

Golden 931

Chapter 931 News

The third brother, who had been observing with binoculars, quickly walked to Hui's side and whispered, "Boss, a boat is coming..."

"Get the guys ready, everyone open your eyes wide, and take the safety off your guns, don't get double-crossed..."

After months adrift at sea, Hui Ge, who had always considered himself a refined man with several foreign university degrees, had become a roughneck. He realized that being too civilized didn't intimidate these people who lived on the edge of death.

Although the other party in this transaction was an old acquaintance of Brother Hui, a well-known shipping tycoon in Malaysia, Brother Hui did not dare to take it lightly. After all, the rule of the sea is that big fish eat small fish, and small fish eat shrimp.

In this desolate place, if the other side is strong enough, even if they wipe out all of them, the world will not be disturbed, and no one will miss them.

What's more, Hui Ge recently heard that a casino owner in Las Vegas has specifically requested that they be found and eliminated.

Hui understood perfectly well that the reason was that Jervis, whom they had hired, had not returned to Las Vegas. This greatly displeased the casino owner, who was preparing to participate in the year-end gambling tournament, and he had mobilized many of his men to gather information about Hui and his group.

This is also the main reason why Hui Ge decided to become a pirate. His whereabouts at sea are unpredictable and difficult to catch. If he were to settle down anywhere, he might be killed by the assassins hired by the casino boss one day.

"Fifth brother, go and deal with those Indonesian monkeys. Make sure they're cleaned up and sunk them to the bottom of the sea..."

Taking the binoculars from the third brother, Hui estimated the ships sailing on the distant sea. They should arrive in about an hour, which would be enough time to deal with the people in the cabin.

If it weren't for the fact that these crew members were needed to pilot the ship, Hui would have killed them a couple of days ago. Keep in mind, because of hijacking this ship, Hui even fell into the sea once and was almost swept away by a huge wave.

When the ship entered the Strait of Malacca, it was still midnight when it was spotted by Brother Hui's men. After following it for several hours, just as dawn broke, Brother Hui personally led his men to take action.

When the ship was stopped, the captain tried to speed away and sprayed water at Hui Ge, who was trying to approach the tanker in a small boat. Unfortunately for Hui Ge, he was swept into the sea by the high-pressure water jet and almost drowned.

Later, the firefighters fired a rocket at the tanker. Although no one was injured, it intimidated the people on board, allowing them to take control of the ship.

Dizzy and disoriented from being sprayed by the water jets, Hui-ge lost his temper after boarding the ship and shot and killed two crew members. This escalated the original hijacking incident, forcing them to find another way to sell the ship.

"Bang...bang bang!"

Not long after Huo Jiang left, a burst of gunfire rang out on the deck behind the cabin. Hui Ge frowned as he heard it. These bullets cost money too. Why not just tie a rock to your body and sink into the sea?

The ship had only about thirty crew members. After a burst of gunfire, the sea breeze blowing from the aft deck carried a strong smell of blood.

"Go, wash all the blood off the deck..."

Hui turned to the person next to him and said that although he had officially "gone into the business" and had taken many lives, he still felt that his behavior was somewhat "undignified".

After waiting for nearly forty minutes, a speedboat was launched from the ship that was approaching from a distance and sailed toward the oil tanker, which was over 10,000 tons in size.

"Datu, my old friend, you are very welcome..."

The spiral staircase was lowered onto the tanker, and Brother Hui respectfully stood by it. The person coming up was his VIP.

Even though he got into the pirate business, it was thanks to the help of this Malaysian tycoon that he was able to buy that frigate. However, money can be a powerful motivator, and people's hearts are unpredictable. Hui Ge still turned back and ordered his men to prepare for a bloody battle.

After wiping the sweat from his face with the white towel handed to him by his subordinate, Datu shook hands with Liu Minghui and said, "Ahui, I didn't expect you to have set up your business so quickly. It seems you really are a natural-born professional..."

Datu was also in his early fifties and was very fat. The fat on his cheeks was almost drooping, and you could see several layers of chin on his neck without even looking down.

Although Datu is a native Malaysian, he traveled to many countries when he was young and speaks fluent Mandarin. He is currently conversing with Liu Minghui in Mandarin.

In the early days of doing business at sea, there were few respectable people. As Dassault said, the initial accumulation of capital was always bloody. Dassault was a businessman on the surface, but in secret he was also a murderer and arsonist who amassed wealth and power at sea.

Although he had made enough money to go ashore and even obtained a title of governor in China, Datu still maintained close ties with pirates in Malacca and even Somalia.

The company that owned the oil tanker that Hui Ge hijacked was a competitor of Datu, and all of Hui Ge's intelligence was provided by Datu.

In this way, he could both strike at his opponents and acquire such a large fortune at a low price. Even though Datu was worth billions, he was still happy to do this.

However, this is precisely the main reason why Brother Hui guarded Datu. He had done plenty of things like "crossing the river and then dismantling the bridge" and "using the millstone and then killing the donkey" when he was a wanderer in the underworld.

"Go check the quantity of crude oil..."

After exchanging a few words with Liu Minghui, Datu sent someone to inspect the crude oil cargo on the ship. In fact, his information came from inside the other company, and he knew more about the crude oil than even the captain.

"My old friend Datu, this is all thanks to your help. This ship hasn't moved since it arrived here. You can rest assured about what I, Ahui, do..."

Hui knew that the fat man opposite him looked like a fat pig, but he had a lot of influence in Southeast Asia. He probably sponsored several pirate organizations. As a newcomer to the pirate world, he couldn't bargain with him. Therefore, he was very respectful to Datu.

"Of course, with our decades-long friendship, what could I, Datu, possibly worry about?"

Datu laughed so hard his fat trembled. He knew Liu Minghui's background. Years ago, he had asked Liu Minghui to set a trap to drag Malaysia's largest shipping company into a financial crisis, which is why his company is now so large.

However, Datu really didn't expect that this group of swindlers from back then would actually have some talent when it came to violence, and even be more efficient and clean than some of the old pirates.

It's important to understand that the disappearance of an oil tanker weighing over 100,000 tons is a major event that would shock the world. Only Tattu could handle such a large shipment and tow the tanker to his own shipyard for repainting and renovation.

About half an hour later, the person checking the goods approached Datu and whispered in the local dialect, "Boss, all the goods are here, nothing is missing..."

"Haha, bro, let's transfer the money..."

Upon hearing his subordinate's words, Datu's face broke into a wide smile. He looked at Brother Hui and said, "Although you suffered a bit of a loss this time, you know my family is a large and powerful enterprise with many employees. Besides, the price for this batch of goods can't be too high, but we'll make it work in the long run. We'll have plenty of opportunities to cooperate in the future..."

"That's...that's..."

Hui nodded in agreement. Although he was very dissatisfied with the price offered by this fat pig, he dared not show it on his face. Observing people's expressions is an essential quality for a conman.

Hui-ge had a Swiss bank account and had even specially obtained a satellite transfer machine for convenient money transfer during the hostage-taking at sea. When he saw Datu transfer 80 million US dollars into his account, Hui-ge's face lit up with joy.

He had been a pirate for just over two months and already had a net worth of nearly a billion. Although he agreed with Datu's words about making a steady living, he had already made up his mind to pull off one or two more heists and then disappear from Malacca.

"Brother, wait a minute..."

After the transaction was completed, the oil tanker no longer belonged to them, and Hui and his group were about to leave the ship when Datu stopped them.

"Mr. Datu, is there anything else?"

Hui Ge was stunned for a moment, his nerves immediately tightening. He hadn't been in this line of work for very long, and his biggest fear was being double-crossed.

Datu waved his chubby, radish-like fingers to signal Liu Minghui not to be nervous, and said with a smile, "Hehe, brother, I'll give you some news. I heard that the gambling king in Macau sold his largest luxury merchant ship to a young man from your country. It's currently being refitted in preparation for setting sail. You can keep an eye on this information..."

"In Macau, the gambling tycoon sold his ship to a young man? What's his name?"

Upon hearing Datu's words, Hui Ge's pupils contracted sharply. He sensed that the young man must be Zhuang Rui, the one who had emptied his pockets.

"I can't remember his name, but I think his surname is Zhuang. Brother, I'm quite interested in that ship. If you can take it, I'll give you this price..."

Datu held up one finger. A few years ago, he had offered the gambling king a price equivalent to 2.5 billion RMB to buy the ship, but the gambling king refused. Now that he could get the casino at a lower price, how could Datu let this opportunity pass?

Upon seeing Datu's gesture, Hui Ge narrowed his eyes and asked, "One hundred million US dollars?!"

"Yes, it's one hundred million US dollars..."

Datu nodded. Although the luxury ferry had been built for many years, it was worth more than four hundred million US dollars and could be used as a gambling ship.

Genting Casino in Malaysia is considered the second largest casino in the world, making a fortune every day. Datu has always wanted to get involved in the gambling industry.

However, if this guy knew that Zhuang Rui had completely altered the ship, I wonder if he would still be willing to pay this price.

Chapter 932 Maiden Voyage

"That person's surname is Zhuang, and his given name is Rui, which means wise?"

A cold glint flashed in Liu Minghui's narrowed eyes. He couldn't forget who had caused all of this. Although he was doing fairly well now, the pain of not being able to go home was something most people couldn't understand.

Rumors had already reached Brother Hui's ears that a gambling tycoon in Las Vegas had offered a huge sum of money to buy his head. So, although Brother Hui owned properties and women in China and several Southeast Asian countries, he didn't dare go back at all, and he didn't even dare to reveal his whereabouts.

In Hui Ge's mind, all of this was thanks to Zhuang Rui. If Zhuang Rui hadn't defeated Jervis, he would definitely be enjoying the sun on a Caribbean island right now, instead of spending his days fighting people at sea with a submachine gun like a fierce demon.

"Yes, that seems to be the name, bro. You know, although I can speak Chinese, I'm not very fluent. It should be this person..."

Datu was a little puzzled as to why Liu Minghui seemed to grit his teeth when he mentioned this name. He never imagined that the reason Liu Minghui had sought him out in his destitute state was because of Zhuang Rui.

"Alright, Mr. Datu, as you wish, I will hand over that luxury cruise ship to you..."

Upon hearing this, Liu Minghui laughed, a very happy laugh. He had originally thought he would never be able to avenge this arrow wound in his lifetime, but he never expected that the opportunity would come so quickly.

Moreover, after pulling off this heist, he would receive another \$100 million, enough for him and his dozen or so men to live a carefree life for the rest of their lives.

Once the island I buy is equipped with weapons and a surveillance and defense system, I won't be afraid even if that gambling tycoon sends assassins.

Thinking of this, Hui Ge's smile became even brighter, as if he was already enjoying a blissful sexual life on a Caribbean island.

"Brother, I know you won't let me down. Don't worry, I'll keep you updated on the ship's movements. I wish you every success!"

When Datu saw that Liu Minghui had agreed, he smiled broadly. In his opinion, Liu Minghui and his group were ruthless and cunning. Dealing with a cruise ship that had no weapons or equipment would be a piece of cake.

It's important to understand that pirates were able to roam the seas not because of their numbers, but because of their superior weaponry.

Just like the frigate that Liu Minghui bought, the 100mm cannon on the bow alone was enough to make many merchant ships surrender obediently.

Moreover, most merchant ships are rarely equipped with heavy weapons; at most, they carry a few pistols. To confront heavily armed pirates with such weapons would undoubtedly be like throwing an egg against a rock—utterly futile.

The reason Liu Minghui shot and killed people during the hijacking of the oil tanker was twofold: first, he was thrown into the sea by a high-pressure water jet, and second, after boarding the ship, he saw someone trying to draw a gun.

Some people might find it strange that if there are guns on the tanker, why use high-pressure water jets to repel the enemy instead of using pistols?

This is actually easy to explain, because the firepower of the two sides is simply not equal. A few pistols would only provoke the pirates to go on a killing spree. Therefore, when merchant ships encounter pirates at sea, they will not take out their pistols unless they are carrying weapons such as submachine guns.

The crew of the oil tanker did not expect that even after they surrendered, they could not escape their fate of death. If they had known this outcome, they might have fought to the death from the beginning and caused some damage to Liu Minghui's pirate gang.

After saying goodbye to Datu and returning to his own frigate, Hui Ge breathed a long sigh of relief. He was always on tenterhooks when handing over stolen goods, fearing that something might go wrong.

"Third brother, send someone to Hong Kong to see if you can make contact with the crew on that ship, find out what defensive weapons they have, don't be afraid to spend the money, and if you can recruit one crew member as an inside man, that would be even better..."

Once the escort ship had sailed far away from the island, Liu Minghui gave his third brother some instructions. He explained that he had underestimated Zhuang Rui, which had led him astray and resulted in losing all his bird eggs. This time, Brother Hui was much more cautious and unwilling to act rashly.

"Brother, don't worry. Getting a few words out of him is just our old job."

In the old Qianmen organization, the third brother always played the role of a guinea pig. He was no good at fighting, but he was good at coming up with bad ideas and making friends with certain people.

"Don't let your guard down. That kid is also a member of the underworld. He might have some tricks up his sleeve. Remember, even if it costs you hundreds of thousands, you have to get to the bottom of this..."

Hui Ge's face was somewhat gloomy. Every time he thought of the name "Zhuang Rui", it would always make him feel terrible.

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"Boom... Boom boom..."

The sound of helicopter rotors filled the air on the "Xuanrui". The strong wind generated by the rotating rotors caused Zhuang Rui, who was not far away, to quickly hug his son who wanted to come closer to watch the excitement. The little guy had lost his balance and sat down on the deck.

"Brother Zhuang, this thing isn't fun to fly, military aircraft are much more exciting to fly..."

About three or four minutes later, the helicopter door opened, and Peng Fei jumped out with a showy air, enticing the little guy in Zhuang Rui's arms, saying, "Fangfang, let Uncle hold you, Uncle will take you on a plane ride..."

The little guy was clearly unable to resist the temptation, twisting his body and opening his little hands towards Peng Fei. Zhuang Rui, annoyed, lightly slapped his bottom and chuckled, "You little rascal, if this were before, you'd be traitor material..."

Zhuang Rui had his own reasons for equipping the ship with a helicopter. The sea is unpredictable and full of dangers, and even a merchant ship with a displacement of over 10,000 tons could not guarantee that nothing would happen.

With a helicopter, as long as one is not far from the coast, they can generally save themselves. Moreover, Zhuang Rui didn't even pay for the helicopter himself, so why not take it?

"Zhuang Rui, how much did this plane cost? You've got everything now – airplanes, ships, you name it!"

The commotion of the helicopter landing on the deck also alerted Huangfu Yun and the others. The people who were originally in the room all came to the deck and stood by, nodding and commenting.

"Over twelve million RMB, Brother Huangfu, it's not like you can't afford it, is it?"

Seeing his wife carrying their daughter over, Zhuang Rui quickly took her into his arms and said, "My daughter is the best! Come on, Dad will take you for a drive..."

In the past two years, Huangfu Yun's wealth has skyrocketed thanks to Zhuang Rui's support. The dividends he has received from the museum in just the past two years alone amount to nearly ten million yuan, which is why Zhuang Rui made such a joke.

"Come on, I'm not that flashy. Peng Fei, let's go for a spin in the sky..."

Huangfu Yun shook his head, but pulled Yun Man directly into the car. Peng Fei smiled and stuffed the excited little Fangfang into Yun Man's arms, then sat in the driver's seat himself.

"Damn it, you're just like your father, taking advantage of my wife..."

When Huangfu Yun saw the little guy's hands grabbing his daughter-in-law's breasts and his pink face rubbing against them, he immediately let out a strange cry.

"Get out of my way, I'm perfectly well-behaved..."

When Zhuang Rui saw his wife standing right next to him, he quickly tried to distance himself from the situation, which only made everyone burst into laughter.

After Huangfu Yun and his wife had taken a ride, Zhuang Rui also took Qin Xuanbing on board. They flew around in the sky and found it quite impressive. The stability and noise level were incomparable to those of military helicopters.

The helicopter's cabin is fully enclosed and features bulletproof and noise-absorbing glass, making it very comfortable to sit inside.

Originally, this was ordered by a Hong Kong tycoon, but Qin Haoran knew that his son-in-law wanted to buy a helicopter for the ship, so he shamelessly approached the tycoon and got the helicopter from him, which was considered a gift from the Qin family to Zhuang Rui.

Although Zhuang Rui hadn't mentioned the time he helped Qin's Jewelry select diamonds in South Africa, Qin Haoran still felt uneasy about it and took this opportunity to give Zhuang Rui some compensation.

The drilling platform and floating crane on the ferry had been fully commissioned five days ago, but because they had to wait for the helicopter, Zhuang Rui's original departure time was delayed by almost a week.

However, since Macau is adjacent to Hong Kong, he stayed at his father-in-law's house for a few days with his children and Qin Xuanbing. This made the old man very happy, and his health, which was still poor, miraculously improved.

Of course, Zhuang Rui would not reveal that he was helping the old man with his health. He would only do so after the old man had fallen asleep, from several rooms away, so he was not worried about being discovered.

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As the maiden voyage of a newly named ferry was supposed to be celebrated, Zhuang Rui was somewhat tired of the rituals of worshipping heaven and earth and offering pig heads in Hong Kong and Macau, so he simply omitted them.

However, early the next morning, many Hong Kong and Macao celebrities who had heard the news rushed to Zhuang Rui's "Xuan Rui" ship, because Zhuang Rui was no less impressive than them in terms of wealth or status, and such a young man was naturally worth befriending.

However, once they boarded the ship, they all stared at each other, secretly cursing Zhuang Rui as a country bumpkin. What was originally a luxury ferry had been turned into a mess by Zhuang Rui, with the platform on the deck and the two arm-shaped floating cranes looking particularly out of place.

At exactly 9:10 a.m., eighteen cannon salutes were fired from the ship, followed by a bright whistle, and the ship slowly began to move.

Since there were many celebrities from Hong Kong and Macau on board, the maiden voyage on the first day only circled the waters near Hong Kong. In the evening, the ship stopped at the Macau pier, and Zhuang Rui personally escorted everyone off the ship.

Meanwhile, on a remote island in the Malaysian archipelago, Hui Ge also received news of the maiden voyage of the "Xuan Rui".

Chapter 933 South China Sea

"This ship is so comfortable. Even if you put a mahjong set on the deck, it probably wouldn't sway at all..."

Zhuang Rui stood at the bow of the "Xuanrui" ship, wearing sunglasses, his loose clothes clinging to his body in the sea breeze.

Looking down at the bow of the ship, dozens of meters below, cutting through a huge white wave, and then looking back at his wife wearing a bikini swimsuit with a towel over it, he couldn't help but whisper, "Xuanbing, how about we do a Titanic-style look?"

Although she had given birth, Qin Xuanbing's figure had recovered very well and was much fuller than before. Her demeanor exuded the charm of a young married woman, and even Zhuang Rui was often dazzled by her.

After its maiden voyage yesterday, the "Xuanrui" departed from the Macau port at 7:00 a.m. this morning, heading towards the junction of the South China Sea and the Strait of Malacca, which will be the first stop for Zhuang Rui's salvage operation of the sunken ship.

It's only a little past 10 a.m. Huangfu Yun and his wife went to a casino in Macau yesterday and slept in quite late. Besides Zhuang Rui and his wife, the only other person on the deck is King Kong, who is playing with Fang Fang and Yuan Yuan.

"Get lost! You're not afraid of losing face, but I am..."

Qin Xuanbing blushed slightly upon hearing this and nestled against Zhuang Rui. Her soft skin immediately aroused Zhuang Rui's fantasies, and he involuntarily got an erection.

"You really are..."

Qin Xuanbing felt something hard in her lower abdomen and immediately glared at Zhuang Rui in annoyance. However, Zhuang Rui saw her charming appearance as a signal from his wife, and his hands immediately became restless.

"No, you don't really want to, do you?"

Qin Xuanbing was startled, but her body went weak, and she quickly said, "No, who knows how many people are watching you..."

Upon hearing this, Zhuang Rui immediately remembered the cameras Li Zhen had installed on the ship. His lust subsided by half; it seemed that if he had gone any further, someone in the monitoring room would have been watching the spectacle.

"Oh dear, Xiao Fangfang has run off to the poolside again, I need to go keep an eye on her..."

It's said that after parents have children, they spend almost half of their time living for their children. Qin Xuanbing is no exception. When she saw Fangfang sneaking to the edge of the swimming pool, she quickly let go of Zhuang Rui and walked towards her son.

"Hey...hey, I'm telling you, you..."

Zhuang Rui had a tent set up underneath, but it was immediately revealed when his wife left. Seeing Peng Fei walking out of the cabin in the distance, he quickly turned around and pretended to be admiring the scenery.

"Brother Zhuang, this boat is really exhilarating, 100 times better than the yacht we rode on at sea last time..."

Peng Fei didn't notice Zhuang Rui's appearance. He stood next to Zhuang Rui, breathing in the sea breeze with ease. The month or so he spent searching for Zhuang Rui last time had almost cost him his life.

"You little rascal, you've learned to enjoy life now..." Zhuang Rui said with a laugh.

"Tch, brother, who would choose to suffer when they can enjoy life? We had no choice back then, did we?"

Peng Fei waved his hand dismissively and said that his former unit had a very high level of secrecy, but one good thing was that it didn't have as many constraints as other units. This made the people who came out of that unit seem a bit lazy and dislike following rules.

Not to mention Peng Fei, even Zhou Rui in the past acquired several submachine guns when he first entered Tibet, completely disregarding the national regulations prohibiting private possession of firearms. Now, Li Zhen is even more formidable, almost turning this merchant ship into a warship.

"Alright, stop talking nonsense. Is the bilge all modified yet?"

Zhuang Rui was most concerned about this matter. He believed that if word got out about the two cannons and the torpedo launcher, the relevant departments would definitely not turn a blind eye.

"Brother Zhuang, don't worry. Cabins three and sixteen have been completely sealed off, and the stairs leading down to them have been modified. The crew can't get into those two places at all..."

Peng Fei still acted nonchalantly. He knew a bit more than Zhuang Rui. For example, this arms deal was completely under the state's surveillance. If someone hadn't intervened, he wouldn't have been able to buy these things at all.

"Yes, these crew members aren't our own people. We'll recruit some from the mainland and gradually replace them all..."

To be honest, apart from the bearded man on the ship who suited Zhuang Rui's temperament, he didn't think much of the other crew members, such as some of the Portuguese crew members.

These lazy guys, when they're not on a voyage, almost always spend their time on Macau Island.

If they were to settle down properly in Macau, Zhuang Rui wouldn't say anything. But these guys either hang out in casinos, hire prostitutes to spend the night in hotels, or get into fights and brawls. When they return to the ship the next day, they all have black eyes.

Although he got the ship for free, Zhuang Rui had high hopes for it, as he was counting on it to salvage the underwater treasures of the five oceans. If Zhuang Rui hadn't been short of manpower, he would have dismissed these guys long ago.

"Hey, isn't that easy to handle? We have plenty of retired navy soldiers. When we find the South China Sea Fleet, those guys will be scrambling to get their hands on us!"

Peng Fei, a former soldier, immediately offered a solution upon hearing the matter. The navy's service period is five years, which is enough time for many ordinary soldiers to master the basic skills of a sailor, and they are also highly disciplined. They can be put to use as soon as they are recruited.

Now that the military no longer assigns discharged soldiers to jobs, many rural soldiers want to become non-commissioned officers. However, the number of non-commissioned officer positions available each year is limited. Zhuang Rui's need for some retired soldiers would solve a problem for the military leadership.

Upon hearing this, Zhuang Rui realized it made perfect sense and immediately said happily, "Great idea! I'll call my brother right away and ask him to get a batch of people..."

"It's no big deal, Brother Zhuang. I'll take care of it later, so you don't need to bother that person..."

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Peng Fei immediately chuckled. Ouyang Lei was truly frustrated that he had to go to the deputy chief for such a trivial matter.

"Uh, then I'll leave it to you..."

Zhuang Rui touched his nose, feeling that he had made a mountain out of a molehill. At this moment, the ferry had already entered the South China Sea. On the vast sea, small islands and reefs could be seen from time to time.

The South China Sea, the world's third largest continental sea, is vast, covering more than three million square kilometers and dotted with thousands of islands, reefs, shoals, and sandbars.

The South China Sea not only possesses exceptionally rich fishery and deep-sea flora and fauna resources, but more importantly, its seabed also holds staggering oil and natural gas resources, making its crucial strategic position all the more significant.

Before the mid-20th century, China (the Qing Dynasty, the Republic of China, the People's Republic of China, etc.) claimed sovereignty over the South China Sea without any disputes from other countries. However, since the large-scale exploration of seabed oil and gas resources, the South China Sea dispute has become complicated.

Because, according to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, possessing islands and reefs means possessing resources beneath the islands and reefs and in the surrounding waters. After occupying Chinese islands and reefs, relevant countries have introduced external investment and engaged in rampant, predatory exploitation of oil and gas resources.

Currently, apart from a small portion under Chinese control, the islands and reefs of the Spratly Islands have been divided up by neighboring countries. Vietnam occupies the most, with over 30 of the 44 islands and reefs illegally occupied by Vietnam.

In recent years, frictions have been constant over the development of the South China Sea. China's repeated concessions have only emboldened smaller countries to scramble to get involved in the South China Sea.

Although the ship was sailing on the high seas, after entering the South China Sea, they frequently saw warships flying foreign flags patrolling the waters, which made Zhuang Rui and Peng Fei very uncomfortable.

"Damn it, if they come to provoke us, we'll have to fight them..."

Peng Fei was inherently fearless, and since he had modified the ship to be no less capable than a small warship, he spoke with great arrogance.

"Come on, let's not get involved in politics. We're just salvaging a shipwreck, and it's in international waters. Everything we salvage is ours, and nobody else can touch it..."

Although Zhuang Rui was also indignant, he had no desire to get involved in these national-level conflicts, nor did he have the qualifications to do so.

What Zhuang Rui wants to do most right now is to open a marine shipwreck museum inside the Dingguang Museum before the start of the school year in September.

The ship that the gambling king gifted him was truly a godsend, because if Zhuang Rui followed the domestic regulations for the management of sunken ships and objects, he wouldn't even be able to obtain a salvage license. But with this ship, Zhuang Rui didn't even consider salvaging sunken ships in Chinese waters; he went straight to the high seas to do it.

According to a 1995 regulation of the International Maritime Organization, all items salvaged from shipwrecks on the high seas belong to the individual who wrecked the ship, and Zhuang Rui can completely ignore the shipwrecking nation.

"Brother Zhuang, are we really going to be able to salvage the sunken ship this time?"

Peng Fei didn't know where Zhuang Rui got his confidence from, wanting to sail the ship directly to the waters near the Strait of Malacca in the South China Sea. If there were no sunken ships below, wouldn't it be a pointless fuss?

"Hehe, you'll find out when the time comes..."

Zhuang Rui laughed upon hearing this, but did not explain why. He couldn't explain it clearly; he couldn't very well say that he sensed the spiritual energy emanating from an antique at the bottom of the sea, could he?

When they returned from Pirate Island, they took this sea route. Zhuang Rui noted down dozens of coordinates along the way, all of which were shipwrecks imbued with rich spiritual energy.

The destination this time is the high seas where the South China Sea meets the Strait of Malacca.

Chapter 934 The Traitor (Part 1)

"If Zheng He's fleet had learned from the practices of European countries, our country wouldn't have become so weak in the mid-to-late Ming Dynasty..."

As the ferry slowly approached its destination, Zhuang Rui, standing at the bow, felt a pang of emotion. The sea route he was now traveling was the same one Zheng He had taken during his voyages to the Western Ocean.

When Zheng He first embarked on his voyages to the Western Ocean, he set off from Liujiagang, crossed the Strait of Malacca, entered the Indian Ocean, and visited more than 30 countries.

Zheng He's fleet for his voyages to the Western Ocean consisted of more than 240 ships and 27,400 crew members. It was organized entirely according to maritime navigation and military standards, making it a formidable mobile naval force in the world at that time.

The renowned international scholar, Dr. Joseph Needham of Britain, concluded that "the Ming Dynasty navy was probably superior to any Asian country in history, and even to any European country of the same era, so much so that all European countries combined could not match the Ming Dynasty navy."

Unfortunately, China has always revered itself as a nation of etiquette. Despite possessing such formidable military power, it deliberately cultivated friendly relations with other countries. If it had followed the example of countries like Britain and Portugal, perhaps China would have had numerous colonies around the world.

"Boss, we're still two hours away from the coordinates you provided. Should we anchor at those coordinates? Please advise..."

Just as Zhuang Rui was reminiscing about his ancestors, his walkie-talkie rang. It was the bearded captain asking Zhuang Rui for instructions.

As a captain who was temporarily hired on a one-year contract, Clyde knew his place very well. Apart from matters related to navigation, which he could make his own decisions on, he turned a blind eye to everything else.

These days, Zhuang Rui's men have been carrying out some kind of modification work in the hold, but Clyde has never asked about it. He even severely punished one of his first mates because the first mate was drunk and insisted on seeing what was going on in the hold.

"Clyde, you are the captain. You should know that you are the boss on this ship. Is it necessary to report everything to that young man?"

Inside the cockpit at the bow of the ship, a first mate with three horizontal bars on his shoulder, looking resentful, was verbally urging Clyde on.

"Jack, that's our boss. He can fire you or me anytime. Then you won't even be able to stay in Macau, let alone work in a casino..."

Clyde glanced at his subordinate with displeasure. If it weren't for the fact that he'd worked with Jack for over a decade and had always been his second-in-command, Clyde would have definitely kicked this alcoholic and gambler off the ship.

"Oh, so many, Captain. I think you're right, but what are they doing down there? Are they trafficking drugs? Good heavens, if that's the case, then we..."

Jack's eyes darted around, and he steered the conversation back to the renovations being done at the bottom of the ship's cabin. He had pretended to be drunk and gone down there a few days ago, but he was dragged back up by two burly security guards and didn't see anything.

"Drug trafficking? What a joke! Do you know how much our boss is worth? At least several billion. Do you know about the Klaus Gold Anchor Treasure? That's what our boss got..."

Clyde scoffed at Jack's words. A billionaire boss dealing drugs? Unless Zhuang Rui made his fortune through drug trafficking, or he's lost his mind, he wouldn't do something like that now.

"Oh God, a golden anchor?!"

Jack genuinely didn't know about this, but the astonishment on his face upon hearing it wasn't feigned. Watching the ship steadily approach the coordinates on the electronic instruments, Jack suddenly clutched his stomach and exclaimed, "Damn it, Captain, I need to go to the restroom..."

"Go ahead, I've never seen you have so much to do before. If you're not feeling well, go back to your room and rest for a while. I'll be fine here..."

Clyde had no doubts and waved his hand. He was always very lenient with his old buddies. If it were a rookie today, Clyde certainly wouldn't have been so accommodating.

"Damn, that kid is so rich. Half a million dollars is too little. I need to squeeze at least ten million out of him so I can finally leave this godforsaken place..."

After leaving the cockpit, Jack's eyes, still gleaming with the effects of alcohol and women, darted around as he muttered in a voice barely audible to himself, "Macau is a great place, and Las Vegas is nice too. Blondes have more allure than Asian women, but that young man's woman was fucking beautiful..."

With filthy thoughts flashing through his mind, Jack walked back to his room, immediately slammed the door shut, and took a satellite phone from the safe on his bedside table.

Unlike many other crew members who settled down and started families in Macau, Jack has been single for over ten years. When he's not on a mission, he's either gambling and drinking or fooling around with prostitutes, and his wages are always gone by the beginning of the month.

Fortunately, the crew's accommodation and meals on the ferry were free, so Jack could act as a big spender once a month and then go back to the ship to freeload. His life wasn't exactly miserable, but it certainly wasn't good either.

But a week ago, Jack's routine, day after day, was disrupted, all because of a bet.

In that gambling game, Jack inexplicably lost more than \$30,000, and he didn't know why he borrowed another \$50,000 from loan sharks, which he also lost. This almost caused Jack to collapse after he came to his senses.

Having lived in Macau for over a decade, Jack knew all too well how terrifying these loan sharks were. With his salary alone, it would take him six months to repay the \$50,000. But after six months, the \$50,000 would probably have become \$150,000. If he couldn't repay it, he would definitely be missing a part of his body.

Just as Jack was feeling a chill run down his spine as he touched his penis, an Asian man who had just bet with him suddenly appeared in front of Jack.

Jack swore that at first he was sure the man was the devil, but after the Asian man pulled out a full \$100,000, he immediately became God in Jack's eyes.

With a \$100,000 deposit and an additional \$400,000 to be earned after completing the task assigned by the man, Jack had long forgotten about his role as first mate and told the Easterner everything that had happened on the ferry.

The last time he deliberately entered the lower deck under the pretense of being drunk was also at the behest of that Easterner. However, Jack was unable to go down. To avoid being blamed, Jack simply said that everything on the ship was normal, and there were no changes except for the newly built drilling platform and floating crane.

"Hey, this is Jack, oh generous boss, I have some good news to report to you..."

After the call connected, Jack couldn't wait to tell the other party about his latest discovery. He had been at sea for one or two decades and was already pretty much certain about the other party's identity.

So what if he's a pirate? Jack didn't care. As long as he got paid, he didn't mind becoming a pirate. He believed that the other party wouldn't do something like discarding a promising and skilled first mate like himself.

"Boss, Klaus's golden anchor, that one thing is worth hundreds of millions of dollars, not to mention what you can..."

Jack stopped talking there, confident that the other person would understand him.

"Alright, Jack, you're going to get an unexpected fortune. Now all you need to do is keep a close watch on the ship's every move, and also find out which coordinates the ship will stay at for how many days."

The voice on the phone was a little low, probably due to the sea waves. There was a slight hissing sound during the call, but neither Jack nor the other party paid any attention to it; it was a normal occurrence.

"Thank you, boss, I will make you satisfied..."

After Jack hung up the phone, he suddenly felt a chill. How could his words sound so much like what a prostitute outside a Macau casino would say in bed?

After sailing for most of the day, the ship finally arrived at the coordinates Zhuang Rui had mentioned. This location is at the entrance to the South China Sea and the Strait of Malacca, right in international waters. If it went any further, it would enter Singapore's waters.

The Strait of Malacca is located between the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra in Southeast Asia. It is an important waterway connecting the South China Sea and the Andaman Sea, and linking the Pacific and Indian Oceans. It runs from northwest to southeast and is about 900 kilometers long.

The Strait of Malacca is currently jointly administered by Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Located in the equatorial doldrums, the strait experiences many calm days throughout the year. The strait has a flat seabed, mostly composed of silt and sand, and the currents are gentle.

However, at the entrance to the Strait of Malacca, there are many reefs, deep waters and large waves, with the deepest point reaching more than 3,000 meters. Since the Age of Exploration, countless ships have perished here.

According to relevant records, there are approximately 2,000 ancient shipwrecks in the South China Sea, and this entrance area probably accounts for more than half of them.

Although this place is located in international waters, and all salvaged items can be kept, the large waves and deep waters make it difficult to pinpoint the exact location of shipwrecks. As a result, few adventurers have come here to work, and the shipwrecks are relatively well-preserved.

"Mr. Zhuang, is this the right spot?"

Zhang walked up to Zhuang Rui. Although he spent a long time at sea every year debugging equipment, this was his first time going out to sea on such a luxurious cruise ship.

Moreover, the salvage equipment installed this time is extremely advanced, and it is the latest product developed by their company. If the salvage is successful, it will be a very beneficial publicity for their company.

"Yes, after anchoring is completed, we need to locate it first. Then it'll be up to you, Engineer Zhang..."

Zhuang Rui nodded, watching as massive iron anchors were thrown from the ship's hull, sinking to the seabed with a dull thud. The chains, as thick as a child's arm, rattled as they were pulled towards the seabed by the anchors.

The location is definitely right. On the way back to China on the yacht last time, Zhuang Rui noted down the coordinates of all the sunken ships in international waters. Just now, he also used his spiritual energy to explore the seabed.

Clearly, there was more than one shipwreck in this sea area. Within a radius of four or five nautical miles, on the gentle riverbed of the seabed, Zhuang Rui sensed at least a dozen places radiating rich spiritual energy.

With his spiritual eyes sensing the dense, lingering aura emanating from the seabed, Zhuang Rui felt a surge of excitement.

Among the items found in shipwrecks at sea, besides gold and silver artifacts, salvaged porcelain is generally the most valuable. Salvaged porcelain refers to a category of export porcelain in Chinese history.

During the late Ming Dynasty in China, porcelain was exported in large quantities. The Strait of Malacca, where Zhuang Rui is now, served as a maritime hub for trade between Asia, Africa, and Europe, and became a necessary passage for Chinese merchant ships. Some merchant ships sank here for various reasons, and the porcelain they carried was collectively known as salvaged porcelain.

Industry insiders believe that although salvaged porcelain cannot be compared with Ming and Qing dynasty imperial porcelain, its origin from shipwrecks gives it a distinct historical background, and its cultural and historical value should not be underestimated.

In previous years, the prices of salvaged antiques were not very high, but in recent years they have skyrocketed. Not long ago, someone salvaged more than 300 pieces of Ming Dynasty porcelain, which were auctioned off for more than 40 million US dollars.

Based on Zhuang Rui's intuition, the items inside the sunken ships in this sea area would definitely be worth the ticket price, and the several relatively well-preserved ancient ships inside would also be an important exhibit in his museum.

"Brother Zhuang, if you have time, come to the monitoring room. Something very interesting has happened on our ship..."

Just as Zhuang Rui was talking to Engineer Zhang, his walkie-talkie suddenly rang. The person speaking was Xiu Luo Li Zhen. This guy stayed in his room all day and never came out. Zhuang Rui had no idea what he was doing.

After a brief chat with Engineer Zhang, Zhuang Rui returned to his cabin and entered the elevator. Upon arriving on the fifth floor, he was able to enter Li Zhen's workroom by pressing the fingerprint lock.

When Zhuang Rui entered the room, he was surprised to find Peng Fei inside. Hadn't this guy gone fishing with his wife on the aft deck just now?

"Hehe, Brother Zhuang, we definitely won't be lonely these next few days..." Peng Fei grinned mischievously as Zhuang Rui entered, his expression showing a hint of excitement.

Zhuang Rui assumed Peng Fei was referring to the salvage of the shipwreck and said irritably, "Nonsense, of course I won't be lonely. If you're bored out of your mind, you can go diving, but don't get eaten by sharks..."

"Brother Zhuang, it's not about that. Here, listen to this recording..."

Peng Fei waved his hand, pulled Li Zhen aside, and after Zhuang Rui sat down, played a dialogue.

"This...is this one of our crew members?" Zhuang Rui's face was full of astonishment after listening to the recording.

"That's right, Brother Zhuang, this is going to be good..."

Li Zhen laughed triumphantly. Due to his profession, he would listen to any signals sent out from inside the ship, but he never expected to catch a mole.

Chapter 935 The Traitor (Part Two)

Out of habit, Li Zhen was very familiar with how many satellite phones and communication devices were on the ship, but today he suddenly discovered an unfamiliar new number, which prompted him to start eavesdropping.

Upon hearing this, Li Zhen discovered that there was a mole on the ship. Although he didn't know the mole's purpose in inquiring about the ship, he was sure it wasn't for any good. So Li Zhen immediately called Zhuang Rui up.

Do you know who it is?

Zhuang Rui frowned. He couldn't help but worry. His wife and children were all on the ship. If anything happened, he would definitely regret it.

However, we're already quite far from the coastline, and even a helicopter can't fly back. After thinking for a moment, Zhuang Rui said, "Why don't we turn back first? Once we're in the South China Sea, we won't have to worry about anything happening..."

In the South China Sea, many warships patrol the waters, as various countries are vying for maritime resources, making it a place that most pirate groups dare not enter.

"It's First Mate Jack on the ship. Brother Zhuang, there's no need to turn back. Are you saying our captain's hundreds of millions of dollars have been wasted?"

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Li Zhen immediately laughed. The ship's monitoring and scanning system alone cost over ten million US dollars. No ship appearing within hundreds of nautical miles of the ship could escape the monitoring of the ship's scanning system.

In addition, the weapons Peng Fei purchased, while not exactly armed to the teeth, were certainly enough to hold their own against ordinary small warships.

With such weapons and information monitoring facilities, if even some clueless pirates have to run away, then Li Zhen will never be able to say where he came from again.

"Don't take any risks. There are many women and children on board. It would be terrible if something happened..."

Zhuang Rui shook his head. He preferred to retreat first, investigate the matter thoroughly, and then resume the salvage operation, rather than risk his family's safety.

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Peng Fei shook his head and said, "Brother, it's alright. We'll have your wife and the kids go back to their rooms. With our torpedoes and cannons, there's no one we're afraid of at sea..."

Fighting at sea is different from fighting on land. Long-range weapons play a crucial role. The weapons equipped on this cruise ship are those of regular warships from various countries. As long as it doesn't encounter medium or large cruisers, Peng Fei feels that it can fight even some small warships.

Moreover, judging from the recording, the other party should be some petty thieves at sea. Peng Fei knows these people very well; they are pirates who rob merchant ships in a dilapidated boat. At most,

they have a few heavy machine guns, which are not even in the same league as the firepower on the cruise ship.

"Brother Zhuang, it's really alright. These five-story rooms have been renovated and reinforced with steel plates. Even a regular machine gun couldn't penetrate them. The women inside are absolutely safe..."

Li Zhen was also cheering him on from the sidelines. After leaving the army, life had become increasingly mundane, so how could he possibly let such an interesting opportunity pass him by?

Even if pirates came knocking on his door, Li Zhen was still thinking of deliberately going to some country's waters to chat with some ignorant people, let alone if the journey was smooth sailing.

"Are you really alright?"

Zhuang Rui saw on the monitor in the room that Engineer Zhang had already directed the technicians to get busy. The drilling platform had been moved off the deck and was lying across the sea. The two tall grab arms were also raised high. All preparations were almost complete.

It would be inappropriate to talk about returning at this point, so Zhuang Rui hesitated.

Peng Fei patted his chest and said confidently, "Brother Zhuang, my wife is on the boat too. How could I not worry if anything happened?"

"Alright, we'll go down in a bit. Let them all stay in their rooms. Also, Li Zhen, you need to be careful. If any ships appear around us, we need to be prepared for defense immediately. Not only must we be protected, but everyone on this ship must be safe..."

Besides the crew, Zhuang Rui and Peng Fei's families, and others, there were dozens of staff members on board. If they were injured, it would be a very troublesome matter for Zhuang Rui.

"By the way, Peng Fei, go and arrest that first mate. Find out who's plotting against us. He's Portuguese, so there's no need to hand him over to the local court. Just make him disappear..."

A ruthless glint appeared in Zhuang Rui's eyes. He would show no mercy to anyone who wanted to harm his family. In this world, only those who had disappeared from his body could not harm him.

"No, Brother Zhuang, I'm still hoping he can get through to them again. The call was a bit too short to pinpoint their exact location. If I get another chance, I can crack their signal and eavesdrop on their phone conversation..."

Zhuang Rui's idea was rejected by Li Zhen. The information monitoring facilities on this ship, worth more than ten million US dollars, were not installed for nothing. It was a military-style information ship. If Jack was captured, it would be impossible to keep track of his whereabouts.

Peng Fei chimed in, "Brother Zhuang, don't worry, that kid won't amount to anything. I'll keep an eye on him myself..."

"Alright, I don't understand the technical aspects, you guys handle it. I'll go get them..."

Zhuang Rui was worried about his wife and children on the deck, so after giving them some instructions, he hurriedly left the room.

After Zhuang Rui left the room, Xiu Luo looked at Peng Fei and asked with a smile, "Peng Fei, Brother Zhuang is quite ruthless, isn't he? Has he ever had blood on his hands?"

"Even dragons have their Achilles' heel. As long as you don't provoke Brother Zhuang, he rarely gets angry..."

As Peng Fei spoke, he was thinking of poor Muta. When that guy was bullying others in Africa, he probably never imagined that he would be roasted to death.

Peng Fei, of course, had no idea that it was just that Jin Gang wanted to eat barbecue at the time, and even now, he still thought that Zhuang Rui was the one who did it.

...

"Assistant Liu, deploy the underwater robot to conduct a seabed scan..."

Inside the room on the drilling platform, Engineer Zhang was giving instructions methodically, while Zhuang Rui sat to the side, watching the monitor opposite him.

So-called underwater robots are actually unmanned remotely operated vehicles, a type of robot that works in extreme underwater operations. Due to the harsh and dangerous underwater environment and the limited diving depth of humans, underwater robots have become an important tool for ocean exploration.

The ship is equipped with the "Orca," an unmanned, untethered submersible developed by the French National Centre for Marine Development. It has a maximum diving depth of 6,000 meters and can operate continuously for 250 hours.

Although this is a product from 1980, it is very powerful and is generally used for offshore oil exploration. Zhuang Rui's use of it to salvage a shipwreck only shows that he has deep pockets.

After being lowered into the water by a tower crane, the several-ton unmanned remotely operated vehicle immediately sank, and patterns in the seawater were displayed on the screen in front of Zhuang Rui.

This submersible is equipped with cameras at different angles, which can transmit the underwater situation to the ship in real time. It is also equipped with two sets of power units and small grab arms in the front, back, up, down, left and right directions, which can fully meet the needs of deep-sea sample collection.

After the submersible sank several tens of meters, the light on the screen became very dim. After Zhang made some operations on the remote control, the seawater immediately became bright again, because the two powerful lights on the submersible were turned on.

Schools of brightly colored ocean fish flashed across the screen from time to time, seemingly very interested in the gleaming metal object, chasing and swimming around the submersible.

Occasionally, a shark would be attracted by the light, causing the school of fish to panic. The submersible's sensing and sound transmission functions were excellent, and the sound of fish hitting the submersible could be clearly heard.

Once the omnidirectional thruster on the submersible was activated, the descent speed increased. The depth of this sea area was more than 3,000 meters. Calculated based on the thruster's speed of only 10 knots, it would take at least two hours to reach the seabed.

However, the process was not boring, because the beautiful scenery and all kinds of strange fish in the deep sea were enough to dazzle Zhuang Rui and the others. If it weren't for safety concerns, Zhuang Rui would have even called his wife and children down to watch.

"Brother Zhuang, Brother Zhuang, can you hear me...?"

Just as Zhuang Rui was admiring the beautiful underwater scenery, Li Zhen's voice came through his wireless earphones.

"Received, you said..." Zhuang Rui stood up and walked outside the platform.

"Brother Zhuang, Jack just made another call. I've located him in the Malay Archipelago, about 400 nautical miles from here. Don't worry, everything is under control..." Li Zhen's voice came through the earpiece.

"Have you verified the other party's identity?"

Zhuang Rui had no idea who was targeting him. The ship had been completely altered, and the information Jack had revealed indicated that it had become a salvage ship. Could the pirates also be thinking of hijacking his ship to salvage underwater treasures?

"No, the other party didn't use that phone except when talking to Jack, so I couldn't eavesdrop..."

Although Li Zhen was highly skilled and the ship had advanced equipment, the other party did not use that phone, so he could not find out their identity and could only monitor their coordinates and movements through satellite positioning.

"Alright, if they head in our direction, notify me immediately..."

Hearing Li Zhen's words, Zhuang Rui felt relieved. With Jack, the mole, around, at least they wouldn't catch him off guard.

Moreover, the other party is currently more than 400 nautical miles away from my location. Even if I drive at full speed, it will take at least 15 hours to reach my area.

Chapter 936 Song Dynasty Shipwreck (Part 1)

On the shore of an uninhabited island in the Malay Archipelago, a "fishing boat" laden with nets is moored. Several burly men stand guard on board, using binoculars to observe passing vessels in the distance.

This is one of Liu Minghui's hideouts. As the saying goes, a cunning rabbit has three burrows. Since offending the Las Vegas gambling tycoon, he has set up five or six places like this in the South China Sea to temporarily hide and stay.

There is no fresh water on this island, so people usually don't come here. Liu Minghui didn't make many arrangements, but built a few wooden houses in a place out of sight at sea for people to stay in.

Although the place was very simple, sleeping on the boat all day was not a pleasant experience, especially since the small boat was rocking so much that most people could not bear it. Liu Minghui was not young, so he was willing to take some risks and insisted on living on the island.

From here, you can quickly reach the Strait of Malacca. Similarly, if you encounter danger, you can immediately retreat. This is already Malaysian inland waters, and if ships from other countries enter, they will be driven away by the Malaysian navy.

With Datu's help, the frigates, which usually conceal their guns and weapons, can still freely enter and exit this sea area. Of course, Hui Ge also spent a lot of money, at least several hundred thousand US dollars on that fat general with a big belly.

"Brother, why aren't we going yet? If we hurry over now, we can catch them off guard..."

The fire kept circling in front of Brother Hui. More than a week had passed since the last transaction, and it had been stuck on this small island. Liu Minghui had given a strict order that no one was allowed to leave the island without permission.

Although they had no worries about food and drink, the lack of modern entertainment facilities, and more importantly, the absence of women, made life very difficult for these energetic guys.

"Damn it, I should have robbed that merchant ship last time and brought that woman back..."

Huo Jiang licked his lips. Last time, they robbed a group of wealthy young men on a sea voyage. Two of the girls on board were incredibly seductive, offering themselves willingly and using a variety of methods, giving all dozen or so of his men a good time.

"You won't die without women, Fifth Brother. Keep your cool. This time, if we don't make a move, we won't do it at all, but if we do, we'll take them all. After we finish this job, we'll run away and have all the women we need."

Hui Ge glared at Huo Jiang with a gloomy expression. For some reason, he had a bad feeling, but he couldn't explain why.

Normally, even if the other side has more people, their unarmed crew is no different from a flock of lambs to the slaughter.

After thinking for a moment, Hui turned to Bai Zhishan, the person in the organization who had been in contact with Jack, and said, "Third brother, contact Jack again and ask if there are any weapons on the ship. Also, find out how long they plan to stay in that area..."

"Yes, elder brother..."

The third brother picked up the phone and dialed immediately. After a while, he put down the phone and said with a beaming smile, "Big brother, good news! Although there are more than ten security guards on their ship, they all have electric batons and don't even have a pistol. There's nothing to be afraid of them..."

As for how long they'll be at sea, the staff said they're salvaging a shipwreck, and it'll take at least a week..."

"Oh? Are you sure?" Hui Ge's tense expression finally relaxed.

"I'm sure. In this sweltering heat, those security guards are only wearing light clothing. You can spot them at a glance if they have weapons. Jack's been at sea for so many years, he has a good eye..."

The third brother glanced at Hui Ge and cautiously continued, "But eldest brother, that kid said that once we get the money from the Zhuang family, we'll give him ten million..."

"Bullshit! I was risking my life, and he was just making phone calls, thinking about splitting the money?"

Hui-ge didn't say anything, but Huo-jiang jumped up. If Jack were here right now, Huo-jiang would definitely snap his neck.

"Extorting that guy surnamed Zhuang? Heh heh, I'm afraid we won't live to enjoy that..."

Upon hearing this, Hui sneered and said, "Promise him, I'll give him a hundred million, as long as he's alive to take it..."

As soon as Hui-ge said that, everyone in the room burst into laughter.

I've seen greedy people, but I've never seen anyone so greedy and stupid. Brother Hui has no problem taking money from these people who live on the edge, but he's afraid that the gun in his hand might accidentally go off.

Hui had inquired about Zhuang Rui's background and knew that he had a deep connection in mainland China. If it weren't for the tempting sum of money, Hui wouldn't have wanted to provoke such a person.

However, now that the feud has been formed, Hui-ge will definitely not give Zhuang Rui a way out after he seizes the ship. Anyway, he will leave after finishing this job. Even if Zhuang Rui has a powerful background, he can't possibly go to Africa to hunt him down, can he?

"Alright, stop laughing, everyone. Go do what you're supposed to do..." Hui Ge's face hardened, and the laughter in the room stopped abruptly.

"Hey, brother, why aren't we leaving yet? What if someone else gets there first? We'll have worked for nothing!"

Upon hearing Liu Minghui's words, Huo Jiang immediately became anxious. He had long been fed up with this desolate place.

Moreover, there are at least three other pirate groups in Malacca, not just them. If they are targeted by others, it will be difficult to strike again.

"Get some rest, we'll leave tomorrow afternoon..."

Liu Minghui waved his hand, sat down on the recliner, and closed his eyes. Seeing their boss's expression, everyone knew that Brother Hui wouldn't change his mind, and they all left dejectedly.

Liu Minghui's decision to set off again tomorrow was based on his own considerations. He didn't believe that such a large merchant ship wouldn't have an automatic weapon on board. A direct assault was absolutely not advisable.

That's why Brother Hui decided to set sail tomorrow afternoon. When they arrive at the waters where Zhuang Rui is, it will be morning, which is also the time when the crew is most relaxed. So, he will lower the small boat, sneak up onto the ship, and catch Zhuang Rui and the others off guard.

As for what Huo Jiang said about someone else getting there first, Hui Ge didn't care much, because for a ship this big, most pirate organizations wouldn't dare to act rashly without thorough prior tracking and investigation.

There have been similar incidents before. A national exploration team was conducting research in international waters when they were attacked by a group of pirates. However, the exploration team was protected by a platoon of soldiers, who easily defeated the ignorant pirates, nearly wiping them out.

Since then, the pirates in Malacca have learned their lesson and generally will not rashly hijack or attack ships whose background they do not know. Even if they do attack, it is only merchant ships whose background they know well and which they have followed for several days.

...

"So beautiful..."

Sitting in front of the big screen, Zhuang Rui couldn't help but exclaim in amazement.

As the submersible descended, it had now reached a depth of over 1,800 meters in the deep sea. Zhuang Rui had originally thought that there would be far fewer fish in the deep sea, but the reality was quite the opposite of what he had imagined.

Although the depth has reached 1,800 meters, schools of fish dart back and forth in the sea. Some are covered with colorful stripes, some have a tuft of red feathers on their heads, some have round eyes and are covered with spines, and when they puff up, they are as round as a ball.

Even larger electric eels swam past the submersible, looking like giant pythons on the screen, with lengths of over ten meters.

Rare fish swimming past the submersible from time to time in the sea would elicit gasps of surprise from the people in the room.

Although these workers had conducted deep-sea operations before, they had all been in waters a few hundred meters deep. This was their first time salvaging a shipwreck in waters more than two thousand meters deep.

"Is this...is this the bottom of the sea?"

Suddenly, the scenery on the screen changed. In the originally clear seawater, a flat riverbed appeared. Wherever the light reached, it was like a desert, with fine white sand as far as the eye could see.

Zhang, being very experienced, glanced at the riverbed and said, "We should have reached the seabed. Mr. Zhuang, which direction should we go now?"

Unlike the beautiful seabed in shallow waters, the deep sea is so barren due to the immense pressure and lack of sunlight that there are no coral reefs or other marine life on its surface.

Some deep-sea fish were swimming around, but as you could see on the screen, these fish seemed to be very afraid of the light, unlike the fish in the shallow sea that gathered around the light.

Zhuang Rui sensed the location of the sunken ship and said, "Turn on all the headlights and head to the right..."

About two hundred meters to the right of the submersible, there was a shipwreck. Although Zhuang Rui could not see it directly, he could sense from the rich spiritual energy that there must be many valuable items on board.

At the front of the submersible robot, there are six large lights. Previously, only two were turned on to save power, but now all of them are on, and the seabed has become bright.

As the submersible turned, the thrusters at the rear stirred up sand from the seabed, making the screen appear murky. Zhuang Rui said, "No, we can't see clearly like this. Raise a little, don't skim along the seabed..."

After Zhang operated the submersible for a while, it rose a few meters and advanced a distance. The seawater became clear again, but the lights could only see a distance of about 10 or 20 meters ahead. No one knew whether there was a shipwreck.

"Look, there seems to be a shadow ahead..."

About 10 minutes later, a staff member who was staring intently at the screen suddenly shouted loudly. Sure enough, there was a dark shadow in the distance directly in front of the submersible.

"The ship is a sunken ship!"

As the submersible drew closer, everyone could clearly see a wooden boat about twenty meters long appear in the field of vision of the monitoring device on the submersible robot.

"It's a shipwreck from our country, a shipwreck from the Song Dynasty..."

As the only professional in the room, Zhuang Rui's archaeological knowledge was not wasted; he immediately determined the ship's age based on its shape.

Chapter 937 Song Dynasty Shipwreck (Part Two)

China has a long history of navigation, with records dating back to the Qin Dynasty. The story of Xu Fu persuading Qin Shi Huang to sail the seas in search of immortality, claiming his ships could hold three thousand children and girls, is a bit far-fetched. If such giant ships could have been built back then, Qin Shi Huang would have conquered the world long ago.

However, it is undeniable that China already had ocean-going shipbuilding technology during the Qin Dynasty, and during the Eastern Wu period of the Three Kingdoms, there are records that large ships were over 20 zhang long and 3 zhang high above the water. The largest multi-story ships could carry 3,000 people, and the smallest could carry 80 horses.

Although the description is somewhat exaggerated, it shows the advanced shipbuilding technology at the time. Even if it was shrunk tenfold, a multi-story ship that could accommodate 300 people and 8 horses was still quite large.

After the Silk Road was opened during the Tang Dynasty, maritime trade increased. There is a record that describes how large Tang Dynasty ships, due to their size and deep draft, could not enter the port of Basra and had to be transferred to smaller ships in India. This record is highly credible.

Of course, it's possible that the port of Basra was built too simply at the time, but Tang Dynasty's navigation technology was definitely among the top three in the world at that time.

Zhuang Rui's claim that this was a shipwreck from the Song Dynasty is based on two main points.

The first reason is that the commerce of the Song Dynasty was even more advanced than that of the Tang Dynasty. Maritime technology had also been further improved. Moreover, the Silk Road was cut off at that time, and the lucrative trade returns continuously stimulated Song Dynasty merchants to develop trade.

The Chinese have always possessed a spirit of adventure. During the Song Dynasty, under relatively lenient national policies, many people continuously attempted to open up new sea routes. However, opening new sea routes was extremely arduous and dangerous; while profits could be gained, the risk of perishing at sea was ever-present.

The opening of new sea routes inevitably came at a heavy price: shipwrecks. Many adventurous merchants and cargo ships sank at sea during the exploration of new routes. The more developed the trade, the more shipwrecks occurred, and the Song Dynasty exemplifies this trend.

During the Ming Dynasty, Emperor Taizu, the only emperor in Chinese history to have come from an extremely poor background, wanted to restore a simple agricultural society where people could "hear the sounds of chickens and dogs from one neighboring village to another, but never visit each other until they die of old age."

In the early Ming Dynasty, in order to consolidate the newly established Zhu family dynasty and prevent overseas invasions, a strict maritime ban policy was implemented, stipulating that "not a single plank is

allowed to go to sea." Therefore, so far, there are more Song Dynasty shipwrecks discovered in archaeological excavations, while Ming Dynasty shipwrecks are very rare.

In addition, some relevant documents provide extremely detailed descriptions of the design features of Song Dynasty ships, so Zhuang Rui concluded that this underwater shipwreck should be a merchant ship from the Song Dynasty.

As the deep-sea robot drew closer, the entire ship became increasingly clear. Its bow and stern were pointed, and it was about thirty meters long and ten meters wide. However, the height of the ship could not be measured because half of it was buried under the sand on the seabed.

"Thirty meters long? This...this is even bigger than the Nanhai No. 1 shipwreck that the government announced a while ago?"

Zhang's job involves working at sea, so he is no stranger to news about shipwrecks. He was referring to the Nanhai No. 1, a Song Dynasty shipwreck discovered by the state in the waters off Yangjiang in 1987.

In 2002, more than 4,000 artifacts of gold, silver, bronze, iron and porcelain were salvaged from the Nanhai No. 1 shipwreck. All of them were rare treasures, which caused a sensation in the world archaeological community at the time.

Although that ship is still sunk to the bottom of the sea, according to the data from the investigation, the ship was only about thirty meters long, perhaps not even as big as the one shown on the screen in front of us.

"It's entirely possible. That ship sank in the inland sea, while this one is clearly an ocean-going vessel, and could even be larger..."

Zhuang Rui knew about the Nanhai No. 1, but it was a government-funded salvage operation that reportedly cost 160 million yuan without success. Zhuang Rui had no intention of getting involved; even if it were salvaged, he wouldn't benefit from it.

As the submersible approached, the ship became clearer. Its massive hull took on a slightly reddish hull under the lights, and even the broken mast was clearly visible.

The mast broke, presumably due to a storm that prevented the sails from being lowered. Judging from the ship's condition, it is highly likely that the entire ship was capsized, as apart from the broken mast, the hull appears to have suffered no other damage.

"There's something there, something on the boat, and something in the mud and sand beside it..."

A staff member pointed at the screen and shouted loudly. Without him saying it, everyone else saw it too. In the cabin, which should have had a roof, countless pieces of porcelain with a faint luster were densely packed together.

Moreover, on the flat seabed around the ship, some vessels can be vaguely seen stuck in the sand. They are not only porcelain, but also gold and silver artifacts, judging from the luster of some objects under the light.

Engineer Zhang carefully maneuvered the submersible around the Song Dynasty shipwreck, taking numerous photos from different angles.

It was clear from the screen that there were at least tens of thousands of ceramic and gold and silver artifacts in the center of the cabin, which captivated everyone in the room. Although they were not collectors, they could still sense that this was an extremely large fortune.

"Mr. Zhuang, you've had a great time..."

Zhang Gong's face was full of envy. He was familiar with the relevant rules in the salvage law published by the International Maritime Organization. All the shipwrecks salvaged from this sea area would belong to Zhuang Rui. Although these were shipwrecks from the Song Dynasty in China, the state could not take them back.

In other words, this ship full of treasures of immeasurable value, once salvaged, would all be Zhuang Rui's private property. It would be impossible for Engineer Zhang not to feel a little envious and jealous.

"These belong to China; they are treasures left behind by China..."

Zhuang Rui was also somewhat excited. The richness of the collection on this ship far exceeded his previous expectations. Judging from the quantity of gold and silver artifacts and salvaged porcelain he could see, it was probably no less than the collection salvaged from the Nanhai No. 1 shipwreck.

It's worth noting that, according to archaeologists' assessments, the Nanhai No. 1 shipwreck is comparable in value to the Terracotta Army in Shaanxi, so the value of the Song Dynasty shipwreck discovered by Zhuang Rui is self-evident.

Judging solely from the treasures found in the shipwreck, this ship may not be the most valuable shipwreck in the world.

During Spain's colonial history in the Americas, a total of 250 ships laden with treasure sank off the coast of the Americas, including three large fleets that sank in 1622, 1715, and 1733 respectively.

Almost all of these ships that sank on their way back to Spain were laden with gold, silver and diamonds plundered from the Latin American colonies, with a total value of tens of billions of pounds.

These shipwrecks are also Zhuang Rui's next salvage targets. "Back then, the Eight-Nation Alliance looted our Beijing. Today, I, Zhuang Rui, am going to your high seas to steal your treasures. You can only watch helplessly."

The most valuable shipwreck recently salvaged was the Central America, which was recovered from the coast of South Carolina in the 1990s. The treasure on board was worth as much as £800 million, which would probably be worth at least RMB20 billion today.

However, this Song Dynasty shipwreck is of extraordinary significance to the Chinese and world archaeological communities because there are very few records of maritime history from more than a thousand years ago in any country. It plays an invaluable role in studying the social structure and navigation technology of that time.

Of course, Zhuang Rui did not intend to donate the shipwreck to the country, because the discovery of this Song Dynasty shipwreck will have a huge impact and far-reaching influence on underwater archaeology in China and the world.

Zhuang Rui believes that as long as he salvages the shipwreck and displays it in the museum, it will definitely become a new attraction for the Dingguang Museum. With this shipwreck and the items on board, Zhuang Rui is confident that he can make his museum the best private museum in the world.

"What I'm after is being able to help ordinary people learn about the history of shipwrecks while also filling my own pockets. Besides, I'm a poor guy too..."

Zhuang Rui, who still had over 100 million euros in bank drafts left over from this gamble, thought to himself with a wicked grin.

"Damn it, we can't let those pirates ruin our salvage plan..."

After thinking for a moment, Zhuang Rui instructed Engineer Zhang to continue taking photos, then got up and left.

"Li Zhen, has the other side made any moves?" Zhuang Rui called out to Xiu Luo over the walkie-talkie.

"No, Brother Zhuang, don't worry, I'll let you know immediately if there's any movement..."

Li Zhen was also a little puzzled. According to the conversation he had overheard, the pirates should have been able to confirm that there were no weapons on their ship. He didn't know why they were still staying put and not heading towards his area.

"Okay, continue monitoring. This shipwreck is very important; we can't afford any mistakes..."

After seeing the sunken ship, even if Zhuang Rui had been told there was danger, this guy probably wouldn't have wanted to leave. Faced with such wealth and such a significant discovery, no one could remain unmoved.

However, the safety of the workers and himself was also important, so Zhuang Rui decided that if there was any disturbance, everyone should be evacuated back to the cabin immediately.

After hanging up the phone, Zhuang Rui walked into the platform room and looked at Engineer Zhang, saying, "Engineer Zhang, check the depth of the hull's indentation and see if the drilling platform's power can pull it out. After the inspection, retrieve the submersible first, and then we'll have a meeting to discuss the specific salvage plan..."

There are too many items on this shipwreck. If traditional salvage methods are used, the porcelain will probably be damaged during the salvage process. Therefore, Zhuang Rui plans to make a big move and lift the entire ship up from the seabed in one go.

However, this will increase the technical difficulty of the salvage operation, posing a huge challenge to Zhuang Rui and the existing equipment.

Chapter 938 Gunshots Before Dawn (Part 1)

"Engineer Zhang, this won't work. Even if the floating crane and platform can pull the sunken ship up, we shouldn't force it. Although the wood on the surface of the sunken ship is still very hard, it absolutely cannot withstand that kind of pulling force..."

In the platform's monitoring room, a heated discussion is underway, with disagreements arising regarding the overall salvage plan for the sunken ship.

Since the underwater robot was retrieved yesterday, Zhuang Rui and the experts working at sea have been discussing specific salvage plans for the sunken ship. However, more than a day has passed and they still haven't reached a consensus.

According to Engineer Zhang, the drilling platform and floating crane installed on the cruise ship have enough power to salvage the sunken ship. As long as underwater robots are used to reinforce the area around the sunken ship, it can be lifted directly.

However, Zhuang Rui rejected this plan. He needed a complete Song Dynasty shipwreck, not a pile of broken wood that would be salvaged, and that would also damage the items on board.

"Mr. Zhuang, the shipwreck isn't sunk very deep into the seabed. With the pulling force of the floating crane, the damage can be minimized..."

Mr. Zhang insisted on his opinion. He wasn't an archaeologist, and from his perspective, this was a good opportunity to test his company's equipment.

"No, the floating crane can only be used as an auxiliary device. How about this, we don't have a semi-submersible barge this time, but we brought quite a few buoys with us. We can use the buoys to loosen the hull first..."

If the shipwreck can be lifted off the seabed, then a submersible robot can be used to pull a net from the bottom of the shipwreck. Only then can a floating crane be used to pull it to the surface...

After thinking for a long time, Zhuang Rui came up with a solution that was clearly superior to Zhang Gong and the others' forceful approach.

The semi-submersible barge that Zhuang Rui mentioned is specifically built for ocean salvage and tugboat operations.

Semi-submersible barges and submarines function somewhat similarly; they can submerge, secure salvaged items, and then raise to the surface, using buoyancy to tow sunken ships. However, semi-submersible barges are technically complex and expensive, so Zhuang Rui didn't consider them for this trip.

The principle behind the pontoons is even simpler: the air inside the pontoons is simply removed, the sunken ship is then secured, and it is thrown into the sea. An automatic inflator is then used to inflate the pontoons, which utilizes the principle of buoyancy to pull the sunken ship out of the water.

After gently lifting the sunken ship with buoyancy, a large net is laid underneath it. This will undoubtedly protect the ship and minimize the loss of items from the ship.

Both of these methods are relatively gentle, unlike floating cranes which use brute force to pull. Furthermore, the salvage process can be controlled based on the magnitude of buoyancy. Therefore, when Zhuang Rui said this, most people nodded in agreement.

"Mr. Zhuang's method is excellent. Although the salvage process may take a little longer, it will preserve the ship's integrity. Let's discuss the specific operational details of this plan now..."

Zhuang Rui is the boss, and he wants to implement a time-consuming and laborious salvage plan. Naturally, Engineer Zhang will not refuse. He works at sea and not only receives a salary from the company, but Zhuang Rui will also pay him a generous labor fee.

Moreover, deep-sea salvage of sunken ships is a highly technical project that requires multiple rounds of demonstration and repeated research before a solution can be determined.

Therefore, Zhuang Rui spent the entire day in his office working with everyone to overcome difficulties and determine the salvage plan.

"Brother Zhuang, Brother Zhuang, something's happened, call back immediately..."

Just as Zhuang Rui was about to get into another argument with Engineer Zhang over the issue of gradually inflating the floating crane, Li Zhen's voice came through his earphones. Zhuang Rui could tell that the kid's words were full of excitement.

"Zhang, you guys discuss this first, I have something else to attend to..."

Zhuang Rui realized that the gang of ruthless pirates had finally made their move. After leaving the office, Zhuang Rui shielded his eyes from the setting sun and said, "Li Zhen, what is it?"

"Hey, Brother Zhuang, business has come in. The other party has already set off from the Malaysian island and is currently 358 nautical miles from here. Based on their speed, they should be able to reach our ship's location by 5 a.m. tomorrow..."

Li Zhen chuckled smugly into his earpiece. He'd carried out many missions before, but this was his first time battling pirates at sea.

Having encountered such an exciting event after leaving the army, Li Zhen wished the pirates would appear before him immediately.

"I understand. Tell Peng Fei to keep a close eye on Jack and not let him know we're on guard. I also need to make some arrangements on my end..."

When the moment came, Zhuang Rui calmed down. He had considered making an attempt to alert the pirates by capturing Jack and scaring them away.

But Zhuang Rui thought about it the other way around. These days, it's not the thieves you should be afraid of, it's the thieves who have their eyes on you. If you don't find these people, you'll have to be on guard all the time when you go out to salvage shipwrecks. So it's better to deal with them this time!

"Engineer Zhang, everyone has worked hard these past two days. Let's discuss the plan again tomorrow. I haven't been able to spend time with my wife and kids these past two days, so I'll be taking a day off from today to tomorrow. But these workers will have to work a little harder to bring the drilling platform and floating crane back..."

When Zhuang Rui returned to the room, the discussion was still in full swing. Everyone was stunned when he said this.

You should know that Zhuang Rui pays them in US dollars every day. With dozens of people like this, that's at least \$100,000 a day. It's rare to see a boss who gives everyone paid leave.

"Mr. Zhuang, it's alright, you go ahead and have some fun, we'll continue our discussion..."

Zhang is a very practical worker. He receives nearly five thousand yuan a day in sea allowance, and he won't feel at ease if he doesn't do some work.

"It's alright, let's have a cocktail party tonight, everyone drink until they drop, let's all relax..."

Fearing that these people might be disturbed by the pirates and suffer casualties, Zhuang Rui decided to hold a party that night so that they could drink too much and go back to sleep. He believed that by the time they woke up the next day, the problem would be mostly resolved.

"Okay, thank you, Mr. Zhuang..."

"Thank you, Mr. Zhuang. A big boss is truly different..."

"But that's a lot of fuel cost for this ship every day. What's our salary compared to that?"

The technicians were excited about the paid leave and the drinks. Women were extremely rare at sea; sometimes it would be difficult to see one for a year or two.

Working at sea is very boring, and it can't continue after dark, so most people like to drink. These technicians and experts are no exception, and Zhuang Rui's words were a way of appealing to their tastes.

That evening, in the cruise ship's luxurious restaurant, cases of Moutai liquor were brought out. Neither the Chinese staff nor the crew members usually had the opportunity to drink Moutai.

A few hours later, the restaurant was filled with empty bottles and staff members slumped on the floor. Even several security guards seemed to be drunk, slurring their English in a way that neither side could understand, as they tried to get Captain Clyde and First Mate Jack to drink.

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"Boss, don't worry, everyone's asleep. There was a party on the ship today, and the security guards are pretty much done drinking. The security won't be very tight tonight..."

In the first mate's cabin on the third floor of the cruise ship, Jack was covering his head with a blanket and quietly talking on the phone with the third brother of Liu Minghui.

First Mate Jack was very dutiful. In order to welcome the pirates tomorrow, he didn't drink much today. Normally, he would have gotten himself drunk no matter what, even if the alcohol was free.

"Go out and check again to make sure everything is perfect. We'll be at your ship's location around 4:30 or 5:00 AM. Then, secretly lower the spiral staircase..."

Upon hearing Jack's words, the third brother was overjoyed. Could it be that God was on their side? He knew the nature of these sailors; they were more attracted to alcohol than women, and it would be difficult for them not to get drunk.

"Don't worry, boss, I'll go out and check it out. When you arrive, I guarantee you'll see the spiral staircase has been lowered..."

Jack was very familiar with the ship, and putting down the spiral staircase was a trivial matter for him.

After hanging up the phone, First Mate Jack stared at the ceiling, already dreaming of becoming a captain, because the generous boss had promised to recruit him into the organization and make him their captain.

"Li Zhen, are the defensive weapons ready?"

Just as Jack hung up the phone, Zhuang Rui asked Li Zhen with a gloomy expression. This matter made him very angry. If it weren't for Li Zhen's information defense system, he probably wouldn't even know if someone slit his throat in the middle of the night.

"Brother Zhuang, you can rest assured. Go back and be with your wife. We'll take care of everything. You can come and check the prisoners tomorrow..."

Li Zhen wore a nonchalant smile. Having weathered many storms, this little incident was merely adding a touch of spice to his otherwise peaceful life.

According to Li Zhen's plan, Jack should lower the spiral staircase, and Li Zhen could guard the ship and capture them one by one. This would be much easier than resorting to arms.

"Speed up to maximum speed, we must reach the enemy ship's location before dawn..."

Tonight is destined to be a sleepless night. Not only is Zhuang Rui unable to sleep after returning to his room, but even Hui Ge is fighting off sleepiness and staying in the cockpit of the frigate.

This decommissioned Malaysian frigate still had decent horsepower. After fourteen hours of sailing, under the moonlight, they could see the huge cruise ship a few hundred meters away.

Compared to Zhuang Rui's cruise ship, Hui Ge's frigate seemed rather inconspicuous. Under the cover of night, the frigate stopped a hundred meters away from the cruise ship.

Two speedboats were launched into the sea from the frigate, and more than a dozen armed personnel wearing masks, camouflage uniforms, and carrying submachine guns got off one by one.

Chapter 939 Gunshots Before Dawn (Part Two)

On the silent sea, only the sound of waves crashing against the cruise ship could be heard, and the morning star in the sky was particularly bright, indicating that the sun was about to rise.

Before dawn, the sea was shrouded in a light mist. Even though the merchant ship was more than 100 meters away, its outline could only be vaguely seen. It stood on the sea like a huge monster.

"Fifth brother, be careful, let me know as soon as you get on the boat..."

Although it wasn't the first time he'd done this kind of thing, Hui was still a little scared. After all, he used to be a tech guy, and now he was using brute force, so it was hard for him to change his mindset.

Knowing he wasn't skilled enough, Hui-ge decided to leave the killing and ship-stealing to Huo-jiang. Hui-ge would be stationed on the frigate, and in case of any mishap, Huo-jiang could be supported by the frigate's machine guns.

"Don't worry, big brother. Jack said there are plenty of pretty girls on board. I'll definitely save the prettiest one for you..."

Fire General grinned, this life at sea suited his taste perfectly. The only downside was the lack of women. Thinking about how he would soon be able to go on a killing spree on the ship, and even have women to relieve his lust, Fire General couldn't help but lick his lips.

"Um?"

Suddenly, Huo Jiang and Liu Minghui, who were talking, both looked toward the cruise ship, because a light was lit up on the side of the ship facing them and circled three times to the left and three times to the right.

This was the pre-arranged signal between Liu Minghui and Jack. The appearance of the lights meant that everything was going smoothly, and if there were no unexpected events, the spiral staircase should have already been lowered from the deck.

"Fifth brother, go ahead, don't turn on the engine, it's too loud. Anyway, it's not far, just paddle over..."

Looking at the flashing lights in the distance, Liu Minghui revealed a sinister look. If it weren't for his age and poor skills, Brother Hui would definitely be the first to board the ship and grab Zhuang Rui from his sleep.

Decades of hard work were ruined in one fell swoop by Zhuang Rui, sending him straight from heaven to hell. Hui Ge absolutely hated Zhuang Rui to the core. Thinking about how he could soon freely toy with that kid's women in front of him, Hui Ge couldn't help but chuckle softly.

There were twelve people on the two speedboats, which was the largest armed force Liu Minghui could muster. Apart from a few old men under his command, the other six or seven were desperate thugs recruited by Brother Hui, and each of them had blood on their hands.

Despite the large number of people on the cruise ship, once Huo Jiang and his group boarded, the crew and staff were nothing more than lambs to the slaughter, posing no threat whatsoever.

With the sound of oars cutting through the water, two speedboats silently approached the cruise ship under the cover of night, arriving at the ship's side in just over ten minutes.

The spiral staircase, tens of meters high, had been lowered, but the lights on it were still on. Huo Jiang, with a short knife in his mouth and a submachine gun on his back, was the first to climb up.

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"Why the hell aren't you coming up here yet?"

Jack had been waiting at the entrance of the spiral staircase for about half an hour, and he was getting quite impatient. It would be dawn soon, and when the security guards patrolled over there, it would be nearly impossible for him to board the ship so easily.

"Hey bro, can I borrow a light?"

Suddenly a voice rang out behind Jack. It was normal for crew members to borrow a light. Jack casually took out his Zippo lighter and was about to turn around when his eyes suddenly widened in surprise.

Before Jack could unleash his tenor from his wide-open mouth, a strong arm gripped his neck, and a towel still reeking of alcohol was shoved into his mouth.

As he increased the force of his arm, Jack felt a dizziness and lost consciousness, while the lighter in his right hand fell onto the deck.

"Hey, not bad, a limited edition from 1942..."

Before the lighter could even touch the ground, a hand grabbed it. Peng Fei, with a slightly wicked smile, appeared under the light hanging on the railing. With a flick of his wrist, a flame lit up the cigarette in Peng Fei's mouth.

"Make sure you get it done quickly, take them down one by one as they come up, and try not to fire..."

Peng Fei craned his neck and looked down. The firefighter at the top was still more than 20 meters away from the deck. He quickly made a hand gesture to the people next to him.

"Jack? Jack?"

After climbing to the top of the spiral staircase, Fire did not rush up. Instead, he held the knife in his mouth, peeked out, and whispered Jack's name twice.

"I am here..." a voice with a Portuguese accent answered the Fire General's call.

Because the light was pointed outwards, it was directly in Huo Jiang's eyes. For a moment, he could only see that the entire deck was empty except for the person standing in front of him. Huo Jiang immediately felt relieved and turned around to give a safe signal to those below.

With a powerful push against the ship's gunwale, Huo Jiang's massive body appeared exceptionally agile, landing silently on the deck like a nimble cat. His right hand gripped the paratrooper knife tightly as he warily watched Jack before him.

"Huh? You're not Jack?"

Once on deck, Huo Jiang's eyes gradually adjusted to the darkness. He discovered that the person standing in front of him was not wearing crew uniform, but was dressed in camouflage like him, and was smiling at him.

"Damn it, I've been tricked..."

Huo Jiang was a henchman in Brother Hui's former Qianmen organization. He had seen a lot of murder and arson over the years. He grinned maliciously and stabbed the man with the knife he was holding in his right hand.

Since there was only one security guard on the deck, Huo Jiang did not suspect that their entire plan had been exposed. He thought that the incident was caused by the security guard's patrol. He believed that as long as he captured the man, the plan could still be carried out once the brothers boarded the ship.

Due to the urgency of the situation, Huo Jiang didn't even have time to notify Hui Ge before he started to act. However, what puzzled him was that the person seemed like a puppet, ignoring the knife he was about to stab, and showing a strange smile on his face.

"Damn it, there's someone behind us!"

Just as Huo Jiang sensed something was wrong, he suddenly heard a whooshing sound behind his ear. Because his attention had been entirely focused on the person in front of him, he had no time to dodge.

With a muffled thud, blood gushed from Huo Jiang's head like a fountain. His massive body swayed a few times before collapsing to the ground in despair.

"Damn, this thing really works..."

Peng Fei held a wrench the size of an arm in his hand, a sly smile on his face. With a swift movement, Huo Jiang's massive body and Peng Fei vanished from the deck at the same time.

For safety reasons, there is a row of baffles under the hull on the deck, which are recessed inward by about half a meter, just enough for a person to crouch and hide inside. Peng Fei and seven or eight security personnel hid inside, and they could not be seen at all when looking out from the spiral staircase.

Just now, Peng Fei caught Huo Jiang off guard when he wasn't paying attention to what was behind him. From behind, Huo Jiang was definitely a huge guy, and he must have some skill. So Peng Fei didn't care about any rules of the martial arts world and just took him down.

"Is that the kid? Damn it, hasn't he learned his lesson the hard way?"

It wasn't until Huo Jiang pulled off the mask that Peng Fei realized who these people were. A sinister smile crept across his face as he gripped the wrench in his hand and chuckled, "This is what they call 'If there's a road to heaven, you won't take it; if there's no gate to hell, you'll slip right in!'"

Although so much had happened since Huo Jiang came aboard, it had only taken a few seconds. Just as Peng Fei pulled Huo Jiang's body under the barrier, another ruthless bandit climbed up.

This guy was even more unlucky. He had just poked his head out of the ship's railing when he felt a tightness in his shoulders and was suddenly lifted onto the deck as if floating on clouds. Before he could look around, he was hit on the back of the head and immediately lost consciousness.

"This guy is really quick. I wonder where Brother Hui found such a ruthless person?"

Following behind that guy was an old man from Liu Minghui's former Thousand Gates sect. He was admiring the guy's nimble skills when, unexpectedly, he too got to experience the same treatment.

Six men were swiftly taken down by Peng Fei and his men, while the thugs on the second speedboat below began boarding and had already climbed to the middle of the spiral staircase.

"No, something's wrong..."

Although the sea fog was so thick that even with binoculars, it was impossible to see what was happening on the other ship's bow, the pre-arranged signal between Hui-ge and Huo-jiang had not been transmitted, causing Liu Minghui's heart to tighten.

As agreed, Huo Jiang should tap the walkie-talkie three times after successfully reaching the deck, but more than half an hour has passed and Huo Jiang has not made a sound.

Hui-ge became anxious, disregarding the fact that the sound coming from the walkie-talkie would alert the people on the ship. He grabbed the walkie-talkie and shouted, "Fifth Brother, Fifth Brother, reply if you hear me, reply if you hear me..."

Huo Jiang was obviously unable to reply at this moment. Although he was physically strong, that wrench blow was enough to knock him unconscious for two hours. All that could be heard was Liu Minghui's voice coming from the intercom on the deck.

"Return them all back, return them all, quickly, return them all..."

Liu Minghui was a decisive man. He knew that the enemy must have been prepared to kill Huo Jiang so silently. At this moment, he couldn't care less about the life or death of his old brother who had followed him for one or two decades. He immediately ordered the men around him, "Set sail! Set sail immediately..."

The third brother beside Hui couldn't bear it any longer and spoke up, "Big brother, fifth brother, he..."

Before the third brother finished speaking, a gunshot rang out from a hundred meters away, followed by more than ten powerful spotlights piercing through the layers of fog and shining on the frigate.

"Brother Hui, you're here, so why are you in such a hurry to leave..." A slightly sinister voice came from the walkie-talkie in Brother Hui's hand.

Chapter 940 Gunshots Before Dawn (Part 3)

"ah....."

As the gunshot rang out, a piercing, desperate cry shattered the silence on the sea. A dark figure plummeted heavily into the water from the hull, which was over twenty meters high.

A hundred meters away, Hui Ge felt a chill run down his spine. He knew he had probably met his match. He picked up the walkie-talkie and, not caring if the people on the other ship heard him, shouted, "Fight back! Fight back!"

To be fair, Liu Minghui's gang of pirates were quite skilled. As they slid off the ship, they had already drawn their submachine guns, which were spitting fire and making a "rat-a-tat" sound.

Flashes of fire shot toward the bow of the ship, temporarily preventing Peng Fei and the others from getting up. Deafening gunfire echoed across the sea. If most of them hadn't been drunk yesterday, who knows what kind of panic would have ensued.

Zhuang Rui barely slept all night. He originally wanted to stay in the monitoring room, but he was afraid of frightening his wife and children, so he stayed in his room the whole time.

The gunshots that rang out on the sea sounded particularly crisp. As soon as the first shot rang out, Zhuang Rui immediately sat up in bed.

Qin Xuanbing was also awakened by the gunshot, but she couldn't tell what it was. She lazily rubbed her eyes, looked at Zhuang Rui, and asked, "Honey, what's wrong? Are we working so early?"

Because working at sea at night is dangerous, and it's too hot at noon, the working hours are usually in the early morning and evening. Zhuang Rui has been getting up very early these past few days, and Qin Xuanbing has gotten used to it.

"It's not work, Xuanbing, you just stay inside and watch the children. No matter what happens, don't go out..."

Before Zhuang Rui could finish speaking, the sound of bursts of submachine gun fire rang out. Even if Qin Xuanbing was inexperienced, she could tell that it was gunfire. Her face paled instantly, and she jumped up and rushed into the house next door.

Although Qin Xuanbing didn't know what had happened and was very scared, she immediately put the danger aside when she thought of her children and rushed into their sleeping room.

"Mom...Mom..."

Fangfang and Yuanyuan were also awakened from their sleep by the gunshot, and they grinned, looking like they were about to cry.

"Damn it, how could I forget to put earmuffs on them..."

Zhuang Rui patted his head, picked up his son, walked to the living room, casually turned on the satellite TV, and started watching a blockbuster action movie.

The surround sound system was truly amazing; the gunshots coming from inside immediately overshadowed the sounds outside, making the sounds from the television seem even more realistic.

Although the two little ones didn't know why their dad made them watch TV so early in the morning, they were quickly drawn to the lively fighting on TV and couldn't tell where the gunshots were coming from.

"Honey, you...you mustn't go out..."

Qin Xuanbing became nervous when she saw Zhuang Rui putting on his coat and about to leave the room.

Zhuang Rui put his arm around Qin Xuanbing, kissed her on the forehead, and said with a smile, "Hehe, it's okay. I'll go to the monitoring room. Don't worry, everything has been arranged, nothing will happen..."

"Daddy, want, want..." After seeing Zhuang Rui's actions, the two little ones reached out to Zhuang Rui, wanting him to kiss them too.

"Okay, one kiss each, then watch TV obediently..."

After kissing each of his children on the cheek, Zhuang Rui gave Qin Xuanbing a reassuring look, then turned and opened the living room door.

"Aww, ho ho..."

Just as Zhuang Rui was about to leave, Jin Gang emerged from another room. This guy was a heavy drinker; yesterday he drank eight or nine bottles of Moutai by himself, and it took six or seven people to carry him back to his room.

However, gorillas are different from humans. After sleeping for several hours, King Kong was also awakened by the gunshots outside. His legs were still a little weak, and he staggered towards Zhuang Rui.

"King Kong, you're not going anywhere today. Stay in your room obediently, understand?"

When Zhuang Rui saw that Jin Gang also wanted to go out and join the fun, he quickly straightened his face. This guy didn't know how dangerous a gun was; if he got shot, it could be fatal.

"Waaaaah..."

Seeing Zhuang Rui's stern expression, King Kong twisted its mouth and pretended to be pitiful. It learned this from Fang Fang and Yuan Yuan. It found that as long as the two little ones cried, their general needs could be met, so King Kong quickly mastered this skill as well.

"You're not allowed to go out, or you'll never have meat to eat or wine to drink again. If you disobey me, I'll send you back to the deserted island..."

Zhuang Rui's expression was unusually stern. He knew that King Kong could understand him. This guy was cunning; if you gave him a smile, he would take advantage of you.

Sure enough, after realizing that his act of feigning helplessness had failed, King Kong snorted a few times in dissatisfaction and went to the sofa to play with Fang Fang and Yuan Yuan.

"Honey, be careful..."

As Zhuang Rui opened the door and went out, Qin Xuanbing's voice came from behind him.

"Zhuang Rui, what exactly happened?"

Just as he stepped into the corridor, the door next to him opened, and Huangfu Yun, wearing only shorts, rushed out with a tense expression. Although he had handled many cases as a lawyer, the bursts of gunfire outside still made him a little panicked.

Standing behind Huangfu Yun was Yun Man, whose thin gauze nightgown only reached her upper thighs, revealing her long, slender legs and her graceful body, which almost made Zhuang Rui's nose bleed.

"It's alright. If you're scared, take Yunman to my room to watch TV..."

Zhuang Rui patted Huangfu Yun's shoulder with a smile, but he dared not look at Yun Man again. Although I don't take advantage of my friends' wives, you don't have to put me through this kind of test, do you?

"Huh?!" Yunman seemed to realize that she was wearing too little clothing, exclaimed in surprise, and turned to go back to her room to get dressed.

"Don't worry, go back to your wife, just lock your room door and don't come out. There will be an announcement on the ship..."

Zhuang Rui suddenly remembered that his wife wasn't wearing much either, and he couldn't let Huangfu Yun get away with it, so he stopped mentioning letting him watch TV in his room and pushed him back into the room.

...

When Zhuang Rui entered the monitoring room, Li Zhen had a cigarette in his mouth and was shouting at the screen. When he heard the door open, a huge Desert Eagle appeared in his right hand as if by magic, with the muzzle pointed directly at Zhuang Rui's forehead.

Zhuang Rui was startled by Li Zhen's actions and quickly shouted, "Damn it, why are you so nervous? Put the gun away..."

"Brother Zhuang, why are you up?"

When Li Zhen saw it was Zhuang Rui, he smiled sheepishly and muttered, "You've regressed, you've regressed. I didn't even notice you opening the door..."

"Alright, enough nonsense, hurry up and explain the situation..."

Zhuang Rui looked at the flashing fire on the screen and his expression became serious. These dark bullets didn't have eyes, and it would be troublesome if they hurt one of his own people.

"Brother Zhuang, everything is under control, so please don't worry..."

Li Zhen also became serious, switched perspectives, and pointed to several masked men who were almost at the bottom of the ship, saying, "They were preparing to board the ship ten minutes ago, but Peng Fei subdued six of them. Of the remaining six, one has already been killed, leaving five..."

"Our firepower isn't inferior to theirs, is it? And we're on higher ground, so how come we're being suppressed?"

Although Zhuang Rui didn't understand military affairs, he could still see some clues from the screen. Peng Fei and the others seemed to be suppressed and unable to raise their heads. It looked like the other side was about to go down to the bottom of the boat and board the speedboat.

"Peng Fei, did you fucking skip dinner yesterday? What happened? You're such a wimp! Damn it, if you can't handle it, come up here and see how I take them down..."

No sooner had Zhuang Rui finished speaking than Li Zhen picked up the walkie-talkie and launched into a tirade of abuse. He had long been fed up with Peng Fei's behavior and, for some reason, lit a cigarette and squatted down to smoke it.

"Isn't it because I'm afraid of being hit by stray bullets in the dark? Alright, you can leave that frigate here, I'll take care of these people..."

Upon hearing Li Zhen's words, Peng Fei's face flushed slightly. He spat out his cigarette butt with a "pfft," picked up the submachine gun he was carrying, pulled the barrel, and then half-squatted up, leaning his back against the ship's railing.

Suddenly, Peng Fei stood up abruptly, rested his submachine gun on his shoulder, and without even aiming, fired a single shot with a "bang".

The firing point below, which was shouting merrily, immediately fell silent. After exposing his hiding place, Peng Fei made no attempt to evade.

"Bang bang bang bang!" Four shots rang out in succession. Three of the four people on the spiral staircase were shot between the eyebrows, and the remaining one was hit in the shoulder. He screamed and fell into the water.

"How about that, buddy? My marksmanship is pretty good, isn't it? Shura, you're still a bit lacking..."

Peng Fei put away his gun, gave a thumbs-up towards the camera, and looked smug.

"Damn it, get down..."

Just as Li Zhen was about to say something to Peng Fei, he suddenly caught a glimpse of a burst of fire from the opposite ship out of the corner of his eye, and quickly shouted a warning to Peng Fei.

Peng Fei reacted quickly, diving and lying prone on the deck. At the same time, a burst of gunfire rang out, and sparks flew from the ship's side. If Peng Fei had been a little slower, he would probably have been riddled with bullets.

"Damn it, Shura, what the hell are you doing? Shoot down that frigate, there are already enough survivors on that ship..."

This time it was Peng Fei's turn to berate Li Zhen. The enemy ship's 10mm squad automatic weapon was practically a small cannon, and it even deformed the thick deck at the hull.

"Brother Zhuang, we've found out it was Liu Minghui's gang who did it. What do you think we should do?"

Li Zhen ignored Peng Fei and looked at Zhuang Rui instead. On this ship, only Zhuang Rui had the right to decide the fate of the pirates.