

Ad Infinitum 171

Chapter 171: Why Not Dance

Jiang Baimian couldn't face dozens of guards alone. All she could do was watch them to prevent anyone from finding an opportunity to blow up Shang Jianyao's head from a spot he couldn't see.

In any case, if anyone dared to do anything abnormal, she would use the pistol to 'point' them out.

However, this wasn't a solution that resolved the root cause of the predicament. Her mind raced as she felt like she was walking on a tightrope above the abyss.

After a second or two, Jiang Baimian laughed and loudly spoke in a helpless tone. "This companion of mine has always had a problem with his brain. He has been seeing a psychiatrist for quite some time. To put it simply, he's mentally ill and a lunatic.

"This time, we came to Weed City to save up money by completing missions. This is so he can find a better doctor. Everyone, I'm not joking. He really dares to press the button; don't bet your life on a lunatic's guts. What can a lunatic not do? He even dares to kill himself!"

Zhao Zhengqi and the others saw that Shang Jianyao had good looks, was young, and had a beautiful companion. Thus, they found it unlikely that he was a ruthless person who would risk his life and have everyone in the Council Chamber die with him.

They were just considering exerting some pressure to make him panic and reveal flaws when they heard those words.

Their hearts tightened, and their plans came to an abrupt stop.

This didn't mean that they completely believed Jiang Baimian, but they were afraid of what might happen.

What if this person was really a lunatic?

He may not want to live, but others wanted to live!

At this moment, Oudick recalled Shang Jianyao's various actions. Although he was unwilling to admit it, he still reminded everyone, "There really might be something wrong with his brain. This is also our first time working together, but I did feel that he was abnormal."

Oudick said this because he was worried that the nobles would be too rash and worsen the conflict, causing everyone to be blasted to kingdom come by Little Mushrooms.

Shang Jianyao didn't feel insulted by such an evaluation. Instead, he smiled and nodded. "Yes, I have a doctor to prove it. I can show it to you later."

As he spoke, his gaze moved back and forth between Jingnian and Advanced Hunter Oudick. He then smiled and added, "I know that both of you are Awakened and that there might be even more here. But I have to tell you in advance that the faction behind me is very good at making biological prosthetics. There are also auxiliary chips inside. Even if the range is suitable now and you might find an opportunity to control me with your abilities, my finger might still be able to press down."

As Shang Jianyao spoke, his smile grew brighter. He looked around and said, "I might have been lying or telling the truth. You can guess its veracity."

Upon seeing his smile, Xu Liyan, Zhao Zhengqi, Francesco, the other nobles, and their bodyguards inexplicably shivered as if they had experienced hidden madness.

The more dazzling Shang Jianyao's smile was, the more they felt gloom under their skin.

Jingnian, Oudick, and the others knew that Shang Jianyao was very likely lying, but they didn't dare take the risk and think that he was definitely lying.

In particular, Jingnian had a strong premonition for danger. This made him believe that the lunatic really dared to press the remote control and detonate all the explosives.

The Six Realms of Reincarnation's Animal realm—which he had prepared—ultimately wasn't used.

As far as he was concerned, he wasn't too afraid of such an explosion. Even if his mechanical body would definitely be destroyed, he could be restored in half a month as long as the heavily protected core components remained intact.

Behind Shang Jianyao, Jiang Baimian resisted the urge to roll her eyes and chuckled inwardly. He even learned this move...

Everything Shang Jianyao said was the truth. Even if the mechanical monk, Jingnian, could mind-read, he wouldn't have discovered any problems.

The only problem was that their deduction from these words could only be: Shang Jianyao had a biological prosthetic limb and an auxiliary chip. He could detonate the explosives, even while under control!

Jiang Baimian was actually the one with the biological prosthetic limb and an auxiliary chip.

In a sense, this was a large-scale Inference Clowning that didn't actually use an Awakened's ability.

Upon seeing that everyone present seemed to be stunned, Jingnian spoke in an electronic voice. "Namo Annutara-Samyak-Subhuti. Patron, why are you doing this?"

"Guess," Shang Jianyao said with a relaxed smile.

He's really crazy... Xu Liyan, Zhao Zhengqi, and the others completely believed Jiang Baimian's words.

This kind of madness and neurosis couldn't be acted out!

At this moment, Jiang Baimian coughed and stopped Shang Jianyao from 'provoking' Zen Master Jingnian. After all, every mechanical monk had a sore spot. Once it was hit, they would go crazy on the spot.

If Shang Jianyao angered Zen Master Jingnian for some reason, he would kill all the nobles present first. Then, there would be no more hostages!

Before Shang Jianyao could speak, Jiang Baimian spoke to the guards outside the door. "The first request is to close the door."

After closing the door, the guards outside wouldn't be able to determine Shang Jianyao's exact location, so they wouldn't dare to fire rashly. This would reduce the pressure on her when defending.

Just as she said that, Shang Jianyao looked at Xu Liyan and the others and expressed his confusion with a nasal voice. "Mm—?"

Xu Liyan gulped and shouted, "Close it! Close the door!"

The guards followed his orders and assigned a few people to close the door to the Aristocratic Council Chamber slowly.

Only then did Shang Jianyao raise the explosives, carry the pistol, and walk to the long table.

"Have a seat. Have a seat. There's always room for negotiation." Shang Jianyao enthusiastically invited the aristocratic councilors, who were huddled in different spots.

As she walked beside Shang Jianyao and helped him monitor Oudick, Jingnian, and the commotion at the door, Jiang Baimian only had one comment: He's going overboard!

She even suspected that this fellow really had a mental spasm.

"No, no, it's fine. We can hear you." Zhao Zhengqi forced a smile onto his face and replied to Shang Jianyao's invitation.

Xu Liyan took the opportunity to say, "There's always room for negotiation. It's fine if you want weapons, ammunition, food, gold, oil, coal, or marijuana!"

He was still young and had only been Castellan for a few years. He didn't want to meet his ancestors today.

Shang Jianyao slowly sat in the chair at the end of the long table and awkwardly said, "I'm wondering how many pieces all of you will end up in after I press the switch to blow you up. Sit, have a seat. I can't have others say that I'm rude, right?"

Upon seeing his persistence, Merrick didn't dare object any further. He retreated bit by bit and sat down.

With him taking the lead, Zhao Zhengqi and the others walked to the meeting table and returned to their seats.

Their bodyguards and attendants stood behind them, staring at Shang Jianyao's finger.

"You c-can voice your request now, right?" Xu Liyan tried his best to lower himself.

Shang Jianyao smiled and looked around. "After we repel the wilderness nomads, everyone will donate any excess food and medical supplies. Gather the survivors and help the city's citizens. You have to stabilize Weed City as soon as possible and revive it."

This request... Is he Weed City's Castellan, or am I Weed City's Castellan? Xu Liyan almost doubted his ears.

This only served to deepen Zhao Zhengqi and the others' belief that Shang Jianyao was a lunatic.

On the other hand, Oudick thoughtfully looked at Shang Jianyao and Jiang Baimian. He no longer intended to take the risk of using the ability to force him to sleep.

After a few seconds of silence, Xu Liyan asked, "Do the targets—which aid is to be provided to—include those wilderness nomads?"

Shang Jianyao replied without hesitation. "Yes."

While all the nobles were a little stunned, Jiang Baimian added, "Gather them up and interrogate them separately. Those who have killed before will swap positions with the slaves in your manor. With so many people dead, be it the city defense forces or the Castellan Guard, they will definitely need replenishment."

Xu Liyan's gaze flickered slightly as he asked, "Any other requests?"

"Yes." Shang Jianyao smiled and nodded.

This answer made Zhao Zhengqi and the others heave a sigh of relief.

They didn't believe that anyone could sacrifice their lives to save the refugees and drag the nobles toward death. This was definitely a request in passing.

At the end of the day, it had to benefit himself.

“Yes... Let's finish this first before talking about the rest.” Shang Jianyao smiled at the fat Zhao Zhengqi. “Let's start with you; call your trusted aide.”

Without waiting for Zhao Zhengqi to speak, Shang Jianyao smiled and asked, “What do you think they will do if I tell them: ‘This person is up to something, and I want to blow up his head? If you choose to help him, I'll press the switch.’”

Facing the smiling face, Zhao Zhengqi swallowed his saliva with difficulty. “You can hear everything I say; I definitely won't dare to play any tricks.”

Zhao Zhengqi had no intention of insinuating anything else with his words. If he didn't do a good job and was seen through, the conflict would immediately escalate. Thus, he was prepared to use an open and aboveboard method.

Zhao Zhengqi quickly took out his phone and called his trusted aide. He issued out orders one by one according to Shang Jianyao's instructions.

The entire process was flawless. However, his trusted aide was outside and knew that he was being threatened. Therefore, he definitely wouldn't do it immediately; he had to wait and see.

After making the aristocratic councilors make their phone calls, Shang Jianyao slowly stood up and said, “The second requirement will be different for everyone. We'll do it one by one.”

He carefully retreated to a corner far away from the long table and loudly called out to the mechanical monk. “Zen Master, you first.”

Jingnian gained his boldness from his capabilities. There was nothing he couldn't abandon, so he didn't hesitate and walked over.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao handed the black remote control to Jiang Baimian and smiled at everyone. "She also has a biological prosthetic limb."

Jiang Baimian cooperatively made electric arcs spark from her left finger.

The ironclad truth made Xu Liyan and the others rejoice that they hadn't been rash or taken any unnecessary risks.

After controlling the scene, Shang Jianyao looked at Jingnian—who was almost two meters tall. He stared at Jingnian's blinking red eyes and asked with a suppressed voice, "Zen Master, do you know Master Jingfa?"

This way, the nobles at the long table couldn't hear what was being said.

"He's my junior brother," Jingnian replied frankly.

Shang Jianyao then said, "Look, I know Master Jingfa and have heard him preach the Buddhist Dharma. I also helped stop the Castellan from blowing himself up, helping you complete your mission. So..."

The red glow in Jingnian's electronic eyes flickered faster before quickly returning to normal. He then chanted a Buddhist proclamation and said in an electronic voice, "Since you are an ally of the parish, this Penniless Monk is willing to help you."

"Thank you, Zen Master." Shang Jianyao stretched out his hand again and shook Jingnian's hand. "You can go back now."

After watching Jingnian return to Xu Liyan's side, he shouted at Oudick, "Mr. Ou, you're second."

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The guards waited for nearly 20 minutes outside the Aristocratic Council Chamber before they finally saw the door open slowly.

Shang Jianyao, Xu Liyan, Zhao Zhengqi, Francesco, and the others came out with their arms around each other's shoulders. They were all smiling.

Zhao Zhengqi looked around and found his trusted aide. He laughed and said, "The misunderstanding has been cleared. Do as you were instructed. My brother's business is my business!"

As the guards stared in disbelief, Jiang Baimian—who was following behind—took the opportunity to take out Wei Yu and the others' photos. "Quick, search the vicinity for these three people."

Since the Anti-intellectualism Church wanted to shift the blame, the remaining Old Task Force members had definitely infiltrated Castellan Manor.

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In a study in Zhao Manor.

The second son of the Zhao family—Zhao Yixue—stood by the window, holding his phone as he talked to someone.

On the other end of the line, a slightly hoarse voice said with a smile, "Listen carefully later. The sound of the explosion will be a salute to your becoming of Castellan."

"Explosion? Then, what about my dad and brother?" Zhao Yixue was rather stunned.

On the other end of the line, Father chuckled. "They will, of course, go to Paradise together. Think about it. If they were still around, you wouldn't become Castellan, even without Xu Liyan and the other nobles. I know you can't bring yourself to do it, so I'll help you. You're welcome.

"Don't worry. With First City's support, the rest won't be able to stir up any waves."

Amidst Zhao Yixue's silence, his trusted aide walked into the study and leaned toward his ear to report the situation.

On the other end of the line, Father smiled and asked, "How was it? Did you hear the explosion?"

Zhao Yixue replied with a strange expression, "There was no explosion... Th-they are currently dancing in the Council Chamber..."

"Dancing?" Father asked. He didn't say anything for a long time.

Chapter 172: Quelling the Chaos

On the top floor of Ah Fu's Gun Shop.

Bai Chen placed the Orange rifle on the edge of the rooftop and fired down in a rather awkward posture.

Bang!

Among the wilderness nomads attempting to break through the barricades at the courtyard's entrance, one person fell face down, blood flowing.

Bai Chen wasn't greedy; she immediately retracted her body and dodged the group's subconscious counterattack.

After a round of random firing, the group of wilderness nomads—who had lost their leader and commander—could only retreat in a rather messy manner due to the relatively abundant firepower in the courtyard.

They fled in different directions.

Long Yuehong heaved a sigh of relief when he saw this. He quickly checked his firearms and reloaded them. This was a rifle that he had borrowed from Ah Fu's Gun Shop's boss, Auntie Nan's brother; it could be used as a sniper rifle.

He and Bai Chen used this opportunity to occupy the high ground and cooperated with the neighbors behind the barricade to deal with the scattered wilderness nomads and a small number of city guards, who had lost their discipline.

Long Yuehong had also grasped sniping techniques during training. However, he usually didn't have the chance to familiarize himself with them. After wasting more than ten bullets, he gradually got into the groove. He could now take an enemy out with two to three bullets.

Compared to him, not only did Bai Chen hit every target with one bullet, but she was also good at observation. She could always find the enemy leader and target them.

This way, the enemies would become disorganized and disperse after a few shots.

"I wonder when it will end..." Long Yuehong looked down from the rooftop and sighed.

Although their defensive efforts had been very successful and easy, nobody knew what awaited them as long as the city continued to be in chaos.

"Soon." Bai Chen looked back at North Street. "As long as Weed City's upper echelons aren't wiped out, these wilderness nomads won't be a match for them when they catch their breath and regroup."

The simplest fact was that the city guards had yet to counterattack. No matter how bad they were, they were regular troops that had undergone training and often fought in the wilderness. It was impossible for them to collapse so easily.

Furthermore, in the residences of the nobles at North Street, every family could produce multiple cannons at any time, take out a few machine guns, and organize a very capable private army.

In addition, Bai Chen had also heard that the Castellan used the Hunter's Guild to cooperate with Mechanical Paradise closely. It was possible that they were hiding some secret weapon.

Just as she said that, Bai Chen heard a slightly deep rumble.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Salvo continuously boomed from North Street, and the ground gently shook.

Long Yuehong felt the building tremble. For a moment, he didn't know if the city defense forces had finally counterattacked or if the wilderness nomads had seized enough cannons and begun bombarding the barricade.

After this round of firing, intense gunshots sounded.

Before long, a commotion surged south from North Street as if a large number of people were running toward the city gate.

Right on the heels of that, a loud voice sounded through the clouds. "Put down your weapons and squat down with your hands on your head. As long as you surrender, you will receive aid. You can also enter a manor and become a slave."

The repeated warnings echoed in the city as the commotion and gunshots slowly subsided. As long as there was a way out, very few people would stubbornly resist to the end.

Long Yuehong and Bai Chen looked at each other and exhaled. "It's finally over..."

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Castellan Manor, Aristocratic Council Chamber.

Sitting at the end of the long table, Shang Jianyao stroked the small speaker with a blue bottom and a black surface as he spoke to everyone in satisfaction. "Isn't it nice how everyone is so harmonious, working together to fight against an external enemy? If there really is any conflict, just have a dance battle or an arm wrestle. Or perhaps see who can stare without blinking for the longest time."

Xu Liyan took a deep breath and agreed. "That's right! We're all brothers and sisters, so how can there be any obstacles that we can't surmount?"

“No, no,” retorted the slow talker, Merrick. “We need to have a hierarchy. You still have to call us uncles.”

Xu Liyan was just about to respond when a guard came over from the door and reported happily, “Castellan, the first counterattack has scattered those wilderness nomads! Due to the promise of aid, many of them have given up resisting. Order in the city is slowly being restored. The city guards that we previously lost contact with have been found and organized.”

Xu Liyan heaved a sigh of relief and smiled. “As expected, things need to work in concert. We can’t be stingy at a time like this. Mercy might not necessarily be worse than selfishness. Different situations require different methods.”

After this battle, Xu Liyan felt that his authority had been established to a certain extent. However, everyone was a brother, so there was no need to force the issue.

After Xu Liyan gave the orders to deal with the aftermath, he saw another guard rush to the door.

“Castellan, the wilderness sentry in First City’s direction reports: A regular army from First City has appeared and have met up with a few slave hunter teams.”

Xu Liyan narrowed his eyes. “As expected...”

Jiang Baimian wasn’t surprised at all. After confirming Father’s true goal, she suspected that there was a faction in First City behind the matter or that it was the direct will of First City’s Senate.

They had long wanted to swallow Weed City—a fat piece of meat with great autonomy—completely.

Xu Liyan then looked around and smiled. “If we can’t resolve the chaos quickly, they will have sufficient reason to station themselves here and stabilize the situation for their subordinate faction.”

With that said, he turned to look at Uncle Liu. “Send out a drone team and bomb the wilderness plains in front of that army. Tell them that we’ve quelled the unrest and ask them not to approach to prevent any collateral damage. Heh heh, these large-scale fireworks should be able to entertain both the guests and the host.”

“Yes, Castellan!” Uncle Liu replied before reminding him, “Bear in mind that harmony is still the most precious thing.”

“I understand.” Although Xu Liyan was angry, he didn’t lose his reason.

For them, be it the resources they could obtain, the trade they could participate in, the protection they could obtain, or the degree of autonomy, staying under First City’s protection was the best choice.

Upon seeing that the situation had been reversed and all matters were on track, Jiang Baimian signaled Shang Jianyao with her eyes.

Shang Jianyao quickly stood up. As he placed the small speaker back into his tactical backpack, he said, “We still have something on; we have to go.”

“You have to come to the ball after things calm down!” Zhao Zhengqi’s eldest son extended an invitation, reluctant to see Shang Jianyao go.

“If I’m free,” Shang Jianyao replied with glistening eyes.

Xu Liyan looked around. “Don’t you still have three people with you? It’s inconvenient without a car. Men! Drive my custom bulletproof SUV to the door.”

After giving the instructions, he looked at Shang Jianyao and sincerely said, “I hope you will like it.”

“Then, I won’t stand on ceremony,” Shang Jianyao replied with a smile.

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The military-green bulletproof SUV drove out of Castellan Manor and slowly headed toward the municipal building along North Street.

Jiang Baimian looked at Wei Yu and the others in the backseat and asked Shang Jianyao—who was in charge of driving. “How long can your Inference Clowning last?”

This would determine how long they had to escape from Weed City.

During the previous search, they had—without any surprises—discovered Wei Yu and the other members of Lei Yunsong’s team. n/o/vel/b//in

Originally, an intense battle was inevitable, and it was very likely that casualties would arise. However, Oudick happened to be involved. With the help of suppressive fire, he found an opportunity to put Wei Yu and the others into a deep sleep.

As many guards were nearby back then, Jiang Baimian didn’t let Shang Jianyao use Inference Clowning to deal with the aftermath. She also didn’t directly wake Wei Yu and the others up and attempt to snap them out of Hypnosis by exchanging pleasantries.

She chose to anesthetize them superficially and bring them back for treatment.

As Shang Jianyao drove, his body swayed slightly. “They’ve already formed a circular loop. If nothing goes wrong, it will last for at least half a month. Usually, even if you encounter something contradictory to your inferred outcome in life, it will be drowned away by the circular loop of facts as long as it’s not something especially intense or completely at odds with you. This will accumulate until it reaches a critical point.”

“That’s good.” Jiang Baimian nodded first before asking curiously, “You only made them think that you were a brother and that they were touched by your spirit, so they chose to help. This has nothing to do with many things in real life. The possibility of a negative example appearing is rather low. What will happen if there’s no negative example at all?”

Shang Jianyao seriously made a guess. “The Aristocratic Council will become a Brotherhood Council then.”

Jiang Baimian laughed. “That’s unlikely since they have real-life conflicts with each other. As time passes, they will discover something amiss sooner or later.”

At this point, Jiang Baimian turned around and looked at Shang Jianyao. She then asked seriously, “Do you think you did anything wrong regarding what happened just now?”

Shang Jianyao thought for a moment and said, "I should've sent you away first!"

Jiang Baimian rolled her eyes. "That's the wrong choice!"

She sighed and helplessly said, "At least give me a signal before you do something. Don't launch a sudden attack. If I had reacted a little slower, we really would've died!"

"Alright." Shang Jianyao agreed.

When they returned to the alley where Ah Fu's Gun Shop was, the city's order had already been restored. All the obstacles blocking the courtyard entrance had been removed.

After settling Wei Yu and the others down, they didn't go out again. They stayed in the room and listened to the sporadic gunshots.

At 5 p.m., the sky gradually darkened, and Weed City finally stabilized.

Shang Jianyao and the others split into two groups. They left the alley and went to South Street to confirm their current situation.

At this moment, people were sitting in front of many shops—which had been smashed to smithereens. They were either bending their backs and looking at the ground, sobbing softly, or looking at the street in front of them, crying silently.

The streets were filled with patrolling city guards. Many citizens and nomads helped collect corpses in order to obtain more food.

The dead were dragged away one after another, leaving behind blood-red streaks on the ground.

Long Yuehong suddenly felt a chill run down his spine, and he subconsciously looked up at the sky.

The low-hanging clouds were like lead. Glistening shards of ice fell down in increasing numbers.

Long Yuehong stared at this scene dazedly. As he stretched out his right hand to receive the snow, he said softly, “It’s snowing...”

Chapter 173: Art of the Gap

The snow had long stopped, but white residue continued covering the roofs and the sides of the road.

Jiang Baimian ignored Shang Jianyao’s attempt to mold a super-large snowball and smiled at Lei Yunsong, Lin Feifei, and the others. “Let’s have a good chat when we return to the company.”

The previous chaos had come too suddenly. Their mission was completed before they could get their hands on the self-assembled radio transceiver. Thus, they could only contact Chen Xufeng—who was in charge of Weed City’s matters—and report the general situation to the company through him. They also helped Lei Yunsong’s team apply for basic supplies.

In the end, the company got Chen Xufeng to prepare two cars, enough food, and the corresponding weapons and ammunition to last Lei Yunsong’s team for half a month. They were to return to the underground building as soon as possible to report for duty and undergo psychological evaluations and trauma treatment.

Lei Yunsong—whose eyes didn’t seem to be fully open—pressed the door as he replied to Jiang Baimian. “You mustn’t forget about making contact with the people from Mechanical Paradise. They definitely know some secrets regarding the Old World’s destruction!”

In their previous exchange after their recovery, Lei Yunsong, Lin Feifei, and the others recounted the reason for their team’s arrival in Weed City and their subsequent encounters.

They had discovered a few broken chips that originated from intelligent robots in a wilderness nomad settlement to the south.

After the repairs, decryption, and data restoration, they extracted some useful information. This information told them that the chips came from Mechanical Paradise’s robot guards. They had been attacked by hostile forces during a certain trade transaction and suffered heavy losses. As a result, some of the components had been lost.

Apart from its origins, the term ‘mainframe’ repeatedly appeared in the retrieved information. It gave one the feeling that the ‘mainframe’ had already occupied every industry in Mechanical Paradise—one couldn’t escape its control, no matter what aspect of life it was.

In addition, some of the timestamps in the information indicated that the ‘mainframe’ had likely existed before the Old World was destroyed and had already been put into operation.

In order to confirm these matters and obtain more information, Lei Yunsong’s team chose to come to Weed City and begin the investigation from the local Hunter’s Guild. This was because it had close cooperative ties with Mechanical Paradise.

It was clearly impossible for lowly wilderness nomads to be treated as equals. In order to ensure that the inquiry went smoothly, Lei Yunsong deliberately chose the best hotel and used their actions to show that they had a large faction backing them.

They didn’t know when the Anti-intellectualism Church’s Father took a fancy to them. They could only be certain that they had met the sickly man after they went to North Street and visited the Castellan.

Jiang Baimian tersely acknowledged Lei Yunsong’s ‘request’ and said, “It will ultimately depend on the company’s arrangements. The information you found might very well put you in charge until the end.”

Lei Yunsong exhaled and said, “We might not have a chance to go out into the field after we return. Our team might very well be disbanded.” n/o/vel/b//in

After working in the Old Task Force for so long, they still had a certain level of affection and obsession regarding this matter. Therefore, they hoped that Jiang Baimian’s team could take over this trail of clues and investigate further to give them an answer.

Jiang Baimian consoled him. “That depends on the final evaluation. There’s still a high chance.”

Lei Yunsong looked at his team members and smiled. “This is actually a good thing since all of us have families. Every time we leave the company and come to the surface, we would feel nervous and afraid that we won’t be able to return. Look, we almost perished this time.

“Taking this opportunity to transfer all of us to some internal department can be considered a blessing in disguise. We no longer have to let our wives, children, parents, and brothers worry about us anymore. After all, I’ve roamed the Ashlands for many years and visited many places. I’m much better than most of the company’s employees. Yes, I should be satisfied.”

It’s quite obvious that you’re a little reluctant when you put it that way... Sigh, very few company employees—who are accustomed to living on the surface—won’t miss the outside world, even if it’s filled with danger... Jiang Baimian inwardly criticized before smiling and waving her hand.

“Regardless of the final outcome, it’s a good thing. At least you will return alive. Have a safe journey!”

“See you later!” Lei Yunsong and the others waved their hands, opened the door, and got in.

After watching their car drive to South Street, Jiang Baimian slowly exhaled and spoke to Shang Jianyao, who was beside her. “How many times has it been? Why do you still have such high hopes?”

Shang Jianyao was again biting the large snowball that he had made.

“I’m just thirsty,” he replied vaguely.

Jiang Baimian clicked her tongue and walked toward the bulletproof SUV that Xu Liyan had given her. “It’s time for us to do something.”

As she spoke, she turned around and waved at Bai Chen and Long Yuehong—who were behind the second-floor window—indicating that they should get busy with their own matters.

After all, Eugene’s slave hunters were still outside the city, and the mission to hunt down the kidnapers was still ongoing.

The latest news Bai Chen obtained was that, after a short gunfight, Eugene’s gang had decided on a new leader and inherited the slave capturing certificate.

The new leader clearly didn’t want to find Eugene. He only wanted to capture the ‘real culprit’ and show his brotherhood to convince the masses.

After throwing away the large snowball in his hand, Shang Jianyao slid into the driver's seat and started the car.

Since Long Yuehong hadn't opened the window, Shang Jianyao gave up on the idea of throwing the snowball at him—this would damage the glass.

“There are two things to do next.” Jiang Baimian—who was in the passenger seat—leaned back and took out Chen Xufeng's ‘reply.’ Then, she simply said, “First, find Xu Liyan and make it clear that we are from Pangu Biology. We hope to establish a mutually beneficial relationship. Second, personally interrogate the fake Father and obtain as much information about the Anti-intellectualism Church as possible.”

This was a new mission given to them by the company.

As Shang Jianyao had been engrossed in playing with snow for the past two to three days, Jiang Baimian was worried that he hadn't been seriously listening back then. Thus, she could only repeat herself.

“It's already a mutually beneficial relationship.” Shang Jianyao spoke as if he and Xu Liyan were sworn brothers.

Jiang Baimian scoffed. “How long can this last? It's also because the company noticed a rift between Xu Liyan and First City that it decided to try roping him in. If it succeeds, we won't have to worry about not being able to leave Weed City, even if you brothers have a ‘falling out.’”

Relations that involved interests were the easiest and most stable relationship to change.

Shang Jianyao thought for a moment and asked, “What's a mutually beneficial relationship?”

Jiang Baimian casually explained, “It just means that we aren't on the same page in terms of status, but we can earn money and enjoy the benefits together. We can also provide some support depending on the situation. In short, the directors will definitely be satisfied if we can drive a wedge between First City and Weed City that can make the former suffer.”

“Why are they like children?” Shang Jianyao commented.

Jiang Baimian rolled her eyes.

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As a sworn friend of the Castellan, Shang Jianyao easily met Xu Liyan.

Beside Xu Liyan was Jingnian—who still wore a long, hooded robe.

Upon seeing Jingnian, Shang Jianyao gently swayed his body with a strange rhythm before Jiang Baimian glared at him to stop.

“Castellan Xu, I have something to discuss with you.” Jiang Baimian signaled with her eyes that it wasn’t suitable for Zen Master Jingnian to hear her.

Xu Liyan smiled and shook his head. “Given my relationship with Jianyao, feel free to say anything. Yes, don’t worry about Zen Master. There’s a confidentiality agreement between us, and the monks have always been trustworthy.”

Jiang Baimian didn’t insist; she pulled out the chair opposite the desk and sat down. She then smiled and said, “Castellan Xu, have you considered increasing your strength?”

Upon hearing this, Shang Jianyao turned his head to glance at his team leader and shut his mouth tightly.

Xu Liyan’s expression turned serious. “What do you mean?”

Jiang Baimian’s gaze swept from Xu Liyan to Jingnian before she retracted her gaze. “Take this attack for example. Once the enemy breaks through the bodyguards’ blockade and restricts Zen Master Jingnian’s actions, you will be like a lamb waiting to be slaughtered. At that time, others can do whatever they want.

“I know that you can hire many bodyguards, including the guild’s Advanced Hunters. Normally speaking, it’s very difficult for anyone to assassinate you. However, it’s better to be safe than sorry.

If your strength can be enhanced, it might spell victory at a critical moment. You should know very well that there are too many weapons in this world that exceed the norm, as well as humans.”

To Xu Liyan, the Father incident was the most dangerous situation he had ever faced since he was born. Every time he thought about that critical moment—the trembling from fear, the loneliness, and the helplessness—he would feel uneasy. This translated into nightmares for several days.

“Then, what should I do?” Xu Liyan tried his best to appear less anxious.

Jiang Baimian smiled. “In the Ashlands, there are many ways to enhance oneself, but very few are beyond the norm. The first is to become an Awakened, but that really depends on fate. It doesn’t mean that one can succeed by working hard or by having power and status.

“The second is to upload one’s consciousness and become an Eternal. This is indeed quite a temptation for humans in their later years. But Castellan, you are still young, and there are still many things that you haven’t enjoyed.

“The third method is mechanical modification. With your relationship with First City, it won’t be that difficult. However, you might not obtain the best equipment. Furthermore, your image isn’t that good...”

After saying that, Jiang Baimian changed the topic. “Look, my biological prosthetic limb doesn’t appear abnormal from the outside, but it has an ability that transcends a human’s capability.”

Silver-white electric arcs sparked out of her fingers.

Xu Liyan fell silent for a moment before saying, “Are you from Pangu Biology?”

“Yes,” Jiang Baimian replied with a smile. “Compared to immature genetic modifications, biomechanical prosthetics tech is already relatively reliable.”

Xu Liyan quietly stared at Jiang Baimian for more than ten seconds before finally asking, “What do you want?”

Jiang Baimian smiled. “We want very little; you’ll still live, and you will still control Weed City. You’ll also continue maintaining Weed City’s freedom. This is enough for us. If we can still buy

some items that normal commerce can't buy here, we will be very grateful. Castellan Xu, it's impossible to maintain balance by placing a chip on one side of a scale."

Xu Liyan thought for a moment and didn't answer directly. "I'll consider it."

Chapter 174: Interrogation

On the way to the fake Father's holding cell, Shang Jianyao spoke, calling a spade a spade. "He's so hypocritical. He was clearly very tempted, but he still said that he wanted to consider it."

He was referring to Weed City's Castellan, Xu Liyan.

Jiang Baimian glanced at Shang Jianyao. "It's very normal. He would've appeared unprincipled if he agreed too quickly."

"What's important between brothers is sincerity." Shang Jianyao objected.

Jiang Baimian followed his logic and said, "Just because you're brothers with him doesn't mean that the company is brothers with him."

Jiang Baimian originally wanted to tease him by saying, "If you have the ability to make all the board's directors become your brother, it will be equivalent to the company and Xu Liyan becoming brothers." However, she dismissed the idea in time when she considered how Shang Jianyao was a man of action.

As they spoke, they arrived at the holding cell and met the in-charge.

After showing Xu Liyan's warrant, the two of them were ushered into a small room.

The room's main body was a control console. There were many screens above the control console.

At this moment, all the screens showed one scene: a small room with only one bed and one chair.

In the small room, the sickly fake Father was sitting in a chair and looking at the wall opposite him. A large screen seemed to be there as well.

“He has powerful Hypnosis abilities; it’s best if the two of you don’t have any close contact with him. It’s safer with an electronic product between you.” The in-charge briefly explained the reason for the holding cell’s current design.

Jiang Baimian naturally couldn’t tell the person-in-charge that Shang Jianyao was also an Awakened and could make friends with the fake Father. Hence, she only nodded and said, “That’s good.”

After she and Shang Jianyao sat down, the scene on the screens connected with one another as the person-in-charge ran the terminal.

This gave people the feeling that there was only a piece of glass between them.

The door to the small room opened, and a silver-gray metal robot walked in. It then switched on the screen opposite the fake Father.

Clearly, humans couldn’t hypnotize machines.

The power of technology... Jiang Baimian sighed.

Before long, the fake Father saw the situation in the surveillance room through the screen.

“It’s you,” said the sickly man calmly as he leaned back in his chair.

Jiang Baimian immediately smiled. “You sure are calm.”

The fake Father raised his head slightly and said, “Since I have the nickname ‘Father,’ I definitely would’ve prepared to die for the cause long ago.”

His tone was calm as if Jiang Baimian and the others were locked up instead of him.

Jiang Baimian knew that such people had very strong self-logic. If one followed their pace and ended up subscribing to their logic, it would be very difficult to delve deeper and ask them for valuable details.

Of course, if it really didn't work out, they could still get Shang Jianyao's Brotherhood member—Oudick—to help. But this was relatively troublesome because dream guidance was clearly directional. It didn't cover a wide range, so Oudick would have to try again and again.

Jiang Baimian then turned her head and signaled for Shang Jianyao to ask the questions.

This was her strategy; she wanted the unconventional Shang Jianyao to disrupt the fake Father's rhythm.

Shang Jianyao didn't hesitate to ask, "What's your Anti-intellectualism Church's Holy Communion?"

Shang Jianyao had a rather serious expression as if he were asking an important question.

The fake Father was stunned, having the feeling that the momentum he built up had come to an end.

This question wasn't something worth paying attention to, so the fake Father casually replied, "Things like rice soup, lotus root starch, and stewed eggs that are easier to digest."

"Do all of you treat yourselves as infants?" Shang Jianyao questioned suddenly.

The fake Father was stunned again. He thought for a moment before saying, "Humans are born with instincts. Our goal is to make most people only have instincts and experience."

"It's fine for a baby to eat such Holy Communion, but it doesn't give adults a sense of satiety. They can only experience this occasionally." Shang Jianyao completely ignored the fake Father's response and spoke to himself. "Really, you should communicate more with the parishioners that believe in the Arbiter of Fate."

The fake Father couldn't keep up with this fellow's train of thought at all. Thus, he chose to give up and shut his mouth.

“I think your religious organizations are too insular. If we can communicate, exchange views, and absorb each other’s strengths often, you will definitely be able to attract more believers than you do now. At the very least, I will consider it,” Shang Jianyao suggested.

The veins on the fake Father’s forehead twitched as he resisted the urge to retort.

“Speaking of which, are all the people of your religion stupid? For example, you spent so much effort but failed to do anything and even ended up being locked up here.” Shang Jianyao looked like he wanted to discuss the failure of the Anti-intellectualism Church’s education with the fake Father.

The fake Father’s breathing became slightly heavier as he replied in a deep voice. “I was just unlucky to encounter you and Oudick together.”

“Luck?” Jiang Baimian seized the opportunity and said with a smile, “When you learned that Lei Yunsong and the others were from Pangu Biology and chose to use them as scapegoats, you should’ve realized that Pangu Biology would definitely send people to investigate. Furthermore, these investigators would be more capable ones. In such a situation, shouldn’t you carry out the plan as soon as possible?”

“Who knew that you guys would drag it out for a month and a half until we arrived before officially starting? Do you have a problem with procrastination, or do you subconsciously have suicidal tendencies? If it’s none of the above, then I can only regretfully believe that your brain has been sacrificed to Last Man.”

The fake Father took a deep breath and said sullenly, “We waited for the weather to get colder so that a large number of wilderness nomads would be gathered.”

“You could’ve totally changed your plan; why were you so rigid? Your goal was to assassinate Xu Liyan, not to mess up Weed City.” Jiang Baimian was like an instructor, sharply striking at the student’s confidence.

She then changed the topic and asked with a smile, “Did someone instill in you the idea that you had to do so?”

The fake Father trembled slightly, and his eyes widened unconsciously.

Jiang Baimian didn't give the fake Father a chance to find a reason. She laughed and pressed on. "Do you still not know that Xu Liyan was attacked when you were dealing with Oudick and that he almost died?"

"What?" The fake Father's expression changed significantly.

Jiang Baimian smiled and recounted the attack conducted by the real Father and the goal he wanted to achieve. Finally, she asked, "If it weren't for the coincidence, all of Weed City's nobles would've been blown to smithereens with a bang. First City's regular army would've then used the excuse of 'quelling the riots' to station themselves in Weed City.

"Isn't this crazier, more imaginative, and closer to success than your plan?"

The fake Father lowered his head with a gloomy expression. He didn't respond, and his thoughts were unknown.

After laying out all the facts, Jiang Baimian finally said, "Compared to him, I think you're like a fake Father."

The fake Father's gaze suddenly froze as his body trembled more and more.

Jiang Baimian continued, "That person's nickname might be Mute or something else. Do you still remember that someone once told you that you will be Father from now on? Uh, something similar."

The fake Father's pupils dilated as a layer of cold sweat covered his forehead. After a few seconds, he let out a beast-like roar and raised his hands to cover his face.

He then stood up and revealed a terrified expression. "Yes, yes, yes!" He repeated the word 'yes' three times, and his voice became louder and louder.

Phew... Jiang Baimian exhaled silently. "Do you know who you are now?"

The fake Father—whose fabricated pride had been completely shattered—could no longer muster any mental defenses. He sat down as if he had lost all his strength. "Guo Zheng, my name is Guo

Zheng. I'm a believer of the Anti-intellectualism Church. I was chosen to bathe in divine grace and became an Awakened."

Jiang Baimian immediately interrupted Guo Zheng. "Did you awaken by relying on the Kalendaria?"

This was the most important question.

Guo Zheng panted and said, "Yes, we were chosen and entered a dark cave. As instructed, we each found a place to lie down and sleep. Not long after I fell asleep, I saw Star Cluster Hall."

Jiang Baimian asked, "How many people were chosen and how many awakened?"

"Many people were chosen; I didn't count them in detail, but there were over 100," said Guo Zheng as he recalled. "There were four or five who awakened in the end..."

As he spoke, he frowned as if he was enduring some kind of pain.

"What side effects did the people who hadn't awakened have?" Jiang Baimian asked thoughtfully.

Guo Zheng thought for a moment. "Some went mad, some died on the spot, and others were fine. That's the majority."

Jiang Baimian turned her head to look at Shang Jianyao and asked with a smile, "How can you be sure that those who appear fine or crazy haven't awakened?"

Guo Zheng revealed obvious fear. "Back then, a Church elder presided over the matter. He can read everyone's memories on a large scale."

As expected, the Anti-intellectualism Church's specialty is in the field of memories and hypnosis... Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao looked at each other and were a little excited.

This was the excitement of slowly figuring something out.

Jiang Baimian continued asking, “Elder? How are the ranks of your religion divided?”

Guo Zheng took a deep breath and slowly exhaled. “The leader of the religion is the Pope, but I’ve never seen him. It’s said that he has already gone to the New World and is serving the Lord there. He’s also in charge of guiding the Chosen Ones after him.

“Under the Pope is the Eight-Man Council. There are a total of eight Elders, who each govern different areas.

“Under the Elders are the bishops, who are in charge of various specific matters. Under the bishops are the priests, who are the executives and proselytizers.”

Jiang Baimian nodded slightly. “Which level does Father belong to?”

“I’m a bishop. He... I don’t know,” Guo Zheng recalled in pain.

Jiang Baimian took the opportunity to ask, “Do you remember who hypnotized you? Do you remember what he looked like?”

Guo Zheng frowned again. “H-he’s a man. No, he’s a woman. No, he’s very handsome. No, he shaved his head bald...”

“No, no...” Guo Zheng’s lips quivered as he shouted crazily and fearfully, “He tampered with my memories!”

Chapter 175: Shepherd Bouillon

Jiang Baimian turned to look at Shang Jianyao and repeated the keywords. “Tampered memories?”

Guo Zheng’s hysterical screams horrified her.

This wasn’t only because of the other party’s performance and voice, but also because memories were a person’s most private and precious possessions. If one’s memories were also tampered with, there was no way to distinguish what was real and what was fake.

When the time came, he might have to take the initiative to join the Monks Conclave with the daily recitals of phrases like ‘this world is an illusion,’ ‘dream, an illusion, a bubble, and a shadow,’ and ‘everything with form is unreal.’

Shang Jianyao didn’t show any fear and nodded seriously. “All of Father’s abilities are accounted for.”

“Indeed...” Jiang Baimian snapped to her senses and exhaled.

From the information they had obtained so far, the true Father’s three Awakened abilities were: Hypnosis, memory tampering, and creating a common illusion.

Compared to the fake Father, his abilities didn’t involve physical control or enhanced combat abilities. However, these abilities struck fear in others due to them appearing mysterious and terrifying.

At this moment, the fake Father, Guo Zheng—who had finished shouting—calmed down. He sat there and panted heavily.

Shang Jianyao looked at him through the screen and suddenly smiled. “Then, here’s the problem. Since the real Father can tamper with other people’s memories, why not directly make you remember that you are a real Father? In that case, there’s no need to worry about the effects of hypnosis being destroyed.”

If this had been done, the words that shattered his mental defenses and exposed his false recognition would appear empty.

Guo Zheng fell silent. After more than ten seconds, he said, “Maybe it’s because he doesn’t allow a fake Father to become the real Father. It won’t do even if it’s being a real Father in my memories. There can only be one true Father; it can only be him.”

When a person’s memories involved them being the real Father, they would be a real Father no matter what kind of interrogation they underwent.

Jiang Baimian was just about to say that this train of thought was a little dangerous and crazy when Shang Jianyao agreed. “I accept this reason.”

“...” Jiang Baimian quietly rolled her eyes. She then asked, “Apart from the memories that have been tampered with, can you remember other details related to the real Father? For example, what price did he pay?”

Guo Zheng shook his head. “The only thing I’m sure of is that we should be in the same batch of Awakened.”

Jiang Baimian believed that Oudick had likely used the dreamscape’s influence to search for an answer to such a question. Since he didn’t remind his good brother, Shang Jianyao, about what he should pay attention to, it meant that Guo Zheng’s relevant memories either didn’t exist or they had problems.

She stopped harping on this matter and began asking other questions. “How many Anti-intellectualism Church Elders do you know?”

Under the Pope was the Eight-Man Council’s Elders.

“I only came into contact with one person—the one who presided over our Awakening Ceremony. He was also the one who issued me the orders later.” When the topic no longer involved the real Father, Guo Zheng’s condition clearly improved. “He’s from the Red River. His name is Bouillon, and he’s in charge of First City’s greater district. Yes, it’s not the entirety of the First City faction, but the city and its surrounding suburbs.”

The First City faction’s capital, First City, was recognized as the most prosperous city in the Ashlands. It was also known as the City of Desire.

Jiang Baimian’s eyes lit up. “What does he look like, and what Awakened abilities does he have? The large-scale search of people’s memories should only be an application of one of his abilities.”

This was a big fish. Of course, this didn’t look like something their Old Task Force could deal with. According to Du Heng, these might be Awakened who had already entered the Mind Corridor. Be it the range of their abilities or the number of targets they could influence, they were sufficiently exaggerated.

“Do you think I can remember his face?” Guo Zheng laughed self-deprecatingly. “His nickname is Shepherd. His voice always made me feel a little uncomfortable; it’s like a wound in the throat that never heals.”

Jiang Baimian’s thoughts raced as she found a possible problem. “Since Shepherd Bouillon is in charge of First City’s greater district, why were you sent to Weed City? Was it just to assassinate Xu Liyan?”

“Weed City is an area that the religion doesn’t cover. Whoever proselytizes first will be in charge,” explained Guo Zheng simply. “Since we’re here to assassinate Xu Liyan, we might as well proselytize while we’re at it.”

Jiang Baimian then asked about the priests under Guo Zheng, how many believers he had converted, and where he obtained his usual supplies.

Guo Zheng only smiled. “Oudick should already know the corresponding situation through a dream. You can just get the report from Xu Liyan; why do you need me to repeat it?”

“It’s just procedure.” It wasn’t Jiang Baimian who spoke, but Shang Jianyao—who helped her with a voice-over.

Not bad... Jiang Baimian nodded slightly and silently praised him.

After Guo Zheng finished answering, Shang Jianyao took the opportunity to ask, “What do you know about the Mind Corridor? What’s up with the Pope entering the New World? Where is the New World?”

Guo Zheng laughed. “These are all confidential secrets. Not to mention me, even the real Father might not know. I only have a vague impression of it. Elder Bouillon has some magical trinkets that are apparently gifts from the Kalendaria. Heh heh, I’m still facing the fears in my heart in the Sea of Origins. I’m still worlds away from the Mind Corridor.”

At this point, Guo Zheng suddenly froze and muttered to himself, “No wonder... No wonder I’ve never been able to clear that island... People who are hypnotized will never succeed...”

Jiang Baimian nodded thoughtfully and asked another important question. “When did you learn about Lei Yunsong and the others being from Pangu Biology? How did you learn about the price Oudick paid? Was it from Christina, the vice president of the Hunter’s Guild?”

“It’s not her; it’s Mute. Heh heh, maybe it’s the real Father who gave me the information.” Guo Zheng shook his head and said, “I originally only wanted to find a few ‘helpers’ who were unrelated to the Church and could be abandoned at any time. Who knew that Mute would directly give me information on such a group of people? Only then did I have a plan to frame another party and incite a dispute.”

Was it because Lei Yunsong and the others want to visit Xu Liyan that he specially flipped through their memories and checked their backgrounds? He then ‘set up’ the time so that they couldn’t avoid the fake Father? Jiang Baimian made further guesses in her heart.

At the end of the interrogation, Shang Jianyao asked excitedly, “How does your Anti-intellectualism Church pray and salute?”

This was a casual topic.

Guo Zheng exhaled and rubbed his temples. “Praying involves shaking your head before eating. The exact number of times doesn’t matter; it just means that you don’t have to think. The salutation involves covering the eyes with hands from both sides, indicating that you can’t see, hear, or notice anything.

“The blessing phrase is, ‘May you lose your intelligence too.’ When it’s said to the Kalendaria, it is: ‘Please believe in God with all your body and heart.’ When proselytizing, it mainly involves: ‘suspect everything; there is no truth,’ ‘thinking is a trap; knowledge is toxic..’”

Shang Jianyao had taken out a small notebook at some point in time and recorded everything down.

“The symbol is a person without facial features? Then, what’s Mass like?”

“Yes, a person without facial features.” Guo Zheng leaned back in his chair and said, “Our Mass is very simple. First is the sermon about the disadvantages of knowledge and thought. Then, we will shout slogans with the priest. As for what we shout and how loud we do so... That’s determined by the existing situation. It can also be replaced by applause.”

Upon hearing this, Jiang Baimian curiously asked, “How do you proselytize? How did those people truly gain faith in the religion?”

Guo Zheng looked at the screen in front of him and said a little listlessly, “In the beginning, we used the temptation of food to gain a deeper understanding of the believers’ difficulties and help resolve a portion of them. Finally, we made them completely rely on us and completely give up on thinking.”

“The first half is pretty normal, but the second half is...” Jiang Baimian pursed her lips. “I thought that you guys would directly use Hypnosis to proselytize.”

“There’s no need to do so. Only during Mass will we make some arrangements to enhance the effects.” Guo Zheng’s smile contained some mixed emotions as he said, “For most people in the Ashlands, living is a very arduous task. If we can help them think, help them make arrangements, and give them a relatively stable life, they will deceive themselves and choose to believe us even if they know that there’s a problem with the teachings.”

Phew... Jiang Baimian exhaled and closed her notebook.

...

In a damp and dark corridor on the second floor of Ah Fu’s Gun Shop, Long Yuehong walked toward the staircase with his hands in his pockets.

As he passed by a family, he sniffed and smelled the fragrance of food.

A middle-aged man—who was cooking with a charcoal stove at the door—saw Long Yuehong and enthusiastically greeted him. “Want to try some? I’ll cook the rest of the food according to the Hodgepodge recipe you mentioned.”

After the battle to protect their home, Long Yuehong had formed a relationship with many people in this courtyard building. n/o/vel/b//in

He waved his hand and said, “No, it’s fine. I just ate.”

Long Yuehong was too embarrassed to eat this family's food. They had also suffered a disaster and needed to receive help to maintain their lifestyle.

With a smile, he passed the man and entered the stairwell.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

A 17-year-old girl ran up from the first floor. She had a pretty face and was wrapped in a shriveled, white cotton coat. She also had a piece of yellow cornbread in her mouth.

"Huh?" Long Yuehong was a little surprised to see her at this moment.

The girl held her cornbread and smiled as she greeted, "Good morning."

She sensed Long Yuehong's puzzling look and casually explained, "There's no business recently, and we can receive aid. Teacher An is also willing to give a discount for a few more lessons. Of course, we have to make the best use of our time!"

With that said, she stuffed the cornbread back into her mouth. She then waved her hand with a bright smile and quickly walked upstairs.

Long Yuehong laughed as well. He went down to the first floor and met Auntie Nan at the door leading to the courtyard.

Auntie Nan was leading a seven-year-old girl inside.

"Good morning." Long Yuehong took the initiative to greet them before asking curiously, "Where's Xiaodong?"

"His grandmother and mother are still alive; they took him back. They said that they would sell the shop here and go to First City to make a living after the new year," Auntie Nan said calmly. "That's good too."

She then smiled and stroked the little girl's head. "In any case, I won't have any children. It's a perfect match."

The little girl covered a little and hid behind Auntie Nan, her eyes bright.

Long Yuehong sincerely extended his well wishes and entered the courtyard. He then looked up at the winter sky—which was neither bright nor dark—and fell into a daze.

“What’s on your mind?” Bai Chen came over.

Long Yuehong retracted his gaze and smiled. “Every time I walk along the corridor upstairs, I feel like I’m back in the company. It’s always a very closed, sealed environment. I would even encounter familiar faces from time to time and have a few words with them.”

He looked at the clouds again and gently said, “But here, you can see the sky, see the clouds, and feel the wind as soon as you walk out of the stairwell. I’m wondering when we won’t have to worry about being attacked. Everyone will live aboveground, exchange greetings, and walk out to see all of this when done chatting...”

Chapter 176: New Direction

After interrogating the fake Father—Guo Zheng—Jiang Baimian drove Shang Jianyao back to Central Square via North Bridge.

At a glance, she saw a smear of white.

In addition to the snow that had yet to melt, there were also white bed sheets hanging from different windows, chalk marks on the walls, and plain white cloth tied high above the door leaves.

In Weed City, this meant that a relative of the corresponding family had passed away.

Although Weed City had more supplies than most wilderness nomad gathering points, ordinary families were unlike the nobles; they couldn’t bear to turn their precious cloth into funeral clothes and tie them into white banners. They could only use all kinds of alternatives. Therefore, there was such a custom.

A bone-chilling wind blew past, and a large amount of white fluttered, filling the entire city.

Jiang Baimian wanted to sigh, but she couldn't say a word after opening her mouth.

She fell silent for a moment before speaking to Shang Jianyao, who was in the passenger seat.
“Let's take a spin in the city.”

“Alright.” Shang Jianyao looked outside and didn't object.

Jiang Baimian then turned the steering wheel and made the military-green bulletproof SUV turn into West Street.

On the way, they saw many people busying themselves. Some swept the snow by the side of the road, some repaired the damaged ground, and some repaired the shops that lined both sides of the street.

This was a relief plan implemented by Weed City's City Hall and Hunter's Guild. Everyone could receive the most basic supplies, but to get more and be better satiated, one had to provide labor in exchange.

This effectively prevented people without food from occupying a large amount of resources, and it took the opportunity to complete the reconstruction after the riots.

The busy people exhaled mouthfuls of white gas. It looked no different, but it naturally formed two distinct groups.

Jiang Baimian wasn't surprised; this was an inevitable aftereffect of the chaos.

How could the original residents of Weed City accept foreign wilderness nomads easily?

Although the people who caused the deaths of their family and friends had been executed or transferred elsewhere to be slaves, to them, it was ultimately the outsiders who had caused all of this.

Therefore, when they looked at the wilderness nomads working hard, their eyes had a clear sense of repulsion and less obvious hatred.

Jiang Baimian retracted her gaze and sighed with emotion. “This can’t be resolved in a short period of time. The bloodstains on the road can be washed away quickly, but the blood clot in their hearts won’t melt so easily.”

“It’s fine as long as they all become siblings.” Shang Jianyao sighed.

Jiang Baimian shot him a glance. “Does the realization of your dream of ‘saving all of humanity’ have something to do with turning everyone into siblings?”

“It’s a direction.” Shang Jianyao indicated that he had considered it.

Jiang Baimian pointed out the biggest problem. “Even true brothers know how to settle accounts.”

Shang Jianyao’s attention had long been diverted. He looked out the window and said, “There’s not much damage here.”

He was referring to the bars and nightclubs, including Wild Wolf Alley.

Jiang Baimian tersely acknowledged his words. “The bosses here have bouncers and weapons, and they are familiar with the terrain. It won’t be a problem for them to hold off the unorganized wilderness nomads for a while. Besides, this wasn’t the area that was immediately attacked. They had sufficient time to gather their manpower and make preliminary preparations.”

At this point, Jiang Baimian said meaningfully, “West Street has all kinds of riffraff. I wonder how many more religions and Awakened are hidden there.”

“For example, Awakened from the Evernight parish that can influence the hearts of others.” Shang Jianyao still remembered the information provided by Meng Xia’s husband, Zhang Lei.

Zhang Lei’s friend had encountered the Evernight parish’s Awakened in Weed City’s bar.

“That’s right.” Jiang Baimian suddenly smiled. “You haven’t even had the chance to join the religions here and taste their Holy Communion. Speaking of which, your Rootless brother left two days ago. Otherwise, you might’ve seen how the Eyes of Holiness’s Awakened deal with a large number of wilderness nomads.”

Shang Jianyao watched the car slowly turn around and said very firmly, “He left early because he sensed that the wilderness nomads might bring about great unrest.”

“When did you see him again?” Jiang Baimian was a little surprised.

In fact, she also believed that Ferlin would definitely be able to tell the latent dangers of a wilderness nomad gathering, given the Rootless’s experience of traveling the world.

“Brothers are of the same mind.” Shang Jianyao’s tone indicated that there was no way he didn’t understand Ferlin.

Jiang Baimian chuckled and drove the bulletproof SUV to East Street as she said, “I’ll take you somewhere.”

Shang Jianyao didn’t ask where; he only rubbed his stomach as a hint.

They entered East Street. When they were about to reach the end, the bulletproof SUV stopped. Beside it was a building with its own parking lot and courtyard.

On this building were two lines of words written in Ashlandic and Red River language: “Weed City’s Second Hospital.”

After parking the car, Jiang Baimian walked in with Shang Jianyao.

Painful groans sounded from all directions, making one feel uncomfortable all over.

The entire hall was filled with beds and futons. On them lay injured people from the riots.

They only did simple bandaging and ate conventional medicine. Those who were lucky could undergo surgery, and those who were unlucky could only depend on their luck for survival.

They weren’t only short of supplies but also doctors.

Many people couldn't withstand their physical pain. They lay there or curled up into a ball, groaning softly, rolling around, or shouting.

From time to time, people would go silent and be carried away amidst their loved ones' cries.

Shang Jianyao looked at this scene and didn't speak for a long time.

"Too many people were injured..." Jiang Baimian retracted her gaze and looked at Shang Jianyao beside her. "This is practically hell."

As she sighed, she added, "Although the angels are busy saving people, there are too few of them. Furthermore, they might not be able to save them all. "Let's take a look upstairs."

When they went up to the second, third, and fourth floors, they saw that each floor was filled with injured people. The original patients in wards had been sent home as long as they weren't seriously ill.

Jiang Baimian only discovered some seriously ill people on the fifth floor.

They were covered in white bedsheets and lying on beds in the wards or corridors. Most of them were unconscious, and thin tubes connected to an IV needle in their hand as though it was their last lifeline.

Jiang Baimian's gaze slowly swept across the area. "These people can all be considered to be well off. However, they can only receive treatment at such a level when ill. This is still Weed City. If this were an outside wilderness nomad settlement, the good ones would be like Moat Town. There would at least be doctors who can concoct medicine and occasionally give injections. Ordinary ones can only rely on folk medicine. Whether one lives or dies depends on fate. The worse ones don't even have any folk medicine..."

Shang Jianyao didn't respond. He looked at the patients that were covered by white bedsheets, seemingly in thought.

Jiang Baimian smiled and said, "Compared to them, the hospitals in the company are much better. Not only are there enough doctors and nurses, but there are also sufficient drugs, equipment, and a complete medical heritage. There are even many laboratories doing research in the related fields.

“If you are seriously ill, you will most likely die in Weed City or in a wilderness nomad settlement. However, there’s an 80-90% chance of surviving in the company.” As Jiang Baimian spoke, her expression gradually turned serious. “Diseases are terrifying, and they are terrifying enemies that everyone has to face. But we definitely aren’t fighting alone.

“In this matter, as long as we can help each other and form a strong entity, a disease isn’t undefeatable. A strong entity can mobilize sufficient resources and produce sufficient drugs and equipment. At the same time, it can also set up schools and various laboratories to complete the inheritance of knowledge, the nurturing of talents, and the exploration of frontiers. It’s like a company.

“I think you might have to start from this aspect if you want to defeat your inner fear of disease. I don’t think it’s a sound method to rely solely on your willpower and/or be infected with an illness and get treated in real life.”

After their primary mission was over and the matter had come to an end, Jiang Baimian focused on helping Shang Jianyao challenge the ‘island.’ Therefore, she specially brought him to a hospital in Weed City to take a look, hoping to find some inspiration by comparing it to Pangu Biology’s hospitals.

After all, the easiest words to think of in humanity’s defeat of diseases were ‘hospitals,’ ‘doctors,’ and ‘drugs.’

Shang Jianyao listened carefully and slowly looked around. “That makes sense.”

With that said, he clenched his right fist in frustration and struck his left palm. “My train of thought is still not broad enough!”

Jiang Baimian stared at him suspiciously, wondering if he had warped her intentions.

Upon returning to the second floor of Ah Fu’s Gun Shop, Shang Jianyao immediately lay on the bed and massaged his temples before quickly falling asleep.

...

Beside the island strewn with haphazard rocks, Shang Jianyao's figure appeared in the illusory sea that shimmered with light.

He was in no rush to challenge the island. He looked down at his reflection in the illusory aqueous light, and his eyes gradually turned dark.

“I'm a human from Pangu Biology; Pangu Biology's main body consists of humans. So...”

After a pause, Shang Jianyao said in a deep voice, “I'm equivalent to Pangu Biology.”

After coming to this conclusion, he quickly climbed up the island.

Almost at the same time, figures appeared from the rubble crevices. They were draped in white bedsheets; their faces and bodies were completely hidden in the shadows.

Shang Jianyao looked at them and didn't panic at all. He smiled and said, “You may have many people, but so do I. This is because I'm Pangu Biology.”

Just as he said that, his body turned illusory as countless figures separated from him.

Some of the figures miraculously combined together and formed a building with the word ‘hospital.’

The other Shang Jianyaos either wore white coats or carried stretchers. They swarmed into the crowd covered in white bedsheets and pressed them down one by one. They placed them on stretchers and brought them back to the hospital before injecting drugs into them.

The ‘hospital’ became busy and lively.

During this process, the figures—who were draped in white bedsheets and symbolized disease—seemed to be a little stunned.

The Shang Jianyao ‘doctors’ were gradually infected as they fell seriously ill.

Shang Jianyao constantly split himself, constantly creating new ‘doctors,’ new ‘drugs,’ and new ‘wards’ to make up for the losses.

After a long, intense battle, Shang Jianyao could no longer take it mentally and still lost.

Phew... Shang Jianyao woke up and panted.

“How was it?” Jiang Baimian—who was sitting on a square stool—asked in concern.

Shang Jianyao’s eyes lit up as he spoke. “I lost, but the direction seems fine. It’s worth exploring further.”

Chapter 177: A Sincere Suggestion

Jiang Baimian felt gratified and asked curiously, “How did you do it?”

Shang Jianyao explained how he manifested himself as Pangu Biology, how he ‘established’ a hospital, and how he ‘created’ a large number of wards, a large number of doctors, and a large number of drugs.

Jiang Baimian had thought that she had seen all kinds of situations before, but this was new to her.

She was dumbfounded for a while before saying, “Such imagination; such a broad train of thought...”

Just imagining those scenes made her feel that it was comical, absurd, and unconcealable madness.

This was only her imagination. If she really saw it, she suspected that her mind would be corrupted.

“If those ‘patients’ were conscious, they might have been scared away by you...” Jiang Baimian commented. She couldn’t help but ask a silly question. “What made you think of that?”

“You said that we needed a strong collective. We need coordination and cooperation in all aspects, just like the company. Also, the mind world should be similar to a dream. Thus, we can make some changes based on our willpower. Yes, that’s how I feel,” Shang Jianyao answered truthfully.

It was normal for the mind world to be magical.

Jiang Baimian was caught between laughter and tears. “The reason I said that was to give you some confidence. On the other hand, I was thinking of finding a way to arrange for you to be sent to hospitals, laboratories, and medicine factories when we returned to the company.

“I wanted you to shadow different people to take a look at the different processes involved in fighting illnesses. I wanted you to see how most people are treated and why a small number of people can’t be treated.

“When you have a sufficient understanding of diseases and have a general understanding of what humans do in the corresponding domain and the established mechanisms, I believe that the fear in your heart will be greatly reduced. After all, fear often comes from the unknown.”

Yet, this fellow made himself an incarnation of the company and established a hospital. Countless Shang Jianyaos played the role of doctor to ‘gank’ the diseases. This was something that normal people would never think of.

“It still had some effect.” Shang Jianyao indicated that he would continue to try. “At least I lasted longer than before.”

Jiang Baimian sighed helplessly. “Let’s do a two-pronged approach. A two-pronged approach.”

It was just past noon.

Jiang Baimian looked at the sky outside the window and said, “Since we have nothing to do, I might as well go to the library and find some books regarding diseases. It’s definitely not a bad thing to learn more about them.”

She didn’t bring up the matter of informing the company about the interrogation’s results. Firstly, she was waiting for Xu Liyan to decide on whether he would establish a mutually beneficial partnership. Secondly, Bai Chen had already paid for the self-assembled radio transceiver.

In another two or three days, she wouldn’t need to relay reports through Chen Xufeng.

Of course, some resources could be obtained through the local intelligence network's person-in-charge.

As for the issue of not being a citizen of the city and not at a rank above Official Hunter, Jiang Baimian didn't even consider it.

As the brother of Castellan Xu Liyan, Shang Jianyao was already a special citizen!

...

Weed City still attached great importance to the public library. The shattered glass from the previous explosion had been replaced with new ones. White paint was smeared on the blackened surfaces, and the damaged walls were being repaired.

This part of the work was directly organized by City Hall through issued missions at the Hunter's Guild. The Hunters that accepted the missions were rather efficient and professional.

After a series of inquiries, Jiang Baimian confirmed that these Hunters were a group of masons. They didn't accept any adventure or exploration missions and only moved around in the city.

Jiang Baimian couldn't help but feel that Weed City's citizen culture was different from other places. It was already inseparable from the Hunter's Guild.

At the same time, it refreshed her understanding of Ruin Hunters.

Other than adventurers, antiquarians, researchers, investigators from large factions, intelligence traffickers, wilderness bandits, scavengers, and mercenaries, there were also new identities like masons, janitors, third-rate detectives, delivery men, and temporary teachers.

"It's all-encompassing. Weed City's Hunter's Guild is equivalent to the Old World's talent market, professional referrals, and bidding platforms..." Jiang Baimian said to Shang Jianyao with a sigh.

As Jiang Baimian spoke, she pulled out a book that talked about the history of humanity's fight against diseases. She was surprised to find a familiar person standing opposite the bookshelf—Advanced Hunter Oudick, who liked to wear black coats.

“Are you here to borrow books?” Shang Jianyao walked around the bookshelf and greeted him enthusiastically.

They were brothers.

Oudick nodded slightly and glanced at Jiang Baimian. “I recently realized that I know too little.”

His nose was still a little red.

“It’s good to read more. Anti-intellectualism education makes one prone to being imprisoned.” Jiang Baimian thought of the fake Father—Guo Zheng—who was imprisoned.

At the mention of the Anti-intellectualism Church, Shang Jianyao immediately asked with concern, “Are you still sneezing?”

It was inevitable that Oudick felt a little awkward when the price he paid and the fatal flaw he possessed was mentioned.

What was even more awkward was that Jiang Baimian slapped Shang Jianyao’s shoulder. “What are you saying!? It is very dangerous to mention the price an Awakened had to pay in front of them. It’s only because Oudick is a nice person. If it were any other Awakened, they would already be thinking of ways to assassinate you.”

Do you think you can dispel my killing desire by saying that? Oudick couldn’t help himself from grumbling inwardly. However, he could completely understand what Jiang Baimian was getting at.

“We are brothers,” Shang Jianyao emphasized. “I am thinking of how to help him solve this problem.”

Jiang Baimian then looked at Oudick and pretended to be deep in thought. “It’s not that there isn’t a solution.”

Do you think I’m using words to force you into a situation such that you would feel embarrassed to kill me? No, I’m triggering this topic!

Oudick was silent for a few seconds before finally asking, “What’s the solution?”

“I know that the price paid by an Awakened isn’t that easy to resolve. Even if your sense of smell is malfunctioning, and you won’t be able to smell anything, the corresponding gas will still bring about a serious reaction when it enters your body.”

Jiang Baimian smiled and said, “But we can reduce the impact in this aspect. For example, we can use a military exoskeleton device and wear a gas mask. We then rely on the oxygen produced by the respiratory machine to survive. This way, even poisonous gases won’t be able to harm you, let alone ordinary and odorous gases.”

After seeing Oudick’s expression remain the same, it was obvious that he had already considered a similar plan.

Jiang Baimian smiled and said, “But this is only a way to treat the symptoms, not the root of the problem. After all, you can’t always wear an exoskeleton device. But it’s simple to solve this—change your nose to a mechanical nose.

“Requirements for the main functionality aren’t high. It’s fine as long as you can filter gases. If you have the means, you can order something of a higher grade. That can add a smart identification feature. In short, the goal is to keep sour-smelling gas molecules outside your body.

“In essence, this is also a form of physical isolation. It’s just that the effect isn’t as good as the gas mask. Furthermore, it will cause quite a bit of damage to your appearance.”

Oudick was a little surprised. He always felt that this woman in front of him made it seem like human modification was overly easy. She also didn’t have any psychological resistance to it.

Even in the messy Ashlands, this seemed rather crazy. It would make one seem like the legendary Frankenstein’s monster of the Old World.

Shang Jianyao looked at Jiang Baimian and commented with satisfaction, “We are indeed of the same kind.”

Jiang Baimian rolled her eyes at Shang Jianyao and continued speaking. “This is the power of technology. Hmm, the price you have to pay is relatively easy to avoid. You can use this method to reduce the negative effects. As for some prices...”

At this point, she glanced at Shang Jianyao. “It’s hopeless.”

Oudick thought for a moment and slowly said, “I’ll consider it.”

He was already tempted. He had previously encountered situations where he had a sneezing fit due to sour smells, thus decreasing his combat strength. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have exposed his price. But with his terrifying Sleep powers, he had never fallen into a dire situation.

Therefore, when he was thinking of solutions, he—who instinctively rejected human modification—had never considered this path.

Now, after being deliberately targeted by the fake Father, it was a painful lesson—having lost his powers on the spot. He felt that it was imperative he resolve the negative effects of the price as soon as possible.

After answering, Oudick looked at Shang Jianyao and said thoughtfully, “The price you paid should be related to your mind or spirit. I can tell that your thoughts are very jumpy; sometimes, you aren’t in control.

“This is definitely a bad thing for daily life, but in specific Awakened battles, it might not be a bad thing. It’s just like when facing Hypnosis—the leap in your thoughts can effectively interrupt the corresponding process. In other words, hypnotizing you is several times more difficult than hypnotizing an Awakened at the same level.

“I have also met some Awakened before. They have mentioned the direct application of their own price. Mm, not all prices can be used in a positive manner, just like how I have an allergy to sour smells because of my price.”

Since the two of them already knew his fatal flaw, there was no need for him to avoid talking about the problem.

“I’m looking forward to meeting the real Father even more.” Shang Jianyao wasn’t worried about the price he had to pay.

Jiang Baimian looked around and didn't continue the topic. "Do you know where we can get some controlled weapons? Like the previously mentioned military exoskeleton device."

Oudick thought for a moment and said, "I can give you some contacts if you are in First City, but you might not be able to close the deal. In Weed City, you can try to find the boss behind the Today nightclub, Sun Fei. He's the leader of the underground market. Yes, he's suspected to be related to the Crystal Consciousness Church."

"Alright." Jiang Baimei had heard Bai Chen mention this person nicknamed 'Uncle Sun' before.

Jiang Baimian wondered if she could use this opportunity to strengthen Long Yuehong.

After borrowing the book, they left the library and arrived at the edge of Central Square.

At this moment, Jiang Baimei's gaze suddenly froze.

Long Yuehong stood in front of a group of men and women, some small and some muscular. He was clearly demonstrating some combat techniques.

"What is he doing?" Jiang Baimian asked in surprise.

...

After he finished a lesson, Long Yuehong walked over to Bai Chen, took a towel, and wiped the sweat off his forehead.

"After the riot, everyone is very passionate about training themselves and improving their combat abilities..." He sighed from the bottom of his heart.

Bai Chen fell silent for a moment before asking, "Why did you accept the mission of being a temporary coach?"

Long Yuehong felt a little embarrassed. "Well, I-I was just thinking that I can't have everyone be Official Hunters while I remain a Rookie Hunter."

Chapter 178: The Next Step

Bai Chen didn't comment on Long Yuehong's tiny obsession. She found a bench at the edge of the plaza and sat down, quietly watching the entire training class.

After returning to Ah Fu's Gun Shop and meeting with Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao, she didn't wait until it was night time to visit the Today nightclub to check if the underground market was open. Instead, she brought Long Yuehong over before the sky turned dark.

'Uncle Sun'—Sun Fei's house wasn't in the same area of the Today Nightclub but on North Street. Even so, he was already in his office at Wild Wolf Alley.

Sun Fei had a deep impression of Bai Chen because of Eugene's incident. After receiving the message, he got his bodyguards to lead the two of them to the top floor in a retrofitted elevator.

After opening the office door, the bodyguard said respectfully, "Boss, they're here."

Sun Fei's office was completely different from what Long Yuehong had expected. There was no desk, no bookshelves, and no chairs. Instead, there were a bunch of seemingly useless black screens and an elegant shrine of the same color.

The large office—which was the result of knocking down a few walls—appeared spacious and austere thanks to the intricate decorations.

The thin Sun Fei with white sideburns was sitting cross-legged on a cushion. Behind him was a tall shrine, and in front of him was a tea set made of ebony.

He held a string of lustrous mala beads in one hand and a small pot in the other, pouring amber-colored tea into the cup.

A delicate fragrance wafted through the air, causing one's body and mind to become tranquil.

"Uncle Sun," greeted Bai Chen.

"Sit." Sun Fei put down the teapot and smiled. He was wearing a black outfit that followed the Old World's classic style. Around him were many pots of odorless, burning-red charcoal.

This made the entire office seem rather warm.

Bai Chen didn't stand on ceremony. She led Long Yuehong along and knelt on the cushion opposite Sun Fei.

She didn't sit down cross-legged like Sun Fei because it wasn't convenient to get up in the event of an accident.

Sun Fei twirled the string of mala beads with his finger and smiled at them. "I never thought that day would be the last day of Eugene's life."

What does this mean... Long Yuehong suddenly felt a little tense, but he tried his best not to show it. He felt that Uncle Sun's words were hinting that they were behind the attack on Eugene.

"It was a little too easy on him," replied Bai Chen calmly. As she said this, she even tugged at the gray scarf around her neck deliberately.

"Regardless, it was a fine development. My brother and I are very grateful to the person who did it," Sun Fei said in a casual tone. "If not for us being curtailed due to our livelihood being in First City's territory and having business and family, Eugene definitely wouldn't have been able to live past this year. Heh heh. Besides, by Subhuti's grace, he had been given a chance to realize his wrongdoings and repent. Unfortunately, he didn't grasp it."

Are you saying that Eugene wouldn't have been able to leave Weed City alive, even if he hadn't died this time? Wait a minute, I can't have such thoughts. He has a deep relationship with the Crystal Consciousness Church and might be an Awakened. He might be able to read minds... Long Yuehong quickly diverted his thoughts elsewhere.

In his haste, his mind was filled with some of the miscellaneous matters that had left a deep impression on him: someone nastily saying, "Sigh, I'm only 1.75 meters tall after genetic enhancement..."

Phew... Long Yuehong let out a breath and began recalling what he had eaten in the past few days.

At that moment, he saw Uncle Sun looking over. When their gazes met, he smiled.

Bai Chen grasped the keyword in Sun Fei's words and asked, "You believe in the Kalendaria, Subhuti?"

Sun Fei replied leisurely, "The longer you live, the more you see and the more you believe in the Kalendaria's existence. And at my age, my health has already begun to deteriorate. It's inevitable to be more focused on the cultivation of my mind and the tempering of my spirit."

If Shang Jianyao were here, he definitely would've said: "You can get the Monks Conclave to upload your consciousness to a stronger body..." Long Yuehong muttered inwardly.

Sun Fei's gaze swept past him and Bai Chen, and his expression became a little more serious. "The path of the Monks Conclave is wrong. A body of flesh and blood with eternal consciousness doesn't imply replacing a susceptible body but to temper the consciousness. This is so that it can exist eternally, never to be destroyed, even if it leaves the body. This is the true way of Buddhism. I view consciousness like a crystal, just like my take on Tathāgata.

"This is also the form the Kalendarium exist in."

Perhaps it's just a form that your Church believes the Kalendarium exists in... To be honest, compared to Sun Fei's philosophy, Long Yuehong was more inclined to approve of a technological path. He felt that Zen Master Jingfa's explanation was more reasonable and had a clear path to realization.

Long Yuehong would've been a strong believer if not for the fact that this group of mechanical monks would go berserk at the slightest faux pas or the details in their comical behavior.

Of course, he wasn't Shang Jianyao, so he didn't refute Sun Fei. He maintained his manners and listened quietly.

"I see..." Bai Chen didn't comment on Sun Fei's philosophy. As a qualified teammate, she hesitated for a moment before asking, "Does the Church you believe in have Holy Communion? What is it?"

Sun Fei was stunned. "Our Holy Communion is vegetarian, and it doesn't have to be sumptuous. Just plain boiled radishes will do."

"You don't eat meat?" Long Yuehong asked in surprise.

Sun Fei shook his head. "Only Holy Communion doesn't have meat or fish. One can eat meat as long as the animal wasn't personally killed."

It looks like you guys aren't fated with Shang Jianyao... Long Yuehong sighed and felt happy for them.

After some small talk, Bai Chen went straight to the point. "Uncle Sun, do you have any controlled weapons here, such as military exoskeletons or bionic armor?"

"How can they be so easily acquired?" Sun Fei shook his head and said with a smile, "Even if we occasionally chance upon one or two, they will be sold very quickly."

He deliberated for a moment before adding, "If you really want one, you can head south and visit Redstone Collection."

Bai Chen was no stranger to Redstone Collection.

Redstone Collection was located in the Lake of Wrath's vicinity, and it didn't belong to any major power.

Perhaps because of this—coupled with the fact that it was physically closer to United Industries and along the roads to places like Future Intelligence and Mechanical Paradise—it gradually developed into a trading center for smuggled goods.

It could be said that Redstone Collection was equivalent to a more chaotic, disorderly Hunter's Guild and less powerful Weed City.

Seeing Long Yuehong's puzzled look, Sun Fei explained, "That place is relatively close to United Industries. It's a large waypoint, where the corresponding smuggling goods exchange hands. Many of my goods are sourced from them."

"It's within United Industries's sphere of influence? No wonder..." Long Yuehong was enlightened.

United Industries was a major power in the Red River delta. However, it wasn't near the main Red River but located along a distributary river, the Golden River delta.

It was located south of First City. In the beginning, it was built by a large number of small factions with different factories and affiliated farms after the Old World was destroyed.

They already had a supply chain among the different tiny factions, but under First City's oppression and invasion, they developed into a rather loose confederation with a company structure. It was quite different from Pangu Biology's composition.

Their highest decision-making authority was the 'President's Office.' A large number of branch offices and subsidiary companies were under it. There were professional security services, arms manufacturing, light manufacturing, and sister companies that provided enough steel. They had a somewhat complete set of sectors and could be considered the largest industrial entity in the Ashlands.

Their heavy weapons were well-regarded throughout the Ashlands. They were the main power that exported military exoskeleton equipment.

Sun Fei continued speaking after seeing Long Yuehong's enlightened look. "If you want to get a military exoskeleton device from Redstone Collection, you

better have some hard currency on hand. As you know, the things which limit United Industries's expansion are oil, coal, food salt, smart chips, and high-performance batteries. That's the best point of incision.

“Heh heh, don't only limit yourself to controlled weapons. There's plenty of good things over at Redstone Collection. These tea leaves are produced in the southern parts of United Industries. Powers like Future Intelligence in Old Mountain have quite a high demand for them.”

It seemed as though he was teaching Bai Chen and the others a way to earn money.

“Thank you.” Bai Chen didn't ask any further.

Long Yuehong calculated the team's remaining assets and found that they only had enough to eat unless they sold the bulletproof SUV that Xu Liyan had given them.

...

The next day, Shang Jianyao—who visited Castellan Manor daily for free food and drink—saw Xu Liyan again.

Xu Liyan dismissed his aides, leaving Zen Master Jingnian behind. He then looked at Jiang Baimian—who was beside Shang Jianyao—and nodded slightly. “I've considered it. In consideration of Weed City's long-term development, I plan on establishing a partnership with you. However, we will not be signing any contracts. Sincerity is far more important.”

He didn't want the contract to be leaked, lest it gave First City a reason to interfere. It was even possible that Pangu Biology might threaten him with the contract to serve the company's own purposes at some point in time.

“No problem.” Jiang Baimian—who had ‘full authority’ regarding the negotiation—agreed.

“So when do we start?” Xu Liyan asked impatiently.

Jiang Baimian smiled. “Even if I report the matter to the company now and get someone over to carry out the bio-prosthetic limb transplant for you, I doubt you would do it. Do you trust us that much?”

Xu Liyan fell silent; it was true that he didn't fully trust in Pangu Biology.

“Let's start with a most basic partnership and build up trust bit by bit.” Jiang Baimian recalled the telegram's contents and said, “Next, we will provide a batch of genetic enhancement liquid. Prepare an equivalent amount of metal and mineral for the trade. Any mineral will do.”

“Castellan, although you are already past the best age for genetic enhancement, it’s better than nothing. You will still gain some benefits, and it will be sufficiently safe. Yes, you can also prepare it for your family’s descendants.”

Xu Liyan thought for a moment. “Sure.”

...

After reporting the matter regarding the Anti-intellectualism Church and Xu Liyan’s matter using the newly bought wireless transceiver, Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao received a reply when it was almost evening the next day.

The main content of the telegram was: Roger that. Will arrange for people to take over the follow-up matters. Your team’s next step: Follow the clues pointing to Mechanical Paradise and conduct a thorough investigation on the cause of the Old World’s destruction.

Chapter 179: “Compass”

An endless lake to the left of the car rippled with the wind. Beside it stood buildings from the Old World.

Some of them had already collapsed, some were abnormally dilapidated, and some had withered plants covering their surfaces. From time to time, some of them would flutter down.

“This is Redstone Collection?” Long Yuehong asked in surprise.

It had been some time since they left from the south of Weed City. According to the rough locations provided by Uncle Sun Fei and the Rootless caravan’s leader, Ferlin, and the route pointed out by the few teams of Ruin Hunters on the way, they had barely found the Lake of Wrath and locked onto a relatively large area.

Then, following the traces left behind by human activity, they found the ruins of the city by the lake.

Without any satellites to provide them positioning information and without a guide, they could only rely on such clumsy methods. After all, Bai Chen only knew and understood the details regarding Redstone Collection and had never actually been there. Her former area of activity was limited to Pangu Biology, First City, and White Knights.

This was also the norm for most Ruin Hunters and wilderness nomads. Although they might not have a fixed residence and sought out ruins for survival, their intelligence, resources, connections, guts, and experience were limited to particular regions.

In the passenger's seat, Bai Chen was also puzzled. "This place seems to have been abandoned for a long time."

"The feces is still fresh, which means that there's plenty of human activity around here. Even if they aren't from Redstone Collection, they should know where Redstone Collection is." Shang Jianyao—who was seated in the back row—spoke with certainty. He was very confident about the traces he discovered.

When they set off from Weed City, Jiang Baimian suggested selling the extra car to the Rootless caravan in exchange for the materials needed to purchase the military exoskeleton equipment.

Shang Jianyao refused to let go of the jeep, claiming that they were already comrades and that they weren't to abandon it or give it up. Therefore, the Old Task Force could only sell the bulletproof SUV that Xu Liyan had given them.

Jiang Baimian exchanged almost half of the received supplies to improve the jeep's survivability and enhance everyone's safety. She had asked Ferlin and the others to add bulletproof glass and thick armor to the jeep and modify the electric engine.

Of course, they didn't need to prepare food and ammunition needed for the journey themselves. They directly informed the company and obtained a large batch of supplies through Chen Xufeng.

Official business needed to adhere to official principles!

Upon hearing Shang Jianyao's words, Jiang Baimian raised her hand to her nose. "Let's enter the ruins and take a spin to see what we can find."

With that said, she glanced at the book in Shang Jianyao's hand. "How's the reading?"

Before setting off, she used Shang Jianyao's 'privilege' to borrow a batch of relatively unpopular books related to diseases from Weed City's public library.

“I gained a lot.” Shang Jianyao watched Long Yuehong drive the car toward the city ruin.

“Oh?” Jiang Baimian expressed her curiosity with her tone.

Shang Jianyao replied seriously, “Medicine can’t save all of humanity.”

Jiang Baimian was a little confused. “What do you mean?”

“An effective organization, the spirit of exploration, the courage to experiment, the scientific method, and the inheritance of knowledge are what’s most important. Medicine is only one aspect,” answered Shang Jianyao confidently.

“Have you found a new way to deal with the Island of Diseases then?” Jiang Baimian went straight to the point.

During this period of time, Shang Jianyao had been openly discussing the Island of Diseases with her. Therefore, she didn’t help him keep it a secret from Bai Chen and Long Yuehong.

Shang Jianyao replied seriously, “No, I can only work harder according to the present idea.”

“Not bad; keep up the spirit of fighting despite repeated failures,” Jiang Baimian encouraged.

Bai Chen looked at the building ruins with cracked cement and steel columns. She hesitated for a moment before giving her suggestion. “Actually, you can try suffering from a minor illness to experience a disease’s true appearance.”

“I’ve also considered this plan.” Although she had previously rejected a similar idea from Shang Jianyao, Jiang Baimian didn’t completely give up on this direction. “The main reason for rejecting is that this fellow is as strong as an ox. He won’t succumb to any minor ailments. If we deliberately infect him, it’ll be very difficult to control the severity. Sigh, if it really doesn’t work out, we’ll talk about it when we return to the company.”

Long Yuehong opened his mouth and wanted to say something, but he rationally shut his mouth.

The next second, Shang Jianyao said, “We can make Long Yuehong catch a cold first before he infects me.”

“What’s the difference?” Jiang Baimian reprimanded. “Alright, observe the surroundings.”

At this moment, the slightly old and worn-out military-green jeep drove into the city ruin that stretched far out from the lake.

The Old World’s ruins were always endless in sight, huge beyond imagination.

This place was very similar to the ruin beside the Rootless camp. A large number of buildings had collapsed, and the roads had sunken. Nothing of value remained; it was desolate and abnormally quiet.

“What a lively place it would’ve been in the Old World...” Long Yuehong recalled the scene after Swamp Ruin No. 1 lit up.

That wasn’t even one-tenth of replicating the Old World’s city skyline.

Jiang Baimian looked out the window, stared at the city that had died countless years ago, and sighed with emotion. “Human civilization sometimes fades away faster and more completely than we can imagine. Yet, it’s sometimes more tenacious and stubborn than anyone thinks it is.”

Bai Chen observed the city ruin carefully. “The collapses and destruction were from a few years ago. It didn’t happen recently.”

She wasn’t a professional, so she couldn’t determine how many years it had been.

“At least it eliminates the possibility that Redstone Collection was recently destroyed. Yes, the premise is that this is Redstone Collection.” Jiang Baimian looked at the lifeless grayish-white concrete, the messy steel columns, the glass shards exposed in the weeds, and the rusted empty window frames.

They circled the city ruins for more than 20 minutes, but they ultimately failed to find any traces of a human settlement.

“It seems like we made a mistake. Redstone Collection is somewhere else nearby.” Long Yuehong—who was driving—voiced his judgment. “Such a large city ruin doesn’t look like a town. They probably come here often to search for valuable items; that’s why they left behind those traces.”

Upon hearing this, Shang Jianyao immediately became spirited as if he had already confirmed that this was Redstone Collection.

Long Yuehong was fully aware of the train of thought this fellow was capable of and couldn’t help but grumble. “Hey!”

Similarly, Jiang Baimian also grasped Shang Jianyao’s ‘inference.’

Long Yuehong was ill-fated and unlucky. Therefore, the route he chose and the answers he gave often deviated from the correct path.

In that case, when he said that this place didn’t look like Redstone Collection, it was very likely that this was Redstone Collection!

Before Jiang Baimian could reprimand Shang Jianyao and protect Long Yuehong’s pride, her expression suddenly changed slightly; she was caught between laughter and tears.

Jiang Baimian then coughed and pointed at a high-rise building by the side of the road that hadn’t completely collapsed but looked abnormally dilapidated. It had clearly been bombarded. “There’s someone inside.”

“Yes!” Shang Jianyao echoed with certainty.

They simultaneously sensed human electric signals and consciousness inside the building. Furthermore, the straight-line distance was less than 15 meters.

Long Yuehong’s expression immediately became a little mixed.

“Coincidence. A coincidence.” Jiang Baimian laughed dryly and consoled him. “Stop the car. Shang Jianyao and I will go in and ask the person for directions.”

Shang Jianyao also consoled Long Yuehong. “I’m now more certain of your importance to our team. You are our south-pointing compass!”

What south-pointing compass? Don’t compasses point north? The question subconsciously surfaced in Long Yuehong’s mind.

In an instant, as Shang Jianyao’s good friend, Long Yuehong understood what he meant—a normal compass was used to point in the right direction, and a south-pointing compass was used to eliminate the wrong route!

At that moment, Long Yuehong felt his teeth itch.

Jiang Baimian pushed open the door and got out of the car as she said to Shang Jianyao, “You have to be careful that Little Red will one day shoot you in the back.”

Shang Jianyao thought for a moment, walked to the driver’s seat window, and sincerely said, “You can directly tell me that you don’t like me using this as a topic for jokes.”

With that said, he smiled and said, “But the premise of me accepting that is for you to defeat me once during combat training.”

Jiang Baimian walked past and commented, “A primary school student’s level of goading.”

Long Yuehong fell silent for a few seconds before looking at Shang Jianyao. “I’ll work hard.”

Although he had been working hard to improve himself during combat training, his long-term self-awareness had made him accept his ‘mediocrity.’ He didn’t have the desire to win.

After watching Shang Jianyao and Jiang Baimian enter the building by the side of the road, Bai Chen and Long Yuehong each held their weapons, alighted from the car, and monitored the surroundings—including the rooftops where snipers might be.

After a while, Bai Chen suddenly whispered when the two of them exchanged positions. “Everyone has times when their luck sucks.”

Long Yuehong was stunned for a moment before smiling. “Thank you.”

In the building, Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao quickly locked onto a room at the edge of the lobby.

They then lightened their footsteps and crossed the area covered in grayish-white rocks and glass shards before arriving by the door.

After exchanging looks, Shang Jianyao tacitly circled around and guarded the room’s other exit.

After he was in position, Jiang Baimian shouted from an area where the people inside couldn’t shoot. “Come out. We’ve found you.”

The door with the tightly shut wooden door was silent as if nothing existed.

After more than ten seconds, the side door in front of Shang Jianyao silently opened.

An unstylish man in his twenties bent down and crawled out. He suddenly stopped and looked up to see a sunny smile.

“Found you!” The Ice Moss in Shang Jianyao’s hand was already pressed against the man’s forehead.

The man immediately raised his hands and acted very submissive. “I lost.”

Shang Jianyao felt a little surprised when he heard this. “Why did you say that you lost? We’re not competing.”

The man—who had a gun pointed at his forehead—frankly replied, “This is the rule of our Redstone Collection and our religion.”

“Religion?” Shang Jianyao’s eyes suddenly lit up. “Does your religion preach the playing of hide and seek?”

The man was stunned for a few seconds before answering, “No, it’s to be always vigilant and in hiding.”

Shang Jianyao thought for a moment and asked, “How is that different from what I said?”

Chapter 180

The man—who had a gun pointed at his forehead by Shang Jianyao—seemed to be of Ashlandic and Red River descent. He had black hair, brown eyes, a high nose bridge, and relatively sunken eye sockets.

He wore gray clothes that were very similar to his surroundings, making it seem as if he could blend in at any moment.

Upon hearing Shang Jianyao’s question, the man appeared a little angry and emphasized, “This world is very dangerous. Even the once-powerful human civilization couldn’t resist it, much less us now! If we weren’t constantly vigilant or didn’t know how to hide ourselves, we would’ve long been destroyed.”

Jiang Baimian had already walked over and stopped Shang Jianyao from probing further. She then asked, “Are you from Redstone Collection?”

“Yes.” The man first gave an affirmative answer before saying, “But please don’t blindly believe me and maintain sufficient vigilance.”

This was the first time Jiang Baimian had heard someone say that. She found it funny and nodded slightly. “We’ve always been very vigilant. Oh right, where’s Redstone Collection?”

“Somewhere in these ruins.” The man looked at the building’s lobby. “Since you’ve already found me, and I failed to hide from you, let me take you there.”

“Alright, how should I address you?” Jiang Baimian was someone whose skills gave her boldness.

“My name is Gaudi,” the man said casually. “This might also be a fake name; please don’t blindly believe me.”

Beside him, Shang Jianyao had an excited expression as if he had learned something new. He retracted the Ice Moss and seriously said, "Lead the way. When we reach Redstone Collection, I promise to return your freedom. This might be a lie; please don't blindly believe it."

Gaudi nodded in agreement and took a few steps toward the lobby. "Distance is our best friend."

After leaving the building, Shang Jianyao got him into the jeep and made him sit in the middle of the backseat. Gaudi was in charge of giving directions.

This time, it was Bai Chen who drove.

While the car drove forward, Jiang Baimian made small talk with him. "What religion do you believe in?"

"Vigilance Church," Gaudi replied in very fluent Ashlandic. "But you..."

"Stop! We know." Jiang Baimian interrupted the other party's repetition and asked with a smile, "Which Kalendaria do you believe in, and what's the doctrine like? We're a little interested."

"What's the Holy Communion?" Shang Jianyao added a question from the other side.

Gaudi's expression became rather pious. "We believe in October's Kalendaria, Eidolon Nun. Before the Old World was destroyed, 'She' was widely worshiped by people in certain places. We are called the Vigilance Church because Eidolon Nun told us that the world is dangerous.

"Wariness is the most important instinct for everyone. After the Old World's destruction, it's very difficult for people without vigilance to survive the various disasters until the New World comes. Wariness is a hint from the Goddess."

At this point, Gaudi raised his hands and crossed them before his chest in a defensive posture.

"And then?" Shang Jianyao urged.

Gaudi turned to look at him. “We don’t have Holy Communion. Do you dare to drink the water and eat the food that wasn’t prepared by you? When we participate in Mass and other rituals, we bring our own boiled water and our own dishes.”

“You’re indeed vigilant,” Jiang Baimian commented and glanced at Shang Jianyao with a hint of schadenfreude.

Shang Jianyao sighed regretfully. “We aren’t fated.”

While Gaudi was confused, Jiang Baimian raised another question. “Is everyone from Redstone Collection members of the Vigilance Church?”

“More or less; only a few aren’t. Also, outsiders like you aren’t either,” Gaudi said rather proudly. “Ever since Redstone Collection was established, it has often been attacked, with many casualties each time. Back then, many religions came to proselytize. Everyone had mixed beliefs, but we gradually realized that the Vigilance Church’s teachings and beliefs are most useful.

“The Eidolon Nun is the one who pities the world’s people the most. After that, everyone spontaneously switched to the Vigilance Church. The number of attacks we suffered clearly decreased, and so did the casualties.”

It’s possible that United Industries needed a smuggling node to complete certain transactions that are inconvenient to be openly done after order in the Ashlands was restored and the situation began to stabilize... Jiang Baimian found another explanation in her mind.

But it was impossible for her to refute Gaudi considering her unfamiliarity with the area—she was not Shang Jianyao.

According to Gaudi’s ‘instructions,’ the jeep circled a seriously damaged block and entered a relatively open area with many evergreen trees.

“Is this a park from the Old World?” Jiang Baimian guessed based on the knowledge she had.

“Something like that. That’s what we think.” Gaudi wanted to repeat his catchphrase, but they had already reached the intersection ahead.

He could only 'command,' "Turn right, all the way to the end."

Bai Chen soon drove the jeep to a small hill.

There was a large hole here that could accommodate four cars.

The path leading underground was well-preserved; its surface was very neat.

"Redstone Collection is underground..." Long Yuehong came to a realization. He was familiar with this.

Just as he said that, gun barrels drilled out of the holes in the cliffs on both sides of the cave entrance. There also seemed to be cannons deep inside the cave that were aiming outward.

"I'll go down and greet them," said Gaudi.

Jiang Baimian instructed Bai Chen to reverse the jeep a distance away from the cannons' possible firing trajectory before opening the door to let Gaudi get off.

"Not bad. Very vigilant," Gaudi praised.

He took a few steps forward and waved his hand. The extended gun barrels and the cannons that had swiveled over retracted.

Only then did Bai Chen drive the jeep and pick him up. They went deeper into the cave and circled down a wet path.

Before long, they saw the parking lot.

Jiang Baimian looked around and memorized the terrain. "Find the spot closest to Redstone Collection."

"Everyone parks there." Gaudi indicated that the Vigilance Church shared the same thoughts.

They were all prepared to rush out of Redstone Collection and drive away at any moment.

“Great minds think alike,” Jiang Baimian replied with a smile. “Then, find an empty spot nearby.”

After some searching, they parked the car and passed through two wooden doors in a row before seeing Redstone Collection.

This place seemed to be a replica of some buildings outside, but they had been moved underground.

At the bottom was a square that could be seen from the top floor, where the Old Task Force was. Surrounding the square were floors that went up in circles. The areas visible to the naked eye were connected by escalators.

These floors were brightly lit, and stores neighbored each other. One had the sign ‘Firearms Trading’ on it, and another had the words ‘Maritime Oil Company’s Redstone Collection Office.’

At a glance, Long Yuehong realized that almost everything was sold here. Furthermore, it was more blatant than Weed City’s underground market.

The only problem was that there were no samples placed in these shops. There were only tables, chairs, and cabinets. Furthermore, there was nobody inside the shops!

“If you want to transact in Redstone Collection, you have to find the hiding boss first.” As Gaudi briefed them, he took out a cloth mask from his pocket, unfolded it, and wore it. This made him look rather ‘fierce and forbidding.’

“Interesting.” Shang Jianyao’s eyes were abnormally bright.

He rushed to the nearest shop—Golden River Tea Leaves—before Jiang Baimian could stop him. He then knocked on the wooden cabinet by the door a few times.

“You lost!” With that said, Shang Jianyao ran back to Jiang Baimian’s side.

The wooden cabinet’s door slowly opened after a few seconds, and a middle-aged man—standing at 1.6 meters tall at most—walked out.

The middle-aged man stroked his black beard and looked around the shop in confusion. However, he didn't discover the person who had found him.

"Is this a tradition of Redstone Collection?" Jiang Baimian smiled and retracted her gaze. She said to Gaudi, "Take us to the Hunter's Guild here first."

"It's at the bottom." Gaudi led the way to the escalator beside him.

As the escalator slowly descended, Jiang Baimian thoughtfully asked, "How do you generate electricity here?"

"Diesel generators, solar boards, and hydropower units. These are all in operation," Gaudi replied casually.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao interrupted and asked, "What's your Mass like? Is it about who's better at hiding?"

Shang Jianyao looked excited.

Gaudi nodded. "It's one of the formats. In the previous Mass, I was the tenth from the last to be found." n/o/vel/b//in

It's really a Hide and Seek Church... Jiang Baimian criticized inwardly.

Shang Jianyao asked, "Then, who was first place?"

"Viel," Gaudi said in admiration. "He hasn't been found to this day."

"...When was your Mass held?" Jiang Baimian was stunned.

Gaudi replied in confusion, "Three days ago."

“That’s good...” Jiang Baimian heaved a sigh of relief. Otherwise, she would’ve thought that Viel was gone.

As a researcher that was well-read in the Old World’s books, Jiang Baimian couldn’t help but associate it with some relatively evil rituals. A ritual like ‘everyone has to work hard to not be found.’ Those who could last until the end would receive the Kalendaria’s blessings and directly enter the New World.

This was equivalent to a disguised form of human sacrifice.

In the empty underground building, where almost no one came and went, their group seemed to be the only living creatures. But when they came to the lowest floor and saw the Hunter’s Guild’s signboard, they still spotted people.

This Hunter’s Guild wasn’t large—it wasn’t even one-tenth as large as its peer in Weed City. It also didn’t have many technological products. It only had a large screen and a row of service windows.

The employees at each kiosk wore different masks. Some were rabbits, some were clowns, some were tigers, and some were paper bags with holes.

“It’s inevitable. The Hunter’s Guild doesn’t allow employees to hide, so everyone can only wear masks and hide their true appearances,” introduced Gaudi.

Jiang Baimian sincerely praised, “Pretty good.”

Although it was relatively easy for her and Shang Jianyao to find people, who would be willing to trouble themselves?

Unless they had fun doing so.

They quickly entered the Hunter’s Guild and came to one of the kiosks.

The employee in the tiger mask immediately said, “The missions are all displayed on the screen. The records on the table are also very complete. If you can’t read, you can find the Guides; they are hiding somewhere nearby.”

