

Ad Infinitum 881

Chapter 881: Making Obvious of the Hidden

Gitis recalled and said, "I've heard of it."

As Shang Jianyao's eyes lit up, Gitis continued, "Every summer, they will send a convoy over to exchange food and meat for coal, steel, and other things. They will then cart them away in cars."

"Then, do you know where End Year City is?" Shang Jianyao asked impatiently.

Gitis shook her head. "Even among their private exchanges, they do not mention such matters."

She had clearly used Heavenly Ears to monitor the situation in End Year City's convoy.

"They sure are careful..." Jiang Baimian sighed with emotion.

She wasn't surprised at all. Small and medium-sized factions like End Year City either relied on organizations like First City and Pangu Biology for protection or could only rely on terrain advantages to prevent themselves from being attacked.

Although End Year City was located in Icefield and was quite a distance away from the various large factions, they would definitely become attractive to many in summer once their exact location was exposed.

Gitis glanced at the Old Task Force members and said, "If you want to find people from End Year City, you can stay in Gesterbourg until summer."

"Yes." Jiang Baimian didn't comment.

If their plan of waiting out failed, Gitis's suggestion was an option.

After leaving the hotel, Shang Jianyao took a deep breath and sighed sincerely. "The air quality today is 367.55% better than yesterday."

"How did you determine it?" Geneva didn't expect Shang Jianyao to give such a precise number.

Shang Jianyao smiled smugly. “I’m imitating you, Old Ge! As for the exact number, I made it up on the spot. How about it? Do you want me to make another one up?”

As a smart bot, Genava was momentarily speechless.

Jiang Baimian looked up helplessly at the sky and helped resolve the awkwardness. “The weather today is pretty good.”

A strong wind blew from Icefield, dissipating the dark gases above Gesterbourg.

“The wind makes me feel a little cold.” Long Yuehong tightened his gray camouflage uniform.

Even though summer wasn’t far away, Gesterbourg—which was close to Icefield—was still chilly. To put it simply, it was relatively hot in Gesterbourg where the sun could shine. It was relatively cold standing in the shadows with the wind blowing.

“Yeah.” Bai Chen also tugged at the scarf around her neck.

She no longer had a slave number, and the knot in her heart had been untied. She wore the scarf purely because her neck felt a little cold from the wind.

Jiang Baimian then looked around. “Let’s go and replenish our supplies.”

...

At night, the Old Task Force—who had eaten their fill—gathered and discussed Room 503. Apart from Shang Jianyao, the others had the same opinion: Don’t enter for the time being.

Jiang Baimian said to Shang Jianyao seriously, “You still have no way of resisting the Heartless disease’s infection. Exploring Jiang Xiaoyue’s room is equivalent to throwing a meat bun at a dog—there’s no return.”

In a sense, 503 was more dangerous than Room 205, which represented the dream of the Kalendaria, Dawn. After all, the dream might not be dangerous, or the corresponding dangers might

not be unavoidable. As for 503—which could infect an explorer with the Heartless—disease, it seemed unresolvable.

“How long do we have to wait before we can explore?” Shang Jianyao asked aggrievedly. “Jiang Xiaoyue and I have been friends for a long time. We can already be considered friends, so it shouldn’t be that dangerous. Uh, unilateral friends.”

Jiang Baimian rolled her eyes and said, “From the information we have, only a New World powerhouse can resist the Heartless disease’s infection with their individual strength.”

“How can we explore 503 when we’ve already entered the New World?” Shang Jianyao had always been clear-headed in this regard.

Upon hearing this, Bai Chen raised a question. “Can a New World powerhouse enter the Mind Corridor in reverse?”

After a brief silence, Shang Jianyao clapped. “That’s a good question.”

Jiang Baimian fell silent for a moment before saying, “We can now be sure that the Kalendarium have corresponding rooms in the Mind Corridor.”

There were specific examples, such as Dawn’s 205 and Master Zhuang’s 102.

“From the looks of it, a New World powerhouse’s Mind Room is still preserved.” Genava made a guess based on the facts. “What we don’t know now is if their Mind Room can be opened from the inside like before entering the New World.”

It was unlikely to be a problem to go from the outside to the inside because Shang Jianyao had entered Master Zhuang’s 102; he just hadn’t done any substantial exploration.

At this moment, Shang Jianyao’s thoughts raced as he clapped and smiled. “If a New World powerhouse can freely enter the Mind Corridor and my room number is known by the enemy, I might really die at any moment.”

“Don’t worry. There’s still the Kalendarium’s aura in your Sea of Origins.” Long Yuehong felt that this fellow wasn’t worried that such a thing would happen.

The Old Task Force had now preliminarily determined that Xiaochong was equivalent to Du Shaochong's childhood and that he was a part of Master Zhuang's body of descent.

"That's right, that's right." Shang Jianyao's eyes lit up as he said, "I'll wait for them to visit my room. I—uh, Xiaochong and I want to entertain with games!"

Having his attention diverted, he had already forgotten about exploring Room 503.

...

Late at night, in the Mind Corridor, Shang Jianyao stood opposite his room and sighed. "Why can't I find the Mind Room of End Year City's Awakened? It's fine if I can't find it, but why isn't any Mind Corridor-level Awakened in End Year City fated to explore my room?"

After some thought, they decided not to wait and see. They had to take the initiative to do something.

As each room only had a number and the order was also random, the Shang Jianyaos couldn't distinguish which ones corresponded to End Year City's people, making it difficult for them to take the initiative to investigate.

He believed that it was better to tamper with his own room than someone else's.

"Yes, I have to increase the probability of Awakened in End Year City exploring my room..." Shang Jianyao stroked his chin and muttered to himself, "Show them kindness? How?"

"That's simple." The Shang Jianyao that sought novelty left the main body and excitedly said, "Watch me!"

He quickly conjured a piece of paper and a pen and wrote.

After writing it down, he pasted the paper under the door number of his Mind Room. On it were words written in Ashlandic and the Red River language: "Home of the Awakened in End Year City."

Clap! Clap! Clap!?

The honest Shang Jianyao clapped for him as he praised, “It’s akin to making it obvious that something is hidden here.”

“Are you sure this can be kept behind?” questioned the calm and rational Shang Jianyao. “We previously failed to modify the door number.”

The Shang Jianyao that sought novelty had an indifferent expression. “It’s not like you will die if you give it a try. Besides, we previously wanted to modify the original item. Without the Mind Corridor owner’s permission, we definitely wouldn’t have succeeded. Now, we are only putting up an annotation. It doesn’t involve the Mind Corridor’s intrinsic structure.”

Since it was just a try, the other Shang Jianyaos didn’t object.

They merged into one and walked around the other rooms before returning to Room 131.

The piece of paper with the words ‘Home of the Awakened in End Year City’ was still stuck there!

“It seems possible...” Shang Jianyao’s eyes lit up.

He opened the door and entered. After waiting for a few minutes, he came out to make confirmation.

The piece of paper was still there.

...

End Year City’s Elder Lawton entered the Mind Corridor again and walked toward the place he could find even with his eyes closed.

The New World door he had been searching for might very well be in the room labeled 131. However, the problem was that not only had Lawton suffered all kinds of unimaginable and grotesque matters there, but he had also experienced the Kalendaria’s gaze.

This made him believe that Room 131's owner had once come into contact with certain Kalendarium and obtained a certain level of favor.

If it weren't favor but malice, the room would've long since had its owner replaced.

As a person of faith, Lawton was very respectful of the Kalendarium. Without sufficient confidence, he didn't dare to explore Room 131 again. All he could do was walk to the door from time to time and look at it to soothe his emotions.

During this period of time, he had prayed to the Kalendaria of his faith and requested a bestowment, but he didn't receive any response.

As he walked, Lawton saw the familiar vermilion door and the golden number '131' that had a spot in his heart.

The next second, his gaze froze. He realized that there was a piece of paper stuck to 131's door. On the paper were words written in Ashlandic and Red River language: "Home of the Awakened in End Year City."

Lawton—who was considered experienced at the Mind Corridor level—was at a loss. He suspected that he was hallucinating because he was eager to explore the room and find the New World's door.

He even analyzed the possibility of him being ambushed and falling into a fantasy world.

After a few minutes of confirmation, Lawton finally confirmed that there was an additional signboard on 131's door.

This was unprecedented in the Mind Corridor!

Chapter 882: Baited

Lawton ultimately didn't enter 131. He wasn't a three-year-old child, so he wouldn't believe it just because the paper wrote that it was a home for Awakened in End Year City.

According to his experience, the probability of this being a trap was higher.

After leaving the Mind Corridor, he opened his eyes and looked at the pale ceiling and the chandelier that resembled letters. He then fell into deep thought.

He remembered that Room 131's owner should have a relatively serious mental illness; the greatest possibility was a split personality. It was perfectly normal for such a person to post a piece of paper outside his Mind Room with the words 'Home of End Year City's Awakened.' There was no need for others to understand, nor could they.

Lawton cared about two other things: The first was that paper and words could be pasted outside the Mind Room—this was something he had never imagined.

Second, the owner of Room 131 actually knew about End Year City. Furthermore, no matter what kind of attitude or thoughts he had, it clearly showed that he was very interested in End Year City.

Lawton's experience and intuition told him that the first point was impossible under normal circumstances. It wasn't like End Year City didn't have Mind Corridor-level Awakened with abnormal mental disorders. They had tried many times, including drawing graffiti outside the door, but they had failed.

Lawton suspected that Room 131's owner was able to post the paper and write the words because he had come into contact with certain Kalendarium and obtained a certain level of favor. This was in line with proof that the Kalendarium could change the Mind Corridor's order.

Lawton didn't have much doubt about this matter. He only confirmed that Room 131 was really dangerous.

The fact that Room 131's owner was interested in End Year City made him feel like a cat was scratching his heart. He couldn't calm down.

If the other party had a request, there was room for negotiation!

Lawton thought about it and felt that he could try to make contact with Room 131's owner.

If the other party didn't want much and it didn't involve the safety of End Year City, he could cooperate to a certain extent in exchange for the other party to restrain his memories and control the trauma so that he could quickly clear the level and find the New World's door.

Of course, this was definitely an abnormally dangerous matter. If the other party had malicious intentions toward End Year City, Lawton would be like a lamb entering a tiger's den once he entered Room 131. He would only be at the mercy of the other. After all, that person had some relationship with the Kalendarium.

The mind world was strange and varied. A little trick could make him wish he were dead.

If it were twenty years ago, ten years ago, or even five years ago, Lawton wouldn't have taken this risk. But now, he hesitated. This was because his illness was getting worse and worse, and his stomach was getting worse. He didn't seem like he could last another two to three years.

He wanted to enter the New World before that, escape the shackles of his body, and obtain eternal life.

After thinking for a long time, Lawton made up his mind. Give it a try!

However, trying was completely different from doing it blindly and rashly. Just as Lawton made up his mind, a corresponding plan appeared in his mind: He wanted to find another elder and borrow an item from him.

...

The next afternoon, Lawton—who was prepared—entered the Mind Corridor again.

After arriving outside Room 131, he took out a green leaf that had been made into a specimen. This was formed when the item's aura was transferred in.

The next second, the leaf lit up with a blurry green glow.

Amidst the green light, Lawton's body—which had been formed from his consciousness—twisted and stretched in all directions. Soon, it split into two, becoming two Lawtons.

Divine Mirror Connection!

The item Lawton borrowed had the Subhuti domain's Divine Mirror Connection. It could split Lawton's consciousness and turn one into many.

Lawton's plan was very simple: leave one of himself outside. This way, even if the person who entered suffered serious damage and was trapped inside or directly died, it would only bring long-term mental trauma and negative effects to his body to a certain extent. It wouldn't cause him to become a vegetable on the spot.

This was having hope despite suffering serious repercussions.

Lawton found it acceptable. After all, time didn't wait for him!

One of the split Lawtons reached out to grab the door handle of Room 131. He took a deep look at the name 'Home of the Awakened in End Year City' before gently turning it and pushing open the door.

As the vermilion door opened, Lawton walked in.

What he saw was a corridor, but it wasn't the corridor that belonged to the hospital in his memories.

"From the looks of it, I've cleared the first psychological trauma?" Lawton looked around and muttered to himself.

Although he had undergone surgery and suffered mental abnormalities that took him a long time to recover from, it was a good thing as long as he could clear the psychological trauma.

At the end of the corridor illuminated by street lamps, Lawton saw a door.

The door was silver-white in color. It wasn't tightly shut, revealing some cracks.

Lawton couldn't help but tremble when he recalled the terrifying gaze he suffered when he pushed open the door.

He was afraid that he would encounter such a thing again. He didn't want to experience that indescribable fear again.

After mentally preparing himself, Lawton mustered his courage and pushed open the silver-white door.

Behind the door was a deep darkness, very similar to the scene in Lawton's nightmare. Fortunately, there was no indistinct female figure, nor was there any gaze from the other party.

Lawton composed himself and walked into the darkness. He couldn't see anything in front of him or hear anything as if he had been abandoned by the world. This brought about a kind of fear and a suffocating feeling that made one go crazy.

Lawton gradually had the urge to roar and sing. He wanted to break this dead and still darkness.

Left with no choice, he forced himself to divert his attention and think about something else. How should I make contact with the room owner next? Under normal circumstances, he will often have nightmares and feel uneasy after I explore the depths of his mind world. He will then know that someone is about to approach his Sea of Origins and lock onto me to give me a warning until the battle begins...

The problem is that if I can clear two more psychological traumas and explore the room's depths, why should I make contact with him? When the time comes, I would've already found the New World's door.

Yes, the deeper I go, the more certain I am that the New World door which belongs to me is in this room... The problem now is how to make the room owner sense that I'm exploring his psychological trauma in advance and take the initiative to make contact with me...

As Lawton's thoughts raced, he saw a ball of light in the distance.

This ball of light didn't dispel the surrounding darkness; one had to be very close to discover it.

It came from an item that looked like a tablet computer. This item was placed above a silver-white pillar, level with Lawton's shoulder.

Lawton gathered his thoughts and approached. He saw the item's screen emit a gentle glow, and two lines of words appeared on it.

The two lines of words were in Ashlandic, and the other line was in the Red River language. The meaning was identical—they were asking: “Where are you from?”

Under this question was a long, blank text box that allowed inputs.

Lawton spent nearly a minute digesting the scene he saw. He then thoughtfully stretched out his right palm and chose to input it manually. Following that, he solemnly filled in the answer: “End Year City.”

Finally, he clicked submit.

...

Shang Jianyao—who was checking the supplies in the jeep’s trunk—suddenly paused. He abruptly turned around and said to Jiang Baimian and the others, “The fish has taken the bait!”

Without waiting for a response, he got into the car, leaned back in his chair, and massaged his temples.

...

Lawton waited for a while before he finally saw the words on the screen change.

Bang! Bang! Bang!?

Colorful fireworks bloomed on the screen, and the sound was clearly festive. Amidst the fireworks, a string of Ashlandic text appeared: “Welcome to Home of the Awakened in End Year City. Is there anything I can help you with?”

As ‘End Year City’ was written in Ashlandic, there was no Red River language.

Lawton slowly exhaled and said in a highly vigilant state, “What do you want?”

The string of words changed again. “The exact location of End Year City.”

“What do you want to do in End Year City? Maybe I can satisfy your needs without you being there.” Lawton deliberated and said, “Besides, you won’t be able to confirm it even if I give you fake coordinates.”

There was a high chance that a person entering the Home of the Awakened in End Year City would fill in ‘End Year City’ when answering the question. However, they might not be from End Year City.

Two hands appeared on the screen. One of them clenched into a fist and struck the other palm.

“That’s right. How can you prove that what you said is true?” The room owner expressed his doubts in words.

Lawton had a plan in mind. “I hope to explore your room to a certain extent and see if the New World’s door is here. This is what I want, and it will take quite some time to complete. During this period of time, you can verify whether I’m telling the truth. If I lie, I won’t be able to escape your punishment.”

“Not bad. Tell me the exact location of End Year City.” The words on the screen changed again.

Lawton felt that the problem had circled back. He took a deep breath and said, “Maybe you can replace it with other questions.”

In a situation where it was difficult to distinguish friend from foe, he didn’t want to betray End Year City. His descendants lived there.

Chapter 883: Q&A

The previous line of words was deleted from the screen, and another line of words appeared: “Why aren’t you willing to tell me the exact location of End Year City?”

Lawton thought for a few seconds and decided to tell the truth. “End Year City is my home. I don’t want to harm it in any way.”

Two hands appeared on the screen, and they clapped.

“Well said!” The two words emitted a golden glow as they popped out one after another.

“Then, can you tell me which Kalendaria you believe in?” A new question came one after another.

This wasn't anything to hide, so Lawton replied solemnly, “The great Arbiter of Fate.”

“The End will belong to the Arbiter of Fate!” The words on the screen expressed their excitement with an exclamation mark.

“You also believe in the Arbiter of Fate?” Lawton was delighted but also a little worried.

Different denominations might not have a harmonious relationship due to their different understanding of the scriptures.

“That's right, that's right,” replied Room 131's owner in text.

Lawton rationally didn't ask which faction the other party was from. He nodded happily and said, “So we are fellow believers. What do you want from End Year City?”

The words on the screen quickly changed. “I want to know something.”

“Ask. As long as it doesn't affect End Year City's safety and doesn't blaspheme the Kalendaria, I can answer you.” Lawton seized the opportunity and said, “However, you have to promise that if the information I provide is of certain value, you will let go of the restrictions and restrain your memories to facilitate my exploration of your psychological trauma in search of the New World's door.”

“No problem.” Room 131's owner was rather straightforward. Following that, new words formed a new question: “Does anything strange happen in End Year City?”

Lawton thought for a moment and said, “Everything is normal. At least, there's nothing especially strange in my impression.”

“Don’t you have the Heartless disease?” The words on the screen were dyed white as if they were expressing shock.

Lawton’s consciousness was divided into two—one was outside, and the other was inside. His thoughts weren’t that agile, so he was a little stunned by this question. After a few seconds, he replied, “It’d be strange if there’s no Heartless disease. Is there anywhere in the Ashlands that’s without the Heartless disease? There will always be some cases every year.”

“That’s true.” Room 131’s owner agreed with this explanation.

Where do you come from? Aren’t you aware of such general knowledge??Lawton couldn’t help but criticize inwardly.

Considering the other party’s mental state, he felt that it was meaningless to argue with the ill.

“Is there really nothing strange?” the owner of Room 131 asked in text again.

Upon seeing that the other party was very concerned about this matter, Lawton felt that his answer might be considered valuable in this regard. Therefore, he didn’t repeat the answer firmly and instead asked, “Can you give me a few examples of the strange situations you mentioned?”

After a brief pause, the words on the screen changed. “For example, large numbers of people dying inexplicably. For example, having many people mysteriously disappear every year. For example, someone going crazy from time to time—it’s not because they suffered trauma or the price they paid for exploring the Mind Room.”

Lawton seriously went through his memories over the years and hesitantly said, “These three situations don’t exist in our End Year City; I’m sure of this. But…”

“But what?” The words on the screen were very cooperative.

“However, the probability of someone in a certain position going crazy is rather high,” Lawton silently exhaled.

“Which position?” The words on the screen popped up one after another.

Lawton replied with a solemn expression, "Grand Elder."

"Does he believe in the Arbiter of Fate?" Room 131's owner seemed to be typing rapidly.

"End Year City's Grand Elder must be a believer of the Arbiter of Fate," Lawton gave an affirmative answer. He then said, "From the establishment of End Year City until now, there have been a total of six Grand Elders. Apart from the current one, one of the remaining five entered the New World, one died from an injury during an expedition, and a total of three went mad."

"The probability of going crazy is 60%?" the words on the screen asked in confirmation.

Nobody knew what would happen to the current Great Elder, so he was temporarily excluded.

Lawton nodded. "That's why I said that it's a little abnormal. Our explanation is that the Grand Elder often pays attention to the deity by being too close to the Kalendaria. It's very easy for him to go crazy if he can't enter the New World before exceeding a certain time limit."

"That's right. People who come into contact with the Kalendarium often are either scared to death or go crazy." Room 131's owner seemed to have this deeply imprinted in his mind.

The words on the screen continued changing. "What happened to the three crazy ones in the end?"

"One ended his life a few days after going crazy. The other brought too much of a threat, so we jointly eliminated him. The other escaped End Year City while we weren't paying attention, but he probably didn't live long," Lawton replied truthfully.

"Why?" the owner of Room 131 asked in text.

"It wasn't long after the end-of-year Mass; Icefield was in its coldest and most unsuitable season for human survival." Lawton had a deep impression of this matter.

"What's that Grand Elder's name, and what does he look like?" The words on the screen changed.

Lawton didn't hide anything. "His name is Qin Ke. He was only 49 years old when he went crazy. As for his looks..."

Lawton tried to show the image of Qin Ke in his memories in the deep darkness.

The next second, the light on the screen skyrocketed, illuminating the pattern he had conjured.

Qin Ke was a man; his shoulder-length hair was half-white. He was about 1.7 meters tall and wore a black robe. The skin on his face was slightly dry and wrinkled. His eyes seemed to be sunken because he was of mixed blood, making him look rather serious.

"What did those crazy Grand Elders say or do after they went crazy?" Room 131's owner deleted the original question and typed new words.

"Some shouted that they wanted to kill all of us and took action, some said that the end of the world wasn't over, and some wanted us to commit suicide to purge the land..." Lawton said as he recalled.

The crazy words sounded meaningful, but there was no substantial content. The blinking lights on the screen didn't form any other words.

Finally, Lawton said, "After Grand Elder Qin Ke went crazy, he seemed to become another person; he even changed his name. On the surface, he seemed to have suffered Destiny Connection, but we eliminated this possibility after inspection."

"What name did he change to?" The words on the screen finally did something.

Lawton truthfully said, "He called himself Du Heng."

Chapter 884: Clues

For more than 20 seconds, the words on the screen didn't change.

It wasn't long, but Lawton felt like several minutes had passed. This was mainly because he couldn't stay in Room 131 for too long. After all, the effects of Divine Mirror Connection had a time limit.

This was also the reason why he didn't use such a method to explore Room 131's psychological trauma previously. This time, he forcefully split his consciousness because he wanted to make contact with the room owner and communicate with him to a certain extent, something he didn't feel would take long.

Finally, the words on the screen changed. "When did Qin Ke go crazy?"

"Seven years ago, after the year-end Mass," Lawton replied frankly, not believing that this information would harm End Year City's safety.

"He fled End Year City a few days later?" the owner of Room 131 asked in text.

"Yes." Lawton nodded.

After another moment of silence, the words on the screen raised another question. "What do you think of Truth?"

"Truth has great power, almost like a deity." Lawton's expression unconsciously became serious. "In End Year City, those who believe in 'Her' will receive a response or two every year."

"How professional!" The words on the screen used exclamation marks again.

"Indeed." Lawton had deep feelings about this.

Truth was nothing like the Arbiter of Fate, who always ignored 'Her' believers. 'She' would only occasionally bestow them with gifts during the year-end Mass.

Room 131's owner then asked about the Truth Church through text. The information he obtained was about the same as what the Old Task Force had obtained from End Year City's caravan outside Cliff Village.

"Last question: What do the Truth believers think of Last Man?" The information revealed by the words on the screen made Lawton heave a sigh of relief.

He replied without hesitation, “They believe that Last Man is a fake god and not a real Kalendaria.”

Clap! Clap! Clap!?

Two hands appeared on the screen. They clapped together with the words: “That’s all to the questions. You are free to explore my psychological trauma at any time. I hope you find the New World’s door soon.”

Lawton was delighted and rubbed his temples. “Thank you very much.”

He planned on coming back to explore in a few days because he needed a certain amount of time to ease the residual effects of Divine Mirror Connection. If this wasn’t resolved well, he might very well end up with a split personality.

This didn’t help him explore the Mind Corridor. After all, without Divine Mirror Connection, it was impossible to have a portion of his consciousness outside and a portion of his consciousness enter.

Several lines of words appeared on the screen: “What you need to pay attention to is not entering the school when you see it and choosing to take a detour when you encounter a door that slides open to the side...”

It sounds dangerous... But if I don’t enter or take a detour, will I miss the New World’s door?? Lawton thought with a solemn expression.

The words on the screen continued jumping out. “These have nothing to do with my psychological trauma; they come from certain memories. It’s impossible for me to control my thoughts and not have any related thoughts flash across my mind at all times.”

“I understand.” Lawton clearly heaved a sigh of relief.

Since it had nothing to do with the psychological trauma, it wouldn’t involve the New World’s door.

The words on the screen disappeared, and the light dimmed.

Upon seeing this, Lawton turned around and walked toward the dark exit.

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“Du Heng? The End Year City’s Grand Elder who went mad thinks he’s Du Heng?” Long Yuehong was stunned.

This completely exceeded his expectations.

Bai Chen nodded thoughtfully. “Teacher Du Heng has always been mysterious.”

It wasn’t surprising that such a person was involved with the Kalendaria.

“Could it be that you think Qin Ke is Teacher Du Heng?” Shang Jianyao had a look of shock. “But they look completely different; their heights are also different. Could it be that he increased his height while undergoing plastic surgery?”

At this point, he looked at Long Yuehong and asked in concern, “If there are really no side effects, you can give it a try. Otherwise, you won’t be able to escape that curse for the rest of your life. Sigh, you’re only 1.75 meters tall after genetic enhancement. Your looks are average, and your grades are only average...”

“Stop!” Long Yuehong interrupted this fellow’s recital. “Let’s discuss the main topic.”

“Yes.” Shang Jianyao nodded and made a guess. “Did Teacher Du Heng wear height insoles? But I’ve observed his shoes—they don’t look like it. Old Ge, what do you think?”

“There’s nothing wrong with his height, and there are no traces of plastic surgery.” Genova made a scientific judgment.

Jiang Baimian—who had been silent—looked around and said, “Could there be more than one person named Du Heng?”

Bai Chen voiced her opinion. “There should only be one person that’s related to mystery and strangeness.”

Jiang Baimian nodded slightly. “I mean, Teacher Du Heng might not have been called Du Heng in the past. Didn’t he lose many memories?”

“I don’t quite understand.” Long Yuehong didn’t get it. “Why do you think Teacher Du Heng wasn’t called Du Heng in the past?”

Jiang Baimian looked around and said, “Here’s my line of thought. In the Ashlands, there are some people. They used to have different identities and names, but they later encountered something and became lunatics. They began to call themselves Du Heng. It’s how it was for Qin Ke, and it might be the same for the Teacher Du Heng we encountered.”

“But Teacher Du Heng isn’t crazy.” Shang Jianyao disagreed with this guess.

Bai Chen had already completely understood her team leader’s meaning and helped make up for the flaws in her inference. “Maybe they’re crazy because they aren’t used to their identity as Du Heng. When they get used to it, they will become normal and become the real Du Heng.”

“Sounds terrifying. It’s even more terrifying than the parasitic phenomenon created by Destiny Connection.” Shang Jianyao trembled. “But the two Grand Elders who went crazy never called themselves that. Only Qin Ke did.”

Jiang Baimian nodded. “This is only a preliminary guess. It might be overturned in the future. What we need to do now is confirm if Qin Ke is still alive and find him to see if the reason for his madness involves the mystery of the Kalendarium rearing humans.”

“But he has already fled End Year City,” Long Yuehong reminded his team leader. “Ignoring the fact that he hasn’t frozen to death in Icefield, it’s no different from searching for a needle in a haystack even if he’s still alive.”

Jiang Baimian revealed a complicated smile. “Hey just hung the sign ‘Home of the Awakened in End Year City.’ Isn’t it too much of a coincidence that an Elder-level figure from End Year City came to ‘visit’ today? Since it’s already so coincidental, we might discover Qin Ke’s traces very coincidentally in the near future.”

Clap! Clap! Clap!?

Shang Jianyao clapped and praised sincerely, “This is fate’s arrangement.”

Then, what's the price?? Long Yuehong muttered silently.

Jiang Baimian then said, "Let's ask Gitis later and see if she has seen anyone suspected to be Qin Ke in the past three years."

At this point, Jiang Baimian exhaled and said, "Things have progressed faster and more 'successfully' than I expected. This way, we don't have to worry about the company discovering that we are investigating the mystery of the Kalendarium rearing humans."

She emphasized the word 'successfully.'

As the problem with Ceningmis might've been resolved by Big Boss, Jiang Baimian didn't believe that the information regarding their completed mission could escape Big Boss's notice. She only felt that Big Boss rarely paid attention to her believers and didn't communicate with the company's board of directors that often. This resulted in a time lag between information gathering.

To put it simply, she had previously wanted to hide from the company, figure out the truth, and return to the underground building before Big Boss communicated with the board of directors. For this reason, she even got Shang Jianyao to wrap the Life Angel necklace in layers and place it in Genava's backpack.

"That's right." Long Yuehong didn't know if he was happy or worried.

...

The next day, the Old Task Force went straight to Gitis's house to visit the intelligence peddler whose shift was at night.

"What do you want to know?" Gitis asked skillfully.

Shang Jianyao nodded with a heavy expression. "Name a price."

Gitis said in embarrassment, "It's free this time, and it will be free from now on."

The information provided by the Old Task Force was priceless.

Shang Jianyao immediately perked up. He took out a piece of paper and handed it over. “Have you seen this person?”

Gitis fell silent as she looked at the stick figure that appeared to be drawn by a child.

Jiang Baimian facepalmed and signaled for Genova to help.

Genava took out his printed portrait and handed it to Gitis. This was a portrait he had produced using the criminal sketching methods that the Old World employed through Shang Jianyao’s description, choice, and confirmation.

According to Shang Jianyao, he resembled Qin Ke.

Gitis took it and looked at it. She didn’t say anything for a while as if she were recalling something.

A few minutes later, she hesitantly said, “I’ve never seen him. However, I once controlled an avatar six years ago. The avatar had a certain impression of him when I flipped through his memories.”

Chapter 885: Raving

“Really?” Long Yuehong blurted out. He didn’t feel surprised; instead, he was shocked.

Clap! Clap! Clap! Shang Jianyao clapped for an unknown person.

Gitis glanced at them, not understanding why they had such a reaction.

They were the ones asking, but they looked like they wanted to stuff their ears when they heard that there were useful clues.

Knowing that this group of people was mysterious and strange, she suppressed her doubts and recalled. “That avatar was the person you encountered on the mountain where you previously helped Aester escort the goods. Back then, he was hunting a beast. He was just about to greet him when he suddenly felt suffocated. His vision turned black, and he was close to suffocation. Just as he was about to faint, this feeling suddenly disappeared—so did the person.

“In the subsequent years, Aester’s subordinates also discovered traces of human activity in the forest around the winery. And it happened more than once.”

“How are you sure that it’s traces of human activity and not Heartless activity?” the honest Shang Jianyao asked.

Gitis replied very bluntly, “It can’t be determined.”

This prevented Shang Jianyao from finding an opportunity to press on.

“Thank you. This information is very important to us.” Jiang Baimian thanked Gitis on behalf of the Old Task Force and ended the topic.

As they left Gitis’s house and walked to the jeep, Long Yuehong looked at Jiang Baimian and hesitantly asked, “Team Leader, what should we do next?”

Jiang Baimian pondered for a moment before replying, “No matter what, we have to search the mountain range which Gitis mentioned. If it were any other matter, I definitely would’ve made you guys stay as far away as possible and not get involved in these coincidences. However, this involves the company’s future and everyone’s safety. We have to take this risk.”

“That’s right.” Long Yuehong agreed sincerely. He made a decision before Bai Chen’s reaction.

Bai Chen said, “Maybe that’s why those coincidences befell us.”

“This is fate’s arrangement.” Shang Jianyao had an expectant expression.

Genava moved his metal neck. “This reminds me of an ancient saying: No matter how many stand in my way, I will forge ahead fearlessly.”

This inexplicably made Long Yuehong’s blood pump with adrenaline.

After the team came to an agreement, Shang Jianyao and the others didn’t delay any further. They took advantage of the fact that it was still early and headed straight for the mine-filled mountain.

After arriving near Aester's private winery, Jiang Baimian pushed open the door and alighted. She then said to her team members, "We'll split into two teams and search the forest. Old Ge, follow Little White and Little Red. Bring FECA along and pay attention to their situation at all times."

"No problem." As a smart bot, Genava wasn't afraid of the Arbiter of Fate's domain ability to affect breathing or the heart.

Qin Ke's identity as an Arbiter of Fate domain Awakened was inferred by the Old Task Force from the End Year City Elder's description and the experiences of Gitis's avatar.

With Old Ge accompanying Long Yuehong and Bai Chen, Jiang Baimian felt rather at ease. She didn't waste her breath and adjusted the auxiliary chip's preset conditions before leading Shang Jianyao—no, following Shang Jianyao—into the forest on the right.

The two of them symbolically held the Berserker assault rifle and walked through the woods.

This place was deep in the mountains. Red pine trees and other cold-resistant plants stood tall, almost blocking out the sky. As a result, it became abnormally dim.

Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao had outstanding eyesight. As they carefully observed the area ahead, they seriously sensed the surrounding human consciousnesses and bioelectric signals.

In this silence, time passed minute by minute. After half an hour, the two of them discovered some traces of human activity.

As for whether they were normal humans or Heartless, it was unknown.

Following the traces, Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao changed their route and walked toward a cliff. It was filled with vegetation, and there were almost no natural paths.

"There are no snakes here." Shang Jianyao kicked the grass in front of him, his thoughts elsewhere.

Jiang Baimian was long accustomed to such a state and casually said, "There might not be any mutated species that are relatively resistant to the cold..."

Before she could finish her sentence, her gaze turned cold as she pointed the muzzle ahead.
“There’s a cave there.”

Behind the array of trees, beside a large number of weeds, and on a vegetation-covered rock wall, there was a black cave.

This place was rather hidden. Not only was it deep in the uninhabited forest, but there were also protruding rocks that prevented line of sight from many directions. If not for the fact that Jiang Baimian believed there was a high chance of finding clues and repeatedly observed the area, she might’ve missed it.

“There’s no human consciousness,” Shang Jianyao immediately replied.

Jiang Baimian nodded. “There are no bioelectric signals that match human characteristics either.”

As she spoke, she held the Berserker assault rifle in her left hand and made her free hand remove the flashlight hanging from her belt.

She was in no rush to enter the cave, nor did she stop Shang Jianyao from jumping in. She stood seven to eight meters away from the cave entrance and looked inside.

More traces of human activity were found in the area illuminated by natural light in the cave. Jiang Baimian approached step by step and switched on the flashlight, illuminating the darkness deep inside.

Suddenly, she stopped. She saw a white skeleton sitting against a stone wall deep in the cave.

The corpse wore a tattered black robe.

“Could this be Qin Ke?” Shang Jianyao asked.

“We can’t rule out that possibility,” Jiang Baimian replied rather cautiously.

Shang Jianyao immediately raised his voice. “You died a tragic death! We came late!”

Jiang Baimian ignored the noise beside her and directly ordered, "Let's go in and check."

Shang Jianyao couldn't wait any longer and jumped into the cave with a whoosh.

Jiang Baimian slowly followed behind him, guarding against any possible accidents.

"Dead for more than two years..." Shang Jianyao came to the corpse and squatted down.

Jiang Baimian nodded slightly and didn't interrupt his feedback.

"There's no sign of broken bones..." Shang Jianyao reported word by word.

Finally, he picked up something from the rock beside him. "There's a recording pen."

A recording pen...? Jiang Baimian's forehead twitched. This made her thoughts run wild.

"The item itself doesn't contain an Awakened's power. As for the contents, we can't be sure." Shang Jianyao dutifully checked.

Jiang Baimian nodded. "Let Old Ge listen to it later."

After searching the cave for a while and not finding any other clues, the two of them informed Geneva, Long Yuehong, and Bai Chen to meet up at the cave.

Geneva's autopsy results were similar to Shang Jianyao's, but he confirmed that the deceased was Ashlandic.

The probability of encountering Ashlandics in the White Knights' sphere of influence was very low to begin with, so there was no other possibility for an Ashlandic corpse to appear in this deep forest. According to this, the Old Task Force preliminarily determined that this was the person Gitis's avatar had encountered back then.

That person was suspected to be End Year City's former Grand Elder, Qin Ke.

Jiang Baimian got Shang Jianyao to hand the recording pen to Genava. “Old Ge, walk in front of the team later and listen to the recording pen’s content. Tell us if there’s any hidden power when we return to the car.”

“No problem.” Genava never declined.

Just like that, the Old Task Force left the forest one after another and returned to the jeep.

After sitting back in the car, Genava returned the recording pen to Jiang Baimian. “I didn’t discover any abnormal fluctuations. I’ve already transcribed the corresponding content into my storage module.”

Genava paused, and the red glow in his eyes flickered violently. “The words recorded are a little like a lunatic’s ravings, but they also reveal very important information that can resolve your doubts.”

Long Yuehong, Bai Chen, and Shang Jianyao straightened their backs.

Jiang Baimian took a deep breath and quietly nodded at Genava.

Genava began to play his transcription—this was definitely safe.

The empty portion that was mixed with static quickly passed when a slightly hoarse male voice sounded. “I’m Du Heng. There are some things I have to record: None of the Kalendarium can be trusted!”

As the Old Task Force members’ eyelids twitched, the sound came to an abrupt end. Following that was a long stretch of seemingly endless silence.

“There’s more.” Genava quickly gave a hint to prevent Shang Jianyao from losing patience.

After another minute or two, the male voice sounded again. “I’m Du Heng. I know some very terrifying things...”

At this point, the sound disappeared again. Only the static proved that Geneva didn't stop broadcasting.

Jiang Baimian looked up at Geneva beside her.

Geneva explained, "My analysis tells me that Qin Ke—who calls himself Du Heng—wanted to record it time and time again but was interrupted by something. What you heard was actually made up of several recording sessions."

Just as Geneva had said, a few subsequent recordings that didn't sound like a lunatic's ravings were played. "I'm Du Heng. I might not live long..."

"I'm Du Heng. The apocalypse has never ended; the Old World's destruction is only the beginning!"

"I'm Du Heng; I'm not Du Heng..."

Just as Long Yuehong was considering rushing Old Ge to fast-forward, the slightly hoarse male voice sounded in fear. "I'm Du Heng. The Ashlands I see is a large ranch, and what's reared here is food for the Kalendarium! The Kalendarium feed on human consciousness!"

Chapter 886: Chance Encounter

Large ranch... Food for the Kalendarium... Feed on human consciousness...?These words were like muffled thunder that exploded in Long Yuehong and the others' minds one after another.

Their expressions couldn't help but change. Even Shang Jianyao had a solemn expression with widened eyes.

Almost at the same time, they thought of something: An experiment on a cold environment's influence on a human's mind and body!

A person with a strong physique and mind is more delicious and nutritious??Jiang Baimian's thoughts raced as her expression sank. Right on the heels of that, a scene surfaced in her mind:~In Pangu Biology's underground building, the temperature is as cold as winter every night after lights out. The widespread genetic enhancement makes most people have good physiques...

As the Old Task Force members' imaginations ran wild, sizzling sounds echoed in the jeep. Before long, a slightly hoarse male voice sounded again. "I'm Du Heng. Don't think that there's nothing wrong now. Once the Kalendarium return to the Ashlands..."

After a brief pause, he suddenly let out an extremely terrified and sharp scream. "Truth!"

This shout made Long Yuehong's ears ring.

The recording ended. Truth seemed to be someone's dying cry.

"That's all." Genava ended the broadcast and broke the silence in the jeep.

After a while, Long Yuehong forced a smile and said, "I wonder how true this is."

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

The next second, the honest him continued, "If one's consciousness is eaten cleanly, they will die on the spot. They become Heartless when only the essence is eaten?"

Long Yuehong didn't want to discuss this problem. This was akin to an injured person tearing open an unhealed wound and making him face the bloody pain.

Jiang Baimian restrained her thoughts and built on Shang Jianyao's guesses. "In that case, the Heartless disease isn't a virus..."

"Then, why can New World powerhouses spread the Heartless disease?" Bai Chen asked.

Jiang Baimian thought for a moment and said, "They might've already obtained the ability to directly exert influence on human consciousness after entering the New World."

Without waiting for the others to speak, she muttered to herself, "New World powerhouses also need human consciousness as fuel to travel between reality and the New World? Is this the real reason for the small-scale Heartless disease outbreaks in many places during First City's uprising?"

“But apart from such accidents, very few people in the company contract the Heartless disease every year,” Long Yuehong whispered.

Shang Jianyao immediately repeated the recording’s original words. “I’m Du Heng. Don’t think that there’s nothing wrong now. Once the Kalendarium return to the Ashlands...”

“Stop!” Jiang Baimian instinctively believed that Shang Jianyao was about to imitate the tragic cry.

Shang Jianyao shut his mouth with a look of regret.

“Before the Kalendarium return to the Ashlands, ‘They’ can only secretly eat a little every year?” Bai Chen said thoughtfully. “Besides, it’s not like every Kalendaria only has one ranch. Eating a little here and a little there can result in a sizable amount.”

Jiang Baimian nodded indiscernibly. “This way, there’s a better explanation for faith spreading the Heartless disease...”

Through the believers’ recitals and prayers, the Kalendarium could locate the corresponding places and eat the consciousness of people unrelated to ‘Them.’ If there was nobody else around and ‘They’ were ‘starving,’ ‘They’ could only eat from ‘Their’ own farms.

“This corroborates the situation of the Kalendaria deep in the Fourth Research Institute needing a large number of experimental personnel whenever ‘He’ is weakened,” Geneva reminded the Old Task Force.

“It’s no wonder Room 506’s owner made the inference that the Kalendaria is eating humans.” Shang Jianyao clenched his right fist and punched his left palm.

He looked enlightened, while the others’ hearts became heavier.

Jiang Baimian frowned slightly. “But why did Room 506’s owner—who believed in Master Zhuang and joined the Eternal Time Church—discover this matter? Why did Qin Ke suddenly go crazy and record such content? This should be a secret kept by all the Kalendarium.”

“From the looks of it, it’s a dispute that involves the New World.” Shang Jianyao mimicked Jiang Baimian. “In order to deal a blow to the enemy, ‘They’ won’t hesitate to expose such a secret.”

“There have indeed been many forces pushing us forward.” Jiang Baimian nodded slightly. “But how useful can we be in such matters with our strength?”

Upon realizing how the discussion appeared to be one built on facts, Long Yuehong quickly said, “I don’t think we can believe the statement of Room 506 just like that. We also can’t believe that there’s something wrong with the Kalendarium just because of a few recordings. What if it’s Master Zhuang’s plot? Besides, anyone can make such a recording.”

“That’s true.” Bai Chen stood on Long Yuehong’s side.

Jiang Baimian nodded slightly and said, “Now that we have a direction, the next step is to verify it.”

At this point, she smiled at Long Yuehong and Bai Chen. “I want the company to be fine more than you. I, Jiang Baimian, am just one step away from entering management. My father is in management, and my brother and sister-in-law’s employee ranks aren’t low either. How can such a family bear to abandon everything they have and go elsewhere?”

After comforting them, her expression turned serious. “However, we can’t avoid the problem. Being afraid of the problem and avoiding it will only make things turn for the worse.”

“But how are we to verify it? After verifying it, how are we to resolve the company’s problem if the recording is real?” Long Yuehong asked in one breath, appearing anxious.

Jiang Baimian wanted to sigh, but as team leader, she had to show that she could definitely see the dawn of hope in the future no matter how lacking in confidence she was.

She deliberated for a moment and said, “We can only take it one step at a time for the time being. Next, the most important thing is to let Hey find the door that leads to the New World. I’ll also try my best to enter the Mind Corridor as soon as possible.

“Hey, you have to pay attention to the situation in the New World and determine if the Kalendarium eat human consciousness. You have to grasp the situation there as soon as possible. Well... Actually, Hey should have an accurate understanding of human consciousness after he becomes a New World powerhouse. When the time comes, he will give us a secret signal according to an agreed-upon method.

“After the New World’s situation changes and Big Boss has no time to care about the company, we’ll immediately secretly contact the Awakened and key personnel we can rope in, striving to get everyone to leave the underground building and search for another settlement before the dust settles in the New World.

“As for whether the Kalendarium will descend into the Ashlands in ‘Their’ complete forms, it’s not something we can worry about now.”

Jiang Baimian had originally come up with a random plan to comfort Long Yuehong and Bai Chen, but her train of thought became smoother as she spoke. Of course, this was only a very crude idea.

It might not be feasible, but Jiang Baimian had already given her team members a heads-up. They would take it one step at a time.

While actively considering the countermeasures, she felt that she had resolved a lot of the problems she had with the company.

Since the problem had already appeared, the only thing they could do next was verify it and resolve it.

Running away wasn’t her style.

With such determination, she vaguely felt that it wouldn’t be long before she cleared her current psychological trauma and came one step closer to the Mind Corridor.

Long Yuehong quietly listened and exhaled. “That’s all we can do...”

There was no better solution now.

He hoped Shang Jianyao would discover that the Heartless disease came from a virus after becoming a New World powerhouse.

“No problem!” Shang Jianyao wore an expression as though he had long wanted to explore the Mind Room to his heart’s content and quickly enter the New World.

“Alright.” Bai Chen didn’t object.

Genava also felt that the plan was relatively reasonable.

Jiang Baimian then looked around. “Let’s return to Gesterbourg now and rest for a few days before returning.”

Nobody objected.

On the way, Shang Jianyao threw the worries to the back of his mind and excitedly said, “What kind of existence is Truth? Qin Ke should’ve died at his hands in the end. Since he killed Qin Ke, why didn’t he take the recording pen?”

Jiang Baimian made a guess by combining all kinds of information. “Maybe he’s trapped in the New World and can’t return to reality. He only locked onto Qin Ke’s consciousness in a certain way, such as finding the other party’s Mind Room.”

Shang Jianyao’s thoughts suddenly jumped. “Yama Tiger is also trapped in the New World. Why does he want the people around him to contract the Heartless disease? It’s not like he can return.”

“They hope to obtain a large amount of fuel to help them escape?” guessed Long Yuehong from the passenger seat.

Jiang Baimian fell silent for a moment before saying, “Maybe... People trapped in the New World need to feed on human consciousness like the Kalendarium? Think about it. Yama Tiger actually survived to this day as a mummy.”

Shang Jianyao’s eyes lit up. “Where are the Kalendarium’s mummies?”

“There’s one under the old pagoda tree,” reminded Bai Chen.

As they discussed, the jeep returned to Gesterbourg.

Shang Jianyao suddenly rolled down the window and waved at the side street. As he waved, he shouted excitedly, “Teacher Du Heng!”

Du Heng??Jiang Baimian, Long Yuehong, and Bai Chen instantly felt like they had fallen into an icy lake.

Chapter 887: Opportunity

A figure was slowly walking along the sidewalk.

He was in his forties and almost 1.8 meters tall. He wore a black robe and had long black hair. He also had a very elegant beard around his mouth. He was none other than Du Heng, whom the Old Task Force knew.

However, Jiang Baimian, Long Yuehong, and Bai Chen didn't feel the joy of meeting an old friend in a foreign land. They even broke out into a cold sweat.

It was already too late for them to stop Shang Jianyao.

When Du Heng heard Shang Jianyao's greeting and turned to look over, the jeep was dead silent.

Upon seeing Du Heng walk over with a smile, Bai Chen resisted the urge to floor the accelerator and drive off. She rationally stepped on the brakes and stopped by the roadside.

Shang Jianyao pushed open the door and alighted, happily walking over.

Jiang Baimian got her expression under control and followed behind.

"Why are you guys here in Gesterbourg?" Du Heng asked with a smile.

Shang Jianyao was just about to answer when Jiang Baimian spoke first. "Teacher Du Heng, it's inconvenient to discuss certain matters in public. Why don't we have a chat at our hotel?"

She calmed down a little. Since she was in this situation, it didn't matter what she did. It was better to obtain some information.

Du Heng looked around and nodded. "Fine then."

Although this was Gesterbourg, and they spoke in Ashlandic, there were many local Ruin Hunters. There might be one proficient in foreign languages.

In order to punish Shang Jianyao for his rashness, Jiang Baimian made him leave the seat to Long Yuehong and let the guest, Du Heng, sit in the passenger seat.

Shang Jianyao could only squeeze in the same spot as Geneva, but this wasn't a problem for them.

After returning to the Fire & Iron Hotel and entering the team's suite, Jiang Baimian looked at Du Heng and asked, "Teacher Du Heng, we just went to Icefield to explore Ceningmis and came to Gesterbourg to replenish our supplies."

She observed Du Heng's expression and realized that he didn't have any special reaction to Ceningmis. He only nodded slightly.

"What about you? What are you doing in Gesterbourg?" Shang Jianyao asked impatiently.

Du Heng smiled and replied, "I heard that the Eighth Research Institute's headquarters was found. I suddenly recalled something."

Heard? From who? Teacher Du Heng, you don't belong to any large faction...? Jiang Baimian didn't voice her thoughts.

"What did you remember?" Shang Jianyao asked curiously.

Du Heng revealed a reminiscing expression. "There seems to be something hidden deep in the Eighth Research Institute. It's rather important, so I want to take a look."

Jiang Baimian had the intention of probing and said in a concerned tone, "The Eighth Research Institute has many powerhouses in its headquarters. It's probably not that easy to infiltrate."

Du Heng smiled, unfazed. "I'll decide what to do after I see the exact situation over there. What if the Eighth Research Institute has already evacuated and moved to a backup base? You can then enter their headquarters without any effort."

“If those powerhouses are still around, I’ll wait. Someone will definitely give them trouble. When the time comes, there will naturally be an opportunity.”

Clap! Clap! Clap!

Shang Jianyao clapped. “Very reasonable.”

Reasonable my ass! Do you know how large the perception range of a New World powerhouse is? Do you know what Old World creations the Eighth Research Institute has? It’s a fool’s dream to hide around their headquarters without knowing... However, it’s not impossible for Teacher Du Heng... There are New World powerhouses in End Year City...?Jiang Baimian muttered silently and didn’t interject.

The premise of her hypothesis was that this Du Heng was indeed Du Heng. There was really a group of people in the Ashlands who called themselves Du Heng.

Despite the New World powerhouses in End Year City, Qin Ke—who had become Du Heng—still managed to escape. In the end, Truth personally took action and killed him.

On the other side, Long Yuehong and Bai Chen tried their best to maintain their silence. Geneva was responsible for guarding the area.

Du Heng smiled at Shang Jianyao’s praise. “In any case, I’ve lived like this for so many years. I’ve pursued certain matters and gone to certain places, only to decide what to do based on the situation. I didn’t encounter many difficulties.”

That’s because you are you...?Jiang Baimian chose to criticize inwardly.

“When can I be like this...” Shang Jianyao had an envious expression. Without waiting for Du Heng’s response, he asked in anticipation, “Can we go to the Eighth Research Institute’s headquarters with you?”

With that said, he recalled that he had made a decision on his own and quickly turned to look at Jiang Baimian. “What do you think?”

Jiang Baimian's heart palpitated as she didn't stop him. She nodded slightly and said, "That depends on whether Teacher Du Heng is agreeable."

She had never considered going to the Eighth Research Institute's headquarters because it was too dangerous. It was better to leave it to the company, White Knights, and other large factions. But if Du Heng—who had a mysterious background and was clearly very strong—joined them, it wouldn't be a bad choice to visit the Eighth Research Institute's headquarters.

In any case, they could make a final decision after understanding the exact situation.

Du Heng laughed involuntarily. "Why? Are you also very interested in the Eighth Research Institute?"

"Yes." Shang Jianyao nodded without hesitation.

Du Heng deliberated for a moment. "That works too. It will save me a lot of time if I hitch a ride with you."

Jiang Baimian immediately said, "Teacher Du Heng, please allow us to have an internal discussion to discuss the corresponding plan."

"Alright." Du Heng expressed his understanding.

Jiang Baimian immediately called for Long Yuehong, Bai Chen, Shang Jianyao, and Genava. They left the suite and arrived at the Fire & Iron Hotel's rooftop.

"Team Leader, didn't we decide to return to the company?" Long Yuehong spoke first.

Jiang Baimian tersely acknowledged it.

"But searching the Eighth Research Institute's headquarters ahead of the various large factions is a great temptation. This might allow us to obtain a lot of important information. Ignoring what's hidden deep in the Eighth Research Institute, just their mature Awakening process is a priceless treasure. The two of you might be able to take the opportunity to become Awakened."

Since she had preliminarily resolved the mystery of the human-rearing Kalendarium, Jiang Baimian definitely wouldn't place her hopes on the company's higher-ups.

Long Yuehong's heart palpitated. Considering that he might have to face the company's die-hard supporters in the future and lead everyone out of the underground building, he had an urgent desire to improve his strength.

Bai Chen was the same.

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

Jiang Baimian swept her gaze across Long Yuehong and Bai Chen's faces and changed the topic. "To ensure that nothing goes wrong, I plan on splitting up. Little White, Little Red, the two of you will return to the company. Old Ge will be in the same team as you. Stay in the Blackmarsh Wilderness and remain in contact. Hey and I will follow Teacher Du Heng to the Eighth Research Institute's headquarters."

Bai Chen subconsciously opened her mouth to refuse.

Jiang Baimian knew her personality and persistence and spoke first. "This way, no matter what Hey and I encounter at the Eighth Research Institute's headquarters by Teacher Du Heng's side or if we can return, at least a portion of people will know the mystery of the human-rearing Kalendarium. Preparations can be made to lead everyone out of the underground building in the future.

"Little White, Little Red, I'll leave my family, Hey's friends, and everyone in the company to you. I know this is a very heavy burden for you, but I have no choice."

Long Yuehong and Bai Chen felt a suffocating heaviness in their hearts.

After a few seconds, Bai Chen bit her lip and said, "You've convinced me."

Long Yuehong said, "Team Leader, don't worry. Our families are also in the underground building. We have to shoulder that burden no matter how much we don't want to."

Jiang Baimian nodded in relief as Shang Jianyao applauded.

After a brief silence, Jiang Baimian planned on refining the plan.

At this moment, Bai Chen pursed her lips and said with slightly red eyes, “You guys have to come back!”

Her voice was slightly sharper than usual, and it trembled a little.

“Definitely!” Shang Jianyao was filled with confidence. “We have to save the entire company and all of humanity together.”

Jiang Baimian blinked and exhaled. “Once I find the way to Awaken at the Eighth Research Institute’s headquarters, I’ll inform Old Ge via telegram. If you haven’t returned to the company by then, you can directly attempt to Awaken. If you’ve already entered the underground building, take the initiative and apply to Deputy Minister Xenny to go to the surface regularly for field training and meet Old Ge according to the agreed method. The reason for going out is very simple: It’s to be prepared to receive Hey and me at all times.”

It was definitely much closer to the Eighth Research Institute’s headquarters from Gesterbourg than from Pangu Biology’s underground building. However, Jiang Baimian still came up with two plans considering Icefield’s weather and the Eighth Research Institute’s headquarters’ situation.

“Alright.” Bai Chen and Long Yuehong nodded in unison.

Long Yuehong then asked, “Team Leader, what do you plan on telling the company?”

Anyone would be suspicious if the two of them didn’t return.

“Tell the truth.” Jiang Baimian smiled. “Just say that we encountered Teacher Du Heng and had a chance to enter the Eighth Research Institute’s headquarters. We decided to take the risk and give it a try. As you guys aren’t Awakened, the risk of participating in this operation is too high. Thus, you were sent back to the company.”

“Very credible,” Shang Jianyao commented.

This was basically the truth but not the entire truth.

Bai Chen thought for a moment before saying, “What if the company sends someone to flip through our memories?”

Chapter 888: Separation

Bai Chen’s concerns were very reasonable. This was also what Long Yuehong was worried about.

Although it was impossible for Pangu Biology to brazenly make them undergo a memory inspection, nobody could be sure if there were any hidden inspections for key personnel.

Bai Chen and Long Yuehong could resist the personnel in charge of flipping through memories by recalling Eidolon Nun’s gaze and Master Zhuang’s dream from time to time. However, it was impossible for them not to sleep. As long as they slept, they wouldn’t be able to control themselves. Secondly, any form of resistance only served to reveal their intentions of hiding. If the person who flipped through their memories was shocked and something went wrong, Pangu Biology would definitely pay more attention to them.

“That’s right, that’s right.” Long Yuehong didn’t hide his worry.

“What should we do?” The honest Shang Jianyao didn’t put on a brave front at all.

Jiang Baimian laughed. “Why are you looking at me? I don’t have the Awakened ability to control memories.”

“That’s not what your expression says,” the honest Shang Jianyao pointed out.

Long Yuehong nodded.

The team leader’s expression was filled with ‘this problem is very easy to resolve.’

Jiang Baimian smiled and said, “I have no solution, but it doesn’t mean that others don’t. Teacher Du Heng has a mysterious identity, has plenty of experience, and is knowledgeable. He might know how to deal with such situations.”

“That’s right!” Shang Jianyao clenched his right fist and punched his left palm.

Long Yuehong and Bai Chen nodded one after another.

With a big shot who could chase Xiaochong all over the place, why did they need to glumly think of a solution? It was only when Teacher Du Heng really had no solution that they had to consider other countermeasures.

After the Old Task Force preliminarily finalized their subsequent plan, they left the rooftop and returned to their suite.

Du Heng sat in an armchair and leisurely looked at the relatively clean sky outside the window. It was unknown what he was thinking.

Upon hearing the door open, he turned around and asked with a smile, “How is it? Have you made a decision?”

As the Old Task Force’s representative, Jiang Baimian smiled. “Teacher Du Heng, we’ve already decided to split into two teams. One team will follow you to the Eighth Research Institute’s headquarters, while the other will be busy with other matters.”

Du Heng nodded slightly and smiled. “Sure, as long as there’s space for me in the car.”

Shang Jianyao took the opportunity to add on Jiang Baimian’s behalf, “However, the other sub-team might very well encounter an Awakened in the Last Man domain. We don’t want some of our memories to be dug out, but we can’t make it too obvious. It’s not good to resist them openly. Teacher Du Heng, you are knowledgeable. Do you have any good suggestions?”

Du Heng thought for a few seconds and chuckled. “That’s simple.”

Simple...?Jiang Baimian, Long Yuehong, and Bai Chen instantly felt blinded. They controlled their expressions and listened to Du Heng’s explanation.

“Just add a state to that portion of memories. That way, Awakened in the Last Man domain will subconsciously be affected when they flip through that portion of memories. They will ignore it and skip it.”

Clap! Clap! Clap! Shang Jianyao clapped—

Genava—who was pretending to be an ordinary robot—forced himself not to join in a duet.

“But we don’t have the ability to add a state to some memories.” Jiang Baimian admitted their inadequacies. What she meant was that if it were convenient for him, he might as well ‘demonstrate’ it.

“I can help with that,” said Du Heng with a smile. “Which memories do you want to add a special state to?”

As Jiang Baimian observed Du Heng’s reaction, she pointed at Long Yuehong and Bai Chen. “The memories related to the Kalendaria’s rearing of humans.”

Upon hearing the mystery of the Kalendarium rearing humans, Du Heng’s eyelids twitched as though he had fallen into a particular memory. After more than ten seconds, he returned to normal and nodded at Bai Chen and Long Yuehong. “Go through the relevant memories in your minds now. Don’t miss anything.”

It was obvious that he couldn’t read or extract other people’s memories directly. He needed their cooperation.

“Alright.” Bai Chen didn’t hesitate.

She and Long Yuehong began recalling Room 506, all the way to the recording pen left behind by Qin Ke—who called himself Du Heng.

Frankly speaking, Long Yuehong was a little terrified when he recalled the crazy Qin Ke calling himself Du Heng. After all, the person sitting in front of him was also called Du Heng.

Fortunately, Du Heng didn’t seem to have any reaction to this. Or perhaps he couldn’t read memories and could only add a state to the target to make the things he was recalling contain hidden powers.

“That’s all,” Bai Chen said at the end of her recollection.

Du Heng nodded slightly. “Alright, it’s done.”

Ah... That’s it? Why didn’t I feel anything?? Long Yuehong felt incomplete.

If Shang Jianyao had said that they were done, he definitely would’ve thought that the other party was pulling a prank. However, Du Heng had always appeared rather reliable.

“Thank you.” Bai Chen chose to believe him.

Long Yuehong expressed his gratitude.

Jiang Baimian glanced at the sky outside the window. “Teacher Du Heng, it’s noon. Let’s go out for lunch.”

“As you wish.” Du Heng stood up with a smile.

When he went to the bathroom, Shang Jianyao suddenly exclaimed.

“What’s wrong?” Jiang Baimian frowned.

Shang Jianyao held his hands together. “I’m also familiar with the ability to add a special state to some memories!”

“It’s not like you can.” Long Yuehong didn’t know what Shang Jianyao was familiar with.

Shang Jianyao smiled. “When I used Destiny Connection to evoke Professor Qin’s memories, I neglected a portion of his memories. I only realized that something was amiss when I entered Ceningmis...”

He had communicated with Genava about this back then and later informed Jiang Baimian. However, nobody had connected Du Heng’s solution to this matter.

Jiang Baimian nodded thoughtfully. “There are people in the Eighth Research Institute who also have such abilities?”

Nobody could answer this question at the moment.

...

Two days later, outside Gesterbourg.

The Old Task Force’s jeep and a dark SUV were parked beside the hill.

Jiang Baimian stood outside the jeep and exhorted Long Yuehong and Bai Chen, “I’ve already reported the matter to the company. The company has no objections. You can just go back and tell the truth.”

The SUV was newly bought, meant for Bai Chen, Long Yuehong, and Genava’s return to the Blackmarsh Wilderness.

The money came from the expensive supplies they had brought back from Ceningmis. On the way to Ceningmis, the Old Task Force had expended a lot of food, leaving some space in the jeep. Since they were already there, they randomly gathered some things and returned to Gesterbourg to sell them.

“Alright.” Bai Chen slowly nodded.

Long Yuehong looked at the dark SUV’s trunk and suggested, “Team Leader, why don’t you bring the Chameleon bionic artificial intelligence armor with you? Old Ge probably won’t need it in the Blackmarsh Wilderness.”

“There’s no need; the military exoskeletons are sufficient.” Jiang Baimian smiled. “Old Ge will be in charge of communications in the future. He might have to rely on Chameleon’s invisibility to meet you.”

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

Their equipment allocation plan was to have Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao take away the two relatively new military exoskeletons, the nuclear warhead, and half of the high-performance batteries. The rest would be left to Long Yuehong, Bai Chen, and Genava.

The dark SUV ran on gas.

As for ordinary weapons, whoever often used them held them.

Jiang Baimian looked back at Du Heng—who was sitting in the jeep—and said to Bai Chen, Long Yuehong, and Genava, “There’s no need to say anything else. Let’s split up.”

Bai Chen pursed her lips and nodded. Long Yuehong’s heart was rather heavy.

After getting into the SUV, Long Yuehong waved at Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao to bid them farewell. Suddenly, his emotions churned as he added loudly, “We must meet again!”

Shang Jianyao smiled brightly and waved his hand in response. “We will definitely meet again!”

Jiang Baimian smiled and waved her hand.

After watching the familiar jeep drive north toward Icefield, Bai Chen wiped her eyes and started the car.

...

In the jeep, Jiang Baimian looked at the rearview mirror beside the passenger seat and smiled at Du Heng. “Teacher Du Heng, we previously encountered another person named Du Heng.”

“This name is very common.” Du Heng—who was sitting in the back row—didn’t mind.

Jiang Baimian stopped probing and casually found a topic to chat about with Du Heng and Shang Jianyao.

Many places in Icefield remained covered in snow, while the areas without snow were abnormally muddy. This made the Old Task Force's jeep advance very slowly; they didn't manage to go far by evening.

Although Jiang Baimian wasn't too worried about encountering other dangers with Du Heng around, this teacher was terrifying to begin with. Therefore, she still insisted that someone had to be on night duty. As a guest, Du Heng didn't have to do anything—she and Shang Jianyao took turns.

At midnight, Jiang Baimian began her night duty. Shang Jianyao lay in the passenger seat and massaged his temples before entering the Mind Corridor.

After arriving outside Room 205—which represented the Kalendaria, Dawn—they didn't wait any longer or quarrel. They took two steps forward, stretched out their right palms, and gripped the brass handle.

Room 205's vermilion door slowly opened.

Chapter 889: A Headache-Inducing Dream

Facing the dream-like mist behind the door, Shang Jianyao walked in without any hesitation.

What greeted his eyes was a small room—it appeared to be a meeting room. There was a long white table in the middle and more than ten chairs from the same set around it. On the left was a white wall and a brown door, and on the right was a row of windows. However, it was pitch-black outside, and nothing could be seen.

As Shang Jianyao looked around, a figure appeared on every chair.

Their faces—both men and women—were blurry. In front of them were portable computers or notebooks with fountain pens.

“A meeting...” Shang Jianyao walked over happily and tried to join.

At this moment, a man stood up and walked to the front of the conference table, projecting the content on his computer to the screen. The next second, he said in Ashlandic, “We can see that these two chiral molecules exhibit completely different biological activity...”

Shang Jianyao was stunned. He opened his mouth but failed to interject.

For the rest of the meeting, the figures took turns speaking and engaged in intense discussions. However, Shang Jianyao—who had always been eager to participate in such activities—seemed to turn into a wooden dummy as he stood beside the long white table in a daze.

After an unknown period of time, he screamed and rushed to the door of the meeting room. But no matter how he slammed or kicked, the door didn't budge. It was as if it was welded to the wall.

Meeting with failure, Shang Jianyao retreated a distance and conjured a grenade launcher before pulling the trigger at the door.

Boom!

In the violent explosion, the door of the conference room remained intact.

The more Shang Jianyao fought, the braver he became. He tried all kinds of methods, but he failed to break out.

Throughout the entire process, the figures around the conference table didn't react at all. They continued to discuss academic issues.

Shang Jianyao panted heavily and covered his ears as he left Room 205 via the original route he took.

...

The next morning, Jiang Baimian asked Shang Jianyao while preparing breakfast, "Did you explore Room 205 last night?"

She didn't avoid mentioning this in front of Du Heng. Instead, she wanted to use a frank attitude to exchange for a chance to fleece him—no, seek guidance.

"I've explored it." Shang Jianyao had a pained and terrified expression. "It was horrifying—extremely horrifying. It's the most horrifying room I've ever seen!"

“What did you encounter?” Jiang Baimian found him active as usual—he didn’t seem to have suffered any serious negative effects.

Shang Jianyao replied as if he had seen a ghost, “Those people in the dream were having an academic discussion!”

“What’s there to be afraid of?” Jiang Baimian asked in confusion. “Could it involve some terrifying, bloody, and cruel experiments?”

Shang Jianyao’s face was filled with grief. “The terrifying thing is that I don’t understand it at all! They spoke Ashlandic, and it’s the more common kind, but I didn’t understand anything at all. I couldn’t participate!”

Horrible, absolutely horrible!

The corners of Jiang Baimian’s mouth twitched indistinguishably. “Can you repeat what they said? Whatever you still remember.”

“I don’t even understand anything, so how can I remember the content?” Shang Jianyao looked troubled. “I only remember chiral molecules, left-handed chirality, right-handed chirality, polarized light, biological activity, drugs...”

He described the overall scene in the meeting room as well.

Jiang Baimian nodded in thought. “This is biomedical content. It’s normal for an electronics major like you not to understand.”

Before she could continue, Shang Jianyao looked at Du Heng, who was sitting on a rock and waiting for breakfast. “Teacher Du Heng, how do you think we should clear or explore such a dream?”

Du Heng smiled and said, “How can you be sure that it’s a dream and not a psychological trauma?”

Because it’s a Kalendaria’s room...? Jiang Baimian muttered inwardly.

Shang Jianyao didn't have any trouble explaining as he directly said, "Just treat it as a dream."

Du Heng's question seemed to be a passing remark in which he didn't care for an answer at all. He smiled and said, "According to the scene you described, there are only two ways to clear or continue forward. You either find a way of opening the door or joining the discussion and pointing out the mistakes in the academic exchanges; otherwise, help them solve their problems."

"I tried, but the door couldn't be opened!" Shang Jianyao revealed a horrified expression. "And I don't understand what they were discussing!"

Since he didn't understand, he definitely couldn't find a mistake or help resolve the problem. To Shang Jianyao, this was equivalent to being blind.

"This isn't something I can resolve. I only know the words you mentioned just now," Du Heng consoled. "At most, I'll change rooms. There aren't many things in the Mind Corridor, but there are rooms everywhere."

"No." Shang Jianyao shook his head firmly. "That room is very important."

Jiang Baimian deliberated for a moment before saying, "I have some knowledge in biomedical research. Why don't you listen in every day and memorize the corresponding content? Pass it to me, and I'll see what they're discussing."

"What if the content of their conversations is different every time?" Shang Jianyao asked.

Jiang Baimian frowned. "Having different biomedical questions every time? Do you think Room 205's owner is a three-year-old who keeps asking why?"

Furthermore, why would February's Kalendaria, Dawn, dream of such a scene? Before the Old World was destroyed, his body of descent was an expert in biomedical science?

With Du Heng beside her, Jiang Baimian didn't directly mention that it was Dawn's room.

At this moment, Du Heng smiled and said, “My experience is that the corresponding dream in the Mind Room is different every time because everyone’s encounters are different every day. But if it’s a long-term dream, its content will be repetitive and circular. You don’t have to worry about hearing different academic discussions the next time you enter. After a few times, it will loop back to the beginning.”

An expert who had entered the New World and was in a deep sleep in reality would have dreams that continued for a long time.

Shang Jianyao said sadly, “What if I can’t tell if it’s repeated? It’s not like I can understand anything! Moreover, I can’t remember so much at once.”

This was the sorrow of being ‘illiterate.’

Jiang Baimian exhaled and said, “Do it one step at a time.”

“Yes, take it slow. There’s no rush,” Du Heng suggested.

After breakfast, Jiang Baimian asked Du Heng, “Teacher Du Heng, can you drive?”

“Yes,” Du Heng replied. “But sometimes, it’s easier to walk than drive.”

Jiang Baimian smiled. “I’ll have to trouble you to drive later then, Teacher Du Heng. I’ll navigate so that he can catch up on his sleep.”

The ‘he’ was referring to Shang Jianyao, who had been on duty for the past few hours before dawn.

“You do the navigation?” Shang Jianyao had a terrified expression.

Jiang Baimian gritted her teeth. “I’m only telling Teacher Du Heng the target’s location and the corresponding coordinates. As for how to drive, it’s up to Teacher Du Heng.”

“No problem.” Du Heng smiled and ended the argument.

In the following week, the jeep drove very slowly. The distance it traveled every day was limited.

As for Shang Jianyao, he entered Dawn's dream time and time again. He 'memorized' the content of the discussion bit by bit and brought it into reality.

His luck wasn't bad—that dream kept repeating the same academic question.

Seeing that the Eighth Research Institute's headquarters wasn't far away, Shang Jianyao finally completed his mission.

While resting, Jiang Baimian—who had obtained the last piece of the puzzle—held the stack of paper and nodded slightly. "I already know what problem they're discussing. They were developing a drug that could penetrate the blood-brain barrier. I suspect it's for the treatment of some chronic neurodegenerative diseases, and they were stumped at that point. The point involved is..."

"Oh, oh, oh." Shang Jianyao nodded repeatedly with an expression that said: "I understand completely."

Jiang Baimian hadn't discussed professional matters in a long time, so she spoke to her heart's content and gave a long speech. Finally, she concluded, "The company has actually done research on this problem, and it has been resolved. Although there's still a long way to go before the successful development of that medicine, this trivial problem has indeed been resolved."

She then took out a pen and wrote a few pages on the paper in her hand. Then, she looked at Shang Jianyao and said, "Memorize it and tell the people in the dream."

"Ah?" Shang Jianyao revealed a rare troubled expression.

After a grueling education and relying on the results of genetic enhancement and the combined efforts of ten people, they confidently entered the Mind Corridor and opened the door to Room 205.

He was afraid of forgetting the answer, so the moment he entered the meeting room and saw the figures appear, he immediately began reciting.

After he finished reciting, the meeting room fell into a strange silence.

Everyone broke out into their own activities—they either launched software or used pen and paper to busy themselves with their own matters. They didn't communicate as frequently as they did previously.

After an unknown period of time, they—who had never paid attention to Shang Jianyao—all turned to look at him.

“This idea seems feasible...” said more than one person.

Shang Jianyao was immediately delighted. “There's a reaction, there's a reaction!”

He then praised Jiang Baimian. “Knowledge is indeed power!”

Chapter 890: Destination

The people sitting at the conference table ignored Shang Jianyao's muttering and seriously discussed the pertinent questions. From the looks of it, they wanted to go into the details with Shang Jianyao.

Shang Jianyao obviously knew nothing. Upon seeing that the situation was going south, he immediately ran to the meeting room's brown door.

Without any other changes to the scene, he wanted to see if the door could be opened now.

Shang Jianyao stretched out his palm, clenched it, twisted it, and pulled. The brown meeting room door moved back, no longer holding steadfast.

He immediately clapped and smiled. “As expected—we have to resolve the problem that's plaguing them before we can advance in the dream.”

He was in no rush to leave the meeting room. He stood at the door and looked out.

All he saw was darkness—he couldn't see the corridor clearly. Or rather, there was no corridor at all.

Shang Jianyao didn't hesitate to stride out the door with his head held high.

Bright and gentle light quickly lit up in front of him, illuminating his surroundings.

This was the same meeting room. A long, pale-white table with the same chairs occupied most of the space. Right on the heels of that, figures appeared again.

Dumbfounded, Shang Jianyao didn't hide his surprise. "Do we have to explain it to them clearly before it's considered a pass? Only then can we leave this place and enter the next scene?"

Without giving him a chance to speak, a man in the group walked to the projection screen, projected his slides, and began speaking. Unlike before, those people conversed in the Red River language this time, mixed with a large number of long and complicated terms.

Shang Jianyao had a solemn expression as he muttered to himself, "I originally had problems understanding the stringed-up words I knew. Now, I don't understand many words... Horrifying, absolutely horrifying!"

He tried to retreat, but he realized that the brown door was already closed and couldn't be opened again.

Shang Jianyao thought for a few seconds and walked toward the shadow at the bottom of the meeting room. This time, he left as he wished and returned to the Mind Corridor.

He passed through the door with piqued interest and entered Room 205.

As expected, he saw the same meeting room, but all the voices he heard were in the Red River language.

...

"No matter what, at least the dream has changed sufficiently." Jiang Baimian—who was leaning against the jeep door—comforted Shang Jianyao. "This means that there's nothing wrong with our direction."

She pondered for a moment and said, “What you need to do next is the same as before. Memorize the questions those people discuss and tell me bit by bit.”

“But I don’t understand many words!” Shang Jianyao was abnormally sad.

“Remember the pronunciations,” Jiang Baimian replied without hesitation. “As long as I confirm that they are still discussing biomedical problems, I can do some auto-correction and restore the actual meaning based on the context even if you get a few words wrong.”

“Alright.” Shang Jianyao didn’t hide his embarrassment. He then said with a pained expression, “Could it be that the dream is essentially conference room after conference room, each filled with questions that get harder to answer? If there’s no end to this, I’ll go crazy sooner or later!”

What made you think you aren’t crazy? Jiang Baimian found it amusing. She then consoled Shang Jianyao. “No worries. In any case, you’re a medically certified patient.”

“That’s true.” Shang Jianyao immediately heaved a sigh of relief.

Du Heng watched from the side and didn’t say a word.

...

After Shang Jianyao spent a few days extracting the question in the ‘second meeting room’ to reality, their jeep had already arrived at the Eighth Research Institute’s headquarters.

Of course, they didn’t dare to venture deeper for the time being. They only lingered at the edge and confirmed the situation in various ways.

“Why does it feel like nobody is patrolling?” Shang Jianyao sat in the passenger seat and looked outside in disappointment.

In the backseat, Du Heng smiled. “Didn’t I say? Maybe the Eighth Research Institute felt that there was no way to hide the fact that their headquarters had been exposed, so instead of putting up a defense, they moved to a backup base.”

“But isn’t there something important hidden deep in their headquarters?” The honest Shang Jianyao pointed out the problem.

Du Heng laughed. “Maybe that item can be moved.”

“That makes sense.” Shang Jianyao clapped.

Jiang Baimian—who was in charge of driving—looked at the rearview mirror. “Maybe the Eighth Research Institute relies on satellites in space to monitor its surroundings.”

“I can’t say for sure.” Du Heng indicated that he didn’t know much about this.

He turned his head to look out the window as if he were saying, “Let’s get closer to that mountain and take a look.”

The Eighth Research Institute’s headquarters was located in a mountain range that divided north and south Icefield. Half of the mountain had been emptied.

This was somewhat similar to Pangu Biology, but the Eighth Research Institute’s buildings didn’t extend underground.

“Alright!” Shang Jianyao replied excitedly.

Jiang Baimian shot him a glance. “Have you memorized the solution I gave you?”

“I’ve memorized it.” Shang Jianyao had an expression that said it was a painful memory.

This referred to the solution to the problem discussed in 205’s dream.

In Jiang Baimian’s words, the problems in Dawn’s dream were too old. Some of them had been resolved before the Old World was destroyed. How could it daunt Pangu Biology researchers who specialized in biomedical science?

This seemed to confirm that Dawn’s body of descent was an Old World biomedical scholar.

“When you have time, enter the Mind Corridor and try to resolve this problem. Try to see what changes the dream will have after you pass through that meeting room.”

“Alright.” Shang Jianyao agreed quickly, but he didn’t do it immediately.

As the jeep was approaching the mountain where the Eighth Research Institute’s headquarters was, he had to focus on sensing his surroundings and observing the area ahead to prevent any accidents.

Perhaps due to the approaching summer, the snow on the mountain had mostly melted. Only the peak and the elevated areas remained white. They reflected the blue sky and were especially pure.

Upon seeing the Eighth Research Institute’s entrance approaching, Jiang Baimian couldn’t help but mutter, “There’s really nobody...”

Du Heng stroked his beard and chuckled. “They have most likely fled. I don’t sense anybody inside.”

You can sense it from so far away?

Jiang Baimian raised her eyebrows.

The jeep was still two to three kilometers away from the Eighth Research Institute’s cliff entrance. After entering, nobody knew how far they could go. Yet in such a situation, Du Heng could confirm with certainty that there was nobody inside.

Jiang Baimian wasn’t surprised at all. She even felt that this still didn’t match Teacher Du Heng’s ‘identity.’

“Then, let’s go in directly,” Shang Jianyao said eagerly.

At this point, Jiang Baimian naturally didn’t stop him. “Alright.”

She drove straight to their destination.

Shang Jianyao still dutifully took on the role of navigator.

Before long, the Eighth Research Institute's hidden entrance appeared in front of them. The heavy, two-paned door painted in camouflage colors was ajar.

"They really ran away!" Shang Jianyao was filled with regret.

Jiang Baimian tersely acknowledged it. "Maybe they moved to the military base where they fired the missiles."

As they spoke, the jeep passed through the door and entered the mountain.

Similar to Pangu Biology's underground building, they were greeted by a wide parking lot. However, there were only a few damaged cars awaiting repairs.

"Sigh..." Shang Jianyao sighed at the fact that the Eighth Research Institute had already moved.

After passing through the parking lot, tunnels appeared. They led everywhere—some were connected to the rooms on this floor, and some were connected to many elevators and emergency access passageways.

Upon seeing the jeep stop, Du Heng asked, "Where are we going?"

Shang Jianyao asked in surprise, "Didn't you say that you were going deep to search for that important item?"

Du Heng laughed. "I did say that, but the problem is that I don't know how deep it is."

Shang Jianyao came to a realization. "I know that. Take the elevator to the fifth floor; there's a tunnel that leads deep into the mountain. The place where the Eighth Research Institute's Professors' Association holds meetings, the room where a few New World powerhouses are sleeping, and the original president's office are all outside that tunnel's entrance. They seem to be guarding it."

"How do you know so much?" Du Heng found it strange.

Shang Jianyao straightened his back and replied smugly, "Because we were the ones who found the Eighth Research Institute's headquarters and spread the news."

We didn't spread the news and only reported it to the company... Jiang Baimian corrected Shang Jianyao inwardly.

Du Heng nodded and praised with a smile, "Not bad. I didn't guide you guys in vain."

"That's right, that's right." Shang Jianyao frankly accepted it.

This left Jiang Baimian, who wanted to be modest, at a loss for words.

She parked the car and put on the military exoskeleton with Shang Jianyao. They then walked to the corridor that connected to the elevator area with Du Heng.