

## Ad Infinitum 551

### Chapter 551: Follow-up Review

Bai Chen kept to herself that she had firmly decided herself to be a member of the Old Task Force. Unless all her current companions had been replaced, she would definitely choose to continue. She didn't wish to repeat her previous experiences.

She felt that the current reason was enough to persuade Long Yuehong. After all, this was indeed one of her thoughts.

Long Yuehong stammered, "B-but the probability of contracting the Heartless disease in the company is very low; it's about the same as some terminal diseases. There's no need to fear it."

Since they couldn't avoid contracting terminal illnesses, there was no need to worry too much about the Heartless disease.

Bai Chen calmly replied, "It's completely different for me. Many terminal diseases can be prevented and avoided, but the Heartless disease can't. Besides, one won't immediately die after contracting a terminal disease. I will still have plenty of time to deal with all kinds of things and think of a way to clear my bucket list. Once I contract the Heartless disease, I will immediately lose all my rationality and no longer be human."

"That's true..." Long Yuehong couldn't out-talk her at all.

The employees of Pangu Biology actually knew of such a difference, but they had already lived like this for decades, going on for generations. Most of the time, they would consciously or unconsciously ignore this to make themselves happier and more relaxed. Otherwise, what else could they do?

Shang Jianyao—who had changed his personality at some point in time and had given up on competing with Long Yuehong in single-hand push-ups—started a new topic. He looked at Long Yuehong and said, "Which job do you want if you were to leave the Security Department?"

Long Yuehong had really thought of this question in the dead of night, but he definitely couldn't say that. He organized his words and said, "I'll go wherever the company sends me."

“Hypocrite,” the honest Shang Jianyao said. He called a spade a spade.

As Long Yuehong’s face flushed red, Shang Jianyao took the initiative to ‘consider’ this matter for him. “How about the Rec Center’s PIC? Look at Old Chen; he doesn’t have much to do most of the time. He only needs to carry a cup, sit there, listen to people chat, and sell things on the behalf of others. He can also leave the job of getting food to his staff; there’s no need for him to line up. When it’s crunch time, it’s just organizing activities—singing, dancing, playing chess, and playing basketball...”

Long Yuehong blurted out, “This doesn’t suit me. I don’t like dealing with people, much less organizing activities.”

At this point, he realized that his answer seemed to have been carefully considered. He quickly added, “I’m only a D5 now. Even if I’m promoted a rank this time, I’ll only be a D6. Yes, I can be promoted one more rank after leaving the Security Department, which makes me D7. However, the Rec Center’s PICs are all D8.”

“You still have to work hard!” Shang Jianyao patted Long Yuehong’s shoulder sincerely.

At this moment, Jiang Baimian—who had finished her report—walked in. Upon hearing their conversation, she smiled and said, “Little Red, don’t even think about it. Even if you can leave our team, you will probably stay in the Security Department. You will only be transferred to the Internal Affairs Department, and there’s a high chance that you will be doing intelligence analysis. Otherwise, won’t all your experiences be wasted?”

On the way back to Pangu Biology, she had a private chat with Long Yuehong. She said that according to the Security Department’s rules, members who were seriously injured and disabled could apply to be transferred out of the front line, making it necessary for them to consider their future.

For a member who had made significant contributions, the Security Department would seek their opinion when arranging their subsequent assignment. Therefore, Jiang Baimian’s words actually hid her personal suggestion.

“That’s good too.” Long Yuehong thought for a moment and realized that the job his team leader had mentioned suited him well. Furthermore, if he—who had lived on the surface—was transferred

to a position that was completely isolated from the outside world, he would definitely feel a serious sense of loss and be unable to adapt quickly.

In comparison, doing intelligence analysis allowed him to come into contact with the outside world to a certain extent and understand what was happening on the surface.

For some reason, Long Yuehong didn't want to delve deeper into his departure from the Old Task Force. He quickly changed the topic and said to Shang Jianyao, "Which job do you want to go to if you leave the Security Department?"

Shang Jianyao's eyes lit up. "After I save all of humanity, I'll apply to be transferred to the Rec Center as a PIC. I'll hold a singing competition one week and organize a mass dance the next! This will keep alternating!"

What simple ideals... Don't you think saving all of humanity isn't compatible with your future wishes? Long Yuehong criticized inwardly and patronized him. "I hope such a day will come."

Jiang Baimian stopped their chatting and clapped her hands. "Let's start training."

As they had just returned, the Old Task Force was under stress most of the time in the Ashlands. They had to be in condition and didn't have time to train their bodies. Therefore, their first day of training was mainly for recovery and getting back in shape.

This was rather helpful for Long Yuehong—who had just recovered from his serious injuries. But even so, his weakened body perspired faster than usual. Before long, his clothes clung to his wet body.

"You have a tummy," Shang Jianyao pointed out.

Long Yuehong almost flew into a rage out of humiliation. Why rub your nose in it?

Shang Jianyao then gave instructions. "Little White, hold his legs and let him train his core more."

"Alright." Bai Chen didn't refuse.

Long Yuehong was stunned. “O-okay...”

“Weren’t you the one who did this in the past?” Jiang Baimian glared at Shang Jianyao. She was helping them in the face of injustice.

Shang Jianyao boldly said, “I forgot that I had to pay the doctor a visit for my follow-up review of my mental problems the moment I returned.”

As he spoke, he walked to the entrance of the training room.

Long Yuehong shook his head and began training his abdomen and core with Bai Chen’s help. During this process, he recalled his conversation with Shang Jianyao and the future they looked forward to.

He suddenly sighed with emotion. If the Heartless disease didn’t exist and there were ample supplies, our lives would really be beautiful...

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Long Yuehong looked at Bai Chen and then at his team leader—who was doing the aerobic exercises. He couldn’t help but add, In fact, now is pretty nice too if there’s no need to go out into the field or worry about the Heartless disease...

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Pangu Biology, basement three.

Shang Jianyao met Dr. Lin at the usual place.

This lady in her thirties had her black hair coiled up. She wore a white coat and gold-rimmed glasses, making her appear mature and intellectual.

She found Shang Jianyao’s file, picked up a black fountain pen, and said in a casual tone, “I thought you wouldn’t come until a few days later.”

Shang Jianyao replied seriously, “I’m mainly here to tell you that there shouldn’t be any need for further treatment or observation.”

“You believe you have completely recovered?” Dr. Lin didn’t show any emotion; she had seen many patients say such things.

Shang Jianyao replied seriously, “No, the problem has worsened. It’s hopeless.”

Dr. Lin—who was hearing a patient give such an evaluation of their condition for the first time—was clearly stunned for a few seconds. “Whether it’s recoverable or not isn’t something you can determine for yourself.”

Shang Jianyao revealed a sunny smile. “We’ve already reached an agreement and have a sufficiently perfect negotiation mechanism. It’s pretty good now, so there’s no need for further treatment. There’s no way to treat it either. We can’t kill a few living people just for treatment.”

We... Dr. Lin secretly hissed and followed Shang Jianyao’s tone. “Are you sure y’all have no differences at all?”

“Yes, but the general direction is the same—that’s enough. We seek common ground while putting aside minor differences.” Shang Jianyao was so spirited that he didn’t look like a patient at all.

Dr. Lin probed, “What general direction did you reach an agreement on?”

“Saving all of humanity!” Shang Jianyao’s expression suddenly turned serious.

Dr. Lin’s grip on the black fountain pen suddenly tightened. She hesitated for a few seconds and said seriously, “I’ll jot down what you... y’all said and report it. That’s fine, right?”

Her initial idea was to urge the higher-ups to take forceful measures against Shang Jianyao and send him to the hospital to receive the corresponding drug treatment.

“Sure.” Shang Jianyao was rather calm and not afraid at all.

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On the 647th floor, Room 14.

After finishing their morning training, Jiang Baimian and the others took a shower and returned to the office to wait for the canteen to ‘open.’

As soon as Shang Jianyao entered the room, he asked Long Yuehong—who was flipping through some information, “Did you go to the Rec Center last night?”

Long Yuehong shook his head. “Where would I find the time? There were many questions from my parents, brother, and sister.”

“Sigh.” Shang Jianyao had a look of regret. “You haven’t even shown them your mechanical arm. This is something worth envy!”

Frankly speaking, Long Yuehong actually had an inferiority complex on this matter. It was also a reason why he didn’t go to the Rec Center last night. But after hearing Shang Jianyao’s words, he inexplicably felt that a mechanical arm wasn’t a bad thing. It was just like the portable computer from before—the envy of his neighbors.

Jiang Baimian could vaguely grasp his thoughts and reminded him with a smile, “If you really can’t get used to a mechanical arm, you can choose a biological prosthetic limb of your choice when the bonuses are distributed. Don’t choose the free ones; they’re scams!”

“Yes, I’ll consider it.” Long Yuehong wavered.

He didn’t really want to undergo surgery again. It wasn’t something good.

Jiang Baimian interrupted this discussion in time and looked at Bai Chen. In line with the topic, she asked curiously, “Little White, what do you usually do when you return to your floor?”

Bai Chen calmly replied, “Use the computer or sleep.”

“Don’t you go to the Rec Center?” Long Yuehong interrupted and asked.

Bai Chen shook her head. “People on our floor don’t like to go to the Rec Center.”

Most of your floor is filled with foreign employees. There's still some distance between them... Jiang Baimian laughed. "This means that your Rec Center's supervisor isn't qualified. I'll get Hey and Little Red to take you to another floor later to see how lively the Rec Center elsewhere is."

"Sure, sure." Shang Jianyao agreed directly.

Jiang Baimian was just about to say something when the phone on the table suddenly rang.

Chapter 552: First Review

Jiang Baimian picked up the phone and made terse grunts before looking at Shang Jianyao with a strange expression. "The C-14 project team wants you to go over for another test."

After informing him, she said in a teasing tone, "You sure are busy!"

Shang Jianyao looked at the wall clock in the room and reluctantly said, "It's almost time for lunch, so I'll go in the afternoon. It's not like they provide meals!"

He was very resentful about this. He had previously wanted to try the research institute's canteen.

"Whoa, that's a show of ill-discipline." Jiang Baimian rolled her eyes at him, picked up the receiver, and dialed back. She restrained the smile on her face and said in a very formal tone, "We have a routine meeting internally; it's very important. Shang Jianyao will be at your place after 2 p.m."

The C-14 project team didn't seem to have any objections.

Jiang Baimian quickly hung up and smiled at Shang Jianyao. "Done!"

She then joked, "It's not that easy to encounter a good superior like me."

Shang Jianyao glanced at Long Yuehong. "She's talking to you! Listen carefully."

Long Yuehong wanted to retort, but he felt a little nervous when he thought about who he would work under after leaving the Old Task Force. Therefore, he said with emotion, "That's right. It's really lucky to encounter such a good superior like Team Leader for my first job after graduation."

He felt that if he had gone to another Old Task Force or another frontline team from the Security Department, it was unknown if he would still be standing in one piece. Of course, he definitely wouldn't experience so much in other jobs as he did now, and the dangers he encountered would also be significantly reduced. However, Long Yuehong believed that his growth in the past year exceeded that of others by ten years. Not only was this reflected in his rank but also in his personal transformation.

“That’s right, that’s right.” Shang Jianyao strongly agreed. “Look, you already have a mechanical arm.”

“Are you mocking me?” Jiang Baimian was amused.

She stood up and snorted. “This won’t do; I have to show you the dignity of a team leader. I’ll treat everyone to lunch!”

“Alright,” Shang Jianyao replied with a glow on his face. “This way, we can get a lot of food.”

Bai Chen quietly listened and watched from the side with a faint smile.

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At 2:15 p.m., Shang Jianyao met the C-14 project team’s person-in-charge—Mei Shou’an—on the third floor of the underground building.

Mei Shou’an sat in the warmly lit office. He nudged his gold-rimmed glasses and pointed at the chair opposite the table. “Please sit.”

“You only said sit last time.” The honest Shang Jianyao said whatever was on his mind.

Mei Shou’an was just about to speak when he suddenly burped. He pressed the back of his hand to his mouth and said with a serious expression, “You should know very well why I requested for you.”

“I’m not sure.” Shang Jianyao shook his head. He then explained, “There are too many reasons. I don’t know which one it is.”



Mei Shou'an picked up the thermos beside him and took a sip. "Why didn't you say that you had already become an Awakened last time?"

Shang Jianyao said in surprise, "It's not like you don't know that I have mental problems."

As he spoke, he pointed at his head as though it was a matter of course.

Mei Shou'an's five fingers on the thermos moved as he asked, "What level are you at?"

"I just entered the Mind Corridor." Shang Jianyao was very honest.

The eyes behind Mei Shou'an's gold-rimmed glasses seemed to widen a little. He stared at Shang Jianyao and didn't speak for a long time.

"Are you sure?" he asked again in confirmation.

Shang Jianyao didn't respond verbally. He leaned back in his chair and crossed his fingers.

Sizzle!

The light in the office suddenly flickered.

"Electromagnetic Interference..." Mei Shou'an no longer had any doubts about Shang Jianyao's level and strength. He frowned and asked, "When did you Awaken?"

Shang Jianyao had an 'are you stupid?' expression. "When I participated in your experiments."

Mei Shou'an clasped his hands and asked with a strange expression, "In other words, you only used one year and three months to enter the Mind Corridor?"

Shang Jianyao nodded sincerely. "That's right. It was still a little slow; it took a lot of time towards the end. Sigh, I just couldn't steel my resolve."

Mei Shou'an decided not to discuss the topic. "Your team has experienced so much on the surface. Your team leader should've long sensed that you are an Awakened, but she didn't submit a report about it."

Shang Jianyao shrugged. "Something that can be resolved with Inference Clowning. If one attempt doesn't work, a few more times will do."

This was the plan that had been discussed by the Old Task Force. Once the company learned that Shang Jianyao was an Awakened, they could push all the blame onto him. After all, he was already an Awakened at the Mind Corridor level. No matter how he was punished for such 'minor mistakes,' it would only be a slap on the wrist.

"One of your abilities is Inference Clowning?" Mei Shou'an's focus was diverted. "Are you from Master Zhuang's domain? What are your other abilities?"

Shang Jianyao sized up the intellectual-like researcher. "Are you an Awakened?"

"Yes." Mei Shou'an didn't hide the truth. With that said, he burped again.

"What level are you at?" Shang Jianyao took the initiative, acting as if he were the inspector.

Mei Shou'an hesitated for a moment before frankly saying, "I've also entered the Mind Corridor."

"You're already a Mind Corridor-level Awakened, yet you aren't aware that you can't inform your abilities and price to anyone?" Shang Jianyao immediately 'criticized' the person in charge of the C-14 project.

Mei Shou'an couldn't help but raise his hand to nudge his gold-rimmed glasses. "It doesn't matter if you say it or not. It's very obvious."

There's something wrong with his mind!

"Therefore, I can't reveal my abilities to others." Shang Jianyao acted as if it was only right.

Mei Shou'an slowly exhaled and said, "Since you've already become a Mind-Corridor Awakened, you will have to undergo two to three tests and reviews. This will be the first one. Shang Jianyao, what's your goal? Or rather, what are your pursuits?"

Shang Jianyao's expression turned serious bit by bit. "Saving all of humanity!"

Mei Shou'an was mentally prepared. He paused for a few seconds and asked, "What happens after saving humanity?"

"Be the Rec Center's PIC on a certain floor and organize everyone to sing and dance!" Shang Jianyao became active and excited. "I won't object if you transfer me to the Entertainment Department to be its PIC."

Mei Shou'an was momentarily speechless. He could only pick up a pen and write in the notebook in front of him.

He wrote down Shang Jianyao's complete answer and added his opinion at the end: "The subject of review has a strong sense of belonging to the company."

After adjusting his attitude, Mei Shou'an thought for a moment and said, "If you can pass all the reviews and tests, you will be in charge of your Old Task Force later at your level."

"That won't do." Shang Jianyao shook his head very firmly.

"Why not?" Mei Shou'an asked in confusion. "If you're worried about your team leader, the company can transfer her to be the team leader of another team."

Shang Jianyao's expression gradually turned solemn. "Because... I can't beat her."

Mei Shou'an massaged his forehead and burped again.

"She's also an Awakened?" asked the research institute's PIC.

Shang Jianyao shook his head. "Not for the time being."

Mei Shou'an couldn't help but ask, "Then, why can't you defeat her? What does she rely on?"

Mei Shou'an knew very well how powerful Mind Corridor-level Awakened were.

Shang Jianyao fell silent for a moment before saying, "She relies on her brain."

Mei Shou'an fell silent for a while before picking up the thermos and taking another sip. "Ahem, what do you know about the Mind Corridor level?"

Shang Jianyao explained most of what he knew, but he didn't mention Du Heng's last exhortation.

Mei Shou'an nodded and said, "You guys have indeed experienced a lot. I can remind you again not to transfer the aura or power in items to your Sea of Origins. This will result in the exposure of your mind coordinates. It's very easy for the corresponding powerhouse who has explored the Mind Corridor's depths to invade you. Furthermore, they can also get helpers to come along. This is a very dangerous act. We can't hope that the other party doesn't sense it. Although this is also a relatively common situation, one can never be too careful. I should've told you this when you entered the Sea of Origins, but you had to hide your strength.

"Also, try your best not to tell others the door number of your Mind Room. This might result in you being attacked in the Mind Corridor. You don't want real-life enemies to open your room and explore your mind, right? Exploring itself is equivalent to an invasion."

Shang Jianyao thought for a moment and said, "Then, that means I can wipe them all out?"

Mei Shou'an felt choked. After a long time, he said, "I hope your strength matches your lofty ambitions."

Shang Jianyao skipped the topic and took the initiative to ask, "Can exploring other Mind Rooms enhance one's strength?"

Mei Shou'an sized up Shang Jianyao again. "You're still relatively good at thinking when you're normal. Yes, based on the company's internal definition, it's a way to enhance your mental strength through such tempering. But exploring other mind rooms is also a very dangerous matter. It's best to do it one step at a time. Retreat when you discover any abnormalities and continue after you are done making preparations."

At this point, Mei Shou'an shared some general knowledge. "Under normal circumstances, you have to explore at least five Mind Rooms to raise your mental strength to the point where you can see the New World's door. Otherwise, you won't be able to find it."

"What about abnormal circumstances?" Shang Jianyao was very curious.

Mei Shou'an's expression changed slightly. "Seeing the door to the New World from randomly opening a door after one just enters the Mind Corridor."

After saying that, his expression turned solemn. "Such people often claim to have received a Kalendaria's favor."

Chapter 553: Coincidence?

Mei Shou'an didn't say too much. For relatively important knowledge such as determining if there was a door that led to the New World in a room, he could only tell Shang Jianyao after he cleared all the inspections. He mainly told Shang Jianyao what to take note of. This was to prevent Shang Jianyao—a mentally challenged Awakened—from rashly exploring the Mind Corridor during the review process and encountering problems that could've been avoided.

After nearly an hour-long conversation, Mei Shou'an got his subordinate—a researcher—to give Shang Jianyao a detailed physical examination.

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495th floor, Zone C, Rec Center.

Long Yuehong—who had eaten dinner—mustered his courage and came here. He realized that most of his neighbors didn't treat him as a monster. They were only very curious about the mechanical arm and were rather interested in his current state.

After Long Yuehong gave his prepared excuse, their attention quickly focused on the mechanical arm's functions. Someone would come over to touch, knock, or request a demonstration from time to time. This included some young girls; it left Long Yuehong rather embarrassed.

After getting over the psychological barrier, he finally found an opportunity to squeeze out of the crowd and come to a corner.

“Hey, Meng Xia. Long time no see.” Long Yuehong smiled and greeted a lady. He had given the excuse of ‘he had seen a classmate’ to escape the ‘harassment.’

Meng Xia was just about to stand up and greet her old classmate when her husband, Zhang Lei, came over and helped her up.

“This is?” Long Yuehong had experience out in the field and immediately sensed the ‘situation.’

Zhang Lei—who looked very quiet and reserved other than his relatively sharp eyes—revealed a rare smile. “Xiaxia is pregnant.”

Long Yuehong wasn’t surprised at all. Meng Xia and Zhang Lei had been married for more than a year. With Pangu Biology’s pro-fertility policies, it was actually considered late for them to only be expecting now.

“Congratulations!” Long Yuehong smiled. He then took the initiative to pull a chair over and sit down instead of requiring his former classmate to get up out of politeness.

“Thank you,” Meng Xia replied before asking curiously, “Is your mechanical arm really that strong?”

She wanted to ask, “Did you really take the initiative to request a transplant?” However, she felt that their relationship wasn’t that good to delve into the topic, so she changed the topic.

Her husband—Zhang Lei, who came from outside the company—asked, “What model is it?”

“T1.” Long Yuehong didn’t hide the truth.

Zhang Lei was a little surprised. “You’ve been to United Industries? This is considered a relatively new model. It’s rare even in First City.”

“We know an arms dealer from United Industries,” Long Yuehong explained simply.

Meng Xia became even more curious and turned to ask her husband, “Is this really that impressive?”

“Yes.” Zhang Lei looked around and gave an example. “If used well, he can kill everyone here alone.”

He was referring to the Rec Center.

Long Yuehong subconsciously said humbly, “The premise is that there are no Awakened here, and none have undergone genetic modification or have transplanted a biological prosthetic limb.”

Meng Xia was dumbfounded. She didn’t care about the mechanical arm’s strength, although it was indeed a little impressive. She was angry and amused because of the example her husband had given her. What a crappy example!

Long Yuehong actually replied to this example!

This was like someone asking if a vegetable knife’s edge was sharp, but the other party’s answer was that it was enough to kill their entire family.

Although the tone and nature weren’t that serious, the underlying logic was similar.

Meng Xia couldn’t help but retort, “Can you guys chat properly?”

Is this the way people who have lived on the surface think?

Long Yuehong also sensed this problem. He raised his mechanical arm, scratched the back of his head, and abruptly changed the topic. “Meng Xia, have you just gotten pregnant? I couldn’t tell. Shouldn’t you be out less at a time like this? Why are you back here?”

Under the influence of the Life Ritual parish’s qualified parishioner—Shang Jianyao—Long Yuehong had some general knowledge that he shouldn’t have.

Meng Xia pursed her lips and said, “Our floor is too depressing. There’s nobody at the Rec Center, so it’s uncomfortable staying there. The atmosphere here is better.”

Long Yuehong recalled that Meng Xia and Zhang Lei lived on the floor that was mainly filled with foreign employees. He was just about to say something when he saw Shang Jianyao walk into the Rec Center.

“Over here.” Long Yuehong waved his hand.

Shang Jianyao had just approached when he rubbed his stomach and asked Long Yuehong, “Do you still have noodles at home?”

“Yes. Why? Did you not get to eat?” Long Yuehong asked.

Shang Jianyao sat opposite Meng Xia and sighed. “The research institute doesn’t provide food but kept me there until now. There’s nothing to eat anywhere, so I can only cook.”

“Why were you at the research institute?” Meng Xia asked curiously.

Shang Jianyao frankly replied, “To be researched.”

“Haha.” Meng Xia laughed.

After not seeing him for a long time, Shang Jianyao still liked to joke like before. However, his personality had changed quite a bit compared to when he was in school.

In the lively Rec Center, the four of them chatted. The atmosphere was very relaxed.

During this process, Zhang Lei glanced at Shang Jianyao. “I thought you would have a mechanical arm transplanted as well.”

This was based on his intuition.



“He stole it. There was only one.” Shang Jianyao pointed at Long Yuehong indignantly. He showed unconcealed envy, jealousy, and hate.

Meng Xia completely believed that Long Yuehong had volunteered for the transplant.

After chatting for a while, Shang Jianyao looked around and didn’t see a familiar figure. Therefore, he asked, “Where’s Old Chen?”

In private, they mostly called this floor’s Rec Center PIC—Chen Xianyu—Old Chen. In front of him, they called him Grandpa Chen.

Meng Xia’s expression changed a few times before she replied solemnly, “There was an outbreak of the Heartless disease in the company in early August. Grandpa Chen was unfortunately infected.”

“Ah...” Long Yuehong found it a little surreal. It has only been a few months, but everything has changed?

Shang Jianyao also fell silent. The people in the Rec Center either played cards, chatted, or discussed whether they should organize a dance party this weekend. It was very lively.

Long Yuehong—who originally found this relaxing feeling very pleasant—suddenly couldn’t sit still. He said to Meng Xia, “Shang Jianyao and I will be leaving first. He’s still hungry.”

“Bye.” Meng Xia waved her hand.

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After using some stockpiled canned food and Long Yuehong’s noodles to make a large bowl of braised beef noodles and finishing it, Shang Jianyao washed up and rinsed his mouth before getting into bed.

He entered the Mind Corridor again, split into ten, and sized up his surroundings. As he did so, he realized that the door numbers were the same as before.

There were no changes.

Following their original route, the Shang Jianyaos walked in one direction of the corridor.

Before long, he arrived near Room 1215. He planned on going deeper and finding more abnormalities so that it would be easier for him to make preparations in the future.

When the ten pairs of eyes looked over, the Shang Jianyaos' gazes froze at the same time. In their memories, the golden door number was: '1235.'

"It changed?" The Shang Jianyao wearing a deer-hunting hat fell silent for a moment.

"The other door numbers haven't changed," the timid Shang Jianyao reminded his associates—associates of the Shang Jianyao Democratic Association.

The honest Shang Jianyao frowned. "That's strange. Could it be that Room 1215 is also a little strange? It's the mobile type, making it difficult to enter it again?"

"It's hard to say." The Shang Jianyao wearing a red kasaya shook his head.

The ten Shang Jianyaos discussed for a while, but they couldn't come up with an effective explanation. They could only wait for the review to end before asking Mei Shou'an if he had seen room numbers change.

...

In an elevator that led to the 647th floor the next morning.

Long Yuehong looked at the constantly changing numbers on the LCD screen and fell silent for a while. "Will there be at least one Heartless outbreak every year?"

He was referring to Pangu Biology's interior.

"Yes, based on memory." Shang Jianyao stroked his chin.

Although there hadn't been many Heartless disease outbreaks on the 495th floor where they lived, the adults who heard the corresponding broadcast would always feel a little terrified and subconsciously reduce the number of times they gathered at the Rec Center. Therefore, they—who were young back then—also felt it. It left an indelible impression.

“Last year was late autumn, and the Life Ritual parish was involved... This year it happened in early August...” Long Yuehong tried to find the connection between the two epidemics.

Without a doubt, he failed.

If the rules behind the Heartless disease epidemic were that easy to discover, the researchers would've long figured it out!

At this moment, Shang Jianyao—who had his hand under his chin—exclaimed, “Wasn't early August when you had your surgery?”

First City's unrest happened in early August.

“What connection can there be?” Long Yuehong felt that it was purely a coincidence. He believed that Shang Jianyao was mostly joking with him, saying that his serious injuries had triggered the company's Heartless outbreak.

After arriving on the 647th floor and entering Room 14, Shang Jianyao shouted at Jiang Baimian—who had already arrived, “Big White, check when the company's August outbreak started and when it ended.”

Jiang Baimian gritted her teeth. “Is there a problem?”

Although Big White was a nickname she had given herself and required her team members to use it, she felt like she needed to give Shang Jianyao a beating every time he called her that.

“Guess?” Shang Jianyao replied with interest.

Jiang Baimian glared at him and couldn't be bothered with him. She used the computer and entered the intranet to flip through the corresponding news that she was privy to.

As she read, she said, “The first case was in the morning of 7th August, between 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. As it was discovered relatively late, the precise timing couldn’t be obtained... It ended on August 13...”

At this point, Jiang Baimian paused and frowned. Then, she suddenly looked up at Shang Jianyao and Long Yuehong.

After hesitating for a moment, Jiang Baimian said in a deep voice, “7th August was the day of First City’s chaos.”

Chapter 554: Hypothesis

7th August left a deep impression on Long Yuehong. This was not only the day of First City’s chaos but also the day he was seriously injured—the day he lost his right arm.

Jiang Baimian was now telling him that a Heartless outbreak had erupted in Pangu Biology on the same day.

“It can’t be that coincidental, right?” Long Yuehong blurted out.

Jiang Baimian pondered for a moment and replied, “Maybe it’s not a coincidence.”

Long Yuehong gaped open his mouth but was at a loss for words. He then realized that Shang Jianyao was looking at him.

This fellow will definitely say that it’s because of me... Long Yuehong felt that he could already guess what Shang Jianyao would say next. However, his guess didn’t become reality because Bai Chen entered the office that very moment and expressed her puzzlement at the rather solemn atmosphere.

After Jiang Baimian explained, she directly voiced her thoughts. “Didn’t we previously guess that First City’s unrest might gain the attention of the Kalendarium or that they might even directly interfere? Could the latter have happened without us sensing any obvious abnormalities? Clashes between the Kalendarium produced a certain stir, causing small-scale Heartless outbreaks to happen across different parts of the Ashlands.”

Long Yuehong's first reaction to Jiang Baimian's bold hypothesis was to heave a sigh of relief. In short, it's not because of me!

Bai Chen didn't object or agree. She thought for a moment and said, "If that's the case, the company definitely wouldn't be the only one experiencing a Heartless outbreak on 7th August."

"Yes." Jiang Baimian nodded slightly. "When we are out on the next mission, we have to ask every place we pass by if anyone contracted the Heartless disease on 7th August."

Long Yuehong's heart palpitated.

"According to this hypothesis, many Heartless patients should've appeared in First City on 7th August. However, we didn't hear of any."

After the chaos, Jiang Baimian and the others stayed in First City for a long time while waiting for Long Yuehong to reach a certain level of recovery.

Just as Long Yuehong said that, Shang Jianyao laughed. "Have you forgotten the most unlucky gentleman?"

"Huh?" Long Yuehong was stunned for a moment. "First City's former consul and commander-in-chief, Beulis?"

If not for the sudden contraction of the Heartless disease, there was a high chance that the chaos wouldn't have developed in the same way.

"It's said that he's very strong as well. Maybe the Heartless virus caused by the fluctuations in that area was concentrated on him," Jiang Baimian hypothesized irresponsibly.

Shang Jianyao suddenly changed the topic without waiting for Long Yuehong and Bai Chen's response. "Master Zennaga predicted that we would trigger chaos in First City, but everything that happened later had nothing to do with us..."

At this point, Shang Jianyao looked at Long Yuehong and smiled. "Maybe you spread the bad luck to Beulis."

“I’ve never seen him!” Long Yuehong subconsciously retorted.

In ‘surprise’ and ‘fear,’ Shang Jianyao praised, “You’re getting more and more impressive! You can affect a person’s luck without contact!”

“Enough.” Jiang Baimian stopped Shang Jianyao’s acting, curling the hair drooping down from her ear. She deliberated and said, “I suspect it’s related to Tomato Omelet.”

She was more careful than anything when it came to matters involving Xiaochong. Even though she knew that there were no wires in the room, she still used a codename.

“If we hadn’t escaped from Sikhara Temple in advance, there’s a high chance that we wouldn’t have been attacked by the commissioner, nor would we have sought help. This resulted in Tomato Omelet being scared away by the commissioner, and it’s very likely that he would’ve left First City immediately,” Jiang Baimian explained further. “If he were still in First City during the Citizen Meet, there would’ve been many variables involved. It might not have blown up at all.”

“That makes sense.” Long Yuehong agreed the more he thought about it.

Of course, the premise was that Master Zennaga’s prophecy didn’t deviate too much and that the Old Task Force had indeed sparked First City’s chaos in a sense.

Shang Jianyao revealed a reminiscent expression. “I wonder where he is now.”

Bai Chen carefully thought through the logic and sighed with emotion. “Master Zennaga’s prophecy was actually confirmed in such a winding manner...”

“That’s how prophecies are.” Jiang Baimian laughed. She then stood up. “Let’s get to training. Leave these questions for later verification. Our current mission is to rest and recover. When the higher-ups complete the review and distribute the bonuses, we will each write up our own applications.”

With a look of anticipation after a pause, Jiang Baimian said, “If our guesses regarding the source of the Heartless disease outbreak is right, the more important thing in the future isn’t to find the places

where someone was infected with the Heartless disease on August 7. Instead, it's to list out settlements where nobody was infected and extract the similarities between them.”

She sounded hopeful and expectant.

At this moment, Long Yuehong inexplicably felt his team leader's face glow. Shang Jianyao—who was beside him—also had the urge to give it a try.

...

Jiang Baimian returned home after the day was over.

“Dad, you're early?” She was a little surprised to discover that her father—Jiang Wenfeng—was already sitting in the living room. She didn't eat in the small canteen today, having had plans on returning home to cook something for herself.

As for the Old Task Force, they had been in a lull period for the past few days. They left work according to their mood and often left early.

Jiang Wenfeng snapped, “It's all because of you!”

He then sighed. “The biological cochlear surgery and Awakening experiments have been arranged for you. After a routine review, you can schedule a specific time.”

Jiang Baimian glanced at her father and deliberately asked timidly, “What happens if I beat a retreat because of fear?”

Jiang Wenfeng glared. “You can pretend that nothing happened for the Awakening experiment, but I'll knock you out for the cochlear implant surgery!”

“How ruthless...” Jiang Baimian dragged out her words. At a time like this, she naturally wouldn't say things like ‘I'll give you a left-hand handicap’ to spoil the mood.

While on this topic, Jiang Baimian curiously asked, “Dad, how many Awakened in our company have already entered the New World?”

Jiang Wenfeng frowned. “This isn’t something you should know at your rank.”

With that said, he slowly exhaled. “Actually, I’m not too sure either. The confidentiality level for such matters is M3.”

In other words, only the board members knew.

Jiang Baimian thoughtfully whispered, “There are a total of five board members...”

Jiang Wenfeng didn’t respond.

...

495th floor, Zone C, Rec Center.

Shang Jianyao, Long Yuehong, Meng Xia, and Zhang Lei sat in a corner. As they enjoyed the bustle around them, they chatted about all kinds of topics.

“We’ve been back for a few days. Why hasn’t Yang Zhenyuan appeared...” Long Yuehong mentioned his other good friend.

Meng Xia scoffed. “Maybe he’s busy taking care of his child.”

Long Yuehong came to a realization and slapped his forehead with his right hand. “I forgot about that.”

With a bang, he frowned slightly but pretended nothing had happened.

Meng Xia glanced at him and then at Shang Jianyao. “Besides, your ranks are rising too quickly. As classmates, we feel inferior in front of you!”

Pangu Biology was neither small nor large. The news that Long Yuehong and Shang Jianyao were already D5 had long spread across the 495th floor.



“You can also apply to be transferred to a front-line team at the Security Department,” Shang Jianyao suggested seriously.

Meng Xia rolled her eyes. “Count us out. We’ll just wait for one of our classmates—no, two to reach management levels. A rising tide lifts all boats.”

As they chatted, Shang Jianyao suddenly looked at Meng Xia’s husband, Zhang Lei. “Have you heard of the Naturalism Church?”

This was a cult that had previously spread within the company and affected some people.

Zhang Lei recalled and said, “Is that the religion that wanders around naked because they don’t like to wear clothes?”

“Yes.” Long Yuehong helped provide confirmation.

“There’s such a religion?” Meng Xia looked surprised.

Zhang Lei nodded. “I encountered them a few times near the White Knights area before joining the company.”

Just as he said that, Meng Xia suddenly interrupted. “Is it a pleasant sight?”

“Some are old, and some are Subhumans,” Zhang Lei said casually.

Shang Jianyao asked excitedly, “Then, do you know which Kalendaria they believe in?”

Zhang Lei thought for a moment and said, “I think it’s May’s Monitor.”

Shang Jianyao came to a realization. “Running naked is also a form of behavioral art!”

After chatting for a while, the pregnant woman was ‘forcefully’ taken away. Shang Jianyao and Long Yuehong left the Rec Center and returned to their respective homes.

Zone B, Room 196.

Shang Jianyao lay on the bed and opened his eyes in the silent darkness.

The light from the streetlamps outside illuminated an area near the window. From time to time, it was disturbed by the pedestrians passing by.

Some static came from the radio a few minutes later, and a slightly childlike voice sounded. “Good evening, everyone. I’m Newspoint broadcaster, Hou Yi. It’s 8 p.m. now...

“Today, the Board of Directors and Vice President Ji Ze convened the Security Production Month meeting...”

Chapter 555: Figuring out the Rules

“The Water Conservation Department will gradually organize a series of water conservation lectures...”

“At 6:20 p.m. today, a murder on the 568th floor happened. Preliminary investigations suggest that the reason is a major outbreak after the accumulation of various day-to-day trivial conflicts...”

“...” A slightly childlike voice echoed on every floor, allowing the employees listening to the radio to understand what had happened in the company today.

There was positive news and negative news, but this didn’t stop Shang Jianyao’s room from becoming quieter.

After Newspoint, the radio station had scheduled a review program to talk about today’s murder. They introduced all the vile cases and the corresponding judgment after Pangu Biology moved into the underground building to serve as a warning to their employees.

This program was still hosted by Hou Yi. The Shang Jianyaos listened with relish.

Some of the vile cases were familiar to everyone, such as the explosion on the 386th floor. It happened back in the Chaotic Era. Supplies in Pangu Biology were seriously inadequate, especially

when it came to mineral resources. For this reason, the Board of Directors specially sent some teams to occupy some of the mines in the surrounding area.

Among them was a D6 middle-ranking employee. After working at the mine for six months, he returned home and realized that his wife and neighbor were having an affair. Not only did the neighbor rank slightly higher than him, but he also had a certain level of connection with the management and was a relative of a certain family.

The employee fumed the more he thought about it. He believed that it would only result in a divorce if the matter escalated and that it wouldn't deal any damage to the culprit. Therefore, he pretended not to know and returned to the mine.

He returned home six months later and knocked on his neighbor's door that very night.

The person who opened the door was the man.

The employee didn't say anything else as he pulled open his clothes, revealing a belt of dynamite strapped around his waist.

The man was grabbed before he could identify what it was. Then, an explosion happened.

The duo was naturally blasted to pieces. It was said that the children on that floor found a few fingers while playing the next day.

The rooms and floors in that area were seriously damaged. Fortunately, the explosion happened at the door, so it didn't affect the bedroom inside that much. Otherwise, more than two people would've died.

Due to danger such matters caused to the underground building's structural integrity, Pangu Biology began to put emphasis on the entry inspection and management of the mines. This resulted in the subsequent series of regulations. At the same time, the act of destroying outfield employees' marriage was deemed illegal and was made an amendment to the statute.

After quietly listening to the review episode, Shang Jianyao raised his hand to rub his temples reluctantly.

...

His figure appeared in the room corresponding to the Mind Corridor.

Shang Jianyao didn't search for 1215. He chose a new target further away from his room: "522."

5 represented the domain of May's Kalendaria, Monitor. This was the target of the Naturalism Church's faith.

Of course, '5' might also belong to the Master Zhuang domain.

After a new round of voting, the Shang Jianyaos confirmed their initial exploration approach. Therefore, they combined into one and opened Room 522.

What Shang Jianyao saw was a ruin. The glass windows were already shattered, and the outer walls were cloaked in the darkness of the night. Large patches of blood also dyed different spots.

Shang Jianyao had clearly walked into the room, but it appeared as though he had walked out of a building. He was immediately on a street filled with cars.

He was in no rush to advance as he stood in the middle of the street and observed his surroundings.

At this moment, the front door of a car beside him was suddenly pushed open, and a figure jumped out.

His hair was messy, and his eyes were turbid and bloodshot. He was clearly a Heartless.

Shang Jianyao had already sensed something the moment the door opened. But just as he was about to dodge, he came to an abrupt pause and treated himself as a target.

The Heartless pounced on him and tore at his shoulder. The corresponding spot was instantly mangled.

"Howl!" Shang Jianyao howled in pain. Only then did he exert strength and throw the Heartless out.

He didn't even glance at the dangerous creature as he split into ten and sized each other up.

Every Shang Jianyao had a hideous wound on their shoulder.

The Shang Jianyao wearing a deer-hunting hat with a pipe in his mouth nodded thoughtfully. "The situation just now explains two things: First, this is the mind world, not the real world. The perception of human consciousness depends on the room owner's condition or cognition back then. It might or might not exist, so we can't rely on this during future explorations. Second, not only does it seem like one's mind will be damaged when exploring another person's mind world, but the body isn't immune either."

"How can there be a body now? This itself is a manifestation of the mind," the honest Shang Jianyao immediately retorted.

At this moment, the Heartless pounced over again.

But as he was in midair, a billboard—which was already on the verge of collapsing—suddenly fell from above. It smashed toward him amidst the wind.

Bam!

The Heartless—who couldn't duck in time—was smashed to the ground by the billboard, blood flowing from his head.

He convulsed and struggled, seemingly unable to suffer an immediate death—a full display of a Heartless's tenacious vitality.

However, he couldn't do anything else. At the very least, he couldn't interfere with the convening of the Shang Jianyao Democratic Association.

The Shang Jianyao wearing a deer-hunting hat took out the pipe from his mouth. "I mean that I was under the impression that apart from Awakened abilities, the attacks in the mind world only deal with emotion, such as causing panic, fear, confusion, and other reactions to force us out into the Mind Corridor and leave a nasty mark. But from the looks of it, a physical attack can also cause damage."

The timid but definitely smart Shang Jianyao agreed. “This physical attack is essentially a mental attack, but it has a similar manifestation due to the different environments.”

“We seem to be bleeding from our shoulders, but our minds have actually suffered a certain level of trauma,” said the Shang Jianyao that paid attention to inner emotions. He wore daily clothes, a caricature of the clothes he wore when he was young.

The rash and bold Shang Jianyao immediately said, “Then, should we make some preparations for such attacks? How can we exhibit the ability to deliver physical attacks?”

The Shang Jianyao wearing a deer-hunting hat shook his pipe. “We can materialize guns and ammunition and add the effects of Matter Interference when firing. As the bullets are small and light, such interference can be added bit by bit to conserve our mental energy.”

It was clearly impossible to materialize a weapon in another person’s mind world and fire directly. One had to purposely ‘imbue’ their psyche powers.

In this regard, Matter Interference had a unique advantage.

The Shang Jianyaos quickly came to an agreement. In order to reduce mental exhaustion, they combined as one.

In his hand was their usual Berserker assault rifle. With this weapon in hand, Shang Jianyao walked toward the street step by step.

Before long, figures appeared from the abandoned cars, many corners of the streets, and behind the many windows in the surrounding buildings.

There were more than a hundred of them, and there were men and women of all ages. Their clothes were tattered and dirty, and their eyes were terrifyingly turbid.

Some of these Heartless carried all kinds of firearms, some held poles and wrenches, and others attacked Shang Jianyao from all directions with their bare palms.

Ta! Ta! Ta! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Shang Jianyao skillfully rolled and fired, allowing each bullet to drill into the different enemy bodies precisely.

The Heartless were also very skilled with their weapons. If not for the fact that Shang Jianyao occasionally used Hands Immobility and Corny Person, he definitely wouldn't have been able to fight 100 enemies alone without suffering any damage.

Compared to a human army in reality, the Heartless here couldn't be defeated by fear!

Ta! Ta! Ta!

A large number of Heartless lost their lives and fell to the ground in the intense gunfight. But at the end of the street, more Heartless rushed over when they heard the commotion.

Looking at these countless blurry figures, Shang Jianyao sighed dramatically. "There's not enough ammunition..."

The essence of this sentence was that his mental reserves might not be able to keep up with the expenditure. Even if he could finish off the group in front of him, he would be subsequently powerless.

Shang Jianyao then asked himself, "How did the room owner escape from such an environment back then, leaving only some psychological trauma?"

Unable to get an answer, he suddenly turned around and ran toward the spot he had entered from.

Shang Jianyao pounced and rolled before returning to the Mind Corridor and ending this exploration.

The best strategy was to get out while the going was good!

...

When Shang Jianyao entered Room 14 on the 647th floor the next day, Jiang Baimian was informed that the entire Old Task Force would undergo a strict review.

Only after completion of the review would the bonuses be distributed.

This was the second review for Shang Jianyao.

Jiang Baimian thought for a moment and reminded him, “Mei Shou’an might not be in charge this time.”

Chapter 556: Board of Directors

Jiang Baimian meant that the person in charge of Shang Jianyao’s second review was most likely a higher-ranking member of the company or a Mind Corridor-level Awakened with special abilities.

Of course, these two possibilities overlapped. They couldn’t rule out the possibility that someone was a high-ranking M1 and above, as well as being a Mind Corridor-level Awakened with special abilities.

Shang Jianyao didn’t mind. “In any case, there’s really something wrong with my mind.”

“...” Jiang Baimian seriously thought about the price she would choose if her Awakening experiment succeeded.

She didn’t discuss this topic any further because her goal was only to remind Shang Jianyao to be more vigilant. As long as there were no problems on principality, the company would definitely be very tolerant of a Mind Corridor-level Awakened.

At this moment, Long Yuehong nervously said to Jiang Baimian, “Team Leader, how should we respond to the review?”

Jiang Baimian smiled. “If anyone else in the company hears you say that, you will be fired today and exiled to the surface.”

Long Yuehong immediately felt uneasy.



“Then, what should we say?” Bai Chen took the initiative to resolve Long Yuehong’s embarrassment.

Jiang Baimian looked around and chuckled. “You should say: How are we to cooperate with the review?”

She cleared her throat and added, “After my efforts, the review of the three of us is limited to the Security Department. It will follow standard operating procedures. In other words, we won’t encounter any Awakened, nor will we encounter machines like lie detectors. Just respond according to the plan by... Uh, cooperating.”

Phew, Team Leader is really capable... Having a background and abilities really changes things... Long Yuehong clearly heaved a sigh of relief. “Alright.”

During this critical period before he left the Old Task Force and acquired the subsequent treatment, he didn’t want any problems arising from the review. Of course, he didn’t think there were many problems with himself.

When he counted them with his fingers, there were only four.

First, he helped Shang Jianyao hide his identity as an Awakened.

Second, he hid some matters related to Du Heng and Xiaochong.

Third, he didn’t report the scene Shang Jianyao had seen or heard from Yama Tiger.

Fourth, they hid the fact that Genava had actually joined the Old Task Force.

The first point had been exposed, and they were prepared to push the blame onto Shang Jianyao’s abilities. Long Yuehong was most worried that this was equivalent to deceiving the company. The punishment would be very serious if they were discovered.

Apart from this, he felt that Old Ge’s matter wouldn’t escape their notice if he encountered an Awakened with special abilities. The second and third problems weren’t a problem. After all, there were only a few corresponding memories. Unless the other party had an extremely clear goal, it

would be difficult for them to find such details that hadn't appeared many times even if they could flip through memories.

To put it simply, although this definitely couldn't be described as searching for a needle in a haystack, it was equivalent to finding a specific island in the vast sea. Furthermore, they didn't know what characteristics this island had.

As for the military exoskeletons, the Old Task Force planned on letting it be known.

Upon seeing Bai Chen and Long Yuehong nod slightly, Jiang Baimian reminded them, "If things don't work out, come clean immediately. Don't worry about Hey and me."

She meant that she had a background and that Shang Jianyao had strength. Even if they were punished for this, it definitely wouldn't be anything serious.

After Long Yuehong and Bai Chen agreed, Shang Jianyao took the initiative to talk about last night's encounter and asked, "How should I explore next?"

"Woah, haven't you always been very opinionated?" Jiang Baimian teased.

Shang Jianyao said seriously, "We have to use our collective intelligence. The 13 of us can simulate a discussion between the Kalendarium."

Thirteen people... Long Yuehong was stunned for a moment.

"Thirteen people?" Bai Chen didn't hide her confusion.

Shang Jianyao pointed at himself. "We have ten now."

Jiang Baimian raised her hand to press the corners of her mouth and sighed. "First, we have to analyze whether the fear or psychological trauma represented by this scene comes from before or after the room owner entered the Mind Corridor."

"Why can't it be a dream?" Just as Bai Chen said that, she came to a realization. "Yes, apart from Awakened that have already entered the New World or the legendary Kalendarium, the dream

shown by a room can't be maintained for long. Shang Jianyao can come to a conclusion by entering again tonight to see if there are any changes."

Clap! Clap! Clap!

Shang Jianyao applauded.

Jiang Baimian was even more gratified. "Little White, you're becoming more and more proactive in our discussions. You're also very clear-headed."

She continued, "Actually, even the Awakened who have entered the New World should have their dreams retain the easily changing characteristic. This is different from the repeated manifestations of psychological trauma. As for the Kalendarium, they are another type of creature. We aren't able to do any analysis at present, but Shang Jianyao's luck shouldn't be that bad to have the first room end up as a Kalendaria's dream."

"That's right, that's right. I'm not Little Red." Shang Jianyao was very confident about this.

Long Yuehong tried to retort, but he lacked confidence. His current understanding was that his luck was sometimes good and sometimes bad. When it was good, he could survive a near-fatal injury. Otherwise, he could encounter anything bad.

But most of the time, his luck was still at a normal level!

Shang Jianyao seemed to have changed his personality and changed the topic. "According to my analysis, the danger represented by that scene isn't too great."

"Yes." Jiang Baimian nodded. "If the room's owner only explored the ruins and encountered so many Heartless after entering the Mind Corridor, it wouldn't be difficult for them to think of a way to escape even if they can't eliminate them. It's unlikely that they will leave behind psychological trauma. Unless... Unless they encountered an extremely terrifying object in this exploration and later on. But if that's the case, their psychological trauma shouldn't have retained the early scenes. Think about it—is your fear of certain things focused on the actual deal? Are the trivial details before and after not that clear?"

“Yes.” Long Yuehong thought for a moment and gave an affirmative answer. When he now recalled his injury, he only remembered his battle with Asus and Christina. He no longer had any impression of the others he encountered along the way.

Bai Chen fell silent for a moment before nodding.

Jiang Baimian continued, “That’s how memories are. The psychological trauma will definitely be more obvious. The scene it shows will definitely be something very terrifying back then, just like the situation in Room 1215.”

“I don’t sense any other danger.” Shang Jianyao stroked his chin, indirectly confirming Jiang Baimian’s words. He then added in a very showy manner, “Since that scene represents a trauma before the room owner entered the Mind Corridor, with their strength back then, they most likely escaped danger by hiding and moving without considering their companions. I plan on imitating them.”

At this point, Shang Jianyao questioned himself. “We’re all Mind Corridor-level Awakened. Can’t we be bolder? We’ll deal with whatever comes our way. If we kill those Heartless, we should be able to clear the mental trauma.”

As the Shang Jianyaos argued, Jiang Baimian, Long Yuehong, and Bai Chen’s expressions were relatively normal. This was because such things had happened more than once on their way back to Pangu Biology.

After the Shang Jianyaos finished arguing, Jiang Baimian voiced her thoughts. “The number of Heartless in that scene might very well be related to the room owner’s mental fortitude to a certain extent. After all, it’s unlikely that they can count the number of Heartless they encountered back then and could only conjure them by relying on their ‘senses.’ In other words, you won’t be able to eliminate all the Heartless until this psychological trauma’s corresponding psyche is exhausted.

“Your mental strength is definitely much weaker than the room owner’s. In terms of probability, the chances of you encountering a newly advanced rookie like yourself are almost zero. Therefore, you might not be on par even if it’s only a psychological trauma.”

More importantly, there was no way to eliminate a batch today and another batch tomorrow. If one could recover, so could the other party.

Shang Jianyao agreed with this judgment. “It’s better to hide and move. I’ll try my best to fire as little as possible to prevent attracting more Heartless.”

Jiang Baimian nodded slightly and said, “From the current situation, this scene is relatively suitable for the current you. It’s better than being strange, mysterious, or suspenseful.”

After discussing this matter, the four Old Task Force members went out one after another at 2 p.m. and headed to the designated location for review.

Shang Jianyao first met Mei Shou’an at the underground building’s third floor’s C-14 project team. He then took the elevator to the fifth floor under the other party’s guidance.

This floor came under the Administrative Zone.

It was only then that Mei Shou’an turned his head to Shang Jianyao and said, “Director Su Yu is in charge of the second review.”

Shang Jianyao was no stranger to this name; he often heard it on Newspoint.

There were a total of five board directors. They were Ji Ze, Lin Yang, Huang Renhui, Su Yu, and Li Lingyun.

Among them, Ji Ze was the vice-president ranked first and took on overall responsibility on behalf of Big Boss. Lin Yang was the vice-president in charge of all the production departments. Huang Renhui was the chief scientist and the decision-maker of the research system. Li Lingyun was another vice-president who was in charge of logistics, including supplies allocation, employee entertainment, and so on. Su Yu was in charge of foreign matters and was the immediate superior of the Security Department’s minister.

Of course, if he wanted to command the Security Department’s operations, he had to discuss it with the Board of Directors and obtain authorization. He couldn’t do whatever he wanted.

Chapter 557: ‘Messing Around’

Shang Jianyao met Director Su Yu of the Security Department in Room 506.

The latter’s name sounded elegant, but he was a rugged and audacious man. He was 1.8 meters tall and had a buzz cut. The elements had left marks on his face.

Unlike Shang Jianyao's generation, Su Yu—who was in his forties—had undergone imperfect genetic enhancement and couldn't be considered a Chosen One. This was reflected in his appearance. He had thick eyebrows, large eyes, and a square face. He definitely couldn't be considered ugly, but his skin was bumpy and unbearable to look at. But even discounting these things, he couldn't be considered handsome. He could only be considered average.

Su Yu was a board member who had risen up the ranks from the Security Department's front line, and he continued maintaining an obvious military style. Upon seeing Shang Jianyao and Mei Shou'an enter, he said to the guards in the room, "Wait outside."

These guards were part of a brigade directly under management and wore all kinds of bionic artificial intelligence armor.

Shang Jianyao looked over, and his gaze stopped on one of them.

The bionic artificial intelligence armor this person wore was covered in fine black scales, but it didn't appear heavy. This reminded Shang Jianyao of the Blackmarsh Iron Snake he had killed on his first mission.

The guards didn't persuade Su Yu of their need to remain to ensure his safety. They left the office and closed the door behind them.

Upon seeing this, Su Yu—who was wearing the Security Department's gray combat uniform—pointed at the sofa and smiled. "Let's have a chat there."

His attitude wasn't considered warm, but it was rather amiable.

Shang Jianyao didn't stand on ceremony at all. He followed behind Su Yu and sat on one end of the long sofa, with Mei Shou'an on the other.

After they sat down, Su Yu—who was in an armchair—laughed. "At the Mind Corridor level, many things aren't that important anymore. I kept saying that there was no need for a review, but they insisted on following the procedures. I called you over today mainly to understand three things. I won't ask anything else."

“Deal,” Shang Jianyao replied very seriously.

Su Yu was a little stunned for a moment before he recalled Mei Shou’an and Dr. Lin’s reports. He then gained a deeper understanding of some of the descriptions.

He leaned forward slightly and clasped his hands, his expression turning serious. “First, I want to know your opinion of the company.”

Shang Jianyao thought for a moment and said, “First, there are still too few singing competitions and dancing activities organized by the Rec Center. Second, the canteen’s menu can get everyone’s opinions by announcing a few days in advance. Third, there are some programs on the radio that need improvement...”

“...” Although Mei Shou’an had expected this fellow not to answer the question at hand, he didn’t expect the latter to deviate so ridiculously. He couldn’t help but wonder if the other party’s language teacher was qualified.

Su Yu was experienced. Back in the Security Department, he had experienced all kinds of storms, and it wasn’t rare to see Awakened with ridiculous prices. At this moment, he didn’t mind and shook his head with a smile. “I’m asking about your attitude toward the company.”

His face seemed flushed, and his forehead was actually sweating in the cold room.

Shang Jianyao replied very simply, “I was born and raised in the company. I didn’t go to the surface until I graduated from university.”

Su Yu was rather satisfied with this answer. “Yes, the company is our home. If we want to obtain more or change anything, we have to work hard to improve ourselves. When you are on par with me or stronger than me, will the Board of Directors not have a seat for you? It’s not like there’s a restriction on the number of people.”

At this point, Su Yu glanced at Mei Shou’an and said to Shang Jianyao, “According to the company regulations, Mind Corridor-level Awakened can directly receive M1 treatment. However, you previously told Old Mei that you wish to stay in the current Investigation Unit for the Cause of the Old World’s Destruction but aren’t willing to be the team leader. This makes things very difficult for us. No matter how many promotions Old Jiang’s daughter gets, she will be a D9 at most. She can’t enter management and can’t lead an M1 employee. Are you sure you want to maintain the status quo and give up on the treatment of being an M1 to promote step by step?”

Shang Jianyao nodded very firmly. “We are worried about harming them if I lead a team alone.”

As he spoke, he pointed at his head.

Su Yu tersely acknowledged his words. “You can also choose to stay in the company, but this involves the second question. Old Mei also asked you before, and I’ll repeat: What is your pursuit—or rather, what do you want to do?”

Shang Jianyao’s already upright upper body became increasingly straighter. “Saving all of humanity! For this goal, we have to investigate the Heartless disease’s origins and the reason for the Old World’s destruction.”

Su Yu laughed. “It’s no wonder you’re willing to listen to Old Jiang’s daughter. You guys are essentially the same kind of people. That solves one of my problems. I previously wondered who I should send to Wasteland Ruin 13 to explore the Holm Fertility Center. From the looks of it, continuing to leave it to your team is the best choice.”

“When we request help, we should receive help.” Shang Jianyao bluntly raised conditions.

“No problem. Everyone is working for the company.” Su Yu paused for a moment and said, “Although you’ve given up on M1 treatment, I still have to give you some normal perks. For example, knowledge related to the Mind Corridor, additional allowances in the form of contribution points, etc.”

Shang Jianyao only thought for a second before saying, “Can the additional allowance be directly given to the Eleventh Orphanage?”

“Sure.” Su Yu naturally wouldn’t refuse such a small request.

Su Yu had always been swift and decisive. He didn’t waste his breath and raised the third matter he wanted to know. “Tell me how you became a Mind Corridor-level Awakened. There’s no need to mention anything that involves your psychological trauma; I just want a rough understanding. I might be able to give you suggestions.”



Shang Jianyao revealed an expression of reminiscence. “Things were originally very normal. After practicing my abilities for two to three months, I pushed open the door that led to the Sea of Origins and defeated islands formed from my inner fears.”

Su Yu suddenly interrupted. “Then, who told you what these islands truly represented?”

“An Official Hunter named Du Heng, who calls himself an antiquarian,” Shang Jianyao replied frankly. “I encountered him on my first mission to Blackrat Town.”

Su Yu’s expression didn’t change. “Please continue.”

Shang Jianyao had always gone with the flow. “We later attacked the Underground Ark owner, DiMarco, in Redstone Collection to save the slaves. He used Destiny Connection to invade my Sea of Origins. In order to deal with him, I transferred all the aura in one of the items I previously obtained.”

Upon hearing this, Mei Shou’an couldn’t control his expression. This fellow really did such a thing! It’s a miracle that he’s still alive!

Su Yu frowned and asked, “Don’t you know that there will be very serious repercussions?”

“I didn’t know back then,” Shang Jianyao replied firmly. “When two parties meet on a narrow path, the brave wins!”

Su Yu and Mei Shou’an fell silent for a moment.

It was rare to see someone act so boldly and foolishly!

After a few seconds, Su Yu asked with an unchanged expression, “What happened next?”

Shang Jianyao rambled on. “We destroyed DiMarco’s body because he was caught off-guard. In the subsequent battle, I used the item’s aura to hold him back for a while, preventing him from successfully occupying my body. This resulted in his consciousness gradually collapsing, leaving only some in my Sea of Origins.

“On this trip to First City, we hunted the real Father and obtained the Bangle of Blindness from him. Things developed, and I also brought the Bangle of Blindness’s aura into the Sea of Origins for a while.”

Don’t stuff everything into your mind world! As a researcher, Mei Shou’an—who strictly adhered to experimental procedures—couldn’t help but roar inwardly. If he had such a researcher as his subordinate, he would definitely send them to the mines to eat dirt!

Su Yu didn’t say anything, nor did he know what to say. He could only sigh. This fellow is really lucky. Nothing happened to him despite doing so.

Shang Jianyao continued recalling. “During the early-August uprising in First City, in order to make the me guarding the elevator compromise at a critical moment, I chose to ‘summon’ the powerhouse with the corresponding aura.”

Su Yu almost couldn’t hold it in any further. Isn’t this too rash?

He wondered if it was thanks to heaven’s grace that this fellow was still alive.

“The one guarding the elevator—my embodiment of cowardice—quickly gave in. We successfully entered the Mind Corridor and obtained new abilities. The auras in the Sea of Origins fought a chaotic battle before they respectively returned home.”

At this moment, in Shang Jianyao’s Mind Room 131, eight Shang Jianyaos held down one Shang Jianyao.

The one pressed to the ground was the honest Shang Jianyao. He kept shouting, “You can’t lie; you have to tell the truth! We mainly relied on Xiaochong’s aura to survive this hurdle! Don’t be vague with your words!”

The eight Shang Jianyaos ignored him and firmly controlled him. They continued letting the calm and intelligent detective, Shang Jianyao, control their body.

After hearing Shang Jianyao’s description, Mei Shou’an was a little dazed. He actually succeeded in entering the Mind Corridor like me by messing around!? Is this scientific? This doesn’t make sense!

Su Yu wiped the sweat from his forehead and laughed involuntarily. “Your experience can’t be replicated.”

If anyone else were to make such an attempt, eleven out of ten would die—even those who help from the sidelines might be killed!

“It’s mainly because everyone has to face something different in the end.” Shang Jianyao actually began to discuss the matter seriously.

It was obvious that Su Yu and Mei Shou’an had no intention of discussing it with him.

The former recalled their conversation and realized something. “In other words, your team once finished off a Mind Corridor-level Awakened?”

DiMarco—who had Destiny Connection.

Shang Jianyao stretched out his palm, flipped a finger, and calmly replied, “More than one.”

Chapter 558: Two Questions

More than one? Amidst Mei Shou’an’s surprise, he suddenly felt countless steel needles under his butt, stinging him so much that he couldn’t sit still.

According to Shang Jianyao, he’s the only Awakened in the Old Task Force. Furthermore, he only found an opportunity to enter the Mind Corridor during First City’s uprising in early August. After that, they recuperated, regulated themselves, and returned. They didn’t have any conflict with anyone else. In other words, their team killed a Mind Corridor-level Awakened earlier—before they had a powerhouse of the same level!

If it only happened once, it can be attributed to luck. The DiMarco that Shang Jianyao had described clearly lost his vigilance in many aspects because of his prolonged stay in an underground fortress. It’s reasonable for him to be caught off-guard.

However, Mei Shou’an couldn’t accept it if more than one was killed by Jiang Baimian’s Old Task Force.

Mind Corridor-level Awakened aren't garden variety entities that can be encountered and killed at will! Jiang Baimian's Old Task Force's strength shouldn't have inflated to such an extent! As these thoughts raced through his mind, Mei Shou'an's back gradually felt a chill.

Pangu Biology's Director Su Yu fell silent for a moment before asking, "Apart from the DiMarco you mentioned, who else was there? How did you win?"

"There's also a commissioner from the Eighth Research Institute and the Virtual World owner who once protected Marcus..." Shang Jianyao recounted the key points of the two battles.

Although these two matters were mentioned in the report Jiang Baimian submitted, they only described the cause and outcome. She didn't elaborate, so it was only now that Su Yu and Mei Shou'an figured out the exact details.

Burp... Mei Shou'an wanted to heave a sigh of relief, but it became a burp. He felt that he had been struck to the core, but it actually wasn't the case.

Kanna had interfered in the battle with the Eighth Research Institute's commissioner. When dealing with the Virtual World's owner, Shang Jianyao was actually considered a Mind Corridor-level Awakened. Furthermore, he fully understood the price the other party had paid and had the corresponding 'tools.'

These were reasonable victories that weren't worth fussing over.

After Su Yu heard that, he laughed. "It's no wonder you are willing to submit to Old Jiang's daughter. She really uses every advantage to the extreme. Your exploitation of the strong against another adversary is also very creative."

Without long-term mental problems, one really couldn't come up with that!

"A mental patient has a broad train of thought," Shang Jianyao said humbly.

At this moment, Mei Shou'an sighed with emotion again at how self-aware this fellow was.

Su Yu didn't answer and pondered for a moment. "I've finished asking about the three things I wanted to know about, and I have a relatively clear understanding of you. There won't be any more

inspections, and your rewards will be handed out in three days. However, you have to cooperate with Old Mei and do more checks. This is also for the company's sake. If we can further grasp the secret of Awakening, we will have an advantage over the other large factions."

"Alright." Shang Jianyao happily agreed and raised a condition. "But they have to open their exclusive canteen to me!"

Mei Shou'an was stunned when he heard that. What kind of request is this?

While stunned, he readily agreed because this request was too simple. He didn't even have to ask Director Su about it and could've just told him in private.

There was no need to be so formal!

Shang Jianyao then looked around hesitantly. "Can we ask two questions?"

A change in personality? That's quite a change... Mei Shou'an cast his gaze at Su Yu. Whether he could agree or not depended on the director.

Su Yu flipped his wrist and looked at his watch. "There's still some time. Ask. Actually, there's no rush. When the rewards are distributed, the corresponding knowledge will be given to you."

Shang Jianyao ignored the second half of the sentence and asked, "How do we confirm that there's no door leading to the New World in a Mind Room?"

Su Yu maintained his forward-leaning posture slightly and thought for a moment. "You don't have to consider this problem for the first five rooms. When you reach the sixth room, the deeper you go, the greater the familiarity you have, and the more likely the door to the New World is there. If one has already cleared three psychological traumas or one dream and hasn't experienced a similar feeling, there's no need to go deeper. You can decisively give up on the room.

"Although continuing can still temper your consciousness, enhance your mental fortitude, and magnify your abilities, it means that you will be closer and closer to the room owner's consciousness, making it easier for them to sense you. When the time comes, there might be a fierce battle. From a risk-benefit vantage point, it's completely imbalanced. There's no need to do so."

Upon seeing Shang Jianyao listening very seriously and was just short of taking notes, Su Yu further explained, “From the situations we’ve understood so far, not only is that door related to the New World, but it’s also closely related to the Awakened themselves. Therefore, the closer you are to it, the greater the sense of familiarity you will feel. Regarding this, other people’s experiences aren’t too valuable as a reference since different people find the New World’s door in different rooms.”

“It seems like the company has several Awakened who have entered the New World and have interacted with many people outside.” Shang Jianyao ‘came to a realization.’

Su Yu didn’t respond and asked, “What’s your second question?”

Shang Jianyao didn’t hide his curiosity. “Have you encountered a sudden change in the door number of a room neighboring yours?”

Mei Shou’an shook his head, and Su Yu confirmed the details. “How sudden?”

“It was one number yesterday, but it changed today,” Shang Jianyao replied.

Su Yu furrowed his thick eyebrows tightly. “If the door number suddenly disappears, and a new door number appears after a period of time, the room’s original owner should be dead. It was later assigned to a new Awakened who just entered the Mind Corridor. However, the gap of a day is too short. It shouldn’t be that coincidental.”

“Is there any other explanation?” Shang Jianyao’s current tone was closer to ‘I’m not asking; I’m just answering you.’

Only when there are questions can there be an answer—a back and forth was needed!

Su Yu fell silent for a moment before saying, “There’s no definite explanation, only some guesses. Although such situations are rare, there are certain examples over time. The most mainstream guess now is that it’s related to the Mind Corridor’s owner. Only the Mind Corridor’s owner can adjust rooms. Many people suspect that Star Cluster Hall, Sea of Origins, and Mind Corridor were built by the Kalendarium.”

Shang Jianyao clenched his right fist and punched his left palm. “Fortunately, I didn’t go in!”

Upon seeing Director Su Yu and Mei Shou'an cast suspicious gazes at him, he quickly 'explained.'

"I haven't explored any rooms in-depth. I just walked along the corridor."

"You have to be careful when exploring," reminded Su Yu. He then stood up and offered his right hand to Shang Jianyao. "Go back and wait for the rewards to be distributed."

At this moment, Shang Jianyao was very polite. He stood up and shook the director's hand.

This handshake made him feel like the other party had just pulled his hand out of a hot water bag.

"Are you running a fever?" Shang Jianyao asked humanely. He was now someone who valued relationships.

Su Yu sighed. "A little."

"Drink more warm water," Shang Jianyao suggested sincerely.

...

Not long after Shang Jianyao returned to Room 14 on the 647th floor, Bai Chen and the others returned one after another.

"How was it on your side?" Jiang Baimian asked in concern.

Shang Jianyao immediately replicated the previous conversation with his other selves. They even simulated Su Yu and Mei Shou'an. The remaining few took turns replicating his own words.

Of course, they didn't have a perfect memory, so they couldn't completely reenact it. Only the meaning was relatively well expressed.

Jiang Baimian praised, "It seems like the rumors are true. Director Su's military style is rather broadminded in many aspects."

She believed that such broadmindedness was a treatment that Mind Corridor-level Awakened should receive. After figuring out the other party's request, he would try his best to satisfy it to a certain extent and maintain a good relationship between both parties before finding an opportunity to intimidate them. There was no point in a review, especially when Shang Jianyao was an employee born and raised in the company.

Even if he colluded with some outside faction, he would slowly change his inclination as long as the company didn't treat him unfairly and satisfied him to the greatest extent.

How could the massive Pangu Biology not be able to keep someone in check?

Unless Shang Jianyao has already become a pious believer of a certain Kalendaria and is willing to risk his life to complete a secret mission in the company... However, the chances of discovering this even with an Awakened or item with special abilities are very low, much less an ordinary review... If the other party dares to send someone like this, they definitely have a certain level of confidence in eluding detection... A few thoughts flashed through Jiang Baimian's mind as she said to Long Yuehong, Bai Chen, and Shang Jianyao, "There shouldn't be any problems with the review. Go back and rest early today. I have a feeling that the rewards will be issued tomorrow."

Chapter 559: Entering Again

Upon hearing Jiang Baimian's words, Shang Jianyao stood there motionless.

"Is there anything else?" How could Jiang Baimian not understand this fellow's body language?

"What do you think is behind Room 1215's door?" Shang Jianyao asked without hiding anything.

Jiang Baimian exclaimed in bemused anger, "Who should I ask if you're asking me? The corresponding knowledge is no longer something our confidentiality rank can grasp. You shouldn't have told us the latter half of your conversation with Director Su."

Afraid that Shang Jianyao wouldn't understand her true meaning, she added, "Even if you want to say it, you should wait a few days when not many people are paying us attention."

She could prevent different technological forms of wiretapping, but she couldn't stop Awakened-related matters.

Fortunately, the conversation they just had wasn't considered taboo. However, they had to be careful in the future.



Shang Jianyao revealed an 'enlightened' expression. "I get it!"

As for what he understood and how much he understood, Jiang Baimian didn't think much of it and simply answered his previous question. "The horror behind that door might very well exceed our expectations. When you encounter such situations in the future, you can't go any deeper unless we have a certain level of understanding of the New World and have sufficient confidence in what these scenes truly represent."

"That might be a door that leads to the New World." Bai Chen voiced her guess.

Jiang Baimian immediately replied, "If that's the case, entry is even more forbidden! Have you forgotten Oray's attitude?"

Although Long Yuehong hadn't heard Avia mention this matter personally, he still had a deep impression of it when Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao recounted it.

Father of the Source Brain and First City's former emperor—Oray Ubis would rather die than enter the New World!

"Unless he has reached a point where he can't continue investigating without passing through that door, I don't recommend him entering the New World." Jiang Baimian gave a simple summary and changed the topic with a smile. "Since the review is over, the two of you can bring Little White around and let her see the difference between the Rec Centers on different floors."

She didn't bring Bai Chen around herself because she lived on the 349th floor. The Rec Center there was equally boring—it mainly provided all kinds of services to the management and their families.

Before Long Yuehong and Shang Jianyao could answer, Bai Chen shook her head. "Let's wait for the bonuses to be distributed first."

Jiang Baimian pondered for a moment and agreed. "Indeed."

The end of the review didn't mean that they had cleared the review. Although she, Shang Jianyao, and Long Yuehong—who were born in the company—could already run around freely, foreign

employees like Bai Chen had to be careful. It was safer to wander around the other floors after everything was settled.

...

495th floor, Zone C, Room 11.

The moment Long Yuehong returned home, he saw his younger brother—Long Zhigu—playing with his laptop in the living room. His sister, Long Aihong, was jumping up and down, attempting to snatch it from him. However, she sadly failed every time.

“Why are you on the computer again?” Long Yuehong subconsciously used his authority as the eldest brother. “You’re at a critical moment in your university entrance exam!”

Long Zhigu turned his head to glance at him and helplessly said, “Bro, it’s almost November. I’ve long finished my exams and am already studying.”

Long Yuehong was stunned for a moment. He then realized that he had been outside for too long and was a little slow on the uptake of how much time had passed.

It was spring before the Old Task Force left the company, and it was now late autumn. He had missed Long Zhigu’s final revision, exams, and application.

“Haha.” Long Yuehong laughed in embarrassment. “My memories of home are still stuck at the point before we set off.”

During their family chats the past few days, Long Yuehong mainly shared his experiences outside.

Without waiting for Long Zhigu to respond, he asked in confusion, “It’s not the weekend. Why are you home?”

Long Zhigu smiled awkwardly. “Aren’t you back? I applied for leave and will be staying home for the next few nights.”

“He just wants to take the opportunity to use the computer!” Long Aihong mercilessly exposed the truth behind Long Zhigu’s excuse. “Bro, you have to teach him a lesson!”

Long Zhigu quickly explained, “Bro, it’s not like you don’t know that school only has a few computer-related classes a week. If I want to learn more, I can only use the one at home.”

“Learn more Old World entertainment?” Long Aihong scoffed.

Long Zhigu couldn’t help but glare at the girl.

Some of the Old World’s entertainment material was outright nonsense. Any man with a sister would know that there was no such thing as having the cutest sister. A younger sister was the most annoying!

Long Yuehong didn’t mind his brother and sister’s bickering because he thought of something due to this opportunity.

Little White previously said that she generally stayed at home to sleep or be on the computer when she returned to her floor. But in order to bribe Xiaochong, she gave away her laptop in First City. The funds we applied for later were used to replenish our nutritional needs and supplies for our return trip. We didn’t manage to make up for her sacrifice. Won’t she be very bored at home these few days? Long Yuehong cast his gaze at the laptop on the living room table.

Long Zhigu and Long Aihong suddenly felt an indescribable sense of danger.

...

When Shang Jianyao returned to Zone B, Room 196, Newspoint had yet to begin. He lay on the bed and massaged his temples.

In fact, this action was no longer necessary for him. However, a large number of Shang Jianyaos were rather ritualistic.

Mind Corridor, Room 131.

Shang Jianyao looked at the LCD screen hanging on the bedroom wall and shouted at Xiaochong's residual aura inside. "Xiaochong! Xiaochong! Xiaochong!"

Nobody replied.

"Engrossed in his games?" Shang Jianyao muttered to himself and could only give up helplessly. After that, he came to the corridor covered in thick, dark-red carpet and arrived at Room 522 again.

"It's still here..." Shang Jianyao sighed with emotion as he pushed open the door and entered.

What appeared in front of him was still the same city ruin. Cars were parked haphazardly everywhere. The walls were vaguely visible in the darkness, and large patches of blood could occasionally be seen. As for the windows, they were almost incomplete.

Shang Jianyao was in no rush to advance. He cast his gaze at the spot where he had been attacked previously.

The door to a car was suddenly pushed open the next second, and a Heartless pounced out.

All of this happened in an identical fashion to the last instance. However, Shang Jianyao didn't experiment with the incurring of an injury. The tottering billboard in midair fell to the ground with a thud, smacking the attacker to the ground.

"I get it." Shang Jianyao clenched his right fist and punched his left palm. "A save was loaded!"

The various aspects of this psychological trauma had been reset with the corresponding mental recovery! In theory, most of the details of such a reset would be restored. Only tiny changes would happen. After all, this presented the room owner's subconscious mind activity. It was impossible for it to be the same every time.

The calm and smart Shang Jianyao quickly recalled where the Heartless had emerged from last time. Then, he bent his back and quietly sneaked into a building by the street.

Many Heartless were attracted by the heavy thud a few seconds later. They circled around and didn't discover any prey that could be hunted. They then returned to hide in the darkness.

Shang Jianyao had infiltrated an Old World supermarket. All the edible items inside only had their wrappers left or had been taken.

The rest were either scattered on the ground due to collapsed shelves or were neatly placed in their original spots. However, a large number of their names were either wrong or strange. In short, they didn't seem real.

Shang Jianyao knew why. After all, the room owner was busy hiding and moving. How could they have paid attention to all the details?

Therefore, when they subconsciously reenacted the scene from back then, they extracted from other experiences to perfect the situation. This inevitably brought about conflicts. For example, a toothbrush-like item was labeled as sour orange.

Shang Jianyao conjured his usual Berserker assault rifle and walked to another exit of the supermarket with it. Although there was nobody else here, nor were there any Heartless, he still inched forward according to his training.

This meant that the one in control of the body wasn't the rash and bold him.

When he approached the other exit, Shang Jianyao swept his gaze and saw a small display rack with newspapers and magazines.

Iron Mountain Daily, People's Magazine... Shang Jianyao walked over with interest, picked up two of them, and flipped through them.

Unfortunately, apart from the relatively clear cover and front page—with pictures and words—the contents were almost blank.

This meant that the room owner had indeed passed by, but he had only taken a few looks and had no time to read it carefully.

Shang Jianyao's gaze quickly landed on two spots. The first was the newspaper's name: Iron Mountain Daily.

The second was a figure on the Renwu magazine: the 23-year-old genius scientist, Lin Sui.

She was a young woman who wasn't considered beautiful but looked very sweet. Her hair was tied up in a box braid.

Chapter 560: Rewards

Apart from the photo and the title, there was no additional introduction on the cover. Shang Jianyao took a few serious looks at it before returning the periodical and magazine to their original spots.

He then carried the Berserker assault rifle and sneaked in the other direction of the city along the room owner's covert route. As for the determination of the areas that the room owner passed by, Shang Jianyao had already found the pattern.

The more realistic and reasonable the details were, the more likely it was that the room owner had once taken it. The messier, more contradictory, and more warped it was, it meant that the room owner had never stepped foot in it back then. The situation presented itself due to the subconsciousness's self-completion—a mixture of multiple experiences.

His subsequent progress proved the correctness of this pattern, but this didn't mean that Shang Jianyao had a smooth journey.

He still suffered many attacks because the process of the room owner hiding and moving was also filled with twists and turns. He found himself in danger several times and barely escaped by relying on his strength and a certain amount of luck to find a new route.

To Shang Jianyao, as long as he was careful, it wouldn't be a problem for him to deal with the Heartless—who didn't have any special abilities—even if he couldn't sense human consciousness in the psychological trauma of another. But once he fired, a large number of Heartless would rush over and force him to move.

Later, he gave up on the Berserker assault rifle and switched to using the United 202 and Ice Moss with silencers.

This was effective, but it didn't completely resolve the problem. This was because the Heartless that attacked him would also produce sounds. They attracted the horde which swarmed him.

Shang Jianyao wasn't in a rush; he treated this as a real-life RPG game. He controlled his mental expenditure as he evacuated using a raid as facilitation evacuation. He memorized a few dangerous situations and prepared to avoid them the next time he reloaded.

When he was almost mentally exhausted, he decisively made many Heartless fall into an indescribable depression. He then took the opportunity to escape and left Room 522 along the safe route he had previously taken.

These Heartless were already Superior Heartless with special abilities!

495th floor, Zone B, Room 196.

Shang Jianyao opened his eyes and muttered to himself, The number of enemies along the room owner's route decreases, but the quality increases... They might've come into contact with something special in the city ruin later... Iron Mountain ruins?

As his thoughts raced, Shang Jianyao heard a familiar voice with a childlike tone on the radio. "Good evening, everyone. I'm Newspoint broadcaster, Hou Yi. It's 8 p.m. now..."

Everything seemed to turn serene again.

...

Shang Jianyao had breakfast in the staff cafeteria on the 495th floor the next morning before taking the elevator.

Long Yuehong was coincidentally behind him.

As Shang Jianyao watched the elevator door close, he chatted with Long Yuehong. "What did you eat this morning?"

"My mother used the leftovers from last night to make a large pot of noodles." Long Yuehong was rather satisfied with this.

Many employees of Pangu Biology had such a habit. If they didn't have many leftovers from the first night and couldn't use it for lunch, they would combine everything together and use them as toppings for noodles the next day.

This was in the same vein as the Rootless camp's Hodgepodge. It was a habit developed during times when supplies were lacking.

Shang Jianyao glanced at Long Yuehong and changed the topic abruptly. "Why did you bring the computer?"

Long Yuehong held his laptop, including the mouse and electric plug.

Long Yuehong tersely acknowledged it. "I'm not sure if the bonuses will be handed out today. It's impossible to train all day since our bodies can't take it. Sigh, it's quite boring with nothing to do in the office."

"Are you despising the Old World entertainment material I chose?" Shang Jianyao felt 'aggrieved.'

Over the past few days, whenever Long Yuehong had nothing to do in Room 14 on the 647th floor, he would go over to Shang Jianyao's desk and watch Old World drama serials with him while Bai Chen and Jiang Baimian paired up.

Long Yuehong scratched his head with his left hand. "Not really. It's more convenient this way."

As they spoke, they arrived on the 647th floor and entered Room 14.

Bai Chen was already inside, and Jiang Baimian was actually absent. However, she didn't make everyone wait too long.

She appeared at the door a few minutes later.

"I was summoned by Minister Xenny at the last minute," Jiang Baimian said with a smile. "The bonuses have been confirmed. They will be officially distributed in the afternoon."

"Huzzah!"



“Banzai!”

Shang Jianyao was the one who shouted, “Huzzah;” same for “Banzai.”

Upon seeing Bai Chen and Long Yuehong’s expectant expressions, Jiang Baimian walked to her seat and smiled. “First, all our harvests will be ours. The items we handed over will return soon.”

This was the most important point. It had to be known that the Old Task Force had handed over three different military exoskeletons, a Chameleon-type bionic artificial intelligence armor, the Six Senses Beads, and the Life Angel necklace. Among them, they were previously only permitted to keep one military exoskeleton.

Now, the higher-ups had decided to return all the items and help repair them. It made Jiang Baimian heave a sigh of relief in satisfaction.

She then added, “However, there’s a premise that certain items have to be kept by the department’s specialized institutions. We can only check them out when we are out training or completing missions.”

With the previous explosion as a precedent, how could the company allow employees to possess military exoskeletons and magical items in the company? Jiang Baimian and the others had previously needed to apply for their guns.

It would be troublesome if something happened.

If it weren’t for the fact that biological prosthetics and mechanical arms were inseparable from the owner—an insurmountable problem for the company that required them to relent—Long Yuehong would probably be a one-armed hero for a period of time.

“It’s only right.” Long Yuehong immediately supported the higher-ups’ decision.

“What a pity...” Shang Jianyao felt a sense of regret.

Bai Chen’s focus had already shifted elsewhere. “What other rewards are there?”

Jiang Baimian didn't answer immediately. Instead, she frowned and said, "Minister Xenny also mentioned something else—the Life Angel Necklace. The company has dealt with it to a certain extent. They have ensured that the effects remain the same, but they have given Shang Jianyao an additional layer of insurance. It's said that it can be used to resist the repercussions of his rash actions at critical moments. Shang Jianyao will be informed of the exact situation from future confidential information."

"That's simple; I can guess it now." Shang Jianyao laughed. "After they learned that there were foreign auras left in my Sea of Origins, they planned on giving me another one of their own auras. When the time comes, I can throw an ally's aura into the Sea of Origins and get their help. After that, it's easier when we are all one big family."

"This is also a form of monitoring." Jiang Baimian nodded slightly. "In that case, the company has an Awakened in the Arbiter of Fate domain which has explored the Mind Corridor's depths?"

Bai Chen voiced her opinion. "Since the company's Awakened experiments have some level of success, they should've accumulated Awakened in different domains even if the probability is very low."

Jiang Baimian didn't discuss this rather sensitive matter. She smiled and continued talking about the rewards. "We completed a very difficult mission that nobody has succeeded in for many years. The company is rather satisfied and has decided to promote me to D9. Heh heh, I previously thought that I would have to complete at least two or three more missions to have a chance. Shang Jianyao, Long Yuehong, both of you have been doubly promoted. You are now D7 team-leader employees. Little White, you've been promoted to D6."

Upon seeing that the rewards were much more generous than expected, Long Yuehong couldn't help but quickly calculate. My basic salary has increased by another 1,000, reaching 4,800 contribution points. My additional monthly allowance is 1,100 contribution points. In other words, I can receive 13,200 contribution points at the end of the year...

When I get married, the apartment I can get will most likely have a small bathroom... If I'm transferred out of the Security Department, I can be promoted again and can be the Rec Center's PIC... I've only been working for slightly more than a year...

As Long Yuehong calculated happily, Jiang Baimian glanced at Shang Jianyao. "I don't really understand your choice either. It's not like I have to be a team leader. After all, the few of us have

always gone with mutual discussions. Alright, I won't say anything else since it's decided. There are other rewards this time."

"You're clearly very happy." The honest Shang Jianyao always spoke his mind.

Jiang Baimian's smile froze on her face for a second as she resisted the urge to raise her left hand. She looked at Bai Chen and said, "My report mentioned that your laptop was lost in First City. Therefore, the reward this time is the latest laptop model..."

"Ah..." Long Yuehong made a sound.

Jiang Baimian nodded at him. "We didn't turn in our supplies this time, so we didn't receive any additional contribution points. The rewards are mainly physical items and opportunities. Apart from the laptop, we can apply to exchange the Chameleon-type bionic artificial intelligence armor for another model or the latest model from the same series. We can apply for another one before the next mission. In addition, there's also a chance for genetic modification, an opportunity to transfer out of the Security Department's front line, and a chance to transplant a better biological prosthetic limb for free. These were tailored for our team—the higher-ups have seen our contributions.

"Little White, I'll have a chat with you later. Some genetic modifications are very dangerous, and some are relatively safe. I still have a certain level of experience and knowledge in this regard, so I can give you advice. I don't want to lose members out of combat.

"Little Red, if you're satisfied with the mechanical arm, give Little White the opportunity to transplant the biological prosthetic limb and allow her to top it up with contribution points for the best model. Right, you can make the transfer application today."

Long Yuehong was stunned for a moment. "O-okay."