

## Golden 821

### Chapter 821 Crisis

"Grandpa, that's how it is, don't worry..."

After arranging the rescue operation, Ouyang Lei immediately drove to Yuquan Mountain. He dared to hide such a serious matter from his aunt, but he dared not hide it from his grandfather.

Although the old man has been retired for one or two decades, his influence in the military is still too great. Even if Ouyang Lei doesn't say anything, someone else will inform Ouyang Gang, and Ouyang Lei will inevitably get a scolding.

Having fought his way through the war years, the old man wasn't particularly surprised by Ouyang Lei's words. However, Ouyang Lei, standing next to the old man, genuinely felt a chilling killing intent.

"Xiao Lei, no matter what it takes, you must protect your little brother's safety..."

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The old man closed his eyes wearily and said, "Notify the South China Sea Fleet stationed at the Yulin base to immediately depart for the Indian Ocean, um... under the pretext of a military exercise, to conduct search operations..."

"Grandpa, isn't this... a bit inappropriate? I've already contacted the embassies of all the countries around the Indian Ocean with which we have diplomatic relations, and asked them to send rescue teams..."

The old man's words shocked Ouyang Lei. He hadn't expected the old man to overstep his authority and issue such an order. This was the first time the old man had given instructions to the army since he retired.

Moreover, this order is extraordinary. It should be noted that there are three major fleets in China. The South China Sea Fleet guards the entire southern sea area of China, and the Yulin base is the only military-level base in the South China Sea Fleet, making it extremely important.

It can be said that every move of the South China Sea Fleet is watched by countries around the world. The old man's order will make many countries suspicious and uncertain. The place separated from the mainland by only a strait is probably going to be in chaos.

"What's wrong with that? Developing the economy shouldn't mean forgetting the fundamental principles that made the nation what it is. Going out and seeing the world can't hurt..."

Knowing Ouyang Lei's concerns, the old man continued, "If Xiao Rui can't be found, this old man doesn't have much time left to live..."

"Grandpa, please don't worry, I will definitely find my little brother..."

Ouyang Lei thought the old man was worried about Zhuang Rui, which was why he said those words. Little did he know that the old man did not mean that at all.

Zhuang Rui's acupuncture treatment over this period of time has greatly improved the old man's condition. If he does not receive Zhuang Rui's treatment for a long time, Ouyang Gang knows that these old men will not be able to hold on for much longer.

"Go ahead and talk to Zhenshan about this. Remember, don't tell your aunt..."

The old man waved his hand, indicating that Ouyang Lei could leave. No one knew what the old man was thinking with his eyes closed. Only the nurse who came in later noticed a single, cloudy tear in the corner of his eye.

"Hurry up, Peng Fei, distribute the food..."

Inside the cabin of the plane flying over the Indian Ocean, a busy scene unfolded as two flight attendants unloaded food and bottled water, filling the middle of the cabin.

Peng Fei, Zhuang Rui, and the others were stuffing things into the pockets of the life jackets placed in the cabin. These items would come in very handy in the near future.

Nighttime rescue is unlikely to go smoothly, and they may have to drift at sea for several days, so Zhuang Rui told them to pack as much food and fresh water as possible.

Otherwise, if fresh water is cut off in the ocean, the suffering of facing an endless sea that cannot be drunk will be far greater than the despair of being at one's wit's end in the desert.

"Mr. Zhuang, these are glow sticks. They emit a strong light at night. Everyone take one..."

He Shuang was handing out glow sticks, each about forty centimeters long, to everyone. As a veteran pilot who had flown fighter jets for over twenty years, He Shuang was very experienced.

Zhuang Rui's plane was fully equipped, even including an inflatable raft for six people and an electric air compressor powered by a battery.

The rubber raft was enough for several of them. With this equipment, as long as there were no problems during the parachute jump, they should be able to hold out until the rescue team arrived.

"Brother Zhuang, this is for you..."

Peng Fei handed Zhuang Rui a satellite phone that was wrapped in a plastic bag. As long as he had this phone, even if they got separated at sea, they could still find Zhuang Rui's location by using satellite signals from the sky.

Zhuang Rui had two satellite phones, but the other one was currently in the hands of co-pilot Ding Hao.

"Ding Hao, give the phone to Tianya and the others..."

Zhuang Rui thought for a moment and handed the satellite phone in his hand to Liu Li. He was a man after all, and even if he was in trouble, he had spiritual energy protecting him. Surely he could hold out in the sea longer than the two women.

Ding Hao glanced at Zhuang Rui, then silently handed the phone to Liu Li. Zhuang Rui nodded. Although Ding Hao had just expressed a different opinion and hadn't been calm enough, his act of handing over the phone without a word showed that he was a decent man.

Seeing that everyone was putting on their life jackets, Zhuang Rui said, "When you parachute, turn on your glow sticks and pay attention to where others are jumping..."

Lao He, go and take control of the plane. Once it descends to a suitable altitude for parachuting, set it to autopilot...

Peng Fei, you'll be the first to jump. The inflatable raft is yours. Once you're down, immediately use the electric inflator to inflate it and help the parachutists below..."

Zhuang Rui methodically made the arrangements. Seeing their boss's calm demeanor, everyone was somewhat influenced. Although the two flight attendants were still pale, their hands were no longer trembling as they put on their life jackets.

"Don't be afraid, everyone. If you survive this time, we'll get you a bigger plane. As long as you're willing to continue serving me, your salaries and benefits will all triple!"

After He Shuang left, Zhuang Rui clapped his hands, drawing everyone's attention to himself. As the saying goes, people die for wealth and birds die for food. Zhuang Rui's words made Ding Hao and the others' eyes light up.

Their current compensation is already quite good. If it could triple, they would earn 200,000 to 300,000 RMB per month. In that case, they could retire after working for two years.

Ding Hao continued Zhuang Rui's words, "President Zhuang, we'll be fine. I'll jump second..."

Everyone on the plane, including Zhuang Rui, had experience with skydiving. If it weren't over the open sea, the danger wouldn't be too great. However, seeing that Zhuang Rui had already contacted domestic rescue, everyone's fear subsided considerably.

"Let's put Liuli and Tianya in second and third place, so we can see where they're landing from the plane..."

Zhuang Rui shook his head, rejecting Ding Hao's suggestion. This incident was entirely an innocent disaster for the crew, especially since the two girls had just gotten married. If anything happened to them, Zhuang Rui would never have peace of mind for the rest of his life.

"Mr. Zhuang, autopilot is set. We'll descend a little more and then we can parachute. I've changed the flight path; this plane will keep circling over this area until it runs out of fuel..."

About five or six minutes later, He Shuang climbed out of the cockpit, looking back with some reluctance, after all, he was the captain of this plane.

"Running out of fuel? I'm afraid it won't be long before you witness the plane explode..."

Zhuang Rui shook his head, his teeth itching with hatred. Just because of a provocative gesture, Muta wanted to kill him. Zhuang Rui vowed that if he survived, he would definitely take Muta's life, even if it meant paying hundreds of millions of dollars to hire an assassin.

However, if I buy a private jet again, I must equip it with two security guards to ensure the safety of the aircraft after the crew leaves.

"Old He, hurry up and put on your parachutes. Everyone check your equipment to see if anything is left behind. Does anyone have any questions?"

Zhuang Rui tossed a parachute to He Shuang, and Peng Fei helped He Shuang carry it on his back. They were about to jump, and Zhuang Rui was also a little nervous. He didn't notice that his voice trembled slightly when he spoke.

"No problem..."

"I'm fine too..."

"Mr. Zhuang... I'm a little nervous..." Tianya's face was a little pale.

"I'm nervous too, but just follow the training steps. Close your eyes and jump. Pull out the parachute when you count to five. Remember, don't lose your phone. The rescue team will find you as soon as possible using satellite signals..."

Zhuang Rui patted Tianya on the shoulder. Tianya was a bit timid and not as bold and outspoken as Liuli. He was really afraid that this girl would get nervous and forget to pull the parachute rope.

"I...I understand, Mr. Zhuang..."

After hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Tian Ya calmed down a little. However, even Peng Fei felt a little uneasy facing the dark and unknown sea below, so it was normal for Tian Ya to be afraid.

"Old He, prepare to open the hatch..."

Zhuang Rui took a deep breath, glanced back at the wing, and realized there were still twelve minutes left. He couldn't afford to waste any more time; who knew if the time bomb would be accurate? If it exploded prematurely, he would die a truly unjust death.

"Brother Zhuang, you take this..."

Peng Fei walked to Zhuang Rui's side, flipped his wrist, and a small knife about two fingers long appeared in his palm.

"Never mind, you're used to it anyway. Besides, you don't need to cut the paracord; you can just pull down the nose clip to loosen it..."

Zhuang Rui shook his head. He knew that Peng Fei always carried a knife with him; this small knife had been with him for many years.

"Brother, you take it, be careful not to cut your hand..."

Because his family was poor, Peng Fei had to take on the responsibilities of a man since he could remember. After his younger sister was born, he fulfilled his duties as the eldest brother, which his parents took for granted. After both his parents passed away, Peng Fei continued to play the roles of eldest brother and parent in front of his younger sister.

It wasn't until he met Zhuang Rui that Peng Fei realized how wonderful it felt to be cared for. From the bottom of his heart, Peng Fei had come to regard Zhuang Rui as family.

When Peng Fei spoke, his eyes were misty. The sea was vast and no one knew what might happen. If he could, Peng Fei would rather give his own life to ensure Zhuang Rui's safety.

"Alright, take care of yourself. Once you're down there, get the raft ready right away. We're counting on you..."

Zhuang Rui chuckled and playfully punched Peng Fei. Looking at Peng Fei's left hand, he hesitated before saying, "Let's throw this on the plane. We can find it again when we're salvaging wreckage later..."

Zhuang Rui was referring to that box of diamonds. Even with his wealth, he was a little reluctant to part with it, as everyone knows that things sunk in the sea are very difficult to retrieve.

Putting aside other things, countless ships laden with gold, silver, jewels, and precious porcelain have sunk along the China-Europe shipping route alone. Although people have been trying to salvage them, less than one percent of the sunken ships have been successfully recovered.

"It's alright, Brother Zhuang, this thing isn't heavy. I'll put it on the rubber raft later..."

Peng Fei shook his head. He couldn't carry someone while skydiving, but carrying something weighing ten or so kilograms was no problem. Besides, the water would have buoyancy once they were in the sea, so the thing wouldn't hinder his actions.

"careful!"

It's unclear whether Peng Fei heard the two words Zhuang Rui shouted, because the cabin door had already opened, and the howling wind and the engine revving filled everyone's ears.

Peng Fei stood with his back to the cabin door, his hands bracing against the iron door. Suddenly, he leaned back and his entire body disappeared from the doorway. Zhuang Rui only saw Peng Fei give him a thumbs-up as he jumped down.

Perhaps due to the nearby storm, the sky was covered with dark clouds, and the glow stick on Peng Fei's body was flickering, making it difficult to see clearly.

"Liuli, Tianya, jump at the same time!"

Zhuang Rui turned his head and shouted at the two girls who were gripping the corner of the table tightly.

"Hurry up, if you don't jump, you're just waiting to die!"

Zhuang Rui became anxious when he saw the two women hesitating to come over. He knew that the bomb only had ten minutes left on its countdown and could detonate at any moment.

Hearing Zhuang Rui's shout, the two girls mustered their courage and jumped down almost with tears in their eyes. Fortunately, neither of them pulled the parachute lines. Looking at the two parachutes that were faintly visible in the sky, Zhuang Rui breathed a sigh of relief.

"Old He, Ding Hao, you guys jump..."

Zhuang Rui turned to look at the two captains. It wasn't that he was particularly noble, but the key was that he was the one who caused this incident. Zhuang Rui felt that he should be the last one to leave the plane.

"Mr. Zhuang, you go first..."

"Alright, stop talking nonsense and hurry up..."

After He Shuang and Ding Hao jumped down, the timer inside the bomb had only five minutes left to count down.

Looking down into the darkness, Zhuang Rui's heart pounded. He hesitated at the hatch, remembering how Peng Fei had kicked him off the plane during his last parachute jump.

"Muta, I'll fuck your whole family...woman!"

With only three minutes left on the countdown, Zhuang Rui let out a scream and jumped out of the plane with his eyes closed.

Chapter 822 Sea Storm

"One...two...three...four...five!"

Earth's gravity pulled Zhuang Rui's body downwards towards the sea surface. The skin on his face was whipped and distorted by the fierce wind, resembling putty and constantly changing shape.

After silently counting to five, Zhuang Rui suddenly pulled the parachute cord in his hand, and a white flower-like parachute popped out from behind him, instantly stopping his descent.

Zhuang Rui felt a sudden jolt in his body. His body, which was falling at a speed of about 150 centimeters per second, came to a stop in mid-air. Zhuang Rui even had the illusion that his body was now rising.

Because of the strong wind earlier, Zhuang Rui only dared to open his eyes now. But when he looked down, all he could see was darkness, and he couldn't see the glow sticks they used to mark their way.

Zhuang Rui and the others jumped from an altitude of about 2,000 meters, which can be considered a mid-to-high altitude skydive. Zhuang Rui opened his parachute when he was falling about 600 or 700 meters, which means that he is now in the air at an altitude of more than 1,200 meters. Even if he uses his spiritual energy, he cannot sense the other people.

"Damn it, whatever, I have food and water on me, enough to last a few more days. As long as I don't run into sharks, I'm not afraid of anything..."

Looking down into the pitch blackness, Zhuang Rui felt a little scared and muttered to himself to encourage himself.

It is important to know that the ocean covers a much larger area than the land on Earth, and the ocean is one of the areas that mankind has yet to conquer. The seabed, which is thousands of meters deep, is a place that humans cannot reach and is full of mystery.

Even the bravest person will feel powerless when faced with the boundless sea.

Zhuang Rui was currently in the Indian Ocean estuary, so he didn't feel very cold. After floating in the air with the sea breeze blowing for a while, Zhuang Rui's slightly panicked mood gradually calmed down.

A skydive from 2000 meters normally takes about 20 minutes to reach the ground. If the wind is strong, it will take even longer. Even Peng Fei might not have reached the sea yet.

After floating in the air for five minutes, a muffled thunder-like sound suddenly came from the distant horizon, followed by a burst of fire that illuminated a vast expanse of sky.

Not only Zhuang Rui, but also the other people who had parachuted earlier noticed this change. Except for Peng Fei, who had a premonition, the others were dumbfounded, their mouths agape, letting the sea breeze fill their stomachs.

Now they no longer harbored any resentment, and they had no doubt whatsoever about Zhuang Rui and Peng Fei's intuition. If they had insisted on staying in the plane, they would probably have plunged headfirst into the sea along with the fireball in the sky.

Meanwhile, outside Earth, a Chinese military satellite also detected the situation. After compiling countless data points, it determined an extremely accurate location and sent it to various search teams heading to the area to search for survivors of the crashed plane.

"What? A fire has been spotted, suspected to be caused by a plane explosion?"

Ouyang Lei, who had been waiting by the phone, also learned of the news. However, all he could do now was pray that the Jade Emperor, the Three Pure Ones, and the Buddha would protect Zhuang Rui. Even with a million elite soldiers under his command, Ouyang Lei was powerless at this moment.

"Order all rescue teams to proceed to the designated area as quickly as possible!"

After issuing the order, Ouyang Lei plopped down in his chair, his eyes bloodshot, staring at the image transmitted from the military satellite on the computer screen, and frowned.

But now all we can do is try our best and leave the rest to fate; nobody knows what the situation is really like on the ground.

Clearly, the debris from the plane explosion was falling much faster than Zhuang Rui and the others. Almost simultaneously with the plane's explosion, a huge fireball plummeted from the sky to the sea.

"Damn it, how come I'm so far away from them?"

Using the light from the plane explosion, Zhuang Rui spotted several other parachutes at least a kilometer away. He was lucky to have good eyesight; otherwise, he wouldn't have been able to see them at all.

However, he was still floating in the sky. Although his professional skills were not very good, Zhuang Rui was still confident that he could control his direction and land not too far away from them.

Among the lines hanging from the parachute, a short rope is sewn at the lower end of the first and last lines. A pilot rod is attached to the short rope, and the direction of the parachute can be controlled by this pilot rod.

Zhuang Rui had studied this a little. He knew that when a parachutist needed to turn, he only needed to pull down the rappelling bar to move the parachute lines to the left or right, thus causing the parachute to turn.

"Huh? Why are we running uphill? Damn it, which instructor taught me this?"

Zhuang Rui pulled down the parachute, only to find that instead of descending, the parachute was rising, carrying his body upwards. He was extremely anxious and started cursing loudly in the air.

Left side... no! Right side! Still no luck. Zhuang Rui almost broke the rope on the parachute, but the parachute was still drifting in the opposite direction from where they had first spotted the group.

"No way?"

After fiddling with it for a while, Zhuang Rui realized that the wind around him seemed to have increased significantly, and the reason why the parachute could not turn seemed to be caused by the howling wind around him.

"Where did the water come from? Is it fresh?"

Zhuang Rui suddenly felt a wetness on his face, stuck out his tongue and licked it. Looking down at the sea, which was still seven or eight hundred meters away, he was stunned for a moment before realizing that it was raining.

"The storm next to Mahler?!"

Zhuang Rui shook his head vigorously. He was now certain that he didn't know how he had ended up at the edge of that stormy sea after jumping off the plane.

Moreover, the sea breeze kept pushing him towards the center of the storm, making him farther and farther away from Peng Fei and the others' landing point.

Zhuang Rui felt the wind blowing against him getting stronger and stronger, and the rumbling thunder in the clouds seemed to be exploding right next to his ears. The parachute swayed left and right like an acrobat, moving unsteadily towards the center of the storm.

One drop, two drops... The raindrops hitting Zhuang Rui's face slowly turned into lines, stinging his face, and then soaking him completely.

Zhuang Rui wasn't worried about his clothes getting wet, since it would be the same once he got to the sea. However, being blown around aimlessly by the strong wind made him feel a sense of helplessness.

Soaring through the air, watching streaks of lightning strike the sea in the distance, Zhuang Rui's heart nearly stopped beating. Thunder and lightning, howling winds—the power of heaven and earth was on full display.

Zhuang Rui didn't even have the mind to pray for Buddha's blessing anymore. The gale was like a giant hand, grabbing Zhuang Rui's parachute and tossing it around. Dizzy and disoriented, Zhuang Rui's thoughts were like mush, and he was unable to make any judgments or reactions.

After an unknown amount of time, Zhuang Rui regained his senses and found himself still in the air. However, the torrential rain around him seemed to have subsided considerably, and he didn't seem to be very far from the sea. But the wind was still very strong, and Zhuang Rui had no idea where he had been blown to.

"Damn it, two hours? When will this end? God, just give me a quick death!"

Zhuang Rui raised his left wrist with great effort and glanced at his watch, which had a luminous and waterproof function. He realized that more than an hour had passed since he jumped.

In Zhuang Rui's mind, those two hours felt like an eternity. The parachute floated in the sky like a paper crane, but it just wouldn't fall.

Zhuang Rui doesn't know if his skydiving experience will qualify him for the Guinness World Record for the longest skydiving landing time.

Zhuang Rui was also unaware that he had been blown by the storm to a distance of over a hundred kilometers from Peng Fei and the others.

Actually, Zhuang Rui was quite lucky, because if the accident had happened in the Atlantic Ocean, he would have been met not by a "storm" of 10 to 20 meters per second in the Indian Ocean, but by a "hurricane" of over 30 meters per second.

It's important to know that hurricanes are extremely destructive. If a car is caught in a hurricane, it will be torn to pieces when it comes out. If Zhuang Rui had encountered a hurricane, it would probably be difficult to find even a complete bone.

"Brother He, come up here!"

It took Peng Fei more than 30 minutes to inflate the rubber raft.

After unlocking the handcuffs and fastening the safe to the nose clip of the rubber raft, he struggled to paddle the raft and search for the people who had just jumped from the plane. Nearly an hour had passed since they jumped.

He Shuang grabbed Peng Fei's hand, climbed onto the rubber raft, pointed in a direction, and said, "Liuli and Tianya seem to have landed in that direction..."

Rowing a boat on a turbulent sea is an extremely frustrating experience. Often, you've only rowed a dozen meters when a big wave hits and sends the raft back twenty or thirty meters.

Adding to the storm in the nearby sea, the waves became very large. Often, a single wave would fill the entire rubber raft with water. Peng Fei was in charge of rowing, while He Shuang kept using plastic paddles to drain the water.

Even though they could already see the glow sticks on Tianya and Liuli, Peng Fei and He Shuang still took more than half an hour to rescue them onto the rubber raft.

"Help...help me..."

Amidst the sound of the waves, a cry for help came from one direction. Without even asking Tianya and the other for their phone number, Peng Fei quickly picked up his oars and rowed towards the sound.

"It's Ding Hao!"

Peng Fei was somewhat disappointed. After pulling Ding Hao onto the rubber raft, he couldn't wait to ask, "Did any of you see where Brother Zhuang landed?"

"I couldn't see it, the wind was too strong, I couldn't open my eyes!"

"No, I didn't see it..."

"I didn't see President Zhuang either. It was all dark and messy; I couldn't see anything..."

The responses from the crowd made Peng Fei's heart sink.

Chapter 823 Misfortune

"I...I think I saw the direction where President Zhuang landed..."

Ding Hao, who had just been pulled ashore by Peng Fei, spat out the salty seawater in his mouth and said somewhat uncertainly.

"You saw it? Over there?"

Upon hearing Ding Hao's words, Peng Fei grabbed Ding Hao's collar and shouted, "What do you mean?"

"I'm not sure, but when we landed, I glanced up and it seemed to drift in that direction..."

The direction Ding Hao pointed was the sea area where the storm had just occurred. However, the storm at sea came and went quickly, and it had now mostly dissipated. The dark clouds in the sky were no longer so thick, and a few stars shone on the sea surface, like fishing lights twinkling in the sky.

"Brother He, you go first, I'm going to make a phone call..."

Peng Fei had been battling the waves for almost the entire past hour or two without a break, and he was now completely exhausted.

As a special forces soldier with extensive experience in wilderness survival, Peng Fei knew the importance of physical strength. After handing the oar to He Shuang, Peng Fei first took out a piece of chocolate and bit into it before taking the satellite phone wrapped in a plastic bag from Tian Ya.

"Little...Little Peng, could you give me some water?"

After handing the phone to Peng Fei, Tianya said somewhat embarrassedly that she didn't know how she had gotten herself into this mess, as all four bottles of mineral water she had on her were gone.

"Go ahead and drink, but going to the toilet will be a bit of a hassle..."

Peng Fei tossed a bottle of water over, and his words made Tianya, who was parched and about to gulp down the water, instantly become extremely ladylike. She merely wet her lips with water before tightening the cap.

It was already three or four in the morning. Ouyang Lei, wearing a coat, paced back and forth in his study. He hadn't heard from Zhuang Rui, which made him restless and unable to sleep all night.

"Zhuang Rui, are you alright?"

Suddenly, a phone rang. Ouyang Lei rushed to the table, grabbed the phone, but it was busy. He then realized what was happening, picked up the phone, and pressed the answer button.

"I am Peng Fei. Everyone except Brother Zhuang has been found. We are currently looking for Brother Zhuang..."

Peng Fei knew that the person opposite him held a high position and wielded great power, but this was not the time to show respect. He went straight to the point and explained the current situation.

"Did nothing go wrong during the skydive?"

After hearing Peng Fei's words, Ouyang Lei, who had been on edge for a long time, finally felt relieved.

As long as you weren't on board when the plane exploded, there shouldn't be a big problem. In another two hours, the Chinese warships that were originally on a military visit in the Indian Ocean will be able to reach the designated sea area.

"Reporting, sir, Brother Zhuang's parachute opened, but the landing site was slightly off-target. We are currently searching for him..."

Peng Fei repeatedly pressed him for the approximate altitude of the parachute he had seen, which confirmed that it was Zhuang Rui, hence the above answer.

"Okay, be careful, keep your phones on at all times. The rescue team should arrive in two hours at the latest..."

Ouyang Lei let out a long sigh of relief. After hanging up the phone, he reached for the landline, but after thinking for a moment, he decided not to pick it up. The old man was probably already asleep.

Just as Ouyang Lei was about to lie down for a while, the landline suddenly rang shrilly.

"Grandpa, why aren't you resting so late?"

When Ouyang Lei answered the phone, he was somewhat surprised by the voice on the other end.

Ouyang Gang didn't answer his grandson's question. He waved to the special nurse beside him, signaling her not to disturb him, before speaking into the phone, "How is Xiao Rui? Any news?"

"I have news! My little brother has jumped, and the parachute opened normally. Grandpa, you don't need to worry anymore. Go to sleep..."

As Ouyang Lei spoke, he glanced at the clock on the wall. The hour hand pointed exactly to four in the morning. Only then did he realize that the old man's love for this grandson had disrupted his decades-long, unchanging sleep schedule, waiting until now.

"Find Xiao Rui tomorrow and have him call this old man..."

The old man looked exhausted. After hanging up the phone, he returned to his room with the help of a nurse. The night's wait had drained him of energy comparable to when he was young and commanding a battle!

"Pfft, cough cough..."

Zhuang Rui had just surfaced when a large wave knocked him back into the water. Having never swum in the waves before, Zhuang Rui suffered a great loss, swallowing several mouthfuls of seawater.

Although the wind in this sea area had weakened considerably, the ocean was still turbulent, with waves crashing one after another like a tidal wave, making Zhuang Rui dizzy and causing him to swallow an unknown amount of salty sweat.

At this moment, Zhuang Rui missed the scene of floating in the air. He never expected that falling into the sea would lead to this situation. He struggled in the seawater for more than ten minutes without being able to catch his breath.

"Damn it, where am I? Peng Fei, He Shuang, Ding... um, cough cough..."

Zhuang Rui couldn't stand the endless waves any longer. He swam to the surface with all his might, but as soon as he opened his mouth to shout a few times, a huge wave swallowed him back down, making him cough up blood.

The repeated pounding of the waves made Zhuang Rui realize the unpredictability of nature, and that he was really overestimating himself by trying to fight against nature with human strength.

After calming down, Zhuang Rui learned his lesson. He stopped sliding his hands, relaxed his whole body, and floated on the sea surface solely by the buoyancy of his life jacket.

In this way, although the waves were large, they could no longer crash against Zhuang Rui. At most, the waves would sometimes sweep him into the water to a depth of more than ten meters. However, Zhuang Rui, who was prepared, was able to hold his breath in time each time and rely on the buoyancy of the life jacket to float back to the surface.

Zhuang Rui didn't know how long he had been floating in the waves, but the sky slowly brightened, as if the storm of the previous night had never happened. When the sun leaped out from the east, the sky and the sea were painted in a golden hue.

"Damn, finally it's quiet..."

As the sun rose, the waves gradually subsided, and the seawater appeared still. However, Zhuang Rui noticed that the seawater still had a direction, and at least his body was constantly moving.

"Let's eat something first..."

After a whole night of tossing and turning, although he could use spiritual energy to restore his strength, spiritual energy couldn't be eaten. Zhuang Rui took out a sticky piece of chocolate soaked in seawater from his life jacket pocket and stuffed it directly into his mouth. He desperately needed to replenish his energy.

The originally sweet chocolate now had a fishy and foul smell, and it took Zhuang Rui a lot of effort to swallow it. Compared to the taste of the chocolate, Zhuang Rui cared more about his life.

Chocolate shouldn't be soaked. After Zhuang Rui ate all four or five pieces of chocolate in his pocket, he took out a bottle of mineral water and took a big gulp.

Zhuang Rui had no intention of saving water. He thought the rescue team sent by Ouyang Lei would find him soon. However, Zhuang Rui did not know that he was now more than a hundred kilometers away from the coordinates.

A thick fog rolled in over the sea early in the morning. Although it wasn't pitch black, it was still very foggy and unclear to see anything more than a few dozen meters away.

An hour passed, and Zhuang Rui finished a bottle of water, his heart filled with the joy of escaping death.

Two hours passed, and Zhuang Rui finished his second bottle of water, pondering how to deal with that bastard Muta.

Three hours passed, and the sun was directly overhead. The scorching sunlight forced Zhuang Rui to frequently bury his head in the water to reduce the sun's exposure.

Five hours had passed, and the hour hand of Zhuang Rui's watch was pointing to noon. He had finished all four bottles of mineral water in his pocket, and his lips were white and cracked from being soaked in the salty seawater.

Fortunately, Zhuang Rui found a rock in the fourth hour. Although he injured his arm when he bumped into it, at least he had a place to stand.

This is a dead coral reef, only a little over two meters above the sea surface, and about one square meter in size. Zhuang Rui can only sit on it; he can't even lie down.

"What went wrong? Why haven't the rescue teams arrived yet?"

Zhuang Rui had a vague feeling that something was wrong. More than ten hours had passed since the plane crash, and during that time, he hadn't seen a single ship or even a plane.

This phenomenon is very abnormal. With the current development of the aviation industry, the airspace over the Indian Ocean is a very busy route. How could there be no planes passing by?

After waiting another hour, Zhuang Rui began to long for rain, because the water in his body evaporated too much at sea. Now, if Zhuang Rui licked his lips with his tongue, he could peel off a piece of skin with blood on it.

Compared to the mirages in the desert, facing a vast ocean without a drop of drinkable water is obviously much more miserable. Zhuang Rui tried to drink two mouthfuls of seawater, but he felt so uncomfortable that he almost vomited up his bile.

Zhuang Rui vowed that he would never overeat again. If he had been more careful with those four bottles of water, he could have lasted for two days instead of ending up in this desperate situation.

"No, if we stay here any longer, we'll either die from the heat or from thirst..."

Zhuang Rui stood up and looked around, hoping to find an island nearby where he could solve his drinking water problem.

"Hmm? There are a lot of rocks here?"

After calming down, Zhuang Rui noticed that there were many reefs of various sizes on the sea in front of him. Some were big enough for a person to lie on, while others were smaller than the one he was standing on.

"That's...an island?!"

The morning mist had dissipated, and Zhuang Rui noticed the faint outline of an island appearing on the distant sea.

Chapter 824 A Glimmer of Hope

Because of the great distance, Zhuang Rui could only vaguely make out the outline of an island, but this still filled him with ecstatic joy. To see land in this boundless ocean was a feeling no less exhilarating than finding an oasis in the desert.

"Compressed biscuits, bread, that's all?"

Zhuang Rui emptied the pockets of the life jacket and found that there was nothing else inside except for seven or eight sealed compressed biscuits and two fist-sized pieces of bread.

The worst part is that both of these things require water to eat. Although Zhuang Rui's stomach was growling with hunger, he still stuffed the things back into his pocket. He would rather starve to death than die of thirst.

There was also a small knife that Peng Fei had given to Zhuang Rui. The black blade emitted a strange, cold light. If it hadn't been stuck in the foam inside his life jacket, Zhuang Rui really wouldn't have known how to carry it.

Standing on the reef, Zhuang Rui observed the direction of the seawater flow. To his delight, the seawater seemed to be flowing towards the island, which would greatly increase his chances of swimming to the island.

As the saying goes, "looking at a mountain makes a horse run itself to death," and the same is true at sea. Friends who have been on ocean-going ships know that when the ship is about to dock, you can see the coastline in the distance, but it often takes a long time to reach the point where you can see it.

However... the distant islands still filled Zhuang Rui with boundless hope.

"Damn it, let's go all out!"

Looking at the islands that were faintly visible in the distance, Zhuang Rui gritted his teeth. Without fresh water, staying on this reef would only lead to his death sooner or later.

He had hoped that the rescue team would find him, but after more than ten hours, he hadn't seen a single person or even a bird. It seemed that Zhuang Rui was all alone in the world, and the loneliness was unbearable for him.

Moreover, it is currently high tide, and if they wait until evening when the tide recedes, even if Zhuang Rui stays on the reef, he could very well be pulled to the seabed by that terrifying suction force.

Although Zhuang Rui possesses special abilities, he is not someone from the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. If you suffocate him for a few minutes, his life will still be in danger.

"Thump!"

Zhuang Rui clumsily jumped into the water and swam towards the island.

Zhuang Rui learned to swim by playing around in Yunlong Lake in Pengcheng when he was a child with Liu Chuan. Although his swimming style wasn't very graceful, it was very practical. Plus, he had plenty of energy, and after a few minutes, he had swum over a hundred meters, leaving the life-saving reef far behind.

"\*\*\*, where is this place?"

To avoid shark attacks, Zhuang Rui constantly released his spiritual energy while swimming. He discovered that the reefs he had just seen in this area were merely the tip of the iceberg. 0999.

Beneath the seawater lie countless semi-tidal reefs. After swimming just a few hundred meters in the water, Zhuang Rui discovered no fewer than several hundred reefs. If the tide were to recede completely, this place would definitely become a tourist attraction with bizarrely shaped rocks.

As for half-tide reefs, they are reefs that are exposed above the sea surface when the tide is halfway down, but are submerged when the tide is high. We are currently in the high tide period, so many reefs are not yet exposed above the water.

These reefs are veritable ship killers. Hidden in the seawater, these semi-tidal reefs are strangely shaped and rugged, ranging in size from dozens of square meters to three or four meters.

The semi-tide reef has a very shallow draft. If a ship were to actually enter this area, it would definitely run aground and sink. For example, the reef that Zhuang Rui just swam over was long and pointed, like the comb of a rooster, and was only about one meter from the water surface. If a ship were to hit it, it would be like being stuck in a sharp knife.

Zhuang Rui's spiritual energy detection range is currently around 500 meters. While swimming, Zhuang Rui also checked the depth of this sea area. The riverbed can be seen at a depth of about 60 or 70 meters.

However, compared to the riverbed covered with fine sand, the riverbed here is much more colorful, with countless fish swimming in it and colorful coral reefs growing everywhere. What caught Zhuang Rui's eye was that among those reefs and sand, there were also many shipwrecks.

Some boats were bow-up, their hulls buried in the riverbed, while others lay flat on the riverbed, their decks covered with seaweed and moss.

Some boats are no longer recognizable, having become one with the reefs, with countless fish swimming among them; this place has become their habitat.

Most of these shipwrecks are wooden vessels, presumably remnants from the Age of Exploration in the 15th and 16th centuries, and they come in various shapes and sizes.

However, most of the shipwrecks on the seabed are wooden two-masted sailing ships, with the hulls joined together using wooden pegs. After looking for a long time, Zhuang Rui did not find a single modern ironclad ship. If these wooden ships were salvaged, it would probably be enough to open an ancient ship museum.

On a large ship about thirty meters long, Zhuang Rui could clearly see that the round holes on the hull that were originally used to extend the oars had now become gates for marine life to enter and exit.

Moreover, Zhuang Rui could clearly sense the presence of spiritual energy in those rotten wooden boats, with countless tiny specks of it.

"Damn it, it's so frustrating to see something you can't have, it's infuriating..."

Sensing the varying strengths of spiritual energy emanating from the places where it was present, Zhuang Rui felt an irresistible urge.

Without a doubt, those things are all ancient treasures. No wonder people always say that the ocean is the world's greatest treasure.

In order to reach the mainland as soon as possible, Zhuang Rui constantly used his spiritual energy to cleanse his body and swam tirelessly toward the distant islands. Only when he was extremely exhausted would he find a reef that was readily available to rest.

These reefs didn't have much of an impact on Zhuang Rui; he could occasionally stop and rest. But the problem was that this area was teeming with marine life, most of which clung to the reefs.

A large portion of the spiritual energy that Zhuang Rui dispersed was injected into the bodies of these marine creatures.

A coral reef can support four hundred species of fish. Zhuang Rui's spiritual energy attracted schools of colorful sea fish, whose names he couldn't even name. Among them was even a large sea turtle with a diameter of about one meter.

The marine creatures, having absorbed the spiritual energy, seemed to have been given a shot of adrenaline, and they all emerged from the reefs, following behind Zhuang Rui.

After the initial surprise, Zhuang Rui actually enjoyed the situation. You see, being alone in the ocean, the feeling of loneliness is hard to describe in words.

With so many sea fish around him, Zhuang Rui's mood improved a lot.

"Damn, that's... a shark?"

After swimming a few hundred meters further, Zhuang Rui suddenly noticed that the school of fish behind him had become chaotic. A huge creature, about two meters long and entirely silver, rushed into the school, opening its large mouth with serrated teeth and devouring the fish that were trying to escape.

This terrified Zhuang Rui so much that he was scared out of his wits. Although he had imagined that he might encounter sharks in the sea, he never expected that this thing would be attracted by his spiritual energy.

Although the shark was still twenty or thirty meters away, Zhuang Rui's heart was pounding in his throat. He quickly suppressed his spiritual energy and dared not swim any further. He relied on the buoyancy of his life jacket to float on the surface of the sea.

"Buddha, Bodhisattva, please don't come any closer, please don't come any closer, you can't see me, you can't see me..."

Seeing the shark leisurely swim towards him after scattering the school of fish, Zhuang Rui's heart pounded so hard it was practically in his throat.

Zhuang Rui muttered to himself, his expression like that of someone playing a character with special abilities in a Hong Kong movie, hoping the big guy wouldn't see him.

However, the shark didn't seem to understand Zhuang Rui's language. It still swam over slowly, its black, marble-like eyes looking at Zhuang Rui.

"A knife, that's right, I still have a knife..."

Zhuang Rui gripped the small knife. Although he knew it posed no threat to the shark, it still made him feel a little better, like someone who had fallen off a cliff grabbing a lifeline.

As the shark approached, Zhuang Rui's nerves were on edge. He knew he had no chance of winning against a shark in the sea, but he refused to give up. He hadn't even seen his unborn children yet!

The shark didn't rush straight at Zhuang Rui. Instead, it circled around him, seemingly sniffing something. After about ten seconds, it suddenly flicked its tail fin and swam towards the seabed.

"I'll never eat shark fin again. Who the hell said sharks eat people?"

After seeing the shark swim away, Zhuang Rui felt as if all his strength had been drained away, and he seemed to collapse. If it weren't for the life jacket, he would have definitely sunk to the bottom of the sea by now.

Zhuang Rui was incredibly resentful of Spielberg. If it weren't for that guy's movie "Jaws", would he have been so scared?

Zhuang Rui was unaware that there are more than 380 species of sharks in the ocean, of which only about 30 species will actively attack humans. Most sharks simply feed on other marine fish and are not so fond of human flesh.

Moreover, Zhuang Rui was quite lucky. The shark he encountered was just an ordinary thresher shark, not a bloodthirsty great white shark. If it had been a great white shark, even if Zhuang Rui had prayed to every god in the heavens, he would probably still be a fish in the belly by now.

Finding a reef a few dozen meters away, Zhuang Rui mustered all his strength and swam over. After climbing onto the reef, Zhuang Rui didn't want to move at all. The situation just now was too stimulating, causing the hormones secreted by his cerebral cortex to be dozens of times higher than usual.

Zhuang Rui lay on the rocks for a full half hour before he finally recovered. After glancing at the sun gradually sinking below the horizon, he mustered his courage and jumped back into the sea.

Staying on this reef, which protrudes only two or three meters above the sea, is not a safe choice. At low tide, there is a good chance that you will be swept into the deep ocean.

Now swimming in the sea, Zhuang Rui no longer dared to release his spiritual energy to look around. Although the shark from before didn't bite, someone with a weak heart would probably be scared to death. Zhuang Rui didn't have the courage to try something so thrilling again.

As Zhuang Rui paddled frantically, the distant, blurry islands gradually became clearer. However, as the sun set, a thin mist slowly rose over the sea, shrouding the entire island in a mysterious aura.

"Five hundred meters to go..."

Zhuang Rui used his spiritual energy and could already see the white sand beach, which almost brought him to tears. After drifting in the sea for nearly 20 hours, Zhuang Rui felt as if his whole body was swollen.

The water here is not very deep, only about 20 or 30 meters deep. The sea turtles and those strangely shaped large sea fish with wings that we just saw have all disappeared. Only some smaller fish are going in and out of the various coral reefs.

The sun slowly sank below the horizon, and the calm sea began to ripple again. Small waves made it extremely difficult for Zhuang Rui to swim, and he would often be swept back by a wave after swimming several meters.

"That won't work, we need to dive into the sea..."

Zhuang Rui sensed that the direction of the seawater flow had changed, and it seemed that the tide was receding. The waves were unpredictable, sometimes forward and sometimes backward, which was a sign that the tide was about to go out.

Taking a deep breath, Zhuang Rui plunged into the sea and swam headfirst towards the shore. The water beneath the surface was relatively calm.

He swam dozens of meters in one breath, until his chest felt like it was about to explode, before Zhuang Rui surfaced and took a deep breath of air.

With continuous underwater swimming, Zhuang Rui got closer and closer to the island. Looking at the tall coconut trees not far from the shore, Zhuang Rui was so excited that tears streamed down his face.

"With coconuts around, even without water, I won't die of thirst, buddy."

However, when Zhuang Rui was still thirty or forty meters away from the island, he felt the seawater behind him suddenly exert a huge suction force, pulling him backward more than twenty meters.

"The tide is going out..."

Zhuang Rui suddenly realized something, which terrified him; this suction force was something he simply couldn't resist.

As the island receded further and further away, just when Zhuang Rui was almost in despair, a huge wave suddenly crashed over, pushing Zhuang Rui more than 20 meters toward the shore.

"Damn it, are you kidding me?"

Zhuang Rui was both surprised and delighted. He took a deep breath, dived into the water, and paddled desperately towards the shore. He was now only praying that the tide would recede a few minutes later, so that he could escape the disaster once he could step onto the beach.

The receding tide of the ocean is not as rapid as that of a river; rather, it is a process. During this phase, the waves at the seaside become exceptionally large, sweeping away all life on the shore and dragging it to the seabed.

Fortunately for Zhuang Rui, the island was surrounded by towering reefs.

These reefs altered the direction of the seawater flow, making even the receding tide more gentle, which gave Zhuang Rui a glimmer of hope.

Chapter 825 A Narrow Escape

The fleet conducting a military visit in the Indian Ocean was the first to arrive at the designated area and the first to discover the survivors of the plane crash.

Around 6 a.m., Peng Fei and the others boarded the warship, changed into clean clothes, and the two girls, who had developed high fevers due to excessive fright, were put to bed in a room.

Peng Fei rested for a short while before joining the rescue team to search for Zhuang Rui. However, as the search area expanded, they still couldn't find any trace of Zhuang Rui.

As time went on, Peng Fei began to get anxious and his temper became irritable. After being refused several times when he requested to pilot the helicopter on the warship to search for Zhuang Rui, he almost got into a conflict with the commanding personnel.

"What? You still haven't found them? You have over a dozen warships and hundreds of aircraft, and you can't even find a single person in an area of thirty nautical miles?"

Ouyang Lei's face was ashen. He hadn't slept well the night before and was woken up by a phone call at six o'clock this morning.

After hearing the news that the plane crash victims had been found, Ouyang Lei thought Zhuang Rui was safe. However, the next news kept Ouyang Lei awake and he stayed by the phone the whole time.

"Sir, all the planes have been dispatched, but there's still no sign of Zhuang Rui. I...I suspect..."

The voice on the other end of the phone hesitated, stammering and not continuing.

"Don't doubt it, we must find him alive or dead, that's an order. Also, the South China Sea Fleet should be arriving soon. Both sides work together to expand the search area. Remember, you must find him!"

Ouyang Lei rudely interrupted the other person. If he couldn't find Zhuang Rui, he didn't know how to explain to the old man, how to face his widowed aunt, and Zhuang Rui's wife who was about to give birth.

"Yes, mission accomplished!"

Although the promise on the phone was made with absolute certainty, Ouyang Lei was still very uneasy. After hanging up, he sat for a while, then stood up and hurriedly left the office.

"Arrange a plane; I need to go to the South China Sea Fleet for a work inspection..."

That's how some things are; you can make them seem legitimate by changing the reason. Although everyone knows Ouyang Lei's purpose in going to the South China Sea Fleet, no one can bring themselves to criticize him.

"Old Xie, what do you think?"

On the deck of the command ship, two naval officers with the rank of rear admiral on their shoulders were having a conversation.

"What else can we look at? The South China Sea Fleet has already come out, let's keep searching..."

The man referred to as "Old Xie" is the highest-ranking officer in the delegation, and the deputy commander of the East China Sea Fleet, one of the three major fleets. Standing next to him is Deputy Political Commissar Shen Hua.

Shen Hua glanced at Commander Xie and said, "It's been more than twenty hours since the plane crashed. Besides, there was a storm in this area yesterday. I estimate that the missing people are probably already dead. Why waste resources and manpower on this..."

Political Commissar Shen was somewhat dismissive of this mission. As the fleet's chief steward, he knew all too well the staggering amount of supplies the fleet consumed during a day at sea.

Now, in order to search for the people on a plane crash, not only has their mission been temporarily terminated, but the South China Sea Fleet, which is closest to the Indian Ocean, has also been dispatched. You should know that is a national strategic force.

However, since the order was issued directly by the Central Military Commission, it had to be carried out even if it was not understood. Political Commissar Shen could only grumble to his old partner.

"Old Shen, don't talk nonsense. Remember the orders from above: find the person alive or dead. Expand the search area by another 30 nautical miles..."

Commander Xie interrupted the political commissar. He had received the order directly from Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Ouyang. Moreover, in the past ten hours, the deputy chief had made seven or eight phone calls, and his tone had become increasingly harsh.

After reviewing yesterday's weather report and inquiring with several other survivors, Commander Xie was not very optimistic about the chances of Zhuang Rui surviving.

Having spent half his life at sea, the general was no stranger to storms. Not to mention people entering them, even these ironclad warships could be capsized by storms.

"But....."

"No need to say anything more, issue the order to expand the search area by thirty nautical miles..."

Commander Xie waved to the guards standing in the distance and gave them a new order.

One nautical mile is nearly 2 kilometers. Expanding the search range to 30 nautical miles would be almost 60 kilometers, which is beyond the range of yesterday's storm. If we still can't find it, then Commander Xie will be at his wit's end.

Zhuang Rui felt like a rag doll being mercilessly torn apart by the sea. The crashing waves almost made him faint. If he hadn't seen how close the shore was, he probably wouldn't have been able to hold on.

With only twenty meters or so left, Zhuang Rui couldn't reach the shore no matter what he did. The gravitational pull of the tidal current was too strong. At this moment, Zhuang Rui was like a blade of grass, with no ability to resist it.

"ah!!!"

Zhuang Rui grew increasingly uneasy. He sensed the tide was about to completely recede, and if he couldn't reach land soon, he would likely be sucked into the depths of the Indian Ocean.

After raising his head above the sea and letting out a roar, Zhuang Rui poured all his spiritual energy into his body. The surge of spiritual energy instantly made him full of energy, and he plunged into the seawater.

The seawater here is only three or four meters deep. After Zhuang Rui dived to the bottom, he stuck his hands firmly into the mud on the seabed and struggled to climb to the shore.

Undersea currents crashed against Zhuang Rui's body. Due to the buoyancy of the seawater and his life jacket, Zhuang Rui's entire body floated up. If he hadn't just grabbed a small rock, Zhuang Rui would have been sucked into the deep sea by now.

A minute passed, and Zhuang Rui's hands gripped the rock tightly.

Two minutes passed, and a feeling of stuffiness came over him, but Zhuang Rui could still hold on.

Three minutes passed, and Zhuang Rui slowly exhaled the air from his chest.

Five minutes passed, and Zhuang Rui's face turned somewhat bluish-purple, but he felt that the suction from the seawater seemed to have lessened.

Eight minutes passed. Zhuang Rui's brain was extremely oxygen-deprived, his face was contorted with bulging veins, and his whole body felt like it was about to explode. In order to hold on a little longer, Zhuang Rui buried half of his head in the sand on the seabed.

Twelve minutes passed, and Zhuang Rui, unable to bear the mouthful of sea sand any longer, suddenly kicked off the seabed with both feet, propelling his entire body upwards.

"Cough...cough cough...spit, spit..."

As soon as he emerged from the sea, Zhuang Rui hurriedly opened his mouth wide to breathe in the air, but he didn't expect to almost inhale the sand in his mouth. He coughed and his face turned red. At this time, he did not realize that even his feet had left the sea.

"Huh? What happened? When did I become able to jump this high?"

Zhuang Rui remembered that when he was diving, he was still three or four meters above the surface, but now, Zhuang Rui felt as if he had jumped into the air, and the buoyancy and pressure of the seawater disappeared in an instant.

Looking down, Zhuang Rui saw that he was completely exposed to the air.

It wasn't until Zhuang Rui fell from the sky onto the sea surface that he realized the water, which was originally three or four meters deep, was now only just above his calves.

"Damn it, I almost suffocated in that deep water just now???"

After a moment of stunned silence, Zhuang Rui realized that he could have breathed air if he had simply raised his head, but instead, he had buried his head in the sand like an ostrich, almost killing himself.

"I...I'm such an idiot..."

Zhuang Rui slapped himself; he simply couldn't forget the fact that he had almost suffocated just now.

However, Zhuang Rui was unaware that he was just over a minute away from breaking the Guinness World Record for the longest time holding his breath underwater, set by Canadian Robert Foster in 1959.

It must be said that human potential is limitless. At Zhuang Rui's normal level, he would be lucky to last five minutes.

"I'm on shore? What happened?"

After he finished getting angry at himself, Zhuang Rui realized the problem. However, for a moment, Zhuang Rui did not expect that this was a normal phenomenon after the tide receded. Of course, this was all caused by the lack of oxygen in his brain.

Just as Zhuang Rui was about to jump up and celebrate his narrow escape from death, his expression suddenly changed drastically, because he heard a very strange sound coming from behind him.

Zhuang Rui looked back and saw a wave, seven or eight meters high, about ten meters away from him, like a monster opening its mouth to devour him.

"Oh my god!"

Zhuang Rui no longer cared about celebrating; his legs seemed to be springy as he jumped up and ran desperately towards the shore.

However, Zhuang Rui had obviously not been trained in sprinting in the sea. Just as he had run about ten meters, the huge wave behind him directly impacted his body and sent him flying. It was like the giant hand of a giant, easily throwing Zhuang Rui's body more than ten meters away.

The giant wave slowly receded back into the sea, while the surface of the sea not far away was still churning, seemingly brewing the next wave.

Dizzy and disoriented, Zhuang Rui stood up, his vision blurred. If he hadn't fallen onto the beach, it would have killed him. Instinctively, Zhuang Rui felt that this place was not safe either, and his whole body swayed as he walked towards the other side of the sea.

"Bang!"

When they reached a place covered with reefs, Zhuang Rui finally couldn't hold on any longer and fell heavily to the ground. When his forehead hit the ground, it scraped against a reef, and blood immediately gushed out.

However, Zhuang Rui could no longer feel the pain at this point.

After nearly twenty hours of battling the sea, the mental strain of escaping death and the exhaustion from completely draining his physical and spiritual energy, Zhuang Rui could no longer hold on and drifted off to sleep.

That night, Zhuang Rui had many dreams. He dreamed of his mother mending his clothes when he was a child, of the stunning beauty of Qin Xuanbing when he first met her, and of the two robbers and the bullets that shot at him when he was working at the pawnshop!

"ah!"

Seemingly feeling the pain, Zhuang Rui cried out in agony and opened his eyes, only to find that a large crab had just released its pincers from his fingers and sneakily burrowed into the rocks on his right hand.

"I'm alive?!"

The dream seemed to take Zhuang Rui through a cycle of reincarnation. When he opened his eyes, he discovered that he was... still alive. The pain in his fingers made this clear to him.

"Aaaaaah, I'm still alive!"

Zhuang Rui jumped up. He didn't care why it was already bright outside, nor did he care about the pain of his bare feet stepping on the rocks. All Zhuang Rui wanted to do now was vent. The reason was simple: it's good to be alive!

Running aimlessly across the beach, uttering meaningless roars, Zhuang Rui's body contorted into all sorts of bizarre poses. If someone were to capture this on camera, it would look like a piece of modern art.

Only when his voice was hoarse and he could no longer speak did Zhuang Rui lie heavily on the beach, looking at the blue sky and white clouds, and his mood gradually calmed down.

"I think I got ashore around dusk, didn't I?"

Zhuang Rui still felt a pang of fear when he recalled his experience before he lost consciousness.

Looking up at his watch, which had excellent waterproof capabilities, Zhuang Rui realized that he had slept for sixteen or seventeen hours and it was already noon the next day.

"thirsty....."

After regaining consciousness from his abnormal state, Zhuang Rui suddenly felt unbearably hungry and thirsty. He quickly took off his life jacket and began to take stock of his remaining belongings.

Zhuang Rui was a little disappointed with the result. Apart from Peng Fei's knife, there were only three compressed biscuits left, and the two loaves of bread that he had been reluctant to eat had been soaked in seawater and turned into a paste because the packaging was torn.

In other words, if there is nothing to eat on the island, Zhuang Rui will have to rely on these three compressed biscuits while waiting for rescuers to arrive.

"Having survived such a calamity, I'm sure to be blessed with good fortune. I haven't even seen my son or daughter yet..."

Zhuang Rui comforted himself, then tore open a bag of compressed biscuits, chewed them slowly, and swallowed them with great difficulty. Not having any water was Zhuang Rui's biggest problem.

Zhuang Rui stood up, looking at the island, as if he had seen coconut trees yesterday. He didn't know if it was a deserted island or had been developed, but judging from the desolate surroundings, the former seemed more likely.

"Hmm? It's fresh water!"

Zhuang Rui suddenly noticed a puddle of clear water in a hollow of a rock next to him. He quickly ran over, dipped his finger in it, and put a drop in his mouth.

Instantly, Zhuang Rui burst into tears; the most important crisis for his survival had been resolved.

Chapter 826 Survival on a Deserted Island (Part 1)

Zhuang Rui took off his life jacket, lay face down on the rocks, pressed his face against a hollow in the rock, moistened his cracked lips, and then carefully took a sip.

In Zhuang Rui's mind, this saliva was no less than fine wine and dew. After holding the water in his mouth for a while, Zhuang Rui reluctantly swallowed it.

He didn't know if it was rainwater or dew, but after taking a sip of water, Zhuang Rui's restlessness subsided considerably, and he regained some strength.

Although he was still incredibly thirsty, Zhuang Rui forced himself not to drink more. The story of those four bottles of mineral water taught him that he needed to think long-term; momentary pleasure could lead to lifelong suffering.

If Zhuang Rui hadn't finished several bottles of mineral water early yesterday, he wouldn't have had to try the taste of seawater.

Where did the blood come from?

Zhuang Rui wanted to comb his hair with his hands, but ended up with his hands covered in scabs. He quickly looked at his reflection in the puddle of water and discovered a wound on his forehead. It was just a minor cut and had already started to scab over.

Zhuang Rui tried to mobilize his spiritual energy, and to his delight, the spiritual energy that had been completely depleted last night was now much more abundant. Although he couldn't do it as usual, it was enough for him to regulate his body.

After healing his wounds with spiritual energy and circulating it throughout his body, Zhuang Rui immediately felt refreshed and all his fatigue gone. Of course, his stomach was still growling loudly, since spiritual energy couldn't be eaten.

Gritting his teeth, Zhuang Rui made a tough decision and pulled out another compressed biscuit from his life jacket.

These biscuits aren't the kind sold in supermarkets; they're issued to the military. Although each one is only the size of a business card, it expands after being eaten and is enough for a person's daily needs.

Tearing open the packaging, Zhuang Rui ate a third of the compressed biscuit with the little bit of fresh water, finally relieving his hungry stomach.

He carefully put away the remaining piece and a half of the biscuit.

Zhuang Rui secretly decided that he should not use compressed biscuits again until he was completely desperate. He had to keep some supplies for himself.

"What kind of place is this?"

After relieving himself of his hunger, Zhuang Rui began to look around at his surroundings. To his surprise, the scenery here was exceptionally beautiful.

Not far away, the sea is dotted with rugged rocks, strange stones, and unusual reefs.

The beach, covered with fine white sand, stretches for over a thousand meters. The azure sea crashes against the sand, creating wisps of white mist. This beautiful scenery surpasses even the beaches of Hainan Island that Zhuang Rui had visited before.

The island ahead was covered in lush greenery with a pleasant climate, and a towering mountain stood there. Standing by the sea, Zhuang Rui could only see the mountain peak shrouded in a light mist.

Based on the plants on the island, Zhuang Ruineng could tell that it should be a volcanic island, formed by the accumulation of underwater volcanic ejecta millions of years ago. After its formation, it underwent a long period of weathering and erosion, and the rocks on the island were completely broken and gradually turned into soil, which is why so many plants could grow on the island.

Moreover, Zhuang Rui believed that there might be animals, even wild beasts, in these towering mountains and forests.

Seeing this scene, Zhuang Rui couldn't help but feel a little strange. Logically speaking, such an island should have great value for tourism development, but he didn't know why no one came to develop it. Looking around, there was no sign of human habitation; it should be a deserted island.

Although 94 percent of the world's islands remain undeveloped, it is somewhat unreasonable that such a beautiful island, almost comparable to a tourist destination like the Maldives, is also left undeveloped.

Such a deserted island, with a substantial investment to build a floating helipad, would undoubtedly attract tourists from all over the world.

Furthermore, this mysterious island shrouded in mist can be developed into an adventure attraction, and coupled with blockbuster movies like "Cast Away," it will surely attract a large number of tourists.

The idea was good, but Zhuang Rui, who had seen American blockbusters such as Jurassic Park and King Kong, was a little uneasy. What if that storm really blew him into Jurassic Park?

Thinking of this, Zhuang Rui couldn't help but shudder. Was he just escaping one danger only to fall into another? Although Zhuang Rui was usually quite thick-skinned, he was starting to feel the strain.

"Damn it, I can't be a Good Samaritan next time..."

Zhuang Rui was now feeling a bit regretful. Why did he have to be so presumptuous? If only he had had that satellite phone, he wouldn't be so helpless now.

Although he wanted to explore the island, Zhuang Rui hesitated to move forward due to his fear of the unknown, and stared at the island for a long time without daring to go any further.

On such an island, there is almost a 100% chance of encountering animals. Zhuang Rui is not afraid of cats and dogs, but if there are lions, wolves, tigers, or leopards, then Zhuang Rui going into the mountains would be nothing more than delivering himself to the enemy.

"Um?"

Zhuang Rui suddenly noticed a lot of seashells on the beach, and many crabs crawling among the rocks around him. His eyes lit up, and his stomach, which had only been half full, started growling again.

Since there's food available at the beach, there's no need to rush to the island. Compared to the mysterious island, the beach seems safer, although sleeping at night might be a bit of a hassle.

However, the sun was shining brightly and it was still early before nightfall. Zhuang Rui enthusiastically took off his tattered clothes, tied up the two cuffs, and used them as pockets.

The island's climate was very pleasant. Even though he was only wearing ripped jeans, Zhuang Rui didn't feel cold at all. The sea breeze felt very comfortable on his body.

More than half an hour later, Zhuang Rui found two oysters in his sleeves, and there were also seven or eight sea urchins. Zhuang Rui had eaten these before, and the sea urchin roe was especially delicious. Looking at these spiky things, Zhuang Rui almost drooled.

"Damn it, am I really going to become a savage?"

Back by the reef, Zhuang Rui emptied the sea urchins and oysters from his clothes and was suddenly dumbfounded, realizing that he had nothing to start a fire.

"Fine, let's just treat it as seafood!"

Seeing the oysters and sea urchins on the ground, Zhuang Rui could no longer resist. He took out Peng Fei's knife and pried open the oysters one by one. After each one was pried open, he stuffed the oyster meat directly into his mouth.

Although it had a slightly bitter taste from the sea, it was still within Zhuang Rui's tolerance range. After eating more than a dozen, Zhuang Rui got used to the taste and ate with great relish.

However, sea urchins were a bit more troublesome, as they were covered in bristles and very difficult to deal with. In the end, Zhuang Rui found a rock and smashed the sea urchin open on the reef.

"Damn, it's so bitter? How come the food is different from what I ate before?"

Zhuang Rui put what he thought was sea urchin roe into his mouth, but couldn't help spit it out. This thing was even more bitter than bitter melon. Zhuang Rui had to drink several mouthfuls of water to rinse his mouth, and then he threw the sea urchin he was holding wrapped in his clothes far away.

Zhuang Rui had no idea that although sea urchins are delicious, they are very troublesome to process. Only a very skilled chef can separate the sea urchin roe from the viscera. The way Zhuang Rui ate it just now meant that he ate both the viscera and the roe, no wonder it was bitter.

Having learned his lesson, Zhuang Rui didn't touch the remaining sea urchins again. After finishing the oysters, he patted his belly comfortably and lay sprawled on the beach.

"Damn, it's so hot!"

Although he was lying in the middle of a reef, the midday sun still made Zhuang Rui feel hot all over, and his skin turned red. Helpless, Zhuang Rui could only stand up and walk towards the coconut grove not far from the beach.

This grove not only has coconut trees, but also many large trees with lush foliage and barbed branches. However, there are not many fallen leaves on the ground, only some dead branches. Presumably, the leaves have been blown away by the storm at sea.

Although the forest is dense with foliage, almost all the trees are over ten meters tall. The trees are quite sparse, and the spacing between them is completely different from that in the primeval forests of places like the Savage Mountain. Even in the forest, the view is very open.

As soon as Zhuang Rui entered the woods, the blazing sun overhead was blocked by the leaves, and he immediately felt a refreshing coolness. If he weren't worried that his hoarse voice might attract some wild beasts, Zhuang Rui would have almost howled with pleasure.

"What a fucking idiot, why didn't he come sooner..."

After entering the woods, Zhuang Rui discovered that there were many coconuts of various sizes on the ground, which must have been blown down by the strong wind. Although Zhuang Rui didn't usually like drinking coconut juice, he now felt like crying.

Coconut juice can be drunk directly, and coconut meat can be eaten as a meal; both are very nutritious. As long as the safety issue can be resolved, Zhuang Rui has enough patience to wait for the rescue team to arrive.

"Dude, I'm really turning into a wild man now..."

After picking up a suitable-sized rock from the reef area, cracking open two coconuts and drinking the coconut juice, Zhuang Rui thought to himself with a touch of self-deprecation.

In the history of human civilization, the biggest difference and evolution between apes and humans is that humans mastered and learned to use fire. However, Zhuang Rui took two broken stones and banged them for a long time, but not a single spark came out.

This result left Zhuang Rui feeling very frustrated. It turned out that he was not even as good as those ancestors who only knew how to use stone tools.

"Damn it, when Robinson Crusoe was down on his luck, he had a wrecked ship and some grain and liquor. How come I only have a small knife?"

After eating and drinking his fill, Zhuang Rui lay under the shade of a tree and began to daydream. The images of Ouyang Wan, Qin Xuanbing, Liu Chuan, and others kept changing in Zhuang Rui's mind.

"People must save themselves; I must live!"

Zhuang Rui suddenly jumped up, picked up a branch about the thickness of a gun barrel from the ground, and rushed towards the beach.

Chapter 827 Survival on a Deserted Island (Part Two)

Humans in the 21st century may have similar survival experiences to those of people during the Age of Exploration in the 15th and 16th centuries, but in terms of knowledge and experience, those people were nowhere near as knowledgeable as modern people.

Putting aside other things, countless adventure movies have taught Zhuang Rui many survival skills, such as burning dry branches to produce thick smoke. Of course, Zhuang Rui can't do this right now because he can't start a fire at all.

However, there is another way. Zhuang Rui is currently busy drawing a large SOS international distress sign on the open beach with tree branches.

"No, this thing is too thin..."

After drawing with a twig for a while, Zhuang Rui looked at the thin lines and shook his head. Let alone airplanes in the sky, even if they were far away, he couldn't recognize what they were.

He casually tossed aside the branch and started drawing on the sand with the soles of his feet.

The scorching sand, baked by the sun, pricked Zhuang Rui's feet like needles, causing him to grimace in pain. Although he could heal himself with spiritual energy at any time, the pain was very real.

What Zhuang Rui longed for most at that moment was the pair of sneakers he had thrown away while swimming in the sea because they were in the way. Apart from untying the shoelaces and keeping them, the shoes had sunk to the depths of the Indian Ocean.

It took Zhuang Rui more than two hours to draw three SOS letters, each 30 meters long and more than 60 meters wide, on a beach far from the sea.

After finishing the drawing, Zhuang Rui collected some dead leaves and stones from the woods and arranged them in the shape of letters. This way, even if sand were buried on top, the letters would still bulge upwards.

After all that was done, the sun slowly began to set in the west, and the sky gradually darkened. The entire island was incredibly quiet, with only the sound of waves crashing on the beach.

If it weren't for the seabirds returning from foraging on the horizon, Zhuang Rui would have thought this was a dead island.

Watching the birds fly into the island, Zhuang Rui felt a pang of envy. If he had wings, he could fly away right now, and he would be willing to be called a birdman.

Just as the sun was about to set below the horizon, the entire world suddenly turned red—a red sky, a red ocean, red islands, and red beaches.

"So beautiful!"

This was Zhuang Rui's first time seeing a sunset over the sea, and he couldn't help but feel refreshed and happy. Such a beautiful scene could probably only be seen in the deep ocean far from the coastline.

"Oh no, I haven't prepared dinner yet..."

Zhuang Rui suddenly jumped up. If there was another storm at sea today, and it was pitch black again like yesterday, he would go hungry for a whole day. While the sun was still shining, Zhuang Rui prepared to prepare dinner.

He ran quickly back to the woods, picked up two fist-sized coconuts from the ground, and then rushed back to the beach, collecting about three or four pounds of oysters before finally returning to the rocky area near the sea, completely satisfied.

Although the woods could provide shelter from the wind and rain, Zhuang Rui was worried about wild animals coming at night, since many wild animals hunt at night.

Relatively speaking, it's safer to stay in the rocky area. After all, it's a volcanic island and located in the volcanic zone, so there's no fear of getting cold at night.

As the saying goes, practice makes perfect. This time, Zhuang Rui was much more skilled at prying open oyster shells. He took Peng Fei's small knife, inserted it into the oyster, and with a slight twist of his wrist, the entire oyster opened.

Zhuang Rui casually rinsed the sand out of the oyster in a puddle of seawater and then popped it into his mouth. He had already drunk seawater yesterday, so he didn't care about a little bit more.

More than half an hour later, oyster shells and coconuts smashed open with stones littered the ground around Zhuang Rui. He had not only drunk the coconut water but also devoured the coconut meat, though the taste... was really not good.

When can I go home?

After eating and drinking his fill, Zhuang Rui strolled slowly on the beach. The starlit sea was unusually calm, and apart from the rustling of the sea breeze through the distant trees, the whole world was incredibly quiet, which made Zhuang Rui feel a sense of loneliness.

"Robinson Crusoe had a little dog by his side back then, and then there was Friday. How come I'm so unlucky to be stranded alone on a desert island?"

Zhuang Rui kicked the beach hard, kicking up a cloud of sand that covered his face.

Zhuang Rui didn't care about his image anymore. In this godforsaken place, he was just showing off to the birds!

After wandering aimlessly on the beach for three or four hours, Zhuang Rui finally dragged his heavy steps back to the rocky area, found a spot that was more than a meter inward with rocks on both sides, and lay down.

Looking at the starry sky above, Zhuang Rui slowly drifted off to sleep.

"Aww...woo..."

In the middle of the night, several roars of wild beasts came from the direction of the island, waking Zhuang Rui from his sleep. He took his knife and pointed it at the dark forest that looked like the gaping maw of a monster.

"Damn it, what kind of wild beast is that...?"

The sound was unlike anything Zhuang Rui had ever heard before. The more unknown something was, the more frightening it became. Could it be that there really were prehistoric animals here?

With a few more roars following, Zhuang Rui's heart gradually calmed down. The beast's cries were deep in the island, and he was on the edge of the sea, so he should be safe.

However, Zhuang Rui didn't dare to sleep that night. He stayed up all night, anxiously waiting until it was bright before he finally drifted off to sleep. He was woken up by the scorching sun at noon.

"No, if this continues, I won't be able to hold on until the rescue team finds me..."

Zhuang Rui looked at his forearms, which were peeling from sunburn, and his whole body was bright red. He quickly used his spiritual energy to cleanse them, and the alarming red color slowly faded away.

After taking care of his body, Zhuang Rui immediately climbed to the highest reef and looked out to sea, but he could see nothing but the waves. When he looked back at the beach, the three huge letters "SOS" were still there.

After standing there blankly for a while, Zhuang Rui walked back to the beach with a disappointed look on his face and began to prepare today's food, but the unease in his heart grew stronger.

Zhuang Rui couldn't understand why, even after two days and more than 30 hours, the rescue team still hadn't found him.

What Zhuang Rui didn't know was that after being blown onto the sea by the storm, he was pushed by the waves for hundreds of kilometers, and the sea area he was in now was the most dangerous and mysterious place in the entire Indian Ocean.

...

This sea area is located west of the Lesser Antilles in the western Indian Ocean. Many people may not know this name, but it has another very famous name: the Caribbean Islands!

Even those who haven't seen the movie are likely familiar with the name. The Caribbean pirates roamed the seas centuries ago, and their stronghold was in the Lesser Antilles.

However, the island and sea area where Zhuang Rui is located are still hundreds of nautical miles away from the Caribbean islands, and this sea area has a more famous name compared to the Caribbean islands. Of course, only people living in the Indian Ocean know this name.

This sea area has a mysterious magnetic field that blocks all communication signals, and plane crashes and shipwrecks frequently occur there. It seems to have a mysterious connection with the Bermuda Triangle.

A bizarre incident once occurred in Bermuda: a Soviet submarine was underwater in the waters off Bermuda one minute ago, but when it surfaced a minute later, it was in the Indian Ocean.

During the voyage that spanned almost half the globe, all ninety-three crew members on the submarine aged five to twenty years in an instant.

Following this incident, the Soviet military and scientific community immediately began investigating the submarine and all personnel involved. The final conclusion was that there is a high probability that a time tunnel with a faster timeline than Earth exists on Earth.

The submarine appeared in this area, which added to its mystique and made it a place of great taboo for the people living on the nearby islands.

Moreover, within a radius of over a hundred nautical miles around the area, there are numerous reefs, making it unsuitable for ship navigation. Not to mention larger ships, even small sailboats would hit the underwater reefs if they entered the area in slightly deeper water.

Throughout history, countless ships have run aground and sunk here after mistakenly entering this area.

Over time, this sea area, covering nearly 100 square kilometers, has been called the Sea of Death by the people living in the Indian Ocean, and the isolated island where Zhuang Rui is now located also has a terrifying name: Devil Island!

This location is nearly a thousand nautical miles from where Zhuang Rui's plane crashed. It's unknown how Zhuang Rui ended up here, almost traversing the entire Indian Ocean. Therefore, even with the search and rescue fleets expanding their search area, they still haven't been able to find this place.

Of course, unlucky Zhuang Rui was unaware of all this. He continued to greet the sunrise and bid farewell to the sunset, waiting for the rescue team to arrive at the beach, but every day he was met with disappointment.

Soon, the third day passed. The island remained the same, and the waves continued to lap at the beach. The planes and ships that Zhuang Rui had been hoping for never appeared.

Four days have passed, and the oysters Zhuang Rui is eating have become tasteless. However, he has mastered the skill of separating sea urchins, adding another dish to his repertoire.

Five days have passed, and even with the nourishment of spiritual energy, Zhuang Rui is still tanned like an Indian Ocean native, his entire body a deep black.

By the sixth day, Zhuang Rui had walked around the island. According to his estimate, the island's area was at least several tens of square kilometers.

Chapter 828-829 Survival on a Deserted Island (Parts 3 & 4)

A week passed quickly. For the first few days, Zhuang Rui would stand on the reef and look around, waiting for the rescue team to arrive. However, every day he was met with endless disappointment.

Moreover, life by the sea has become increasingly difficult, because every few days there will be a severe storm.

The night before last, the sea level suddenly rose, and Zhuang Rui, who was nestled among the rocks, was awakened by the icy seawater. If Zhuang Rui hadn't reacted quickly and clung tightly to the rocks, he would probably have already been swallowed up by the deep Atlantic Ocean and become shark food.

In Zhuang Rui's eyes, the raging and unrestrained sea was like a monster that might swallow him whole at any moment. His fear of the ocean now surpassed that of this mysterious island.

Another reason was the food. Although he ate fresh oysters and drank pure natural coconut juice every day, which is a lifestyle that modern people pursue, Zhuang Rui's stomach finally started to rebel after three days of eating like that. He had diarrhea so badly that he was in ecstasy but couldn't stop.

For the next few days, Zhuang Rui didn't dare to eat seafood anymore. He could only fill his stomach with coconut juice and coconut meat. His mouth was so bland that he almost ate bird's nest. Looking at the seabirds flying over the beach every day, Zhuang Rui wished he could grow wings and catch them one by one to roast and eat.

After spending a week at the beach without encountering a rescue team, and knowing that staying on the beach wasn't a solution, Zhuang Rui made up his mind to explore the isolated island.

Based on what Zhuang Rui knew from movies, there are generally no large predators on isolated islands in the sea. Perhaps he misheard the night before.

However, Zhuang Rui still had a lot of preparations to make before entering the island. The first was naturally weapons. Without something to defend himself, Zhuang Rui dared not venture deep into the island.

Standing at the edge of the coconut grove, Zhuang Rui held a wooden pole about 1.5 meters long in his hand. He had used a sharp stone to smash it down from a tree covered in thorns with great effort.

As a result, Zhuang Rui's hands were covered in thorns, as if they had grown hair. It took him a whole day to clean them up, and then another half day to scrape off all the thorns from the branches with a knife.

The wooden pole, or more accurately, the javelin, was tied tightly to one end with Zhuang Rui's shoelaces, holding a small knife from Peng Fei. This was Zhuang Rui's only weapon.

Zhuang Rui held the javelin in his right hand, about halfway down, and threw it forcefully at a coconut tree.

With a muffled "snap," the small knife at the tip of the javelin was completely embedded in the hard coconut tree. The more than one-meter-long javelin was firmly stuck in the tree, swinging back and forth like a spring, making a "buzzing" sound.

"Good, let's see if we can catch a fish later..."

Zhuang Rui pulled the javelin from the tree and twirled it in his hand. He was very satisfied with the weapon he had made.

A few days ago, Zhuang Rui successfully used a knife and a stone to ignite the dried leaves and start a fire on the beach.

Although the fire went out again on the second day because Zhuang Rui didn't know how to keep a fire, practice makes perfect. After a period of trial and error, Zhuang Rui could skillfully start a fire in about ten minutes as long as there were dry leaves and firewood.

However, without the right tools, the oysters were difficult to grill, which made Zhuang Rui itch to eat them while watching the fish swimming in the sea.

However, after several trips to the sea to fish, Zhuang Rui was repeatedly outmaneuvered by the fish, and he fully understood the true meaning of the idiom "like a fish in water".

However, Zhuang Rui did find a good place to fish. It was a canyon about seven or eight miles away from where he landed. Calling it a canyon was a bit inappropriate, because there was only a small pool of water about fifty or sixty square meters in size in the canyon.

The pool isn't deep, only five or six meters at its deepest point. Climbing onto the smooth rocks on either side, which have been sculpted by the sea, you can clearly see the entire pool, which is as beautiful and clear as a blue gemstone.

Possibly formed by a volcanic eruption, the pool is flanked by sheer cliffs, with a depression in the middle. Over the years, the constant erosion by the sea has created a narrow crevice, only two or three meters wide and a little over a meter deep, between the pool and the ocean.

Due to its unique environment, some ferocious marine predators cannot enter, making this pool a paradise for fish.

Standing by the pool, you can clearly see all kinds of sea fish swimming in it, some as long as a foot or two, and some as small as a finger.

Ever since Zhuang Rui accidentally discovered this place, the pool has lost its tranquility. Every day, Zhuang Rui would come to practice his swimming skills and try to catch a fish to improve his life. However, after struggling in the water for several days, he tragically failed to catch a single fish.

"Brother's here!"

Catching fish was Zhuang Rui's happiest time of the day, so when he saw that the javelin was successfully made, he couldn't hold back any longer. He immediately put aside his island exploration and excitedly ran towards the pool with the javelin.

Having a weapon really makes a difference. After failing a few times at first, Zhuang Rui, whether by sheer luck or something else, managed to pierce a large fish more than a foot long with silver scales all over its body with a javelin.

"Haha, hahaha!"

Zhuang Rui's laughter echoed above the pool. He hadn't seen any animals at the beach for the past few days, which had made him much bolder; otherwise, he wouldn't have had the idea of exploring the island.

"Thump!"

Zhuang Rui jumped into the pool, grabbed the javelin, and lifted the big fish up. After scrambling ashore, he started looking for dry leaves and firewood nearby.

"Click...click click..."

As the knife struck the volcanic rock, a few sparks landed on the sun-baked, withered leaves, instantly blackening them with the smoke. Zhuang Rui quickly brought his mouth close and gently blew on them.

There's a technique to blowing air out. If you blow too much, the sparks will be extinguished, but if you blow too little, it won't be enough to ignite the dry leaves. Zhuang Rui spent several days figuring it out before he mastered the technique.

Unfortunately, Zhuang Rui's coin-sized archaeological magnifying glass, which he always carried with him, was nowhere to be found. Otherwise, starting a fire would have been quite easy; he could have simply focused the sunlight through the magnifying glass.

After lighting the fire, Zhuang Rui hurriedly gutted the fish, which weighed seven or eight pounds, and threw away its internal organs. He then found a sturdy tree branch, threaded it onto the branch, and hung it over the fire.

"It smells...it smells fucking good..."

Smelling the aroma of grilled fish, Zhuang Rui's mouth watered. He had been on the island for almost a week and hadn't eaten any cooked food. Now, smelling the fish, he almost shed tears of excitement.

"Shhhhhhhhhhhhh..."

Before the fish was fully cooked, Zhuang Rui, disregarding the heat, tore off a piece of fish and stuffed it into his mouth. The heat made him spit out his breath repeatedly, and he couldn't even taste the fish.

Knowing that haste makes waste, Zhuang Rui finally calmed down and grilled the fish until it was golden brown all over. He then set it aside to cool for a while before starting to taste it.

"Delicious, really delicious..."

Having eaten fish for over twenty years, Zhuang Rui felt for the first time that fish was so delicious, a hundred times more delicious than any other good food he had ever eaten before.

Moreover, the fish meat was delicate, with no bones except for a large fish bone. The fish meat alone weighed two or three pounds, and it was now all in Zhuang Rui's stomach.

Zhuang Rui kept the fish bones after eating, as they would come in handy later. He was penniless and had to make the most of every resource.

"We need to get some salt..."

After finishing the meal, Zhuang Rui felt like something was missing. He had been eating raw seafood and coconut for the past few days, but with cooked food, salt had to become an essential seasoning.

However, salt production by the sea is incredibly simple. Just dig a shallow, large pit near a coconut grove, channel brackish water through it, and then use the heat from the sun to dry it for a while; salt will precipitate out.

Although this is not iodized salt, there is absolutely no problem with eating it. After finishing the grilled fish, Zhuang Rui was full of energy and immediately started to work.

More than three hours later, Zhuang Rui cleared out a space of about ten square meters next to the coconut grove, and dug up the soft sand of the beach to bring in some seawater.

However, it would probably take another three to five days to extract the salt. Seeing that it was getting late, Zhuang Rui sat down under a tall coconut tree.

Zhuang Rui spent the last two nights in the woods because he was terrified by the high tide that occurred during the night; it was like a murder without bloodshed.

Because the javelin was made, which took up a day, Zhuang Rui began preparing the second piece of equipment he would need for exploring the deserted island the next day after having a full meal.

To set foot on this deserted island, Zhuang Rui would need a pair of shoes.

If he went barefoot, let alone entering the island, Zhuang Rui's feet would have been cut several times even after leaving the beach and walking into the woods. Without shoes, Zhuang Rui could only wander around on the beach.

"Crack..."

Zhuang Rui used a knife to cut open his jeans, severing the entire leg below the knee, and then pulled out a few thin threads from the tear.

That's when the fish bone came in handy. Zhuang Rui found a thick and hard fish bone, broke it in half, and carefully pierced a hole at the larger end with the tip of a knife, making it a simple sewing needle.

"Damn it, art really does imitate life..."

Looking at the needle and thread in his hands, Zhuang Rui sighed with emotion. You see, he learned all this knowledge from movies.

"Let's retreat..."

Ouyang Lei waved to Commander Xie, looking at the vast sea before him with some resentment. He didn't know how to explain things to his grandfather, or how to face his aunt and Zhuang Rui's wife.

The search has been ongoing for seven days, covering an area of over a thousand nautical miles. More than three thousand aircraft sorties have been deployed. Not to mention anything else, the money spent on this search alone is incalculable.

Zhuang Rui seemed to have vanished from this sea area, and no clues could be found. Even the parachute that should have been floating on the sea surface was nowhere to be seen.

The military wasn't solely Ouyang Lei's responsibility. Although he wanted to continue the search, pressure from higher-ups forced him to decide to end the operation.

"Commander, I request to stay..."

Upon hearing Ouyang Lei's words, Peng Fei became anxious. He firmly believed that Zhuang Rui was not dead and that as long as they continued searching, they would definitely find Zhuang Rui.

The crew members had already been sent back to \*\*\*, but Peng Fei refused to go back and continued to participate in the search operation.

"Why stay here? To swim?"

Ouyang Lei glared at Peng Fei with annoyance. He was already under a lot of pressure, so he spoke very rudely.

"Sir, please leave me a boat. I'm sure I can find Brother Zhuang!"

Peng Fei looked at Ouyang Lei almost pleadingly. If he couldn't find Zhuang Rui, Peng Fei would have no face to return to \*\*\*, no face to face Zhuang's mother and Qin Xuanbing, whom he considered family.

"Nonsense, let's go back and talk first..."

Ouyang Lei wanted to scold Peng Fei, but he didn't say it and waved his hand wearily.

Under Ouyang Lei's orders, the two fleets slowly turned around and began their return voyage, while rescue teams from various countries also returned one after another, and the once bustling sea area suddenly became deserted.

Two days later, the fleet stopped in Hong Kong for a rest. Peng Fei, who was originally on the ship, suddenly disappeared. Ouyang Lei couldn't care less about Peng Fei at this point. He was thinking about how to explain Zhuang Rui's disappearance to his family after returning to \*\*\*.

The very next day, news appeared in major Hong Kong newspapers that a super-rich man's luxury yacht, which he had purchased for over 100 million yuan and was capable of ocean sailing, had been stolen the previous night.

According to investigations, the yacht is not currently in Hong Kong waters, meaning that it left Hong Kong waters overnight after being stolen and entered international waters.

"Brother Zhuang, where are you?"

Peng Fei was piloting the luxury speedboat at top speed, speeding across the sea towards the area where they would be parachuting.

Actually, Peng Fei didn't need to resort to throwing speedboats. If he had just found the Qin family, he could have gotten a much better boat. However, Peng Fei now harbors some resentment towards Qin Haoran. If Qin Haoran hadn't sent Zhuang Rui on this trip, none of this would have happened.

Peng Fei was unaware that the Qin family in Hong Kong was already in chaos. After learning of Zhuang Rui's disappearance, Old Master Qin's blood pressure spiked and he was hospitalized.

Qin Haoran was also in no mood to manage his business and was filled with regret. He flew directly to \*\*\*, but he didn't dare tell his daughter about it, and didn't even dare to go to the courtyard house. He only secretly told his mother-in-law and wife in private.

This actually helped Ouyang Lei a lot, as he was just wondering how to tell his aunt about it.

When Ouyang Wan heard the news, she was struck by lightning and fainted on the spot.

After waking up, Ouyang Wan could no longer face Qin Xuanbing, who was pregnant with her grandson. Whenever she saw Qin Xuanbing, she would think of her son. In the end, she simply moved to Yuquan Mountain under the pretext of taking care of the elderly.

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"Mom, when is Zhuang Rui coming back? I'm almost due, and he's such a terrible father..."

Sitting in the courtyard, Qin Xuanbing happily touched her belly. The two little ones were becoming more and more lively, kicking their fists and legs all day long, never stopping for a moment.

"There's been a bit of a problem with the business in South Africa, and it might take a while. How about I have your dad go and bring Zhuang Rui back?"

Although everyone was heartbroken, they dared not show it on their faces. After all, Qin Xuanbing was pregnant and nearing delivery. If anything went wrong, no one could bear the responsibility.

Fang Yi looked at her daughter, tears welling up in her eyes. She quickly lowered her head, trying hard not to let the tears fall.

"Forget it, with Mom here, it's fine if Zhuang Rui isn't around. Dad's getting old, so he shouldn't run away..."

Qin Xuanbing is about to become a mother and understands the difficulties of being a parent. She supports her husband in helping his father with some household chores.

"Child... uh, Mom will go check if the soup is ready yet..."

Fang Yi burst into tears and quickly stood up, hurrying towards the kitchen. She was afraid that if she continued talking, she would reveal that Zhuang Rui had disappeared.

"Gah!"

Jin Yu jumped down from the tree. It could sense that Qin Xuanbing was pregnant with two little lives, so Jin Yu liked to stay close to Qin Xuanbing whenever it was free.

The little golden eagle is now about the same size as its parents, standing over a meter tall. Its dark golden feathers shimmer in the sunlight, giving it an extraordinary appearance.

"Jin Yu, don't you think Zhuang Rui is being incredibly irresponsible as a father? He hasn't even come to see his own child. What do you think we should do to punish him when he gets back?"

Qin Xuanbing has recently taken to talking to herself a lot. Even though she knows that golden eagles can't speak, she often says a few words to them.

"quack....."

Jin Yu tilted its head, seemingly understanding Qin Xuanbing's words. After rubbing its beak against Qin Xuanbing's hand, it suddenly took two steps forward, flapped its wings, and flew up.

"Hey, hey, Zhuang Rui told you not to fly around like that..."

Qin Xuanbing called out from below, but the golden eagle didn't turn around. It flapped its wings a few times and disappeared from Qin Xuanbing's sight.

Using fishbone thread, Zhuang Rui sewed one leg of the jeans together. Then he stuffed in a lot of soft, dry leaves. After putting his feet in, he used shoelaces to tightly hold the jeans leg together, and a pair of shoes was made.

I stood up and took a few steps. My feet felt soft and yielding. Although it wasn't very aesthetically pleasing, it was still much better than walking barefoot in the woods.

After finishing the shoes, Zhuang Rui hugged the javelin and leaned against a coconut tree, falling into a deep sleep.

The next morning, Zhuang Rui cracked open two coconuts to make breakfast. Then he picked up a dry branch and leaf and placed it on the beach. The morning fog was thick, and the leaves were all wet. He left them on the beach to dry for a morning, and they would be ready to use by noon.

Looking at the mountains rising higher and higher in the depths of the forest, Zhuang Rui gripped the javelin in his hand, gritted his teeth, and walked deeper into the forest.

The coconut grove was much larger than Zhuang Rui had imagined. After walking for more than ten minutes, they still couldn't get out. The leaves and dead branches on the ground had become thicker, and it felt soft and spongy underfoot.

"Um?"

Half an hour later, Zhuang Rui finally emerged from the woods. A gentle slope appeared ahead, covered with low shrubs. A stream flowed down the mountain, forming a small pool at the bottom of the slope.

What surprised Zhuang Rui was not the pool itself, but the fact that there were more than a dozen goats drinking water beside it, a scene that left him somewhat astonished.

Zhuang Rui had imagined many scenarios, even the appearance of dinosaurs in the mountains, but he never expected to see so many goats.

If it weren't for the javelin in his hand reminding Zhuang Rui that he was on a deserted island, he would have thought he was back on the snowy mountains of the Great Han Dynasty.

"Does someone live here?"

A question mark popped into Zhuang Rui's mind. These goats didn't seem to resemble the wild goats he had ever seen before.

"Is anyone there? Is anyone there... Is anyone there... Is anyone there..."

Unable to contain his joy, Zhuang Rui shouted loudly. His shouts echoed through the forest for a long time, startling the dozen or so goats that were drinking water. They quickly disappeared into the bushes.

As Zhuang Rui shouted, several seabirds took flight from the mountains, but then fell silent again. No one answered Zhuang Rui; the silence, like a mountain, made it hard for him to breathe.

Such a loud shout, with such a resounding echo, would surely have alerted anyone. After standing there for more than half an hour, I couldn't help but feel disappointed and walked heavily to the stream.

With coconuts present, Zhuang Rui wasn't particularly excited about the fresh water. What he was thinking about now was how to leave this cursed island and return home.

More than a week has passed. Zhuang Rui wonders how worried his family must be. Especially Qin Xuanbing, who is pregnant. Will hearing the news of his disappearance harm her health?

Arriving on this damned island felt like entering a forbidden zone for humans. Although there were other creatures, the desolation was so profound that it felt as if Zhuang Rui was the only person left in the world, a feeling that was extremely unpleasant.

Every day, Zhuang Rui has to shout loudly to vent the frustration in his heart.

After squatting by the stream and drinking a few mouthfuls of water to wash his face, Zhuang Rui walked up the gentle slope. He wanted to climb to the top of the mountain and see if there were any islands around.

Zhuang Rui could endure being stranded on a deserted island for a week or two, but after a while, he felt he would go crazy. If there were other islands nearby, he would definitely risk swimming there.

After walking for more than 10 minutes, Zhuang Rui climbed up the gentle slope, but the scene before him made him involuntarily open his mouth wide, his eyes filled with ecstatic joy.

Before Zhuang Rui appeared a village made of wooden houses!

Chapter 830 Skull

Indeed, what appeared before Zhuang Rui was a row of wooden houses, about twenty or so in total. However, after Zhuang Rui examined them carefully, his heart sank.

Even from a distance, Zhuang Rui could tell that these wooden houses were already dilapidated. He was standing on higher ground and could clearly see that the roofs of many of the houses were gone, so the possibility of anyone living there was probably not very high.

Is...is anyone there?

Zhuang Rui gripped the javelin tightly in his hand, walked to a point about twenty or thirty meters away from the wooden house, and tentatively called out, his voice trembling slightly.

Although we've entered the 21st century, it's possible that the natives on this isolated island still retain the custom of cannibalism. While roasted meat is delicious, roasting one's own flesh is not such a pleasant thing.

In short, it's always better to be safe than sorry. Zhuang Rui planned to turn around and run away as soon as he saw people with scribbles on their faces or people with their buttocks exposed.

Zhuang Rui didn't realize that his current situation was no different from that of the natives in those movies. Apart from the shoes made from his jeans, all he was wearing was a pair of briefs.

Moreover, the briefs had two holes in them, so they probably wouldn't last much longer.

At this moment, Zhuang Rui felt both anticipation and fear. He hadn't seen anyone for over a week. Even if they were indigenous people, they were still able to make a sound, weren't they?

However, after Zhuang Rui finished speaking, the situation he had imagined did not occur. Apart from the dust falling from the wooden house, there was no echo from Zhuang Rui's shout.

Even more outrageous, a wooden house collapsed with a crash right at Zhuang Rui's shout, raising a cloud of dust.

"Nobody's here..."

Zhuang Rui was now certain that this was an abandoned village. Although somewhat disappointed, it also meant that humans had once lived on this isolated island.

The humans who built the wooden houses must have had contact with modern civilization. Since they are not here, there are only two possibilities: either they have moved to another part of the island, or they have already left this isolated island.

Regardless of the possibility, it's good news for Zhuang Rui. If others can leave, then he can too.

Zhuang Rui couldn't build a boat, but if he could find the tools here, he was fairly confident he could cut down a tree and make a canoe.

Approaching a wooden hut, Zhuang Rui reached out and pulled on the door. He didn't use much force, but the entire door came down, and the doorknob he was holding turned into splinters that slipped through his fingers and fell to the ground.

This situation made Zhuang Rui frown. The wooden house was so decayed that it must have been at least two or three hundred years old. Could it be that... the people here had already left hundreds of years ago?

Because the wood was badly rotten, Zhuang Rui didn't dare go inside the house, but instead walked around the village.

"It shouldn't have been built by indigenous people..."

Zhuang Rui discovered that all of these wooden houses were built with round logs and rivets. Their architectural style was very mature, somewhat like the style of Finland and North America. Although simple, it was extremely practical. There were also traces of a fence about 20 meters outside the village.

"Could this be a pirate's lair?"

Zhuang Rui suddenly had such a thought, but he quickly dismissed it.

Based on Zhuang Rui's understanding of pirates through movies and books, these pirates who roam the oceans pay great attention to their lairs and always build them in places that are easy to defend and difficult to attack. They would never build their lairs in such a flat place at the foot of a gentle slope.

Even in the 15th and 16th centuries, pirates would build their hideouts like castles, not something so simple, so that if they encountered enemies, they would have nowhere to run.

"Let's see if there's anything we can use..."

Although Zhuang Rui had a fortune of hundreds of millions outside, in this place he was truly penniless and destitute, even having to use leaves to go to the toilet.

Anything that humans can use is a treasure in Zhuang Rui's eyes now.

These wooden houses are so dilapidated that they could be listed as ancient protected buildings. Zhuang Rui dared not go in. Although the wooden beams on top were also rotten, they could still kill someone if they fell on their head.

After thinking for a moment, Zhuang Rui walked towards the collapsed wooden house. The roof of the wooden house was probably made of dried coconut leaves tied together and laid on top, but due to its age, it had long since turned to ashes.

Zhuang Rui picked up the javelin and started fiddling with the pile of wood. After lifting two beams that could be broken with a snap, all that remained on the ground was a thick layer of rotten wood chips.

"This is....."

Zhuang Rui suddenly launched an object with his javelin. The object was oval-shaped with a protrusion on top and curved back and forth. However, it did not seem to be made of cloth, otherwise it would not have been preserved until now.

"hat?"

Suddenly, a term popped into Zhuang Rui's mind: Isn't this the hat from the 16th or 17th century in the movie? It's exactly the same as the one worn by the pirate with black eye circles.

Using a javelin to pick up the object and bring it to my eyes, sure enough... it was a fur coat, covered with a thick layer of dust. In the parlance of the antique trade, it was an old object with a thick patina, indicating it had been around for many years.

Zhuang Rui shook the hat. He couldn't tell what kind of leather it was made of. It was very tough and hadn't deformed much after hundreds of years of wind and rain.

"I'll take this, buddy..."

Zhuang Rui picked up the hat and looked at himself. Since he was completely naked and had nowhere to put it, he simply put it on his head. Anyway, every morning when he woke up, his messy hair would ooze salt and alkali, so Zhuang Rui wasn't worried about getting his hair dirty.

"Huh, what's this?"

After putting the hat on his head, Zhuang Rui picked up the javelin and started poking around in the wood again. Suddenly, a grayish-white object appeared in front of him. Zhuang Rui quickly squatted down, brushed away the wood shavings with his hands, and picked up the object.

"Holy crap, that's really scary..."

Zhuang Rui only realized after picking it up that it was actually a human skull. When he held it up, the two dark eye sockets stared right into his eyes, which startled him so much that he threw it away.

"Smack..."

After the skull rolled a few times on the ground, a crawler more than two inches long crawled out of its eye socket, seemingly quite displeased that Zhuang Rui's sleep had been disturbed.

"Ignorance is no excuse, please forgive me, please forgive me..."

Zhuang Rui clasped his hands together in a gesture of respect towards the skull on the ground, muttering a few words under his breath.

When Zhuang Rui met those dark, hollow eyes just now, he couldn't help but think of the cursed pirates in Pirates of the Caribbean, and he couldn't help but feel a little creeped out.

"This hat isn't one he wore, is it?"

Zhuang Rui touched the hat on his head. He had originally wanted to throw it away, but considering that he was penniless and it wasn't easy to accumulate any wealth, he decided to keep it on.

After all, Zhuang Rui is also an insider in the antique industry. Which of those valuable antiques wasn't handled by countless people who have already died?

In addition to his current status as an archaeology graduate student, Zhuang Rui had calmed down after the initial panic. He took a few steps forward, picked up the skull, and examined it in his hand.

To be precise, this should only be half a skull, because the mandible and pharynx are gone, leaving only three dark holes for the eyes and nose.

In archaeology, the history of human evolution is also an extremely important course. Archaeologists must be able to determine the approximate age, gender, and cause of death of the deceased by examining the skeletal remains found in burial mounds.

Zhuang Rui certainly didn't have that ability, but he did notice something: the owner of this skull was probably not a local native, but a Westerner.

According to Zhuang Rui's knowledge from books, the bridge of the nose of indigenous people is usually flat, while the supraorbital rim is raised. However, the nasal bridge of this skull is high and the supraorbital rim is flat, which is more in line with the physiological characteristics of Westerners.

Archaeology, like solving a case, is a process of reasoning. Archaeologists use physical objects to determine what happened hundreds or even thousands of years ago. Holding this skull, Zhuang Rui couldn't help but fall into deep thought.

Judging from the color of this skull, it's yellowish-white, indicating it's quite old. Why did these Westerners come to this island hundreds of years ago? And how did they leave?

Comparatively, Zhuang Rui was more concerned about the latter question. After a week of observation, Zhuang Rui found that the island was surrounded by numerous reefs on all sides.

Let alone a large ship, even a regular yacht could easily run aground and sink. Zhuang Rui didn't know why those people came here, or how they managed to avoid the reefs.

After standing there blankly, deep in thought for a long time, Zhuang Rui shook his head. He couldn't deduce anything from a dead person's skull alone, and there were no wounds on the skull, so the cause of death was unknown.

After respectfully placing the skull back on the ground, Zhuang Rui began searching through the wood shavings again, but this time he was much gentler, almost like an archaeological excavation. To unravel the mystery of this person's death, more physical evidence was needed.

Zhuang Rui's efforts were not in vain. After more than two hours of cleaning, a relatively complete skeleton appeared in front of him.

Although the collapse of the wooden house caused some damage to the remains, Zhuang Rui could still tell at a glance that this person had definitely not died an unnatural death and had been murdered!

The reason is very simple: a rusty piece of iron is stuck in the ribs of the skeleton.

After Zhuang Rui and Huangfu Yun got to know each other, they also did more research on weapons from the foreign cold weapon era. If Zhuang Rui was not mistaken, this should be a knight's sword from the 16th or 17th century.