming sense of despair, thinking, Lin Beichen just arrived at Wuling Mountain and then went missing... Is that just a coincidence? Could it really be such a coincidence?

He hoped it was just a coincidence, but he didn't quite believe it in his heart.

"Report it!"

Wang Kai found Zhang Zheng and explained the situation.

Zhang Zheng listened, his expression serious, and said, "It seems we didn't take this human trafficking gang seriously enough before. Now there's a murderer, and even frequent foreign contacts among them. We need to take this gang more seriously!"

Saying this, his expression turned a bit odd and he said, "Lin Beichen went to Wuling Mountain just to study thunder at this time?"

For the sake of scientific research, unknowingly putting himself in harm's way.

"Yes."

Wang Kai nodded helplessly.

At this moment, a police officer waiting in the office for a report muttered, "Lin Beichen studying thunder? That reminds me of Li Youquan."

"Hmm?"

Zhang Zheng looked at him in confusion.

The officer didn't expect his muttering to be heard, and explained awkwardly and panickedly, "Li Youquan was also struck by thunder, and now Lin Beichen is studying thunder. I just suddenly thought of connecting them."

"You've been dealing with Li Youquan's body and hearing 'thunder' too much over these past two days."

Wang Kai said speechlessly, "When I first heard about it, Li Youquan's body appeared in my mind too, but I didn't think of Lin Beichen."

Thunder? Li Youquan? Lin Beichen?

For a moment, Zhang Zheng was in a daze, vaguely feeling like he was grasping something, but couldn't quite figure out what.

"Strange..."

He shook his head to clear his scattered thoughts.

His eyes revealed contemplation as he said to Wang Kai, "Wuling Mountain is vast and the human trafficking gang has always been in hiding. It's unlikely for Lin Beichen to just run into them by chance. I think his disappearance is probably just a coincidence. However, regardless of whether Lin Beichen's disappearance is coincidental or not, we need to treat it as related to the gang. You should immediately take all available detectives and head to Wuling Mountain. I will contact the local police station there and have them cooperate with us to investigate and apprehend the human traffickers and find Lin Beichen to ensure his safety!"

"Yes!"

Wang Kai stood at attention and saluted, then hurried to carry out the orders without any delay.

Zhang Zheng watched him leave and then checked the area where Wuling Mountain is located before making a phone call to the Wuling Mountain police station.

"Hello, is this Director Li? This is the deputy captain of the criminal police, Zhang Zheng, from Xiaoqianmen Police Station."

"Hello, Captain Zhang, what's the matter?"

Li Dongqing was a bit puzzled, wondering why Xiaoqianmen Police Station, several districts away, was calling him.

However, his confusion quickly dissipated.

Zhang Zheng quickly explained the situation and said, "Director Li, I hope you can fully assist us in investigating and apprehending the human traffickers that might be in Wuling Mountain, and also find student Lin Beichen to protect his safety."

"No problem!"

Li Dongqing realized the gravity of the situation and agreed immediately, "Captain Zhang, send over the relevant information. I'll inform everyone and have them head to Wuling Mountain right away."

"Okay, I'll send it immediately."

Zhang Zheng solemnly thanked him before hanging up.

Meanwhile, as he was organizing the information to send to the Wuling Mountain police station...

The wailing of urgent police sirens rang out, and one police car after another, with flashing red and blue lights, sped away towards Wuling Mountain.

Zhang Zheng watched them disappear into the swirling dust and thought, "Hope everything goes well."

...

...

Wuling Mountain.

The sky was ominously dark, as if night was about to fall, although it was noon.

Layer upon layer of dark clouds covered the sky.

Short, thin lightning bolts occasionally flashed within the clouds.

The air was humid and oppressive.

The thunderstorm was imminent!

At this moment, outside the scenic area.

Deep within Wuling Mountain.

Ancient trees stood tall and thick, their roots entangled, their branches interwoven, making it hard for the scant light to penetrate the forest.

It was as dark as midnight within the forest.

Squirrels darted uneasily back and forth in the branches, and rabbits hopped and scurried through the undergrowth.

They created rustling sounds.

Lin Beichen, whom no one could contact, stumbled forward, heading for a higher piece of ground some distance away, which he had chosen for setting up his tent.

He could already smell the earthy scent in the air. He looked up at the sky, the clouds almost pressing down.

"I need to set up the tent quickly."

Lin Beichen quickened his pace and reached the clearing, then dragged the tent out of his backpack, spreading it out. He then ran the aluminum poles through the tent holes and set it up.

"I also need to secure the tent to the ground."

Lin Beichen began looking for large stones around him. How he wished his phone wasn't broken so he could use its flashlight.

But fortunately, he was in the mountains.

There were plenty of stones.

He quickly found a suitable stone and used it to secure the tent. He then efficiently set up the ground mat and other items.

Lin Beichen sat in front of the tent, satisfied with his work.

The rain came suddenly.

"Sssshhh—"

He stretched out his hand, feeling the drizzle fall on his palm, his mental realm becoming extraordinarily serene and relaxed.

Just then,

A massive lightning bolt tore through the dark sky, forming a leaf-vein pattern in the air before gradually fading.

"Craaack— —!!!!"

A deafening peal of thunder erupted!

The drizzle instantly turned into a downpour.

Retracting his hand, he thought, "Time to temper the liver. I haven't done it properly for days."

Without further ado,

Lin Beichen took a deep breath and began to perceive the electric element in nature.

The mountains were full of electric elements!

They were bouncing around!

"Indeed!"

"Thunderstorms are the best!"

His heart was full of joy.

However, the next moment,

As he tried to absorb the electric element,

"Hmm?????"

He frowned, showing a perplexed expression.

He found that...

The electric element that would normally converge into his body wasn't coming to him; instead, it surged towards a different direction.

It made absorbing the electric element very difficult!

"What's going on?"

"The electric elements are refusing to obey?"

This was the first time Lin Beichen had encountered such a situation.

After a brief hesitation, he decided to follow the electric elements and see where they were going.

Chapter 68: The Police Are Shocked, Someone Is Undergoing Tribulation???

At the same time.

The entire team of detectives from Wuling Mountain Police Station had quietly arrived at Wuling Mountain. To avoid alerting the suspects, they were all dressed in plain clothes. They headed straight to the service center of the Wuling Mountain Scenic Area to find the area's head.

At the same time.

The entire team of detectives from Wuling Mountain Police Station had quietly arrived at Wuling Mountain. To avoid alerting the suspects, they were all dressed in plain clothes. They headed straight to the service center of the Wuling Mountain Scenic Area to find the area's head.

"Hello, I'm Xiao Peng, the captain of the detective team at Wuling Mountain Police Station."

Xiao Peng immediately revealed his identity.

The person in charge of the scenic area was mumbling to himself about the bad weather and the relatively few tourists. First, he had to deal with a bus driver negotiating compensation, and now some young man wanted to see him. When he heard that the guy was the captain of the detective team, his attitude changed instantly, and he greeted Xiao Peng with a smiling face, saying, "Captain Xiao, hello, hello, what can I do for you?"

"We are investigating a case and wanted to know if you have seen these two people."

As he spoke, Xiao Peng took out the photos of Zou Huaide and Li Wangxin sent by Xiaoqianmen Police Station and handed them to the person in charge of the scenic area.

The person in charge of the scenic area took a close look at the photos, frowning slightly, eyes full of confusion and thought, mumbling, "These... look familiar. Where have I seen them before... where have I seen them?"

"Think carefully."

Xiao Peng's eyes lit up, confirming nervously, "Have you really seen them? Where did you see them?"

..."

The person in charge of the scenic area stopped mumbling and focused on thinking. After a moment, he suddenly lit up with an idea. Without saying anything, he quickly walked to a cabinet, rummaged through it, and pulled out several large photo albums.

"Captain Xiao, I remember now."

The person in charge of the scenic area began flipping through the albums quickly, saying without looking up, "After all, Wuling Mountain is a tourist spot. We arrange for some photographers to take paid photos for the tourists. I remember seeing them in those photos. To be sure if they are the same people you showed me, we need to compare the photos."

"Let's look together."

Xiao Peng looked at the numerous albums, thinking that by the time the person in charge flipped through them all, the folks from Xiaoqianmen Police Station would have already arrived.

After saying that, he gestured to the other officers.

Immediately, the sound of pages flipping echoed continuously.

Everyone was looking through the albums.

There is strength in numbers.

Soon, good news came continuously!

"Captain Xiao, isn't this them?"

"There's also this one."

"And another here."

...

Xiao Peng picked up two photos casually.

In the first photo, a young couple stood on the steps, happily embracing each other, surrounded by green mountains. Behind them were many tourists, and the closest man was wearing black clothes, a wide hat, and a mask.

In the second photo, a man posed like a typical tourist near an ancient tree, not far from the steps in the first photo. On the other side of the tree, another man was passing by, wearing a white T-shirt, blue jeans, a mask, and sunglasses.

Despite this.

He could still recognize that the two men in the photos, trying to hide their faces, were Li Wangxin and Zou Huaide.

The person in charge of the scenic area asked, "Captain Xiao, are these the two people you are looking for?"

"Yes, it's them."

Xiao Peng continued to look at the photos, answering without lifting his head.

This made the person in charge of the scenic area very pleased, saying proudly, "I knew I recognized them. They stand out too much in the photos. According to the photographer, their overall style doesn't fit in with the others. These photos were taken in less popular areas of Wuling Mountain with fewer tourists. But because they kept appearing in the photos, I remembered them well."

Xiao Peng listened lightly to his words, focusing more on each photo found.

From these photos.

He made a new discovery!

In some of the photos, besides Zou Huaide and Li Wangxin, there were others following them.

"Other members of the human trafficker gang?"

Xiao Peng's eyes lit up. He then instructed the officers still looking through the photos, "Don't just look for Zou Huaide and Li Wangxin. In some of these photos, there are clearly others following them too. Check if they also appear elsewhere in the photos and see if we can identify more accomplices."

"Yes!"

The officers responded in unison.

With their collective efforts, more photos were found.

Besides Zou Huaide and Li Wangxin, there were four more people who stood out in the photos.

And...

All six of them appeared in the same area, the less popular area the person in charge had mentioned before.

"This is not just about two people. The entire human trafficker gang is likely active in the same area."

Xiao Peng concluded that Wuling Mountain was undoubtedly the hiding place of the human trafficker gang.

At this moment, he thought of something and asked, "Can we retrieve the surveillance footage from this area for the times these photos were taken?"

He wanted to use surveillance to pinpoint the direction the traffickers entered Wuling Mountain from, narrowing down the search area.

"Sure, absolutely."

The person in charge nodded and immediately led Xiao Peng and his team to the monitoring room to retrieve the footage.

Then, Xiao Peng thought of something else. He had a few officers review the footage, then took out Lin Beichen's photo, asking, "Do you recognize this kid?"

The person in charge immediately recognized the boy who cost him the most compensation!

"I do."

He nodded, saying, "Around noon, I compensated him for a broken phone!"

"Compensated?"

"Yes!"

The person in charge briefly explained the situation.

After hearing the explanation, Xiao Peng felt relieved. At least Lin Beichen's disappearance was indeed a coincidence. His phone was damaged on his way here, and it wasn't related to the human trafficker gang.

"But..."

"We still need to find Lin Beichen as soon as possible."

He quickly told the person in charge, "Can we check the surveillance footage of the area to see where the boy went after leaving here?"

"No problem."

The person in charge quickly pulled up the surveillance footage again.

Xiao Peng reviewed it personally and soon found the last spot where Lin Beichen appeared on camera.

"It seems Lin Beichen left the scenic area and entered Wuling Mountain from that point."

Xiao Peng's expression turned serious.

He realized that the point where Lin Beichen entered Wuling Mountain was not very close but also not too far from the area where the human traffickers frequently appeared.

The chance of encountering the trafficker gang was not low.

Xiao Peng knew that finding Lin Beichen was urgent and couldn't wait for the rest of the operation.

After a brief thought, he pointed at a few officers, instructing, "You take some brothers and enter Wuling Mountain from here. Find Lin Beichen and bring him back as soon as possible."

"Yes!"

The selected officers saluted and quickly left to carry out the order.

Xiao Peng looked at the others and continued, "The rest of you stay with me to continue tracking the human traffickers. We need to narrow the search area as much as possible. The brothers from Xiaoqianmen Police Station will be here soon, and we will search the mountain together."

After saying that, he continued to closely review the surveillance footage together with other officers.

Meanwhile.

The chosen officers partnered up and started moving from Lin Beichen's last known location into Wuling Mountain, searching for him.

By this time, the accumulated thunderstorm had started.

Heavy rain poured down, and thunder roared.

They trudged through the mountains, with each step being quite difficult.

One officer shook his head, saying, "In this weather, even if Lin Beichen and the human traffickers wanted to meet, they probably couldn't."

"No kidding. This weather makes searching the mountain so tough."

Before his voice finished.

Several bright flashes streaked across the sky.

All the officers looked up involuntarily.

"Damn! Is someone crossing tribulation?"

Someone exclaimed in excitement.

They saw lightning breaking through the dark clouds overhead, extending towards the ground one after another, as if connecting to Wuling Mountain!

This scene was both shocking and sudden, and extremely unusual!

Chapter 69: The Sage in the Deep Mountains (Part 1)

"Boom——!!"

"Boom——!!"

"..."

This scene was like war drums sounding from the horizon, followed by a series of muffled thunder!

In an instant, many police officers were somewhat stunned, shaken by the mighty momentum, feeling like their hearts were rumbling, a ringing in their ears, and an inexplicable sense of awe towards nature rising in their hearts.

A moment later, one police officer was the first to come back to his senses, still with a shocked expression on his face.

"Such a spectacular thunderstorm is really rare, almost forming a continuous sheet. Aren't there people crossing the Thunder Tribulation on Wuling Mountain?"

"Alright, stop joking around, be serious."

Another police officer shook his head speechlessly, naturally knowing his colleague was making a jest.

But looking around at the curtain-like rain and the shining thunder above, he wanted to marvel at the power of nature but, remembering their mission, urged, "Quickly, we must find Lin Beichen soon."

"Hey?"

At this moment, another police officer thought of something and said, "The continuous lightning just now all struck right above us. Do you think it could be related to Lin Beichen? Isn't he here to research lightning?"

Everyone: ...

"Aren't you overthinking this?"

"Lin Beichen is just a student. Even if he's here to study lightning, doing scientific research, it's just research, right? Can he attract the lightning? That would need a major research project and equipment, right? What a joke!"

"..."

However, despite their claims that it was impossible,

they ultimately decided, under the persistence of that police officer, to have him lead a few brothers to the direction where the lightning struck to investigate.

Searching the mountain from any direction is still searching, having a direction is good too.

...

In the sky, the thick, dark clouds were not showing any signs of dispersing after the series of lightning strikes but instead seemed like a prelude.

"Boom——!"

"Boom——!"

"..."

Thunder rolled.

Lightning seemed to be released without restraint, striking the clouds as if a thunder prison, imprisoning the entire Wuling Mountain.

Outside the forest, within the scenic area.

Scenic spot: Ascension Platform.

Tourists held umbrellas, standing on the Observation Platform that jutted out from the mountain, raising their heads to watch the awe-inspiring scene in the sky, deeply shaken!

"Wow, the lightning strikes, I've never seen such a spectacle in my life!"

"Neither have I. By the way, didn't Wuling Mountain offend the gods? This looks increasingly like divine punishment."

"Divine punishment? Looks more like a Thunder Tribulation to me."

"..."

Talking about Thunder Tribulation, they couldn't help but think of the scenic spot they were at.

Ascension Platform!

According to legend, Wuling Mountain, designated as a forbidden land of Feng Shui by the Qing Dynasty and sealed for over 200 years, wasn't only because it was an imperial Feng Shui treasure but also because of a story related to this platform.

The stele beside the Observation Platform has a record, using semi-classical words to tell a small story.

Generally speaking, it's about: Once an esteemed hermit crossed the Thunder Tribulation and ascended here, hence the platform's name Ascension Platform.

The protagonist of this story is actually the famous Qing Dynasty Daoist, Liu Yiming.

Naming himself Wuyuanzi, alias Simple Wanderer.

He was notable in Daoism history, and the most renowned Daoist master of Qing Dynasty for over 200 years, giving this place its name.

Of course, the tale of proving Dao and ascending is only a rumor, possibly fabricated to promote Wuling Mountain's reputation as a 'Qing Dynasty forbidden land' and 'Qing Dynasty first Daoist' to attract more tourists.

Nonetheless, the current nine-day thunderstorm and the Ascension Platform on the ground complement each other well, inevitably leading to mythic imaginations based on the site's history.

Tourists glanced around, surrounded by towering green mountains, torrential rain like waterfalls, mist hovering, nine-day thunderstorm descending, as if someone far away was about to ascend.

At that moment.

A thick lightning bolt exploded with bright radiance.

For a moment, they felt themselves like that immortal proving the Dao, standing in clouds, surrounded by Immortal Qi.

High-spirited and carefree!

"Crack——!!"

The sound of fabric tearing echoed through the sky.

Tourists were startled and snapped out of their trance, their expressions shocked and excited.

"Did someone really cross the Thunder Tribulation in history?"

"Myths really spark imagination."

"In the deep mountains afar, could there truly be a master?"

"..."

Among them,

was a man, in his twenties, whose behavior gave an impression of sneakiness.

Without an umbrella, not very tall, about one meter sixty, dressed in a long black raincoat, covering everything except his face.

Just moments ago.

He seemed more frightened than others, his whole body shivering.

At this moment, the man mumbled, "Thunder Tribulation, divine punishment, nonsense, damn weather, should have come back a couple days later."

After speaking, he nervously glanced at the sky, as if afraid a lightning bolt might strike him.

Then, he craftily observed the surrounding tourists, seeing no one noticed him, quickly slipping away silently into the crowd.

...

Many outside were gazing deeply into the Wuling Mountain.

The weather grew nastier.

Torrential rain, electric flashes, thunder roars.

Momentary flashes of light occasionally illuminated the sky, also lighting up the rain-drenched forest.

"Crack——"

"Crack——"

"..."

Lin Beichen, soaked all over, didn't mind, continuing to walk in the forest following the direction where Electric Element flowed, footsteps crunching like breaking twigs.

At this time, around him.

The silence was eerie, only the sound of rain pitter-pattering.

No squirrels jumping, rabbits scurrying, it felt like there were no living creatures around.

Ancient trees stood tall but emaciated, their bark dull gray, appearing like they could wither at any moment.

The weeds underfoot were equally stunted, dry, brittle, darker than the ancient trees, even slightly blackened.

"Why is it like this?"

Lin Beichen was confused not by his surroundings; walking along, he noticed the worsening conditions.

He guessed the reason for this...

was closely related to what puzzled him now—the Electric Element in nature!

He discovered...

as he continued walking towards where the Electric Element gathered, the Electric Element in nature grew increasingly concentrated.

It seemed that all the Electric Element nearby was being drawn to some region ahead!

Chapter 70: The Sage in the Deep Mountains (Part 2)

With a head full of questions, Lin Beichen walked for a long time.

Suddenly, Lin Beichen stopped in his tracks.

He looked around.

The environment was even stranger than before!

The ancient trees varied in thickness, but all their bark was black, with many already dead.

The ground was devoid of weeds, revealing a bare surface as black as the tree bark, mottled as if random inks had been splashed around.

Lin Beichen confirmed that this was the end point he sought.

From the moment he entered this area, he sensed an overwhelmingly dense presence of Electric Element in the air, almost unbelievable.

Moreover...

He discovered that not only the Electric Element from his direction was flowing here, but from every direction around this area, converging towards this spot like a reversed fountain.

"All of this..."

"What is the cause?"

Lin Beichen tried to sense the Electric Element in the surroundings, searching for clues while scanning his surroundings.

In a blink of an eye, he sensed something unusual.

In the very center of this area, a small patch absorbed the Electric Element around it like a Black Hole.

"So, is this small patch the answer to all the questions?"

"What is absorbing the Electric Element from the surroundings?"

Due to the overcast sky and the dark surrounding environment, it was difficult to clearly see the specifics of the anomalous region with his eyes.

"I wish my phone wasn't broken."

Lin Beichen realized how indispensable his phone was, then stepped towards the patch he sensed earlier.

However, he had only taken a few steps before he could sense further into the area.

Suddenly!

A bright streak flashed from the sky into his eyes.

Instinctively, he looked up.

A dazzling lightning bolt tore through the thick, black clouds, spreading out like veins and striking downward.

Moreover...

The central and longest arc seemed attracted to the area where he stood, descending straight down!

Lin Beichen: ????

What's going on????

Thunder Tribulation???

In his bafflement,

"Kaboom——!!!"

With a deafening roar, the lightning struck at a spot only a dozen meters from him.

Perfectly.

The very center of the anomalous patch he detected.

"Boom——!!"

A muffled sound burst forth.

No debris flew, no soil erupted.

At the point of impact,

A gleaming black area appeared, not charred but shiny black, with a rough stone-like outline.

"This is..." Lin Beichen snapped out of his daze, focused on the scene, and had a flash of insight.

"The previous times I encountered Thunder Tribulation, I felt oppressive, breathless pressure, but not this time."

"Moreover, I hadn't done anything significant or reached a new milestone."

"So, that was not a Thunder Tribulation."

"And the lightning strike was no coincidence."

"It's because of this."

His gaze locked on the black area, sensing he'd found the answer.

Instinctively, he sensed the Electric Element around the region, feeling a clear flow towards the black patch.

"Thus..."

"This black patch is the key to everything!"

Approaching the answer, Lin Beichen felt an increasing urgency.

He quickly moved forward to examine the black patch.

The remnants suggested a massive ancient tree once stood there, but now, there was only a large tree stump resembling stone, about twenty centimeters in diameter, irregular in shape, with rough, pitch-black surface like ink, evidently charred by thunder.

But oddly...

Despite being charred, the stump bore fresh, green sprouts!

Black, green.

Death, life.

Creating a striking contrast!

With a single glance,

Three words flashed in Lin Beichen's mind—

Thunderstruck Wood!

Thunderstruck Wood refers to trees struck by lightning during storms.

Influenced by Daoism, people generally believe Thunderstruck Wood is split by Celestial Thunder, feared by ghosts, and a powerful talisman against evil.

Of course, Lin Beichen didn't believe in such things, ghosts? They don't exist in this world.

However, regarding the Thunderstruck Wood,

He knew it didn't possess the abilities rumored by common folk but was not ordinary.

"Except..."

Until then, he'd only heard of Thunderstruck Wood, never seen it. Now witnessing it, his mind flooded with questions.

"Why is there only this one Thunderstruck Wood in the area?"

"Why is this lone tree constantly struck by lightning?"

"For a tree to be reduced to a stump would take decades of strikes. Is it true for decades, only this tree was targeted?"

"What's special about this tree?"

Lin Beichen couldn't understand.

At that moment,

He felt the surrounding Electric Element moving towards him without any absorption effort.

"What's happening?"

"Could it be..."

"Because of it?"

"Does it have such an effect when nearby?"

Unable to look away from the Thunderstruck Wood, Lin Beichen reached out, intending to feel it closely.

As he extended his hand,

He noticed that approaching the Thunderstruck Wood didn't cause the surrounding Electric Element to move more actively towards him.

When his hands touched the Thunderstruck Wood,

"Hmm?!"

His face showed immense surprise.

Inside the Thunderstruck Wood was a massive store of Electric Element!

"The Thunderstruck Wood absorbs and stores the Electric Element from the surroundings and can help me absorb it?"

With that thought, Lin Beichen was astonished!

This was truly Heaven and Earth Treasure!

In novels, this was equal to finding a Magical Treasure.

If he had it, wouldn't he be free from the weather constraints?

Like carrying a portable charger.

Moreover...

It would quicker absorb the surrounding Electric Element, reducing the time needed to gather Elements, indirectly enhancing the efficiency of strengthening his abilities?