

## **Ad Infinitum 701**

### Chapter 701: Unlucky One

The information provided by Elder Zhang reminded Jiang Baimian of their analysis of the situation revolving around the nuclear warhead.

One possibility was that the person receiving the nuclear warhead in Ubei had failed to send the item out of the city in time due to an accident and was trapped here under martial law. Upon seeing that the Salvation Army was close on his heels in their investigations, he had no choice but to take the risk, hijack the radio, and design a ‘game’ in hopes of sneaking away amidst the evacuation.

Back then, the Old Task Force members had guessed what kind of accident it would be. There was the inclination to believe that the target had encountered something as his true identity, preventing him from escaping in a timely fashion. Another was the belief that he was a powerful Awakened whose weakness had been ‘hit’ by chance and had no choice but to spend two to three days recovering. Another belief was that something happened in the middle. For example, the defectors’ contact and the person who hijacked the radio broadcast was infected with the Heartless disease not long after obtaining the nuclear warhead, or he suddenly had a brain hemorrhage or a heart attack. He couldn’t hand over the nuclear warhead in time, causing the person who hijacked the radio to take two to three days to reestablish the ‘connection.’

Now, someone’s condition had rapidly acted up because of the theft of antihypertensive drugs. Being sent to the hospital for two days matched the second situation perfectly. Of course, the third scenario also made logical sense.

As these thoughts raced through her mind, Jiang Baimian felt delighted. She felt like they had caught the fox’s tail.

It was definitely rare to have antihypertensive drugs stolen in Ubei, and it happened two days before martial law was enacted. This directly led to a certain person’s illness acting up, leading to them being hospitalized for two days.

Jiang Baimian looked at Elder Zhang—who was wearing a grayish-white, deep aluminum pot—and smiled calmly. “I roughly looked around and didn’t find any especially valuable clues, but clues often seem inconspicuous alone. They will only glow when there’s more. Elder Zhang, don’t worry. We will cooperate with the Public Security Council and gather more information to find useful clues.”

Elder Zhang—who was wearing the faded black uniform—flew into a rage. “Why should I be worried? If I’m worried, there will be many people criticizing me for being overreaching and being a busybody who can’t bear to part with power! Do whatever you want. Don’t bother me!”

Just like the hotel manager and the others said, he’s a little irritable and irascible...?Jiang Baimian muttered inwardly.

However, she didn’t believe that Elder Zhang was unconcerned about the nuclear warhead.

If he was truly unconcerned, why would he painstakingly help interrogate people and gather this stack of information? If he really didn’t care, he would’ve long evacuated Ubei with his family and comrades thanks to his status.

At this moment, the honest Shang Jianyao asked, “Do we not have to tell you if we really figure out something?”

Elder Zhang waved his hand. After two seconds, he said angrily, “Whatever! I’m heading back to the sanatorium! Remember to get an aluminum pot and wear it. You can’t treat it lightly anymore!”

“Alright, alright.” The Shang Jianyao that sought novelty and liked to sing and dance didn’t mind wearing the aluminum pot at all. Instead, he was eager to give it a try.

After Elder Zhang left, Shang Jianyao turned to Jiang Baimian and said, “I didn’t see the last two pages too clearly. Let me see them again.”

So you really didn’t see it clearly. I thought you noticed the information, but you pretended not to notice anything...?Jiang Baimian hung up the flashlight, folded the paper, and said in a meaningless tone, “Read it again when we get back. It’s dark here.”

There was a nuclear power plant in Ubei, and the large hydropower station upstream of the Yuelin River was relatively well maintained. There was no serious power shortage, but this was only relative. After all, this was an important industrial base for the Salvation Army. Therefore, there weren’t many street lamps installed in the Ashlands Hotel’s parking lot. The lighting wasn’t good, and Jiang Baimian had to rely on the flashlight’s beam to read the information.

“Alright.” Shang Jianyao had a look of disappointment as he eagerly walked to the hotel’s back door.

Jiang Baimian walked by his side as her thoughts raced. She quickly analyzed what she had gleaned. From the looks of it, hypertension should be a certain price. Otherwise, it would be too much of a coincidence if the two matters of the blood-pressure medication being stolen and the medical emergency happened together. Only by treating hypertension as a price can the accident of having the antihypertensive drug stolen fluidly result in the target falling ill and being sent to the hospital for emergency treatment without any other chance factors...

The person sent to the hospital for emergency treatment was most likely a powerful Awakened. Otherwise, the result of the price wouldn't be so serious—collapsing the moment he didn't take his antihypertensive medicine...

I can't be sure if this person is the one who hijacked the radio system, the middleman in charge of liaising with the defectors, or if they are one and the same person... Personally, I'm more inclined to the former. Otherwise, there would be too many powerhouses in this matter, and the probability of being plagued by accidents would be extremely low... However, how could such a powerhouse have his vital antihypertensive drugs stolen?

The more Jiang Baimian thought about it, the more she found it ridiculous, comical, and funny. If not for the relatively comprehensive medical system in Ubei and the fact that the Salvation Army was willing to provide help to foreigners to a certain extent, the powerful Awakened might've already passed away. The reason for his death would be enough to be ranked on the Ashlands' hilarious list. Well, if such a list existed.

As they approached the back door, Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao saw the hotel manager, Shen Kang, poking his head out.

"Why is Elder Zhang here again?" Shen Kang asked worriedly.

Shang Jianyao replied honestly, "I requested Elder Zhang to help us question if the old warriors in the sanatorium had seen anyone suspicious in the evening. He was just here to give an answer."

Shen Kang heaved a sigh of relief and asked in confusion, "Why are you asking this?"

Jiang Baimian smiled. "Isn't there a nuclear warhead planted in the city? This concerns everyone's safety, and we want to help in any way we can."

“There’s the Supplies Management Committee to worry about that. Just stay in the hotel.” Shen Kang didn’t agree with the Old Task Force’s actions. However, he still expressed his gratitude. “If only everyone had the same thoughts as you; things most likely wouldn’t need a resolution using martial law. Sigh, I’m not worried that people will die now. There will definitely be time for the evacuation, but I wonder how many items we can take away. It wasn’t easy for us to save up that bit of wealth...”

Shen Kang spoke softly before stopping.

Jiang Baimian looked around and pretended to ask casually, “Manager Shen, have you noticed anything abnormal in the past few days? Things that rarely happen in the past count.”

Shen Kang seriously thought about it. “No, things were the same just like every other day.”

“Really?” Jiang Baimian tried her best to hint at him. “For example, someone fought, someone was injured, someone was sent to the hospital, and something was stolen.”

Shen Kang frowned slightly. “I think so, but also not...”

It’s only been two to three days, but you can’t remember that a resident had their antihypertensive drugs stolen from their room and was sent to the hospital for emergency treatment? Could it be that you’re also an Awakened, and the price is forgetfulness? Uh...?As Jiang Baimian muttered silently, she suddenly had a thought and couldn’t help but ‘visualize’ Eidolon Nun’s gaze.

At this moment, Shen Kang touched his forehead and said, “I remember. An unlucky fellow drove out to do something, but his antihypertensive drugs and other things left in the room were stolen. He was delayed and came back only much later. Perhaps it’s because he only had enough antihypertensive drugs on him or in the car for one dose, so he couldn’t continue his medication and became dizzy.

“When he realized that his antihypertensive drugs in the room were gone, he was so angry that his blood pressure shot all the way up, and he fainted on the spot. Fortunately, an attendant was with him back then. He quickly called for an ambulance. Otherwise, he might not have been saved!”

As expected...?Jiang Baimian was just about to ask which room it was when Shang Jianyao asked in shock, “Are the thieves here that rampant?”

Shen Kang sighed and said, “Sigh, there are too many foreign Ruin Hunters. Some will find an opportunity to get a sum of supplies and leave when they feel that they have no hope of settling down. We never imagined that someone would be bold enough to enter and steal from the neighboring rooms!”

“Poor fellow.” Jiang Baimian spoke first. “Is he still in the hospital? Which room did he stay in?”

Shen Kang thought for a moment and said, “He came back before martial law was enacted. Room 214. What’s his name again? I can’t remember.”

Jiang Baimian tersely acknowledged his words and pointed at the stairs. “Good luck to him. We’ll be heading back first.”

She and Shang Jianyao bade him farewell and walked to the stairs, going up step by step.

As she passed by the second floor, Jiang Baimian suddenly frowned and muttered to herself, “What was I trying to do? Why did I forget...”

Shang Jianyao recalled and said, “I don’t remember you mentioning it to me.”

“We’ll talk about it later.” Jiang Baimian threw this matter to the back of her mind.

## Chapter 702: Self-Consistent Explanation

Just as Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao returned to the third-floor room, Long Yuehong curiously asked, “Team Leader, where’s the information from Elder Zhang?”

He realized that Jiang Baimian’s hands were empty.

Jiang Baimian smiled and said, “We’ve already scanned through it below, but we didn’t discover anything worth paying attention to.”

As she spoke, she took out the folded stack of paper from her pocket.

“That’s right, that’s right.” Shang Jianyao nodded in agreement.

Long Yuehong was disappointed, but he also felt inexplicably relieved. “No valuable clues...”

He looked at the stack of paper in Jiang Baimian’s hand and considered if he should waste time reading it again. Compared to Jiang Baimian, he felt that his meticulousness, acuity, and logical abilities were inferior. He probably had no hope of discovering problems that the other party couldn’t.

In other words, since his team leader had certified that there were no problems with the information, there was no need for him to waste any more time on it.

As Long Yuehong hesitated, Geneva directly said, “Even a wise man has a moment of folly. I think it’s better to pass around the information.”

“Yes.” Bai Chen agreed.

Long Yuehong suddenly regretted it and felt that he shouldn’t have hesitated.

Clap! Clap! Clap!

Shang Jianyao applauded Geneva.

Jiang Baimian nodded and smiled. “I’m no wise man, so mistakes are inevitable. Everyone should read, ask, and communicate more to prevent any mistakes. This is called fully utilizing our collective intelligence.”

If she felt that there was no need to show the stack of information to her team members, she wouldn’t have taken it out.

Several pages of information were quickly divided and given to Bai Chen, Long Yuehong, and Geneva.

With a simple sweep, the honest Geneva stated, “There is a very suspicious point. Two days before martial law was enacted, a hotel resident had his antihypertensive drugs stolen from the hotel. His condition quickly acted up, and he was sent to the hospital for emergency treatment.”

“What?” Long Yuehong blurted out.

Bai Chen pursed her lips and organized her words. “This is very similar to a situation we expected—the person who obtained the nuclear warhead had his weakness accidentally ‘hit.’ It took two to three days for him to recover. He missed the opportunity to leave the city and was trapped in Ubei under martial law.”

Furthermore, the people living in the Ashlands Hotel were all foreigners, making it even more suspicious.

“Not bad; very sharp.” Jiang Baimian praised him and smiled. “I thought so too when I saw it previously. However, I encountered the hotel’s Manager Shen on the way back. He told Hey and me that the unlucky fellow—who was secretly admitted to the hospital because of the antihypertensive drug issue—had yet to completely escape danger and was still receiving treatment. Such a person doesn’t have the time or the ability to hijack the radio.”

“Indeed.” Long Yuehong nodded.

From this angle, the unlucky fellow’s suspicion could be eliminated.

Shang Jianyao stroked his chin. “But we can’t use that to say that he’s completely fine. What if he’s the middleman? As he was accidentally hospitalized and the corresponding ‘connection’ broke, it took two to three days for the person who hijacked the radio to determine that something had happened to him and think of a way to retrieve the nuclear warhead. However, he had already missed the best opportunity to leave the city.”

Jiang Baimian thought for a moment and nodded slightly. “That makes sense.”

She then pointed at Shang Jianyao and joked, “Even a fool has a moment of brilliance.”

Without giving Shang Jianyao a chance to retort, Jiang Baimian looked at the floor and said, “That unlucky fellow previously lived in Room 214. Do you sense any human consciousness there?”

Shang Jianyao outlined the entire building’s layout in his mind and spent some time confirming the location.

“No.” He shook his head and then looked at Jiang Baimian. “What about you?”

This referred to her sensing of bioelectric signals.

Jiang Baimian also took a while before saying, “Nothing.”

“From the looks of it, that person is still in the hospital.” Bai Chen cast her gaze out the unlit window. “But we can’t rule out the possibility that he’s the middleman.”

She turned around and looked at Jiang Baimian. “Did you ask about the entire matter? Maybe the devil is in the details.”

Jiang Baimian tersely acknowledged her words. She described how the guest at Room 214 had been out that day for quite some time and was no longer in the right state when he returned. It was suspected that he had unfortunately used up all the antihypertensive drugs on him. She then mentioned how he became anxious and angry upon discovering that the antihypertensive drugs and many items in the room had disappeared without a trace due to a burglary and how it made his blood pressure rise and caused him to be sent to the hospital for emergency treatment.

“Captain Ding really had the foresight to get us to leave someone behind to guard the room.” Long Yuehong was secretly speechless. “Aren’t the thieves in Ashlands Hotel way too ridiculous?”

The Old Task Force had never encountered such a thing when they stayed in a hotel in First City.

Of course, the majority of the reason was that Bai Chen was considered a half-local. The hotels she found were relatively reliable, and the boss secretly kept a close eye on the rooms.

Jiang Baimian only corrected Long Yuehong’s evaluation. “It’s not foresight but experience.”

First City didn’t have any requirements for settlement; they just didn’t give out citizenship at worst. The benefits brought about by First City’s citizenship were actually insignificant. Therefore, many Ruin Hunters used the city—which provided most convenient supplies—as a base to expand and explore the various ruins. As the saying went, a hare doesn’t foul its own hole. If they weren’t forced into a corner, the possibility of them committing crimes in their ‘base’ without any scruples wasn’t high.



Although the Salvation Army also didn't have any requirements for settlement, they had relatively strict control over foreigners. Many Ruin Hunters often couldn't replenish the supplies they wanted, and their daily lives felt very restrictive.

In such situations, once they realized that they had no hope of joining the Salvation Army, they would often choose to go elsewhere and never return.

Since they wouldn't return in the future, it was only natural to take advantage of the situation and find an opportunity to obtain some benefits.

The other settlements of the Salvation Army were under strict control, and order was well-maintained; it was very difficult for these Ruin Hunters to have a chance. Only in a place like the Ashlands Hotel was there a large number of foreigners. It was inevitable that management would fail at times. After all, their bottom line was to not let the chaos leak out and affect the Salvation Army's official members.

Bai Chen thought for a few seconds and said, "I'm becoming convinced that Room 214's guest is the middleman. He left for so long that day perhaps to meet the defectors, give them supplies, and take away the nuclear warhead."

Upon hearing this, Shang Jianyao's eyes lit up. "He had just driven back when he realized that the antihypertensive drugs had been stolen. He was so angry that he entered the hospital and has yet to come out. Could there be a possibility that the person who hijacked the radio hasn't actually obtained the nuclear warhead and that the item is still hidden in the car trunk of Room 214's guest?"

"There's a chance." Genova gave his analysis results.

Jiang Baimian deliberated for a moment and said, "Hey, go to Manager Shen and guide his thoughts so that he can tell you which car belongs to Room 214's guest. Let's check when the night deepens."

"Alright!" Shang Jianyao became excited.

...

When it was almost midnight, the Old Task Force circled around the hotel guard—who had already become friends with Shang Jianyao—and found the vehicle of Room 214’s guest.

It was a black SUV with a modified trunk.

Although she didn’t know much about electronics, Bai Chen still opened the trunk without Genava’s help after fiddling with it for a while.

The alarm wasn’t triggered.

Bread, biscuits, instant noodles, various cans, a box of bullets, and two rifles were revealed under the flashlight’s illumination.

“There’s nothing...” Shang Jianyao couldn’t hide his disappointment.

Although Commissioner Huang had said that it was a miniaturized hydrogen bomb, Jiang Baimian knew that it couldn’t be ridiculously small like the size of a high-performance battery.

Although there was a breakthrough in the Old World’s technology, it definitely wasn’t to that extent!

Jiang Baimian felt that the nuclear warhead was at least 100 to 200 kilograms. It was very difficult to hide an item of this size in a small trunk.

As the flashlight swept across the area, Bai Chen and Long Yuehong finished checking the front part of the car.

“Nothing.” They gave the results at the same time.

Jiang Baimian slowly exhaled and said, “Alright, it seems like the entire matter is just a coincidence. Let’s get some rest.”

...

After returning to her small room, Jiang Baimian lay on the bed. She closed her eyes and listened to Shang Jianyao hum a song as she quickly recalled what had happened today.

Suddenly, she felt a little guilty.

As a directionally challenged person, she wasn't sure if she had misjudged the direction and mislabeled the 'door sign' when she sensed Room 214 based on the architectural layout in her mind.

It seems—probably—that I really might've made a mistake... I sensed the room opposite...?After careful identification, Jiang Baimian awkwardly wanted to rub her head.?Isn't this too embarrassing? Fortunately, nobody discovered it.

Fortunately, she was already lying in bed.

Since she'd confirmed that the room was wrong, she definitely had to reconnoiter. She immediately turned her attention over.

The next second, Jiang Baimian opened her eyes.

In Room 214, there was a bioelectric signal highly suspected to be human!

Chapter 703: Hint

Room 214 has a bioelectric signal highly suspected to be human!?In the dark room that only had a little starlight shining in, Jiang Baimian opened her eyes wide, and her drowsiness vanished.

With a cautious attitude, she switched to sensing using her Awakened consciousness. The results were quickly 'fed back' into her mind: There was no human consciousness in Room 214.

This...?Jiang Baimian looked at the ceiling in the darkness, and her thoughts boiled over like boiling water.

Coupled with her perception of bioelectric signals and human consciousness, she preliminarily determined that an Awakened was hiding in the supposedly empty Room 214. He had concealed his

consciousness but didn't deal with bioelectric signals. Therefore, he could hide from Shang Jianyao but was now exposed.

With this in mind, Jiang Baimian's first reaction was that someone had infiltrated Room 214 in an attempt to find something, such as the miniaturized nuclear warhead. This was a guess that followed the conclusion that Room 214's guest was likely the middleman who had an accident happen at a critical moment.

This made Jiang Baimian suspect that the person she sensed might be the one who hijacked the radio broadcast.

In the blink of an eye, Jiang Baimian relaxed her subconsciously tense muscles to prevent anyone from sensing that something was amiss. She didn't immediately take action and quietly monitored the area.

As time passed, Jiang Baimian was surprised to discover that the bioelectric signal had barely moved. It seemed to be lying in bed like her.

That's not right... Shouldn't he be searching for items?

Jiang Baimian muttered. She quickly had a new guess. Could it be that the person in Room 214 isn't anyone else but the unlucky guest who had his hypertensive drugs stolen?

Isn't he not out of the hospital yet? Did he secretly return? Was it before martial law was enacted? In the current environment, such an escape will be easily detected and tracked... Jiang Baimian unconsciously had a series of questions.

When she delved deeper into this matter, a bolt of lightning suddenly flashed across her mind, illuminating a certain spot in the fog.

Some of her blurry memories became clear. The hotel manager, Shen Kang, told Shang Jianyao and me that the resident in Room 214 had returned shortly before martial law was enacted! I previously wanted to pay attention to this person!

Jiang Baimian suddenly clenched her fists before slowly releasing them. At this moment, another memory remained in her mind: The hotel manager, Shen Kang, said that the resident in Room 214 hadn't been discharged. Based on this, I deduced that it wasn't a matter of concern.

The two contradictory memories made Jiang Baimian quickly come to a conclusion: Her memories had been tampered with—not long after she communicated with Shen Kang!

Jiang Baimian then revised her judgment. No, it wasn't tampering but blurring the original memory and having a new memory implanted! And it was most likely done by the person hiding in Room 214!

Jiang Baimian was immediately puzzled. I had already made precautions against having my memories flipped and tampered with. After discovering that the hotel manager, Shen Kang, had a blurry memory of the antihypertensive medicine being stolen—a story that could be recounted for an entire year—and him needing a reminder to recall it, I was worried that the resident in Room 214 might be a powerful Awakened in the Last Man domain.

There was evidence of this from another perspective.

It could be said that the Salvation Army had a systematic advantage with their strict control, allowing them to quickly track down the two defectors. However, it was a little coincidental that they had both died on the spot and didn't leave behind any clues as to who they had traded with.

It was very reasonable to explain this away if someone had implanted pessimistic memories in them, making them commit suicide the moment they discovered something amiss.

Therefore, Jiang Baimian quickly recalled Eidolon Nun's gaze back then. However, her memories had still been tampered with under such 'protection!'

This didn't make sense!

Even if the price paid by that person wasn't weakness or cowardice, it was unlikely that he could be calm, unaffected, and not leave behind any traces when suddenly facing the memories related to the Kalendaria's gaze. Could it be that he's already accustomed to being watched by the Kalendarium every day? Jiang Baimian was first confused before she had a new idea from her previous judgment.

Perhaps the person had never flipped through her memories at all. Instead, he directly blurred the most recent memories and then connected them with new memories he had woven.

This way, the other party could avoid the danger of seeing Eidolon Nun's gaze and achieve their goal. This also effectively explained why the person wasn't wary of bioelectric signals—he had no idea!

In other words, it's very likely that he has learned a lesson and won't easily flip through other people's memories. Yes, we can't rule out the possibility that it's because his abilities are limited and that he's not good at flipping through memories accurately... In short, what I'm thinking about now is still relatively safe. I won't be discovered...?As these thoughts raced through her mind, Jiang Baimian felt a little more certain.

This hypothesis could explain most of the situation, but there was still a question: Since that person didn't know how to read memories—or rather, couldn't—how did he know that the Old Task Force was asking the hotel manager, Shen Kang, about the loss of the antihypertensive drugs and had handled it in time?

Jiang Baimian had two guesses regarding this.

The first was that despite not easily flipping through the memories of others, he only targeted people like the Old Task Force with obvious backgrounds or ordinary people like the hotel manager, Shen Kang. He would attempt to flip through their memories the moment he discovered them communicating.

The second was that the person had other abilities or items that could monitor the hotel's situation.

Out of caution, Jiang Baimian was more inclined to the latter possibility.

She exhaled slowly as if she were adjusting herself just before falling asleep. Her focus of thought then shifted to how to safely transmit her discovery and thoughts to Shang Jianyao and the other team members, as well as how to deal with the person in Room 214 without any accidents.

Just as Jiang Baimian kept raising plans in her heart and repeatedly rejecting them, Shang Jianyao sat up on the other side of the large bed.

The team now lived in a suite. There were two bedrooms, a living room, and a bathroom.

“What's wrong?” Jiang Baimian jumped in fright. She felt guilty and alarmed as though her secret had been exposed and that the enemy was attacking.

Under the faint starlight, Shang Jianyao turned around and looked at Jiang Baimian. He seriously said, "I suddenly realized that we weren't careful enough. We didn't even go to Room 214 to check before returning. What if there are clues hidden there?"

That's why you woke up... Jiang Baimian secretly heaved a sigh of relief and replied seriously, "I don't think there's a need. Think about it; that room has already been ransacked by thieves. If the Salvation Army wants to investigate the case, they will definitely investigate the scene carefully. How can there be any clues left behind that haven't been discovered?"

Shang Jianyao thought for a moment and sighed. "Indeed."

Bang!

He lay down again, straight like a log.

Jiang Baimian glanced at him and had a thought. "Have you cleared the cruise trauma in Room 522?"

Room 522 and Room 912's cruise trauma came from the same source. After finding a way to clear Room 912's trauma, Room 522 was akin to free for the picking. It would be a waste not to clear it.

The Old Task Force had previously discussed that the reason the owners of Room 522 and Room 912 could defeat the island of fear corresponding to the cruise ship's trauma and successfully enter the Mind Corridor was very likely that they had later discovered that the captain didn't contract the Heartless disease and survived. They then found clues from him.

Shang Jianyao laughed smugly. "Not for the time being; I plan on saving it for critical moments. In that case, I can achieve a sudden breakthrough at the critical moment to exceed the enemy's expectations!"

Jiang Baimian's expression froze for a second. "Come to your senses. There's no such thing as a sudden breakthrough for Awakened! That's unless you find a door leading to the New World right after you clear that psychological trauma. But is that possible?"

After asking the question, Jiang Baimian added, “Back when you dealt with the Virtual World’s owner in First City, you didn’t win by making a breakthrough in the middle of the battle. You relied on knowing the other party’s weakness and having an item targeting him. The sudden breakthrough was mostly in passing.”

The honest Shang Jianyao was stunned. “Alright, we were overthinking.”

He would admit his mistake.

Jiang Baimian took the opportunity to say, “Then, clear the cruise trauma in Room 522 tonight. Yes, remember to bring the Six Senses Beads and the Life Angel necklace to prevent any accidents.”

After saying that, two scenes surfaced in Jiang Baimian’s mind: The first was the honest Shang Jianyao snatching control over the body and asking, “Is there a need to bring items? I can clear it with my eyes closed!”

The second was to have the honest and reckless Shang Jianyaos restrained, leaving the person in charge of the body to understand her hint—have the item on hand and be prepared.

Just as Jiang Baimian said that, Shang Jianyao had already turned his gaze to her.

In the night that was sprinkled with dim starlight, the two of them looked at each other. Neither spoke as they retracted their gazes.

After a few seconds, Jiang Baimian suggested, “Why don’t I lend you my Chaotic Right Hand as well?”

“Alright.” Shang Jianyao agreed.

Jiang Baimian immediately sat up and stretched her hand toward her tactical backpack to carry it over. She then quickly unzipped it and gripped the black glove with familiarity.

Almost at the same time, Jiang Baimian shivered as if winter had arrived early



After grabbing Chaotic Right Hand, Jiang Baimian's first reaction was to pull up the blanket and wrap it around her body. However, this didn't stop her body from trembling. After all, she wouldn't enjoy a sharp rise in temperature doing so.

As she gritted her teeth, Jiang Baimian began to think about what to do next.

She only had a flash of inspiration and used the fact that Shang Jianyao had cleared Room 522's cruise trauma to secretly have the latter hold both powerful items—the Six Senses Beads and the Life Angel necklace—in preparation. She also took the opportunity to take out her Chaotic Right Hand and enhance her strength.

But after completing these matters, Jiang Baimian sadly realized that she and Shang Jianyao still couldn't attempt a surprise attack without the other party noticing. Once there were signs, things might very well become very troublesome with the target's strength and unique abilities. It was unknown who would emerge victorious.

Most importantly, there was a high chance that the other party still had the nuclear warhead. Even if the Old Task Force could create an opportunity one step at a time, they had to worry that the other party would choose an internecine outcome when pushed into a corner.

Ignoring the fact that Jiang Baimian and the others weren't mentally prepared to sacrifice themselves here, most of Ubei's citizens probably wouldn't be spared if the nuclear warhead were to be detonated. This was definitely not the outcome Shang Jianyao hoped to see.

Unfortunately, he hid his human consciousness. Otherwise, I could've dealt a sudden strike and given him a Chaotic state to create an opportunity for Shang Jianyao to use the Six Senses Beads and the Life Angel necklace...?

If I can't lock onto his consciousness, I can't use my abilities and items...?

Do we have to alert the enemy? The risk is too high, and the consequences are uncontrollable...?

Calm down, calm down. Think about the rules governing how Awakened sense each other's consciousness.

First, every Awakened can hide their consciousness, and they can even prevent Awakened at a higher level than them from discovering them. This has been verified and confirmed, but it's still unknown if powerhouses who enter the New World can sense hidden consciousness...

Second, once Awakened have interactions—including but not limited to seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, and using their abilities—they can sense each other's consciousness...

Now, Room 214's person is within the confines of the first rule. To crack this—finding his consciousness and completing a lock-on—we have to establish an interaction with him.

Are we to just knock on his door? That's too obvious. The other party can easily guess that we've sensed his existence and will definitely exert influence on us immediately, causing us to lose the initiative and be in a disadvantaged situation...

Call him? Ignoring the fact that this might expose the secret, he can completely ignore the call...

Sigh, why can I clearly sense him through bioelectric signals but not establish a connection? Once there's interaction, I can sense his consciousness and attempt to lock onto him... This is simply discrimination!

What's the essence of interaction...

Now's not the time to think about this problem. Sigh, it'd be great if Little White were here. I just need to think of a way to hint to her that there's a problem with Room 214 and get her to release a subsonic wave there. That way, most of the problems can be resolved... No matter what level of Awakened one is, their physiques don't seem to undergo a qualitative change. Under prolonged exposure to the subsonic wave, there's a high chance that the target won't be able to withstand it and will have a relatively bad reaction. In addition, he has hypertension. Perfect!

What excuse should I use to visit Little White now so that we won't be suspected? How should I hint to her when I'm there?

As the trembling Jiang Baimian found herself in a conundrum, she occasionally recalled the scene and feelings of being stared at by Eidolon Nun. This was to prevent the person in Room 214 from suddenly having an urge and deciding to take a certain risk to flip through her memories.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao also retrieved the Six Senses Beads and the Life Angel necklace. He looked like he was about to fall asleep and go on an adventure in the Mind Corridor.

He glanced at Jiang Baimian and thought for a few seconds seriously. “The cruise’s trauma is relatively special. I need to get myself in optimal condition before facing it.”

He was lying, and Jiang Baimian knew that he was lying. He also knew that Jiang Baimian knew that he was lying. However, this was only limited to the tacit understanding between the two of them.

Jiang Baimian knew that Shang Jianyao had already understood her intentions. She knew that getting him to take out the items was to deal with an unspoken problem, not the so-called trauma of Room 522’s cruise ship. Therefore, he was stalling for time. He didn’t go to the Mind Corridor and waited for the matter to develop.

This can’t be delayed for too long. Any longer, and it’s equivalent to telling the target that the situation isn’t right...?Jiang Baimian was vexed.

After the cold was alleviated to a certain extent, she was now very envious of Shang Jianyao’s ability to multitask and carry out multiple operations at once.

She wished she could do the same. One was in charge of thinking about how to interact with the target, another was considering an excuse to visit Bai Chen, and another was figuring out a sufficiently concealed and effective way to give her a hint.

Shang Jianyao then muttered to himself, “Why doesn’t the limb’s range include that? Otherwise, the two items’ negative effects would be offset.”

However, it doesn’t remove the effects on your brain...?Jiang Baimian didn’t know how to evaluate Shang Jianyao’s strange ideas. She almost laughed from anger.

As her brain raced, she suddenly thought of a question. That’s right. Interaction involves the use of abilities to have an influence. When the person in Room 214 previously blurred Hey and my memories and implanted new content, it was actually equivalent to establishing a connection with us. As long as we sensed Room 214 back then, we would definitely be able to capture his human consciousness. However, we didn’t have such thoughts back then. When a new memory took shape

and the person stopped using his abilities, the connection between both parties was severed again. We completely missed the opportunity.

So, should we let him make another attempt? There's a certain risk, but it seems within the limits of control because he doesn't have the habit of flipping through my memories. Besides, he can't affect the auxiliary chip in my biological prosthetic limb, or he doesn't realize there's the need to influence it...

I have to think of a good reason to agitate him. I can't let him think that I've already discovered him... A plan quickly formed in Jiang Baimian's mind, and she secretly added a reminder into the auxiliary chip: "Pay attention to whether your suspicion and investigation inclinations for Room 214 are muddled or warped."

After changing the reminder to a corresponding pulse every second, Jiang Baimian—who was wrapped in a blanket—suddenly yelped.

"What's wrong?" Shang Jianyao asked intensely.

Hey, don't be too exaggerated...? Jiang Baimian trembled slightly and said, "I realized that we were overthinking. Why care if there are any clues left in Room 214? Why care if that person is related to the nuclear warhead? Why are we making things difficult? Let's just call the Ubei Public Security Council and get them to investigate!"

Just as Jiang Baimian said that, she suddenly forgot what she wanted to say. The next second, the auxiliary chip reminded her: "Pay attention to whether your suspicion and investigation inclinations for Room 214 are muddled or warped."

Jiang Baimian's heart palpitated as she covered Room 214 with her mind. In the blink of an eye, she gained something.

There was indeed a human consciousness in that room!

Without any hesitation, Jiang Baimian directly used the black glove in her hand—Chaotic Right Hand!

At the same time, she activated one of her abilities: Spatial Hallucination!

She then shouted, “214!”

In Room 214, the person lying in bed and resting felt a little dazed suddenly. He then heard someone shout ‘214’ from afar.

This close proximity made him subconsciously believe that he had been exposed and that the enemy had arrived at the door. In the face of such a situation, there was no need to hide his consciousness. The guest in Room 214 immediately rose up, prepared to use his abilities on the enemy outside.

Dizziness!

On the third floor, in the Old Task Force’s room.

Upon hearing Jiang Baimian shout the number ‘214,’ Shang Jianyao jumped up and spread his mind to the target area. In the blink of an eye, he captured the human consciousness that didn’t exist previously.

In midair, Shang Jianyao’s expression suddenly became compassionate and merciful. He spun the string of prayer beads in his left hand and said solemnly, “Consciousness Deprivation!”

Although the Six Senses Beads only had two uses of Consciousness Deprivation left, Shang Jianyao never worried about such problems. He used it whenever it was needed!

Jiang Baimian completely agreed with Shang Jianyao’s choice. This was because the person in Room 214 might very well be carrying a nuclear warhead or the corresponding detonation device.

Cardiac Arrest didn’t mean that he would die immediately. Corny Person and Literary Hipster might not be able to ease the situation in a good direction. When the time came, everyone would be doomed if anything really happened. Therefore, Consciousness Deprivation—which left no repercussions—was definitely the best solution in the current situation!

After the blurry green light lit up, the person in Room 214 fell to the ground with a thud and lost consciousness before Shang Jianyao’s voice sounded.

Jiang Baimian didn't relax. Instead, she grabbed the flashlight and went straight to the window, wanting to take a shortcut to Room 214 to restrain the enemy completely.

Shang Jianyao threw down the Life Angel necklace and followed closely behind.

None of them knew how long the target's consciousness could be deprived.

#### Chapter 705: Brooch

After pushing open the window, Jiang Baimian propped herself up with her hand and jumped out. Then, like a spider, she quickly moved to Room 214's window using the protruding areas and water pipes on the outer facade thanks to her amazing balance.

She almost fell during this process because she was still carrying Chaotic Right Hand. Her muscles experienced a certain level of frozen stiffness, making her less agile and natural.

Fortunately, her biological prosthetic limb suffered relatively weak influence. She stabilized her body in time by exerting the needed strength, preventing her from plummeting from the second floor.

Although she wouldn't be gravely injured even if she really fell to the first floor from that height, it would definitely cause her to miss the best opportunity to deal with Room 214's guest. That would be a huge problem.

Things happened quickly as Jiang Baimian arrived outside Room 214's window, struck the glass with her elbow, and shattered it into pieces.

With a crashing sound, Jiang Baimian shielded her face with one hand and gripped the window frame with the other before jumping up.

Just as she landed, she suddenly exclaimed. This was because she sensed that the person in Room 214's human consciousness and bioelectric signals were rapidly receding or weakening. In other words, the target was on the brink of death and could stop breathing at any moment.

How is that possible? It clearly only deprived him of his consciousness...? Jiang Baimian was surprised and confused. She was just about to rely on the weak starlight outside the window to observe the situation in the room when a shadow appeared behind her, darkening her vision.

Shang Jianyao had blocked the window.

Jiang Baimian immediately took out the flashlight she had stuffed into her pocket for her climb and flicked the switch.

Pa!

A yellow beam of light shone ahead, allowing the scene in the room to be reflected in Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao's eyes.

Two single beds were on the left, and on the right was a long wooden table and cabinet.

At this moment, a figure was lying in the aisle between the bed and the table. His eyes were wide open, and a stench came from his lower body.

He was a male Ashlandic. He wore a slightly old white T-shirt and black pants, and he didn't seem a year over thirty. His face was relatively long, and his hair was messy.

"Dead..." As Shang Jianyao passed through the window and entered the room, he muttered to himself in confusion, "I clearly used Consciousness Deprivation, not Cardiac Arrest."

He clearly shared the same thoughts as Jiang Baimian.

It was impossible for such a powerful opponent to die so easily. It was even impossible for him to be subdued so easily. There could be other twists and turns in the process.

But the truth was that the target was really dead. The human consciousness had disappeared from Shang Jianyao and Jiang Baimian's perception.

"Search him," Jiang Baimian quickly ordered. She quickly took a few steps forward, squatted beside the corpse, stretched out her left hand, and carefully examined it.

The sound of window smashing was relatively obvious in the night. The hotel's duty personnel sensed the commotion and walked to the back of the building to search for the source. The soldiers in charge of martial law in the distance also cast their gazes over.

After quickly examining the traces, Jiang Baimian made a preliminary judgment. She frowned and said, "This person seemed to have hit his head when his consciousness was deprived. There are obvious signs of blunt trauma on his head, and there are also traces on the nearby table legs. Therefore, this was an unfortunate accident? The unconsciousness caused by Consciousness Deprivation made the target accidentally hit his head when he fell to the ground. Furthermore, he has been suffering from abnormal hypertension for a long time, and the blood vessels in his head are fragile. The impact resulted in major internal bleeding, leaving him no time to be rescued?"

Shang Jianyao clenched his right fist and punched his left palm. "The price he paid isn't actually hypertension but bad luck?"

The target had previously encountered an absurd matter like having his antihypertensive drugs running out and his room burgled. Now, a fall had cost him his life.

Jiang Baimian was momentarily unable to refute Shang Jianyao's guess. This was the first time in her twenty-plus year life she had seen such an unlucky person.

After a few seconds, she exhaled and said, "The price should still be hypertension. Otherwise, it wouldn't have been so serious from missing one dose of antihypertensive drugs. Therefore, although the price of hypertension can be controlled by antihypertensive drugs—akin to a cheat—the truth is that the problem isn't trivial at all. Some things might not matter to others at all, but to them, it's a huge matter. Any slight misfortune will result in an uncontrollable outcome."

"That's right," Shang Jianyao said with emotion. "I think we're in pretty good shape now."

To be able to say such words means that it's not good...

?As Jiang Baimian muttered silently, her gaze landed on the deceased's chest.

There was a human-shaped brooch there. It lacked detail, making it impossible to tell who it was. There were also some mottled marks on its surface as if it were a relic of the Old World.

Jiang Baimian waved her hand and said to Shang Jianyao, "Take it and confirm the situation. I'm in charge of guarding against any accidents."



Shang Jianyao couldn't ask for more. He immediately squatted down and stretched his hand toward the old brooch.

He instantly froze just as he gripped it, unable to move his eyes.

At the same time, Jiang Baimian felt the temperature in the room drop a little, making her—who was still wrapped in the blanket—tremble even more.

That's not right! Jiang Baimian didn't hesitate at all. Her body suddenly leaned forward as she stretched out her right hand and grabbed Shang Jianyao's left palm.

That was where the Six Senses Beads was!

With the Six Senses Beads' help, Jiang Baimian saw a black figure attempting to burrow out of the void from the badge. It was getting larger and larger until it took human form!

It was connected to Shang Jianyao and had partially invaded his body. At a glance, it was as if a ghost had suddenly appeared in front of Shang Jianyao—a ghost that came from hell and not reality!

Jiang Baimian raised her left palm and released a high-voltage electric current at the badge's black figure without reservation.

Spark!

Countless silver-white electric arcs jumped out and struck the black figure one after another.

A charred smell spread out, and the suddenly illuminated room finally attracted the hotel duty personnel's attention.

Finally, in Jiang Baimian's 'vision,' the black figure retreated back into the void. No further anomalies surged out of the badge, and its surface became increasingly mottled.

Shang Jianyao's eyes returned to normal as he sighed with emotion without any lingering fear. "It feels a lot like Mr. DiMarco, but it feels much stronger."

"But this strength didn't reflect such strength... Because it's separated by the New World's node?" Jiang Baimian also roughly understood what had happened.

A certain person in the New World tried to use the brooch as a medium to 'possess' Shang Jianyao!

From the fact that the deceased with the brooch had never been 'possessed,' the person in the New World likely had a strong relationship with him. If the deceased had already been 'possessed,' then there was no need for Possession to happen through a New World node after his death. He could just migrate elsewhere.

Shang Jianyao didn't answer. His attention was focused on the brooch, and he didn't care about his right hand—which had turned black from the electric shock—or his slightly standing hair.

At such a close distance, it was inevitable that he was affected by Jiang Baimian's high-voltage electric current. Fortunately, it wasn't head-on.

Shang Jianyao quickly came to a conclusion. "The ability is Heavenly Ears. The price is the loss of taste."

He had already tried to use the brooch and heard the hotel staff discussing whether to call the Public Security Council.

Heavenly Ears? No wonder he could monitor our actions and deal with us in time...?As Jiang Baimian came to a realization, she stood up and sized up the situation in the room.

The most eye-catching thing was a computer and a few instruments on the table.

He hacked into the radio system??Jiang Baimian looked around and said to Shang Jianyao, who was happily playing with Heavenly Ears, "Put down the brooch and call the Public Security Council to have them take over."

Being in the Salvation Army's territory, the Old Task Force had to avoid trouble. For this reason, Jiang Baimian specially made Shang Jianyao emphasize Commissioner Huang and Ding Ling's existence during the call.

While waiting for the Public Security Council, Genava also rushed to Room 214. Long Yuehong and Bai Chen guarded their items in their suite to prevent any accidents.

At this moment, the corridor was filled with vigilant hotel duty personnel. Several teams of soldiers in charge of martial law—who had been transferred over—stood outside the window, and drones were flying back and forth in midair.

The Salvation Army was rather efficient. Before long, Ding Ling arrived at the Ashlands Hotel with seven to eight people from the Public Security Council.

Ding Ling glanced at the Public Security Council members checking the rooms and corpse and said to October Xue and Zhang Qubing, "Don't worry. Commissioner Huang is already nearby. Just tell them the truth."

She then added, "We were actually looking for people who had an accident in the past few days. We didn't expect you to lock onto the target so quickly. Not bad!"

Jiang Baimian explained how they had obtained clues from Elder Zhang—who wore an aluminum pot—how they had communicated with the hotel manager, Shen Kang, how they had checked the target car, how she had recalled her day in the dead of night, and how they had suddenly sensed conflict in their memories.

Of course, she pushed the main 'credit' to Genava to prevent herself from exposing her and Shang Jianyao's abilities and characteristics.

"It's nice to have a robot," Ding Ling said sincerely.

At this moment, a Public Security Council member in charge of checking the room walked over and frowned. "We didn't find the nuclear warhead. It's not in the car either."

Jiang Baimian secretly took a deep breath.

The current situation was that the suspect had been found and captured, but the nuclear warhead had disappeared?

## Chapter 706: "Internal Strife"

The suspect was very important, but the nuclear warhead was even more important. Every day it wasn't found left everyone in Ubei uneasy. They were afraid that they would be blown to kingdom come in their sleep one day.

The nuclear warhead has actually gone missing. This problem seems to be getting worse... Could it be that the person in Room 214 is really just a middleman? He delivered the nuclear warhead to the buyer before martial law was implemented two to three days after he was sent to the hospital after having his antihypertensive drugs stolen? But if that's the case, why did he hack into the radio system and plan such a 'game?' Was he really sure that the buyer had a tacit understanding with him to use the opportunity to send the nuclear warhead out of Ubei? He still maintains a connection with the buyer despite martial law??Questions flashed through Jiang Baimian's mind.

At the same time, she realized that the few Ubei Public Security Council members were looking at her and Shang Jianyao with slightly complicated expressions.

Unlike the Salvation Army's black uniforms and the blue formal suit representing the Administrative Officers, the Public Security Council members wore olive-green.

Jiang Baimian's heart palpitated as she scoffed. "Don't tell me you suspect that we took away the nuclear warhead?"

"We can't rule out that possibility." The person who replied wasn't from the Public Security Council but the 'mole,' Shang Jianyao. He seriously said, "After all, only us and the suspect—God knows if he's the real suspect—were at the scene."

Jiang Baimian glared at him. "When we moved in, the hotel manager and many guests' memories regarding the antihypertensive drugs should've been vague. This can be verified. If he didn't have a guilty conscience, why would he do that?"

Back then, the Old Task Force had just settled down in the Ashlands Hotel when martial law began. The person in Room 214 had already returned from the hospital by then. Of course, he had just

returned. Otherwise, he would've had a chance to leave before the army entered the city. He would've been like a fish jumping into the sea, a bird flying freely in the sky.

“To hide the price he paid.” Shang Jianyao smiled and stroked his chin.

Whoa, you're playing brain stimulation games with me??Jiang Baimian thought for a moment and said, “Then, why did he only simply fade the memories without fabricating brand-new memories and implanting them in people to completely cover up the antihypertensive drug matter?”

Shang Jianyao's eyes flickered. “This is because the target also knows that he had been hospitalized for two to three days and that there was a high chance that this matter has already spread. After all, this is also considered a strange story. Furthermore, he had just shown that he couldn't flip through the target's memories or do so accurately. Therefore, without the ability to trace the matter back, he didn't dare to implant new memories into the hotel personnel to prevent them from discovering a huge conflict in their understanding of the situation when communicating with certain people in Ubei. In such a situation, ‘not remembering clearly’ is a better reason and excuse.”

Jiang Baimian laughed and asked, “Since there's no way to completely erase the matter regarding the antihypertensive drugs, why did he muddle the hotel personnel's memories? From the perspective of an attempt to hide his own price, there's no need to do so.”

Shang Jianyao fell silent for a few seconds in deliberation before saying, “He wants to control the spread and the intensity of the discussion so that nobody can guess his price before he leaves Ubei.”

“The price is a lifelong matter. If he tries to keep it under wraps, it will only result in some hotel personnel guessing his weakness later and selling this as important information,” Jiang Baimian said confidently. “I agree that the target wants to control the spread and the intensity of the discussion, but a more reasonable explanation is that he hopes to escape Ubei before the Salvation Army notices this.”

Shang Jianyao was stunned before he clapped.

Their ‘internal strife’ made Ding Ling and the people from Ubei Public Security Council look at each other. They inexplicably felt like they were questioning their existence.

Only Geneva wasn't surprised and even showed signs of wishing to join in.

“Ahem.” Ding Ling cleared her throat and said, “Your debate, the clues we gathered at the scene, and the feedback from other places have allowed us to preliminarily confirm that the deceased is really involved in the theft of the nuclear warhead.”

The Ubei Public Security Council members in olive-green uniforms nodded in agreement.

Furthermore, there were computers and some equipment at the scene. After extracting the data and logs on them, it was very easy to restore some of the truth.

Jiang Baimian steered the topic back on track and said to the Ubei Public Security Council members, “There are surveillance cameras installed in many places in the hotel, and there are many witnesses at the scene. They can all prove that we haven’t left or moved any items out after entering this room. We clearly can’t hide a nuclear warhead on us, no matter how miniaturized it is.

“Right, witnesses might be affected by an Awakened’s abilities. But with your Salvation Army’s strength, it’s very easy for you to find a way to break the corresponding control when there’s a need. If—if you still don’t believe me, you’re welcome to conduct a body search. You’re welcome to search our rooms and our cars.”

Jiang Baimian acted frankly.

She was indeed very frank because the Old Task Force had never seen the nuclear warhead. There was nothing to fear with a clear conscience!

As for the part about how she had seen through Room 214’s true identity and how she had dealt with him by surprise, it was only related to lying, obfuscating, and hiding the abilities and items of hers and Shang Jianyao’s. Even if the Salvation Army later discovered this problem and found the truth, they could definitely understand her.

This was every Awakened’s instinct.

Besides, the misdirection didn’t change the essence of the matter, nor did it affect the Salvation Army.

The leader of the Ubei Public Security Council members nodded. “We’ll find surveillance footage and witnesses to determine the situation. As long as you are really innocent, our Salvation Army won’t randomly search your items.”

In any case, we have to undergo a detailed search when we leave the city tomorrow, right??Jiang Baimian criticized inwardly.

The Ubei Public Security Council member looked around and said, “You can return to your rooms now, but you can’t come out until you obtain permission.”

“No problem!” Shang Jianyao had a sense of belonging to the Salvation Army after all.

Escorted by Ding Ling, Jiang Baimian, Shang Jianyao, and Geneva returned to their suite.

Ding Ling didn’t stay and quickly conveyed their conversation to Commissioner Huang.

After the door closed, Long Yuehong frowned. “Where did that nuclear warhead go?”

He firmly believed that the person in Room 214 was related to the nuclear warhead theft and played a relatively important role.

“I want to know too,” Shang Jianyao replied truthfully.

The ruthless Shang Jianyao then smiled. “There are only two possibilities: First, the person in Room 214 is indeed a lunatic. He has already installed the nuclear warhead somewhere in Ubei, fixed the detonator, and set up the corresponding instructions. Once he’s evacuated from Ubei and is in a safe area, he will remotely detonate it to create a massive fireworks show.

“Second, he’s the middleman—or rather, he has an accomplice. Before he returned to the hotel, he had already handed the nuclear warhead to the other party. He created the game to create an opportunity for his companion to leave Ubei safely with their items.”

Clang! Clang! Clang!?

Geneva loved to clap for Shang Jianyao.

Bai Chen pursed her lips and said, “Since we’ve found the target, the Salvation Army will definitely be able to quickly and partially figure out his origins and what kind of person he is and determine if

he's a psychopath who enjoys destruction. As for the second possibility, this has a very high requirement for the tacit understanding between companions. It has to be known that the person in Room 214 returned to the hotel before martial law began. In other words, when they were exchanging the nuclear warhead, they wouldn't have needed to consider how they were to leave the city once martial law was imposed..."

Bai Chen's voice softened, a clear show of her losing confidence.

This was because the Old Task Force's team leader, Madam Jiang Baimian, was someone who had to draft a few plans before any operation! If she were the one in charge of stealing nuclear warheads, she would imagine how she would safely escape if an accident happened and she was trapped in the city while facing martial law.

Although there were few people like Jiang Baimian, there were definitely more than one or two.

Genava—who had analyzed many situations—added, "Besides, is the person in Room 214 really sure that his companion can use the opportunity to evacuate the entire city while bringing out the nuclear warhead? The Salvation Army will definitely conduct an inspection before letting them pass. They will also prevent the interference of Awakened abilities. For example, the inspection will be carried out with surveillance cameras. Someone will be watching it remotely and in real-time."

Upon hearing this, Long Yuehong felt that the probability of Ubei being destroyed in a fiery fireball was increasing. That fellow seems to be a lunatic!

At this moment, Jiang Baimian smiled thoughtfully. "Do you still remember what Elder Zhang said?"

Without giving her team members a chance to answer, she directly gave an answer. "The families and relatives of those above have probably already left Ubei by this time!"

Just as she said that, Jiang Baimian looked at Shang Jianyao and the others and asked seriously, "Do you think the inspection of these people will be very strict?"

Chapter 707: Visit



Shang Jianyao stroked his chin and pinched his cheeks awkwardly. Finally, he gave an ambiguous answer. “It depends. With wise people and the older generation’s supervision, it will definitely be stricter. If not, it will depend on those people’s self-awareness. Sigh...”

As he spoke, Shang Jianyao sighed. He acted like a loyal warrior who was worried about the Salvation Army’s future.

Isn’t that obvious?? Long Yuehong criticized Shang Jianyao’s answer in his heart.

This was equivalent to someone asking if the temperatures would drop tomorrow, only to receive an answer: “If a cold draft blows south, it will definitely cool down. If not, the fluctuations will be relatively low.”

Bai Chen expressed her opinion. “From the current situation, I’m more inclined to believe that the person in Room 214 has really handed the nuclear warhead to his subordinate or accomplice. He’s also rather certain that the other party can safely drive the nuclear warhead out of Ubei after using the open plot of forcing the Salvation Army to evacuate the citizens.

“In such a situation, he originally only needed to hold out for the night. Then, he could’ve evacuated Ubei with the hotel guests tomorrow without being discovered. Who knew that he would encounter us?”

The plan of Room 214’s guest actually had a relatively high chance of error. Ignoring the fact that the Old Task Force lacked understanding, to the point of not knowing if there was a subordinate or accomplice, he—who had Heavenly Ears—could monitor everyone’s conversation in real-time in a small environment like the Ashlands Hotel. He could muddle the corresponding memories the moment he discovered any signs of something amiss. Not only did this not cause a huge commotion and attract the attention of others, but he could also last for days or even longer under normal circumstances.

However, he had never considered the fact that the Old Task Force had seen too much of the world. They were powerful, and they had many items and secondary reconnaissance means of detecting bioelectric signals despite the multiple walls in between.

Upon hearing this, Jiang Baimian couldn’t help but have Shang Jianyao’s previous doubts. Is the price paid by the person in Room 214 really hypertension? Are you sure it’s not bad luck?

When it rains, it pours!

After discussing this question for a while, Jiang Baimian suddenly sensed many human consciousnesses coming up the stairs and walking toward them.

“Are they here to capture us?” Not only did Shang Jianyao not panic or fear, but he also had an excited expression.

He probably has no intention of fighting the Salvation Army... From his expression, he doesn't seem to be scaring Little Red...? Jiang Baimian turned her head to glance at him in confusion. “Why are you so excited?”

The honest Shang Jianyao replied, “Once I'm successfully captured, I can join the Salvation Army as a way to redeem myself! I don't think any faction will refuse a Mind Corridor-level Awakened.”

“...” Jiang Baimian and Long Yuehong were stunned.

After two seconds, Jiang Baimian gritted her teeth and said, “There's no need to be captured. You can also surrender openly now.”

Shang Jianyao shook his head. “No, this is a betrayal of the company!”

You know what relationships are?? Before Jiang Baimian could say a word, Shang Jianyao added, “After I'm captured, the company should be able to understand my thoughts of enduring humiliation to preserve my usefulness.”

Jiang Baimian gradually felt that it was better to slap Shang Jianyao with her left hand than argue with him. After all, the debate would end in the same way.

At this moment, the lucky Shang Jianyao realized that the human consciousnesses coming up the stairs had stopped outside their rooms.

Someone knocked on the door.

“Please come in.” Jiang Baimian retracted her gaze and looked at the door.

The person in charge of opening the door was undoubtedly Shang Jianyao.

Outside the door were Ding Ling and Commissioner Huang, who was wearing the Salvation Army's black uniform without an epaulet.

Behind Commissioner Huang were several people. Some wore the Salvation Army's black uniforms, and some wore olive-green clothes representing the Public Security Council.

Commissioner Huang—who was almost 1.7 meters tall—looked back and said to the personnel in charge of protecting him, “Stay outside.”

Nobody had any objections. Nobody said that letting Commissioner Huang enter the room alone violated the security rules. This meant that Commissioner Huang didn't accept disagreements. It also meant that the security personnel were confident in his strength.

After Commissioner Huang took two steps forward, he thought for a moment and said to Ding Ling, “You don't have to follow either. Close the door.”

Ding Ling nodded. “Yes, Commissioner Huang.”

She left the room and closed the wooden door.

Commissioner Huang then looked around and smiled at the Old Task Force members. “Don't worry. Based on the various feedback we received, it's indeed impossible for you to move the nuclear warhead away. This means that you were really the first to dig out the suspect and handled it in time. I thank you on behalf of the Ubei Supplies Management Committee!”

Shang Jianyao—who was thanked—wasn't happy at all. He was even a little disappointed.

Commissioner Huang sensed the change in his emotions and glanced at him in confusion, but this wasn't anything worth paying attention to. Commissioner Huang smiled and sighed. “I previously told you the general situation of the missing nuclear warhead, hoping that you would pay attention to what happened in the Ashlands Hotel and the foreigners here. It's not that we don't have the ability to investigate them one by one, but I've always adhered to a philosophy: the more helpers we have, the harder it will be for the enemy! As expected, you really discovered a problem, found clues, and resolved a dangerous actor.”

As expected of an old Salvation Army warrior. There's nothing to criticize about his ways...?Jiang Baimian looked at Commissioner Huang—who was much older than her father—and glanced at his white hair. She smiled and replied, “We were just lucky. We only asked two to three questions before we obtained clues. Commissioner Huang, let's sit and talk. We also feel uncomfortable with you standing there.”

She didn't mention anything about respect for the elderly because some elders didn't like being called old.

Commissioner Huang nodded, walked to the suite's sofa, and sat down.

After Jiang Baimian, Shang Jianyao, and the others found their seats, he nodded and said, “Personally, I'm sure there's nothing wrong with you.”

For some reason, Jiang Baimian felt that Commissioner Huang had emphasized ‘nothing.’

Commissioner Huang continued, “I came over to hear your guess regarding the nuclear warhead's whereabouts. You've already proven that you have outstanding brains.”

“Uh...” Jiang Baimian hesitated about whether to mention the possibility that Room 214's accomplice might be a family member of Ubei's Salvation Army's higher-ups. After all, it was very important for foreigners to avoid arousing suspicion. Not getting involved in the Salvation Army's internal affairs was their first priority.

Regardless of whether they were deliberately trying to sow discord among the Salvation Army's factions, their intentions were punishable by death in reality.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao—the mole—had already revealed the two situations the Old Task Force had guessed in detail. “First, he's indeed a lunatic. He has already installed the nuclear warhead somewhere in Ubei...”

“Second, he's a middleman—or rather, he has accomplices... Some people in Ubei have probably already left the city by now. Will their checks be very strict?”

Commissioner Huang laughed involuntarily. “The second possibility was inspired by Elder Zhang? Will I not be able to figure out things he thought of? From this afternoon to this evening, I’ve personally held down the fort. I didn’t cut anyone slack and only let them pass after a strict inspection.”

Shang Jianyao wasn’t happy because of this. Instead, he sighed.

“Are you trying to question why those people can evacuate from Ubei in advance? Yes, Elder Zhang will definitely ask the same question.” Commissioner Huang stood up and walked to the window. He then pointed at the warriors in charge of enforcing martial law outside and said, “My colleagues chose to stay in Ubei and face the risk of a nuclear blast with me. My subordinates chose to stay in Ubei and face the risk of a nuclear blast with me. Be it the active or the passive ones, the young people outside are staying in Ubei to face the risk of the nuclear blast with me. They are willing to make sacrifices and contributions for this matter. How can I bear to let their families stay in such a dangerous place? How can I not help them eliminate any worries?”

After hearing Commissioner Huang’s words, Long Yuehong—who had resonated with Old Zhang’s indignation—felt that what he said made sense.

Commissioner Huang slowly exhaled and continued, “I can understand Old Zhang’s disappointment, confusion, anger, and suspicion. I’ve also been through that phase.”

He cast his gaze out the window again as if he were looking at the stars in the sky that were mostly covered by clouds.

“I’ve already forgotten which year it was in the New Calendar. Our Salvation Army had absorbed more wilderness nomads than we could. The Old World’s food reserves and various sources we originally had were also expended to a very dangerous extent. Therefore, a great famine happened. Many people starved to death. Do you still remember Hong Guangming? He had a child that died back then.

“After this famine, we acutely realized that we couldn’t continue like this. We have to be responsible for the lives of those who already belong to the Salvation Army. We have to take a long time to strengthen our agricultural and industrial fundamentals and raise our food reserves.

“Back then, many people were confused and felt that we were violating our original oath and giving up on our ideals. Yes, although Old Zhang and the others found it puzzling, they accepted it. After all, the great famine really happened in front of them.

“Later... Sigh, we encountered many problems while reclaiming farmlands and building industry. The most serious problem was that many people wanted to live a peaceful life. It’s impossible for humans to stay stressed all the time.

“Us old folks have seen the Old World’s bustle and know what the goal looks like. However, the young fellows who were born after the Chaotic Era or those who weren’t even seven or eight years old when the Old World was destroyed think that this is good enough. They also want to live a better life on this foundation.

“Everyone has a natural right to yearn for a good life, and we can’t treat everyone as a saint. It’s unrealistic and unscientific to be impartial and selfless. Perhaps everyone can request themselves to be a saint at a specific stage in life. Perhaps a small number of people can always request themselves to be a saint at all stages in life. However, it’s impossible for everyone to demand that they themselves are saints all the time. Most people are selfish.

“In the face of this situation, we can only accept reality and adjust our management system and methods bit by bit to mobilize more people’s motivation. During the process, many problems inevitably arose. This was unacceptable to Elder Zhang and the others, but us old fellows have indeed been working hard to resolve them. We can only go further through compromise. It might be better to turn back and resolve them after we resolve the corresponding predicaments.”

Shang Jianyao quietly listened and didn’t interject.

#### Chapter 708: Hidden Worries

As she looked at Commissioner Huang standing by the window, Jiang Baimian felt that he wasn’t saying those words to them, nor was there a need to do so either. She vaguely felt that Commissioner Huang was using this opportunity to communicate with Elder Zhang after learning that they had communicated with him.

Although Elder Zhang couldn’t hear these words, this was the effect Commissioner Huang wanted to achieve.

Such emotions were indescribably subtle.

After saying that, Commissioner Huang fell into a long silence.

He took out the box of wrinkled cigarettes from his pocket, took out one, and placed it in his mouth to the side. He then paused for a few seconds before stuffing it back as if he didn't think it was a good idea to smoke in someone else's room.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao asked with a serious expression, "When your batch of elderly dies, can the Salvation Army still complete its adjustments?"

Those who had seen the Old World's prosperity and had a deep impression of it were definitely close to 80 years old; there weren't many such old warriors even in the Salvation Army. Furthermore, according to the laws of nature, they definitely didn't have many years left. Even someone like Commissioner Huang—who was still very healthy—could deteriorate quickly once he fell ill.

Commissioner Huang turned to look at Shang Jianyao and nodded. "Therefore, our main job in the past few years has been to establish a system that can adapt to the current situation without needing old folks like us to operate. At the same time, we have to nurture the heirs who still have some ideals left."

Upon hearing this, Jiang Baimian was confused. "According to what you previously said, shouldn't you be more inclined toward a pragmatic successor?"

Commissioner Huang looked up and laughed. "That's some selfishness on our part; we still hope that our ideals can be inherited. Besides, an organization without ideals has no future. No matter how effective the monitoring is, it's useless when it comes to an organization where everyone chooses to be mediocre and degenerate. No matter how powerful technology becomes, these ideals have to be achieved by humans."

"This can be left to us, smart bots." Genova finally couldn't help but interject. "We don't degenerate or rot. We qualify as supervisors."

Commissioner Huang glanced at the silver-black robot and shook his head with a smile. "Robots are also set and controlled by humans. Robots that aren't controlled by humans are equivalent to real humans. Any human has selfish motives."

"Any human has selfish motives..." The red glow in Genova's eyes flickered as he muttered to himself.

Commissioner Huang continued, "Us old fellows still hope to see the day our ideals come true."

As he spoke, he turned his head to look out the window of the unlit streets. “Haven’t you guys always felt that my price was very hidden and wondered what it was? I can tell you now that the price I paid is the eternal loss of a portion of my memories.”

That can be used as a price? This price seems pretty good. I can wrap up all the things I don’t want to recall and sacrifice it...?This was the first time Long Yuehong was tempted by the price an Awakened had to pay.

It wasn’t a good thing to have a good memory. He often cringed when recalling past embarrassing matters.

For example: Sigh, I’m only 1.75 meters tall after genetic enhancement...

As if sensing his, Jiang Baimian, and the others’ thoughts, Commissioner Huang laughed self-deprecatingly. “Back when I discovered that I could use a portion of my memories as a price, I shared the same feelings as you are having now: ‘How nice. I can eliminate all those trash memories and not be easily targeted.’

“Unfortunately, forgetting something isn’t something I can decide. I forget many things every time I advance. Later, I gradually understood the true meaning of an Old World saying: People without a past have no future. People who forget the past will definitely lose the motivation to walk to the future.”

Commissioner Huang’s tone gradually became heavy. “If it weren’t for the fact that I still remember the Old World’s prosperity, the oath everyone made when we established the Salvation Army, and the anticipation for the future, I might’ve long been unable to keep up the fight and had chosen to end my own life.

“I’m already more than 80 years old, and there are fewer and fewer things I can do. Effectively extending the ideals that me and old comrades share is the only motivation for me to stay alive. People can be mediocre now, and the process can be pragmatic, but the goal can’t be changed.

“I hope that after we investigate the source of the Heartless disease and completely eliminate this latent danger, our Salvation Army can carry out our original dream step by step after our industry is completely rebuilt and our supplies reach a certain level.” Commissioner Huang’s voice rose. “A beautiful future life will definitely be realized!”



Shang Jianyao crossed his legs and pressed his right hand against his left chest. “For all of humanity!”

Commissioner Huang subconsciously pressed his right hand to his left chest. He straightened his back and replied with a serious expression, “For all of humanity!”

He then waved his hand and laughed self-deprecatingly. “I most likely won’t be able to see that day. Alright, you guys should rest early. You’ll be examined in the morning and be evacuated from the city to prevent any accidents.”

“Alright,” Shang Jianyao replied quickly.

After sending Commissioner Huang off, Jiang Baimian turned to look at Shang Jianyao and joked, “Why didn’t you retort Commissioner Huang’s words this time? You said that forgetting your ideals means betrayal?”

Shang Jianyao admitted his mistake and sighed without hiding anything. “I think he makes sense. He can’t ask for everyone—or most people—to be as pure as me.”

Are you pure? You have ten personalities! Long Yuehong couldn’t help but criticize inwardly.

Shang Jianyao glanced at Jiang Baimian again and said, “Even for me, I often have to compromise with reality. I can completely understand the Salvation Army’s compromise, temporarily stopping their expansion, and adjusting themselves.”

Whoa, what else do you want if you don’t compromise? Romping in the bedroom?? Jiang Baimian snorted. She then smiled and said, “What Commissioner Huang said might only be part of the situation. From his description, I can’t find a reason for Elder Zhang and the others to object so strongly to the point of believing that the higher-ups are mind-controlled.

“Maybe...” Jiang Baimian paused before saying, “Maybe some of the higher-ups—or even some elders like Commissioner Huang—have indeed degenerated. They focus their efforts on how to lead a better life for themselves and how to ensure that their children and grandchildren can maintain their privileged statuses for extended periods. It’s still unknown if the Salvation Army can complete the adjustments and not evolve into a faction like First City.”

Shang Jianyao’s expression was solemn, and he didn’t respond.

Bai Chen agreed with her team leader. “Any human has selfish motives.”

Long Yuehong was just about to say something when Jiang Baimian suddenly exclaimed, “Commissioner Huang just said that the price he paid is a permanent loss of a portion of his memories? This sounds very similar to the Last Man domain...”

After careful thought, Jiang Baimian felt that it seemed normal for a Mind Corridor-level Awakened in charge of intelligence to be in the Last Man domain. It could even be said to be very compatible.

Long Yuehong came to a realization. “It’s no wonder I keep having the feeling that he can sense my thoughts!”

He replied in timely fashions.

Jiang Baimian nodded. “He’s sure that there’s nothing wrong with us because he secretly flipped through our memories and realized that we weren’t lying? Uh, we just lied a little about the details...”

Jiang Baimian didn’t feel angry about this matter and instead felt a little more at ease. She felt like she had completely been cleared of suspicion.

It would be more troublesome if they encountered people they couldn’t escape—having no means to confirm such power—or someone who had steeled their resolve to push the blame to the Old Task Force.

Jiang Baimian didn’t think much about how things would develop, whether the nuclear warhead could be found, or whether Ubei would be blown up. She had no way of analyzing either.

After the person in Room 214 died, the Old Task Force—who was in the hotel—could only passively wait for the Salvation Army’s investigation results.

In any case, they could be evacuated tomorrow morning.

Upon seeing that it was getting late, they left Geneva on night duty while he charged. Long Yuehong and the others returned to their rooms and got into their beds.

After an unknown period of time, Jiang Baimian suddenly felt that something was amiss. It seemed like someone was watching her.

Jiang Baimian struggled to escape the dream and opened her eyes. She then saw a pair of eyes.

With a whoosh, Jiang Baimian sat up and punched out with her left fist.

Bang!

Shang Jianyao blocked the punch with both arms and was thrown off the bed.

Jiang Baimian then realized that Shang Jianyao had been quietly watching her in the darkness with the help of the weak starlight. She suppressed her voice and asked, “What are you thinking about instead of sleeping in the middle of the night?”

Shang Jianyao stood up, frowned, and stroked his chin. “I thought of a problem.”

“What problem?” Jiang Baimian’s expression gradually turned solemn.

Shang Jianyao looked up at the ceiling. “I’m wondering if the black figure that tried to ‘possess’ me came from the New World.”

He was referring to what had happened after he touched the brooch in Room 214.

“Didn’t we discuss it back then? It’s very likely.” Jiang Baimian couldn’t keep up with Shang Jianyao’s train of thought.

Shang Jianyao’s expression slowly turned cold. “In other words, that black figure is equivalent to someone in the New World. Could this person know Doctor—who’s also in the New World—and tell him about our situation here? We’ve already killed one of Doctor’s powerful subordinates. Do you think he will find this place through the assassin and return to reality to take action personally?”

## Chapter 709: Alarmist Talk

Jiang Baimian was a little stunned when she heard Shang Jianyao's question. She hesitated and said, "Probably not..."

Her voice dragged out into a whisper. This was because she didn't know much about the situation in the New World. She couldn't be sure if the experts there knew each other, nor did she know if Doctor had spread the information about her team to people he was familiar with.

After a brief pause, Jiang Baimian tersely acknowledged and said, "Even if Doctor knows that we're in Ubei, it's unlikely he can make it in time. Ignoring the event in which the assassin happens to be nearby out of sheer luck, Doctor shouldn't be able to return completely even if there's such a coincidence. His body is still in the Eighth Research Institute and is worlds apart from Ubei. Unless he can teleport, I don't think he can make it in time."

The Old Task Force would be examined after dawn and leave Ubei.

"But our understanding of New World powerhouses is limited to what Wu Meng said." The honest Shang Jianyao argued.

Jiang Baimian nodded. "There's nothing wrong with being careful. Let's first confirm if we've fallen into a dream."

Her understanding of Doctor was: the nightmare's minion who controlled a series of dream domain abilities.

As she was unprepared and didn't instruct the auxiliary chip, she couldn't monitor if she had fallen asleep.

Shang Jianyao was immediately excited. "Alright!"

He—who had been blasted to the window—turned around and looked out at the dim lights. His figure appeared in the glass.

Looking at his reflection in the 'darkness,' Shang Jianyao said in a deep voice, "I was dreaming yesterday at this time. There's no fundamental difference or great change between today and yesterday. So..."

His gaze suddenly glazed over as his eyes slowly lost focus. He seemed to have entered a sleepwalking state.

From the looks of it, we aren't affected by a dream yet...?Jiang Baimian heaved a sigh of relief, jumped up, and landed beside the window. Seizing this opportunity, she slapped Shang Jianyao awake.

Shang Jianyao suddenly snapped to his senses and looked around. "Doctor probably hasn't arrived yet..."

If Little Red were here, he would definitely say: "Don't have such a strong persecution complex..."?Jiang Baimian criticized inwardly and nodded slightly. "I'll set up the instructions for the auxiliary chip. Then, I'll report this matter to the Salvation Army at dawn. I don't think they will watch a New World powerhouse descend in Ubei without doing anything. Besides, their relationship with the Eighth Research Institute isn't harmonious at all."

In other words, it was basically impossible to rule out the possibility that Doctor knew the Salvation Army's higher-ups and had secretly reached a certain level of tacit understanding.

In such a situation, Jiang Baimian was definitely unwilling to neglect a large faction like the Salvation Army, which she could rely on.

She often said that people weren't born differently, but when it came to success or failure, it depended on who's using the tools available.

"Alright." The ruthless but timid Shang Jianyao was very satisfied with this solution.

He and Jiang Baimian quickly packed their items, put on their tactical backpacks, walked out of the room, and came to the living room.

At this moment, Genava was charging as he looked at the darkness and the street lamps outside the window as if he were in deep thought.

"Old Ge, what's on your mind?" Shang Jianyao asked curiously. He seemed to have forgotten that Doctor might attack.

This Shang Jianyao was not the same Shang Jianyao.

Genava turned his metal neck and said, "I'm wondering what my selfishness is since all humans are selfish..."

"Have you figured it out? If you don't, I'll get Big White to make one up for you on the spot," Shang Jianyao asked in concern.

Hey, what are you saying??Jiang Baimian expressed her indignation at the slander. Of course, she used her eyes instead of words to express this injustice.

Genava sighed, and the wind produced a strange sound in his metal mouth. "My selfishness is likely the pursuit of the definition of being human and to prove the meaning of my existence. For this reason, I've always held back from returning to Mechanical Paradise to save my wife and daughter. Their relevant memories might've already been completely formatted..."

"Sigh..." Shang Jianyao sighed as well. "Just treat it as if they encountered an Awakened in the Last Man domain. You can nurture your feelings for each other after rescuing them."

"Without the memories of the past, and perhaps even have their personalities and components completely changed, are they still my wife and daughter..." Genava fell into deep thought again.

Shang Jianyao was momentarily unable to answer such a philosophical question. He could only solemnly promise, "After we figure out the source of the Heartless disease and the reason for the Old World's destruction, we'll accompany you back to Mechanical Paradise to save your wife and daughter! When the time comes, we can try to resolve any problem."

In the world, not all problems have an answer or a solution...?Jiang Baimian muttered but didn't interject.

At this moment, Genava realized that they had woken up a little early. "What's wrong? Did you discover anything abnormal?"

"It's fine." Shang Jianyao had a nonchalant expression. "I just thought that Doctor might attack."

Even as a smart bot, Geneva was almost confused by the logic behind this sentence.

“It’s not a trivial matter if Doctor might attack.” Geneva was one who clarified matters and got to the bottom of things. “Why did you suddenly link the matter to him?”

The honest Shang Jianyao quickly explained his guess.

After careful analysis, Geneva let out a slightly synthetic voice. “Although the possibility is relatively low, we do need to take precautions.”

The conversation between the trio woke up Bai Chen and Long Yuehong. They came out one after another and figured out what had happened.

The Old Task Force waited for more than an hour before the sky finally lit up.

Ding Ling also came over and knocked on their door according to their prior agreement. Upon realizing that Jiang Baimian and the others had serious expressions, the experienced Salvation Army border sentry captain frowned slightly. “Did someone disturb you last night?”

After finishing off the resident in Room 214, she didn’t think there was anything in the Ashlands Hotel that could make October Xue’s team have such an expression.

Jiang Baimian had long deliberated over her words. “Here’s the thing. Last night, didn’t we say that we were invaded by a strange black figure when we touched the brooch? Fortunately, our robot, Geneva, was around to release a high-voltage electric current, putting a stop to this matter.”

“Yes, what’s wrong with that?” Ding Ling was rather confused.

This was something that had been explained and confirmed last night.

Jiang Baimian looked around and cleared her throat. “We suspect that the black figure originated from the New World.”

New World...?Ding Ling’s eyebrows twitched.

Jiang Baimian continued with an innocent expression. “When we were previously pursued by the Eighth Research Institute, we were targeted by a New World powerhouse. In the middle of the night, we suddenly thought: If the black figure that might’ve originated from the New World knows the powerhouses that have their sights on us and knows our characteristics, doesn’t that mean that the powerhouse might rush over at any moment, return to reality, and take action personally?”

Being targeted by a New World powerhouse... Rush over at any moment, return to reality, and take action personally...? On the one hand, Ding Ling felt that she should be numb. On the other hand, she couldn’t help but twitch the muscles on her face. Who are these people? Why were they so randomly associated with the New World!?

It had to be known that before accompanying this team to Ubei, she didn’t even know that the New World represented an Awakened’s level. She only thought that it was another world that humans had been searching for—a world that symbolized beautiful hope and a bright future. It was no longer a world with the Heartless disease, famine, cold, mutated, and pollution.

After the Old Task Force shared the information with the Salvation Army through her, she obtained the corresponding clearance to understand this information. In the end, she really encountered something related to the New World in just a few days. Furthermore, it was somewhat related to the nuclear warhead theft!

October Xue and the others should’ve been targeted by the New World powerhouse before they came to our Salvation Army, but they’ve always acted normal and haven’t shown any anxiety...? Ding Ling was momentarily at a loss for words. Should she praise the Old Task Force for being bold or for being knowledgeable and not having to sweat over the big stuff?

Upon seeing that the border outpost captain was silent, Jiang Baimian added, “If a powerhouse from the New World returns to reality in Ubei, I’m worried that something unpredictable will happen. Therefore, I’m reporting it to you in advance.”

Ding Ling finally came to her senses and hurriedly said, “Alright, I’ll report it to Commissioner Huang immediately.”

She didn’t delay. Giving a gesture, she turned around and left the room.

...



In less than 15 minutes, the Old Task Force members were led to a room on the first floor of the hotel.

Commissioner Huang was alone in the room. He was still wearing the black Salvation Army uniform with no epaulet.

Upon seeing Jiang Baimian and the others, he said authoritatively, “You guys only know how to surprise me! If someone from the New World were to really return and take action personally, there’s no chance of you winning. Most of Ubei’s citizens might die with you.”

“Why do you say that?” Shang Jianyao asked.

Commissioner Huang fell silent for a moment. “That’s because you’ve never seen the horror of a New World returner.”

He paused and said, “New World people can take the initiative to spread the Heartless disease to the surroundings.”

#### Chapter 710: Raising an Alarm

New World people can take the initiative to spread the Heartless disease to the surroundings!

This sentence was like an electrified arrow shooting into Long Yuehong and the others’ minds, shattering their thoughts. It made their bodies and hearts tremble and numb.

The Old Task Force had already had a certain guess regarding the connection between the Heartless disease and the New World. They also suspected that the enhancement of nodes would cause the Heartless virus to spread from the New World and infect the surrounding humans when the New World’s powerhouses returned.

Even if they didn’t return, as long as the body of the person who entered the New World was still alive, it was equivalent to a natural node, resulting in the Heartless virus spreading across the Ashlands. It all depended on whether they were willing to control it.

Of course, such nodes were very weak; the corresponding ‘passage’ was extremely narrow. The load of the Heartless virus that used this opportunity to enter the Ashlands was very low, and it

could hardly survive—it could only affect a small area near the node. The further out one went, the fewer viruses there were until there were none.

With this knowledge as a psychological foundation, Long Yuehong originally felt that he wouldn't be too surprised even if the guess was confirmed and that the Heartless disease came from the New World. Instead, he would be depressed.

But Commissioner Huang actually told them that the New World could take the initiative to spread the Heartless disease around them once they returned to the Ashlands! This meant that every New World powerhouse was equivalent to a weapon of mass destruction, and it was the kind with precision. At the same time, it also meant that humans had no chance of defeating the Heartless disease. If the Old Task Force really encountered the returning Doctor, they would definitely die!

At this moment, Jiang Baimian's thoughts were chaotic and in a fragmented state. She then recalled something: The last city Shang Jianyao's father appeared in was a place where a large-scale Heartless outbreak happened—a rare event after the establishment of the New Calendar. This resulted in a human settlement not much smaller than Ubei turning into ruins instantly.

Could it be that they encountered a powerhouse who returned from the New World there?? Jiang Baimian's various thoughts gradually subsided as she slowly found her normal train of thought.

At this moment, Commissioner Huang looked around and took in the changes in Long Yuehong, Bai Chen, and the others' expressions. He sighed and smiled bitterly. "When I preliminarily confirmed this matter, my reaction was about the same as yours. Heh heh, this was originally information with a very high confidentiality level. But first, you encountered a threat from a New World powerhouse, and this might very well affect Ubei. We have to respond. Second, I've always insisted that this should be made public to all of humanity so that everyone can be more vigilant. Therefore, I'll share the corresponding situation within the powers of my clearance based on special exceptions afforded during an emergency."

Before Jiang Baimian and the others could respond, Shang Jianyao asked, "Then, why not make it public to all of humanity?"

He seemed to care more about this.

Commissioner Huang wasn't too surprised by his reaction and frankly replied, "This is because we haven't figured out the real reason for the Old World's destruction and the New World's secret. Once the source of the Heartless disease is announced, we are afraid that humans will encounter

another ‘great purge’ similar to the one from back then. If that happens, we can’t be sure if humans can continue on and if we can slowly rebuild civilization.”

“A very reasonable worry.” Jiang Baimian commented before Shang Jianyao could. She recovered and asked, “How did you confirm that people who return to the New World can take the initiative to spread the Heartless disease to the surroundings?”

This was very important.

Commissioner Huang held an unlit cigarette and paced back and forth. “In the beginning, we encountered a few humans who had fallen asleep for many years without dying. Once people stayed around them for too long, they would definitely be infected with the Heartless disease...”

A situation like Yama Tiger’s...? Bai Chen pursed her lips and recalled the first New World powerhouse the Old Task Force had encountered—he was also the only New World powerhouse that couldn’t autonomously return and was praying for help.

Commissioner Huang continued, “Back then, the strongest of us had just entered the Mind Corridor. We couldn’t figure out what was going on, so we could only issue a ban to prevent all warriors from approaching the corresponding area.”

Yes, the Salvation Army was formed in the mid to late Chaotic Era. Many humans experienced disappointment time and time again and witnessed failure. Back then, it was indeed possible that Awakened had already pushed open the door to the New World...? Jiang Baimian analyzed Commissioner Huang’s words from a different angle.

“Later, someone among my colleagues finally found the New World’s door and walked in. From the hints he gave, we understood the root cause of the previous phenomenon. We also preliminarily confirmed that people who return to the New World can take the initiative to spread the Heartless disease.” Commissioner Huang’s memories in this regard seemed to be well-preserved—or rather, he had been reading the corresponding information repeatedly to form new memories again and again.

Shang Jianyao expressed his confusion again. “Why did your colleagues who entered the New World only hint instead of making it clear?”

Commissioner Huang’s expression changed slightly. “I’ve forgotten my doubts back then and can only make some guesses from the documents that record these matters. My colleagues seem to have

been restrained in some way; they even became real vegetables a few years after giving the hint. They could no longer transmit information from the New World, and such a situation continued until their bodies completely died.

“I still don’t know if they are still alive in the New World. Those of us who later entered the New World learned a lesson because of this and didn’t give any similar hints. Most of their bodies have successfully survived to this day.” At this point, Commissioner Huang sighed with a solemn expression. “From the looks of it, the New World’s situation is very complicated. Maybe we have to wait for more like-minded people to enter before we can stir some waves.”

“Alright,” Shang Jianyao said in a tone as though he was making a promise.

Without waiting for Jiang Baimian to speak, Commissioner Huang pondered for a moment and said, “The rules for transmitting information in the New World are unknown. We still have to be prepared for Doctor’s possible attack. How about this? Wait a few more hours. I’ll change the current arrangement and get the ordinary people to leave from the other side of Ubei. You, the person sleeping in Ubei, and the team that’s escorting him will evacuate to the southwest along the Yuelin River.”

The one sleeping in Ubei??Long Yuehong instantly understood that this represented a New World powerhouse from the Salvation Army.

The first thought that surfaced in his mind wasn’t that he was finally safe but that the New World powerhouses were also afraid of a nuke. He then felt some indescribable emotions.

Commissioner Huang arranged for most humans in Ubei to evacuate in another direction, making him feel like the Old Task Force was the source of the disaster. It was very easy for them to be implicated if they stayed around them.

Of course, Long Yuehong also understood why Commissioner Huang had made such an arrangement—he was worried that Doctor would really attack. When the time came, it would be very easy for the ordinary citizens to be implicated if they were still nearby during the intense battle.

“No problem.” As the team leader, Jiang Baimian agreed to Commissioner Huang’s suggestion on behalf of the Old Task Force.

After leaving Commissioner Huang's room and returning to the third floor, the four carbon-based Old Task Force members fell silent.

Genava looked around and said, "Shouldn't you be happy that the connection between the Heartless disease and the New World has been further confirmed?"

This was the Old Task Force's main mission.

"It weighs on my heart." Long Yuehong didn't hide his feelings.

Shang Jianyao stroked his chin and chuckled. "I'm thinking about some problems."

"What problem?" Bai Chen felt that although Shang Jianyao's train of thought was always strange, it was often something that invoked strong inspiration.

This time, it wasn't Shang Jianyao who replied but Jiang Baimian. The latter looked at the sunlight outside the window and slowly said, "I'm thinking that the company also has New World powerhouses. It's impossible for the Board of Directors not to know the source of the Heartless disease. Why did they establish an Old Task Force to pursue the truth in this regard?"

The calm and rational Shang Jianyao gave his explanation. "Maybe the hints from the company's New World powerhouses are even more unclear to prevent them from repeating the mistakes of the Salvation Army's earliest batch of New World powerhouses."

Jiang Baimian nodded. "This depends on who entered the New World first—the company or the Salvation Army."

Normally speaking, humans who had experienced the Old World's destruction and painstakingly entered the New World would more or less work hard to transmit some important information without the corresponding experience or sufficient lessons.

Jiang Baimian glanced at Long Yuehong, Bai Chen, and Genava before continuing with a solemn expression. "I thought of the Kalendaria's gaze on us and how we went to Swamp Ruin 1 and met Xiaochong during our first training in the Ashlands..."

Hiss...?Long Yuehong gasped. He smelled the scent of 'arrangement.'