

Ad Infinitum 801

Chapter 801 Cliff Village

In the Blackmarsh Wilderness, somewhere near Icefield.

The road was muddy due to the melted snow. Long Yuehong felt like he was driving along the edge of a swamp.

Shang Jianyao—who was on the right side of the backseat—leaned forward and asked Long Yuehong and Bai Chen in front of him with interest, “Do you have a sense of *déjà vu*?”

Long Yuehong thought for a moment before replying, “Back when we encountered the Blackmarsh Iron Snake?”

Back when the swamp expanded, it almost swallowed the corresponding path.

Shang Jianyao nodded in satisfaction. “That’s right. I still remember that you were especially nervous back then. You seemed like you had forgotten how to use a gun and almost peed yourself.”

“There was no such thing!” Long Yuehong immediately retorted. “That was the first time I encountered danger. It left a deep impression on me; it’s definitely not as you said.”

Shang Jianyao tried to persuade him. “Maybe it’s because that memory was too unbearable that you subconsciously chose to forget certain details.”

“As if I’d believe you!” Long Yuehong glanced at Bai Chen in the passenger seat and sighed with emotion. “Back then, mutated creatures at the Blackmarsh Iron Snake level could chase after us everywhere. Now, we can easily finish off another two.”

Be it lasers or electromagnetic rounds, they were enough to penetrate the Blackmarsh Iron Snake’s scales.

“That’s right.” Shang Jianyao agreed. “If we really encounter it, we’ll throw the nuclear bomb over and detonate it, vaporizing it.”

“Hey, consider the problem of friendly fire!” Long Yuehong experienced what Jiang Baimian often said about being exasperated and amused.

Shang Jianyao didn't answer and clicked his tongue. “What you just said is wrong! Wasn't it easy for us to finish off the Blackmarsh Iron Snake back then? Big White used Thunder Spear, and Little White used Eyebreaker, putting down the Blackmarsh Iron Snake. Are you saying that they didn't do a good job?” Long Yuehong hurriedly defended himself. “No, the Blackmarsh Iron Snake chasing after us left the deepest impression on me.”

Jiang Baimian finally couldn't stand it and stopped Shang Jianyao. “Cut down on the games. What Thunder Spear, what Eyebreaker...

“Anything from Xiaochong's rift?”

Shang Jianyao revealed a sad expression. “No, I already did such a good job playing.”

With that said, he turned to look at Genava. “Old Ge, what do you think the problem is?” Genava began to analyze the situation. “Maybe Xiaochong has been playing games all this while and is obsessed. He didn't notice what happened in your Sea of Origins.” “Then, what should we do...” Shang Jianyao fell into deep thought.

As he pondered, the Old Task Force's jeep followed Panshan Road and entered a forest.

“Left...” Jiang Baimian switched to the passenger seat and pointed the way.

This was also something that couldn't be helped because only she knew where they were going next.

Shang Jianyao recovered from his deep thoughts and shouted at Bai Chen, who was driving, “Turn right, turn right. Big White has already eliminated the wrong answer.”

Bai Chen calmly replied, “There's no path to the right. It will lead us crashing straight down the mountain.”

“What about forward?” Shang Jianyao quickly corrected himself.

Bai Chen glanced forward with her outstanding vision. “Dead end.”

Shang Jianyao immediately looked at Jiang Baimian in shock. “You actually didn’t get it wrong this time! This doesn’t make sense...”

Jiang Baimian gritted her teeth and smiled. “I’m not blind!”

Shang Jianyao tersely acknowledged it. “Even a broken clock is right twice a day.”

Jiang Baimian raised her left hand, and the car seemed to brighten a little.

Upon seeing Shang Jianyao finally quieten down, she asked in satisfaction, “Any gains from Room 506’s dream last night?”

Ever since he successfully ‘waited for her, Room 506’s owner seemed to have completely given up on struggling. Her daily routine began to become regular and normal.

Shang Jianyao recalled and said, “Two things have been confirmed: First, it’s true that the Kalendaria has secretly ‘eaten’ people more than once. The room owner knows of four to five instances, but it didn’t cause much of an impact the first few times. It seems like not many people were ‘eaten.’ It’s very likely that they are limited to a particular laboratory.

“Second, the outcome of ‘people eating’ is that the corresponding person dies, but the corpse remains intact. This is very similar to the situation in Tai City and Dajiang City’s Linhe Village.”

These were all guesses that the Old Task Force had previously made and had recently been confirmed.

Jiang Baimian tersely grunted. “We might have to make the best use of our time in the future. The longer this drags on, the more variables there will be. For example, the room owner finds an effective way to resist the nightmare or finally attract the attention of the corresponding Kalendaria due to the excessive leakage of secrets, causing her to die an unnatural death.”

“But she only sleeps at night now. I can’t force her to sleep during the day, nor can she sleep.”
Shang Jianyao revealed a vexed expression.

Jiang Baimian couldn’t think of any good suggestions for this and could only continue giving Bai Chen directions.

When the sky was about to darken, the Old Task Force finally arrived at their destination.

Their destination was opposite a mountain stream, a relatively independent mountain peak.

If they wanted to cross the river, they could only use the paved bridge that spanned the mountain stream.

Jiang Baimian heaved a sigh of relief and pointed at the various buildings on the other side of the bridge that were about to be swallowed by the darkness while introducing, “That’s Cliff Village, a human settlement protected by the company. It’s also the closest to Icefield. No matter what team it is, they will choose this place to be the last supply stop when taking this route to Icefield for missions.”

She was really afraid that they wouldn’t arrive before dark, forcing them to set up camp and try again tomorrow morning.

Bai Chen nodded and thoughtfully asked, “Most of the project teams that go to Icefield for experiments will also resupply here?”

“This is why I insisted on coming here.” Jiang Baimian laughed. “I’ve been here twice when I was in another team in the Security Department. Yes, some of the villagers here were volunteers for some experimental projects.”

Long Yuehong came to a realization.

At this moment, the warden opposite the bridge had already discovered the Old Task Force’s jeep. A man holding a Berserker assault rifle picked up the loudspeaker and asked, “Where are you from? What are you doing here?”

“Pangu Biology!” Without receiving Jiang Baimian’s instructions, Shang Jianyao happily took out his loudspeaker.

Jiang Baimian explained the situation to Bai Chen, Long Yuehong, and Geneva. “There are many explosives installed on this bridge. If a strong enemy really attacks, the villagers will blow up the bridge directly. That mountain didn’t have many roads leading to it back in the Old World. Apart from a few people who are good at special-forces combat and wilderness survival, there’s no way to get up there. They can only rely on helicopters.”

In addition to the explosives, there were several roadblocks along the bridge.

Shang Jianyao—who was using the loudspeaker to communicate with the other party—quickly took the time to interject. “Such a defense system is useless. They still have to ask who we are and where we came from? There’s no way to verify what I say?”

“Do you think there are many people like you?” Jiang Baimian cursed in exasperation and amusement.

At this moment, after knowing that they were from Pangu Biology, the bridge guards signaled for the jeep to drive to the bridge’s entrance to confirm their identities.

An electronic device was placed there. The circuit extended all the way to Cliff Village opposite the mountain stream.

Jiang Baimian pushed open the door and alighted. She swiped her electronic card on the equipment.

With a beep, the railings across the bridge automatically rose.

“You can swipe cards here?” Long Yuehong was shocked. Doesn’t this mean that the entirety of Pangu Biology’s employee data is in Cliff Village, or is it the data of the Security Department’s outfield employees?

After Jiang Baimian got into the car, she casually said, “After all, this is a relatively important settlement for the company. Besides, we gave them a sealed data pack. It can only test the authenticity of an electronic card and whether it corresponds to the employee photo.” “What if the equipment breaks?” As the vehicle slowly crossed the bridge, Shang Jianyao thought of a question.

Jiang Baimian looked ahead and said, “In the beginning, Security Department employees were stationed here. Later, the company trained a few villagers who knew how to repair equipment and carry out programming maintenance.”

The jeep soon arrived opposite the mountain stream. Jiang Baimian rolled down the window and smiled as she greeted the bridge guards. “Thanks. Are we the first batch of people after spring?”

The first batch of people who came here to seek supplies and head to Icefield.

The slightly dark and thin bridge guard who had just asked the question replied without finding anything wrong, “No, a batch of scientific researchers came two weeks ago.” “Oh.” Jiang Baimian restrained herself and didn’t ask further to prevent herself from appearing too anxious. The thin, black bridge warden sized up Jiang Baimian under the street lamps’ light. “Have you been here before?”

He had never seen many beautiful women of this caliber in his life.

“I’ve been here twice,” Jiang Baimian replied frankly. “Where’s the village chief?”

The bridge guard turned around and pointed at a building with lights shining out. “In the office.”

Jiang Baimian—who knew that the village chief lived in the public office from time to time, nodded and signaled for Bai Chen to drive the car into the village.

As Pangu Biology had given them a lot of supplies, Cliff Village had sufficient generators and oil. Apart from the office and the bridge, many houses were also illuminated. In the darkening evening, this gave people a sense of stability and warmth.

“I wonder what the project team that came two weeks ago is up to...” Shang Jianyao muttered to himself.

Chapter 802 VIP

The jeep drove along the road in Cliff Village toward the five-story building that served as the public office.

As far as Jiang Baimian knew, this was actually a scenic area in the Old World. The arable land was relatively limited, but it became a settlement for many wilderness nomads after the Old World was destroyed because of its excellent location. It was named Cliff Village.

In the beginning, the villagers had to cross the bridge every day to farm in the farmlands in the mountains and hunt in the surrounding area. Not only was it tiring, but it was also rather dangerous. After all, the mountains were tall and slippery, and there were many ferocious beasts. From time to time, bandits would pass by. The ammunition in the village was depleting with each use, and there was a lack of replenishment.

But even so, they often lacked clothes and food.

Later, Cliff Village encountered Pangu Biology and became a vassal. They received a large number of reinforcements and quickly developed to a level where they could be self-sufficient. Of course, this form of self-sufficiency was only relative to other settlements. Once they left Pangu Biology, Cliff Village was nothing. The easiest way to elucidate this was that the high-yielding seeds they were currently planting required Pangu Biology's constant supply. Otherwise, the production of second and third-generation seeds would rapidly decrease, making it impossible for them to satisfy the villagers' daily consumption. In order to have their fill and protection, Cliff Village was loyal to Pangu Biology. Every Pangu Biology employee enjoyed VIP treatment when they came here.

As the jeep drove through the village's roads, the villagers they encountered stopped to greet them. They smiled at Shang Jianyao and the others, who had opened the windows to observe the people outside.

Before long, the Old Task Force arrived at the village office.

In front of this ancient five-story building was a small square. Almost twenty children were playing games like Five Stones and Hopscotch.

Upon seeing Jiang Baimian and the others in gray camouflage alight, a few children ran over. They weren't as reserved as adults and asked in a cacophony, "Do you guys have candy?"

"Any chocolate?" "Is there anything delicious?" After asking, they emphasized in unison, "We can buy it with money!"

As they spoke, the children took out golden or silver coins and wrinkled notes from their pockets.

Jiang Baimian looked over and realized that they belonged to some country in the Old World.

She shook her head and smiled. “We were thinking of buying things from you.” The Old Task Force had come to Cliff Village to investigate the Pangu Biology project team’s whereabouts and to replenish supplies for entering Icefield.

The children immediately felt a little disappointed and returned to their companions’ side.

Bai Chen retracted her gaze and sighed. “This place is indeed wealthier than Moat Town.”

Under normal circumstances, a piece of paper from the Old World was either used to wipe one’s ass or to be given as toys to the children; it wasn’t worth fussing over. However, the Old World’s coins were real metal. They were small, but every bit counted. When accumulated, they could also be exchanged for other supplies. To many wilderness nomads and Ruin Hunters, even a coin was valuable.

In Cliff Village, children by the side of the road could easily produce a few coins. It was obvious that this place was different from other human settlements.

“They joined the company relatively early and have developed in all aspects.” Jiang Baimian also sighed with emotion.

How nice... It would be even better if the company had no problems... Long Yuehong was touched.

Bai Chen nodded. “Moat Town will become like this in the future?”

Jiang Baimian thought for a moment and said, “It might not be comparable to here, but it’ll definitely be stronger than before.”

As she walked to the office, she casually explained, “The main reason Cliff Village is doing so well now is that they have a geographical advantage. Most of the companies’ teams that want to go to Icefield will choose to obtain their last batch of supplies here. These supplies aren’t free; they are fair transactions.

“You definitely want to ask: but how can Cliff Village have that many supplies? It’s definitely not enough just relying on themselves. Every spring, summer, and autumn, the company will have many convoys come over and sell the corresponding supplies to them. This forms a cycle.”

To put it simply, this place is equivalent to the company’s supply depot. The people in Cliff Village are equivalent to employees guarding the warehouse, and they receive the corresponding perks? Long Yuehong interpreted it through his experience.

“Is that so...” Shang Jianyao revealed an ‘I completely understand’ expression.

Jiang Baimian looked at Genava—who was wearing a robe that made it impossible to tell that he was a robot—and added, “Ever since Cliff Village became rich in supplies, many caravans and Ruin Hunters that come to Icefield will choose to trade here and get supplies.”

“The business center in this area?” Bai Chen nodded in enlightenment, combining her experience in Weed City, First City, and the knowledge provided by the Old World’s entertainment.

Jiang Baimian tersely grunted. “But apart from the company’s employees, nobody else can cross the bridge or enter the village. They can only trade in an abandoned town on the opposite bank. Spring has just started, and nobody has come over yet.”

As they spoke, the Old Task Force members went up the stairs and arrived at the public office entrance. The village chief was already aware of the arrival of a team from Pangu Biology and was personally waiting there.

He was in his fifties. Although his hair was white, he was very hale and hearty. His face was rather ruddy, and his wrinkles didn’t appear eye-catching. “Are you guys going to Icefield?” The village chief’s words had a clear accent. He was a little surprised because this team had too few people. Over the years, the Pangu Biology team he had seen going to Icefield had a large group of people. They had at least four to five cars. “That’s right,” Jiang Baimian replied with a smile. “We’re going to Icefield to complete a mission.”

“Why don’t you go in the summer? What mission is so urgent?” The village chief knew very well how cold Icefield was in spring.

He was only asking casually, and he didn't expect Jiang Baimian and the others to answer. After all, this definitely involved some level of confidentiality.

Jiang Baimian pointed into the public office and said, "Let's talk inside."

At this moment, Shang Jianyao interrupted indignantly. "You don't know her?" The village chief led the Old Task Force two steps forward and arrived at a relatively bright spot. He carefully examined Jiang Baimian for a while. "I remember. I've only seen one lady so handsome and tall."

"That's more like it." Shang Jianyao revealed a gratified expression.

Jiang Baimian forcefully suppressed her embarrassment and smiled. "It's not too strange to go to Icefield in spring. I just heard that a scientific research team from the company went over last week."

The village chief walked into the lobby and went to the sofas. "That's different. The weather is what scientific researchers want. It's obvious that you aren't scientific researchers."

"Who said so? We've also done scientific research!" Shang Jianyao indicated that he was looking down on them.

Jiang Baimian's heart stirred, but she didn't stop him from speaking.

Shang Jianyao added smugly, "We've participated in scientific research projects as volunteers."

The village chief muttered, "How can being a volunteer count as participation? Many people in our village were volunteers."

Jiang Baimian took the opportunity to ask, "Many?" "Quite a number," the village chief replied with a sigh. "However, this happened a few years ago. For more supplies and better treatment, many villagers agreed to volunteer. They thought that they could leave something for their families even if they died. Sigh, there aren't many of them now. Everyone can eat their fill and have their own livelihood."

"I see..." Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao said in unison.

The former casually asked, “Did many of the village’s volunteers return?”

“About half.” The village chief wasn’t too sure. “Some were fine, some were sick, others had something extra or something missing.”

Jiang Baimian tersely acknowledged his words and didn’t continue the topic.

After chatting for a while, the village chief pointed upstairs and said, “It’s getting late. How about you guys stay on the second floor? Everyone from the company lives in the public office. Dinner will be served to you later.”

“Alright.” Jiang Baimian had no objections.

Shang Jianyao curiously asked, “Is it free?”

“Accommodation is free, but meals aren’t.” The village chief smiled. “But for people from the company, the first meal is on us.”

“What do you mean by first meal? We’ll leave in the morning and come back at night. Can this be considered the first meal again...” Before Shang Jianyao could finish speaking, he was forcefully dragged into the stairwell.

After entering the room, Long Yuehong looked around and said, “These conditions are better than the hotel we stayed in at Redstone Collection.”

It was almost comparable to the Salvation Army’s hotel for foreigners. It was clean, tidy, and relatively spacious. The bed and other furniture didn’t smell musky.

Bai Chen didn’t mind such matters and looked at the door. “Volunteers who can be released shouldn’t be involved in important secrets.”

She meant that the surviving volunteers in the village might not know much.

Jiang Baimian smiled. “That’s good. It won’t alert the company, and much key information is hidden in ordinary details.”

Chapter 804 Volunteer

In Cliff Village’s public office.

Shang Jianyao woke up and silently assumed a sitting posture. “What’s wrong?” Jiang Baimian—who was on the adjacent bed—was still awake. As it was still early, she planned on sleeping after Shang Jianyao finished checking Room 506.

Shang Jianyao suppressed his voice and mysteriously replied, “Room 506’s owner once believed in Master Zhuang.”

Jiang Baimian muttered to herself, “She’s an Awakened in the Master Zhuang domain. Previously, you said that you had become arrogant, but was it actually a kind of corniness? That’s not right. 506 starts with 5, and it belongs to May’s Kalendaria, Monitor. That’s not right either. An Awakened in the Master Zhuang domain can start with any number from 1 to 12.”

The honest Shang Jianyao shook his head in denial. “No, she used a new ability today that can magnify the urge in my heart at that very moment. This is more like the Monitor domain.”

Jiang Baimian tersely grunted. “In other words, she only believes in Master Zhuang. Then, there are two possibilities: First, she chanced upon the Kalendaria deep in the Fourth Research Institute’s laboratory and slowly realized that ‘He’ was Master Zhuang. She secretly believed in ‘Him.’ Most people in the Fourth Research Institute don’t know this secret.

“The second possibility is that she encountered a religion that believes in Master Zhuang outside or that the corresponding religion carried out secret proselytization in the Fourth Research Institute. After becoming a believer of Master Zhuang, she received a warning from the Kalendaria and discovered the Fourth Research Institute’s hidden secret. She confirmed that the person deep in the laboratory was another Kalendaria. It was also because of Master Zhuang’s protection that she survived the subsequent unforeseen events and escaped.”

At this point, Jiang Baimian made a judgment herself. “I’m more inclined to the latter possibility; this can explain several of our previous questions. Master Zhuang exposed the secret of the Fourth Research Institute’s Kalendaria through Room 506’s owner? Is it a manifestation of the New World’s struggle?”

Shang Jianyao didn't respond but wore a bitter expression.

Under the relatively bright moonlight outside the window, Jiang Baimian glanced at him. "What's wrong now?"

Shang Jianyao sighed. "The first time we talked about how the owner of Room 506 survived, her dreamscape changed. I suspected that the eyes of a Kalendaria were about to open. Back then, I felt like I would die. However, Xiaochong and I are friends!"

He looked disappointed.

"Xiaochong is only one of the millions of Master Zhuang," Jiang Baimian consoled. "The other Master Zhuangs might not find you pleasing."

"That's right." Shang Jianyao clenched his right fist and punched his left palm. "We even woke up Master Zhuang with a call back then. That's a deep grudge." What kind of deep grudge is this? Jiang Baimian pondered for a moment and said, "The reason we can come this far and investigate so many secrets is most likely because of the battle between the Kalendarium. What are 'They' fighting for? What's the reason for 'Their' contest..."

"Who's the good person, and who's the bad person?" Shang Jianyao added. Jiang Baimian laughed. "In such matters, the distinction between good and bad is meaningless. We can only view the victory of the particular Kalendarium as how beneficial it is to humans."

"Those that benefit humanity are the good ones." Shang Jianyao was still obsessed with distinguishing between good and bad.

Jiang Baimian didn't say anything else. She thought for a few seconds before saying, "Go to sleep. We'll rest in Cliff Village for a few days, giving you enough time to go to Room 506. Strive to obtain more information."

In dreams, humans were unconscious. It wasn't like Shang Jianyao could obtain the corresponding answer by asking; this required repeated attempts.

Bang!

Shang Jianyao plopped back down.

The next morning, the Old Task Force was invited to the village chief's house for breakfast. They then followed the village chief to the storage warehouse for supplies.

Long Yuehong walked behind the team and suppressed his voice as he said to Jiang Baimian, "Team Leader, I thought of a question."

Jiang Baimian turned around. "What question?"

"What do we use to exchange for supplies?" Long Yuehong asked very seriously.

Along the way, the Old Task Force had never explored ruins or traded for other supplies in Weed City. The jeep only had military exoskeletons, bionic artificial intelligence armor, conventional weapons, corresponding ammunition, various canned food, compressed biscuits, energy bars, and a nuclear warhead. Military exoskeletons, bionic artificial intelligence armor, and nuclear warheads were strategic resources. Unless forced into a corner, it was impossible for the Old Task Force to trade them. Even if they really did, Cliff Village might not dare to accept them.

As for canned food, compressed biscuits, and energy bars, the Old Task Force had already eaten two-thirds of them; there wasn't much left. Furthermore, they wanted to replenish such supplies, so it was meaningless to exchange using them unless they only wanted to change the variety.

The Old Task Force didn't prepare many conventional weapons and corresponding ammunition. They had just enough for their own use.

Jiang Baimian laughed when she heard that. "We swiped cards when we entered the village. We can naturally use contribution points to trade supplies here."

"D-didn't you say that they only give them a sealed data pack that can only verify the electronic card's authenticity and the employee photo?" Long Yuehong expressed his confusion.

Jiang Baimian smiled. "That's right. Payment here won't use your original contribution points; instead, it will generate an extra debit charge. When we return to the company and submit the report, the higher-ups will verify the corresponding expenses and help you zero them out.

“Cliff Village will receive the corresponding credit. This can be used as contribution points to buy supplies from the company’s caravans.”

“I see.” Long Yuehong finally understood.

Although the equipment in Cliff Village didn’t have the right to extract most of the data in the electronic card, new data could be written into

it.

At this moment, Bai Chen had a question. “There are also people in Cliff Village who know computers and programming. Without supervision, aren’t they free to write however many contribution points are needed?”

This allowed them to fleece the company.

Shang Jianyao’s eyes lit up as if he wanted to do so.

In order not to expose his identity, the Old Task Force’s specialist in this area-Genavakept wearing a robe and shoes and didn’t dare to speak.

“No.” Jiang Baimian shook her head. “Any team that uses contribution points to complete the transaction here has to keep a tab. When they return, they’ll submit it to the higher-ups, which will be used to compare with the data in the electronic card. After the company tabulates the contribution points, they know how many contribution points we’ve spent in Cliff Village. If it’s excessive, the company will definitely send someone to investigate.”

Without waiting for Shang Jianyao to raise a question, Jiang Baimian added, “However, this can’t prevent the teams that come to Cliff Village to resupply and the people here from colluding with each other to chalk up fake figures and obtain some benefits. But you can’t expect too much of it. With Cliff Village being far away from the company, it’s impossible to avoid all the problems with the current technology. It can only be said that they will be exposed and investigated collectively. Also, many teams will forever stay in Icefield after resupplying here. The data can’t be sent back to the company...”

“Louder.” Shang Jianyao had an expression that said: “I didn’t hear you clearly.”

Jiang Baimian glanced at the village chief walking in front of her and ignored him.

After 20 to 30 years of stable development, the population of Cliff Village increased significantly. The originally empty scenic area gradually became filled. It took the Old Task Force a while to reach the storage warehouse.

“The upper floor is a standard warehouse, and the bottom floor is the cold storage.” The village chief pointed at the building in front of them and said, “The supplies list is in the lobby. Feel free to select the items yourselves.”

“Alright.” Jiang Baimian took a few steps forward and stood beside the village chief.

The village chief then pointed at the middle-aged man who was enjoying the breeze at the warehouse’s entrance. “Old Zhao used to be a volunteer like you. After he returned, he was given a relatively easy job according to the company’s rules.”

Old Zhao looked about the same age as the village chief, but his hair was much sparser. The wrinkles on his face were also relatively obvious, and he was wrapped in a thick cotton coat.

In a place close to Icefield, the weather was still a little cold even in April.

“What project did you participate in?” Shang Jianyao didn’t hide his curiosity at all.

Old Zhao had heard that people from Pangu Biology had come to the village last night, and the people in front of him were handsome men and beautiful women. Therefore, he easily guessed the Old Task Force’s identity.

He stood up and smiled. “Something about human resistance to the cold.”

“Why does the company keep doing such experiments?” Shang Jianyao looked like he was ‘knowledgeable.’

Jiang Baimian smiled. “What was your experiment like?”

Old Zhao revealed a reminiscing expression. “They brought us deep into Icefield the first time. They only gave us a single layer of clothes, and I almost froze to death. Fortunately, we were rescued...

“They gave us thick clothes the second time, but I still couldn’t take it. It was so cold...

“On the third trip, we went further south. The temperature increased significantly. They tried giving us single-layer clothes, thick clothes, and the kind of cotton jacket I’m wearing, but it didn’t work either. People still suffered problems from the cold...”

Old Zhao rambled on, making Jiang Baimian and the others confused.

What’s the company’s goal in this experiment? Is it really to test human resistance to the cold in various situations?

Chapter 805 “Lying In Wait”

It was rare for someone to be willing to listen to his past experiences, so Old Zhao stood at the warehouse door and recounted his experiences as he recalled. However, the experiments he participated in were conducted in Icefield over and over again. He either wore single-layer clothes, thick clothes, or cotton coats for varying periods before entering a simple room to be examined. There was nothing to highlight; it was boring and mundane.

Jiang Baimian determined that Old Zhao and the others experienced temperatures ranging from -30°C to 6°C according to the information provided by the company and the information on Icefield she had gathered. It was available at all stages and was very detailed.

If it were already above zero degrees, how could it be considered an experiment to determine a human’s resistance to cold? As a former researcher, Jiang Baimian felt that the experimental goal didn’t match the experimental plan. She suspected that the data the company really wanted wasn’t on cold resistance.

Jiang Baimian deliberated and asked, “What were the tests done during the physical examination?”

Old Zhao seriously recalled for a moment. “We were checked everywhere-head, neck, chest, stomach, limbs...”

I can't tell what data they wanted to gather... Long Yuehong muttered inwardly. "What left the deepest impression on you?" Shang Jianyao's focus was always wrong.

"Aren't all inspections the same?" Old Zhao didn't quite understand the question. "I only remember that the simple rooms were relatively cold."

Clap! Clap! Clap!

Shang Jianyao clapped in satisfaction. He seemed to receive the answer of what left the deepest impression, the cold. Old Zhao was clearly stunned by his applause. The village chief beside him was also confused.

Jiang Baimian secretly sighed and helped explain. "This colleague of mine likes to joke, say things that others can't understand, and make strange actions."

"Oh..." Old Zhao came to a realization. "There was such a person among the volunteers back then."

"Could he be my brother from different parents? What happened to him later?" Shang Jianyao asked anxiously.

Old Zheng shook his head. "I don't know; he's from another settlement. He was alright in the beginning, but he later showed a side that liked to joke. Later, the experiment ended, and I returned to the village. I'm not sure where he went."

"Some people only reveal their true selves when they are familiar with others," Shang Jianyao said in a tone of 'I can understand very

well.'

Jiang Baimian thought for a moment and remembered this matter. She then asked, "How many people returned alive from that experiment?"

Old Zhao counted with his fingers. "Sixty to seventy percent. The in-charge said that very few people died in this experiment. If it weren't for the fact that many volunteers were recruited from various settlements and that their bodies seemed fine on the surface but weak inside, they wouldn't

have had 30 to 40% deaths. Sigh, most of the ones who lived had all kinds of frostbite. Some developed brain problems from the cold and went crazy.”

Mental problems due to the cold? Jiang Baimian had never done such experiments, nor had she read the corresponding report. She wasn't sure if this was normal.

She turned to look at Geneva.

The robed Geneva shook his head, indicating that he didn't have the corresponding knowledge in his database.

Jiang Baimian didn't ask any further. First, acting too curious with an attempt to dig deeper made it easy to arouse suspicion. Second, Old Zhao clearly didn't know much. He should've said almost everything he could remember.

“It's so tough being a volunteer. Back in the day, I...” Shang Jianyao's act of sharing his past was forcefully stopped.

Jiang Baimian interrupted him. “Alright, let's go in and choose supplies.”

The village chief was very tactful and immediately said to Old Zhao, “Open the door. I'll lead our guests in.”

When Old Zhao opened the warehouse door, Jiang Baimian casually asked the village chief about the previous topic. “Was the company's scientific team that went to Icefield last, last week large?”

“Nope,” the village chief replied casually. “Just five to six cars and about 20 people. Half of them seemed to be volunteers.”

With that said, the village chief smiled awkwardly. “Compared to you guys, it's quite large.” Jiang Baimian smiled and changed the topic. “How many days did they stay in the village?”

“Three to four days. Yes, slightly less than four days.” The more the village chief recalled, the more certain he became.

At this moment, the warehouse door opened. He led the Old Task Force inside.

Jiang Baimian tersely grunted. “They must’ve replenished their supplies for this trip to Icefield, right?”

“It was alright. Half of their cars were filled with all kinds of machines-uh, apparatuses.” The village chief shook his head.

Jiang Baimian immediately revealed a curious expression. “What cars did they drive? How did they fit in so many apparatuses?”

“Just ordinary SUVs. The trunks had been modified,” replied the village chief casually.

Jiang Baimian then raised a few questions about the scientific research team that didn’t seem confidential in nature and obtained satisfactory answers. The Old Task Force then began to choose supplies according to their needs.

After the corresponding supplies were moved out of the warehouse and into their jeep, Jiang Baimian browsed through the bill given by the village chief and used her electronic card to pay with her contribution points.

There was still some time before noon. Jiang Baimian led Shang Jianyao and the others into Cliff Village for a walk.

Most of the villagers were busy in the fields. A few stayed at home, doing needlework while watching their children or handling different matters in the public office.

They became very enthusiastic seeing the Old Task Force. From time to time, villagers wanted to invite Shang Jianyao and the others to their homes as guests.

An old lady—who was older than the village chief—was originally suntanning by the window. Upon seeing the Old Task Force pass by, she quickly stood up, walked out the door, and shouted, “Young lads, young lasses, come to my house for lunch!” Before Jiang Baimian could respond, Shang Jianyao took the initiative to say, “We can’t help you join the company!” The old lady was first stunned before she smiled. “I’m already old. How would I dare to think about entering the company? I’m just happy to see the company’s personnel. If it weren’t for the company taking us in

and giving us a way out, how could I have lived to this age and even have several children? I don't even have to be out in the fields anymore!"

Jiang Baimian took a step to the side and shielded Shang Jianyao. She smiled and said, "We appreciate your kindness, but we have something else to do at noon."

She was embarrassed to freeload on their food when she saw that this family clearly wasn't as wealthy as the village chief.

The old lady waved her hand regretfully. "You have to come to my house for dinner if there's a chance in the future!" Jiang Baimian and the others waved their hands in response.

After walking a little further away, Long Yuehong sighed with emotion. "The company is really respected and welcomed here..."

If it were in the past, he would definitely be proud of his identity as a Pangu Biology employee. But now, he felt nervous and melancholic just thinking about it.

Jiang Baimian nodded. "Regardless of the goal, the company has done many beneficial things for settlements like Cliff Village. It has brought concrete benefits and clear hope."

"That's right." Bai Chen agreed.

The Old Task Force had specially detoured to Moat Town and realized that it had changed a lot. It was a little prosperous.

The honest Geneva analyzed the situation. "This might be because the Chaotic Era and the early years of the New Calendar are like nightmares to most settlements. It's like they lived in hell."

Only when there was a comparison would there be gratitude.

Old Ge, there's no need for you to make it sound so deep at a time like this... Jiang Baimian couldn't help but criticize inwardly.

After circling around the area, the Old Task Force returned to the public office. They planned on having lunch by ordering food delivered to their room after resting for a while.

Long Yuehong stood by the window and looked at the distant mountain stream and bridge. He asked in concern, "Team Leader, what should we do next? Track that scientific research team in Icefield? But they've been gone for more than two weeks. Any traces they left behind will most likely be swallowed by the snow." Jiang Baimian was sitting by her bed, stretching her legs and stretching her muscles.

Upon hearing Long Yuehong's question, she smiled and said, "We'll rest here for a week."

"A week?" Long Yuehong and Bai Chen were clearly a little surprised.

Isn't this too long a break?

Shang Jianyao came to a realization. "You want me to get all the secrets of Room 506's owner as soon as possible?"

"That's one reason." Jiang Baimian smiled. "The other reason is that I've just calculated that with the number of people in the scientific research team and the supplies they carried, they can't stay in Icefield for a full month. Although the deaths of the volunteers will reduce the food consumption, petrol remains a fixed expenditure. Such scientific research teams will definitely reserve sufficient supplies for their return journey to prevent any accidents. In other words, they will return to Cliff Village in about a week to replenish their supplies. "It's indeed very difficult to track them in Icefield, but we can wait for them here."

Clap! Clap! Clap! Shang Jianyao clapped

Long Yuehong finally understood the meaning of his team leader's previous questions.

Some seemingly unimportant details could actually play such a major role!

He was just about to say something when he suddenly saw a convoy approaching from the distance on the other side of the highway bridge opposite Cliff Village.

Long Yuehong frowned and said to his companions, “A convoy has come to Cliff Village, but they don’t look like they come from the company. The cars are all in derelict conditions.”

Chapter 806 Who’s the Problem

“Halt!” The voice of the villager at the bridge could be heard relatively clearly from the public office through the amplified loudspeaker.

Shang Jianyao was excited. He came to the window and muttered to himself, “Will there be a fight if they don’t halt?”

“Can’t you think of something better?” Jiang Baimian also came to the window.

“I’ll be useful if there’s a fight,” Shang Jianyao said hopefully. “I’ll mediate and persuade them to ultimately become friends.”

You can make both parties friends without fighting. Why must you go through all that? Long Yuehong couldn’t understand Shang Jianyao’s train of thought, but he didn’t voice his doubts.

As if sensing his thoughts, Shang Jianyao looked at the bridge that spanned the mountain stream and sighed. “I don’t think they will fight... This way, there’s no reason for me to interfere.”

The derelict convoy stopped on the other side of the bridge and followed the rules.

“Whoa, you now need a reason when stirring sh*t?” Jiang Baimian replied in amusement.

The logic is pretty air-tight... Long Yuehong muttered inwardly.

At this moment, the villager guarding the bridge asked through the loudspeaker, “Where are you from? Purpose of visit?” In the passenger seat of the car in front of the convoy, a man in a fur coat stuck his upper body out and replied loudly, “From the north. Here to trade some stuff.”

“North...” Long Yuehong repeated the word.

“North of Cliff Village means Icefield,” introduced the honest Genava. Bai Chen—who was also staring at the bridge pursed her lips and said, “They’re lying. It must still be snowing in Icefield

during this season. There should be snow everywhere, but there are no signs of that on their cars.” The villager at the bridge—who was rather familiar with Icefield—asked a similar question. “There’s no more snow in Icefield?”

Shang Jianyao became excited again and muttered, “If this convoy has Awakened, will Cliff Village be unable to stop them from crossing the bridge?”

Not all human settlements had Awakened; it could even be said that most did not.

When encountering Awakened who were good at controlling people, settlements without the corresponding strength would encounter situations that were impossible to guard against, even if they were armed to the teeth. They were like sealed canned food that seemed indestructible. Sooner or later, their hard outer shell could be peeled off by someone with the right tools.

According to the Old Task Force’s observations, the possibility of Awakened existing in Cliff Village was very low. Of course, this didn’t include the Pangu Biology teams coming and going

Jiang Baimian smiled. “As long as they don’t encounter an Awakened with abilities that cover more than 500 meters or an Awakened like you who can remotely exert influence with electronic products and your voice, Cliff Village will still have a certain level of defense.

“Apart from sending people to guard the bridge, there’s also a surveillance room on the top floor of the public office. There are always two villagers on duty, and they are watching the bridge from 300 to 400 meters away. Once they discover something amiss, they will immediately report to the village chief and activate the devices to blow up the bridge.” Jiang Baimian paused and said, “Yes... This can only guard against those who barge in. If an Awakened lowers himself and surreptitiously influences the villagers and the bridge guards one by one, he will sooner or later achieve their invasion goals. However, it will be relatively roundabout.”

Just as she said that, the man who had previously replied to the bridge guard shouted, “We first went south to make some transactions and spent more than ten days there.”

That explains their current situation... Long Yuehong heaved a sigh of relief.

He essentially didn’t like fighting.

The villager guarding the bridge seemed to recall their identities. “You guys... Go to Col Town. Someone will get you later.”

The people in Cliff Village called the abandoned town used for foreigner transactions ‘Col Town.’

“Alright!” The convoy didn’t waste their breaths and went back to the mountain road opposite Cliff Village with great familiarity. “They’re gone...” Shang Jianyao had a look of disappointment.

Before long, Jiang Baimian noticed four residents of Cliff Village walk out of the residence, get into a black mountain car, cross the bridge, and head to Col Town.

More than ten minutes later, they returned to the village and entered the public office. The village chief then led them to the storage warehouse for supplies.

“A transaction.” Jiang Baimian retracted her gaze.

This was one of the most common things in Cliff Village that happened in late spring, summer, and early autumn.

“Lame.” Shang Jianyao shook his head first before becoming excited. “What do you think they will trade? Military exoskeletons, Old World entertainment, New World nodes, nuclear warheads?”

While the others didn’t know how to respond, Jiang Baimian smiled and said, “Those things can only be traded by teams like us that are responsible for saving all of humanity.”

She was half patronizing Shang Jianyao and half telling the truth.

How could the Old Task Force obtain the nuclear warhead without the open and secret struggles of some high-ranking power?

Shang Jianyao was immediately satisfied.

At noon, the village chief knocked on the door to the room they were in. “I heard someone singing from the stairwell.” He chuckled and handed over a few pages. “This is the menu. Put in your order,

and I'll get someone to prepare it." As Jiang Baimian took the menu, she smiled casually. "It seems the village just clinched a big business?"

"It's alright; they come a few times a year," the village chief replied frankly. Shang Jianyao curiously asked, "They come from Icefield?"

"Yes." The village chief nodded. "It's not like there's nobody living in Icefield."

"That's right," Jiang Baimian echoed. "Some areas have special terrain, chaotic environments, and a climate similar to the south. Some areas have plenty of geothermal resources that can be properly exploited."

However, such areas weren't large. Compared to the entire Icefield, they were like normal islands in the ocean.

"Yes, yes, yes." The village chief agreed. "Their settlement is in a valley. The climate is alright, and the land is very fertile. It can feed many

people."

Jiang Baimian tersely grunted. "What's the name of their settlement? I wonder if I've heard of it."

"End Year City." The village chief didn't hide the truth.

He was undoubtedly biased toward Pangu Biology. It was what Cliff Village truly relied on.

Without waiting for the Old Task Force members to ask again, he suppressed his voice and said, "End Year City is quite strong. The teams they send often have Awakened."

As the leader of Pangu Biology's relatively important vassal, the village chief was definitely knowledgeable.

"Awakened?" Shang Jianyao had an excited expression.

The village chief said in a hushed voice, “Once, they encountered bandits. In the end, they only looked at each other and spoke a few words before the bandits lowered their weapons and allowed them to do whatever they wanted.”

Last Man’s or Master Zhuang’s domain? Jiang Baimian revealed a thoughtful expression.

Shang Jianyao smiled. “Then, were you affected, resulting in you providing supplies to them for free?”

The village chief quickly explained, “No, no. We check the accounts more than once after they leave; there’s no problem.

“The people of End Year City are still very friendly to us. They probably haven’t used their abilities before, so it’s all fair transactions. They might know that we have a large faction backing us and don’t dare to go too far. Only by being harmonious can business continue.”

A thought flashed across Long Yuehong’s mind: “Only people with strength and foresight can live long in this world...”

After chatting about how people in End Year City mainly exchanged for salt, gasoline, industrial products, and other supplies, Jiang Baimian ordered the dishes on the menu.

After the previous night’s experience, they felt that everything in Cliff Village was average except for the delicious roasted meat.

After the village chief went downstairs and headed to the kitchen, Shang Jianyao suddenly laughed. “The name ‘End Year City’ is very interesting.”

“Oh?” Jiang Baimian, Long Yuehong, Bai Chen, and Geneva looked at him in unison.

Shang Jianyao’s smile became brighter. “End Year means the end of the year. The end of the year’s Kalendaria, Arbiter of Fate, is our Big Boss.”

Tarnan, Serene Dream Hotel.

The lady boss, Aynor, had recently examined the calendar for the umpteenth time. She muttered to herself, “It’s almost been a month. Why aren’t the Clam Dragon Church’s Awakened here yet? I want an Awakened in the Last Man domain who knows Hypnosis, not an Awakened in the Shattered Mirror domain who will get lost. Why would it take so long?”.

It’s not good to have nightmares every day!

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Finally, Aynor mustered her courage, changed into her most beautiful clothes, and went out again.

She came to Nanke Convent and saw Zhou Yue. She politely asked, “Abbess Zhou, why isn’t the Hypnosis-capable Awakened from your Church here?”

Zhou Yue looked at this person’s dress carefully and widened her eyes. “Madam Aynor, didn’t you choose to give up back then and adapt to the nightmares yourself? Therefore, I didn’t make the request to headquarters.”

“I didn’t!” Aynor blurted out. “I look forward to it every day! Back then, I only used ‘everything is but a dream; why so serious?’ to comfort myself so that I could survive a month of nightmares.”

Zhou Yue, apart from being face-blind, are you brainless?

“You clearly said to let it be; it’s not like anyone will die,” Zhou Yue replied in confusion.

Uh, I think I might’ve really said that... Aynor seriously thought for a moment and said, “But I didn’t say I would give up completely!” “Forget it, forget it.” Zhou Yue couldn’t be bothered to argue any further. She spread her arms, raised her body slightly, and looked into the void. “Everything is but a dream. Why so serious?”

Aynor almost vomited blood. She kept having the feeling that her memories had deviated from Zhou Yue’s.

It was as if asking for help was a fantasy!

Aynor couldn't help but look behind Zhou Yue.

There was a shrine there. In the shrine, the dragon symbol formed from shattered mirrors reflected a faint glow.

Chapter 807 Old He

After lunch, the Old Task Force got into the jeep and left Cliff Village using the excuse of 'trying to see if they could trade something.' They headed to Col Town in an attempt to make contact with the people of End Year City.

End Year City's convoy was parked across the small square and the surrounding streets amidst the collapsed buildings in the mountainous town. Some of them were things Jiang Baimian and the others had never seen before.

The people of End Year City were clearly familiar with the rules of Cliff Village. The vehicle with the important supplies had long broken off from the convoy and headed for Col Town first.

These were all trucks. Some carried large iron drums, and it was obvious that they were used to store oil. Some had metal grills wrapped around them, and the bleats of sheep, meat cows, and black pigs sounded one after another.

The stench they produced filled the air. Coupled with the smell of blood from the live slaughtering not far away, Long Yuehong couldn't help but hold his breath for a few seconds. He paused for a moment and muttered to himself curiously, "All of these were transported from Icefield?"

The climate in the valley where End Year City was located was warm, and the land was fertile. He knew that farming was possible, but the journey from End Year City to Cliff Village basically went through a wasteland covered in bone-chilling snow. It was very difficult for these livestock not to freeze to death in droves. It was impossible for so many to survive.

Long Yuehong didn't expect an answer because the other Old Task Force members had never been to End Year City and didn't know the exact situation there. He could only guess that these were either obtained by the End Year City personnel who had previously gone south to trade for them or that they had a unique method for the animals to have cold resistance.

At this moment, a thickly coated middle-aged man-whose SUV was parked nearby-smiled and said, "The pigs, cows, and sheep from our End Year City are very resistant to the cold. They just have a

bigger appetite, but the meat is really good. Do you want to buy one and give it a try? Also, do you want to take a look at the leather and fur? It's very cheap!"

The trunk of the SUV beside the speaking man was propped up, revealing skinned leather and fur. Some were from common livestock, and some were creatures from Icefield. "Why can they resist the cold?" Shang Jianyao asked.

The middle-aged man seemed to have been asked such questions too many times. He replied without stuttering, "Some are cold-resistant species left behind by the Old World, and some are mutated from normal livestock. Don't worry; we've selected and eaten them. Nothing has happened all these years. In our Elders' words, this is considered a positive mutation."

Shang Jianyao nodded and asked seriously, "What's the average life expectancy in End Year City?"

"Uh..." The middle-aged man was stumped.

It was obvious that End Year City had never done the statistics.

Shang Jianyao explained kindly, "I mean, do many people in your End Year City die young? Or do many people die before the age of 40?"

"It's alright... It's not inferior to the large human settlements in the south." The middle-aged man thought for a moment and said. He then tried his best to promote the leather and fur in his car.

The entire Col Town seemed to have become a large exhibition. Every car was a shop-a stall.

Jiang Baimian politely listened to the middle-aged man's sales pitch and casually looked at the skinned fur. "Who's your boss?"

"You want to discuss some big business?" The middle-aged man's eyes lit up. Jiang Baimian didn't confirm or deny. "It depends."

The middle-aged man immediately pointed toward the slaughter grounds that were covered in blood. "There—the one wearing a bearskin coat and holding a pipe. "Do you want some tobacco leaves? Although our End Year City is in Icefield, the climate and soil in certain places in the valley are very suitable for growing tobacco. It's not inferior to the ones in the south."

“Do we look like people who smoke?” Shang Jianyao smiled, revealing his two rows of pearly white teeth. Jiang Baimian asked, “How should I address your boss?”

“Old He; just call him Old He,” introduced the middle-aged man enthusiastically.

The five Old Task Force members walked toward the temporary ‘slaughter grounds’ on a street beside the small square.

The beef, mutton, and pork from the slaughtering weren’t used for transactions. They were part of the convoy’s food for the next few days.

Of course, if the residents of Cliff Village really didn’t carry out collective transactions and insisted on individually exchanging some salt, tea leaves, and industrial products for a few pounds of meat and to have a feast, the others in End Year City wouldn’t have any objections.

At this moment, the convoy leader—who was known as Old He—was standing at the edge of the street filled with blood. He instructed his subordinates to cut the meat, categorize them, and preserve them.

He looked to be in his forties. He was wrapped in a bearskin coat and wore a furry melon knit cap. From time to time, he would raise his pipe to suck at it. His face was thin, and he looked exhausted.

Upon recalling that the village chief had mentioned that there were suspected Awakened in the Last Man or Master Zhuang domain in End Year City’s convoy, Jiang Baimian turned her head and glanced at the hooded Geneva.

Geneva understood what she meant and slowly nodded.

He was the Old Task Force’s last line of defense. Although smart bots could also be affected by Electromagnetic Interference, Matter Interference, and some abilities, they were definitely more resistant to those abilities than humans.

“Old He, Old He!” Shang Jianyao enthusiastically greeted the leader of End Year City’s convoy.

Old He turned around and looked at them for a while before hesitantly asking, “You are?”

Why do you look like you know me well?

When facing him, Jiang Baimian realized that Old He’s eyes were rather deep. They didn’t match his looks or bearing.

“We came from Cliff Village,” Jiang Baimian replied with a smile. “But we aren’t from Cliff Village.”

Old He’s gaze swept across her, Shang Jianyao, Long Yuehong, and Bai Chen a few times. “I can tell, but no matter where you come from, you are our guests. What do you want to exchange for?”

“Pigs, cows, and sheep-as well as leather and fur-aren’t what we want,” Shang Jianyao replied before Jiang Baimian could.

Old He was rather calm. “We also have flour, tobacco, and some specialty products from Icefield.”

“No, no, no. This isn’t what we want either.” Shang Jianyao shook his head smugly. He was proud that Old He couldn’t guess what they wanted to transact for.

Upon seeing Old He’s forehead twitch, Jiang Baimian quickly helped him remedy the situation. “We want to trade information. We will be going to Icefield for a mission in the future. We want to obtain some information regarding the climate, terrain, and ruins from

you.”

Old He’s expression relaxed. “We do know a lot.”

At this point, he changed the topic. “But some information is very valuable. What can you use to trade?”

“Some conventional weapons or high-performance batteries produced by the Orange Company.” Jiang Baimian already had a plan. On this mission in Icefield, the Old Task Force had applied for another batch of high-performance batteries. Coupled with the dozens they originally had, they

could be considered rich in this regard. “One might not be enough.” Old He smiled. “And that depends on what you want to ask.”

Although high-performance batteries were inferior to gasoline, diesel, and other supplies in Icefield as a whole, the valley where End Year City was located had a warm climate. Many equipment still relied on this.

Jiang Baimian first asked about the exact location of the city Shang Jianyao’s father had last appeared in.

“I know of such a city. I came into contact with their residents a long time ago, but I haven’t encountered them again for more than ten years. I don’t know which area the city is in; I only know the general direction.

“It’s near the White Knights; you can find it following the climate. For it to provide shelter for so many people in Icefield for so many years, the climate can’t be too bad. Even if it’s not as good as our End Year City, it will definitely be warmer than normal in Icefield.”

Jiang Baimian asked for some details and obtained a relatively satisfactory answer.

“Then, have you seen the Eighth Research Institute’s commissioners?” Shang Jianyao eagerly interrupted.

Upon seeing Old He’s confusion, Jiang Baimian added, “Have you seen any strange people in Icefield? They seem to live somewhere in Icefield.”

“Not me.” Old He shook his head. “I’m not sure if anyone else in End Year City has. You can ask around later.”

Jiang Baimian tersely acknowledged his words and took out a high-performance battery. “There are no other questions for the time being.”

After completing this transaction, Shang Jianyao suddenly took a step back, bent his arms, and assumed a posture of hugging a baby. He suppressed his voice and said, “The End will belong to the Arbiter of Fate!”

Jiang Baimian knew that this fellow was testing End Year City's faith.

Old He laughed. "Are you also a believer of the Arbiter of Fate? Many people in End Year City believe in 'Her.'"

Just as Shang Jianyao was about to step forward to acknowledge familiarity, Old He said, "Unfortunately, I don't."

"Then, who do you believe in?" Shang Jianyao asked curiously.

Old He took out a pendant from his collar; it hung a small wooden figure. The small figure had no facial features and was blank.

Holding the pendant, Old He sincerely and solemnly said, "I believe in Truth."

Chapter 808 A Vicious Cycle

After returning to the second floor of Cliff Village, Long Yuehong closed the door and said, "Truth? Why have I never heard of such a Kalendaria?"

They didn't chat for long about the problem of faith with Old He because the 'Truth' he spoke of touched on blind spots in their knowledge. This included Genava—a smart bot with a large amount of information stored—and Jiang Baimian, a knowledgeable 'folklore historian.'

Back then, Shang Jianyao had asked which Kalendaria it was and what characteristics it had. If they wanted to believe in 'Him,' what rituals did they need to complete. However, Old He didn't answer and only spoke perfunctorily with a smile.

As the deity the other party believed in was clearly strange, End Year City was related to the Kalendaria, Arbiter of Fate, and there were some abnormalities, the calm and rational Shang Jianyao didn't forcefully befriend him or make the target say some heartfelt words. He planned on observing him for a while longer.

This obtained Jiang Baimian's affirmation and admiration.

Bai Chen pursed her lips and said, “It might be an alias of Last Man or an embodiment, just like the relationship between Lokeśvara-Tathāgata and Master Zhuang.”

Jiang Baimian said, “The wooden figurine on Old He’s pendant is indeed very similar to the symbol representing the deity in the Anti-intellectualism Church.”

They were all featureless. In the Anti-intellectualism Church’s teachings, this was the symbol of Last Man. “The Awakened ability described by the village chief is also suspected of belonging to the Last Man domain.” Geneva—who was still wearing the robe-offered some evidence.

“Old He denied this guess.” Shang Jianyao had an expression that said: “I’ll believe whatever he says.”

After he saw the pendant that Old He had pulled out, he asked, “Last Man?”

Old He shook his head without hesitation, indicating that Truth wasn’t Last Man.

Jiang Baimian tersely acknowledged it. “In theory, the deity you believe in is something you should be proud of. There’s no need to deny it, just like how the Buddhist religions frankly admit that Lokeśvara-Tathāgata is Master Zhuang. “However, Last Man—the Kalendaria controls memories and is rather mysterious. The Anti-intellectualism Church that believes in ‘Him’ has also inherited this characteristic. Their style of doing things is crazy yet filled with caution, and there’s caution amidst arrogance...”

She meant that the Kalendaria, Last Man, might be the same. ‘He’ had multiple fake identities and many embodiments that nobody knew.

This way, it was normal for believers of ‘His’ other embodiments not to know that their deity was the Kalendaria, Last Man.

“But there’s also the possibility that Truth is another Kalendaria or that it’s not a Kalendaria.” Jiang Baimian added, “Do you still remember Yama Tiger? Before he fell asleep, he lived with his believers as a deity on Lake Heart Island. Such situations are common in many places in the Ashlands, and they won’t be too rare in the Chaotic Era or the early years of the New Calendar.”

Shang Jianyao clenched his right fist and punched his left palm. “Got it.”

“In End Year City, Truth is a New World powerhouse in the Last Man domain or even the only New World powerhouse. Therefore, it obtained the faith of some residents.”

Bai Chen thought for a moment before saying, “But why did he make the symbol that symbolizes himself almost identical to Last Man? Isn’t he afraid that his believers will suffer cognitive confusion when they encounter people from the Anti-intellectualism Church?”

“It’s possible that the symbols in the Last Man domain are fixed. This has to be explained using mysticism...” Shang Jianyao glanced at Jiang Baimian and forcefully assumed the posture of a folklore scholar.

Jiang Baimian rolled her eyes and said, “The symbols corresponding to a Kalendaria aren’t actually fixed. Do you still remember the Vigilance Church, the Terror Church, and the Friendly Hand that all believe in Eidolon Nun?”

These were the three religions the Old Task Force had encountered in Redstone Collection. They all believed in the Kalendaria, Eidolon Nun, but they had different beliefs and symbols.

Back then, the folklore scholar, Jiang Baimian, had taken the time to make some inquiries.

This wasn’t anything too important.

Long Yuehong took a while to recall. “The Vigilance Church’s symbol is a half-closed door with a faint female figure in the darkness behind the door...”

He had the deepest impression of this. Sometimes, this scene was a blueprint for his nightmares. “The Terror Church’s symbol is a black female shadow. The Friendly Hand is a slightly glowing hand in the darkness’s depths.

“What they have in common is darkness and gloominess. Yes, when these three religions argued, they never accused the other party’s symbol of being unable to represent the Kalendaria, Eidolon Nun.”

“That seems to be the case...” Shang Jianyao was rather depressed and unwilling to admit his mistake.

Genava let out a slightly synthetic voice. “Every Kalendaria controls many domains. Perhaps those symbols don’t directly represent the Kalendaria but a particular domain below. For example, the woman behind the door corresponds to ‘wariness,’ and the black female shadow corresponds to ‘terror.’ The glowing hand in the darkness corresponds to friendliness.”

Jiang Baimian nodded. “This is relatively common in folklore, religion, and mysticism. Therefore, as a powerhouse of the New World, the domain Truth grasps is related to memories. This corresponds to the Anti-intellectualism Church symbol?”

Bai Chen, Long Yuehong, and Shang Jianyao agreed with this guess.

Just as Jiang Baimian was about to change the topic, Shang Jianyao suddenly laughed and suppressed his voice. “I thought of another possibility.”

“What possibility?” The honest Genava was very cooperative.

Shang Jianyao looked around and said, “Substitute! Truth uses the Last Man symbol so as to replace the other party one day.”

“Have you watched too much Old World entertainment?” Jiang Baimian’s first reaction was exasperation and amusement.

She then fell into thought. “This isn’t impossible. After all, we aren’t too sure about the Kalendarium’s form and the New World’s exact situation.”

“If the Kalendarium can also weaken, die, or be replaced, many things can be explained.” Bai Chen recalled the Fourth Research Institute’s destruction and what would happen when the 13 Kalendarium Shang Jianyao mentioned filled up every month. Clap! Clap! Clap!

Shang Jianyao clapped, but Long Yuehong’s heart felt inexplicably heavy.

Jiang Baimian slowly exhaled and said, “This is only a guess for the time being. What’s more worth our concern now is why the Arbiter of Fate Church in End Year City allows Truth to preach and develop believers. Besides, the two parties get along well.”

“Big Boss doesn’t care about her believers, right? She doesn’t like to interact with humans as a Kalendaria?” Long Yuehong replied reflexively.

“Big Boss is Big Boss, and the Arbiter of Fate Church’s higher-ups are the Arbiter of Fate Church’s higher-ups. The two can’t be completely equivalent,” Jiang Baimian explained. “Since End Year City has already publicized their faith in Big Boss, the Elders there probably won’t allow other religions to appear unless they can’t defeat them or have any pragmatic considerations.”

This was determined by a religion’s own characteristics. They would instinctively ostracize other beliefs and only consider fusing or coexisting when constrained by reality. Of course, this was excluding oddities like Friendly Hand.

“Maybe they really aren’t their match.” Shang Jianyao had a look of schadenfreude. “Big Boss doesn’t care about matters in reality, and there are relatively few New World powerhouses in End Year City that believe in the Arbiter of Fate. They can’t do a thing to the Truth and can only compromise.” Long Yuehong muttered, “Maybe the price of eliminating Truth is too high that it’s better to cooperate.”

Bai Chen glanced at Jiang Baimian. “There’s another possibility: Truth has a close relationship with Big Boss and is an ally of a certain faction in the New World.”

“Yes...” Jiang Baimian slowly nodded.

The others were momentarily at a loss for words. Even Shang Jianyao only muttered to himself, “Big Boss doesn’t have a good relationship with Last Man?”

Nobody answered him.

After a while, Jiang Baimian glanced at her team members and said, “Let’s make more contact with the people from End Year City in the next few days before they leave. In the future, if there’s a chance, we can get Hey to ask about End Year City’s exact location and visit it. Forget it; we won’t consider this for the time being.”

“Why?” Long Yuehong asked in confusion.

Jiang Baimian smiled. “Are we going to jump around under Big Boss’s nose? That might be a place that Big Boss is paying attention to.”

“That’s true.” Long Yuehong came to a realization.

The Old Task Force’s rule of thumb when formulating plans had always been to search for clues from the various marginalized experiments and the city ruins that didn’t belong to the Arbiter of Fate.

At night, Shang Jianyao entered the Mind Corridor again and pushed open Room 506’s door.

Just as he entered the dream, he saw the blurry female figure sitting in the living room’s armchair. She stood up and walked over.

“You’re finally here!” the female figure said in a hysterical tone. “Ask, ask! I’ll tell you everything!” “Are you sick?” Shang Jianyao asked in concern. “No!” the female figure shouted. “I want to completely escape this nightmare! Stop coming to me!”

Shang Jianyao stroked his chin and muttered to himself, “The psychological pressure accumulated in reality causes one to dream the thoughts that plague them in the day. Furthermore, she has completely broken down in the dream, so she’s eager to vent it?”

Without waiting for a response, he asked, “Who’s the Kalendaria deep in the laboratory?”

Shang Jianyao took two steps back as he spoke, prepared to escape this dream at any moment.

The female figure fell silent for a moment before answering in a slightly ethereal tone, “Dawn...”

Chapter 809 What Happened Back Then

In Cliff Village at night, Jiang Baimian gathered the Old Task Force members.

She looked around the bulb emitting yellowish light and said to Shang Jianyao, “Explain what you gathered from the dream in detail.”

Shang Jianyao sat up straight and cleared his throat. “It’s unknown what the owner of Room 506 encountered in reality; it’s also possible that she had nightmares every day. When she recalled the past, the suppressed emotions reached a critical point, causing her to suffer a complete breakdown.

She was shouting in her dream. Without needing me to guide her, she told me about the Fourth Research Institute. The magical thing is...”

At this point, Shang Jianyao leaned forward and spoke in a tone as though he was telling a ghost story. “This time, I didn’t feel the danger of a Kalendaria opening ‘Their’ eyes in the darkness again.”

“Comparisons from before imply that certain conditions have changed,” Geneva commented objectively.

Shang Jianyao stroked his chin and fell into deep thought. “What changes could it be that caused the person in Room 506’s memories to stop stirring...”

Jiang Baimian shot him a glance. “It’s also possible that the person in Room 506 has given up and overcome the fear in her heart. She no longer flares up, so the corresponding scenes related to the Kalendaria no longer appear in the dream.

“Continue.”

Shang Jianyao’s expression gradually turned smug. “After piecing together the pieces, I restored the original story from the words of the person in Room 506.”

Is this credible at all? You always embellish the story and let your creative juices flow... Long Yuehong felt doubtful and wasn’t too trusting. He was just about to raise this question when Shang Jianyao glanced at Jiang Baimian and said, “Ah right, it’s not I, but we. I was in charge of narrating the statements, and Big White was in charge of piecing together the pieces.”

“That relieves me.” It wasn’t Long Yuehong who said this, but the honest Geneva.

Shang Jianyao didn’t mind and recounted the encounter of Room 506’s guest with a rich expression. “The room owner followed the Fourth Research Institute’s trading teams to many human settlements and came into contact with some Awakened from the Eternal Time Church. She’s a very curious person who enjoys novelty. She felt that secretly believing in Master Zhuang was a very fashionable matter, so she accepted the proselytization and became a believer.”

Upon hearing this, Long Yuehong couldn’t help but turn his head to glance at Bai Chen and realized that his wife was also looking at him.

At this moment, the two of them roughly understood what the other party was thinking: Room 506's owner resembled Shang Jianyao in the early days!

They were both curious and enjoyed novelty. The difference was that one had joined the Eternal Time Church, and the other had become a member of the Life Ritual parish. There were also differences in the goals of joining. Shang Jianyao was originally curious, finding it fun, but he later fell in love with Holy Communion and had the intention of helping the company monitor this secret parish. As for 506, she only did it out of curiosity and fun.

Shang Jianyao continued, "Under the guidance of a certain person in the Eternal Time Church, Room 506's owner grasped many rituals. After returning to the Fourth Research Institute, she

—who was getting older—began to participate in work and was assigned to a laboratory.

"In the beginning, everything was normal. But once, after she finished praying to Master Zhuang and hoped that overtime work during that period would end as soon as possible, she happened to sense a room deep in the laboratory that seemed like a haunted house often mentioned in the Old World's entertainment. It was mysterious, dangerous, and creepy. As for how she sensed it, we speculate that Master Zhuang did something to her."

Bai Chen nodded. "Then, how is she so sure that the Kalendaria is deep in the laboratory?"

Shang Jianyao shook his head and replied, "She didn't answer this question; we could only make some speculations based on other descriptions.

"When she first discovered the anomaly in the room deep in the laboratory, she thought that it was some secret result of the Fourth Research Institute. However, she gradually noticed that many experimental subjects were sent in alive but were carried out as corpses. The colleagues who were in contact with the room for extended periods would suddenly die from time to time.

"The frequency wasn't high, but it was enough for her to notice it. Later, she might've held some other rituals and obtained Master Zhuang's hint in her dream. She learned that the person in the room deep in the laboratory was a Kalendaria.

"After a long period of observation and 'sensing,' she gradually concluded a pattern: When the Kalendaria in that room becomes weak, the Fourth Research Institute's higher-ups will almost

certainly order a large number of experimental subjects to be sent in. This is often accompanied by the deaths of some experimental subjects.

“This made Room 506’s owner come to the conclusion that the Kalendaria eats humans. At the same time, she believes that the higher-ups are trying to follow a policy of appeasement, which exacerbated the problem.”

Upon hearing this, Bai Chen tried to make a guess. “Therefore, she planned on secretly informing everyone in the Fourth Research Institute of this matter and organizing them to resist the Kalendaria deep in the laboratory?”

“She didn’t do that. From what she understood, the Kalendarium are invincible,” Shang Jianyao replied. “She only wanted everyone to know the truth. She wanted to wait for an opportunity to collectively escape the Fourth Research Institute with supplies in hand to establish a new human settlement elsewhere in the Ashlands.”

This is similar to our idea... Long Yuehong muttered inwardly.

Although the Old Task Force was currently investigating if Big Boss-Arbiter of Fatereared Pangu Biology’s employees as livestock or whether ‘She’ had any real malice, they had yet to take the step of beginning full-out resistance. However, they had more or less thought about it and wondered what they would do if it was confirmed to be true.

Their initial plan was to think of a way to eliminate the few most determined traitors while Big Boss’s gaze wasn’t on Pangu Biology and leave the underground building with the other employees. This required them to inform a large number of employees of the truth beforehand. Otherwise, they wouldn’t be able to organize a team in an emergency. “Then?” Long Yuehong cared about the subsequent development as if he were concerned about Pangu Biology’s future. Shang Jianyao sighed. “She was betrayed; she had just told her trustworthy relatives and friends the secret she had discovered when several people betrayed her. She was captured and made to face the Fourth Research Institute’s higher-ups.

“She reprimanded the higher-ups and said that they were using the employees’ lives to exchange for their status, power, and wealth. The higher-ups said that many employees actually know the truth. People who entered the laboratory’s depths had signed the corresponding contracts and used their possible sacrifices to exchange for a good life for their families and the Fourth Research Institute’s stable development.

“Room 506’s owner didn’t believe it. She had also prepared some contingency plans before she was captured; this resulted in the secret of the Kalendaria deep in the laboratory ‘eating’ proliferating in the Fourth Research Institute.

“However, what she received wasn’t gratitude but blame and accusation. A large number of employees cursed her for colluding with foreign enemies, cursed her for tearing open wounds, and cursed her for infuriating the Kalendaria and bringing disaster to the entire Fourth Research Institute.

“She reasoned that if the Kalendaria fell into an extremely weak state, the experimental subjects and some experimental personnel wouldn’t be able to satisfy ‘Her.’ When the time came, everyone would die!

“She was cursed very badly. Some viewed her with animosity, some hated her, and some became abnormally cold to her...”

Long Yuehong turned worried, feeling the same way. He was really afraid that this was their future.

“What happened next?” Bai Chen asked.

Shang Jianyao had previously been very engrossed in his recount. At this moment, his eyes seemed to be a little moist. “Later, the person in Room 506 was sentenced to be an experimental subject and was forced into the laboratory. Once, when she was undergoing an experiment and was about to faint, she suddenly ‘sensed’ that the Kalendaria had become abnormally weak.

“She didn’t have the time to warn others and entered an anesthesia state. By the time she woke up, the anomaly had happened in the laboratory. Everyone was dead, and she couldn’t sense the Kalendaria in the innermost room anymore.

“She hurriedly fled the laboratory and saw corpses all over the Fourth Research Institute’s residential area. Nobody was spared...”

Huff... Long Yuehong felt abnormally heavy-hearted.

Shang Jianyao finally said, “During the escape, it was also possible that in the previous experiment or a little earlier, Room 506’s owner completed her Awakening and became an Awakened in the Monitor domain.

“She claims that the Kalendaria deep in the laboratory is suspected to be February’s Dawn based on the higher-ups’ words and her subsequent experience.”

“The Kalendaria that’s known to go against nightmares and prevent humans from being swallowed by the darkness in their dreams?” Long Yuehong didn’t expect it to be this Kalendaria.

He had always felt that ‘He’ was rather righteous.

The Dawn believers he previously knew gave him a general feeling that they were alright. This included Oudick, Boss Ugo, and General Phocas.

Jiang Baimian nodded. “Preliminary confirmation is that it’s Dawn, but Room 506’s owner isn’t so sure either.”

Long Yuehong and the others fell silent for a moment, unsure of what to say.

Jiang Baimian looked around and consoled him. “At the end of the day, this matter is mainly for reference. It can’t replace our own investigations. Alright, get back to your rooms and get some sleep. We’ll continue making contact with people from End Year City tomorrow.”

“Alright,” Long Yuehong, Bai Chen, Genava, and Shang Jianyao replied one after another.

Chapter 810 Morning Prayers

After Long Yuehong, Bai Chen, and Genava left the room, Jiang Baimian said to Shang Jianyao, “The matter regarding Room 506 has almost come to an end. The information that needs to be squeezed out has probably been squeezed out. Even if there are still some secrets, they are things that the room owner doesn’t know or hasn’t delved into. Once you come into contact with them, you might face a Kalendaria.”

“I think so too.” It was the calm and rational Shang Jianyao.

Jiang Baimian nodded slightly. “You can explore other rooms next and search for the door that leads to the New World. Yes, don’t affect your daily missions.”

She felt that, based on the various pieces of information they currently had, the root cause of most of the problems was the New World. Without knowing the exact situation there, it was very difficult to make an accurate judgment, nor could she effectively and concretely resolve the corresponding 'chronic problems.'

Among the Old Task Force, Shang Jianyao was undoubtedly the one with the highest chance of finding the New World's door.

Of course, Jiang Baimian wouldn't agree to Shang Jianyao entering directly if he really found it. Instead, she planned on gathering more relevant information. After coming up with a certain plan, they would wait for an appropriate opportunity.

Shang Jianyao eagerly replied, "Alright!"

"Rest tonight to recover some energy." Jiang Baimian saw through his plan. "Alright." Shang Jianyao walked to his bed in disappointment.

The next morning, the Old Task Force drove away from Cliff Village again and headed for Col Town.

The smell of blood from slaughtering the livestock still filled the air. Although the stains on the street had been washed clean by the stream, it still attracted some microorganisms to hover over the area.

These weren't the flies and mosquitoes that Long Yuehong was familiar with. In this season, these two creatures normally wouldn't appear near Icefield.

As for what they were, Long Yuehong couldn't identify them at all. He only suspected that they were some mutated insects that were resistant to the cold.

Shang Jianyao familiarly drove past the cars parked in the small square and the surrounding streets, poking his head out to search for Old He.

"Smells good..." he suddenly said.

Long Yuehong subconsciously sniffed. As expected, he could smell the fragrance of roasted meat amidst the faint smell of blood.

“It won’t do to eat so much grease early in the morning!” Shang Jianyao looked to the side, pained.

Several people from End Year City were using the embers left over from last night to roast a few pieces of sliced pork. They didn’t have any seasoning and only had some salt and plant powder, which was local produce of the valley. However, just the pork belly itself made the roasted fat especially charming and whetted one’s appetite.

Shang Jianyao leaned over, looking like he wanted to criticize such an unhealthy diet.

“What can I use to exchange for a piece?” he asked.

“Clothes!” “Energy bars.” “Weapons.” The three young people from End Year City gave different answers.

Although they produced fur, the valley’s climate was warm. Apart from winter, it was about the same as the south most of the time. There was no need to wear thick clothes. Shang Jianyao readily took out two energy bars and exchanged them for a large piece of roasted pork belly.

He stood there and ate until his mouth was filled with oil.

Long Yuehong couldn’t help but gulp a mouthful of saliva and turn to look at Bai Chen. “Do you want some?”

“I just had breakfast.” Bai Chen indicated that she didn’t have the appetite, but she then added, “You can exchange for one and try the

taste.”

“There’s no need.” Long Yuehong shook his head. “We’ve had roasted meat for the past few meals.”

Finally, Shang Jianyao finished eating the pork belly and took the opportunity to inquire. “Where’s Old He?”

The young man—who had just received his energy bar—pointed at a car in the square. “Old He is doing his morning prayers. The Truth they believe in is troublesome. Unlike us, apart from the last day of the year when we hold Mass, when we pray is up to us.”

That’s very compatible with Big Boss’s attitude toward believers... Long Yuehong inexplicably felt a sense of intimacy.

Before Shang Jianyao could speak, Jiang Baimian pointed at him. “My companion also believes in the Arbiter of Fate, but they seem different from you.”

“Yes, yes, yes,” Shang Jianyao said excitedly. “When newborns are born or when someone passes away, we will hold a one-month old celebration and a funeral respectively. Everything else will be simplified. However, we have to thank the Kalendaria for keeping us alive when we wake up every morning. In addition, the Guide will gather us at a relatively fixed time to do a sermon and enjoy Holy Communion.”

As he spoke, he raised his right hand and wiped his mouth. He didn’t seem worried that he would be reprimanded as a heretic by the other party.

The young man with messy hair, white skin, and light-brown eyes that had just replied revealed an envious expression. “We only have Holy Communion when there’s a Grand Mass.”

“What’s your Holy Communion?” Shang Jianyao asked eagerly.

The young man pointed at a small number of livestock that had yet to be traded. “It’s to slaughter all kinds of animals; it symbolizes that the End belongs to the Arbiter of Fate. We then use their various parts to make different dishes. The most precious things are all kinds of dishes related to blood. Sigh, it’s a pity that all the blood sausages we brought along were sold out in the south. Otherwise, I could still let you have a taste.”

He didn’t view Shang Jianyao—who also believed in the Arbiter of Fate—as an enemy and was rather enthusiastic.

“Blood sausages. I think I’ve heard of it somewhere...” Jiang Baimian muttered to herself.

Genava wanted to give an answer, but he stopped his speaker's operation in time considering that his identity as a smart bot couldn't be exposed here.

Jiang Baimian quickly recalled. "I heard about it in Tarnan. It's a local delicacy in President Gu's hometown; he brought the recipe to Tarnan."

"That's right. There's also Pork Stew!" Shang Jianyao clenched his right fist and punched his left palm. "Abbess Zhou still owes us Pork Stew."

He just couldn't forget about it.

"She's not the one who owes you," Jiang Baimian corrected him again.

The young man from End Year City listened in confusion and came to a realization. "Our Grand Mass also has Pork Stew. The President Gu you're talking about should be someone from an area north of the Old World or their descendants. There are many such people in our End Year City."

As for which area it was, he couldn't give the specifics. First, he wasn't a descendant of those people. Second, Icefield had already encroached the corresponding area, making it impossible to make a good comparison with the Old World's map. "How should I address you?" Shang Jianyao's eyes lit up when he heard Pork Stew. "I'll visit you in End Year City in the future and participate in your Grand Mass. We're all believers of the Arbiter of Fate, so we definitely can't treat each other as strangers."

He temporarily didn't use Thought Guidance and followed Jiang Baimian's suggestion to see what he could obtain through normal questions.

The young man from End Year City felt the sincere enthusiasm and replied with a smile, "My name is Li Bingliang; it means pure-hearted. Uh, our End Year City doesn't accept outsiders to prevent our exact location from being leaked unless you can obtain an Elder's invitation."

"Oh..." Shang Jianyao was rather disappointed. "Is Old He an Elder?"

"No." Li Bingliang shook his head.

At this moment, he recalled the question of why the ritual and Holy Communion were different when they both believed in the Arbiter of Fate.

“Our End Year City was mainly established by the End Year Church. You should belong to other denominations that believe in the Kalendaria. Evernight Parish, Sunset Church, or Life Ritual?”

“Life Ritual,” Shang Jianyao replied without hesitation.

Li Bingliang felt affirmed of his guess.

After chatting for a while, the Old Task Force walked deeper into the square and came to Old He’s military car.

Old He donned a bearskin coat. He was sitting in the passenger seat, holding a book. His head was slightly lowered as he silently chanted.

Jiang Baimian and the others looked at each other and nodded indiscernibly.

They began to believe in the hypothesis that Truth wasn’t Last Man. This was because the Anti-intellectualism Church had always advocated that knowledge was toxic and that thinking was a trap. How could they get believers to recite scriptures during morning prayers?

Even if this belonged to another denomination of Last Man, they—who used similar symbols - shouldn’t be diametrically opposite.

The Old Task Force waited for a while longer until Old He completed his morning prayers and closed the book.

Jiang Baimian curiously sized it up and saw the words ‘University Physics.’

University Physics... Jiang Baimian was knowledgeable, so she didn’t let her expression change.

“Physics?” Shang Jianyao asked with a questioning tone.

old He smiled and replied, “Physics is the principle of all things, the truth of this world, and the embodiment of our Lord. Of course, the physics written by humans is only close to the truth, not the truth. There are always certain flaws that can often be overturned and corrected—just like how I read a physics summary previously...”

Long Yuehong immediately recalled the despair he felt during his physics classes in university.

Shang Jianyao interrupted Old He. “This doesn’t look like the doll on your pendant. It has no facial features, which means that it doesn’t look, listen, sniff, or ask questions. It only listens and is a Last Man.”

Old He replied angrily, “That’s a heretic’s interpretation! The true meaning of this symbol is that human eyes, nose, ears, mouth, and eyebrows aren’t as important as their brains!”

Following this, he alighted, stretched out a finger with each hand, and pressed it against the sides of his head. Old He then said, “The Truth is in our minds!”