

Black Iron 371

Chapter 371: An Old Friend

Zerom's struggles irritated one of the students from Hidden Dragon Palace who was escorting him.

Therefore, he knocked onto Zerom's head with the handle of his long sword.

At sight of this, Zhang Tie sped up and stopped him, "Wait, senior brothers..."

"Argh, junior brother Zhang Tie!" The two students immediately revealed smiles at the sight of Zhang Tie coming towards them.

As the two students had assaulted Bluestone Pass together with Zhang Tie several days ago, they had a deep impression of Zhang Tie. Additionally, as Zhang Tie was growing famous as the demon-killing javelin lord, not to mention that Zhang Tie was already well-known when he was in Hidden Dragon Palace and because of his all-purpose medicament, he was ranked first on the Hidden Dragon Wealth List.

Hidden Dragon Palace was the place where the clan elites of Huaiyuan Palace cultivated themselves. Nobody in Hidden Dragon Palace was an idiot. They all knew the importance of human relationships. Therefore, they were very polite to Zhang Tie and didn't look like senior brothers at all.

At sight of Zhang Tie, Zerom looked a bit excited. After recovering his composure, he threw his glances towards his partners to appease them.

"Senior brothers, may I inquire as to what these people have done?" Zhang Tie asked.

"Due to the event in Heavens Cold City, many peripheral forces and those who dream of money want to sneak into the refugee camp. When they get a chance, they would further slip into Heavens Cold City. We've caught a lot of people like these guys!"

Hearing his words, Zhang Tie finally let out a sigh. They truly had caught a lot of people like that these days. Most of them were looking for money in Heavens Cold City. Whereas, as they were not bad guys, after being caught, they would only be punished by doing hard labor or a few days.

Zhang Tie smiled. Without making any explanation, he directly took off the piece of cloth from Zerom's mouth in front of 2 senior brothers.

"Zhang Tie..." Zerom called Zhang Tie's name at once. After that, he peered at his partners who were also bound.

The 2 senior brothers then exchanged glances with each other and became a bit surprised, "You know them, junior brother?"

"They are my friends. Can you let me deal with them?" Zhang Tie asked.

"Haha, now that they are your friends, they are yours now. It's not a big deal, just deal with them at your will, junior brother!"

"Thanks, senior brothers!"

"You're welcome, junior brother!"

The 2 students from Hidden Dragon Palace then directly undid their ropes. After chatting with Zhang Tie for awhile, they finally left.

There were 3 more people that were caught together with Zerom. After being set free, they all hurriedly moved their arms to relax themselves. At the same time, the other 3 guys started to glance over Zhang Tie out of curiosity.

"Why are you here?" Zhang Tie and Zerom exchanged glances with each other and asked the same question in Hebrew in unison. They then burst out laughing at the same time.

"It's not convenient to talk here, come with me!" Zhang Tie looked at them and brought them into his own tent.

Zerom and the other 3 guys didn't speak; instead, they just followed Zhang Tie and his arrangement.

Zhang Tie's tent was not large and would be a bit crowded with 5 people living in. However, it's okay for 5 of them to sit inside and talk.

After entering the tent, they evidently looked relaxed. After looking at the heavy chain-type armor plate and the symbol on it, one partner of Zerom's eyes brightened up at once as he said in Chinese, "怀远堂 (Huaiyuan Palace)!"

Zhang Tie smiled as he let them sit down.

Zerom's partners included a thin old man, a tall and muscled tough man and a 40-odd-year-old guy with short brown hair who looked shrewd, who could speak Chinese.

Because Zhang Tie didn't know Zerom could speak Chinese, he directly chatted with them in Hebrew in case of trouble.

"Mr. Zerom, why are you here?"

Zerom revealed a smile, "I'm not a teacher now. Soon after you left Blackhot City together with Iron-Blood Camp, I had resigned and left Blackhot City. After that, I traveled to Armes, a mercenary empire in the Blackson Human Race Corridor. A few days later, I joined Thor Mercenary Group. This time, we are here in Jinyun Country for 2 tasks. Oh, how about you? Why are you here?"

'Since Zerom left Blackhot City shortly after me, it indicates that he didn't know what happened to me since then.' Therefore, Zhang Tie briefly talked about what happened to him after Blackhot City. Hearing Zhang Tie's experiences, not only Zerom, even the other 3 partners of him kept sighing with feeling.

Zhang Tie's experience was really legendary; Rendering meritorious service on the battlefield for Iron-Blood Camp; Fought the secret police in Norman Empire; Having a warrant issued by the Norman Empire; being picked up to Jinyun Country by Huaiyuan Palace; being involved in the event in Heavens Cold City. Given his current look, Zhang Tie seemed living a well-off life. Zerom then recalled that teenager in the survival training in Wild Wolf Valley one year ago and became thrilled inside as he felt that fate was really marvelous.

"You are in Huaiyuan Palace now?" Zerom asked.

"Yes, I was here to attend the action of assaulting Heavens Cold City arranged by Huaiyuan Palace!"

After exchanging glances with the other 3 guys, Zerom looked hesitated.

At sight of Zerom's look, Zhang Tie had known that they needed his help.

"What can I do for you?" Zhang Tie asked straightforwardly.

"Can you take us to Heavens Cold City. As Heavens Cold City has been surrounded by some big clan's forces in Jinyun Country, we can not even enter by airship. Commoners like us could hardly enter! Zerom took a deep breath as he looked at Zhang Tie seriously.

"How long will you stay in Heavens Cold City?"

"Only a few hours if it's smooth. We know a batch of city guards of Zhen Clan has been controlled by puppet worms, we need to a couple of demonized guards!"

"Do you need to take them away?"

"No need!" Zerom waved his head as he pointed at a thin old man and introduced him to Zhang Tie. "This is professor Simon. He's a demon biologist and the chief legal examiner and coroner in Thor Mercenary Group. We only need to hand the demonized guards to him and let him finish the anatomy. After gaining the information that we need, we will leave."

Hearing Zerom's explanation, Zhang Tie understood at once. During this period, many demonized guards had been taken away by the 6 clans of Jinyun Country and various foreign powers. Zhang Tie had also participated in a task of capturing demonized guards. Commoners could not figure out the function of those demonized guards at all. However, those powers could gather quite a bit of useful information from a demonized guard.

The most important information was when the eggs of the parent puppet worm started to live in the host's brain.

Because the city guards of the Zhen Clan in Heavens Cold City were the most powerful force of the Zhen Clan. Additionally, they always stayed in Heavens Cold City which meant that they would not cause eggs to die due to being a long distance away from the parent puppet worm. Instead, eggs could grow well in their brains. Therefore, by studying these specimens, they could confirm when the Zhen Clan had started to place the eggs of the parent puppet worm in the water supply system of Heavens Cold City.

As long as they confirmed this time, they would be able to deduce lots of information. For those big powers, this time was of great significance and was the basis for big figures to make major decisions about the Holy War in the future.

Huaiyuan Palace had also taken away more than 40 demonized guards from Heavens Cold City, many of which were even senior military officers in the city guards of Heavens Cold City. After getting these specimens, Huaiyuan Palace handed them to professionals from Huaiyuan Palace for anatomy. After that, they would be burned directly.

"How many of you want to go there, only 4 of you or are there more?" The moment he confirmed their target, Zhang Tie didn't waste time as he asked straightforwardly.

"We have some more partners, but they are in the airship. Therefore only 4 will be going!"

"Well, wait for me for a moment, I will prepare something for you." After saying this, Zhang Tie stood up, "What weapons do you need? It's very dangerous in Heavens Cold City now!"

"I need a longsword!" Zerom replied.

"I need a war ax of 50-100 kg!" The tall tough man said.

"Give me a long spear. I want them to stay away from me!" The one with short brown hair answered.

"For me?" Professor Simon shrugged his shoulder and gave a bitter smile. "I have no fighting strength. Just give me a lighter one!"

Hearing their requests and glancing at them, Zhang Tie turned around. After opening the tent, he walked out...

Chapter 372: A Tough Task

The moment Zhang Tie left the tent, the other 3 guys had thrown weird glances towards Zerom.

"Zerom, I never would have imagined that you could have such a student! You didn't mention it before!" That tough man said.

"But I didn't even know that he was here Jordan." Zerom shrugged his shoulder. "You heard that just now. When I left Blackhot City, he was in Kalur. Several minutes ago, I still thought that he was in the Iron-Horn Army of the Norman Empire. I would never have guessed that I could meet him here."

"This teenager is not weak!" Narrowing his eyes, professor Simon added, "I smelt something related to death from him!"

"This set of heavy chain-type plate armor is nice. Zezeze, this is the best heavy chain-type plate armor produced by Huaiyuan Palace in Jinyun Country. Except for its heavyweight, this is definitely a non-rune equipment that combines defensive capability and flexibility in the perfect way. Battleax Mercenary Army tried to counterfeit such a batch of heavy chain-type plate armor for its middle- and senior-level officers. However, their fake goods could never match this original although at almost the same cost. They finally stopped that plan..."

As the man in short brown hair said that, he touched the chain-type movable metal protective covering over Zhang Tie's armor which was tightly connected; meanwhile his eyes gleamed, "Zerom, your student might have a high position in Huaiyuan palace now. Otherwise, he couldn't get such expensive equipment. It is worth at least 100 gold coins. With him, we could easily finish our task in Heavens Cold City! Oh, what about his current fighting strength? I've been observing him but I failed to figure it out!"

"I don't know either. When I left Blackhot City last year, he was LV 4. I think he might be LV 5 now!" After thinking for awhile, Zerom added, "This youngster is cultivating Iron-Blood Fist and had formed Iron-Blood Hidden Strength[1] easily. He's the most excellent student that I've taught!"

"LV 5? He might have formed Iron-Blood Converted Strength[2] but he's 18 years old at most! Jordan said.

"Perhaps!" Zerom nodded with feelings, "I didn't know that he was a descendant of Count Long Wind. His parents were all commoners in Blackhot City and didn't look special at all!"

"Many clan's ancestral bloodlines and special genes could be expressed through atavistic heredity. His ancestor is Count Long Wind, who should be at least LV 15. Only very powerful knights would be conferred with titles of nobility. In such clans, some descendants might probably have talents in cultivation." Professor Simon concluded in an authoritative way.

"We can also ask him about all-purpose medicament. I was told that all-purpose medicament had appeared in Huaiyuan Prefecture. He must know more than us about that. Our boss paid high attention to this matter. Before we set out, he even especially ordered us to contact the alchemist who could produce all-purpose medicament in Huaiyuan Prefecture even though we failed the task in Heavens Cold City!"

Zerom nodded as he started to frown. After the event in Heavens Cold City broke out, prices of medicament started to surge across Blackson Human Race Corridor. Many people started to stockpile all kinds of medicament. As a result, the source and supply of medicament became tense at once.

Now, not only Thor Mercenary Army, even super-powerful mercenary armies such as Battleax, Hugesnake, Green Highland and the Steel & Iron Alliance in Armes had started to be short of various medicament. They were all thinking about a solution. If all-purpose medicament that appeared in Huaiyuan Prefecture was really more effective than preliminary antidote potion as was said, it would help Armes a lot.

Within the territory of Armes, poisonous substances exist almost everywhere. Therefore, people there need a lot of preliminary antidote potion each year. But due to the shortage of supply of various medicament, preliminary antidote potion was in short supply. For the lack of the other medicament, they might find other solutions. For Armes which was located in the long Snake God Mountain and was surrounded by endless smog and marshes. As long as preliminary antidote potion was in short supply, it meant many people would die every day due to various reasons.

All-purpose medicament was like a bright light in the darkness. For all the mercenary armies in Armes, a medicament that was more effective than preliminary antidote potion and could substitute the other medicament was definitely like a heavy rain after a long drought.

For those mercenaries who lived in Armes and lived using their sabers and swords, all-purpose medicament was definitely the best choice! More than 98% of functions that common mercenaries needed in preliminary antidote potion or low-rank medicament were contained in such a vial of medicament such as detoxification, curing wounds, intensifying spiritual energy, accelerating the recovery of wounds, improving various physical functions and curing various diseases, including chronic diseases without any side effect.

Therefore, before they set out for Jinyun Country, the boss of Thor Mercenary Army emphasized that they had to contact the alchemist who produced this all-purpose medicament. It would be better if the alchemist could provide a batch of the all-purpose medicament for Thor Mercenary Army every year.

The news that all-purpose medicament appeared in Huaiyuan Prefecture was passed from Jinyun Country to Armes by pioneers. When it reached Armes, the message had become obscure. Therefore, hearing this news, everybody there thought it must be an alchemist who could produce all-purpose medicament and probably be a well-known senior alchemist. Because only a well-known senior alchemist might solve the problem that had puzzled the world of alchemist for hundreds of years.

The news of all-purpose medicament influenced Armes more than any other places. In a few days after Armes received the news of all-purpose medicament, the event in Heavens Cold City broke out. Therefore, the boss of Thor Mercenary Army assigned some reliable fighters to Jinyun Country.

At that moment, Zerom only joined Thor Mercenary Army for a short period. But his shrewd brain and fighting strength had won the favor of the management of Thor Mercenary Army. Therefore, he also came here as a director of the mission while the other director of this mission was in the airship.

It was really a surprise for Zerom to meet Zhang Tie here. If he could complete the mission in Heavens Cold City in such a dangerous situation, his position in Thor Mercenary Army would be greatly improved and consolidated. However, thinking of that mission on all-purpose medicament, Zerom became a bit worried.

As long as they came to Huaiyuan Prefecture, Zerom was confident to contact with the alchemist who could produce all-purpose medicament. Although Thor Mercenary Army was trivial in Jinyun Country, after all, it had more than 60,000 mercenaries which meant it was an influential power in Armes and the northern region of Blackson Human Race Corridor. Therefore, that alchemist could not refuse to meet them.

However, to tell the truth, Zerom lacked confidence in establishing a trading relationship with that alchemist and persuading him to provide a lot of vials of the all-purpose medicament for Thor Mercenary Army each year. Even though Thor Mercenary Army had been prepared for a very high purchasing price, Zerom was still not sure whether he could make that. After all, it was all-purpose medicament, not stones in mining pits. If medicament could be easily produced on a mass scale, Armes and the whole Blackson Human Race Corridor would not lack medicament at all.

Additionally, it was said that the other mercenary armies in Armes also assigned people in Jinyun Country with the same goal as Thor. This increased the difficulty of that task for Zerom.

"Could he really realize mass-production of all-purpose medicament?" Thinking of that tough mission, Zerom asked professor Simon.

"It's possible. But I don't know the exact possibility!" Simon shook his head. "Theoretically, an all-purpose medicament is a super enzyme. According to the forming principle of an enzyme, its fermenting process could realize mass-production. However, as I have no relevant intelligence, I'm confused about the producing process of all-purpose medicament in Huaiyuan Prefecture. It might require something special and precious. Therefore, it depends."

"Hopefully, the God of mercenaries could bring some good luck to Thor!" Zerom revealed a bitter smile. "We will finish the task in Heavens Cold City first, then, we will think about the all-purpose medicament!"

"As you say! Now, various medicament started to be in short supply. Only in a couple of days, the prices of various medicament in the market in Armes had risen by at least 20%. Some medicament were even in even shorter supply. We're not the only party that's focused on procuring the all-purpose medicament. Even if that alchemist could realize mass-production of the all-purpose medicament, it's still difficult for us to gain more shares than our opponents."

For the second mission, old Simon became a bit pessimistic. The influence of Thor Mercenary Army was well reflected here near Heavens Cold City. A mercenary army of fewer than 100,000 people was only a trivial group for many big powers and figures; even though they were here, they were not even qualified to enter Heavens Cold City to have a look, not to mention others...

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[1]Iron-Blood Hidden Strength. With no movement physically, the fighter could hold back the opponent's attack through inner strength; however, if the opponent covered the point where the fighter released his hidden strength, the latter would not able to release his hidden strength.

[2]Iron-Blood Converted Strength. Like Iron-Blood Hidden Strength, with no movement physically, the fighter could hold back the opponent's attack through inner strength; however, being different from Iron-Blood Hidden Strength, even if the opponent covered the point where the fighter released his hidden strength, the latter could still release his hidden strength facing the opponent's attack; however, through displacement of skeletons, the fighter could take preemptive while changing the direction of his strength.

Chapter 373: A Bloody City

Zhang Tie came back in only 5 minutes with four suits of field fighting clothes like that he was wearing. Meanwhile, he was carrying the weapons of the 4 people—a dagger, a longsword, a long spear and a double-edge huge axe of more than 50 kg in one hand.

"These clothes were chosen in line with your frames. Put them on and take your weapons. Then, we can set out!"

Zerom and his partners were so surprised as they hadn't imagined that Zhang Tie could deal with these things in such an efficient way. Without any hesitation, they then took their own clothes and started to change them as soon as possible.

After professor Simon took off his pants, Zhang Tie found a leather toolkit over this emaciated old man's calf, which contained various tools like a lance and small hooks. With these items, he could almost finish surgeries. Zhang Tie then knew that his senior brothers must not have meant to search him judging from his emaciated look. Therefore, they didn't notice the toolkit over his calf.

When they were changing clothes, Zerom introduced his other 2 partners to Zhang Tie. "The taller guy is Jordan, as a squadron leader of Thor Mercenary Army, he's LV 8 and the one with the highest fighting strength among us. According to the military establishment of Armes, Jordan is a captain."

Although mercenary armies were different than regular armies on establishment, it was still clearly divided into fighting units. In Armes, mercenary armies could be divided into team, corp, squad, detachment, group, league and column, which almost equal to that of class, platoon, company, camp, regiment, brigade and division respectively in many human countries' armies.

Zerom came here with the other 8 people as a standard team in a mercenary army. However, except for professor Simon, the other 8 were all above LV 6. Such a team was qualified to be called "luxury" in a mercenary army.

"The guy with brown short hair is Shrek, the only one among us who can speak Chinese. LV 7, a senior scout in Thor Mercenary Army. He has a deep insight and is very agile. He's excel at spying and street battle in city.

Gazing at this "luxury" team, Zhang Tie didn't have any special feeling. By comparison, when he was in Blackhot City, he and his elder brother both dreamed of being LV 6 fighters. However, Zhang Tie abruptly found that he didn't awe those fighters below LV 10 anymore.

In Zhang Tie's eyes, except for some LV 9 guys who might bring him some trouble, most of the fighters were nothing different than soldiers below LV 5 as Zhang Tie could solve them with only one javelin or a punch.

After these days of fighting against demonized people, Zhang Tie had been able to apply his Iron-Blood Fist in a much more eye-catching way. Gradually, he could use his Iron-Blood Fist as unrivaled as that used by the first emperor of the Norman Empire which shocked the Blackson Human Race Corridor.

After a short while, the 4 guys had put on their field combat clothes. Additionally, they had put on the hat being connected to the field combat coat and had pulled down the respirator which was filled with soft activated carbon. The respirator could filter fresh air, resist coldness and hide their faces, only exposing their eyes.

After that, they took their own weapons.

"Is this okay?" Zerom asked carefully.

"No problem. Some elites of Hurricane Army are still surrounding Heavens Cold City. As the soldiers of Hurricane Army are from everywhere, including all human races, if you just follow me, nobody would ask anything." Zhang Tie answered confidently.

Zerom then nodded, "Thor Mercenary Army owes you!"

Zhang Tie revealed a smile. "Due to various reasons, big figures don't want to expose too much information to commoners about the coming holy war. However, I feel that the more people know about it in advance, the better. After they know about it, at least they would not be easily pushed to the frontline to be fodder ashes. If not, they might even not know how they were killed!"

"Your thinking is very special!" Professor Simon glanced at Zhang Tie, "Few people in a big clan would consider it this way."

Zhang Tie shrugged. "Perhaps it's because I lived at the bottom of society. I know more about commoners. In holy wars, if the frontline was broken, it would be very dangerous. Rich and powerful people would then escape by airships, leaving those innocent commoners to be killed by demons. Those commoners won't even have a chance to escape. I feel this is unfair. If commoners could know more about this in advance, they would have more time to prepare for escape."

"Members in Thor Mercenary Army are all dauntless, instead of cowards who only think about escape. If there's a chance, I will kill those abominable demons with my ax!" Weighing his axe, Jordan said in a low voice.

"Although you are fighters, you also have family members and friends, who were not all fighters. If you were told that demons' army would launch an attack towards Armes 1 year later, would you lead your family members and friends to fight together with you in Armes? If you know that Blackson Human Race Corridor might be covered by demons in 2 years, would you lead your family members and friends to escape to a safe place first? If you know that the holy war would break out in half a year, would you let your family members stockpile food and drinks?"

Jordan then became quiet. Hearing Zhang Tie's words, Zerom nodded inside as he seemed seeing the same diligent and tough teenager in the survival training in Wild Wolf Valley and the handsome boy who didn't slash towards his opponent who had already lain on the duel platform. During the past 1 year, many things and people had changed. However, that teenager was still kind inside.

'Kerlin might also be proud of having such a student if he knew that!' Zerom mumbled inside.

The other guys in the tent started to consider Zhang Tie's questions.

Zhang Tie didn't talk any more, instead, he carried that heavy metal container of 9 bolts inside which had been used to kill so many people these days and opened the tent, "Let's go!"

The other 4 people then followed him out.

After being several hundred meters away from the camp, they came to the wild, from where they could already see Heavens Cold City in the distance. On the way from the camp to here, although many people had noticed the 4 people after Zhang Tie, nobody asked about them.

"This place is 15 km away from Heavens Cold City. It would take a long time to get there if we just walk like this. How fast is your marching speed?" Zhang Tie asked professor Simon considering his age.

"Although I'm not a fighter, at least I'm a LV 5 soldier. I can keep jogging there for 1 hour!" Professor Simon said proudly.

"That's fine. Follow me then. In order to save time, I will choose a route with fewer demonized people! Remember, unless you chop off their heads or break their whole body or head in to pieces by destroying their brain tissues can you kill them!"

Zhang Tie reminded them once again. Everybody else then nodded. After that, with Zhang Tie's guidance, they started to jog towards Heavens Cold City.

On the way, they met many other teams, the sizes of which varied from 3-5 people, dozens of people to over 100 people. They came from everywhere. Some of them were the unrivaled cavalries from Taishi Clan, some were elite troops from Huaiyuan Palace, some were some healthy adolescents recruited from the refugee camp. They scattered outside Heavens Cold City to hunt those demonized people that ran out of the city then collect, burn or bury them.

After encountering so many teams, Zerom's group started to understand that without Zhang Tie, they could hardly get close to Heavens Cold City even if they were not arrested in the refugee camp.

At this time, Zhang Tie's heavy metal container of 9 bolts on his back had almost become his symbol on the battlefield as anyone who caught sight of Zhang Tie dared not to find trouble for him. Instead, many teams even exclaimed out of excitement when they saw him.

"Mie Mo Shen Mo (灭魔神矛) ..."

"Mie Mo Shen Mo..."

Except for Shrek, none of Zerom's group spoke Chinese. Therefore, when they saw a team yelling towards them, they were even a bit nervous and thought they might have trouble. However, after seeing this several times, they started to understand that they were exclaiming towards Zhang Tie.

"Shrek, what are they yelling?" Jordon asked behind Zhang Tie while panting.

"They were yelling a slogan!" Shrek then looked at Zhang Tie calmly, "That slogan means marvelous demon-killing javelins. They might be yelling towards Zhang Tie!"

"Is that a praise or honor for Chinese?" Jordan asked surprisingly.

Shrek didn't know how to answer about this question. Because of the cultural difference between Chinese and them, it's hard to explain. In Chinese, the word "魔" and "神" always contained dozens of meanings, such as "魔" referred to demon, ghost, evil, darkness, villain, malice, inhumanity or difficulty in comprehend while "神" referred to marvel, holiness, deity, creator, fantasy, wonder even one's spiritual awareness.

In Hebrew-spoken regions, if a fighter was received an honor, it would be very significant. Because people could never gain any honor without any performance. Additionally, according to the conventions in this age, like being conferred with a title of nobility, a fighter has to gain his honor through fighting with demons. Additionally, honors always had fixed patterns, were always composed of the place where one made a meritorious deed plus his performance or feature (noun). Observably, they were not yelling an honor, neither a eulogy; it should be something between two of them that only existed under Chinese cultural background.

When Shrek scratched his head. Zhang Tie who was ahead of them opened his mouth. "That's not an honor, neither an official and holy eulogy. You can take it as an appreciation and praise, just like some of your nicknames!"

"Like I am called Steel Ax in Thor Mercenary Army, right?" Jordan asked out of curiosity.

"Just like that!"

"However, only a few people in Thor Mercenary Army know me. Nobody knows my nickname on the outside. But it seems that so many people know your nickname!" Jordan became a bit depressed and admirable.

"This tough man is cute." Zhang Tie then revealed a smile, "That's because your nickname is not loud enough or special. If you try harder and go to the extremes when you use your axe on the battlefield such as speed, I will give you a nickname then. I'm sure that more people would know you by then!"

"Argh? What nickname?"

"Black Cyclone!" Zhang Tie joked.

It was really out of Zhang Tie's imagination that Jordan became spirited after thinking for a while seriously, "Fine, that's it, Black Cyclone sounds cooler than Steel Ax. Shrek, Zerom, you can call me Black Cyclone from then on!"

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1 hour later, they had successfully arrived in the suburban area of Heavens Cold City after only meeting 10 more common demonized people. Before Zhang Tie moved, Jordan who wanted to show his qualification as "Black Cyclone" had chopped them all into pieces in a split second.

When they arrived at the suburban area of Heavens Cold City, everything became different.

It was already past 9 am when the sun had already risen up. The temperature over the land was gradually increasing, causing a terrifying, suffocating and disgusting stink to drift from inside Heavens Cold City. When they were about 1 km away from the city, Zerom and the other guys' faces instantly turned pale when they smelt this.

Although they were nothing strange about this odor in the morning breeze, they had not met such a heavy odor before.

Even Zhang Tie who didn't pull down his breathing mask on the way here had also pulled it down at this moment in order to ease its stimulation.

"How many people were killed here?" Professor Simon turned and asked.

"They are not human, they are demonized, people. From July 7th to now, we've killed at least 100,000 demonized people within 1 km of the four city gates!" Zhang Tie answered in a low voice. "Now, there are still over 1 million demonized people in Heavens Cold City. We can hardly clean their corpses. Our men only controlled a part of regions near the four city gates. After killing them, we will maintain the city gates so that living could still escape out of there!"

As long as the over 1 million demonized people continued under the guidance of the parent puppet worm, they could easily shock 2 common human armies. Additionally, as Langye Prefecture was relatively remote, all the local forces only contained less than 400,000 soldiers, how could they fight an over 1 million strong demonized army.

This also indicated that the Zhen Clan was very vicious. If the Zhen Clan aroused trouble when the holy war broke out, the whole Langye Prefecture would deteriorate heavily in a few days. Langye Prefecture was in the northwest of Jinyun Country and there were no powerful forces and clans within 1000 km of

the surroundings. Nobody would know what the Zhen Clan could do in Langye Prefecture with over 1 million demonized people

In the Second Holy War, the most powerful parent puppet worm controlled by demons could even control over 3 million demonized people at the same time.

At this moment, unless assigning more than 2 corps from 1000 km away and prepared to pay for a high price, they could only surround Heavens Cold City and annihilate those demonized people in Heavens Cold City with small teams. They could only weaken the force and reduce the number of those demonized people in Heavens Cold City. Thankfully, demonized people could not deliver babies. Otherwise, it would much more troublesome.

When they were outside a city gate of Heavens Cold City, they would meet some corpses with each step forward. All of them were demonized, over 90% of them had been chopped or cut into pieces. Many corpses had started to rot and grubby—where's hell? Right here!

Although the guys from Thor Mercenary Army had been used to death and blood, they all started to vomit after only 100 steps forward.

Except for Zhang Tie as he had long experienced this period. He also contributed a part to this scene. Those whose heads were still linked to their necks yet had exploded were mostly the work of his javelins. Glancing over corpses, Zhang Tie looked a bit sorrowful while icy flame gleamed in his eyes.

These corpses were once people like him!

God-damned demons!

Zhang Tie had made 2 targets silently since he was born.

First, he determined to be an alchemist in the auction house in Kalur.

Second, he made it to Heavens Cold City. Several days ago, standing in a gate tower in Heavens Cold City, Zhang Tie looked at the abstruse night sky. He then determined that he would never close his eyes until he killed 1 million demons and lackeys of Three-Eye Association and covered Heavens Cold City with those corpses.

From then on, watching all this, Zhang Tie didn't vomit anymore. Instead, his eyes were filled with grief while a cold flame was burning in his heart...

Having almost vomited everything that he had eaten, bending his body, Zerom watched Zhang Tie's back as straight as usual and felt that Zhang Tie was like a steel statue which contained a foreboding and hard strength that should not belong to this age.

'Although this teenager looks the same as before in some aspects, he's different in some places.' A thought flashed through Zerom's mind.

Zhang Tie just waited there for them calmly. When they finished vomiting and stood up, their eyes had turned red and tearful. Zhang Tie then nodded, "Let's go, you will be fine after that. There are more corpses than that inside. But it is more dangerous inside!"

The 4 people then continued to follow Zhang Tie and walked over to the hell-like place. They soon came to the south gate of Heavens Cold City where they watched a rapid fight.

A batch of people in the same uniform as them was killing some demonized people gathering over the passage in the city gate. After that, they pulled away those corpses and cleaned up the passage.

Zhang Tie then walked over there and casually stamped a pink worm two

"Zhang Tie", one of them walked towards him. Seeing this, Zerom and the other 3 guys shut up.

"What's up? Is anyone alive out of there?" Zhang Tie asked as he watched Liu Xu.

"None!" Liu Xu waved his head while his half-covered face didn't look good obviously, "It's been almost 1 week. Fewer people could escape out of there. These are..."

Liu Xu then turned his eyes to Zerom's group.

"Some of my old friends. After hearing the event in Heavens Cold City, they want to have a look inside. Therefore I'm taking them here." Zhang Tie put it straightly and didn't mean to cover the status of Zerom's group at all.

Liu Xu then moved his eyes from them like having not seen them at all. Thus, he lowered his voice and moved closer to Zhang Tie, "I heard our clan seniors were negotiating with some big figures from other clans on dealing with the event in Heavens Cold City. There are always powerhouses lurking in some sensitive places in the inner city and some banks in the outer city. There are also some guerrillas. Take care of yourself!"

Zhang Tie understood Liu Xu's good intentions. He also knew what Liu Xu was hinting about. Therefore, he slightly patted on his shoulder, "Don't worry, they are just figuring out something inside. They would leave in several hours after having a look near the camps of the original city guards!"

"That's fine, watch out!" Liu Xu understood it instantly.

Zhang Tie then nodded before guided Zerom and the other 3 into Heavens Cold City through the bloody passage...

Chapter 374: Battle

Each of Zhang Tie's nine javelins in the metal container on his back was close to 130 centimeters in length. Besides being used for throwing, the metal javelins could also be used as short spears in close combat.

At this moment, noticing that more than twenty demons were rushing towards the five people, Zhang Tie waved his spears, one in each hand. In a wink, he had made ten heads explode.

Zhang Tie moved so swiftly and directly. Facing those demonized people, he only made one movement—prick!

Each time he pricked, his short spear would cause a low, wind-breaking sound, "Sss, sss", which suggested his terrifying speed at close quarters. However, to respond to the power of his short spear

moves, the heads of the demonized people being pricked all exploded like broken watermelons, sprouting brains backwards.

Although those being killed were demonized people, judging from their looks and clothes these demonized people were all once commoners in Heavens Cold City, including common businessmen, citizens, students, housewives, the old and the young.

The demonized man that Zhang Tie had just exploded was around forty years old and was still wearing a postman's clothes, with a visible yellow Chinese character, "邮", on the left breast of his blue uniform. Below that character for "mail", Zhang Tie peered at his official identification photo and his name——Gu Anming (谷安明[1]) .

Compared to that official identification photo, Gu Anming didn't look like how he looked one week ago any more. Instead, his bulging eyes were filled with a bloody, killing intent. His face looked grim and twisted and a fishy, stinky liquid was flowing out of the corners of his mouth. Gritting his teeth with fury and evil, he was charging at Zhang Tie while waving his limbs. As was expected, he exploded from the impact of Zhang Tie's short spear before he drew too close.

After Zhang Tie made Gu Anming's head explode, the remaining demonized people in his group cried out with jarring screams. Hearing this, Zhang Tie changed his facial expression immediately as he pricked another head swiftly and told Zerom's group, "They are calling their partners, we have to get out of here as soon as possible!"

Hearing Zhang Tie's warning, Jordan swung his huge ax and chopped off two demonized people's heads, sending them flying in the air. Zerom and Shrek also each killed one respectively. After that, they followed Zhang Tie and rushed into an alley on the side.

While being protected by them in the middle, Professor Simon started to pant. After running less than 100 meters, Zhang Tie saw an opening rice store. He then ran inside at once.

Followed by the other four guys, the moment Jordan went to shut the door, he was stopped by Zhang Tie, "No need!"

"What if those demonized people rush inside?"

"No problem. If we close it, we might arouse their attention. Follow me upstairs, and be quiet!"

Hearing the screams and disorderly footsteps from outside, they hurriedly followed Zhang Tie up to the second floor of the rice store.

They were in a small warehouse where someone had lived before. It seemed that chaos had happened here as things were strewn everywhere. Many rice bags were broken. There were even some blood stains on the floor. However, nobody was inside. The moment Zhang Tie had come upstairs, he pulled closed the curtain there. Standing close to the windowsill, he made a gesture to tell the others to be quiet. Therefore, everybody slowed their breathing.

Shrek was on high alert above the entrance of the stairs and watched the gate downstairs. If any demonized people rushed inside, he would find out first.

The screams of demonized people were drawing closer and closer. It was really noisy in the alley on one side of the rice store and on the other side from the street outside. Hundreds of demonized people rushed by, followed sparsely by many more. From the source of the sound, they knew that those demonized people were rushing towards the place where they'd fought just now.

Professor, Jordan, Zerom and Shrek all changed their facial expressions slightly. If they had stayed half a minute longer there, they would have been surrounded by the demonized people. Although normal demonized people had the same fighting strength as a commoner person's, they were all painless and dauntless. If Zhang Tie's group were to be surrounded by them, nobody knew what would happen.

They had been in Heavens Cold City for over two hours, during which period they had experienced six fights. As a result, they gradually came to understand how terrifying those demonized people were.

Like piranhas or army ants, as long as they locked onto their target, those demonized people would all attack together. Unless they were all killed, they would never stop. When being surrounded by demonized people, as long as one was troubled by a demonized person for over 2 seconds, more of them would take the chance and crowd up. In two seconds...four seconds...six seconds...eight seconds...they would gather until they covered you and gnawed you, leaving nothing at all. Any powerful fighter would be frightened facing such an attack.

With a sound downstairs, a demonized person walked in. Seeing this, Shrek made a gesture towards them to tell them to hold their breaths.

Jordan then clenched his ax...

Zerom narrowed his eyes as he changed the position of his long sword...

Professor Simon seemed to be praying as he drew something on his chest...

Zhang Tie gazed at the foot of the stairs...

Over ten seconds later, the sound downstairs drew farther away, while the screams outside also faded. Several minutes later, after those noises disappeared, everybody finally let out a breath.

Shrek then jumped from his position at the stairs and walked towards the other people, throwing himself onto a rice bag. Zerom watched outside carefully from the windowsill. "Those demonized people have gone, only leaving a couple of them wandering in the alley!" he said.

"Professor Simon, why didn't they call their partners the moment they saw us instead of doing that when they only had one or two left?" Shrek asked.

"After losing the guidance of their parent puppet worm, all the demonized people have poor organization. They are not even as smart as spiders or ants. When they caught sight of us, they took us as their food and target. We made them excited, just like how those stupid animals are when they notice their food and mates. Of course, they would not share their food with others!"

Hearing Professor Simon's explanation, Jordan quivered all over. "Professor Simon, could you change the metaphor. We are their food, but what motherf*cking mates? Who wants to hug those guys in a bed?"

Professor Simon then revealed a smile in an embarrassed way. Ignoring Jordan's qualms, he said "Only when they've confirmed that they have no chance of eating us would they then send an SOS to their own kind!"

"Before coming to Heavens Cold City, I even thought they could speak. It's really out of my imagination that they could only scream!"

"Language is a very advanced function in the human brain. It requires a very high level of intelligence. Although those puppet worms can control one's actions by living in their brains, they cannot control people's language function. The reason lies in the very low intelligence of puppet worms themselves. They cannot deal with the sophisticated functions of the language area in human brains, not to mention comprehending human language, logic and contents or exchange by language!"

While they were talking in low voices, Zhang Tie was frowning among the things in the room. He found some dried fruits and passed them to the other people, saying, "Eat some first to regain your physical strength. We might face more battles like this later on!"

When they entered Heavens Cold City, it meant they'd entered the battle field. Of course, Zhang Tie would seize any chance to recover his physical strength and spiritual energy, and maintained them in their optimum states. This was a battle field survival skill that he'd learned in Iron-Blood Camp. Besides fighting on the battle field, they needed more strength to persist.

"How long from here to the nearest camp of the former city guards?" Zerom asked Zhang Tie after a short thought.

Zhang Tie pointed at a direction outside the window, "We need to pass two streets. It's about 1000 meters away from here. Now, only a few demonized city guards are wandering in the city, while 90% of the rest of the demonized city guards are gathering around the inner city of Heavens Cold City, where the parent puppet worm was killed..."

"I don't think we can continue like this. It's too dangerous, especially for Professor Simon!" Zerom said as he drew on the floor with his long sword. "How about this? We will find a place within this region to settle down Professor Simon first. Then two of us stay with Professor Simon to protect him while the other two go outside to catch two demonized city guards. The advantage of this method is that we could reduce our chance of exposure. Additionally, those going outside could get out of danger with their own fighting strength more quickly..."

Chapter 375: Military Camp

The moment Zerom posed the plan, everybody else agreed. If they stayed together, it truly would be too eye-catching for those demonized people; additionally, their efficiency would also decline.

"How about Shrek and I go out and catch two demonized city guards?" Zhang Tie nodded as he said, "Zerom and Jordan are responsible for protecting Professor Simon. If any accidents occur and evacuation becomes necessary, each group can leave Heavens Cold City separately. We can then gather near the south gate of Heavens Cold City!"

"I agree!"

"I agree!"

"Me too!"

Everybody nodded. Professor Simon needed to be protected. Therefore, it was safe for him to stay with a powerhouse and a clear guy; Zhang Tie was familiar with Heavens Cold City, Shrek was a senior scout who was good at spying and urban warfare. Therefore, it was proper for the two people to catch demonized people to bring back.

"Professor Simon, which parts of the demonized people do you need, only their heads?" Zhang Tie asked.

"Although their heads are the most important part, you'd better bring back their complete bodies. As puppet worms can influence one's internal organs, we can get more precise information through a complete study of their organs.

"I understand!"

...

After the discussion, they took a short rest in the warehouse before leaving.

A couple of demonized people were still wandering in the alley outside. The moment Zhang Tie walked out of the door of the rice store, he killed them with his javelins before they made any sound.

As they had all been fighting the demonized people in close combat until now, it was Zhang Tie's first time showing his javelin throwing talent to them. Zerom and the other three guys heard the sonic booms when Zhang Tie threw out his javelins!

None of them had imagined that Zhang Tie's javelin throwing skill had reached the level of causing a sonic boom. Therefore, they were amazed, especially Zerom. Although he knew Zhang Tie well, it was still out of his imagination that Zhang Tie could realize this in only one year after leaving Blackhot City.

Most people who excelled at throwing javelins would at least reach LV 8 before they could create a sonic boom because sonic booms required great, explosive physical strength. Take Captain Kerlin as an example, he was able to create a sonic boom in the middle and late period of LV 8.

"Zhang Tie, what's your level now?" Zerom asked Zhang Tie as he ran.

"Just reached LV 7!"

Considering the sonic booms they heard, Zerom and the other three guys was not surprised about that answer. They were all thinking that Zhang Tie might have learned some secret knowledge after he returned to his Zhang Clan. In some big clans with long histories, it was not difficult for a person at Zhang Tie's age to reach LV 7.

Zhang Tie didn't give any explanation either; instead, he rapidly collected his javelins from the dead bodies and led them towards a camp of former city guards in the distance.

As there were too many demonized people on the main streets, Zhang Tie especially chose side alleys. Sometimes, he directly entered the buildings on his side and ran on the roofs of the buildings in cases

when there were too many demonized people. Even though they were very carefully, it was unavoidable that they still met four teams of demonized people hundreds of meters away.

After learning from the former experiences, they all moved very fast in these battles, leaving no time for those demonized people to utter any scream.

Zhang Tie noticed that after Shrek killed those demonized people, he immediately took their purses. Zhang Tie didn't say any word about that as mercenaries were good at doing that kind of thing.

The places with great wealth in Heavens Cold City were within the inner city and in the Heavens Cold City Bank opened by the Zhen Clan. Both places had been under the watchful gaze of powerhouses from Huaiyuan Palace. However, people could still find much wealth from the other places in the city.

...

With a jarring scream uttered by a demonized person from afar, all the surrounding demonized people rushed over there. As a result, the streets became instantly empty.

In a room, Zhang Tie and Zerom's men heard the disorder footsteps from outside.

"This is a good chance. Someone else must have attracted those demonized people. We can directly rush over there. Ready..."

Zhang Tie also became more vigilant; when the footsteps had gone far away, Zhang Tie sped up followed by Jordan, who directly hefted Professor Simon on his shoulder. Zerom and Shrek were at the back of the team.

Zhang Tie targeted at a hotel with more than ten floors two hundred meters away.

This was the longest distance for them to run in a breath since they entered Heavens Cold City. It only took them a bit more than 10 seconds to get there.

Ahead of the team, Zhang Tie rushed before the gate of the hotel and caught sight of 4 demonized waiters of the hotel wandering out of the lobby. Of course, the four demonized people also saw Zhang Tie. Before they uttered any voice, Zhang Tie had already exploded their heads with 4 javelins.

Closely after that, all of them rushed into the lobby. As being not chased after on the way here, Jordan heavily panted, "F*ck, I couldn't have imagined that we could run so freely in Heavens Cold City!"

"Douchebag, hurry up, put me down!" Professor Simon swore.

Jordan hurriedly put him down.

...

Two minutes later, after killing seven or eight more demonized people in the hotel, they arrived at a conference room at the top of the hotel.

Standing in the conference room, they were able to see the military camp hundreds of meters away and some demonized people in the uniforms of former city guards wandering outside the camp.

"Nice spot, we will choose here then!" Zerom looked around before nodded.

"Fine, if we don't come back in two hours, we must have encountered some accident or special situation. You should then evacuate without us!" Zhang Tie told Zerom.

"Okay! Take care of yourselves!" Zerom nodded.

After reaching an agreement on the details, Zhang Tie and Shrek walked downstairs and left from the rear door. Before separation, they even exchanged glances with each other. After that, they chose a direction respectively and ran towards the military camp.

Shrek chose an alley while Zhang Tie directly dashed through the streets. Shrek thought that Zhang Tie would choose the roofs of those low buildings; however, it was really out of his imagination that Zhang Tie would choose that way. Therefore, he was stunned. 'What a crazy guy! Isn't he afraid of being surrounded by demonized people?'

Of course, Zhang Tie was not afraid of that. Because he didn't think any of the demonized people inside Heavens Cold City could catch up with him and block him. With his physical strength, he could keep running for a whole day in Heavens Cold City like this, regardless of the quantity of those demonized people.

Now that most of demonized people above LV 10 in Heavens Cold City had been cleared by the powerhouses of the 6 clans, the remaining demonized people above LV 10 were staying near the inner city of Heavens Cold City. Few of them wandered outside. Even though Zhang Tie had met one of them, he was still confident that he could escape with the bliss of his rapid moving skill.

When he left the hotel, Zhang Tie triggered his rapid moving skill; therefore, he moved even faster on the streets.

As he expected, after a few footsteps, Zhang Tie was noticed by some wandering demonized people on the streets. They then chased after Zhang Tie; however, Zhang Tie just ignored them. As a result, more and more demonized people noticed Zhang Tie and started to follow him. In less than 200 m, Zhang Tie had been followed up by hundreds of demonized people.

As common demonized people ran almost as fast as commoners, they were gradually lagged behind by Zhang Tie.

For Zhang Tie, with high speed movement, he could keep out of range of all the attacks and harassment of demonized people in Heavens Cold City. Unless he stopped, he would never be surrounded by demonized people.

Even though more and more demonized people were chasing after him, the distance between them and Zhang Tie was also expanding. As long as Zhang Tie changed a route or made a turn, many of the demonized people following him would lose their target and start to wander in the streets again.

Zhang Tie chose to stay close to that military camp's perimeter. After only several minutes, he had already gotten rid of the demonized people chasing after him. After circling around the military camp, Zhang Tie jumped off the three meter high wall in the east.

The whole camp was ruined by the battle airships of Huaiyuan Palace as a quarter of the ground and a fifth of the buildings in the camp had been attacked by white-phosphorous gel combustion bombs while

metal bolts shot by the small-caliber, rapid-fire ballista from the battle airships of Huaiyuan Palace spread everywhere; many of them even burrowed deep into the soil.

Along with those traces left by the war were those incomplete corpses. As those corpses were left a week earlier, nobody cleaned them up; therefore, it was pretty disgusting. Nobody would like to see them at all.

At this time, the whole camp, which once housed over 10,000 city guards, had become a completely empty zone. Besides some demonized people wandering around like ghosts on the large training field, nobody else was alive, except for Zhang Tie.

At sight of Zhang Tie, the couple of demonized people rushed towards Zhang Tie at once...

Chapter 376: Double-Carp Swords

Three demonized city guards were rushing towards Zhang Tie. They all looked pretty disgusting, with the skin of two of them heavily burned. Besides that, one of them had lost an eye, and one's hair and scalp was burned off. The last one had a bolt in the right side of his chest, while disgusting puss was flowing out of the festering wound. Due to their stink, a lot of flies were circling around them.

With only one glance at them, Zhang Tie had given up his plan to bring them back to Professor Simon. They were really disgusting!

With one javelin, Zhang Tie slashed their heads into pieces as fast as he could, like swatting flies. After that, he started to search the military camp. As he didn't see Shrek inside the camp, Zhang Tie thought that he must've been targeting the demonized city guards wandering outside the military camp.

This was a very large military camp, which covered about 500,000 square meters, including the training field. Many buildings inside the camp had been burned, leaving behind the most common barracks, some training facilities, warehouses, canteens and so on.

According to the habits of demonized people, some of them preferred to wander where their hosts used to stay. Therefore, Zhang Tie didn't believe that there were only three demonized people inside such a large military camp. Although he couldn't see any on the training field, he might meet some demonized people somewhere else.

Zhang Tie ran directly towards the nearest barracks.

The door to the barracks was half closed. When he arrived, Zhang Tie kicked it open at once. After peeping inside, he found no demonized people at all. It was chaotic and nothing could be seen on the bunk beds except for dust.

Zhang Tie kept kicking open the doors of seven more barracks and found no demonized city guards inside at all. Then Zhang Tie came to the gate of a building with four floors.

That building was very magnificent. Its exterior was covered with delicate marble bricks. There was also a noticeable copper plate on the wall outside, reading, 'Brigade of City Guards III Headquarters, Heavens Cold City'.

There were two empty sentry booths outside the gate of the building. Some military vehicles and light wheeled infantry chariots were parked in the parking lot beside the building. Those vehicles were crowded together in a disorderly way and the scene was lifeless. One chariot had even run into a parterre beside the building. After crashing into the parapet guardrail, it tilted over the parterre and was damaged greatly.

Everything there seemed to reveal how chaotic it was when the airships of Huaiyuan Palace had assaulted this military camp one week ago.

Zhang Tie didn't intend to go inside. But then he suddenly heard sounds from upstairs and changed his mind, deciding to search inside.

After entering the building, the sounds became louder. The sounds, "bang, bang, bang" were drifting down from upstairs every second. With a javelin in hand, Zhang Tie silently went to the stairs of the building before he rushed upstairs.

Like other similar buildings, the stairs were in the middle. On both sides of each floor were corridors, and lining the corridors were rooms and offices. At a glance, the design was indicative of military camps.

Nobody was in the corridors on the second and third floors, so the sound had come from the fourth floor, which was more luxurious than the lower floors as it had dark red carpet on the floor. The moment Zhang Tie came to the fourth floor, he caught sight of a man in military uniform at the end of the corridor on the left, who was thumping on a closed door with his fist.

As that man had his back to Zhang Tie, the latter could not clearly see his face. Therefore, Zhang Tie could not judge whether or not the man was a demonized person.

All the rooms and offices on this floor were opened, with papers scattered all over the floor, except for the room at the end of the corridor on the left.

Zhang Tie took a look around and found nobody else on this floor. He walked towards the man in military uniform and stopped ten meters away from him.

He coughed, "Ahem..."

Zhang Tie's cough was extraordinarily loud in the empty corridor. The moment the man heard this, he turned around.

Bloody eyes, a grim and twisted face, and mucus dripping from the corners of its mouth; all this indicated that it was a demonized city guard. What made Zhang Tie excited was that it was a second lieutenant.

Zhang Tie then let out a sigh, 'Thankfully, this one doesn't look that disgusting.'

The demonized person then charged at Zhang Tie, intending to punch his face. It moved very swiftly, equal to the fighting strength of a level six fighter. Zhang Tie revealed a smile as he faced its attack head on, like how a tough guy would bully a toddler, he ended the fight in the blink of an eye.

Catching its wrist in one hand, Zhang Tie pushed the demonized person's head with his other hand. Then, with a "Kacha" sound, he rotated its head 360 degrees and immediately broke its neck like

breaking off corn cobs. As a result, the puppet's head was bent backwards over 180 degrees and lolled down its back while the top of its head was facing the floor.

No blood was spilled during the whole process.

Zhang Tie then loosened his grip, letting that demonized second lieutenant fall onto the floor like mud.

However, Zhang Tie hadn't expected that the puppet wouldn't die immediately. Instead it lay on the floor, its limbs still twitching slightly like a machine that was out of control. Meanwhile, its bloody eyes gazed at itself, intending to control its own body once again.

Although, Zhang Tie had long known that demonized people had a very strong physical endurance, he had not imagined that the puppet could still try to stand up at that moment.

"Motherf*cker!" Zhang Tie swore as he immediately raised his foot and stomped on its limbs to break them. After that, the puppet didn't move any more. However, its bloody eyes were still gazing at Zhang Tie. Thankfully, Zhang Tie's psychological endurance was great and he didn't care about this "staring salute".

Previously, Zhang Tie had intended to catch it, However, at the sight of the metal plate on the door, Zhang Tie changed his mind.

The plate read, 'Brigade Commander's Office'.

He thought to take a look inside, as there could be some good items there. A thought flashed across Zhang Tie's mind, 'No matter what, they are Zhen Clan's items. Just take them.'

It seemed that this was an important place as it had a reinforced metal protective door. At that moment it was obviously locked, otherwise the demonized man would not have thumped on it for so long, leaving only a dent in it.

"Pah, pah, pah..." Zhang Tie patted the door's surroundings. From the muffled resonance, Zhang Tie knew that it was a heavy door.

Zhang Tie then took a deep breath and moved one step back. After that, he ferociously kicked its lock with the "Elephant Stomp" movement of Iron-Blood Fist.

With a crisp sound, "Bang," the whole door, along with its frame, changed shape greatly, leaving a crack of space between the door and its frame about two fists wide.

After another "Elephant Stomp", with a boom, the door fell down together with its door frame.

Soon after that, fine plaster and cement blocks dropped from the ceiling and covered Zhang Tie's head and face.

"Peh...peh...peh..." Zhang Tie kept spitting out of the cement and plaster as he patted off the dust in his hair. After that, he walked into the office.

'It'll be a great loss if I find nothing inside.'

He came to an outer room of the office, which was more than thirty square meters big. There were some filing cabinets, a sofa set and a desk close to the door. Some maps were hanging on the wall. It

seemed to be the office of a secretariat or an adviser. After a glance, Zhang Tie could see nothing valuable. Therefore, he didn't search it any more than that.

There was a dark red door on the right wall, which was half covered. Stepping on the thick carpet, Zhang Tie walked over there and pushed open the door.

Compared to the room outside, the room behind the door was like an office of a brigade commander. It covered more than 100 square meters. The moment he walked inside, he saw a huge sand model of the city on a table in the middle of the room, and two nice, crisscrossed, gleaming long swords on the wall facing the door.

"Ze...ze...Zhen clan is really rich!" Zhang Tie sighed with feeling as he touched the two one meter high crystal columns, each of which weighed hundreds of kilograms.

The two crystal columns on both sides of the door looked pretty good. They were transparent all over. Additionally, a steamed-bun sized pyramid energy shadow had formed in their cores. The moment Zhang Tie drew close to them, he felt the powerful energy effects of the two super "crystal generators".

Such large pyramid crystals were close to at least level six. Zhang Tie had not seen such large pyramid crystals before. The value of the two items was definitely worth more than 10,000 gold coins.

After confirming that nobody was in the room, Zhang Tie teleported the two huge pyramid crystals into Castle of Black Iron without any hesitation.

This was really a worthwhile trip for Zhang Tie.

The brigade commander's office had been arranged in an ambient way. Other than the two huge "crystal generators", there were some oak bookcases which were filled with books. At the sight of the bookcases and the books inside, Zhang Tie's eyes gleamed. Without a second thought, he collected all of them into his study room in Castle of Black Iron.

As his study room in Castle of Black Iron was still empty, he would not waste the precious books on those bookcases. Until now, Zhang Tie still remembered his experience while in the Grant family's Private Library in Prague. In this day and age, books were also a very important treasure.

When he was in Zhen's Mansion, Zhang Tie had the chance to move all the books from the Mansion into Castle of Black Iron. However, due to an emergency he'd had no time to collect every book. Additionally, he was afraid of exposing himself to the Zhang Clan. By contrast, he didn't need to consider any of that at this moment.

Besides bookcases, there was also a wine cabinet in the office, which was filled with various types of alcohol. However, Zhang Tie wasn't interested in drinking them as he was not sure what was inside of the bottles.

Many elite weapons were hanging on a wall. There were also two sets of nice looking armor. However, Zhang Tie didn't touch them either.

On one side of the desk, Zhang Tie found a safe which was completely open, leaving nothing inside. It seemed that someone had taken the items away in a frenzy. Only god knew who had those items now.

After that, Zhang Tie checked the last thing in the office—the desk.

Zhang Tie came to the desk and pulled out the drawer at the bottom. As only some documents had been left inside, Zhang Tie turned them over randomly before pushing the drawer closed.

Some boxes of cigars and some delicate boxes of medicament were lying in the drawer on the second layer. Zhang Tie picked up one box of medicament and found some sexy women on the package, who had alluring, slim eyes and half-exposed boobs. There were 3 lines of Chinese characters on the package:

'Beauties Groan Every Night.'

'Tone Your Kidney and Nourish Your Body. With One Piece, You Will be a Real Man Overnight.'

'Secret Medicament from Qionglou Pavilion of Taixia in the Eastern Continent.'

"F*ck!" Zhang Tie swore as he pressed the drawer back in.

When he pulled open the drawer on the third layer, he found some medals and an exquisite box made of silver and gold, which was about thirty square centimeters wide and more than 10 centimeters high.

Zhang Tie took the box out of the drawer and opened it.

A belt, made of gold and silver diamond-shaped pieces of metal, was lying inside. At the sight of this belt, Zhang Tie widened his eyes in amazement—No Way!

Zhang Tie screamed inside, "No Way", repetitively as this belt's design and its brilliant, noble and slim buckle made him excited.

It was too familiar for Zhang Tie. This was obviously another Red-Snake Sword. Additionally, compared to the Red-Snake Sword that he'd gained in Iron-Horn Army, this one looked better and more advanced.

Zhang Tie then pressed the bead in the middle of the buckle. With an extremely low sound, "Tsa", two fish shot out at the same time.

Zhang Tie took one of the two fish. Feeling the fine, anti-slip scales and the heavy texture on the fish, Zhang Tie instantly recalled the same feeling from when he'd held the Red-Snake Sword.

Holding the handle of this slim, golden fish, Zhang Tie noticed the small Chinese characters on its back—'Golden Carp of Double-Carp Swords'

Zhang Tie slightly release his Iron-Blood Battle Qi.

A sword ray instantly sprouted out of the golden carp's mouth and stretched six meters away. Amid the sword light, Zhang Tie seemed to see a flexible golden carp. Just as when he'd used the Red-Snake Sword before, when he pushed it with his sword qi, the secret grains on the blades cast a vivid pattern in the air.

Zhang Tie took the other fish sword in his left hand. At the same time, he slightly released his Iron-Blood Battle Qi to push out the sword light from the mouth of this other fish. The thin sword blade also reached six meters away. The only difference was that the projection in the air from this sword was a silver carp.

Zhang Tie waved his hands at the same time. In a split second, the room was filled with crisscrossing sword light. Like performing a magic trick, Zhang Tie unleashed golden and silver carps from his hands, making them swim six meters ahead of him in the air.

As he was not accustomed to the two weapons and the effective distance of the weapons was a bit long, the two weapons collided with each other every now and then with a splash. Due to an unsteady gesture from his left hand, the silver carp swam over the middle of the wine cabinet, instantly creating a clean cut through the bottles inside. As a result, all the items inside the wine cabinet shattered.

"Hahahaha," Zhang Tie burst out in laughter. The double-carp swords were definitely one level higher than the Red-Snake Sword that he'd used before. The two swords were greater in various ways, including effective distance, sharpness and craftsmanship.

Zhang Tie guessed that the weapons had probably been gifted to the master of this office. Zhang Tie sighed with feeling. 'This gift is really much better than those weapons in the warehouse of the Iron-Horn Army.'

Zhang Tie had been shocked when he'd gained the rare Red-Snake Sword before. However, he had not imagined that he could gain another set of swords of the same quality just one year later.

Was this his destiny?

Zhen's assassin had made him lose his Red-Snake Sword in Dragon Cave. However, now he'd gained a much better set of Double-Carp Swords within Zhen's territory. This must have been predestined.

Zhang Tie then instantly tied his Double-Carp Swords to his waist. Being covered by his field combat clothes, nobody would know that Zhang Tie had changed his sword belt.

By then, Zhang Tie was satisfied.

After another glance around the office, the corners of Zhang Tie's mouth were raised as he left the room.

When he went back through the door of the outer office, Zhang Tie grabbed the demonized person who's bloody eyes were popping out and was still intending to pick itself up. Zhang Tie then rushed downstairs with it in hand, like he'd caught a small chick, and rushed outside of the camp.

...

Ten minutes later, after shaking off the demonized puppets chasing him by taking a circular detour, Zhang Tie returned to the hotel where Professor Simon and the other two guys were.

Less than two minutes after Zhang Tie returned, Shrek also came back with a demonized puppet in hand.

"Well, they are mine now. Please spare me two hours. You can leave now!" said Professor Simon

After placing the two demonized puppets onto the desk of the conference room in the hotel, qi instantly covered Professor Simon as he chased the other people out of his working place like a chef who was ready to cook two fat fish.

Zhang Tie, Shrek, Zerom and Jordan were then chased out of the conference room by Professor Simon as well.

At the entrance of the conference room, Shrek put his arm around Jordan's neck and murmured something to him. Jordan then forcefully swallowed his saliva and nodded.

"Zerom, it's enough if you accompany Professor Simon here. Jordan and I want to make an inspection round inside the hotel to eliminate the other demonized puppets here!" said Shrek as he winked.

Because he was clever, of course Zerom knew what they were really going to do, but he only exhorted them, "Watch out, don't bring in those demonized puppets from outside the hotel!"

"No problem!" Shrek responded with a big smile. Then he glanced at Zhang Tie. "How about inspecting the hotel together with us?"

"No need. Just do what you want. Except for money and some valuable items, don't take any items that are too conspicuous with you. Otherwise you will have trouble!" Zhang Tie warned.

Considering the fact the hotel's star rating wasn't too low, there would probably be a lot of money and some valuable items inside the hotel, or left behind from the guests. Whether they could find these things depended on their luck.

Shrek and Jordan then walked away jubilantly.

"Aren't you going?" Zerom asked Zhang Tie with a smile.

"I have many chances to make money like this, so I'm not in much of a hurry!" said Zhang Tie, having just made a fortune.

"I almost forgot that. You can come here whenever you want!" Zerom patted his head.

"Oh, have you gotten a message from Captain Kerlin? Has he left Blackhot City too?"

Zerom shook his head. "I contacted him a month ago. He was still in the No.7 National Middle School. You might not know yet, but that guy has bought a house near Bright Avenue!"

"Bought a house?"

"As a man who wants to protect and be responsible for a woman, of course he needs to prepare a fixed house in Blackhot City!" Zerom mocked, "That guy is rude and rarely falls in love with any women. But since he's fallen in love with a woman like Miss Daina from your school, he would not leave Blackhot City unless he saw no chance of surviving! In order to buy a house there, that guy almost robbed non-stop these past few years..."

'Miss Daina.' After hearing this familiar and beautiful name, Zhang Tie became slightly absent-minded...

Two hours later, Shrek and Jordan came back red faced with items fully covering their waists. At this time, Professor Simon also walked out of the conference room as he wiped off the blood stains on hands.

At the sight of Professor Simon's slightly pale and frightened face, Zhang Tie was slightly shocked inside.

Professor Simon trembled, his voice hoarse, "I...I have to go back to Armes...right now!"

...

Chapter 377: Ahead of Time

When the 5 people went back to the refugee camp, it was almost 2 pm.

Zerom and his men changed their clothes in Zhang Tie's tent; Zhang Tie then saw them off.

"No matter what, Thor Mercenary Army owes you!" the emaciated Professor Simon said as he embraced Zhang Tie to bid him farewell. Although they'd only stayed with each other for one morning, they had become brothers-in-arms.

"Come to Armes when you are free. I will introduce the hottest girl to you!" Jordan said as he gave a bear hug to Zhang Tie, "Thanks for that nickname, Black Cyclone, I like that!"

"You can bring me fortune!" Shrek also hugged Zhang Tie and sighed with feelings, "Now, Heavens Cold City is like a vault; to be honest, I don't even want to leave!"

Zerom also hugged Zhang Tie, "Take care of yourself!"

"You too!" Zhang Tie replied.

"We planned to go to Huaiyuan Prefecture; however, we have to give up on it; Professor Simon said we had to notify the headquarters of Thor Mercenary Army and let them prepare for the coming war!" Zerom appeared to be slightly disappointed.

"Why were you going to Huaiyuan Prefecture?" Zhang Tie was slightly stunned by this.

"Hmm, I heard an alchemist in Huaiyuan Prefecture had produced all-purpose medicament. After the event in Heavens Cold City, the various medicaments are in short supply. However, Armes is covered with poisonous things. As long as the antidote is in short supply, it will cause many bad chain reactions. Previously, we intended to seek a solution in Huaiyuan Prefecture; but now..." Zerom waved his head helplessly. As they only had one airship, they had to go back to notice Armes first about the more emergent information.

"How many vials of all-purpose medicament do you need?"

"At least 4,000 vials! Zerom replied. The trading volume of 4,000 vials of medicament was huge wherever it was, especially for a mercenary army.

If Thor Mercenary Army was under the control of Zerom, Zhang Tie would directly promise him by selling or gifting him the all-purpose medicament. Zhang Tie's life philosophy was influenced by his dad and his mom as he firmly insisted on repaying one's help. When he attended survival training in Wild Wolf Valley, Zerom and Captain Kerlin saved him in the cave. Of course, as repayment, Zhang Tie would gift his all-purpose medicament to him without any hesitation.

However, Thor Mercenary Army was not under Zerom's control. As a member who was though highly of by the management of the mercenary army, he was nothing different than a staff member in a business

group. He was not even a shareholder. Therefore, Zhang Tie needed to consider it carefully. If he repaid his thanks to Thor Mercenary Army, it be not proper; instead, he needed to repay his thanks to Zerom and let Thor Mercenary Army know about Zerom's significance in the Army, which would be advantageous for Zerom's development in the mercenary army.

Many thoughts flashed across Zhang Tie's mind.

Zhang Tie smiled and pretended to take out of something from the vials container in his tactical vest; actually, he was taking out of 2 vials of all-purpose medicament from Castle of Black Iron and gave them to Zerom.

"Do you mean this?"

At the sight of the two vials of medicament in Zhang Tie's hands, Zerom, Simon, Shrek, and Jordan were stunned.

Under the sunlight, the crystal vials were radiating rainbow-like brilliance, which made the greenish yet golden medicament pretty mysterious. The unique symbol of Manjusaka on the vials instantly attracted their eyes.

"Argh, Manjusaka, I heard it was the symbol of the all-purpose medicament..." Shrek screamed before Zerom spoke.

"Zhang Tie, where do you get this from?"

"Why wouldn't members of the Zhang Clan have such good items from Huaiyuan Prefecture?" Zhang Tie casually answered.

Staring at the two vials of all-purpose medicament, Zerom's eyes gleamed, "I was told that very little of such medicament could flow out of Huaiyuan Prefecture. Nobody in Armes has even seen it. We just heard about its marvelous functions. Can it really replace preliminary antidote potions?"

"If you only used to detoxify, you would find it was more effective than preliminary antidote potion. Some of my friends have tried it, this thing could easily detoxify the toxin of a huge centipede!"

Hearing Zhang Tie's words, Professor Simon took one and started to gaze at it carefully. He seemed wanting to open it; however, he felt embarrassed to do that; ergo, he glanced at Zhang Tie, asking for Zhang Tie's agreement.

"Just open it, these 2 vials of all-purpose medicament are yours!"

Hearing this, Professor Simon instantly opened the clasp of the vial and moved it closer to his nose and sniffed. Soon after that, he looked very energetic. Seeing this, Jordan and Shrek also drew close.

"Argh, how come it smells so good..." Jordan shouted.

"Is this the smell of a super enzyme?" Professor Simon became a bit stunned.

"What, Professor? Shrek asked.

"Alas, I also wanted to be an alchemist when I was young. I studied some knowledge as a herbal apprentice and tried to make a super enzyme; pitifully, I failed it. I even wasted several years on this. At

the sight of this vial of all-purpose medicament, I recalled what happened before..." Professor Simon waved his head in a nostalgic look.

Zerom then looked at Zhang Tie full of inquiries and desires, which could be easily felt.

"When you go to Huaiyuan Prefecture next time, you can go to Jinwu Company in Jinhai City. You could get all-purpose medicament there!" Zhang Tie told Zerom.

"Jinwu Company?" Hearing this, Zerom became a bit surprised. Companies were usually small trading organizations; the greater ones would be called commercial associations or business groups. He had not heard a company called Jinwu Company in Jinhai City of Huaiyuan Prefecture could sell all-purpose medicament. Zerom felt it was unbelievable, "Is Jinwu Company selling this?"

"If it were anyone else, they would not be able to buy all-purpose medicament from Jinwu Company even for a high price, but if it's you, you will definitely buy it from Jinwu Company. They can get all-purpose medicament for you through special channels!"

Hearing Zhang Tie's words, not only Zerom understood, even Professor Simon, Shrek and Jordan had understood who then glanced at Zerom with amazed looks. 'When did Zerom become so welcome? No matter whether Zhang Tie was bragging or not, it was very significant for Thor Mercenary Army that Zerom can get all-purpose medicament from Huaiyuan Prefecture.'

Zerom glanced at Zhang Tie and felt moved inside. Hearing Zhang Tie's words, Zerom finally confirmed that this teenager might have grown too powerful, so much so that even Zerom felt strange about him.

People didn't need to explain somethings.

Zerom then embraced Zhang Tie once again, "Take care of yourself, I hope to see you again!"

"You too!"

Zerom, Shrek, Jordan and Professor Simon finally departed Zhang Tie. Seeing them disappearing in the distance, Zhang Tie stood still in the wild for a while. He then took a deep breath and looked at the scorching sun before he returned to the refugee camp.

It was a sunny day; however, Zhang Tie felt chilly inside.

Watching their backs, Zhang Tie wondered if he would see them again; perhaps, this was the last time they would see each other.

Last year, Donder told him that the third holy war between human race and demons would break out in five to twenty years. So, according to Donder, the holy war would break out in 4 years; however, based on the information that Professor Simon gained through study and analysis of the demonized puppets, Zhang Tie knew that it would break out much earlier than estimated.

Zhang Tie only had one year to prepare for the coming war, instead of four years. Based on the analysis of Professor Simon, the puppet worms had lived in their hosts' brains for over 36 months. If not for the event, those puppet worms would've incubated for another six months to one year...

This was very important and frightening information, which meant that demons and their lackeys in Three-Eye Association planned to launch the war and plunge the whole continent into great chaos next year, next August at the latest — as was predicted by Professor Simon.

The world had become chaotic. What happened in Heavens Cold City was just the beginning; in the future, more and more places would become a hell like Heavens Cold City.

Zhang Tie didn't know whether the complete collapse and exposure of the Zhen Clan in Heavens Cold City would let demons and Three-Eye Association's some plans shift to earlier dates. Now that Professor Simon could gain the information through anatomy and analysis of the puppets, Zhang Tie believed that those big clans in Jinyun Country and the other countries and powers which took away not only one demonized puppet from Heavens Cold City could also work it out.

As long as they started to accelerate their defense towards the 3rd holy war, actually, they were forcing Three-Eye Association and demons to launch the war. Therefore, Zhang Tie and most of the other average people would have less time to prepare for it!

No war would start when both parties were well prepared for it. Wars were always competitions on speed.

Thinking of this shocking information, Zhang Tie walked in the refugee camp with a low mood. Seeing those extremely sorrowful and numb looks, Zhang Tie's heart gradually became cold.

At this moment, Zhang Tie was like a man running on the prairie; seeing the horizon in the distance, he thought that he could somewhere brilliant if he kept running like that; however, all of a sudden, that man found that the horizon was merely a mirage. Actually, he stood on the edge of an abyss and had no road ahead.

...

At this time, a red leather football rolled towards Zhang Tie and hit his foot, causing him to look around.

A sunny boy of 5 years old or so was running towards him, "Elder brother, can you kick the football back to me?"

At the sight of the little boy's smiling face, Zhang Tie became stunned. After circling around the refugee camp for several days, it was Zhang Tie's first time to see such a happy smile. It was like a ray of sun light among the black clouds.

Zhang Tie didn't react until the little kid repeated what he said. Zhang Tie then slightly picked the football by his foot into the air and held it by hand. After that, Zhang Tie walked towards that little boy and squatted, patted his little head, and passed the football to him, "Are you alone? Where's your dad?"

"My dad is catching bad guys in Heavens Cold City!" The little boy answered in a spirited way. "He's a police officer in Heavens Cold City. My dad also has the same uniform as yours. But my dad's uniform is blue!"

"Your dad is catching bad guys in Heavens Cold City?" Zhang Tie failed to understand it at once, "Are there any bad guys there at this moment... No, is there anybody alive in Heavens Cold City?"

"Yes, my mom told me that my dad is very great. He has caught a lot of thieves before. We are camping outside; after my dad catches all the bad guys in Heavens Cold City, we will go back home!"

'Camping?' Zhang Tie looked around at the refugee camp filled with tents. Before he wanted to say something, he saw a 30-odd woman running towards him in a flurried way, "Argh, sorry, sorry, did Xiaoxing's [1] football hit you?"

The little boy turned around and told his mom, "Mom, I'm talking about dad with this elder brother!"

"Ah, Xiaoxing, go play over there, don't trouble this elder brother. Haven't I told you to not trouble others when you play?"

"But I was asking whether this elder brother had seen my dad or not. My dad also has a uniform almost the same as that of this elder brother. This elder brother is also in the police!" The little boy said innocently before asked Zhang Tie, "Elder brother, you are a police officer, right?"

"Ah...yes...yes!" Zhang Tie smiled.

"Are you catching bad guys too?"

"Almost that. But you dad is much sharper. I've not caught any thieves yet!"

"Are you catching bad guys in Heavens Cold City every day? Have you seen my dad there? How about him now? My mom said my dad would write a letter to me in a few days!"

The little boy didn't see it; however, when he asked this, his mom who was squatting behind him started crying tears instantly. The woman stared at Zhang Tie with an imploring look.

"What's your dad's name?" Zhang Tie asked patiently.

"My dad is Fang Weiqiang!"

"Oh, I met him before. When I went to Heavens Cold City last time, I saw him catch a lot of thieves! He's great!"

"Really?" The little boy became excited at once, "When you see him next time, can you tell him that Xingxing misses him so much? It's really interesting to live in tents here, I want to play together with him!"

"No problem!" Zhang Tie nodded.

Hearing Zhang Tie's promise, the little boy threw his football onto the ground and kicked it away. After that, he chuckled and chased after his leather football.

The woman hurriedly wiped off his tears as she stood up and thanked Zhang Tie.

For this mother's consideration, Zhang Tie could only let out a deep sigh, "He will find out about it sooner or later!"

"Just let him remain happy temporarily. He's still young now; I don't want him to know that he has lost his dad at such an age!" The woman looked firm and painful.

Zhang Tie then glanced at her, "I'm Zhang Tie. I live in the camp of Huaiyuan Palace, if you need my help, come find me!"

"Thanks..." The woman dropped off her tears once again.

...

Zhang Tie then left the refugee camp. The woman had given him a lesson just now. From what happened to her and her kid, Zhang Tie learned that no matter how tough the road ahead was, one had to survive on. You might not decide what was going to happen; however, you should at least fix your own attitude.

'Even a kid could treat living in refugee camp as a camping trip and found pleasure among it, why wouldn't I treat the tough and unpredictable future as a gamble of my life?

'Although the future didn't look bright, at least I have taken the preemptive move due to all-purpose medicament. The sudden shortage of medicament materials indicates that the proportion of my all-purpose medicament becomes heavier in the market. What does this mean? It means more money and more chances to gain resources. Then, I will be more influential. Of course, more unpredictable dangers will come towards me.'

Zhang Tie returned to his base and found two officers of Hidden Dragon Palace waiting for him outside his tent.

"Are you Zhang Tie? The seniors of the Zhang Clan want to see you!"

Hearing this, Zhang Tie's heart pounded. "Seniors of the Zhang Clan have summoned me? What's that for?"

"Elder brothers, what's up?" Zhang Tie asked politely, 'Could it be that I screwed up by leading outsiders in Heavens Cold City? No way! How could such a trivial thing arise the attention of the seniors of Zhang Clan.'

"We don't know either. Just follow us there!" the two officers also replied very politely, which made Zhang Tie recover his composure at once.

He then followed the two officers towards the flagship airship in the far...

Chapter 378: Never Lower My Head

The airship parked on the ground was like a giant building dozens of stories high. Thick steel wires were pulled taut from the body of the airship and were firmly nailed onto the wood piles on the ground like those ropes nailed to the ground to hold the tents. If not fixed to the ground, such a colossal thing would cause a very dangerous accident when facing heavy winds.

To park a huge airship on the ground was as technical as parking a huge ship in the harbor. Zhang Tie learned how to park a huge airship recently. Looking at that airship which brought him a great sense of oppression, Zhang Tie was thinking about something in his mind—

'I've not entered Castle of Black Iron to eat fruits for many days. I wonder whether new fruits have grown on the small tree after killing so many demonized puppets over the past few days. Hopefully I can get another Trouble-Reappearance Fruit; then, I'd be able to try driving a fury-wind airship in the trouble-reappearance space.'

The huge airship was parked on a wide, sandy area; many people were accessing the hatch door at the end of the airship. It had observably become a temporary headquarters of Huaiyuan Palace in Heavens Cold City. Personnel only! Two rows of fully armored soldiers from Huaiyuan Palace were standing outside the hatch door. Without permission, no students from Hidden Dragon Palace were allowed to access the airship.

Under the guidance of the two officers, Zhang Tie smoothly entered this huge airship and came to the outside of a room on the second floor of the airship.

After lightly knocking at the door, the two officers said respectfully outside the door, "Senior, Zhang Tie has arrived!"

"Let him in!" a tender voice said from inside the door.

An officer pushed open the door and made a gesture to let Zhang Tie in. Zhang Tie then entered the room with various questions filling his mind.

The room was arranged in an elegant and simple way. An old man in plain robes was sitting on his knees and making a kettle of fragrant tea water. He looked both attentive and pious, all of his movement made Zhang Tie very comfortable.

Zhang Tie looked at his bloody clothes, then looked around the surrounding environment in the room. He instantly felt like a plate of dog meat served in a top-class cocktail party, which formed a sharp contrast.

Zhang Tie scratched his head, not knowing whether to walk forward to destroy the nice ambience or just stand still. To be honest, it was Zhang Tie's first time seeing a senior of Huaiyuan Palace. These seniors not only had a terrifyingly great amount of power, but also had a say in Huaiyuan Palace. What was more, this man should be Zhang Tie's great-grandfather.

Of course, Zhang Tie became nervous in front of him.

"Come here, take a seat!" The senior was very kind. He seemed to understand what Zhang Tie was thinking about now. Raising his hand, he beckoned Zhang Tie. "Be at home; people are the noblest creature in the universe; items might not match a man, yet a man is qualified to match all the items!"

'Items might not match a man, yet a man is qualified to match all the items?' Zhang Tie was shocked by this meaningful line. Therefore, Zhang Tie didn't hesitate anymore; instead, he walked straight into the room and sat on his knees like that senior before the teapot.

"Have a try!" The senior pushed a cup of tea in front of Zhang Tie.

The moment the cup of tea was pushed in front of Zhang Tie, Zhang Tie smelt a special odor, which was extremely delicate with a refreshing and rigorous moisture. He then thought about the scene in the mountain after the early spring rain.

Zhang Tie downed the whole cup of tea, but was shocked; he tasted nothing at all. The tea only tasted a bit sweet, nothing else.

"How do you feel?" the senior asked Zhang Tie full of expectation.

"It would be better with a bit of sugar in it!" Zhang Tie answered honestly.

Hearing this reply, the senior's eyelids quivered; he then watched his cup with the same kind of tea water for a short while before sighed, "Didn't you taste such tea before? It's 'Wild Spring', the top-class tea in Eastern Continent. How come you want some sugar with it?"

"I have not tasted any tea like this before; I only tasted tea leaves before!" Zhang Tie said with an embarrassed look.

Thinking about Zhang Tie's life in Blackhot City, the senior shook his head as he took his teacup and smelt the fragrance of the tea inside. After that, he took a sip carefully and asked Zhang Tie straightforwardly, "You took outsiders into Heavens Cold City today, correct?"

Hearing this, Zhang Tie's heart raced instantly. The old man continued sipping his tea; however, Zhang Tie felt that this old man immediately became taller and unshackable like a mountain, which caused him difficulty breathing.

This was purely a spiritual feeling. It was an all-round overwhelming state from qi field, spirit, ability, will and other aspects.

At this moment, Zhang Tie felt like a trivial ant. No matter how high he jumped, he would always be an ant. In contrast, this old man was a mountain which was hard to pass or compete with. Zhang Tie even felt that on a whim the old man on the opposite could destroy him both spiritually and physically.

After only a few seconds, Zhang Tie had realized that he was losing control of his body under such a terrifying suppression. He was now in an extremely powerful force field both physically and spiritually. The force field was like mercury spilling over the ground. It penetrated into his body without any obstacle and could even impede his nerve center and brain from sending orders to his body.

Under such suppression, Zhang Tie's straight back started to bend towards the ground slowly. At this moment, each of his cells seemed to be forcing him to lower his head with the instinct to kneel down and give up completely.

The senior was still sipping his tea leisurely with his attention on the teacup. He didn't glance at Zhang Tie at all.

'Is this a knight's force? Is this the 3-in-1 force mentioned by Master?' Zhang Tie was shocked too much inside. Although he was clear-minded, he felt helpless as he could only see his body slowly bending towards the floor. His head was closer to the beige floor which he was kneeling on; at the same time, the wooden grains on the floor became larger and clearer.

'No, I will not surrender to this... even if I die...' Zhang Tie screamed inside out of fury. Meanwhile, the veins on his forehead started to bulge. With full of his spirit and strength, he wanted to take back control of his own body...

Zhang Tie then saw some images in his mind: that teenager who was abducted by Huck and Snade and stomped onto the ground... Glaze throwing a contemptuous sneer towards him... the seven wild wolves who almost killed him... the hidden bolt covered with blue frost which was shot towards him after he walked down from the duel platform... those undead of Black-Feathers Army of the Sun Dynasty who wanted to tear him to pieces... Major Franca's wolf-like eyes...and the assassination attempt executed by that Zhen douchebag in Dragon Cave...

'No... no, I won't...' Zhang Tie's eyes turned red at once.

The spiritual energy in his mind was boiling up...

Zhang Tie's blood started to boil...

Every one of his muscles started to tense as hard as steel and iron...

When Zhang Tie's forehead was only one egg's distance away from the ground, Zhang Tie's hands which were put on his knees finally became fists.

The sweat over his forehead started to drip onto the floor one blob after another. Because of the narrow distance, Zhang Tie could almost hear the sound of his sweat dripping onto the ground.

Zhang Tie finally controlled his head; after that, he started to raise his head and straighten up his back gradually. Although it was a simple movement, it caused a sound of "Kakakaka" over Zhang Tie's muscles and skeletons like forcefully opening those fixtures on the metal processing platform which had been rusted for a long time

It took Zhang Tie two minutes to completely raise his head and straighten his back.

However, after such a short while, Zhang Tie was fully covered in sweat like he'd just climbed out of water. His combat uniform had become completely drenched. He felt even more tired than after fighting a whole day in Heavens Cold City.

Not until Zhang Tie raised his head and straightened up his body did the senior raise his head and peer at him with a shrewd light.

Zhang Tie panted. Even after drinking a cup of tea, he still felt his throat becoming hoarse. He then stared at that person opposite him, "Yes, I took four people into Heavens Cold City today!"

"Don't you know about the order?" The senior gazed at Zhang Tie as he put down his tea cup. At the same time, his kind gaze turned into sharp-bolts and shot directly into Zhang Tie's mind, "Why do you think you are an exception?"

Chapter 379: If Not an Ant, Be a Chinese Dragon

Facing the sharp stare of the senior, Zhang Tie replied without any fear, "I just did what I should do!"

"What you should do?" A forbidding sneer appeared on the senior's face. "Don't you know that Huaiyuan Palace is enforcing military laws here? You think that's what you should do, but you might lose your life according to the military laws. Since its founding, Huaiyuan Palace has been strictly complying

with the clan regulations left by Lord Huaiyuan for hundreds of years. Even an heir who once violated the clan regulations was abolished and imprisoned for the rest of his life by the clan. Do you think that you are unaffected by clan regulations just because of your all-purpose medicament? Do you think that Huaiyuan Palace won't kill you?"

"I'm just a small figure. I don't think I am great. If I violate any clan regulations, of course Huaiyuan Palace could kill me!" Zhang Tie raised his head. "But as a man, I have to do something!"

"Oh? You still have an excuse for your actions?" The senior turned his furious look into a smile. "Is your excuse more important than clan regulations? Tell me about your reason. Do they deserve what you did to them?"

"One of them saved my life before. I have to return the favour. This is the first reason!"

"What about the second reason?"

Zhang Tie kept silent for a short while before he continued with a lower, yet firmer tone, "The information that was gained at the cost of over a million common people's lives doesn't belong to a single individual, the six influential clans in Jinyun Country or their privileged lords. Nobody is qualified to hold this information personally. If the news about the holy war was locked, more average people would become cannon fodder as they wouldn't be able to prepare!"

"You really think so?" The senior of Huaiyuan Palace narrowed his eyes slightly.

"Yes!" Zhang Tie replied with a louder voice as he puffed up his chest. "In the last few days, many powerful people have already gained the information they wanted from Heavens Cold City. I don't think those big figures and influential clans in Central States Union are the only ones who have the right to know that the holy war will arrive next year, or even in six months. Why don't other people have any right to know about this information, which is so closely related to their lives?"

The senior fixed his eyes onto Zhang Tie's face. His sharp gaze almost shot through Zhang Tie's eyes and entered his mind. "Do you want to know why? Because only these people and clans can deal the greatest damage to the demons and keep more people alive. Because of their great combined power and organizational ability, they are qualified to know more information than commoners!"

"Therefore commoners are destined to die?"

With an extremely solemn face, the senior replied, "Have you seen how ants cross a river when it has flooded? Ants cannot swim, so all they can do is hug each other in a ball with tens of thousands of them and roll over the river. During this process, many of the ants on the outer sphere are flushed away by the flood, leaving those in the core alive. This holy war is akin to ants crossing a river. In the end, some ants would be flushed away by flood. However, some would survive. Sacrifice is unavoidable. While we cannot make sure that every ant will cross the river, we have to believe that only those ants who are powerful enough to unite can decide the future of the ants!"

Zhang Tie knew he was right. When the holy war arrived, most of commoners who were not powerful enough to unite with each other would not organize effective counterattacks towards the demons at all. Instead, they would only think about escape, escape and escape...

'At this moment, the big figures and I don't think the same. They pay more attention to the ants who can unite with each other. However, I want those commoners who cannot unite with each other, who are doomed to be flushed away by the floods, to make preparations ahead of the floods, even just a bit. They might not be able to roll over the river like other ants, but at least they could have a chance to find a leaf for themselves.

'Is anybody wrong? Nobody is wrong. Each person has his or her own stance. Although my idea is almost perfect, I could actually only help a few "ants". A Thor Mercenary Army of only tens of thousands of people was nothing compared to those big powers. I was just trying my best to help them in case of regret.'

Before coming to Huaiyuan Palace, his family members in Blackhot City were those ants, doomed to be flushed away by this flood in the eyes of those big figures.

Thinking of this, Zhang Tie smiled with self-mockery. Until then he didn't realize that although he was rich and more privileged than before, it was impossible for him to become a person like Lan Yunxi or the elites from other clans, because he could not think like them at all. His life experiences at the bottom of Blackhot City had been deeply impressed in his soul. Deep in his mind, there was a small figure, a poor guy, a flesh bag in the Iron Thorns Fighting Club, who would always do something at the sight of someone like him encountering unfairness or doomed to be cannon fodder.

Donder told him that according to a discovery made by human psychologists before the Catastrophe, everybody was actually trying to do one thing—to make their personality formed in childhood more complete.

'I can hardly understand the "good intentions" of the big figures. Instead, I only want to do something to make me and my friends feel better. I am both resigned to the coming adversities and rebellious. I expect this world to be a paradise where "everyone is equal". Does this expectation come from the small figure in my soul?'

"You didn't have to attend this action. Nobody has forced you to do that. But you came voluntarily in response to the summons of the clan. Additionally, you are very brave on the battle field. I appreciate it very much!" Seeing Zhang Tie stay silent for a while, the senior sipped a mouthful of tea and continued, "As it's your first mistake taking people inside the city privately, I will punish you according to the military laws of Huaiyuan Palace in the name of playing favoritism. Your clan contribution points for this action will be fully deducted. Furthermore, you should accept one hundred whips. Do you agree?"

"A country has its national laws, similarly, a clan has its regulations. As I have violated the regulations of Huaiyuan Palace, I accept the punishment voluntarily!" Zhang Tie said in a low voice.

"Hmm. There's another thing that you need to know. Someone of the Zhen clan once worked in the Alchemists Association of Jinyun Country. The quantity of vials that you ordered from Alchemists Association was too large and had attracted his attention. Therefore, the Zhen clan arranged for someone to assassinate you on Hidden Dragon Island. Additionally, the Zhen clan are members of the Three-Eye Association, which was developed by demons among the human race. After they heard that you can realize mass-production of all-purpose medicament, the other clans and members in Three-Eye Association probably already knew about it too. Therefore, you are in a very dangerous situation right now!"

"Three-Eye Association wants to kill me?" Zhang Tie was shocked by this information. He thought that he had solved the problem after sweeping then Zhen Clan. However, he had not imagined that Zhen's attack on him might only be the beginning, as Three-Eye Association was backing the Zhen Clan and might still be watching him at this moment.

"Based on Three-Eye Association's style, when we are on the verge of the third holy war, they will eliminate anyone who can reinforce the overall strength of the human race and help the human race to fight demons. Recently many alchemists have been assassinated, and a senior clan of the Carlo Federal Alchemists Association was swept. According to our investigations, these actions were done by Three-Eye Association. As you are much more valuable than a common senior alchemist, Three-Eye Association will definitely try to find a way to get rid of you!"

"Thanks for your warning, senior. I will take care of myself!"

"After the Zhen Clan's real status is exposed, Three-Eye Association will be in the thick of the storm. They might be lurking for a while more. Therefore, you should still be safe for a short period of time. If you agree, our clan can assign powerhouses to protect you!"

"I think the best protection is to disappear. I prefer if nobody can find me, or if Three-Eye Association just thinks that getting rid of me is not worth the trouble. I will deal with it myself!" Zhang Tie considered for a short while before he refused the senior's help.

One minute later, Zhang Tie left the senior's room with a calm look.

To tell the truth, the Zhang Clan's punishment to him for bringing outsiders into Heavens Cold City was fair. Zhang Tie wasn't grateful or resentful towards the Zhang Clan for the punishment. Instead, he thought he deserved the punishment. However, through this he felt an invisible chasm between him and those big figures, which also existed between him and Huaiyuan Palace.

This chasm was not cause by interest disputes, but purely the differences in values and world views. The big figures' distant attitude towards small figures and average people from the event in Heavens Cold City made Zhang Tie very uncomfortable.

If the Central States Alliance or Huaiyuan Palace could make a detailed announcement about the coming holy war, they'd spare time for commoners to prepare and they might be able to save the lives of hundreds of millions of people. However, Zhang Tie knew that he was dreaming.

When he left the senior's room, Zhang Tie recalled the faces of his friends still in Blackhot City and Bulapei—Barley, Owen, Doug, Hista, Bagdad, Leit, Alice, Beverly, Hanna, girls of Rose Association and...Miss Daina.

Zhang Tie knew that these people were the "ants" that would be flushed away by the flood. During the long holy war, their lives had become trivial. If they could survive the holy war it meant they were lucky. However, if not it was nothing strange. Even though the holy war was coming, nobody felt it was necessary to notice them at all.

This made Zhang Tie uncomfortable and furious.

After that, Zhang Tie saw Lan Yunxi in the airship. A few days before, Zhang Tie had heard that Lan Yunxi forcefully triggered her ancestral bloodline and killed three powerhouses of the Zhen clan who were

above level 10 when she assaulted Heavens Cold City. Because of this, her primordial qi was heavily weakened. She needed to recuperate for a period. Therefore, she left the battle field from then on.

Zhang Tie had seen many people to inquire about her whereabouts, yet nobody knew where she had gone. He even thought that Lan Yunxi had returned to Huaiyuan Palace for recuperation. Therefore, Zhang Tie was a bit amazed at the sight of Lan Yunxi in the airship.

She was followed by a man, who was over twenty years old. With sword-like eyebrows and sparkling eyes, the man was as white as jade. He was robust and tall in a blue silk warrior's robe. A long sword was hanging at his waist. What a handsome guy! Walking together with Lan Yunxi, the man was not overwhelmed by Lan Yunxi's qi field at all. Instead, he kept laughing and jesting with Lan Yunxi.

Zhang Tie passed by them calmly without even glancing at them.

When she brushed past Zhang Tie's shoulder, Lan Yunxi peered at him and slightly bit her lip instead of saying anything. In contrast, the man completely ignored Zhang Tie.

"Younger sister Xi, here's the Jade Marrow Primordial Qi Recovery Ointment. I had my man bring this from Shantai Family in Qinghua Mountain by airship. I hope it can help you recuperate as soon as possible."

After he'd walked two steps away from them, Zhang Tie heard the man's voice. He then clenched his fist and felt jealous inside.

...

Five minutes later, Zhang Tie accepted his punishment in the open square of the camp of Hidden Dragon Palace, which aroused the attention of many people.

"Zhang Tie, student of Hidden Dragon Palace, brought outsiders into Heavens Cold City privately by playing favoritism. As punishment, all the clan contribution points that he gained through joining the action of assaulting Heavens Cold City were cancelled. Additionally, he will suffer one-hundred whips!" A military inspector of Huaiyuan Palace declared Zhang Tie "guilty" after glancing over the onlookers. He then ordered a soldier to execute the punishment on Zhang Tie.

Hearing this, all the onlookers exchanged glances with each other. Zhang Tie's performance in Heavens Cold City in the last few days was very outstanding, which brought him a good reputation. However, it was really beyond everyone's imagination that he could suffer such a punishment. Therefore, everybody just watched silently.

A two meter high pile of wood was fixed on the ground in front of Zhang Tie. An iron chain was fixed on the wood pile which was used to handcuff the offender's hands.

The soldier then walked towards Zhang Tie and wanted to fix Zhang Tie's hands onto the wood pile.

"I will stand still right here, just whip!" Zhang Tie took off his shirt, exposing his robust back.

"The whip in the army is no joke. It's a dragon whip made of the large tendons of mutated killer whales and steel wires. An average person would pass out with only 3 whips. I suggest you to respect this whip. Otherwise, you might lose your honor in public. I respect you as a tough guy considering your excellent

performance in Heavens Cold City recently, therefore, I am warning you about this!" The inspector murmured to Zhang Tie.

"Thanks, no need. I want to know whether the whips of Huaiyuan Palace can wake me up a bit!" After saying this, Zhang Tie smiled at Ma Aiyun and the other girls who had concerned looks.

After another glance at Zhang Tie, the inspector moved back as he nodded towards a muscular, barebacked, tough-looking guy who was holding a whip and preparing to execute the punishment. The tough guy then opened a rosewood box on his side and took out a black whip, which was as thick as a kid's arm. He then raised the whip in the air to show it around to the onlookers. After that, he dipped the whip in the water barrel before he pulled it out. After that, he slapped it towards Zhang Tie's back...

With an air-breaking sound, "Si..." he lashed the whip onto Zhang Tie's back, producing a crispy sound, "Pah..."

Hearing that sound, all the onlookers felt their hairs stand on end.

Although he had a blood stain on his back, Zhang Tie was still standing there as firm as an iron pillar with the exception of a slight frown.

After slashing Zhang Tie with the whip, the tough man found that Zhang Tie didn't respond at all. He then moved his whip in front of his eyes to check whether or not it was broken. After finding no problem with the whip, he continued.

"Pah..."

"Pah..."

"Pah..."

In a wink, the tough guy had lashed over twenty whips. Not only did the onlookers change their looks, but even the executor changed his facial expression. Such a whip could even leave a mark on a rock, not to mention a person. However, Zhang Tie just stood there, still as a statue. The muscles on his back didn't even twitch a bit.

At the beginning, Zhang Tie would slightly frown after each lash. However, after ten lashes, he wouldn't even frown a bit. Instead, he looked calm after each lash.

The onlookers had never seen a person who could stand more than twenty dragon whips without even moving a bit. They had not even heard of such a thing before.

More and more people came to watch, not only those from Hidden Dragon Palace, even many soldiers from Hurricane Army and Breaking Sun Army of Huaiyuan Palace had arrived. At the sight of Zhang Tie's performance they were all stunned.

After lashing the whip more than ten times with his full strength, the tough guy started to pant slightly.

"Harder, have you eaten food? This is no fun! Change to another executor!" Zhang Tie roared.

The moment he shouted, someone among the crowd instantly yelled, "Tough guy!"

With a solemn face, the inspector walked over. He took the whip and started to lash it onto Zhang Tie's back, causing a shrill, air-cutting and cracking sound on his back.

Then, gradually, all the onlookers started to count for him loudly.

"58..."

"59..."

"60..."

The sound of counting grew louder and louder, which even aroused the attention of people far away.

Hearing the increasingly louder yells outside the airship, the senior of Huaiyuan Palace, who was tasting tea calmly in his room, frowned. He walked towards the window and looked outside. Because the body of the airship was very high, the senior noticed Zhang Tie, who was standing still like an iron pillar and suffering from the punishment.

At this moment another man also walked towards the window in the room and watched.

"What a pity." Watching Zhang Tie being lashed, he shook his head slightly. "This young man is too merciful. Since he experienced the assassination on Hidden Dragon Island, I feel he's always estranged himself from Huaiyuan Palace on purpose!"

"It's normal. After all, he's new in Huaiyuan Palace and has no strong background. For a young man who was to be assassinated by a guard arranged by the clan, he is already brave enough to keep the previous partnership with Long Wind Business Group and stay on Hidden Dragon Island!" Although having scolded Zhang Tie just now, the senior started to appreciate him at this moment.

"I think that Huaiyuan Palace should master the manufacturing method of all-purpose medicament. If this young man encounters a worse situation, I'm afraid that nobody else will be able to produce it any more! For the sake of the Zhang Clan, it's not a good thing for him or Huaiyuan Palace if all-purpose medicament is under the control of this young man! This is nothing different than a baby holding a treasure passing through the boisterous market!"[1]

The senior of Huaiyuan Palace then smiled proudly, "The reason Huaiyuan Palace is so powerful is not because of a small bottle of medicament. No matter what, the manufacturing method of all-purpose medicament is in the hands of Lord Huaiyuan's descendant. That's enough! If Huaiyuan Palace forces or cheats him into submitting the manufacturing method for all-purpose medicament, it would ruin the cohesiveness of the clan members. If so, do you think that Huaiyuan Palace can survive this holy war, considering the powerful capabilities of those people who cast their greedy eyes on Huaiyuan Palace?"

"It's really pitiful..." That man sighed as he watched Zhang Tie from afar, "If this boy could be a bit more docile, he would become another ferocious general in Huaiyuan Palace in a couple of years. But now, I feel this brat is not completely standing in line with Huaiyuan Palace. As he dares to take outsiders into Heavens Cold City privately and violates the rules of Huaiyuan Palace, he might do something more excessive in the future. Additionally, I'm afraid that he will not help Huaiyuan Palace do anything after the one-hundred whips!"

"No matter who he is, as long as he violates the rules of Huaiyuan Palace, he should be punished! In future, as long as he doesn't betray Huaiyuan Palace, defame his ancestors or impact the interests of Huaiyuan Palace, just take him as a freak. Oh, what about that investigation?"

"We've confirmed that this brat has nothing to do with that event. First, he's not able to do that, especially considering the many people in the conference room of the Zhen Clan Mansion. He would not be able to kill them all in a short period before some of them even moved a bit. Second, he was drinking with his friends in Jinwu Castle until midnight that night. On the 2nd day, he was still on Hidden Dragon Island. Unless he could fly, he could not swim over 1000 miles over night to do this. Additionally, no airships or ships were recorded as leaving Hidden Dragon Island that night, neither on the next morning. Last but not least, how could he know about Zhen's arrangement in Huaiyuan Palace? When the Zhen Clan was scheming about Huaiyuan Palace, he was still in Blackhot City. Therefore, we've confirmed that another powerhouse who cultivated Iron-Blood Fist must have been involved with the event in the Zhen Clan Mansion."

"Who could that guy be?" The senior of Huaiyuan Palace also frowned.

...

In another room of the airship, Lan Yunxi watched Zhang Tie from afar as her face started to turn pale gradually.

...

"97..."

"98..."

"99..."

"100..."

With the last cracking sound, the yells among the crowd stopped. Then, the onlookers became quiet. Everybody was gazing at Zhang Tie. At this moment, Ma Aiyun and the other girls who got along well with Zhang Tie ran over, full of tears.

Yuan Ziyi took out wound medicine and started to rub it over Zhang Tie's back. At the same time, Gu Caidie had brought Zhang Tie's coat over and put it on for him.

However, Zhang Tie kept watching the clouds in the sky, which looked like ants and robust dragons. The one-hundred whips really woke him up. Just now, among the ever terrifying pain, his mind was unprecedentedly clear. Watching the clouds in the sky, he thought through many things.

"Zhang Tie, are you okay?" asked Ma Aiyun. Finding Zhang Tie absent-minded, she touched his forehead out of concern. She was afraid that Zhang Tie was driven mad by the whips.

"Senior sister Ma, I'm okay!" Zhang Tie grinned with a big smile. At the sight of Zhang Tie's smile, Ma Aiyun finally felt reassured.

When he was being lashed just now, Zhang Tie didn't feel pain at all. However after the punishment was over, when he moved his hand intending to pull out something from his bag, he felt his whole body had been cut into pieces, which made his face twist slightly.

"What do you want? I'll help you!" Ma Aiyun pressed Zhang Tie's hand, "Do you want all-purpose medicament?"

"No, it's my purse!" Zhang Tie answered as he gasped, "Senior sister Ma, please take out my purse and help me buy meat and alcohol from the Logistics Division for 150 people!"

"You still think about eating and drinking?" Ma Aiyun popped her eyes out at once.

"I've promised some cavalry brothers in Taishi Clan I'd drink with them tonight. I cannot eat my words. You come together with me. Don't forget to call Liu Xu, Wei Wu and Liu Yunfei when they come back, just to see me off!"

"What? You want to go?"

Hearing Zhang Tie's words, Yuan Ziyi, who was rubbing medicine over Zhang Tie's back, suddenly shook her hand, causing Zhang Tie to frown once again.

Zhang Tie then nodded, "I feel it's not proper for me to stay here any longer!" After saying this, Zhang Tie saw the girls' faces turn ashen at the same time. Soon after that, Zhang Tie revealed a sunny smile as he lowered his voice and murmured with a sneaky look, "Are you wanting to see me raising my buttocks on the bed, my senior sisters? I don't know whether that gesture is sexy or not. If you really want to have a look, come for me in Jinwu Castle silently. I will show it to you for free, either with pants or not..."

Having felt like crying just before, Yuan Ziyi instantly burst out laughing. As she wasn't being careful about the force from her hands, Zhang Tie uttered a ground-breaking, miserable shriek at once as he almost jumped up, "Argh, d*mn, lighter please..."

The onlookers who had intended to move closer to him instantly stopped after hearing Zhang Tie's shrill shriek like a pig being slaughtered. They then exchanged glances with each other and questioned to themselves, "Where's that tough guy? How come that tough guy disappeared after being lashed? Was he pretending just now? Why not pretend a bit longer? Why so embarrassing now..."

...

That night, Zhang Tie, Taishi Ci, Liu Xu, Yang Yuankang, Ma Aiyun and some cavalry brothers of Taishi Clan sat around bonfires and drunk until midnight.

After Zhang Tie returned to his tent in a half-cocked way, a shadow drilled into his tent.

"Senior sis Ma..."

Zhang Tie became awake immediately. However, his mouth had been blocked by a hot face...

What a nice wet dream...

Chapter 380: A Strange Place

On the tranquil sea with tender waves an old wooden trawler longer than 30 m was wobbling harshly.

The lacquer on the body of the trawler below the drafting line almost faded away. The earsplitting sound of the steam engines in the engine room also indicated that the working condition of the most important machine in the trawler had been much worse than before, like an old ox who was still pulling an oxcart and climbing the slope.

A flock of jagers was following after this trawler. Having been living in the sea area for a long time, these jagers knew that when sailors hauled their nets, they would throw small-sized sardines and parwns back into the sea. Those jagers would enjoy their meal at that moment.

If sailors had a nice mood they would even throw the fish and prawns into the air. Seeing this, those jagers would directly bite them in the air as if performing acrobatic stunts.

The jagers had already followed after this obsolete trawler for a whole morning, during which period, the sailors cast their net 6 times, 2 of which had nice gains which the jagers also enjoyed.

At this moment, a greater part of the fishhold had been filled with fish and prawns. With tons more weight, the old-ox like engine uttered a more jarring sound.

Besides, even the jagers in the sky started to tweet loudly.

"Boss, just cast the net. Even those jagers can't wait any more!" A sailor shouted loudly.

Beside the shipboard, a middle-aged tough man whose face had been full of wrinkles due to the long-term effect of sea wind was holding a tobacco pipe in the mouth. He was gazing at the seawater attentively, wanting to see through the sea water.

After hearing the sailor's scream, he raised his eyes towards the sky before waving his robust arm forcefully and sent the order loudly, "Cast the net! After hauling this net, we will go back home!"

Seeing his gesture, all the sailors started to cast the well-arranged net into the sea by sections from the stern of the trawler.

The man being called boss then came to the cab from the shipboard and told to the helmsman, "Maund, starboard the helm! I feel ocean currents under the sea. Those silver-headed spotted fish always like to follow ocean currents!"

"Yes, sir!" The helmsman then turned around to check whether those sailors had finished casting their net. The moment they finished doing that, the helmsman had started to starboard the helm to steer the trawler towards the right.

The boss then came onto the deck to watch the buoys on the net together with the sailors.

"Boss, Pike[1] is too old. It has almost run for 10 years. Why not get a new one for us..."

"Yes, it's such an unprecedented good market recently. Any seafood would be sold out the moment they reach the market. Those purchasers from canning factories in the downtown are squatting in the wharf every day. As long as they see us, they would charge at us like that we were beauties. We begged them before, but now, it's the complete opposite!"

"I was told that those canning factories really had good business nowadays. They work overtime every day. There are so many orders that they just can't deal with them all!"

"When I was in the tavern, I was told by a sailor that it was pretty chaotic on the continent recently. It seems like war will break out soon. A city might have been destroyed by demons while all the commoners inside had been killed..."

"So what! We have money to make!"

"But 2 months later when the sea freezes, we will not be able to head out any more, otherwise, we would make more money!"

The sailors talked before hauling the net. By contrast, the boss still held his tobacco pipe in the mouth with his eyes fixed on the stern. He was imagining a beautiful new steel trawler.

Of course, he had also thought about buying a new trawler like what those sailors had suggested. He had ordered a new trawler from Minsk Shipyard. He found an old friend who could help him get his new trawler in September without having to queue up.

Now, shipyards also had a good business. Additionally, the prices of the fishers manufactured by those shipyards also rose up like those canned fish.

Thinking of the 1800-odd gold coins, the price of the new trawler that he had paid for in advance, the boss felt heartache for a while. 1 month ago, the price of another steel trawler longer than 50 m and weighing 460 tons was only 1500-odd gold coins. He had been considering changing trawlers at that time. However, he hesitated and decided to change next year. Therefore, he missed the best purchasing opportunity.

As a result, he had to pay 20% more this time.

...

After he finished his smoke, the boss knocked his tobacco pipe which was made of whale's bone on the shipboard and sent another order, "Now, haul the net!"

Receiving the order, the sailors immediately started to rotate the capstan at the stern to haul the net out of the sea. This time, the boss's face turned gloomy.

The easier the sailors rotate the capstan, the fewer they gained.

Finally, they got no fish at all, even a prawn. What was more, they found a tidy hole whose diameter was greater than 2 m at the bottom of the net.

Squatting around the net, the boss and those sailors started to check the mysterious hole carefully.

"Is it a magical beast in the sea?" A sailor asked while his teeth started to quiver.

"Impossible. If it's a magical beast, it would take a great strength for it to make such a hole and we should have sensed that!" Another more experienced sailor waved his head.

The boss then rubbed the broken net and took the broken fish lines and started to observe them carefully. The end of the lines was tidy just like having been cut by a sharp weapon, making it very mysterious. Not only the boss had noticed that even those sailors had found it.

What could cause such damage in the sea? What if that thing targets at this trawler...Thinking of this, everybody felt a chill inside while those sailors moved their eyes onto the boss.

"As we've gained a lot today, it's time to go back!"

Hearing this, everybody felt they'd been relieved of a heavy burden...

The Pike then turned around and drove towards the north. After sailing for half a day, the trawler finally drove into a boisterous fish pier on Kaja Island which was filled with fishers at dusk.

After ensuring they were safe on the wharf, everybody let out a sigh.

When they landed, their haul was soon sold out. After one day's work, Pike brought over 90 silver coins to the boss, which was much higher than that 1 month ago. After receiving their salaries, those sailors left jubilantly.

The boss directly called a trailer to carry away that broken net to mend it up overnight; otherwise, they would not be able to set sail tomorrow.

Several hours later, as those fishers had come back consecutively and sold out their fishes and prawns, few people were left on the pier. When the last purchasers from canning factories left after midnight, the whole fish pier became quiet, except for the surging sea waves.

At this moment, a black figure showed his head above the sea at the stern of the Pike like a legendary water ghost. Without making any sound, he then grabbed the shipboard and jumped on board the trawler.

After that, the shadow came outside the door of the crew modules on the trawler. With a slight twist, he had broken the tiny lock, causing a light sound, "Ka".

3 minutes later, that shadow changed into a tidy set of sailor's clothes and left the fish pier quickly.

Although there were no roadside lamps on the streets in this city, it didn't influence Zhang Tie's actions at all as he had night vision. Walking on the streets, Zhang Tie glanced here and there out of curiosity...

There were no tall buildings in this city. Almost all the buildings were lower than 6 stories with pinnacles or slopes on top. Most of their exterior walls were white, beige or a light wood color. Additionally, the most original textures of the woods and stones which were used to build buildings were preserved, making them natural, concise, firm and massive.

Almost no tall chimneys like those in Blackhot City could be seen in the city. No traces left by trolley vehicles on the ground either. Only a few buses were parking on two sides of the streets. All this indicated that this was a city with poor industry.

For Zhang Tie, this was absolutely a strange place...

After arranging everything in Huaiyuan Prefecture and Hidden Dragon Island, Zhang Tie had left Hidden Dragon Island 3 days ago.

Nobody knew where he was heading. Even Zhang Tie was not sure where to go. He only had one general target in his mind—the sea area in the north of Waii Sub-Continent.