

## Ad Infinitum 301

### Chapter 301: Last Problem

After making this judgment, Jiang Baimian exhaled without hiding anything. “What a pity...” It was a pity that her dream of using such an item to experience Awakened abilities had been shattered.

At this moment, Bai Chen thought for a moment and said, “Its effects seem different from what the murloc Oracle showed.”

The murloc Oracle’s ability mainly affected breathing and heartbeats.

“Different domains.” Shang Jianyao became serious and succinctly voiced his judgment.

“Yes.” Jiang Baimian nodded. “From the way Yama Tiger could use the tree branch laurel to open the murloc Oracle’s mind world and attempt to descend in reverse, that item is likely an amalgamation of his aura of some corresponding object. This night pearl seems to be his harvest from exploring the Mind Corridor. I wonder which powerhouse it belongs to...”

At this point, Jiang Baimian turned to look at Geneva. “Did Mechanical Paradise categorize Awakened abilities?”

Geneva shook his head and said, “As you can see, our Mechanical Paradise actually has very little contact with the outside world. Most of the time, we do it through Tarnan. Occasionally, we will send teams out to places like Redstone Collection, Weed City, and the Linhai Alliance, but overall, we haven’t encountered too many Awakened. We can’t establish categories for a more in-depth analysis.”

“Indeed.” Jiang Baimian expressed her understanding. She suspected that Mechanical Paradise was most likely not as knowledgeable as Pangu Biology when it came to Awakened. However, the Old Task Force still didn’t have the clearance to do so.

After Shang Jianyao put the yellowish-green night pearl into a rubber glove and threw it to Geneva, Jiang Baimian raised her hand and touched her cochlear. “Now that everything is in place, there’s only one problem left.”

She didn’t plan on contacting the various Redstone Collection factions—large or small—for Operation Beheading. She didn’t think of cooperating with Tan Jie and the others either.

Success in such matters had to do with them happening like a bolt out of the blue. The more people knew about it, the easier it was to have leaks.

If a ruler does not keep his deliberations with his minister, he will lose that minister. If a minister does not keep his deliberations with his ruler, he will lose his life.

The Underground Ark had a longer history than Redstone Collection. It was through their business that this settlement was established. Over the years, Redstone Collection's residents and the Underground Ark inevitably had all kinds of connections. There could be conflicts or secret ties.

Jiang Baimian didn't want to take the risk of a leak under the situation of not being able to carry out an effective screening in a short period of time. After all, Operation Beheading didn't require a large number of people. It was more suitable for a small and elite team.

As for informing Pangu Biology, that was definitely a no-no. Such matters would definitely be stopped.

If they chose not to say anything, it would just boil down to how a general far away on the battlefield doesn't obey an emperor's orders.

"What problem?" Long Yuehong asked cooperatively.

Jiang Baimian's right hand—which was rubbing her cochlear implant—slid to her chin, and she said with a serious expression, "As the saying goes: one needs to predict the enemy's actions from a comprehensive perspective. I previously hypothesized that DiMarco might be a Mind Corridor powerhouse not much weaker than Yama Tiger, didn't I?"

Long Yuehong still seemed to experience the effects of Coward. His liver trembled when he heard that. "It's better to give up on the operation then."

After he expressed his attitude, Shang Jianyao began a story. "One day, Long Yuehong met a girl he really liked. They hit it off and soon fell passionately in love with each other..."

"What kind of adjectives are those!?" Long Yuehong couldn't help but interrupt. He was a little confused about what Shang Jianyao wanted to say, so he chose to listen.

“Just get the meaning.” Shang Jianyao didn’t patronize him with the excuse of ‘everything is but a dream; why so serious’ and sincerely expressed his apology. “Later, they encountered danger, and that girl was about to die at gunpoint. At this moment, Long Yuehong felt that he wasn’t strong enough. Therefore, it was better to give up. Or should he risk his life and leave no regrets?”

Long Yuehong turned agape and fell silent. Although he felt that Shang Jianyao’s story was inapplicable to the situation at hand, he still felt like he had taken an arrow in the knee.

Jiang Baimian raised her hand and pressed it down. “How can it be the same? Yes, we have the night pearl and Genava—who isn’t affected by most Awakened abilities. Even in the worst-case scenario, it’s not like we can’t put up a fight. Besides, do you still remember? When DiMarco’s father was seriously ill, a rebellion happened in the Underground Ark, causing heavy casualties to their family members. It was only then that DiMarco became the Underground Ark’s owner.

“Although I suspect that DiMarco is behind this matter, it means that DiMarco wasn’t too strong back then. Otherwise, things wouldn’t have developed this way. Think about it. A powerful DiMarco would be able to protect his family members from being killed during the rebellion while easily killing the family members who stood in his way without the rebellion’s help.”

After saying so much in one breath, Jiang Baimian pursed her lips and moistened her throat. “It hasn’t been many years. No matter how fast DiMarco improves, he definitely can’t compare to Yama Tiger. I think he’s at most a little stronger than Tarnan’s Superior Heartless...”

At this point, Jiang Baimian suddenly had an idea, and her expression changed twice.

Long Yuehong—who felt that he was still affected by the residual effects of Coward—asked in fear.

Jiang Baimian didn’t answer him. She looked at Shang Jianyao with a slightly complicated expression and thoughtfully asked, “Do you still remember how DiMarco evaluated Eidolon Nun?”

Shang Jianyao was like an artificial computer as he basically repeated DiMarco’s words from back then. “Not all Kalendarium like Eidolon Nun like to watch their cathedral.”

“Yes, yes, yes. DiMarco’s explanation is that Eidolon Nun wields vigilance, so she will also appear vigilant.” Long Yuehong recalled the relevant information.

Jiang Baimian nodded and asked Shang Jianyao again, “Do you remember what happened when we felt Eidolon Nun’s gaze?”

Before Shang Jianyao could answer, Long Yuehong’s eyes widened. “You’ve been gazed upon by Eidolon Nun?”

Bai Chen also revealed a surprised expression.

Jiang Baimian naturally wouldn’t say that she kept it from them because she was afraid that it would scare them out of their wits. She smiled and sighed. “We also couldn’t be sure back then; we thought it was an illusion. Now that we’ve recalled DiMarco’s words, I think it might not be fake.”

She didn’t make up any other reason because she had long realized that Bai Chen lacked a sense of security and didn’t like being excluded.

Long Yuehong hissed. “We were... watched by a Kalendaria... The Kalendarium really exists...”

Bai Chen turned her head to glance at him and nodded thoughtfully without saying anything.

Shang Jianyao then replied to Jiang Baimian’s question. “Before we sensed Eidolon Nun’s gaze, Bishop Renato contracted the Heartless disease. Viel believes that this is a divine punishment stemming from his affair with Mrs. Theresa.”

“There’s no need to say the latter half...” Jiang Baimian weakly stopped him. She then looked around and said seriously, “If it’s really Eidolon Nun’s divine punishment, I believe Bishop Renato will be directly ‘scared to death.’”

“Yes, if we assume that DiMarco is suspected to be a powerhouse at the Mind Corridor level—an existence that can be called a false god as a premise—we will come to a different conclusion when we consider his evaluation of Eidolon Nun and Eidolon Nun’s gaze.”

Shang Jianyao helped her continue, “Eidolon Nun often watches Redstone Collection’s Vigilance Cathedral. It’s not only because ‘She’ wields vigilance, but it’s also possible that a powerhouse at the Mind Corridor level is suppressed at the bottom of this cathedral. Back then, the Vigilance Church didn’t choose other places and only rented a few floors above the Underground Ark as a cathedral. It was probably one of the reasons.”

As he spoke, Shang Jianyao disagreed with himself. “That’s not right. DiMarco wasn’t born when the Vigilance Cathedral was established.”

Jiang Baimian was also confused about this problem. Could it be that DiMarco’s grandfather or great-grandfather were also powerhouses at the Mind Corridor level?

“The descendants of powerhouses at the Mind Corridor have a higher chance of Awakening and are more likely to enter the Mind Corridor? Yes... Every generational Underground Ark owner will give birth to a large number of children and choose the most outstanding one as his successor. Is this using numbers to exchange for the descendants’ Awakening? Whoever awakens will be the Ark’s next owner? Did DiMarco become crazy after his youngest son died because his youngest son was a natural Awakened?”

This could explain some of the phenomena inside the Underground Ark, but it couldn’t cover everything.

Long Yuehong felt that his team leader’s guess wasn’t wrong and said in fear, “From the looks of it, DiMarco might really be a very dangerous person. Then, should we...”

It was unlikely that the Old Task Force could deal with him.

Jiang Baimian smiled. “This gives me a little more confidence.”

“Why?” Long Yuehong was very surprised.

Jiang Baimian turned to the north and smiled. “This means that not only will the Vigilance Church or Eidolon Nun not protect DiMarco, but they might also provide us with some help.”

This was a great benefit.

Long Yuehong was very excited and felt much more at ease.

“What should we do next?” Bai Chen asked.

Jiang Baimian restrained her smile. “This will have to go back to what I just said: ‘Now that everything is in place, there’s only one problem left.’ If DiMarco is a powerhouse who has explored the Mind Corridor’s depths, he will definitely be able to sense the existence of human consciousness in a large area. Let alone entering through the ventilation duct, we probably won’t be able to hide from him just by approaching the ventilation duct.

“Heh heh, don’t think of taking advantage of the dead of night. Shang Jianyao will automatically sense things around him when he sleeps. A powerhouse at the Mind Corridor level will only be stronger.”

Shang Jianyao smiled. “I can hide my consciousness.”

This was an ability that every Awakened had. As long as they weren’t discovered by the other party’s five senses or tried to use their abilities to influence the other party, they wouldn’t be exposed.

Genava said in a slightly muffled voice, “I don’t think I have human consciousness.”

This meant he wouldn’t be sensed.

Jiang Baimian frowned slightly. “But it’s impossible to enter silently through the ventilation duct with just the two of you. It’s the same even if there are two moles inside.”

Chapter 302: Search

Genava could analyze what Jiang Baimian was worried about and immediately said, “I can carry out some modifications to obtain the ability to interfere with the surveillance.”

The modifications he was referring to were as simple and natural as a normal human talking about changing clothes.

“I’ve considered it, but I was afraid it wouldn’t be in time. Besides, the corresponding equipment isn’t that easy to obtain.” As Jiang Baimian spoke, a smile gradually appeared on her face. “This was indeed a problem in the past, but I have a better idea now.”

“What is it?” Long Yuehong asked with a learning attitude.

Jiang Baimian's eyes darted around as she smiled. "Since our approach to the Underground Ark might not escape DiMarco's senses, we won't hide it. We'll go over openly."

"Huh?" Long Yuehong looked confused. Bai Chen and Genava didn't answer.

How can we carry out Operation Beheading if we go over openly?

Jiang Baimian looked at Shang Jianyao. "What do you have in mind?"

Shang Jianyao nodded solemnly. "Tactical deception!"

"Whoa." Jiang Baimian didn't bicker with him. Instead, she explained with a smile, "I mean, we can find an excuse to move openly in the Vigilance Cathedral's ventilation duct."

Upon hearing 'ventilation duct,' a name surfaced in Long Yuehong's mind: Viel!

Before he could have any other thoughts, Jiang Baimian smiled and looked around. "For example, we can go to Harbinger Song and take on the mission to find Viel. As everyone knows, Viel likes to move around in ventilation ducts. Therefore, it's very reasonable for us to search for him in the cathedral's ventilation system.

"During this process, we will inevitably approach the Underground Ark due to the large number of interconnecting ventilation ducts. We will be sensed by DiMarco, and this will allow him to familiarize himself with our existence. He will also know of our supposed goal in advance.

"When he becomes numb to such a situation and is no longer as vigilant or doesn't show any excessive reaction, we will take advantage of the night and use the chosen ventilation duct to infiltrate the Ark."

Bai Chen nodded slightly. "It's an idea."

Jiang Baimian's smile became even more obvious. "More importantly, if an accident happens and the operation fails, we can also come under the Vigilance Church's banner to intimidate DiMarco and strive for everyone to retreat safely."

At this point, she wore a bright smile and pretended that the people in front of her were from the Underground Ark. She then simulated a possible explanation. “We were commissioned by the Vigilance Church, and we suspect that Viel’s disappearance was related to your Ark. Therefore, we infiltrated to search for clues! If you think there’s anything wrong with that, communicate with the Church and let them punish us. Could it be that you want to meddle in our affairs?”

Long Yuehong was stunned when he heard that. He had the feeling that a pair of black wings had extended from his team leader’s back, and a black tail had curled up.

At this moment, Jiang Baimian concluded, “To put it simply, we’re hoisting a banner such as a tiger’s skin to intimidate others!”

Clap! Clap! Clap!

Shang Jianyao clapped as expected.

Long Yuehong sincerely felt that he could offend anyone but his team leader in the future.

Fortunately, Team Leader has always been tolerant and magnanimous. Shang Jianyao’s survival to this day is a testament to that... As Long Yuehong muttered inwardly, he thought of a question. “What if Viel has already returned?”

“Then, let’s communicate with the Vigilance Church. If they really are as we deduced, not only will they not protect DiMarco, but they might also provide us with a certain level of help. Let Viel disappear for a period of time. If it’s different from what we expected, there’s no need for Operation Beheading to continue. Fighting the Vigilance Church is something only the company has the right to consider.” Jiang Baimian had long thought about this.

Let Viel disappear for a period of time? Long Yuehong felt a headache coming on.

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The next morning, in the red and gold Vigilance Cathedral.

The Old Task Force met Harbinger Song He in his room.



“Harbinger Song, is Viel back?” Jiang Baimian asked directly.

Song He shook his head and said worriedly, “I was just about to get people to seek him out. Something seems wrong.”

As Long Yuehong heaved a sigh of relief, Jiang Baimian volunteered. “Why don’t you entrust this mission to us? We were the ones who found Viel previously.”

Although Viel was the one who had come out on his own initiative, it was after the Old Task Force took on the mission and conducted a search.

Song He thought for a moment and said, “What kind of payment do you need?”

“A little protection from Eidolon Nun.” Jiang Baimian deliberately made her words sound meaningful.

“Oh?” Song He found it a little difficult to understand.

Jiang Baimian didn’t answer and said, “Viel’s most likely hiding place is the ventilation ducts all over the cathedral. We want to enter and exit the cathedral freely and search every ventilation duct.”

Song He fell silent for a few seconds as if he understood the meaning behind Jiang Baimian’s words. He deliberated and said, “I can’t make a decision regarding this matter and the payment you want. I’ll discuss it with Bishop Antonella now. Wait here for a moment.”

“Alright.” Jiang Baimian—who was wearing the graceful monk mask—smiled.

Almost ten minutes later, Antonella—who was wearing a simple mask and a black cloak—entered the room with Song He. He directly said, “Eidolon Nun’s blessings are for those who sincerely believe in ‘Her’ and work for ‘Her.’ I can’t give you any promises on behalf of the Kalendaria.”

Just as he said that, Shang Jianyao clasped his hands in front of his chest and took a step back. “Always be vigilant!”

“...” Antonella didn’t know how to respond. After a few seconds, he changed the topic. “I can give you permission to search the cathedral’s ventilation ducts. I only hope that you can find Viel as soon as possible. I also hope that you don’t cause any damage to this place.”

He didn’t mention the final payment as if it wasn’t something worth paying attention to.

Jiang Baimian’s eyes flickered as if she were in thought. “The ventilation ducts here have a complicated layout and are connected to the Underground Ark. What if we get lost and enter a place we shouldn’t enter?”

Antonella fell silent for nearly ten seconds before smiling. “Make sure there won’t be a next time.”

Jiang Baimian laughed as well. “Alright, there won’t be a next time.”

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Vigilance Cathedral, basement one.

Slave Merchant Huo Zhi looked at the 40-odd young men and women in front of him and smiled. “As you can see, even a place used for training is better than the one you used to live in. There are beds of similar sizes, mattresses, blankets, pillows, and three punctual meals. What’s this called? Heaven, I tell you! This is your blessing; you can’t let Mr. DiMarco down. In short, train well and strive to enter the Ark. If you aren’t selected, heh heh, you might have to go to places like the mines.”

The eyes of the 40-odd men and women in tattered clothes lit up with hope. They were also worried about the consequences of not being chosen.

Just as the Underground Ark’s personnel began arranging for these men and women to stay in different rooms, Huo Zhi and his subordinates saw the Ruin Hunter team—which had the robot and could wipe out the entire Redstone Collection—take the elevator here.

What are they doing here? Huo Zhi subconsciously took two steps to the side and made way.

The slaves he brought were huddled in different rooms, sizing up the ‘visitors’ with apprehensive and confused gazes.

Shang Jianyao stopped and swept his gaze across the relatively clean but pale faces.

“What are you doing here?” An Underground Ark warden walked over and said, “Our Ark is using it to train servants now.”

The ownership of basement one belonged to the Ark. Only when they did not use it for the training and inspection of servants would they lend it to the Vigilance Church for Masses.

Shang Jianyao—who was wearing the furry, mouth-protruding monkey mask—smiled and raised his hand. “We’re here to repair the ventilation ducts.”

The warden, Huo Zhi, and the others were stunned by this answer. For a moment, nobody spoke.

Jiang Baimian took two steps forward and explained, “A child was lost in the cathedral; he likes to go about the ventilation ducts. We’re here for him.”

As she spoke, she took out the document that Antonella had written.

The Underground Ark warden took a few looks and nodded slightly. “Don’t disturb us.”

“Alright.” Jiang Baimian smiled and agreed.

This interlude was deliberately done by Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao. Their goal was to inform the Underground Ark’s people of their ‘mission’ and strive to get this message passed to DiMarco as soon as possible.

The Old Task Force then searched the ventilation ducts according to the map layout. During this process, they arrived at the ventilation ducts that allowed them to enter the Underground Ark many times. However, they left for elsewhere after ‘confirming’ that there was no sign of Viel. They acted like a Ruin Hunter team that was sticking to their promise.

As outsiders who were unaccustomed to ventilation ducts, the Old Task Force’s search progress was undoubtedly slow. They had to go out for a breather every two to three hours to stretch their bodies and rest their minds.

Just like that, they worked until 11 p.m. There were only two to three unsearched areas left.

One of the corresponding ventilation ducts was where their moles—Yu Tian and Bode—were in charge of.

The Vigilance Cathedral had already closed. The clergymen had all returned to their rooms to rest. Only a portion of the cathedral's armed personnel was still patrolling and on duty.

In the empty golden-red hall, Jiang Baimian—who had recovered—stood up and led Shang Jianyao, Bai Chen, and the others to Eidolon Nun's Sacred Emblem.

Looking at the indistinct female figure behind the door, she lowered her head, suppressed her voice, and sincerely said, "The Underground Ark believed in you in the past. It believes in you now and will believe in you in the future. We just want your believers to lead a better and more peaceful life. They don't have to be afraid of being killed at any moment."

After the confession, the five people from the Old Task Force looked up at the same time.

The female figure—Eidolon Nun—was still quietly hanging in the darkness behind the door.

Long Yuehong muttered in disappointment, "There's no response..." Although he also knew that this was wishful thinking—after all, even the most pious Eidolon Nun believer might not receive the Kalendaria's attention, much less heretics and faithless like them—humans had the tendency to look forward to the good.

In fact, if Eidolon Nun really cast her gaze over, Long Yuehong would definitely be the first to be shocked.

Just as he said that, Shang Jianyao smiled and said excitedly, "The Kalendaria has tacitly agreed!"

With that said, Shang Jianyao wore the monkey mask with the furry face and protruding mouth. He then turned around and walked to basement one.

Chapter 303: The Same Night

Vigilance Cathedral, basement one.

Ge Miao woke up, having not slept too well in the unfamiliar environment she was in.

“What’s wrong?” asked her elder sister, Ge Lin, in a daze.

Ge Miao thought for a moment and said, “I-I’m going to the bathroom.”

She originally wanted to use the word ‘piss,’ but she recalled that Warden Locke had said that one had to be cultured after entering the Ark; otherwise, it would anger Mr. DiMarco. Hence, she quickly changed her choice of words.

For a wilderness nomad from a small settlement, this was a very awkward matter. The three meals a day, a safe and stable environment, a warm, soft bed, and a future where she didn’t have to separate from her sister prompted her to change.

Even Ge Miao felt that the headache-inducing task of learning the Red River language wasn’t that unbearable. It even made her happy; it was as if every word carried a hint of hope. They could be exchanged for a better future once she had enough of them.

“I’ll go too.” It struck Ge Lin that her sister was only 15 years old. Although she had become much more mature after losing her parents when their settlement was breached, she still felt worried.

The sisters used the light from the street lamps that shone through the door to grope their way out of the room and walked to the bathroom according to their memories. On the way, they encountered patrolling guards sent by the Underground Ark. However, they weren’t put in a spot after explaining their goal.

Amidst the flushing sounds, Ge Miao looked at the toilet bowl with a dazed expression. “Sister, this thing is so convenient.” She couldn’t help but sigh with emotion again.

She remembered that the most powerful Elder’s family in the past didn’t have such an item.

Ge Lin tersely acknowledged it and unconsciously smiled. “The good days are really coming.” This was the first time she looked forward to the future.

She remembered that Warden Locke had said that, not only did Mr. DiMarco not forbid servants from finding a partner, but he also encouraged everyone to get married and have children.

The two sisters reluctantly washed their hands with what seemed like precious water, walked out of the bathroom, and retraced their steps.

When they were only a few steps away from the six-person room, two Underground Ark guards came walking by.

One of the guards—a black-haired, brown-eyed Ashlandic—nodded at them in a friendly manner.

Ge Lin's heart palpitated as she smiled timidly. "Good evening."

"Don't run around," reminded the Ashlandic guard.

"Yes, Sir." Ge Lin smiled obsequiously. "Thank you for your service."

Although the two sisters couldn't be considered good-looking, they looked rather presentable among the batch of slaves. The two patrolling Underground Ark guards didn't show any aversion and instead said with a smile, "There's no need for that. When you enter the Ark, we will all be colleagues."

Ge Lin seized the opportunity and sincerely asked, "Sirs, I heard from Warden Locke that we could express interest in the work we do if we can pass the training. Is that true?"

"Yes, but there are limited choices. It can't exceed the quota either..." the Ashlandic guard explained simply.

Ge Lin held her sister's hand and looked at the two of them eagerly. "Then, what would be the better choice?"

The Ashlandic guard fell silent for a moment before looking at his companion of Red River heritage beside him. He then looked at the surveillance camera above him that belonged to the Vigilance Cathedral and not the Underground Ark. He deliberated and said, "Try not to go to Mr. DiMarco's side. H-he doesn't have a good temper, and he is prone to anger. When he gets angry..."

He didn't make it too clear. A certain fear was like a boulder, pressing heavily on his heart.

Upon seeing this, the other Red River guard reminded Ge Lin and Ge Miao, "We often replenish servants like you, and the Ark is only so big..."

They didn't say anything else and strode forward to continue their patrol mission.

Ge Miao was confused and had no idea what the conversation implied.

Ge Lin's expression changed a few times, and she roughly understood what underlay the conversation. The servants before them were chased away because of Mr. DiMarco's bad temper? No, Warden Locke mentioned that nobody could leave the Ark unless they are sent out to do something. They live and die in the Ark... Could it be that the servants before us are all dead?

Ge Lin recalled the two guards' expressions of pity and solemnity and increasingly felt that her guess was right. Dead, all dead...

Ge Lin's footsteps became unsteady; she felt despair as if she had just jumped out of the wok and into the fire. However, she also knew that wilderness nomads like her and her sister could die from all kinds of accidents at any moment, and who knows where they might be sold to if they failed to enter the Ark—becoming prostitutes and being tortured to death.

Everybody wanted to live a good life.

After returning to her room, she quietly got into bed. Ge Lin looked at her sister, who had fallen asleep again. Her sorrow came from the bottom of her heart, and she could no longer hold it back.

She buried her face in the blanket, her body trembling slightly.

In the corridor outside, the two Ark guards glanced at each other while patrolling and sighed. "Sigh..."

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“Sigh...” At basement two, Yu Tian sighed silently beside a ventilation duct.

After he and Bode returned to the Ark, they didn't take any action despite their excitement and the urge to mobilize everyone they knew to cooperate with the Vigilance Church and overthrow DiMarco's brutal rule. This was because they didn't have much confidence, nor had they recently suffered any pressure from DiMarco. They lacked the fuse that ignited the gunpowder keg.

Upon recalling that the other party had said that the two of them only needed to do very little and didn't need to take any risks, Yu Tian and Bode decided to cooperate to a certain extent and observe the progress.

If everything went well, they would join without reservations.

Yu Tian sighed because he didn't know if this matter would succeed. Furthermore, he had hit it off with a maidservant—it was the time when they were passionately in love.

His father—an old guard—firmly objected to this matter because the maid had immediate family members who were also servants.

In the Underground Ark, the guards had a relatively special status. They were rarely killed due to DiMarco's brutality, and the same went for their families.

This made them prime choices as spouses for the servants who hoped to obtain some form of death exemption.

The guards weren't too happy about this. This was because although the marriage between a servant and a guard would indeed earn them a certain level of tolerance from DiMarco, they still had immediate family members. If their immediate family members made a mistake or offended DiMarco, they would be killed.

According to DiMarco's habits, it was very likely that they would implicate the corresponding guard's family as a way to eliminate any latent dangers.

Therefore, it was better for guards to intermarry. This also made many guards feel superior.

But there was no reason in relationships.



Yu Tian felt vexed about this matter. The Vigilance Church's actions gave him hope.

As these thoughts raced through his mind, he—who was holding a submachine gun—turned his head and glanced at his companion, Bode. He realized that Bode was also a little tense and uneasy.

Yu Tian shook his head indiscernibly, indicating for Bode not to panic.

Maybe the Vigilance Church has already given up on their original plan? As his eyes darted around, he swept his gaze across the metal-grilled ventilation duct, the three surveillance cameras that didn't leave any blind spots, and the other guards under the other two cameras as usual.

There were four of them, and they were also divided into two groups. Three were of Red River heritage, and one was Ashlandic; they were wearing olive-green uniforms and carrying the latest submachine guns.

From Yu Tian and Bode's point of view, such a defense wasn't impregnable, but there was definitely nothing that could be exploited. The invaders could only fight head-on and face wave after wave of reinforcements sent from the surveillance room.

At this moment, silver-white lightning and the resulting sparks lit up in front of them.

A circuit malfunction? This was the first thought that flashed through Yu Tian and Bode's minds.

At the same time, in the surveillance room at basement six, the two guards—who were rotated in shifts—saw an electric spark appear on a screen before it lost its image and turned black.

"B3 guards, check if there's a malfunction with the B12 cameras." One of the men in charge of surveillance immediately gave instructions using the electronic products purchased from Mechanical Paradise.

His voice then echoed in Yu Tian and the others' ears through the corresponding area's loudspeaker.

Yu Tian looked up at the B12 camera and realized that there were charred marks on its interface.

Suddenly, he saw a hand waving at him from the other side of the ventilation duct's metal grills.

Yu Tian's pupils suddenly dilated. He followed his instincts and slowly retracted his gaze.

The next second, electric arcs and sparks flashed twice.

In the surveillance room, the man—who had just spoken through the loudspeaker—saw the corresponding images of the B10 and B11 cameras disappear.

Before he could give any further instructions, Yu Tian snapped to his senses and said with the help of the electronic product clipped to his collar, “Yes, the three cameras here are malfunctioning. It should be a circuit problem.”

At this moment, he realized that he was unprecedentedly calm. After all, he didn't have to do anything dangerous. He just had to report the most likely situation.

“Check again. I'll send someone over to repair it immediately.” The man in the surveillance room handled the matter according to standard operating procedure.

Yu Tian, Bode, and the other two groups of guards obediently split up to make confirmation. During this process, Yu Tian and Bode deliberately occupied the area under the ventilation duct, leaving the others with their backs facing the area.

The metal grill around the vent silently moved away.

Shang Jianyao—who was wearing a furry-faced, mouth-protruding monkey mask—and Jiang Baimian, who was wearing a graceful monk mask, jumped down one after another.

It was impossible for them to completely mute their landing, but they had moles who produced all kinds of normal sounds in time to cover up the corresponding commotion.

Without any hesitation, Shang Jianyao pounced at the two guards who were checking the cameras with their backs facing him.

Bang! Bang!

He struck from both sides, striking the bottom of each target's ears.

The two guards fainted without a grunt.

Shang Jianyao's hands slid down, caught their bodies, and slowly lowered them to the ground.

Meanwhile, Jiang Baimian easily knocked out the last two guards and made them 'sit' against the wall without making any loud thuds.

After doing all of this, Jiang Baimian gestured at the vent.

The silver-black, blue-shirted robot—Genava, who had blue-light-emitting eyes—jumped down. The landing made relatively little noise.

He climbed up and directly snapped open a metal finger and inserted it into the B12 camera's interface.

Behind him, Long Yuehong and Bai Chen—who were wearing military exoskeletons—also entered the Underground Ark.

Yu Tian and Bode heaved a sigh of relief while reeling in anxiety.

Chapter 304: Mad Dash

To Yu Tian and Bode, the experts of the Vigilance Church had fulfilled their promise and arrived as promised, increasing their confidence. However, the DiMarco family had ruled the Underground Ark for decades and had accumulated a lot of power. Before they saw the dawn, their worry wasn't something that could be dispelled.

Shang Jianyao stood up, turned around, and looked at them. He raised a finger and pressed it to his lips.

This was considered relatively common body language. Yu Tian and Bode shut their mouths tightly and didn't dare to ask any questions.

At the same time, Bai Chen—who was carrying an Orange rifle and a Short Neck submachine gun in her hand—and Long Yuehong, who was wearing a military exoskeleton, squatted down, removed out the passed-out guards' belts, and tied their hands.

They also stuffed the four guards' mouths with pre-prepared cloth bundles and pulled their pants down to their ankles.

This way, they didn't have to worry about these people shouting for help or escaping on their own after waking up.

Although Jiang Baimian's Operation Beheading required them to deal a swift strike and there was a high chance that they would end the operation before the guards woke up and updated the Ark, there was nothing wrong with being careful. After all, nobody knew if an accident would happen.

After Bai Chen and Long Yuehong were done, Genova—who had one hand on the gap and was firmly adhered to the wall—retracted his finger that was inserted into the B12 camera's socket.

The blue light in his eyes flickered quickly for a while before he inserted his finger back ten to twenty seconds later.

It didn't take long for him to retract his hand and insert the B12 camera back into its socket. He also repaired the malfunction caused by the electric shock.

After repairing the B10 and B11 cameras in the same way, Genova gently jumped back to the ground.

He spoke quickly, but his words were clear. "I've already analyzed the Ark's system and compiled a virus for the invasion. In another 30 seconds, all the cameras will be rebooted, and they will replay footage from the past 15 minutes. The footage will then loop back."

This way, the guards on duty in the surveillance room would see that everywhere in the Ark was fine and that everything was normal, just like the previous 15 minutes.

It would be truly identical.

Of course, someone would definitely discover the problem if the footage was repeated for too long, but Operation Beheading didn't need that much time.

"Got it." Jiang Baimian tersely acknowledged it and suppressed her voice as she said to Yu Tian and Bode, "Do you know what to report?"

Yu Tian and Bode looked at each other and nodded excitedly. They couldn't quite understand what Genova had just said, but this didn't stop them from finding it impressive.

They originally imagined that the Underground Ark's defense system could prevent a fly from flying in without everyone knowing. Any potential invaders had no way of launching a surprise attack and could only choose to fight head-on. Who knew that the Vigilance Church's experts—with their strength and comprehensive smart bot—could easily finish off the surveillance system without causing any commotion? They even made it an accomplice in the invasion.

Yu Tian and Bode's confidence doubled. They began to think that the operation to overthrow DiMarco's tyranny had a high chance of success!

Upon seeing that time was almost up, Yu Tian gripped the electronic product on his collar and reported, "It's not a big problem. We fiddled with it a few times, and I think it's almost fixed."

The guards in the surveillance room were just about to ask about the corresponding details when they saw the three surveillance cameras on the black screen light up again, revealing Zone B3's situation.

The three groups of guards—six in total—were at their posts. Everything was normal.

"Alright, I won't rush the mechanic then, but we still have to conduct an inspection later to prevent it from malfunctioning again," replied the guard in charge through the regional radio.

They really pulled the wool over everyone's eyes... Yu Tian and Bode looked at each other again and saw the pleasant surprise in each other's eyes.

Shang Jianyao walked in front of them, pressed down the smug monkey mask on his face, and smiled. "We won't trouble you next."

Before he could finish his sentence, he had already raised his right hand.

Yu Tian and Bode were first stunned before something dawned on them. They turned their bodies one after another, exposing the spot behind their ears to Shang Jianyao.

Shang Jianyao hand-chopped each of them with perfectly controlled strength.

Yu Tian and Bode felt dizzy, but they didn't really faint. However, they took the opportunity to lie on the ground. During this process, their actions were abnormally gentle as if they were afraid of hurting themselves.

If the Vigilance Church's operation didn't succeed, they would really be forced to faint. If everything went smoothly, they would get up and incite other guards to strive to obtain a larger piece of the pie from the Vigilance Church's subsequent management.

After doing all of this, Shang Jianyao stretched out his right hand to Genava.

Genava took out a rubber glove containing the yellowish-green night pearl and threw it over.

Shang Jianyao pinched the fish-eye-sized bead with his left hand and stuffed the rubber glove into his pocket.

Upon seeing this, Jiang Baimian took a deep breath and ordered, "Get ready."

Bai Chen picked up the Short Neck submachine gun. Her back was slightly bent, fully prepared to run out at any moment.

Long Yuehong—who was wearing a military exoskeleton—walked in front of Bai Chen and assumed a similar posture.

Further ahead were Jiang Baimian—who held the Death rocket launcher in one hand—and the silver-black robot, Genava, who was prepared to fire lasers and grenades.

Shang Jianyao stood right in front of them and sighed regretfully. "Unfortunately, I can't have my stereo..."

This was because there was no trick left to pull off. All they had to do was rush forward and kill DiMarco before most of the Underground Ark's forces reacted. If they used the small speaker along the way, it would definitely incur the surveillance team's suspicion.

The Old Task Force didn't consider re-entering the ventilation ducts and winding their way down because it would take more time. More accidents would happen with time.

"DiMarco lives in Zone C at basement six; there's only one room there. He usually stays inside and rarely changes rooms at the last minute... Zone C has two latest military exoskeletons, eight teams of 16 armed guards, and two 'consultants' with superpowers... Zone A has a large number of DiMarco's mistresses... Zone B now belongs to the mistress who is pregnant with DiMarco's child. The surveillance room is also there..."

"The elevator can't go straight to Zone C. We can only go to Zone A first, then enter Zone C through Zone B..."

"There seems to be a secret escape route in DiMarco's room. There's a special elevator..."

The pieces of information described by Yu Tian and Bode flashed across Jiang Baimian's mind one by one before finally fixing on DiMarco's figure in the Old World's black priest outfit.

"Move out!" she shouted softly and ran out of basement two's Zone B3 without hesitation.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

Shang Jianyao held the yellowish-green night pearl in his left hand and was the first to rush into Zone B2.

Before the guards could react, they felt indescribable horror. They couldn't help but rush to different corners, curl up, and tremble.

They had all become 'cowards.' Apart from being afraid, they couldn't have any other thoughts!

Shang Jianyao almost used all his strength to stimulate the night pearl's power, hoping that the Coward effect could last longer.

After their previous experiments, they confirmed that under no additional influence, the effects lasted a maximum of one minute and a half.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

The Old Task Force ran toward the elevator. Along the way, all the guards separated like a tide, their faces filled with extreme horror.

None of them shouted, afraid that any sound would make them a target. They only wanted to find the safest place and stuff themselves in, waiting for the horror to blow over.

Tap! Tap! Tap!

The Old Task Force only took about ten seconds to rush to the elevator.

During this process, Jiang Baimian and the others strictly maintained their distance and position. On the one hand, they were worried that they would suddenly be attacked and wiped out. On the other hand, they would enter the range of the night pearl's powers if they overtook Shang Jianyao.

At this moment, three grayish-black elevators stood silently in front of them, appearing very heavy.

Genava had already infected the entire Underground Ark's system with the virus he had written. Therefore, after having the elevator wait for them, they didn't need to swipe cards or enter any passwords after entering. The corresponding button for the sixth floor lit up automatically.

The carriage door slowly closed in front of Long Yuehong and the others. It only took a few seconds for it to open again.

Outside was a corridor covered in a yellowish-brown carpet. There were many rooms on both sides.



According to the layout given by Yu Tian and Bode, Shang Jianyao held the yellowish-green night pearl—which had dimmed significantly—and led the way into the area. His expression was hidden under the smug monkey mask—something no one could see.

At this moment, many people in this area fell asleep. They couldn't help but have nightmares. Some struggled with all their might, twisting and turning, while some suddenly woke up, gasping for breath.

The patrolling guards were the same as their colleagues at basement two—they each found a place to hide. Some hid in corners, trembling, and some snatched blankets and wrapped themselves tightly.

There was definitely some commotion, but it was not too obvious.

In the surveillance room, the guards on duty seriously watched the images displayed on multiple screens and confirmed that nothing abnormal had happened. It was the same as the past 15 minutes.

It was truly identical.

Suddenly, they felt like countless ghosts were wandering around them. For no reason, they believed that their companions wanted to kill them.

Their courage quickly melted away as they left their seats and ran to places where they could hide.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

The five people from the Old Task Force rushed into basement six's Zone C.

It had only been slightly over 40 seconds since they began rushing forward.

Basement Six, Zone C.

The two guards wearing military exoskeletons fled first, leaving only Shang Jianyao and the others behind.

As the abilities of the two middle-aged men—who were suspected to be Awakened—were far inferior to the yellowish-green night pearl, they rushed into a safety passage like birds startled by the twang of a bow and scrambled down the stairs before they sensed the approach of the human consciousness.

The others quickly dispersed.

The defensive strength that the Underground Ark took pride in didn't even last three seconds.

“There's only one person in the room!” Jiang Baimian shouted as she ran. At this point, she no longer needed to hide her actions.

Shang Jianyao—who was in the lead—had always treated the person in the room as Coward's main target. At this moment, he didn't relax at all.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

Shang Jianyao—who was wearing a grayish-blue camouflage uniform—ran to DiMarco's door and kicked open the dark-red wooden door.

He didn't enter. Instead, he bounced back before running a few steps forward.

Jiang Baimian—who was following closely behind him—instantly 'braked.' She aimed the Death rocket launcher at the dark door and the human inside.

Without any hesitation, she fired the rocket.

A rumbling sound shook basement six as blazing flames surged out.

Jiang Baimian had already pounced to the side to avoid the ensuing effects of the explosion.

Genava and Long Yuehong arrived at the door in time after the 'aftershocks.' They fired grenades into the room.

The four grenades landed in different directions, overlapping each other without leaving any blind spots.

Boom! Boom!

Amidst successive explosions, the Old Task Force completed Operation Beheading's first wave of attacks.

Chapter 305: Corpse

With the augmentation of the yellowish-green night pearl, the Old Task Force's Operation Beheading progressed abnormally smoothly. They virtually met with zero obstacles before they arrived at DiMarco's door and completed two rounds of firepower bombardment.

In the unrestrained flaming storm, the room became very messy. Jiang Baimian couldn't sense any weak electric signals for a while.

Although Jiang Baimian could infer the outcome based on common sense after such a barrage of attacks—as long as the person inside wasn't DiMarco's double, this Underground Ark owner would definitely be doomed. However, Jiang Baimian still wasn't at ease. After all, the DiMarco she had expected was a powerhouse at the Mind Corridor level. Even if he couldn't compare to Tarnan's Superior Heartless, he didn't deserve to die without putting up a fight.

Not only did this not make her relax, but it served to raise her guard.

After the explosion subsided, she immediately rolled to her feet and rushed to DiMarco's room.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

A figure in a grayish-blue camouflage uniform rushed past her and stepped through the collapsed door, which was in a sorry state.

It was Shang Jianyao! He led the way as always.

At this moment, two grenades suddenly flew over from the ends of Zone C's corridor.

Jiang Baimian—who had long sensed something—gave up on trying to sense the electric signals in the room. She directly pounced forward and rolled in, avoiding the attack.

Genava and Long Yuehong also used their comprehensive warning systems to discover the enemy's approach in advance. One of them jumped up, grabbed the four to five-meter-high ceiling, and retracted their legs while another shoved Bai Chen in advance, allowing her to jump into DiMarco's room with Jiang Baimian before following closely behind. Although Long Yuehong was a little nervous, he didn't panic.

Rumble!

Two grenades landed where Shang Jianyao and Jiang Baimian were originally standing, and an explosion sounded.

For the smart bot, Genava, it was very difficult for him to be harmed as long as he wasn't directly hit. The worst case would be to exchange for supplies to give himself a new paint job.

Therefore, he—who was hanging from the ceiling—only swayed a few times from the blast.

At this moment, he saw the attacker clearly; it was an iron-black robot with red-light-emitting eyes.

The Underground Ark had dominated the smuggling node, Redstone Collection, for years. It had accumulated a lot, and its hidden defenses were indeed astonishing.

In the blink of an eye, Genava determined that the attacker was a relatively ancient smart bot based on the various characteristics. This was a smart bot based on Old World standards, not a smart bot produced by Mechanical Paradise.

In Genava's eyes, such things without humanization modules were pure tools. They were no different from the maintenance robots and non-intelligent combat robots in Tarnan that could transform into cars.

He would never acknowledge it as a smart bot.

“Leave the area outside to me!” He simulated the necessary tone for the situation according to the information in his database. His body then swayed like a swing before he flung himself out. He jumped across a considerable distance and landed in front of the iron-black robot.

At this moment, the iron-black robot was dutifully rushing toward DiMarco’s room.

Genava turned slightly and slammed into the iron-black robot. During this process, he adjusted the direction of his palm.

Clang!

A clear reverberating sound echoed in basement six. The iron-black robot’s back chest suddenly melted, shooting out a beautiful yet dangerous red laser.

Almost at the same time, its back swelled up and cracked. A metal ball—wrapped in electric bolts—penetrated its many key components and flew into the distance.

Genava seized the opportunity to use his laser weapon and electromagnetic weapon! Furthermore, he had downloaded the blueprints of all kinds of robots and had done some research. He knew very well where the other party’s fatal spots were.

Amidst a series of explosions, the iron-black robot lost all its mobility and fell to the ground with a thud.

Genava didn’t waste any time; he turned around and ran to DiMarco’s door.

In Operation Beheading, he—who had no human consciousness—would be the main force in the latter half of the battle.

When Genava pounced at the iron-black robot, Jiang Baimian had already completed her roll. She switched on the flashlight and shone it at the spot where she had sensed a human before firing the rocket launcher.

There was a large, cracked bed with wisps of flames. Beside the bed lay a man in silk pajamas.

This man wore a tattered black mask with white patterns, and there were many badly mangled wounds on his body.

Shang Jianyao could sense that he no longer had human consciousness. This meant that he was already dead.

According to the mask and flaxen hair, the deceased was DiMarco.

Jiang Baimian was not happy but shocked. This was because from where DiMarco was lying, he shouldn't have escaped the first rocket's blast.

The power of Death wouldn't allow the target to retain an intact corpse!

This is a powerhouse at the Mind Corridor level? He would've managed to survive if our weapons were slightly weaker? Jiang Baimian held a rocket launcher in one hand and a flashlight in the other. She quickly rushed to DiMarco's corpse, removed his mask, and sought confirmation.

In the yellowish light, a muscular man's face appeared in front of her.

Under his short, flaxen hair were a high nose bridge and pale-blue eyes that looked like he had died with remaining grievances. There was also a cyan birthmark on his forehead.

Jiang Baimian was stunned for a moment and found this face abnormally familiar. She soon recalled where she had seen this face.

This belonged to Lehman's lover—Lars—the Ruin Hunter who had previously disappeared and was later confirmed to have entered the Underground Ark!

The cyan birthmark's location was identical to the photo Lehman had given them!

Lars is the one who's dead? DiMarco has always been using Lars as a substitute? He doesn't sleep in this room at all, but who is he guarding against? With his authority and potential strength, there's no need for him to do so... He sensed our approach and left here in advance, leaving only Lars behind? But why did he leave Lars behind? At this moment, countless questions surfaced in Jiang Baimian's mind.

At this moment, she felt the entire room being enveloped by a weak and abnormal electric field.

With a whoosh, Jiang Baimian, Long Yuehong, Bai Chen, and Shang Jianyao's flashlights turned extremely dim.

The surrounding environment seemed to be injected with 'darkness,' making it appear eerie and cold.

In the blink of an eye, an emotionally suppressed voice came out of nowhere and echoed in everyone's ears. "Do you think you can kill me just like that? If it were any other Awakened who stepped into the Mind Corridor, they might've truly died aggrievedly. Unfortunately, the person you encountered was me..."

At this point, Shang Jianyao seemed to have finally grasped the source of the sound. He suddenly turned his head and looked in a certain direction.

In the dim, yellowish light, Long Yuehong slowly turned his head and looked back at Shang Jianyao.

The corners of his mouth curled up bit by bit, and his eyes—which were covered by the goggles—turned extremely deep. He then asked in an ethereal voice, "Are you looking for me?"

Shang Jianyao—who was wearing a monkey mask—frowned.

At this moment, Bai Chen also looked at Shang Jianyao. She had taken off her mask at some point in time, and the flashlight in her hand illuminated her face partially.

With an indescribable smile, she asked in an equally ethereal, genderless voice, "Are you looking for me?"

Shang Jianyao suddenly raised his left hand, revealing the yellowish-green night pearl.

At the same time, Jiang Baimian stood up from beside the corpse and looked over. She was also no longer wearing a mask.

She raised her chin slightly, and the light and shadows on her face intertwined, giving a bizarre feeling.

“Are you looking for me?” she asked with a chuckle.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

Genava ran into DiMarco’s room.

He immediately saw Shang Jianyao’s eyes turn abnormally deep and dark.

...

In the Sea of Origins, on the sunny island with mountains and rivers.

A figure in the Old World’s black priest outfit and an old-fashioned bonnet appeared. He looked to be in his forties and was nearly 1.8 meters tall. He had short, flaxen hair, light-blue eyes, and a prominent hooked nose. There was no cyan birthmark on his forehead.

The figure’s gaze swept across Shang Jianyao, who wasn’t wearing the monkey mask any longer. The corners of his mouth curled up slightly as he asked with a leisurely smile, “Is this your mind island?”

Chapter 306: Strength in Numbers

Shang Jianyao looked at the figure in the Old World priest outfit and an old-fashioned bonnet in front of him. There was no fear on his face but an excited expression.

“DiMarco?” he asked in confirmation.

The figure with an obvious aquiline nose retracted his gaze and sized up his surroundings before seriously looking at Shang Jianyao. “Sort of. You don’t seem afraid at all?”

“What’s the use of being afraid in such a situation?” Shang Jianyao smiled. “Is this your Awakened ability? Can you directly invade someone’s mind world without passing through the Mind Corridor?”



DiMarco laughed. “It has a nice name—Destiny Connection.”

As he spoke, his expression vaguely warped as if he couldn't suppress some hidden emotion in his heart. “You're actually not afraid! Don't you know that I love seeing others terrified and helpless? Don't you know how wonderful it is to end a life filled with hope with your own hands?”

His expression became increasingly grotesque as indescribable brutality and madness appeared.

“Haha.” He then looked up and laughed. “Come, let me give you a good schooling. I'll let you know what terror, fear, despair, and helplessness are.”

As he spoke, his figure split into countless DiMarcos. These DiMarcos were wearing Old World black priest outfits and matching old-fashioned bonnets. They surrounded Shang Jianyao in the middle.

“Is this the price you paid?” Shang Jianyao still had a smile on his face, full of eagerness.

DiMarco chuckled. “Do you think I'll answer you?”

Just as he said that, Shang Jianyao—who was wearing a grayish-blue camouflage uniform—split into many figures. Some carried individual rocket launchers, some carried assault rifles, some wore white coats, some carried stretchers, some held small speakers, and some held boom boxes...

Eight of these figures were very clear, but the rest were relatively blurry.

The countless DiMarcos looked at the countless Shang Jianyaos and momentarily forgot what he wanted to do.

On the sunny island with mountains and rivers, the Shang Jianyao troop and the DiMarco troop stood in confrontation.

After two to three seconds, DiMarco muttered in confusion, “You also obtained the Divine Mirror Connection? No, this seems more like a split personality...”

These words came out of the different DiMarcos' mouths and overlapped as they echoed.

Shang Jianyao shook his head in regret. "That's quite a poor performance... You can't actually have each DiMarco say something different."

One of the Shang Jianyaos said this. The other Shang Jianyaos either laughed out loud, spoke in a sarcastic tone, danced to liven things up, or repeated it with the help of a loudspeaker. Their performances were all different.

All the DiMarcos' facial muscles twitched at the same time, and the brutal and cruel feeling appeared again.

"It's just that there's no need for that..." DiMarco squeezed the words out of his throat.

Before they could finish their sentence, they already had a bad feeling. Why argue about this baffling problem with this fellow?

The next second, all the figures that DiMarco had split out gathered together, leaving only one. This only DiMarco rapidly expanded and soon became like a mountain on the island.

Divine Mirror Connection could go from one to 10,000 and be of various sizes!

...

In DiMarco's wrecked room.

Genava's gaze swept across Shang Jianyao, Jiang Baimian, Long Yuehong, and Bai Chen. He instantly analyzed that there was something wrong with their gazes and their conditions.

At the same time, Jiang Baimian, Long Yuehong, and Bai Chen's expressions changed. They were sometimes warped, sometimes normal, sometimes ferocious, and sometimes confused.

Jiang Baimian abandoned the single-target Death rocket launcher and drew a United 202 pistol. She slowly raised her right hand as if she wanted to point the gun at herself.

With a change in expression, the bending of Jiang Baimian's arm stopped, and the muzzle slowly moved out.

A gloomy feeling immediately surfaced over her as the gun muzzle turned back to her.

At this moment, she seemed to have two souls. One was in control and wanted to commit suicide with the gun, while the other was in a suppressed state. She relied on her survival instincts to resist with all her might.

This was her situation; the same went for Bai Chen and Long Yuehong. They were in a state where they were aiming their weapons at themselves while also moving the muzzles away from their bodies. They switched back and forth as if they were in a tug-of-war.

Genava didn't appear confused because Operation Beheading—which had been formulated previously—had the corresponding content: "Once incomprehensible phenomena happened to the Old Task Force's humans, Genava would knock them out."

This was a preventive measure for DiMarco's corresponding Awakening abilities as a suspected Mind Corridor-level powerhouse.

Genava swept his gaze and realized that Long Yuehong was the one who had the most difficulty resisting the anomaly. The various weapons loaded with the military exoskeleton were about to flip over and aim at him.

Without hesitation, Genava exerted strength with the metal joints in his legs and pounced over, landing beside Long Yuehong.

Just as he raised his right hand and was about to knock the other party out, Long Yuehong turned and faced him! At this moment, Long Yuehong's face—which wasn't covered by the military exoskeleton helmet—no longer had any changes in expression.

Silently, he aimed the grenade launcher at Genava.

When attacked by a 'foreign enemy,' the two 'souls' in his body seemed to come to a consensus: one didn't want to be knocked out, and the other purely relied on their instincts to respond to all attacks.

Upon seeing this, Genava used the rebound from the landing to lunge to the side abruptly. He didn't want Long Yuehong to use the grenade launcher, so he didn't take any risks and dodged in advance.

If he was directly hit by the highly-explosive grenade, it could indeed be a threat to Genava's survival. Even if he wasn't hit, the resulting blast might very well cause Jiang Baimian, Long Yuehong, and Bai Chen harm, given the size of DiMarco's room. Therefore, Genava chose to give up.

The silver-black robot fully utilized his speed, reaction, and technique. He circled Long Yuehong, Jiang Baimian, and the others and kept trying. He didn't advance rashly and patiently waited for an opportunity. He would knock out whoever he could.

His attempt effectively slowed down Jiang Baimian and the others' 'suicide' progress, making the situation less precarious.

...

In the Sea of Origins, on an island with mountains, rivers, and sunlight.

Countless Shang Jianyaos tried to use Corny Person, but it didn't produce any good effects.

DiMarco—who was as large as a mountain—looked down at them and stretched out his right hand. Accompanying this action was a grand and solemn voice. "Visual Deprivation!"

Darkness silently descended in front of the Shang Jianyaos' eyes. They could no longer see anything. Even though they existed in the mind world in the form of consciousness and didn't have any real eyes or corresponding nerves, all of their 'vision' was still stripped away.

Right on the heels of that, DiMarco's voice sounded in the Shang Jianyaos' ears again. "Auditory Deprivation!"

At this moment, the Shang Jianyaos fell silent, and nothing else happened.

Their sense of smell, taste, and touch also began to fade over time.

In the dead and boundless darkness, even their own existence seemed to melt and assimilate.

Somewhere far away from this island in the Sea of Origins.

Shang Jianyao—who was wearing a grayish-blue camouflage uniform—was floating in the water cross-legged. His head didn't rise out of the sea.

This was the last him. He had only used eight of himself on the island just now; the rest were created with the mind world's special effects.

This Shang Jianyao's expression was very calm as if he was using the underwater environment to think about something.

...

In DiMarco's room.

Just as Geneva searched for an opportunity to knock out his companions and save them from their strange states, Jiang Baimian's face and body trembled slightly. As if she had used all her strength, she slowly relaxed her fingers and let the United 202 fall to the ground.

When the pistol smashed onto the thick carpet, Jiang Baimian's left hand clenched slightly.

This process was so difficult and slow that it looked like it would stop at any moment. This resulted in Geneva—who had analyzed the general situation—not approaching her to prevent affecting her.

Finally, a silver-white electric bolt erupted from Jiang Baimian's palm. It rose and bloomed, producing crackling sounds.

The dark room was illuminated a little.

Almost at the same time, the motionless Shang Jianyao relatively relaxed his clenched left fist. There was a yellowish-green night pearl in there.

## Chapter 307: The Truth of the Past

In DiMarco's room, which had suffered two rounds of attack.

More and more electric arcs appeared from Jiang Baimian's left palm as the light grew brighter.

Clap!

This silver-white bolt of lightning suddenly erupted and flew to every corner of the room, baring its fangs and brandishing its claws.

The arcs of light interweaved into an inescapable net that covered the area.

The weak but abnormal electric field that enveloped the entire room was thrown into chaos. It shattered and was torn apart, quickly melting away like snow under the blazing sun.

The coldness and darkness weakened significantly, and the flashlights in their hands became less dim.

The devastating electric bolts landed on Long Yuehong and Bai Chen, jolting them so much that their bodies convulsed slightly. Then, their curled lips unknowingly relaxed.

Jiang Baimian also didn't escape this indiscriminate 'electric shock.' The hair on the back of her neck stood on end.

Her eyes gradually lost their deepness and returned to normal.

As a metal robot, Genova inevitably absorbed a large amount of electricity. The silver snakes darted across his body, but he was fine.

This was a problem that they had considered during the planning phase. Otherwise, there would definitely be two more lines of content in Smart Bot's Deployment Manual: "Do not be out during a thunderstorm."

"Don't stand beside carbon-based humans when there's lightning and thunder."

Back then, Jiang Baimian had to open a partition before injecting an electric current into the key socket that resulted in the disciplinary robot's power overload.

The yellowish-green night pearl in Shang Jianyao's palm was also struck by two electric currents. It clearly trembled and became unstable, but it quickly returned to normal.

...

In the Sea of Origins, on the sunny island with mountains and rivers.

DiMarco—who was as large as a mountain—suddenly became extremely blurry. He was like a reflection on the water surface as waves undulated, distorted, broke, and recombined.

His aura instantly weakened, and his body rapidly shrank. He quickly returned to his normal size.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao—who had been deprived of his five senses—stood in his spot in a daze as if he had become a wooden stake.

In order not to give the other party a chance to catch his breath or counterattack, DiMarco forced himself to focus and stretched out his right hand again.

He weakly made a proclamation. "Consciousness Deprivation!"

The various Shang Jianyaos turned blurry as they vanished from the island like a dream. However, eight Shang Jianyaos remained standing in their spots. They only turned illusory for a moment before returning to normal.

"This..." DiMarco's pupils dilated. He believed that it was unlikely that he failed to 'strip' away the target's consciousness, even if a large number of his 'embodiments' had been shattered by the electric current and placed him in a relatively weak state.

It had to be known that not only was there a level difference between the two of them, but DiMarco had also taken away his adversary's five senses in a prescribed order in a bid to ensure that the final blow would be foolproof.

To his surprise, the result was completely unexpected.

The failure of Consciousness Deprivation also resulted in the previous effects disappearing. The Shang Jianyaos saw the middle-aged man in the Old World's black priest outfit and bonnet of the same color.

They laughed, and one of the representatives said, "You really aren't up to it."

Upon hearing this vaguely familiar sentence, DiMarco came to a realization. In his weakened state, he couldn't suppress his violent rage any longer and blurted out, "Did you use your abilities to influence me during our conversation?"

"That's right." Shang Jianyao—who was carrying a single-target rocket launcher—smiled and said, "I knew that my abilities definitely wouldn't have much of an impact on you, so I could only make attempts as early as possible, hoping to deepen the effects with the passage of time and the situation's development. Do you need me to repeat myself?"

The two Shang Jianyao stretcher-bearers spoke one after another. "Your performance isn't up to it..."

"You can't actually have each DiMarco say something different."

Shang Jianyao—who was wearing a white coat—concluded, "So..."

Therefore, DiMarco subconsciously believed that he wasn't as crazy as Shang Jianyao or as strong as he imagined. In this confrontation of pure consciousness, self-awareness would undoubtedly affect the strength and effects of his abilities.

After DiMarco was affected by the outside world and weakened, this perception was greatly enhanced.

"You!" DiMarco seemed to be very prone to anger.



The assault rifle-wielding Shang Jianyao beamed as well. “Are you thinking that you shouldn’t have said so much to me and should’ve gone all out from the beginning to finish me off? When did you have the illusion that you are only affected by my ability when there’s a conversation?”

As soon as DiMarco invaded Shang Jianyao’s mind world and stepped foot on this island, Shang Jianyao used Corny Person on him! However, there was a difference in levels between the two parties. Shang Jianyao’s full-powered use of Corny Person only made DiMarco prouder, more smug, and more eager to showcase himself.

DiMarco no longer showed his rage. Although his brutal temperament remained, a smile appeared on his face. “Then, why are you saying so much now? Don’t you know that my consciousness recovery is far better than yours?”

As he spoke, DiMarco’s weakness faded significantly!

The small speaker-wielding Shang Jianyao smiled back. “Because I’m waiting for it!”

A ball of yellowish-green light suddenly appeared in his hand, quickly condensing into a night pearl the size of a fish eye.

At this moment, there was no longer any light escaping Shang Jianyao’s palm in the real world. There was only an ordinary glass sphere left.

Since the aura obtained from the Mind Corridor could be brought into the real world and combined with items before settling in, it could naturally return to the mind world!

Shang Jianyao had made preliminary confirmation when studying the night pearl’s effects.

Upon seeing this, DiMarco couldn’t hide his surprise. “Are you crazy? It’s fine if it’s used in the Mind Corridor or the real world, but who would bring someone else’s aura into their own consciousness? This is your Sea of Origins. Aren’t you afraid that the owner of the aura will descend onto your mind island in reverse?”

Shang Jianyao—who was holding the small speaker and the night pearl—raised his eyebrows. “Really? I didn’t know.”

Upon hearing this answer, DiMarco had the urge to vomit blood. Fortunately, he was in a consciousness state and didn't have a corporeal body.

Shang Jianyao—who was holding the small speaker and the night pearl—smiled as if he wasn't worried at all. The Shang Jianyaos said with a smile, “Since you've already come in, it doesn't matter if there's one more.”

Looking at the smiles of the different Shang Jiangyaos, DiMarco felt that the other party truly might've gone crazy.

The next second, Shang Jianyao—who was holding the small speaker—crushed the yellowish-green night pearl in his hand, allowing its remaining strength to erupt without reservation.

In an instant, the entire mind island was enveloped by a yellowish-green glow.

DiMarco's figure was also dyed this color, and a door suddenly appeared in front of him.

It was an illusory white door that was half-closed; it was ajar.

Behind the door was darkness. A female figure could be vaguely seen watching everything from the darkness.

Indescribable fear surfaced in DiMarco's heart, making him uncontrollably shout in horror, “No!”

...

In DiMarco's room.

With the stimulation of the electric current, Jiang Baimian regained control of her body. However, she could still sense that the consciousness which had affected her hadn't completely disappeared. It could make a comeback at any moment.

But this didn't stop her from thinking. With her previous experience, she understood one thing: The person killed by the Old Task Force's two rounds of attacks was indeed Lehman's lover—Lars—but he was also the Underground Ark's owner, DiMarco!

This was a monster that was closer to an Eternal! He could strip off his consciousness, but he didn't become a mechanical monk by uploading his consciousness onto a special chip. Instead, he could occupy other people's bodies!

Recalling the past described by the Ark guards, Jiang Baimian connected the dots from a different angle. Every previous Underground Ark owner might be the same person. It's this monster named DiMarco! His uniqueness comes from his Awakened abilities.

The reason every Ark's owner has a large number of partners and many children while encouraging servants and guards to become life partners—acting as if he likes new life very much—is that he wants to rely on the law of large numbers to select a body that's more suitable for occupation. This often happens among those who are related to him by blood.

After his youngest son died, the main reason for DiMarco's sudden madness might very well be that apart from this child, there was nobody in the entire Ark that was suitable for his occupation. This way, even if he forcefully possessed a body, he could only last for a short period of time. The body he used back then—the one named DiMarco—had most likely begun to deteriorate. It couldn't be used for long.

At the end of his rope, it was inevitable that he did perverse acts and became increasingly brutal. He even wanted his guards and servants—who had had children—to give birth to his children.

Later, Lars's appearance gave DiMarco hope. Not only did he have DiMarco's hair and eyes, but he was also very suitable for occupation. Therefore, DiMarco calmed down. Not long after, his mistress became pregnant with a new life...

This was a guess that Jiang Baimian made based on her previous experience and past situation. It was a guess that could truly explain all the details.

At this moment, Genova had already approached the slightly conscious Long Yuehong and Bai Chen, prepared to knock them out.

Upon seeing this, Jiang Baimian couldn't help but sigh inwardly. Our Operation Beheading did succeed, but we only killed one of DiMarco's bodies... Wait a minute. Lars is dead, and the child in the stomach of DiMarco's mistress hasn't been born yet. This means that he doesn't have a physical body that he can occupy now. It won't be long before his consciousness dissipates... But he actually didn't flare up or show the brutality that the Ark guards described... Could it be that he has found

someone else to occupy after Lars? Or can one of us play this role? As Jiang Baimian's thoughts raced, she suddenly cast her gaze at Shang Jianyao.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao opened his mouth and shouted in horror, "No!"

A blurry figure separated from his body—a figure wearing a black priest outfit and bonnet of the same color.

Chapter 308: Why

The figure separated from Shang Jianyao's body like a ghost from legends. It was blurry and illusory, making the surrounding temperature seem to drop a little.

DiMarco! Jiang Baimian completely confirmed that there were consciousness lifeforms in this world.

In fact, the existence of Mechanical Monks had already provided proof to a certain extent with the Eternal project's success.

Before Jiang Baimian could think of anything else, she felt her body turn cold as if her consciousness had been frozen. She then shouted in horror, "No!"

Along with this shout was the figure's departure. DiMarco instantly overlapped with Long Yuehong. "No!"

"No!"

DiMarco's illusory figure blinked into Long Yuehong and Bai Chen, making them involuntarily scream in horror.

The owner of the Underground Ark acted like a headless fly. He scurried around the room in horror, constantly possessing and escaping. It was as if nowhere could make him feel safe.

In just a second or two, he completed two rounds of possession at an exaggerated speed. He even planned on using the silver-black smart bot, Genava, as a vessel. Unfortunately, Genava didn't react at all, nor did he shout 'no.'

As he blinked, DiMarco's figure suddenly disappeared.

He 'jumped' into a strange room. The room's walls were pitch black, highlighting illusory faces.

These faces were either hideous or warped as they looked at DiMarco with extremely venomous eyes. It was as though they wanted to rush forward and tear this Awakened at the Mind Corridor level apart.

DiMarco ignored them and pounced on the dark door, attempting to open it. However, the door didn't budge as if it was just a drawing.

One side of the dark door was vermilion, and there were golden numbers on it. However, black paper was pasted on the door handle and the lock.

They covered the area like barricade tape from the Old World.

"No!" DiMarco let out another cry of indignation and fear.

Over the years, he had been locked in his 'room.' Occasionally, he could use other people's mind worlds to explore the corridor. The reason he was so concerned about Yama Tiger's condition and the words he left behind was that he wanted to find a solution or a door to the New World to escape this predicament completely.

For powerhouses at DiMarco's level, although the night pearl—which instantly erupted with all its power—could deal a considerable impact on him, the duration of its effects was still too short. Before long, DiMarco recovered from his Coward state.

He coldly looked around at the faces in the 'room' and left.

...

In the real world, Shang Jianyao, Jiang Baimian, and the others had completely recovered because of DiMarco's brief disappearance.

Jiang Baimian immediately shouted, "He's afraid of electricity and magnetism!"

There was practical proof!

Jiang Baimian had already discovered that the so-called 'consciousness lifeform' was closely related to the electromagnetic field. The electric storm she had previously released had greatly disrupted DiMarco's foundation for survival and destroyed many of his hidden 'embodiments.'

However, this was not enough. In order to completely destroy this monster that had lived in different bodies for years, the electric energy in her biological prosthetic limb was clearly insufficient. Furthermore, the previous eruption had exhausted the energy she had charged up over a long period. At most, she could complete one or two more electric shocks that left a person numb.

Just as she said that, DiMarco's figure quickly appeared in midair. This monster—who was wearing the Old World black priest outfit and an old bonnet of the same color—was much more illusory than before. He faltered like a weak bubble.

Upon seeing Jiang Baimian raise her left hand and Geneva seemingly about to take out a high-performance battery, DiMarco immediately snorted.

With a loud bang, the ceiling collapsed, and large rocks fell.

They seemed to be pulled by an invisible force as they gathered above Jiang Baimian, Geneva, Long Yuehong, and Bai Chen.

The spot where Shang Jianyao was was as calm as the eye of a storm.

Amidst the rumbling sounds, Long Yuehong saw pieces of concrete smash at him. After hearing his team leader's words, he subconsciously activated the military exoskeleton before he could think of a countermeasure. He bent his joints as he pounced toward the door.

The situation there was much better.

After doing this, Long Yuehong recalled something. Bai Chen wasn't far from me. She doesn't have an exoskeleton, so it's very dangerous for her to face the ceiling's collapse.

In midair, Long Yuehong forcefully turned his head and looked back. He saw that the pieces of concrete were about to cover Bai Chen.

His eyes instantly froze, but he couldn't turn around.

Bang!

Long Yuehong—who was wearing a military exoskeleton—pounced to the door but didn't roll over.

At this moment, Bai Chen curled up her body with her rich experience. She used her right hand and arm to protect her head, covering all her vital spots.

She didn't panic; she also observed the environment and took the initiative to hide under the area with the least amount of concrete.

The lesser of two evils.

Bang! Bang!

Her shoulder, back, and arm were struck and grazed.

Bai Chen gritted her teeth and only grunted.

Meanwhile, Jiang Baimian dodged the largest piece of concrete. She used her left hand's immense strength to push away the 'attacks' forcefully.

This left her with only a slight scratch.

As for Genova, not only did he have fast reflexes and strength, but he could also withstand most of the concrete's impact. Apart from certain depressions in parts of his body, there were some scuffs that required a new paint job.

As they dodged the attack, DiMarco's figure disappeared in midair.

Shang Jianyao's eyes turned deep again, and his feet couldn't move at all.

...

In the Sea of Origins, on the island with mountains, rivers, and sunlight.

DiMarco—who was wearing the Old World priest outfit and an old-fashioned bonnet—appeared in the sky. Compared to before, he was clearly much weaker. It seemed as if he couldn't last much longer.

He looked down at the Shang Jianyaos and snapped, "Although this body of yours isn't a suitable vessel, I'll use it for two years at most. My child will be born soon. I still have a chance to create more new lives! You forced me to assimilate you directly. Can't you just let me strip you of your consciousness?"

As he spoke, DiMarco lowered his right palm.

Shang Jianyao's Sea of Origins suddenly boiled, raising waves dozens to a hundred meters tall.

Amidst these massive waves, countless glimmers expanded, revealing scenes.

There was Shang Jianyao, who tottered as he learned how to walk in front of his parents. Shang Jianyao, who listened to his father's stories of the surface. Shang Jianyao, who won the hide-and-seek competition and captured Long Yuehong. Shang Jianyao, who was curled up in a dark room. Shang Jianyao, who guarded by the white bedsheets. Shang Jianyao, who was focused on studying alone. Shang Jianyao, who signed to be a volunteer without hesitation. Shang Jianyao, who lay on the experiment bed and slowly closed his eyes...

The past appeared again today.

Destiny Connection. Upon seeing the past of all living beings, one realized that Buddhist nature was unique.

You are me, and I am you!



No matter how the Shang Jianyaos used Corny Person, Inference Clowning, or simulated rocket launchers, DiMarco was no longer affected. His figure fused with the illusory wave and the numerous scenes.

Crack!

The huge waves around the island slammed down and drowned the Shang Jianyaos.

...

In the real world, in DiMarco's room.

After the ceiling was done collapsing, Jiang Baimian—who had guessed whose body DiMarco wanted to occupy—immediately ran toward Shang Jianyao.

Electric arcs emitted from her left hand, but they could no longer zap through the air and land on Shang Jianyao. She could only go close and make direct contact to complete the electric shock.

Jiang Baimian didn't know how much damage this could do to DiMarco after the possession or if she could force him out of Shang Jianyao's body. But at this moment, she couldn't care less.

In just a second, Jiang Baimian ran to Shang Jianyao's side. Just as she stretched out her left hand, she saw Shang Jianyao—who was wearing a monkey mask—give her a signal with his eyes.

He signaled with his eyes.

Jiang Baimian's outstretched left hand paused.

...

In Shang Jianyao's Sea of Origins, on an island with mountains, rivers, and sunlight.

Only DiMarco's figure and the shimmering scenes in the surrounding waves were left.

The Shang Jianyaos in those scenes seemed to appear a little more sinister.

“Haha!” DiMarco roared with laughter. However, faces of Shang Jianyao protruded out from his face, forehead, and neck. They looked like they were about to tear out from the inside.

“How can this be? How can he not be completely assimilated?” DiMarco shouted in horror. His aura was much weaker than before—much, much weaker.

At this moment, he saw a pair of hands appear at the edge of the island. Right on the heels of that, a figure flipped over.

It was Shang Jianyao in a grayish-blue camouflage uniform.

He smiled at DiMarco. “Because there’s still one more me.”

Previously, there were only eight Shang Jianyaos on the island.

“You!” DiMarco shouted in anger, but he didn’t do anything.

Shang Jianyao smiled and said, “After discovering that you could invade other people’s minds, I figured out something. Every previous Underground Ark owner should’ve been you. You can occupy another person’s body after your current body deteriorates and continue living. The Ark owner always has a large number of mistresses and many children because you want to choose the most suitable vessel.

“There’s a very interesting detail in this. When the previous Ark owner was seriously ill, the servants rioted, causing your family to lose a large number of members. This resulted in you not being able to find a suitable vessel after DiMarco’s body failed, pushing you to the brink of madness. It was only when Lars appeared that you saw hope.

“You are a powerhouse at the Mind Corridor level. You shouldn’t have let such a problem arise and put yourself in a predicament. Therefore, I came to a conclusion: Every time you assimilate others and occupy a body, you are at your weakest. You can’t even control ordinary servants and guards. The fact that you deprived me of my consciousness the moment you came here and didn’t directly occupy my body proved my guess correct.”

DiMarco's eyes gradually turned fierce as if his most important secret had been exposed.

Shang Jianyao continued smiling. "Therefore, I hid and kept waiting for this opportunity. Now that you have fallen into the process of assimilation and haven't completed it, you are in your weakest state. I remain as the owner of this mind world."

DiMarco could no longer suppress the anger in his heart and blurted out, "Was everything you previously did all an act?"

He had been deceived by the Shang Jianyaos' performance and thought that this was their limit. Of course, the matter's development and the changes in the environment 'urged' him to obtain a body immediately.

"No, no, no. All of us are doing our best. We can't place our hopes on a single person," Shang Jianyao explained with a smile.

DiMarco was speechless. After a few seconds, he gritted his teeth and roared, "You're really a lunatic! Why did you obey the Vigilance Church to deal with me? What benefits did they give you? I can agree to anything!"

As Shang Jianyao walked toward the tottering DiMarco, he smiled and said, "We have nothing to do with the Vigilance Church."

"Then, why are you attacking me?" DiMarco was shocked and angry.

Shang Jianyao looked at him and replied in a normal tone, "For the innocent lives that you killed, for those pair of eyes that went from hope to despair."

DiMarco almost doubted his ears. "Just for this? Why?"

He asked 'why' again because he couldn't believe that someone would take a huge risk to deal with him for the lives and future of a group of slaves.

"Why?" Shang Jianyao repeated the question and looked around.

On his sides, in the huge waves that had frozen in midair, a few of the shimmering scenes had become much larger and emitted sounds.

It was the large number of nomads who had frozen or starved to death outside Weed City. It was the streets and squares filled with blood. It was a customer that almost broke down and went crazy because they couldn't bear to part with the last mouthful of noodles:

“We're humans too; do we deserve to starve to death?”

It was a scene of a battlefield filled with corpses. There were humans, merfolk, and mountain monsters. It was a map with a circle with the words 'home.' It was the amber scales on Han Wanghuo's arm. He laughed indignantly.

“Yes, I'm a Subhuman. But compared to most people in this town and this world, I'm more like a human!”

It was the silence when faced with the question: 'Do you still treat yourself as a human?' It was the old figure that jumped down from a tall building. It was a smile that said, 'Everything is but a dream. Why so serious?' It was a question that Genova couldn't understand or accept that he had to retort: “Are we not a type of human?”

It was an incomplete corpse in a short mountain cave. It was a female figure hugging her child tightly. It was a helpless question from the recording pen: “Are they going to kill us just because we're sick?”

They were the pairs of eyes that had suffered many hardships but carried a glimmer of hope. They were corpses that had been placed in sacks. They were round eyes that silently stared at the sky filled with horror and despair as if they were asking the heavens.

As these scenes surrounded him and the questions echoed, Shang Jianyao looked at DiMarco's confused and slightly terrified face. The corners of his mouth curled up, revealing two rows of white teeth. “Because I'm human!”

He smiled and stretched out his right hand toward DiMarco.

The frozen waves around the island—along with the scenes from before—slammed down, drowning the figure in the Old World black priest outfit and bonnet of the same color.

## Chapter 309: Behind the Coincidence

In the face of the numerous scenes and the huge waves that reflected Shang Jianyao, DiMarco's figure suddenly turned ethereal as if he wanted to split into countless entities, which would then escape in different directions.

But at this moment, the eight Shang Jianyaos that had assimilated with his body each did something.

One protruded from DiMarco's thigh and tried his best to stretch out his body to wrap around the enemy's legs. Another stretched out both arms and firmly covered DiMarco's mouth. One tore out of DiMarco's chest and firmly gripped his torso. Another drilled out from above his head, holding a small speaker as it played the Old World's mournful music...

DiMarco was firmly entangled by the eight Shang Jianyaos growing out of his body. This made DiMarco unable to move or shout. All he could do was gradually drown in despair.

In the Mind Corridor, in the room that belonged to him, the human faces on the pitch-black wall separated one after another. As they quickly faded, they caused the entire environment to collapse.

...

In DiMarco's wrecked room in the Underground Ark, basement six, Zone C.

Jiang Baimian's left hand hung in midair and didn't press down on Shang Jianyao. She was just hesitating about giving Shang Jianyao a few seconds of observation time and what kind of cutoff conditions to set when the ordinary glass sphere in Shang Jianyao's hand was suddenly dyed a green color.

In the blink of an eye, the glass sphere turned into a night pearl that emitted a green glow.

Jiang Baimian's heart palpitated as she looked into Shang Jianyao's eyes.

Under the smug monkey mask, Shang Jianyao's deep eyes quickly returned to normal. He then lowered his head and looked at the green night pearl in his hand, falling into deep thought.

“W-what are you thinking about?” Jiang Baimian probed in a poised manner.

Shang Jianyao replied truthfully, “I was wondering what color I would be.”

This answer really has Shang Jianyao's style... DiMarco definitely can't imitate it... Jiang Baimian secretly heaved a sigh of relief and thoughtfully asked, “Did you counterattack when DiMarco—uh—seized your body? That should've been when he was at his weakest... You relied on your ability to split into nine?”

Jiang Baimian couldn't think of an accurate term to describe DiMarco's actions. She could only draw upon knowledge from the Old World's entertainment material.

Shang Jianyao expressed his 'shock' with his eyes and tone. “You can also invade other people's minds?”

It's Shang Jianyao. There's no doubt about it... Jiang Baimian subconsciously asked, “What's fused with the glass sphere now is DiMarco's remnant aura?”

Upon seeing Shang Jianyao nod in affirmation, she didn't ask any further and said, “Act according to plan. I'll go see how Little White is doing.”

Meanwhile, Long Yuehong had already returned to the room and hurriedly removed the rubble from Bai Chen's body with Geneva's help.

“How are you?” he asked in concern.

“I'll probably... Hiss... won't die...” Bai Chen moved her body slightly and replied with a frown, “It's mainly my right shoulder and arm. I might have fractured them.”

Upon hearing this, Geneva slightly modified the parameters of his detection module and examined Bai Chen.

At this moment, Jiang Baimian rushed over. She took off her tactical backpack and injected Bai Chen with a FECA jab.

This was to prevent any accidents.

“Bear with it. I’ll fix you up simply for now,” Jiang Baimian said as she busied herself.

Bai Chen was also someone who had suffered many injuries. She pursed her lips and nodded.

After a while, Geneva straightened his body and said, “Preliminary examination indicates no internal bleeding.”

Phew... Jiang Baimian and Long Yuehong heaved a sigh of relief at the same time. Bai Chen also closed her eyes.

At this moment, footsteps approached DiMarco’s room—they were either fast or slow, heavy or light.

The Ark guards had finally come to their senses and had begun to rush over to save DiMarco.

Shang Jianyao had already covered Lars’s face with the black and white mask again. He also took out a blue and white loudspeaker and a piece of paper filled with content from his tactical backpack.

His energetic voice boomed across this floor: “DiMarco is dead! DiMarco is dead!”

The approaching footsteps stopped almost at the same time.

“We were only targeting DiMarco. There’s no need for others to be nervous. It’s the same even if you are DiMarco’s relative. It can even be said that the Vigilance Church hopes that Eidolon Nun’s believers in the Ark no longer have to be afraid or face DiMarco’s brutality.

“We will allow each of you to enter and leave the Ark freely. You can be assigned to large, abandoned fields around Redstone Collection and obtain food that can last until the next harvest. You can freely choose your lifestyle. If you wish to leave the Ark, leave. If you wish to stay here, stay. If you want to farm, farm. If you want to continue your current line of job, continue.

“The butlers and wardens who were originally in charge of the various businesses don’t have to be afraid. You will continue on with your responsibilities and maintain the corresponding channels. You will only be sharing the profits that were originally handed over to DiMarco with the rest, and that includes yourselves.

“Captains of the various guards, you will remain the main force at maintaining order in the Ark. You are the guns that will protect everyone’s safety and interests. We will also establish the Ark Management Committee. The members will mainly be chosen from you, and the overseer will be the cathedral’s bishop.

“Alright, all of you are to come to DiMarco’s room now. We will discuss the management committee’s member list and the subsequent income distribution plan. Some of you can take this opportunity to leave the Ark with some supplies from other exits. But from then on, you will no longer have anyone to rely on and can only wander the wilderness alone. The first to approach us and show sincerity will receive sufficient preferential treatment.

“Yutian, Bode, you are one of them...” Shang Jianyao first used the loudspeaker to make the guards, servants, mistresses, and children on the sixth floor hear him clearly. Then, he used the Ark’s radio system to transmit his voice to every corner, reaching the ears of the people on duty outside.

...

At basement two, the four guards—who had been knocked out by Shang Jianyao and the others—had already woken up and heard the broadcast.

Yu Tian and Bode no longer put on an act. They stood up at the same time and happily removed their companions’ restraints.

The guards looked at them with strange gazes; they were a little angry but also a little envious.

When Yu Tian and Bode looked back, they smiled in unison.

“Quick, let’s rush over now. We can’t be late.” Yu Tian urged and made a promise. “Don’t worry. If there’s anything for me, you guys won’t be left out!”



Bode immediately echoed, “We’re all brothers, so we have to be united!”

The four guards’ felt zeal and ardor surge to their faces as they immediately patted their chests and promised to follow the two of them.

...

In the servants’ room at basement one, where they were still under probation during their training.

Ge Lin and Ge Miao were woken up by the commotion outside. They heard the patrolling guards and the various wardens rushing to the elevator.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao’s voice—which had switched to using Ashlandic—echoed through the electronic products on these people again. “DiMarco is dead!

“...Each of you can enter and leave the Ark freely. You can be assigned to large, abandoned fields around Redstone Collection and obtain food that can last until the next harvest...”

Ge Lin was first confused before she came to a realization: The ill-tempered Mr. DiMarco—who loved to kill servants—was dead! His rule had been overthrown, and the Underground Ark was about to change owners.

The new owner promised that everyone would receive fields and food. Nobody had to worry about being killed for no reason or be on edge every day.

W-we are saved. W-we have, we have a future... Ge Lin’s vision suddenly turned blurry.

She grabbed her sister’s arm the next second. “Quick, let’s go too!”

These slaves rushed out of their rooms.

...

After treating Bai Chen's injuries, the Old Task Force waited for everyone from the Underground Ark to rush over.

At this moment, many people had already gathered in the wrecked room. Most of them were the guards on this floor and DiMarco's mistresses and children.

Jiang Baimian looked around and was just about to say something when she suddenly cast her gaze outside the door and at the ventilation duct on the ceiling.

Soon, a figure jumped down.

The figure was a teenager, about 1.6 meters tall. He had soft blond hair and green eyes. He was none other than Viel, who had been missing for a few days.

He looked at DiMarco's corpse in the room and muttered, "You guys settled it really quickly. I was actually late. Damn it! Coward should be matched with Extreme Terror. This can directly scare DiMarco to death, even if he's only a ghost."

"Huh? What did you say?" Jiang Baimian really didn't hear him clearly.

Shang Jianyao—who was wearing a monkey mask—kindly helped her and repeated his words using the exact same tone.

Jiang Baimian's eyebrows twitched slightly as she looked at Viel. "You are aware of our possession of the night pearl? You've long entered the Underground Ark?"

Viel revealed a harmless smile. "Don't tell me you think my disappearance was a coincidence? Oracle—I'm a reserve Oracle. What's that murloc? I'll be the real Oracle in the future!"

At this point, his expression turned solemn. "Everyone, fate often is behind any coincidence."

Jiang Baimian, Shang Jianyao, Bai Chen, and the others looked at each other, and their expressions couldn't help but turn solemn.

She probed, "What else does the Kalendaria have to say to us?"

Viel smiled. “It has to be described with an oracle! Why would the Kalendaria give an ordinary person an oracle? Even for me, I only occasionally hear ‘Her’ voice from the other world.”

At the mention of the Kalendaria’s oracle, Viel’s expression turned solemn. “‘She’ said that the answers to all the questions are in the New World.”

Chapter 310: Return

The answers to all the questions are in the New World... Jiang Baimian, Shang Jianyao, and the others silently repeated this sentence.

Their conversation with Viel convinced the Ark citizens present that the act of overthrowing DiMarco’s tyranny was indeed under the orders of a deity!

After a brief silence, Shang Jianyao—who was wearing a monkey mask—suddenly looked at Viel and asked, “You have the Awakened ability, Extreme Terror?”

Jiang Baimian quickly asked, “You killed Helvig?”

She remembered that during the few days when Viel was missing while the Vigilance Church held a hiding Mass, Helvig had died from shock during that period!

It was originally very difficult to put these two matters together. After all, Viel was young and had no feud with Helvig. Furthermore, it only made people feel that he had secrets but not signs of being an Awakened.

Now, Viel’s words clearly revealed that he had the ability of Extreme Terror.

Helvig had died under the influence of this ability!

Viel replied casually, “Blame it on him; always mocking me for being short. He should’ve died long ago. Most people here want him dead, including his wife.”

You killed him because he mocked you for being short? Over-sensitive? Jiang Baimian muttered to herself in enlightenment.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao laughed and stared at Viel before taking two steps forward.

Viel jumped in fright and instinctively retreated. “What are you trying to do?”

“Guess.” Shang Jianyao pressed the smug monkey mask on his face.

Viel could imagine the smile that spread out from under his mask. He hurriedly said, “D-do you want to avenge Helvig? He’s a devil. Most people in Redstone Collection will only applaud me for killing him!”

Shang Jianyao didn’t respond. He wore the monkey mask and took two more steps forward.

Viel’s expression changed a few times before he snapped, “If you come any closer, I’ll use Extreme Terror!”

Shang Jianyao laughed and pointed at Geneva beside him. “See that? He won’t be afraid. I also prepared a FECA shot to prevent me from being shocked to death so easily.”

Viel’s gaze swept across the silver-black smart bot, Geneva, and he blurted out, “I-I’m a reserve Oracle!”

He arched his back slightly, and he looked like he would attack at any moment.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao laughed. “What’s wrong? There’s no need to be nervous. I’m not Redstone Collection’s sheriff; I have no right to judge you.”

As he spoke, he took off his tactical backpack and took out his beloved small speaker. “I will only drive around Redstone Collection and make it constantly repeat ‘it was Viel who killed Helvig.’”

Viel was momentarily speechless. After a long time, he said hatefully, “Up to you!”

As he spoke, he turned around, ran a few steps, jumped up, climbed to the ceiling, and disappeared into the ventilation duct.

Shang Jianyao watched him leave before turning around and walking back to Jiang Baimian and the others.

“You said so much just to tease him?” Jiang Baimian touched her metal cochlear implant. “Why bother? This fellow bears grudges.”

With a beaming smile, Shang Jianyao replied, “It’s only interesting when you bully such dangerous children.”

Jiang Baimian was just about to roll her eyes when she saw a large group of servants rush over.

Their expressions were filled with unease and worry, but their eyes appeared rather numb.

After slowly sweeping their gazes across DiMarco’s corpse—which was wearing a black, white-patterned mask—their eyes gradually lit up.

...

A few days later.

In a field near the lake northwest of Redstone Collection.

“From today onward, this piece of land will be yours.” Yu Tian—who had become a member of the Underground Ark Management Committee—pointed ahead and said to the two sisters, Ge Lin and Ge Miao, “We will organize people to clear the ditches here and do all kinds of work with you in clearing out the weeds. However, you will mainly have to rely on yourselves in the future.

“Don’t worry. The first year’s seeds will be distributed for free. You can also apply to Redstone Collection or the cathedral to borrow all kinds of machinery. The corresponding fees will be subsidized by the annual smuggling business. Therefore, apart from the first year, you will have to submit a portion of your harvest every year after that. It will feed the members in charge of the smuggling business and the Ark guards...”

“O-okay!” Ge Lin and Ge Miao looked at each other and replied in surprise. For them, who came from small settlements, the value of arable land was obvious.

After receiving the corresponding title deed, the two sisters returned to the Vigilance Cathedral. They faced Eidolon Nun's Sacred Emblem and sincerely prayed.

They didn't choose to live in the Ark because they weren't accustomed to living underground and were still very afraid.

They planned on staying in the basement of the Vigilance Cathedral first. When spring came, they would find a relatively intact abandoned house near their fields that was conducive for hiding. They would tidy it up and hire people to repair and wire it up.

Under the Vigilance Church's mediation, Redstone Collection barely acknowledged the Underground Ark Management Committee's existence and allowed them to use uninhabited buildings and reclaim the currently abandoned farmlands. Of course, the Underground Ark also paid a certain price and gave up many of its smuggling businesses.

After returning to their assigned temporary housing, Ge Lin—who had been busy the entire day—picked up a tattered towel and said to Ge Miao, “Go wash your face first.”

“Let me lie down for a while longer, pretty please? I'm so exhausted.” Ge Miao lay on the bed and wheedled.

It was unknown how long it had been since Ge Lin had seen her sister acting this way. She recalled the past and smiled. “You can go when I return.”

She briskly walked to the nearest bathroom and washed her face and hands with cold water.

After doing all of this and walking back, Ge Lin suddenly heard a commotion ahead.

She was a little confused at first, but her heart tightened as she quickly rushed to her and her sister's room.

She soon saw several people gathered outside the familiar door, and inside was her hunched sister.

Ge Miao's eyes were turbid and bloodshot, and transparent saliva dripped from the corners of her mouth. Her face was contorted, no longer having the sweetness from a few minutes ago.

Ge Lin immediately felt the entire world peel away from reality and become abnormally surreal. The Heartless disease... Miao Miao contracted the Heartless disease...

Ge Lin stared at the door dazedly, not daring to approach or believe it.

Bang!

With a gunshot, Ge Miao collapsed. Blood pooled around her.

Her eyes were wide and bloodshot.

Ge Lin staggered over, squatted, and stretched her hand toward her sister's eyes. Her vision had long turned blurry, and her throat was incapable of making a sound.

Someone approached her and bent down to comfort her. "This is the Heartless disease. No one expected it..."

"Don't be too sad. You just received a field. You will have your own family and children in the future. Everything will be fine..."

...

In the moving jeep, Jiang Baimian looked at Bai Chen in the passenger seat and sighed with emotion again. "Our previous understanding of Awakened was still too shallow. I didn't expect DiMarco to have an ability that's almost mythical..."

Destiny Connection, Divine Mirror Connection, and Six Senses Deprivation had completely exceeded the norm.

If it weren't for the fact that the Old Task Force's initial Operation Beheading had gone smoothly, allowing them to destroy DiMarco's body, the subsequent development might've been very

dangerous. They could only rely on Geneva and the night pearl to last until Viel—Eidolon Nun's reserve Oracle—to join the battle.

Even if their first step had been a great success, the Old Task Force's confrontation with DiMarco had been fraught with dangers. Fortunately, they had obtained information in advance and managed to figure out DiMarco's weaknesses in a split second. Furthermore, Shang Jianyao was sufficiently special and could effectively use this point.

Long Yuehong couldn't help but say, "That's why we were a little too rash regarding this operation..."

"You can't put it that way." Jiang Baimian deliberated and said, "We made sufficient preparations this time and even obtained Eidolon Nun's blessing. If we didn't give it a try this time, we might die without knowing why when we encounter Awakened with similar abilities in the future. At the very least, we'll know why now."

As she spoke, she laughed. "We also gained quite a bit. A total of 22 high-performance batteries, an M-45 military exoskeleton, and a night pearl that has DiMarco's solidified aura."

There were more high-performance batteries in the Underground Ark, but Jiang Baimian didn't take them all, considering the management committee's defense requirements.

These batteries had temporarily been left in Redstone Collection with Geneva. As a former mayor of Tarnan, he became the Underground Ark Management Committee's interim president. He would only head to Weed City's Ah Fu's Gun Shop and meet up with Shang Jianyao and the others when things were on track.

Considering that he was still wanted by Mechanical Paradise, Geneva basically didn't appear in Redstone Collection apart from needing to liaise with the Vigilance Church.

If anything happened, he would escape through the Ark's Iron Mountain entrance.

As for the new military exoskeleton, M-45, it was something the Ark residents insisted on giving to the Old Task Force as a thank-you gift. Due to the Old Task Force's actual situation, Jiang Baimian couldn't refuse.

This way, Bai Chen's combat strength would be greatly enhanced.



After Shang Jianyao's experiments, the pearl—which had its color changed—was confirmed to have solidified DiMarco's Destiny Connection. Of course, it was definitely much weaker than the original.

After talking about the harvest, Jiang Baimian—who was driving—looked at Bai Chen and smiled. “Only you were injured this time. Actually, I've always found it a little strange. Not only did Little White—who usually protects herself best—not object to Operation Beheading, but she also acted a little proactive.”

In the passenger seat, Bai Chen looked out the windshield and fell silent for a moment. “I've always believed that it's already very difficult for everyone to survive in the Ashlands. They shouldn't poke their noses into the business of others. Back when I was captured by Eugene and became a slave, I told myself the same thing.”

She paused for two seconds before her gaze gradually turned blank. “B-but I couldn't help but think about how nice it would be if a team suddenly descended and rescued me...”

“It would be nice.” Jiang Baimian completely understood what she was getting at and didn't mention it again.

Shang Jianyao smiled and said, “So, are you officially joining the operation to save all of humanity this time?”

Bai Chen ignored him.

As they chatted, Shang Jianyao massaged his temples, leaned back, and closed his eyes.

In the Sea of Origins, on an island with mountains, rivers, and sunlight.

A large, shocking crater appeared near the beach.

Shang Jianyao stared at the hole that hadn't recovered from his departure and smiled.

He then split up more of himself. They dug ditches and directed the spring water into the hole.

While Shang Jianyao was 'catching up on sleep,' Long Yuehong listened to his team leader and Bai Chen chat. He would interject from time to time as he cast his gaze out the window.

At this moment, the sky was clear blue and dotted with clouds. The jeep was racing through the wilderness and hills, heading back to Pangu Biology in the distance.

Along the way, new greenery was everywhere, and beasts could be seen.

Winter was over, ushering in spring.