

Ad Infinitum 491

Chapter 491: Throw

Bang!

As the door slammed to a close, Jiang Baimian suddenly felt the air thin.

No, it wasn't thinning but turning sticky. It was so sticky that it seemed to have solidified into an iron plate, making it impossible to absorb.

That wasn't all.

The air was also contracting like a pair of iron hands that wanted to clasp Jiang Baimian's throat. It was like layers of soil were attempting to bury her.

Jiang Baimian turned her head and saw that Long Yuehong and Bai Chen's expressions had become abnormal.

Although the reaction toward suffocation would be delayed, Long Yuehong felt like he had really entered a ghost story. Someone had grabbed him by the neck, making him dizzy. He tried his best to struggle and resist, but his movements were restricted because of the surrounding air's 'solidification.'

Moreover, there was nobody around him. He didn't know what to do to get out of his predicament.

The most helpless thing was when one couldn't find their enemy at all.

Upon seeing this, Jiang Baimian suddenly exerted strength in her waist and abdomen. She took two difficult steps and arrived beside Long Yuehong.

After that, she stretched out her left palm and grabbed Long Yuehong's shoulder. Then, she exerted her strength, lifted Long Yuehong, and threw him toward the stairwell like she was throwing a lead ball.

Despite Long Yuehong's weight, he still flew up.

Bang!

He hit the wall on the side of the stairs and rebounded to the middle of the flight of stairs. He then rolled down extremely quickly.

As his face and back kept colliding with the stairs, Long Yuehong saw stars as he was powerless to stop his inertia.

In just two to three seconds, he rolled to the bend in the stairwell.

Long Yuehong was surprised to discover that the feeling of being strangled had weakened significantly. His breathing had also recovered a little.

The viscosity of the air here was clearly much weaker than that on the seventh floor!

Without thinking about the reason, Long Yuehong relied on his instincts, experience, and inertia to roll toward the stairs that connected to the sixth floor.

Amidst the thumping sounds, he finally returned to the sixth floor. At this moment, he felt that the air around him was ever so fresh and wonderful.

He was nearly moved to tears.

When Long Yuehong flew to the stairwell, Shang Jianyao retracted his gaze regretfully and looked at Bai Chen.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

Shang Jianyao seemed to be running while dragging something weighing more than 50 kilograms. His expression turned grotesque.

In a few steps, he had already arrived behind Bai Chen. After that, he raised his right leg and kicked Bai Chen's butt.

During this process, he seemed to have used all his strength.

Bai Chen ‘flew’ toward the staircase uncontrollably before rolling down one stair after another.

At this moment, Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao held their breaths and ran toward the stairs leading to the sixth floor. They used all their strength as if they were being dragged by an invisible, powerful, omnipresent, and increasingly powerful enemy.

After spending a Herculean effort, Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao arrived at the staircase one after another. Then, they covered their heads and faces and relied on gravity to roll down.

After rolling all the way back to the sixth floor, Jiang Baimian finally felt the air return to normal. She then jumped to her feet and glanced at the still-conscious Long Yuehong and Bai Chen. In a deep voice, she said, “Back to the room!”

If they had reacted a little slower just now, the entire team might’ve stayed on the seventh floor in the form of corpses.

That suffocating feeling—that feeling of being buried became stronger with time!

The suffocating feeling remained in the air as the four Old Task Force members returned to the room where Garibaldi was. As for the gray-robed monk’s corpse on the stairs, they didn’t have time to care, nor did they dare to.

After closing the door, Shang Jianyao glanced at the bruised and swollen Long Yuehong and complained to Jiang Baimian, “You should’ve thrown Little White.”

Clearly, he wanted to kick Long Yuehong’s butt even more.

Jiang Baimian chuckled. “According to the team’s tactical handbook, we should prioritize the one closer.”

That's right, that's right. I don't want to be sent flying from a kick... Long Yuehong wanted to say that, but he realized that there weren't many bruises on Bai Chen's face. She seemed to have come to her senses during her flight and protected her head in advance.

In comparison, he was the first to roll down the stairs. Although his head didn't swell like a pig's head, there were bruises everywhere.

He didn't dare to blame his team leader for throwing him so hard that he couldn't react in time. He could only helplessly mock himself for having bad luck.

At this moment, Bai Chen brought the topic back on track. She said in a deep voice, "I think there's more than one person on the seventh floor."

Someone was trying to bewitch the Old Task Force into entering the room; someone was preventing the door from opening; someone was trying their best to send out information; someone was trying to silence them... Some of these actions were contradictory, and they didn't seem like something a single person could do.

Jiang Baimian nodded. "From the situation just now, at least two people are fighting each other. We're just props in their skirmish."

She then glanced at Shang Jianyao. "But we can't rule out the possibility that this person is similar to Hey. He has split personalities, and they will restrain each other in reality and fight for a long time."

"I knew it!" Shang Jianyao had a look of anticipation on his face. He had previously hypothesized that Buddha's Nirmanakaya had 81 'personalities.'

Long Yuehong recalled and said, "I remember that the opening and closing of the doors happened at the same time. There's an obvious tug-of-war. If he really has a split personality, is he able to fight his left hand with his right?"

This was equivalent to an Awakened being capable of using two abilities at the same time without relying on any items.

"I'm not too sure about that." Jiang Baimian turned to look at Shang Jianyao.

Shang Jianyao replied regretfully, "Not now. Perhaps when I enter the Mind Corridor."

"Therefore, the 'split personality' theory can't be completely confirmed. There's also a certain possibility of the 'suppressed devil' theory." Jiang Baimian thought for a moment and said, "However, this isn't the main problem. After all, we've already escaped. In the future, just remember not to go to the seventh floor no matter what. The main point now is what does the 'Holm' that was said with great difficulty from the room mean?"

"Fakh region's Holm Fertility Center?" Long Yuehong thought of this first.

Bai Chen nodded. "I think it's referring to that. The person in the room wants us to go to one of the five holy lands, Wasteland Ruin 13's Holm Fertility Center. There might be some secret there that he wants us to discover."

"Yes." Jiang Baimian nodded slightly. Obviously, she thought so too.

Based on its superficial meaning, 'holm' meant flat ground or an islet. There was nothing special about it. At the very least, the Old Task Force couldn't think of anything that matched the conditions.

"I'm a little inclined to the devil theory now." Shang Jianyao suddenly interrupted.

Actually, me too... Long Yuehong replied softly in his heart.

Sealed somewhere in Wasteland Ruin 13 was the terrifying devil, Wu Meng. Now, the person in the third room on Sikhara Temple's seventh floor wanted the Old Task Force to go to the Holm Fertility Center in Wasteland Ruin 13.

Combined with the rumor that Buddha's Nirmanakaya suppressed a devil, it was difficult not to make similar associations. But in this way, they would arrive at the strange conclusion that Buddha's Nirmanakaya had killed the gray-robed monk to silence him.

Before Jiang Baimian could respond, Shang Jianyao asked excitedly, "Shall we go?"

“We’ll see,” Jiang Baimian said perfunctorily. “Even if the Holm Fertility Center isn’t the secret laboratory, it’s still dangerous. Let’s report to the company and see what hints we can get.”

With that said, she looked around thoughtfully. “Every time we discuss something similar, Master Zennaga doesn’t seem to participate. Could it be that his Mind Reading has been interfered with?”

As she spoke, Jiang Baimian looked up at the ceiling.

“Perhaps.” Bai Chen nodded in enlightenment.

“I wonder how he did it...” Shang Jianyao had a yearning expression.

At this moment, Garibaldi—who was tied to the bed—asked them in confusion, “What are you guys talking about?”

Shang Jianyao pointed at Long Yuehong and dragged out his tone. “We met a ghost...”

Giuseppe—who was leaning against the bed—followed Shang Jianyao’s finger and looked at Long Yuehong. He saw that his neck was red, but there were no finger marks.

Giuseppe couldn’t help but shiver. Was there really a ghost?

After a short moment of silence, footsteps sounded in the corridor. Judging from the time, it was likely that the young monk from before had come to deliver breakfast.

Chapter 492: Old Friend

Just as the Old Task Force had expected, there was a quick knock on the door. The young monk named Danro had delivered oatmeal and toast.

“Today’s breakfast.” The monk’s expression was no different from before.

Did he not see the gray-robed monk’s corpse on the stairs? Long Yuehong muttered inwardly.

Of course, he definitely wouldn’t ask this directly. Wouldn’t that be exposing himself?

“Do you have any plans today?” Jiang Baimian asked with a smile.

Danro gave her a strange look. “Apart from not being able to leave this floor, all of you are free. Any plans will be up to you.”

Shang Jianyao tersely acknowledged it. “Has the new Chief been chosen?”

“Not yet,” Danro replied truthfully. “Right now, important matters are decided by an internal discussion between the Enlightened.”

“I see...” Jiang Baimian nodded slightly and got Bai Chen and Long Yuehong to enjoy breakfast.

Danro returned to the staircase and walked toward the lower floors. He still didn’t seem to see the corpse of the gray-robed monk—who had died of suffocation on the stairs leading to the seventh floor.

After breakfast, Jiang Baimian and the others left the room and approached the staircase as though they were taking a stroll after dinner while waiting for Danro to collect the cutlery.

They looked over and realized that the place where the gray-robed monk’s corpse had been lying was empty. Even the dirt caused by death had disappeared.

Who dragged the corpse away and even cleaned the stairs... Furthermore, this looks like an ordinary matter. It’s as though it’s not worth informing the Enlightened on duty today... Long Yuehong retracted his gaze. If not for the discomfort in his neck, he would’ve suspected that what he experienced in the morning was an illusion.

As they walked back, Jiang Baimian and the others heard grunting and thumping sounds coming from behind Sikhara Temple.

A few days ago, they had actually vaguely heard such a commotion. But at that time, they hadn’t obtained permission to walk on the sixth floor, so they couldn’t observe the specific situation.

With a sweep of his gaze, Shang Jianyao entered an open and empty meditation room opposite him.

They came to the window and looked outside.

Through the colorless glass window, the four Old Task Force members saw gray-robed monks scattered in different places on the enclosed square with the cremation furnace. They were doing all sorts of things.

Some of them held black semi-automatic rifles and shot at targets in the distance. Some held two guns and practiced their marksmanship. Some lowered and lifted barbells repeatedly. Others ran around the perimeter of the square and chased each other. Some put on boxing gloves and practiced with their peers...

Long Yuehong was stunned. He felt that something was amiss.

There was nothing wrong with these matters, but when put together with the gray-robed monks, it appeared rather strange.

Shouldn't the morning classes in Buddhist temples be about meditation and paying respects to Buddha? Why did it become shooting and combat training? At this moment, Long Yuehong suspected that a muscular monk with glistening muscles would jump out of the temple at any moment holding a machine gun in hand with a bullet strip around his body.

Moreover, he would be chanting something like 'Namo Gatling Bodhisattva.'

"Doesn't the Crystal Consciousness Church focus more on spiritual cultivation and think that the body is just a mortal coil?" Jiang Baimian muttered to herself.

Just as she said that, Zennaga's voice sounded in the four Old Task Force members' minds. "Before one's mind is accomplished, the body is still very important. Just like before you learn how to swim, lifebuoys are equally important. Blindly giving up your body and letting it weaken will only cause you to sink into the water."

"Then, why do you still need to practice shooting?" Shang Jianyao asked further. He was asking purely out of curiosity.

Zennaga calmly replied, "Spiritual cultivation isn't something that can be accomplished through pure meditation. When the monks of our sect reach a certain stage, they will leave the temple and travel to different parts of the Ashlands. During this process, if your body isn't strong enough and

you aren't proficient in weapons, you will easily lose your life. You won't have the chance to train your mind.

“Only when one reaches my age and gains some insights in the Buddhist Dharma will the requirements on the physical body be relaxed.”

How pragmatic... Jiang Baimian muttered.

At this moment, Long Yuehong couldn't help but think of another question. Could it be that Master Zennaga—who is so thin that he's almost out of shape—was a bald, strong man who could kill someone with one punch when he was young? Or could it be that a monk with a bullet strip around him and a machine gun in hand—along with glistening muscles—just happened to have Master Zennaga's face?

Such a scene was too splendid. Long Yuehong didn't dare to imagine any further.

But judging from Zennaga's black motorcycle, those scenes were indeed possible!

After watching the Crystal Consciousness Church monks' morning training, the four Old Task Force members returned to their room.

On this day, they still failed to find an opportunity to escape.

At night, the Old Task Force prepared a telegram for the scheduled moment and sent it back to the company. They mentioned that they had been 'lured' upstairs and heard the word 'Holm,' but they didn't mention their guesses.

...

In a city ruin with lush plants around the North Shore Wastelands.

The vines that wrapped around the remains of a building were abnormally thick. They were green and had red fruits. They were like venomous snakes that were entangled with each other—slippery and ferocious.

Similar mutated plants could be found everywhere in this heavily polluted area. Dangerous mutated animals and hidden Heartless walked among them.

Genava had already turned off the sound of the pollution detector. Otherwise, the beeping wouldn't stop until the battery ran out.

“Get some rest. We have to leave this place tomorrow morning,” Genava said in a professional tone. “Otherwise, there's a high chance that there will be repercussions later. Although you guys aren't in good condition now and don't care if it worsens, you have to think about the future. If the fatal problem is resolved and your life is extended, it won't be good if you contract a bunch of difficult-to-treat diseases that don't end up killing you quickly.”

Although Genava's words sounded a little harsh, Han Wanghuo had to admit that what he said made sense.

Han Wanghuo looked at Zeng Duo. “Go rest in the car. If there are any accidents, we can move immediately.”

The danger level of this area wasn't low; Hunters were everywhere.

As his battery reserves were still sufficient and Han Wanghuo and Zeng Duo had made another arduous trip and weren't in good health, Genava got them to rest at the same time.

Han Wanghuo checked his condition and didn't insist.

...

After another period of traveling, Han Wanghuo, Zeng Duo, and Genava received a telegram from Jiang Baimian and the others. It said that after a careful test, they had a better understanding of the duo's conditions. There was hope of treatment via regular means, but the premise was that they had to return to First City immediately and undergo a comprehensive and detailed examination.

Zeng Duo and Han Wanghuo were pleasantly surprised. With the mentality that there was no other way, they decided to give it a try. Together with Genava, they used the seriously polluted area to escape their pursuers and circled back to First City.

They remembered that Jiang Baimian and the others had been ‘invited’ to the Crystal Consciousness Church’s Sikhara Temple as guests. They didn’t blindly head over, afraid of encountering an accident.

“Let’s go to Xiaochong’s place.” Genava’s red eyes swept to the sides. “Big White said that if something happens on their side and need help, we should look for Xiaochong first once we are back in First City.”

“Is that so?” Han Wanghuo asked in confusion. Although he felt that this was very reasonable and was a countermeasure that he could imagine, he didn’t seem to have heard Jiang Baimian mention it herself.

Genava moved his metal neck. “When I was on night duty.”

Han Wanghuo no longer had any doubts. Although they didn’t know Xiaochong’s exact identity, they could tell that this child wasn’t simple just from the fact that he could ‘communicate’ with the mutated creature and obtain such high regard from Jiang Baimian and the others.

Zeng Duo followed Han Wanghuo and Genava all the way to Xiaochong’s rented place and led the child to Sikhara Temple.

As a Ruin Hunter who had been around First City for a long time, Zeng Duo knew where the temple was.

When the seven-story tall building with a yellowish-brown base that was dotted with green and black appeared in front of them, the sky suddenly darkened.

It was as if it were the onset of a rainstorm.

...

Zeng Duo suddenly woke up and looked outside the open car door.

A thin mist filled the surroundings, and the faint smell of blood wafted over.

According to her experience, a hunt and counter-hunt between mutated creatures or a confrontation between mutated creatures and the Heartless should've happened not far away.

This required vigilance. After all, those dangerous creatures would definitely have no scruples hunting two more humans.

Han Wanghuo also woke up. He and Zeng Duo took their guns and approached Genava.

I actually had a dream that my illness could be treated... In the dark night, Zeng Duo sighed in her heart as she walked forward.

...

It was another morning.

The Old Task Force—who had finished breakfast—gathered in the sixth-floor corridor, looking for exploitable opportunities.

After circling around a few times, they suddenly heard footsteps. It came from the seventh floor, and the footsteps were coming down.

This... As Long Yuehong's gaze froze, Jiang Baimian said, "Two people."

"Not including ghosts." Shang Jianyao gave his affirmation in a strange manner.

Bai Chen stopped and cast her gaze at the staircase warily.

Shang Jianyao cleared his throat and got into position. Upon seeing Jiang Baimian look over, he smiled and said, "So that I can shout for help at any time."

Ten seconds later, two figures walked out of the staircase.

One of them was Zennaga, who was so thin that he was almost out of shape. The other was actually an acquaintance of the Old Task Force—the handsome, long-haired, and middle-aged man Du Heng, who was wearing a black robe!

This man who called himself an antiquarian and had a mysterious background actually appeared in Sikhara Temple and went up to the seventh floor.

“Teacher Du Heng!” Shang Jianyao shouted.

Du Heng turned his head and said with a smile, “Why are you guys here?”

“Master Zennaga said that we would bring chaos to First City, so he captured us and wanted to imprison us for ten days.” Shang Jianyao spoke frankly, not hiding anything just because Zennaga was beside him.

Du Heng looked around in amusement. “Then, do you have anything urgent that needs to be done in ten days?”

Shang Jianyao thought for a moment and replied very honestly, “No.”

“Then, staying here for ten days might be a good thing. You can save money on food and accommodation, right?” Du Heng said in a joking tone.

Jiang Baimian understood what he meant and asked, “Teacher Du Heng, what are you doing here?”

Du Heng turned to look at the stairs leading to the seventh floor and sighed. “I’m here to visit an old friend.”

Chapter 493: Poisonous Sore

Old friend... Seventh floor... Long Yuehong immediately noticed two keywords.

The former was said by Du Heng himself, and the latter was conveyed by his gaze and actions.

Apart from the Enlightened on duty on the seventh floor, there were only the monks and Buddha’s Nirmanakaya who were in abnormal states.

Upon recalling that Du Heng had claimed to figure out a way to enter the New World with both mind and body—as well as the fact that his actual age was far greater than he looked—Jiang Baimian suspected that his so-called old friend was the Buddha's Nirmanakaya of the Crystal Consciousness Church.

Perhaps it's because his old friend entered the New World that resulted in him clearly not being in the right state that Du Heng decided to seek out a new path... Jiang Baimian nodded gently and smiled. "Are you preparing to leave?"

She didn't ask about his old friend. After all, Zennaga was beside her.

Although the Old Task Force had used Ashlandic language when conversing with Du Heng, it couldn't stop Zennaga's Mind Reading.

"That's right." Du Heng smiled. "What's the matter?"

"I have some questions to ask you." Shang Jianyao was very frank. "You can also not answer them, just like the monks here."

Du Heng looked around. "Let's find some place to sit then."

This time, he switched to the Red River language.

Zennaga immediately understood what he meant and led the mysterious antiquarian and the four Old Task Force members into an empty meditation room on the sixth floor. He then went elsewhere.

After finding a bed, a bench, and a chair to sit down on, Shang Jianyao directly asked, "Teacher Du Heng, since I can't defeat myself and everyone is evenly matched, I can't reconcile with him due to fundamental differences. What should I do?"

Du Heng stroked his beard and laughed. "I knew you'd ask that question. If it's that simple to accommodate oneself, there will definitely be more Mind Corridor-level Awakened in the Ashlands than this."

He said smugly, "I can't make a choice for you, nor can I directly give you a plan. Everyone's inner self is different. Failure is the only outcome from doing what others have done. Based on my

personal experience, I'll find what you and that you of yours have in common. Figure out what both of you wish to do and deliver an incisive strike there."

Du Heng didn't elaborate. The mind world was too private after all, and people were different.

Shang Jianyao thought for a moment and slowly nodded. "Thank you."

After a brief silence, Jiang Baimian deliberated and asked, "Teacher Du Heng, have you been to Wasteland Ruin 13?"

Du Heng took some time for a serious recall. "Probably."

What do you mean by probably... Long Yuehong wanted to curse inwardly, but he immediately recalled that Du Heng's memories seemed to be missing something.

"Then, do you know Wu Meng?" Jiang Baimian asked further.

"I've heard of him." Du Heng continued using an uncertain tone. He then smiled and said, "Why? Did you meet him?"

Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao spoke one after another about how they had listened to the Dao and Electrical Appliance Repairs radio station at Lehman's, how they had entered Wasteland Ruin 13 while tracking the white wolf, and how they had been affected and almost committed suicide.

They didn't mention recording the Dao and Electrical Appliance Repairs radio program because it would implicate Xiaochong.

Du Heng quietly listened and stroked his beard. "The name of this ability seems to be Thought Implantation or Subconscious Thought. That or Wu Meng has both..."

He wasn't so sure either.

He then said, "This, combined with a certain level of control over electromagnetism, creates the Dao and Electrical Appliance Repairs program's effects."

“Which domain is this?” Shang Jianyao asked curiously.

“Master Zhuang.” Du Heng nodded slightly.

Master Zhuang... After an Awakened in the Master Zhuang domain enters the Mind Corridor, they obtain electromagnetic interference... Jiang Baimian turned her head and glanced at Shang Jianyao.

Shang Jianyao clenched his right fist and punched his left palm. Although he didn't say anything, his expectant expression was obvious.

Uh... Telecom fraud might really happen in the future... Jiang Baimian retracted her gaze.

Du Heng also seemed a little interested in Wasteland Ruin 13. He then asked about the Old Task Force's observations gained from their few entries.

After a while, he looked at the sky and stood up with a smile. “I have other matters to attend to. Talk to you later.”

Jiang Baimian and the others stood up and sent the mysterious antiquarian to the staircase.

Before parting, Jiang Baimian joked, “Teacher Du Heng, you actually didn't warn us that Wasteland Ruin 13 is very dangerous—a place we cannot explore now.”

Du Heng fell silent for two seconds before glancing at the Old Task Force members and laughing self-deprecatingly. “I originally planned on saying that, but I gave up. An existence like Wu Meng is this world's poisonous sore and rotten flesh. If we continue to ignore it, the festering will worsen, and the situation will worsen. If we interfere, we will definitely suffer great risks. We might even have to be prepared to perish together or sacrifice ourselves for nothing.”

“To save all humanity!” Shang Jianyao replied very seriously.

Du Heng was stunned for a moment before smiling at Jiang Baimian, Long Yuehong, and Bai Chen. “Are you guys asking in your hearts why I don't care?”

“No.” Jiang Baimian and Bai Chen shook their heads.

To Jiang Baimian, words like ‘people like Wu Meng are this world’s poisonous sore and rotten flesh’ had more value.

Long Yuehong denied it as well, feeling a little guilty.

“What I’m doing now actually has such inclinations. Probably.” Du Heng waved his hand and walked down the stairs.

Is he referring to Xiaochong? Jiang Baimian waved her hand in response.

...

North Shore Wastelands, in the city ruins at dawn.

Piles of flesh and blood were scattered on the weeds, and there were burn marks everywhere.

The tall silver-black robot, Genava, aimed the grenade launcher in his left arm forward and observed for a while. “The mutated creatures have all retreated from this area.”

Han Wanghuo—who was holding a rifle—and Zeng Duo, who was holding two guns, heaved a sigh of relief.

They had encountered a large number of mutated creatures last night, and a few of them had strange abilities. If it weren’t for Genava being a smart bot—making him immune to such things—Han Wanghuo felt that he and Zeng Duo definitely wouldn’t be spared no matter how much firepower they had.

This made the two of them deeply understand what a restricted area for living beings was. Of course, this mainly referred to human life.

“Let’s go.” Genava opened the car door and sat. He urged them not only because this place was filled with danger but also because Han Wanghuo and Zeng Duo had been exposed to the polluted environment for too long.

As the heavy SUV drove away from the city ruins, Han Wanghuo—who was in the passenger seat—glanced at Zeng Duo, who was driving. “If your illness can be treated, I have other ways to resolve my heart problem. What do you plan on doing?”

“Plans?” Zeng Duo replied in confusion. “Find more helpers, rescue everyone in town, and relocate them to a new settlement. Then, think of a way to contact an organization that produces genetic drugs. I hope that the children in the future will become more and more normal...”

At this point, Zeng Duo suddenly gasped.

“What’s wrong?” Han Wanghuo asked.

Zeng Duo looked vexed. “The mutated creatures’ remains are very valuable. I actually forgot to pick them up!”

“It’s too dangerous to return now,” Genava—who was in the backseat—reminded.

“I know...” Zeng Duo sounded bitter. After calming down, she glanced at Han Wanghuo in confusion. “Why did you ask such a strange question?”

“I suddenly thought of it,” Han Wanghuo replied concisely.

Zeng Duo was only asking casually. She didn’t ask further and focused on observing the road.

...

In the afternoon, Red Wolf Zone, 19 Rosta Street.

Wall was summoned to the Hand of Order’s headquarters by his superior.

“Did something happen?” he asked Trevis, the Red Wolf Zone’s Orderly.

Trevis leaned back in his chair and held a red fountain pen in both hands as he casually said, “Remember the culprit behind the Citizen Meet explosion we captured? We followed the clues we

found on him over the past few days and captured a few more people. We've obtained further gains, and this matter is suspected to be done by Elder Varro in collusion with the Salvation Army."

Elder Varro... Elder Varro—who was previously caught working with the Anti-intellectualism Church and the Salvation Army—still hasn't been convicted... He's the Consul's deputy... As these thoughts raced through Wall's mind, he suddenly understood why Trevis had summoned him.

Trevis wanted to use him to pass this information to his father-in-law—the commander of the Eastern Army and the leader of the Senate's Reformists, Gaius.

At this moment, Wall felt that First City was shrouded in dark clouds and that a storm was brewing. He gradually understood why his father-in-law had stayed in First City and hadn't returned to the Eastern Army.

Chapter 494: Broadcast

Sikhara Temple.

After dinner, the Old Task Force members sat or laid down, waiting for the moment telegrams were exchanged with the company.

Shang Jianyao leaned against the bedhead and raised his hand to pinch his temples before slowly closing his eyes.

...

In the Sea of Origins, on the island with the golden elevator.

Shang Jianyao looked at the other him wearing a gray camouflage uniform. He split into nine, surrounding him.

One of the Shang Jianyaos raised his head and looked at the crack in the sky that was swirling with sunlight. He said excitedly, "Should we greet the person on the other side and invite him to invade? I've thought about it. The thing we have most in common is that we value this body and want to dominate it. Since we have too many differences that can't be reconciled, we can create a scene where our lives are threatened and can be lost at any moment. This way, everyone can give up their prejudices and form a strategic alliance to complete an initial level of accommodation."

“Have you gone mad?” The person who refuted Shang Jianyao wasn’t the Shang Jianyao that sat cross-legged in front of the golden elevator and blocked the exit but one of the nine Shang Jianyaos who had split off.

He clearly didn’t agree with this radical and risky strategy.

“The person opposite us is an Awakened at the Mind Corridor level. He might even be one who has explored its depths. Once he descends, we will have a slim chance of survival. No, probably none at all. This isn’t a risk—this is suicide!”

Another Shang Jianyao nodded in agreement. “Besides, not everyone will choose to cooperate in dangerous situations. Some people are petty and will seize all opportunities to eliminate dissidents. They often have wishful thinking, believing that the problems that ensue can be handled, but the result is often the opposite.”

As he spoke, he looked at the hostile Shang Jianyao.

The nine Shang Jianyaos argued incessantly and couldn’t come to an agreement. They could only temporarily give up on that radical method.

Therefore, they returned to staring at the hostile Shang Jianyao.

...

After Shang Jianyao returned from the Sea of Origins, he waited for a while before Pangu Biology sent a telegram to the Old Task Force. There wasn’t much content in the telegram, only two sentences.

The first sentence was: “Consider the Holm Fertility Center in Wasteland Ruin 13 for ‘Holm.’”

Jiang Baimian sighed with emotion and said with a strange tone, “It seems like the company has information on the Five Great Holy Lands. At the very least, they know about the Holm Fertility Center.”

Although this wasn't sufficient information to deduce that Pangu Biology was aware of the abnormalities in the steelworks factory ruins, it still complicated the Old Task Force members' emotions.

"Maybe the company doesn't have information on the Five Great Holy Lands." Bai Chen deliberated and voiced her thoughts. "There might be other abnormalities at the Holm Fertility Center, so they might be known in other areas."

Jiang Baimian nodded slightly and said, "We can't rule out that possibility. Before the Old World was destroyed, the Holm Fertility Center might've been conducting genetic screening, enhancement, and treatment research. They might have contributed to the rapid advancement of the company's relevant technology."

Therefore, Pangu Biology knew of this place.

Jiang Baimian then read the second sentence of the telegram: "If there's a chance, you can consider making a reconnaissance trip to the Holm Fertility Center. Pay attention to the working electrical appliances along the way."

"Ah..." Long Yuehong was a little shocked.

That wasn't what the company had previously said. Despite knowing about the secret laboratory in Wasteland Ruin 13, Pangu Biology didn't order the Old Task Force to explore it.

"As expected, the company is still more interested in fertility medicine." Shang Jianyao's thoughts went astray.

Jiang Baimian smiled. "Perhaps the company believes that the level of danger in the two places is completely different. In the face of that secret laboratory, ten Old Task Force units will definitely be wiped out with nothing to speak of. As for the Holm Fertility Center, we can still complete our investigations if we are careful."

At the very least, it was a routine matter for the Crystal Consciousness Church's monks to hold a ritual at the Holm Fertility Center. This meant that there wouldn't be much danger as long as something wasn't triggered.

Furthermore, the paths taken by the Crystal Consciousness Church's monks were definitely relatively safe. There weren't many working electrical appliances.

"Maybe." Long Yuehong undoubtedly agreed with his team leader's guess. He probed, "Shall we go?"

"It depends." Jiang Baimian pointed at the door. "We're still locked up, so is it up to us to decide where we go?"

"Yes, that's true. After all, the Holm Fertility Center is there. It won't run away on its own, so it doesn't matter when we go." Long Yuehong really wanted to say that they could go after Shang Jianyao entered the Mind Corridor.

Upon hearing Long Yuehong's words, Shang Jianyao revealed a horrified expression. "Oh no! The clues will be running away."

Isn't that a good thing? Clues often spell danger! Long Yuehong muttered inwardly.

At this moment, a broadcast sounded across many streets simultaneously. "Emergency notice, emergency notice: Citizens, please come to Hope Square at 9 a.m. tomorrow for an important gathering."

Hope Square was located in the Red Wolf Zone. When First City was established, it was modified from an Old World square and was named Hope.

There were stone statues of the founders—Oray, Drace, and Cass—erected there. They were symbols of First City's citizenship system, often equal to the nearby Senate.

This broadcast was repeated six times.

Long Yuehong and the others looked at each other.

"Something must have happened." Being partially knowledgeable of First City, Bai Chen came to the window and said with a slightly solemn expression, "Under normal circumstances, they won't convene the citizens so urgently to hold a gathering."

Jiang Baimian thoughtfully said, “The balance in First City has been tipped, and a certain tilt has appeared?”

This was both something the Old Task Force anticipated and a situation they were afraid of. Although they would indeed have the opportunity to take advantage of the chaos if First City were to experience chaos, even a Mind Corridor-level Awakened might not be able to guarantee that they would be fine in such an environment.

Under the chaos of war, everyone was in danger.

Shang Jianyao and Long Yuehong walked to Bai Chen’s side and cast their gazes at the street outside.

Under the night sky, the lights were distributed unevenly—there were no obvious signs of chaos.

After nearly 15 minutes, everything was still normal.

Jiang Baimian stood behind her team members and calmly analyzed, “The gathering will be held tomorrow morning. That means it’s not that urgent.”

At this moment, Bai Chen suddenly said, “Master Zennaga.”

“Huh?” Jiang Baimian leaned over. Then, she saw Zennaga—a monk so thin that he was almost out of shape—leaning over a dark motorcycle and riding it southwest.

Jiang Baimian nodded slightly. “Master Zennaga seems to be heading to some important place in the Golden Apple Zone or Red Wolf Zone at this time. This means that there are indeed turbulent undercurrents...”

Shang Jianyao immediately asked, “Our chance to escape is here?”

He looked excited.

Since Zennaga had temporarily left Sikhara Temple, the Old Task Force—which he had captured—could apparently consider an escape!

Jiang Baimian looked at the slightly expectant Bai Chen and Long Yuehong—who were filled with anticipation and fear—and nodded. “This might not be a good opportunity. The situation in First City is currently turbulent, and the Crystal Consciousness Church has clearly received the notice. They will definitely increase their vigilance and guard. This is their headquarters, and we don’t even know how many Mind Corridor-level Awakened are here. Under such circumstances, the chances of us escaping are very low. We might even anger one of them.”

In fact, Jiang Baimian didn’t have much confidence in escaping after learning that Sikhara Temple was the Crystal Consciousness Church’s headquarters. She believed that staying here for ten days was the best and safest choice.

Over the past few days, she had been indulging and even cooperating with Shang Jianyao and the others to search for an opportunity to escape. On the one hand, it was to leave an out to prevent any accidents. On the other hand, it was to train the team members’ senses and judgment in such an environment.

As for why she didn’t tell Zennaga and the other Enlightened about their strange encounters over the past few days, it was because the Old Task Force knew too much. It was easy for there to be no secrets when facing Mind Reading. When the time came, Zennaga might only request that they stay for a longer period, but the others might silence them.

Bai Chen thought carefully and agreed with her team leader. “Yes, the real opportunity should be tomorrow or the day after tomorrow.”

When the time came, First City might devolve into chaos. Zennaga would also lose the justification for imprisoning the Old Task Force.

Shang Jianyao retracted his gaze regretfully, walked to the bed, and sat down.

After about 15 minutes, they heard footsteps approaching.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

The knocking echoed in the room.

It was the young monk, Danro—who had previously been in charge of delivering and retrieving the food and cutlery.

Danro pressed his palms together and chanted a Buddhist proclamation. “Patrons, please follow me to the square at the back to wait. This is a joint decision made by the Enlightened. Don’t worry; most of the monks in the temple will also be waiting in the square.”

“What happened?” Long Yuehong blurted out. The unrest is about to begin?

Danro shook his head. “I’m not too sure either, but this happens a few times a year.”

At this point, he lowered his voice. “Rumor has it that the devil sealed on the seventh floor has its powers restored to its peak periodically, and it will affect all the monks in the building. The Enlightened have to cooperate with the Buddha’s Nirmanakaya to suppress it, so they can’t divert their attention to take care of us. They can only make all of us hide in the square temporarily.”

“I see...” Jiang Baimian nodded.

This statement made her afraid of insisting on staying in Sikhara Temple.

She glanced at Shang Jianyao, Bai Chen, and Long Yuehong respectively, indicating that they should pay attention to their surroundings and not be led to the seventh floor.

Then, Long Yuehong loosened the ropes around Garibaldi and helped him up. After that, they followed the young monk—Danro—all the way down to the square where the cremation furnace stood.

The night was dark—the street lamps in the square couldn’t illuminate everything.

Jiang Baimian and the others walked to the center of the square, turned around, and looked at Sikhara Temple.

In this seven-story building, many of the rooms were still lit with yellow lights.

Suddenly, the lights shook.

Chapter 495: Forced

Under the night sky, the entire Sikhara Temple seemed to tremble.

If Long Yuehong didn't know what was happening and if not for the lack of trembling in the square, he would be convinced that an earthquake had happened. He turned his head to look at the young monk—Danro—and asked, “Is it like this every time?”

Under the dim street lamps, Long Yuehong saw Danro standing in his spot dazedly as he stared at the seven-story Sikhara Temple as if he hadn't heard him.

“Hey!” he called again.

“Why did you call me?” Shang Jianyao cast his gaze over.

Danro slowly turned around and faced Long Yuehong.

Shadows were fleeting across his face. His eyes were dull, and his expression was wooden. He looked identical to the gray-robed monks that had come down from the seventh floor.

Long Yuehong's heart sank. He released his grip on Garibaldi and subconsciously took two steps back before drawing his pistol.

During this process, his gaze followed the experience he had accumulated over the months and swept across the surrounding area. He saw the Crystal Consciousness Church monks—who had temporarily sought refuge in the square—turning their faces to him like sunflowers.

They were either bathed in the street lamps' light or cloaked by the darkness of the night. Their faces were expressionless, looking more like statues than the living. They didn't appear alive.

These monks were silent as they stared at Long Yuehong, Jiang Baimian, and the others, and the latter couldn't help but have goosebumps.

Team Leader, this doesn't seem right... Just as Long Yuehong was about to say that, Jiang Baimian ordered in a deep voice, "Move to the side exit. Don't run, and don't turn around in a hurry. Take one step at a time."

She was afraid that an excessive reaction would spark off a chain reaction.

Bai Chen and Long Yuehong understood Jiang Baimian's rationale. They held their weapons and half-turned their bodies before taking small steps toward the side exit of the enclosed square.

Outside was the parking lot of Sikhara Temple—the Old Task Force's jeep was there.

The Crystal Consciousness Church monks stared at the Old Task Force dazedly. They didn't say a word or stop them.

Upon seeing this, Shang Jianyao—who was in charge of the rear—began to retreat. He didn't turn his body like Long Yuehong and Bai Chen. Instead, he first raised his left hand and pressed down on his head before extending his right palm and placing it below his abdomen.

After completing the preliminary actions, he moonwalked to the square's side exit. It was very ritualistic.

This made Jiang Baimian—who was also in charge of bringing up the rear—stiffen. Her criticisms were stuck in her throat.

The monks stared blankly at Shang Jianyao's dance, maintaining a blank and silent state.

After catching up to Bai Chen and Long Yuehong—who was helping Garibaldi—Shang Jianyao sighed softly. "Sigh..."

"What's wrong?" Long Yuehong turned nervous.

"They didn't clap." Shang Jianyao was very disappointed.

"..." The corners of Long Yuehong's mouth twitched. "Did you cast Corny Person on yourself again?"

Shang Jianyao shook his head. "This is regarding their manners."

In the beginning, Shang Jianyao still needed the help of a mirror to use Inference Clowning on himself. In order to allow himself to be affected by Corny Person, the series of actions needed was even more complicated. He first needed to use Inference Clowning to make himself think that he was the same as a certain person before casting Corny Person onto the other party.

When Shang Jianyao could split into nine and each of them became more independent—to the point of being able to see himself—these series of actions could be simplified.

The specific steps were: In the mind world, the nine Shang Jianyaos first voted for the lucky one. They then used Inference Clowning or Corny Person on him and finally pushed him out so that he could control the body.

It had to be said that apart from everyone being more spirited and how he would occasionally offend people and commit mistakes uncontrollably, such a price was still useful. It was comparable to Qiao Chu's passive charm.

Upon seeing the Crystal Consciousness Church monks standing in their spots like statues with only their blank gazes following them, Jiang Baimian looked at the side exit and issued a second order. "To the parking lot."

Most of their equipment was in the car and on them. Only the radio transceiver remained in the room on the temple's sixth floor, but it was a very easily acquired item. The important things were the corresponding frequencies and passwords.

The four Old Task Force members took tactical formation and exited through the enclosed square's side exit one after another, arriving at the open-air parking lot.

Having rehearsed this hundreds of times in their hearts, they easily found their sapphire-blue jeep and covered each other as they approached.

Suddenly, Long Yuehong was pushed by 'Garibaldi' Giuseppe, who he was helping. With his rich experience, he fell to the ground and rolled. He then raised his pistol based on his intuition and aimed at the other party.

When he saw Giuseppe's condition, he felt as if he had sunk into an ice lake—he felt cold.

Garibaldi's delicate face was slightly distorted, and his eyes were dull. Under the dim moonlight, his entire face seemed to be covered by a shadow.

Unlike the silent monks, Giuseppe opened his mouth and said, "Holm..."

Just as he spat out this word, Shang Jianyao took a step forward, raised his right fist, and smashed down.

Bam!

Giuseppe's eyes rolled as he fainted.

Shang Jianyao caught his collapsing body.

"Get in the car first!" Jiang Baimian didn't waste her breath and issued the third order.

Shang Jianyao carried Giuseppe as he ran. He opened the car door and threw the other party in.

Bai Chen had already used the electronic key to unlock the doors.

The other Old Task Force members got into the car one after another and got into their positions.

Long Yuehong's mind went adrift for a moment as he watched Bai Chen start the car and drive to one of the exits in Sikhara Temple's open-air parking lot. Are we about to escape the Crystal Consciousness Church's headquarters?

He had previously thought that Sikhara Temple would definitely have tight security internally with relatively relaxed security on the outside—that would give them no chance of escape. But now, they were just one step away!

Although this was related to the anomaly on the seventh floor, Long Yuehong still felt like it was a dream.

It felt surreal.

Bai Chen—who was driving—looked at the parking lot entrance and frowned. “Isn’t this too much of a coincidence?”

The situation in First City had just changed, and Zennaga was forced to leave the temple to coordinate matters. It was too much of a coincidence that something abnormal happened to the devil suppressed on the seventh floor.

Admittedly, this was an occurrence that happened a few times a year, making it nothing surprising. But for it to happen at this moment made it seem strange.

“Was it not a deliberate attempt by that devil?” Shang Jianyao had an expression that indicated it was a question that wasn’t worth asking.

Clearly, he believed that the devil had deliberately created an abnormality to allow the Old Task Force to leave Sikhara Temple.

Jiang Baimian—who was in the passenger seat—nodded slightly. “Giuseppe said the word ‘Holm’ just now, which means that the entire matter had the devil involved. But the question is: Why make us leave now when we can leave in a few days? Why did he create the abnormality? Even if we ultimately decide to go to the Holm Fertility Center, we won’t be going in such a rush. We have to observe First City’s situation no matter what, and that will take us about half a month.”

“If we don’t leave now, we might not be able to leave...” Shang Jianyao replied in a sinister tone.

This made Long Yuehong shudder. He only hoped that Bai Chen could successfully drive the jeep past the parking lot exit.

Jiang Baimian thought for a moment and instructed Shang Jianyao, “Hey, wake Giuseppe up and ask him how he felt.”

Shang Jianyao immediately tried many methods that he usually didn’t have the chance to use, including but not limited to pinching the philtrum, scratching the armpit, stabbing with sharp objects, and shaking him forcefully.

Soon, the jeep drove out of the parking lot and onto the street outside.

Giuseppe woke up, and he looked at Shang Jianyao in shock, anger, and fear. “Why did you hit me?”

Shang Jianyao’s eyebrows twitched. “Because you were possessed...”

Giuseppe was shocked. “I didn’t feel anything. I saw you rush over and punch me...”

Jiang Baimian turned around and asked, “Don’t you remember what you said?”

Giuseppe shook his head violently. “I didn’t say anything.”

He actually didn’t believe Shang Jianyao when the latter said that he was possessed by a ghost, but Jiang Baimian—who seemed very reliable—shared a similar attitude. He had no choice but to believe it.

Jiang Baimian nodded slightly. “From the looks of it, you don’t have any memories when affected. Yes, the premise is that this influence only lasts for a very short period of time.”

She then consoled him. “Don’t worry. It should be fine now.”

“That’s right, that’s right.” Long Yuehong heaved a sigh of relief when he saw that Giuseppe had returned to normal.

At this moment, they heard a loud explosion.

Boom!

A terrifying explosion occurred somewhere in First City. The billowing dust rose up like a gigantic mushroom cloud.

Amidst the rumbling, planes flew past the city at low altitudes and dropped bombs.

These bombs surrounded the sapphire-blue jeep the Old Task Force was in—their target seemed to be the Old Task Force!

Right on the heels of that, a flurry of precision-guided missiles—fired from an unknown location—descended, attempting to swallow Jiang Baimian and company.

This threw Long Yuehong into despair. He didn't believe that there was any chance of dodging.

Chapter 496: Doesn't Make Sense

This is the state of a true war? Humans are so puny... They are like slaves to those weapons, enhancing their glory with their lives... Long Yuehong saw bombs drop one after another as missiles flew over and blanketed the area the Old Task Force was in.

He knew that the jeep's bulletproof armor modifications couldn't withstand such a bombardment. He could only hope that they would be lucky enough to survive.

Long Yuehong seemed to see his life begin a countdown. For a moment, he felt despair and yearning.

His despair was because he couldn't think of a way to avoid the imminent death, something that he could only watch helplessly. Compared to getting out of the car and rolling for cover, there was still a decent layer of protection as long as the jeep wasn't directly hit. His yearning was because he couldn't bear to die like this. He wanted to return to Pangu Biology and show off his gains on the surface to his parents and siblings. He wanted to share his experiences and live a relatively fulfilling life.

At this moment, he heard Shang Jianyao shout from the backseat, "This doesn't make sense!"

What doesn't make sense... Amidst Long Yuehong's perplexity, he saw Shang Jianyao pounce over and swing his fist.

The fist went straight for the back of his ear!

Hey! You want to hit me because you think it doesn't make sense? Just as this thought flashed through Long Yuehong's mind, the unprepared him was punched by Shang Jianyao.

With a bang, he blacked out.

An instant before that, Long Yuehong saw his team leader straighten her body from the corner of his eye. She then swung her right fist at the driving Bai Chen and aimed her left palm at ‘Garibaldi’ Giuseppe.

Jiang Baimian was only slightly slower than Shang Jianyao.

The unconscious darkness gradually disappeared as Long Yuehong recovered some of his thoughts. Why did Shang Jianyao say that it doesn’t make sense? Why hit me when it doesn’t make sense? That’s good. At least being blown up in a coma isn’t that painful...

As his thoughts wandered, Long Yuehong suddenly felt the darkness ebb.

The shaking became more and more intense as a gap opened up in the darkness, allowing blinding light to spew in.

Long Yuehong abruptly opened his eyes and saw Shang Jianyao’s body lunge forward above ‘Garibaldi’ Giuseppe.

Shang Jianyao grabbed his friend’s shoulder with one hand and shook it while holding the flashlight with the other to illuminate his face.

“...” Long Yuehong was confused at first before raising his hand to cover his eyes. “Stop, stop, stop!”

“He’s awake.” Jiang Baimian—who was in the passenger seat—stopped Shang Jianyao.

Shang Jianyao regretfully switched off the flashlight, released his grip, and sat back down.

Long Yuehong’s heart palpitated as he suddenly sat up and looked around. He then realized that the jeep was intact and that none of the team members were injured. Although the surrounding streets were in a poor state, there were no signs of them being bombed.

More importantly, the jeep seemed to have just left the parking lot of Sikhara Temple—this wasn't the case in his memories.

We were almost turning into another street!

“This...” Long Yuehong blurted out, “A dream? We were dragged into the Real Dreamscape just now?”

“Furthermore, it was a connected dream,” Jiang Baimian—who was in the passenger seat—replied in a deep voice.

“It went from a single-player game to a multiplayer online game,” Shang Jianyao echoed.

“We almost got into an accident.” Bai Chen had lingering fears about how she began dreaming without even knowing.

On the one hand, the bombardment in the dream made her feel the approach of death. On the other hand, the short slumber in reality almost made her drive the jeep into a house by the road and through the wall.

Long Yuehong came to a realization and looked at Shang Jianyao. “You said that it doesn't make sense because you found it unreal and suspected that it's a dream?”

“That's right.” Shang Jianyao was rarely serious. “We all feel that nobody in First City would spend so much on us. It's too wasteful. How many missiles can they buy with all our bounties combined?”

That's true. That kind of treatment is something only the company's brigade will 'enjoy'... Long Yuehong recalled his dream and felt that it was indeed so.

Shang Jianyao continued, “Once I suspected that it was a dream, I decided to experiment with you. A coma in the Real Dreamscape is equivalent to a coma in reality. After a coma, one will lose their ability to sense their surroundings, and they will no longer be affected by the fatal blow in the Real Dreamscape.”[s

Long Yuehong hesitated for a few seconds before responding. “Thanks a lot!”

He wasn't too angry because if Shang Jianyao hadn't treated him as an experimental subject, he would be left in the line of danger.

At this moment, Bai Chen looked at the rearview mirror. "Team Leader, were we targeted by a Mind Corridor-level Awakened from the Dawn domain?"

This was much stronger than the Nightmare Horse's Real Dreamscape. Furthermore, that person seemed to have the ability to force sleep!

The Old Task Force's greatest worry happened.

Forced Sleep coupled with Real Dreamscape was indefensible!

Jiang Baimian nodded with a solemn expression. "Yes. From now on, we might enter a dream again at any moment. We won't be able to sense it ourselves, and our understanding of the things around us will deceive us."

...

In the North Shore Wastelands, Han Wanghuo, Zeng Duo, and Geneva circled around and left the heavily polluted area. They then entered a small town ruin and found a place to hide from the elements.

After lighting a bonfire, Zeng Duo sat by the side and watched the kettle perched above it. As the flames swayed, she suddenly smiled and said, "When I was young, I yearned to go out hunting with adults and search for all kinds of supplies in the ruins. But now, I only hope that there will be a piece of unpolluted farmland that I can survive in without the need to take any risks."

Han Wanghuo—who was preparing dinner—glanced at her. "I'm surprised. You still consider yourself."

Zeng Duo smiled awkwardly. "That's very normal. Anyone would want to lead a better life if they had a choice, isn't that so? I dreamed last night that my illness could still be treated."

Han Wanghuo's expression suddenly froze. A few seconds later, he said in a deep voice, "I dreamed about it too."

"Huh?" Zeng Duo looked confused.

Genava's shimmering red eyes looked over. "You were dragged into the Real Dreamscape?"

"What was your dream like?" Han Wanghuo quickly asked Zeng Duo.

Zeng Duo couldn't remember the details of the dream clearly, but she could still describe the overall situation.

After hearing that, Han Wanghuo said solemnly, "I had the same dream as you."

"This..." Zeng Duo was a little frightened and confused. She didn't understand what such a dream represented.

"If you die in a Real Dreamscape, you will also die in reality," Genava explained. He then said to Han Wanghuo, "Xiaochong's existence and Big White's whereabouts are likely known by the dreamscape's owner."

"What should we do?" Zeng Duo blurted out.

Han Wanghuo replied calmly, "Send a telegram to October Xue and Zhang Qubing later to remind them to be careful."

Zeng Duo consoled herself. "Yes, I hope we can make it in time. The North Shore Wastelands' environment is complicated, so it's impossible to reach First City in a day unless we take a plane."

Even planes had to avoid the extreme weather here. However, the other party could also send a telegram to inform their companions in First City.

...

“Then, what should we do?” Long Yuehong subconsciously asked before taking the initiative to make a suggestion. “We can turn around and return to Sikhara Temple now. There’s Buddha’s Nirmanakaya there, and there are many Enlightened. We can definitely make the enemy give up.”

Jiang Baimian stared at the street under the night sky and slowly shook her head. “First, even if we return to Sikhara Temple, all of that might just be a dream. Second, I suspect that tonight’s coincidence isn’t a coincidence. The goal isn’t to get us to the Holm Fertility Center.”

She further explained, “Someone on the seventh floor might’ve predicted that an enemy was waiting outside for us and deliberately created an abnormality to force us out of Sikhara Temple. They wished to use the enemy to finish us off and eliminate any latent dangers.”

Clearly, this was the party that didn’t want the Old Task Force to head to the Holm Fertility Center.

Long Yuehong thought about it carefully and realized that his team leader’s guess was indeed logical. It could explain all the problems.

Bai Chen slowed down the car and asked, “Who’s the enemy, and why are they targeting us? We didn’t offend the religion that believes in Dawn... Also, how did they know that we were in Sikhara Temple...”

These questions weren’t meaningless. Only by answering them could one find a way to resist powerful enemies.

Jiang Baimian seemed to have long considered this problem. She deliberated and said, “There are three possibilities: First, the powerhouses of First City have specially come to arrest us. The Awakened in the Dawn domain might not necessarily believe in Dawn. But if it’s an official faction, we will definitely encounter more than this. Furthermore, there’s a higher chance that it’s the Virtual World’s owner.

“Second, the friend of the one on the seventh floor specially came to help them when they couldn’t do it themselves. However, there’s also a problem. How did that person inform their friend? They seem to be restricted from doing such a thing.”

At this point, Jiang Baimian’s voice sank. “Third, it’s the secret faction that has been secretly wiping out the clues of the Old World’s destruction. They specially came to eliminate us after knowing that we obtained the passcode for Wasteland Ruin 13’s secret laboratory. This also raises a

question: How did they know that we were in Sikhara Temple? Or did they use some other method or channel?”

Just as Jiang Baimian said that, ‘Garibaldi’ Giuseppe woke up. He said in surprise and anger, “You first knocked me out, and now you electrocute me. What do you want? Eh...”

He realized that there were no signs of an electric shock on his body.

...

While waiting for the scheduled moment to send the telegram, Han Wanghuo suddenly thought of a problem. “Why didn’t the person who dragged me and Zeng Duo into the Real Dreamscape let us die in the dream after obtaining the information?”

That way, they wouldn’t notice anything amiss and couldn’t send a telegram to remind October Xue and the others. Besides, he didn’t have to face Genova head-on if they died in a dream. He didn’t have to worry about his abilities being ineffective against a robot.

After Genova raised many possibilities, he emitted a slightly synthetic male voice. “Perhaps something happened in the darkness back then and scared him away. It might also be because some conditions were fulfilled.”

Chapter 497: Dreams Everywhere

“Enemy attack.” Jiang Baimian didn’t have the time to explain the situation in detail to ‘Garibaldi’ Giuseppe, so she only gave a simple explanation.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao had already cast his gaze at the side window. Compared to the night outside and the lights inside, it was like a mirror that reflected Shang Jianyao’s face.

He faced himself and said in a deep voice, “Look, this world might very well be a dream. There’s no need to be so serious. We can’t tell when we’re awake and when we’re dreaming. So...”

After a brief pause, Shang Jianyao gave his conclusion. He curled the corners of his mouth and smiled. “So, we’ve actually been dreaming the entire time.”

Long Yuehong was confused and couldn’t help but ask, “Can’t you exert your influence on yourself without a mirror?”

At most, he had to list out Inference Clowning's conditions.

"If I didn't do this, how could I give you a demonstration?" Shang Jianyao replied righteously.

In the passenger seat, Jiang Baimian nodded thoughtfully. "Do you want to categorize all encounters as a dream, making no distinction between reality and dream? This way, as long as you remember this, you won't die in real life from any fatal damage you suffer from in the dream..."

With the subconscious understanding that it was a dream, the dream would at most give Shang Jianyao a start no matter how realistic it was. It wouldn't trigger the corresponding physiological changes and bring about sudden death.

"How can there be reality? Everything is a dream!" Shang Jianyao emphasized firmly. He then spread his arms, raised his body slightly, and looked into the air. "Everything is but a dream. Why so serious?"

His Inference Clowning had used the Clam Dragon Church's teachings. This was the foundation that the 'inference' needed to be successfully established with good effects.

"You want us to accept this philosophy as well?" Jiang Baimian deliberated over her words to match Shang Jianyao's intention to prevent him from escaping his current state. After all, Inference Clowning was very easy to see through when faced with contradictory facts or certain words.

Using 'philosophy' at this moment was clearly more in line with Shang Jianyao's intention than 'inference.'

Shang Jianyao laughed. "Yes. No matter what happens in the dream, it will always be a dream and won't have any actual effects. If we understand and grasp this fact, there won't be any problems."

He indirectly answered Jiang Baimian's question with an affirmative attitude.

Upon hearing this, Long Yuehong had to admit that Shang Jianyao's method made sense. However, he felt that something was amiss or oversimplified.

He thought for a moment and said, “If we don’t distinguish between reality and dream and treat everything as a dream, we can indeed avoid the effects of Real Dreamscape. But this way, what if we are really in reality? It doesn’t seem safe to face attacks in reality with the attitude of facing a dream...”

They would be careless, numb, and show belittlement.

A real-life attack could directly result in death.

Shang Jianyao smiled. “The entire Ashlands is a dream. Unless you enter the New World, we will always be in a dream. There will be no real reality.”

You are forcing the issue... Long Yuehong knew that Shang Jianyao’s theory was wrong, but he couldn’t pinpoint the problem.

Shang Jianyao continued, “Besides, we can’t surrender and be at their mercy even in a dream. When you play games, will you freely accept the deaths of the character you control, lose experience, and lose equipment because it’s only a game?”

“No.” Long Yuehong still had a competitive streak in this regard.

Shang Jianyao smiled again. “So...”

This ‘so’ made Long Yuehong tremble. He kept wondering if he had unknowingly fallen for Inference Clowning.

“Therefore, we have to do our best to avoid anything that can harm us, be it in reality or in a dream. If we really can’t avoid it, we still have a chance of survival in a dream. In reality, the game will really end,” Shang Jianyao explained further. “It’s better to treat it as a dream.”

That’s true. What can’t be avoided in a dream most likely can’t be avoided in reality... Long Yuehong agreed with Shang Jianyao’s theory.

“Make the best use of your time.” Jiang Baimian urged Shang Jianyao. “Take the opportunity while everyone can still ‘communicate.’ Yes, be it reality or a connected dream, they are better than an individual dream where we have no communication among each other.”

Shang Jianyao immediately used Inference Clowning to spread the ‘teachings.’ At the same time, he made Jiang Baimian, Long Yuehong, Bai Chen, and Giuseppe believe that the entire Ashlands was a dream and that there was no need to be so serious when dealing with attacks or harm.

His Inference Clowning could now affect nine at once, but the premise was that the corresponding conditions could be shared.

Of course, he couldn’t guarantee the final outcome. After all, everyone’s experiences and cognition were different. The kind of conclusion obtained under the same conditions was distorted depending on an individual’s uniqueness. Shang Jianyao could only say that he did his best to incept such thoughts in them.

Fortunately, the four people in the car ‘inferred’ similar outcomes when it came to dreams.

Jiang Baimian turned her head and instructed Bai Chen, “Drive a little slower—just a little slower.”

Bai Chen casually said, “It’s a dream anyway. Besides, this speed is considered slow even in the city. With me at the wheel, there won’t be an accident.”

“You can’t think that way,” Jiang Baimian said seriously. “Maybe it’s a dream now. You might implicate the dreamer outside if you don’t slow down. Although it’s fine to have an accident in a dream, it’s equivalent to failure.”

Bai Chen thought for a moment and didn’t understand what her team leader meant, but it wasn’t a big deal to slow down the car a little. She couldn’t be bothered to argue, so she made the jeep crawl like a giant snail.

Vroom!

A motorcycle overtook it.

Ding ring ring!

A bicycle overtook it.

Heh heh.

A few pedestrians smiled and overtook it.

Beep! Beep!

The cars behind either rushed the jeep that was seemingly out of power or circled around it.

Bai Chen remained unmoved. She drove slowly and treated this as a dream.

Shang Jianyao stroked his chin, and his expression had already turned serious. “There’s another problem now.”

“What problem?” Long Yuehong blurted out.

Shang Jianyao said seriously, “What if the enemy launches a physical attack in reality while we’re all in a dream?”

“This...” Long Yuehong immediately understood the seriousness of the problem. At this moment, he suddenly felt the air around him turn sticky—it quickly condensed into an ‘iron plate.’

His breathing became irregular, and the oxygen entering his lungs decreased. This reminded Long Yuehong of his encounter on Sikhara Temple’s seventh floor.

He subconsciously cast his gaze at Shang Jianyao, Jiang Baimian, and his companions. Long Yuehong was so shocked that his heart and lungs almost stopped.

Apart from Bai Chen—who he couldn’t see because she was right in front of him—the others’ expressions became wooden, and their eyes were extremely dull.

They sat there, allowing their faces to gradually turn red and purple bit by bit. They allowed their breathing to become more and more rapid, but it was useless.

Long Yuehong was just about to push Shang Jianyao out of the car when he felt a chill run down his spine as if he had been invaded by coldness. His movements quickly became stiff, and his thoughts became slower and slower.

He felt the difficulty of breathing and the discomfort of having his neck gripped, but he was powerless to do anything about this. He could only watch helplessly as he endured it.

Before long, he saw Jiang Baimian, Shang Jianyao, and Giuseppe's faces turn purple from extreme pain. Their tongues were also sticking out.

Long Yuehong's thoughts became blurry, and his vision turned black. Am I going to die? Is this the experience of death? Fortunately, it's only a dream. Otherwise, I would really die... Long Yuehong's thoughts gradually scattered.

After an unknown period of time, he suddenly woke up and realized that he was still sitting on the left of the jeep's backseat. Jiang Baimian, Shang Jianyao, and the others were still alive, and nothing had changed.

In addition, Bai Chen kept the car moving slowly like before.

In the passenger seat, Jiang Baimian sighed with emotion. "As expected—one won't really die when they wake up after knowing that it's a dream. The human body has a self-protection mechanism under extreme conditions."

She immediately said to Shang Jianyao, "Inference Clowning again."

After having the concept of 'awakening,' the previous 'inference' was eliminated.

"Alright!" Shang Jianyao was very proactive and enthusiastic about this.

...

In the real world, the sapphire-blue jeep drove forward like a snail, attracting many surprised gazes, honking, and curses.

In the car, Jiang Baimian, Shang Jianyao, Bai Chen, Long Yuehong, and Giuseppe leaned back in their chairs with their eyes tightly shut. Their breathing was very smooth and long as if they had fallen asleep.

At this moment, a brown SUV drove out from a diagonal street.

The window suddenly rolled down, and a rocket launcher containing anti-tank rounds extended out.

The rocket launcher's black muzzle was aimed at the Old Task Force's jeep.

Chapter 498: Self-inflicted Damage

In a town ruin in the North Shore Wastelands.

Genava stood by the bonfire and began to ask Han Wanghuo and Zeng Duo about their surroundings when they first woke up from their dreams to determine why the attacker had spared them.

As a smart bot, he had stored the various environmental information he had gathered over the past few days. He could do a comparative analysis.

Genava regularly compressed a large amount of seemingly useless data and archived or directly deleted it, leaving behind only the relatively important data. After all, storage space was limited.

As it had been less than 24 hours, the data was very complete.

“When I woke up, the first thing I saw was a very faint fog, but it wasn't raining. I then smelled a hint of blood...” Zeng Duo recalled and said, “Having some experience in this regard, I guessed that there was likely a battle between mutated creatures or Heartless in the distance. Furthermore, it might very well spread over.”

“Did those mutated creatures scare away the attackers?” Han Wanghuo guessed.

Although they had easily finished off the dangerous creatures that migrated over, they mostly relied on Genava's uniqueness as a smart bot. It was unknown if Han Wanghuo and Zeng Duo could successfully escape by themselves.

If the attacker wasn't at the Mind Corridor level or lacked robot guards and sufficient firepower, it was completely reasonable for them to be forced to evacuate after failing to deal with the mutated creatures.

Genava moved his metal neck up and down. "We can't rule out that possibility, but I discovered something from the Awakened database I established: Awakened who can influence dreams are most likely in the Dawn domain, and not all of their influence on dreams can achieve the effects of Real Dreamscape. It might not be able to cause death. Sorry, I made a hasty conclusion just now. You might not have been affected by Real Dreamscape.

"Apart from that, there's another point. Awakened in the Dawn domain might be allergic or afraid of a certain smell. There is a precedent for this."

"The smell of blood back then?" Zeng Duo instantly made the connection. She had a relatively deep impression of this.

...

After Shang Jianyao quickly completed a new round of Inference Clowning, Jiang Baimian's expression became a little strange.

"What's on your mind?" Shang Jianyao asked curiously.

Jiang Baimian quickly replied, "I'm wondering if there's a way to completely wake up and escape this dream. That way, I can see the New World."

"I don't think so. Shang Jianyao previously tried using normal methods to escape the Real Dreamscape, but he could only barely wake up by deepening his understanding and strengthening his affirmation that it was a dream. The current enemy is much stronger than the Nightmare Horse back then. They aren't on the same level." Long Yuehong recalled what had happened. He then added, "So what if you wake up from the Real Dreamscape? Aren't you still in the Ashlands' gigantic dream?"

Inference Clowning's effects were slightly different for everyone. Long Yuehong showed hints of abandoning himself to despair while Shang Jianyao felt that there was no need to be serious.

“You can’t say that.” Shang Jianyao smiled. “At least we can still enjoy our dreams. Why so serious?”

Jiang Baimian quietly listened and suddenly raised her left hand.

Electric arcs immediately emitted from her palm, and the silver-white light made Bai Chen—who was driving—subconsciously close her eyes.

The electric arcs intersected and quickly formed a ball of blazing lightning.

“Tea-Team Leader, what are you doing?” Long Yuehong stammered. He was rather afraid that Jiang Baimian would use him as an experimental subject.

Although it was virtually impossible for Jiang Baimian to do so, there was still Shang Jianyao beside her as a counter-example.

“Giving myself an electric shock.” The ponytail behind Jiang Baimian’s head swayed slightly as an indescribable smile appeared on her face. As she spoke, she slapped the ball of lightning at herself!

Team Leader... What is she trying to do? Long Yuehong was surprised and confused.

It wasn’t only him. Bai Chen and Giuseppe had similar expressions, not understanding Jiang Baimian’s intentions.

Who’d wanna hurt themselves for no reason? Besides, Shang Jianyao had long proven that it was impossible to wake up by harming themselves in a dream.

Shang Jianyao looked at Jiang Baimian’s left hand and muttered to himself, “You actually didn’t use me for the experiment...”

Clap!

The bolt of lightning landed on Jiang Baimian, turning into countless electric arcs that darted around.

Jiang Baimian's clothes and skin were clearly charred black. Her entire body became numb, and she became hard of breathing.

At this moment, only a few similar thoughts echoed in her mind: If I am in the Real Dreamscape now, the damage I suffered and the condition my body showed would be faithfully reflected in the dream outside or even the reality in the New World...

According to prior experience, only with such a change that can threaten one's life while knowing that it's a dream will a human's self-protection mechanism activate and filter out most of the effects, leaving only a relatively weak reaction that makes one's heart race, be short of breath, and break out into cold sweat...

This way, my current seriously electrocuted condition will be synchronized to the external dream and even in the New World. The auxiliary chip in my left arm has always been monitoring my physical condition...

Once the conditions are met, the auxiliary chip will drive the biological prosthetic limb and release an electric current used for defibrillation and pacing, just like how it dealt with the Murloc Oracle back then.

It's a stimulation in an external dream or the New World. It's enough to wake me up, just like how Shang Jianyao woke me up from my Real Dreamscape by shaking me...

If I cannot rely on the chip data in my dream since it's now an external dream or reality in the New World, the corresponding electric current can also save me from the self-harm and give me a chance to inject FECA... As these thoughts raced through her mind, Jiang Baimian felt an abnormal reaction in her heart.

She jolted awake and opened her eyes, only to discover that her body was still slightly numb.

At the same time, she saw a brown SUV drive over diagonally. A black rocket launcher stuck out of the window.

We're pretty lucky. If we were any slower, we could only hope that the jeep's bulletproof armor could help us block the most fatal damage... When facing a Mind Corridor-level Awakened, we sometimes have to rely on luck to a certain extent... Jiang Baimian spread her right elbow and slammed the window-opening button.

She took an Ice Moss pistol from her left hand.

As the window rolled down, Jiang Baimian fired based on her intuition as a sharpshooter.

Bang!

The man—who was holding the rocket launcher and aiming at the sapphire-blue jeep—shrank back and disappeared from the window.

Bright-red blots bloomed from his neck.

After the Real Dreamscape's owner failed to wipe out the Old Task Force twice with dreams, Jiang Baimian was worried that he would seize the chance in the external dream or the real world. Therefore, she took the risk to electrocute herself in an attempt to wake up.

When she really woke up and saw the rocket launcher, the Inference Clowning effect on Jiang Baimian was naturally removed. She no longer believed in any external dreams or reality based on the New World.

The present was reality—the reality that she had to stay alive in!

Psst!

The brown SUV braked and turned, producing an ear-piercing sound.

Jiang Baimian didn't fire at the other party again. Instead, she pressed a switch and made the seat fall backward.

Slap!

She took the opportunity to turn her body and slap Shang Jianyao awake with her right hand.

Shang Jianyao had just woken up when he saw the situation in front of him clearly. He then reached for his tactical backpack.

Jiang Baimian anxiously instructed, “Music!”

Shang Jianyao quickly took out the portable recording device and connected it to the small speaker. He then turned on the electronic products and raised the volume to the maximum.

He did it with such skill that the series of actions took less than ten seconds.

Bang!

The sleeping Bai Chen slammed the jeep into a utility pole by the roadside, startling the pedestrians around her.

But as the vehicle kept its speed very slow and the jeep was equipped with bulletproof armor, only the front of the vehicle had a slight depression. It didn't suffer any more damage.

This impact wasn't considered serious, but it still made Long Yuehong, Bai Chen, and Giuseppe feel like they were about to wake up.

At this moment, everyone—including Shang Jianyao and Jiang Baimian—fell asleep again.

No more influence was exerted in the dream. Instead, their corresponding thoughts fell asleep in a daze.

The Real Dreamscape's owner gave up on the idea of controlling the dream and began to use his Forced Sleep ability to obtain control. The brown SUV then changed directions as if it wanted to drive over again.

Suddenly, loud music sounded from the sapphire-blue jeep. “Dog goes “woof”

“Cat goes ‘meow’

“Bird goes ‘tweet’

“And mouse goes ‘squeek’...”

This joyous nursery rhyme blared out through the open passenger window. The background music had a child’s whistling. “Shh...”

“Shh...”

“Shh...”

Chapter 499: Using Negative Status Effects

Amidst the whistling, the horrified pedestrians due to the vehicle’s impact and the gunshots suddenly felt their bladders swell. They subconsciously shrank their bodies, looked around, and searched for a place to pee. They also secretly calculated how long it would take to reach home.

As First City residents, the occasional gunshots and car accidents weren’t enough to scare them into pissing themselves. It only compelled them to leave the scene as soon as possible.

The Red Wolf Zone was relatively fine. Even if shooting incidents didn’t happen every day in the Green Olive Zone, it would definitely happen every few days.

The brown SUV corrected its course and approached the Old Task Force’s sapphire-blue jeep. The surviving passenger in the backseat and the driver couldn’t help but clamp their legs together to resist the sudden urge to pee.

They were all experienced gunmen, and they were long past the point of suffering from incontinence in the face of enemies. Therefore, they didn’t understand why such things would happen now.

Having seen how powerful Awakened were, they could only categorize this as a special ability that they had yet to learn of.

The brief urgency couldn’t crush their relatively good physiques. It wasn’t enough to make them immediately give up on attacking, push open the car doors with guns in hand, and head to a nearby electric pole or tree to relieve themselves.

They held in their pee. One of them slowed down the car and stretched out his pistol from the driver's seat window, aiming at the jeep's open passenger window. The other picked up their dead companion's rocket launcher and leaned over the corpse, attempting to lock onto the Old Task Force's vehicle.

At this moment, Jiang Baimian, Shang Jianyao, and the others were sleeping soundly with their backs against the seats, having endless and meaningless dreams.

“Shh... Shh... Shh...” The whistling became clearer as the small speaker played the nursery rhyme.

The pedestrians around them quickened their pace and headed for their respective destinations. The two attackers clamped their legs together, stabilized their bodies, and aimed.

At this moment, Jiang Baimian suddenly opened her eyes. She raised her left hand and fired a few rounds at the enemy.

She had awakened! She had escaped the forced sleep imposed by the Mind Corridor-level Awakened!

At the same time, Shang Jianyao—who was in the back row—jumped up. His eyes turned dark and deep. He was awake too!

They woke up thanks to their swelling bladders.

Jiang Baimian didn't get Shang Jianyao to play the music to use Xiaochong's whistling to affect the nearby assailants and the hidden Mind Corridor-level Awakened. Instead, she wanted them to have the urgency to pee in reality.

When this state became more and more intense, the corresponding physiological stimuli could wake them up from their normal sleep.

Sometimes, the negative effects brought about by abilities might not be a bad thing depending on the situation.

The two enemies—who could've completed the attack while Jiang Baimian fired—froze. They realized that their fingers were no longer under their control, preventing them from pulling the triggers.

Hands Immobility!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Jiang Baimian's Ice Moss completed a series of shots, but the accuracy wasn't high as she had fired in the direction of the enemy she had hastily observed as soon as she woke up. All she did was cause sparks to fly from the brown SUV's surface, leaving bullet holes.

Unable to counterattack, the two assailants retreated one after another to avoid this wave of attacks.

Upon seeing this, Jiang Baimian lowered her pistol and raised the Death rocket launcher. She only used her left hand to complete the setup and aiming, prepared to pull the trigger.

At this moment, she and Shang Jianyao closed their eyes again—they fell asleep again!

The whistling continued in the nursery rhyme, and the two of them quickly woke up with Long Yuehong, Bai Chen, and Giuseppe.

Boom!

Jiang Baimian reflexively pulled the trigger.

A rocket flew out, passed through the brown SUV, and landed further away, creating a violent explosion. Fortunately, the pedestrians and other drivers on the road had left the area because they had to pee, having sought a place to relieve themselves.

The brown SUV took the opportunity while Jiang Baimian and the others were asleep and drove forward a distance.

Jiang Baimian knew that the number one danger was the hidden Mind Corridor-level Awakened. Thus, she immediately said to Bai Chen, "Accelerate, but don't go all out."

The Old Task Force would be in danger if Bai Chen was forced to sleep again if that happened. Even if she only took a slight nap due to her bladder, the speeding vehicle might very well lose control. When the time came, the jeep might not be able to protect the passengers inside even if it was equipped with thick steel plates.

Bai Chen didn't ask why. She tapped the accelerator, restoring the car to its normal cruising speed.

It was only then that she understood why her team leader had previously asked her to slow down the car. It was because she had used the auxiliary chip to monitor her physical condition, suspecting that she had been in reality and not in a dream. Hence, slowing down the car was useful.

Of course, she might also dream of the auxiliary chip's feedback, so Jiang Baimian couldn't be sure.

Long Yuehong returned to his senses when the jeep accelerated. He straightened his back, turned around, and took out a military exoskeleton from the trunk. He then handed it to Shang Jianyao first and quickly picked up the other one.

This series of skilled teamwork stunned Garibaldi. He secretly sighed with emotion at the team's strength.

While Long Yuehong and Shang Jianyao helped each other wear the military exoskeletons, Jiang Baimian didn't stop her attack.

She put down the Death rocket launcher and picked up the Tyrant grenade launcher. From time to time, she would fire at the brown SUV or attack the deserted roadside.

Boom! Boom!

Amidst the series of explosions, the brown SUV was forced to deviate from its route of pursuit—the distance between it and the jeep increased.

The First City citizens living around the scene reported to the Hand of Order in different ways.

This was Jiang Baimian's goal—involving First City's officials.

Their team was naturally afraid of being captured, but their assailants were probably afraid as well!

At the very least, judging from the current situation, the attacker wasn't a powerhouse from First City. There was a high chance that they came from the secret and dangerous organization responsible for eliminating clues related to the Old World's destruction.

Compared to them, the Old Task Force was nothing to the First City officials. After all, what needed to be leaked had definitely been leaked.

Jiang Baimian knew when to stop. She stopped her bombardment and said to Bai Chen, "Head to Xiaochong's."

This was the second step of the plan to save themselves. When facing a Mind Corridor-level Awakened who had an unknown price, it was very likely that they wouldn't be spared by relying solely on their strength and ability to create chaos. At this moment, only four people in First City could help them.

The first was Du Heng, but the Old Task Force had no idea where this antiquarian was.

The second was the compassionate Zennaga and the Crystal Consciousness Church he represented. However, the Old Task Force also didn't know where Zennaga had gone, and the Crystal Consciousness Church's headquarters—Sikhara Temple—was currently experiencing abnormalities. The other Enlightened's attitudes were unknown, so Jiang Baimian didn't dare to take the risk.

The third was General Phocas, who had promised to provide help. But in the current situation, the Old Task Force would most likely face an inspection when heading to the Golden Apple Zone. They might end up 'killed' or directly arrested by First City's other powerhouses before they met General Phocas.

The fourth was naturally Xiaochong, the King of the Heartless. He lived in the Red Wolf Zone. It couldn't be considered close to Sikhara Temple, but it wasn't too far either.

Bai Chen undoubtedly thought of this as well. She controlled the jeep and made it turn toward the Golden Apple Zone.

Xiaochong was on a street along the way.

As the car drove, Long Yuehong—who was wearing the military exoskeleton—weakly made a request. “Can you turn off the speaker?”

The urge to pee grew stronger as the whistling continued.

Garibaldi had already considered peeing in his pants. In this regard, he had long lost his dignity and sense of shame. When he was previously tied up and suffering cold turkey, he would occasionally suffer from incontinence when under the effects. Fortunately, Sikhara Temple provided laundry services.

Jiang Baimian nodded. “Turn it off. The current state is enough.”

Their urgency to pee was enough to wake them up from their sleep. If they continued doing so, the consequences would be ‘unimaginable.’

Shang Jianyao didn’t have a regretful expression this time. He switched off the small speaker and portable recording device swiftly.

The jeep sped down the street, completely shaking off the brown SUV. During this process, they didn’t sleep or dream again.

However, Long Yuehong and the others didn’t dare to relax or be careless at all. They had witnessed the horror of Mind Corridor-level Awakened previously.

The person secretly pulling the strings had currently shown two abilities—Forced Sleep and Real Dreamscape. The third was still a secret.

In addition, Jiang Baimian and the others couldn’t be sure that Mind Corridor-level Awakened only had three abilities.

While reeling in anxiety, time passed slowly. After an unknown period of time, the jeep finally drove into the street where Xiaochong lived.

Long Yuehong heaved a sigh of relief when he saw this.

Suddenly, a rocket flew out of nowhere and headed straight for the jeep!

Chapter 500: Method of Change

As the rocket flew out, Jiang Baimian anxiously shouted, “Turn!”

She saw flames flash in the distance.

Along the way, Jiang Baimian never gave up on monitoring her surroundings. Her focus was undoubtedly on the areas that facilitated sniping and bombardment.

She wasn't the only one. Shang Jianyao and Long Yuehong—who were wearing military exoskeletons—were also doing the same. They relied on the comprehensive warning system to be in charge of the observation of the two areas behind.

Similarly, Bai Chen—who was driving—paid attention to the situation ahead and forward-left.

Therefore, it definitely wasn't a coincidence that they discovered the rocket's arrival in advance—it was only a coincidence that Jiang Baimian discovered it. In short, even if Jiang Baimian didn't discover it, Shang Jianyao also would've noticed it. If Shang Jianyao didn't discover it, Long Yuehong or Bai Chen would've.

With a creak, Bai Chen suddenly swerved the steering wheel.

The sapphire-blue jeep turned left in a nearly out-of-control manner, leaving a clear tire mark on the ground.

Boom!

The rocket passed through the vehicle's original spot and exploded a little further away.

Amidst the surging flames, the violent shockwave—combined with the powerful momentum brought about by the jeep's sharp turn—overturned the car as it slammed into the roadside trees.

Bang!

The trees along the road toppled to the side, stirring up a large amount of soil. The jeep finally stopped, its right side facing up.

As the car was covered in thick steel plates, the shockwave didn't deal any obvious damage to the passengers inside.

However, Long Yuehong still felt a little scared. He had never felt the importance of wearing a safety belt more than this.

In order to wear the military exoskeleton, he and Shang Jianyao had taken off their seatbelts. However, they almost flew out of their seats when the vehicle made a sharp turn and rolled.

They would've collided with each other in the car or been thrown out the window with glass shards. Fortunately, they were wearing military exoskeletons. In that split second, they relied on mechanical strength to stabilize themselves.

Even so, Long Yuehong felt dizzy and short of breath. Of course, he at least managed to not relax his control over his bladder due to this accident, preventing the pee he had held in for a long time from gushing out.

Smack!

Shang Jianyao pushed open the door, and his knees drove the auxiliary joints as he jumped out of the jeep. He then raised his left arm, adjusted the grenade launcher, and used the feedback he had obtained from his prior observations to serve a grenade into the distance.

Amidst the explosion, he bent down, stretched out his right arm, and raised 'Garibaldi' Giuseppe up.

As Long Yuehong helped Giuseppe unbuckle his seatbelt, he climbed and jumped out of the overturned jeep.

On the other side, Jiang Baimian also opened the passenger door and used it as cover as she crawled out. She then dragged Bai Chen away from the driver's seat, which had suffered relatively serious damage.

“Ignore the car; get to Xiaochong!” Jiang Baimian ordered. She didn't expect the attackers to follow them and intercept them here.

No, it doesn't seem like they were following us. It's more like they set up an ambush in advance... Are there Awakened among them who are good at Prophecy, or do they know that we will run over here after learning of Xiaochong's existence? But even Master Zennaga doesn't know this... At a critical moment, Jiang Baimian could only let a few thoughts flash through her mind. She had no time to analyze them further.

Shang Jianyao stuffed Garibaldi under his armpit and clamped him tight. As he used the grenade launcher to suppress the enemy 30 meters away, he bent his legs and prepared to use the military exoskeleton to leap to the roadside and rush into the target apartment building. At the same time, he shouted, “Xiaochong! Xiaochong!”

Shang Jianyao—who was covered in the metal skeletal structure and had a tactical backpack slung over his shoulder—jumped up.

But as he was in midair, he suddenly felt the military exoskeleton become ‘heavy.’ It was as if an invisible hand had pressed down on his shoulder with the metal skeleton as a medium.

Bam!

Shang Jianyao's cool ‘flight’ turned into a chaotic mess like a flailing rooster. He was forced to descend and take a hard landing when he was only halfway up his estimated height.

He barely managed to balance himself, and he tried to stabilize his body by taking a few steps forward. He felt his ankle being pulled by the corresponding auxiliary joint.

Shang Jianyao simply gave up and carried ‘Garibaldi’ Giuseppe as he did a roll.

Like him, Long Yuehong—who was carrying Bai Chen toward Xiaochong's apartment—suffered an invisible tug. He felt the auxiliary joint on his right foot become a prop for an invisible enemy. He also felt like his left foot had betrayed him.

Long Yuehong fell flat on the ground as he staggered.

Clang!

The metal skeletal structure over him collided with the ground.

Jiang Baimian—who had used all her strength to engage in a short distance sprint—was the same. As she ran, her feet seemed to be tied to an invisible rope. She lifted off the ground and struggled in midair.

After a few failed attempts, Jiang Baimian shrank her profile and rolled. As soon as she stopped rolling, she planned on raising the grenade launcher she carried and continue delivering suppressive fire to the distant enemy to cover her companions' retreat.

She suddenly realized that the weapon was so heavy that she couldn't lift it. It was as if someone was snatching it from her!

Jiang Baimian gritted her teeth and suddenly exerted strength with her left arm, forcefully 'pulling' it away from the invisible enemy as she raised the grenade launcher in triumph.

She roughly understood what was going on: After the Mind Corridor-level Awakened failed to achieve his desired goal with Forced Sleep and Real Dreamscape, he gave up on pulling strings remotely. He closed the distance between himself and the Old Task Force and then used his basic ability to interfere with matter to influence their every move.

Perhaps it was because he had maintained a safe distance, or perhaps it was because his level was inferior to Zennaga's, but the strength he displayed was clearly lacking. He couldn't even resist the strange strength of Jiang Baimian's electric eel-like biomechanical limb.

However, this could still produce interference—fatal interference.

Regardless of whether one was wearing a military exoskeleton, balance in humans was a tricky thing when they were moving. At this moment, as long as one's strength reached a minimum threshold, pushing, pulling, yanking, and pressing at key spots were enough to make the target lose their balance and be unable to complete the designated actions.

With the help of a military exoskeleton, people like Long Yuehong and people like Jiang Baimian—who could climb building ruins as if they were on flat ground—might be able to quickly adjust after losing their balance. However, it would also make them miss the most precious opportunities.

If this were combined with Forced Sleep, the Old Task Force members would be killed by the distant enemy even if they quickly woke up from their need to urinate after sleeping—as long as they didn't enter Shang Jianyao's Hands Immobility range.

This was what Jiang Baimian was most worried about.

She fell asleep the next second, and so did Shang Jianyao and the others.

...

In the North Shore Wastelands, in the town ruin where Han Wanghuo and the others hid from the rain.

Genava finished sending the telegram and waited for a while. However, he didn't receive a reply from Jiang Baimian's team.

"That's not right..." Zeng Duo muttered.

This was the agreed-upon time for the exchange of telegrams.

"Did something delay them?" Han Wanghuo frowned and guessed.

"That's the best situation." Genava looked around with shimmering red eyes. "The worst possibility is that the person from before informed their companions of Big White and Hey by sending a telegram. His companions are in First City."

Han Wanghuo hesitated and said, "But aren't October Xue and the others at the Crystal Consciousness Church's headquarters? There should be plenty of powerhouses there."

During this period of time, they had learned through a telegram that Sikhara Temple was the Crystal Consciousness Church's headquarters.

"That's indeed the case, but we can never rule out accidents," Genova said rather cautiously.

Zeng Duo looked at the crackling bonfire. "Then, what should we do? What can we do?"

Even if their team wanted to provide help, they couldn't save them from immediate dangers.

Genava and Han Wanghuo fell silent because they couldn't think of anything to do for the time being.

The only difference between the two of them was that Genova was still exhausting all possible solutions while Han Wanghuo tried to focus on doing whatever he could do, no matter how insignificant.

...

The four Old Task Force members and Garibaldi woke up from their need to urinate.

At this moment, the distant enemy had already finished aiming.

Long Yuehong—who was attempting to use the military exoskeleton to jump away with Bai Chen—clearly had his actions interfered with. He couldn't jump too far and remained within the rocket launcher's range.

At this moment, the hair-like bracelet on Shang Jianyao's left wrist lit up with fire.

Bangle of Blindness!

Relying on this item, Shang Jianyao's perception range instantly expanded to 100 meters, and he detected the rocket launcher-carrying enemy.

With a flash, the person couldn't see anything.

He couldn't help but feel anxious. His body subconsciously leaned back a little, and even the rocket launcher was fired at an angle.

Boom!

The rocket passed by Jiang Baimian and the others and landed on the other side of the sapphire-blue jeep.

The intense explosion caused the windows to crack.