

ARC OF FIRE

Chapter 15: What to do when a teammate sends help without saying a word, urgent, waiting online.

The new term made Wang Zhong frown.

Previously, the prayer hand appeared to be a radio operator responsible for guiding missiles; now what in the world was a Hymn Monk?

However, judging by the reactions of the people around him, this seemed to be common knowledge, so Wang Zhong didn't dare to ask.

They had just mentioned the Tribunal, who knew if its duties included executing those possessed by strange otherworldly spirits.

He had to behave like a person from this world and not give himself away.

But Wang Zhong remembered that he had another question to ask, so he inquired, "Are Monk Yeca Neiko and his Divine Arrow squad among these monks?"

Sergey hesitated, "Uh, I didn't ask. Maybe you should ask the priest directly?"

Before he had finished speaking, a tall, brown-haired male entered the room, followed by a bunch of soldiers.

Their military uniforms were khaki as well, but the style was different. If Wang Zhong were to describe it, his own group outfitted for combat wore training uniforms, while this group donned dress uniforms better suited for occasions with a strong sense of ceremony.

The group entering wore shoulders adorned with sun-based motifs, which reminded Wang Zhong of the sun emblem on the cathedral roof at the duke's headquarters.

It seemed these men were the monks of the national religion.

The first to enter, the brown-haired male, asked, "Who is the commander here?"

He looked back and forth between Wang Zhong and Yegorov.

Wang Zhong remembered that he and Yegorov were both lieutenant colonels, and he could only command Yegorov because of the "trust" from the duke.

Actually, there was no such trust; the duke only had time to tell him to run fast.

Not thinking much about it, Wang Zhong stepped forward and said, "I am. Duke Vladimir has entrusted me with the command of his troops."

The brown-haired man frowned, "How come you're only a lieutenant colonel?"

At this moment, a man behind him interjected sharply, "Did His Grace the Duke transfer command authority with a written order?"

Wang Zhong turned to look at the speaker and saw a man wearing a greatcoat cap, which sported blue edging.

"Judge, now is an emergency situation. To ensure the functioning of the command core of the troops, we can spare the red tape," the brown-haired man turned to glare at the person who had interrupted their conversation.

Judge... it seemed these two were from the Tribunal after all, the Tribunal, the blue edging on the greatcoat caps—Wang Zhong clicked his tongue, quietly shelving his thoughts, and silently noted down "to be careful about what one says in the presence of someone with blue edging on their greatcoat cap."

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The blue-capped man bowed slightly, "Apologies, Bishop, sir."

He then took a step back, scrutinizing Wang Zhong with eyes that appraised like one would value a live pig.

Forcing himself not to pay attention to that gaze, Wang Zhong addressed the “Bishop”: “I am Count Aleksei Konstantinovich Rokossov, and I am the commander of these forces right now.”

Bishop Stepan Aleksandrovich Polok saluted Wang Zhong, “My respects to you, brave Count. I am Stepan Aleksandrovich Polok. I have brought the last contingent of monks; we have some Divine Arrows left, which should be able to destroy quite a few of the enemy’s tanks!”

Wang Zhong: “Is it Monk Yeca Neiko’s Divine Arrow squad?”

Bishop Stepan seemed surprised: “You know Monk Yeca Neiko?”

Wang Zhong: “I know their prayer hand Ludmila; she was originally one of my soldiers—my prayer hand, but our Divine Arrow squad has been wiped out, leaving only her without any Divine Arrows.”

Bishop Stepan: “I see. I will make sure Monk Yeca Neiko takes good care of Miss Prayer Hand.”

Hmm? Could it be that the Bishop has some strange misunderstanding?

Wang Zhong was too lazy to correct it, considering one of the reasons he took action was to ensure Ludmila’s survival; it would be good if she received special care.

“So we...”

Wang Zhong was about to continue when he was interrupted by the Bishop.

Bishop Stepan: “We’re going to counterattack the enemy, right?”

For some reason, the Bishop looked full of anticipation.

Wang Zhong hesitated for a moment, “Uh, this...”

Bishop Stepan clenched his fists: "We must show the Prussians our spirit, tell them our homeland of Ante will not be easily defeated!"

Wang Zhong's mouth hung open, why were these people so eager to rush to their demise?

"No, please, calm down," he snapped back into the conversation, "We're advancing because the enemy's defenses ahead are weak; they did not anticipate an attack. Our current position is the enemy's division headquarters, and this division is certainly in chaos; we can easily jump out from their encirclement."

As Wang Zhong spoke, Bishop Stepan looked at him with a significant expression, as if viewing him as a problem.

After Wang Zhong finished, Bishop Stepan raised his voice: "Jump out of the encirclement? Isn't this a counterattack?"

"It is a counterattack, of course, it is, look around!" Wang Zhong spread his hands, "We've taken down the enemy's division headquarters, isn't that a counterattack? Counterattacking and breaking through are not in conflict. We need to retreat to our next line of defense and then join the defensive operations."

Bishop Stepan turned his head to exchange glances with the two Judges.

Wang Zhong always felt something was off about these three.

When the Bishop looked at Wang Zhong again, he asserted decisively, "This is desertion!"

Wang Zhong, "It's a tactical retreat to preserve our forces for a better chance at annihilating the enemy."

Bishop Stepan, "That sounds like an excuse!"

Wang Zhong, “No, no, listen to me. If we hold onto the land but lose the people, we’ll end up losing both. By preserving our forces and appropriately giving up some land, we can achieve victory and keep both the people and the land!”

That was the instructor’s reasoning, which Wang Zhong directly borrowed for his argument.

Bishop Stepan glared at Wang Zhong, “This is unquestionably an act of treason! His Majesty has just issued an order; the land of the motherland is sacred and inviolable! Everyone must fight to the very last moment!”

Wang Zhong’s scalp tingled. Fight to the very last moment? The “motherland’s” land is sacred and inviolable? Damn it, I only learned the name of the country by looking at the enemy’s map, and to me, it’s just a name on a map!

I am Chinese!

And it’s an order from His Majesty the Emperor, damn it, I come from a country that has always advocated, “When the king enfeebles himself through righteousness, who will dare to be unrighteous?” Even the emperor can’t order me to go to my death!

Wang Zhong, “Impossible. Launching a do-or-die attack under these circumstances would be a senseless waste of our living forces! We will counter-attack, but that might be a year from now, or even two, three years later! What we need to do now is to retreat, trade distance for time, and establish a new defensive line!”

Bishop Stepan glared at Wang Zhong, as if the appreciative expression that was there earlier never existed.

Moments later, he darkly commanded, “Judge Shaposhnikov, arrest the Count—no, we’re about to launch an assault, and probably no one will be able

to escort the Count. We must enforce martial law, and for the crime of desertion—execute him by firing squad, now, immediately!”

Wang Zhong’s head genuinely tingled. Did this idiot understand the consequences of executing a military officer on the battlefield?

Huh? It seems I executed a deserter too... But the problem is, I’m not a deserter!

The Judge called Shaposhnikov smiled as he opened his holster—

At this moment, Wang Zhong was exceedingly nervous, with countless thoughts flashing through his head:

Should I give Yegorov an order? If I command Yegorov to shoot these people down, will he listen? What if I order him to strafe these “Monks”?

What would the outcome be?

Won’t I still end up getting shot?

Suddenly, he remembered something.

Before the shells fell, Duke Vladimir was planning to evacuate Wang Zhong—that is, Count Aleksei Konstantinovich Rokossovsky—because—

Because the Crown Prince made a phone call to the Duke’s headquarters.

Huh, it seems I do have connections above?

At that moment, Shaposhnikov drew his pistol.

Yegorov immediately stepped in front of Wang Zhong, his right hand almost lifting the captured submachine gun—

Wang Zhong restrained his gun, and declared loudly, “Bishop Stepan, it seems you are not well-informed about who I am. I am a dear friend of the Crown Prince, and if news of my execution reaches the Crown Prince’s ears...”

Having said that, Wang Zhong then thought self-deprecatingly: What am I doing? Threatening someone about to nobly embrace death; how can this be effective? They're about to die; why would they care what the Crown Prince thinks?

But Bishop Stepan clearly hesitated.

So, this bastard didn't really want to die after all—that's what Wang Zhong initially thought, but then he noticed that Bishop Stepan glanced at Yegorov and the submachine gun in his hand.

Did Stepan just fear Yegorov and his submachine gun?

Just then, Bishop Stepan yielded, "Fine, but I will record everything, document who it is that wants to abandon our sacred land, defying the Emperor's orders!"

In that instant, Wang Zhong seriously considered whether to take advantage of the chaos in battle to shoot these bastards dead covertly, to avoid later trouble.

After all, it was still uncertain just how solid his relationship with the Crown Prince was; acting decisively now could prevent prolonged troubles.

Moreover, Wang Zhong always felt a sense of discordance emanating from these three, especially the Bishop, whose initial lavish praise and subsequent turn of face both seemed like an act in a play...

Just then, a pleasant female voice came from the doorway: "Report!"

Wang Zhong turned his head, expecting Ludmila, but instead saw a strange girl with black hair braided in pigtails hanging behind her neck.

"I have just received a message from the Argesukov Hymn Choir; capable troops are to head to Shepetovka immediately, where Duke Meishikin is organizing the defense!"

Wang Zhong had no idea where Argesukov was, nor did he know anything about Shepetovka, but he quickly countered, "We can make it!

"This is the troop that has defeated the Prussian Army, penetrating one of their division headquarters, with experience in combat and victory, which will surely benefit the defensive operations substantially."

The Bishop looked a tad disappointed, "If that is the case, then there's no helping it; organize the retreat, Count."