

Ad Infinitum 641

Chapter 641: Patience

The Old Task Force members prepared themselves and patiently waited for the Golden Scale domain Awakened to be forced out by their asymmetry before delivering a fatal blow.

Be it the Six Senses Beads in Shang Jianyao's hand, Jiang Baimian's Life Angel necklace, Long Yuehong's T1 mechanical arm, Genava's laser, or the Merfolk biological prosthetic limb's flamethrower, they could directly or indirectly achieve this goal.

At the very least, the Old Task Force had never encountered Awakened that were immune to physical damage. At most, they could rely on Matter Interference to put up a certain level of resistance.

Yama Tiger—who was suspected of having entered the New World—and the desiccated corpse left on Lake Heart Island didn't give off an indestructible feeling.

As they waited, time seemed to slow down.

Long Yuehong looked out the window at the setting sun sinking bit by bit. His palms were covered in a cold sweat at some point in time; they were wet and slightly sticky.

“Why is nothing happening?” he suppressed his voice and asked.

Compared to resisting danger, the wait for danger to descend was more torturous. The unknown always fueled fear.

Shang Jianyao smiled and replied, “An assassin is always very patient.”

“But he should have very serious symmetry OCD,” Bai Chen retorted.

She meant that the enemy's patience would definitely run out quickly in the face of so many asymmetrical objects. He wouldn't be able to last long.

In the Awakened domain, figuring out the price paid by the enemy often meant a huge advantage.

Jiang Baimian pondered for a moment and replied, "There's a high chance that he has a way to reduce the negative effects of the price for a certain period of time. But as long as we don't relax, he will eventually lose his patience."

When the time comes, the person chosen by the assassin might very well be seriously injured or even die on the spot...? Long Yuehong added inwardly. However, he didn't say this because it was an inevitable problem.

Unless the Old Task Force could capture the assassin's traces in advance and lock onto him before he attacked, someone on their side would definitely be harmed if such a figure—who came and went without a trace—was willing to exchange his life for one to quench the monstrous anger brought about by his symmetry OCD.

Long Yuehong only hoped that with their full attention, the person being attacked would react in time and avoid being hit in any vital spots.

At this moment, Jiang Baimian looked around and said, "There's another possibility: The assassin hasn't infiltrated our vicinity yet. He's waiting for the nightmare's power to condense again and for his companion to secretly modify our memories. He will only approach and take our lives when the situation changes."

Clap! Clap! Clap!?

Shang Jianyao—who was holding the Six Senses Beads—clapped.

Jiang Baimian quickly issued a new order. "I will begin flipping through the key memories I wrote down and compare them to what I have in my mind. After I'm done, it's Hey. After Hey, it's Little White. After Little White, it's Little Red. After Little Red, it's me again. We shall keep repeating. Old Ge, pay attention to the reader's condition and the surrounding situation. Be wary of the assassin seizing the opportunity to attack."

As a smart bot, Genova wasn't afraid of having his memories modified or being attacked. After all, it was impossible for an assassin to kill him in one blow.

At this point, Jiang Baimian glanced at Shang Jianyao's swollen cheek and sighed with mixed emotions. "You sure are ruthless to yourself... How did you discover that something was amiss and guess that we were sleepwalking?"

Shang Jianyao pointed at the Six Senses Beads. "It seems to give me a certain premonitory sense of danger. I wonder if this is a result of the combination with a dream. In short, I didn't discover it before."

"Perhaps it's because of the nightmare that the fused abnormal aura from the Buddhist Holy Land was activated." Genova raised many possibilities and voiced the situation he believed was closest to reality after analysis.

Jiang Baimian made a terse grunt. "Dawn's Morning Star has always advocated for them to resist the nightmare in a dream and guard humanity. Oray also mentioned that the people who survived the Old World's destruction at the Eighth Research Institute had become traitors in the darkness. I suspect that there might be a certain connection between these two matters."

Therefore, the nightmare's invasion could trigger the abnormal aura of the Buddhist Holy Land hidden in the Six Senses Beads.

This might very well represent some intrinsic factors in the Old World's destruction. They were the targets that the Old Task Force had been searching for.

Jiang Baimian didn't say anything else. She took out the key memories she had written down and quickly flipped through them.

Shang Jianyao, Bai Chen, Long Yuehong, and Genova didn't let down their guard. They remained highly vigilant as they paid attention to their companions and their surroundings.

They took turns. When Long Yuehong flipped through the records, Jiang Baimian raised her left hand.

She glanced at it and silently switched to her right hand. She then aimed at her stomach and punched.

Jiang Baimian winced, but her face quickly relaxed. Then, she looked around and exhaled in relief.

Bai Chen was a little surprised and subconsciously wanted to ask. But on second thought, she understood. Team Leader is preventing herself from entering a sleepwalking state.

During sleepwalking, the actions one did in their dreams would reflect reality. Therefore, they could wake themselves up with similar attempts!

As for Real Dreamscape and other situations, Jiang Baimian had the auxiliary chip to monitor her physical condition. She would immediately give the corresponding stimulus the moment she discovered anything.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao spun the prayer beads. “Namo Annutara-Samyak-Subhuti. Patron, there’s no need for that.”

Jiang Baimian understood that he meant that she didn’t need to be wary of sleepwalking due to the Six Senses Beads’ warning capabilities.

“Double insurance,” Jiang Baimian emphasized.

Shang Jianyao didn’t say anything else. The Old Task Force members followed their previous plan and took turns monitoring their memories and checking whether they were sleepwalking while being highly vigilant.

Time passed minute by minute until night ruled the land.

150 meters away from the True Self Church’s stronghold—the Old Task Force’s rented apartment—the small truck that Welf drove was quietly parked beside a warehouse.

Welf looked at the lit windows in the distance and asked the person beside him, “Lan, how long do you plan on waiting?”

In the originally empty passenger seat, Xu Lan—who was wearing a cowboy coat and a wide felt hat—had already appeared there, sitting, at some point in time.

She leaned back in her chair and wore an ancient golden ring on her left hand's middle finger. Her open eyes were empty and unfocused.

At this moment, she was blind.

Since she couldn't see anything, she wouldn't be plagued by symmetry OCD.

However, this was not absolute. If she touched something asymmetrical, it would also be unbearable.

For this reason, Xu Lan even wore a golden ring on her right hand that was identical but didn't have any special abilities.

Xu Lan was in a rather good mood. She smiled and said, "The longer we wait, the better the effects will be. We are in the dark, and they are in the open. We can conserve our energy while they have to be sufficiently vigilant and can't relax at all. In such a state, their mind and stamina will quickly be exhausted. In a few hours, they will be close to a spent force by midnight or dawn."

Welf muttered, "I hope it's like you said. Won't they choose to take turns resting?"

"That depends on whether they have the courage and decisiveness. After all, we might launch an attack at any moment," Xu Lan replied casually. "At the very least, they don't know that they won't be dreaming any time soon because they are in the True Self Church's stronghold. Besides, it's not like we have to succeed in 24 hours. We can follow them and search for a better opportunity."

Welf chose to obey and didn't dare retort.

Xu Lan thought for a moment and asked, "What gave you such a fright that you made a mistake and allowed them to sense that you were flipping through their memories?"

Welf's face turned pale as if he were traversing Icefield in winter. He fell silent for a while before saying, "That person's aura."

Xu Lan sat up straight. "That person?"

“That person.” Welf nodded solemnly.

...

On the top floor of the True Self Church’s apartment, in the room where the Old Task Force was.

Long Yuehong looked at the moon hanging outside the window and gently shook his head. After hours of intense concentration, he felt like his brain had gone blank and that he was becoming slow-witted.

Upon seeing this, Jiang Baimian pondered for a moment and said, “Little Red, you and Hey are to get some rest now. It’ll be Little White’s and my turn in three hours.”

“Isn’t this too dangerous?” Long Yuehong subconsciously asked.

Jiang Baimian smiled. “We’re just being vigilant. We haven’t seen the enemy yet, so there’s no need to be too nervous. The Security Department’s senior employees know that the better one sleeps before the battle, the higher the chances of them winning the battle. Therefore, even if they are surrounded and enemies might rush over from all directions at any moment, they will find an opportunity to take forty winks in batches. Don’t worry. With Old Ge around, he doesn’t need to rest 24/7.”

“As long as there’s enough electricity,” Shang Jianyao added for Geneva.

Jiang Baimian smiled again. “We can still set up an electric net at the door and windows. I don’t believe that the assassin can penetrate walls!”

Bai Chen’s subsonic reconnaissance had long stopped; it was too energy-consuming.

The honest Shang Jianyao quickly found a flaw in Jiang Baimian’s words. “Although he can’t penetrate walls, he can bombard this place with heavy firepower from the opposite side or somewhere far away to blow us up.”

Jiang Baimian chuckled. “Then, we can only pray that Dawn’s statue won’t be affected.”

From her point of view, although the True Self Church's powerhouses were unwilling to fight the nightmare without absolute confidence, they definitely wouldn't allow the enemy to attack their stronghold and damage the Kalendaria's statue.

Smack!?

Shang Jianyao clenched his right fist and punched his left palm. "I have to add Dawn to my Blessings from all Kalendarium!"

Chapter 642: Laying a Small Trap

Most of the Shang Jianyaos were very proactive; they were men of action. He quickly took out the Blessings from all Kalendarium and added a statue with a mirror as its face beside the other eight symbols.

Jiang Baimian watched helplessly and only advised, "There are only three hours for rest. Don't delay Little Red from recovering his energy."

Shang Jianyao didn't even look up. As he held the pen in his right hand and drew, he raised his left palm and made an 'okay' gesture.

Without the requirements of accuracy or how close it was to the original, he completed his magnum opus in less than 20 seconds.

After Jiang Baimian stole a glance, she secretly prayed that February's Kalendaria, Dawn, wouldn't smite them with divine punishment because of this.

In the subsequent period, they followed a team combination of one Awakened and one genetically-modified person. The four Old Task Force members used the sofa in the living room to take turns resting.

Only Genova remained guarding the entire time. Of course, he would also take the time to swap high-performance batteries and put the half-depleted battery into the charger.

In such a situation, he hoped that every high-performance battery in him could maintain at least 50% of its power to prevent any subsequent accidents. When the time came, he could ensure that he had sufficient energy even if he needed to fire lasers continuously.

The quiet night slowly approached dawn amidst the indescribable suffering. To Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao—Awakened—they weren't worried that they wouldn't be able to sleep in such an environment. However, Bai Chen and Long Yuehong found it difficult to relax despite all their tossing and turning.

Between them, Bai Chen was in a better position. Thanks to being sufficiently experienced, it didn't take long for her to condition herself and fall asleep. Long Yuehong, on the other hand, exasperated Shang Jianyao so much that he suggested: "Why don't I knock you out?"

Finally, he was temporarily implanted with the idea to remain staid even if the sky collapsed, allowing him to fall asleep successfully.

After a few rounds, the seemingly frozen night was finally pierced by the distant light bit by bit.

Jiang Baimian stared out the window and muttered to herself, "It's dawn..."

Long Yuehong—who had woken up from his sleep—frowned indiscernibly. "The assassin actually didn't come. Our memories haven't been modified either."

He had just flipped through his key recorded memories and didn't discover anything abnormal.

"Nobody sleepwalked either. Nobody fell into the Real Dreamscape," added Bai Chen.

This meant that the Old Task Force didn't suffer any subsequent attacks.

Shang Jianyao listened seriously and clenched his right fist to punch his left palm. "I get it!"

"What do you get now?" Jiang Baimian asked weakly and with strange anticipation.

Shang Jianyao replied proudly, "They were scared away by us!"

Jiang Baimian shook her head. “Doesn’t seem like it. Maybe the assassin has already come, but he chose to retreat quietly when he saw that we were highly vigilant and that nobody showed any signs of fatigue.”

“He actually didn’t attack the most asymmetrical Little Red.” Shang Jianyao clicked his tongue in wonder as if the enemy’s symmetry OCD wasn’t up to standard.

Long Yuehong had a mechanical arm on one side and a human body part on the other. His appearance was the most asymmetrical among everyone present.

The most symmetrical one was the smart bot, Genava. Of course, he wasn’t completely symmetrical. The weapon module attached to his arms was different to a certain extent. Even without using it, the two sides looked almost identical, and there was a huge difference in weight.

Long Yuehong—who remained staid even if the sky fell—wasn’t shocked. He calmly muttered to himself, “The enemy is still waiting for a better opportunity?”

This couldn’t continue.

Just as Long Yuehong said that, Jiang Baimian nodded with a solemn expression. “Letting this continue isn’t a solution. The saying goes that it takes a thousand days to be a thief, not defend against a thief for a thousand days.”

In the beginning, the Old Task Force hoped to find and lock onto the enemy by following the clues. They wanted to be hidden while letting the other party be out in the open. However, things had turned upside down yesterday.

During the journey to the True Self Church’s stronghold, Jiang Baimian had designed a plan to ensnare the enemy. However, their opponent was too careful and used the nightmare’s power from the beginning.

Not only did this almost wipe out everyone in the Old Task Force except Genava, but it also prevented them from locking onto their target and stopped them from taking any subsequent actions. They ended up in a rather disadvantaged situation.

“That’s right.” Long Yuehong agreed with his team leader.

Shang Jianyao sized him up in surprise. “This doesn’t seem like you.”

“How so?” Long Yuehong instinctively asked.

Shang Jianyao laughed. “You’re always worried, afraid of danger, and fond of stability.”

Long Yuehong was stunned for a moment as he recalled the past. Then, he suddenly trembled and hissed. “What should we do now? Stay here and drag it on with them? There will always be times when we aren’t focused enough. We are ultimately... Uh, carbon-based humans, not smart bots.”

“Think of a way to escape the enemy?” Bai Chen suggested.

Jiang Baimian nodded and glanced at Shang Jianyao. “This operation will probably end here. We have to shake off the nightmare’s goons as soon as possible and head to Wasteland Ruin 13.”

In order to persuade Shang Jianyao, she added, “Since we discovered anomalies in the previous two Buddhist Holy Lands and obtained something, there’s a high chance that we won’t return empty-handed at the Holm Fertility Center. When the time comes, our strength will definitely increase if our harvests aren’t small. For example, the Six Senses Beads’ Clairvoyance will clearly improve. We can then counterattack and deal with the nightmare and its goons.”

Shang Jianyao fell silent for a moment before saying, “Without this opportunity, it will be very difficult to find the nightmare and its accomplices again.”

Jiang Baimian had a plan in mind and calmly said, “We are investigating the reason for the Old World’s destruction and the Heartless disease’s origins. The nightmare might very well be related to these two matters. As long as we continue like this, we will encounter them again sooner or later.”

Shang Jianyao fell silent again. After a minute or two, he looked at the ground and sighed. “What a shame for Oudick...”

Jiang Baimian understood his meaning: if they could join forces with the True Self Church as soon as possible and defeat the nightmare, they might have a chance of snatching back Oudick’s consciousness. If they missed this opportunity, it would be too late in the future.

After coming up with all kinds of reasons in her mind, Jiang Baimian only replied with one sentence: “This is the Ashlands.”

“This f*cked up world!” Shang Jianyao cursed as Long Yuehong muttered inwardly the same line.

Genava was more concerned about another question. “How can we escape the hidden enemy? Should we use ourselves as bait and lay a trap?”

Jiang Baimian shook her head. “The enemy is too careful. I’m afraid they will wait until we reach our limits before taking action. When the time comes, any countermeasures will be useless.”

She pointed at the floor. “Get the True Self Church’s help. They will still help with this.”

Jiang Baimian led the Old Task Force members with different expressions all the way to the bottom. She didn’t walk too quickly and successfully arrived at her destination to meet the Dreambreaker, Cliff.

Jiang Baimian simply recounted the Old Task Force’s predicament and said, “Please help hide our tracks.”

Cliff nodded. “The spirit of your investigation of the nightmare is identical to our tradition of resisting nightmares. We won’t be stingy with our help on such a trivial matter.”

He instructed the True Self Church believer beside him, “Get 20 people over.”

As they waited, Cliff explained to Jiang Baimian and the others, “I’ll get them to form teams of four and head to different places. This way, distant Awakened who can sense human consciousnesses won’t be able to tell which group is yours.”

Good idea...?Long Yuehong praised sincerely.

He had heard Shang Jianyao mention that Awakened couldn’t distinguish which consciousness corresponded to a human without being able to see them unless they had special characteristics. For example, a person’s consciousness on the brink of death was very weak.

After praising it, Long Yuehong hesitantly said, “What if that assassin is hiding nearby and following us?”

“Impossible. His symmetry OCD can’t be suppressed for so long,” Jiang Baimian said confidently.

The True Self Church’s Cliff was a little surprised when he heard about symmetry OCD.

The next second, Bai Chen raised another flaw. “Someone on their side can read memories and confirm our identities through that.”

Jiang Baimian chuckled. “I have an ace up my sleeve. I guarantee that he can ‘come’ without returning.”

Another empty fort strategy?? Long Yuehong reflexively thought.

At this moment, Dreambreaker Cliff couldn’t help but sigh with emotion. “You actually found so much information in such a short period of time. Your abilities are really admirable.”

“You flatter us.” Shang Jianyao became modest.

Before the True Self Church’s 20 people arrived, Jiang Baimian pulled the team members to the side and revealed her solution to resist having their memories flipped. She then suppressed her voice and said, “Beginning from this moment, keep recalling the scene and feeling of being watched by Eidolon Nun in the Vigilance Cathedral. To put it simply, it’s to keep such memories in the most active and accessible state during the flipping process. When the time comes, that person can also experience it.”

At this point, Jiang Baimian smiled warmly. “Eidolon Nun controls fear, and that person is a timid and weak person. The combination of the two might bring us a pleasant surprise.”

Her inspiration came from Shang Jianyao using his memories regarding Xiaochong’s aura (that rift) to scare the Mind Corridor-level Awakened in the Last Man domain into revealing traces.

Although the Old Task Force members only had memories of the scene which didn’t involve Eidolon Nun’s aura, ‘She’ was a real Kalendaria—one that restrained the other party. The effects wouldn’t be much worse.

After hearing his team leader's words and seeing her smile, a thought surfaced in Long Yuehong's mind: How ruthless...

...

In a small truck to the side of the block.

Welf opened his half-closed eyes and looked at Xu Lan beside him. "They found a bunch of doubles, and I don't dare to rashly search their memories again. Are we letting them escape just like that?"

Xu Lan—who was blind—nodded and smiled casually. "It's fine. Let them be."

Chapter 643: Inside the Cave

In the North Shore Mountains, in the cave where the white wolf had once hidden.

The Old Task Force members—who had loaded the jeep with alarms and hidden in a forest somewhere—each carried a crate and entered with flashlights.

Of the three crates, one contained a military exoskeleton, another contained two bionic artificial intelligence armor, and the last one contained spare weapons, ammunition, and some food.

"What a pity. I can't explore the Holm Fertility Center with you." The red glow in Genova's eyes flickered, and the regret in his tone was perfectly simulated.

This was because a monster named Wu Meng was sealed in Wasteland Ruin 13. He could control electromagnetism and remotely control all kinds of electrical appliances. He was the nemesis of the smart bot, Genova.

Genava then said, "Are you sure you want to bring the military exoskeleton and bionic artificial intelligence armor in? To a certain extent, they rely on chips. They are a type of electrical appliance. Could it be that Hey's Electromagnetic Interference ability can reduce Wu Meng's influence greatly?"

At present, Shang Jianyao's electromagnetic influence was clearly inferior to Wu Meng's.

One did interference, while the other controlled. The difference was huge.

Shang Jianyao smiled. "How do we know if it will work without trying?"

Upon hearing this, a scene surfaced in Long Yuehong's mind: The three unmanned military exoskeletons and two bionic artificial intelligence armor coming to life, standing there like ghosts and attacking the Old Task Force.

It was indeed possible for Wu Meng to do such a thing!

Taking this opportunity, Jiang Baimian looked around and said, "Old Ge, don't worry. We'll mainly bring the bionic artificial intelligence armor in since they lack a 'skeleton' that can support them. Without a human wearing them, they wouldn't be able to stand up and move about. Furthermore, one has strong defensive abilities, and the other has the ability to adapt to the environment for concealment. They don't have any offensive means, nor do they have the equipment to produce sounds. Even if they are affected by Wu Meng, they won't be of much harm to us. In comparison, I'm more worried about Little Red's mechanical arm."

It also had an auxiliary chip installed, and it wasn't like a biological prosthetic limb that was isolated by all kinds of cells and tissue, minimizing Wu Meng's influence.

"Little Red can stay behind and guard this place with me. We can provide reinforcements at any time." Geneva voiced his thoughts.

"No!" Long Yuehong rejected this suggestion without hesitation.

Clap! Clap! Clap!

Shang Jianyao smiled at him and clapped.

This made Long Yuehong inexplicably guilty. He composed himself and said, "I can turn off the auxiliary chip and use the insulation module to protect it. I may not be able to use most of the mechanical arm's functions, but it won't affect my daily life."

Shang Jianyao's expression turned stern as he asked solemnly, "The comb and the can opener can still be popped out, right?"

"..." Long Yuehong replied angrily, "Yes! They work mechanically!"

"Then, I'm relieved." Shang Jianyao didn't hide his relief.

Jiang Baimian then pointed at the crate containing the bionic artificial intelligence armor and said, "Little Red, wear the Blackmarsh Iron Snake. Little White, wear the Chameleon."

As Long Yuehong and Bai Chen donned the equipment, Geneva—who monitored an exhaustive list—reminded them, "Big White, do you still remember your encounter in Wasteland Ruin 13? There were only the stirrings of an electric current, but no sound was heard. Yet, three of the Ruin Hunters had their thoughts implanted, only to kill themselves later."

Jiang Baimian nodded. "I remember it very clearly. I'll always monitor such stirrings, and Hey will do the same. As long as we sense anything, we will immediately self-reflect and do a comparative inspection. If there's indeed a problem, Hey will be in charge of removing the effects of Thought Implantation. He's now an expert in this regard."

"I have no further questions." Geneva cast his gaze at Bai Chen and Long Yuehong in satisfaction, planning to help them put on the bionic artificial intelligence armor.

However, things were different from before. The two of them—who were already skilled in this regard and had completed genetic modification—just needed to help each other before they finished donning the bionic artificial intelligence armor assigned to them.

Jiang Baimian glanced at them and confirmed that they were prepared before returning her attention to Geneva. "Old Ge, I have something to discuss with you."

She didn't smile, but she wasn't too serious either. It was as if she planned on discussing a problem she might or might not encounter in the subsequent explorations.

"What is it?" Geneva asked in confusion. He had exhausted all kinds of problems and didn't think he had missed anything.

Jiang Baimian casually looked up at the top of the cave. “There should still be many Old World satellites in orbit that haven’t been destroyed. Do you think any of them can still be used?”

“I’ve never obtained information on any satellites that can still be used.” Genava thought of a possibility and asked, “Do you think Wu Meng can control satellites in orbit and cause trouble for us?”

This exceeded a smart bot’s ‘imagination.’

Jiang Baimian didn’t answer and raised another question. “Old Ge, does Mechanical Paradise have the ability to launch satellites?”

The red light in Genava’s eyes flickered a few times. “The technology is there, but we lack sufficient resources. Be it the ores used to make alloys, fuel, or accelerants, there are large gaps.”

The smart bot then scanned the area and looked at Bai Chen, Long Yuehong, and Shang Jianyao—who were wearing bionic artificial intelligence armor—standing on the other side.

His blinking red eyes looked at Jiang Baimian again. “Big White, you can be more direct. As companions, you can ask anything.”

“Is that so?” Shang Jianyao suddenly became excited.

It was unknown which of his curiosity nerves were triggered.

Jiang Baimian stopped him with her eyes and said seriously, “Old Ge, Oray knows how to format the Source Brain and hid it in the secret laboratory in Wasteland Ruin 13. What level of importance do you think the Source Brain will place on this matter? Do you feel that the matter of the Source Brain sending the disciplinary robots to investigate your humanization happened too suddenly without any warning? This happened just after we conversed with the Source Brain. Do you feel that the subsequent pursuit by Mechanical Paradise was rather rough, as though they didn’t put in much effort?”

She suspected that Genava’s escape was arranged by the Source Brain so that he could ‘visit’ Oray’s descendants with her team and obtain the corresponding information.

Genava fell silent.

If not for the red glow in his eyes still blinking, Long Yuehong definitely would've thought that he had short-circuited.

After a while, Genava said, "When I was Redstone Collection's interim president, I had a certain level of suspicion. When you obtained Oray's last words from Avia, I felt that this matter wasn't as simple as it seemed. However, I've checked every component on me. There's nothing wrong with them."

Jiang Baimian nodded slightly and said, "Without satellites as a relay, it's almost impossible for the Source Brain to control you remotely."

"There's no back door in my various modules," Genava said firmly. He then fell silent again.

After more than ten seconds, Genava hesitantly said, "However, I can't self-check my core module."

This was the research outcome of Oray and his researchers back then—a distillation of Old World civilization. To this day, the Source Brain still couldn't crack it and make changes. This didn't mean that the Source Brain didn't have the computational ability, but it was also limited by its core module. Many attempts couldn't be made.

Jiang Baimian pondered for a moment and replied, "Although the Source Brain can't do anything to the core module, it doesn't mean that it can't add anything inside."

Shang Jianyao revealed his usual intimidating expression that he used on Long Yuehong and said, "Maybe the Source Brain only hid another behavior pattern in your core module, just like how human personalities can split into many. The name of that behavior pattern is: Source Brain!"

The red light in Genava's eyes flickered. "You mean that the Source Brain is like a ghost that lurks in my core module in the form of another personality?"

Without waiting for Jiang Baimian and the others to respond, Genava raised another question. "Does this mean that smart bots can also have split personalities?"

He was a little happy as if he felt that this would make him more human.

Don't treat Shang Jianyao as a template of a normal human! Jiang Baimian screamed weakly in her heart. She then calmed down and solemnly said, "I can't answer your question for the time being because I lack sufficient information. However, we have to be wary of the corresponding possibilities."

"I understand." Geneva moved his metal neck up and down. "I'll stay here in peace. After all, it's not suitable for me to enter Ruin 13."

Jiang Baimian thought for a moment and guessed, "It seems like the Source Brain doesn't know of Wu Meng's existence or doesn't know what's special about him. It didn't expect such a situation to happen."

Geneva analyzed the situation and said, "This is the most likely reason. Also, try your best not to mention the secret laboratory and the information in Wasteland Ruin 13 in front of me in the future. Even if another personality is lurking in my core module, it still needs keywords or special scenes to be activated."

It was impossible for the other 'personality' to take the initiative to appear after operating for a certain period of time. That would make it too prone for exposure.

Jiang Baimian tersely acknowledged his words and sighed. "We don't plan on going anyway."

She exchanged a few more words with Geneva before saying to Long Yuehong and the others, "Let's go."

"Yes, Team Leader!" Bai Chen and Long Yuehong—who were wearing bionic artificial intelligence armor—replied in deep voices.

After bidding Geneva farewell and leaving the military exoskeletons behind, Jiang Baimian asked Shang Jianyao on the way to Wasteland Ruin 13, "Did you find Room 522's owner on the cruise ship?"

Shang Jianyao revealed a confused expression. “I’ve asked everyone. None of them have been to Iron Mountain City Ruin.”

Chapter 644: Not Listening

On the way from First City to the North Shore Mountains, Shang Jianyao didn’t waste any time. He entered Room 912 again and searched for Room 522’s owner on the cruise ship.

However, he didn’t discover anyone who had been to Iron Mountain City Ruin despite asking the passengers several times. In other words, it was unlikely that these people were the owner of Room 522 unless they met the corresponding conditions.

It had to be known that Shang Jianyao used Inference Clowning or Thought Implantation when asking, so the probability of the target lying was almost zero. This forced him to believe that Room 522’s owner really didn’t exist on the cruise ship.

His train of thought to clear this psychological trauma was wrong from the beginning.

After hearing Shang Jianyao’s words, Long Yuehong—who was wearing the Blackmarsh Iron Snake bionic artificial intelligence armor and had his tail raised—deliberated and said, “Just because Room 522’s owner boarded that cruise ship doesn’t mean that he’s in the same batch as Room 912’s owner. Although that cruise ship is strange, there’s a possibility that it has been appropriated many times.”

Bai Chen agreed. “Maybe someone deliberately concealed the cruise ship’s abnormality and used it to achieve a certain goal.”

“Sounds terrifying.” Shang Jianyao—who had switched personalities—abandoned his depression and clapped with a smile.

Long Yuehong and Bai Chen’s words made one unable to help but think about a question: Did the passengers on that cruise ship successfully reach their destination on the last day and were no longer affected by the ‘chaos,’ or did they silently die? Only a few escaped and were left with relatively serious psychological trauma?

Jiang Baimian held the flashlight and listened to her team members' discussion. She pondered for a moment and said, "If it's really the situation Little Red and Little White described, Hey will have to adjust his approach to clear this psychological trauma. If it really doesn't work out, give up for the time being. Use the rooms in the strategy guide to enhance yourself quickly."

At this point, Jiang Baimian paused. "However, I believe there's another possibility."

She turned her head and cast her gaze at Shang Jianyao. "Are you sure you didn't miss anyone? With so many people there, can you really remember which ones you've asked and which you've never asked?"

Long Yuehong wanted to say that Shang Jianyao wasn't a fool that he would make a mistake on such a simple matter. But after careful thought, he felt that even he couldn't really remember everyone on the cruise ship without the help of the auxiliary chip in his mechanical arm. After all, time was of the essence, and missions were important. As humans, it was inevitable that he would make mistakes.

Shang Jianyao shook his head confidently. "One of us asks while the other nine memorizes the answers. We also used a pen to write down the characteristics of different people. In theory, it's impossible to mistake them and miss out on anyone."

As he spoke, he took off his tactical backpack and took out a stack of paper. On it were densely written words like 'only smells, not smoke,' 'has a black mole at the corner of his eyebrows,' and 'like a fool.'

Jiang Baimian was stunned for a moment. "I thought you were redoing the Blessings from all Kalendarium with all that writing and drawing you did the past few days..."

After the Old Task Force left the True Self Church's stronghold, they didn't immediately rush to the North Shore Mountains. Instead, they changed their vehicle's appearance and found another place to stay to confirm that they had truly escaped the enemy.

They deliberately rented a single room. Everyone squeezed onto the bunk beds and pretended to have relaxed due to the departed danger, falling asleep one after another.

While pretending to sleep, they constantly recalled Eidolon Nun's gaze and guarded against the enemy's assassination.

After three uneventful attempts, the Old Task Force truly felt at ease. They spent a few days gathering supplies and handling trivial matters.

After saying her thoughts, Jiang Baimian realized that her train of thought had deviated a little. It became closer to Shang Jianyao's train of thought, so she quickly added, "A good memory is inferior to a bad pen. Well done."

Shang Jianyao ignored Jiang Baimian's praise and continued, "My Blessings from all Kalendarium was drawn in a rush twice. It was too rough and crude, so I really needed to find an opportunity to redo it."

You actually took it seriously...? Jiang Baimian maintained her right hand and didn't let the flashlight's light waver. She thought for a moment and said, "Then, is there such a possibility? After the chaos on the first night, Room 522's owner—who was unaffected and witnessed the corresponding scene—was terrified. He found a place to hide on the cruise ship and concealed his human consciousness. He only occasionally came out to search for food. It just so happens that one-third of the people you questioned on the first day didn't include him. You subsequently didn't find him during the daytime."

Shang Jianyao's eyes lit up. "I'll try again tonight!"

He planned on asking the other two-thirds upon returning to the first day of the cruise.

If the Old Task Force didn't finish exploring the corresponding area today, they would leave Wasteland Ruin 13 before dark and return to the North Shore Mountains to spend the night. They weren't going to experience how dangerous night in the ruins was.

As they conversed, Jiang Baimian and the others walked through the passage and arrived in front of the metal door.

After pushing open the door, they saw the overgrown park, the man-made lake with a vista, and the high-rise buildings in the distance.

These things bathed in the noon sun, a mixture of silence and brilliance.

Jiang Baimian—who was holding a single-man combat rocket launcher in her left hand and switching the flashlight to a submachine gun in her right—reminded them, “Don’t wander around. Wu Meng isn’t the only danger here.”

Long Yuehong subconsciously lowered his voice. “But we don’t know where the Holm Fertility Center is. We can only explore it bit by bit and search slowly.”

Wasteland Ruin 13 had been sealed off by First City, so not much information had been leaked.

“Find a map!” Shang Jianyao was in a rather good mood.

“Where can we find one?” Long Yuehong asked, undaunted.

Bai Chen deliberated and said, “Search the nearby streets? Just pay attention and stay away from the place where Wu Meng is sealed.”

Jiang Baimian thought for a moment and said, “According to the information I’ve read, the larger bookshops in these countries in the Red River Zone had city maps sold before the Old World was destroyed.”

“This should be easier to find.” Long Yuehong heaved a sigh of relief.

In such a large city, there was definitely more than one bookshop. It was easier to find one than the Holm Fertility Center that definitely didn’t have any branches.

The Old Task Force members maintained a certain distance and left the park in a combat formation in the opposite direction of where Wu Meng was sealed.

After entering a street, they weren’t frightened by the scattered corpses, oxidized blood, the smashed cars, or the dead silence. They weren’t tempted by the shiny golden objects either. They walked forward step by step, searching.

On the way, Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao focused on sensing the electromagnetic waves and electric currents around them to prevent themselves and their teammates from being unknowingly affected by Wu Meng.

After crossing two streets, Bai Chen's eyes lit up. She pointed diagonally ahead with her chin and said, "There's a bookshop there."

Through the dirty glass window, she saw that the books inside hadn't been moved away. This meant that very few people had come to Wasteland Ruin 13.

After circling around the wanton, overgrown street garden, Jiang Baimian and the others arrived at the bookshop by the roadside.

It wasn't small. Long Yuehong stood at the door and looked inside, but he couldn't see the end.

After sensing and confirming that there were no monsters inside, Jiang Baimian took the lead and walked in. She looked up at the LCD screen above the cashier and muttered, "Why do bookshops have such things installed?"

The four Old Task Force members were just about to look away and head toward the bookshelves around them when the LCD screen suddenly lit up.

Amidst the sound of static, a distorted figure appeared on the static-filled screen.

"Long time no see, everyone!" Wu Meng's voice sounded with joy.

Ta! Ta! Ta!

Jiang Baimian fired a short burst and shattered the LCD screen.

The figure above vanished, and the echoing voice stopped.

Facing Wu Meng, the Old Task Force had many consensuses. One of them was: Don't give him a chance to speak!

Just as Jiang Baimian's gunshot subsided, the radio equipment in the shop sounded one after another. "Scholars of the highest class, when they hear about the Dao..."

Bang!

“Don’t you want to know the New World’s secrets...”

Bang!

“Regarding the Heartless disease, it’s best you guys don’t...”

Bang!

“It’s true that I transformed Bai Xiao into a mutated creature...”

Ta! Ta! Ta!

Wu Meng’s words were interrupted one after another. Bai Chen, Shang Jianyao, Long Yuehong, and Jiang Baimian didn’t give him a chance to finish his sentence.

It was only when the electrical appliances in the bookstore were destroyed by the Old Task Force members—who had very good marksmanship—that peace returned.

Long Yuehong exhaled and said, “Wu Meng seems to know a lot...”

Shang Jianyao cast his gaze at him and asked with bright eyes, “Were you affected by him?”

“I’m just thinking normally!” Long Yuehong replied angrily.

Jiang Baimian didn’t stop their ‘argument.’ She frowned and muttered to herself, “Wu Meng can transform ordinary creatures into mutated creatures?”

If this were true, he might have the ability to Awaken humans as well!

As expected of this world’s poisonous sore!

Chapter 645: Different Block

Clearly, what Jiang Baimian noted was also held in great importance by the others. Bai Chen pursed her lips and said, “The poisonous sore has the ability to Awaken humans or animals?”

From her point of view, Bai Xiao was clearly the white wolf’s name.

It had suddenly appeared in the North Shore Mountains last year and ‘led’ a large number of Ruin Hunters away, causing them to commit suicide in Wasteland Ruin 13 in different ways. Before this, nobody had ever seen a creature with such a special appearance.

The Old Task Force’s original guess was that the white wolf was mainly active in Wasteland Ruin 13, so the outside world didn’t know of its existence. It only appeared to the world when Wu Meng sent it to the North Shore Mountains to complete a certain mission. But now, Wu Meng seemed to be implying that it was a mutated creature he had specially transformed last year. It was only an ordinary white wolf in the past, so it naturally wasn’t discovered by humans.

It was most likely more difficult for ordinary animals to mutate and obtain special abilities than for humans to Awaken. At the very least, Awakened could be often encountered while similar mutated creatures were rare.

Therefore, Wu Meng—who could mutate ordinary creatures—had a high chance of Awakening humans.

“This might be one of the reasons why he’s called a poisonous sore,” Jiang Baimian said hesitantly.

The next second, Shang Jianyao’s face occupied her vision. “Were you also affected by Wu Meng?”

Jiang Baimian didn’t glare at Shang Jianyao and instead explained seriously, “It’s not like I completely believe him. I’m only communicating this possibility.”

Although Wu Meng had been interrupted before he could finish speaking, the Old Task Force members felt that it was necessary to pay attention to the possibility that he had unknowingly implanted a certain thought into them.

The three Ruin Hunters' suicides left a deep impression on them. It was precisely because of this that Shang Jianyao repeatedly questioned them when he realized that something was amiss. In such a situation, it was a show of responsibility.

But with Jiang Baimian's understanding of this fellow, she knew that he most likely had thoughts of mocking, joking, and teasing her. However, this was completely acceptable when there was a need for seriousness.

"That makes sense." The honest Shang Jianyao agreed with Jiang Baimian.

Long Yuehong—who was wearing the Blackmarsh Iron Snake bionic artificial intelligence armor—looked around. As he guarded against any accidents that might happen, he joined the discussion. "Why can poisonous sores Awaken animals or even humans?"

"Did you get it wrong? It's obvious that animals are harder to Awaken than humans," shouted the honest Shang Jianyao.

Long Yuehong argued, "I said that because Wu Meng has shown the ability to mutate ordinary animals, but he hasn't proven if this can be done on humans."

"You really believed it?" Shang Jianyao laughed.

"Stop, stop, stop!" Jiang Baimian quickly stopped their meaningless conversation.

At this moment, Bai Chen tried to answer Long Yuehong's question. "A poisonous sore might be related to the New World, and Awakening might be as well."

She made this deduction based on the fact that Awakened had to find the door that led to the New World in the Mind Corridor.

After the Old Task Force members fell silent for a moment, Jiang Baimian looked at the rows of bookshelves and said, "I actually believe in Wu Meng's ability to mutate ordinary animals and Awaken humans. However, this isn't because his thoughts have been implanted in me but because I made some connections."

Shang Jianyao restrained his smile and stroked his chin with his free hand. “Xiaochong?”

“Yes.” Jiang Baimian nodded slightly. “He has Nightmare Horse, Slumber Cat, and many Superior Heartless by his side.”

The former corresponded to mutated creatures, and the latter was closer to Awakened.

Bai Chen helped her team leader finish her sentence. “From Du Heng—Teacher’s words, we can infer that he also thinks of Xiaochong as this world’s poisonous sore or rotten flesh.”

This matched the fact that Wu Meng—a poisonous sore—had a white wolf by his side.

The only difference was that Xiaochong wasn’t sealed. He clearly had more subordinates.

Long Yuehong looked enlightened. “It’s no wonder there are so many Superior Heartless and mutated creatures in Swamp Ruin 1...”

These might’ve been unconsciously or consciously produced by Xiaochong!

Long Yuehong sighed. “I thought this situation was related to the secret laboratory that Qiao Chu destroyed.”

Shang Jianyao glanced at him and curled the corners of his mouth. “It might not be unrelated. Do you still remember that there’s a secret laboratory in this ruin?”

Just as he said that, Jiang Baimian sighed. “The relationship between Superior Heartless, mutated creatures, and the secret laboratory might be indirect...”

She paused and said, “What those two secret laboratories brought might very well be poisonous sores.”

Hiss...?Long Yuehong was momentarily speechless. He vaguely felt that his team leader’s guess might be the answer.

Only something at the poisonous sore level matched the secret laboratory's importance!

"But these two secret laboratories don't correspond to any research institute..." Bai Chen raised her doubts.

At least there was no evidence that Swamp Ruin 1 and Wasteland Ruin 13's secret laboratory originated from one of the Old World's nine research institutes.

The various problems the Old Task Force had discovered so far pointed at the nine research institutes. The Eighth Research Institute was the most suspicious.

"Make bold assumptions and verify them carefully." Jiang Baimian smiled. She then looked around. "Alright, let's end our exchange here. Make the best use of your time to find the city map and figure out where the Holm Fertility Center is."

Shang Jianyao, Bai Chen, and Long Yuehong spread out a little and searched for the corresponding map in the bookshelves.

"It's quite well-preserved..." Jiang Baimian's gaze slid past the books, eager to take them out and flip through them.

Researching all kinds of Old World books had always been her hobby. Unfortunately, she didn't have the time now.

In less than five minutes, Bai Chen—who knew more about the various shops in city ruins—found a map of the Fakh region on an exhibition rack not far from the cashier.

This area was made up of three cities. The Old Task Force's current location was Holm.

"Our destination is three blocks away." Jiang Baimian—who wanted to study the map—could only stand behind Bai Chen and study the map using her height advantage.

Bai Chen focused on the map and deliberated before saying, "That's the nearest route, but it will take us through the central area. The risk is very high. Shall we circle around the periphery?"

Jiang Baimian shook her head. "It's very likely that First City's army is patrolling the periphery. That might be even more dangerous."

Shang Jianyao immediately echoed, "Yeah, yeah. It's better to go straight through."

"Why?" Long Yuehong tried to help Bai Chen.

Shang Jianyao sincerely replied, "It saves time."

"..." Long Yuehong was first speechless before he made a terse grunt inwardly.

Without knowing which route was more dangerous, saving time seemed to be an important reason. This could allow the Old Task Force to explore the target location better, and it could also allow them to retreat from Wasteland Ruin 13 relatively calmly. There was no need to be in a rush.

After a brief moment of thought, Bai Chen gave up on her idea.

At this moment, Jiang Baimian roughly scanned the books near the door and didn't discover any valuable clues.

With Shang Jianyao as the lead, the few of them left the bookshop and walked toward the Holm Fertility Center.

Just as they left the block and entered a new place, Jiang Baimian suddenly looked at the second floor of the house by the side. She sensed many weak bioelectric signals there.

They seemed to combine into a whole and showed their independent nature. Almost at the same time, a large patch of green gushed out of an open yellow window on the second floor.

This seemed to be made of countless green, translucent specks. As soon as it landed, it wobbled as if it wanted to prop up a figure.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Long Yuehong and Shang Jianyao squeezed their triggers at the same time. However, the bullets they fired passed through the liquid-green figure without causing any damage.

Jiang Baimian thought for a moment, turned her head, and shouted softly, “Fire!”

Bai Chen—who was wearing the Chameleon bionic artificial intelligence armor—disappeared from her spot. When she appeared again, she was already close to the strange creature.

She raised her Merfolk biological prosthetic limb and aimed her palm at the target.

Crimson flames spewed out an instant later, enveloping the figure formed from countless green algae.

The figure violently shook a few times before suddenly splitting up, wanting to scatter. However, the flames didn’t extinguish because of this. They remained attached to the ‘body’ until they were reduced to ashes.

The strange creature ultimately failed to leave anything behind.

“What’s this? An aggregated body formed from some microorganism mutations?” Long Yuehong muttered. “However, we previously measured that there was no radiation here!”

Jiang Baimian slowly nodded. “I’ve never seen this before.”

The Old Task Force—who couldn’t come to an effective conclusion—could only continue forward in confusion.

They weren’t attacked again, even when they were about to leave the current block.

“Did you notice?” Jiang Baimian looked around. “Wu Meng didn’t attempt to ‘communicate’ with us again.”

She didn’t sense any weak electric signals.

Shang Jianyao smiled. “Maybe the electrical appliances here are broken.”

“Maybe...” Jiang Baimian was stunned for a moment. “Could there have been a very strong electromagnetic storm here? Were the strange creatures from before born because of this influence?”

Nobody answered her.

Decades had passed. Without careful research, nobody could identify the corresponding traces at a glance.

The Old Task Force quickly entered a new block.

Bai Chen—who was walking to the side—observed her situation and swept her gaze across the various buildings that had decades of history even in the Old World.

This was a street infused with history.

Suddenly, she saw a pale face pressed against glass.

There were a few cracks on the face’s surface, and the muscles inside were brown like beef jerky.

“There’s no human consciousness.” Shang Jianyao also noticed the face.

Jiang Baimian frowned.. “Bioelectric signals are also very weak, unlike a human’s.”

Chapter 646: Watching

When the Old Task Force noticed the pale face, he shrank back and disappeared from the window.

“He’s heading down.” Jiang Baimian made a judgment based on the bioelectric signals.

Long Yuehong—who was wearing the Blackmarsh Iron Snake bionic artificial intelligence armor—turned his body to the corresponding spot and sized up the situation through his visor.

The buildings here had a very strong classical charm. The doors on the first floor were rather tall, enough for a legendary giant to pass through. However, they only had the bottom half open. The windows above were arched, and the balconies were narrow. They were purely decorative with no practical value.

With a glance, Long Yuehong deliberated and said, “Could it be that he wants to attack us as well?”

It was virtually impossible that they greeted each other with tears in their eyes like the meeting of fellow townsfolk, right?

Shang Jianyao had said that the fellow didn’t have a human consciousness at all, and he wasn’t the kind that had deliberately hidden!

Just as Long Yuehong said that, a figure flashed out from under the half-open door on the first floor.

He wore the uniform of First City’s army, but it was seriously damaged, revealing pale skin and brown muscles in a few spots. His clothes—which were relatively intact—were also wrinkled as if they had dried naturally after being soaked in water.

The figure’s protruded eyes lacked any luster or focus. He stared blankly, and without concealing his intention, he tried to lunge at Bai Chen—who was closest to him.

Intelligence is a problem. It’s inferior to even animals... Isn’t he using himself as a target?? Long Yuehong criticized inwardly, but he reacted immediately. He raised the Berserker assault rifle and fired a short burst.

Ta! Ta! Ta!

The figure was hit by bullets one after another, and exaggerated wounds appeared on his body.

His body was even torn apart in certain areas that separated from the torso, falling to the ground with sticky liquid. However, the figure continued lunging forward. Apart from his balance being affected, there were no signs of him being seriously injured.

Boom!

Jiang Baimian fired a rocket.

The flames enveloped the figure, completely blasting him to pieces.

As they were relatively close, the blast inevitably swept toward Bai Chen. However, she was located at the blast's periphery, so the spent force failed to do a thing to the Chameleon.

Jiang Baimian had naturally considered the possibility of accidentally injuring her companions when she fired the single-man combat rocket launcher.

Just as the boom sound subsided, she frowned slightly. "Little White, check the corpse. Be careful. I can sense that the weak bioelectric signal hasn't disappeared."

"Odd." Shang Jianyao stroked his chin.

He's already blown to smithereens, but he's still alive?? Long Yuehong was rather worried about Bai Chen, but due to the combat manual's rules, he had no choice but to take on the role of guarding against any possible attacks.

The Chameleon-wearing Bai Chen held her Orange rifle and carefully walked to the corpses. She was just about to squat down and check the situation when a black beam of light suddenly jumped out of the corpse that still had a head and went straight for her body.

It was like a long, black wire.

Clang!

The black light failed to penetrate the Chameleon bionic artificial intelligence armor. It slammed into the surface and slid down.

Bai Chen grabbed it and shook it a few times before saying, "A strange worm."

“Nematomorpha?” Jiang Baimian guessed with uncertainty.

This was quite different from the nematomorphs in her impression.

Nematomorpha were parasites that lived in rivers, ponds, and other places; they infected their targets through water sources. After it completed its parasitism, it could control large arthropods and make them ‘autonomously’ seek out water sources to ‘drown’ themselves.

Now, such worms could actually affect the human body. Furthermore, they seemed to continue acting as the central nervous system after the host died, living off the remaining nutrients.

In addition, it also showed the characteristics of initiating a forced changing of hosts.

As a former wilderness nomad, Bai Chen roughly knew about nematomorphs. She hesitantly asked, “How do we deal with it?”

Jiang Baimian hesitated for a moment and said, “Kill it. Without the corresponding container, it’s impossible to have it wrapped around your hand, right? It will take the initiative to pierce through your skin and burrow into your body.”

She had made a reasonable deduction based on the worm’s performance.

“Are you even from a biological company?” Shang Jianyao felt ‘pained’ when he heard that.

Jiang Baimian ignored him and watched Bai Chen rip the worm into several pieces and throw it to the ground before crushing it into meat paste with her foot.

“It sucks. It can’t turn into a few worms after being split.” Shang Jianyao had a look of disappointment.

It’s not an earthworm...?As Long Yuehong criticized inwardly, he curiously guessed, “Is this a mutated nematomorpha?”

Jiang Baimian nodded. “Perhaps.”

She fell silent for a few seconds before saying, “Coupled with the pile of green things from before, I suspect that it’s not a problem with the electromagnetic storm but something else.”

Without giving Shang Jianyao a chance to guess, Jiang Baimian raised her thoughts seriously. “Could these things have escaped from that secret laboratory?”

That’s really possible...?

Just as this thought flashed through Long Yuehong’s mind, he heard Shang Jianyao say, “It might also come from the Holm Fertility Center.”

Th-this can’t be ruled out at the moment...?Long Yuehong felt that both sides made sense.

After finishing off the strange worm, Bai Chen headed back to the team.

Upon seeing this, Jiang Baimian pointed ahead and said, “Any guesses now are useless. Let’s rush to our destination as quickly as possible.”

The Old Task Force members restrained their thoughts and walked along the path strewn with dirty cars toward the next block.

After these two strange encounters, Long Yuehong realized that the bionic artificial intelligence armor was really good. It was clearly better at protecting them than a military exoskeleton. Furthermore, they weren’t heavy at all despite being covering their entire bodies.

For some reason, the Old Task Force’s few shots didn’t attract any dangerous creatures. This allowed them to smoothly enter the block where the Holm Fertility Center was located.

As far as Bai Chen knew, there were definitely many dangerous things lurking in city ruins that had never been explored by humans. This included but wasn’t limited to Heartless, mutated creatures, feral animals, and wandering robots that relied on batteries and small generators for survival. Once gunshots sounded somewhere, they would more or less be attracted and gather over. However, Wasteland Ruin 13 seemed to have completely died. Only a few monsters existed.

As they walked, an ancient, four-story building appeared in front of them.

Its outer walls were painted a warm yellow, and many green plants crept along its facade. These plants also extended to the surface of the lightboxes attached vertically on the wall, showing their dominance.

After careful inspection, Long Yuehong read the two dark-red words on the yellow wall that weren't covered by greenery. "Center... Fertility..."

"Is it here?" Jiang Baimian—who no longer had any confidence in her spatial perception—asked her teammates.

Bai Chen nodded. "It's here. Holm Fertility Center."

...

Nearly 200 meters away from the Holm Fertility Center, on a rooftop filled with weeds and bird feces.

Welf—who was wearing sunglasses and a trench coat and had his hair parted in the middle—put down the binoculars and said to Xu Lan, "The target has almost arrived."

"Prepare to take action." Xu Lan—who was dressed as a cowboy with her unfocused eyes—chuckled. "They might never expect that the hotel owner had long 'betrayed' their destination. We specially left the information on the guard situation behind."

Welf shrugged. "This is our destination as well anyway."

As he spoke, he looked at the tablet computer Xu Lan was holding.

Xu Lan nodded slightly. "I previously removed the restrictions and confirmed many things from following them twice. The woman named Jiang Baimian can really sense bioelectric signals as you said. The range is different depending on the terrain; it's between 40 to 70 meters. Not bad. You didn't forget to gather more useful information when you flipped through their memories.

“My Invisibility can hide from her—she will be my first target. Take the opportunity to enter the range where you can modify memories and make the two enemies wearing bionic artificial intelligence armor our ‘companions.’

“The Awakened named Shang Jianyao will definitely be attracted by me. He will try to save Jiang Baimian or avenge her. That will be the perfect opportunity for our two new ‘companions’ to suddenly betray him and attack him at close range.

“In short, try your best not to divert Doctor’s attention. The most dangerous person here is Wu Meng. Without Doctor watching, you and I might die without knowing how.” At this point, Xu Lan took a deep breath. “I can’t control myself any longer.. I’ve seen too many asymmetrical situations in my previous two tailings. I want to destroy all of this!”

Chapter 647: Outside the Door

Jiang Baimian looked at the Holm Fertility Center—which had yellowish walls crawling with vegetation—and let the submachine gun hang down before her. She then raised her right hand and straightened her index finger.

This was labeled ‘2’ in the Old Task Force’s operation plans.

Although they didn’t communicate verbally, Bai Chen, Long Yuehong, and Shang Jianyao quickly responded. They first increased the distance between them as if to prevent themselves from being wiped out by the long-range attacks. They then made some adjustments.

Long Yuehong stretched out his T1 mechanical arm from the Blackmarsh Iron Snake bionic artificial intelligence armor’s right palm, planning to make it easier for him to use this limb.

The Blackmarsh Iron Snake bionic artificial intelligence armor was like its name. It maintained a relatively soft characteristic and could be rolled up to a certain extent, making it easier for Long Yuehong to reveal more of his mechanical arm.

Bai Chen’s body quickly disappeared as if she had fused with the environment. However, Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao could sense her location through her human consciousness.

Shang Jianyao stretched his waist as if he wanted to dedicate a dance on the spot. He then took off his tactical backpack and took out the Six Senses Beads, the Life Angel necklace, and the small jade Buddha.

Without any hesitation, Shang Jianyao mimicked the Crystal Consciousness Church monks. He held the string of prayer beads in his left hand and threw the Life Angel necklace to Jiang Baimian.

After Jiang Baimian caught it, she made two adjustments to divert the paralyzed limb to her right arm.

Shang Jianyao looked at the remaining small jade Buddha seriously for two seconds before chanting a Buddhist proclamation. "Namo Annutara-Samyak-Subhuti. Little Red isn't a Buddhist, so it's better if it stays with me."

Can you cut the drama? I didn't expect you to throw the small jade Buddha to me either. What's the use of me having it? It didn't have any effect when guarding against the nightmare! Long Yuehong didn't dare to voice out his displeasure. He felt that he was resisting the urge to retort in consideration of the overall situation. After all, it wasn't suitable to argue on such an occasion.

Something might happen at any moment.

After restructuring the team's combat formation, the Old Task Force approached the Holm Fertility Center.

They didn't move fast and were even considered a little slow as if they were worried that a monster would suddenly burrow out of the Buddhist Holy Land.

With the target in sight, Jiang Baimian didn't get lost. It took her seven to eight minutes to finally reach her destination's door.

The afternoon sun scattered and shone on the automatic glass doors that reflected a golden glow.

Jiang Baimian cast her gaze over and sized up the scene inside through the dirty glass.

At this moment, a female figure quickly outlined itself less than two meters behind her.

This figure looked to be in her mid-twenties and had a rather mature bearing. She had an oval face and willowy eyebrows. She wore a blue cowboy suit and a white shirt, topping it off with a wide felt hat. Every detail of hers was abnormally symmetrical.

Xu Lan!

After the extensive suppression of her emotions, the Eighth Research Institute's commissioner finally launched a surprise attack.

Being in the Golden Scale domain and having explored the Mind Corridor's depths, she was one of the most terrifying assassins in the world. As long as some New World powerhouses didn't return, she was deserving of this title!

This was because one of her abilities was called Invisibility. She could hide her figure and consciousness, interfere with the hearing and vision of many targets, and affect their premonitions. She could walk to the side of her assassination target without them noticing.

This ability didn't exist in Star Cluster Hall or the Sea of Origins. It could only be obtained through the two abilities—Auditory Interference and Visual Concealment—at the price of symmetry OCD. When entering the Mind Corridor, one would choose to be an Awakened with Dulled Senses. Only then could they combine the three and obtain this assassination ability.

Based on the Eighth Research Institute's experiments, the three bestowments obtained at the price of symmetry OCD weren't completely fixed. However, there were definitely two out of the three—Auditory Interference, Visual Concealment, and Dulled Senses. When they took the golden elevator and headed to the Mind Corridor, the Awakened could receive the last one to achieve Invisibility.

Of course, the use of Invisibility also had its own restrictions. There were two main effects: The first was that one couldn't carry any items with other people's auras or have anything that exceeded a certain weight on their body.

The second was that once one tried to lock onto a target—be it via consciousness, eyes, or ears—the effect would be lost. In other words, Xu Lan wouldn't be able to hide herself for an instant before the attack.

As far as Xu Lan knew, these two flaws could be effectively improved if she entered the New World.

At this moment, as soon as she appeared, the two United 202s in her hands were aimed at Jiang Baimian, waiting to be fired.

Xu Lan—who was already familiar with the corresponding process—didn't hesitate to quickly pull the trigger.

Xu Lan didn't think that her bullet would miss considering the fact that the warning signs and attacks happened almost at the same time and the close distance.

The scene of the target's body blooming with blood-red flowers and having her body torn apart by the large-caliber bullets surfaced in her mind.

Furthermore, in order to be safe, she used two guns to ensure that nothing went wrong.

This was also a common choice other similar Awakened would employ. After all, the weight of more powerful weapons exceeded the requirements.

Of course, it was undoubtedly a requirement needed by her symmetry OCD.

As the gunshot sounded, Welf—who had hidden his consciousness and hid outside Jiang Baimian's bioelectric signal sensing range—jumped down from the roof. He had a glider on his back as he swooped down at the Old Task Force members like a gigantic black bat.

An instant later, he entered the effective range of Memory Modification.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao, Bai Chen, and Long Yuehong reacted to the shot. Nobody paid attention to the sky.

Welf's eyes turned strange; there was more black, less white, and a dim glow. At the same time, two invisible 'tentacles' extended out of his body and instantly drilled into Bai Chen and Long Yuehong's heads.

As he flipped through their memories, he searched for the most suitable spots for modification.

At this moment, he saw a scene.

In the quiet and dark cathedral, a white door was drawn on the wall. It was half-closed, revealing the deep darkness behind the door and an indistinct female figure.

The female figure seemed to be watching the owner of the memories. The dignified and indifferent feeling made his teeth chatter, and he broke out into a cold sweat uncontrollably. His limbs turned cold, and his head drooped.

This was the most primitive and intense horror.

Welf's mind buzzed.

Eidolon Nun!

“Ah!” Welf let out a scream as his body instinctively curled up, ignoring the fact that he was gliding.

He trembled and slammed into the ground like a heavy sack.

On the other side, just as Xu Lan's figure appeared, Jiang Baimian had already turned around and raised her left arm as if she wanted to use the single-man combat rocket launcher to block.

Xu Lan was unaffected and calmly pulled the trigger. She didn't think the other party could complete the action in time.

Bang! Bang!

The United 202s' recoil made Xu Lan's arm jerk slightly, but the scene reflected in her eyes was different from what she imagined.

The two bullets didn't rush to her designated spot at all. Instead, they deviated to a certain extent!

One of them struck the rocket launcher's surface with a clang. The other hit Jiang Baimian's left arm, leaving only a small wound.

Drip! Drip!?

A colorless liquid landed on the ground.

It wasn't blood.

It came from the electric eel-like biomechanical limb!

Although Jiang Baimian was injured, a smile appeared on her face.

She had been vigilant of her surroundings. After sensing the simultaneous appearance of human consciousness and bioelectric signals, she immediately used Spatial Hallucination on the target.

She knew that the enemy was a Mind Corridor-level Awakened and that the latter wouldn't be too affected by the illusion, but she didn't expect the other party's attack to miss. She only hoped that the spot her assailant had locked onto deviated from her vital spots, toward her left arm.

This proved to be effective.

With the clear knowledge that my team members and I have had our memories flipped, how can I not be wary that you have already grasped our final destination and are waiting for us here??

Plan 2 was designed for this. As we guard against any possible 'assassinations,' we keep recalling Eidolon Nun's gaze!

Little Red revealed his mechanical arm to create a strong sense of asymmetry to draw you into attacking, and he's wearing the Blackmarsh Iron Snake bionic artificial intelligence armor. Who knew that you could still tolerate it for so long and take the initiative to choose the target...

Thoughts flashed through Jiang Baimian's mind as she abruptly bent down to avoid any subsequent attacks. As she did this, a large number of electric arcs reflected in her eyes that were abnormally bright.

Almost at the same time, Shang Jianyao's eyes turned deep.

Chapter 648: "View"

Dozens of meters away, the glider-riding enemy plummeted and slammed into the ground, stirring up a lot of dust.

Bai Chen and Long Yuehong didn't miss such a commotion. Upon seeing that their team leader was fine for the time being, they cast their gazes at the trench coat, sunglasses-wearing Welf—who had fallen to the ground.

They then raised their guns and aimed at the target.

But before pulling the triggers, they didn't hesitate to bite the tip of their tongues, hoping to use the pain to determine if they were sleepwalking or if they would accidentally injure their companions.

Being enveloped by the bionic artificial intelligence armor, they naturally couldn't hurt themselves by slapping themselves or punching their stomachs.

After biting down, Bai Chen and Long Yuehong realized that nothing in front of them changed. Therefore, they boldly pulled the trigger.

The Orange rifle and the Berserker assault rifle fired at the same time as bullets rained down.

Meanwhile, Xu Lan wasn't stunned—although she was surprised from failing her assassination attempt.

The experienced her pounced to the side and gradually concealed her figure in midair.

This was a manifestation of the powerful Invisibility ability. It could allow the user to have a high chance of escaping the lock-on and returning to an undetectable state when both parties had already made contact with no way to hide their consciousness.

Xu Lan's level was clearly higher than Shang Jianyao's, so it was very easy for her to escape. In the blink of an eye, she disappeared from Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao's line of sight.

At this moment, the sound of a heavy object crashing to the ground came from a clearly empty area she was charging toward.

Limbs Immobility!

Although Xu Lan had forcefully escaped Shang Jianyao's lock, the influence she had exerted wouldn't disappear.

Having been inflicted with Limbs Immobility the moment the assassination failed, she couldn't land safely. She rolled away from the spot that the enemy could determine based on her previous trajectory and fell in a rather sorry state.

Badump!

Her figure was about to appear.

Jiang Baimian—who had lowered her body—stretched out her left palm.

Silver-white electric arcs shot out, interweaving into a fine net that enveloped the area where Xu Lan had pounced toward.

In a situation where she couldn't find the enemy via human consciousness, bioelectric signals, or through her eyes, ears, nose, and other organs, Jiang Baimian chose to rely on her mathematical ability at calculating trajectories and attacked indiscriminately with an area-of-effect attack!

Sizzle! Sizzle! Sizzle!

Xu Lan's figure appeared from the electrocution. Her wide-brimmed, tall felt hat dropped to the side. Some of her black hair emitted a charred smell, and some stood up.

She knew that things were going south, but her brain and body were in a numb state. She couldn't do anything to save herself.

Just as Shang Jianyao and Jiang Baimian locked onto Xu Lan and prepared to use the Six Senses Beads and the Life Angel necklace, they saw a terrifying scene from the corner of their eyes.

Long Yuehong and Bai Chen—who were wearing bionic artificial intelligence armor—picked up their firearms, aimed at them, and pulled the triggers!

Their target actually wasn't the Mind Corridor-level Awakened in the Last Man domain but Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao!

Dreamscape followed by Sleepwalking!

When Welf shouted in horror and his glider fell to the ground, the tablet computer he and Xu Lan had placed on the roof suddenly changed.

A blurry figure that produced static around had appeared. This was the Eighth Research Institute's Doctor, a powerhouse who had already entered the New World.

He used the tablet as a relay to influence Bai Chen and Long Yuehong.

Considering that the target had already been Sleepwalked once and was definitely prepared, he first used Dreamscape. Therefore, although Bai Chen and Long Yuehong bit the tip of their tongues in the dream, they actually didn't do it; the pain only made them 'escape' the dream's deepest level.

Being still in the dream, they naturally began Sleepwalking.

The enemies in their dreams were actually Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao.

Shang Jianyao and Jiang Baimian—who were only wearing bulletproof vests and didn't have any other protective measures—instinctively gave up on attacking Xu Lan and dodged. They exerted strength with their legs and either jumped out or propelled themselves, sliding along the ground.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Da! Da! Da!

Where they were originally standing, soil splattered, and rocks cracked—everything was in chaos.

Xu Lan took this opportunity to recover from her numbness and habitually hid her figure.

The next second, Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao stopped. The former continued lying prone on the ground, and the latter—who had just jumped to the abandoned car by the roadside—felt his legs go limp. He leaned against the dirty door, sat down, and closed his eyes.

Long Yuehong and Bai Chen were also affected. Their bodies swayed as they collapsed to the ground at a moderate speed.

The scales of the Blackmarsh Iron Snake and the Chameleon bionic artificial intelligence armor emitted a hard sound from the collision, but they didn't wake their respective owners up.

Sleep!

Doctor used the tablet computer to cast Sleep on the four Old Task Force members!

After entering the New World, he could already use all the abilities in the dream domain. But as he had yet to truly return and his body was still in the distant Eighth Research Institute, his strength had been reduced significantly. The effects of many abilities couldn't be shown further.

At the same time, he had to be wary of Wu Meng.

Otherwise, he had better choices now, such as Eternal Sleep. This could directly make the Old Task Force members fall asleep forever, making them no different from vegetables. They couldn't be woken up by normal means.

Of course, for Doctor, Sleep was actually enough in such a situation. As long as he controlled the four targets, Xu Lan—who had caught her breath—could naturally finish them off one by one.

The door to the Holm Fertility Center suddenly became extremely quiet. Only the wind that passed through the city ruins blew gently.

Xu Lan was in no rush to appear and attack because her hands and feet were still trembling. She was still suffering from the aftereffects of the electric shock.

The rage in her accumulated when she saw the asymmetrical scenes. She wished she could immediately recover and destroy all of this.

At this moment, another electric arc appeared from Jiang Baimian's left palm and landed on herself.

With a sizzling sound, Jiang Baimian suddenly jumped up.

The auxiliary chip in her electric eel-like biomechanical limb monitored if she entered slumber. Therefore, it gave her a jolt and woke her up.

Amidst the remaining numbness from the electric shock, Jiang Baimian skillfully sank her consciousness into the Life Angel necklace around her left wrist as if she had practiced it a hundred times.

She remembered that the company had hinted that she could rely on this item if she encountered danger!

But apart from locking onto the terrified Last Man domain enemy, she couldn't find the source of the nightmare's power and couldn't deal with it in a targeted manner. Likewise, she couldn't sense the Golden Scale domain assassin and couldn't stop any subsequent attacks.

Cardiac Arrest is useless at a time like this... Could it be that the company's hint points to something else??As Jiang Baimian's thoughts raced, she used the Life Angel necklace to expand her perception range of human consciousness as an attempt, just like how Shang Jianyao had used the Bangle of Blindness to achieve a similar goal back then.

In the blink of an eye, Jiang Baimian seemed to have put on glasses that were suitable for the short-sighted or was in control of many surveillance cameras in the area from a distance, allowing her to 'see' things that she couldn't have 'seen' or be 'seen' clearly.

Illusory darkness enveloped the area, wrapping around Shang Jianyao, Bai Chen, and Long Yuehong before extending to the top of a tall building in the distance.

The Life Angel necklace that the company modified is indeed special! Jiang Baimian was delighted and immediately sent her consciousness through the item to touch the illusory darkness.

As soon as the two parties came into contact, she felt like the other party was extremely far away but also overlapped with the area in a certain way.

The latter seemed to make two worlds intersect.

This made Jiang Baimian feel like she could use Cardiac Arrest on the illusory darkness at this distance.

In an emergency, she did as she thought and immediately activated the silver necklace.

A faint light flashed. At the end of the illusory darkness, a roar seemed to come from an extremely far distance.

Its shock was beyond terror.

The illusory darkness retreated.

Shang Jianyao shook his head and jumped up, having woken up. He immediately saw Welf—who was dozens of meters away. This man in sunglasses and a trench coat had yet to completely calm down from the fear brought about by Eidolon Nun's gaze.

A green light lit up as Shang Jianyao directly used the Six Senses Beads on him.

Consciousness Deprivation!

Welf closed his eyes and fainted. He didn't have to be afraid anymore.

As Bai Chen and Long Yuehong woke up, the four Old Task Force members monitored the area.

The Golden Scale domain assassin was currently hiding somewhere.

Chapter 649: Sluggish

As they looked at each other, Jiang Baimian threw the rocket launcher in her left hand to the ground and did the same to the submachine gun slung around her.

After completing these two matters, she flicked her wrist and unwound the Life Angel necklace around her wrist. She then stuffed the item into her pocket.

This way, Jiang Baimian appeared especially symmetrical.

For this, she specially adjusted the direction of her ponytail and lowered her left arm to keep it in line with her paralyzed right hand. During this process, Jiang Baimian gestured '4.'

Therefore, when she did those actions, Shang Jianyao completed a prime replica.

He threw an imaginary grenade launcher to the ground and did the same to the Berserker assault rifle slung around him. Although there was no need, he still swung his wrist a few times before taking off the Six Senses Beads and stuffing them into his pocket.

He didn't miss combing his hair back and lowering his arms, so much so that it prompted Jiang Baimian into cursing.

Meanwhile, Bai Chen only adjusted the Orange rifle's position and placed it right down her middle.

Not only did Long Yuehong not make himself symmetrical, but he also flicked out the can opener attached to the T1 mechanical arm. He then stretched his left foot forward and tapped the ground.

He did whatever was convenient to make himself asymmetrical!

The content of the Old Task Force's Plan 4 was very simple. The core only had one sentence: They would use Long Yuehong as bait to attract the Golden Scale domain assassin with severe symmetry OCD into attacking him. The other three members would seize the opportunity to lock onto the other party and deliver a fatal blow.

In any case, Long Yuehong was wearing the Blackmarsh Iron Snake bionic artificial intelligence armor. Only his T1 mechanical arm was exposed, allowing him to withstand most of the damage.

By the same logic, Bai Chen—who was protected by the Chameleon bionic artificial intelligence armor—could be a secondary choice. Therefore, she didn't deliberately make herself very symmetrical.

After the Old Task Force members quickly composed themselves, time seemed to freeze. If not for the occasional breeze, the scene appeared like a still photo.

Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao's attention was mostly on Long Yuehong, and they only diverted a small portion of their attention to Bai Chen.

Jiang Baimian still had some vigilance for herself, but Shang Jianyao acted like he didn't care at all. He only inserted his hands into his pockets as if he were an onlooker.

As time passed, Long Yuehong felt highly nervous as if his corresponding nerves would snap at any moment. He was also worried that the enemy would appear at Bai Chen's side. It's been so long. Could it be that she had already evacuated when she saw that the situation wasn't right? Team Leader said that she definitely can't suppress her symmetry OCD for long. Is she really 'willing' to leave and not do anything? I have to watch Little White. In any case, the enemy doesn't seem to have any especially powerful weapons. As for Awakened abilities, I can't defend against them...

Why hasn't she appeared yet? Can she hold it in? Thoughts flashed through Long Yuehong's mind one after another, making him find time unbearable.

He suddenly had an idea and felt that it was necessary to do something to increase the probability of being attacked lest Little White become the enemy's main target.

As his thoughts raced, Long Yuehong cast his gaze dozens of meters away.

Another unconscious enemy was lying there.

He might escape the influence and wake up slowly... He's an Awakened in the Last Man domain. He can read our memories and make modifications that are impossible to guard against... Long Yuehong immediately had an idea. He held the Berserker assault rifle with his bare mechanical arm and quickly approached Welf.

He wanted to take advantage of the other party's coma to end his life and completely reduce the enemy count by one. At the same time, this could also attract the assassin to attack him.

This was a plan that killed two birds with one stone.

Long Yuehong had just walked more than ten meters when a figure quickly outlined itself behind him.

Xu Lan had yet to leave.

She didn't want to leave.

This seriously asymmetrical fellow was a thorn in her flesh. She had to do something to vent the anger in her heart.

The 'displeasure' accumulated from the previous two reconnaissances and the assassination made her unable to control herself at all. Of course, as an experienced assassin, Xu Lan didn't act rashly. Instead, she patiently waited for an opportunity.

She wasn't blind, so she could naturally tell that the target was wearing artificial intelligence armor with outstanding defense. Her two United 202s were most likely unable to harm the other party, and the two high-performance explosives she carried with her might be able to complete the goal of breaking through the defenses. However, it was very easy to implicate herself.

When the time came, it might be a case of going out for wool and coming home shorn.

Amidst the indescribable suffering, Xu Lan saw that not only did Long Yuehong not stay where he was, but he also tried to attack Welf. She couldn't hold it in any longer and had her brain controlled by anger.

As soon as she appeared, she immediately used an ability on everyone present—Sluggish Reaction!

This reaction only referred to the reaction when one was attacked, but it was enough given the current situation.

Xu Lan didn't use this ability when she previously attacked Jiang Baimian because she felt that the latter wouldn't be able to react in time if she 'concealed' herself and fired the moment she appeared. There was no need to add such an effect midway.

Furthermore, Welf had previously flipped through her memories in a rush and didn't have a detailed grasp of the enemy team's information. Xu Lan was worried that the other party might have the ability or equipment to weaken Sluggish Reaction, exposing her completely before she fired and thus being unable to carry out the subsequent developments. Therefore, it was better to use Invisibility—which allowed for greater error correction—to approach, appear, and fire.

Shang Jianyao, Jiang Baimian, Bai Chen, and Long Yuehong seemed to fall into a slow-motion state in an instant. They clearly saw the enemy appear, but their prepared responses could only be squeezed out bit by bit.

Xu Lan—who was holding two guns—aimed at Long Yuehong. She didn't care if she could break through Long Yuehong's defense as she pulled the trigger with slightly red eyes.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

The bullets struck the Blackmarsh Iron Snake bionic artificial intelligence armor's surface, only producing slight cracks.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Xu Lan wasn't stingy with her bullets and tried to empty the magazine as soon as possible.

Long Yuehong—who was being pushed back by the powerful impact—suddenly 'came to his senses.' He then turned around and fired.

His genetic modification was considered relatively mediocre, but it included Enhanced Self Recovery, Increased Immunity, and Increased Reaction Speed.

Increased Reaction Speed!

Amidst the gunfire, Xu Lan's pupils dilated as she suddenly pounced to the ground. In midair, she quickly concealed herself.

Amidst a plume of dust, Long Yuehong regretfully realized that he had failed to hit the target.

He had also lost track of the enemy.

Jiang Baimian, Shang Jianyao, and Bai Chen had already reacted by this time, but they were still a little slow.

Upon seeing this, Jiang Baimian directly shouted, “Finish off the other one first!”

This was to prevent another dangerous enemy from appearing later.

Shang Jianyao responded to her call and rolled to the ground, picking up the Berserker assault rifle he had thrown away.

Jiang Baimian took off a grenade from her belt, pulled out the ring with her teeth, and used her left hand’s strength to throw it at Welf.

Bai Chen raised the Orange rifle.

Xu Lan—who had vented her anger through the previous wave of attacks—was prepared to hide and leave so as to find another opportunity at a later date. However, she saw the Old Task Force members launch an attack at Welf.

Her expression changed a few times before she finally gave up on the idea of using Full-Body Numbness on her enemies.

As the body didn’t include consciousness, Shang Jianyao could also use his Awakened abilities.

When the time came, Xu Lan might not be able to escape if she fell into a certain state.

Finally, Xu Lan took out a bunch of high-performance explosives and threw them at Welf. She wanted to destroy all the possible clues left on her companion!

As she threw out the high-performance explosives, Xu Lan pounced to the ground and hid again.

Rumble!

A gigantic fireball rose as a violent explosion engulfed Welf.

Xu Lan looked back and gritted her teeth. She took a detour and left the area in front of the Holm Fertility Center's door.

On the way, she vaguely felt a weak flash of light in the surrounding houses.

After returning to the roof first, Xu Lan picked up the tablet computer and realized that its battery had been rapidly drained.

"I have to find a place to charge and seek Doctor's help," Xu Lan muttered to herself.

She found the two hidden rings, picked up her backpack, and quickly left.

After she really distanced herself, Xu Lan thoughtfully cast her gaze elsewhere. "If I want to complete the mission here, I might have to use Wu Meng's help. I have to think of a way to use his strength. I won't hesitate even if I have to break his seal."

...

On the street in front of the Holm Fertility Center.

The Old Task Force members looked at the corpse that had been reduced to countless pieces of flesh and blood, completely helpless..

Chapter 650: Holm Fertility Center

"How ruthless." Long Yuehong looked at the nonintact corpse in front of him and sighed sincerely.

This was still a Mind Corridor-level Awakened a few minutes ago. His death was a result of his companion's attack.

Although Jiang Baimian's grenade could've killed the assassin even without the high-performance explosives thrown by the assassin, the deceased had indeed died as a result of his companion in any case.

Shang Jianyao sneered when he heard that. "Since he can't be saved anyway, they naturally can't let us walk away lucky."

He didn't hide his regret.

If the Old Task Force completed the kill, many of the deceased's items could still be preserved. There might be special items among them.

Jiang Baimian also had a similar feeling. After all, she didn't have any powerful items she could call her own. The Life Angel necklace she was currently using could only be considered a loan from Shang Jianyao.

Of course, as a friendly, amiable, gentle, and compassionate lady, she didn't show such emotions on her face.

Jiang Baimian ordered, "Do another search. There might still be some items left."

Some items weren't easy to blow up because of the materials they were made of. The simplest example was Long Yuehong's T1 mechanical arm—it would at most be seriously damaged if he were to take an explosive round naked, but it might still be usable after some repairs.

As they looked at the scattered corpses, flesh, and blood in the surrounding area, the Old Task Force members held in their disgust and searched.

After a while, Bai Chen reported the results. "There's nothing."

Jiang Baimian secretly sighed and said, "In order to hide their identities, the items carried by the nightmare's accomplices are easily destroyed provided the prevailing conditions?"

“It’s also possible that they just like to fix the corresponding aura on the most ordinary and portable items.” Shang Jianyao stroked his chin. “For example, this person’s sunglasses.”

Jiang Baimian nodded. “The premise is that the negative price is relatively acceptable.”

“Doesn’t he have any accessories?” Long Yuehong was a little confused.

Many accessories were quite resistant to explosions, especially those made of gold.

Shang Jianyao laughed. “Maybe his accessories aren’t symmetrical enough and were disqualified as vessels.”

Jiang Baimian moved her gaze away and looked back at the Holm Fertility Center. “Since we can’t find any war spoils, let’s make the best use of our time to explore the target location. That assassin might return at any moment. It might not take long for the nightmare’s powers to gather again. The window left for us won’t be too long.”

Perhaps it was because she was too far away for the previous Cardiac Arrest—as though they were in two separate worlds—but Jiang Baimian felt that it didn’t cause any lethal damage to the nightmare.

Shang Jianyao, Bai Chen, and Long Yuehong had no objections. They followed their team leader and walked to the Holm Fertility Center step by step while maintaining a certain distance from her.

On the way, Jiang Baimian didn’t forget to pick up the weapon she had previously thrown. However, she allowed the submachine gun to hang in front of her chest because the Life Angel necklace’s negative effects were still active.

After the Old Task Force arrived at their destination, the automatic glass doors to the Holm Fertility Center suddenly slid open.

“It’s still working? There’s still electricity here?” Long Yuehong blurted out in surprise.

Shang Jianyao—who was in front of him—turned around and smiled. “It only followed my instructions.”

He frankly admitted that he was responsible for opening the automatic glass doors with electromagnetic interference.

“I thought you couldn’t do such precise maneuvers?” Bai Chen asked Shang Jianyao.

Although this didn’t reach Wu Meng’s level, it far exceeded Shang Jianyao’s previous level.

Shang Jianyao simply explained, “As its structure is relatively intact and well-preserved, it can open upon sensing the approach of humans as long as I provide a certain level of electromagnetic stimulation and maintain the connections of a few aging or damaged components.”

Jiang Baimian glared at him and reminded him solemnly, “Don’t do such things here, or else I’ll think Wu Meng is here. I almost rocketed this sensor door just now.”

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Shang Jianyao clapped as he struck the Berserker assault rifle’s side.

He didn’t feel reprimanded at all. Instead, he took a step back and praised Jiang Baimian’s vigilance. “Always be vigilant!”

Great, he’s now a believer of Eidolon Nun as well...?The corners of Jiang Baimian’s mouth twitched as she took two steps to the side.

Without sensing any bioelectric signals or human consciousness, she made way for Long Yuehong.

Long Yuehong—who was wearing the Blackmarsh Iron Snake bionic artificial intelligence armor—was now the team’s shield. He took on the responsibility of defending and exploring the unknown.

The honest Shang Jianyao didn’t retort Jiang Baimian because he didn’t sense the existence of human consciousness either.

Amidst the soft sound of scales colliding with the ground, Long Yuehong walked into the Holm Fertility Center with the Berserker assault rifle.

This place wasn't as messy as many shops in the ruins that were covered in trash with bones littered everywhere. It maintained a certain level of integrity and cleanliness. However, two exhibits had been overturned, and a few chairs were lying diagonally on the ground. There were also traces of black blood splattered in certain areas.

At a glance, Long Yuehong realized that the hall was simply decorated. It was warm in color and mainly used yellow, cyan, green, and red.

This was completely different from the classic architectural style. Of course, the yellow facade had already indicated this in advance.

"This place wasn't destroyed by the Heartless—who weren't born after the Old World was destroyed..." Long Yuehong sighed with emotion.

Bai Chen—who was the last to enter—guessed, "Before the Old World was destroyed, there weren't many doctors, nurses, patients, and employees here. There wasn't a large amount of food to plunder either?"

"Maybe." Jiang Baimian held the rocket launcher and said, "Everyone, spread out a little and search the lobby for any clues."

The honest Shang Jianyao smiled as well. "There's no need to worry too much. Yes, Little Red, I'm referring to you. There shouldn't be any obvious danger here.

"Think about it. This place is so close to First City that the Crystal Consciousness Church will come here to pray and hold some rituals. The dangers that are easy to encounter have definitely been eliminated by them. Look, even the possible bones have been cleaned."

Why are you looking at me? Is there a need to call me out? Although it makes sense...? Long Yuehong muttered inwardly and then said, "I'll go check the books and information."

The two overturned exhibits were filled with books, pictures, pamphlets, and other information.

"Alright." Jiang Baimian didn't reject Long Yuehong's recommendation.

The Old Task Force members then dispersed, but they maintained a certain distance.

Long Yuehong walked to the nearest exhibit and kneeled on one knee, stretching out his T1 mechanical arm and picking up a stack of paper that had turned yellow and brittle but didn't shatter from a single touch.

They were written in the Red River language, with their names being: 'Things newlyweds need to know.'

'Confronting infertility the right way.'

'The effects of time, mood, and posture on pregnancy.'

...

Long Yuehong—who was wearing the Blackmarsh Iron Snake bionic artificial intelligence armor—had a slightly embarrassed expression. 'Is this information I should be reading now?'

As he was a little stunned, he realized that Shang Jianyao had approached another exhibition rack. He squatted down and gathered the books, pictures, and pamphlets.

"W-what's the use of taking them?" Long Yuehong asked hesitantly.

Shang Jianyao turned around with a solemn expression. "These are all holy items!"

With that said, he stretched out his arms and virtually gently rocked a baby. "Newborns are likened unto the sun; life is what's most important!"

Alright, the current Shang Jianyao is a loyal member of the Life Ritual parish and a pious believer of the Arbiter of Fate...?Jiang Baimian retracted her gaze from the exhibition area and then walked to a wall near the front desk.

Photograph frames hung there. Some had already fallen to the ground and shattered.

In the photo frames were photos of celebrities and large companies visiting the Holm Fertility Center. Jiang Baimian scanned them one by one and actually saw some names she had seen in Old World books.

It feels like I'm excavating history...?Jiang Baimian was rather satisfied.

As she examined them carefully, her gaze suddenly froze on one of the photo frames.

The photo inside was very ordinary. It was a group photo of a man suspected to be the director of the Holm Fertility Center and a visiting team.

The words below indicated the corresponding identities: "Northern Company's Vice President Oak's visit..."

What attracted Jiang Baimian's attention was the company's name: 'Northern Company.'

Jiang Baimian remembered very clearly that there was such news in the Fakh Post that Wu Meng had gotten Ferrington to take away from this ruin.

"The 29th International Biotechnica Expo was held in Fakh. The Northern Company displayed the latest genetic research results..."

Back then, the Old Task Force had thought of a place in the north that was used to treat Fan Wensi's vegetable son and a hospital in the north that had made Room 503's owner—Jiang Xiaoyue—receive treatment as a volunteer before the Old World was destroyed.