

Ad Infinitum 531

Chapter 531: North

“Human Awakening.” Khal’s voice wasn’t loud, but it sounded like rumbling thunder to Jiang Baimian’s ears.

The Eighth Research Institute’s scientific focus was actually ‘human Awakening!’ This answer was truly unexpected to her, but she inexplicably felt that it matched reality and was reasonable.

With the Old World’s technological standards of producing Eternals, it was impossible for them not to pay attention to human Awakening—unless the Awakening happened after that disaster.

“You guys have significant achievements in that field?” When Jiang Baimian asked, she realized that she had disguised herself well. Her voice was calm, and her tone was flat as if she was talking about today’s weather.

Khal laughed with the same air of arrogance. “Otherwise, how do you think I Awakened?”

Jiang Baimian was just about to ask when Bai Chen eagerly said, “Can an Awakening be guaranteed?”

Khal glanced at her. “There’s only a 30% chance of success.”

How can you use the term ‘only?’ It’s already very impressive to have a stable chance of Awakening, even if it’s less than 10%! When the topic broached on research, Jiang Baimian couldn’t help but roar inwardly.

None of the large factions could currently claim to stably Awaken their personnel; even religious organizations that believed in the Kalendarium were the same. It was closer to reaching for pie in the sky, but this ‘sky’ referred to the Kalendarium. Sometimes, depending on the Kalendaria’s good ‘mood,’ many people would Awaken. Sometimes, nobody would receive divine grace if the Kalendaria wasn’t pleased.

It was definitely a shocking thing to say that a level of stability of Awakening could be done. As long as the chances of success weren't low, the various large factions had ways to obtain a large number of Awakened.

In the Ashlands, population was very important. However, it was also very unimportant!

"How is it done?" Jiang Baimian thought for a moment and finally decided to be direct.

Khal chuckled. "I'm not a researcher; I'm just a research subject. How would I know how those guys did it? Even if you have items from the Last Man domain and can read my memories, you can't figure out the exact process from me. How can you figure out something that doesn't exist?"

"Well, I only know that I have to be injected with drugs and be illuminated by certain instruments. Finally, I had to sleep in a place that resembles a space capsule."

The reason he was so frank was that the information he had wasn't important.

Jiang Baimian nodded thoughtfully. "Any repercussions for those who participated in the project but failed to Awaken?"

Khal was relatively aware of the answer in this regard. "Most of them are fine. A small number show signs of mental and physical inhibitions, but many of them recovered after treatment. This is if they failed during the first Awakening. If they attempt it a second time, the probability of there being repercussions will rise exponentially. Furthermore, treatment would be difficult. Some might even die on the spot. Therefore, our research institute doesn't recommend failures to attempt an Awakening again."

At this point, Khal's gaze swept across Jiang Baimian and Bai Chen's faces. "I heard from a researcher that this is under the premise that we have a mature method. Otherwise, the situation will be terrible, even if it's only the first Awakening attempt."

Bai Chen fell silent for a few seconds before saying, "Can you choose your own Awakened domain?"

"Consider your price. This often corresponds to your domain, but many of them are less precise as the overlapping exists to a certain extent." Khal was very happy to use this worthless information to stall for time.

Bai Chen exhaled in disappointment. She thought that the Eighth Research Institute allowed people to freely choose the corresponding domains and abilities they wanted.

Khal continued, “You can forget about using the smallest price to exchange for sufficiently powerful abilities—that’s unrealistic. Even if there really are such situations, the corresponding price might undergo a qualitative change as you advance. It might become even more terrifying.”

Jiang Baimian took note of this and asked, “How many members of your research institute alive today survived the Old World?”

Khal deliberated for a moment and said, “Vice President, Charlie, Professor Li, and Doctor—the four of them have entered the New World. They are in a slumber all year round and can only move about occasionally.”

A total of four New World powerhouses? The Eighth Research Institute is indeed powerful... Are these four the people that Oray said had undergone a terrifying change in their bodies and were reduced to traitors in the dark? Jiang Baimian’s eyebrows twitched slightly.

As if sensing Jiang Baimian’s thoughts, Khal chuckled. “Even compared to First City, we aren’t weak. In some aspects, we are even stronger—much stronger. Otherwise, how can we stop those who are tempted by the devil from exploring the reason for the Old World’s destruction?”

Jiang Baimian took the opportunity to ask, “Where’s your research institute? Where’s the city you previously mentioned that was destroyed in the past decade?”

The tied-up Khal straightened his neck. “You can kill me now. I won’t tell you.”

Jiang Baimian was in no rush to think of a way to pry open Khal’s mouth and ask about the Eighth Research Institute’s location. She first took out Shang Jianyao’s father’s photo and showed it to Khal. “Have you seen this person? He was also investigating the reason for the Old World’s destruction. He might’ve been killed by you, your colleagues, or subordinates—uh, harmed.”

Khal casually glanced at it, and his expression suddenly froze. He then carefully examined it for a few seconds before slowly saying, “Didn’t I mention it just now? A certain group of people made some progress in their investigation of the cause of the Old World’s destruction. They found the city

in the north and brought about a disaster that almost affected the entire Ashlands. He's one of those people."

Jiang Baimian perked up and quickly asked, "Is he still alive?"

Khal replied with a nasty expression, "Most of his companions either became Heartless in that disaster or died at the Heartless's hands. Only he and the other two went missing. We've been searching for them all these years. Of course, they might've died in that city as well but were eaten clean by the Heartless. We don't even know where their bones were thrown, making it impossible for us to identify them."

Missing whether dead or alive... This sentence suddenly surfaced in Jiang Baimian's mind, but she believed that this was very good news for Shang Jianyao. At least there was a little more hope than before.

At this moment, Jiang Baimian's walkie-talkie sounded. She picked it up and realized that it was from Phocas's attendant.

The general requested to communicate with them outside the room.

Jiang Baimian looked at the tightly bound Khal and casually gave some instructions. She then led Bai Chen out the door and arrived at the back door.

The old lion-like Phocas stood at the window at the edge of the corridor and nodded at the two ladies. "Your abilities are beyond my imagination. I originally didn't think you had much hope of coming into contact with Avia. Unexpectedly, not only did you obtain complete information, but you also captured a very useful captive. This is simply beyond your abilities."

He seemed to be testing if the Old Task Force had any additional help.

Jiang Baimian smiled. "Your Excellency, there's not much time. I'll quickly tell you what Avia told us now."

Phocas nodded slightly. "Tell me."

After Jiang Baimian shared her gains without reservation, Phocas frowned. “Give me a copy of that mysterious number.”

“Alright.” Jiang Baimian took out a pen and paper and busied herself.

As he waited, Phocas said, “I have a way to dig out the location of the Eighth Research Institute and the city from the captive, but this will cause irreversible damage to his brain. You don’t have anything to ask further, right?”

Jiang Baimian and Bai Chen looked at each other and deliberated for a few seconds. “No.”

Phocas didn’t say anything else. He half-closed his eyes as if he were resting.

After taking the copied number from Jiang Baimian and comparing it, the general walked into the room where the captive was imprisoned.

In less than ten minutes, Phocas returned to the two ladies with a simple map in his hand—a crude map of the Ashlands.

It had Icefield, Old Mountain, Lake of Wrath, Gold Coast, Blackmarsh Wilderness, Monk Wastelands, Blood Wastelands, and other places depicted. It labeled where the various factions—First City, Pangu Biology, White Knights, Salvation Army, United Industries, Mechanical Paradise, Linhai Alliance, Orange Company, Future Intelligence, Spirit Island, and Fog Realm—were.

Phocas pointed at a dot on the map and said, “This is the city’s location.”

He then moved his finger to a red circle. “The Eighth Research Institute is roughly within this area.”

Upon seeing Bai Chen’s confusion, Phocas added, “That captive’s name is Khal. As a commissioner, he doesn’t actually know the research institute’s exact location. He always goes to the area’s vicinity, fires a signal, and has others pick him up. He’s blindfolded the entire time.”

They are rather careful. They consider the possibility of the commissioner failing and being captured... Jiang Baimian looked at the red circle and dot on the map and realized that they were all in Icefield.

Icefield was a concept that had existed in the Old World. In ancient times, many Icefielders had been affected by the climate and migrated south to the Red River Zone, developing into the current Yargai.

Before the Old World was destroyed, Icefield wasn't as vast as it was today. It only covered the northernmost area. As far as Jiang Baimian knew, the superposition of many destructive weapons during that upheaval had a great impact on the climate. This resulted in Icefield crazily 'expanding' in the subsequent 20 to 30 years, turning the original Great North into a land of ice and snow.

The area where the Eighth Research Institute and the city were located belonged to the Great North from back then.

Almost at the same time, Jiang Baimian thought of two things. First, Jiang Xiaoyue was sent to a hospital in the north to receive experimental treatment as a volunteer. Second, the vegetable in the steelworks factory ruins was also sent north as a volunteer for experimental treatment.

North!

Chapter 532: Arguing

Upon seeing Jiang Baimian's expression change slightly despite remaining silent, Phocas imagined that she was attempting to find a solution to locate the Eighth Research Institute in such a large area.

"Unfortunately, the captive can't be used. Otherwise, we can consider controlling him and getting him to fire a signal to lure the Eighth Research Institute's personnel over." Phocas also found it a shame.

If not for the fact that this matter was a private operation, he had the urge to visit the Crystal Consciousness Church's Enlightened at Sikhara Temple. He wanted to invite an accomplished monk capable of Destiny Connection to possess Khal, the commissioner of the Eighth Research Institute.

Of course, this was a relatively troublesome operation, just that it was relatively safer and easier to gain control over the overall situation. When it came to controlling a person, the Last Man domain and Master Zhuang domain had certain abilities that made things much simpler.

"The fact that the Eighth Research Institute hasn't been found after so many years means that the method of controlling the commissioners to enter isn't too effective." Jiang Baimian instantly

retracted her train of thought and made an inference based on Phocas's words. "They have a way to stably allow humans to Awaken, so they definitely have a large number Awakened with all kinds of powers. They know what most abilities are like, how to guard against them, and how to sound an alarm. Therefore, if one really wants to fish for the Eighth Research Institute's welcoming party, one shouldn't start with Awakened abilities. They should consider technological means."

Jiang Baimian knew that she wasn't being too careful with her words. Since the Eighth Research Institute had developed a way to stabilize the Awakening process, and the process involved the injections of drugs, illuminating equipment, and so on, it meant that it was most likely a result of scientific research. An Awakened's abilities were also considered technological.

At this moment, she felt that Phocas could understand her and didn't waste her breath explaining.

Phocas nodded and looked out the window. "Leave the captive with me. You can leave now."

That commissioner's brain has already suffered irreversible damage. Why is General Phocas keeping him behind? He only has two items on him, and there are relatively few of them. Could it be that there are other items that he couldn't carry with him and that these items he was prepared to exchange with others are hidden somewhere? Does he need to use his fingerprints or iris to open the door? Yes, I can't rule out the possibility that irreversible brain damage is a lie... Jiang Baimian was a little perplexed.

Phocas misunderstood her reaction and simply said, "That string of prayer beads is called Six Senses Beads; each bead corresponds to a type of ability. They are Visual Deprivation, Auditory Deprivation, Olfactory Deprivation, Touch Deprivation, Taste Deprivation, and Consciousness Deprivation. However, Consciousness Deprivation can't be used alone—it can only be activated when the target's five senses have been completely deprived. The negative price of Six Senses Beads is increased lust. It's very easy to do some perverted actions if one wears it for a long time.

"That necklace is called Life Angel; its ability is Cardiac Arrest. The price is constant drowsiness." Phocas imagined that the Old Task Force didn't want to hand over the already mentally challenged captive because they didn't want to lose an experimental subject, so he directly informed them of the information they had 'acquired.'

Cardiac Arrest... That's potent... Jiang Baimian nodded in relief.

The Old Task Force's strength had increased again.

Bai Chen couldn't help but focus her attention on the Six Senses Beads' price. She felt that even if Shang Jianyao wore it for a long time, the perverted actions he did might very well have nothing to do with sex. It definitely exceeded the imagination of normal people and was a test of his companions' tolerance.

"Yes, it's actually not too convenient for us to bring the captive with us. We'd still have to find an opportunity to deal with and dump him." Jiang Baimian indirectly replied to Phocas's suggestion, but she was in no rush to leave. She smiled and said, "General, you promised to provide sufficient help in making contact with Avia. You've only given me a pass so far."

"What do you want?" Phocas asked calmly.

"We want to leave First City as soon as possible." Jiang Baimian voiced the Old Task Force's request. Without waiting for Phocas's response, she took the initiative to ask, "Is the chaos coming to an end? Which side won?"

"Gaius has already gained control of the Senate and reached a settlement with Alexander and the others. He has been elected as the new consul," Phocas briefed her simply. "All the city's entrances and exits are controlled or about to be controlled. Entry and exit are prohibited. If you want to leave now, it's equivalent to raising a sign and pointing out that you are problematic. I can't provide any effective help unless a certain entrance is attacked and chaos ensues."

Upon seeing Jiang Baimian and Bai Chen fall silent, Phocas took the initiative to say, "I can give you a few city defense uniforms, the corresponding identification documents, and the documents needed for executing missions. However, this requires the martial law at each entrance to be lifted. Before that..."

Phocas pointed north. "Go to an apartment near the bridge and wait. It's the captive's and one of their strongholds, but nobody lives there anymore. Yes, the key should be in your hands. Heh heh, they colluded with some of the North Shore Survey Company's personnel. The latter's helicopter was used in this operation, and that apartment was where the two parties met and communicated."

Half of the North Shore Survey Company had ties to the military. Under the surveying of terrain, they helped First City do things that were inconvenient for regular troops to do. Most of the time, they could directly transform into slave hunters or Wasteland Reclaimers.

After hearing Phocas's words, Jiang Baimian gave up on the idea of leaving First City in an hour.

After asking for the detailed address, she and Bai Chen brought the uniforms, identification, and documents that Phocas had prepared in advance. They left through the back door and returned to the jeep.

Upon seeing this, Long Yuehong heaved a long sigh of relief.

Just as the jeep drove out of the area, Shang Jianyao suddenly appeared out from the roadside, opened the door, and jumped in.

“Here.” Jiang Baimian turned around and handed his father’s photo to him. “I got some clues.”

She then recounted the northern city.

Shang Jianyao listened attentively before suddenly leaning back and shouting, “I need to rest. I bled quite a lot.”

Without waiting for Jiang Baimian, Long Yuehong, and Bai Chen’s response, he closed his eyes.

Jiang Baimian silently straightened her body and used the radio transceiver to share the changes in First City with Geneva, Han Wanghuo, and Zeng Duo.

...

In the North Shore wastelands, a black SUV sped under the dense, dark clouds. Around it were steel concrete buildings wrapped in vines.

“First City’s unrest is coming to an end,” Geneva reported the situation to his two companions.

Zeng Duo’s expression sank uncontrollably.

Han Wanghuo glanced at her and said, “Fortunately, we set off in advance. Even if the chaos completely subsides in an hour and the Mind Corridor-level Awakened and the evacuated troops immediately rush back, they probably won’t be able to catch up to us. We can use the time difference.”

“The premise is that they don’t use aircraft,” Geneva pointed out.

Han Wanghuo tersely acknowledged it and looked at the sky ahead. “I can only hope that the weather worsens.”

...

With the identification, uniforms, and documents provided by Phocas, the Old Task Force successfully left the Golden Apple Zone. They then used more than half an hour to pass the rounds of inspection and interrogation before arriving at their destination.

This apartment block was located along the Red River, and it had a total of nine floors. It was considered a relatively tall building in the Green Olive Zone. From the top few floors, one could directly see the bridge. Its surroundings were filled with all kinds of people, and the environment was complicated.

After finding a spot to park the jeep, the Old Task Force got out of the car and walked to the apartment door with the key they had found on the captive.

In order not to arouse the residents’ suspicion, Bai Chen and Long Yuehong had already taken off their military exoskeletons and placed them back in the crate they carried on their backs.

As they waited for the elevator to descend, Long Yuehong suddenly heard someone arguing in the nearby stairwell.

A man and a woman.

They were likely on the second floor, which was quite a distance away. If not for the genetic enhancement, Long Yuehong wouldn’t have been able to hear what they were saying.

The man asked angrily, “Why did you guys betray us?”

You guys... Long Yuehong—who originally thought that it was a relationship dispute—almost dug his ears.

“This is a decision made by the higher-ups,” the woman replied rather calmly, causing her volume to decrease significantly. Long Yuehong suspected that he hadn’t heard her clearly.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao came to Long Yuehong’s side and asked in a low voice, “What music should I use for the accompaniment? Going Too Far?”

Just as he said that, the man roared again. “What benefits can you guys gain by doing this? According to the original plan, you will be accepted by most nobles in a few years and can slowly walk under the sun. Why are you betraying us? Just to save time?”

Uh... Long Yuehong couldn’t help but look at Shang Jianyao.

Their reactions attracted Jiang Baimian and Bai Chen’s attention.

The woman quickly replied, “I actually can’t understand it either. Maybe these aren’t the most important matters to the higher-ups. Who’s not in power is the key...”

She was about to say something else when she suddenly stopped for some unknown reason.

Chapter 533: Narrow Road

Jiang Baimian was just about to ask when she saw that the elevator had already reached the first floor and that the hoistway door and gate opened. She pondered for a moment and pointed ahead, indicating that they should enter the elevator first.

As there was no sound coming from the stairwell, Long Yuehong had no objections and followed Jiang Baimian into the elevator.

After Bai Chen and Shang Jianyao entered, Jiang Baimian pressed the number ‘6.’

Their destination was actually the eighth floor.

After the elevator started moving up, Jiang Baimian suppressed her voice and asked, “What were you guys listening to?”

As Long Yuehong inwardly praised his team leader for being careful, he recalled and said, “We heard a man and a woman talking about betrayal, the acceptance of most nobles, and about who and who’s not in power...”

Due to the environment, he could only pick up a few key statements. Bai Chen was confused as Jiang Baimian frowned.

Upon seeing that the elevator had already reached the sixth floor, Jiang Baimian controlled her urge to ask further. She led the three Old Task Force members out and walked up the stairs to the eighth floor.

This apartment building was considered good in the Green Olive Zone. It was divided into several stacks, and each stack only had four apartments on each floor. Jiang Baimian easily found the one described by General Phocas.

Shang Jianyao had long taken out the key he had found on the captive from his tactical backpack and opened the door with a click.

The living room was relatively large, but the decorations were rather simple. There was only an old sofa, a cupboard, three chairs, and a coffee table.

Jiang Baimian casually closed the door and asked the question she had been holding in her heart for a while. “What exactly did they say?”

Long Yuehong quickly repeated the conversation between the man and woman while his memories were still relatively clear. He even simulated the corresponding tone.

Finally, he gave his guess. “It’s likely that a faction in today’s chaos suffered an ally’s betrayal, and one of the survivors came to question the other party.”

“Does he want to die?” Shang Jianyao revealed an expression of admiration.

Long Yuehong could understand what his friend meant. The other party had already betrayed them, yet they still came to question others. Weren’t they walking into a trap and seeking death? Not only did this require one to give up on their intelligence, but it also required sufficient courage.

Jiang Baimian ignored Long Yuehong and Shang Jianyao's conversation and asked in thought, "They will be accepted by most nobles in a few years and can slowly walk under the sun... Who's not in power is the key... Which faction can you associate this with based on the first sentence?"

Bai Chen—who had a relatively deep understanding of First City's situation—immediately replied, "Church of Paragon Desire!"

Many nobles secretly believed in Mandara and indulged their desires. The Old Task Force knew this, and Old K's late-night party was proof of this.

"That's why that person dared to come to question her. He does have some level of friendship with that woman..." Long Yuehong came to a realization. He originally wanted to describe the situation between the man and woman as 'having sex many times' and 'often having sex.' However, he felt that these words were too vulgar and finally switched to 'friendship.'

"You tainted the word 'friendship,'" Shang Jianyao commented bluntly.

Without giving Long Yuehong a chance to argue, Jiang Baimian thoughtfully raised the second question. "Who do you think the man is? The faction he belongs to can influence many nobles in First City and create an opportunity to make them accept the Church of Paragon Desire slowly. The faction he belongs to has suffered an extremely serious blow in this chaos. His status shouldn't be low either. There's a high chance that he's an Awakened or has other abilities. Otherwise, he wouldn't have come to question the other party, nor does he have the right to do so. The woman mentioned: 'who's not in power is the key...'"

When the stripped pieces of information were combined, Long Yuehong felt like the answer would rise to the surface at any moment. However, he was just short of the final and most critical point.

At this moment, Bai Chen suddenly said, "Asus—the son of Consul Gaius, Asus."

Long Yuehong looked at his companion in surprise, only to see a strange feeling in her solemn expression.

"Why do you say that?" Long Yuehong subconsciously asked.

“He has a high status. His father was also the leader of the Conservatives and the most powerful figure in First City before the chaos. He’s directly related to ‘power...’” Bai Chen said several lines in one breath.

She fell silent for two seconds before continuing, “He’s at least a Sea of Origins-level Awakened, and he comes under the Mandara domain.”

“How do you know?” Long Yuehong blurted out before he received his team leader’s signal to stop asking.

Oh no... Long Yuehong vaguely understood something and felt very regretful. He remembered that after Little White was captured by the slave peddler, Eugene, she was sold to First City as a slave for a period of time before she found an opportunity to escape.

The corners of Bai Chen’s mouth twitched as if she wanted to squeeze a smile out, but she didn’t succeed in the end. However, her tone was still relatively calm. “This is because the price he paid is highly suspected to be sexual addiction. Furthermore, he has an item with abilities similar to the Six Senses Beads’ negative effects—a withered flower that can be used as a bookmark.”

The Six Senses Beads’ negative influence was Enhanced Lust. As an ability, it was most likely in the Mandara domain.

This time, Long Yuehong didn’t ask how she knew.

An indescribable silence filled the room.

After a few seconds, Jiang Baimian cleared her throat and said, “We long discovered that the Church of Paragon Desire seems to be cooperating with the Anti-intellectualism Church to create conflict and incite chaos. This is very unfavorable to the Conservatives for Gaius. Asus and his father didn’t notice anything previously? Or rather, the Church of Paragon Desire’s early actions were instigated by them. It’s equivalent to striking a nail into the enemy. In the end, the Church of Paragon Desire ultimately betrayed them?”

Upon recalling the conversation between the man and woman, Long Yuehong instinctively believed that it was the latter possibility.

“This bout of unrest in First City goes deep.” Shang Jianyao raised his hand and stroked his chin.

He and Jiang Baimian stared at Bai Chen and Long Yuehong normally. They didn't avoid anything and assumed a posture of seriously discussing the problem.

Jiang Baimian nodded slightly and said, "The saying 'who's not in power is the key' is really interesting. I'm not sure what the lady wants to express, but if we consider this as a Kalendarium game, it can be interpreted this way: It doesn't matter who affects First City as long as it's not Master Zhuang, Shattered Mirror, or Subhuti..."

"Is this the attitude of September's Kalendaria, Mandara?"

Bai Chen slowly nodded. "That's possible."

"From the looks of it, the Kalendarium might also be divided into factions." Shang Jianyao recalled some entertainment material from the Old World.

Jiang Baimian tersely acknowledged his words and laughed. "The few of us mortals have started to consider problems at the Kalendaria level again. Uh... Let's take note first. It's useless now, but it might come in handy in the future."

She then restrained her smile and seriously said, "One of the abilities in the Mandara domain is the Sixth Sense. The lady might've sensed that someone was listening in, so she didn't continue."

"They discovered us?" Long Yuehong hissed.

Jiang Baimian nodded indiscernibly. "If they move quickly, they should be able to see our elevator go up to the sixth floor. I've observed this place before; there are no surveillance cameras. In other words, they shouldn't be able to track this room unless they blanket the area with their area-of-effect abilities. But if it's really Asus, he's definitely the new consul's target for elimination. He can't wait to hide. Once he can't silence us very quietly, it's unlikely that he will take the initiative to start a fight. Therefore, he will choose to leave this area quickly after failing to find us."

At this point, Jiang Baimian turned to look at Bai Chen. "Little White, go to the window and carry out surveillance. If we can discover Asus, there might be a chance..."

She raised her right hand and gestured firing.

Bai Chen pursed her lips, picked up the Orange rifle, and nodded as she walked toward the window.

At this moment, Jiang Baimian looked to the side.

Opposite them was the stairwell.

“Someone is coming up—three.” She reported the situation she had sensed as per usual. As the numbers were wrong, she didn’t pay much attention to it.

But upon hearing her words, Shang Jianyao turned his right hand and tried to take off his tactical backpack. During this process, he quickly said, “There’s only one person.”

The bioelectric signals showed three people, but there was only one human consciousness! This meant that two people had deliberately concealed their consciousness!

Jiang Baimian easily understood Shang Jianyao’s meaning, but she suddenly felt an irresistible itch, one that she could scratch hard a few times.

Chapter 534: Sex Kills

This itch came so suddenly and intensely. Jiang Baimian had just understood Shang Jianyao’s meaning when her hands uncontrollably scratched her arms and forearm.

This was definitely abnormal for her. It had to be known that when she was first transferred to the Security Department—where she participated in covert field operations—she could resist mosquito bites until the target entered firing range.

Since the mosquito repellent developed by Pangu Biology could ward off mosquitoes, it also meant that it could be detected by certain creatures from afar. Security Department employees were forbidden from spraying repellent when carrying out specific missions.

Jiang Baimian now felt like a hundred or a thousand mosquitoes were wreaking havoc on her body. She couldn’t drive them away, nor could she fend against them. She could only scratch desperately regardless of the situation.

In a flash, she thought of someone: Christina—the former Vice President of Weed City’s Hunter’s Guild!

Weed City’s Castellan, Xu Liyan, had mentioned to Jingnian—the mechanical monk in charge of protecting him—that Christina had the ability to make a group of people itch.

Just as this thought surfaced in her mind, Jiang Baimian had already collapsed to the ground. This was because the itch was so serious that she needed to twist and turn, relying on friction to gain relief.

She was fast, but Shang Jianyao was even faster. He pounced to the ground and twisted around like a python shedding its skin. His hands weren’t idle either. Even though one hand was seriously injured, he still scratched with all his might.

Compared to them, Long Yuehong and Bai Chen—who were physically weaker—did the same thing ahead of them.

Long Yuehong’s mind was in a mess. All kinds of thoughts uncontrollably surfaced in his mind, filled with the thought of the itch. Not good... We are under attack... Is it Asus and that woman? How did they find us? We didn’t leave any clues... We lost the initiative.

We lost the initiative in a battle with Awakened, and we don’t have the corresponding plan... If we are prepared, we can resist Mind Corridor-level Awakened for a period of time. We might even have a chance to escape... Now... The anesthetic gas in Team Leader’s biological prosthetic limb has been used up. The electricity reserves should’ve been mostly exhausted... It’s so itchy. Man, can Shang Jianyao still use his Awakened abilities in such a state? Probably not... What should we do?

Long Yuehong tried to roll toward a corner and use the building structure there to stop the itch, but their door was soon slammed open.

Someone outside exclaimed, but silence quickly prevailed.

The innocent person who had chosen to take the stairs for some reason and confused Jiang Baimian’s judgment seemed to have encountered something nasty.

Right on the heels of that, two people walked into the room. The leader had black hair and blue eyes. He was tall, and his eyes were deep and charming as if they could discharge electricity. He was none other than Asus, son of the former consul and commander-in-chief—Beulis.

Compared to the last time they met, this noble's black shirt and white pants were wrinkled. They were very messy, and he looked to be in a wretched state.

Behind him, Christina—the former vice president of Weed City's Hunter's Guild—had her soft blonde hair cascading over her shoulders. Her light-blue eyes darted around as she took in the situation in the room.

"It's you guys?" She seemed to recognize the disguised Shang Jianyao and Jiang Baimian. She was perplexed and a little pleasantly surprised.

As she spoke, she closed the door with her left hand. Her right hand held a Red River pistol with a silencer.

Asus walked to Bai Chen—who was by the window—and smiled. "I was wondering who it was; the smell felt so familiar. Isn't this 105? You sure did run away decisively back then. I thought you wouldn't bear to part with the robot and would circle back to try and save it. In the end, you ran away without looking back. You didn't even watch how the robot was blown to pieces.

"To be honest, I quite liked that robot. Without anyone commanding it, it actually infiltrated the city without needing a master. While I was bringing you to the manor, it rushed out to save you without any thoughts of its own safety. If it were a human, it would be deserving of the Loyal Medal issued by the Senate. However, you gave up on your companion and only wanted to survive."

Bai Chen twisted her body and glared at Asus with bloodshot eyes. She wanted to curse or say something, but her fingers had already unconsciously reached into her mouth and scratched the itch on her tongue.

"Woo, woo, woo..." This was the only sound she could make as saliva kept flowing out of the corners of her mouth.

Upon seeing this, Asus laughed even more happily. This seemed to be one of the few pleasures he had on this dark day.

As he looked at the squirming Bai Chen, Asus chuckled. “Your appearance always brings back beautiful memories. You liked it back then too, so why were you in a rush to escape? Ah, right. I forgot to tell you—do you know how I found my way here?”

He raised his finger and pointed at his nose. “Every woman has their own smell. Although I don’t have the ability to enhance my sense of smell, I can distinguish and remember the smells of women I’ve interacted with many times thanks to my interest in sex. The moment I entered the elevator, I smelled a familiar scent in the air. Fortunately, it wasn’t too long ago, or I wouldn’t have been able to detect it.

“Following this smell, I realized that you guys went up to the eighth floor and had come to this room.” At this point, Asus looked at Bai Chen and smiled mockingly. “You’re really an unlucky woman. You brought me three companions this time. Ah, the quality is pretty good. Very good…”

Asus’s gaze swept across Jiang Baimian on the other side.

“Woo! Woo! Woo…” Bai Chen’s eyes widened. Water droplets seemed to form and slide down the corners of her eyes, and transparent liquid flowed out of her nose.

She roughly understood why Asus could find them. He had used the positive effects of his price of ‘sexual obsession.’

Christina frowned slightly when she heard Asus’s words. “You talk too much. In this environment, it’s better to deal with them quickly and move elsewhere to hide.”

Asus turned to look at Christina. “Once we have them under control and deal with the one outside, what’s the difference between hiding here and hiding elsewhere?”

As he spoke, he suddenly laughed. “As I expected. Not only do you not have any hostility toward me, but you also want to protect me. That’s true. The one who wants me dead is Gaius, not the Church of Paragon Desire. If there’s a conflict between the two of you in the future, I’ll be of use.

“Don’t be in a rush to retort; you know that I’m right. Don’t be fooled by the fact that you and Gaius are currently in your honeymoon period. When he stabilizes his power and has other supporters, it’s unknown if you can still maintain your current relationship. If I didn’t figure out these things, how would I dare to be here? Your superior should’ve warned you to help me as much as possible given a chance.”

Christina didn't answer, a tacit agreement of Asus's words.

Asus then stretched his neck. His gaze swept across Jiang Baimian and Bai Chen a few times before gradually turning fiery.

He swallowed a mouthful of saliva and smiled at Christina. "It seems like I won't be able to leave the city for the time being. You don't want me to hide at your house either. Why don't we relax here?"

"Are you crazy? You still have your mind on that at a time like this?" Christina was a little astonished. She suspected that something had happened to Asus's mental state because of today's upheaval.

"I already said that once we deal with the person outside and have the four people here under control, we don't have to worry about being exposed for a period of time. Who'd know what we're doing after the door is closed? There's nothing else to do anyway." Asus retracted his gaze and smiled at Christina. "Don't you want it?"

Christina's gaze was on Shang Jianyao before turning to Jiang Baimian. She stuck out the tip of her tongue and licked her lips, momentarily unable to control herself.

After some thought, she said to Asus, "Deal with the person outside. I'll continue controlling the four of them."

"Alright." Asus nodded and said rather cautiously, "We'll take turns later. You control while I enjoy, and vice-versa."

"Okay." Christina quickly drafted a plan. "We can only control three at a time. We'll use Sexual Eruption on the remaining one; that's more interesting. Otherwise, there's no way to go about it."

Asus looked at Bai Chen—whose face was covered in snot and tears. She had been struggling toward him in an attempt to resist. He said in anticipation, "The two women are mine, and the two men are yours."

Christina immediately replied, "I want all of them."

Her eyes seemed to be shining.

Asus—who was rather familiar with her—wasn't surprised. He smiled and asked, "After we finish dealing with the person outside, who goes first? You or me?"

"You." Christina was more careful.

Just as she said that, Asus saw Shang Jianyao—who was lying not far away and scratching his itch crazily—reveal an extremely warped smile.

For some reason, Asus felt a fire burn in his heart.

"Why are you smiling?" he asked in a deep voice.

Shang Jianyao could only respond with an exaggerated smile because it was too itchy for him to speak.

Asus took a few steps in his direction and approached Jiang Baimian and Long Yuehong. He couldn't help but say to Christina, "Make it less itchy so that he can answer my question."

With that said, Asus quickly added, "I'll only give him the chance to speak one sentence. I'm afraid of being affected if he's given more. There are such abilities."

Christina didn't care as she adjusted Shang Jianyao's itch.

Shang Jianyao quickly squeezed out a sentence: "You first... because... it'll be quick for you..."

Asus had never been insulted in this way—his face flushed red instantly. He then revealed a slightly hideous smile and glanced at Jiang Baimian, who wasn't far away. "Then, I'll use your companion to let you see for yourself."

The itch on Shang Jianyao's body returned, but he still stared at Asus's pants and forced out two words. "How tiny..."

“You!” Asus glared at the fellow angrily. He felt that he was much more prone to anger than normal, but he felt that it was inevitable considering what had happened today.

“Is that so?” Christina was a little curious and sized up Shang Jianyao from top to bottom. She also reduced the other party’s itch a little.

“Let’s compare!” Shang Jianyao revealed an unyielding spirit.

At his provocation, Asus laughed in anger. “Fine, let’s compare!”

Christina was tempted. She walked toward Shang Jianyao and gulped. “I’ll help you take it off.”

She then bent her back.

As her attention was diverted and she was carrying out another action, her control over the others’ itch fluctuated slightly.

Jiang Baimian suddenly jumped up horizontally and grabbed Asus’s calf with her left hand.

Chapter 535: Pain Control

Asus was considering giving himself Desire Outbreak to defeat Shang Jianyao in the comparison match when he saw Jiang Baimian pounce over and grab his calf.

In his haste, he failed to put up a significant response. Furthermore, such an attack didn’t seem to be worth paying attention to—it wouldn’t deal too much damage to his body, and he had sufficient leeway to regain the upper hand. Therefore, he only swung his leg back to prevent himself from being grabbed and dragged down by the other party.

As he tried to focus, his blue eyes seemed to ripple like the sea.

Bam!

Jiang Baimian’s left palm was hit by Asus’s right calf. With a sizzling sound, silver-white electric arcs surged out like a flood, attempting to spread further through the cloth and muscles it came into contact with.

Jiang Baimian had been waiting for this opportunity. Although she could barely do anything due to the itch, and it was also difficult for her to complete a series of thoughts, she believed that Shang Jianyao had the ability to counterattack during the short gap between the discovery of something amiss and the irresistible itch.

In that state, Inference Clowning definitely couldn't be used. Hands Immobility and Blindness couldn't deal with the root cause of the problem. Only Corny Person could silently influence the other party and be maintained for a period of time.

Therefore, Jiang Baimian was waiting for the accumulation of corny behavior! At this moment, she suddenly felt pain.

It was clearly a very light collision, but her biological prosthetic limb sent back a signal of intense pain.

No, this signal seemed to be directly produced in her mind. It rapidly burgeoned due to the light collision and developed to an unbearable extent.

Jiang Baimian couldn't help but retract her hand and curl up. This prevented the large number of electric arcs that surged forward from hitting Asus, leaving behind dreamy and stunning traces in the air.

Bam!

She fell to the ground, and the pain—dozens of times stronger than normal—drowned her rationality and thoughts.

At this moment, Jiang Baimian almost fainted from the pain. The grenade launcher slung over her had also escaped her grasp due to her series of actions and slid to the side.

Pain Control—this was one of Asus's Awakened abilities. It could make a target lose their sense of pain or make them dull and sensitive to pain.

Meanwhile, although Asus had avoided the subsequent high-voltage electric shocks, the first wave was already quite a kicker.

He seemed to hear static, and his vision alternated between darkness and brightness.

His entire body convulsed as he fell to the ground, paralyzed. His skirmish with Jiang Baimian ended in an internecine outcome.

Badump!

The commotion on Asus and Jiang Baimian's side made Christina subconsciously look over. She ignored the control over the itch and Shang Jianyao in front of her.

Shang Jianyao suddenly exerted strength with his waist and abdomen, pulling at the muscles in his thighs and lashing his right leg upward like a whip.

The moment before he did this, Christina seemed to have a premonition. Without thinking, she looked in the other direction, tilted her center of gravity, and rolled away.

Bam!

Shang Jianyao's lashing leg missed, but Christina's act of rolling and dodging also minimized the itch Long Yuehong and Bai Chen were suffering.

Long Yuehong resisted the discomfort and propped himself up with one hand. He then pounced horizontally, drawing a United 202 from his waist with his other hand and pulling the trigger at Christina.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Christina abandoned her pistol and rolled. She didn't stop for a moment and successfully dodged Long Yuehong's shots.

Gunshots echoed, startling all the residents on the eighth floor.

The people on the other floors—who were still at home—also noticed the familiar commotion.

Long Yuehong's United 202 didn't have a silencer!

Meanwhile, Bai Chen had just pulled a few fingers out of her mouth when she flipped over and pounced at Asus—who was relatively far away—with bloodshot eyes and a warped expression. During this process, she didn't forget to draw her Ice Moss pistol.

Shang Jianyao was in no rush to get up. As he rolled to the coffee table, he took off his tactical backpack and tried to take out the Life Angel necklace.

Even with this in his pocket, it would make him sleepy. He needed to isolate it sufficiently.

Finally, Long Yuehong landed on the ground, and the gunshots came to an end.

Christina stopped rolling, and her light-blue eyes turned abnormally deep.

Clang!

Bai Chen—who was still in midair—felt her entire body itch. Finding it difficult to hold the Ice Moss, she released the pistol, allowing it to smash to the ground.

Thud!

She fell not far from Asus.

Almost at the same time, Christina's vision turned black—she couldn't see anything.

As Shang Jianyao felt the itch, he gave up on finding the Life Angel necklace and counterattacked.

The Bangle of Blindness on his left wrist lit up like fire again. He then twisted his body like Long Yuehong, an attempt to stop the strange itch through rubbing again.

Jiang Baimian wasn't spared by Christina, but she—who was about to faint from the pain—momentarily ignored the itch. Of course, she was powerless to do anything else.

As for Asus, he had yet to recover from the electric shock.

This made Christina—who had regained control of the situation—curse inwardly. Trash!

She knew that such handsome men and beautiful women were irresistible to them—who had a ‘sexual addiction’—in such a stimulating environment. It was very easy for them to become irrational and have their brains controlled by their genitals.

It wasn’t rare for Christina to make mistakes because of sex. Furthermore, she also sensed that she and Asus had likely been secretly affected by some relatively weak ability. This resulted in them repeatedly doing stupid things and causing accidents.

However, this didn’t stop Christina from calling Asus ‘trash.’ After all, she wasn’t the one that screwed up.

At this moment, Christina—who had lost her vision—didn’t panic because she could sense the four targets’ human consciousnesses. They were all suffering from an extreme itch.

She had already lost her pistol—which was equipped with a silencer—during the roll, but she pulled out another Red River from her inner pocket. As an experienced Hunter, how could she only have one gun with her?

The shootout just now was quite loud. Someone in this apartment definitely didn’t attend the meet or go to work... As long as they react and shout out the window a few times, the city defense forces near the Red River Bridge or the public security officers who have passed the screening will rush over. There’s not much time left for us...

Thoughts raced through Christina’s mind as she quickly gained clarity over the situation. With her strength, she wasn’t actually too afraid of ordinary city defense force members or public security officers. If it weren’t being in the wrong place at the wrong time, she could even hold a naturalist party on the spot. She was worried that any commotion here would attract the attention of the powerhouses in the helicopters in the sky.

When the time came, how would the Church of Paragon Desire explain Asus’s problem to the new consul, Gaius? The only way was to turn around and finish off the fallen noble as soon as they were exposed.

However, the Church of Paragon Desire still hoped that he could play an important role in the future.

Without needing to weigh the pros and cons, Christina instantly had a solution: she had to kill the four enemies immediately and wait for her vision to recover or for Asus to recover before moving elsewhere!

Christina kept her unfocused eyes open and raised the Red River pistol, attempting to complete the 'blind strike' with her perception of human consciousness.

The first person she aimed at was undoubtedly Shang Jianyao, who she found most dangerous. But just as she was about to pull the trigger, Christina suddenly hesitated. It's not easy to encounter a man with good looks, a masculine bearing, and a good figure... He also thinks Asus is tiny... I'm curious; I really want to give it a try. Wouldn't it be a waste to kill him just like this? I should make the best use of my time to enjoy him... No, I really can't help it...

Christina knew that her sexual addiction had acted up completely, regardless of the occasion. This was a state that she couldn't tolerate but enough to make her extremely obsessed.

She drew her pistol and aimed. When she did so, Shang Jianyao—who was twisting like a python shedding its skin—had already curled his left arm and slammed to the side!

It was a leg of the coffee table.

Shang Jianyao had rolled toward the coffee table with all his might just to make it easier for him to bump into something!

To the nine of them, this was an action to stop the itch. Furthermore, it only required him to move his elbow; it didn't affect his scratching. Therefore, he was still capable of carrying out the bump.

Bang!

A certain spot on Shang Jianyao's left arm hit one of the coffee table legs—it was his wound. He had previously stabbed himself with the multi-purpose bayonet when resisting the Real Dreamscape's owner!

The wound split open as expected, and the bandages around it were quickly dyed red. This intense pain made Shang Jianyao's face contort in an exaggerated manner, but this also successfully made him forget the intense itch temporarily.

In the blink of an eye, Shang Jianyao jumped up from the pain.

Christina—who had wanted to walk toward him step by step—sensed something when he bumped into the coffee table and pulled the trigger.

Chapter 536: Courage

Bang!

A bullet shot out from the Red River pistol in Christina's hand and hit the area in front of the coffee table. This was originally where Shang Jianyao was fidgeting and scratching himself.

But at this moment, Shang Jianyao had already jumped up and pounced to the side. He had also shrunk his body from the pain. Furthermore, Christina was blind and could only fire based on her perception of human consciousness. There was a certain degree of inaccuracy, so there was no doubt that she didn't hit him.

In midair, Shang Jianyao stretched out his hands. He resisted the pain in his left arm and reached into the tactical backpack that he was hugging in front of himself.

His right hand drew the United 202 from his waist and pulled the trigger at Christina based on his intuition. With his talent as a high-quality product of genetic enhancement and the hard work he had put in after joining the Old Task Force, he was definitely better at marksmanship than Christina—who was clearly an ordinary person—despite being incomparable to Jiang Baimian.

Christina suddenly had a strong premonition. She followed the room layout in her memories and rolled toward the bedroom and bathroom.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Three bullets in a row either went past the spot she had been standing at and left holes in the wall or directly created plumes of dust that rose from where she had rolled.

If not for her special abilities, Christina believed that she would've been seriously injured or even killed in the round of shots. After suffering this shock, her rampant desires were effectively controlled.

Guessing that the other party had used the pain to reduce the itchiness effects for a short period of time, her unfocused eyes flickered. An invisible vortex immediately appeared in the third translucent button of her white blouse, and it showed signs of collapsing.

After completing the shot in midair, Shang Jianyao—who was about to touch the two items—suddenly lost his balance just as he was about to land.

Bang!

He fell heavily, and even the United 202 flew out of his hand when he hit the ground. The only lucky thing was that Shang Jianyao kept the tactical backpack in his arms and didn't let it escape his grasp.

Christina—who was focused on dodging Shang Jianyao's shots and counter-attacking the other party—could no longer maintain Itchiness Control. Long Yuehong and Bai Chen had already recovered.

Long Yuehong couldn't be bothered to pick up the United 202 that had landed beside him. As he didn't have the time to change the magazine, he propped himself up with one hand and pounced horizontally toward Asus while pulling out the Ice Moss from his belt with the other.

He thought that even if this round of shots failed to hit Christina, he would force her into rolling and dodging repeatedly. With this, it would be difficult for her to focus on making them itch again. Then, he—who had landed beside Asus—could seize the opportunity to finish off an enemy first.

After nearly a year of training, Long Yuehong's tactical acumen could be considered pretty good.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

His shot was only a second or two slower than Shang Jianyao's suppressive fire, making Christina not dare to stay. She could only roll toward the bedroom based on the impression in her mind, hoping to hide inside and survive the counterattack before letting the enemies fall into a state of itchiness again.

Having lost her vision, she was in unbearable pain. She would occasionally bump into something on the way, but she didn't dare to stay put. She could only endure the pain and rush out.

If not for her outstanding 'premonition' and strong intuition, allowing her to be almost prescient of great danger and where it was relatively safe, she might've already slammed into a piece of furniture or a corner of a wall. She might've been forced to stop rolling and be hit by a bullet.

Long Yuehong flew out diagonally. As he fired sideways, Bai Chen also drew the United 202 from her waist. Her Ice Moss had landed relatively far away from her. If she wanted to pick it up, it would take at least two to three seconds.

They were now in a race against time.

Bai Chen's first reaction was to fire at Asus, but she knew that she had to deal with Christina—who could make them all itch—first. If the other party caught her breath, the chance of survival that Shang Jianyao and Jiang Baimian had fought so hard for would be wasted.

Based on her observations and combat experience, Bai Chen scanned the area and instinctively believed that Christina wanted to hide in the bedroom. She immediately raised her hand and aimed at the corridor by the bedroom door.

If Christina continued rolling, she would be hit by Bai Chen. If she didn't do so and hesitated, there was Long Yuehong waiting in midair with a non-empty magazine clip.

At this moment, Christina—who could only see darkness—felt like she was between a rock and a hard place. Not only was it dangerous, but it was also difficult to avoid.

She could only bite the bullet and continue rolling toward the corridor outside the bedroom door.

At this moment, Bai Chen's gaze suddenly froze. From the corner of her eye, she saw Asus end his spasm and sit up. He also had a golden Oray coin between his fingers.

Ping!

The gold coin tumbled into the air.

Bai Chen suddenly felt a strong sense of greed—a desire for money. Although there was only one gold coin, she felt that it was something she could abandon everything to pursue. Therefore, she gave up on firing at Christina despite knowing that something was amiss. She gave up on the United 202 in her hand and pounced out like a trained hound to catch a ball thrown by her master.

Bastard... In midair, Bai Chen revealed an expression of self-blame and regret.

Badump!

She fell to the ground and pressed her body against the gold coin.

She then saw a familiar smile surface on Asus's face. It was a smile that controlled her life and death, a smile gained from watching her struggle and even beg.

No! Bai Chen slammed her forehead against the ground, wanting to rely on the pain to escape Greed's control.

With a bang, Long Yuehong landed beside her, near Asus.

Asus had already stood up and picked up the grenade launcher that Jiang Baimian had dropped. He smiled and aimed at Long Yuehong and Bai Chen.

Christina—who had rolled to the bedroom door—seemed to sense something. She halted and stopped being distracted, prepared to restart the itch.

Facing the grenade launcher, Long Yuehong's thoughts seemed to freeze. He couldn't come up with anything quickly, but all kinds of memories gushed out and ran through his mind as if a tap had been turned on.

It was his father's unspoken love and protection, his mother's ramblings, and his younger brother and sister's eyes of adoration. It was the satisfaction of a table of meat and vegetables; it was the joy of finally getting a high score on his exam; it was the pure joy of laughing and joking with Shang Jianyao, Yang Zhenyuan, and the others; it was the nervousness he felt when he joined the Old Task

Force; it was the satisfaction of individual growth through repeated missions; it was the tacit understanding and camaraderie he had with Jiang Baimian, Shang Jianyao, and Bai Chen.

No, I don't want to die! A force erupted from Long Yuehong's body, pushing him to the side to avoid the sharp edge. At this moment, another scene inexplicably flashed across his mind: it was in the Underground Ark. In the face of DiMarco's attack, he could've clearly pushed Bai Chen, but he had jumped away on his own due to his reflexive fear. This resulted in Bai Chen almost dying and having one arm disabled for a long time.

Bai Chen had never raised this matter again, but Long Yuehong always took it to heart. He felt that he shouldn't have done that. He shouldn't have acted like a coward and should've done better.

In a split second, Long Yuehong gritted his teeth. With bloodshot eyes, he turned around and pushed Bai Chen heavily. He was so strong that he sent Bai Chen—who had just straightened her back—flying and crashing into the distant sofa.

After doing this, Long Yuehong used the rebound to pounce to the wall corner.

Boom!

The grenade exploded behind him and Bai Chen, and the expanding flames made contact with half of Long Yuehong's body.

His vision instantly turned blurry and dark, leaving only one thought echoing: I'm not a coward...

Boom!

As Asus fired, he exerted strength with his feet and lunged backward to avoid the grenade explosion's aftershocks. He was too close to Bai Chen and Long Yuehong, so he deliberately let the grenade explode further away and did the necessary dodging.

Boom!

Amidst the explosion, Shang Jianyao—who had just recovered and didn't have the time to use Hands Immobility to stop all of this—quickly pulled his left hand out of his tactical backpack and threw a string of brown beads at the area where Asus landed.

His other fingers were tightly gripping a necklace with a silver angel pendant—Life Angel!

Christina—who had dodged further into the bedroom due to the explosion—had already completed her Itch Control over the few enemies. She was just about to deepen the effects when she suddenly had a strong sense of danger, but she didn't know where to hide.

She then felt intense pain in her heart.

The pain was so terrifying that she couldn't help but reach out to grab at her heart, wanting to stop it. However, her hand had just touched her blouse when it stopped; then, her body collapsed to the side.

Her mind was already blank, and her vision remained dark.

Cardiac Arrest!

Asus—who had fired the grenade—successfully dodged the aftershocks. He began to think of the subsequent countermeasures.

If Christina successfully controlled the surviving enemies, he had to finish them off quickly to prevent any accidents from happening again. If not, he would use the Flower of Love to trigger the male Awakened's desire and get him to deal with his female companions. He would then be free to finish them off one by one.

Badump!

Asus landed on the ground, his back hurting from something.

It was the Six Senses Beads that Shang Jianyao had thrown over. Its negative effect was that one's lust would increase once they came into contact with it, even if they were separated by one to two layers of clothes.

Asus's price was sexual addiction! When the two were combined, the effects were undoubtedly greatly amplified.

Asus's eyes turned bloodshot immediately, and his breathing became heavy. He no longer had the strength to control himself as he got up and slammed into the sofa. He relied on the latter to block the grenade's shockwave and ran fiercely.

Bai Chen had just recovered from her dizziness when she saw his warped face.

Desire burned in his eyes, making one shiver. This was one of Bai Chen's persistent nightmares.

Asus jumped up with a hideous smile as he pounced at his prey. Bai Chen couldn't help but tremble as if she had returned to the past.

Suddenly, Asus's expression froze. His eyes widened as his right hand desperately reached for his chest.

Bang!

He fell heavily in front of Bai Chen, his limbs twitching as his face quickly turned blue and purple.

Bai Chen was stunned for a moment before she let out a roar that sounded like a mix of crying and laughter. She then pounced at Asus and irrationally tore at his throat with her mouth.

Lumps of flesh were torn off as blood splattered.

On the other side, Shang Jianyao held his tactical backpack, took out his first-aid kit, and ran toward Long Yuehong.

Jiang Baimian also slowly stirred.

Chapter 537: Emergency Treatment

Long Yuehong's body was red and black, and he was badly mangled in many places as he lay there motionless.

Shang Jianyao didn't attempt to shake him awake like he usually did. He quickly checked the latter's injuries, took out the FECA biological agent from the first-aid kit, and injected it into him.

As a large faction in the Ashlands that specialized in biology and medical treatment, Pangu Biology was undoubtedly outstanding in this regard. The effects of FECA were immediate.

Long Yuehong—who was breathing weakly—stabilized, but he showed no signs of waking up.

Shang Jianyao then used the other items in the first-aid kit to treat Long Yuehong's wounds.

“You're almost wrapping him up like a mummy...” Jiang Baimian rushed over after she recovered. She took the bandages and other things from Shang Jianyao's hand and demonstrated what a textbook example of battlefield emergency treatment was.

Shang Jianyao didn't put on a brave front. He helped Jiang Baimian take off her tactical backpack, took out her medical kit, and replenished the supplies that were gradually expended.

On the other side, Bai Chen finally stopped her carnage and looked up. Her face was covered in blood, and streak marks were left by her tears.

Asus had almost stopped breathing, and blood was gushing everywhere.

Bai Chen snapped to her senses and hurriedly stood up to look at Long Yuehong. Upon seeing that Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao were carrying out emergency treatment and had yet to show any signs of grief, she felt a little more at ease. After that, she bent down, picked up a United 202 not far away, and raised her hand to aim at Asus's head.

Bai Chen exhaled heavily and pulled the trigger.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

She fired three times in a row—only three, blasting Asus's head apart like a smashed watermelon.

After doing this, Bai Chen quickly ran to Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao's side.

Upon seeing that the emergency treatment was still ongoing and that she couldn't help, she quickly held the United 202 and ran to the bedroom, firing a few more shots at Christina so as to snuff out

any latent dangers. She then yanked off the bedroom's bedsheet, blanket, and other items and made a very simple stretcher.

At this moment, Jiang Baimian had already finished giving battlefield emergency care. She turned her head and said to Shang Jianyao, "He needs surgery as soon as possible. Quick, make a stretcher and carry Little Red into the car."

Long Yuehong's current state was neither suitable for piggybacking or helping him up. It would easily worsen his injuries.

Just as Jiang Baimian said that, Bai Chen walked out of the bedroom with a simple stretcher.

It's good to have companions with tacit understanding and rich experience... Jiang Baimian praised inwardly. She restrained her worry and exhorted Shang Jianyao to carefully move Long Yuehong onto the stretcher.

As they busied themselves, Bai Chen ran to Asus's corpse and took out a withered, bookmark-like flower from his chest pocket.

"Do you want it?" she anxiously asked Shang Jianyao.

Shang Jianyao asked, "Can it reduce Little Red's injuries?"

"No," Bai Chen immediately replied.

This item made people undergo Sexual Eruption. To think of using it would mean they were afraid that the seriously injured person wasn't dying quickly enough.

"Then, we don't need it," Shang Jianyao said, not finding it a pity at all.

Bai Chen didn't say anything else as she threw the Six Senses Beads beside the corpse back to Shang Jianyao and picked up the Old Task Force's weapons. Then, she held the dried flower and rushed into the bathroom before throwing it into the sewers.

After securing the unconscious Long Yuehong on the stretcher, Jiang Baimian got Bai Chen to carry the other end as she said to Shang Jianyao, “You’re in charge of providing cover.”

At this point, she revealed a slightly terrifying but smiling smile. “Hold onto the Life Angel necklace. Kill anyone in our way!”

“Alright.” Not only did Shang Jianyao hold the Life Angel necklace, but he also wore the Six Senses Beads on his left wrist.

The accessory woven from black hair had completely lost its luster. It scattered to the ground with a light touch.

The Bangle of Blindness’s energy was depleted, a little faster than Shang Jianyao had expected.

Without having the time to check if Christina had any valuable items on her, the Old Task Force rushed out of the room in a race against time.

Jiang Baimian glanced into the distance and saw an unconscious man in the corridor. The bioelectric signals were stable, and his life wasn’t in danger for the time being.

She retracted her gaze and carried Long Yuehong with Bai Chen under Shang Jianyao’s protection. They entered the elevator and returned to the ground floor.

By then, someone had already called the police. Several Hand of Order members had already gathered downstairs.

Jiang Baimian—who had previously disguised herself—carried the stretcher and calmly walked over. She then said to the Hand of Order members, “There are two thugs upstairs, suspected to be wanted targets. They had a gunfight with us and injured one of our companions.”

She spoke with confidence and even had the authority of an officer. After the Old Task Force left the general’s residence, they were wearing formal city defense uniforms with the necessary identification documents!

Upon seeing Shang Jianyao show his identification, one of the sheriffs quickly asked, “How are the two thugs?”

“They’ve been killed. Go clean up the scene,” Jiang Baimian instructed. Her appearance was closer to that of a Red River person, but one could still tell that she was beautiful.

The Hand of Order members didn’t suspect anything and rushed to the elevator.

Jiang Baimian led Bai Chen and steadily carried the stretcher as usual. They left the apartment and found their military-green jeep nearby.

After settling Long Yuehong in the backseat and letting Shang Jianyao watch over him, Bai Chen rushed into the driver’s seat and started the car.

“Where to?” she asked anxiously.

Jiang Baimian estimated the distance. “Antanna Street. Let’s find an unlicensed clinic.”

It was faster to go to Antanna Street than to return to the Golden Apple Zone. Besides, even if they found General Phocas, they would have to go through a lot of trouble to find a doctor. It was better to go to an unlicensed clinic directly.

It was hard to comment on the standards of unlicensed doctors, but they were definitely experts at treating gunshot wounds and blast injuries. Jiang Baimian was only worried that they didn’t have sufficient equipment.

Bai Chen didn’t say a word. She floored the accelerator and started the car in the Green Olive Zone.

“Slow down,” Jiang Baimian quickly said.

Bai Chen didn’t respond and maintained her speed. It was only with her excellent driving skills and familiarity with the road that nothing happened.

Jiang Baimian eased up and said seriously, “More haste, less speed. Ignoring the possibility of an accident, there’s definitely something wrong with driving so quickly in the eyes of the helicopters and drones above. When the time comes, it will be troublesome if we are intercepted by the Hand of Order and the city defense forces.”

Bai Chen finally listened. She released the accelerator and slowed down the car, making the jeep less eye-catching. However, it was still relatively fast.

Jiang Baimian turned around and looked at the backseat. She said to Shang Jianyao, "I've given you all the FECA. When Little Red's condition isn't right, inject him with a dose. Make sure he survives until Antanna Street."

As for the problem of an overdose, they couldn't be bothered now.

"Alright," Shang Jianyao replied very succinctly, unlike his usual self.

Jiang Baimian composed herself and used the radio transceiver to inform Geneva of the situation here. She told him that the reinforcements might be delayed and that there was a high chance only two people would be sent. She told him to carry out the operation with Han Wanghuo and Zeng Duo given the conditions. If not, they would wait for a rendezvous before coming up with a solution.

Due to the unrest caused by the Citizen Meet and the subsequent search, there weren't many cars on the roads. The Old Task Force drove the jeep to Antanna Street in less than 15 minutes.

Most of the shops here were still tightly shuttered. The locals had yet to sound the all-clear and crawl out of hiding.

Bai Chen didn't care about this and parked the car in front of the clinic that had treated Han Wanghuo.

The clinic's door was also closed, but there was some sound coming from the residential unit on the second floor.

Jiang Baimian pushed open the door and alighted. She came to the clinic's shutters and slapped them hard.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

The sound echoed, but nobody responded.

Jiang Baimian didn't waste any time. She drew her United 202 and fired at the shutter door's lock a few times.

After three bangs, she bent down, raised her left hand, and easily opened the door.

"Come down!" she shouted at the second floor.

Upstairs, the unlicensed clinic's doctor—who was wearing gold-rimmed glasses—looked out the window. Upon seeing a tall man guarding the street with a grenade launcher, he immediately gave up on the idea of jumping out of the building to escape.

He nervously went down to the first floor and looked at Jiang Baimian. "W-what's the matter?"

"Can you operate? Our companion received blast injuries," Jiang Baimian asked concisely.

The doctor in the gold-rimmed glasses wanted to say that he didn't know how, but he didn't dare to patronize the other party when he saw her stance.

The black muzzle was really terrifying!

"I can, but I'm not a Kalendaria. I can't save him if the blast wounds are too serious." He gave some warning.

"Carry Little Red in," Jiang Baimian instructed Shang Jianyao and Bai Chen.

"Then, I'll go to the operating theater at the back to prepare." The unlicensed clinic's doctor pointed at the area behind the clinic.

Jiang Baimian didn't let him move alone, afraid that he would find an opportunity to escape.

After making the corresponding preparations and getting an assistant to come down to help, the doctor saw Long Yuehong—who had been carried to the operating table. He examined the latter carefully and blurted out, "He's still alive?"

With such injuries, those with weaker physiques would probably die on the spot.

“We have some first-aid needles.” Jiang Baimian placed the remaining FECA beside her. “Use them all you want.”

The doctor didn’t say anything else and got into the zone.

Upon seeing that he was skilled, Jiang Baimian, Shang Jianyao, and Bai Chen—who had put on their scrubs—took a few steps back to avoid disturbing him.

After a round of surgery, the unlicensed doctor reminded them, “There were no problems with the first-aid treatment. His physical fitness isn’t bad, and he’s lucky. I have the required blood for a transfusion, so the chances of him surviving are still high. However, he will definitely be crippled. He won’t be able to keep his right hand and arm.”

Jiang Baimian felt rather sad when she heard that. At the same time, she vaguely recalled an item that had been forgotten by the team for a long time.

Shang Jianyao directly said, “We have a mechanical arm. Can you help install it?”

The Old Task Force had previously traded for a T1 multi-purpose mechanical arm from United Industries’s arms dealer, Lehman.

Chapter 538: Settled

“You have one?” The unlicensed clinic’s doctor was shocked and almost added another wound to Long Yuehong. Although he had already determined that these people had some background from their looks, bearing, height, and weapons and that it was best not to offend them, he didn’t expect them to have a mechanical arm.

These weren’t common firearms like grenade launchers or automatic rifles. It was very tightly controlled, and supplies were scarce.

Jiang Baimian glared at Shang Jianyao and stopped him from speaking. “Don’t shoot your mouth. We’re undergoing surgery!”

The unlicensed clinic's doctor composed himself and laughed self-deprecatingly. "Do I look like I can transplant a mechanical arm?"

He had never tried a job that required such high technology and expertise.

Bai Chen immediately said, "There's an underground workshop on Antanna Street that can transplant mechanical arms. You should know where it is."

The unlicensed clinic's doctor didn't stop moving and muttered, "They might not accept it. How about this? I'll get my assistant to bring you there. Negotiate with them as soon as possible, and we'll do the implant directly to prevent any additional damage that comes from carrying out multiple operations. But without an assistant, the surgery will stop. I'm not a Kalendaria; I can't do two people's work alone."

"I'll help you." Jiang Baimian took the initiative to go over and take on the assistant's job. "Little White, you and Hey will follow."

She originally planned on letting only Shang Jianyao 'visit' the underground workshop, but she was afraid that he would screw up and mess things up. Therefore, she got Bai Chen to accompany him.

As for herself, she naturally had to stay behind to keep an eye on the area to prevent the doctor from causing trouble.

In short, this was a plan to ensure that both parties maintained sufficient combat strength.

After Shang Jianyao and Bai Chen followed the unlicensed doctor's assistant out the front door, Jiang Baimian focused her attention on the surgery.

It would take hours for such a major surgery to complete.

As the unlicensed doctor busied himself, he casually asked, "You don't look like city guards."

"We wouldn't be here if we were with the city defense forces." Jiang Baimian's tone was calm.

The unlicensed doctor glanced at the FECA biological agent beside him. “Your first-aid needle is very outstanding. Where does it come from?”

“You won’t be able to buy it even if I tell you,” Jiang Baimian replied without giving away anything.

The unlicensed doctor hesitated for a moment and said, “If possible, can I keep one? It can cover some of the cost.”

“We’ll talk about it when the time comes.” Jiang Baimian didn’t give an affirmative answer.

The unlicensed doctor took a scalpel from her and smiled. “You actually didn’t stop me from speaking. In the past, the patient’s companions would be very unhappy if I joked when I operated on others.”

“Being able to chat and joke means that nothing unexpected has happened. It’s all within your grasp, and you are confident that it will be done well.” Not only did Jiang Baimian have real-life experience, but she was also influenced by the Old World’s entertainment.

The unlicensed doctor nodded in admiration. “I admire smart women like you. Yes, if nothing goes wrong, there shouldn’t be any problems saving him. How long he can live depends on the Kalendaria’s mood and your preparations.”

...

After leaving the unlicensed clinic and walking toward the area near Antanna Street, Bai Chen reminded Shang Jianyao, “Those who can carry out a mechanical arm transplant aren’t simple. They must have a considerable faction backing them, and they might even have the support of a powerhouse. Once a conflict erupts, things will become very troublesome. It’s very likely that it will affect Little Red’s surgery.”

Shang Jianyao nodded. “I know.”

The doctor’s assistant—who was leading the way—looked back at them and muttered inwardly, “They know quite a bit...”

The Old Task Force was now disguised to be of Red River ethnicity and had deliberately not used Ashlandic.

Bai Chen quickly said, “When the time comes, we have to make friends with the people we meet regardless of whether we have a successful deal.”

First City was still under martial law. Anyone who could produce a mechanical arm would definitely arouse suspicion.

If they were reported by the people from the underground workshop, the Old Task Force might not be ransomed by Pangu Biology. Therefore, making friends was necessary insurance. Furthermore, if they made friends, the other party might agree to carry out the mechanical arm transplant.

“No problem.” Shang Jianyao agreed very quickly, indicating that he thought so too.

The doctor’s assistant—who was leading the way—muttered again, Do you think you can make friends so easily?

He didn’t dare to ask. He led Shang Jianyao and Bai Chen around the alley twice and arrived at an ordinary-looking street shop.

In the shop, an elder with a blond beard was holding a tool and using a magnifying glass attached to his head to repair an Old World mechanical watch.

The doctor’s assistant didn’t disturb him until he put down the things in his hand. He then looked up at the doctor’s assistant. “Conley, they are?”

“A customer who wants to do a mechanical arm transplant.” The doctor’s assistant, Conley, didn’t say that he had been coerced. Although there was nothing hard jabbing at his waist, he felt like a gun was aimed at him.

The elder with the blond beard frowned. “Mechanical arms need reservations. There’s definitely nothing available if you come all of a sudden.”

Shang Jianyao immediately said, “We’ve prepared one ourselves.”

The elder fell silent for a while, appearing rather hesitant. “What model is it? I’m afraid I won’t be able to do it. Small workshops like ours only know how to transplant a few models.”

“T1,” Shang Jianyao replied frankly.

“T1?” The elder’s eyes lit up. It was obvious that he was very interested in such a mechanical arm model.

He deliberated for a moment and asked, “Who wants the transplant?”

“An injured person,” Bai Chen replied simply.

The old man wasn’t surprised by this answer because the person leading the way was the unlicensed clinic doctor’s assistant, Conley.

He thought for a few seconds. “The patient can be sent over after the surgery. Our equipment isn’t easy to move.”

“Alright.” Shang Jianyao smiled. “Look, we have a mechanical arm, and you do mechanical arm transplants. We were introduced by the doctor, and you and the doctor are acquaintances. Therefore...”

The elder stood up, smiled, and stretched out his right hand. “Don’t worry. Anyone who makes the right payment is a friend.”

Conley was stunned.

The conversation from before confused him. He didn’t understand what it meant.

Shang Jianyao then turned to him and smiled.

After leaving the underground workshop and returning to the clinic, Bai Chen suddenly sighed with emotion. “Little Red’s luck is pretty good.”

The first unlicensed clinic doctor they found could carry out such a major surgery. The first underground workshop they were introduced to was also interested in the T1 mechanical arm and was willing to take on the job, reducing the risk of their ‘making friends’ being seen through.

“It seems like all his usual luck was accumulated for today,” Shang Jianyao said very sincerely.

...

In the area behind the unlicensed clinic, Jiang Baimian retreated to stand between Shang Jianyao and Bai Chen after Conley took over. She simply asked about the matter and heaved a sigh of relief. “Not bad.”

She then asked, “How much Oray does the other party want?”

Bai Chen was stunned for a moment. “We didn’t ask.”

Don’t you know how much Oray the team still has?

She thought that her team leader was prepared to ‘pay the bill’ with a gun.

It would indeed be a little troublesome for the underground workshop. They definitely had a considerable faction backing them, but didn’t they already make friends? They could write an IOU first and get the company’s intelligence network to raise money to pay the bill.

This should be considered a work injury that could be reimbursed, right?

As an employee who had joined Pangu Biology for more than a year, Bai Chen had already mastered the terms ‘work injury’ and ‘reimbursement.’

Jiang Baimian took a deep breath. “It shouldn’t be cheap...”

“Yes, yes.” Shang Jianyao strongly agreed.

The doctor from the unlicensed clinic—who was carrying out the surgery—quickly said, “I won’t charge you any surgery fees, but you have to pay for the equipment, drugs, and blood used. 200 Oray, nothing lower. The transplant over there will cost about 500 to 600 Oray. If you don’t have enough money, you can use these first-aid needles as payment.”

He had previously tried his best to chat with Jiang Baimian. This was not only because chatting with a beautiful woman was pleasant in both body and mind for a man and helped him maintain his condition, but he had also taken this opportunity to figure out Jiang Baimian’s personality and attitude so that he could adapt to any situation.

Although Jiang Baimian’s mouth was sealed and didn’t reveal any information, the doctor had already discovered that their group didn’t seem like bandits who would wantonly kill. Therefore, he dared to ask for payment.

Who wasn’t smart if they could survive and do business on Antanna Street all this while? Of course, this was excluding those with absolute strength.

“The total cost is about 800 Oray...” Jiang Baimian felt a little troubled.

After a period of expenditures without any revenue, they didn’t have much money left.

...

Red Wolf Zone, Senate.

The remaining Elders had yet to obtain permission to leave.

Superintendent Alexander saw his daughter, Galoran, walk back and asked in a deep voice, “How’s Master Zennaga?”

“Not too good.” Galoran shook her head.

Alexander was just about to arrange for the best doctor to treat him when he heard a Reformist Elder’s phone ring.

After the Elder picked up the call, he heard the other party report, “They’ve found Asus.”

Gaius had gone elsewhere to deal with the important aftermath. The Senate was handled by this Elder.

“Where is he?” the Elder asked anxiously.

“In an apartment near the bridge with Christina from the Hunter’s Guild,” the other party introduced in detail. “They’re all dead—shot dead by the city defense forces.”

“City defense forces?” The Reformist Elder was surprised. “Which elite team did it?”

Asus and Christina were no weaklings.

Chapter 539: Operation

An answer quickly came from the other end of the line. “We aren’t sure, but they suffered casualties.”

That still makes sense... The Reformist Elder—who had accepted Gaius’s commission—nodded and said casually, “Send Asus’s corpse over. As for Christina’s, hand it to the Hunter’s Guild.”

As for which city defense team did it, he didn’t care. After all, Phocas would report it to the new consul subsequently.

...

Genava, Han Wanghuo, and Zeng Duo traveled without stopping. They used up a full tank of gas and finally arrived at Early Spring Town from the Red River coast.

The sky had already turned dark, and the distant stone perimeter could barely be seen.

It had been nearly ten hours since First City’s Citizen Meet. If not for Zeng Duo being familiar with the terrain and traveling straight lines wherever possible, they wouldn’t have been able to travel so quickly given the North Shore wastelands’ road conditions and complexity.

Han Wanghuo took out his binoculars and observed the situation in Early Spring Town.

There were much fewer troops now compared to before. There was almost nobody in the camp outside the town.

The armored vehicles at the main entrance were gone, and only a khaki-colored tank stood alone.

Above the stone perimeter, the patrolling personnel were more vigilant than before. They were completely perked up and paid close attention to their surroundings with the help of the searchlights.

“Maybe only one-third of the troops remain.” Han Wanghuo wasn’t a smart bot and could only make a rough judgment. “The rest have returned to First City.”

Zeng Duo estimated the speed at which the troops crossed the North Shore wastelands. “After Gaius used the radio to announce that there would be a Citizen Meet today, they should’ve received orders to start returning.”

“The remaining personnel don’t have sufficient firepower either,” Genava said with a red glow in his eyes. “Besides, although they appear more focused, their hearts are actually wavering. They are worried that First City’s chaos will affect them. If it weren’t for the long delay because of our traveling and that it’s very likely they’ve already used the telegram to understand the outcome of the chaos and gain a certain level of confidence, we might have them surrender simply by saying a few words.”

The content of the shout would, of course, be: The party supported by the defense forces has been defeated. The higher-ups have sent people to clean up the area and requested that they immediately put down their weapons and stop any form of resistance.

Genava had chosen this move from Jiang Baimian’s behavior database. If one could influence the heart of the opponent, one would avoid war!

Zeng Duo didn’t understand what was going on in the beginning, but the more she thought about it, the more she realized how sinister people were.

Fortunately, Geneva—who came up with this solution—is a smart bot. According to him, this is chosen through the method of exhaustion, the outcome of an optimal choice. It has nothing to do with being sinister... Zeng Duo thought.

“Shall we attack now?” Han Wanghuo asked Geneva.

Geneva moved his metal neck up and down. “Yes, we have to make the best use of our time. If we delay any longer, the Mind Corridor-level Awakened will arrive soon even if the majority of the troops that have been transferred away don’t return that quickly.”

This opportunity couldn’t be missed!

Han Wanghuo immediately turned his head and said to Zeng Duo, “Put on the military exoskeleton.”

“Aren’t you going to wear it?” Zeng Duo subconsciously asked. From what she knew, a military exoskeleton was equivalent to a stronger safeguard and stronger offensive firepower. On such a battlefield, it was equivalent to having a few more lives.

Therefore, it was only natural for Han Wanghuo—who was closer to the Old Task Force—to wear the military exoskeleton.

To her surprise, Han Wanghuo chose to let her use it!

Han Wanghuo pointed in the direction of Early Spring Town. “The person wearing the military exoskeleton will lead the charge with Old Ge. The remaining one can stay behind and focus on sniping. It’s safer to go over when the enemies at the main entrance are cleared.

“I’m a selfish person. All decisions are definitely for my own good in the end—just like how I did so many good things and strictly fulfilled my promises just to make myself more like a human and not be rejected.”

“Is that so...” Zeng Duo felt that it made sense.

Geneva glanced at Han Wanghuo. “You don’t usually say so much. Do you have other thoughts?”

“...” Han Wanghuo shook his head. “No.”

Genava didn't ask any further. He watched Han Wanghuo take out the military exoskeleton from the SUV's trunk and helped Zeng Duo adjust the height and put it on.

After completing the preliminary work, Han Wanghuo raised his rifle and placed his yellowish-white eyes at the scope.

Genava relied on himself while Zeng Duo relied on the military exoskeleton to 'raise' their electromagnetic weapons as they looked at Early Spring Town in the distance.

Bang!

Han Wanghuo pulled the trigger.

In the dark sky and at such a distance, the bullet from his rifle muzzle accurately arrived at Early Spring Town's main entrance and drilled into the head of a First City soldier—who had come out for some fresh air—above the tank.

The head immediately exploded like a burgeoning watermelon.

Bang! Bang!

Genava and Zeng Duo also finished firing. The bullets—which were wrapped in silver-white electric currents—hit a patrolling soldier on the outer perimeter and penetrated their bulletproof vests.

As the two corpses fell, the two of them jumped out at the same time and ran toward Early Spring Town.

Boom! Boom!

They used grenade launchers to bombard the enemy at the main entrance.

Han Wanghuo remained in his spot. He relied on his talent and rifle to target the enemy's suspected officers one after another, preventing First City's garrison from organizing themselves in the panic.

In just dozens of seconds, the garrison at Early Spring Town's main entrance collapsed. They left behind corpses, some fleeing into town in an attempt to rendezvous with their companions inside and reorganize the defense line.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

Zeng Duo—who was wearing a military exoskeleton—jumped over the khaki-colored tank and landed on Early Spring Town's outer perimeter. Geneva did the same.

Boom! Boom!

They continued to use grenade launchers to suppress the garrison.

Han Wanghuo put away his rifle, bent his back slightly, and ran toward the khaki-colored tank.

After a round of bombardment, Zeng Duo used the evening light to take in the town clearly.

The houses and roads were no different from when she left. They were still simple but clean, but she couldn't see any Early Spring Town residents.

Are they all locked up? Just as this thought flashed through Zeng Duo's mind, half of her body suddenly turned numb. She couldn't help but fall to the side.

Boom!

Geneva blasted a grenade at a two-story building, and the surging flames blazed through a few shattered glass windows.

The numbness in Zeng Duo's body vanished, and she quickly used the military exoskeleton to maintain her balance.

...

First City, Green Olive Zone, Antanna Street, the area behind Grimm Watch Shop.

Jiang Baimian, Shang Jianyao, and Bai Chen had sent Long Yuehong here for a mechanical arm transplant. Nearly three hours had passed.

Adding the time from the previous major surgery, the sky had already turned dark, and the sun was about to completely sink below the horizon.

Bai Chen looked at the underground workshop's work area and asked, "Team Leader, do you really not need Hey and me to raise the money?"

The Old Task Force's remaining Oray had already been given to the unlicensed doctor. It happened to cover the cost of the equipment, blood, and drugs.

Of course, 'happened to' was a claim by Jiang Baimian. The doctor from the unlicensed clinic didn't dare to raise any objections. After all, he was Shang Jianyao's 'friend.'

He was only a little regretful that he didn't get a syringe of the FECA biological agent.

"There's no need." Jiang Baimian shook her head. "First City is still under martial law, so it won't be worth it if something unexpected happens. If Mr. Grimm doesn't accept us paying with some FECA and additional weapons later, we'll leave Little Red here. That T1 mechanical arm is much more expensive than their surgery fees. We'll raise money to redeem him when First City returns to normal."

Considering that Long Yuehong wasn't suitable to travel around for the time being, Bai Chen found her team leader's solution rather ingenious.

She thought of something and exhaled. "We were in such a rush. I wonder if Little Red likes a mechanical arm..."

“It’s fine.” Jiang Baimian waved her hand. “If he doesn’t like it, he can undergo a second surgery when he returns to the company and recovers. He can then replace it with a biological prosthetic limb to ensure that there’s nothing wrong with his appearance.”

“How casual.” Shang Jianyao expressed his thoughts.

Biological companies were just that casual!

The three of them waited for a while before they suddenly heard a commotion coming from Antanna Street.

The commotion quickly subsided, and the environment was so quiet that it made one nervous.

Soon, the sound of helicopters and drones sounded in the sky.

Jiang Baimian frowned slightly. “A wanted remnant escaped here?”

“Will they search in our direction?” Bai Chen was rather worried.

Jiang Baimian thought for a moment and said, “You and I will wear the military exoskeleton and stay inside. Hey, wait at the door. Be prepared to make friends.”

After giving the instructions, she turned her head and shouted at the underground workshop’s work area, “How much longer?”

“About half an hour,” replied the blond-bearded Grimm.

Shang Jianyao inserted his pistol back into his belt and walked to the watch shop’s closed door.

Chapter 540: Geneva’s Consolation

Wasteland, North Anheford area, Early Spring Town.

Geneva and Zeng Duo didn’t rashly advance. They used various sensors and electromagnetic weapons to eliminate the enemies hiding in the various houses in town.

The bullets—which were propelled by the electromagnetic force—had extremely strong penetrative power. It made many First City guards lose their lives or suffer heavy damage despite clearly being in a ‘safe place.’

Han Wanghuo seized the opportunity to reach Early Spring Town’s main entrance and climbed up the khaki-colored tank. After pushing the corpse to the side, he entered the tank and sat in the driver’s seat.

This was the first time Han Wanghuo had come into contact with such a weapon—equipment which had been labeled as the King of Land Wars in the Old World for a long time. When he was a sheriff and town guard captain in Redstone Collection, he had indeed seen many arms dealers and the smuggled goods they carried. However, this didn’t include tanks.

With the harsh conditions of the Ashlands’ roads and the few railroads, tanks weren’t a convenient item for transportation. They weren’t suitable for smuggling.

Transactions involving tanks were often conducted in neighboring areas. One side would drive it over, and the other drove it back.

Although he had never seen a tank, especially one produced by First City, Han Wanghuo didn’t show any fear. He studied it for a while and thought for a moment before starting.

On the way to Early Spring Town from the vicinity of the Red River, Geneva projected videos targeting the garrison’s tanks of how to drive a tank for him and Zeng Duo. He strictly adhered to Jiang Baimian’s instructions of not fighting an unprepared battle.

Geneva had plenty of usage information and related techniques of such weapons in his database. After all, he was once Tarnan’s mayor and a smart bot guard captain. A huge proportion of his job was to maintain public security, clear out bandits, and resist foreign enemies.

Before long, the khaki-colored tank made a sound. As its tracks spun, it slowly turned around and aimed the muzzle at Early Spring Town’s main entrance.

Boom!

The thick wooden door immediately shattered.

Han Wanghuo drove the tank into Early Spring Town. Under Geneva's command, he methodically reloaded shells and fired at the enemies that the electromagnetic weapons couldn't hit.

Boom! Boom!

One building after another collapsed, and only a small number of enemies barely escaped. They lost the courage to resist and scattered toward the town center with the help of cover.

Geneva and Zeng Duo alternated between swapping ammunition. They sometimes suppressed the enemy with firepower, and at other times, they tried a targeted approach to prevent the First City soldiers in the town center from organizing an effective counterattack and driving the remaining two armored vehicles.

As the khaki-colored tank approached, the remaining garrison retreated into a sturdy, reinforced concrete building.

This was Early Spring Town's school and also the shelter they had meticulously built. At the bottom of the building was a bomb shelter that the townsfolk had spent decades building.

At this moment, Zeng Duo realized that First City's soldiers had used the past few months to build many permanent fortifications at the bomb shelter's entrance.

"Analysis results: There are a large number of people inside. It should include the townsfolk of Early Spring Town." Geneva spoke in a slightly synthetic male voice.

Considering this, Han Wanghuo couldn't use the tank to bombard the entrance directly. Even if he was very lucky to have a shell successfully fly in, the ones killed might not be First City's garrison. There was a high chance that they were Early Spring Town's townsfolk.

Han Wanghuo—whose goal was to save these people—clearly couldn't act in a way that ran counter to his goals. Thus, he stopped the tank, crawled out, and raised his rifle to see if he had a chance to deliver a targeted attack.

He and Zeng Duo were in no rush because the current situation was still within their expectations.

With an Early Spring Town resident like Zeng Duo around, how could the Old Task Force not know of the bomb shelter's existence and not consider the situation of the garrison and the townsfolk entering?

When they separated, Jiang Baimian gave most of the potent anesthetic gas produced by Pangu Biology to Geneva.

The anesthetic gas in her electric eel-like biomechanical limb naturally needed replenishment after it was used. When out on expeditions, anesthetic gas was more useful than an exoskeleton in many situations. Therefore, she brought quite a number with her.

When Geneva 'created' the anesthetic rounds, Zeng Duo—who was wearing a military exoskeleton—paid close attention to the bomb shelter entrance. She didn't want First City's garrison to take this opportunity to counterattack.

Of course, she didn't continue delivering suppressive fire. Instead, she fired a few rounds at that spot from time to time or threw a grenade. They only had one car after all, and the weapons and ammunition they carried were limited. They couldn't afford too much wastage.

At this moment, a figure suddenly appeared in a crude building that Geneva and Zeng Duo had confirmed to be empty.

The figure quickly outlined itself in the air, wearing thin armor covered in scales. Under the dim setting sun, the scales flickered with different colors.

This was the Chameleon-type artificial intelligence armor produced by Pangu Biology!

Bang!

The figure turned to face Han Wanghuo—who was aiming at the bomb shelter entrance—as soon as he appeared and pulled the trigger.

He was holding a Gauss rifle.

A metal bullet wrapped in silver-white electric currents was shot out.

At virtually the same moment this figure appeared, Zeng Duo sensed it with the comprehensive warning system. She was stunned for a moment before she jumped up and pounced at Han Wanghuo.

Bang!

Han Wanghuo was thrown onto the tank by Zeng Duo. The metal bullet passed through the military exoskeleton's shoulder armor and flew into the distance.

Zeng Duo was almost hit.

At this moment, Genova's grenade launcher had already turned around.

Boom!

The figure in the bionic artificial intelligence armor couldn't dodge in time and was swallowed by the blooming fire. However, he didn't die yet, nor was he seriously injured. The Chameleon-type bionic artificial intelligence armor provided him with outstanding protection.

He mainly lost the Gauss rifle—it had been damaged in the blast.

The next second, a red laser shot out of Genova's palm and landed on the figure's body. It penetrated the scales and drilled into his organs.

The figure swayed a few times before finally collapsing.

"Pay more attention to your surroundings," Genova advised before busying himself with 'producing' the anesthetic rounds.

Zeng Duo jumped up and replied, "Alright."

She caught her breath and continued monitoring the area around the bomb shelter entrance. At the same time, she paid more attention to the nearby buildings.

Han Wanghuo quickly stood up. As he picked up his rifle, he touched the sore spot that arose from slamming into the metal exoskeleton.

He glanced at Zeng Duo and frowned. “Why did you save me? Don’t you know that this is very dangerous? It’s easy for you to be seriously injured or even die.”

Zeng Duo didn’t understand why Han Wanghuo had such a reaction and stammered, “I thought that since you’re here to help me, I should be the one taking on the risks. Besides, I don’t have long to live anyway. If I die, my heart will belong to you...”

Han Wanghuo’s eyes flickered as he blurted out, “Do you never consider yourself when doing things?”

He paused and added, “Stay alive. If you die now, I don’t have the equipment to preserve your heart. Do you want me not to get a payoff after working so hard all this while? Do you want me to die with you?”

As he spoke, he turned around and aimed at the bomb shelter entrance again.

Zeng Duo shut her mouth. Although she was a little confused, she admitted that Han Wanghuo made sense.

Genava consoled the two of them. “If I slightly modify a module, I can produce a temporary hypothermia tank. However, it lacks the corresponding preservation liquid.”

Han Wanghuo didn’t answer the question and urged, “Hurry up and get the anesthetic rounds done.”

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First City, Antanna Street, Grimm Watch Shop.

Shang Jianyao—who was wearing the city defense uniform—stood guard at the door and watched the wall clock tick.

After about ten minutes, footsteps—accompanied by a commotion—sounded. Right on the heels of that, there was a knock on the watch shop door.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

It was loud and rushed. It seemed like the person knocking on the door would kick open the door if nobody replied.

Shang Jianyao opened the door and saw a city defense team.

The city defense team was clearly stunned when they saw that the person inside was also wearing the same uniform.

Shang Jianyao laughed. As he took out the identification and documents General Phocas had given him, he said, “Look, I’m wearing the same military uniform as you, and there’s all the documentation. So...”

The city guards came to a realization and asked, “Are you carrying out a secret mission?”

“Is there something wrong here?”

“Did you discover any useful clues?”

“Shall we pretend not to see you?”

“What secret mission allows one to wear a uniform?”

As these soldiers asked their questions, the iron-black helicopter in the sky turned around in the heavy twilight.

The sound of rotors approaching gradually became louder, bringing about a strong gust of wind.