

## **Ad Infinitum 471**

Chapter 471: Touching Pitch

At the appointed time, Pangu Biology replied with a telegram.

There was very little content this time, so it didn't take Jiang Baimian long to complete the translation. She wrote it on a piece of paper and showed it to Shang Jianyao, Long Yuehong, and Bai Chen: "Pay close attention to this matter and gather as much information as possible."

This referred to First City's secret experiments in the wasteland's North Anheford area.

The company does things in a safe and moderate manner as always... Long Yuehong realized that Pangu Biology's reply was similar to what he had expected. In fact, it was obvious that when they could only command remotely, the responsible superiors would definitely choose as stable a plan as possible and give more discretion to the frontline personnel.

"What other information can we gather?" Shang Jianyao sounded troubled.

With regards to Early Spring Town, the Old Task Force had obtained all the information they could gather.

Jiang Baimian ignored him and glanced at Han Wanghuo and Zeng Duo. She muttered to herself, "Report the situation of First Spring Town's troops first."

She planned on subdividing the information the Old Task Force currently had into several submissions to the company to show that they were working.

"Yes... Also, inform them we'll be divided into two groups. One group will stay in the wastelands and pay attention to the secret experiment. The other group will return to First City and attempt to complete the mission." Jiang Baimian quickly drafted the telegram in her mind.

As for how they were divided into groups, that was an unnecessary detail.

After replying to the telegram, she put away the machine and walked to Han Wanghuo and Zeng Duo. She then smiled and said, "By the way, leave a sample of your blood."

Without waiting for the other party to ask why, Jiang Baimian took the initiative to explain, “When we return to First City, we’ll get someone to find a good medical institution or corresponding laboratory and check on your problems.”

“I can sense that my heart is ailing. Furthermore, it’s getting worse with each passing moment,” Han Wanghuo replied calmly, indicating that there was no need to do any more tests.

“You’ve misunderstood Big White’s meaning.” Shang Jianyao forcefully interrupted. “What she wants to say is that your condition is definitely serious, but we have to figure out how many months you still have and make preparations in advance.”

Preparations for a mourning? Long Yuehong criticized inwardly.

Jiang Baimian also spat. “What preparations do you want to make?”

“Oh right.” She turned to Han Wanghuo and Zeng Duo and said, “Perhaps after the testing and analysis, we can find more effective drugs that will allow you to live for another year or so. To others, this might be useless. But if you can last until winter, perhaps there will be a good development that aids the saving of Early Spring Town.”

Zeng Duo was moved by the last sentence. Without hesitation, she said, “Alright.”

She rolled up her sleeves as she spoke, revealing a vein that could be used to draw blood. She was quite open-minded about this matter. In her own words: I won’t live past a few months anyway, so what is there to be afraid of?

Upon seeing this, Han Wanghuo suppressed his vigilance and prepared to cooperate.

“There’s no rush. We’ll draw it tomorrow morning.” Jiang Baimian smiled and turned her head to look at Geneva. “When the time comes, Old Ge, do a few more scans of them.”

Geneva had a wealth of detection modules, many of which could be modified to examine the human body.

The next day, after busying herself with drawing blood and transmitting and checking the images, Jiang Baimian said to Han Wanghuo and Zeng Duo, “The first thing you need to do is get another

radio transceiver. Although Old Ge can also take on this task, it's inconvenient to charge in the wastelands. Let him conserve as much power as he can."

In order to charge Geneva, Jiang Baimian even gave the Old Task Force's solar charger board to them. In any case, the jeep and the two high-performance batteries' remaining power was more than enough to return to First City.

They could charge the batteries and attempt to buy new solar panels when they were there.

"Alright." Han Wanghuo nodded calmly.

After waving goodbye to them, Jiang Baimian, Shang Jianyao, Bai Chen, and Long Yuehong got into the jeep belonging to the team.

Under Jiang Baimian's stern watch, Shang Jianyao didn't let himself loose this time. He only changed the jeep's paint job to a sapphire blue.

In Jiang Baimian's words: "It's quite fashionable."

...

After watching October Xue and the others drive to the Red River's coast, Han Wanghuo asked Zeng Duo for her opinion. "Where are we going next?"

Although he had gone on expeditions in the surrounding area of First City, he believed that he was inferior to Zeng Duo—who grew up here—in terms of his understanding of the North Shore wastelands.

"Head toward the mountains." Zeng Duo had long made plans. "There are many settlements there that we can transact with, and they are rather wary of First City."

Han Wanghuo rubbed his knitted brows and heaved a sigh of relief. "Alright."

He turned to Geneva and asked, "Do you have anything to add?"

This was a habit Han Wanghuo had developed when he was Redstone Collection's sheriff and town guard captain. He tried his best to take care of everyone so that nobody would feel neglected.

Genava moved his metal neck from side to side. "Not at the moment, but..."

He looked at Zeng Duo, his eyes flashing red. "I'm making a rough map of the North Shore wastelands. I need your opinion."

Zeng Duo and Han Wanghuo were stunned. They never expected a real smart bot to be so proactive.

...

Unlike when they fled, the Old Task Force didn't encounter any trouble on their way back to First City.

The bridge's inspection points paid more attention to the people leaving the city. It only maintained its daily vigilance against the vehicles and pedestrians entering. In other words, they could be bribed.

Be it the people in the car or the weapons in the trunk, the Old Task Force received preferential treatment from First City's soldiers after handing over a stack of Oray when lowering the window—they turned a blind eye to it.

They passed through the bridge along the familiar path and entered the main city.

Long Yuehong's mentality was very different from before. To be more precise, he had become numb. He no longer had the excitement of coming to the largest city in the Ashlands.

Bai Chen turned the steering wheel and drove the car into the Green Olive Zone.

Their destination this time was another room that Han Wanghuo had previously rented. He and Zeng Duo had only stayed inside for a few minutes, so the safe house wasn't exposed.

After driving for a while, Long Yuehong looked out the window and suddenly sighed with emotion. "Wolf's Den..."

It turned out that the Old Task Force had passed by the place where they had saved the Ashlandic prostitutes.

The fast-food restaurant on the first floor was still open, and business was good. Although Su Na and the others were busy, their faces were filled with hope.

Ever since the real Father's incident, the Old Task Force had never looked for them again. This was to avoid implicating them and causing the future they had painstakingly obtained and built to suffer an undeserved calamity.

From the looks of it, the Old Task Force's original goal had been achieved.

Their relationship with Su Na and the others could only be traced in two places. One was the Blackshirts' second boss—Terrence—and the other was the source of the food that Su Na's fast-food restaurant used.

The manor pertaining to the latter had already gone through two buyers. To the sheriffs, there was no need to continue investigating after investigating the manor that October Xue's team had obtained and encashed after completing the mission. As for Terrence, Shang Jianyao would visit regularly to consolidate their 'friendship' until they completely left First City and had no value to be tapped.

Jiang Baimian—who was in the passenger seat—smiled and said, "Seeing how they are now, I feel that what we did back then wasn't in vain."

On the other side of the back row, Shang Jianyao was also smiling. "This is the joy of saving all of humanity."

"..." Long Yuehong was stunned for two seconds and couldn't help but criticize. It might be more convincing if you change the grand, empty mantra of 'saving all of mankind' to 'helping others.'

As they spoke, the sapphire-blue jeep drove past the original Wolf's Den and headed for another street.

Suddenly, seven or eight people walked out of an alley.

The leader was a handsome middle-aged man in a black suit. He was slender and had white sideburns.

Most of the people behind him were wearing the grayish-blue sheriff uniform, and two of them were holding a man hostage.

The man wore a mottled leather coat. His eyes were green, and his facial features were soft. His black hair was long and messy.

This... Bai Chen and Long Yuehong's pupils dilated.

The Old Task Force knew the man being held. He was a suspect in the Citizen Conclave explosion, an accomplice of the gladiator arena assassin, and a member of the Behavioral Church. He was Dimis, who liked to cover his mouth with a scarf to mislead the sheriffs!

This 'behavioral artist' was actually caught!

Bai Chen and Long Yuehong looked over and realized that Dimis—who came out to 'walk' the sheriffs from time to time—had a blank expression. His eyes were empty, and there was obvious confusion on his face.

He was clearly not unconscious. He also wasn't handcuffed, shackled, or held at gunpoint, but he was like a puppet without any intention of resisting.

Chapter 472: New Mission

"He was actually caught." As the sapphire-blue jeep turned, Shang Jianyao also saw the situation. "His behavioral art is quite lacking."

Jiang Baimian was also a little surprised, but she wasn't shocked. "Touch pitch, and you'll be defiled. From time to time, he will 'walk' the sheriffs and engage in behavioral arts. Sooner or later, it will backfire on him. Yes, there are quite a number of powerhouses in the Hand of Order. Their abilities aren't bad."

Bai Chen strongly agreed. "Last time, I felt that he was hopping on a single foot at the edge of a cliff. It might be fine if he did it once or twice, but something would definitely go wrong after repeated tries. The main question now is how the Behavioral Church will react."

“They will host a grand, rich, and diverse behavioral art exhibition.” Shang Jianyao gave his guess with a serious expression.

Long Yuehong’s thoughts couldn’t stop wandering after hearing him say that. Images of naked running, feces eating, and walking upside down surfaced in his mind.

How does this Church guarantee their survival when they love behavioral art so much? From this angle, Long Yuehong instinctively felt that the Behavioral Church definitely wasn’t simple.

Jiang Baimian smiled. “No matter how the Behavioral Church reacts, this matter won’t end this easily. Let’s hope that it can implicate a large group of people and completely intensify the conflict.”

At this point, Jiang Baimian was stunned. Perhaps this is why Dimis has been walking the sheriffs and engaging in behavioral art...

“This might not be his own will. Someone just used his hobbies and habits.” Jiang Baimian meant that someone else was trying their best to intensify the conflict.

This was a change worth looking forward to for the Old Task Force. Only then could they fish in troubled waters.

The jeep circled around and arrived at the area around Antanna Street again. They found the safe house that Han Wanghuo had secretly prepared.

It was located on the second floor of an old apartment. The building in front had a bathroom, and there were other apartments on both sides and behind. They were also mainly residential apartments.

At this moment, the sky was already dark. Night had arrived, accompanied by heavy rain.

Summer was like that—rain came and went as it pleased.

The safe house Han Wanghuo had prepared wasn't big—it only had one bedroom. The living room and kitchen coexisted, barely separating a narrow bathroom.

Compared to when he first arrived on the surface, Long Yuehong could be considered experienced. Although Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao didn't warn him, he still pressed his right hand to his waist before entering the room, ready to dodge and counterattack at any moment.

The room was slightly humid, but there was nothing unusual.

Long Yuehong heaved a sigh of relief and reached out to the wall beside the door to press the switch.

Pa!

No lights came on. Only the dim glow outside the window and the flashlight in Shang Jianyao's hand illuminated the room's silhouette.

"A blackout?" Long Yuehong muttered to himself, not too surprised.

This was a common occurrence in the Green Olive Zone. Power outages and water outages were things in life that none of the residents here could escape.

Jiang Baimian—who was at the back of the group—surveyed the area and pointed outside. "There's electricity there."

She was referring to the door opposite. One could see a faint yellow light seeping out from the bottom of the wooden door.

"It doesn't make sense that this apartment is the only one with a blackout in the building..." Long Yuehong expressed his confusion.

Bai Chen glanced at him and calmly said, "One has to pay the electric bills."

"..." Long Yuehong was first stunned before he felt that this might be the truth.



After Han Wanghuo secretly rented this room, he seldom came here to ensure its secrecy and safety. It was completely understandable that he owed electricity bills.

“That’s true.” Long Yuehong looked back at Bai Chen. “However, you seem very sure?”

Just as he said that, he saw Shang Jianyao—who was in charge of opening the door—point at the ground.

Long Yuehong looked over and found several pieces of paper. Using the illumination from Shang Jianyao’s flashlight, he read the name of one of the pieces of paper: “Electric bill payment notice.”

“There’s still a notice?” Jiang Baimian closed the door and said in amusement.

After all, most of the Green Olive Zone residents were illiterate.

“They usually come to demand payment. Only when they can’t find someone for a long time will they deliver a payment notice,” Bai Chen explained simply.

As for whether the other party could understand it or not, that wasn’t something the utility department needed to consider.

Jiang Baimian nodded slightly. “Where can we pay the electricity bill at this hour?”

Uh... This question suddenly gave Long Yuehong an indescribable sense of absurdity.

His team had just done a lot of major things recently. Their bounties were worth more than 100,000 Oray, and they had even instigated a band of bandits to attack First City’s troops. Yet, they were now discussing how to pay an electricity bill.

“It has to be tomorrow,” Bai Chen replied.

Jiang Baimian waved her hand and said to Shang Jianyao, “You and Little Red can reconnect the circuits and draw some power from the public network. Do it yourself, and you’ll be self-sustaining!”

It wasn't like they were in the company. Jiang Baimian wasn't embarrassed at all when she mentioned stealing electricity.

Anyway, they weren't transferring the cost to the civilians around them, and they would pay the electricity bill tomorrow.

As people, one had to be flexible. Otherwise, how could they carry out their missions?

Shang Jianyao and Long Yuehong busied themselves, and finally, the incandescent lamp in the room lit up.

The sky outside was getting darker, and the rain kept falling.

Jiang Baimian looked out the window and suggested, "There's no need to go out to get food. We'll make do and cook up a meal ourselves."

Shang Jianyao and the others naturally had no objections.

They carried a few cans of canned meat, a few packets of instant noodles, and a few bags of dehydrated vegetables from the jeep's trunk. They then made dinner using an induction stove.

There were many Ruin Hunters in First City, and there were also many troops out on missions. There was a market for such convenient food, forming a complete industrial chain. As for the Old Task Force, they were a team with rich wilderness survival experience. No matter what, they would ensure that they had a batch of stored food on hand.

The big and delicious beef chunks and the instant noodles dotted with many vegetables were quickly cooked. A rich and strange fragrance wafted through the entire room.

As there were only two stools at the dining table, Shang Jianyao walked to the window after filling his lunch box with food. He ate while looking out.

Long Yuehong mimicked him and went to the window. He ate a piece of beef and drank a small mouthful of broth before looking out the window.

Amidst the falling rain and the deep and hazy darkness, the windows of the houses shone with a yellowish light.

Outlined by the light were figures moving around. They were either wiping their heads, eating, carrying their children, or leaning against each other.

There were many pedestrians on the streets outside. Some of them were holding umbrellas and wearing raincoats, while others could only lower their heads and shelter their heads with their hands.

From time to time, these pedestrians would turn into a house and complain to the person who came to shelter them.

For some reason, Long Yuehong suddenly felt a sense of serenity and warmth. After a long silence, he muttered to himself, "Isn't it not good for us to look forward to chaos erupting in First City?"

This would ruin many people's lives and futures.

Jiang Baimian put down the lunch box, stood up, walked to the window, and said seriously, "This isn't something that won't happen just because we don't look forward to it."

Bai Chen swallowed the instant noodles in her mouth and turned to look at Long Yuehong. "Even if there's no turmoil, the future many people here can enjoy maxes out at about two to three years, perhaps even shorter."

Antanna Street was extremely close to the Factory Zone.

This sentence mercilessly shattered Long Yuehong's feelings.

Shang Jianyao also looked at Long Yuehong and said seriously, "First City can't save all of humanity."

Long Yuehong was speechless.

Jiang Baimian mediated in time. "Hurry up and eat. The noodles are getting soggy."

“Alright, alright.” Long Yuehong quickly turned his attention to the lunch box in his hand.

After the Old Task Force had their fill, they took out their radio transceiver to see if the company had any new instructions.

At the appointed time, Pangu Biology’s reply arrived as scheduled. This time, there was more content than usual.

Jiang Baimian recited a paragraph after translating one: “The company praised our idea of splitting up. The team in the North Shore wastelands is to focus on intelligence gathering. The team that returned to First City is to try... try to help Garibaldi...”

Ah? Isn’t this the company’s intelligence officer? Long Yuehong quickly recalled who Garibaldi was.

Bai Chen frowned and asked, “Has he been captured? No, he should be rescued if he’s captured, not helped.”

Jiang Baimian nodded and continued translating. “After Garibaldi received the company’s notice, he didn’t have time to activate the plans. He could only rely on having his enemy’s key and chose to hide in his house. He’s afraid of being discovered, so he only steals very little food and water every day. He’s almost finished eating the things he brought, and he can’t hold on much longer. Hmm, his enemy is called Old K.”

After Shang Jianyao heard this, he praised Garibaldi in admiration. “Very creative.”

Chapter 473: Front and Back

After hearing the general mission content, Bai Chen said in confusion, “The company has a complete intelligence network in First City. We definitely aren’t the only team that they can mobilize, so why did they assign the matter of helping Garibaldi to us?”

In comparison, the people from the intelligence system were more familiar with Garibaldi and understood the situation better.

“Because we are powerful!” Shang Jianyao replied immediately.

Long Yuehong immediately felt a little ashamed because he knew that Shang Jianyao was just spouting nonsense, but he could only think of this reason for the time being.

Jiang Baimian said, “If we fail, the loss will only be our team and Garibaldi. If the others fail, the entire intelligence network might be wiped out.”

“...” Although Long Yuehong was unwilling to admit it, he still felt that his team leader’s words made sense. However, isn’t this logic too cold and heartless?

Upon seeing his reaction, Jiang Baimian chuckled. “Alright, I’m just joking. If Garibaldi is captured, the company’s intelligence network in First City will definitely suffer a heavy blow. If I were the minister, I definitely would’ve ordered the people who have met Garibaldi to evacuate First City urgently. The others will sever all links with Garibaldi, hoping that the worst outcome wouldn’t be that bad.

“The company probably sent us to save Garibaldi for two reasons: First, First City is currently in a tense situation. It’s best for the company’s intelligence personnel here to stay low. Their main goal is to reduce the risk of exposure so as to avoid being implicated. In the Hand of Order’s eyes with regards to the First City intelligence system, we have already escaped the city. We won’t be watched by anyone, making it easier for us to move.

“Second, we are indeed very strong...” Toward the end, Jiang Baimian laughed. It was obvious that the second point was just a random reason she came up with to respond to Shang Jianyao’s words.

Of course, Pangu Biology would definitely consider this factor when assigning missions, but the weight placed on such a factor wasn’t great. After all, it didn’t seem too difficult to help Garibaldi.

Bai Chen nodded and no longer had any doubts.

Jiang Baimian took the opportunity to translate the subsequent content in the telegram. This was mainly Old K’s introduction, and it was rather simple.

Jiang Baimian repeated in a summarizing tone, “Old K; real name Corenza. He’s an import and export merchant who has connections with several Elders and many nobles. He also has dealings with several major gangs. Among them, the Red Coat Army—a gang—is at odds with Old K because of their involvement in the import and export business...”

“It doesn’t sound simple,” Long Yuehong said.

“Why did Garibaldi become his enemy and even have an assassin shoot him?” Bai Chen raised a new question.

Jiang Baimian shook her head. “It isn’t mentioned in the telegram.”

“I think it’s a result of hatred stemming from love.” Shang Jianyao raised his hand and stroked his chin.

Jiang Baimian was just about to say that it was possible when Shang Jianyao added, “Old K fell in love with Garibaldi, but Garibaldi fell in love with someone else and abandoned him...”

“...” Long Yuehong wanted to lambast his friend but was at a loss on the delivery. In the end, he could only mock, “So he destroys what he can’t get?”

“There are many such people. You have to be careful.” Shang Jianyao nodded sincerely.

Jiang Baimian cleared her throat and said, “That’s not the main point. What we need to do now is gather more information on Old K and observe his residence, which is the place where Garibaldi is hiding. Then, we can formulate a feasible plan. Speaking of which, Old K lives quite close to Hey’s good friend.”

This referred to the second boss of the Blackshirts, Terrence.

Old K lived only three streets away from this gang leader’s house, closer to the Golden Apple Zone.

At this point, Jiang Baimian laughed self-deprecatingly. “The older one becomes, the more timid they become. When we first arrived in First City, we dared to visit Terrence directly and try to ‘convince’ him. We weren’t afraid of accidents. Now, without a sufficient understanding and a perfect plan, it’s best to let Garibaldi starve. It’ll take some time for him to starve to death.”

“That’s different,” Bai Chen replied calmly. “Back then, we had a certain understanding of Terrence through the Wolf’s Den gang members. Furthermore, the key to the planned operation was to take the initiative. As long as Terrence wasn’t a Mind Corridor-level Awakened or had the ability to restrain Shang Jianyao, we could successfully make friends with him.”

As for now, the fact that the Old Task Force was wanted prevented them from visiting Old K directly and striking up a conversation. This prevented them from using the best environment to utilize Shang Jianyao's abilities.

Jiang Baimian nodded slightly and said, "In short, we have to take one step at a time and mustn't be rash. Yes, the fact that Old K is on good terms with a large number of nobles is a hidden danger. It might bring about accidents at any time."

...

After a short rest, the Old Task Force took advantage of the rainy night and drove toward the Red Wolf Zone. They planned to conduct preliminary observations of Old K and his residence that very night. At the same time, they planned to prepare a few additional safe houses.

The rain had already reduced to a drizzle. The street lamps by the side of the street were dyed with halos of light, creating a dreamy color in the dark night.

The disguised Old Task Force either went straight to the door or completed the establishment of three new safe houses through their 'friends.' They then arrived at Maschar Street, where Old K lived.

Looking at Unit 54 from afar, Jiang Baimian leaned back in her seat and thoughtfully said, "What time is it? All the curtains are drawn..."

She was referring to all the places with curtains. Places like the kitchen still had lights shining through.

"It's not normal." Bai Chen voiced her opinion.

It was only some time past nine. For the laborers in the Green Olive Zone, it was indeed time to rest. But for the people in the Red Wolf Zone who had plenty of assets, the night had only just begun.

Old K was obviously one of them. Under such circumstances, the curtains of the living room facing the street were drawn and shut tightly, making it look very suspicious.

“Maybe they want to perform a shadow play,” Shang Jianyao said in admiration as he looked at the black shadows that occasionally showed through the curtains.

Nobody bothered with him.

Jiang Baimian pondered for a few seconds. “Let’s split up and monitor the front and back doors.”

Before long, Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao found a suitable surveillance spot on the top of an apartment building two streets away. Bai Chen and Long Yuehong also drove to a place where they could observe the back door from an appropriate distance.

Monitoring was very boring most of the time. Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao had long gotten used to this kind of life and had zero impatience. The only thing that vexed them was that the rain hadn’t stopped and that the wind on the roof was strong.

It was inevitable that their bodies would be drenched.

As time passed, Jiang Baimian saw the main door to Old K’s house open as a few people walked out.

One of them was broad and thick like a wall. It was Sheriff Wall, whom the Old Task Force knew.

One of the people who sent Wall out was wearing a white shirt and a black vest. His hair was neatly combed back, and a small number of silver strands could be seen.

His wrinkles had already drooped slightly as he frowned slightly. His eyes were deep blue. He was the Old Task Force’s target for this operation—Old K, Corenza.

Old K smiled and walked Wall to his car with a few subordinates.

“Wall is indeed investigating the Garibaldi trail. Furthermore, he has already found Old K...” Jiang Baimian muttered softly. “Thankfully, we didn’t rashly visit.”



She moved her gaze and memorized the characteristics of Wall's police car. This way, they could determine the other party's approximate location by observing the vehicles and obtain advance warning.

"Actually, we should've made friends with Sheriff Wall long ago." Shang Jianyao expressed his regret.

Meanwhile, on the other side.

Bai Chen and Long Yuehong noticed a black car turn into another street and stop at Old K's back door.

The ajar back door quickly opened. Clearly, someone had been waiting there.

A servant came out. He held a large dark umbrella and opened the door of the black car.

A person got out of the car and immediately took shelter under the umbrella. With their head bowed, the figure hurried to the back door.

In the dark night and hazy rain, Long Yuehong and Bai Chen couldn't see who it was due to the lack of light. Only when the person was about to disappear from their sight did they notice that it seemed to be a woman.

Chapter 474: What I Miss

Long Yuehong and Bai Chen focused on Old K's back door through their binoculars, trying to figure out the visitor's appearance. Unfortunately, the nearby street lamps were broken for some reason, preventing them from getting their wish.

"If only Old Ge were here." Long Yuehong couldn't help but sigh.

Compared to a fully functioning smart bot, carbon-based humans needed too much additional equipment to enhance themselves.

Of course, Long Yuehong had always remembered what his team leader often said and used it to motivate himself. "People aren't born differently, but when it comes to success or failure, it depends on who's using the tools available."

Bai Chen agreed with Long Yuehong's sigh. "Unless it's completely dark without any light, Old Ge will always have a solution..."

Before she could finish speaking, Bai Chen's attention returned to the back door of Old K's house.

Another car drove over and stopped outside the door.

What happened before was repeated again. A servant from Old K's residence held a large umbrella and came out to welcome the guest.

In just half an hour, nearly 20 visitors arrived at the back door where the street lamps were broken. Judging from their clothes, there were men and women.

This stunned Long Yuehong and Bai Chen. They didn't understand what was going on.

At the same time, Jiang Baimian—who had received Long Yuehong's report—also discovered that a large number of cars had driven into Maschar Street where Old K's residence was and stopped on both sides of the road.

Under the illumination of a large number of street lamps, the car doors opened one after another, and men and women dressed in bright clothes walked out.

Surrounded by bodyguards, they openly approached the main entrance of Old K's house and walked in. However, their bodyguards and attendants remained outside before returning to the cars.

"They're all nobles..." Jiang Baimian observed carefully for a while and came to a conclusion.

She and Shang Jianyao had been noble imposters. They had gained a certain understanding of the people of this class in preparation for the gladiator match. This was to prevent them from not knowing how to greet a noble when they encountered one.

The other party could fail to recognize them, but they couldn't. Only then could they minimize the risk of being exposed.

“That’s right.” Shang Jianyao pointed at a male noble and smiled. “I remember him. He mocked Dino for almost becoming the first person in high society to choke to death while drinking water.”

Dino was one of the main characters during the assassination at the colosseum. He was the one who was ‘assassinated.’

“It seems... His name is Phelps,” Jiang Baimian said with uncertainty.

Phelps was also an Akson with black hair and blue eyes. He seemed to have undergone genetic enhancement—he had above-average height and appearance. However, the muscles on his cheeks were slightly drooping.

After watching these people enter Old K’s house, Jiang Baimian nodded thoughtfully. “This is a banquet?”

She didn’t make a definite judgment because it was very awkward in terms of time. According to her understanding, noble gatherings usually started at dinner and lasted until midnight. People could leave at any time in the middle. Why would they only start gathering at 11?

“Perhaps this gathering has a ghost theme,” Shang Jianyao guessed excitedly. He seemed eager to take out the monkey mask with the hairy face and protruding mouth, put it on, and join the party.

Jiang Baimian ignored him and continued muttering to herself, “All the curtains are drawn for this gathering? What’s with the people behind? Special guests? How can bodyguards not be allowed to enter a normal gathering? Will those nobles be that assured?”

She couldn’t think of an answer to these questions for the time being. Shang Jianyao provided many possibilities, but they were clearly ridiculous.

Jiang Baimian had no choice but to take out her walkie-talkie and remind Long Yuehong and Bai Chen, “Continue monitoring and wait for it to end.”

They waited for several hours until three in the morning when the front door of Old K’s house opened again. The well-dressed men and women walked out one after another with tired but relaxed expressions before leaving in their cars.

At the same time, cars arrived at the back door area and quietly picked up the incognito visitors.

Due to the environment, Bai Chen and Long Yuehong still couldn't see their faces clearly.

“Team Leader, should we choose a target to follow?” Long Yuehong asked for Jiang Baimian's opinion.

If he and Bai Chen went downstairs and drove the jeep, they still had a chance of locking onto a car.

Jiang Baimian fell silent for a few seconds before saying, “There are too many unknowns in this matter. To be safe, there's no need for now. Right, our next step is to track down a noble and find out from them what kind of party Old K holds at home and what role those people who came in through the back door play.”

Compared to those incognito visitors and Old K who seemed a little mysterious, a noble with a house and family while being on the edge of the power dynamics was a more suitable and safer target.

Without much elimination, Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao unanimously chose Phelps.

They had a certain understanding of him—they knew that his grandfather used to be an Elder who died early and couldn't cushion a path for his descendants. This caused Phelps's father to gradually be pushed out of the power center. By his generation, they had been marginalized.

From the development during the colosseum assassination, Jiang Baimian believed that there were no Awakened among Phelps's bodyguards and attendants.

Combining all the factors, this was a rare, desirable target.

Jiang Baimian wasn't in a hurry to head downstairs to tail him. This was because it was late at night, and there were few people. This made it very easy for them to be discovered.

In any case, he could run, but he couldn't hide. She wasn't afraid that she wouldn't be able to find him when she 'visited' Phelps during the day.

“After we investigate these matters, the plan to help Garibaldi will probably take shape,” Jiang Baimian said casually as she watched the nobles’ vehicles leave.

In fact, if she didn’t have too many concerns, she could’ve provided a feasible plan now: When Old K went out to deal with business problems and brought with him most of the potential ‘accidents,’ they could sneak in or use ‘friends’ to evacuate Garibaldi.

The success rate of this plan was very high based on how Garibaldi had hidden in Old K’s house for several days without being discovered.

Of course, Garibaldi didn’t dare to move after he entered and hid himself because he didn’t have a complete grasp of his surroundings.

...

The next afternoon, the Old Task Force—which was done resting—used the method of making friends to borrow a car temporarily and drive to the Golden Apple Zone. They were prepared to find an opportunity to communicate with Phelps, a noble scion.

“Sigh...” In the car, Shang Jianyao let out a long sigh.

“What’s wrong?” Long Yuehong asked warily and worriedly.

Shang Jianyao replied with a pained expression, “I’m missing Mr. DiMarco.”

“Why?” Long Yuehong was a little puzzled.

Jiang Baimian scoffed. “Whoa, you say you miss him? You’re missing his Destiny Connection!”

“Destiny Connection is really useful,” Shang Jianyao admitted frankly. “Even I find Mr. DiMarco very adorable.”

What kind of adjective is that? Long Yuehong almost vomited blood.

Jiang Baimian agreed with Shang Jianyao's first half of the sentence. "Indeed. If the Destiny Pearl were still around, we wouldn't need to find an opportunity to deal with a marginal aristocratic scion like Phelps. We would just need to wait for him to head out and get into a car before we possess him from more than 20 meters away and directly evoke his relevant memories."

The entire process was silent and virtually undetectable to the average person. If Shang Jianyao did a clean job and prepared the right conditions, Phelps might not even realize that he had been possessed after the incident. He might very well think that he had a fainting spell because of his recent overindulgence.

As the Old Task Force members conversed, the car turned into a relatively secluded street.

At this moment, a figure crossed the road and stopped in the middle.

He was of Red River ethnicity. He wore a gray robe and had a bald head that reflected light. He was also so thin that his figure was a little out of shape. It was impossible to tell his exact age, but his face wasn't pale, and his mental state wasn't bad.

This person half-closed his green eyes. He held prayer beads in one hand and placed the other vertically in front of his chest. He faced the Old Task Force and bowed. "Namo Annutara-Samyak-Subhuti. Patrons, the sea of bitterness is endless. Repent, and you will be saved."

He spoke in the Red River language. His voice wasn't loud, but it echoed in Jiang Baimian, Shang Jianyao, and the others' ears like a huge bell.

Chapter 475: Zennaga

The sudden appearance of such a monk and his baffling words made Long Yuehong suddenly tense up. At the same time, he felt a little puzzled and lost. What's going on? Why is there another monk who believes in Subhuti? Is he crazy? Is he mentally unstable?

Long Yuehong subconsciously cast his gaze forward and saw from Jiang Baimian's side profile that she had a rather solemn expression.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao had already rolled down the window, stuck his head out, and shouted, "Why don't you use Ashlandic? The Red River language can't fully express the charm and profundity!"

This fellow is being argumentative regarding the wrong aspect again... Long Yuehong once again didn't know whether to praise Shang Jianyao's courage or not.

To Long Yuehong's surprise, the thin gray-robed monk answered.

He continued in the Red River language, "I'm not good at Ashlandic, but paying respect to Buddha is paying respect to one's own consciousness. Talking about Buddhism is like explaining one's true nature. No language will affect its essence."

"Why are you in our way? Why do you say that the sea of bitterness is endless and that we need to repent?" Shang Jianyao's thoughts skipped as he changed the topic.

Jiang Baimian didn't stop him. She tried to use his unconventional approach to disrupt the gray-robed monk's thought process and create an opportunity to pry into the truth or escape the current situation.

The gray-robed monk made a Buddhist proclamation again. "This Penniless Monk foresaw that a four-person team passing by this street today would affect First City's stability and bring about chaos. Buddha is merciful and can't bear to see suffering. I can only stop you and watch over you for a while."

Jiang Baimian and the others looked at each other when they heard this answer. They felt like the other party was mentally ill.

This was an unexpected disaster!

The Old Task Force hadn't done anything yet!

Shang Jianyao's expression turned serious as he replied loudly, "It won't be a four-person team that will bring chaos and affect stability. It can only be those nobles, Elders, and ambitionists who control the army. Zen Master, why don't you take care of Beulis, Alexander, and Gaius? Believe me, this is the most effective way to eliminate any latent danger."

Whoa, this debate level is rising... Jiang Baimian praised inwardly.

The gray-robed monk fell silent for a few seconds before saying, “This Penniless Monk will also make attempts on that, but I need to keep an eye on you first.”

His tone was calm, but it showed his determination.

At this moment, Bai Chen—who was driving—also stuck her head out. “Monk, what makes you so sure it’s us?”

Although there were no other people on this street, the prediction might be erroneous not because of the target, but the time and place.

“That’s right,” Shang Jianyao echoed. “Think about it—it’s common for prophecies to be interpreted wrongly. You definitely...”

Before he could finish his sentence, the gray-robed monk chanted another Buddhist proclamation. “Namo Annutara-Samyak-Subhuti...”

His voice sounded in Jiang Baimian and the others’ ears like a loud bell, successfully suppressing Shang Jianyao’s subsequent words.

Then, without giving Shang Jianyao a chance to continue speaking, he calmly said, “Patron, don’t try to use your ability to influence This Penniless Monk’s logic and judgment. This Penniless Monk knows Mind Reading and knows what you are trying to do.”

F\*ck... Long Yuehong couldn’t help but curse inwardly. Abilities like Mind Reading are too disgusting! Anything we want to do would be stopped before we can even get into position. How can we fight such an adversary? Furthermore, this monk is more than ten meters away from us, but his Mind Reading can hear us so clearly. This means that his level far exceeds Jingfa’s...

As Long Yuehong’s thoughts raced, the gray-robed monk spoke again. “Patron, don’t take out your speaker and portable recorder. You have already ‘told’ This Penniless Monk that certain sounds stored inside will bring about negative influence.”

Shang Jianyao listened to his advice, but he didn’t heed it completely. Although he didn’t take out the portable recorder and small speaker from his tactical backpack, he tried to press the switch and turn up the volume.



At the same time, Jiang Baimian—who had been maintaining her silence—suddenly drew her gun. She pushed the door open with her left palm and swung her right hand out, preparing to shoot at the gray-robed monk.

She didn't expect it to succeed. She only wanted to use it to obstruct the other party, affect his ability, and create an opportunity for Shang Jianyao to play Xiaochong and Wu Meng's recording.

Bai Chen also instantly reacted. She floored the accelerator, causing the rented heavy SUV to roar and charge forward.

At that moment, the gray-robed monk's left hand spun the prayer beads.

Silently, Jiang Baimian felt unbearable pain as if she had fallen into a trap made of steel needles.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Her right hand reflexively retracted, and the bullet deviated in its path, hitting the stone slab beside the road.

Shang Jianyao seemed to have fallen into an endless sea of fire as his skin burned with pain. His body curled up, and he didn't have the strength to press the switch.

Bai Chen felt like she had been thrown into boiling water—the intense pain almost made her faint. Due to this, she couldn't help but release her right foot.

The car had only sped a few meters before it slowed down and moved forward slowly.

Long Yuehong felt like he had fallen into an ice cavern as he trembled uncontrollably. His body became stiff, and his thoughts seemed to freeze.

Six Realms of Rebirth and Existence—Hell realm!

Under an indescribable but invisible torture, the Old Task Force lost all ability to resist.

No, Jiang Baimian's left hand was still moving. It 'autonomously' extended out of the car and threw out a metal coin held in its palm.

With a sizzling sound, silver lightning bloomed and wrapped around the coin, dragging out an obvious 'blazing tail.'

It was like a violent cannonball blasting toward the gray-robed monk!

While Shang Jianyao conversed with the other party, Jiang Baimian was already preparing for the possible conflict that might happen next. Having interacted with many Awakened, she knew very well that as long as she didn't encounter particular types of enemies, she could avoid most of the effects by relying on the actions preset in the auxiliary chip.

Unfortunately, the chip in her biological prosthetic limb was rather simple. It could only preset a few actions. If Geneva were here, he could preset the complete radio gymnastics workout. Therefore, this could only be a desperate counterattack when there was no other way.

However, the gray-robed monk seemed to have expected this.

A stone slab flew over from the side of the road and blocked the metal coin.

Clang!

The stone slab was charred, and electric currents were tearing amok through the dielectric without going any further.

After all, Jiang Baimian had thrown the coin with her hand and relied on the high-voltage electric current for victory. It was impossible for her to achieve the effect of a railgun.

Hell realm was still maintained, and the pain nearly knocked out the Old Task Force members.

"Namo Annutara-Samyak-Subhuti..." The gray-robed monk gave another Buddhist proclamation, and everything returned to normal.

Long Yuehong subconsciously looked at his body and didn't find any damage. However, the cold and torture from before remained clear and vivid in his memories.

The cold sweat on his forehead and back also proved that something had happened.

"Patrons, meaningless resistance will only cause you pain," said the gray-robed monk calmly. "It's better if you accept my watch."

As Jiang Baimian reprogrammed the auxiliary chip, she asked in a deep voice, "Zen Master, how long are you going to watch over us?"

"Ten days. I'll let you leave after ten days," the gray-robed monk replied simply.

He glanced at Jiang Baimian and didn't stop her. He only said to Shang Jianyao, "You want me to become corny?"

Shang Jianyao smiled and spread his hands, indicating that he was just thinking and didn't plan on putting it into practice.

"How should we address you, Zen Master?" he asked casually.

The gray-robed monk nodded slightly. "My Dharma name is Zennaga."

The stone slab in front of him slowly flew back to the roadside and landed in its original position as if an invisible hand was controlling it.

This made Jiang Baimian and the others even more certain that the monk was an Awakened at the Mind Corridor level.

"Zen Master, which Church are you from?" Shang Jianyao asked further.

Zennaga's green eyes swept across the crowd. "This isn't the place to chat. Patrons, follow This Penniless Monk."

“Zen Master, please lead the way.” Jiang Baimian knew that they couldn’t do anything and began seeking out other solutions. For example, she could designate a place to stay while being watched. Or she could also tell Zennaga that once a lonely and pitiful child were to lose the Old Task Force’s care, he wouldn’t be able to eat or sleep well. It was better to bring him over.

Jiang Baimian even considered inviting Zennaga to lead the way in the car. Otherwise, the monk strolling in front of them would be very conspicuous and would easily attract additional attention.

Zennaga didn’t want their lives, but the Hand of Order wanted them dead.

“Patrons, you are merciful.” Zennaga nodded his head in satisfaction. The next second, he waved his hand that wasn’t holding the prayer beads, and a dark black motorcycle flew over from the side of the road.

“Ah...” Long Yuehong was dumbfounded.

The gray-robed monk flipped over, raised his leg, got on the motorcycle, and floored the accelerator. With a vroom, Zennaga lowered his body and calmly said, “Patrons, just follow behind This Penniless Monk.”

At this moment, the monk, gray robes, bald heads, motorcycle, and exhaust formed an extremely visually impactful scene. Jiang Baimian, Long Yuehong, and Bai Chen were slightly stunned.

Shang Jianyao curiously asked, “Zen Master, why don’t you drive a car?”

Zennaga kept the motorcycle stable as he replied frankly, “Cars are too heavy.”

Chapter 476: Crystal Consciousness

Cars are too heavy... What kind of reason is this... Long Yuehong—who was sitting in the back row—bowed down to pick up the pistol he had dropped due to the cold and pain while he repeated Zennaga’s answer dazedly. Is there any connection between the weight of a car and driving? The person drives the car, not the other way round.

As Long Yuehong’s thoughts ran through his mind, the gray-robed monk—Zennaga—had already made the black motorcycle dash forward. Bai Chen had no choice but to step on the accelerator and get their vehicle to follow closely behind.

In the passenger seat, Jiang Baimian looked at Zennaga's back and didn't hide her thoughts. How can one crack his Mind Reading ability? If he knows everything in advance, there's no chance of winning... We can't just sacrifice ourselves by becoming Heartless and rely on instinct to achieve victory, right? Ignoring the problem of reaching this stage, even if we wanted to, the Heartless disease isn't something that can be obtained just by saying it...

In this aspect, he is clearly stronger than Jingfa the mechanical monk. He can clearly hear our thoughts from a distance...

He possesses the Mind Reading ability. The ability that makes us feel pain probably comes from the prayer beads in his hand, so he can use both simultaneously...

Controlling matter is a basic ability, and it doesn't seem to conflict with his Mind Reading... Yes, the pain of being pricked by needles still existed when he used the stone slab to block the electric current, but it was clearly alleviated... It looks like it still has some effect...

Mind Reading comes under the Subhuti domain. The corresponding price of Mind Reading is related to one's mental state, changes in desires, and senses. It might also be that one can't lie...

He answered so many of our questions, so it's suspected to be the latter. However, this might be their Church's commandment, just like the Monks Conclave... His senses don't seem to have any problems at the moment, nor does he show any signs of increased lust. For the time being, there's no way to guess what the price is... Sigh, I only hope that he doesn't have a split personality. Otherwise, the benevolent Zennaga might switch to the cruel and dark Zennaga later...

Jiang Baimian knew that Zennaga might very well read her inner thoughts. She only believed that these were unimportant matters, a reaction that any normal human in the current situation would have. At most, she knew a little more about Awakened and had come into contact with the mechanical monk, Jingfa. This probably wouldn't touch Zennaga's sore spot, nor would it expose the Old Task Force's countermeasures. They had zero escape plans, so how could they expose something they didn't have?

Jiang Baimian looked at the black motorcycle ahead that turned into another street and turned to look at Shang Jianyao and Long Yuehong in the backseat.

She was both amused and surprised to discover that Shang Jianyao's expression was sometimes serious, sometimes happy, sometimes heavy, and sometimes relaxed. It was as if he was wearing a kaleidoscope mask.

Jiang Baimian deliberated and asked, “What are you thinking about?”

She wasn’t worried that her question would cause Shang Jianyao’s plan to leak out because it couldn’t be concealed in front of Mind Reading.

Shang Jianyao’s expression returned to normal as he nodded slightly. “Each of us is drawing up our own escape plan, but we aren’t voting on which one we’ll use. Even if he hears our discussion, it’s impossible for him to be on guard against every plan. When the time comes, we will vote according to the situation and immediately take action once it’s decided. This way, he will only know about it a couple of seconds in advance and won’t be able to deal with it appropriately. The code name we gave this method is ‘Bolt Out of the Blue.’”

It’s feasible in theory... Long Yuehong was stunned when he heard that. He actually felt that Shang Jianyao’s plan was rather good.

Jiang Baimian frowned and said, “The problem is that you—uh, all of you won’t be fully prepared for every plan before all of you cast the vote.”

This was equivalent to the unprepared versus the unprepared.

Shang Jianyao frankly replied, “That is the biggest difficulty of this method.”

He then added, “I have another way—it’s to keep thinking about it and make him constantly monitor us. We can spend the entire day thinking about things. He definitely can’t maintain his Mind Reading all day.”

Even if Mind Corridor-level Awakened were far superior to Shang Jianyao—who was at the Sea of Origins—their abilities were definitely limited.

Just as Shang Jianyao finished speaking, a voice sounded in Long Yuehong’s heart. It was a calm and indifferent voice. “Indeed, but you don’t know when I’m using Mind Reading and when I’m not.”

This... This is Zennaga’s voice? No, I didn’t hear it with my ears. It’s like it popped up in my head... Long Yuehong’s pupils dilated in surprise. He cast his gaze at Jiang Baimian, Shang

Jianyao, and Bai Chen, trying to determine if he was hallucinating or imagining things from their reactions.

The next second, Jiang Baimian looked around and sighed. “His Mind Reading has reached a level where it can be used in reverse...”

Zennaga’s Mind Reading not only allowed him to hear the thoughts of the four Old Task Force members but also allowed them to hear Zennaga’s thoughts.

This is close to the telepathic experiments that the Old World wanted to conduct before it was destroyed... Jiang Baimian retracted her gaze and recalled some information she had read in the past.

Long Yuehong was a little pessimistic about whether he could escape Zennaga’s watch ahead of time.

Although Zennaga couldn’t use his Mind Reading all the time, the Old Task Force didn’t know when he was ‘listening in’ or when he wasn’t. Therefore, they had no way of confirming if he knew the plan they had made in advance.

What was even more terrifying was that Zennaga could ‘hear’ it and pretend not to hear it. He could watch coldly as the Old Task Force schemed and squeezed out all their secrets before easily snuffing out their hopes.

The current situation and pressure made Long Yuehong truly understand how terrifying an Awakened at the Mind Corridor level was. This wasn’t something that the off-form DiMarco and the clearly flawed Superior Heartless could compare to.

At the same time, Long Yuehong deeply realized something: In the Awakened domain, it was very important to gain the initiative!

The Old Task Force had previously been able to kill DiMarco and crack the Virtual World largely because they were lurking in the dark and obtained the initiative through intelligence. On the other hand, Zennaga possessed the two great abilities of Prescience and Mind Reading. They were simply synonymous with having the initiative.

Silence dominated the dark-green SUV. Jiang Baimian, Shang Jianyao, and the others didn't speak for a long time.

Zennaga—who was dressed in a gray robe—rode a black motorcycle through the streets and alleys, leading the Old Task Force to the easternmost area of the Red Wolf Zone.

Just as they were about to leave the city, a temple appeared in front of Jiang Baimian and the others. It was seven stories high and had a yellowish-brown base that was dyed blue.

It had different pillars and large windows in the Red River style, as well as various statues of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Wisdom Kings in the Ashlandic style. These statues were located along the periphery of the top five stories as if they were watching over the world.

“We're almost there.” Zennaga's voice sounded in Long Yuehong, Bai Chen, and the others' hearts again.

At this point, it was obvious to Jiang Baimian that they would be placed under house arrest in this strange temple.

“Crystal Consciousness Church?” she guessed thoughtfully through examining the architectural style. Her voice wasn't loud, but she knew that Zennaga could definitely hear her.

Zennaga slowed down the motorcycle. “Yes.”

Jiang Baimian momentarily couldn't think of a way to escape and could only casually say, “Zen Master, we still have many items back at our residence. We can't return for ten days. What if we lose them? Also, we were preparing to buy a solar charger board for the original car. We might not have the corresponding opportunity to do so ten days later if the chaos still happens. When that happens, we will be trapped in the city and be unable to take refuge in the wasteland.

“Zen Master, can you accompany us back first and settle these matters? If it's expressly forbidden, you can send a couple of acolytes for the errand. I'll give you the address and keys.”

Zennaga looked at the approaching temple and said calmly, “Okay, give me the address and keys later.”



Jiang Baimian's heart skipped a beat when she heard that. She immediately nodded and said, "Thank you, Zen Master. By the way, we were out today to save a companion. He is trapped in his enemy's residence and can't find a chance to escape. Zen Master, saving a life is better than building a seven-story pagoda. You can't bear to see him lose his life because of your prophecy, right?"

"Why don't we do this? You can accompany us to the place where he's trapped and watch our actions to prevent us from escaping. Don't worry; we don't like to use force ourselves. We will definitely use words to resolve things whenever possible, so it won't cause any chaos. If you're really worried, you can personally help us save him. I have no objections, and I will even express my gratitude."

Upon hearing his team leader's words, words instantly flashed through Long Yuehong's mind: A glib tongue.

If it were anyone else, Long Yuehong felt that his team leader's words would definitely be useless. But from his performance just now, Zennaga might really be a benevolent monk.

Zennaga—who was wearing a gray monk robe—stopped his black motorcycle and got off. He then looked at the dark-green SUV behind him.

Bai Chen stepped on the brakes.

Jiang Baimian calmly endured Zennaga's gaze because she really hadn't thought of exploiting the rescue of Garibaldi to escape.

After a few seconds, Zennaga raised his left palm vertically. "Namo Annutara-Samyak-Subhuti, This Penniless Monk shall accompany you then."

Chapter 477: Car Accident

Upon hearing Zennaga's answer, Long Yuehong and Bai Chen were pleasantly surprised. Even Jiang Baimian felt the same.

In fact, she wasn't too sure that the other party would agree. She only made the request based on a certain feeling, and that feeling came from her observation and memory of Zennaga's words and actions.

“Thank you, Zen Master!” Shang Jianyao extended his hand out the window and waved it twice with a sincere expression.

Zennaga said without any change in expression, “Patrons, please lead the way.”

He turned the black motorcycle around, got on it again, and twisted the throttle.

Bai Chen used the alley beside them and skillfully turned the car around, driving toward Old K’s residence in the Red Wolf Zone.

Jiang Baimian pondered for a moment and sat in the passenger seat. “Zen Master, the enemy of our companion has quite the background. There’s some hidden mystery about him. If we rashly visit him, I’m afraid we will encounter someone or something we shouldn’t encounter. When that happens, it might not end well even if you stop us.

“We went to the Golden Apple Zone previously because we wanted to visit a noble. He’s that person’s guest and often participates in secret gatherings. He might know something. When we get a general understanding of the situation from him, we’ll know what to be wary of, when to strike, and what actions to take.”

Zennaga—who was riding beside the car—made his voice sound in Jiang Baimian and the others’ minds. “Just carry on with your arrangements. If something is wrong, I will stop you.”

“Alright, Zen Master.” Jiang Baimian heaved a sigh of relief.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao said with a puzzled expression, “Zen Master, I find you merciful. Why don’t you think of a way to resolve the problems regarding First City’s slavery, the factories’ environment, and the intensity of labor? Why don’t you try to lead the lower-class citizens and foreign wanderers in the Green Olive Zone to have a dialogue with the nobles and help them obtain more rights and production resources to build a beautiful new world together...”

S-stop talking... Jiang Baimian shouted weakly in her heart. She didn’t know much about the Crystal Consciousness Church’s philosophy and Zennaga’s ideals. If the other party really claimed to be benevolent and compassionate, then Shang Jianyao’s questions were no different from repeatedly slapping Zennaga.

Those with poor self-restraint might fly into a rage out of humiliation and make the Old Task Force wish they were dead. Those with better self-restraint would probably have their blood vessels throb.

Furthermore, the price of the Subhuti domain was a certain probability of mental flaws.

While Jiang Baimian was worried, Long Yuehong was trembling slightly. He saw veins bulging on Bai Chen's right hand, which was holding the steering wheel.

How can Hey speak without considering the situation? This might kill us!

Long Yuehong wasn't angry despite his inward roar. He knew that Shang Jianyao didn't do it on purpose—he just couldn't control himself.

If he could control it, it wouldn't be considered a price.

This time, Zennaga was silent for a long time. He was so silent that the three Old Task Force members—other than Shang Jianyao—began considering whether they should burn their bridges and attack.

Finally, he sighed and said, "I can't beat them."

"..." This answer was so honest that it left Jiang Baimian, Long Yuehong, and Bai Chen's mouths half-open. They didn't know how to respond.

Before Shang Jianyao could speak, Zennaga added, "Besides, our Crystal Consciousness Church's focus is on the tempering of one's mind and the cultivation of one's consciousness. Mercy is only a form of self-awareness and understanding after one can see their true nature. Not every monk is like that, but those monks won't care about such trivial matters and won't stop you.

"Namo Annutara-Samyak-Subhuti, This Penniless Monk is no longer young and has seen many things. This Penniless Monk deeply believes that no matter how terrible the order is, it's still better than having anarchy. Before having the confidence to establish an effective system, it's best not to use other people's lives to achieve your ambitions."

"That's the case for the nobles. For low-class citizens and wilderness nomads, resistance happens only because they can't survive," Shang Jianyao replied as though he was in a debate.

Zennaga fell silent again.

Jiang Baimian cleared her throat and deliberately changed the topic. “Zen Master, is one of the commandments of the Crystal Consciousness Church not to lie?”

“That’s right. A monk does not lie,” Zennaga said truthfully. “However, one can choose not to answer.”

He rode the black motorcycle and leaned forward slightly, allowing his gray robe to freely flutter in the wind. Apart from his bald head and the prayer beads in his hand, there was nothing wrong.

After a few seconds, Zennaga said, “You seem to have a certain understanding of the suffering that exists in the Ashlands.”

Shang Jianyao replied without hesitation, “Everything we do is to save all of humanity.”

Zennaga didn’t immediately respond as though he was listening to Shang Jianyao’s heart to see if his thoughts and words were the same.

After a while, Zennaga sighed and said, “Patron, it’s rare for you to have such great ambition. This Penniless Monk didn’t even dare to have such a fantasy when I was young. Now, I’m even more conservative.”

Are you praising Shang Jianyao for having a pure heart, or are you mocking him for being overly ambitious and unrealistic? Jiang Baimian couldn’t help but mutter inwardly.

As for whether Zennaga could hear her, she did not know.

Zennaga continued, “Your thoughts and words are one. Your heart is clear, your will is firm, and there is a natural luminance from it. It’s a pity that stubbornness is also arrogance. If you can’t realize this, you will never have your consciousness be crystalline. Patron, if you are interested in Buddha Tathāgata’s orthodox path, I am willing to be your guide.”

F\*ck... Long Yuehong never expected Shang Jianyao to gain Zennaga's admiration. Shouldn't a normal person scoff at his words or treat them as a joke? Considering that the Awakened in the Subhuti domain might also have mental problems, is this considered mutual appreciation among mental patients?

Just as these thoughts flashed through Long Yuehong's mind, he wished he could take out a hammer and knock himself unconscious. This would be heard!

With Mind Reading constantly a threat, the richness of his thoughts far exceeded the limits of his speech.

Zen Master, what's your Crystal Consciousness Church's Holy Communion... Jiang Baimian muttered inwardly.

"Zen Master, what's your Crystal Consciousness Church's Holy Communion?" Shang Jianyao asked with interest.

Bai Chen pursed her lips as though she was suppressing a smile. She seemed to have guessed that Shang Jianyao would ask the question as well.

Zennaga answered truthfully, "We don't have Holy Communion; we only have Holy Artifacts. The Holy Artifacts are Bodhi and Tower. As for food, we avoid spicy and stimulating food. There are no other restrictions, but we can't eat the prey we kill with our own hands."

Hot pot and barbecue are considered spicy and stimulating, I suppose? At least most of them are... Long Yuehong subconsciously thought about what such precepts could restrict.

Shang Jianyao sighed and said with a compassionate expression, "Zen Master, perhaps I am not fated with Subhuti."

Zennaga didn't insist. He drove the motorcycle and continued following the Old Task Force to the Golden Apple Zone.

...

At the edge of the Golden Apple Zone, in a villa belonging to a certain family.

The Old Task Force and Zennaga observed the area from afar and waited for their target, Phelps, to come out.

Having attended Old K's secret gathering last night, the noble scion probably couldn't get up in the morning. Therefore, the Old Task Force chose to come in the afternoon. After waiting for a while, they finally saw their target through the binoculars.

Phelps—who had black hair, blue eyes, and slightly drooping cheeks—walked out of the villa's main entrance and boarded the car. He covered his mouth and yawned.

His two bodyguards got into the car one after another and protected him well.

The car started and drove along the road in the garden and out the gates.

In the distance, Bai Chen stepped on the accelerator and followed Phelps from a distance.

Seeing that the Red Wolf Zone was in sight, Bai Chen sped up and caught up to her target quickly. Then, she overtook him.

Phelps's driver didn't think much of it. He was just wary that the other party would suddenly turn and obstruct his path.

Suddenly, he felt an unbearable grievance.

This crappy car actually dares to overtake me! Watch me overtake you! The driver stepped hard on the accelerator.

With a loud boom, the car in front just happened to make a turn.

Bang!

Phelps's vehicle slammed into the side of the Old Task Force's rented car.

Fortunately, the driver was trained. He stepped on the brakes and turned the steering wheel in time to reduce the severity of the accident.

During such a collision, Long Yuehong felt dizzy and was almost injured even though he had his seatbelt on.

On the other hand, Shang Jianyao—who was closer to the collision spot—had an outstanding physique. He pushed open the car door and jumped out, completely unaffected. He glanced at the dented rear of the car and suddenly rushed toward Phelps's car, shouting, "Do you even know how to drive?"

As a noble, Phelps naturally wouldn't say, "It's all my driver's fault." He only gave the bodyguard beside him a look.

The bodyguard immediately got out of the car and lifted the corner of his shirt, revealing the pistol at his waist.

Shang Jianyao revealed a terrified expression and shouted at Phelps in the car, "Look, your car is damaged, so is mine. You have companions, so do I. So..."

His words were like the expression of a frightened person who was both stubborn and flustered.

Phelps's expression changed as he said to the bodyguard, "Forget it. It's someone I know."

Although the bodyguard had been with Phelps for several years, he hadn't grown up with him after all. Compounded by the influence of Inference Clowning, he didn't have any doubts.

Upon seeing Phelps, Shang Jianyao grumbled, "Isn't your driver being too rash? Forget it, forget it. With our relationship, there's no need to fuss over this matter."

Phelps nodded in satisfaction. "No problem."

At this moment, Shang Jianyao looked around and deliberately lowered his voice. "I think I saw you go to Maschar Street last night..."

He didn't state his position, nor did he ask what the gathering was about. He only casually mentioned it.

Phelps suddenly turned vigilant. He looked around and whispered, "A rave party to please Mandara..."

Chapter 478: Sixth Sense

Please Mandara? Long Yuehong—who had already alighted and was pretending to help Shang Jianyao—was shocked, but he also felt that it was reasonable.

The Old Task Force already knew that many nobles in First City secretly believed in Mandara and were Church of Paragon Desire members.

Phelps's answer and Old K's secret gathering only confirmed this once again.

Long Yuehong subconsciously turned his head and glanced at his team leader and Bai Chen. He realized that their expressions hadn't changed.

That's right... At this distance, at this volume, and with them sitting in the car, they definitely can't hear it... Furthermore, Team Leader's hearing isn't good... As Long Yuehong came to a realization, he cast his gaze further away.

At the end of the street, the gray-robed monk riding a black motorcycle had a solemn expression.

"Does desire have a spirit?" Shang Jianyao pretended to be enlightened as he smiled and asked in return with a doctrine from the Church of Paragon Desire.

As though finding a fellow parishioner, Phelps revealed a suggestive smile and pressed his crotch. "There is no barrier between people."

"How was it? Did you have a good time last night?" Shang Jianyao—who had confirmed that the other party was a believer of the Church of Paragon Desire—asked curiously.



Phelps reminisced and said, “It was great—everyone’s desires were boiling over. They let loose the barriers between them and opened the doors to their hearts. That experience can’t be described with words. With the help of various Holy Communion, Holy Oils, Holy Medicines, and rituals, it allowed me to awaken and transcend again and again.”

As he spoke, he yawned. “It’s just that I’ll end up beat the next day. I might not want to do such things for a week. But at the end of the party, when all my desires were ignited and my body was extremely exhausted, my mind was at peace. I no longer had any worries and truly felt a spirituality that transcended everything. That’s Mandara.”

When he was done, Phelps piously patted his crotch.

To make indulgence sound so refreshing and refined... Long Yuehong almost looked up at the sky.

“What was the Holy Communion this time?” Shang Jianyao asked excitedly.

Phelps’s expression immediately turned vivid. “What else could it be? Marijuana and some synthetics.”

Shang Jianyao nodded and sincerely said, “I think it won’t take a few years before all of you meet Mandara.”

“May your desires be satisfied as well.” Phelps found Shang Jianyao’s ‘blessing’ very pleasant to the ear and replied with a smile.

After chatting for a while, Shang Jianyao and Phelps agreed to repair their cars themselves before waving goodbye.

After returning to the ‘rented’ car, Shang Jianyao and Long Yuehong briefly repeated the conversation as Bai Chen stepped on the accelerator.

During this process, Shang Jianyao tried to get Long Yuehong to ‘act’ as Phelps, but Long Yuehong felt too ashamed to slap his crotch from time to time and rejected his suggestion.

Jiang Baimian quietly listened and sighed. “It’s really a rave party of the Church of Paragon Desire... It seems that Old K is one of the points of contact between them and the nobles.”

“But not all of them,” Bai Chen added in a rather firm tone.

Jiang Baimian glanced at her, retracted her gaze, and thoughtfully said, “Since Old K is from the Church of Paragon Desire, then Garibaldi’s request for help seems a little strange. It’s normal for him not to forget to bring a radio transceiver in his hurry, but after entering Old K’s house, isn’t he too lucky to evade discovery for so many days?”

“Old K’s residence often holds such parties, so there’s no lack of Awakened from the Church of Paragon Desire among them. As long as they reach the Sea of Origins, it’s not difficult for them to sense a human consciousness hidden somewhere in the house. Garibaldi isn’t an Awakened, so there’s no way he can hide it.

“Even if those Awakened are overwhelmed by their boiling desires and aren’t vigilant enough about their surroundings, they should be able to sense Garibaldi when they arrive at Old K’s house—unless it’s for confidential purposes. The Church of Paragon Desire’s people won’t take the initiative to visit Old K during the rave party.”

The driving Bai Chen shook her head. “It doesn’t seem like it. Many nobles who attend the party are ordinary people. At most, they have some genetic enhancements. It’s unlikely that they can keep secrets.”

“That’s right. Although they drew all the curtains, the gathering itself is still very obvious. The people in the surrounding streets will more or less sense it but won’t know what the gathering is about. This will easily arouse suspicion,” Long Yuehong echoed.

Shang Jianyao also smiled and said, “It doesn’t make sense that we only used one day to figure out the truth so easily while others have failed to do so after several years.”

“Yes, this might be a semi-open secret to people who pay attention to Old K.” Jiang Baimian nodded slightly. “So, could Garibaldi’s request for help be a trap?”

Bai Chen and Long Yuehong didn’t answer her because it was possible but not necessarily true.

Shang Jianyao said seriously, “I wonder what kind of trap they will prepare.”

Jiang Baimian wanted to discuss this topic in depth and make a detailed analysis, but she gave up on the idea when she thought that this might expose many of her team's secrets. After all, she couldn't be sure if Zennaga was eavesdropping on them using Mind Reading.

She looked ahead and said in a normal voice, "Zen Master, this matter involves the Church of Paragon Desire. It's more complicated and difficult than we imagined. I wonder what you have in mind. Do you want us to return to the temple first and we'll subsequently consider how to save the person, or are you willing to watch us probe and find opportunities to control the scale of the conflict?"

Jiang Baimian didn't know what the relationship between the Crystal Consciousness Church and the Church of Paragon Desire was like. But from how one could build a temple and preach openly while the other could only secretly influence some nobles, they shouldn't be in the same camp.

After more than ten seconds, Zennaga's voice echoed in the Old Task Force members' hearts. "You can head over to take a look first."

"Alright." Jiang Baimian didn't hide her joy. From the looks of it, the Crystal Consciousness Church doesn't like the Church of Paragon Desire very much!

Bai Chen exhaled and made the car turn into the Red Wolf Zone.

They didn't repair the car first. Instead, they went straight to Maschar Street and parked opposite Old K's house.

Jiang Baimian deliberated for a moment and probed, "Zen Master, do you think our operation will be dangerous?"

She remembered that one of Zennaga's abilities was Prophecy.

Zennaga took nearly a minute to answer. It was so long that the Old Task Force members thought that the other party had stopped Mind Reading and had failed to 'hear' the question.

Zennaga said calmly, "If you can strictly follow the plan, there won't be any accidents."

This Prophecy is really ambiguous... Accident, what do you mean by accident? Jiang Baimian muttered inwardly.

Without getting any further explanations from Zennaga, she turned her body and nodded at Shang Jianyao and Long Yuehong. "Follow the plan."

The first step of the plan was to wait and observe.

After confirming that there weren't many people in the house, Shang Jianyao and Long Yuehong changed into a set of gray canvas clothes after Old K, his trusted aides, attendants, and bodyguards left the compound.

A line of Red River language words was emblazoned across their chests: "First City Electric Repair Company."

Shang Jianyao and Long Yuehong got out of the car and went straight to the prearranged spot, where they clipped a wire.

Old K's residence instantly suffered a power outage.

A few minutes later, Shang Jianyao led Long Yuehong and knocked on Old K's door.

Jiang Baimian and Bai Chen also got out of the car and walked over.

The main door of Old K's house was quickly opened. The butler—who was wearing a formal suit and had white sideburns—asked the people outside in confusion, "You are?"

The disguised Shang Jianyao immediately replied, "Isn't it obvious? Look, there's a power failure in this block. We are wearing the clothes of the electric repair company. So..."

Old K's butler was enlightened. "There's a malfunction here? No wonder there was a blackout."

He no longer suspected anything and stepped aside, allowing Shang Jianyao and the others to enter—Jiang Baimian and Bai Chen also wore the uniforms of the electric repair company.

The Old Task Force quartet didn't delay and headed straight for the second floor, heading for the guest room in the corner that Garibaldi had mentioned.

Before they came close, Jiang Baimian slowed down and turned to look at Shang Jianyao.

Shang Jianyao nodded. "Two human consciousnesses."

They didn't know the exact layout of the building before, so they couldn't determine which room was their target when they were on the first floor. The other rooms also had humans.

Besides, having two human consciousnesses and Garibaldi hiding inside didn't contradict each other. Perhaps it was just a servant cleaning the area without discovering the hidden person.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao added, "There should've been three earlier."

Uh... The four Old Task Force members looked at each other. With Zennaga watching over them, they quickened their pace and arrived in front of the guest room in the corner.

Jiang Baimian reached out and twisted the handle before pushing open the door. Long Yuehong, Bai Chen, and Shang Jianyao scattered and prepared themselves for an attack.

There were two people in the room.

A black-haired man was lying in bed. He looked rather delicate, but he looked rather haggard. At that moment, his eyes were tightly shut. It was unknown if he was asleep or unconscious. He was Garibaldi, whom the Old Task Force needed to help.

Another man was sitting on a single sofa. His eyes were dark blue, and his wrinkles were obvious. His hair with a few silver strands was neatly combed back. It was Old K, Corenza.

Beside Old K, the window facing the back alley was completely open.

Upon seeing this, Shang Jianyao asked curiously, "Where's the ambush?"

Old K's expression was a little dull and complicated. After a few seconds of silence, he said, "She jumped out of the window and ran away."

This... While Long Yuehong was confused and amused, Old K added, "One of her abilities is the Sixth Sense."

Chapter 479: Destiny

Sixth Sense... She jumped out the window and ran away when she sensed danger? And this danger is because Zennaga is following us? Jiang Baimian instantly realized why.

It had to be said that the Awakened in charge of the ambush was exceptionally decisive. Old K—who was in the room—had yet to react.

Jiang Baimian also understood the true meaning of Zennaga's Prophecy. The result of there being no accidents or dangers had the prerequisite that there was such a powerhouse following them.

Regardless of whether he would help the Old Task Force, just his existence alone could scare away the enemy with the Sixth Sense. And if the ambusher of the Church of Paragon Desire didn't have the Sixth Sense, a conflict would break out regardless of whether Zennaga was present.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao seriously asked Old K, "So, this was indeed a trap?"

Old K—Corenza's expression gradually returned to normal as he said with a hint of mockery, "I really didn't expect him to hide in my house. If the world was filled with ordinary people, he might've hoodwinked us. Unfortunately, that's not the case. He could only bear my wrath and divulge everything under the gaze of Mandara."

In other words, Garibaldi has long been exposed. The ones who subsequently sought help from the company are the codex-possessing Old K and the Church of Paragon Desire backing him... Thankfully, we don't use the same passcode and intelligence system as the company... The company has also arranged for other intelligence personnel in advance... Jiang Baimian looked at Old K and asked in puzzlement, "Why did you set up such a trap?"

She believed that Old K and the Church of Paragon Desire weren't targeting her team because the Old Task Force had already left the city when Garibaldi was discovered and divulged everything. Back then, they didn't even know that they would return to First City.

“Why?” Old K repeated the question. He smiled and said, “When I catch one, I naturally want to catch a whole string of others. Of course, we aren’t the ones upholding order in First City. We do this to see what kind of deal we can make. And since we want to make a deal, the more chips we have, the better our gains.”

They want to use the company’s strength during the future chaos in First City? Jiang Baimian’s eyes moved slightly as she looked at Old K and chuckled. “I thought you had already formed a community of vested interests with First City’s nobles.”

“The nobles have never been united.” Old K maintained a fundamental level of calmness in the face of the enemy who scared away the church’s powerhouse. “It can even be said that most of the chaos originates from their conflicts.”

Clap! Clap! Clap!

Shang Jianyao applauded.

This made Old K even more confused.

Before Jiang Baimian could say anything, Shang Jianyao raised the question that perplexed him the most. “Why did you become enemies with him?”

He was referring to Garibaldi on the bed.

Old K glanced at Garibaldi and sighed. “I’m a believer of Mandara, so I only believe that desire has a spirit. I believe that all feelings can only be sublimated and extended through desire. All these years, I’ve been immersed in the sea of desire in a bid to find a spirituality that transcends everything. Later, I met her. I suddenly realized that feelings that don’t emphasize desire seem to have their own charm. There’s no need for constant romps in bed. Just talking about Old World literature and the heretics with strange habits can calm my heart as well.”

At this point, Old K laughed until his entire body trembled. “In the end, she was seduced by this fellow. The heart-to-heart connection ultimately lost to desire—the desire for external pleasure. To me, this is an enormous mockery.”

Old K stood up, patted his crotch, and said piously, “Mandara is in our hearts. After this matter, I realized that the Kalendaria’s teachings are right. By wavering in my faith, I deviated from the right path. This outcome was destined by fate.”

Old K looked around and laughed self-deprecatingly. He seemed to have let the matter go and was no longer affected by the matter, but Bai Chen vaguely sensed that he still cared a little.

As for Long Yuehong, he sighed with emotion at the machinations of destiny. Due to his lack of experience, he felt that Old K was just used to eating good—copious amounts of meat and fish. His sudden taste of something ordinary like porridge made him find it different and novel.

The reason why he couldn’t get over it was that before he got sick of such food, his porridge was processed, turning into a century egg and lean meat porridge with salted fish. It made him feel that the beauty in his heart was tainted.

Yes, it feels quite like some romance novels in the Old World’s entertainment... Long Yuehong muttered inwardly.

He wasn’t afraid of Zennaga hearing these words. If he could make the monk indulge in the Old World’s entertainment, he believed that he had done a great deed for the team.

“So there’s such a story...” Shang Jianyao said regretfully. He felt that this wasn’t as complicated and exciting as he had imagined.

Jiang Baimian nodded slightly and glanced at Garibaldi, who was either asleep or unconscious but had stable vital signs. She then said to Old K, “Hence, you sent someone to kill him? And what have you done to him now?”

Old K adjusted his collar. “I was so angry that I got a gunman to do the deed. As for now... Hehe, I and the person from before only let him experience what true desire is like with the previous one. We let him experience how wonderful it is to be close to something that transcends all spirituality. I think he should thank me for letting him realize the meaning of life...”

“You squeezed him dry?” Bai Chen interrupted Old K. “You even made him smoke marijuana or something similar?”



“Those are just supplementary items for the ritual.” Old K shrugged. He then looked at Jiang Baimian and the others. “My grudge with him is over. If you want to take him away, go ahead.”

To describe your cowardliness in such a refreshing and refined manner... Long Yuehong grasped the essence of the situation.

“Alright.” Jiang Baimian gestured for Long Yuehong to carry Garibaldi away.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao asked Old K another question. “What about her, the one between the two of you? How is she now?”

Old K’s expression changed a few times. “I had the urge to kill her back then, but I felt that it wasn’t enough to appease my anger. I wanted to see her regret—I wanted to see her cry bitterly and repent. Thus, I just took everything I gave her and waited for her to suffer with each passing day.”

How old are you? Why are you still so childish... Long Yuehong—who had been influenced by the Old World’s entertainment—couldn’t help but criticize inwardly.

However, he felt that this was good. At least nobody died.

As he thought this, Long Yuehong helped Garibaldi up.

Jiang Baimian didn’t get Shang Jianyao to ask more questions. She gave him a look, indicating that he should help Little Red. She then smiled at Old K and said, “It’s time to say goodbye. I don’t think you want our relationship to be too strained, right?”

As she spoke, she deliberately glanced at the open window. She meant that even the person who was involved in ambushing them found them dangerous and that they didn’t have any ill intentions toward them. Therefore, it was best for both sides not to hurt each other.

This hidden meaning made Jiang Baimian feel like she was assuming the authority of another as her own. For the sake of expressing her ‘friendliness,’ she deliberately didn’t ask about the ambusher from before.

“There might still be a chance to cooperate.” Old K patted his crotch again and bowed in accordance with the Church of Paragon Desire’s teachings.

With the unconscious Garibaldi, the four Old Task Force members left Old K's house and returned to their car.

"Thank you, Zen Master." Jiang Baimian looked ahead and thanked him sincerely.

"I didn't do anything," the unseen Zennaga calmly replied.

Jiang Baimian then said, "Zen Master, why don't you let us bring along everything we need since we are on the way?"

"Very well," Zennaga did not object.

The Old Task Force drove back to the room Han Wanghuo had rented and placed all their items in the sapphire-blue jeep.

After leaving the repair fee in the rental car, they drove their jeep and followed Zennaga—who was riding the black motorcycle—to the Crystal Consciousness temple located in the easternmost part of the Red Wolf Zone.

During this process, they never found an opportunity to escape.

"Zen Master, we don't want to be seen by most monks." Jiang Baimian raised a new preposition.

Anyway, when it came to being watched, she tried her best to seek better treatment.

Of course, she was only making as many requests as possible. She wasn't too sure if the other party would agree.

"Alright." Zennaga did not make things difficult for them.

He rode his motorcycle and led the Old Task Force to the side of the temple. He entered through a small door and followed a narrow and dim staircase to the sixth floor.

“You will stay here for the next ten days. I will deliver food regularly.” Zennaga pointed to a wooden door.

Jiang Baimian, Shang Jianyao, and the others nodded and helped Garibaldi push the door open.

It was a very simple room with three medium-sized beds. There was a long table against the wall and a bathroom on the side.

After confirming that the human consciousness representing Zennaga had left, Jiang Baimian looked at Long Yuehong and the others and said solemnly, “We have to quickly report the matter regarding Garibaldi.”

Zennaga didn’t ban them from using the radio transceiver.

Chapter 480: Coping With Shifting Events By Keeping the Status Quo

Jiang Baimian and the others used the codebook they had found on Garibaldi and his portable radio transceiver. They then reported that Garibaldi had been rescued but had long been exposed.

During this process, the Old Task Force tried to add the encounter of them being intercepted by Zennaga and brought back to the temple.

They were prepared for Zennaga to stop them, with no chance of succeeding. However, there was only silence outside.

There weren’t even any monks passing by.

“They aren’t worried at all...” Jiang Baimian heaved a sigh of relief.

She could roughly understand why Zennaga was so at ease. Even if the forces backing them received the news in time, in the face of such a huge organization like the Crystal Consciousness Church, formulating a plan, organizing manpower, making advanced preparations, and starting the rescue operation was unlikely to be completed in less than half a month.

And this was with the Crystal Consciousness Church not being wary.

Ten days later, the Old Task Force would be able to leave the temple named Sikhara openly.

“What do we do now?” Long Yuehong didn’t hide his worry.

Although Zennaga looked rather kind and benevolent, this didn’t mean that the other Crystal Consciousness Church monks were the same. After all, a large number of them were in the Subhuti domain. Just based on probability, there were definitely people with mental problems.

For some reason, the Old Task Force hadn’t hit their sore spots. This could be concluded from the difference between Jingfa and Jingnian.

Shang Jianyao clenched his right fist and punched his left palm. “This is an opportunity!”

“Huh?” It wasn’t only Long Yuehong—even Jiang Baimian and Bai Chen were a little confused.

Shang Jianyao deliberately made his voice sound magnetic. “The more dangerous it is, the more one should take risks. This is the opportunity for me to accommodate myself and enter the Mind Corridor. When that happens, we will have the strength to put up a fight.”

So you were possessed by Wu Meng... Jiang Baimian criticized inwardly and deliberated before saying, “How confident are you?”

“Not at all,” Shang Jianyao replied very bluntly.

“...” Jiang Baimian slowly exhaled. “There’s no rush. From the looks of it, this matter hasn’t reached the point where we have to go all out. Master Zennaga should be able to suppress or stop the other monks. Otherwise, with his personality and philosophy, he wouldn’t have brought us to this temple to watch over us.”

“That’s true.” Long Yuehong nodded.

To be honest, if Zennaga hadn’t forced his team to be remanded in Sikhara temple for the purpose of watching over them with his unclear prophecy, he would’ve had a good impression of the monk.

At least from his attitude toward ordinary people, he was a real monk.

“But our plan has been interrupted...” Bai Chen didn’t seem to enjoy forced imprisonment. She had quite some hatred for Zennaga.

Jiang Baimian smiled. “What plan do we have? Wasn’t it just waiting for chaos to erupt in First City and then fish in troubled waters to find an opportunity to complete the mission? With our strength, can we really get involved? Those big shots can kill us with a single slap.”

The Old Task Force was very aware of this. They had never thought of taking the initiative to strike and tip First City’s balance. They were only taking advantage of any ensuing situation and some particular development.

“No, that’s not our plan,” Shang Jianyao said with a serious expression. “Since Master Zennaga said that we would bring chaos to First City, we must’ve made a mistake and remembered the wrong plan.”

Are you serious, or are you mocking Zennaga? Long Yuehong boldly muttered inwardly.

Jiang Baimian nodded. “That’s right. I’m also very curious about the Zen Master’s prophecy. It’s the same whether we’re here or outside. Could it be that his act of intercepting us and bringing us back to Sikhara temple to watch over us is the trigger that can trigger a series of changes?”

At this point, Jiang Baimian laughed. “Prophecies are always fulfilled in ways that the prophet cannot predict, is it not?”

Team Leader, you’re still trying to shake Zennaga’s beliefs... Long Yuehong saw through Jiang Baimian’s true goal.

Unfortunately, Zennaga’s voice didn’t sound in their minds.

Jiang Baimian could only stretch herself. “Let’s get some sleep and wait for something to happen. Right, send a telegram to Old Ge and tell him that First City’s situation is still relatively stable. As for us, we have been invited by Master Zennaga of the Crystal Consciousness Church to be guests at Sikhara temple for ten days.”

...

In a wilderness nomad settlement in the North Shore Mountains.

Han Wanghuo and Zeng Duo sat in a secluded corner and read Genova's translation under the afterglow of the setting sun.

"Something seems to have happened to them." Zeng Duo frowned.

As a Ruin Hunter who had spent a fair amount of time in First City and the North Shore Wastelands, she knew that the Crystal Consciousness Church had certain connections with First City's officials, allowing them to preach publicly.

Han Wanghuo thought for a few seconds and said, "From the fact that they can still send telegrams, the problem isn't too serious. What should we do next?"

He cast his gaze at Genova.

Genava said in a slightly synthetic male voice, "Since something has happened to them, we have to see what's not mentioned in the telegram. This is what Big White said before. The telegram didn't ask us to change our plans, so we will act according to our original plan."

Big White... Zeng Duo had always found the Old Task Force's nicknames odd. The members of such a powerful team are actually nicknamed Big White, Little White, Hey, and Little Red... How is this a team worth tens of thousands of Oray per person? Such names are clearly ones used in First City's citizen school clubs—the kind that's used for low-class plebeians.

In comparison, 'Old Ge' was really very normal.

"Alright." Han Wanghuo also believed that it was best to cope with shifting events by keeping the status quo.

After burning the message and waiting for the rye bread to soften, Zeng Duo saw that the scene was a little heavy. She looked at Genova and asked curiously, "You were the mayor of Mechanical Paradise, right? Why did you follow Big—uh, October Xue, Zhang Qubing, and the others to First City? Mechanical Paradise has a cooperative relationship with them?"

In her mind, smart bots were also robots. They couldn't violate their program design and the orders from above. Without permission, they definitely couldn't leave their posts.

The red light in Genava's eyes flickered a few times. "I'm too humanized. If I didn't leave, I'd have been brought back to headquarters to be formatted. I followed Hey, Big White, and the others to find the answer to the question 'what makes a human.' I wanted to find out if I was considered human, what kind of person I am, and what the meaning of my life is."

Zeng Duo was stunned when she heard that. She felt like her head was spinning.

What makes a human... Han Wanghuo—who was staring at the fire and listening quietly—turned to look at Genava.

The flickering firelight reflected on his face in the afterglow of the setting sun.

Genava let out a slightly synthetic laugh. "Haha. Before I left Tarnan, I was a qualified mayor, a considerate husband, a loving father, and a dignified officer. That was the definition of self in my core program. Now, I feel that I have more possibilities; it's not just that. When I've built a sufficiently perfect human template, I might be able to find my true self."

Zeng Duo didn't know how to respond. All she could do was smile and say, "It's not that complicated for me. I just want everyone in Early Spring Town to live better."

Han Wanghuo glanced at her and said coldly, "Have you never thought about yourself?"

Zeng Duo opened her mouth and closed it again. She cast her gaze at the rye bread that was gradually softening.

...

At night, Garibaldi finally woke up.

As soon as he opened his eyes, he saw four faces above him. Spooked, he quickly shrank his body and looked for a weapon.

“You’re awake?” Shang Jianyao asked with a smile. This time, he used Ashlandic.

Garibaldi was stunned for a moment. After careful inspection, he finally recognized that this was the company’s dispatch team he had met before.

“You rescued me?” At the mention of the word ‘rescue,’ Garibaldi’s expression couldn’t help but change.

Even Long Yuehong could tell that he was afraid but also reluctant to leave.

“That’s right.” Jiang Baimian smiled and took a step back. “Sit up first. Do you need help?”

Glancing at the lady, Garibaldi’s body suddenly trembled as he hurriedly shook his head. “No, there’s no need.”

He sat up quickly. During this process, his gaze swept across Shang Jianyao and Long Yuehong, and he couldn’t help but shiver.

Jiang Baimian raised her hand and pressed on the corner of her mouth to hold it still.

After Garibaldi’s emotions eased a little, Jiang Baimian asked, “What does the lady who left a deep impression on you look like?”