

Ad Infinitum 771

Chapter 771: Straight to the Point

Jiang Baimian looked at Shang Jianyao and said with a serious expression, “It’s not a trivial matter to use your abilities on your superior. No organization can tolerate such a thing.”

Shang Jianyao replied indifferently, “After entering the Mind Corridor, the company once said that I could be promoted straight to M1, but I rejected it. According to this standard, Minister Xenny and I are considered of the same rank.”

He paused and smiled again. “Besides, everyone who should know knows that I have a serious mental illness.”

This reason is really versatile...?Jiang Baimian was speechless.

“For a person like me, it’s reasonable even if I make any mistakes. It has nothing to do with you,” Shang Jianyao said smugly. “Before bringing me to meet Minister Xenny, you couldn’t foresee that I would have an episode. Besides, for a valuable mental patient like me, imprisoning and killing me isn’t the best way to extract value. If I were Big Boss or a member of the Board of Directors, I definitely would choose to throw such a person into the Ashlands and send him out on one mission after another to reduce his stay in the company and let him harm other factions.”

Jiang Baimian felt like applauding him that very moment. She even automatically added some details to Shang Jianyao: They wouldn’t completely forbid him from returning to the company. Every once in a while, they would need him back to visit ‘loved ones’ to maintain an emotional connection.

Upon seeing Jiang Baimian remain silent, Shang Jianyao continued bewitching her. “We were born and raised in the company; this is our home. We have to treat anything that might threaten our home seriously and not have any wishful thinking. We would rather make mistakes than let it go.”

This sentence was like an arrow that stabbed at Jiang Baimian’s soft spot.

It might be difficult for people from other factions to understand the feelings native employees had for Pangu Biology, but as people sharing the same experiences, Shang Jianyao knew very well. In such a sealed and relatively stable environment, it gave people a sense of belonging. Furthermore, Jiang Baimian, Shang Jianyao, and the others' parents were born and raised locally.

After a few seconds, Jiang Baimian teased, "Did you use your abilities on me? Otherwise, why would I accept such a risky, bold, crazy, and seriously illegal plan?"

"Yes." Shang Jianyao nodded.

"Huh?" Jiang Baimian was a little stunned.

She was very sure that Shang Jianyao wouldn't use his abilities on her on such a very important matter. Furthermore, before Shang Jianyao gave such a reason, her heart had already wavered. The reason was that she attached great importance to the company.

On second thought, Jiang Baimian understood why Shang Jianyao nodded.

He wants me not to have to shoulder any responsibility and blame my cooperation on Thought Guidance...? At this thought, Jiang Baimian's heart warmed as she smiled. "Then, I'll take it as a yes."

Shang Jianyao laughed as well; he was very happy.

...

On Monday morning, Long Yuehong and Bai Chen—who had met the former's parents—applied for leave to register their marriage at the Order Supervisory Bureau on the 495th floor. Only Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao were left in the Old Task Force's office.

This was a good opportunity. Jiang Baimian picked up the receiver and called Minister Xenny's office.

After the call connected, she said seriously, "Minister, I'm Jiang Baimian. I have something to report to you."

She then tersely made a few words of affirmation and answered the other party's question. "It's relatively urgent and important."

"Alright, I'll be right there."

After Jiang Baimian hung up, Shang Jianyao curiously asked, "Why didn't you mention that I was also going?"

Jiang Baimian slowly exhaled and simply explained, "If Minister Xenny is indeed problematic and knows that you will follow in advance, she will definitely think of a way to guard against abilities like Thought Guidance. When the time comes, it's difficult to say if the results of our probing will be authentic."

Jiang Baimian's smile had a hint of self-deprecation. After all, she was using her tricks on Pangu Biology and her immediate superior.

Clap! Clap! Clap!?

Shang Jianyao clapped for Big White's meticulousness.

The two of them then looked at each other before walking out of Room 14 and heading to the elevator area that led to the 646th floor.

With Shang Jianyao around, Jiang Baimian didn't get lost and successfully arrived at Xenny's deputy minister's office.

Knock! Knock! Knock!?

Under the gazes of two armed guards, she bent her finger and knocked on the door.

"Come on in." Xenny's voice sounded.

Jiang Baimian turned the doorknob and pushed open the door. She saw Minister Xenny sitting behind a large desk in a smart, white shirt and short black top.

“Him?” Xenny—who had long chestnut hair and chestnut eyes—saw Shang Jianyao and cast a confused gaze at Jiang Baimian.

Jiang Baimian smiled and said, “He was the one who discovered that matter. I was afraid I’d miss out on some important details, so I brought him along.”

After explaining, Jiang Baimian began to wait for Minister Xenny’s reaction.

If the latter was very resistant to communicating with Shang Jianyao now, her suspicion would rise exponentially.

Xenny slowly nodded and pointed at the sofa. “Let’s chat there.”

She then stood up and walked over with her sky-blue porcelain teacup.

Jiang Baimian led Shang Jianyao in and closed the door.

The two of them sat on the long sofa opposite Xenny, and Jiang Baimian first started the conversation. “Minister, Shang Jianyao actually mentioned that matter when he met Director Su. However, we later made a new discovery and felt that it was necessary to report it to you.”

Xenny didn’t hide her enlightenment. “Are you talking about Mu Renjie? Director Su has spoken to me. I’m in charge of selecting reliable people for the corresponding investigations. Why? Do you want to be part of it?”

“That’s right, that’s right!” Shang Jianyao had an expression that said: “I’m here to recommend myself.” He was very sincere with genuine interest.

This was within Jiang Baimian’s expectations because it was impossible for Su Yu to investigate personally. He would definitely find a trustworthy subordinate and assign the mission. The probability of him handing it to Xenny was considerably high.

Jiang Baimian didn’t expect Shang Jianyao to act so naturally and sincerely.

This might be the benefit of having a split personality...?She could only sigh.

Xenny smiled and replied, "I'll consider it. With your addition, it will be much simpler for you to investigate with your abilities. Oh, didn't you say that you had new discoveries?"

Jiang Baimian deliberately looked at Shang Jianyao beside her.

Shang Jianyao deliberated over his words and quickly said, "That new discovery actually involves you, Minister Xenny, so you should distance yourself from this matter."

The faint smile on Xenny's face revealed obvious confusion.

Shang Jianyao expressed his 'loyalty.' "But we trust you, Minister Xenny, just like you've always trusted us. We are always on the same side as you, comrades in the same trench as you."

Xenny's expression relaxed as she smiled and said, "Let's talk about the new discovery first."

"Here's the thing. Our team's Long Yuehong and Bai Chen previously lived together and had the same dream the same night." Shang Jianyao first pointed out the anomaly in the matter before saying, "In that dream, they realized that Director Mei Shou'an is from the Life Ritual parish. They then tried their best to find you and report this matter to you. In the end, you were also a member of the Life Ritual parish."

Xenny laughed involuntarily. "There's indeed a problem with such a dream, but we can't believe whatever others say, right?"

Shang Jianyao asked seriously, "Then, Minister Xenny, are you from the Life Ritual parish?"

"Of course not," Xenny replied casually.

Upon seeing this, Jiang Baimian heaved a sigh of relief. This was because Shang Jianyao had secretly used Thought Guidance in his recount to make Minister Xenny treat the two of them as trustworthy companions, comrades who had risked their lives together, and members of the same small organization.

In such a situation, if Xenny was indeed from the Life Ritual parish, she would believe that Shang Jianyao and Jiang Baimian were the fellow parishioners and frankly tell the truth.

The person who created that dream's intentions are vile... Fortunately, we didn't act rashly. Uh, this isn't called acting rashly but making confirmation...?Jiang Baimian muttered inwardly.

"That's good." Shang Jianyao had a look of relief. "The Arbiter of Fate symbolizes new life, and the Life Ritual parish disregards the lives of others and randomly deprives them of life. It's obvious that they have taken a wrong path and misread the scriptures."

Xenny smiled and listened without commenting.

Shang Jianyao made another confirmation according to the plan. He then asked, "Minister Xenny, do you believe in the Kalendaria?"

Xenny's gaze swept across the two of them as she replied with a smile, "I do believe in a certain Kalendaria."

Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao tensed up. They felt the atmosphere in the deputy minister's office freeze.

"Who?" Shang Jianyao asked with a smile.

Xenny pressed her hand to her heart and solemnly replied, "The night is long; the Arbiter of Fate blesses thee."

Chapter 772: People of Action

Jiang Baimian's gaze was fixed on Xenny's face, wanting to see if she was joking. After all, if the two parties became trustworthy companions, comrades who had risked their lives together, and members of the same small organization, it was completely possible for them to prank and joke with each other.

Xenny had a solemn expression. Be it the corners of her eyes or her mouth, there was no hint of a smile.

She seemed to sincerely worship the Kalendaria, Arbiter of Fate, from the bottom of her heart.

Little Red and Little White's dream was real... Although the information that the other faction sent us has certain errors, there's essentially no problem... Minister Xenny is indeed a believer of the Arbiter of Fate, but she doesn't belong to the Life Ritual parish... Mei Shou'on should be the same. Jiang Baimian's thoughts raced as she forced herself to calm down.

Shang Jianyao's expression didn't change. Nobody knew if he had switched personalities.

He then curiously asked, "Minister Xenny, which Church are you from?"

"I'm not part of one." Xenny smiled and shook her head. "Faith in the Arbiter of Fate doesn't need a Church."

Shang Jianyao pressed, "Then, who made you start believing in the Kalendaria, Arbiter of Fate?"

Xenny picked up the sky-blue porcelain teacup and took a sip. "Director Su."

As expected. Although Jiang Baimian had a guess, her heart palpitated when she heard this answer.

The company had a very serious problem! A board member was a secret believer of a Kalendaria!

"Oh, oh." Shang Jianyao came to a realization. "Apart from Director Su, do the other directors also believe in the Arbiter of Fate?"

"I'm not sure." Xenny shook her head slightly.

Shang Jianyao then asked, "Then, what do you think of the Life Ritual parish?"

Xenny replied seriously, “They act too wantonly. I can understand their reverence for the Arbiter of Fate, but their actions were too out of line. Just like you said, they likely took a wrong path and misread the scriptures.”

Uh, it’s not that extreme. There’s still room for salvation... Jiang Baimian began to think about what to do next.

Shang Jianyao’s Thought Implantation could exist for extended periods as long as there weren’t any counterexamples or opportunities. However, it was impossible for the two of them to always follow Xenny, pay close attention to the information she received, and correct her in time.

Therefore, after the two of them left Xenny, how long would it take for her to escape the influence and discover the problem? It would be completely uncontrollable. If one was lucky, Xenny would go about her days as usual for the next few days without finding anything abnormal. If they were unlucky, Su Yu could suddenly call Xenny to discuss something—that would jolt her awake.

Due to this reason, Jiang Baimian felt that she and Shang Jianyao had to seize the opportunity to do something.

In a split second, she came up with two plans.

The first was to use Xenny’s computer and account to send this matter to all the directors in the form of an email without knowing who else was problematic on the board of directors.

The second was to think of a way to meet Big Boss at the bottom level and report this matter.

For the sake of caution, Jiang Baimian decided to carry out two plans concurrently

With Xenny temporarily in cahoots with the two of them, they could use the safe passage there to head to the lowest floor after obtaining permission to enter the management floor. At the same time, scheduling the email at a later time prevented the problematic directors from knowing that something had happened in advance and sending people to intercept the two of them at the entrance to the lowest level.

If she seized the opportunity well, sending the mass email would cause chaos. Jiang Baimian felt that it would be much easier for her and Shang Jianyao to enter the lowest levels.

Time waited for no one. Jiang Baimian acted on her thoughts.

She smiled at Xenny. “Minister, can I use your computer?”

“Sure.” Xenny didn’t think there was a problem.

Upon seeing Jiang Baimian walk to Xenny’s desk, Shang Jianyao jumped up. “I’ll help!”

He came to Jiang Baimian’s side and occupied the area, preventing Xenny from coming over to check on the situation.

Tap! Tap! Tap!

Jiang Baimian quickly typed and wrote her plan in a document so that Shang Jianyao could see it.

“Yes, yes.” Shang Jianyao nodded repeatedly with an expression of admiration.

Jiang Baimian—who didn’t know who he was acting as—deleted the plan she had just written down. She then began describing how Xenny and Su Yu were believers of Arbiter of Fate, and how Mei Shou’an was suspected of being a believer.

After that, she opened the email program, which logged into Xenny’s account by default. Following this, she created a new email with all the board directors in the send list.

After copying and pasting the content, Jiang Baimian chose to schedule to have this email sent 15 minutes later.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao had already followed the plan and further convinced Xenny not to touch the computer for half an hour and to give them permission to head to the Management Zone—the fifth floor of the underground building—and secretly seek an audience with Director Su.

Although Xenny’s office was on the 646th floor, she often had to go to the fifth floor for meetings. Furthermore, she was of sufficient rank and was Su Yu’s trusted aide. Therefore, she agreed to

Shang Jianyao's request easily. She casually found a reason and made a call to get them the corresponding permission.

After leaving her office, Jiang Baimian exhaled deeply.

She and Shang Jianyao looked at each other. Neither spoke as they walked straight to the elevator that led to the Management Zone.

On the way, Jiang Baimian habitually wanted to ask, "Do you think it's worth it to make such a decision and take such a risk? Don't you regret it?" However, she then remembered that Shang Jianyao was beside her. He was more radical, more adventurous, and more reckless than her.

Pangu Biology is our home. No matter what, I have to ensure its stability... Jiang Baimian said inwardly before pressing the number '5' after stepping into the elevator.

As the elevator descended, Jiang Baimian—who had composed herself-laughed and said to Shang Jianyao, "Why aren't you saying anything?"

Shang Jianyao looked up at the surveillance cameras in the elevator. "Some words aren't suitable to be said in such a public place."

"That's very ambiguous," Jiang Baimian scolded jokingly. She appeared very relaxed as if she were really going to the Management Zone to report about something work-specific with great familiarity.

After a while, the elevator arrived at the fifth floor. The elevator's two doors opened at the same time.

After Shang Jianyao walked out, he flipped his wrist and looked at his watch. "Gosh, we're early! We can only wait in the corridor."

At the elevator exit, guards in bionic artificial intelligence armor looked over at the same time.

Although she couldn't see their expressions, Jiang Baimian could vaguely sense their resistance.

“How rude!” she cooperatively cursed Shang Jianyao.

Shang Jianyao took the opportunity to sigh and said, “Then, let’s wait at the stairs to avoid being an eyesore.”

His string of words used Thought Guidance. Therefore, the guards didn’t have any doubts about him and Jiang Baimian moving to the emergency access. They felt that it was only right.

In the lit stairwell, Jiang Baimian suppressed her voice and said, “There are surveillance cameras. I’ll be in charge of pointing out the location later. You provide the interference.”

Shang Jianyao nodded and extended his psyche.

When the email was sent on schedule, Jiang Baimian forced herself to wait patiently for three minutes so that the problem could ferment and create chaos.

As time passed, Jiang Baimian exhaled and said, “Move out!”

Without any hesitation, she nimbly walked down the stairs. From time to time, she would raise her right hand and point out the surveillance cameras’ locations to Shang Jianyao.

Shang Jianyao followed closely behind Jiang Baimian and interfered with the surveillance cameras’ images, causing them to fall into a situation as though the lights had gone out.

Such an abnormality would definitely attract the surveillance personnel’s attention, but the first thing they thought of was that there was a malfunction in the circuits. They had to send someone over to check it before they could simultaneously consider increasing the vigilance of the area.

Jiang Baimian was exploiting this time difference!

With their abilities, they had a chance of barging into Big Boss’s door as long as they didn’t encounter any high-level guards.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao had outstanding physiques. They went down five flights of stairs and quickly arrived at the stairwell on the lowest floor.

Suddenly, Jiang Baimian stopped in surprise and blurted out, “There’s nobody guarding the door.”

This didn’t make sense! How could the security at the bottom—Big Boss’s residence—be so relaxed?

In the blink of an eye, Jiang Baimian had some guesses. Could it be that Big Boss has long passed away and no successor has been left behind? Could it be that the directors secretly didn’t hold a funeral and found someone good at mimicking accents to do things in her name?

“I don’t sense it either.” Shang Jianyao confirmed that Jiang Baimian’s discovery was correct.

Jiang Baimian thought for a moment and firmly said, “We’re already here. We can only advance; retreat is not an option!”

She stretched out her left hand and pushed open the stairwell door.

There was indeed nobody outside. There were no guards.

After leaving the stairwell, the two of them came to a corridor. They saw that the ground was paved with neat brown tiles. On the walls on both sides were murals, sculptures, and all kinds of decorations.

It looked very classical.

“Big Boss has good taste.” In such a tense situation, Shang Jianyao actually commented on the environment here.

Jiang Baimian glanced at him and jogged forward. She used her posture to tell Shang Jianyao: Don’t talk about trivial matters. Quickly find Big Boss’s room!

Shang Jianyao also ran, but the two of them didn’t forget to pay attention to their surroundings to prevent any possible attacks.

Under the illumination of the ceiling lamps, Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao quickly ran to the end of the corridor.

What appeared in front of them was a silver-white metal wall. In the middle of the wall was a door that slid open to the side. Beside the door was precision electronic equipment.

At this moment, the door was ajar, revealing a thick, black gap.

“Behind the door is Big Boss’s residence?” Jiang Baimian muttered to herself. She carefully approached and prepared to examine the area.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao stretched out his hand to stop her.

“What’s wrong?” Jiang Baimian thought that Shang Jianyao would run faster and more rashly than her.

Shang Jianyao replied seriously, “I find this door a little familiar. It should be the door inside Room 1215.”

1215... Jiang Baimian was stunned for a moment before she recalled that this was the first room Shang Jianyao had explored after entering the Mind Corridor.

Back then, he encountered a slightly open metal door in Room 1215. He suspected that the room owner had encountered something extremely terrifying behind the door, leaving behind a serious psychological trauma. Therefore, with a vote of eight to two, they gave up on the exploration and left.

After that, Shang Jianyao didn’t encounter Room 1215 again.

But now, he actually said that the door that was suspected of leading to Big Boss’s residence was very similar to the door in Room 1215!

Chapter 773: Doctor of the Church

All kinds of thoughts surged in Jiang Baimian's mind before disappearing like a receding tide, leaving only a portion.

She looked at the sliding metal door in front of her and solemnly said, "1215 represents an Awakened in the Arbiter of Fate domain. What did he want to do when he came here and passed through the door?"

Without waiting for Shang Jianyao's answer, Jiang Baimian answered her question, "Either the Arbiter of Fate's believers had designs on Big Boss and hoped to gain full control of the company, resulting in them coming up with a way to infiltrate this place. In the end, they encountered something extremely terrifying and left a psychological trauma. Otherwise, something abnormal had long happened behind the door, causing the Arbiter of Fate domain Awakened –who was loyal to the company and in charge of guarding this place-to be frightened and suffer some form of restriction."

The Shang Jianyao that valued relationships muttered, "Can't you be more optimistic?"

"That's not what you say every time you cook up a story for Little Red," Jiang Baimian retorted skillfully. She then exhaled and said, "At this point, we can only advance; there's no room for retreat."

She had already said something similar once.

"Let me do it." Shang Jianyao seemed to be the one offering to serve the food.

He strode toward the silver-white metal wall and the sliding door.

Jiang Baimian didn't fight him for the honors. She slowly followed behind, raised her left arm, and prepared to deliver a high-voltage electric shock.

In a few steps, Shang Jianyao came to the door. Through the small gap, he saw a deep darkness behind the door.

Shang Jianyao didn't hesitate; he became even more excited. He stretched out his hands, grabbed the door's crack, and suddenly pulled it to the side.

The ajar metal door immediately emitted a grinding sound as it quickly provided passage to the interior. The light in the corridor flowed in before Shang Jianyao could enter, illuminating the area near the door.

The ground there was paved with large, milky-white square bricks. There was nothing-it looked like it was part of a spacious hall.

At this moment, Jiang Baimian suddenly said, “There are bioelectric signals inside. They are suspected to be human!”

She couldn’t sense the other party’s consciousness.

Just as Jiang Baimian said that, lamps began turning on in the area behind the metal door which wasn’t illuminated by the corridor lights.

They illuminated the large computer deep in the room and the dense screens hanging on three walls. These screens displayed Shang Jianyao and Jiang Baimian’s figures. From the moment they left the Old Task Force’s office and headed to Xenny’s place to the moment they took the elevator to the fifth floor, all the way till they came here via the stairs-their entire process was recorded.

This made Jiang Baimian tremble. She felt like her and Shang Jianyao’s actions were being watched by others quietly. There were no secrets!

Of course, this didn’t include the scenes they saw in Room 14 or their home. The process of them going down the stairs from the fifth floor to the lowest floor was also affected by the corresponding interference. The light was dim and indistinct, only revealing two figures.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao sighed and said with abnormal sincerity, “The Doctor of the Church has always been watching us.”

Jiang Baimian jolted to her senses and saw a black leather chair with armrests placed in front of the large computer.

At this moment, a man was sitting in the chair.

He looked to be in his forties. His hair was neatly combed back, and he wore a pair of gold-rimmed glasses. His cheeks were relatively thin, and his nose was very high. His lips were neither thick nor thin.

This man wore a white shirt, a black coat, and a dark-red tie. Even as he sat there, he gave off the feeling that he was high and above.

This was a bearing he had developed from being in a high position for a long time. It blended with his elegant bearing and had a unique charm.

Shang Jianyao and Jiang Baimian knew this man. This was because from the moment they had memories, this man would extend the new year greetings on behalf of Big Boss through the LCD screens at the Rec Center on each floor at the end of the year.

He was Ji Ze, a board member of Pangu Biology's Board of Directors and the number one-ranking vice-president. He answered directly to Big Boss and was equivalent to the company's Chief Executive.

He was second only to one person and above all others!

There were no guards around Ji Ze. He leaned back slightly and leaned against the leather chair before smiling at Jiang Baimian. "When you followed your father to the management's end-of-year banquet in the past, my impression of you was that you were obedient, polite, and eloquent. I didn't expect you to actually be so calculative. You are deep while also being firm, decisive, and fearless. As of now, nobody in the younger generation can compare to you."

Jiang Baimian deliberately made her smile look bitter. "This is something that can't be helped. The company is our home. We will definitely work hard to resolve any abnormalities we discover. Since time immemorial, countless people have defended their homes at the cost of their lives."

Ji Ze nodded slightly. "Why did you suddenly choose to do this? I almost couldn't react."

Shang Jianyao immediately said, "Well, here's the situation."

Ji Ze raised his hand to stop him. "Don't speak."

He looked at Jiang Baimian. “You do the talking.”

Although this successfully resolved Shang Jianyao’s Thought Guidance and indicated that Ji Ze had a certain level of understanding of their abilities and knew how to avoid them, Jiang Baimian still felt inexplicably relieved.

At least this meant that Vice President Ji Ze was still relatively afraid of Shang Jianyao’s abilities!

It would be despairing if he was immune to everything.

Jiang Baimian sensed her surroundings and saw that nobody else had rushed over. Therefore, she composed herself and spoke unhurriedly from the moment they discovered that Mu Renjie had died from a myocardial infarction. She kept talking about how someone had affected Long Yuehong and Bai Chen’s dreams and how Mei Shou’an and Xenny were members of the Life Ritual parish. In order to confirm the situation, she and Shang Jianyao were willing to pay the price of being punished. They used the opportunity of reporting to Xenny to affect this Security Department deputy minister and obtained answers.

As she spoke, she observed her surroundings and thought about her current situation. She suspected that the directors had collectively sided with the Kalendaria, Arbiter of Fate, in order to seize Big Boss’s authority.

The Arbiter of Fate domain Awakened in Room 1215 was one of the people who had participated in this battle back then. He had been traumatized by Big Boss—who had gone all out.

Ji Ze quietly listened and stroked his hands. “Brave, smart, and decisive. Furthermore, you have the spirit of sacrifice. It’s no wonder you could do so much on the surface and obtain so much. Unfortunately, your efforts are destined to fail.”

Shang Jianyao had never been an obedient person who would stay silent if Ji Ze requested him to shut up. Taking the opportunity, he asked, “Are you wake?”

Wake was the most mysterious and dangerous Doctor of the Church in Pangu Biology’s Life Ritual Church.

Ji Ze was prepared to interrupt Shang Jianyao at any moment. After hearing the question, he laughed and said, “No, I’m not Wake.

“It is.” Ji Ze pointed at the large computer behind him and smiled. “You’ve been to Mechanical Paradise, so you should know about artificial intelligence. Only artificial intelligence can activate cameras 24/7 and monitor most of the company, dealing with anything the moment any abnormalities are discovered. Only such a Doctor of the Church can be said to be always watching you.” Shang Jianyao was shocked by this matter and forgot to criticize Vice President Ji for not giving artificial intelligence human rights.

He habitually and instinctively clapped. “How did it join the Life Ritual parish?” Jiang Baimian asked. The more she knew, the higher the chances of her finding an opportunity to turn the situation around.

Ji Ze smiled and said, “After the matter regarding Mu Renjie, we actually caught the Life Ritual parish’s tail. But considering how we are all believers in the Arbiter of Fate, there’s no need to make things too difficult for them. We just have to restrain their actions and prevent the extremists among them from doing anything that will ruin the company’s stability and overall situation. Therefore, I got Omega to replace the real Wake, gradually control the other Doctors of the Church, and be in charge of all aspects of the Life Ritual parish.”

Jiang Baimian’s heart slowly sank. She didn’t feel heavy because of Wake’s identity but because Ji Ze had said that they were also believers of the Arbiter of Fate without any scruples.

This reminded her of an Old World proverb: “Dead men tell no tales.”

Jiang Baimian couldn’t help but ask the question she was most concerned about. “Are all the directors believers of the Arbiter of Fate?”

Ji Ze slowly nodded. He then smiled and said, “Haven’t you figured out the answer yet? I’m very disappointed.

“Why are all the directors believers of the Arbiter of Fate? Why did I just say that your efforts are destined to fail? Why did I waste my breath talking to you? The answer is very simple.”

Ji Ze stood up, pointed at a door beside the supercomputer-Omega-and said to Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao, “That’s because Big Boss’s name is: “Arbiter of Fate.”

Shang Jianyao and Jiang Baimian’s pupils instantly dilated.

Without waiting for their response, Ji Ze pressed his hand to his chest and spoke humbly and solemnly to the door. “The night is long; the Arbiter of Fate blesses thee.”

Chapter 774: Screaming (End of Volume)

“The night is long; the Arbiter of Fate blesses thee.”

This respectful sentence echoed in Jiang Baimian’s ears, making her thoughts erupt. However, she felt that it wasn’t impossible if that was the case.

All the abnormalities in Big Boss seemed to receive an explanation.

Ji Ze lowered his right hand and turned around. He smiled at Shang Jianyao and

Jiang Baimian. “I know you still doubt me, but didn’t you find it strange? As the

Big Boss of Pangu Biology, ‘She’ doesn’t actually lead the company’s

operations, participate in the board of directors’ various conferences, or often

appear in front of the employees. ‘She’ only speaks to everyone through the

radio at the end of the year. Won’t such a Big Boss be worried that ‘She’ will be

made a figurehead and replaced?

“Besides, normally speaking, since one is willing to do a radio speech, it’s easy

to record a video and greet all the employees through the Rec Center’s large

screens. Why is Big Boss unwilling to do so?

Jiang Baimian really didn't understand why Big Boss had completely

relinquished power and only spoke on the radio at the end of the year. She had

even imagined many possibilities from the perspective of a conspiracy theory.

But after learning of the existence of New World powerhouses and their

condition, she no longer had any doubts. She believed that Big Boss was such a

person and that she had already entered the New World and could only return

occasionally.

There were also many reasons not to do a video call. For example, she was

dissatisfied with her appearance. Therefore, she doubled down on genetic

enhancement research every year. Another example was that her price was an

inferiority complex, making her unwilling to meet people.

But if the premise was that Big Boss was equivalent to a Kalandaria, this would

be better explainable.

Without needing Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao to think, Ji Ze spoke on their

behalf.

“Because Big Boss is a great Kalandaria and only occasionally casts ‘Her gaze over. I don’t know if your grandparents ever mentioned this to you. In their era, Big Boss acted this way. Even earlier, Big Boss also didn’t appear when the company first moved into the underground building. ‘She’ only issued orders through the board of directors and indirectly showed strength needed to protect most people.

“All these years, Big Boss has never changed. ‘Her voice hasn’t changed either.

Haven’t you guys noticed?”

Isn’t this because some people make the claim-whether deliberate or unknowingly-that there’s a successor? In order to obtain the corresponding authority and fortify their faction, it’s relatively normal for a successor to imitate their predecessor’s hairstyle, voice, and posture. This is mentioned in many Old World books.. Jiang Baimian criticized inwardly.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao also said, “Director Ji, it’s not that I don’t believe you, but you can’t just say it without evidence.”

He had already returned to normal and had a curious expression.

Ji Ze didn't mind and smiled. "I understand."

He faced the door beside the supercomputer again and respectfully said, "Thy mercy be praised!"

Just as Ji Ze said that, the entire hall suddenly turned black.

All the lamps here were clearly lit, but they couldn't expel the darkness at all.

Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao felt like they were being stared at by a high-ranking existence again.

The blood in their bodies seemed to freeze instantly, and their hearts and breaths stopped.

At this moment, the two of them seemed to hear the footsteps of death and the great melody that extolled an eternal slumber. The memories that unconsciously flashed through their minds were the prelude to the song.

The next second, the light returned.

Badump! Badump! Badump!

The feeling of death receded like the tide. Shang Jianyao and Jiang Baimian's hearts raced, almost jumping out of their throats.

With their rich experience facing a Kalendaria, it wasn't difficult for them to
conclusion: It was indeed one of the 13 Kalendarium that had been
watching them.

Furthermore, from the strength characteristics displayed, it was none other
than the Arbiter of Fate.

Shang Jianyao raised his arms and gently rocked a baby in his arms. He
shouted without any scruples, "Newborns are likened unto the sun; life is
what's most important!

Jiang Baimian was rendered speechless and seriously considered whether she
should do the same.

Upon seeing this, Ji Ze laughed. "Big Boss actually doesn't like to proselytize.
She' is more willing to interact with everyone as Pangu Biology's protector,
company boss, and board chairwoman.

On the one hand, every Kalendaria has their own special hobbies. On the other
hand, it involves certain New World secrets. Therefore, apart from New World
powerhouses and board members, only a few people in management know this

secret for various reasons. This includes Xenny and Mei Shou'an.

“You aren't part of management yet. According to the rules, your

responding memories need to be deleted; this is also your punishment.

“Well, due to your actions today being a result of the importance and love you

place toward the company, you will be exempted from any other punishment.

However, make this your last. Don't worry; I'll get the personnel in charge of

the operation to leave you with the memories regarding the Life Ritual parish,

as well as an impression that the company has plans toward the Arbiter of

Fate's believers, so as to prevent this from happening again.”

This punishment is rather light.. After preliminarily confirming that Big Boss

was the Kalendaria, Arbiter of Fate, Jiang Baimian suddenly felt a little

dispirited.

Many of her previous worries had vanished.

The Life Ritual parish was just a naughty younger brother who refused to study

well and didn't have the capital or strength. They had long been infiltrated and

was under control.

With a Kalendaria definitely present and a strength far greater than themselves, Jiang Baimian felt that it wasn't a bad thing to believe in the Arbiter of Fate.

All these years, Big Boss had always been one to be hands-off. She had never seen her make any requests of the employees.

At this thought, Jiang Baimian turned to glance at Shang Jianyao. She was more worried about this person's attitude.

Shang Jianyao smiled. "Alright."

He then pressed his chest and solemnly said, "The night is long; the Arbiter of Fate blesses thee."

Ji Ze was rather at ease with the current situation and pointed at the lobby door. "Go back to the stairwell. Someone will be there waiting to erase your relevant memories."

"Yes, Director ji." Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao looked at each other and walked out of the hall.

Behind them, the metal sliding door closed inch by inch.

The two of them walked at a moderate pace in silence. Before long, they arrived at the emergency access entrance at the lowest level.

A man stood here. He wore a dark cap, a blue top, and black pants; his leather shoes were brand-new and shiny.

“It’s you!” Shang Jianyao said in a tone as though he was meeting an old friend in a foreign land. “The person who wiped away a portion of my memories back then!”

Yue Qifan immediately felt a little embarrassed. “Those were all orders from the Doctor of the Church. It’s the same now. Do you think I want to? I almost died back then!”

Oh!” Shang Jianyao pointed at his leather shoes and said, “Have you saved enough contribution points to exchange for new leather shoes?”

Yue Qifan couldn’t suppress the urge to argue. “What do you mean by saving up enough contribution points? I have a lot of contribution points. I just changed to a more comfortable pair of old shoes for convenience.”

“Then, why didn’t you change it this time? Shang lianyao found a problem in

his answer.

Yue Qifan snorted. “The order was issued in a rush, and it’s said that there won’t be any battles.”

Jiang Baimian interrupted their ‘conversation.’ “Let’s begin.”

Yue Qifan nodded, and his dark-brown eyes turned pure black.

On the 640th floor, in the Order Supervisory Bureau that managed the 20 floors above and below.

Long Yuehong and Bai Chen took their electronic photos and filled in the application form and personal information forms. Finally, they heard the staff at the window say, “After you sign your names, the registration is complete. There’s no actual marriage certificate, but the corresponding information on your electronic card will be modified to ‘Married.’ You will be assigned a new room in a week.”

Bai Chen and Long Yuehong glanced at each other, picked up a pen beside them, and signed their names on the document handed over by the staff.

After completing this step, Long Yuehong mimicked some of the Old World’s

entertainment and spread his arms to Bai Chen. “Happy marriage.”

“Happy marriage.” Bai Chen returned the hug.

On the 647th floor, Room 14.

Jiang Baimian rubbed her head and returned to her seat as team leader. She

sighed with emotion. “We can never underestimate a large faction like the

company that has been running for decades. The problem has long been

resolved.”

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

He then leaned back in his chair and massaged his temples. Soon, his figure

appeared in the Sea of Origins.

Shang Jianyao quickly split into nine and cast his gaze at the rift that

represented Xiaochong in midair, one that had fused with some white aura.

A figure crawled out-it was another Shang Jianyao.

He looked down at his peers and calmly said, “As long as I don’t completely

crawl over, there’s no danger. Even if I crawl over, it shouldn’t be a problem

since it’s Xiaochong over there.”

“Why did you do that? the ruthless sShang lianyao asked in hatred and disgust.

The other Shang lianyao replied seriously, “I can’t accept the fact that the

company has to tolerate the Life Ritual parish just because everyone is a

believer of the Arbiter of Fate. Uncle Shen and the others won’t die in vain. Ill

never forget it!”

“So you took the risk of implicating everyone and hid in Xiaochong’s rift with

the copied memories?” the ruthless Shang lianyao asked sharply. “Is this your

justice, your abhorrence of evil?

The Shang lianyao frankly admitted, “Yes.”

“Alright, stop arguing. Nothing happened anyway.” “The calm and rational

Shang Jianyao stroked his chin and said, “This matter happened to give me

inspiration—inspiration to clear Room 506’s third psychological trauma.”

The Shang Jianyaos combined into one again and left their room to enter 506.

He skillfully pretended to clear the obstacles and create an explosion before

facing the cold, stiff, and seemingly dead faces.

Shang Jianyao didn’t persuade them; he didn’t attempt to change the attitude

of the people in the Fourth Research Institute's residential area. Instead, he sat down cross-legged.

He frankly said, "There's nothing wrong with my choice; such an outcome is inevitable. I just didn't expect it to be so bad. I don't pray for everyone to accept me again. I only plan on chanting sutras to send you off."

He composed himself and got Zen Master Redemption to take over his body.

Zen Master Redemption looked at the corpse-like humans, sighed, and chanted a Buddhist proclamation. "Namo Annutara-Samyak-Subhuti.

As the Buddhist proclamations sounded, the people's expressions gradually softened as their eyes slowly closed.

They fell to the ground one after another, and black gas on them seemed to dissipate.

Toward the end, the Fourth Research Institute's residential area began to collapse and fall into an endless darkness.

*

Shang Jianyao opened his eyes and took the small speaker with a blue bottom

and a black surface. He stroked it for a while before a smile slowly appeared on his face.

At this moment, Long Yuehong and Bai Chen returned to the office.

“Done with the registration? Jiang Baimian asked with a smile.

“That’s right.” Long Yuehong immediately extended an invitation. “Team

Leader, Hey. Let’s have lunch at 12 p.m. this weekend at the 495th floor’s Rec Center.”

With enough contribution points, he planned on hosting a wedding with a few tables.

“Sure, sure!” Shang Jianyao had an expectant expression.

Jiang Baimian nodded and smiled. “No problem.”

“Good evening, everyone. I’m Newspoint broadcaster, Hou YI. It’s 8 p.m. now..

Shang Jianyao quietly listened to the radio and lay down. He waited until Room 506’s owner might be dreaming before entering the Mind Corridor and opening the corresponding door.

In the darkness, countless, dense blood-red eyes opened.

A faint whisper echoed endlessly.

“Not bad. You’ve finally had a nightmare after all my efforts.” Shang lianyao

smiled in relief. He then split into ten and transformed into the people in the

Fourth Research Institute’s residential area.

There was a white-haired old lady, a middle-aged lady with a good bearing,

and a man in gold-rimmed glasses...

The entire dream froze as the pairs of blood-red eyes closed at the same time.

The Shang Jianyaos walked to separate locations in an attempt to make contact

with the room owner’s consciousness.

Ten seconds later, a sharp voice sounded from all directions. “Don’t come

over

The Shang Jianyaos didn’t stop walking

The voice fell silent for a moment before saying loudly, “Even if I hadn’t done

anything or had chosen not to put up a resistance, all of you would’ve still

died”

The next second, she shouted at the top of her lungs, “Were only livestock

reared by the Kalendarium”

The Shang Jianyaos froze at the same time.

Chapter 775: Snowland

Year 49 of the New Calendar, February.

Although the Lunar New Year had passed, the northern Blackmarsh Wilderness didn't give the feeling that winter was ending at all thanks to the pure white snow blanketing the ground. At a glance, the entire world was cold and empty.

Long Yuehong leaned his face close to the window and looked out. He sighed with emotion and said, “This is much more shocking than the snowy scene we saw in Weed City.”

At the same time, a song was playing from the small speaker with a blue bottom and a black surface on the right of the driver, Shang Jianyao. “The snow falls, and the wind blows.

“The world is completely white’ ..”

“Can't you play some festive music? The Lunar New Year was just days ago,” Jiang Baimian muttered from the passenger seat. “The song you sang during the end-of-year performance was very good.”

Shang Jianyao sighed in all seriousness. “We're already outside; it's very easy for mistakes to happen if we are still immersed in a joyous mood. Although this is only a field training session, we have to treat it seriously. We can't relax too much. That won't meet the effects needed for training.”

In order to search for the last Buddhist Holy Land in the future, head to Icefield to explore the city where Shang Jianyao's father had disappeared, and lock onto the Eighth Research Institute's true location, Jiang Baimian specially organized a field training session to prevent her team members—who were

going havoc spending the Lunar New Year—from being unable to get into the groove when they were out on official missions.

Furthermore, she had specially chosen the northern part of the Blackmarsh Wilderness—which had a climate that was similar to Icefield’s periphery—to allow her team members to adapt to the difficulties of being in a land of ice and snow.

This way, the Old Task Force wouldn’t be at a loss and panic when they encountered extreme weather in Icefield.

Jiang Baimian originally wanted to do this before the new year, but considering that Long Yuehong and Bai Chen had just gotten married and that it was inappropriate to organize field training, she officially submitted a request only after the new year by informing Minister Xenny.

Jiang Baimian rolled her eyes at Shang Jianyao. “Whoa, do you hear what you are saying? Who’s the team leader—you or me?”

She then reminded Long Yuehong, “When we get out of the car later, don’t keep staring at the snow, or wear your sunglasses in advance. I remember telling you guys about snow blindness.”

“Alright.” Long Yuehong was always someone who followed advice. He took out his black sunglasses and placed them on the bridge of his nose.

Bai Chen—who still had short hair—looked at the passenger seat. “Are we looking for a place to rest?”

Not only were there no villages or shops in the area, but there were also no large rocks or conspicuous trees. It was just an endless white.

“That’s right. It’s about time; we have to eat,” Jiang Baimian explained. “In such a climate and environment, we have to ensure that our bodies are filled with energy and have sufficient energy to deal with accidents and risks.”

Beep! Beep! Beep!

Shang Jianyao clapped by thumping the horn.

Before Jiang Baimian could respond, the jeep slid to the side along the snow-covered road, producing a screeching sound.

Fortunately, there were no other cars here, nor were there any trenches or obstacles. The jeep finally stopped firmly.

“Be careful.” Jiang Baimian didn’t blame Shang Jianyao for the distraction from thumping the horn because even if he hadn’t, the jeep still would’ve slid.

Long Yuehong exhaled. “Didn’t we already change to anti-slip tires?”

Since there was snow survival in the field training plan, they definitely wouldn’t forget to bring anti-slip tires and change to them in advance.

“Anti-slip tires aren’t omnipotent.” Shang Jianyao laughed. “Just like how you can’t do whatever Little White says at home all the time.”

Long Yuehong was momentarily speechless. He didn’t know whether to respond or not.

“We’ll listen to whoever has a point.” Bai Chen helped resolve the situation.

“That’s right, that’s right.” Long Yuehong quickly nodded.

And it’s Little White who often has a point... Jiang Baimian laughed inwardly and stopped Shang Jianyao from continuing to sow discord between husband and wife.

She pointed at the snow in front of her and said, “Let’s stop there. Set up a stove, heat some canned food, and pair them with some biscuits.”

Shang Jianyao replied by wiping his mouth with his right hand.

The jeep quickly stopped. The Old Task Force members split up and got busy.

Long Yuehong checked the solar charger board on the car roof. Shang Jianyao had brought out an induction stove, canned food, and biscuits that they wanted to eat. Bai Chen used instruments to measure the level of pollution in the surroundings. Jiang Baimian was in charge of guarding the area.

“We didn’t gather much solar energy.” Long Yuehong was the first to speak. He then sighed. “There’s not enough electricity for the jeep; we can only use high-performance batteries to cook. At this rate, our energy will run out sooner or later. We have to plan the return trip in advance to prevent us from

running out of juice while the car is still in the snow.”

Jiang Baimian smiled. “This is one of the difficulties when carrying out missions in Icefield. We were always traveling in summer, but after entering Icefield, we might encounter extreme weather even during the summer.

“Don’t think that it’s cold now. In a colder situation, it’s still unknown if high-performance batteries can be used.”

Long Yuehong nodded slowly. “That’s why we need such a training session to help us adapt to various situations.”

“Shall we have a snowball fight later?” Shang Jianyao interrupted the discussion with an excited expression.

Long Yuehong shook his head. “No.”

This fellow is so impudent when it comes to snowball fights!

Shang Jianyao sighed regretfully. “Do I have to wait until you and Little White have a child so that I can play with the child when he grows up?”

Can’t you let Little Red and his family off? Jiang Baimian criticized inwardly. But compared to Shang Jianyao’s disappointment at not being able to have a snowball fight, she was more concerned and curious about another question. Little White and Little Red have been married for months. Why isn’t there

anything?

Within Pangu Biology, once one was married, it meant that they had to start preparing for pregnancy. Every family was the same, with no exceptions.

Although some people only conceived after being married for more than a year, that was a minority. Furthermore, Long Yuehong and Bai Chen had undergone a detailed physical examination when they underwent genetic modification. There were no such problems.

Although Jiang Baimian was concerned, she knew that she definitely couldn't ask about certain matters if they didn't raise the issue.

No matter how good their relationship was, there had to be a sense of boundaries.

She resisted the urge and instead urged Shang Jianyao to cook. "Hurry up!"

"alright!" Shang Jianyao returned his attention to the induction stove.

Long Yuehong heaved a sigh of relief.

Recently, his mother—Gu Hong—had already mentioned the Babymaker talisman twice. The meaning behind her words was self-evident.

He didn't want to suffer being pressured into having children when training outfield.

Before long, the braised beef canned food was heated up. The rich fragrance filled the snowland, making Long Yuehong gulp a mouthful of saliva.

Apart from Jiang Baimian—who was in charge of guarding the area—the other three Old Task Force members squatted there with lunch boxes and ate.

After finishing a mouthful of gravy-covered biscuit, Long Yuehong narrowed his eyes in satisfaction. "I was sick of it previously, but I find it quite delicious after not eating it for months."

Shang Jianyao scoffed. "In another half a month or so, you will clamor about how disgusting it is seeing canned food again."

"Aren't you the same?" Long Yuehong retorted.

Shang Jianyao nodded. "That's right, that's right."

After missing the 'punch,' Long Yuehong could only focus on eating.

After Shang Jianyao wolfed down the food and replaced Jiang Baimian, he and Bai Chen continued enjoying the braised beef canned food.

As Jiang Baimian ate, she pretended to casually ask, "Little White, according to the company's rules, newlyweds don't have to go out into the field. Why didn't you and Little Red report it?"

If they didn't apply for a waiver, and Minister Xenny didn't take the initiative to give the order, she didn't know what to do with Long Yuehong and Bai Chen. She could only bring them along.

Bai Chen pursed her lips and said, "Newlyweds don't have to go out into the field because they have to focus on preparing for pregnancy and having children early. Little Red and I don't want to have children so early; we plan on enjoying our alone time for a few years first. This is a little in violation of the

company's policy of encouraging childbirth, but we should be able to delay it for two to three years after making so many contributions."

Alone time? That doesn't seem like you, Little White... Jiang Baimian frowned slightly and suspected that Bai Chen had deliberately found an excuse because she didn't want to leave the team.

Furthermore, it was copied directly from the Old World's entertainment!

Jiang Baimian then looked at Long Yuehong. "You think so too?"

She remembered that Little Red liked children very much and hoped to switch jobs with Little White.

Long Yuehong nodded. “That’s right. I share the same thoughts as Little White.”

This doesn’t make sense, but it’s very realistic... Jiang Baimian forced a smile onto her face and said, “This isn’t like the past you.”

“Of course not.” The person who replied wasn’t Long Yuehong but Shang Jianyao, who was guarding the area not far away.

Shang Jianyao smiled. “Because I implanted him and Little White with thoughts of not having children or leaving the team for the time being.”

“Huh?” Long Yuehong and Bai Chen looked surprised.

Their first reaction was to get him to stop joking, but their minds buzzed when they saw Shang Jianyao’s expression gradually turn serious. They recovered their original realizations.

Shang Jianyao had indeed implanted the corresponding thoughts into them!

Jiang Baimian looked at Shang Jianyao and asked in a deep voice, “Didn’t you say that you don’t use your abilities on your teammates when it comes to serious matters?”

Shang Jianyao nodded and said seriously, “I have something to tell you guys.”

Chapter 776: Notification

Upon seeing Shang Jianyao’s serious attitude, Long Yuehong and Bai Chen—who weren’t sure if he had acted up—restrained their expressions and waited for him to continue.

“Speak.” Jiang Baimian nodded.

Shang Jianyao looked at her and, instead of speaking, asked, “Do you still remember how we controlled Minister Xenny and sent out mass emails before infiltrating the lowest level to report to Big Boss?”

“I do,” Jiang Baimian replied frankly. “My memories were wiped later, leaving behind only an impression that the company had successfully resolved the matter. It likely involved some secrets.”

She had previously shared this matter with Long Yuehong and Bai Chen.

Shang Jianyao smiled and said smugly, “I still remember!”

“How can that be?” Although Jiang Baimian didn’t remember the scene, she was certain of one thing: the company would definitely repeatedly confirm that Shang Jianyao had his corresponding memories erased. They definitely wouldn’t make any mistakes on such an important matter unless Shang

Jianyao used an extremely special and secret method to deceive everyone.

Shang Jianyao smiled smugly. “Among us, the one who abhors evil and believes it’s his responsibility to save all of humanity believes that the company shouldn’t give the Life Ritual parish a slap on the wrist. This would be letting down Uncle Shen and the others for their innocent deaths. Therefore, before

the Awakened did the job, he took the risk to burrow into the rift that represents Xiaochong with a copy of the corresponding memories.”

At this moment, a sentence suddenly flashed across Long Yuehong’s mind: “No comfort brings to my afflicted mind...”

“Isn’t that too risky?” Jiang Baimian frowned.

She had actually been very restrained in using the term ‘risky’ to describe that Shang Jianyao’s actions. In the hearts of other Mind Corridor-level Awakened, attempting to enter a rift created by a powerhouse’s aura without exploring the depths of the Mind Corridor was equivalent to ‘courting death.’

More importantly, Xiaochong's origins were mysterious, and he was suspected to be related to Master Zhuang. The danger on the other side of the rift was definitely not something a Mind Corridor-level figure could deal with.

"Yes." Shang Jianyao cursed himself, and his expression was abnormally gloomy. "It's more than taking a risk. It was as though he was in a rush to reincarnate!"

He then retorted himself, "You can't say that. Xiaochong is our good friend; he won't harm us."

"That's hard to say. Didn't we previously guess that Xiaochong might be one of Master Zhuang's personalities? What if we encounter other personalities after we burrow through the rift?" the honest Shang Jianyao said impartially.

Bai Chen was in a rush to know what was going on and interrupted to ask, "So, did you crawl through it?"

She was very satisfied with her current life and didn't want it to be destroyed.

"No." Shang Jianyao shook his head. "I hid in the rift and hid myself with the help of the two fused auras."

Of the two auras he mentioned, one came from Xiaochong, and the other came from the cryochamber at the Holm Fertility Center. The latter was suspected of belonging to Lokesvara-Tathagata, who was also the Kalendaria, Master Zhuang.

It involves the Kalendaria... It's no wonder that person missed it... Jiang Baimian nodded and said, "Get to the point."

The point was what secret she and Shang Jianyao had discovered back then.

Shang Jianyao was no longer smug or smiling as he slowly said, "Back then, we successfully infiltrated the lowest level and saw Director Ji. He told us that he was the one who planted the Life Ritual parish's Doctor of the Church. It was the artificial intelligence, Omega

"He also told us that all the board members believe in the Kalendaria, Arbiter of Fate, but they don't belong to any religion

Long Yuehong felt his blood run cold when he heard that. He felt like a ghost story was happening in front of him.

Bai Chen also couldn't withstand the cold wind. A chill rose from her tailbone and quickly spread through her entire body.

"To think we managed to carry out a full retreat..." Jiang Baimian frowned and muttered.

She had a guess.

Shang Jianyao nodded. "Yes, it's as you imagine. Finally, Director Ji said that all of this happened because Big Boss's name is: 'Arbiter of Fate.'"

Long Yuehong's mind instantly went blank before countless thoughts raced through his mind.

This answered some of his questions about Big Boss.

Shang Jianyao carefully examined his expression and asked in disappointment and confusion, "Why aren't you trembling, surprised, scared, or pale?"

Long Yuehong's thoughts returned as he thought for a moment. "I'm still quite shocked, but why should I be afraid and pale? I-I feel much more at ease instead..."

So our background is so solid!

A faction that had a Kalendaria as its boss was much stronger than other factions! This made Long Yuehong less afraid of going out into the field.

"I feel the same," Bai Chen said.

Jiang Baimian wanted to nod, but she resisted the urge.

Apart from feeling dispirited, she also felt at ease. At the same time, she became more confused about something.

Shang Jianyao smiled and looked at Long Yuehong before saying with a pained expression, “Doing so means you have the potential to join a cult.”

I’m clearly already part of one... If Big Boss is really the Arbiter of Fate, we are all cultists... Long Yuehong criticized inwardly but didn’t say anything.

Bai Chen pursed her lips and said, “But I can’t understand why a Kalendaria will personally be the company’s boss and not recruit believers. Because of love, pity, and mercy?”

“Every Kalendaria has their own quirks,” Shang Jianyao explained.

Jiang Baimian also deliberated over her words and said, “Also, since Big Boss is a Kalendaria, ‘She’ definitely knows the reason for the Old World’s destruction and the Heartless disease’s origins. Why did the company establish the Old Task Force and send out teams?”

Wasn’t it unnecessary, like taking off one’s pants to fart?

Jiang Baimian had a guess regarding the corresponding reason.

Her experiences in the past few years—especially the experience of being watched by Eidolon Nun, the exploration of a few Buddhist Holy Lands, and finally entering Master Zhuang’s dream—made her feel like they were pieces in the Arbiter of Fate’s game of chess. They were participating in a major

event that involved the various Kalendarium and the New World.

“I’m not too sure about that.” Shang Jianyao shook his head.

Jiang Baimian fell silent for a few seconds before looking at him. “You shouldn’t have brought this up so solemnly just to tell us that Big Boss is the Arbiter of Fate.”

This wasn’t worth Shang Jianyao violating the principle of not using his abilities on his teammates.

Long Yuehong became nervous again when he heard his team leader's words.

Shang Jianyao smiled and clapped. "As expected of you."

"speak," Jiang Baimian replied expressionlessly. She had already mentally prepared herself and felt that her mental fortitude should be rather high.

Shang Jianyao glanced at Long Yuchong and Bai Chen. "After this matter, I comprehended a way to defeat the psychological trauma in Room 506 and finally succeeded. After that, I entered the room owner's dream and used the image of the people in the Fourth Research Institute's residential area to force

her to shout two sentences in the dream.

"The first sentence was 'Even if I hadn't done anything or had chosen not to put up a resistance, all of you would've still died!'" The second sentence is: 'We're only livestock reared by the Kalendarium!'"

Long Yuehong's hands trembled, and he almost dropped the lunch box in the snow. Bai Chen suddenly felt the fear she felt back when she was first captured. Jiang Baimian instantly felt that the braised beef didn't taste that good.

An indescribable silence lasted for more than ten seconds before Long Yuchong forced a smile onto his face. "The Fourth Research Institute's encounter might not necessarily be equivalent to the company's. Every Kalendaria's personality and quirks are different."

He meant that one shouldn't be easily led. The Fourth Research Institute was reared by a particular Kalendaria and treated as a livestock that could be slaughtered at will. It didn't mean that it was the same for Pangu Biology.

'There was a difference between Kalendarium!

"Besides, I don't feel like I'm being reared." Bai Chen expressed her opinion.

Domesticated livestock would definitely be slaughtered at a certain point. But apart from the early stages, there had never been large-scale deaths in Pangu Biology.

“Yes.” Jiang Baimian exhaled. “We can’t blindly believe it. This requires further verification and confirmation.”

She unconsciously used the Vigilance Church’s catchphrase.

“I think so too.” Shang Jianyao smiled in relief. “But it’s impossible to ask Big Boss about such matters directly. The board members might not know the truth, and it’s easy to stir the nest if we investigate them. We can only find another way.”

“For example, figure out what the Kalendarium are playing, and figure out the real reason for the Old World’s destruction.” Jiang Baimian nodded slightly. “For example, talk to Room 506’s owner in detail and ask why she’s still alive while everyone in the Fourth Research Institute’s residential area is dead.”

Shang Jianyao immediately sighed when he heard that. “Sigh, the owner of Room 506 didn’t have any more dreams after that—at least I never encountered one. Any deeper, and we will enter the other party’s Sea of Origins. She has too many secrets, and I’m worried that we will encounter memories that

involve a Kalendaria. Therefore, I didn’t make any attempts for the time being.”

Several Shang Jianyaos were held down because of this.

“She actually didn’t dream again?” Long Yuehong and Bai Chen looked surprised.

Tarnan, Serene Dream Hotel.

A few merchants from Redstone Collection entered the lobby and saw an unfamiliar girl sitting at the front desk.

“Where’s the lady boss?” the leader asked in confusion.

The girl stood up and replied, “She’s sleeping. I’m an employee she hired.”

“What time is it? Why is she still sleeping?” Redstone Collection’s merchants were shocked.

The hotel’s new receptionist smiled and explained, “She’s been sleeping during the day and staying up the entire night for the past few months..”

Chapter 777: Item

In the Blackmarsh Wilderness, in a mountain to the east.

The leader of the Wildfire bandits, Gao Yuan, was huddled in a room with a stove, tightly wrapped in a fur coat. As he stoked the fire, he flipped the sweet potatoes on the coal.

“This f*cking winter!” He shook his legs and expressed his strong displeasure with the weather.

With the resources he had, he could actually enjoy the treatment of having the air conditioner blow warm air at him. However, he felt that it wouldn’t be as comfortable as a coal stove while on the mountain.

The cold wind that seeped into the room jolted Gao Yuan into an abnormally energized state. He couldn’t help but recall his experience at a large faction city a few years ago. The upper-class people lived in places where their winter was as warm as early summer. They only needed to wear thin clothing.

Gao Yuan had asked around back then and was confused by a series of terms. He only knew that the heat came from the hot water that was heated by a large boiler. It flowed through the pipes and into different areas in the room, producing fairyland-like warmth.

After he returned to this place—which he called Copper Mountain—he tried to modify his residence. Unfortunately, he failed miserably. He planned on kidnapping a few people who had the knowhow to install one.

At the same time, he also wanted to bring his vault of resources, children, and beautiful female slaves to settle down in a large faction when he was older and no longer suitable to be a bandit.

It would be comfortable and stable.

While Gao Yuan was flipping the roasted sweet potato, his deputy, Chi Qingliu, slammed his door.

“Boss, Boss!” Chi Qingliu shouted as he slammed.

Gao Yuan stood up, adjusted his posture, and asked authoritatively, “What is it now?”

He was becoming less and less like a bandit leader. Instead, he was closer to a castellan or governor.

As for the Wildfire bandits, they only went out to plunder a few times a year. They mainly carried out abductions and did ore enrichment. Their focus was completely on Copper Mountain.

‘There was a rich copper mine here!

If not for the fact that this place was so remote that the environment was harsh to a certain extent and that it was sufficiently far from the various large factions, Gao Yuan didn’t think that a bandit group like him could occupy a mountain and almost develop into a small faction.

Of course, he was an Awakened himself, and the bandits later recruited a few Awakened. This was also a very important reason. Otherwise, they would’ve been attacked by other bandits even if they weren’t worried about the expansions by large factions.

Every year, when the Rootless drove over to move the copper ores, Gao Yuan would be happy and afraid.

He was happy that the copper ores could be exchanged for a large number of resources, but he was afraid that some powerhouse or faction of a sizable scale would suddenly become greedy or have ideas on Copper Mountain after learning about its situation.

Chi Qingliu—who considered himself a military advisor—replied to Gao Yuan’s question loudly. “The guys have discovered something good!”

“Come in.” Gao Yuan looked at Chi Qingliu—who had opened the door and entered—and asked in a deep voice, “What is it?”

Chi Qingliu was a man in his thirties; he was an Awakened that the Wildfire bandits had recruited after discovering the copper mine. He looked ordinary and had kept a beard.

Upon hearing his boss’s question, Chi Qingliu waved at the door. “Bring it in.”

A few bandits held a hunting net and brought in an item—it was a small black speaker with a blue bottom.

“That’s it?” Gao Yuan raised his eyebrows.

Chi Qingliu hurriedly explained, “This should be an item that involves a Mind Corridor Awakened. After a few of them touched it, they cried, laughed, sang, and danced as if they had gone crazy. Fortunately, they were woken up by the people beside them in time, so they didn’t freeze to death in the snow.”

An item that involves an Awakened in the Mind Corridor... Gao Yuan immediately became serious. This is good stuff!

If not for the fact that he had previously been to a large faction’s city and had come into contact with some nobles and merchants, he wouldn’t even know what the Mind Corridor and the respective items were.

“Where did you find it?” Gao Yuan asked.

One of the bandits smiled. “Boss, there’s nothing to do in the winter. Apart from eating, sex, and gambling, there’s nothing to do. We left the mine today and planned on going to the nearby river to do some ice fishing. On the way, someone slid down the hill and found this in a village ruin.

“We lost control the moment we touched it. When we thought of what you said, we felt that it should be something good.”

Gao Yuan nodded. "Put down the thing. You guys can leave first."

He thought for a moment and added, "Don't worry. If it's really useful, you will be rewarded."

The bandits happily left Gao Yuan's room, leaving behind the small speaker wrapped in a net.

After they left, Chi Qingliu stared at the item on the ground and curiously muttered to himself, "What abilities does this thing have..."

"You won't know until you try." Gao Yuan recalled the knowledge he had learned. "The price of it should be to make the people it touches go crazy. With me watching, you'll be fine."

What do you mean by I'll be fine? Chi Qingliu was stunned for a moment before he understood that his boss wanted him to test the item's abilities. After all, ordinary people couldn't use items.

He secretly took a deep breath and cursed inwardly as he forced a smile. "Alright."

Upon seeing him walk to the small black speaker with a blue bottom, Gao Yuan's heart stirred. "Wait."

"Huh?" Chi Qingliu cast his gaze at his boss.

Gao Yuan walked toward him, passed him, and distanced himself from him.

Upon seeing his boss leave the room and distance himself from him by 20 to 30 meters while trembling in the cold wind, Chi Qingliu asked in confusion, "That far?"

"It's not wrong to be careful!" Gao Yuan replied loudly. "Don't worry. You won't die after entering the crazy state. I can wake you up in time!"

Chi Qingliu gritted his teeth and mentally prepared himself before slowly squatting down.

He stretched his hand toward the small black speaker with the blue bottom. Following his understanding of Old World electronic products and the method of using items his boss had mentioned, he spread his aura over and pressed the switch.

The sound, which was at maximum, suddenly boomed: “Just come and have fun! We have lots of time to waste anyway.

“Just come and fall in love! We have lots of desire anyway...”

This song spread across half of the mine. Every bandit who heard it smiled and gyrated their bodies unconsciously, becoming happy.

They cast their gazes at their women or companions, their eyes filled with yearning for love and burning desire.

“Just come and wander around! We have lots of directions to go anyway.”

“Just come and mess around! We have lots of sexy things to explore anyway’...”

Gao Yuan suddenly had the urge to turn around and run out of the mine.

He wanted to wander.

He wanted to mess around.

A large number of bandits followed their boss and left the mine, prepared to wander.

The place immediately became empty, leaving Chi Qingliu dancing to the music alone.

Bang!

With a gunshot, Chi Qingliu collapsed.

Bai Chen—who was wearing a military exoskeleton—put away the Orange rifle and followed Jiang Baimian, Shang Jianyao, and Long Yuehong into the copper mountain mine.

The four of them wore earplugs that blocked out the singing.

After switching off the small speaker and cleaning up the scene, Jiang Baimian took off her earplugs and looked at Shang Jianyao. “Why make things so troublesome and go to such lengths? With our strength, we can ‘visit’ them openly.”

Shang Jianyao smiled and pointed at the small speaker. “As a member of our team, it’s time for it to contribute!”

After exploring the Mind Corridor’s depths, he used his aura to modify his beloved small speaker and made it an item.

Jiang Baimian was speechless.

Long Yuehong looked around and asked his team leader, “Why must we deal with these bandits?”

“To save the miners here!” Shang Jianyao replied first.

Jiang Baimian exhaled and said, “To get some supplies.”

“We have enough supplies to return to the company, but we have to ration the use of high-performance batteries,” replied Bai Chen.

Jiang Baimian smiled. “It’s not enough. We aren’t in a rush to return to the company next.”

“Huh?” Long Yuehong’s first reaction was that his team leader was defecting.

However, there was no evidence for what Shang Jianyao said. He believed that Jiang Baimian wouldn’t be that rash.

Jiang Baimian pointed south and said, “I plan on making a trip to Swamp Ruin 1 and confirm if that’s Dajiang City—the last Buddhist Holy Land—before returning to the company. The textual information Wang Beicheng and the others gathered didn’t specify what the ruin’s name was in the Old World. We

can only find it ourselves.”

Furthermore, she suspected that the company had concealed such information. Therefore, after hearing Shang Jianyao mention those matters, she made a prompt decision and planned on taking the opportunity to explore Swamp Ruin 1 again during this training session.

“But we didn’t bring much equipment this time,” Long Yuehong said hesitantly.

As it was only training and the focus was on wilderness survival, the Old Task Force only applied for a single military exoskeleton and a set of Blackmarsh Iron Snake bionic artificial intelligence armor this time. Long Yuehong had to admit that he had an equipment shortage phobia.

Jiang Baimian smiled. “It’s enough; each of you will get one. Hey and I don’t need one for the time being.”

“Yes.” Bai Chen nodded.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao leisurely fantasized. “Maybe Xiaochong returned to hide there.”

Chapter 778: Return

Maybe Xiaochong returned to hide there? Long Yuehong was alarmed and didn’t think that it was a good thing.

Although he had played with Xiaochong, helped the latter clean his room, and cooked for him, and he felt that this person was actually rather easy to get along with, things were different now—ignoring his great strength and mysterious origins, as well as how he was just an ordinary child who lacked

love, sense of security, and was obsessed with games. The Old Task Force had ‘broken into’ Master Zhuang’s dream and suspected that Xiaochong had a certain connection with this Kalendaria. He could be one of ‘His’ split personalities.

Therefore, if the Old Task Force really encountered Xiaochong again, they might not be meeting Xiaochong. Or perhaps they wouldn’t only be meeting Xiaochong.

This was filled with danger and the unknown.

As if sensing Long Yuehong’s mental activity, Shang Jianyao smiled and continued speaking. “Dajiang City’s Elite Middle School might be in Swamp Ruin 1.”

As for Dajiang City’s Linhe Village, it definitely didn’t wasn’t in a city.

Long Yuehong couldn’t help but tremble when he recalled Old Ge’s description of Dajiang City’s Elite Middle School.

At this moment, Bai Chen looked at Jiang Baimian and pursed her lips. “But the few entrances to Swamp Ruin 1 are basically controlled by the company or are under the company’s watch. It will probably be a little difficult for us to hide from the company and infiltrate the ruin to search for the

corresponding textual information.”

More importantly, the Old Task Force had no intention of fighting the company head-on yet.

“That’s right, that’s right.” Long Yuehong nodded in agreement.

Shang Jianyao smiled. “The city ruin is so large, and the company has limited manpower. How can they watch over every place? In the past few years, haven’t Ruin Hunters still entered and exited the city ruin? At most, we’ll abandon the car in advance and enter using a trail. Or we can play a lullaby for

Wang Beicheng and the others.”

Jiang Baimian laughed. “Why are you sure that it’s Wang Beicheng’s company on duty now?”

‘What she meant was: Why are you targeting Wang Beicheng again?’

‘Without waiting for Shang Jianyao’s response, Jiang Baimian looked around and said, “Actually, there’s an entrance that the company doesn’t know about.”

“Which one?” Long Yuehong’s heart palpitated as he thought of the answer.

Jiang Baimian smiled and said, “The entrance Qiao Chu used when he brought us along previously.”

“You didn’t report it?” Shang Jianyao had a surprised’ expression, but Jiang Baimian felt that it was an exhibition of joy.

Jiang Baimian chuckled. “When we left Ruin 1, didn’t we find that path too winding and dangerous? Without Qiao Chu’s guidance, it was very easy to sink into the swamp. Hence, we switched to taking the path that An Ruxiang and the others took.”

“Yes.” Bai Chen nodded. She remembered that they had also encountered Wang Beicheng’s company on their return trip.

Jiang Baimian smiled and said, “I found it troublesome when writing the report, so I didn’t specify which path Qiao Chu used. The company probably tacitly acknowledged it as the one we used when leaving. Wang Beicheng and the others would also have confirmed it.”

Swamp Ruin 1 was large and dangerous. Pangu Biology had always taken it slow and steady; it pushed forward bit by bit and slowly explored. At present, at least two-thirds of the places had yet to be searched.

In other words, the possibility of them discovering the hidden entrance was relatively low.

‘As Long Yuehong came to a realization, he worriedly said, “Team Leader, I remember that the path is hidden deep in the swamp. Not only is it hidden and winding, making it easy to get lost inside, but it’s also very dangerous.”

The mutated creatures were fine; the Old Task Force currently had the ability to deal with them. The most troublesome thing was the swamp itself—a quagmire that could devour all life.

Jiang Baimian smiled and consoled him. “Have you forgotten what season it is? The Lunar New Year has just passed. The temperature in the Blackmarsh Wilderness’s depths and the northern area is still very low. The lakes and rivers have frozen, allowing vehicles to pass through.”

If the lakes and rivers were frozen, there was no need to mention the swamps.

In winter, it was equivalent to a smooth plain.

“That’s true.” Long Yuehong heaved a sigh of relief.

As long as he could enter Swamp Ruin 1 relatively safely and not meet Pangu Biology’s Security Department employees, he felt that this mission wasn’t too unacceptable as long as they could gather the textual information to determine if the ruin was in Dajiang City.

Jiang Baimian then asked Shang Jianyao, “How do you plan on dealing with this mine?”

At present, most of the bandits had started wandering. Only the people guarding the mines and the miners remained behind because they were too far away and weren’t affected by the small speaker. However, it was also because they were too far away that they had yet to realize the situation in the

headquarters.

Shang Jianyao immediately felt energized. “I want to distribute the bandits’ weapons to the miners and spend a few days training them on how to use firearms and cannons, how to form a defense line, deal with the enemy, and rely on the complicated terrain in the mountains to move.”

This was a relatively difficult matter for others. After all, most wilderness nomads had only seen but never used cannons, nor did they have the resources. However, Shang Jianyao could directly implant a set of thoughts into them to help them familiarize themselves with the corresponding actions as

soon as possible.

Although it was impossible to replace muscle memory and mass-produce warriors proficient in firearms, it saved them a lot of time.

Jiang Baimian nodded. “What do you plan on doing with the women and children left behind by those bandits?”

Shang Jianyao sincerely replied, “I’ll persuade both parties to forget the past and get along well.”

Hiss!

Long Yuehong secretly took a deep breath. As expected of an Awakened who has explored the Mind Corridor’s depths!

Jiang Baimian frowned and thought for a few seconds before sighing. “That’s all we can do for now.”

At the same time, she sighed with emotion inwardly. Jiang Baimian, Jiang Baimian, you’ve degenerated!

She had always disagreed with Shang Jianyao’s use of his abilities to create false peace. Back in Redstone Collection, she had rejected Shang Jianyao’s suggestion to ‘persuade’ the townsfolk to get along with the Subhumans.

But now, she could only relent in an emergency.

Sigh, only hope that Hey’s current ability is enough to maintain the effects for a long, long time... Repeat a lie often enough without being overturned, and it will become the truth... Jiang Baimian consoled herself.

Shang Jianyao—who had obtained permission—excitedly turned around and walked to the door.

He suddenly stopped, turned his head, and solemnly said to Jiang Baimian and the others, “Leave one for me. No, half will do.”

“What?” Long Yuehong was confused.

Shang Jianyao pointed at the sweet potatoes that the bandit leader was roasting above the coal stove and gulped. “They’re almost done.”

Only then did Long Yuchong smell the fragrance of roasted sweet potatoes in the air.

Eating one in such cold weather was definitely a top-notch enjoyment.

Jiang Baimian smiled and clapped. “Deal with everything else first. We’ll eat when you return.”

She didn’t forget that her goal this time was to get supplies. For this, she adjusted the sweet potatoes to prevent them from being charred by the time he returned.

“Alright!” Shang Jianyao replied excitedly.

Bai Chen and Long Yuehong nodded nonchalantly.

As for where the bandits would ultimately wander, whether they could escape the influence, and when they would escape, it wasn’t a question they needed to consider now.

In the white snow, the Old Task Force spent a lot of time finding the path that Qiao Chu had led them into Swamp Ruin 1 with.

Amid the cold, the bloodthirsty mosquitoes and mutated vines had either disappeared, were hidden deep under the ice, or were covered in white as if they had been dead for a long time.

Amidst the creaking sounds, the Old Task Force’s jeep drove through the snow. Apart from sliding across the ice from time to time, they didn’t encounter any sudden collapses.

Jiang Baimian sat in the passenger seat and pointed at a spot. “I think it’s over there.”

Shang Jianyao nodded. “Alright.”

He turned the steering wheel and drove the car to the other side.

“That’s not right.” Jiang Baimian quickly corrected him. “I’m talking about over there!”

“That’s right.” Shang Jianyao smiled. “When it comes to giving directions, I have to do the opposite of what you say. The effects should be pretty good.”

“So you’re doing it through a process of elimination?” Jiang Baimian laughed in exasperation.

She was already accustomed to suffering such blows and even began to mock herself.

“Something like that.” Shang Jianyao looked at the rearview mirror. “Little Red, point in a direction as well.”

I’m not directionally challenged... Long Yuehong felt a little guilty-conscience and ignored this fellow.

He did know the way, but his luck was always bad.

With Shang Jianyao doing this, the Old Task Force finally entered the tunnel that led to Swamp Ruin 1 when it was almost dark.

Jiang Baimian didn’t know if this was considered early or a delay.

The jeep soon drove out of the tunnel, and they saw the sleeping city again formed by dead high-rise buildings.

Long Yuehong stared at this scene and sighed with emotion. “We’re back again...”

Perhaps this was fate.

Jiang Baimian and Bai Chen shared the same feelings.

Shang Jianyao nodded and indignantly said, “Qiao Chu still owes us a military exoskeleton..”

Chapter 779: Old Place

Under the setting sun’s rays, the Old Task Force’s jeep drove along the familiar street. It slowly advanced through the signs—hairstyling, supermarket, barbecue, foot bath, hotpot, police, clothing, and other signs that were hanging diagonally or missing.

Cars were randomly parked along the road, clearly ravaged by the elements. It seriously hindered traffic, but it didn’t mean that the jeep couldn’t pass through.

“It’s still the same old.’ Shang Jianyao—who was in the backseat—sighed.

For some reason, a sentence that originated from the Old World’s entertainment naturally surfaced in Long Yuehong’s mind: “He lit a cigarette and started recounting his tale.”

The driving Bai Chen looked ahead and said, “It’s getting dark. Where are we camping tonight?”

“The place from last time, of course!” Shang Jianyao replied before Jiang Baimian could. “We have feelings for it!”

His small speaker came from there.

Who has feelings for this godforsaken place? Jiang Baimian muttered silently and nodded. “Same old place—at least it’s familiar.”

Bai Chen tersely acknowledged her words and turned the jeep to the left before entering the estate without a complete name. They then alighted, brought their items, tuned into a unit in the first building on the right, and familiarly arrived at the sixth floor.

After opening the door to the innermost room, a putrid smell drilled into their noses.

“The layout is no different from when we left.” Shang Jianyao looked around as if he didn’t smell anything.

The coffee table, the television cabinet, the dirty cloth sofa, the emerald-green cups, the round table, the recliner, and other items were all in the same position. They appeared frozen in time and had never been moved.

Jiang Baimian nodded. "It seems like no Ruin Hunter has been here."

She then ordered, "Check the rooms and eliminate any latent dangers."

The four people from the Old Task Force immediately split into two teams. One team walked to the bathroom, and the other went to the end of the corridor and opened the door to the child's bedroom.

Jiang Baimian looked over and saw a person lying quietly on the bed.

The person was covered in a blue blanket with a small golden star. The exposed parts had already turned to bones, leaving only a cluster of white, messy hair.

Shang Jianyao fell silent for a few seconds before saying, "Let's go somewhere else."

"Alright." Jiang Baimian could understand his feelings.

The corpse in front of them likely belonged to the room's original owner—the little girl named Nan Nan in the photo album.

She had become a Heartless. She grew up year after year and gradually aged, but she never forgot where her home was. Every time the lights lit up at night, she would return to rest and flip through her photos.

"When the power was cut, she would become a cruel Heartless and hunt outside."

In the blink of an eye, more than two years had passed. When the Old Task Force encountered her again, she had already become a corpse.

After briefing Long Yuchong and Bai Chen about the situation, Jiang Baimian led her team members to the same unit on the eighth floor.

It was also where they had stayed.

After settling down, Long Yuehong sighed with emotion. "I didn't expect her to be dead.."

"It's very normal." Bai Chen consoled him. "Not many ordinary Heartless can live to the age of 40. They only lasted until a few years ago because of Xiaochong's protection."

After the previous incident, Xiaochong was scared away by Du Heng, Pangu Biology took over a portion of the area, and many Ruin Hunters came and went. The 'environment here had completely changed.

This made Jiang Baimian vaguely feel like they had become villains.

Shang Jianyao sat by the floor-to-ceiling railed windows. He looked out and sighed. "It would be nice if there's no Heartless disease."

"This is our team's mission," Jiang Baimian replied in a joking manner, trying her best to lighten the mood in the team.

Long Yuehong looked out the window and exclaimed, 'It's already dark. Why aren't the lights switched on.'

Before he could finish speaking, he shut his mouth.

The reason Swamp Ruin 1 could have electricity at night and replay the city's former dazzling night scene was that the nearby hydropower station was still being 'maintained. It was still working because Xiaochong was playing games near the underground engine room at the City Intelligence Network

Control Center. From time to time, it would power the entire city.

Now, there was no Xiaochong or the Superior Heartless with a certain level of intelligence.

Bai Chen also came to the floor-to-ceiling window and looked out. She acutely noticed: “There’s light over there.”

At the edge of the concrete jungle, balls of yellow or pure white light flickered.

There were definitely not many of them, but they were rather eye-catching in the setting sun.

Jiang Baimian exhaled and said, “That should be where the company’s garrison is stationed. They must’ve been to the City Intelligence Network Control Center to keep this ruin powered.”

That’s true. Having electricity and not having electricity are two completely different concepts. It’s the same for those being stationed and day-to-day living... Long Yuehong came to a realization.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao excitedly stood up, rushed to the dining area, and pressed the switch.

The white light lit up.

“There’s indeed electricity!” Shang Jianyao was rather happy.

Jiang Baimian’s eyes darted around. “Turn it off. It’s too eye-catching at night.”

After Shang Jianyao switched off the lights, Jiang Baimian looked around and said, “The arrangement for tonight is: Have dinner first, then rest for an hour. We’ll then go to a nearby block on foot to search for bookshops and other places to determine if this is Dajiang City.”

“We’re searching for information tonight?” Long Yuehong blurted out in surprise.

One had to catch their breath before hanging themselves.

Jiang Baimian smiled. “We should be carrying out operations at night and resting during the day. Otherwise, it’s very easy for us to encounter the company’s exploration team. Furthermore, we have to be constantly worried that a drone will fly over our heads. You don’t want this, right?”

“Okay.” Long Yuehong nodded without hiding anything.

He still hoped that Shang Jianyao’s discovery was a misunderstanding and that they were still loyal employees of Pangu Biology.

Bai Chen said, ‘If we act at night, it’s best to plan a route in advance.’”

“That’s right, that’s right. Otherwise, Big White will easily get lost.” Shang Jianyao agreed.

Jiang Baimian gritted her teeth and said, “Let’s head toward the blown-up secret laboratory. On the way, we’ll circle around the City Intelligence Network Control Center and not approach it.”

The blown-up secret laboratory had long become worthless after Pangu Biology’s years of excavation. As for the City Intelligence Network Control Center, it was of great importance. There was a high chance that it was guarded by the company’s troops.

“Alright.” Long Yuehong and the others didn’t object.

At 8 p.m., the Old Task Force began taking action according to the plan.

In order to reduce any commotion, they didn’t drive. However, Bai Chen and Long Yuehong put on their military exoskeleton and Blackmarsh Iron Snake bionic artificial intelligence armor. If they really encountered something, they would drag Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao with them and run at full

speed. They wouldn’t be slower than the jeep and would be more agile.

Shang Jianyao held the Berserker assault rifle and relied on the dim starlight in the sky to carefully walk along the street. Jiang Baimian didn’t know whether to praise him for not being careless and being sufficiently careful, that he always did things according to the tactical manual or should she mock him

for being unnecessary and for liking to act?

With the Old Task Force's current perception and detection standards, there was really no need to follow those instructions to the tee.

After circling around the City Intelligence Network Control Center, the Old Task Force arrived at a street behind it that led to the secret laboratory.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao turned around and shouted in a direction, "Stop!"

As his voice echoed, a figure jumped down from the street window.

It was a male Heartless. His hair was messy, his eyes were turbid, and his body was hunched. He was about 30 years old.

He originally wanted to pounce at the Old Task Force and complete the hunt, but he stopped and didn't move.

Shang Jianyao walked over and politely asked, "Do you know which city this is?"

The Heartless roared, and his bloodshot eyes were vigilant and filled with hatred.

Shang Jianyao was not discouraged. "You should say, 'This is Dajiang City.'"

The Heartless's mouth quivered as a difficult and strange voice sounded from his throat. "This is Dajiang City."

"It's indeed Dajiang City!" Shang Jianyao slapped the Berserker assault rifle's side.

Is this considered getting an answer through torture? Long Yuehong muttered.

Shang Jianyao then waved his hand and said to the Heartless, "You can leave now."

Therefore, the Heartless obediently left.

‘The next second, Shang Jianyao looked at Jiang Baimian and asked curiously, “You actually didn’t reprimand me.”

Jiang Baimian rolled her eyes. “Your actions reminded me of something.”

“What is it?’ Shang Jianyao asked.

Jiang Baimian tersely grunted. “Do you still remember the strange things we encountered here? After the lights were switched on, all the Heartless seemed to return to normal. They did their own things and stopped attacking humans.”

“Yes,” Bai Chen and Long Yuehong nodded.

‘That had left a deep impression on them.

Jiang Baimian exhaled and said, “Back then, I found it unbelievable. Now that I think about it, I feel that it might be the effect of Thought Implantation. And it’s most likely because of Xiaochong.”

Xiaochong implanted different thoughts into every Heartless in this city ruin, making them do things according to the corresponding thoughts once the lights are switched on? The more Long Yuehong thought about it, the more he felt that his team leader’s guess was close to the truth.

Shang Jianyao slapped the Berserker assault rifle’s side again. “Xiaochong is indeed from the Master Zhuang domain!”

What’s there to be happy about... This is very terrifying, alright? Long Yuehong criticized inwardly as he guarded his surroundings.

As his gaze moved, he suddenly saw the words on a sign by the street being illuminated by starlight that left the dark clouds. “Dajiang City.”

Long Yuehong was surprised and delighted. He pointed at the signboard and said, “Team Leader, it says what place this is over there!”

This is really Dajiang City!

Just as he said that, he saw the entire signboard clearly: “Dajiang City’s Elite Middle School.”

This.. Long Yuehong’s pupils instantly dilated as if he had been struck by lightning.

Chapter 780: Persistence

Upon hearing Long Yuehong’s hint, the other three Old Task Force members also saw the signboard hanging on the pillar beside the automatic extendable gate. The words “Dajiang City’s Elite Middle School’ were reflected in their eyes.

For a moment, Jiang Baimian didn’t know if she should sigh at how easy it was to find it by luck or be surprised that Swamp Ruin 1 was indeed Dajiang City.

“That’s not interesting enough!” Shang Jianyao sighed regretfully.

“How do you want it to be interesting?” Jiang Baimian shot him a glare.

Shang Jianyao pointed at the signboard and said, “If there’s a line of small words beside Dajiang City’s Elite Middle School that says ‘Administrative Office in Blackmarsh City,’ it will give off very strong comedic vibes. That will be an interesting twist.”

Long Yuehong subconsciously imagined the scene Shang Jianyao described and couldn’t help but curse inwardly.

This would cause a stir, only to end up a false alarm!

Jiang Baimian spat. “Unfortunately, this is a serious documentary film, not a random comedic film.”

Shang Jianyao had already diverted his attention and pointed at Dajiang City’s Elite Middle School. “Shall we explore?”

“Not for the time being,” Jiang Baimian replied hesitantly. “This involves Master Zhuang. Who knows if we will fall into a dream like in Tai City’s No. 1 Senior High School after entering.”

‘When the time came, the Old Task Force might very well be wiped out without the smart bot, Geneva, as a backup.

“It won’t happen.” Shang Jianyao shook his head with abnormal certainty.

Bai Chen held the Orange rifle and observed her surroundings, attempting to guess the real reason for Shang Jianyao’s answer. “Do you think Xiaochong won’t harm us?”

After confirming that this was Dajiang City, Xiaochong’s connection with Master Zhuang was elevated. This was the reason for Bai Chen’s words.

“No.” Shang Jianyao shook his head again. “Because Master Zhuang’s current dream has nothing to do with the school.”

“How do you know?” Long Yuehong blurted out.

Shang Jianyao’s face was filled with ‘isn’t this a very normal matter?

“I open 102’s door every day to see if there are any changes inside.”

102 was the Mind Corridor room that represented Master Zhuang.

“Some time ago, Master Zhuang began dreaming again. He dreamed of a sea and a gigantic bird that blotted out the sky,” Shang Jianyao continued. ‘I’m not sure about the exact situation of the dream because I only looked at it from the door. However, I’m certain that it has nothing to do with the school.’”

Therefore, it wouldn’t cause an anomaly in Dajiang City’s Elite Middle School.

Jiang Baimian nodded slightly and said, “You check Room 102’s situation every day?”

“There’s nothing to do anyway.” Shang Jianyao didn’t think there was anything to fuss about.

How persistent... Jiang Baimian evaluated inwardly.

If it were a normal person, they would definitely open 102’s door once in a while to observe the situation inside. After all, even if there were some changes, it wouldn’t help in reality. They wouldn’t consider entering the room and exploring the Kalendaria’s sea of consciousness as a result. Yet, Shang Jianyao

could actually persist in doing this meaningless thing.

Jiang Baimian knew that if she were in his shoes, she would at most confirm if Room 102 had moved every day.

At this thought, she deliberated for a moment and said, “Since Master Zhuang’s dream has nothing to do with this school, we can indeed consider exploring it.”

Upon seeing that Shang Jianyao looked like he was about to rush out, she quickly added, “But I don’t think we will gain anything. Think about it. What was truly valuable in Tai City’s No. 1 Senior High School back then? It was Master Zhuang’s dream, and it was a secret hidden in that dream. There were

actually no clues left in Tai City’s No. 1 Senior High School. The only thing worth paying attention to was the Salvation Army member who accidentally entered and died during the ‘act.

“Like Tai City’s No. 1 Senior High School—before the Old World was destroyed, the batch of students that involved Master Zhuang had graduated countless years ago. New batches of students entered one after another later on. They constantly replaced and overlapped everything, burying all traces deep in

history. Unless time can be reversed, it’s very difficult for us to find anything valuable.”

Shang Jianyao suddenly turned his head and said to Long Yuehong, “Quick, repeat those words!”

Lame.. Long Yuehong didn’t respond.

He knew what Shang Jianyao meant and didn't want to play a baffling and meaningless game with him.

“Since we've come this far, the risk of entering and exploring isn't high. We can give it a try. At most, it will be a waste of time.” Bai Chen expressed her thoughts. “There must be a corresponding reason for the company to hide the fact that this is Dajiang City.”

The Old Task Force easily confirmed that Swamp Ruin 1 was Dajiang City. It was impossible for Pangu Biology—which had been excavating it for more than two years—not to know of this. They had gathered a large amount of text.

Therefore, the fact that the Old Task Force couldn't find out that Swamp Ruin 1 was Dajiang City from the information provided by the company could only mean that Pangu Biology had deliberately hidden this point for an unknown reason.

“Maybe our clearance isn't high enough,” Long Yuehong defended the company softly.

Bai Chen immediately replied, “The fact that it requires higher levels of clearance to know that Swamp Ruin 1 is equivalent to Dajiang City means a lot.”

“That's right, that's right.” Long Yuehong agreed.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao clicked his tongue and asked, “Why are you so sure that this is Dajiang City now?”

“Isn't it written here?” Long Yuehong pointed at the school's signboard.

Shang Jianyao smiled. “If it were me, I would deliberately make a ‘Dajiang City's Elite Middle School’ signboard and randomly hang it outside a school to mislead people who come to explore.”

Therefore, you are nuts, while we're very normal. It's not like changing a sign can intimidate people. If you have the ability, replace all the text that involves Dajiang City in this city! Even a smart bot like Old Ge won't be able to do it without decades... Jiang Baimian muttered and exhaled. ‘We'll continue

gathering information later to complete the confirmation.”

Without waiting for Shang Jianyao’s response, she pointed at Dajiang City’s Elite Middle School. ‘Let’s go in and explore.’

With experience gleaned from exploring Tai City’s No. 1 Senior High School, the four Old Task Force members didn’t enter at the same time. Instead, they split into two teams and had Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao lead the way.

After confirming that they were fine, Bai Chen and Long Yuehong—who were wearing military exoskeletons and bionic artificial intelligence armor—carefully jumped over the automatic extendable gate and entered the school.

More than two hours passed in a flash. They didn’t find anything valuable or any clues.

The only thing they could gain was that they confirmed that Swamp Ruin 1 was Dajiang City through some of the school’s documents.

After leaving Elite Middle School, Long Yuehong looked at Jiang Baimian and asked, “What should we do next?”

Jiang Baimian had a plan in mind. She pondered for a moment before saying, “Continue forward according to the plan until we reach the secret laboratory that Qiao Chu blew up.”

“Why are we still going over? Didn’t we already achieve our goal?” Long Yuchong asked in confusion.

The Old Task Force had secretly infiltrated Swamp Ruin 1 to confirm that this was Dajiang City.

Now, they had an answer.

Jiang Baimian glanced at Shang Jianyao and Bai Chen and said seriously, “Because there’s something I find relatively coincidental.”

“What is it?” Bai Chen asked.

Jiang Baimian nodded. ‘Didn’t you notice? There’s a secret laboratory in all the places related to Master Zhuang. There’s one in the Fakh region where the Holm Fertility Center is. There’s one in Tai City as well. The Renhui Hospital’s Vegetative Rehabilitation Center isn’t too far from First Senior High School.

There’s one here too.”

It was even closer! The straight-line distance between Dajiang City’s Elite Middle School and the secret laboratory that Qiao Chu had destroyed was less than two kilometers.

“That’s right!” Shang Jianyao clenched his right fist and punched the Berserker assault rifle’s side.

Bai Chen nodded. “This is too much of a coincidence.”

There was often an inevitable connection behind coincidences.

“Indeed.” Long Yuehong no longer had any objections.

As the Old Task Force continued forward, Jiang Baimian briefed them of the subsequent arrangements. “If we don’t find any clues in the laboratory ruins, we’ll leave this place tomorrow and go to the nearby hydropower station. We’ll then search for the last Buddhist Holy Land along the river.”

Old pagoda tree in Linhe Village, Dajiang City.

Jiang Baimian determined that for a hydropower station to still be capable of generating electricity despite the cold weather—as well as the name Dajiang City, or Great River City—there had to be a large river with plenty of water near the city ruin. The water flowed fast, making it less prone to freezing.

Alright.” Long Yuehong and the others agreed.

As they walked, Shang Jianyao suddenly stopped and suppressed his voice when he had the secret laboratory ruins in sight. “There’s someone over there..”