

Versatile 1981

Chapter 1981: Team of the Sick

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Starting from the highest altitude, Tianshan Mountain was split into the Valley of Glaciers, the Alps, the Meadow, and the Barren Land.

The Rift Valley meandered upwards, which meant the group would arrive at the Meadow after passing the Barren Land. They would be closer to the Valley of Glaciers and the location of the Scar of Tianshan Mountain.

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The Mailong Private Military Group successfully made it out of the Barren Land by following the trail of the mudslide. They had entered the Meadow, which was full of moss and grass.

It was called the Meadow because the land was covered in thick grass. The whole place was dazzlingly green, like a sacred field!

However, since the Mailong Private Military Group was traveling in the Rift Valley, they were unable to enjoy the spectacular view of nature. That being said, the Valley in the Meadow was a lot more spacious than before. It consisted of valleys, basins, and low-lying grasslands, which had also inherited the Meadow's traits.

The group saw a layer of vegetation similar to a grassy space in the Rift Valley after they reached the Meadow. However, as they ventured deeper, they noticed the walls and cliffs were covered in plants, in particular with vines bearing huge leaves. Some of them were as thick as a wall. They might even think they had walked into a dead end if they were not observing the plants closely.

A place covered in plants would obviously be home to many species, especially poisonous ones. They were supposed to be relieved after leaving the Barren Land, but now they had to stay on alert when they realized they had entered a much complicated area.

The Bone-Eating Spiders were not the only species the Mailong Private Military Group had encountered in the Barren Land, after all.

They had stumbled into a variety of species along the way, but they had managed to drive the creatures away with brute force. Under normal circumstances, the creatures in the Barren Land had no chance of stopping a strong mercenary group like the Mailong Private Military Group. Luckily, they had not encountered another cunning species like the Bone-Eating Spiders. However, they had no idea if other groups had encountered some even deadlier species.

Either way, the environment in the Barren Land had been quite simple. It was made up of rocks, sand, cliffs, and crevices. On the other hand, the Meadow was a lot more complicated, meaning there were more types of demon creatures with higher numbers. None of them dared to underestimate Tianshan Mountain after encountering the Bone-Eating Spiders!

“Old Ai, ask the Vice Leader and Gavin to come here,” Nanyu said.

“Oh, alright.”

The group had set up their camp at a spot covered with dried moss. Ai Jiangtu went to ask Kuma and Gavin over.

“What now?” Gavin asked impatiently.

“He’s dying,” Nanyu pointed at Parker who was severely ill.

Parker had been sick ever since he came to Tianshan Mountain. He could still walk on his feet at first, but he was now lying down most of the time. The other two freeloaders on the team took turns carrying him around.

“Parker, what the hell is wrong with you? Have you been staying at comfortable places for too long? Did you fall sick so easily when the conditions aren’t so favorable to you? Are you a sissy?” Gavin scolded him.

“I...I need a medic,” Parker said feebly.

“So many people are injured. The medics are busy. It’s your own problem that you are sick!” Gavin said.

“Ask Warner to come take a look,” Kuma said.

“Seriously, why must you call us over for something so trivial!” Gavin grumbled.

The medic called Warner soon arrived, but he was obviously worn out too. It seemed like he did not even have time to quench his thirst.

He observed Parker and said, “It’s the same symptoms as before, high-altitude sickness, but they are a lot worse now. Parker, it seems like this place doesn’t suit you at all. Normally, people with high-altitude sickness will recover in a day or two, but you’re getting worse instead.”

“Help...help me...” Parker pleaded.

“There’s nothing I can do. Your body has to adapt to the environment. Try taking more deep breaths,” Warner said.

Even a Healer could not do anything much for a sick patient, let alone something like high-altitude sickness.

Parker’s eyes dimmed after everyone left. He seemed to be suffering a lot, but there was no way the group would turn back now because of him.

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“He should have rested in the town.”

“Who knew it would be so serious.”

“Parker is going to die at this rate.”

Even a small fever might kill a healthy adult if it was not treated properly, not to mention the high-altitude sickness, which had a variety of symptoms. If the patient’s body could not adapt to the environment, vomiting, nausea, and edema were only some of the obvious symptoms.

Parker could no longer eat. He might even die of starvation instead of sickness.

Mo Fan and the others did not have any better ideas. Mo Fan and Ai Jiangtu tried compressing the air to provide Parker with more oxygen, but that did not work either.

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“It seems like they are going to leave him behind,” Jiang Yu shook his head.

“It’s the same for many mercenary groups. Many people fall ill when a journey is long, and most of the time, the sick can only be treated in the cities with doctors, devices, and medicine. It’s normal for the sick to be abandoned by the group,” Ai Jiangtu said softly.

It was the difference between the military and mercenaries. Soldiers were not allowed to abandon their comrades under any circumstances. Even if they were dead, they had to carry their bodies back. Mercenaries were more cold-blooded. They only cared about money and their missions.

“Old Ai, what did Gavin tell you?” Nanyu asked.

“He asked me to leave Parker behind and let him die when I found a suitable spot,” Ai Jiangtu said.

“Holy crap, did he seriously ask us to act like assh***s?” Zhao Manyan said.

“I didn’t agree to it,” Ai Jiangtu said.

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The group set out again, but before they took off, two old mercenaries carried another man and placed him in front of Ai Jiangtu and the others.

“What’s wrong?” Ai Jiangtu asked.

“He seems to be suffering from symptoms of the high-altitude sickness too. Gavin has asked us to bring him here for you to look after, since you are so compassionate toward the sick,” the gambling addict Li Yu said.

He kept staring at Mu Ningxue’s bust without concealing his lust.

“What the heck? Is our team the Team of the Sick now? Shouldn’t his team be looking after him?” Zhao Manyan grumbled.

“You should be relieved that we aren’t asking you to take care of the injured, too. Besides, there are many women on your team. It’s normal for you to be looking after the sick,” Li Yu went on

Chapter 1982: Group Reaction

The ninth team started having difficulty moving around once they had to look after two ill members. They were falling behind when the Mailong Private Military Group arrived at a place covered in frozen moss.

The Mailong Private Military Group left them markings along the way. Ai Jiangtu noticed the mercenaries had set up camp at a spot with a clear view after losing sight of them for some time.

“Is it already time to rest?” Nanyu asked.

“Something must have happened,” Ai Jiangtu judged.

“What are these mercenaries up to this time?” Mo Fan was starting to feel impatient with the Mailong Private Military Group.

When they arrived at the camp, they saw Gavin and some other people surrounding three members who were lying on stretchers.

Gavin frowned. When he saw Mo Fan and the others, he said, “Right on time, we are moving them to your team.”

“What happened to them?” Ai Jiangtu asked.

“They are ill. Same symptoms as the high altitude sickness,” Gavin said.

“We are already looking after two ill members. We won’t be able to maintain the same pace as the group,” Ai Jiangtu said.

“It’s an order. You should bear some responsibility for the group if you’re one of us. We’ll rest up here and set out again in three hours,” Gavin said.

Zhao Manyan could not bear with it any longer. He pointed at Gavin and snarled, “You’re overdoing it. We aren’t a team of medics. You should know that your people aren’t any stronger than us!”

“Huh, kid, do you think the world is short on powerful Mages? You might be strong, but can you take on the entire group?” Gavin scoffed.

“Humph, there’s no reason for us to follow you useless pricks around either,” Zhao Manyan returned promptly.

“Sure, you’re only joining us temporarily. Feel free to leave if you want. We won’t stop you,” Gavin sniffed.

“That’s enough, why are we arguing in a time like this? Team nine, you don’t want to look after so many ill members, but the other teams share the same thought. It’s quite simple, actually. We’ll just move those who are sick to that spot. If they don’t recover in three hours, their chances of survival will depend on whether they can keep up with us,” Kuma said.

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Everyone shivered after hearing Kuma's words, especially the three sick members.

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"I've already told you that if anyone slows us down while we are on a mission, they will be abandoned, including me. If you remember the terms we've agreed to, you should leave the group on your own, or else we'll have to do it the hard way," Kuma went on.

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The three ill mercenaries begged for mercy, but the rest of the group remained silent.

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The relationships between mercenaries were not as solid as the relationships in a Hunter Group. They were only after personal gain, and had no obligation to look after one another. They were only forbidden from fighting among themselves.

Every time they were on a mission, they were risking their lives. Not getting the reward was worse than dying for them!

"Bring them to our team," Ai Jiangtu said after some time.

"Are you sure? We didn't force you to take them this time," Kuma pointed out.

"I'm from the military. I can't accept it," Ai Jiangtu replied.

"Very well, let's hope you don't fall behind, or we'll have to abandon you too. You should know that more than ninety of us in the group are hoping to get enough of a reward to live a prosperous life, so they won't be happy if you are in the way," Kuma informed him.

The mercenary group had been promised a handsome reward. These mercenaries had their own principles. If someone died during the mission, they would still receive their share. They had all put down a close relative's name while signing up for the mission. If the mission was a success, the mercenary group leader would deliver the sum to the close relatives of those who died. The mercenaries might be cold-blooded and selfish, but they would stick to their principles when money was involved. The others were not allowed to claim their shares. The rule was needed to stop the mercenaries from fighting among themselves.

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"Ai Jiangtu, how are we supposed to keep going if you're taking all the ill members?" Zhao Manyan said.

"I don't have a choice, they are more cold-blooded than I imagined," Ai Jiangtu shrugged.

"I'm seriously done here. Those regular members of the Mailong Private Military Group don't even care about the sick, but we have to look after them when we are only joining them temporarily. We aren't Bodhisattvas!" Zhao Manyan spat.

“Old Ai didn’t do anything wrong. After all, we aren’t mercenaries like them. We should stick to our principles as Mages,” Nanyu disagreed.

“Mo Fan, what do you think?” Jiang Yu asked.

“We’ll just follow Old Ai’s decision. These people are all foreigners. We’ll just treat it as a chance to show them how humane our country is,” Mo Fan shrugged.

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The team now had five sick members. Jiang Yu summoned his Rock Golem and combined the stretchers with vines so the Rock Golem could drag them on the ground.

The five ill members could only lie still. The national team members could not help but sigh when they saw the ill members’ painful expressions and how cold-blooded the mercenaries were.

“What’s going on? Why are so many people falling sick?” Mu Ningxue asked. Something did not feel right to her.

“For some reason, I have a feeling it’s going to happen again,” Lingling said.

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The team set out three hours later. They had to admit that oxygen was indeed lacking in the Rift Valley. The plants were not receiving any sunlight, so they were not using photosynthesis to produce fresh air. Everyone was having trouble breathing evenly.

Guan Yu suddenly breathed heavily as if his nose was clogged.

Jiang Shaoxu turned around and asked quickly, “Guan Yu, did you get a cold?”

“I have no idea. My nose feels blocked all of a sudden,” Guan Yu used his mouth to breathe when he noticed his nose was clogged.

His breathing had turned heavier. Jiang Shaoxu kept observing him. She noticed his face was turning pale.

“Guan Yu, are you sure you’re fine?” she pressed.

“I...I’m having breathing difficulties. I feel so weak. I can’t breathe,” Guan Yu staggered before sitting down on a nearby rock. His chest was rising and falling heavily.

“Seriously? You’re having symptoms of the high altitude sickness too?” Zhao Manyan said.

“I’m not feeling well, either,” Ai Jiangtu admitted.

“Same here,” Lingling said softly.

Mo Fan was carrying Lingling on his back. He only noticed her face was pale when he turned around. She was panting heavily, like a little fish struggling to breathe with its gills.

“Lingling,” Mo Fan quickly put her down.

“I’m feeling a little light-headed,” Lingling said.

Chapter 1983: Mountain Frost Lotus

"Damn it, could it be a contagious disease? I told you we shouldn't be bringing the sick with us. Our whole team has caught the disease too!" Zhao Manyan began to panic when he saw Lingling and Guan Yu's condition.

"It's troublesome since we don't have a Healer on our team. What should we do now? A few of us have fallen ill so suddenly," Jiang Yu said.

Both Lingling and Ai Jiangtu were showing symptoms of high altitude sickness after Guan Yu, and were having difficulty breathing. They felt light-headed and sick, and they could not move, like they were overwhelmed by fatigue.

"It's...it's not... contagious..." Lingling said.

"Stop talking, just rest up," Mo Fan was worried about Lingling. He did not let her speak again.

She did not even have the strength to talk properly. The whole Mailong Private Military Group only had a single useless Healer, who was clueless about the strange disease. They could not afford to place their hopes in him.

Mo Fan looked around and asked everyone how they were doing.

Apart from Ai Jiangtu, Guan Yu, and Lingling, the others did not have any symptoms for now.

Nanyu went ahead and communicated with the Mailong Private Military Group. She soon returned with a grim face.

"More than twenty people in the Mailong Private Military Group are showing the same symptoms now," Nanyu informed them.

"Over twenty..." Zhao Manyan took a deep breath.

"What should we do now? Is the whole group going to fall sick? What the hell is causing it? Can anything other than a contagious disease take down so many people at once? We are all Mages, so we shouldn't fall sick so easily," Jiang Yu exclaimed.

"Isn't Ai Jiangtu a Super Mage? Can a Super Mage even fall sick?"

"I doubt it has anything to do with our cultivation," Mu Ningxue spoke up.

As soon as Mu Ningxue finished her sentence, a bright flame suddenly erupted in front of them. The light outlined several figures in the outfits of mercenaries. They looked fierce and angry!

"It must be them. They have spread the disease to others. The Vice Leader already told us to abandon them, yet you hypocrites insisted on bringing them along. More people have fallen ill now!"

“So what? Are you going to burn your comrades to death then, including the dozens who have fallen sick too?” Mo Fan scoffed when he saw the aggressive mercenaries.

These mercenaries were not even that strong, yet they lacked even the slightest kindness as human beings. He was relieved that he had never crossed paths with mercenaries before.

“That’s enough, behave yourself!” Kuma demanded.

“Vice Leader, we can’t afford to keep the sick members around. More people are only going to fall sick because of them. Everyone is going to die here!” The person leading the mercenaries who were throwing a tantrum was none other than Li Yu.

“We’ll split into two teams. Those who are healthy will go on ahead. If the sickness is contagious, those who are with the ill are more likely to fall sick,” Kuma said.

“But...”

“Enough talk, do as I say!”

Kuma immediately split the Mailong Private Military Group into two groups. The first group was made up of fifty healthy members. They were around three kilometers ahead of the second group. They would leave markings behind for the group who was sick.

Around thirty people in the second group were ill. Those who were healthy had to use their magic to transport them.

“Seriously, more than thirty in a group of fifty are lying on the ground. If we encounter a species like the Bone-Eating Spiders again, we are all going to die!” Zhao Manyan said.

“Our own team is sick too,” Nanyu agreed helplessly.

It was meaningless to part ways with the mercenary group now. They were all in the same situation now. They had to find the solution to it as soon as possible!

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The number of the ill kept increasing, as expected. Around ten people in the first group began to have the symptoms of high altitude sickness. Meanwhile, five out of twenty of the healthy people in the second group had also fallen ill. Mu Ningxue was one of them.

Mu Ningxue was having difficulty breathing. Mo Fan Summoned the Flying Creek Snow Wolf to carry Lingling and Mu Ningxue.

Everyone began to panic!

How did they contract the sickness? It seemed like anyone could be the next person to fall sick!

“Mo Fan, my nose feels uncomfortable,” Zhao Manyan said.

“Uncomfortable my ass, you’re just scaring yourself. Seriously, the group is being taken out by this strange disease when we haven’t encountered a single demon creature, yet we have no clue how to treat it!” Mo Fan snarled.

Zhao Manyan was fine. It was just his mind playing tricks with him.

More than half of the group had fallen ill. When the healthy ones saw them struggling to breathe, they also felt like they were struggling to breathe properly.

The first group had turned back to regroup with the second group. It was obvious that the sickness was not contagious.

If it was contagious, more people in the second group would have fallen ill while the first group remained healthy. However, ten people in the first group had fallen ill instead!

"The ratio is almost the same," Kuma said.

"If it's not contagious, it must be the environment," Warner said.

"Are you seriously telling me that you've only figured out the reason behind it after so many of us have fallen sick!?" Gavin snarled.

"Didn't we discover a few dead bodies before we left the Barren Land? I think I know what killed them. They must have encountered the same situation as us. They decided to head back to town, but they all died to the sickness after they found shelter from the mudslide," Warner spoke up.

"I don't want to hear any more useless analysis. Just tell me how they can recover, or how we can stop more people from falling sick!" Kuma said impatiently.

"There's a plant called the Mountain Frost Lotus in the Meadow. Rumors say these plants are the leaves of the Snow Lotus of the Scar that drifted to the lower layers when the ice melt. It can cure poison and treat certain diseases. We should be able to find them in this area," Warner said.

"I did hear the people at the entrance mentioning the name of the Mountain Frost Lotus," Tommy said.

"Find it then!" Kuma said.

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Mo Fan was appointed as the temporary captain of the ninth team, and had received the order to look for the Mountain Frost Lotus.

When he went back to the team to discuss with the others, Lingling murmured softly.

Lingling was trying to tell Mo Fan that she had read about the Mountain Frost Lotus in some mysterious records. She had tried to prepare them in advance before entering the Rift Valley, but she could not find them.

"It should come in handy... Jiang Shaoxu, Jiang Yu, and I will look for it with the others. Old Zhao, you and Nanyu will stay here to look after them," Mo Fan said.

Chapter 1984: The Defeat is Mine if There is Even One Left Alive!

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It was not difficult to find the Mountain Frost Lotus. The Mailong Private Military Group had not come unprepared. Tommy also took out some of the useful information he had purchased previously, and led a dozen members off to climb some hills.

The mountains were located in the Rift Valley. Some of them were like pillars connected to the outside, covered by strange-looking plants, many of which were dangling from the mountains like ropes.

“You guys, keep an eye on the entrance!”

“Don’t you worry, we won’t let those Mudcat Demons in.”

Mo Fan was standing on the opposite cliff. His job was to keep an eye on the Valley Bird Demons that were approaching from another canyon. Kuma was climbing another hill with a few of the captains to retrieve the Mountain Frost Lotus.

“You better stay on alert. If those Valley Bird Demons ambush us, I won’t go easy on you,” the captain of the fourth team said.

“Just mind your own business.”

The Valley Bird Demons were a low-level species, with wings that looked like huge banana leaves. They would normally dive at their targets like howling banshees. They were able to reproduce rapidly in a short period of time, so they did not mind sacrificing themselves for the sake of feeding their tribe.

Many high-level demon creatures struggled to fend them off, since they relied on their suicide attack.

“They are here already?” Mo Fan could already hear the bird demon’s cries echoing off the cliff.

He glanced at the edge of the canyon and noticed a large flock of green creatures moving through the air like a stream. They were approaching the group rapidly through the canyon.

The Valley Bird Demons hated sunlight. Whenever a ray of sunlight crossed their flight path, they would avoid it as if it was a solid obstacle along the way. They insisted on staying in the shadows. It looked like the flock was suddenly cut in half diagonally.

“So, you aren’t afraid of dying? The defeat is mine if even one of you manage to fly through my wall of flames!” Mo Fan raised his hands. Flames erupted from his palms.

He tossed the flames out at them. The first one landed on the narrow opening of the canyon. There were no flammable plants nearby, yet the Ardent Flame immediately set the area on fire and filled up the gap!

The Valley Bird Demons let out unpleasant, bat-like cries, but continued to advance recklessly. The double-layered flock went through Mo Fan’s flames directly. They were treating the bodies and wings of the Valley Bird Demons on the outside as protective clothing.

Mo Fan was still holding another flame in his hand. He did not panic even when he saw many Valley Bird Demons flying toward him.

The captain of the fourth team turned around when he heard the loud screeches of the Valley Bird Demons. He yelled when he saw Mo Fan's petty flame about to be put out by the flock of Valley Bird Demons, "Is your energy as valuable as gold? Why aren't you using your Advanced Mages? Idiot!"

Mo Fan glanced at the Valley Bird Demons toward the back and noticed they had entered the vicinity of his flames. He finally hurled the second flame out.

The tongue of flame seemed like an ordinary fireball on the surface. However, when it landed amid the burning flames in the canyon, it was like a catalyst. The wall of flames instantly grew into a sea of flames over a few dozen meters high. The flames immediately devoured the Valley Bird Demons.

The taller the wall of flames, the thicker the flames. The Valley Bird Demons on the outer layers could not endure the heat. Even the Valley Bird Demons in the inner layers were burned into ashes.

The Ardent Sunset was strong because every living creature on fire served as fuel to the flames. Creatures that liked huddling together were always its favorite. It was not going to spare any of them!

The fierce flames were producing loud crackling sounds as the creatures were burned to death. Mo Fan could even smell a pleasant aroma when the wind blew toward him.

"It seems like these Valley Bird Demons are a great ingredient for cooking. Unfortunately, the flames are a little too strong," Mo Fan smiled when he picked up the pleasant smell.

Meanwhile, the captain of the fourth team was struggling to fend off the startled Mudcat Demons. They were also not a high-level species. Their strength was their ability to use the shadows and dim surroundings as cover, making it difficult for their enemy to keep track of them. They were good at ambushing their prey.

As Mo Fan expected, the fourth team failed to fend off the Mudcat Demons in the end. Almost thirty of them broke through the defense and chased after Kuma and her men.

"Idiots, you can't even keep the Mudcat Demons away!" the Vice Leader yelled like a ferocious beast.

The captain of the fourth team had an awkward face. He glanced at Mo Fan who seemed quite relaxed.

"Do you need help?" Mo Fan asked.

"If you're willing..." the captain said shamelessly.

"Unfortunately, I'm not..."

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The low-level Mudcat Demons were not much of a problem for the powerful Vice Leader, but it meant they had to waste their time taking care of the demon creatures first.

"Vice Leader, I got it!" Tommy said.

"Retreat, we must leave now. More demon creatures are coming this way!" Kuma said.

"Our path has been blocked by an unknown species."

"Force our way through!"

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The Mailong Private Military Group was quite impressive. They managed to withdraw in one piece even as they were surrounded by demon creatures.

When they retreated along the same path, another group was ready to receive them. It did not take the band long to break free from the encirclement of the demon creatures.

They returned to the campsite. It was getting dark, and they only had a few torches to light up the camp. The Light Mages were not willing to use their spells, since they had to preserve their energy.

“We’ve found the Mountain Frost Lotus. What now?” Kuma asked.

“I think we just need to boil it in water and drink it.”

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Warner plucked the petals of the Mountain Frost Lotus and boiled them with drinking water.

A pleasant aroma soon rose from the pot. Those who were ill immediately felt a lot better after smelling it. They opened their eyes and looked at the source of the smell.

“It seems to be working!” Kuma was overjoyed.

If the aroma alone was already so effective, everyone would soon recover from the illness by drinking the water!

“Be careful, the smell might attract demon creatures to us,” Tommy reminded them.

“Humph, once our people recover, we’ll kill every single one of them!” Kuma swore.

Chapter 1985: The Outbreak, Part One

The group boiled the Mountain Frost Lotuses with water. They soon served bowls of the remedy to the patients.

“Damn it, they are only giving it to their own people. These selfish pricks!” Zhao Manyan was displeased when he saw the other teams had received the antidote first.

“Why are those who aren’t sick drinking it too?” Jiang Shaoxu pointed out.

“Apparently they are drinking it as a preventive measure. The disease is pretty odd. It feels like anyone might fall ill at any second. They are afraid they will fall ill next, so they all drank the remedy too,” Mo Fan said.

While they were talking, Kuma finally sent someone over to give them the remedy. She seemed to be pleased with Mo Fan’s contributions at the cliff.

“Do we all have to drink it?” Mo Fan asked.

“Yes for everyone’s sake,” Kuma said.

They brought the remedy to Lingling and Mu Ningxue. Its pleasant aroma was energizing. Mo Fan took a sip before feeding it to them to make sure it did not have any side effects.

Apas was standing beside him. She kept staring into the bowl Mo Fan was holding.

“I think you shouldn’t feed it to them,” Apas said.

“What do you mean?” Mo Fan looked at her.

“Us medusae have a great sense of smell. For example, if something poisonous is placed in front of us, no matter how alluring and delicious it seems, our instincts will stop us from eating it like other brainless creatures. There’s something fishy about its aroma,” Apas said.

“But I didn’t feel anything after drinking it,” Mo Fan said.

“Of course you’re fine. You’re almost immune to poison because of the Black Snake Armor,” Apas pointed out.

The Black Snake Armor was able to protect Mo Fan from most poisons, but it was not necessarily effective against certain Poison Spells. Mo Fan had yet to find himself a new suit of Armor.

“Oh, I almost forgot about that... but the others seem to have recovered after drinking it.” Mo Fan looked at the other patients.

The guy called Parker had been the first to fall ill. His condition was the worst, but he was immediately filled with energy after he drank the remedy.

“They won’t die anytime soon. You better observe them for a little longer. It’s not too late to feed them the medicine if nothing happens to the others,” Apas said.

Mo Fan thought about it. He believed in Apas’ instincts when it was related to nature.

Apas’ ability to predict danger was an innate talent of their species, and more impressive than Mo Fan’s Dark Vein. They had a strong awareness of other creatures and their surroundings.

Mo Fan believed it was necessary to respect a Medusa’s warning.

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“Great, everyone has recovered!”

“This Mountain Frost Lotus is pretty useful. The patients are feeling a lot better after drinking the remedy. They even feel more energetic than before. If the Mountain Frost Locus already has such magical uses, won’t the Sacred Lotus at the top of Tianshan Mountain be able to bring the dead back to life or extend a person’s lifespan?” Gavin blurted out excitedly.

“Yeah, let’s set out right away. We can’t let something so valuable fall into others’ hands.”

“Let’s go, there’s nothing to be afraid of in the Rift Valley!”

The Mailong Private Military Group was suddenly motivated after they found the cure to the disease. They could not wait to venture deeper into the mountain.

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The disease had slowed the group down significantly, but the Mailong Private Military Group finally continued on with its mission. Everyone's stamina had improved after consuming the remedy. Not a single person complained about fatigue.

"Team nine, send someone to scout this path over here," Gavin said.

"I'll do it," Jiang Yu said.

"I'll go with you." Nanyu was worried about Jiang Yu.

The two followed the path Gavin was pointing to. The group soon discovered a few crossroads branching off it. Kuma assigned the other teams to scout the paths.

There were too many forks along the way. The group soon discovered a few more unexplored canyons.

The group was further split up. The ninth team only had a few members left. Some of the patients on the team still had not recovered. Mo Fan had no choice but to ask Zhao Manyan to keep an eye on them.

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"It's too inconvenient like this. Should we let them drink the medicine too? It doesn't seem like there's any problem after so long," Zhao Manyan asked Apas.

Zhao Manyan and Apas had stayed behind to look after the others.

"Walden, don't just sit there and do nothing. Go patrol the area with those guys and make sure there isn't any danger nearby," the captain of the tenth team said.

"Oh, got it!" Walden nodded. He immediately rose to his feet.

As a rookie, patrolling under someone's lead was a great way to gain experience. However, Walden noticed the gorgeous girl staring at him in a weird way. He blushed when their eyes met.

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Walden followed four other mercenaries to scout the path that was opposite the direction of the wind. They were soon over a kilometer away from the group.

"Walden, go check out the cave down there," Li Yu said.

"There's nothing in it."

"I said check it again!" Li Yu demanded.

Walden did not dare oppose the old mercenary, and went into the cave. It was pitch-black, even the faintest light devoured by the darkness. Walden purposely looked Li Yu in the eyes. He noticed a strange look in them... Walden immediately recalled the way the little girl was looking at him before he left.

“Was he trying to...” Walden felt a great chill behind him.

Walden turned around and saw black gas rising from Li Yu’s body, whose eyes were glittering like a ferocious beast. Walden immediately felt his hair standing on its end!

The man was trying to kill him!

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Many people had now moved away from the group. Only a few had stayed behind to keep a lookout for demon creatures.

Mu Ningxue was lying in her tent, breathing with difficulty. She had no clue why Mo Fan had not let her drink the medicine, but she believed in his judgment.

She was still fully awake when she heard footsteps outside the tent.

They did not belong to Zhao Manyan or Apas. The footsteps were heavier, and were accompanied by a strong presence.

Chapter 1986: An Outbreak, Part Two

A figure suddenly rushed into a tent. Mu Ningxue slowly opened her eyes. There was no sign of panic in her eyes.

“I must say, even if I have to pay them money instead of winning seven times what I’ve bet, I’m willing to do it as long as I can have an enjoyable night with you. You are seriously the most attractive woman I’ve ever met.” Gavin stood there admiring Mu Ningxue, who was lying inside the tent.

He was looking at her beautiful face, her fair and long neck, and her delicate body.

“Didn’t your Vice Leader tell you anything?” Mu Ningxue sounded a little weak.

“Her? What could she say? That woman... to be honest with you, when she was still attractive around ten years ago, she was also a plaything in our group. The old mercenaries all have their own stories of how they fooled around with her after some drinks. If she hadn’t been lucky enough to become a Super Mage a few years ago, there’s no way she would have been appointed the Vice Leader,” Gavin said while stepping closer to Mu Ningxue.

“Three steps,” Mu Ningxue said.

“What did you say?” Gavin smiled. He added, “I’ve made sure there’s no one around. Don’t worry, it’s only us now.”

The mercenaries enjoyed gambling, but everyone who took part in the bet knew it was Gavin who had suggested the bet related to Mu Ningxue.

The more Gavin thought about how such a beautiful woman was with an insignificant young man, the more he wanted to show his manliness.

"One last step." Mu Ningxue stared at Gavin.

"Don't be afraid, we'll be zero distance from one another... oh, my bad, it should be negative distance," Gavin grinned.

Mu Ningxue's eyes flickered with disdain. She closed her eyes as an icy glow rose from her fingers.

A lunar-white gap appeared behind Mu Ningxue, like something connected to another world. A howling gust of icicles burst out of it and knocked the shocked Gavin into the air.

The icicles stabbed into Gavin. His blood squirted out as he flew over sixty meters and slammed into a wall.

The impact shocked everyone. It felt like the roar of a powerful creature from close by.

"What just happened?"

"I heard a loud roar!"

"Colonel!"

Several mercenaries quickly followed the sound and saw Gavin lying on the ground in a pool of blood.

Gavin was as furious as a lit fuse. He was glaring at Mu Ningxue in the distance.

Mu Ningxue had already risen to her feet. Even though she was struggling to stand properly, a powerful Aura was circling her like a living beast.

"You dare attack me!" Gavin yelled.

Mu Ningxue did not respond. The man was as good as dead in her eyes. There was no point in talking to a dead man.

"Colonel, maybe we should just forget it..." Xu Luoqing advised.

"Humph, I'm in charge here!" Gavin snapped.

Xu Luoqing clearly knew what Gavin was up to. He should just bear with it since he was injured and had been discovered. Otherwise, he would not be able to explain himself once the rest of the members of the ninth team returned.

"That woman dared to attack me. What are you all waiting for? Get her!" Gavin ordered the others around him.

"Colonel, I don't think that's a good idea. Let's wait until the Vice Leader is back."

"You're not going to listen to your colonel!?" Gavin was enraged.

They had poked Gavin's sore point when they mentioned Kuma's name. A blazing red flame engulfed him. He was using it to conceal his Star Constellation.

The mercenary beside Gavin suddenly spat a mouthful of green matter onto Gavin's face as he was about to complete his Star Constellation.

"Do you want to die!?" Gavin was infuriated. He glared at the mercenary as if his eyes were set aflame.

The mercenary fell to the ground before Gavin had the chance to do anything. His body was twisted in an odd way, like he was suffering from a stroke.

A few mercenaries nearby had the same symptoms. Their noses were blocked with the same green matter. It erupted from their stomachs when they tried to wipe their noses.

Only their nose was blocked at first, but their mouths were soon clogged too. The tense atmosphere suddenly felt weird when five mercenaries were having the same symptoms.

The afflicted mercenaries all fell to the ground. Even Gavin was lost for words. Why did it feel like everyone had been poisoned all of a sudden?

"Colonel, colonel, Parker... he's dead... my gods, what's happening to everyone!?" Tommy came over to report something when he saw the mercenaries falling to the ground.

"I...I have no idea," Gavin was dumbfounded.

"Colonel, they are dying too," Xu Luoqing blurted out.

"They are the ones who fell ill before!" A mercenary quickly noticed the connection between those who were having the symptoms.

"Didn't they recover?"

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The others who went scouting returned to the camp after receiving the news.

When they made it back to the camp, they saw over a dozen dead bodies on the ground, each with green matter pouring out of their eyes, noses, mouths, and ears.

Even Kuma was shocked. So many of her men had died so suddenly!

"It seems like only those who were ill before have died..." Warner murmured.

"You assh***, didn't you say the Mountain Frost Lotus could treat them? Why are they all dead now!?" Kuma snarled. She almost had the urge to feed Warner to her Man-Eating Flower.

"I have no clue either! Nothing on Tianshan Mountain makes any sense!"

The mercenary group was troubled by the strange deaths. It was scarier than the sickness that had been troubling them previously. Not a single person who had fallen ill before had survived, including those with outstanding cultivation.

"By the way, Vice Leader, not one of the members on the ninth team has died," Tommy noticed.

Kuma led her men over to the ninth team. Ai Jiangtu, Lingling, Mu Ningxue, and the others were alive, but they had yet to fully recover from the sickness.

"I need an explanation!" Kuma glanced at the ninth team coldly.

"I'll give you one," Mo Fan had just come back from a trip into a deep canyon, and had a hard look on his face.

Chapter 1987: Condemning the Mailong Private Military Group!

"Humph, perhaps you are the reason they are dead!" someone immediately rebuked him.

Mo Fan ignored the comment. He walked up to one of the dead bodies and said, "The Mountain Frost Lotus is the source of the illness in the first place. Its pollen will spread in the air and cause symptoms similar to high altitude sickness to certain people.

"Many plants have fruits. These fruits are eaten by animals when they are ripe, and the seeds are spread to other places by the animals when they defecate. It's how these plants spread their seeds.

"It's the same for the Mountain Frost Lotus. It will make living creatures sick so they have to rely on its fruits to relieve them from the symptoms. The Mountain Frost Lotus is effective against poisons, but that doesn't include the sickness it causes itself.

"Consuming the Mountain Frost Lotus is like eating its fruit. Those who consumed it are carrying its seeds around. These seeds aren't discharged through defecation. They will kill their hosts and use the nutrients in their bodies to nurture themselves. The dead bodies will grow into a new Mountain Frost Lotus after some time."

While Mo Fan was talking, he pried open one of the corpses of the mercenaries and tore the heart out.

He squeezed the heart in his fist. A huge amount of green liquid burst out of it. As everyone was disgusted by the sight, a tiny sprout with legs jumped out from the liquid like a flea and dug into the ground in a panic.

Mo Fan casually grabbed the sprout demon that had jumped out from the heart and showed it to Kuma.

The demon sprout was strong, even though it was only around the size of a little finger, and it was also very aggressive. It quickly extended its roots toward Mo Fan's nose, attempting to suffocate him.

Mo Fan's eyes glittered. The little creature's roots immediately shattered into pieces.

The mercenaries were terrified. It turned out that such an insignificant creature was responsible for so many deaths!

Most importantly, the Mountain Frost Lotus which even the locals believed could cure a lot of sicknesses and poisons, had such a cruel reproductive method. It had cost over a dozen lives in the Mailong Private Military Group without alerting them!

"If you already knew what's going on, why didn't you tell us earlier?" Gavin yelled.

"I discovered a group of dead Hunters below a cliff when I went scouting just now. Their symptoms were similar to the dead bodies we saw at the Barren Land. I also noticed a lot of Mountain Frost Lotus down the cliff, and under them were a lot of skeletons. I also encountered a plant demon that was as big as a pine tree, so I killed it," Mo Fan replied.

When Mo Fan went scouting, a few of the mercenaries who went with him had died to the sickness too.

Mo Fan immediately recalled what Apas had told him. He had followed the pleasant scent that the Mountain Frost Lotus was emitting and then discovered the cliff.

Before Lingling fell severely ill, she had given the samples she had collected from the dead bodies in the Barren Land to Mo Fan. He had easily figured out what was going on!

It was also not Mo Fan's first time encountering demon plants that disguised themselves as harmless existences.

"So... those who drank the water that was cooked with the Mountain Frost Lotus..." Tommy immediately felt uneasy, especially after seeing the tiny demon sprout that had jumped out of the dead mercenary's heart.

"Only those who are sick are suitable hosts for the sprout demons. Those who aren't are safe even if they drank the water. They will only lose control of their emotions and do something like killing their comrades for the sake of money," Mo Fan said.

Li Yu shuddered as Mo Fan finished his sentence. "I didn't do it!" he argued.

"I wasn't referring to you," Mo Fan replied grimly.

Another mercenary fell to the ground in front of Kuma.

"I didn't want to kill Simon. I swear, the demon lotus was controlling me. I... I didn't..." the old mercenary almost burst into tears.

"Didn't he list you down as his next-of-kin if anything happened to him? He trusted you so much!" Tommy let out a helpless sigh.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry!" the old mercenary almost bled from knocking his head on the ground.

"What about you? Don't you have something to say?" Mo Fan glanced at Li Yu and said, "The guy called Warden on my team hasn't returned yet. I thought he went scouting with you?"

"Li Yu, don't tell me you actually killed Warden for the sake of the bet..." Xu Luoqing looked at Li Yu like he was a monster.

Li Yu's face turned pale.

Kuma stared at Li Yu like a leopard eyeing his prey. The man finally spilled the beans after he could not withstand the pressure any longer, "He somehow noticed my intentions. I didn't kill him. He ran away with serious injuries. Maybe some demon creatures have already dragged him into their caves."

"Li Yu! Are you out of your mind!?" Xu Luoqing, the captain of the tenth team, snarled at him.

"I...I don't know what happened... It's like... I somehow lost control of myself as he just mentioned," Li Yu said.

The group fell silent.

Kuma immediately did a headcount when she realized how terrifying the Mountain Frost Lotus was.

She found thirty-three of her men had been killed by the Mountain Frost Lotus to spread their seeds while five of them were still missing, including Simon, who was thought to be dead, and the rookie named Warden.

The atmosphere was weird in the group. Those who were not sick were mentally unstable because of the Mountain Frost Lotus. They had no clue whether the other three who were missing had died to demon creatures or one of their own!

"You did well. You've managed to find the truth. Tianshan Mountain... such a terrifying place... I'm considering turning back," Kuma told Mo Fan. She had finally acknowledged the ninth team's capabilities.

"Vice Leader, I don't care what your men have done, but there's one thing I won't overlook so easily." Mo Fan's tone had changed.

Mo Fan sounded calm when he was explaining the truth. He was scoffing a little at those who had ulterior motives among them, yet his voice had turned cold very suddenly!

"About Gavin... I heard what he tried to do, but nothing actually happened. Gavin has also paid for it," Kuma said immediately.

"Are you treating me like a three-year-old? Are you saying that I should forget it just because nothing happened? I'll make it clear: you people who see yourself as elites in this group are no different from a bunch of useless dogs in my eyes. If I want you dead, none of you can leave in one piece, including you, their Vice Leader!" Mo Fan said as a dark shadow loomed over him.

The canyon was already quite dark, but it was now shrouded by a dark veil. The mercenaries who had assumed everything was fine suddenly felt like there were assassins standing behind them!

The eerie shadows behind the mercenaries were quite obvious. They could see shadows standing behind one another like executioners holding axes to their necks. It was a spooky sight!

"What...what do you mean by this!?" Kuma's expression shifted.

"I'll let you choose: whether you're going to protect Gavin and have the whole Mailong Private Military Group die together with him, or you and your men will behave yourself and stand aside when I kill him," Mo Fan stated icily.

Chapter 1988: Isn't It Better to be Alive?

“Do you think I’m afraid of you?” Kuma said proudly.

“Either you are all going to die, or only that piece of trash is going to die. I don’t care whether you’re afraid or not,” Mo Fan replied grimly.

Kuma scanned her surroundings. She was a Super Mage. As a matter of fact, the Mailong Private Military Group had three Super Mages. Colonel Gavin was also one of them.

However, the terrifying shadows had already placed their axes on everyone’s necks. Kuma was totally unaware of when Mo Fan used his magic, or that he could just kill everyone in a short burst!

Either way, Mo Fan was right. The mercenaries were as helpless as useless dogs in his eyes. Once he gave the order, over seventy percent of them would die instantly!

Kuma was not afraid of Mo Fan. She actually believed she was stronger than the young man, but her men were most likely going to die!

“It’s your personal matters. I won’t intervene with it. However, I won’t do anything if you’re killed by him, either. Don’t overestimate yourself. You don’t want to mess with Gavin,” Kuma finally said.

Personal matters!

It was exactly what Mo Fan was hoping to hear. It was unnecessary for him to kill all of them. Luckily, Kuma still had enough brains to make the wiser choice!

—

The demon sprouts were the true cure to the illness. Mo Fan gave Ai Jiangtu, Lingling, Mu Ningxue, and the others the water he had boiled with the little plants. They all recovered in no time.

“I’ll do it myself,” Mu Ningxue told Mo Fan.

“Let me handle it. You’re my woman. I should show them the consequences of messing with my woman,” Mo Fan stated firmly.

Mu Ningxue did not say another word.

Mo Fan approached Gavin. The Colonel seemed to have some privileges in the group. A few female mercenaries were treating the wounds that Mu Ningxue had inflicted on him. Gavin was still unaware of what was going on.

“Don’t bother treating the wounds. He’s going to be messed up soon,” Mo Fan stood close to Gavin. He was staring down at Gavin, who was sitting on the ground.

Gavin looked up and burst out laughing. He said, “You already mentioned we have lost control of ourselves. You have such a beautiful girlfriend. I bet every man in the group has dirty thoughts about her. You are a man too, I bet you can understand.”

“Of course I do, I swore to make her my woman during our first encounter. Unfortunately, thinking about it and actually doing something are two different things,” Mo Fan replied evenly.

Wasn’t it normal for men to have dirty thoughts?

Mo Fan did not mind what the men in the Mailong Private Military Group were thinking. He could not care less about their lowly bets, either. Even those who were not addicted to gambling had taken part in the bets out of curiosity. However, only Gavin had tried to act on his evil thoughts.

Was it because he had lost control of himself?

Obviously not. He would do the same thing whenever he had an opportunity, even if he was not under the influence of the Mountain Frost Lotus!

"I can tell that you've done similar things in the past," Mo Fan said.

"So what? Are you a cop or a judge? Go ahead and sue me. I'm willing to be jailed if I'm sentenced guilty," Gavin answered confidently.

"Nothing happened to you before because the women you preyed on were too weak. However, it seems like you've used all your luck, since you've stumbled into someone you shouldn't be messing around with, like me," Mo Fan answered simply.

"You think too highly of yourself. Please enlighten me with your petty skills!" Gavin rose to his feet with a formidable aura.

Gavin was a Fire Mage. Flames burst out of his body and spread rapidly the moment he stood up. The others quickly backed away.

"You've made a mistake standing so close to me!" Gavin swore.

White tongues of flame burst out of his body. The flames from before were only little sparks that had leaked out of his body. The real deal was the blinding flame on his body. Even his blood and bones were visible under the bright flame. The blood flowing in his body was about to erupt like scorching lava!

The man was like a ticking bomb of wild flames!

The two female mercenaries were terrified. They quickly ran for their lives while Mo Fan remained where he was standing.

"You're asking for it," Gavin yelled when Mo Fan's inactivity ridiculed him.

The flames exploded and surged wildly through the canyon!

The ground within the flames trembled from the force. The forest soon turned into a sea of flames. The steep cliffs collapsed, while the uneven landscape was scorched black.

The people of the Mailong Private Military Group were all well aware of Gavin's strength. They had long moved to a safe distance and set up a defensive barrier. However, many people were still knocked flying and injured by the flames.

The closer they were to Gavin, the stronger the impact from the explosion. Mo Fan was only a few steps away. No one apart from Gavin could possibly survive the impact!

"I'm the one whom you shouldn't have messed with, imbecile!" Gavin took a deep breath. His body was releasing white steam like a steam engine, cooling down after executing the powerful move.

The white steam dissipated rapidly. Gavin had a grin on his face. He began searching for the young man whom he expected to be lying on the ground like a dying dog.

However, he saw a dark figure only a few steps away from him as he was trying to focus!

For some reason, the figure's outline was blurred like a phantom. It slowly returned to normal and reclaimed its color as time went by.

"You...you...you..." Gavin's face twitched like he had just seen a ghost when he saw Mo Fan at the same spot with a mocking grin on his face.

The younger man was unharmed!

Even a Ruler-level creature would be knocked flying by the explosion at such a close distance, yet not even a corner of the young man's shirt had caught on fire. How could he possibly be standing in the same spot and staring at him in such a terrifying manner?

"Colonel, isn't it better to be alive?" Mo Fan asked him rhetorically.

"You...you're a monster!" Gavin cried out in disbelief.

The Dark Aura circling Mo Fan thickened. It looked like his outline had grown deeper somehow...

He clenched his hand like a claw and swung his arm. The Elder of the Darkness Tribe that was attached to him immediately pounced forward like a starving fiend!

Chapter 1989: Demon Scythe of the Shadow Tribe

The Elder of the Shadow Tribe did not have a muscular upper body like last time. It was more like a Grim Reaper, holding a scythe in its hands. When it appeared, it immediately released Soul Chains of the Dead and nailed Gavin to the cliff like the opening of a dark ritual!

Gavin had never seen a spell like it. The magic Shield and Armor he activated were completely useless, and his back slammed hard onto the cliff, his body almost sinking into the wall. The chains intertwined like a spiderweb, but were eerier and more domineering, as if they were going to Seal the entire wall!

The Elder of the Shadow Tribe let out an eerie laugh, like it was about to enjoy something.

The scythe it was carrying started swinging rapidly, so quickly that only a few black lines were visible.

The Elder of the Shadow Tribe did not show any mercy. After a few slashes, Gavin's chest burst open as blood poured out from it. His magic Armor was completely useless.

His blood flowed down the wall continuously. It was a shocking sight.

The scythe continued to slash at Gavin's other body parts. Even his bones were soon visible. His cries of agony were echoing in everyone's ears and dove straight into their hearts.

The process only lasted for a while, yet it felt endless to Gavin. The people of the Mailong Private Military Group could only feel chills running down their spines.

Was that really their Colonel? He had no chance of fighting back whatsoever!

A skeleton with a well-preserved head now hung on the wall. Its twisted face clearly showed the torture and pain its owner had experienced right before death. It no longer had any signs of life, yet it would wear its terrified expression forever. It was none other than the mercenaries' Colonel Gavin!

Kuma was completely dumbfounded. On top of the great shock she was under, she was a little relieved.

She felt lucky that she had not provoked the young man's wrath. She would have had no idea on how to defend herself from the eerie demon that had rendered Gavin defenseless!

She recalled how Mu Ningxue had warned them not to seek their death when the woman and her friends had first joined the group. She finally realized Mu Ningxue was dead serious at the time. Even Gavin did not stand a chance against them!

Mo Fan's cruelty stabbed the old mercenaries right in the heart. Their minds were filled with Gavin's horrible death if they had the slightest imagination about, let alone did anything disrespectful to, the women. Not just Mu Ningxue, the Mailong Private Military Group also began treating the rest of the women on Mo Fan's team with utter respect. They did not even dare to peek at them inappropriately!

"Mo Fan, you're seriously an expert at this!" Jiang Shaoxu raised her thumb at Mo Fan.

Seven out of ten among the older mercenaries were perverts. Jiang Shaoxu always felt like they were stripping her with the way they were staring at her. She had been feeling extremely uncomfortable.

The situation had now improved. The old mercenaries even had an urge to prove they were actually homosexual so they could claim they were innocent.

"By the way, we are lucky that we are with a bunch of mercenaries. If it was a normal Hunter Group, they would most likely turn back after losing so many members after an incident like that," Zhao Manyan said.

Mercenaries were much more tenacious, and would keep going regardless of the number of comrades they had lost. Their fear was usually surpassed by their desire for glory and fortune!

There were more demon creatures of many species in the Meadow. They also had to be extremely cautious around the plants, in addition to the demon creatures!

Plant demons were not common, and were the hardest to be cautious around. Most of them would just swallow a human without spitting a single bone out.

Luckily, the Mountain Frost Lotus had taught the Mailong Private Military Group a huge lesson. The group was oddly cautious whenever they discovered something that might be valuable along the way.

The trick saved many of the mercenaries. Humans would die for riches, just as birds would die for food. There were indeed a lot of valuable resources along the way, but in a place like Tianshan Mountain, every valuable had a certain danger around them. They were either deadly or some demon creatures

were staying close to them. The mercenaries barely survived by being extremely cautious, but other Hunter Groups, Mages, and mercenaries were not so lucky.

There were a great many dead bodies along the way with unknown causes of death. It was difficult to say how many groups had managed to leave the Meadows in one piece.

The information related to the Meadows that Lingling had purchased came in very handy. There was information on whether the valuables were safe to claim, and the appropriate way to retrieve them. It also mentioned if they were related to some other even more valuable resources.

The people of the Mailong Private Military Group were afraid of the ninth team after what had happened to Gavin. However, when Lingling told them how they could make a fortune, they immediately had a much better impression of the ninth team. The fear they had was replaced with respect!

Mercenaries were given a commission and potentially high reward for every mission, including insurance payments if they died during the mission. In addition to those payments, everything that the mercenaries found during the mission would belong to them. Kuma made sure the group was happy with how the loot was allocated.

The average loot that every member in the group now had was already worth more than the money they had received when they signed up for the mission. Didn't they sign up for the mission to make money? If the mission was a success, the pay was more than enough for them to live a luxurious life for a while!

"Having a huge group is definitely better. We wouldn't bother wasting our energy claiming the available resources if we were on our own," Zhao Manyan exclaimed.

"Yeah, we should still be in a good spot when we reach the Scar of Tianshan Mountain with them around," Ai Jiangtu agreed.

"We can also claim a lot of valuables. This Tianshan Mountain is seriously a land of gold. Even a stalk of grass by the road is more valuable than the grass outside!" Jiang Yu was overjoyed.

"Yeah, the Condense Grass is an important raw material to produce serums that are effective at stopping bleeding. Normally, it would take more than ten years for these grass to grow and blossom more than a hundred times before they would be considered high quality. They are rare in the deep forests and mountains, yet they are so common here on Tianshan Mountain. Some of them have even lived for a hundred years and have blossomed more than a thousand times. If the pharmacists manage to find a safe path here, they can easily make a fortune from these valuable herbs and plants," Guan Yu spoke.

"It's really just a small fortune for us!"

"Mo Fan, didn't you say you killed a Mountain Frost Demon Lotus? The Mountain Frost Lotus is already so expensive, and is very useful despite its cruel reproduction method. Doesn't that mean the Mountain Frost Demon Lotus is far superior?..." Zhao Manyan asked after he recalled something.

"I've managed to acquire a Queen Sprout Demon," Mo Fan confirmed.

“Holy crap, that thing is a money-printing machine! It’s possible to nurture a Queen Sprout Demon with the right method! You might be able to mass-produce serums with effects similar to the Mountain Frost Lotus!. You could easily build a business with it!” Zhao Manyan exclaimed.

Chapter 1990: Tianshan Demon Tigers

Antidote Serums were usually more expensive than Blood Serums and medicine, especially those that could cure multiple poisons and diseases. Almost every Hunter Group would choose Antidote Serums over magic Equipment. After all, not every Hunter Group had a Healer!

If a normal Sprout Demon was already enough to be the ingredient of an Antidote Serum, a talented Plant Mage could easily turn the Queen Demon Sprout into something that kept producing the Demon Sprouts.

“The coasts have a high demand for these Antidote Serums. You might have to spend a little money to produce your specialized Antidote Serums, if you find a way to nurture the Sprout Demons,” Zhao Manyan said.

“Mm, that’s not a bad idea,” Mu Ningxue nodded.

A mature renowned clan had to have a symbolic asset before expanding into multiple domains. Fanxue Mountain currently had a lot of members. The taxes they were collecting from the residents were nowhere enough to feed everyone, nor were their funds sufficient to help them grow. They had to continue to grow their economy.

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The Mailong Private Military Group cautiously retrieved the valuables. They were a little reluctant to leave the resource-abundant Meadow layer.

The real treasures of Tianshan Mountain lay in the higher mountain Alpine reaches and the Valley of Glaciers, since they were pure and unmarred. The mercenaries were looking forward to the higher layers after earning a fortune in the Meadows.

The vegetation at the Alpine level was obviously thinner. There were only more steep cliffs and rocks around. Due to the huge difference in altitude, it felt like they were venturing deeper into the shadow of a cliff when they were in the Rift Valley.

They finally exited the dim valley and arrived at a well-illuminated canyon.

The canyon did not even seem to be inside a ravine. Massive mountain walls stood on both sides. The undulating peaks could almost reach the sky. Some of the peaks even had obvious snow lines. The purity of the white snow reflected the sunlight, highlighting the meandering outlines of the mountains in the distance.

"Did anything happen to Tommy? It's already been half a day, but he hasn't reported back," Kuma said sternly.

"Was he in some kind of trouble?" Xu Luoqing said.

"He would alert us if he was in trouble."

"Let's wait for a while."

The group decided not to advance recklessly, and was scouting the situation ahead. Heaven knew if they would be surrounded by demon creatures under one of the cliffs.

"I can smell blood," Ai Jiangtu pointed ahead with an alert face.

The wind was blowing from a greater height. The cold breeze was like a whip soaked in cold water. Ai Jiangtu kept staring ahead into the Rift Valley, which differed greatly from the surrounding terrain.

A figure was jumping around by bouncing off the irregular rocks nimbly. It gradually grew in size from a dot to someone recognizable.

"Tommy!" Xu Luoqing yelled.

"He's injured!" Ai Jiangtu quickly went forward to receive Tommy.

The third team was scouting the path ahead, and Tommy was its leader. He had brought four members with him to survey the complicated terrain, but he was the only one that made it back. He was now covered in blood.

Ai Jiangtu quickly reached Tommy, who was fleeing for his life in a panic. He purposely looked behind Tommy to see what he was being chased by, but he only sensed some unsettling movements in the distance. The thing that was chasing him had disappeared.

"Demon tigers... it's the Tianshan Demon Tigers, the others are all dead!" Tommy cried out.

"What happened? Wasn't your squad able to conceal its presence?" Kuma asked.

"I don't know how it found us. We were actually quite a distance away from it. However, it was approaching us before we even noticed its existence," Tommy reported urgently.

"It?" Xu Luoqing emphasized.

"Just one?"

"Yeah, just one," Tommy nodded.

Even Tommy did not expect a single Tianshan Demon Tiger to wipe out the entire squad. The scouts had basically trespassed into the territory of a king of the mountain. They did not stand a chance!

"We've reached the Alps, where the Tianshan Demon Tigers reside at. The place ahead must be the territory of a single Tianshan Demon Tiger."

"The Tianshan Demon Tigers have strong territorial instincts. They will chase their enemies recklessly. No one knows how to avoid them."

The contractors of the Mailong Private Military Group were strong, but they were like mere goats to the Tianshan Demon Tiger.

“Let’s set up a camp and rest here. We’ll discuss our next steps tonight,” Kuma ordered.

“Set up the camp here!”

—

The Tianshan Demon Tigers were a powerful species, the predators of the Alpine level. The Mailong Private Military Group could handle the powerful species by fighting with their full strength, but it also meant they were going to lose some of their men.

The Tianshan Demon Tigers were unpredictable. The strength of an adult Tianshan Demon Tiger ranged from the Commander-level to the Ruler-level. It was fine if the Tianshan Demon Tigers they encountered were only at the Commander-level. The Mailong Private Military Group was not afraid to fight Commander-level creatures, but if they were in the Ruler-level...

If they were not well-prepared, the Mailong Private Military Group, including the ninth team of the strongest members of the national team, would be killed instantly by a Ruler-level Tianshan Demon Tiger. As such, they had to be extremely cautious after reaching the Alpine Level. The whole group might be wiped out because of a wrong step!

“Let me scout the path ahead. The third team is only going to feed themselves to the Tianshan Demon Tiger,” Guan Yu said.

“You sure you can handle it?” Ai Jiangtu asked.

“Of course. It won’t be a problem for me.”

Kuma knew the ninth team was extremely reliable. She was relieved when Guan Yu volunteered to scout the path ahead.

“You have my thanks!” Kuma said.

Most of the members on the third team had the Wind and Earth Elements, granting them outstanding speed. If even they had struggled to escape from the Tianshan Demon Tiger’s pursuit, not many people in the Mailong Private Military Group would dare to act alone.

“I’ll ask Night Rakshasa to go with you. She can keep an eye out for you too,” Jiang Yu said.

“Meow?” Night Rakshasa was lying lazily on Jiang Yu’s shoulder. She immediately put on a blank expression.

Night Rakshasa was trying to say, “Why didn’t you go with him instead? What do you mean you’re just going to send your Contracted Beast to scout the path ahead?”

“Well, I’m slow and clumsy, but you’re quick. You and Guan Yu can retreat if there’s any danger,” Jiang Yu explained to the creature in an awkward voice.