

Ad Infinitum 791

Chapter 791 Excuses

When the Old Task Force ended their training and returned to Pangu Biology, spring's rain began to drizzle, washing away the dust. If it were any other time, Long Yuehong would definitely sigh with emotion. Why is it raining again? It was raining the past three out of five times we returned. Furthermore, he was definitely just chit-chatting when he said this. In fact, he was secretly excited and smiling. He couldn't wait.

But this time, he didn't say anything while sitting in the back row. His mouth was tightly shut; he was no different from a statue.

There was silence in the jeep.

After the Old Task Force approached and confirmed their identities, the silver-white door at the entrance to Pangu Biology's underground building slowly moved back like a behemoth opening its mouth.

The jeep drove in and stopped at the designated spot. Jiang Baimian and the others alighted one after another and underwent safety checks.

"Why did you guys return so quickly this time?" The captain on duty today was a middle-aged man that Jiang Baimian, Shang Jianyao, and the others didn't know. He had a crew cut, and his eyes were small. He looked rather old.

The Old Task Force didn't know this person, but this person was no stranger to their feats out in the wild. After all, be it Jiang Baimian, Shang Jianyao, or Long Yuehong, their characteristics were very obvious.

Coupled with the fact that this person had an easygoing personality, he directly raised the question curiously. A smile appeared on Jiang Baimian's face. "It's just training this time. After the previous mission ended, we stayed in the company for months. After finishing the new year, I was afraid that they would lose their touch. Therefore, I first organized a training session to let them get used to it." The captain came to a realization. "I knew it. I recently heard that you guys went outfield, and doesn't your fieldwork last at least two to three months?"

“Not really,” Jiang Baimian replied with a smile. “Our first mission was only about a month. I forgot about the details, but it wasn’t long.”

She smiled and was filled with the relaxed feeling of returning home from the company. After passing the safety inspection, the Old Task Force went through various procedures and returned to Room 14 on the 647th floor.

“I have to change the game.” Shang Jianyao took out his laptop, sat up straight, and thought about the serious question of what to change.

During this period of time, he had been obsessed with entering the Sea of Origins daily to play games for Xiaochong to ‘see.’ He stopped exploring new rooms.

Such attempts couldn’t do without serious preparation. Long Yuehong didn’t know if he should sympathize with Shang Jianyao’s hard work or envy his ‘abuse of public office for personal gain.’

Unfortunately, the rift that represented Xiaochong showed no reaction.

Jiang Baimian glanced at Shang Jianyao. “It’s just your first day back; there’s no need to keep thinking about work. Get some rest. We’ll talk tomorrow. Why don’t I give you two more days

off?”

She acted like she usually did when she returned to the company after finishing a mission.

“Aren’t we still waiting for the test results?” Shang Jianyao said with bright eyes. “I plan on playing racing games.” “What’s the reason?” Jiang Baimian asked curiously.

Shang Jianyao replied smugly, “We can race in reality, but Xiaochong can’t...”

At this point, he laughed. “Because he’s too short to reach the pedal. Hahaha!”

If I were Xiaochong, I would definitely make a good friend like you use the bathroom once an hour. There will be no exception even in the dead of the night! Long Yuehong criticized inwardly.

Shang Jianyao continued, "Therefore, just because we aren't interested in racing games doesn't mean that Xiaochong doesn't like it."

"That makes sense. Go ahead and play until the results are out." Jiang Baimian didn't harp on the topic.

She sat in her team leader's seat and thought about how to write the report for this training session. She also recalled the scene of being watched by Eidolon Nun from time to time.

After three hours, all kinds of tests were done. Long Yuehong, Bai Chen, and Shang Jianyao left the Old Task Force's office one after another.

Jiang Baimian switched on the computer and wrote the report.

At the end of the report, she submitted an application to the higher-ups. She said that the members could head out to carry out missions while the effects of their recent training remained fresh after some preparations.

For this mission, she planned on going to the city ruin where Shang Jianyao's father had last appeared to search for traces of him and his teammates. She also wanted to investigate why a large-scale Heartless outbreak had happened after the New Calendar, causing the city to be destroyed.

After that, the Old Task Force would head to the area mentioned by the Eighth Research Institute captives to search for clues. The Eighth Research Institute commissioner that the Old Task Force had captured in First City had said that the ones sent outfield didn't actually know the Eighth Research Institute's exact location. People would escort them in and out every time, blindfolding them and stuffing their ears the entire time. The Icefield where they released the signal to wait for the escort was the Old Task Force's destination.

After writing the application, Jiang Baimian exhaled silently and continued typing on the keyboard.

"The field participants this time are still me, Shang Jianyao, Bai Chen, and Long Yuehong.

"Bai Chen has a psychological trauma of abandoning her companions because of her past experience. During training, I communicated with her a few times and realized that she's very resistant to such matters. She can't accept the idea of switching to internal affairs for the time being. This can be seen from the fact that she hasn't started preparing for pregnancy since she got married.

Although she will definitely accept the company's mandatory order, as comrades and companions, I still hope that she can lead a healthy life in the future. "And Long Yuehong has indicated that he would stick to Bai Chen's decisions.

"Therefore, I'm requesting special permission to let Bai Chen and Long Yuehong participate in this mission. I'll continue persuading them during this mission. At the same time, I'll let them see that the Old Task Force's mission is indeed about to be completed.

"As long as we can find the Eighth Research Institute's exact location, Shang Jianyao and I will focus on internal affairs in the future. When the time comes, Bai Chen definitely won't resist..."

Using Bai Chen's psychological trauma as an excuse to prevent her and Long Yuehong from staying in Pangu Biology was an explanation that the Old Task Force had discussed on their return trip. Otherwise, according to the rules, they didn't have to go out on missions as newlyweds.

Jiang Baimian had previously specially mentioned to Deputy Minister Xenny that she wanted them to become internal agents and lead a stable life. Once she changed her mind out of the blue, it was very easy for the higher-ups to have the idea that something abnormal had happened.

Under normal circumstances, having these thoughts surface didn't matter, but the Old Task Force couldn't undergo an investigation! Therefore, they discussed and believed that there had to be a reasonable reason.

Back then, Bai Chen had said that she originally wanted to stay in the team and wait for the last mission to end. The reason was already there, so there was no need to find another one.

After drafting the report, Jiang Baimian gently leaned back in her chair and pinched her temples.

She had to admit that Shang Jianyao's hiding the truth and only revealing the matter during training was very meaningful.

She suspected that in the first month after the two of them had their memories deleted, the company's corresponding Awakened often came to 'examine the brains of the team members to prevent any accidents. Back then, apart from Shang Jianyao, the other three didn't know a thing.

As for Shang Jianyao, the one who abhorred evil was most likely hiding in Xiaochong's rift with the corresponding memories.

Today, Jiang Baimian believed that the company should've already slacked off in this regard. After all, it was impossible for them to treat it as endemic. Furthermore, if the corresponding Awakened frequently used their abilities on the Old Task Force, they would definitely expose their existence.

With Shang Jianyao and the others' strength, it was impossible for them not to notice all this while.

But even so, Jiang Baimian still made Long Yuehong and Bai Chen recall the scene of Eidolon Nun's gaze whenever they remembered to.

After calming down her indescribable emotions, she submitted the report.

495th floor, Zone C, Room 11, Long Yuehong's parents' house.

After dinner, everyone sat in different spots to watch an Old World entertainment program.

Long Yuehong deliberated for a moment and spoke before Gu Hong and Long Dayong could. "Mom, Dad, Little White and I might have to go outfield in the near future."

Gu Hong's eyes widened. "You guys just got married and haven't even had children. How can you go outfield? That doesn't make sense!" She looked like she wanted to reason with Long Yuehong and Bai Chen's immediate superior, Jiang Baimian.

Long Yuehong's eyes stung slightly as he shook his head at Bai Chen, indicating for her not to speak and for him to handle it himself. He forced a smile and pretended to explain, "Haven't we been to the surface many times? We also know many friends and have done some things. I think we should make another trip and bid farewell to the past to wrap things up. Only then can we be at ease when we transfer to internal affairs."

Long Dayong nodded slightly, and Gu Hong came to a realization. "It's no wonder you haven't had children after so long. So you want to go out again." This is all Shang Jianyao's fault... Long Yuehong muttered inwardly. Bai Chen took the initiative to respond. "Yes, we can prepare for pregnancy when we return."

Upon hearing this, Gu Hong's expression relaxed as she smiled. "It shouldn't be dangerous to meet friends, right?"

“It’s fine,” Bai Chen replied on Long Yuehong’s behalf, preventing him from showing any hesitation.

Gu Hong and Long Dayong heaved a sigh of relief.

“Good evening, everyone. I’m Newspoint broadcaster, Hou Yi. It’s 8 p.m. now...” Shang Jianyao sat in the Rec Center. As he listened to the familiar, slightly childlike, and sweet voice on the radio, he quietly watched his neighbors play cards, chess, and chat. People came and went.

His expression was calm and focused.

Chapter 792 Ahead

On a weekend night, Room 12 of the 349th floor’s Zone C.

Jiang Baimian and her family sat around the dining table and enjoyed some leisure time after dinner.

Her nephew and niece worshiped her, who had always traveled far, and had all kinds of questions for her. From time to time, they would throw strange questions in an attempt to obtain an answer.

Upon seeing their usually smart and resourceful daughter stammering from two children’s questions, Jiang Wenfeng and Xue Sumei unconsciously smiled as if they could already see what Jiang Baimian would be like after her marriage.

Jiang Dening and his wife were happy that they didn’t have to deal with the young handfuls for the time being and pretended not to receive their sister’s pleading gaze.

Jiang Baimian quickly took the opportunity to look at her father and pretended to ask casually, “Dad, do you think the company will move to the surface one day?”

Jiang Wenfeng was stunned for a moment before he sighed slightly. “Although I don’t see the corresponding signs yet, and although the Indoor Ecosystem Zone has become increasingly perfected over the years and has formed a real cycle, and the cost of living for employees has reduced, making the burden more bearable, I have a nagging feeling that the company’s core will return to the surface sooner or later, leaving only some highly confidential projects in the building.

“You and your children still have to live under the blue sky and enjoy the natural breeze.”

As a member of management and a scientist in agricultural research and cotton enhancement, Jiang Wenfeng had been to the surface many times. After all, some wild species could bring sufficient benefits. Therefore, he was especially regretful that his wife, son, grandson, and granddaughter still didn't have the chance. He also didn't want his descendants to be trapped in Pangu Biology's underground building forever and never see the sun.

If it weren't for the fact that Jiang Baimian's current job was too dangerous, Jiang Wenfeng would've supported her not to transfer internally, allowing her to still head aboveground from time to time.

“Auntie, Auntie, what's the smell of natural wind?” the two children asked Jiang Baimian with widened eyes after hearing their grandfather's words.

For some reason, the scene of the Old Task Force's first trip to the Ashlands flashed across Jiang Baimian's mind. She recalled Shang Jianyao's words: “Smells like fresh shit.”

Jiang Baimian-who had entertained the children for a long time-felt more exhausted than dealing with Shang Jianyao. It was harder than when out executing missions. Therefore, she immediately washed up and went to bed after sending her brother's family of four off.

But as a disciplined person, she still followed her habits and entered the Sea of Origins. She swam into the distance in the illusory sea formed by light and searched for the next island of fear.

As she swam, Jiang Baimian suddenly saw a black dot appear at the intersection of the sea and sky.

Finally... She couldn't help but sigh with emotion. She then accelerated her paddling and swam toward the island.

As time passed, Jiang Baimian arrived at her destination.

The island had mountains and rivers covered in green, making it inexplicably familiar.

Thanks to the fact that being on the Sea of Origins's island of fear would only result in mental exhaustion and a forced exit without leaving behind any repercussions even if she encountered redoubtable dangers, Jiang Baimian propped herself up with her hands and gently lifted herself onto the island.

She circled the edge of the island's mountain for a while and saw a path that led into the mountain.

Jiang Baimian—who was sufficiently experienced in this—immediately conjured the Old Task Force's jeep and drove into the mountain along the road.

Such an action was essentially the same as relying on her feet to go over; it would consume a certain amount of mental energy just that one consumed more while the other less. The one that consumed more saved more time.

Jiang Baimian's choice was that her time was more precious, considering how her mind could recover quickly.

After driving for more than ten minutes, Jiang Baimian increasingly found the scenery on both sides familiar. This made her wonder if she had lost her way or if she was trapped in a loop, resulting in her driving down the same path constantly.

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After careful thought, Jiang Baimian finally came to a realization: The reason she found this path familiar was that it was a necessary path used to return to the company from the Blackmarsh Wilderness. As expected, Jiang Baimian saw the silver-white metal door at Pangu Biology's underground building's entrance in just a few minutes.

She couldn't help but mutter, "This psychological trauma is actually the company again..."

Her second island of fear was the empty Pangu Biology underground building. It was actually repeated this time! However, Jiang Baimian found it reasonable despite it being surprising when she recalled that she had spent most of her life in the underground building. Most of her experiences were related to Pangu Biology.

She didn't hesitate to step on the accelerator again and drive the jeep to the silver-white door.

At this moment, Jiang Baimian suddenly saw a string of flames.

She suddenly turned the steering wheel and made the jeep swerve horizontally.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Shells bombarded the area where the vehicle would've passed.

After the bombardment failed, lasers and electromagnetic rounds aimed at the fleeing jeep and fired.

Jiang Baimian floored the accelerator, but a mountain wall was not far away.

She instinctively stepped on the brakes and dodged a wave of attacks. She then unbuckled her seatbelt, pushed open the door, and rolled for cover.

She had just rolled halfway when her body inexplicably turned numb, making it difficult for her to exert any strength. The next second, a red laser shot over and penetrated her body.

Jiang Baimian's face immediately warped. She immediately chose to leave the Sea of Origins.

In the bedroom, on the bed, she opened her eyes and touched her forehead, covered in cold sweat.

The company's guards didn't confirm anything and directly attacked me? Jiang Baimian muttered to herself silently. This means that I subconsciously treat the company as an enemy... This psychological trauma is essentially a result of my suspicion and worries about the company? This shouldn't have been a big deal and won't become a psychological trauma. However, Hey's report worsened this fear...

As these thoughts raced through her mind, Jiang Baimian gradually sorted out her thoughts. She temporarily couldn't think of a way to clear this island of fear.

The hometown in her heart had unknowingly become her psychological trauma.

On Monday morning, Jiang Baimian—who was late—had just walked into the office when she heard Bai Chen say, “Team Leader, Deputy Minister Xenny is looking for you.”

Jiang Baimian nodded thoughtfully. “It seems like she wants to inquire about the application.”

At this moment, Shang Jianyao stood up and volunteered. “Do you need me to lead the way?”

“There’s no need.” Although Jiang Baimian could sense his concern, she wasn’t happy at all.

She thought for a moment and said, “Don’t make it obvious.”

She meant that he shouldn’t quietly follow behind her or use Thought Guidance, making it seem like meeting Deputy Minister Xenny was a very dangerous matter.

Shang Jianyao sighed in disappointment.

After three attempts at entering the deputy minister’s office from different doors, Jiang Baimian finally found her destination.

Upon seeing that she was alone, Xenny heaved a sigh of relief and pointed at the chair opposite the table. “Have a seat.”

Jiang Baimian had just sat down when she asked bluntly, “Minister, what’s the matter?”

Xenny smiled gently. “I was originally worried about which helpers to assign you for the subsequent missions, but you told me that Long Yuehong and Bai Chen could take up the last post.”

“Actually, Shang Jianyao and I are enough.” Jiang Baimian deliberately changed the topic, not wanting to discuss Long Yuehong and Bai Chen.

Xenny shook her head. “If there are too few people, many things will be inconvenient. Yes, with Shang Jianyao’s abilities, he can temporarily find some helpers.” Since this matter had been

resolved, she didn't say anything else. She then asked, "Don't you think it'd be a rush to set off next month? Sticking to the plan, it won't be summer when you reach Icefield. The climate will be quite bad."

Jiang Baimian voiced the clear plan in mind confidently. "I just think it's better to do it earlier than later. It's relatively simple to find the city ruin where Shang Jianyao's father last appeared, but it will definitely take a large amount of time to discover the clues. It's the same for locking onto the Eighth Research Institute's exact location. We have to have sufficient patience to catch the fox's tail.

"Therefore, I'm worried that one summer isn't enough. Compared to Icefield in October September, Icefield in May is relatively milder."

Xenny thought for a moment and nodded slightly. "Then, prepare more winter protection equipment and high-caloric food."

"Yes, Minister!" Jiang Baimian didn't hide her smile.

After that, Xenny asked a few detailed questions and received satisfactory answers.

The Old Task Force's schedule was confirmed.

One day in March, Shang Jianyao and the others drove the jeep out of Pangu Biology's underground building. As fresh air blew in from the window, Jiang Baimian felt her heart broaden.

Upon seeing that the car was a little silent for a long time, with Bai Chen, Long Yuehong, and Shang Jianyao immersed in their own thoughts, she deliberately looked at the driver's seat and casually asked, "Hey, have there been any changes to Xiaochong's rift?"

"No." Shang Jianyao had a look of disappointment.

Jiang Baimian then asked, "Then, has Room 506's owner recently been dreaming?" Shang Jianyao shook his head again. "She seems to have lost the ability to dream. I suspect that she got someone to hypnotize her so that she stops dreaming."

Jiang Baimian thought for a moment and asked, "Which periods have you tried?"

“9:30 p.m., midnight, three in the morning, and six in the morning.” Shang Jianyao didn’t realize that he had been working very hard.

Jiang Baimian fell silent for a moment before saying, “No dreams at night. Either she found a way to control herself from dreaming, or she doesn’t sleep at all.”

“Doesn’t sleep?” Shang Jianyao’s eyes lit up.

Jiang Baimian tersely grunted. “Give afternoon nap time a try in the future.” “Alright!” Shang Jianyao had an excited expression.

Jiang Baimian ended the topic and looked at the rearview mirror. She turned around and smiled at Long Yuehong and Bai Chen in the back row. “I know what’s troubling you, but this will only affect your focus. It won’t make the situation any better or worse.”

“Little Red, just say it,” Shang Jianyao interrupted.

Jiang Baimian glared at him and continued, “In that case, we might as well throw the problem to the back of our minds and seriously complete what’s at hand to see if there’s anything we want.”

Shang Jianyao shouted, “Yes, yes, yes. Listen to music! Listen to music!”

Long Yuehong and Bai Chen looked at each other and nodded. They then said, “Alright.”

“We’ll adjust.”

At this moment, the jeep drove into the wilderness like an arrow, going straight ahead..

Chapter 793: Direction of the Investigation

Weed City, in a rented apartment on South Street.

Shang Jianyao and the others met up with Geneva.

As Jiang Baimian walked to the window, she casually asked, "How's the situation recently?"

As a cold intelligence collector, Geneva replied in a slightly synthetic voice, "Due to the news that war will break out between First City and the Salvation Army within the year, the price of food has increased significantly.

"Weed City is located at the westernmost end of First City's sphere of influence; it's the furthest from the Salvation Army, so the level of panic here isn't that strong. It still maintains a relatively normal and stable state. This has attracted more Ruin Hunters, making Weed City more prosperous than before.

"The nobles here control the land in the form of manors and stockpile a large amount of food..."

Upon hearing Geneva's clear report, Jiang Baimian cast her gaze out the window.

On South Street, there was heavy traffic and many pedestrians. The various shops by the side of the road were open, and business seemed to be good.

This formed a sharp contrast to the bleak and quiet atmosphere after the riot.

After Geneva finished speaking, Jiang Baimian looked at the classic and modern houses opposite her. She turned her body slightly and said to Bai Chen, "Auntie Nan's alley is just opposite. Are you going to pay a visit?"

The Old Task Force didn't stay in Ah Fu's Gun Shop this time because Geneva had chosen the place.

"That's right, that's right." Shang Jianyao agreed first. "You haven't even told Auntie Nan that you're married"

Auntie Nan should be very gratified to know that Little White has a normal family... Long Yuchong immediately felt tempted. He cast a consulting gaze at Bai Chen.

Bai Chen didn't wear a scarf, and the number was no longer on her neck. It had been removed when Bai Chen underwent genetic modification two years ago. It was a matter that nobody paid attention to.

Bai Chen walked to the window and silently stared at it for a while. "No. We are burdened with too many things. Don't implicate Auntie Nan and the others."

"That's true." Long Yuehong nodded immediately.

Shang Jianyao sighed regretfully. "I still want to see how the people taught by An Ruxiang are doing in terms of literacy..."

You probably want to see how those people are doing... Jiang Baimian vaguely guessed Shang Jianyao's thoughts.

She chuckled and said, "There's no need to set such restrictions. We are out on a normal mission. If we don't dare to go places or do anything, that will instead arouse suspicion. Yes, we can't forget our disguises; there's a bounty on our heads."

As wanted criminals of First City, they couldn't act ostentatiously in its sphere of influence.

"That's right." Shang Jianyao clenched his right fist and punched his left palm. "I also want to visit my good brother, Xu Liyan, in Castellan Manor and discuss the Buddhist Dharma with Zen Master Jingnian."

"You mainly want to freeload on food, right?" Jiang Baimian joked.

Shang Jianyao frankly replied, "You can say that."

At this moment, the red glow in Genava's eyes flickered a few times. "Compared to last year's departure, you seem to have many more worries. Did something happen in the company?"

As expected of a smart bot. Its ability to gather information and carry out logical analysis is sufficiently powerful... Jiang Baimian sighed.

Shang Jianyao wasn't too convinced. "Why must something happen in the company? Can't it be that the few of us have a love dispute and are about to splinter off and go at things alone?"

The red glow in Genova's eyes flickered violently for a few seconds before he said, "That's also a possibility, but the probability is only..."

"Stop!" Jiang Baimian stopped the honest robot from having his train of thought led astray by Shang Jianyao.

She sensed her surroundings and deliberated before saying, "So here's the thing—we discovered something not long after we returned to the company..."

She highlighted the series of matters that had been sparked off by the Babymaker talisman.

As Genova listened, his eyes flickered with a red glow as if he was carrying out intense calculations.

"Alright, that's about it." Jiang Baimian looked at Genova and asked in anticipation, "Old Ge, what's your take?"

She had always recognized that artificial intelligence was better than human brains in certain aspects.

Genava replied truthfully, "Frankly speaking, I'm not too surprised that your Big Boss is the Arbiter of Fate. Since First City's uprising involved a New World dispute and was associated with a few Kalendarium, the other large factions of the same status probably can't escape the Kalendarium's influence.

Pangu Biology won't be an exception."

"There are exceptions!" Shang Jianyao immediately retorted. "Mechanical Paradise is an exceptioi

Genava was just about to nod and say that this was because their lifeforms were different and that as a powerful artificial intelligence, the Source Brain couldn't believe in any Kalendaria when Shang Jianyao mocked himself. "Even Omega can be the Life Ritual parish's Doctor of the Church. Why can't the

Source Brain be under some Kalendaria?”

Genava momentarily froze.

Jiang Baimian slowly exhaled. “Old Ge, continue.”

“That’s right, that’s right.” Long Yuehong quickly echoed, and Bai Chen nodded.

Genava returned to normal. “As for the Arbiter of Fate raising employees of Pangu Biology as livestock, I don’t think it’s necessarily true.”

“That’s right! That’s right!” This was the first time Long Yuehong found Old Ge blindingly glorious.

“Why?” Jiang Baimian asked.

Genava replied, “Your internal situation is too normal. It’s so normal that there are almost no signs of you being reared.

“The information you previously gave me indicates that the annual mortality rate in the underground building is clearly lower than the average rate in human settlements like Weed City. It’s close to the Old World’s large cities.

“It can even be said that compared to the Old World before it was destroyed, Pangu Biology only had a few more Heartless outbreaks. The incidence rate is far lower than that in most places in the Ashlands.

“If you are being reared, there must be a goal. I can’t figure out the goal now.”

Jiang Baimian nodded slightly and said, “The incidence rate of the company’s various diseases is also very normal. Yes, the premise is that the data isn’t faked.”

This was an additional harvest from her previous search for cases of cardiac death.

Long Yuehong couldn't help but join in the discussion. "That's right. Big Boss can't be rearing us because 'She' wants to harvest our souls when we die after feeding us well, right?"

He was still inclined to believe that Big Boss was protecting Pangu Biology out of interest or price.

Jiang Baimian tersely grunted. "I've been thinking about it for a long time and have a guess. What do you think is the most valuable thing in the company?"

"The underground building?" Long Yuchong postulated an answer.

"The many employees!" Shang Jianyao had a look of confidence.

"A relatively well-preserved human civilization and sufficiently powerful strength?" Bai Chen deliberated for a few seconds.

"All kinds of biological-related technology, including but not limited to genetic enhancement, genetic modification, biological prosthetic limb, and bionic artificial intelligence armor..." Genava spoke using models and data.

Jiang Baimian nodded. "Yes, since it's called Pangu Biology, the most valuable thing is undoubtedly biological."

"Maybe it's Pangu," Shang Jianyao retorted softly.

Jiang Baimian ignored him. "Coupled with the fact that Master Zhuang's descent also requires a body, the Kalendarium might have to satisfy this premise if they want to walk the Ashlands. They might even have to get a sufficiently compatible body and mind. Without a perfect body, Big Boss might want

to create one through biological technology."

That'd be good... Long Yuehong could completely accept that Big Boss's goal of keeping them as employees was for the company's biological research results.

In any case, this was 'Her' company. The research results theoretically belonged to 'Her:

Yes, as long as 'She' didn't turn hostile after obtaining what 'She' wanted, it didn't matter even if 'She' no longer provided protection.

Clap! Clap! Clap! Shang Jianyao clapped—

Genava moved his metal neck up and down. "I originally wanted to say that the only abnormality with Pangu Biology is that the New Calendar is almost 50 years old. The situation in the Ashlands has stabilized, so why haven't they moved the company's main body back to the surface? Now, I feel that it's

to protect the latest biological research and prevent other Kalendarium from obtaining it."

"There are also many abnormalities. For example, not telling us that Swamp Ruin 1 is Dajiang City," Shang Jianyao argued, taking it to heart.

"That might involve the Kalendarium's struggles." Genava voiced his opinion.

Bai Chen pursed her lips and said, "These are only guesses. If we don't verify them, we will always be on edge. We don't know when the guillotine above our heads will fall."

Jiang Baimian nodded slightly. "Yes, this is also something I've been considering recently, but I'm still at a loss. The only people who know Big Boss's true goal are probably the directors and a few sleeping New World powerhouses. It's impossible to directly kidnap them, right? Ignoring the question of

whether we can defeat them, they will definitely be under Big Boss's watch.

"Old Ge, what do you have in mind?"

Genava gathered all the relevant data, injected them into a model, and quickly did some calculations. After a while, he said, "I screened some information based on what you've told me."

"What information?" Long Yuehong blurted out a question.

The red glow in Genava's eyes flickered twice. "You said that Pangu Biology is related to many Subhuman communities and human settlements. It uses the conditions of providing blessings and hope for recovery to make them volunteers and participate in certain experiments. Can we start from these

experiments conducted on the surface, search for clues, and guess Big Boss's goal?"

Jiang Baimian was stunned for a moment before she revealed a reminiscing expression. "I remember Teacher Du Heng mentioning that he encountered the company's project team in Icefield doing experiments on human bodies and minds in cold environments... It's on the way; we can take a look."

"How many years has it been?" Shang Jianyao said sincerely. "That experiment must've ended years ago."

Jiang Baimian didn't mind. "I'm just saying. In short, Old Ge's suggestion is very good. What a faction says isn't important; what's important is what it has done. We might indeed discover something by looking into the surface experiments carried out by the company."

With a direction in mind, Jiang Baimian exhaled in relief and said to Shang Jianyao, "You guys have the next few days off. Apart from visiting your friends, there's nothing else. You can try to see if you can capture the dream of the person in Room 506 during afternoon naps."

Chapter 794: Requesting Help

After lunch, Shang Jianyao lay on the bed early.

He entered the Mind Corridor and eagerly opened Room 506's door.

It was dark inside, and there seemed to be an ocean hidden deep within.

Shang Jianyao knew that it represented the room owner's Sea of Origins, which was also her mind world and the source of her consciousness. As long as he could clear the danger-filled darkness, he could reach there and directly speak to the room owner.

But due to the other party knowing the secret that involved a Kalendaria, the Shang Jianyaos temporarily decided not to take the risk every time they voted.

The appearance of this scene also meant that the room owner wasn't dreaming.

“Sorry to disturb you. I'll come back later.” Shang Jianyao politely left the room and closed the vermilion wooden door. He then went to his Sea of Origins and played a round of games before returning to Room 506 on schedule.

As the brass handle twisted, the vermilion door opened. Shang Jianyao took a step forward and saw the blue sky.

His eyes lit up as he muttered to himself excitedly, “I've finally caught you!”

He 'bumped into' the dream of Room 506's owner again.

Without hesitation, Shang Jianyao walked under the blue sky.

The environment around him changed.

Bright sunlight scattered down, illuminating the glass windows that were bright and clean. It also illuminated the air with countless motes of dust.

Outside the window was a busy street. It resembled the Fourth Research Institute's residential area, but it was limited to one corner.

Many shops on the street had their doors closed and stalls set up outside. It was the complete opposite of the situation in Weed City and other human settlements.

At this moment, a blurry female figure was sitting in a rocking chair by the window. She held a book in her hand and bathed in the warm and bright sunlight. From time to time, she would take a sip of coffee and sigh. “This is what life should be. This is life!”

Shang Jianyao couldn't be bothered to size up the dream's composition carefully. He thought for a moment and transformed into the cyborg monk, Zen Master Redemption. He planned on communicating with the room owner in a calm and benevolent manner to induce her to reveal the corresponding

secrets.

Zen Master Redemption—who had put on a monk robe and a kasaya—had a red glow in his eyes as he walked toward the blurry female figure in front of the window.

Zen Master Redemption pressed his palms together and greeted, “Namo Annutara~Samyak-Subhuti. Patron, how have you been?”

Perhaps it was because the female figure's face was hazy in the dream and occasionally changed, he couldn't identify her.

She looked at Zen Master Redemption—who was in a cyborg monk state. Not only was she not surprised or afraid, but she ended up asking curiously, “Robots can also believe in the Kalendaria and become monks?”

“Don't you know about the Monks Conclave?” Shang Jianyao quickly changed the topic.

The female figure chuckled. “But a mechanical monk is essentially still human.”

“Robots are also humans,” Zen Master Redemption explained calmly.

The female figure came to a realization. “You're a fanatic—the kind of robot that believes itself to be human.”

“I'm from the Redemptionists,” the cyborg monk replied truthfully.

The female figure thought for a few seconds and waved her hand. “Forget it, forget it. Say whatever you want. Don't hold me up from my suntan.”

Shang Jianyao recalled his goal and asked as Zen Master Redemption, “I have something to ask you.”

The blurry female figure said without turning her head, “I’m not sure. I don’t know. Find someone else.”

“I can pay.” Zen Master Redemption didn’t give up.

The blurry female figure joked, “If you were a handsome man, I would be willing to consider it. As a robot, forget it.”

“You look down on robots!?” Shang Jianyao—who valued relationships—questioned angrily.

His body changed from a cyborg monk to a human. He then stroked his chin and, without receiving permission, directly asked, “Why do the Kalendarium want to rear humans?”

The blurry female figure suddenly froze. She then slowly turned around and looked at Shang Jianyao.

The next second, she let out a sharp cry. “Ah! Don’t come over!”

As her voice echoed, the entire dreamscape quickly shattered.

Tarnan, Serene Dream Hotel, in a very girlish-looking bedroom.

The lady boss, Aynor, sat up. “Damn it! You don’t even let me off during the day!”

After cursing a few times, she muttered to herself worriedly, “What should I do? Why is that fellow constantly haunting me? He hasn’t given up even now. My biological clock has been screwed up all this time! He has already discovered my countermeasure. The method of staying up late at night and

sleeping during the day won’t work...”

Aynor hesitated for a long time before she finally mustered her courage and planned on going out to get help. After all, compared to revealing the secret and facing the cruel reality, she would rather swallow her pride and pretend to be thick-skinned.

To be honest, if the haunting fellow was willing, she would've sincerely begged him to let her off.

Aynor put on her colorful clothes, instructed the hired hotel receptionist, and went straight to Nanke Convent.

Her target was Abbess Zhou Yue. This Daoist priestess couldn't remember other people's faces, so she naturally became Aynor's first choice.

'When the time came, as long as she didn't say her name or casually fabricate an alias, Zhou Yue wouldn't remember who had come to her for help amidst snot and tears.

This perfectly matched Aynor's requirements.

She arrived at Nanke Convent. Through the open brown wooden door and the impluvium, the lady boss entered the hall pavilion with the cloud patterns.

At this moment, many believers were sitting on rows of black recliners, facing the shrine with the dragon symbol and praying with their eyes closed.

Zhou Yue stood in front of the symbols formed by shattered mirrors. She was still wearing the white robe that had the Old World's classical style. A length of hemp rope was tied to her waist, and her black hair draped down her shoulders.

Aynor struggled for a while before walking in front of Zhou Yue and shouting, "Abbess Zhou."

"What's the matter?" Zhou Yue asked with a smile.

Aynor didn't know who the other party thought her to be as she heaved a sigh of relief and said, "I would like your Church's help."

Zhou Yue widened her eyes slightly. “Madam Aynor, you’re in trouble? It’s no wonder you haven’t appeared recently.”

“...” Aynor was stunned for a moment. “How did you recognize me?”

Although she didn’t disguise herself, she believed she didn’t need to disguise herself when facing Zhou Yue.

Zhou Yue frankly replied, “In all of Tarnan, only you would wear such clothes.”

Aynor looked down at her abnormally beautiful dress and indignantly said, “What if an outsider comes to Tarnan today and happens to like wearing such clothes?”

“Then, I’d just make a mistake recognizing them. It’s not like I haven’t recognized wrongly before...” Zhou Yue muttered softly. She then spread her hands, raised her body slightly, and looked at a certain spot in the void. “Everything is but a dream. Why so serious?”

Aynor was speechless.

“Madam Aynor, what trouble did you encounter?” Zhou Yue asked in concern.

At this point, Aynor could only facepalm and say, “Does your Church nurture Awakened who are good at Hypnosis? I’ve been having nightmares recently, and I hope I won’t have nightmares again.”

She was still unwilling to tell the truth.

Zhou Yue didn’t mind. “I’ll help you ask.”

She did as she said. She left the hall where the shrine was and entered her room to send a telegram to headquarters.

Before long, Zhou Yue came out and went straight to the one in a colorful and clean dress. “Our Clam Dragon Church has similar Awakened, but it might take more than ten days or even a month for them to arrive.”

“That’s quite some time…” Aynor frowned.

Zhou Yue consoled her. “It’s just a nightmare, nothing serious. Everything is but a dream. Why so serious?”

Aynor’s face collapsed as she gritted her teeth and said, “That’s right; it’s only a nightmare. Let it be. It’s not like anyone will die!”

He deserves it if he can get anything out of me. If he can’t, I’ll pretend that nothing happened!

In Weed City, Shang Jianyao excitedly told Jiang Baimian and the others about his encounter.

“In other words, the reason the person in Room 506 doesn’t dream at night is that she only sleeps during the day?” Long Yuehong asked in surprise.

Shang Jianyao sighed in amazement. “That should be the case. What a talent; it actually stumped me for months!”

Jiang Baimian smiled. “However, this method doesn’t solve the problem at its root; it can’t prevent the inevitable forever. Hey, try it during the day and night from now on. Use your abilities and try to obtain the answer as soon as possible.”

“Alright!” Shang Jianyao replied, his eyes lighting up.

In the afternoon, the Old Task Force left their rented apartment, walked across the street, and circled to the alley where Ah Fu’s Gun Shop was.

The shop was very quiet. Only the boss, Ah Fu, was fully focused on repairing the second-hand firearms he had received.

Upon sensing someone entering the shop, he looked up at the door.

As Bai Chen and the others had disguised themselves well, Ah Fu didn’t recognize them for a moment. He stood up and asked, “What guns would you like to buy?”

“Where’s Auntie Nan?” Bai Chen asked bluntly.

Ah Fu was Auntie Nan’s younger brother.

Ah Fu finally recognized the Old Task Force, and his expression immediately turned sad.. “At the end of last year, my sister—my sister contracted the Heartless disease

Chapter 795: Verification

Auntie Nan contracted the Heartless disease? Long Yuehong blurted out, “How can that be?”

How did the lady—who always tidied herself up and had her hair tied into a bun—suddenly contract the Heartless disease and bid farewell to the world?

But Long Yuehong fell silent again when he recalled that the Rec Center’s PIC on the 495th floor of the underground building—Chen Xianyu—had also contracted the Heartless disease without any warning.

‘This was the Heartless disease. It could happen to anyone, regardless of whether they had experienced suffering or if they had just seen hope in life.

Bai Chen was no stranger to such matters, so she didn’t show any signs of disbelief.

She fell silent for a moment before asking in a slightly deep voice, “She was then eliminated?”

Sigh, Little White asking this question means that she still has some hope... Jiang Baimian didn’t say a word. At the same time, she used her left hand to stop Shang Jianyao from interjecting.

“That’s right.” Ah Fu let out a long sigh. “The city defense forces came to deal with her.”

This was a choice that every faction would definitely make when facing Heartless patients.

Bai Chen pursed her lips and said, "That's good too."

The consensus among humans toward Heartless was that they had to clean up as soon as possible to prevent themselves and other normal people from being harmed. They also had to cut off any possible infection routes or capture them by force and send them to the laboratory to contribute to humanity's future treatment of the Heartless disease.

Compared to the latter, Bai Chen could accept Auntie Nan entering an eternal slumber after some short pain.

She paused and asked, "Where is Auntie Nan buried?"

"The cemetery outside the city." Ah Fu smiled bitterly. "To be safe, I paid to have her cremated."

'Whether it was a cremation or a burial, money was needed. The former cost energy, and the latter occupied land close to the city. There was always a team of soldiers guarding the area.

If an ordinary family had someone pass away, they would often bring them into the wilderness and find a place to dig a hole to bury them. However, this might not necessarily allow the dead to rest in peace. Be it wilderness nomads or wandering beasts, they were all real and potential threats.

Bai Chen nodded. "Take us there tomorrow."

"Alright." Ah Fu agreed.

Shang Jianyao could finally speak. He asked in concern, "How are Auntie Nan's girls now? Where's An Ruxiang? What about the people who pooled money to hire her as a teacher?"

He asked three questions in one breath.

Ah Fu thought for a moment and said, "Ms. An finished teaching three classes here and later went to another courtyard to be a temporary teacher. She's always being hired.

“Sister Gu and the ladies in the courtyard can read. Through the Hunter’s Guild, most of them have found new jobs. Some of them lead a good life, and some have relatively lower income. However, they can also upkeep themselves; they don’t have to be as worried as before. They don’t know when they will

contract a sexual disease or encounter guests with mental problems.

“Only a small number of people aren’t that lucky. They themselves or their families fell sick, had something happen, and are in debt. They still have to take jobs occasionally to replenish their family supplies.

“Over the past few years, the literate ones are able to feed their families in the city as long as they are willing to work.”

First, many people died in that uprising. Second, Weed City has been the most stable place in the past few years compared to other places in First City... Jiang Baimian nodded indiscernibly.

Shang Jianyao oohed and aahed a few times and was visibly happy.

Upon seeing this, Ah Fu said, “Perhaps it’s because of the heavens’ blessings. A few ladies didn’t know better and were mesmerized by the gang members who specialize in living off women. They led a life worse than death and were just short of throwing themselves to doom. In the end, those gang

members either died in a gunfight or were shot in the back; none of them ended up well. It seems to be the case for those who set up traps and coerce the girls.”

Jiang Baimian was stunned for a moment before she recalled something.

An Ruxiang’s previous job before she was a temporary teacher was a Ruin Hunter, and the job before that was as an assassin.

Clap! Clap! Clap! Shang Jianyao clapped—

He smiled and said, “How nice!”

That's right. How nice... Jiang Baimian was abnormally gratified.

She took the initiative to say to Ah Fu, "Ask around later where Teacher An holds her class. We haven't seen her in a long time."

"Alright." Ah Fu knew that this group of people had known An Ruxiang long ago—earlier than the ladies in the courtyard.

South Street, in the rented apartment.

Jiang Baimian casually found a seat and sat down. She thoughtfully commented, "Why does Weed City have the Heartless disease?"

"Why can't Weed City have the Heartless disease?" Long Yuehong asked in confusion.

The Heartless disease might appear in any spot in the Ashlands with humans. Furthermore, there had been a few Heartless outbreaks every year since Weed City was established. The number of Heartless outbreaks was more or less of varying sizes. It was never a utopia.

Jiang Baimian looked around and said, "Our previous investigation results showed that the Heartless disease is related to the New World. It leaks to the Ashlands through all kinds of nodes and randomly infects the surrounding humans, but Weed City doesn't seem to be a place with a New World node.

Yes, many human settlements don't seem to be the case either; yet, there's still the Heartless disease."

They had previously denied the theory that the spread of the Heartless disease was a fluctuation produced by a collision of powers in the New World. Now, they had encountered an incomprehensible situation.

"That's right... This is contradictory to our guess." Long Yuehong nodded slightly.

As he spoke, he saw the nuclear warhead that Geneva had placed in a corner of the room from the corner of his eye.

He felt strange chatting beside such an item, Although it was definitely safe and impossible to have it randomly explode, Long Yuehong felt like being in its company was tantamount to living with a tiger when he thought of its rumored power.

Bai Chen thought for a moment before saying, “The New World’s nodes can be either human or object. The former belongs to a relatively large faction or is sleeping in a secret place. It shouldn’t have anything to do with Weed City, but the latter might be everywhere and of various sizes. The effects are

also different.”

She meant that although there were no New World powerhouses in Weed City, it didn’t mean that there were no hidden and very small New World nodes here.

Jiang Baimian tersely grunted. “After paying our respects to Auntie Nan tomorrow, I’ll get Hey to wear the Six Senses Beads or the Life Angel necklace. We’ll wander the city and search for a New World node.

“If there is, we’ll use a high-voltage electric current to stimulate and destroy it so that this area won’t have to worry about the Heartless disease for a long time. If there isn’t, we might have to establish a new guess regarding the source and transmission mechanism of the Heartless disease or alter it.”

Jiang Baimian wanted to say, “In any case, Weed City isn’t large. I’ll plan the route. With Hey’s current perception range and his ‘friendship’ with Xu Liyan, it won’t be difficult to do a carpet search.” However, her good idea was caught in difficult circumstances; she could only look at Geneva.

“Old Ge, work with Hey’s perception range to plan a route and try to cover every spot.”

“No problem.” Geneva didn’t find it a problem at all.

“When are we visiting my good brother, Xu Liyan?” Shang Jianyao asked.

Xu Liyan might not want to see you... Jiang Baimian muttered and replied, "Without the Castellan's warrant, we won't be able to go to many places, much less search through your senses. Therefore, the first thing we have to do after paying our respects to Auntie Nan tomorrow to find your good brother,

Xu Liyan."

Although Shang Jianyao could make friends and come and go freely in a small place like Weed City with his level and abilities, Jiang Baimian felt that there was no need to do so since there was a better and more convenient method.

Who knew if there were any dangerous parishes lurking here or which unfriendly Kalendaria they worshiped!

"The chef in Castellan Manor is rather good," Shang Jianyao commented objectively. He then suggested, "Let's go to Castellan Manor first before paying our respects to Auntie Nan."

Hey, can you not be so pragmatic... Before Long Yuehong could say that, Shang Jianyao added, "This way, we can pack some delicious food and drink for Auntie Nan!"

Bai Chen pursed her lips and said, "This will only be a waste, right?"

Not really," Jiang Baimian said. "In the Old World's customs, the food used for rites is distributed to family and friends after the ritual is completed."

Bai Chen tersely acknowledged it and nodded.

After discussing this matter, Jiang Baimian turned to Shang Jianyao and asked, "When do you plan on going to Room 506 again?"

Shang Jianyao said impatiently, "Now! I plan on going once every two hours in the future. I don't believe she won't sleep! After entering her dream, I'm prepared to use my abilities to see if it's effective."

“Okay.” Jiang Baimian thought for a moment and said, “We can also observe the room owner’s dream. If our abilities are useless, we can guess where she lives through the dreamscape and what kind of person she is. We can visit her in reality.”

“Alright,” Shang Jianyao agreed readily.

Tarnan, Serene Dream Hotel.

The lady boss, Aynor, sat in front of the laptop. She forced her eyes open and kept saying to herself, “I mustn’t sleep, I mustn’t sleep.”

Chapter 796 Buddhist Dharma

Exchange

The next morning, Jiang Baimian sat beside the nuclear bomb and looked at Shang Jianyao, who had just woken up. She asked in concern, “How was it? Any progress?”

Shang Jianyao yawned. “Nothing- I went to Room 506 every two hours and didn’t encounter a dream. She didn’t sleep at all!” Without waiting for Jiang Baimian and the others to respond, he eagerly added, “I’ll continue during the day. I don’t believe she won’t sleep the entire time!”

Jiang Baimian thoughtfully said, “She might be thinking of another solution.”

Tarnan, Serene Dream Hotel.

The lady boss, Aynor, watched the Old World entertainment on her computer with a haggard expression. Her mind was filled with her comfortable and clean bed.

She drank a mouthful of coffee produced in the northern area of the Linhai Alliance and a mouthful of bitter tea before muttering, “Every day counts...”

She would avoid it for as long as possible!

The Old Task Force’s jeep drove out of the courtyard surrounded by a few houses and headed for South Street according to the plan. This time, Geneva was in charge of driving.

Shang Jianyao sat in the passenger seat. One hand hung limply, and the other held the Life Angel necklace. His eyes were half-closed as he sensed the possible New World nodes around him.

From left to right were Long Yuehong, Bai Chen, and Jiang Baimian. They didn't say a word, afraid that Shang Jianyao's attention would be diverted and that something would go wrong with his perception.

Just like that, the jeep seemed to wander around South Street, East Street, and West Street aimlessly. It entered every alley it could enter.

In places where cars couldn't pass through, Shang Jianyao also completed the 'measurement' with his feet.

When it was almost noon, he sat back in the passenger seat, stretched his right hand that was holding the Life Angel necklace, and said in disappointment, "I didn't discover any New World nodes."

"Yes." Jiang Baimian nodded, her expression normal. "Only North Street remains."

North Street was Castellan Manor, and it was also where the nobles lived. Ordinary people had no way of entering, but this didn't stump the Old Task Force. Even though they had a large bounty on their heads and had no intention of using the help of the servants who were out shopping for Castellan Manor they still easily arrived at their destination with Thought Guidance. They then revealed their identities and met Xu Liyan.

ore

Xu Liyan had clearly gained some weight. He no longer wore old clothes or donned an old-fashioned hairstyle. He wore a casual outfit and had short, refreshing hair, making him look a few years younger. Or rather, his appearance and age finally matched his actual age.

After firmly grasping power, he no longer needed to rely on his appearance to enhance his authority.

Jingnian sat not far from Xu Liyan. His hooded robe revealed a tall body made of black metal bones and various mechanical components. He wore an old yellow monk robe and a tattered red kasaya. The red glow in his eyes was intense.

Xu Liyan looked at Genova—who was wearing a black military uniform—and secretly compared his and Jingnian’s steel bodies. He then retracted his gaze and was in no rush to ask why Shang Jianyao and the others had come. He smiled and said, “You guys did something huge in First City. You actually have a high bounty placed on you by the Hand of Order. This makes me wonder if you played a role in that coup.”

“A role that simply took advantage of the situation.” The honest Shang Jianyao would never lie.

Xu Liyan smiled as if he had expected this. “You guys really interfered.”

Jiang Baimian ‘helped’ Shang Jianyao respond. “That uprising involved many factions and many religious organizations. We suspect that the deities’ will was at work.”

In the Ashlands, when it came to deities, they mostly referred to the Kalendarium.

“Deities’ will.” Xu Liyan frowned slightly.

As a member of this faction and a member of a vassal state, he had sent someone to get a detailed understanding of First City’s uprising. He knew the general sequence of events and wasn’t surprised that religious organizations had participated. However, he didn’t think that it had anything to do with the will of deities.

Although his business partner, the Monks Conclave, sincerely believed in the two Kalendarium-Subhuti and Master Zhuangand always promoted the Pure Lands’ existence, he still didn’t believe that there were any deities.

Of course, he would rather believe it than not when it came to such matters. He wouldn’t lose anything by kneeling. Instead, he might obtain unexpected benefits.

Due to this, he didn’t comment and changed the topic. “Compared to what you did in that chaos, I admire you more for killing the real Father.”

He hated the real Father, who had almost blown him up.

“I’m very satisfied too.” Shang Jianyao revealed a pleased expression.

The honest him then added, “However, the Anti-intellectualism Church still has Shepherd Bouillon, eight Elders—including him—and the Pope above them.”

Xu Liyan’s face twitched.

He forced a smile and said, “Father is already dead. The Anti-intellectualism Church won’t keep eyeing me. I don’t have a deep grudge with them.”

“You do now,” Shang Jianyao reminded. “Huh?” Xu Liyan was clearly confused. Shang Jianyao said sincerely, “We killed the real Father and destroyed the Anti-intellectualism Church’s plot, and you are my good friend and brother.”

I’m not... Xu Liyan subconsciously glanced at the mechanical monk-Jingnian-not far away. He finally rationally realized that compared to the Anti-intellectualism Church which was far away—the ‘good brother’ in front of him was a more realistic threat.

“What are you talking about? The Anti-intellectualism Church doesn’t know that we killed the real Father and that we wrecked many of their plans.” Jiang Baimian interrupted in time and consoled Xu Liyan by reprimanding Shang Jianyao.

Xu Liyan heaved a sigh of relief. “The fact that nothing happened to you after you killed the real Father and resisted the Anti-intellectualism Church up to today means that you are already sufficiently powerful.”

Shang Jianyao was just about to admit it frankly and expose his strength when Jiang Baimian glared at him.

Xu Liyan didn’t continue the topic and asked, “Why are you here?”

“Two things.” Shang Jianyao didn’t stand on ceremony at all. “The first is that we’re investigating if there are any New World nodes in Weed City. We want you to give us a warrant so that we can wander around North Street...”

Without waiting for Shang Jianyao to finish speaking, Xu Liyan asked in confusion, “New World nodes?”

There were all kinds of rumors regarding the New World in the Ashlands. Most people had their own thoughts and hopes for the New World, and Xu Liyan was no exception. However, he had never heard of a New World node.

Jiang Baimian replied before Shang Jianyao could. “I can only say that the New World does exist, but they might not be a good place. The source of the Heartless disease seems to be there. In the Ashlands, there are many nodes of various sizes that don’t allow passage but are connected to the New World. One of our jobs is to eliminate them.”

That’s not the job you guys previously mentioned... Xu Liyan realized that the group in front of him was becoming increasingly mysterious and that the matters involved were becoming increasingly advanced.

The red glow in Jingnian’s eyes flickered a few times as if he wanted to retort, but he held back.

In the Monks Conclave, the New World was equivalent to the Pure Lands.

After spending a while digesting the New World information he had obtained, Xu Liyan asked solemnly, “How do you plan on investigating? Will there be any accidents from removing the New World’s nodes?”

“In theory, no.” Jiang Baimian was experienced and relatively certain about this. “As for the investigation, it’s very simple. We can discover it from a distance with the corresponding equipment and use an Awakened’s perception.”

“We won’t barge into someone else’s house.” Shang Jianyao patted his chest and promised.

Xu Liyan nodded. “Alright, I’ll give you a warrant to freely pass through North Street later.”

He was naturally happy that someone could help eliminate any possible New World nodes that sounded rather dangerous.

Without waiting for the Old Task Force's response, he asked, "What's the second matter?"

Shang Jianyao looked at Jingnian—who was sitting by the side—and smiled. "We want to discuss the Buddhist Dharma with Zen Master Jingnian."

"What do you want to discuss?" Jingnian asked in a synthetic voice.

He didn't refuse. First, he didn't sense any danger. Second, he wanted to see what these people wanted to ask.

Zen Master Redemption Shang Jianyao pressed his palms together and chanted a Buddhist proclamation. "Namo Annutara-Samyak-Subhuti. Zen Master, I want to know when Awakened first appeared in your parish?"

"This includes when you weren't monks yet and hadn't formed a parish," Jiang Baimian added. "I know that such questions involve some of your parish's secrets, but please tell us if it's not too important. We will exchange that with corresponding information that you might be interested in."

Jingnian fell silent for a moment before saying, "When the Old World was destroyed, a few people Awakened. In the subsequent year, people Awakened one after another, but there were very few of them. The difficulty of Awakening decreased when Star Cluster Hall appeared."

Chapter 797 The Difference Between Monks

Although DiMarco's encounter had already indicated that Star Cluster Hall appeared some time after the Old World was destroyed, Jingnian's words were still rather valuable.

First, this confirmed that the Old World's destruction had brought about a batch of human Awakening. Or rather, a few people had Awakened during the Heartless disease outbreak. For example, DiMarco or someone

in the Monks Conclave.

Second, Jingnian mentioned that the difficulty of Awakening had decreased with the appearance of Star Cluster Hall.

This was clearly not random talk. There had to be the corresponding evidence.

Jiang Baimian could even guess why Jingnian said that.

Some of the people in the Monks Conclave—who had previously been unable to Awaken—Awakened after Star Cluster Hall appeared.

“Is that so?” Shang Jianyao came to a realization before he wore a look of disappointment. “Star Cluster Hall already existed when I Awakened, but I couldn’t challenge the highest difficulty.”

He then curiously asked, “Zen Master, I know that many people in your parish only uploaded their consciousness after they Awakened and became mechanical monks. Then, did any original Eternals Awaken?”

The red light in Jingnian’s eyes flickered a few times. “Yes, but very few. In terms of ratio, it’s clearly lower than that of non-Eternals.”

“Why?” Shang Jianyao looked like he wanted to defend the mechanical monks.

Jingnian’s metal neck rotated from side to side, indicating that he didn’t know the reason either.

Jiang Baimian pondered for a moment before inquiring, “Is there any difference in the Awakening of an Eternal from an ordinary person’s Awakening?”

“There’s none,” Jingnian replied without hesitation.

Jiang Baimian thought for a few seconds and said, “Are there any other changes that came with it?”

The red glow in the mechanical monk’s eyes instantly intensified. After a while, he replied, “For monks that Awakened after uploading their consciousness, the corresponding bionic chip on the body will show a certain

level of chaos during the Awakening. It will take dozens of minutes for it to restore compatibility.”

“Why is that?” Shang Jianyao voiced everyone’s thoughts.

“We aren’t sure either. We’ve been doing the corresponding research,” Jingnian said as he chanted a Buddhist proclamation. “Namo Annutara-Samyak-Subhuti.”

Monks are doing research on chips and mechanical bodies? As a folklore scholar who knew the Old World well, Jiang Baimian found such matters rather ridiculous. But looking at Jingnian’s tall and muscular body made

of black metal, she felt that it couldn’t be far from the truth.

“Shouldn’t you guys study the Buddhist Dharma every day?” the honest Shang Jianyao asked on Zen Master Redemption’s behalf.

Jingnian replied in a synthetic voice, “A large number of people in the parish are researchers who participated in the Eternal project back then. Apart from studying the Buddhist Dharma, they will also find something

else to do for themselves to enrich their long lives.”

Upon hearing this, Long Yuehong couldn’t help but ask, “Can one really achieve eternal life after uploading one’s consciousness? Without considering the flaws in this technology and the serious mental problems it will

bring.”

Jingnian fell silent.

Long Yuehong immediately felt embarrassed. “If this involves the secret of your parish, forget that I asked.”

It wasn't easy to catch a mechanical monk that he could communicate with. He couldn't help but want to verify the widely circulated information in the Ashlands that was written in Pangu Biology's textbooks.

It was clearly impossible for the Old Task Force to calmly discuss such matters with the previously encountered Jingfa.

Jingnian slowly said, "It's not only mental problems. We later realized that the corresponding consciousness would weaken as the number of uploads increased. The passage of time will also bring about similar changes.

"Those researchers have been working hard to find a reason for the past few decades to perfect the Eternal technology. But no matter what, an Eternals life is several times that of a normal person or even more than

ten times. That's sufficient time for us to comprehend the Buddhist Dharma, cultivate ourselves, achieve Phala, and transcend."

This corresponds to the rumors that Eternal technology is far from mature... Jiang Baimian nodded indiscernibly.

Xu Liyan's heart palpitated. He planned on uploading his consciousness and becoming an Eternal after he enjoyed the bustle of the world after the age of 50.

Of course, Jingnian had also told him that when a person's consciousness began to deteriorate, the Eternal technology had a certain risk and failure rate. Therefore, Xu Liyan didn't want to wait until he was in his

seventies or eighties to upload his consciousness.

It was only then that Shang Jianyao seemed to realize that there was a problem with Jingnian's first answer. "Zen Master, why did the difficulty of Awakening decrease with Star Cluster Hall's appearance?"

"We have many examples in this regard." Jingnian only gave the conclusion, not the exact details.

Shang Jianyao tried his best to explain, “I mean, why can Star Cluster Hall bring about a reduction in the Awakening difficulty?”

“This is because Buddha is merciful.” Jingnian—who was wearing a yellow monk robe and a red kasaya—pressed his palms together and said sincerely, “Star Cluster Hall, Sea of Origins, and Mind Corridor are the doors

of convenience that Lokeshvara-Tathagata and Buddha Subhuti created to receive all living beings from the world. They are a path that leads from the sea of suffering to the Pure Lands.”

“Namo Annutara-Samyak-Subhuti.” Zen Master Redemption Shang Jianyao chanted a Buddhist proclamation.

Jingnian glanced at him deeply and said, “Any other questions?”

Jiang Baimian thought for a moment and asked seriously, “Will monks be infected with the Heartless disease?”

A red light flashed and paused. Jingnian replied after a while, “Yes. Although we have already abandoned our mortal coils, we will still suffer all kinds of pain when trapped in the sea of bitterness. Only by attaining Phala

and entering the Pure Lands can we truly transcend.”

As Jiang Baimian nodded solemnly, she stopped Shang Jianyao from saying words like ‘you mechanical monks can’t compare to Old Ge and the other smart bots on this.’

She exhaled and said, “That’s about all our questions. Zen Master, what do you want to ask?”

Jingnian had already prepared a draft and directly asked, “Are you sure the New World exists?”

So you aren’t that confident in the Pure Lands either? Long Yuehong criticized inwardly.

Jiang Baimian sincerely replied, “Yes, we’ve interacted with powerhouses who have entered the New World. We’ve also seen nodes that connect to the New World.”

When have we interacted with New World powerhouses? The only New World powerhouse we've met is Yama Tiger... Uh, does scaring Doctor off or scaring him to death count? Long Yuehong muttered.

"Someone entered the New World? Since they are already in the New World, how do you communicate with them?" Xu Liyan blurted out a series of questions.

This was enough to show his surprise, puzzlement, shock, and curiosity.

"It's not like they can't return." Shang Jianyao had a look that said: "We've only encountered New World powerhouses that have returned."

"They can return?" Jingnian asked in confusion.

Jiang Baimian acutely captured this. "Zen Master, has no accomplished monk from your Monks Conclave reached Phala and entered the Pure Lands?"

She preliminarily confirmed that the paradise the Monks Conclave spoke of was equivalent to the Awakening domain's 'New World.'

"Yes," Jingnian replied with a red glow in his eyes. "However, their bodies have stopped operating. Nobody has returned."

"There's a certain difference between an Eternal and an ordinary person?" Bai Chen didn't understand.

To the New World, Eternals are also relatively special? Jiang Baimian thought for a moment and said, "It's not a secret among the higher-ups of the various large factions that New World powerhouses can return."

Jingnian fell silent. After a while, he asked, "You previously said that the Heartless disease comes from paradise and the New World. Any evidence?"

Jiang Baimian immediately replied, “There’s a certain evidence chain here. We once encountered a sleeping New World powerhouse who couldn’t return. Staying by his side for too long would result in the contracting

of the Heartless disease. This resulted in the destruction of a town...

“We have confirmed from other means that similar New World powerhouses have the same phenomenon within a certain range around them...

“A higher-up from the Salvation Army told us that a New World powerhouse can artificially create the Heartless disease...

“Some of our friends became Heartless because they were attacked by a New World powerhouse...

“In the vicinity of many New World nodes, abnormalities brought about by similar Awakening abilities will appear. Over time, humans will most likely contract the Heartless disease if they can’t distance themselves

from the node...”

Jiang Baimian spoke very vaguely and didn’t mention the exact person or matter. The last sentence was a conclusion obtained from the cruise ship trauma.

Jingnian quietly listened and didn’t say a word. Xu Liyan was secretly speechless, amazed that this group of people had survived after experiencing so many high-level matters.

“Namo Annutara-Samyak-Subhuti.” More than ten seconds later, Jingnian chanted a Buddhist proclamation. “I have no further questions.”

Upon seeing this, Shang Jianyao flipped his wrist and looked at his watch. He then smiled at Xu Liyan. “Is it time for lunch?”

Xu Liyan forced a smile. “I’ve already instructed the chef to cook more.”

—while the Old Task Force entered.

After having their fill and leaving Castellan Manor, the Old Task Force held Xu Liyan's warrant and drove the jeep around the alleys on North Street, hoping that Shang Jianyao's perception zone could cover every

corner.

After an unknown period of time, Shang Jianyao opened his half-closed eyes and said in disappointment, "There's no New World node."

Weed City didn't have a node that was connected to the New World.

Then, where did the Heartless disease here come from? Could it be that the Heartless disease brought about by the return of a New World powerhouse isn't limited to one place based on our previous wave theory?

These two questions flashed across Jiang Baimian and the others' minds at the same time.

Chapter 798 Another Method

Bai Chen—who was sitting in the back row spoke with a guessing tone. "Maybe a New World powerhouse lives in seclusion in Weed City. He sleeps all year round and occasionally returns, or someone with the corresponding items happens to pass by."

The entire Old Task Force had been influenced by the Old World's entertainment, and Bai Chen was no exception.

"It's also possible that some New World nodes can restrain their fluctuations like Awakened and only produce an influence at specific times?" Long Yuehong said. Jiang Baimian slowly shook her head. "Plenty of information and our experiences have proven that the Heartless disease might appear in any small human settlement. It's impossible for New World powerhouses to exist in those places or have people passing by them with the corresponding items, right? "In that case, New World powerhouses would be too run-of-the-mill; they would be equivalent to a mayor or a village chief. Can the company even call itself a large faction without hundreds or thousands of them?"

"No, no, no. At most, they are equivalent to a Rec Center's PIC." Shang Jianyao corrected Jiang Baimian's analogy. He then stroked his chin and said, "There definitely aren't many people with items containing New World nodes. We've only encountered a few after so long after all?"

“New World nodes that can hide themselves are purely a guess. At the very least, we haven’t encountered one yet, nor can we imagine a reason for its existence. Could it be that a New World node is also considered an intelligent creature?” “Why not? You’re discriminating!” the honest Shang Jianyao retorted himself.

At this moment, Genova—who was in charge of driving—had already completed a round of exhaustive searches or an ergodic process. He said in a slightly synthetic voice, “Either the Heartless disease brought about by the return of a New World powerhouse is randomly produced in different places and is essentially a kind of fluctuation, or there are other methods that connect to the New World—other methods besides humans and objects.”

Humans as the connection point were in the form of Awakened at the New World level, while objects as the connection point were all kinds of ‘New World nodes.’

“What is it?” Shang Jianyao asked anxiously.

Humans and objects contain all possibilities. How can there be other methods? Long Yuehong muttered inwardly. “I don’t know either.” Genova moved his metal neck from side to side. “I only analyzed the meaning and extraneous aspects of ‘people’ and ‘objects.’ Combining them doesn’t make a complete set...” His explanation made Long Yuehong dizzy.

“I see.” Shang Jianyao clenched his right fist and punched his left palm. He sighed with emotion with an expression that said: “I completely understand.”

Jiang Baimian nodded. “We don’t have any clues for the time being and can’t find a direction to make an educated guess. There’s no rush for this; we’ll talk about it later. It’s not too early now. Let’s go to Ah Fu and get him to bring us to pay our respects to Auntie Nan.”

“Alright,” Bai Chen was the first to answer.

At 3:30 p.m., in the suburbs north of Weed City.

A quiet cemetery was situated here with a team of soldiers guarding it.

As Ah Fu walked to a corner of the cemetery, he casually introduced the area to the Old Task Force. “Being buried here will cost an additional sum of money every year, or you will have to find two days every month to be a warden here.”

Winter had already passed. Many trees in the cemetery had already budded and turned green. Before long, Jiang Baimian stopped in front of a cemetery. The words ‘Ren Nan’s Tomb’ were carved on the crude stone monument. “There’s no photo.” Shang Jianyao turned to look at Ah Fu.

Ah Fu sighed and said, “It’s been a long time since my sister took a photo.”

He pointed at his neck, implying that Auntie Nan had never taken a photo after she escaped to Weed City as a slave.

First, they didn’t want to waste money. Life wasn’t good. Second, she was mentally resistant to the idea.

As for the previous ones, they had long been lost with the disasters.

Bai Chen didn’t say a word. She put down the crate on her back and took out the box of dishes inside. She then stood up and silently bowed three times.

Upon seeing this, Shang Jianyao pressed his palms together and sighed. “All life is suffering.”

Jiang Baimian suddenly turned her head and glanced at him before gradually revealing a thoughtful expression.

She quickly restrained her expression and bowed three times at Auntie Nan’s tombstone.

After completing the ritual and handing some boxes of dishes to Ah Fu, the Old Task Force walked out of the cemetery.

“Oh right.” Ah Fu recalled something and quickly took two steps forward before catching up. “I asked Teacher An where she lives now and got someone to tell her that you’re here and want to meet her at her place.”

“Yes, where?” Jiang Baimian nodded.

Ah Fu gave an address and walked to the car that belonged to the gun shop alone with the dishes he received.

After returning to the jeep, Jiang Baimian held the passenger seat door with one hand and suddenly said, “I thought of a way to connect to the New World that’s not human or object. Yes, this is still only a guess. There’s no evidence yet.”

“How?” Shang Jianyao—who was in charge of driving—and Long Yuehong, who was in the backseat, asked in unison.

Jiang Baimian pondered for a moment and said, “It’s considered a way that’s both humans and objects. Let’s first make one clear premise: Are the Kalendarium in the New World?”

“Definitely,” Long Yuehong replied with abnormal certainty.

Shang Jianyao immediately had a look of horror. “It’s over. The Kalendarium are going to walk the Ashlands like Xiaochong.”

“But no matter what, most Kalendarium should be in the New World.” Bai Chen helped Long Yuehong fill in the gaps in his previous sentence.

Jiang Baimian ignored this small argument and continued, “Then, is humanity’s faith in the Kalendarium a form of connection to the New World? The Old World has been destroyed for almost 70 years. What I can’t understand is why the rumors of the 13 Kalendarium are so uniform despite the chaos of war and inconvenient transportation. Most people in the Ashlands know about them. Even in the most remote and obscure settlements, there are some people who know of the existence of certain Kalendarium and believe in them to a certain extent.”

Long Yuehong wanted to say, “There’s no such situation in the company. Nobody knows of the Kalendarium’s existence.” But after careful thought, he realized that it didn’t have any grounds.

Ignoring the Security Department’s outfield employees’ understanding of some of the Kalendarium, the Life Ritual and other parishes that had developed in secret, and the fact that the board members and New World powerhouses believed in a Kalendarium, just the fact that Big Boss was equivalent to the Arbiter of Fate made Pangu Biology no different from other settlements in terms of faith.

“There’s a certain possibility for this method.” Genova gave the results of his analysis. Shang Jianyao came to a realization. “The Kalendaria’s believers are another kind of caged livestock? Where there are them, there are invisible New World nodes that cause the spread of the Heartless disease?”

Upon hearing this, the jeep fell silent.

After a few seconds, Genova replied, “It’s indeed possible. This might be why some Kalendarium allow others to recruit believers despite clearly not liking it. To maintain a large number of invisible nodes that connect to the Ashlands?”

Following this train of thought, Bai Chen asked, “What will happen if all these nodes disappear?” Shang Jianyao revealed a terrified expression again. “The disappearance of those nodes means that most humans are completely dead. The remaining few might not be able to maintain the continuation of civilization.”

“I mean, what will happen to the Kalendarium?” Bai Chen quickly expressed her true meaning

In fact, apart from Shang Jianyao, everyone could understand what she wanted to ask.

“I don’t know.” The honest Genova moved his metal neck from side to side.

Jiang Baimian also shook her head. “We aren’t even sure if faith is equivalent to another way to connect to the New World. We have to investigate further carefully.”

She turned to look at Shang Jianyao and asked, “Has Room 506’s owner not had a dream yet?”

“No,” Shang Jianyao said excitedly. “I plan on seeing how many days she can last.”

Tarnan, Serene Dream Hotel.

The lady boss, Aynor, drooped her head a little and almost smashed it on the table.

She suddenly woke up and muttered to herself with a haggard expression, “Hang in there, hang in there...”

In the evening, on the fifth floor of a building on Weed City’s south street.

The Old Task Force came to An Ruxiang’s rented apartment and knocked on the door.

They waited for a while before the door opened.

An Ruxiang wore a dark lady’s jacket. A bluish-black tattoo appeared at the base of her neck, and her face remained expressionless.

She stepped aside and calmly said, “I thought you wouldn’t come until tomorrow.”

The place she lived in wasn’t bad. Half of it was a bedroom, the other half was a living room, and there was an attached kitchen. Only the bathroom was public; one had to go to the end of the corridor. “Wait a minute. I’ll cook a few more dishes.” An Ruxiang pointed at the kitchen.

“We brought our own food. We just need to heat it up.” Shang Jianyao pointed at his tactical backpack. He then walked to the kitchen as if they were familiar with each other. “I’ll do it. Little Red, help. You guys

chat.”

“It’s decided then!” Jiang Baimian replied before An Ruxiang could.

Therefore, Long Yuehong and Shang Jianyao went to the kitchen and got busy. Jiang Baimian, An Ruxiang, and Bai Chen each pulled a chair over and sat down.

“Why do you suddenly want to see me?” An Ruxiang asked. Jiang Baimian looked around and realized that a neatly folded blue and white checkered handkerchief and folded paper were on the bedside table deep in the room. On the coffee table in the living room were a few children’s textbooks from the Old World. She retracted her gaze and smiled with a slightly complicated expression. “This should be the last time we are out on a mission, so we wanted to meet our old friends. Heh heh, I wonder if we still have a chance in the future.”

An Ruxiang nodded slightly. "Marriage, have children, and lead a stable life?"

"Yes." Jiang Baimian pointed at Bai Chen and Long Yuehong, who were at the edge of the kitchen. "The two of them are already married."

An Ruxiang was stunned for a moment before her eyes drooped slightly. "Pretty good."

"It's indeed pretty good. We will slowly let go of the past." Jiang Baimian changed the topic. "You previously said that you were an assassin. You should've been to many places and seen many people, right?" An Ruxiang was rather frank about this. "Yes, I can be considered knowledgeable. What would you like to know?"

Chapter 799: Dream

Jiang Baimian didn't hide anything and directly asked, "You should've seen many religious organizations members, right?"

"I've seen some." An Ruxiang didn't deny it.

Jiang Baimian asked, "Did any of them contract the Heartless disease?"

"Yes," An Ruxiang replied very firmly. "It's no different from an ordinary person contracting the Heartless disease."

Jiang Baimian and Bai Chen looked at each other and deliberated for a moment. "How's the probability of them contracting the Heartless disease compared to ordinary people?"

She wasn't too sure about An Ruxiang's level of culture, so she was prepared to explain what probability was in detail.

However, An Ruxiang didn't return with a question. She did some recalling and said, "It should be lower than an ordinary person's. I've only seen about 20 religious organizations' members contract the Heartless disease, and I often encounter ordinary people turning into Heartless."

This might be the Kalendaria's 'protection'... Jiang Baimian suddenly felt that Shang Jianyao would definitely say that if he were in the living room. If Geneva wasn't watching the car and had followed them up, he would definitely echo Shang Jianyao.

She nodded and thought for a while before saying, "Have you encountered a relatively special scene that involves members of religious organizations?"

An Ruxiang calmly replied, "I'm not sure what you mean by 'specifically.' The rituals of those religious organizations are relatively puzzling. Sometimes, they will party all night. Sometimes, they will dance strange dances in the morning."

This made Jiang Baimian and Bai Chen recall the radio gymnastics exercise of the Paragon Eagle and the Church of Paragon Desire's rave parties.

They were indeed relatively special to ordinary people.

Jiang Baimian deliberated and gave a limited condition. "A relatively special scene related to the Heartless disease."

An Ruxiang thought for a moment and said, "Once, I infiltrated a manor and tried to assassinate its owner. I had already obtained detailed information prior to this and knew that he was a cultist. He would take out his precious idol at 7 every morning and pray on the bedroom balcony.

"Just as I entered a firing position, I saw the person turn into a Heartless in front of the statue. The Kalendaria he worshiped didn't help him avoid misfortune."

"Maybe he committed some sacrilege." Shang Jianyao walked out of the kitchen with two heated dishes.

Jiang Baimian ignored him and asked An Ruxiang, "What did that idol look like?" "There was a mirror embedded in its face. I only remember this characteristic." An Ruxiang glanced at the dishes on the coffee table.

The True Self Church... February's Kalendaria, Dawn... Jiang Baimian nodded indiscernibly. She then smiled and said to An Ruxiang, "It's almost mealtime."

“Try it. It was bought from Castellan Manor.” Shang Jianyao didn’t find it embarrassing at all. Instead, he was rather proud.

He handed the chopsticks to An Ruxiang.

The meal was very lively. Although An Ruxiang didn’t say much and had a relatively cold personality, the Old Task Force was never quiet. It was either Shang Jianyao joking with Long Yuehong or Jiang Baimian stopping this fellow from saying anything inappropriate.

They were just short of bantering.

An Ruxiang didn’t show any disgust. She ate very seriously and listened to the Old Task Force’s conversation from time to time.

After having their fill, Shang Jianyao and the others bade An Ruxiang farewell and returned to the jeep.

In the passenger seat, Jiang Baimian stared at the building and the pedestrians on the street and said, “Well set off for Icefield tomorrow. We’ll head north from the Blackmarsh Wilderness this time to search for clues regarding the company’s experiments.”

After a pause, Jiang Baimian sighed with emotion. “I wonder when we’ll come back to Weed City again...”

Long Yuehong and the others sighed when they heard that.

“As long as you have the strong desire to return here, you will eventually return.” Shang Jianyao didn’t feel much and was filled with firm beliefs.

Jiang Baimian turned her head to glance at him in the driver’s seat. “Remember to do your rounds at 506 and resolve this matter as soon as possible. We mustn’t have your mental state affected on the way.”

She called Shang Jianyao’s visits to Room 506 to see if there were any dreams as one of his rounds.

“Old Ge, you do the driving!” Shang Jianyao couldn’t wait.

Tarnan, Serene Dream Hotel.

The lady boss, Aynor, stood up shakily and walked to the bathroom. She was in a daze and felt like she would faint at any moment.

It’s too torturous not to sleep!

For people with strong wills, they might be able to last a few more days. However, Aynor had never been a strong-willed person.

Upon thinking about the cruel reality of not sleeping for a few days, she félt that having nightmares wasn’t that terrifying.

Even if it really involved that secret, the Kalendaria might not necessarily hear what was said in her dream!

It’s impossible that the Kalendaria has been watching me constantly, right? I usually dream about that past, but nothing has happened... Aynor—who had walked out of the bathroom with difficulty—decided to close her eyes and ignore everything.

Treat it as a normal dream!

As for whether there was that foreign bastard in the dream, how could the person dreaming know?

The ignorant were innocent!

Aynor then pounced on her comfortable bed and pulled the blanket over her.

Deep fatigue instantly rose in her. Without having the time to comfort herself, she fell asleep.

In the Mind Corridor, Shang Jianyao pushed open the door to Room 506 and checked on the room.

He took a step forward and looked at the bedroom illuminated by the starlight. He laughed out loud. “You gave up after a few days?”

The smug Shang Jianyao immediately entered the dream.

He realized that a female figure was lying on the bed in the bedroom. She was wrapped in a blanket and sleeping soundly.

On the corresponding ceiling, a figure hung from a chandelier and gently swayed. Figures were also suspected to be moving in every corner of the room.

“A ghost story-like nightmare?” Shang Jianyao excitedly walked over, laid on the ground, and looked under the bed.

There was indeed a pale corpse lying there. Its face was swollen, and its eyes were bulging.

After looking at each other for a few seconds, Shang Jianyao stood up in disappointment. “What a lack of creativity.”

He sat by the bed and nudged the female figure wrapped in a blanket. “Wake up, wake up!”

The female figure woke up in a daze and was shocked by the figure by the bed. “Ah!”

Amidst her screams, she suddenly sat up, hugged the blanket, and shrunk to the bedhead. “Who are you?”

Shang Jianyao energetically pointed at the corpse on the chandelier and said, “Have you forgotten? I’m the exorcist you hired.”

“Ghost!” The blurry female figure shouted for a while before asking in fear, ‘Il-is he still alive? Can he still move?’

Shang Jianyao smiled. “I’ve already suppressed him. We’ve known each other for many years and have become good friends. I won’t lie to you...”

The female figure clearly heaved a sigh of relief. In the dream, she couldn't think clearly and couldn't remember if she really knew such a person.

Shang Jianyao chatted with her until he was almost mentally exhausted before leaving the room.

Upon seeing him open his eyes and sit up as if in thought, Jiang Baimian asked in concern, "Any results?"

"No, I forgot to ask," Shang Jianyao replied very frankly. "I suspect that I was hit by the room owner's ability in the dream."

"Why do you say that?" Jiang Baimian sat up as well.

Shang Jianyao recalled and said, "She should've activated her abilities when she let out the first 'ah.' I felt like I had become rather arrogant. I clearly had the chance to use Thought Guidance, but I had to weave a story and try to persuade her normally. In the end, I couldn't dispel her vigilance."

"It's very normal to be affected in other people's dreams," Jiang Baimian evaluated truthfully, "However, this shouldn't be a big problem because she's almost unconscious in a dream. You can think, plan, and be sufficiently clear-headed."

If this couldn't settle the room owner, Jiang Baimian would suggest Shang Jianyao go to the Sea of Origins to see if he had split out a personality with lower intelligence than the rash Shang Jianyao.

"That makes sense!" Shang Jianyao clenched his right fist and punched his left palm. He then stroked his chin and said, "Actually, being unconscious is even more dangerous. Perhaps she will simulate the dangerous things she had encountered in the past due to her agitation. Due to this, anything can happen in her dream. I'm really afraid of facing the Kalendarium."

Jiang Baimian nodded. "My suggestion is to make a preemptive strike.

"Get some sleep to replenish your energy. Try again at dawn. She hasn't slept for so long, so she definitely won't wake up in less than half a day."

Shang Jianyao followed suit.

After dawn, he went to Room 506 every 30 minutes, for a total of three times. Finally, he encountered the person dreaming again.

This time, the blurry female figure was standing in the Fourth Research Institute's residential area, taking in the fresh morning air. There was nobody around.

Shang Jianyao immediately greeted, "Long time no see."

"Long time no see." The female figure was a little confused.

As Shang Jianyao approached, he smiled. "We've met many times..."

In the dream.

"We can be considered to have sufficient friendship..."

A unilateral relationship.

"I didn't expect to meet you here again. Are you also from the Fourth Research Institute?"

At this point, Shang Jianyao completed Thought Guidance.

"That's right..." The woman's voice sounded a little ethereal.

Shang Jianyao looked around and took the initiative to say, "They seem to be dead."

"Sigh." The woman let out a long sigh.

Shang Jianyao then asked, "What do you think of the Kalendarium?"

The female figure was stunned. She looked around and suppressed her voice.

“Don’t tell anyone. ‘They’ are secretly eating people!”

Chapter 800 Eating People

“Eating people?” Shang Jianyao instantly became excited.

He said in a tone as though he was exchanging countersigns, “Is it written all over that people are eaten?”

The female figure glanced at him and asked in confusion, “What are you talking about?”

Shang Jianyao tersely grunted and asked seriously, “How do you know that ‘They’ are secretly eating people?”

Before the female figure could speak, the Fourth Research Institute’s residential area suddenly turned dark.

The sun in the sky was covered by dark clouds that had drifted over at some point in time. The air around them seemed to welcome the arrival of a storm. It was oppressive and depressing, making it difficult to breathe properly. It was abnormally uncomfortable.

The female figure clearly trembled a few times and said, “There was a sudden weakening. Then, everyone died—all of them!”

Her voice revealed indescribable fear and some form of hysteria.

Her answer was also somewhat incompatible with Shang Jianyao’s question. It was as if she had suffered a corresponding agitation, producing a certain connection but not a seamless raving.

Shang Jianyao asked curiously, “How did you discover the sudden weakening? Who’s this Kalendaria?”

The female figure looked around and trembled as she replied, “Deep in that room in the laboratory. Been there, always!”

It's very similar to Big Boss... The Shang Jianyao that valued relationships was immediately worried.

He seriously said, "Let's first confirm something. Are you referring to a man, a woman, a deity, or something else?" The female figure looked at Shang Jianyao for a few seconds as if she were looking at a fool. "After chatting for so long, don't you know that we're talking about a Kalendaria?"

"Is that so?" Shang Jianyao suggested, "Why don't I play a song as background music? It doesn't have the right mood to chat like this."

The female figure finally seemed to sense that this fellow was very strange. However, she didn't think too deep into it because this was a dream, so she left it at that.

"I don't want to make it look like a horror film." She rejected Shang Jianyao's suggestion.

Shang Jianyao stroked his chin and steered the topic back on track. "How can you be sure that the Kalendaria was eating humans? There was only a sudden weakening."

"There was normality after everyone died! This happened several times!" The female figure trembled, giving off the feeling that she couldn't stand the cold spring.

Shang Jianyao clapped. "You're amazing-you actually survived after witnessing this! How did you do it? Teach me."

The female figure suddenly froze, and her lips quivered as she recalled something. The entire dreamscape turned deep. The originally existing light instantly retreated into the distance as if it were a world away.

In the darkness, a pair of eyes slowly opened.

Although Shang Jianyao was bold and knowledgeable, he still felt like a basin of cold water had been poured over his head at that moment. He was then dragged into an icy world as punishment.

Therefore, his entire body was frozen as if he had turned into an ice sculpture. Just as all the thoughts that belonged to different personalities surfaced in his mind, they were shattered, unable to turn whole again.

The female figure also felt the same. A tide of fear that could drown her soul surfaced in her heart.

She couldn't hold it in any longer, and her figure quickly turned dim. Accompanying this was the shattering of the dreamscape.

The sky collapsed, and the ground caved in. Everything disappeared.

Tarnan, Serene Dream Hotel, in the lady boss's bedroom.

Aynor suddenly opened her eyes and screamed. She then panted heavily and recalled a few scenes from her dream.

After a while, she finally calmed down and muttered to herself, "Nothing serious happened... Continue sleeping, continue sleeping."

In fact, she had always known that it was very problematic for her to survive back then and subsequently be able to live a carefree life in Tarnan for so many years. However, she was accustomed to avoiding reality and never thought deeply about the problems hidden in this.

She just lived every day she had!

With this thought in mind, Aynor hugged the blanket and lay down. She closed her eyes in a fearless manner and prepared to sleep. She wanted to make up for her lack of sleep.

In Weed City, in the rented apartment on South Street where the Old Task Force lived.

Shang Jianyao had just walked out of the room when he saw Jiang Baimian, Long Yuehong, and Bai Chen gathered around the square table and eating the cornbread and different stuffed buns bought from downstairs. Geneva stood by the window and stretched his body to prevent certain components from rusting because he hadn't used them for too long.

“Any results?” Jiang Baimian asked first. She then pointed at the table and said to Shang Jianyao, “There’s soybean paste stuffing, pork stuffing, and vegetable stuffing... Weed City has indeed been relatively stable in the past two years; the variety of breakfast has increased significantly.”

Shang Jianyao picked up the pork bun and took a bite. He vaguely said, “There are some results.”

“Have you asked what’s going on with the Kalendaria’s rearing?” Long Yuehong forgot that he was still holding the bun and the soy milk.

They had sufficient funds now, so they didn’t need to eat water with cornbread.

“No.” Shang Jianyao had always been honest. “But I managed to get something else.”

He recounted what had happened in the dream.

“Everyone clearly died. Why did this happen several times?” Long Yuehong asked after hearing that. He didn’t understand the room owner’s statement in the dream and found it ridiculous.

It was contradictory. How many times could a person die?

Jiang Baimian thought for a moment and said, “You can’t take everything said in a dream seriously. Although a person seriously lacks self-control and is unlikely to lie when dreaming, the various matters in the dream will bring about different emotional effects and induce a specific answer. Furthermore, those matters are a mixture of various memories and fantasies. They aren’t necessarily equivalent to reality.”

Upon seeing that Long Yuehong and Bai Chen were a little confused while Shang Jianyao had an ‘I see, I completely understand’ expression, Jiang Baimian added, “To put it simply, 506’s words in the dream might be a product of many things combined. For example, the Kalendaria did secretly ‘eat humans’ many times. However, the first few times didn’t result in the Fourth Research Institute’s destruction or the collective deaths of the humans there. It only affected a few people or was limited to the laboratory’s research subjects. This was accidentally discovered by the room owner, triggering the subsequent series of matters.”

“Is that so...” Long Yuehong felt a little solemn.

The red light in Genava's eyes flickered a few times. "The Kalendarium rear humans to replenish 'Themselves' to recover from their weakness?"

"At least that seems to be the case based on the room owner's answer." Jiang Baimian didn't dare to be too sure.

Long Yuehong exhaled. "There were no mass deaths in the company."

The meaning behind his words was that the different Kalendarium were different. The Arbiter of Fate might not necessarily be rearing humans. It was closer to using human intelligence to study biological technology. "Perhaps not employees, but what about the volunteers who participated in all kinds of experiments?" Shang Jianyao replied coldly.

Long Yuehong was momentarily speechless.

The next second, Bai Chen quietly gripped his left hand.

Jiang Baimian thought for a moment and said to Shang Jianyao, "Go to Room 506 more often and ask about this matter from different angles. Dig up more details so that it's easier for us to piece together and restore the truth. Yes, don't talk about how that person survived for the time being. This feels very dangerous."

"That's right, that's right." Shang Jianyao chose to agree. "We almost died back then. Fortunately, the room owner collapsed before

us."

Jiang Baimian nodded. "Have a good rest in the car later. The room owner seems to have given up resisting, so just do it step by step. There's no rush.

"Alright, let's pack up and prepare to set off. We'll circle to Icefield from the Blackmarsh Wilderness."

Somewhere in Icefield, in a valley with a temperature different from the surroundings.

End Year City's Elder Lawton stood by the window and looked down at the residents' busy scene. His eyebrows were locked tightly.

At this moment, he kept wanting to sing something. He felt that words couldn't compare to songs. He had experienced such urges too many times. As an experienced Awakened who had explored the Mind Corridor's depths, Lawton naturally knew what was going on. This was the after-effect of him fainting in Room 131 and suffering the 'surgery.' It was essentially a mental trauma that required time and the corresponding treatment to soothe.

However, this wasn't what vexed Lawton. In his exploration of the different rooms in the Mind Corridor, this wasn't the first time he had experienced such trauma. He had long made mental and physical preparations.

He was vexed that he might have to explore the strange and dangerous Room 131 that seemed to involve the Kalendaria again. This was because he felt a sense of familiarity the moment he fainted.

This meant that the door he had been searching for—which led to the New World was very likely deep in Room 131.