

Ice Age 191

Chapter 191: Greed is a Deadly Poison

The villagers of Xu Family Town suffered heavy casualties, with the ground littered with the wounded. Though they were alive, their agony was worse than death. Some had their feet impaled by the traps and were trying to pull out the nail boards to stop the bleeding. The boards were not just studded with smooth nails but also with threaded screws. Any forceful attempt to remove them only made things worse, tearing the flesh like barbed hooks.

"How did it come to this?" they wondered. They had always been victorious in their skirmishes around Xu Family Town, never facing such a humiliating defeat.

Finally, someone realized the core issue. "Chunlei didn't come!" The moment this was said, everyone understood. Xu Chunlei, with his ability to manipulate ice and snow, was like a cheat code in these wintry conditions. Their strength had never been their own; it was always because they had Xu Chunlei.

The leaders of the teams, with grim faces, decided to temporarily retreat. They approached Xu Dongsheng. "Village Chief, we need Chunlei! There's still over a hundred meters to go, and we don't know how many more traps are hidden beneath the snow. We need Chunlei to clear the way!"

Everyone started speaking at once, urging Xu Dongsheng to call for Xu Chunlei. Xu Dongsheng's expression soured. He had harshly scolded Xu Chunlei earlier, calling him a coward and declaring that Xu Family Town could take down the shelter without him. Now, after the first wave of attacks, the villagers were at a loss.

In the shelter's second-floor window, Zhang Yi, holding his sniper rifle, watched silently. "Why hasn't the ice and snow ability user made a move yet?" There were too many people for him to identify the ability user. If the user revealed themselves, Zhang Yi could quickly target them. The distance from the villa to the frontline of the villagers was less than 200 meters. Even if the ability user was cautious and attacked from a greater distance, as long as it was within 2000 meters, Zhang Yi could still take the shot.

"Hurry up and come," Zhang Yi muttered.

Meanwhile, Xu Dongsheng faced mounting pressure from the villagers. Asking him to seek help from Xu Chunlei? The thought of a grandfather begging his grandson was unbearable. He gritted his teeth, unable to bring himself to do it.

"Are we helpless without Chunlei?" he barked. "This guy laid traps around his house, but in our youth, we set snares and traps in the mountains. It's nothing new! Let's move forward slowly, dismantle every trap. He's here; he can't escape!"

The villagers were apprehensive, but Xu Dongsheng handed his binoculars to a nearby man. "Take a good look inside that villa."

The man eagerly took the binoculars and looked towards the villa. Through the brightly lit windows, he saw a lavish interior, warm and inviting. He saw two stunningly beautiful women sitting at a table, eating and occasionally glancing outside. The table was covered with delicious, steaming food.

"Gulp—" The man swallowed several times, drooling over the food and the women. Others grabbed the binoculars, each seeing something they desired: food, a warm and comfortable home, and the beautiful women.

"If you can get past those traps, everything in that villa is yours!" Xu Dongsheng declared, pointing at the villa less than 200 meters away. The villagers were tempted. Returning home after losing so many people felt unacceptable.

"But the traps and bombs in the snow—how do we deal with them?" someone cautiously asked. Another suggested, "Let's call Chunlei. His abilities can clear the snow, exposing all the traps."

Nods of agreement followed. Xu Dongsheng's face reddened. As the elder of the Xu family and the village chief, his pride was at stake. Asking Chunlei for help was out of the question.

"Humph! Cowards!" he spat. "It seems without Chunlei, the rest of you are useless! If anyone is scared, go back and spare us the shame!"

His harsh words stung the villagers, who felt both ashamed and angry. "We're not cowards, Grandpa!" a young man shouted. "I'll capture Zhang Yi myself!"

Driven by anger, the young men grabbed their tools and turned to clear the traps. Xu Dongsheng nodded approvingly. "That's the spirit! Be careful, and these traps will be nothing!"

Learning from the first wave, the villagers became more cautious. They started throwing chunks of ice ahead of them, triggering traps from a distance and paving a safer path. Zhang Yi watched their efforts from the shelter's second floor, noting their strategy.

"The ingenuity of common folk," he thought. "This method will neutralize many of the traps. But high-tech traps won't be so easily overcome."

The villagers moved forward, clearing more traps and even triggering a few grenades, which boosted their confidence. Xu Dongsheng smiled triumphantly. "Keep moving! Hunters, stay ready. If Zhang Yi fires, shoot back immediately!"

Xu Dongsheng's cousin, Xu Dongping, an old hunter, grinned, holding his ancient rifle. "Don't worry. If he shows his face, I'll put a hole in his head!"

Chapter 192: Your Tribesmen Are Flying

The villagers from Xu Family Town continued dismantling traps as they advanced. By using thick blocks of ice and snow to pave the way, they managed to cover the nail boards hidden underneath. Although Zhang Yi's traps were relatively simple, they were easy to neutralize once revealed. He noted this for future improvements.

There were two routes from outside Cloud Manor to Villa 101: the south gate and the west gate. All the villagers from Xu Family Town had come from the south, so they were now concentrating on the southern route. Zhang Yi wasn't particularly concerned about them. The villagers couldn't fathom the strength of a well-fortified shelter. They probably thought it was just another concrete structure, easy to breach. Their ignorance would be their downfall.

Through his sniper scope, Zhang Yi continued to scan the area, particularly wary of the ice and snow ability user he had encountered before. But despite waiting, he saw no sign of any significant changes in the snow or weather.

"Is he waiting for me to show myself, or did he not come at all?" Zhang Yi wondered, slightly puzzled. The name Xu Family Town indicated that many of the townspeople shared the surname Xu and were likely related. It seemed unlikely that the ability user would let his kin march to their deaths without helping to clear the snow and traps.

"Is he really not here? Was he injured by my stray bullets last time?" Zhang Yi's frown turned into a cold smile. "Good, better if he's dead!"

Meanwhile, the villagers, numbering in the hundreds, were slowly advancing up the southern path towards the shelter. As they dismantled traps, their pace quickened. Being closer, they could now clearly see the villa's luxurious interior. In the past, only the wealthiest and most powerful people could live in Cloud Manor. Each villa, costing over a billion, was decorated with top-tier furnishings. Even the curtains were made from fine silk.

Not to mention, there were two stunningly beautiful women standing by the window, watching the approaching villagers. One young man's breathing grew heavy, and his steps quickened.

Inside, Yang Siya watched the approaching crowd with mounting fear, her heart pounding. She instinctively stepped back, clutching her chest. But beside her, Zhou Ke'er remained calm, sighing softly.

"How many more will die this time?" Zhou Ke'er mused.

Yang Siya hugged herself tightly, her face pale. "Where is Zhang Yi? Will they break in?"

If those men broke in, she dreaded to think what might happen to her. Despite everything, Zhang Yi had been relatively kind to her, never forcing her into anything. These villagers, however, gave off a vibe of pure greed, lust, and brutality that made her shiver.

Zhou Ke'er, noticing Yang Siya's terror, smirked arrogantly. She lifted her chin, showing off her swan-like neck. "Is this all it takes to scare you? How will you ever stay by Zhang Yi's side?"

Zhou Ke'er had spent a month with Zhang Yi in Yue Lu Community, surviving numerous betrayals and witnessing Zhang Yi's deadly prowess. What was happening now was a minor event to her. She knew Zhang Yi had planned the demise of these villagers.

From the second-floor window, Zhang Yi, like an experienced hunter, waited for his prey to walk into his trap. As the villagers approached within fifty meters of the villa, Zhang Yi confirmed the density of the crowd. He activated the villa's active noise-canceling system, muting all external sounds. Then, he pressed an electronic button.

A massive explosion erupted on the road outside the villa. Even with the noise-canceling, the blast was clearly audible. Flames shot into the sky, lighting up the night and revealing the colorful fragments of what seemed like fireworks—except they were the dismembered bodies of the villagers. The explosion created a five-meter-deep crater, tearing up the concrete beneath the snow.

The explosion occurred right in the middle of the Xu Family Town's formation, killing dozens instantly and sending shockwaves that hurled others into surrounding traps. Nail boards and animal traps inflicted further injuries on the already wounded villagers.

Zhang Yi watched the gruesome scene unfold. Villagers screamed in pain, clutching their pierced feet or impaled faces, some with nails driven deep into their flesh, others trapped in animal traps, desperately trying to free themselves.

Seeing their agony, Zhang Yi shook his head and sighed. "If only I had more landmines, I could kill them all quickly and spare them the suffering."

Outside, the air was filled with agonized screams, resembling the cries of crows in a graveyard. Zhou Ke'er and Yang Siya, witnessing the carnage, instinctively stepped back. They could see some injured villagers stumbling closer, pleading for help with contorted faces.

"Help me, help me!" one villager, missing his lower half, crawled towards the window, staring at Yang Siya with desperate eyes. His lower body was a horrific mess.

Yang Siya's hair stood on end, and she bent over, vomiting uncontrollably. Even Zhou Ke'er, despite her toughness, turned pale and looked away. Only Zhang Yi remained unfazed. He had seen too much death and destruction to be affected anymore.

Living or dead, the strong survived, and Zhang Yi was unflinchingly ready to face it head-on.

Chapter 193: The Hunter and the Cold Arrow

The sudden explosion instantly claimed over thirty lives, with countless more deaths following due to the ensuing chaos. The agonized cries of the villagers from Xu Family Town echoed across Cloud Manor. The horror left the survivors pale with fear, with some younger ones driven insane, screaming and running away.

Those who were still alive were in shock from the explosion. Some were temporarily blinded, others were knocked unconscious, and some had their eardrums ruptured, leaving them deaf. Xu Dongsheng and the other senior members of the Xu family stood in stunned silence, their expressions blank and their eyes lifeless. They couldn't accept the reality before them; the shock was too great for their minds to process.

A mentally disturbed young man ran over and clung to Xu Dongsheng's leg, yelling hysterically, "They're dead! They're all dead! Blown to pieces—arms, heads, everything!"

"Grandpa, they're all dead!" Even in his delirium, the young man instinctively sought the comfort of his elders, hoping for some reassurance. But, hearing his words, Xu Dongsheng felt his brain slowly rebooting, only to collapse in despair.

He looked at the carnage before him, his breathing rapid and sweat freezing on his forehead in the extreme cold. "He's a demon... not a man, but a demon! We just wanted his supplies, and he killed dozens of us!" Xu Dongsheng's eyes were wild, his speech incoherent. The seventy-year-old man was breaking down, unable to withstand the blow.

With so many dead and as the instigator of this doomed attack, Xu Dongsheng couldn't escape blame. The villagers, who had hoped the elders would lead them, now saw their leader in a state of mental breakdown. They became like headless chickens, running in panic, only to fall into more traps.

Zhang Yi, watching from the second floor, confirmed the absence of the ice and snow ability user. He put away his sniper rifle. At a distance of 200 meters, there was no need to waste bullets. A white flash in his right hand revealed an exquisite compound bow and two quivers of arrows. Zhang Yi hung the quivers on his waist and held the bow in his left hand, issuing a command to the shelter's intelligent system.

"Open the window in front of me."

The large bulletproof glass window slowly lifted, letting the icy wind and snow rush in. Zhang Yi narrowed his eyes and quickly drew three arrows, placing them on the bowstring. Thanks to his precision shooting ability, he didn't need extensive aiming. In half a month, he had mastered shooting three arrows simultaneously.

Standing in the dark, Zhang Yi began his hunt, targeting the remaining villagers without mercy.

"Swish!"

"Swish!"

"Swish!"

Three sharp arrows whistled through the air, unaffected by the wind and snow due to the enhanced abilities. They struck three fleeing villagers, piercing through their chests cleanly. Combined with precision shooting, the modern compound bow was powerful enough to penetrate wild boars, let alone villagers in down jackets.

In the pitch-black night, with Zhang Yi's floor remaining unlit, the silent arrows went unnoticed by the panicked villagers. Zhang Yi calmly continued to draw and shoot arrows, systematically picking off the fleeing villagers.

Each arrow claimed another life, and soon Zhang Yi had personally killed twenty-six villagers. It was only then that the remaining villagers noticed something was wrong.

"There's a hunter!" one villager shouted.

The armed villagers hurriedly raised their guns to return fire. But Zhang Yi was using a bow, so there was no muzzle flash or light to give away his position. Equipped with infrared tactical goggles, Zhang Yi had a massive advantage over those relying on their eyes.

Seeing the armed villagers, Zhang Yi prioritized taking them out. He opened a portal before him that swallowed any incoming projectiles—a top-tier defensive measure akin to a cheat. The old hunters only

managed a single shot before arrows pierced their heads, leaving them with eyes wide open in disbelief. They couldn't comprehend how arrows could reach such a distance.

As villagers fell one by one, many of them close friends and relatives, Xu Dongsheng and the other elders felt immense regret. Especially Xu Dongsheng, who now recalled Xu Chunlei's warnings. He had never taken Zhang Yi seriously, but now he realized his arrogance and self-confidence had cost them dearly.

Xu Dongsheng slapped his face hard. "I deserve to die! I'm the Xu family's sinner!" He shouldn't have ignored Xu Chunlei's advice. Things might have been different if he had at least brought Xu Chunlei along. For his pride, he had condemned over a hundred villagers to death.

Zhang Yi continued to shoot, and each arrow was released into groups of three. His ability-assisted shooting felt exhilarating, like playing a game with cheats. Against an ability user, ordinary people stood no chance, highlighting the disparity in power.

"Since you came, none of you will leave!" Zhang Yi's voice was cold. He intended to kill every one of them.

At that moment, the wind and snow intensified, obscuring Zhang Yi's view like a blizzard. His eyes lit up with excitement. "Why are you just showing up now!"

The ice and snow ability user from Xu Family Town had finally made a move! Zhang Yi switched to his sniper rifle. In such a storm, arrows were insufficient. A sniper rifle was necessary!

Chapter 194: Chase in the Snow

Xu Chunlei finally arrived, drawn by the explosion across the river. As an ability user, he understood the vast difference between ordinary people and those with powers. Having faced Zhang Yi before, he knew his abilities were completely countered by Zhang Yi's. If Zhang Yi hadn't been cautious of an ambush, Xu Chunlei would have died that day. But he couldn't stand by and watch his entire village die.

The villagers of Xu Family Town, recognizing the familiar sight, breathed a sigh of relief. They knew Xu Chunlei had come to their rescue. Struggling from the riverbank, Xu Chunlei used his power to create a snowstorm, blocking Zhang Yi's line of sight while shouting to the villagers, "Run! Run!"

Awakening from their shock, the villagers realized the attack had failed, and they had suffered heavy casualties. Unsure of what other traps Zhang Yi might have in store, they hurriedly gathered their injured relatives and carried the bodies of their fallen family members. Some, reduced to pieces, could only be taken in larger chunks, further slowing their retreat.

Xu Chunlei was extremely nervous, terrified of dying, yet he knew he couldn't live with the guilt if everyone died here. He maintained the snowstorm, giving the villagers time to escape, the same tactic he had used to escape before.

Zhang Yi watched the snowstorm inside the shelter, obscuring his vision and putting away his sniper rifle. His defensive abilities were incredibly strong, but his offensive capabilities, particularly at long range, were more limited. Shooting blindly into the snowstorm would only waste bullets. However, Zhang Yi had prepared to deal with the ice and snow ability user.

Maintaining such a large snowstorm consumed a lot of energy. The distance from the shelter to the riverbank was over 700 meters. "Let's see how long you can keep this up!" Zhang Yi muttered as he closed the window, letting the snowstorm rage outside. He opened his dimensional space and methodically suited up: bulletproof vest, pants, helmet, thermal clothing, and cut-resistant gloves. He armed himself with a knife, grenades, a claw knife, and a pistol, leaving heavier items in the dimensional space for easy access.

Fully equipped, Zhang Yi quickly descended the stairs. He glanced at Zhou Ke'er and Yang Siya, leaving them with a brief "Wait for me here," before heading out.

Yang Siya, having just finished vomiting, felt weak on the couch. Watching Zhang Yi's decisive and vigorous demeanor filled her with a strong sense of security. The attack showed her how weak and powerless she was and how strong and composed Zhang Yi was. She couldn't help but wonder how lucky she was to be by his side, yet she felt guilty for being unable to contribute more. All she could think to do was try harder in bed, feeling inadequate in every other way.

Zhang Yi left the shelter, bypassing the chaotic southern route and opting for the western path to avoid his own traps. He wasn't worried about the villagers escaping because he had a vehicle. Zhang Yi took out his snowmobile and drove out of Cloud Manor via the other route, circling back to the riverbank for the chase.

Xu Chunlei struggled to maintain the snowstorm, blocking Zhang Yi's line of sight. After a while, noticing the gunfire had ceased and Zhang Yi hadn't followed, he felt a brief sense of relief. But soon, everyone heard the sound of an engine.

The snowmobile roared down the path, Zhang Yi using autopilot while firing an assault rifle at the retreating villagers. Bullets sprayed out like fire, taking seven or eight lives in an instant. The villagers screamed in terror. "Chunlei, stop him!" someone shouted.

Hearing the call, Zhang Yi scanned the crowd, spotting a conspicuous figure: slightly overweight, facing Zhang Yi with raised hands while everyone else fled. "It's you!" Zhang Yi tossed the assault rifle to the passenger seat and set up his sniper rifle.

"Boom!" The shot rang out, but an icy barrier suddenly formed, diverting the bullet. The enhanced bullet, wrapped in energy, pierced through the ice but veered off course, missing Xu Chunlei by just twenty centimeters and slamming into the ice.

Xu Chunlei felt a chill run through him, narrowly escaping death. With Zhang Yi's improved spatial abilities and the power of the sniper rifle, he could now penetrate the snowstorm. However, the bullet's trajectory was still affected.

"Chunlei, go!" A sled pulled up, and a man extended a hand. Realizing Zhang Yi's threat, they were all fleeing for their lives. Xu Chunlei grabbed the hand and was pulled onto the sled.

Zhang Yi stopped at the riverbank. The wide river, its thick ice formed over a month of freezing temperatures, was likely five or six meters deep. After briefly hesitating, he turned and drove onto the ice in pursuit.

This was the perfect chance to eliminate the enemy ability user. They had caused too much trouble already, and Zhang Yi had no reason to let them go. The snowmobile roared across the ice, rapidly closing the distance on the sleds. Despite the sled dogs' efforts, they couldn't outrun the snowmobile.

As he closed in, Zhang Yi set up his sniper rifle, seeking an opening to target Xu Chunlei. Killing the ability user would turn the remaining villagers into defenseless sheep. In the face of danger, Xu Chunlei summoned incredible strength, maintaining the snowstorm to block Zhang Yi's view. Knowing his attacks couldn't harm Zhang Yi, he focused on obstructing his aim.

However, the fleeing crowd was scattered. Spotting Xu Chunlei protecting himself, Zhang Yi turned his gun on the villagers instead.

"Boom!" The shot echoed across the river, piercing through three people huddled on a sled and dropping them onto the ice.

Chapter 195: Breaking the Ice

Xu Chunlei's ability could disrupt Zhang Yi's vision, but its range was limited. He could protect himself, but not the others. On the ice, villagers from Xu Family Town fled in panic, making them easy targets for Zhang Yi. He had no qualms about killing them since they attacked first. With his military-grade sniper rifle enhanced by his abilities, Zhang Yi's shots were devastating. One shot penetrated three people, filling the air with a mist of blood.

Reloading, Zhang Yi aimed again and fired, killing two more villagers. Each sled was crowded with three or four people carrying their relatives' bodies, slowing them down. Realizing this, someone shouted, "Drop the bodies! Run!"

The villagers were torn. They were carrying their loved ones' bodies, adhering to their belief in proper burial for peace and blessings. But the relentless killing machine behind them left them no choice. Reluctantly, they abandoned the bodies on the ice, hoping it would slow Zhang Yi down. It did little to impede his progress, as a vehicle would always outrun dogs. The gunfire continued, each shot echoing with death as villagers fell.

Xu Chunlei watched in agony as his fellow villagers fell. His cousin, Xu Yongzhi, shouted desperately, "Chunlei, do something!"

The others looked to Xu Chunlei with pleading eyes. Only an ability user could stop another ability user. Xu Chunlei, under immense pressure, felt his mind breaking. In his desperation, an idea struck him. He stretched his right hand towards Zhang Yi's path, his eyes glowing blue. With a slow, deliberate motion, he clenched his hand.

"Crack!" A sharp sound echoed as a long fissure appeared on the ice, expanding rapidly. Zhang Yi's snowmobile tilted dangerously as it hit the fractured ice. He grabbed the window frame as the vehicle

lost balance, the auto-pilot system quickly applying the brakes. The snowmobile tilted, forcing Zhang Yi to halt the chase.

He jumped out, assessing the situation. The ice had cracked significantly, forming a ten-meter-long fissure that ensnared one of the snowmobile's wheels. Zhang Yi realized that while Xu Chunlei couldn't break through the five or six meters thick ice completely, his potential to control ice could grow stronger.

From afar, the villagers were escaping into the trees, taking advantage of the pause in Zhang Yi's pursuit. He raised his sniper rifle and fired twice more, killing two more villagers before they disappeared. "Looks like fighting on the ice is out of the question from now on," Zhang Yi muttered, observing the long fissure.

"If his ability was stronger, or the ice thinner, I'd be in the water right now," Zhang Yi thought. He exhaled, white vapor escaping his lips. He used his spatial ability to reposition the snowmobile, then drove back to Cloud Manor.

The southern route was in disarray, with most of the traps destroyed, leaving only the last fifty meters intact. Zhang Yi wasn't concerned; he had killed enough invaders. He planned to clear and re-establish the traps later.

Returning home, he found Yang Siya pale and weak on the couch, having vomited all her food from the day. Despite her outward disdain, Zhou Ke'er was massaging Yang Siya's head, helping her relax. Seeing Zhang Yi return, Zhou Ke'er asked, "Did you get the ability user who attacked us last time?"

Yang Siya, weakly, looked up at Zhang Yi. He shook his head, "No. The guy is a coward, won't face me head-on. His abilities make it hard to kill him." Zhang Yi was cautious not to engage on unfavorable terms, but he was confident he could win in a direct confrontation.

Yang Siya's gaze dropped, and she softly asked, "Aren't you afraid of being held accountable for killing so many people? Killing is illegal."

Her tone was weak, reflecting her shaken belief that the world would return to normal. Zhang Yi smiled, walked over, and pinched her soft cheek. "What do you think?"

Yang Siya remained silent, knowing deep down that her hope for a return to civilization was a dream. Zhang Yi stood up, feeling hungry after the fight. "Ke'er, I'm hungry. Make me something to eat."

Zhou Ke'er immediately stood up, "Sure, what do you want?"

"Roasted pig brain, spicy duck blood, duck gizzards with garlic, and nine-turn pig intestines," Zhang Yi replied.

Yang Siya's face turned even whiter at the names of the dishes. "Ugh—" she gagged.

Zhang Yi chuckled, "Feeling weak? You should eat something to regain your strength."

Yang Siya, flushed with anger, snapped, "Are you a devil?"

Seeing her angry expression made Zhang Yi happy. He leaned in and whispered, "How about something more nutritious later tonight?"

Yang Siya blushed but didn't reject his advance this time.

Chapter 196: Hero or Coward?

Xu Family Town, Xu Dong Village.

The villagers fled back, looking miserable and defeated. Many were so traumatized by the horrors they had witnessed that their eyes were vacant, and they collapsed into the snow. The air was filled with the cries of the wounded and the mourning of those who had lost loved ones.

The women who had stayed behind were horrified by the sight. They had expected to welcome back victorious heroes laden with spoils of war. Instead, the once proud and robust group returned halved in number, broken and bleeding.

"Where's my son? Where is he?"

"Little Zhi, Little Zhi!"

"Wait, where's my husband? Did something happen to him?"

The women frantically searched for their fathers, husbands, and sons, only to be met with grief and despair.

Xu Chunlei stood in the snowy square, feeling profoundly uneasy as he observed the villagers' plight. "I warned them," he sighed and quickly retreated to his home, unwilling to face the grieving villagers.

However, it wasn't long before someone barged into his house. "Xu Chunlei! Why are you hiding here?" His cousin, Xu Yongzhi, grabbed his arm, his voice urgent, "Come quickly, Grandpa is dying! He wants to see you!"

Shocked, Xu Chunlei hurried to Xu Dongsheng's house, dragging his plump body along. When he arrived, he found the entrance crowded with people, their expressions a mix of complexity and accusation. Xu Chunlei felt a chill run down his spine, as he saw no gratitude in their eyes, only blame and resentment.

"Ugh!" An elder spat on the ground. A weeping woman, her eyes red with tears, gritted her teeth and said, "Chunlei, I heard you didn't go with them. Why didn't you go? You're the one with the powers in our family. When trouble comes, you should be the first to face it. But instead, you stayed home like a coward. Do you know how many people died because of you?"

Xu Chunlei, sweating profusely, tried to explain, "I... I told them not to go. I warned them." But no one listened, or if they did, they didn't care. With so many dead, nearly every family had lost someone, and the atmosphere was thick with resentment.

People pointed fingers and hurled accusations at him. "If you had been there, you could have used your powers to prevent the bombings. What were you thinking?" Xu Chunlei felt angry but couldn't bring himself to shout back. Years of reclusive living had made him timid, and he couldn't stand up to his elders.

A scholarly-looking old man with glasses and neatly parted hair stepped out at that moment. "Enough!" he commanded. The villagers fell silent but continued to glare at Xu Chunlei. The old man, Xu Dongtang, Xu Dongsheng's younger brother and a respected figure in the family, gave Xu Chunlei a meaningful look. "Go in. Your grandpa wants to see you."

Xu Chunlei lowered his head and walked into the house. The structure was one he had built using his ice abilities. After the heavy snowfall, he had used his powers to build shelters for everyone. These ice houses were well-insulated and windproof, although they required regular maintenance to prevent melting from indoor fires.

Inside, Xu Dongsheng lay on his ice bed, looking frail. The recent shock had taken its toll on his already old body, causing him severe distress. Seeing Xu Chunlei, Xu Dongsheng's face showed guilt. "Chunlei, you're here."

Xu Chunlei rushed to his side, "Grandpa!" Xu Dongsheng weakly said, "It's my fault for not listening to you. If I had, so many of our family wouldn't have died."

Xu Chunlei felt a lump in his throat. The villagers' accusations had deeply hurt him, but his grandfather's understanding comforted him. Xu Dongsheng continued, "I was foolish, thinking we were unbeatable just because we won fights with the neighboring villages after the snowstorm. Now I see it was because of you. Without you, we're just farmers and fishermen, pretending to be warriors."

As he approached death, Xu Dongsheng realized his mistakes, though it was too late. He looked at the chubby young man by his bed, holding his hand. "I've told the others to blame me, not you. We're just ordinary people; we can't fight those with great powers. They might say harsh things, but don't hold it against them. We're family, and we must support each other to survive."

Xu Chunlei nodded, feeling touched. "I understand, Grandpa. I won't hold it against them."

Xu Dongsheng smiled weakly. "I'm dying, and I'm worried about our family. Chunlei, please protect the Xu family after I'm gone."

Xu Chunlei was taken aback and gripped Xu Dongsheng's hand tightly. "Grandpa, don't say that. You'll be fine!" But Xu Dongsheng's smile was strained. At his age, he knew his body's limits and could sense his approaching death.

"Chunlei, take care of the family," he said, waving his hand weakly. "Now, let me rest."

Xu Chunlei called out several times, "Grandpa!" but Xu Dongsheng only muttered, "I'm tired. Let me sleep."

With that, his head fell to the side, and he passed away. Xu Chunlei called for the others, and the villagers rushed in, finding Xu Dongsheng lifeless. They wept and wailed, mourning their loss. Seeing no one paid him attention, Xu Chunlei slipped away quietly, burdened by grief and guilt.

Chapter 197: Xu Chunlei's Awakening

Xu Chunlei felt defeated today. His mind was clouded with conflicting thoughts and a sense of frustration. Was the disastrous outcome really his fault? If so, he had warned Xu Dongsheng many times and ultimately saved the remaining villagers. Without his intervention, none would have survived Zhang Yi's relentless assault.

But if it wasn't his fault, perhaps fewer would have died if he had joined the initial attack. As he walked home slowly, these thoughts weighed heavily on him. "Grandpa entrusted me with protecting the Xu family before he died. But what can I do? If that killer comes, I can't stop him; I can only run."

He lamented, "I thought awakening my abilities would make me a hero, but why do so many troubles find me? I just want to be a lazy, carefree guy!" Xu Chunlei couldn't make sense of it all.

Just as he reached his home, he saw a girl waiting at the door. She was about eighteen or nineteen, wearing a long white down jacket with brown fur trim around the hood. Her small face peeked out from under the hood.

Seeing Xu Chunlei, she walked over quickly. "Are you Chunlei?" Xu Chunlei's heart skipped a beat. As an otaku, he was naturally awkward around real-life women. Her sweet voice made his mind race. "Uh... yeah, I'm Chunlei. Who are you?"

Though they were from the same village, he didn't recognize everyone. The girl smiled sweetly. "I'm Xu Lili. Thank you for saving my father today." Her eyes were filled with gratitude.

"My father said if it weren't for you, they would have all died there." Xu Chunlei's previously confused eyes brightened. He wasn't a villain; he was a hero. He was supposed to be a hero!

"Ha, it was nothing," he said modestly. Xu Lili continued, "My father is too weak to come himself, so he sent me to thank you." She lowered her head, embarrassed. "Sorry, we don't have anything to give you. I came empty-handed."

Xu Chunlei quickly waved his hands, "No, no, we're from the same village. No need to be so formal! If you ever need anything, just come to me." Xu Lili chatted with him for a bit, then waved goodbye and disappeared into the snow.

Watching her leave, Xu Chunlei's heart pounded. Although he didn't see her face clearly, he felt he had fallen in love with her. "Xu Lili? We must be distantly related," he thought, contradicting his self-proclaimed indifference to real-life women. He clenched his fist, determination in his eyes. "I will protect this family. I must give her and our future children a safe environment."

Back home, he pondered how to handle the upcoming crisis. His encounters with Zhang Yi had shown him the man's terrifying resolve. Zhang Yi killed without hesitation, using traps and weapons designed for maximum lethality. Xu Chunlei imagined Zhang Yi as a bloodthirsty demon.

"He must be furious. He might come to attack Xu Dong Village and kill everyone!" Xu Chunlei promised his grandfather he would protect the village and now had love to fight for. But how could he confront Zhang Yi directly?

Xu Chunlei couldn't bear the thought of fighting Zhang Yi head-on. He had never killed anyone; the most he had done was use his abilities in skirmishes with neighboring villages. After much thought, he concluded there was only one solution: negotiation.

Excited by his idea, he thought, "I'm a genius! It's dangerous, but to protect the Xu family and Lili, it's worth the risk!" He quickly sat at his computer, searching for a way to contact Zhang Yi. "Lili must like me, right? I saved her father. She must have feelings for me."

As he fantasized, he convinced himself of her affections, even imagining their future children. In reality, she was just being polite and building rapport with him, an ability user in their village. But Xu Chunlei, lacking real-world experience with women, was swept away by a small gesture of kindness.

The next morning, Zhang Yi carefully cleaned up the damaged traps around the villa. The most powerful grenade traps and explosive mines had been triggered, but animal traps and nail boards were still scattered everywhere. The ground was littered with corpses, some whole, others in pieces. He buried the remains to avoid waste and reset the traps.

With most of the traps destroyed, only those within fifty meters of the villa remained intact. But Zhang Yi wasn't worried. He had killed enough invaders, and Xu Dong Village was unlikely to dare approach again. The traps would remain for any future threats.

Reflecting on the recent battle, Zhang Yi admired the ice ability user who had maintained a cautious distance throughout the fight. Both he and the user shared a common trait: a fear of death. Zhang Yi respected that pragmatism.

However, he also recognized the potential danger. The ice ability was incredibly versatile, offering both offensive and defensive capabilities and the ability to alter terrain. It was like having an ice mage from an online game.

"I need to find a way to eliminate him," Zhang Yi decided. "Such a powerful ability user could become a major problem in the future. If he can't be an ally, he must be dealt with as an enemy."

Chapter 198: Negotiation

After setting up the traps, Zhang Yi returned to his shelter. The villagers from Xu Family Town were not his main concern; the ice and snow ability user was. However, after witnessing the user's potential, Zhang Yi decided not to cross the river for battle. He would wait for the right moment to snatch an opportunity and take down his opponent with a sniper rifle, now enhanced to a formidable range of 1500 meters.

Back in the living room, Zhang Yi sat on the sofa as Zhou Ke'er and Yang Siya attentively came over to massage his shoulders and legs. Afterwards, Yang Siya's attitude became noticeably more affectionate. Recognizing the harsh reality and her own helplessness, she smartly chose to depend on the man before her.

Life was enjoyable for Zhang Yi. The two women wore the outfits he provided: Yang Siya displayed her impressive figure in a low-cut slip dress with black stockings by Balenciaga. Zhang Yi insisted she walk around barefoot, finding great pleasure in watching her graceful movements.

Zhou Ke'er, with her tall, model-like figure and elegant demeanor, embodied the image of an ideal wife. Zhang Yi constantly pushed her boundaries, making her wear increasingly provocative clothing, with his favorite being a nude apron look, which was both arousing and suggestive of domestic bliss.

As Zhang Yi relished this lifestyle, his phone suddenly rang. It was an unknown number. He thought of Lu Fengda from a few days ago, who had accessed his personal information through the internet. Zhang Yi's information was not hard to find, being sold by various platforms.

The phone kept ringing. Zhang Yi, more composed this time, answered casually. "Hello."

An excited voice responded, "Zhang Yi! Hello, I'm Xu Chunlei! Thank you for taking my call. Can we talk? I have something important to discuss."

"Xu Chunlei? You're from Xu Family Town," Zhang Yi noted, his eyes narrowing. Zhou Ke'er and Yang Siya also tensed up. They held no goodwill towards the people who had attacked their shelter the previous day.

Xu Chunlei clarified, "I'm from Xu Dong Village in Xu Family Town, but that's not important. I called to propose a truce. Let's not have any more conflicts. How about we make peace?"

Zhang Yi chuckled coldly. "Peace? Are you joking? You've been causing trouble from the start. Now that you can't win, you want to make peace? The world doesn't work that way."

Xu Chunlei, feeling nervous, started sweating. To him, Zhang Yi was a powerful and terrifying figure. "No, I mean we seek your forgiveness. It was our village's fault. We haven't harmed you, but we've suffered greatly. Can you forgive us? We're willing to meet any conditions you set."

Zhang Yi sensed the fear in Xu Chunlei's voice and found it curious. If Xu Dong Village really wanted peace, they would have sent someone more reliable. The nervous voice on the other end didn't seem experienced.

He rubbed his chin, pondering. "Can I ask if you can represent Xu Dong Village in this negotiation?"

Xu Chunlei swallowed hard and nodded. "Yes, I can."

"Why? Who are you?"

"I'm the ability user who fought you twice," Xu Chunlei admitted, revealing his identity to gain Zhang Yi's attention.

Zhang Yi's demeanor shifted upon realizing the person on the other end was the ice and snow ability user. "So, it's you."

"Yes, it's me. Zhang Yi, do you think I'm qualified to negotiate?"

Given his abilities, Xu Chunlei indeed had the qualifications. Zhang Yi, wary of his potential, took him seriously. "Oh? So if I agree to peace, Xu Dong Village will meet any of my demands?"

Xu Chunlei laughed nervously, "As long as the conditions aren't too difficult, I can agree."

Xu Chunlei, having seen Zhang Yi's abilities, was certain Zhang Yi controlled a large cache of Walmart supplies. Thus, he doubted Zhang Yi needed food or other basic resources. Xu Chunlei wasn't foolish, just reclusive.

Zhang Yi smiled, realizing Xu Dong Village had little interest. Their stored grains and fish catches paled compared to his resources. However, there was one thing he coveted.

"Alright. What I want is you, Xu Chunlei!" Zhang Yi declared.

He desired Xu Chunlei's limitless potential with his ice and snow abilities. If he could recruit Xu Chunlei, it would be immensely beneficial in the future.

Chapter 199: Lap Pillow

Xu Chunlei was startled by Zhang Yi's words. He shouted in fear, "Don't do this! I'm... I'm a virgin!"

Zhang Yi rolled his eyes, while Zhou Ke'er and Yang Siya couldn't help but giggle. "Idiot! What are you thinking? I mean I'm interested in your abilities," Zhang Yi clarified.

"Here's the deal. If you really want to make peace, come here yourself. Show me you're worth negotiating with!" Zhang Yi emphasized, "Otherwise, I won't tolerate your repeated harassment. Your powers don't work on me. If I cross the river, wiping out your entire village will be a piece of cake!"

Zhang Yi's threat succeeded in scaring Xu Chunlei. "No! Don't!" Xu Chunlei shouted, standing up and pacing nervously. Facing Zhang Yi terrified him. "Destroying Xu Dong Village gains you nothing! Besides, don't think we have no defenses," Xu Chunlei attempted to sound confident.

Zhang Yi sneered, "Defenses? I'd like to see what you have. Remember, I have a sniper rifle. I don't need to get close to kill every one of you. Unless you plan never to leave your houses again!"

Xu Chunlei was extremely nervous. He had attempted a heroic act, hoping to use his abilities to negotiate peace and earn Xu Dongsheng's approval, and perhaps win Xu Lili's admiration. But if he messed this up and angered Zhang Yi, he would become Xu Dong Village's biggest traitor.

"Wait! Zhang Yi, don't get angry. Let's talk more, okay?" Xu Chunlei pleaded. "Keeping Xu Dong Village around is beneficial to you too. Xu Dong Village and Cloud Manor can help each other against external threats in the future!"

Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow and scoffed, "Enemies? Right now, you're my biggest enemy. You tried to take everything from me, failed, and now want peace without paying a price. Does that make sense to you? As far as I'm concerned, only you, Xu Chunlei, have the right to talk to me."

"You can come or not. Whether I cross the river depends on my mood," Zhang Yi said, pushing Xu Chunlei to make a choice.

Xu Chunlei's fear of Zhang Yi grew, the shadow of Zhang Yi's power looming large in his mind. He remembered how Zhang Yi had slaughtered his people like animals. "I'll come! I'll come, okay?" Xu Chunlei blurted out, desperate not to lose this last chance.

Zhang Yi, seeing Xu Chunlei had taken the bait, smiled. "Good. Come at 2:30 PM. It's a bit warmer then." Zhang Yi hung up before Xu Chunlei could change his mind.

On the other end, Xu Chunlei stood in shock. He couldn't believe he had agreed so impulsively. The reality of facing Zhang Yi was terrifying. He had survived before by staying hidden and using his abilities from a distance. If he got closer, he could imagine a hundred ways he might die.

Xu Chunlei collapsed to his knees, his face dark with despair. "I'm doomed this time."

Meanwhile, Zhang Yi placed his phone on the table, contemplating how to handle the afternoon meeting. He understood Xu Chunlei's abilities well: controlling snow and ice for attacks and defense, and creating large-scale environmental effects. But Zhang Yi's dimensional gate could nullify physical attacks, and he could snipe Xu Chunlei from 1500 meters away. Up close, Zhang Yi's equipment would give him a decisive advantage.

"Should I kill him?" Zhang Yi wondered. A highly potential ability user could be a great threat but also a valuable ally. Xu Chunlei's abilities were appealing. If abilities were ranked, Xu Chunlei's would be above Uncle You's physical enhancement, and only slightly below Zhang Yi's spatial abilities.

"I'll test him first. Decide to kill or recruit later," Zhang Yi decided. He had no deep hatred for the villagers of Xu Dong Village, having already killed over a hundred. They were like ants trying to invade his shelter, unworthy of his anger. But Xu Chunlei intrigued him.

After lunch, Zhang Yi took a nap. Yang Siya wanted to join him, but he refused. "I have important business this afternoon. I'll deal with you later!" he said, declining her request to sleep together but allowing her to sit on the bed and provide a lap pillow.

Yang Siya obediently sat on the large bed, lifted her lace nightgown, and revealed her smooth, rounded thighs. Zhang Yi rested his head on her legs, enjoying the soft and elastic feel.

He put aside thoughts of Xu Family Town, focusing on resting to maintain his best condition for the meeting with the ice and snow ability user. "Wake me up at two," he said lazily.

"Okay, rest easy," Yang Siya replied. As Zhang Yi closed his eyes, she smiled subtly at his handsome, determined face. The more time she spent with him, the more she liked his character. She had initially thought of him as a bad man, but now found his badness intriguing and felt safe with him.

"Rest well, my little man," she whispered, gently caressing his face.

"Stop it," Zhang Yi muttered, blinking up at her.

Chapter 200: The Dutiful Grandson

At 2 PM, Zhang Yi, fully equipped, stood by the window, waiting for Xu Chunlei to arrive for their negotiation. From this vantage point, he could spot anyone stepping onto the river ice, well within the 1500-meter range of his sniper rifle.

Zhang Yi removed his Rolex and placed it on the table, checking the time. If Xu Chunlei showed up, it would give Zhang Yi full control. Even if negotiations failed, he could kill Xu Chunlei instantly. Should the talks collapse, Zhang Yi wouldn't massacre Xu Dong Village but would regularly patrol the riverbank, sniping any villagers who ventured out to fish—an essential food source they couldn't afford to give up.

After waiting a while, a shadow emerged from the chaotic snow and trees on the other side of the river. Zhang Yi raised his sniper rifle and looked through the scope. He clearly saw a plump figure in a black down jacket, legs resembling two square blocks, and a comical furry hat. "It's him!" Zhang Yi recognized the figure, having seen the same silhouette through his tactical visor the previous night.

As Xu Chunlei stepped onto the ice, he immediately slipped and fell hard on his backside. Zhang Yi couldn't help but burst into laughter. "Is this the ice and snow ability user I was so cautious about? The one with limitless potential?" he chuckled but quickly reminded himself not to judge by appearances.

Xu Chunlei's next clumsy attempt to stand up ended with another face-first fall into the snow. Zhang Yi struggled to contain his laughter, finding it hard to take Xu Chunlei seriously. After a few more

embarrassing slips and falls, Xu Chunlei cautiously got back on his feet and started his precarious journey across the ice.

Zhang Yi watched closely, making sure there were no signs of an ambush. After several minutes of Xu Chunlei's awkward trek, it was clear he was alone. Zhang Yi relaxed slightly. "Looks like I've really scared them."

Satisfied that it wasn't a trap, Zhang Yi put away his sniper rifle and prepared to meet this interesting ability user. Xu Chunlei finally reached the shore, his breathing labored, and called Zhang Yi from his iPhone. "Hello, I'm at the shore. How do I get to you? I'm afraid of the traps around your place."

"No need. I'm already here," came Zhang Yi's cold voice from ahead. Xu Chunlei looked up to see Zhang Yi's piercing gaze. One was heavily armed, the other bundled up and breathless. Zhang Yi found the scene somewhat amusing, far from his envisioned dramatic encounter.

Xu Chunlei, however, felt his legs go weak with fear. "You... you're Zhang Yi?" he stammered.

Zhang Yi nodded, "And you must be Xu Chunlei?"

"Yes, that's me," Xu Chunlei replied, mustering his courage. "I came to negotiate peace. Continuing this fight benefits no one. It's pointless."

Zhang Yi sneered, "Whether it has meaning isn't for you to decide. As the aggressors, you should be ashamed."

Xu Chunlei scratched his head awkwardly. "I understand. It was our fault. What will it take for you to agree to peace?"

Xu Chunlei's humble approach caught Zhang Yi off guard. He had expected a more confrontational stance. Instead, the plump, clumsy man before him was far from a shrewd negotiator. Zhang Yi felt like he was hitting a soft target.

Not showing his thoughts, Zhang Yi crossed his arms and sternly asked, "What are you willing to sacrifice for my forgiveness?"

Xu Chunlei blinked and quickly responded, "Anything but the lives of our villagers. Whatever you want, we'll do our best to meet your demands."

The situation was peculiar. Zhang Yi lacked nothing, while Xu Dong Village had nothing to offer. Yet Zhang Yi needed to assert his dominance. "Who ordered the attack on my shelter? That person must die for us to talk."

Unexpectedly, Xu Chunlei answered eagerly, "That's easy! It was Grandpa who decided. He died from fright when he got back. So, you should be satisfied now, right?" His genuine smile made Zhang Yi's eye twitch.

"You're pleased about this, aren't you?" Zhang Yi thought, impressed by Xu Chunlei's apparent sincerity. "You're quite the dutiful grandson," he muttered sarcastically.

Xu Chunlei scratched his chubby face. "The dead are gone. The living must move forward. And this was our fault to begin with, so we can't blame you."

Seeing Xu Chunlei's earnest attitude, Zhang Yi contemplated his next move. It would be highly beneficial if he could turn this powerful ability user into an ally. Otherwise, Xu Chunlei would remain a significant threat. "Alright," Zhang Yi finally said. "I have some conditions. Let's see if you can meet them."