

Ad Infinitum 901

Chapter 901: Night Exploration

With the biological prosthetic limb's auxiliary chip and the military exoskeleton's installed system, Jiang Baimian only lost her way once before successfully bringing Shang Jianyao and the nuclear warhead to the end of the tunnel.

The heavy iron-black door was still tightly shut. The Heartless didn't seem to have stepped past it in pursuit.

"They clearly discovered me and showed the desire to hunt..." Jiang Baimian looked at the door and muttered to herself in confusion. She suspected that the Heartless were restrained in some way and could only move within a limited range.

After some consideration, Jiang Baimian placed Shang Jianyao and the crate containing the nuclear warhead in the tunnel and leaned against the wall. She then half-squatted in front of Shang Jianyao and extended her psyche to make contact with his consciousness.'Search NewNovel ^ on google'

The familiar darkness approached again, and the faint light in the distance gradually condensed into a street lamp.

"Long time no see!" Shang Jianyao waved his hand.

It's been less than two hours!?Jiang Baimian kept suspecting that the other party was mocking her for being directionally challenged.

She had just contacted Shang Jianyao before taking a nap. After waking up, she immediately stretched, wore her equipment, and brought the corresponding items into the Eighth Research Institute.

Considering that such communication consumed a lot of mental energy, she didn't waste any time arguing about this and directly said, "I'm going to explore the New World in reality now; provide me with protection. Right, my primary goal this time is to see how far away one has to be from your body for that kind of protection to lose its effects."

She was very careful with her words and didn't say 'completely lose its effects.' This was because when the distance was widened to a certain extent, the mental barrier provided by Shang Jianyao might no longer be able to resist the New World's extraction of human consciousness as the protection gradually weakened.

At this moment, the mental barrier might remain but be penetrated.

"Sure, sure." Shang Jianyao had always been one to experiment as he said excitedly, "Wait a moment."

As Jiang Baimian had taken the initiative to make contact with his consciousness with her mind, it was equivalent to establishing a connection. Therefore, Shang Jianyao didn't need to waste time sensing, searching, and locking onto the target. He only needed to use this connection wholeheartedly to allow his power to penetrate the barrier and attach to Jiang Baimian.

.....

There wasn't much delay; it lasted only a few seconds.

Back when Shang Jianyao extended his psyche and came into contact with Yama Tiger's seemingly sleeping consciousness, he felt like he was being dragged into the deep black water.

Now that he thought about it, Yama Tiger had hoped for help back then but was also unbearably hungry. In the end, he had instinctively extracted the consciousness of the person on the other end of the connection as he shouted "save me"—a kind of contradictory action.

Fortunately, there was a certain delay and Jiang Baimian had also reacted quickly, cutting off the connection between the two in time to prevent a tragedy.

Soon, Shang Jianyao informed Jiang Baimian that he had provided the consciousness barrier she needed. This way, even if Jiang Baimian retracted her extended psyche, the connection between the two of them would still exist until the barrier's effects completely disappeared.

Jiang Baimian didn't hesitate to restrain her human consciousness. She then stretched out her metal-boned palms and used the most suitable strength to open the heavy iron-black door silently.

What greeted her eyes was a flashing light.

In the small city that was very similar to the New World and could even make people who stepped foot into it become Heartless, there were specks of light in the night. There weren't many of them—no more than 20. They were distributed around the tower and its surroundings, completely incomparable to the dense stars in the night sky.

But on such a quiet and dark night, in such a strange place without any real human activity, these dozen or so yellowish or pure white lights still made Jiang Baimian's scalp tingle.

Suddenly, a thought flashed across her mind: The Eighth Research Institute has clearly moved, but they didn't cut off the power to the headquarters. It's probably because this small city at the end of the tunnel still needs electricity to maintain the operation of certain things...

In the beginning, she thought that the Eighth Research Institute used a nuclear power plant. Stopping the operation was a troublesome matter, so they didn't have the time to do it while in a rush.

From the looks of it, there might be a better explanation. Jiang Baimian exhaled softly and walked out of the tunnel.

This time, she didn't feel dizzy, have her head throb, or feel like her soul was about to leave her body.

Jiang Baimian thought for a moment, turned around, and slowly closed the heavy iron-black door. She was worried that the Heartless might escape their 'restraint' and enter the tunnel when the door was left open.

Although this was unlikely to cause any damage to Shang Jianyao's body, Jiang Baimian would lose her greatest trump card if they carried the nuclear warhead away.

As for her, she was infiltrating at night. It was clearly inappropriate for her to carry the nuclear warhead as it would obviously affect her actions.

In any case, she was wearing a military exoskeleton and had an extremely powerful biological prosthetic limb. When the time came, she could open the door with a slam or push. It wouldn't delay her escape.

Compared to this, she was more worried about wasting precious time on getting lost.

Jiang Baimian—who had hidden her human consciousness—bent her back and quietly approached the real New World along the weeds that could be seen everywhere in the valley.

The temperature here was slightly higher than outside. It was already summer in Icefield, and all kinds of creatures were clearly active.

With her sensing of electric signals and the exoskeleton's night vision, Jiang Baimian didn't alarm these 'little fellows.' She silently arrived at the edge of the city and hid beside a long-abandoned apartment.

Almost at the same time, she realized that the scattered bioelectric signals had warped to a certain extent. The visualization dashboard of the M-45 military exoskeleton also told her that the electromagnetic environment here was different from the outside world.

As expected...?Jiang Baimian wasn't surprised at all.

She followed her plan and passed through the dark alley where starlight couldn't reach, approaching the tower and the dozen or so lights around it bit by bit.

Her sense of direction was much better when she could see her destination directly.

Upon seeing her target in sight, Jiang Baimian suddenly frowned. She had sensed too few Heartless consciousnesses along the way—almost one-tenth of what she had seen during the day.

At this moment, she had almost traversed half the city.

It's impossible for 90% of them to live on the other side, right? Or can they all hide their consciousness and hide in places with lights? But why don't the 10% head over??Jiang Baimian stopped advancing and fell into deep thought.

Unable to make a guess, she walked forward for a while.

When the nearest lamp was less than 30 meters away from her, her head throbbed as if someone had pricked a nerve with a needle.

This familiar feeling made Jiang Baimian immediately stop—this was a precursor to the Heartless disease!

But as she stopped moving forward, the throbbing pain in her head remained the same as before. It didn't worsen.

Here, the consciousness barrier provided by Hey gradually can't withstand the consciousness extraction. The corresponding signs are beginning to appear...?Jiang Baimian thought for a moment and came to a realization.

She was currently only 160 to 170 meters away from the tower. This made Jiang Baimian feel a little regretful and disappointed.?It would be good if Shang Jianyao's consciousness barrier was stronger.

However, Shang Jianyao didn't know how to improve himself after entering the New World, much less her. She could only think of another way to cover the last hundred-plus meters.

Jiang Baimian took seven to eight steps back to shirk off the throbbing pain in her head and quickly came up with an idea.?There are two ways: The first is to move Hey's body in and shorten the distance between him and me. However, I'm not sure if the effects of his consciousness barrier have weakened or if the closer we are to the tower, the stronger the human consciousness extraction.

Second, from the looks of it... The higher the Awakened's level, the stronger their resistance to consciousness extraction. If I can enter the Mind Corridor and use the barrier provided by Hey, I should be able to reach that tower...

She was still wandering about the Sea of Origins and searching for the next island, and that island might very well have a golden elevator and another 'her.'

Unable to go any deeper, Jiang Baimian changed targets and prepared to confirm the situation regarding each Heartless she could sense.

...

In the New World.

As Shang Jianyao maintained Jiang Baimian's mental barrier, he looked at the Ashlandic compound by the side of the road.

The compound was pitch-black, and there were no lights representing humans. However, Shang Jianyao had previously heard a slight commotion.

Yes, two hours ago.

Shang Jianyao had maintained this posture for two hours!

"This is called being careful!" The honest Shang Jianyao praised himself.

After two hours of 'listening,' he realized that there were indeed sounds coming from the compound from time to time. Sometimes, it sounded like people walking; sometimes, it sounded like the sound of the wind passing through the hall; and sometimes, it seemed like a group of men and women were suppressing their voices and laughing.

The calm and rational Shang Jianyao looked around and said, "There's been no light..."

"The New World's situation might be more complicated than what the lady, Jacob and Hendrick had shared. There are more secrets..."

"Won't we know what's going on by entering and taking a look?" The rash Shang Jianyao took the opportunity when his peers weren't paying attention to control the body and rush two steps forward. He stretched out his hand, pressed down, jumped over the wall, and entered the courtyard.

Among all Shang Jianyaos, his strength seemed to be increasing.

As Shang Jianyao entered, the lamp representing him lit up in the compound.

Chapter 902: Real and Fake

In the courtyard's patio were water vats and green plants. The air was fresh and slightly humid, making Shang Jianyao feel like he had come to the wilderness from a large settlement like First City.

“Sigh, I should be lying on the roof of the jeep at a time like this. As I watch the stars, I'll be scolded by Big White for crushing the solar charger board. Little Red and Little White won't help me either. They only know how to be all affectionate with each other and let Old Ge be in charge of patrolling alone...” Shang Jianyao muttered to himself as he examined the patio.

This was one of the Old Task Force's daily routines.

The courtyard didn't seem abnormal. Shang Jianyao even stuck his head into the water vat, but he didn't discover any clues.

“Pfft, there's really water!” He suddenly straightened his body and pulled his head out of the water vat.

After wiping his face, he walked to the main door.

The grayish wooden door was unlocked and ajar.

Knock! Knock! Knock!?

Shang Jianyao—who had climbed over the wall—knocked politely and didn't immediately push open the door to enter. After knocking three times, he said in relief, “Since you aren't responding, I'll take it as you giving your tacit approval!”

Without waiting any longer, he stretched out his right palm and pushed open the main door.

Behind the door seemed to be a living room. The decorations were so ancient that Shang Jianyao couldn't help but sigh. “A living zombie!”(Search NewNovel *)

With that said, he took two steps back and returned to the door. He looked up and muttered, “It's not a protected historical and cultural site either...”

This was a term he had learned from the Old World's entertainment.

.....

The situation in the living room looked rather ancient. Opposite the door was a table, and there was a mahogany armchair on both sides. Beneath them were two rows of ancient-looking chairs interspersed with wooden tables.

"Could this be a part of a film set?" Shang Jianyao was immediately interested.

As he praised the New World for having everything despite its size, he circled the living room to search for the source of the slight commotion.

He wasn't afraid at all!

After a while, he sat in the armchair on the left and looked at the two lanterns by the door that had lit up because of him. He muttered to himself in disappointment, "There's no problem..."

Before he could finish speaking, his voice stopped abruptly. He turned his head slightly and listened attentively.

In the room on the left, a soft cry sounded.

Boohoohoo...

Shang Jianyao silently stood up and crept closer to the source of the sound.

Just as he arrived at the door, the lights inside lit up.

The two lanterns outside extinguished.

"Sigh!" Shang Jianyao sighed.

The light inside represented his consciousness.

He stopped hiding and turned the doorknob to open the door in front of him.

The side room's layout was relatively normal. There were two bookshelves, a table by the window, and a bed opposite it. A chair and a stool were casually placed in an empty area.

The style of these pieces of furniture was relatively compatible with the compound, but they didn't look old.

Shang Jianyao swept his gaze around and stopped at the table in front of the window. There was a photo frame there.

Shang Jianyao walked over and saw the details of the photo in the photo frame with the help of the light.

On it was a relatively young woman. She wasn't beautiful, but she had a sweet smile, and her hair was casually tied into a braid.

Shang Jianyao studied it for a while before suddenly clenching his right fist and punching his left palm. "I remember now—we know this woman! That genius scientist, Lin Sui!"

Back then, Shang Jianyao had read Lin Sui's Renwu interview in the Iron Mountain City Ruin trauma in Room 522.

"She has a room here too..." Shang Jianyao came to a realization. "But why aren't there any lights or people? Why hasn't she returned after leaving? What's the source of the cries and other sounds?"

After asking themselves, they fell silent.

After a few seconds, Shang Jianyao began rummaging through the drawers and cabinets, searching for clues.

He gradually walked to the bookshelf.

Shang Jianyao looked over and realized that there were all kinds of books inside. Many of them were very technical.

He couldn't help but raise his right hand and block his face as if he was afraid of being blinded by the light of knowledge.

After scanning through the titles, he silently turned to the bed. He didn't even have the interest to flip through them.

...

Jiang Baimian traveled through the night according to her previous senses and approached the area where some Heartless lived.

This inevitably took some detours, but the general direction was right. There was no problem with the outcome.

Finally, she arrived at her destination. She hid in the shadows outside the window and peeped into the building.

A pair of male and female Heartless were lying on the bed, sleeping like normal humans. They seemed fine.

Jiang Baimian retracted her gaze and sneaked elsewhere.

After rounds of reconnaissance, she realized that the Heartless she could sense maintained human habits. They slept on beds, closed the windows, and locked the doors.

In some houses, there were bags of rice, flour, and boxes of canned food, biscuits, and energy bars. This made Jiang Baimian suspect that the Eighth Research Institute had installed rails in the tunnel to deliver supplies to the Heartless in this small city.

She wasn't in a rush to eliminate these Heartless because 90% of the targets were still missing. With this in mind, Jiang Baimian decided to leave the New World in reality and tell Shang Jianyao about the various abnormalities she had discovered.

Perhaps this could be a boon to the other party's exploration of the mental 'New World,' and the gains there might help Jiang Baimian crack some of the mysteries in reality.

Of course, the premise was that the two places were closely related.

With the military exoskeleton, Jiang Baimian left the Heartless's residential area. She then unsurprisingly confirmed that she was lost again.

The experienced her climbed up a telephone pole quickly, stood at the top, and looked around.

With the help of starlight and the night vision goggles, Jiang Baimian quickly determined the direction to the tunnel entrance.

I have to circle two streets, pass several intersections, and make many turns...?The more Jiang Baimian evaluated the route back, the heavier her heart became.

She could already foresee that she would lose her way many times.

As her thoughts raced, Jiang Baimian had a countermeasure thanks to her experiences of failure—she planned on walking in a straight line. She would scale any walls and climb over any houses she encountered!

This could effectively prevent any mistakes in her choice. Coupled with the positioning function of her equipment, Jiang Baimian felt that she would get lost once at most.

After confirming the plan, she immediately took action. She quietly slid down the electric pole to the ground and carefully ran to the first house.

She suddenly stretched out her right hand and pressed it against the wall, planning on using the momentum to jump onto the roof of the building. But to Jiang Baimian's surprise, the wall her right palm pressed against couldn't withstand any force!

It was just empty air!

This made her—who had already shifted her center of gravity—unable to pull her body back. She involuntarily fell forward and slammed into the wall.

She passed through it and rolled on the ground.

Jiang Baimian had undergone genetic modification and was wearing a military exoskeleton, so she quickly stopped her uncontrollable tumbling and stood up. She then turned around and looked at the wall with a shocked and suspicious expression.

At the thought that this was the real New World and that the electromagnetic environment was rather chaotic, Jiang Baimian couldn't help but make a guess. "The tall tower and houses Hey and I saw aren't actually what this small city looks like. Everything here has been distorted, forming a large illusion. There's both the real and the fake mixed together?"

Jiang Baimian walked back to the wall and gently stretched out her right palm for confirmation.

Her right palm penetrated the white-gray stone wall as if it had penetrated air.

Jiang Baimian walked forward step by step, passing through it until she returned to the spot where she had fallen.

There's Shattered Mirror among the Kalendarium who controls illusions. It's normal for such a strange thing to exist in the real New World...?Jiang Baimian muttered silently.

She thought for a moment and stretched her right hand toward the wall again. She had to slow down this time and calm her mind to experience the feeling of penetrating the fake wall.

Silently, Jiang Baimian's palm pressed against the wall, but she didn't take another step forward.

It wasn't that she didn't want to but that she couldn't.

The wall was hard and cold. It didn't seem fake at all!

...

Jiang Baimian—who was walking in a straight line—spent some time returning to the tunnel before closing the heavy iron-black door again.

She sat cross-legged beside Shang Jianyao and extended her psyche to touch his consciousness.

After the same boring scene passed, Shang Jianyao waved at Jiang Baimian. “I have something to tell you!”

“What a coincidence; so do I.” Jiang Baimian’s heavy mood relaxed a little. She then exhorted, “Try your best to use code when it comes to the New World’s rules and secrets. If you can’t do so, use another term and use something else as a metaphor.”

“It has nothing to do with the New World’s secret. I entered Lin Sui’s house...” Shang Jianyao rambled on about his experience. “But I didn’t discover anything valuable, nor did I find the source of the strange commotion.”

Jiang Baimian thought for a moment and said, “Tell me what books are in Lin Sui’s room.”

Shang Jianyao revealed a troubled expression. “I can’t remember. Uh, I’ll try to materialize it. Take a look for yourself.”

As it was a consciousness-level exchange, he directly walked back to the room with the bookcase and had it appear in front of Jiang Baimian as he looked.

Jiang Baimian scanned it and thoughtfully said, “Lin Sui was also very interested in research related to human consciousness...”

Chapter 903: Two Places

“I’m interested too.” Shang Jianyao expressed that there was nothing strange about this. “It’s just that those books look very professional. I’ll study them when I’m free.”

Jiang Baimian didn’t care about his response at all and continued, “Combining the information we gathered previously, I suspect that the awakening of humans and the forbidden zone of gods are products of the Old World’s scientific studies pertaining to the mysteries of consciousness.

“Yes, the Eighth Research Institute’s true research direction is very likely to be the mystery of human consciousness, not how to awaken it. The latter is a side result. Lin Sui has been confirmed to be a young scientist from the Northern Company, a member of a major project committee. Her name appeared in an academic lecture at the Holm Fertility Center on the cutting edge of genetic research. She was ranked alongside Teacher Du Heng, who is suspected to be the Eighth Research Institute’s president. She’s very likely one of the core researchers of the Eighth Research Institute.

“I originally suspected she was one of those amongst Vice President, Charlie, and Doctor, who lived near that tower. I didn’t expect you to actually find her home on the street—away from the core—and see her photo.”

She didn’t mention ‘Professor Li’ because Lin Sui’s surname was Lin. Even if she wanted to use a code name, she would at most use ‘Professor’ and not deliberately add a fake surname.

“Not necessarily,” the honest Shang Jianyao retorted. “Perhaps this compound doesn’t belong to Lin Sui. The owner is another researcher in the Eighth Research Institute who has a crush on her.”

He partially agreed with Jiang Baimian’s guess.

Jiang Baimian thought seriously and said, “It’s not impossible.”

Shang Jianyao immediately said smugly, “When the Old World was destroyed, the owner of the compound died, but his crush and obsession with Lin Sui kept him alive. He became a ghost and lingered in his home in the New World. The slight movements I heard were from him!”

“But didn’t you say that the sobbing sounds came from a woman?” Jiang Baimian asked.

Shang Jianyao was stunned for a second before saying, “Who says women can’t have a crush on women?”

He spoke righteously.

Jiang Baimian was speechless.

.....

At this moment, his thoughts jumped, and he changed the topic. “I think that even if Lin Sui is really still alive and is one of the few New World powerhouses in the Eighth Research Institute, she can at most be chosen between Charlie and Doctor. The rest can be eliminated.”

The other ‘New World’ experts of the Eighth Research Institute only advanced many years after the Old World was destroyed.

“Why do you rule out ‘Vice President?’” Jiang Baimian asked.

Shang Jianyao replied confidently, “‘Vice President’ should be Oak. He’s the vice president of the Northern Company and co-principal investigator of the major project.”

The relationship between the Northern Company and the Eighth Research Institute was self-evident.

Jiang Baimian nodded and stopped discussing this topic that was void of clues for the time being.

Considering her mental expenditure, she said to him, “Next, I want you to help me take a look at two places.”

“Which two places?” Shang Jianyao didn’t act like Jiang Baimian was instructing him to do it, but as a result of his volunteering.

Although Jiang Baimian was directionally challenged, her memory was quite good. With the help of the auxiliary chip and the military exoskeleton’s system, she quickly conjured the streets and buildings she had explored and observed tonight.

Of course, she couldn’t help but have some confusion during this process. After all, she had lost her way in many places and couldn’t be sure. However, there were complete records from the auxiliary chip, military exoskeleton, and even the night photos she had taken when she was high above.

She pointed to a spot. “Go to the corresponding location in the New World and see what buildings are there and what abnormalities are inside. When I wanted to use its wall to jump to the roof, I actually went straight through that wall...”

Jiang Baimian briefly explained her encounter, including the building that eventually turned corporeal.

Shang Jianyao's eyes lit up when he heard that, and he looked regretful that he didn't experience it personally.

"Alright, I'll take a look later," he agreed readily.

Then, she pointed to another location. "This is the lamp on the outermost edge of the tower in reality. Go to the corresponding place in the New World and investigate who lives there or what buildings are there."

Shang Jianyao acknowledged it twice and seriously remembered the exact location of those two locations as he compared them to the New World's layout.

When he finished this job, Jiang Baimian ended the exchange.

Shang Jianyao immediately walked to the two bookshelves, took out all the books that involved human consciousness, and quickly flipped through them.

He didn't look at the content in detail. He only checked if there were any notes stuffed inside or if there were any notes written in the margin of a page.

This took him nearly half an hour, but he didn't discover anything.

He turned to the other rooms and began a careful and meticulous search. Although this was most likely useless, he was astonishingly patient at certain times.

Finally, he left the compound without finding anything. He identified the direction and searched for the first location Jiang Baimian had given him.

Shang Jianyao—who was never directionally challenged—circled around a few streets with more lights and arrived at the corresponding location before long.

What appeared in front of him was a small square with elegant stone pillars and statues with their own characteristics.

Those statues belonged to the sages of the Old World. There were Ashlandics and Red River people. Shang Jianyao had seen them in textbooks and entertainment materials, so he wasn't mistaken.

After weaving through the pillars and the stone pillars umpteenth times and reaching out to touch their surfaces, Shang Jianyao muttered to himself in disappointment, "There's nothing strange..."

The ruthless Shang Jianyao sneered at his companion. "Wouldn't others beat us to it if the secrets of the New World were so easily discovered?"

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

They noted down the situation here and went to the second location Jiang Baimian mentioned, which was the street corresponding to the light at the outermost area of the tower in reality.

Just like before, he walked in the darkness and tried his best to stay away from places with lights, lest communication slow down his probing speed.

After an unknown period of time, he finally circled to the entrance of that street and looked at the target location.

A grayish-blue four-story building stood there, and its overall style was rather ancient. A bright fluorescent lamp was 'switched on' on the top floor of the building, but there was no figure reflected in the window.

"There are lights here too..." Shang Jianyao muttered to himself as he retreated.

The rash Shang Jianyao asked unhappily, "Why not just go there?"

Because of what happened at the compound, he suffered a joint suppression by the others.

“Who knows if the person living inside is a friendly person like Jacob or a devil who wants a few more batteries? We have to observe carefully before making a decision,” the ruthless Shang Jianyao replied angrily.

The calm and rational Shang Jianyao stroked his chin. “Let’s find a house that allows us to see the situation at the target location’s entrance, but we can’t get too close lest we get noticed. Then, observe the visitors and determine the identity of the owner.”

“How can we confirm?” the Shang Jianyao who valued relationships asked in confusion. “We might not know those visitors.”

The ruthless Shang Jianyao chuckled. “Observe if the visitor is alone when he leaves. If he’s alone, find a chance to follow him and become ‘friends’ with him to get him to verbally confirm the owner’s identity.”

“But how can we follow them without being discovered?” The honest Shang Jianyao pointed at the street lamps above them.

All the Shang Jianyaos fell silent at the same time.

In the end, the rash Shang Jianyao made the final decision. “Let’s observe first!”

They observed the terrain and entered a high-rise building that was ruled by darkness at the end of a street. They went up to the sixth floor.

The fluorescent lights in the corresponding window lit up.

Shang Jianyao stood in hiding and observed the target location diagonally opposite through the glass window.

He tried to hide his human consciousness, but it didn’t work.

...

Jiang Baimian stood up and looked at Shang Jianyao—who was lying against the wall—and the crate containing the nuclear warhead. Thoughts flashed through her mind.

Soon, she made a decision: She planned to move all the supplies in the jeep here. This would effectively save her time traveling between the tunnel and the jeep, allowing her to devote more energy to explore the small city.

At the same time, this could directly reduce the number of times she got lost.

“Phew...” Jiang Baimian exhaled and laughed self-deprecatingly in her heart. “Actually, there’s no need for me to take the risk to explore. I should wait for Hey to gain something and for the fog of war to dissipate before making an attempt. However, I really don’t want to be a burden. Moreover, there’s a high chance that the abnormalities and clues found outside will help Hey...”

After convincing herself for a while, she walked out of the Eighth Research Institute while dressed in the exoskeleton.

After getting lost time and time again, she moved all the supplies to Shang Jianyao and the nuclear warhead and hid the jeep in a hidden spot outside.

After doing all this, she found a place to charge and sat against the wall before entering the Sea of Origins.

In the shimmering sea, she continued swimming into the distance.

Chapter 904: “Encountered”

As she swam, she didn’t feel particularly anxious because she had been searching for the next island for a long time. Logically speaking, she would soon gain something.

As time passed, she suddenly saw a small island rising in front of her.

Golden light flashed faintly on the island.

Jiang Baimian perked up. She felt that it was time to accommodate herself.

The appearance and characteristics of the island were identical to Shang Jianyao's description! However, she didn't speed up her swimming. She maintained her original pace and focused on thinking about what she should do later.

She felt that she couldn't 'fight' with numbers. There was almost no hope for her to make a 'compromise' during the first clash and complete the acceptance. Therefore, under the circumstances that failure wouldn't have any negative effects, she decided to figure out what her other self was obsessed with before coming up with a plan. It was an effective strategy.

Amidst her thoughts, Jiang Baimian arrived at the edge of the island. She reached out and climbed up.

Unsurprisingly, she saw a golden elevator that seemed to lead deep underground. A familiar figure leaned against the elevator door.

The figure was nearly 1.8 meters tall, and her skin was malt-colored. Her facial features were elegant and beautiful, and her black hair was tied into a ponytail behind her head. It was Jiang Baimian herself.

The difference was that this figure wasn't wearing a gray camouflage uniform. Instead, she was wearing Jiang Baimian's favorite white cotton pajamas. She looked refreshing and slightly lazy.

That Jiang Baimian smiled and said, "I know you won't attack recklessly. Let's have a chat first."

"Alright." Jiang Baimian carried out her plan. "What reason do you have to stop me from entering the Mind Corridor?"

Jiang Baimian smiled. "Why should I stop you from entering the Mind Corridor? This is a great thing for us!"

.....

"Then, why are you blocking the elevator door?" Jiang Baimian looked quite relaxed.

That Jiang Baimian replied seriously, "Let's discuss who should be in charge."

“Oh?” Jiang Baimian expressed her confusion with her tone.

That Jiang Baimian looked at her and said, “Don’t you have any hesitation in your heart now? Our dream is to investigate the cause of the Old World’s destruction and the source of the Heartless disease, and it has been achieved.

“The latter comes from the absorption of human consciousness by Awakened at the New World level and above. The former should be the awakening of the Kalendaria’s main body sleeping in the darkness after the Eighth Research Institute’s research on human consciousness delved deep into the forbidden zone of the gods. ‘They’ wantonly enjoyed the ‘delicacies’ and stirred up a storm of Heartless. When many people in key positions became Heartless and attacked the normal humans around them, the automatic defense systems were launched. The weapons created by humans almost destroyed human civilization.”

“The latter guess can’t be confirmed yet,” Jiang Baimian commented. “It remains to be seen until Shang Jianyao makes further explorations in the New World. After all, before the Old World was destroyed, many Kalendaria had bodies of descent active on the earth, unlike those sleeping in the darkness.”

That Jiang Baimian didn’t retort and only smiled. “That’s right, but it doesn’t mean much to you or me. In a situation where we might not be able to enter the New World for several years, our work and dreams have come to an end. It’s time to consider more realistic problems.

“Don’t try arguing. I know very well that you have no wish of entering the New World, where you might not be able to return from that mental prison once a year.”

Jiang Baimian fell silent.

After learning from Shang Jianyao that one of the New World’s functions was to restrict the freedom of high-level Awakened, she was just like First City’s emperor, Oray—she resisted going further. Although she felt that it was a good thing for the Kalendarium to forcefully restrain New World powerhouses, her beliefs would be different if she were a member of the New World.

In order not to fall into such a predicament, she sincerely didn’t want to push open the door to the New World.

Of course, at her current level, it was still too early to consider this problem. Those thoughts belonged to her instinctive reaction after figuring out the corresponding truth.

That Jiang Baimian continued, “You and I don’t have the noble feelings and selfless heart to save all of humanity like Hey does. After all, we aren’t anything special. We won’t risk our lives for such illusive righteousness. Let Hey explore the New World slowly. Someday, he’ll be able to tell us some details about the Old World’s destruction, and it will then be time for us to return to the company.”

As far as Jiang Baimian knew, the destruction of the Old World was clearly directly related to words like ‘Eighth Research Institute,’ ‘Human Consciousness Research,’ ‘Forbidden Zone of the Gods,’ and ‘Kalendarium.’ However, there were still many lacking details on how these keywords were organized.

She frowned and said, “Go back to being livestock reared by Big Boss? To worry every day about when we’ll become Heartless?”

That Jiang Baimian smiled. “You actually know very well that we don’t really need to care about this problem. When we return, we can enter management, and the incidence of the Heartless disease happening among the management and their immediate family members is very, very low.

“Do you want to challenge the Kalendaria for a large number of strangers and change your originally comfortable life with Mom, Dad, Brother, and Sister-in-law?”

Jiang Baimian was silent for a moment. After a few seconds, she let out a long sigh in her heart.

She roughly knew which weakness the person in front of her represented from her humanity—it was her selfish self.

...

New World.

Shang Jianyao’s back was against the wall as he observed the target through the window on the sixth floor.

This observation lasted for a long time, but there was silence at the entrance of the grayish-blue classical house. Nobody came or went, and the lights on the top floor did not change.

“It’s been so long, but nobody has visited or gone out. Isn’t it boring to stay at home alone?” Shang Jianyao muttered.

The one who sought novelty agreed wholeheartedly. “What’s the difference between this and being locked in a prison?”

“Usually, there are still people chatting in prison. Occasionally, they can even fight and vent their anger.”

“What makes you think this isn’t a prison?” the honest Shang Jianyao asked.

The Shang Jianyao that sought novelty was speechless. After a few seconds, he forced an explanation. “I mean, they’re already locked up in prison. Then, getting to know a few more friends and chatting with other Awakened will help relieve any stress. Staying at home alone without going out or having any guests will really drive one crazy!”

The honest Shang Jianyao asked again, “How do you know the Awakened represented by that lamp isn’t insane?”

“That’s right, that’s right. It’s quite good to chat with ourselves like this.” As the Shang Jianyao who sought novelty chose to remain silent, the one that was prone to echoing answered.

At this point in the discussion, Shang Jianyao continued observing the target building while materializing a pen and paper.

It was a little difficult for him to materialize weapons, but there was nothing wrong with these small items.

Then, using the wall as a backing, he scribbled a title on the paper: On the impact of the New World’s closed environment and monotonous interpersonal relationships on mental conditions.

After writing the opening, he hesitated for a while but couldn’t land his fountain pen. Eventually, he wrote: “May Madam Jiang Baimian study it.”

“Phew...” Shang Jianyao exhaled and ended this form of self-entertainment.

After waiting for a while, he still didn't gain anything. He decided to split himself and let some people go to the Mind Room to have fun.

Clearly, the price he had to pay after stepping into the New World was even more serious. It was just that he was restricted by the rules here and didn't show it directly, so he couldn't split into ten.

In his mind world, Shang Jianyao's autonomy and independence had increased further, and a small number of Shang Jianyaos had even been strengthened. Therefore, Shang Jianyao could now have a few of himself play cards in his mind room while another group controlled his body for work.

If he could still explore other people's rooms, he could choose to send only one.

In Room 131 in the Mind Corridor, the idle Shang Jianyaos looked at each other, looking forward to the other party's good suggestions for games.

After a short silence, the rash Shang Jianyao waved his hand. “Why don't we go to the Sea of Origins and see if there are any changes in the rift representing Xiaochong? We've all entered the New World. We'll definitely make different discoveries if we study that rift again!

“If Xiaochong is really Master Zhuang's childhood form, could the other end of the crack be inside the tower?”

The other Shang Jianyaos' eyes lit up.

The cheerful Shang Jianyao smiled and said, “Maybe we can see the interior of the tower from the rift.”

“But Xiaochong clearly doesn't want to return to the New World and the tower. There's a high chance that he's playing games in a human settlement,” the honest Shang Jianyao said.

The rash Shang Jianyao couldn't be bothered to argue. He turned around and said, “Let's go take a look first!”

Chapter 905: Nobody

Under the rash Shang Jianyao's lead, the few of them entered the Sea of Origins and flew straight for the rift that represented Xiaochong.

Due to their increased independence and autonomy, they no longer distinguished who were the wings and who were the main body. They used all the methods they had learned from the Old World's entertainment, such as flying via nimbus clouds or by riding the wind.

Of course, this was mainly to entertain themselves. They—who had already passed through the New World's door—didn't need this in their Sea of Origins. They could go wherever they wanted.

In the blink of an eye, a few Shang Jianyaos floated in the air and surrounded the rift.

They tried their best to look over and realized that there was still a faint glow inside. There were many black shadows, and it was no different from before.

“How can there be no changes?” The rash Shang Jianyao was very disappointed.

He went closer and squeezed into the gap, just short of squeezing through the entire way. The next second, he shouted in surprise, “Come and listen! There are voices!”

The other Shang Jianyaos immediately approached and gathered around the entrance. They then heard rustling sounds coming from inside.

It was soft and vague—the Shang Jianyaos couldn't hear what was being said. They could only barely tell that they came from different sources as if there were more than 10 to 20 people discussing and communicating about a topic.

“I can't hear it!” The rash Shang Jianyao tried to pass through the rift to the other side to shorten the distance between him and the speakers. However, his 'body' didn't listen to his instructions.

His legs were tightly hugged by the other Shang Jianyaos, making it difficult for him to escape.

“This opportunity can't be missed. It won't come again!” the rash Shang Jianyao shouted.

Nobody answered him.

.....

“The more dangerous it is, the more one should take risks!” The rash Shang Jianyao’s tone was filled with disappointment.

Unfortunately, the other Shang Jianyaos worked together and forcefully dragged him away from the rift.

After some arguments and negotiations, they reached a consensus not to enter Xiaochong’s mind world rashly. After all, this person was most likely Master Zhuang’s childhood. His mind world was equivalent to Master Zhuang’s mind world.

...

Eighth Research Institute, at the end of the tunnel, behind the door.

Jiang Baimian—who was sitting against the wall—took out a candy, peeled off the wrapper, and stuffed it into her mouth.

The sweetness slowly seeped out and slushed in her mouth, calming her emotions to a certain extent.

The other her was actually right. Everyone had a selfish side, and saving all of humanity was too illusive to her. It couldn’t resonate with her too strongly.

Although she had been irrepressibly touched when she saw Commissioner Huang and the others shout the slogan ‘for all of humanity’ and die selflessly in Ubei, times had changed. She knew that she probably couldn’t do such a thing herself.

If danger pointed at herself, her family, and her friends, Jiang Baimian believed that she had the courage and confidence to face danger and death head-on. But for the sake of unrelated people—

people she didn't have a specific image in her mind for—it was inevitable that she would have thoughts like 'there's no need for it.'

When she was capable of helping, Jiang Baimian was still willing to help when ordinary people were harmed. However, that depended on her having seen those tragedies and those humans.

In comparison, the goal of 'for all of humanity' was really too grand. It was so grand that it became abstract.

She was escaping reality and only protecting her family and friends. Jiang Baimian felt different from her other self.

Among the company's ordinary employees, there was no lack of people she had met, chatted with, and interacted with. When she thought about how these people—who couldn't be considered acquaintances but were familiar faces—would unknowingly become food for the Kalendaria and New World powerhouses and lose their minds without warning to become Heartless, she felt a strong sense of pity and compassion.

As the old saying went: When one has seen them while alive, he cannot stand to watch them die. If he hears their screams, he cannot stand to eat their meat. Therefore, he stays away from the kitchen.

If that was the case for animals, what more for her own kind that she often met?

Jiang Baimian sucked on the candy as all kinds of thoughts rose and fell in her mind.

...

There was no distinction between day and night in the New World. Shang Jianyao could only rely on Jiang Baimian to communicate with him three times in the morning, noon, and night to roughly know what time it was.

As for watches and alarm clocks, it was quite simple for him to materialize them. However, the problem was that they were products of his mental structure—they didn't have the corresponding mechanical or electronic structure. In other words, the time displayed on them was the time Shang Jianyao believed it to be. It had no effect on helping him keep time.

If Shang Jianyao was willing to assign a 'timekeeper' to be in charge of the watch by counting down every second, that would've been able to determine the time. However, this was too much of a waste of energy.

"I actually waited the entire night!" Shang Jianyao looked out the window and saw that the fluorescent lamp on the top floor of the target building was still lit.

He rubbed his face and praised himself. "Not bad, not sleepy at all!"

He then said, "But we can't keep waiting like this."

The rash Shang Jianyao immediately suggested, "Why don't we pay a visit? As a newcomer here, it's very normal to visit neighbors. It shouldn't attract hostility."

"What if it's a hungry and irritable fellow?" the honest Shang Jianyao asked.

The Shang Jianyao that sought novelty smiled and said, "We'll take it one step at a time. Let's knock on the door first while prepared for battle. At that distance, our chances of escaping are relatively high even if we are really attacked. We'll then decide if we should go in to visit, speak at the door, or leave immediately based on the room owner's attitude."

The Shang Jianyaos conversed for a while and passed the proposal with a one-vote advantage under the objections of the two most intelligent members.

He then left the current apartment and walked down the dark street. Under the street lamps' illumination, he arrived in front of the grayish-blue classical building.

Ding dong! Ding dong!

Shang Jianyao pressed the doorbell.

Nobody replied.

"I can't sense any human consciousness on the top floor..." He stroked his chin and said, "What's the point of hiding like this?"

When the lights were on, hiding one's consciousness was as useless as tits on a bull.

Ding dong, ding dong, ding dong!

The rash Shang Jianyao kept pressing the doorbell.

The sound echoed repeatedly, but it didn't cause a stir.

"Is anyone there? Is anyone there?" The rash Shang Jianyao slammed the door.

The fluorescent lamp on the top floor remained silent as if it was just an illusion.

Suddenly, the rash Shang Jianyao grabbed the wooden door handle and twisted it.

Before anyone could react, the door opened!

The first floor was ruled by darkness, and nothing abnormal could be seen.

"I'm coming in? I'm coming in?" the righteous Shang Jianyao politely announced.

Nobody in the room answered.

After another round of discussion, the rash Shang Jianyao obtained the majority of votes. He forced the calm and rational Shang Jianyao, the ruthless Shang Jianyao, and a few others to enter the house with him and the others and head straight to the fourth floor.

This made the previously depressed and rash Shang Jianyao sigh with emotion. "Who said that the price will worsen after entering the New World? It clearly got better!"

The other Shang Jianyaos chose to remain silent.

He walked up the stairs and arrived at the lit room door in less than two minutes.

The room was completely open, and inside was a small reception room. It had a brown floor, and crystal-like fluorescent lights hung from above. There was a coffee table, a set of sofas, and a few chairs. Apart from that, it was empty.

“No one?” Shang Jianyao stuck his head out the door and examined the room a few times.

With the lights on, there was actually nobody in the room!

Considering that the other person might be ‘invisible,’ the rash Shang Jianyao conjured a long broom as he walked through the door step by step. He stabbed left and right, hoping to force out the room owner who might be hiding in the air through actual contact.

At the same time, he listened carefully to his surroundings.

After some confirmation, Shang Jianyao became increasingly confused. He muttered to himself in shock, “There’s really nobody!”

Apart from the fact that his entry made the lights brighten significantly, nothing else changed.

Just as Shang Jianyao said that, he suddenly heard a creaking sound—

The open door automatically closed without any stir of the wind!

“No!” Shang Jianyao shouted and pounced at the door.

As he pounced, he interfered with matter, turning the air into a large hand that pressed against the door as a form of resistance. However, the force from closing the door was extremely great. With Shang Jianyao’s current level, it was difficult for him to stop it across the distance.

Thud!

The door closed.

Bang!?

Shang Jianyao slammed into the door and rebounded.

As soon as he stabilized himself, he twisted the handle with all his might, but the door remained motionless as if it were painted on the wall.

Without hesitation, Shang Jianyao turned to the window. However, the window couldn't be opened either.

Chapter 906: Dream

Shang Jianyao jumped up and down, proceeded to check the ventilation duct, and attempted to break open the door, but it was futile.

The entire room seemed to be cast from steel.

“Am I locked up?” The rash Shang Jianyao was a little dumbfounded.

The ruthless Shang Jianyao was raging. As he struck the wall, he laughed loudly. “Is there a need to ask? I knew that something would definitely go wrong with the body when a single-celled creature like you and a few low-IQ fellows are in the lead, but I didn't expect it to happen so quickly! How dare you enter a room that's clearly odd!?”

“In theory, everyone is a New World powerhouse. Nobody can lock us up easily. Besides, what's the point of locking us up? Even if they want to absorb our consciousness and mind, won't they still have to fight us?” the honest Shang Jianyao muttered.

The ruthless Shang Jianyao scoffed. “Don't you know how deep the waters of the New World are?”

“Alright, alright. Everyone, stop arguing.” The calm and rational Shang Jianyao stopped the internal strife. “The most important thing now is to think of a way to get out. Although we don't have to worry about mental exhaustion for the time being, being trapped here will seriously affect our progress in exploring the New World.”

At this point, he looked up at the brighter fluorescent lights and said, “That person doesn’t seem to have left yet...”

A single New World powerhouse like Shang Jianyao was unlikely to support such bright lights.

“Maybe he’s hiding in a corner of the room, waiting for us to make a mistake and stab us in the back,” the honest Shang Jianyao said.

The rash Shang Jianyao expressed his dissatisfaction. “How is that possible? I just checked every place here with a broom.”

“What’s the point of such a check?” The ruthless Shang Jianyao jumped a few times. “You can easily dodge it.”

He meant that the room owner could completely avoid the broom’s touch by jumping in the form of skipping rope.

.....

“156, 157, 181921...” The Shang Jianyao that sought novelty performed excitedly without any sense of him being trapped.

In Pangu Biology, house-hopping, hide-and-peek, and other games with the least requirements were the children’s favorite games. Next was skipping rope that only used a small number of materials.

Shang Jianyao—who valued relationships the most and was the youngest—asked worriedly, “Then, how should we check so that we don’t miss anything?”

“That’s simple.” Zen Master Redemption smiled and said, “Focus and forcefully materialize a bomb. Then, detonate it in the room and cause indiscriminate damage. This way, no matter who is hiding here via invisibility, it’s impossible to survive without making sound.”

“Indiscriminate damage...” The ruthless Shang Jianyao frowned.

The honest Shang Jianyao asked, “What about ourselves?”

“We will also be hurt.” Zen Master Redemption raised his right palm and chanted a Buddhist proclamation. “If I don’t enter hell, who will?”

Without waiting for his peers to scold him, he added, “This is a mental bomb that originated from us. With us standing in the eye of the storm, the damage we suffer is definitely the lightest.”

The calm and rational Shang Jianyao thought for a moment and said, “What if the invisible one has already left but is now outside the door?”

As they were very close, the corresponding light wouldn’t be reflected in the corridor but in the room. In such a situation, a mental bomb wouldn’t be too effective.

All the Shang Jianyaos fell silent.

After a while, the rash Shang Jianyao anxiously said, “We can’t just sit back and wait for death!”

“What do you have in mind then?” The ruthless Shang Jianyao now realized that this fellow was more annoying than the calm and rational one.

“Think of a way to break out of the door,” the rash Shang Jianyao replied. “We are all New World powerhouses. There’s no reason for him to trap us so easily.”

The calm and rational Shang Jianyao smiled. “The buildings here are constructed by the Kalendarium. The walls and doors are definitely extremely sturdy. We can only consider starting from the connections and weaknesses. But before making such an attempt, I have another suggestion.”

“What suggestion?” the honest Shang Jianyao asked.

The calm and rational Shang Jianyao replied confidently, “Ask Big White if she has any good ideas.”

“That’s right, that’s right.” Shang Jianyao immediately agreed.

The other Shang Jianyaos had no objections.

...

In order to maintain her mental strength, Jiang Baimian forced herself to sleep. This was all thanks to her being an Awakened.

In a daze, she felt like she had returned to the company and was living a stable life with her parents, brother, sister-in-law, and the others.

One day, the people around her suddenly became Heartless one after another.

She eventually escaped the underground building after an ordeal, only to discover that the entire Ashlands had become a paradise for Heartless. Human civilization had been completely destroyed.

Phew...?Jiang Baimian opened her eyes and woke up.

The nightmare from before was still lingering in her mind.

She fell into a daze for a while and muttered to herself, "Wasn't the reason that I wanted to investigate the reason for the Old World's destruction and the Heartless disease's origins because I hope that our next generation won't have such a guillotine hanging over their heads and that the tragedy of the Old World's destruction will never happen again..."

When she was young, she had heard her father talk too much about the Old World's destruction, the Heartless disease's horror, and the tragic encounters of humans. Only then did she slowly develop the idea of investigating the cause of the Old World's destruction and the Heartless disease's origins.

When she came into contact with the Old Human civilization more broadly, such thoughts took root and became her dream or ideal.

She didn't want her descendants to be afraid again. She didn't want the once brilliant civilizations to be wiped out.

She prided herself on being a part-time folklore scholar. She experienced the local customs wherever she went because of her love for human civilization.

Most of the humans she had never seen before were indeed strangers to her. They didn't leave an indelible impression, but the children around her—the poems, songs, and scientific knowledge that contained human intelligence—left clear imprints in Jiang Baimian's heart.

Jiang Baimian exhaled again.

She stood up and stretched her body. She then communicated with Shang Jianyao at the agreed time, helped him find a place to pee, and injected him with a nutrient shot.

After doing all of this, Jiang Baimian simply made do with compressed biscuits and energy bars. During the process, she sighed with emotion and muttered to herself in confusion, "When you think about something enough during the day, you will dream about it at night as well..."

"This dream came at the right time—it helped buttress some of my thoughts. But isn't it too much of a coincidence?"

As these thoughts raced through her mind, Jiang Baimian cast her gaze at the tightly shut black door and considered the problem she would explore later. Since only one-tenth of Heartless are present at night, what will it be like during the day?

Jiang Baimian felt that there was still hope of infiltrating the small city in broad daylight by hiding her human consciousness and relying on the military exoskeleton and other equipment.

At this moment, her head throbbed a few times. This was a familiar precursor to the Heartless disease.

Fortunately, the throbbing pain quickly subsided.

Jiang Baimian immediately came to a realization and understood that Shang Jianyao was looking for her. She quickly walked back to Shang Jianyao's side, knelt on one knee, and extended her psyche.

She soon 'met' Shang Jianyao.

“I’m locked up!” Shang Jianyao went straight to the point.

The corners of Jiang Baimian’s mouth twitched slightly. “Give me the details.”

Upon hearing Shang Jianyao say that he had rashly entered the target building and that strange room, she almost raised her hand to facepalm herself. After calming down, she thoughtfully said, “Your situation is a little like Yama Tiger’s encounter...”

They were restricted to a certain place in the New World and couldn’t move freely.

“That’s different. I can still return to the Ashlands as long as I choose the right person to pray to.” Shang Jianyao didn’t agree with Jiang Baimian.

Jiang Baimian chuckled. “Why are you so sure when you haven’t tried it yet? What if the Kalendarium ignore you?”

“‘They’ ditched us after having ‘Their’ fun!” Shang Jianyao’s thoughts jumped elsewhere. “Besides, Yama Tiger was a wild fox back then. He proclaimed himself a god and probably didn’t know that he could temporarily return to the Ashlands by praying to a Kalendaria.”

“Then, who’s giving him the ‘blood transfusion’ to maintain his consciousness?” Jiang Baimian chuckled.

Without waiting for Shang Jianyao to argue, she nodded. “Don’t act rashly for the time being. I’ll find an opportunity to approach the corresponding building in reality at night and fire a few grenades at it to see what changes it will bring.”

In reality, the building corresponding to the place where Shang Jianyao was trapped was where the tower’s outermost lamp was. Although Jiang Baimian couldn’t reach there yet, the remaining distance didn’t prevent her from deploying long-range attacks at all.

“That’s very dangerous,” Shang Jianyao said in concern.

“You are actually aware of that too? Don’t be so rash in the future!” Jiang Baimian exhorted. “I’ll evacuate immediately after bombarding that building. With the help of the military exoskeleton, those Heartless shouldn’t be able to catch up to me if I travel in a straight line.”

Just as she said that, Shang Jianyao suddenly felt the lights in the room dim significantly.

The fluorescent lamp was no longer as bright as before!

Chapter 907: Coattails

“That fellow left?” Shang Jianyao jumped up, his tone filled with joy.

The light returning to normal meant that he was the only one left in the room and its vicinity.

“Left?” Jiang Baimian was rather surprised. From her point of view, things wouldn’t be easy to resolve due to the oddity of the room.

Shang Jianyao excitedly said, “I’ll try opening the door. Call me again in five minutes.”

Why does the second sentence sound so familiar...?Jiang Baimian thought for a moment before recalling that this sounded like some lines from the Old World’s entertainment.

Shang Jianyao focused and walked to the door. He then stretched out his right palm and turned the doorknob, but the door remained motionless.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

He turned his body and slammed into it, but it was like scratching an itch for the wooden door.

“I still can’t open the door...” Shang Jianyao looked around as if a ghost was hiding in the room.

At this moment, the fluorescent lamp dimmed a little, giving off the feeling that the voltage in this area was unstable.

Its brightness was clearly lower than that of a normal New World powerhouse!

Shang Jianyao's eyes immediately turned sharp, and more sparks gathered in his eyes. The next second, a large, illusory vortex seemed to appear in front of him.

This cast a shadow over the entire room.

.....

The terrifying suction force pulled Shang Jianyao until he staggered and fell into the vortex. At the same time, his 'head' throbbed, showing signs of contracting the Heartless disease.

The suction force was extremely terrifying. Shang Jianyao couldn't resist it even with his mental strength.

In a flash, Shang Jianyao suddenly disappeared. All of his consciousness had entered his Mind Room!

Before Shang Jianyao could breathe, he felt a chill along his ankle.

He quickly lowered his head and saw that a dark-blue sea had come from nowhere and was constantly surging upward. It wouldn't be long before it drowned 131.

Shang Jianyao didn't run to the door. He knew that it was impossible to enter the corridor from a Mind Room at the New World level.

He went straight to a part of the room, jumped, and drilled into his Sea of Origins in a very standard diving posture.

Above the illusory sea formed by faint light, Shang Jianyao's figure had just appeared when he saw the water under his feet turn pitch-black.

A pitch-black wave slammed into the air, and the water level rose higher and higher, wanting to drown everything here.

Shang Jianyao's mouth opened wide as he muttered to himself, "Isn't this too exaggerated?"

As he exclaimed, he rose higher and higher. He was chased by the pitch-black seawater and huge waves until he had nowhere to go.

After fleeing for a while, the ruthless Shang Jianyao shouted, “Now that disaster has struck, let’s split up!”

“You make it sound like you can escape if we split up,” the honest Shang Jianyao pointed out mercilessly.

Internal strife broke out between them.

The ruthless Shang Jianyao quickly explained, “I plan on hiding in Xiaochong’s rift, but I won’t crawl over completely.”

This was the plan that had been used to avoid having his memories deleted.

“What if the seawater doesn’t stop rising?” the Shang Jianyao that abhorred evil asked anxiously.

The ruthless Shang Jianyao replied without hesitation, “Then, I’ll enter Xiaochong’s mind world! Since we are going to die either way, we will definitely choose the one with a chance of survival!”

After all, Xiaochong was good friends with them.

“I didn’t expect the timid you to be so decisive at a time like this.” The honest Shang Jianyao always said whatever was on his mind.

The ruthless Shang Jianyao snorted. “Because there’s no way out.”

As they conversed, Shang Jianyao came to the gap that represented Xiaochong. He didn’t hesitate to enter before stopping at the interface.

A few seconds later, the dark and illusory seawater surged to this height. Its rising trend suddenly stopped—one without warning.

The water level quickly dropped, and it didn't take long for it to return to normal.

Shang Jianyao stuck his head out from the gap and watched seriously. After a while, he jumped out of the rift and laughed. "Xiaochong is indeed Master Zhuang's childhood! As expected of my good friend. It feels great to have a Kalendaria's backing!"

He stood akimbo and roared with laughter, looking like a vile person who had gotten his way.

The honest Shang Jianyao reminded his peers, "Xiaochong didn't promise to help us resist such matters. We were just bluffing."

"So what? If anyone doesn't believe in it, they can follow me to Xiaochong's mind world. At most, we'll perish together!" The rash Shang Jianyao had an excited expression. "I knew it. There are only benefits and no harm in being direct. Let's quickly do what we should've done but didn't do while we can still ride on the coattails of Xiaochong!"

"Are you looking for a quick death?" the ruthless Shang Jianyao cursed angrily.

During the argument, they left the Sea of Origins and returned to the cage-like New World room.

The light from the fluorescent lamp had returned to normal at some point in time.

Shang Jianyao clicked his tongue, walked to the door, and gripped the handle again.

As he twisted and pulled, the wooden door—which had previously remained motionless as if it had fused with the wall—opened. The corridor outside was illuminated by light.

"Hahaha." The rash Shang Jianyao laughed with his arms akimbo. "I knew riding the coattails of Xiaochong was useful!"

He looked eager to give it another try.

...

He relied on the deterrence of Xiaochong's rift to defeat the 'oddity' in the room...?Jiang Baimian ended her conversation with Shang Jianyao and muttered to herself silently.

She felt that there was nothing wrong with this matter. It was reasonable and logical.

What was important was the origins of the 'oddity' that forced Shang Jianyao to flee and made it difficult for him to resist effectively.

Was it a bug in the New World's rules or some existence? If it were a certain existence, the strength and level displayed would be higher than that of an ordinary New World powerhouse. Even if they weren't a Kalendaria, they should be at the level of Truth or Wu Meng.

At this thought, Jiang Baimian shook her head and temporarily suppressed this matter to the bottom of her heart. She undoubtedly heaved a sigh of relief that Shang Jianyao could escape.

On the one hand, she was happy for the other party, and she felt at ease because of this. On the other hand, she didn't have to take the risk of attacking the corresponding building. She could slowly figure it out according to her original plan.

During their exchange, Jiang Baimian had already obtained a new mental barrier. Upon seeing that the sky was about to brighten, she quickly pushed open the heavy black door and walked out of the tunnel.

After closing the door, she used the darkness before dawn to hide her human consciousness and infiltrated the small city suspected to be the New World in reality.

After spending some time, Jiang Baimian arrived at the spot where she had the Heartless disease symptoms appear last night just as the sun slowly rose. It was a building less than 30 meters away from the tower's outermost lamp.

At this moment, the lamp had already been switched off.

Jiang Baimian tried to take a step forward, and the familiar throbbing pain in her head appeared again.

She quickly retreated again.

“It’s indeed not a matter of distance.” Jiang Baimian sighed softly.

This time, she moved Shang Jianyao’s body a distance away toward the tunnel exit, but her range of activity didn’t increase. In other words, there were only two ways for her to proceed further. The first was for Shang Jianyao to advance, and the second was for her to accommodate her other self and enter the Mind Corridor.

Without having the time to think about this problem, Jiang Baimian hid in the building beside her and monitored the area near the tower.

Since she couldn’t go deep, she could only secretly observe.

After a while, the Heartless became active. They came from different places and did different things. Some of them repaired circuits, some guarded the tracks, and some used electrical appliances to cook...

This stunned Jiang Baimian. If it weren’t for the fact that those guys were like zombies, she would’ve thought that she had entered a normal human city.

Upon recalling Swamp Ruin 1, Jiang Baimian believed that someone had implanted a complete set of thoughts in these Heartless to maintain the normal operation of this small city.

As these thoughts raced through her mind, she saw a few Heartless approach and walk to the tower’s periphery. When they passed nearly 20 meters from the building where Jiang Baimian was hiding, their figures suddenly disappeared.

The Heartless disappeared in front of Jiang Baimian without warning as if they had vanished from the face of the earth!

Jiang Baimian’s gaze froze.

...

New World.

Shang Jianyao—who had found nothing in the room—returned to the street. He held his head high, puffed out his chest, and strode toward the tower.

After arriving at the intersection, Shang Jianyao casually glanced around and realized that four lights were lit on different floors in a mall-like building.

They were abnormally weak, clearly weaker than normal New World Awakened.

Shang Jianyao chuckled and said, “Is that a hospital?”

After looking at it for about ten seconds, his expression suddenly became excited. “It’s where Yama Tiger is locked up!”

This was the location he had deduced.

Chapter 908: Nothing But Recklessness

Looking at the mall-like building where Yama Tiger was imprisoned, the rash Shang Jianyao said excitedly, “This is what you call ‘searching high and low for something, only to find it effortlessly!’”

“But the truth is that we haven’t searched high and low at all when it comes to finding Yama Tiger,” the honest Shang Jianyao retorted his peer.

The rash Shang Jianyao felt justified about this. “We had considered it!”

Without giving the other Shang Jianyaos a chance to retort, he pointed at the mall and said, “Let’s go over now.”

“Are you crazy?” the ruthless Shang Jianyao blurted out. “Do you know what the situation inside is? Don’t implicate us even if you wish to die!”

The rash Shang Jianyao spoke eloquently. “We now have Xiaochong’s backing. Who dares to stop us and not cut us some slack?”

“How can you be sure that it wasn’t a particular Kalendaria that imprisoned Yama Tiger and the others?” the ruthless Shang Jianyao asked in return. Then, considering that he had become a minority, he suggested in a good-natured manner, “Even if you want to enter and find Yama Tiger, you have to find a few friendly New World experts nearby and ask about the building.”

The rash Shang Jianyao sneered. “You’re a coward! And it’s safe to find other New World experts nearby? They might be the guards of this building!”

As he spoke, he strode forward and ran to where Yama Tiger was imprisoned.

“You nincompoop, do you think you can do whatever you want just because you can ride the tailcoats of Xiaochong?” The ruthless Shang Jianyao couldn’t control himself anymore.

Under his desperate resistance, Shang Jianyao tripped himself with his feet, completing a flat fall.

“Coward!”

“Idiot!”

.....

“Both of you, calm down.”

...

The Shang Jianyaos began an intense internal battle. He appeared alone, but he sometimes ran, sometimes rubbed the wall, sometimes did handstands, and sometimes crawled backward. He sometimes hugged a street lamp pole and was unwilling to move forward. It was as if many invisible enemies were fighting him.

Finally, the rash Shang Jianyao and his supporters clinched the final victory.

Shang Jianyao swaggered to the mall-like building and walked in with his head held high.

With a snap, a lamp inside the building lit up upon his arrival, sprinkling pure white light.

This was indeed a large mall. There were stairs, escalators, and areas where one could see a dome.

Shang Jianyao casually scanned the layout and easily walked to the escalator in front of him without making much observation.

The escalator was powered as it slowly brought him up.

...

In a building in the small city.

Jiang Baimian resisted the urge to raise her hand and rub her eyes.

As an Awakened in the Shattered Mirror domain, she confirmed that the Heartless from before weren't her imagination and that their disappearance was real.

Jiang Baimian composed herself and continued her observation in an attempt to confirm. During this process, she also 'observed' the Heartless's activities, wanting to determine which were ordinary and which had Awakened abilities.

What puzzled her was that the Heartless that had appeared were doing specific things. There were no so-called 'supervisors,' so she couldn't tell who had a higher status.

After some observation, Jiang Baimian preliminarily divided the Heartless into two categories based on her analysis of their work: The first was to maintain the supply lines' integrity and normality. The second was to ensure the current race's livelihood and improve the surrounding environment.

At this thought, Jiang Baimian's heart palpitated. The latter type is what these Heartless need to survive. It's an additional product of their core work...

In other words, someone implanted the corresponding thoughts in them to ensure the normal operation of the power system... Does this mean that some important items that require electricity are hidden in the area where the tower is?

The reason Jiang Baimian used the term 'items' and not 'machines' was that she remembered that Swamp Ruin 1 had been powered for decades because Xiaochong wanted to play games.

Although the game console was also a machine, it was still different from the machines that Jiang Baimian subconsciously thought of.

As these thoughts raced through her mind, Jiang Baimian saw a few Heartless walk over. She immediately held her breath and focused.

Just like before, the Heartless disappeared without a trace as soon as they crossed an invisible boundary on their way to the tower.

...

In the mall where Yama Tiger was imprisoned in the New World.

Shang Jianyao walked in the darkness and watched the lights shimmer to life one after another with him before extinguishing one level after another.

According to his previous guess and Jiang Baimian's calculations, he knew that Yama Tiger was on the fourth floor. A weak lamp that was about to go out was situated there.

Before long, Shang Jianyao arrived at his destination and saw a grayish-white shutter sealing the entrance.

"Nothing happened." The rash Shang Jianyao looked around and smiled smugly. "Didn't I say so. Who would dare stop Xiaochong's good friend?"

The others chose to remain silent.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Shang Jianyao slammed the shutters.

“Is there anyone? Is there anyone?” he shouted as he slapped.

After shouting many times, he shook his head in disappointment. “Was Yama Tiger deprived of his senses? He actually didn’t react...”

When he knocked on the door, he noticed that the situation here was indeed very similar to his previous encounter.

The door seemed to be welded to the wall, and the wall was indestructible! In other words, he couldn’t barge by force.

The ruthless Shang Jianyao coldly replied to his peer, “You’re so noisy that you’ve drowned out every sound.”

“That’s right!” Shang Jianyao clenched his right fist and punched his left palm. He then quietened down and placed his ear against the shutter.

In the silence, Shang Jianyao heard a weak voice. “Save me...”

“It’s indeed you, Yama Tiger!” Shang Jianyao replied excitedly as if he had met an old friend in a foreign land.

“Save me...” Yama Tiger’s cry for help was as soft as a mosquito’s buzz.

Shang Jianyao stroked his chin and smiled. “I can’t open this door now. If I want to save you, I’m afraid I have to understand the entire matter and find the problem.”

The shutter seemed to have a certain shielding effect. Logically speaking, Yama Tiger was weak, hungry, and close to fainting. He would instinctively attempt to extract the human consciousness around him, but Shang Jianyao didn’t feel anything.

After Shang Jianyao repeated his words a few times, Yama Tiger finally reacted. “Who are you... You know me?”

“I saw your body on Lake Heart Island.” The honest Shang Jianyao never lied. “I have to know what you encountered before I can think of a way to save you.”

In the current situation, Yama Tiger had to make a Hail Mary effort, especially when the other party had expressed his willingness to help him.

Even if this was a trap, he would jump in without hesitation. Therefore, he forced himself to focus and intermittently said, “Back then, I entered this place. Not long after, my wits suddenly became dull, and I couldn’t think. Then, a voice told me to come here. I came over in a daze and was locked in this room.

“In the beginning, I was too anxious. I extracted consciousness from a large number of my believers and fed on them to replenish my expenditure. This resulted in them either dying or becoming Heartless—they couldn’t provide me with food anymore. Later, every time I was about to starve to death, someone would provide me with some food so that I remained in this limbo of life and death. I remained in this weak state the entire time.”

“Who’s providing you with food?” Shang Jianyao asked.

“I’ve never seen him. I don’t know who he is,” Yama Tiger replied weakly.

Shang Jianyao changed his angle. “Who made you dim-witted?”

“I don’t know.” Yama Tiger couldn’t hide the hatred in his tone.

“This is very similar to Moron Halo, an Awakened ability in the Master Zhuang domain,” Shang Jianyao said to himself.

He didn’t let Yama Tiger waste too much energy on this meaningless question and sincerely asked, “Why do you think that person locked you up? Yes, we can lock onto the corresponding suspect once we find the motive for the crime.”

Yama Tiger ignored his strange analogy and fell silent for a while. “I suspect that he wants my body.”

“What?” Shang Jianyao was shocked. “He’s a rapist?”

As for whether it was a man or a woman, that didn’t matter.

Yama Tiger spoke for a while before his words became a little smoother. “No, I didn’t mean that. When I still had enough food, I observed the situation here from the window—the lights here rarely disappear. This means that it’s very difficult for them to return to reality. Th-this might be a mental prison.”

Clap! Clap! Clap!?

Shang Jianyao applauded Yama Tiger. “It’s really impressive that you can come to such a conclusion based on observation.”

Yama Tiger didn’t have the energy to be polite and continued, “The person who dealt with me might want to transfer their consciousness into my body when an opportunity presents itself and escape to reality. My neighbor, Modeus, has such an ability. Even if that person doesn’t have it himself, he can achieve his goal by obtaining the corresponding items.

“If I’m not wrong, that person has several people like me locked up in different places. Having more choices is never a bad thing.”

Chapter 909: Meeting

Clap! Clap! Clap!

Shang Jianyao applauded Yama Tiger. “That’s some nice thinking.”

He then said, “Those people are also locked up here but on different floors.”

“As expected...” Yama Tiger slowly exhaled and said in an abnormally weak voice, “You can visit them. They should have encountered something similar to me.”

Shang Jianyao agreed and said in anticipation, “One of them might’ve seen the criminal before.”

He had always been a proactive person. He immediately bade Yama Tiger farewell and headed to another floor.

After making his rounds, Shang Jianyao gained a preliminary understanding of the other people’s situations. They were either the batch of New World powerhouses who had advanced rather early or the kind that ruled over their own territories. The thing they had in common was that they lacked the corresponding understanding of the New World. Furthermore, they didn’t have friends who could help them when they first arrived.

“What a bully!” Shang Jianyao felt pained.

Compared to the New World powerhouses who formed alliances and had factions backing them, Yama Tiger and the others were like innocent sheep when they first arrived. They were timid, lonely, ignorant, and naive. They were indeed ‘weaker’ and were the best targets for attacks.

Back then, there was a high chance that they didn’t know that every lamp represented a New World resident and lacked sufficient vigilance against the lights around them.

The Shang Jianyao that abhorred evil said, “The assailant might not be as strong as we imagined. He attacked Yama Tiger and the others while they didn’t know much about the New World and lacked allies. He probably used this building’s uniqueness to imprison them later.”

“But no matter what, he should be stronger than Yama Tiger and the others,” said the honest Shang Jianyao.

If the perception range of both parties was very close, it was impossible for Yama Tiger and the others to be controlled without sensing anything.

.....

The Shang Jianyaos discussed this matter for a while before the rash one impatiently said, “There’s nothing new here. Let’s go elsewhere.”

He looked like he wanted to quickly go to all the places he needed to go before riding on Xiaochong's coattails failed.

The calm and rational Shang Jianyao and the ruthless Shang Jianyao also didn't want to continue staying in this rather strange mall. They agreed to leave immediately.

They took the escalator down and went straight to the exit.

On the floor where Yama Tiger was imprisoned, a figure suddenly walked out from the darkness.

He didn't light up any lights. He slowly walked to the railing and looked down at the ground floor where Shang Jianyao was.

At this moment, the light representing Shang Jianyao shone on the protective glass on each floor; they were more or less bright or dark.

This outlined the figure's appearance; he looked to be in his late twenties. His hair was neatly combed, and he wore a formal gray suit with black stripes and small, round glasses—Wu Meng!

Wu Meng's face was mostly concealed by the darkness, and only his glasses reflected a little light.

As Shang Jianyao left, moving the lights with him, he fused with the darkness again.

...

After staying in the company for two to three days, Long Yuehong and Bai Chen applied for an opportunity to go for outfield training. The reason was that they needed to be prepared to receive Jiang Baimian and Shang Jianyao—who had headed for the Eighth Research Institute's headquarters.

In the morning, they seriously carried out different projects according to the plan. When the sun reached overhead, they drove the SUV that had been assigned to them and arrived at an abandoned building complex.

Although there was a path inside, Bai Chen and Long Yuehong still left the car outside and found a hidden spot to park it. They then put on their military exoskeletons and walked into the small ruin.

After circling around several buildings, they stopped.

“Check if the exoskeleton is bugged,” Bai Chen said to Long Yuehong.

“Yes, yes.” Long Yuehong did it seriously.

After confirming that things were fine, they came to a collapsed high-rise building. They easily relied on the military exoskeleton and the protrusions and depressions on the outer walls to reach the rooftop.

There were gravel and cracks everywhere.

Bai Chen walked to a collapsed wall, bent down, and dug out two items. One was a radio transceiver, and the other was a recording pen.

The recording pen had a certain sentence that Shang Jianyao had recorded in advance. It held power that could affect many people at once. As the power was fused into the words and not the recording pen, Long Yuehong and Bai Chen wouldn't be directly affected when holding it.

Furthermore, if Shang Jianyao successfully entered the New World, he could provide some help by locking onto the remnant powers when Bai Chen and Long Yuehong played the recording.

In other words, Bai Chen and Long Yuehong could use the recording pen's words to influence others even if they weren't Awakened.

This was an arrangement Jiang Baimian had made when the Old Task Force separated.

Bai Chen switched on the radio transceiver and sent a telegram to Geneva.

Before long, Old Ge replied to them with a concise message: “Situation confirmed. Make preparations.”

According to the agreement, the situation here referred to the fact that the Kalendarium and New World powerhouses would absorb human consciousness, bringing about the Heartless disease.

This also meant that Pangu Biology's employees were indeed livestock reared by the Arbiter of Fate.

Bai Chen and Long Yuehong looked at each other and fell silent.

After a while, Long Yuehong exhaled and said, "Let's abandon our fantasies and prepare for battle."

Upon seeing his wife's surprise, he smiled bitterly. "It's impossible for me to keep running away. I can't feign ignorance when the truth is before me."

"Yeah." Bai Chen nodded and said, "Hey should've already entered the New World."

Otherwise, Genova wouldn't have sounded so certain.

"That's right." Long Yuehong sighed. At this point, he suddenly thought of something and came to a realization. "I finally understand why that white wolf bewitched batches of humans into Wasteland Ruin 13."

It was food for the sealed Wu Meng!

In order to hide the fact that New World powerhouses extracted human consciousness, Wu Meng implanted different thoughts in those people and made them choose different ways of committing suicide.

"Yes, some things aren't complicated at all once you know the truth." Bai Chen shared the same feelings. She then sent a telegram back to Genova and told him that the two of them would begin preparations. He also had to move somewhere close to Pangu Biology as agreed.

At the same time, Long Yuehong picked up the recording pen and stuffed it into his pocket.

After doing this, the two of them buried the radio transceiver again and left the abandoned building complex.

To them, the next problem facing them was bringing the recording pen back to the company.

...

After wandering around the New World for a few days, the increasingly bold Shang Jianyao ventured deep into the area around the tower.

He quickly passed through an intersection and saw two windows facing the street lit up in the dark street ahead.

“Let’s go over and ask about the situation.” The rash Shang Jianyao strode over.

He was filled with confidence.

When he came close, his eyes lit up as he muttered to himself, “Café!”

This was a complete café. Several lights were lit inside, and two people were sitting by one of the windows, chatting.

One of them was a lady in a thin and elegant white dress with golden wavy hair. The other was a man. He wore a formal black suit, a white shirt, and a dark tie. He was clearly over 60, and there were obvious wrinkles on his face. His eyes were brownish-yellow, and his hair was thin and white.

Shang Jianyao was immediately excited.

These were acquaintances!

He waved his right hand and shouted, “Flora, Barnard!”

“Flora, Barnard!”

The two people were none other than Flora and Barnard, whom Shang Jianyao had encountered in a New World projection somewhere in Ceningmis. The former had once been a director of the Orange Company, and the latter was the first Red River president of the Linhai Alliance.

They had kindly reminded Shang Jianyao never to enter the New World.

Upon hearing Shang Jianyao's shout, the surprised Flora turned her body with difficulty and looked out.

Her cheeks were thin, and her eyes were as blue as the sea. She was undoubtedly a beauty in her youth, but there were a few wrinkles at the corners of her eyes. She looked to be in her forties.

Upon seeing Barnard and Flora look over, Shang Jianyao excitedly came outside the café and pushed open the door.

Upon seeing Shang Jianyao come in front of him, Barnard—whose left side was trembling—asked in confusion, “You are?”

Shang Jianyao sincerely thanked him. “Some time ago, you guys reminded me not to enter the New World.”

Flora recalled the matter and grumbled, “Then, why did you come in?”

Shang Jianyao replied loudly, “How am I to completely resolve the New World's problem if I don't enter?”

Flora and Barnard's expressions changed drastically. One hurriedly looked at the café owner, and the other looked around, afraid that others had heard him.

Chapter 910: ‘Conspiracy’

This café wasn't big or small, and there were a total of three chandeliers, all of which were lit.

Other than Shang Jianyao, Flora, and Barnard, there was another person in the shop—the boss who was focused on making cappuccino art.

He was an Ashlandic with relatively long hair and an artistic bearing.

At first glance, the man wearing a white T-shirt and blue jeans was relatively young. He had bright eyes and clean brows, but upon closer inspection, one would discover fine wrinkles across his forehead, the corners of his eyes, and the side of his mouth.

He didn't look up when Shang Jianyao made his declaration, still focused on the coffee in front of him.

Seeing this, Flora and Barnard retracted their gazes. The former smiled stiffly at Shang Jianyao and asked, "What problem do you want to resolve?"

Shang Jianyao replied confidently, "This is a mental prison, and what happened to you guys is considered illegal imprisonment. Even the Kalendarium can't do this! We have to think of a way to end this situation. Where there's oppression, there's resistance!"

Flora and Barnard trembled in fear as they listened. They occasionally glanced at the window, afraid of suffering an undeserved calamity.

If it weren't for the fact that their bodies had rather serious obstructions that made it very inconvenient for them to move, they would probably choose to distance themselves from Shang Jianyao.

When Shang Jianyao finished speaking, Flora and Barnard looked at each other and forced a smile. "You didn't have to enter this large prison to begin with. Why did you take the risk to help us escape our predicament? Oh, how should I address you?"

Shang Jianyao pulled over a chair and sat down. "Just call me Doug. My Ashlandic name is Shang Jianyao."

He simply pronounced 'Shang Jianyao' clearly.

After introducing himself, he puffed up his chest and pressed his right hand to his left chest. "My ideals and goals are to save all of humanity!"

.....

Flora and Barnard revealed looks of realization.

The former smiled and said, “Aren’t you from Pangu Biology? Are you a spy from the Salvation Army?”

“I remember that you’re also the Blessed of the Arbiter of Fate...” Barnard added shakily.

Shang Jianyao looked embarrassed. “I’m indeed an employee of Pangu Biology, but I’ve always wanted to join the Salvation Army. However, they haven’t approved my application.”

What’s going on? This is called betrayal!?Barnard was stunned when he heard that.

The Linhai Alliance was dominated by Ashlanders. As the first president of Red River ethnicity, he had a rather deep understanding of Ashlandic culture.

Then, Shang Jianyao said, “Other than the Arbiter of Fate, several other Kalendarium have given me their blessings.”

He spoke with extreme pride and didn’t seem to be in the wrong at all.

Flora and Barnard were dumbfounded.

After a few seconds, Flora asked, “Since you are the Blessed of several Kalendarium, why are you trying to resolve the problem of the New World and help us escape our predicament?”

Shang Jianyao smiled. “I remember a saying from Red River: Plato is dear to me, but dearer still is truth. To save all of humanity, I’m willing to suffer the wrath of the Kalendarium.”

Then, he added sinisterly, “Besides, how do you know that no Kalendaria wants to change the situation in the New World?”

Barnard and Flora exchanged looks again.

“Why are you so obsessed with saving all of humanity?” The left half of Barnard’s body—including his lips and face—was trembling.

Shang Jianyao thought about it seriously. “My father told me many things that influenced me from a young age, causing me to have such thoughts. Later on, I went crazy, and this became my goal and ultimate ideal.”

“You went crazy?” Flora blurted out.

Shang Jianyao nodded sincerely. “I’m medically certified.”

Flora observed him for a while, recalling every move he had done and every word he had said. After confirmation, she believed that this guy was really crazy.

“No wonder...” Flora heaved an obvious sigh of relief. She thought for a moment, took a sticky note on the table, and conjured a fountain pen.

Swish! Swish! Swish!?

She scribbled a sentence on the sticky note. Then, she tore off the piece of paper and handed it to him.

Shang Jianyao took it and saw the words: “Nobody doesn’t want to escape such a predicament. We’ve been here for years, and we’ve summarized some rules and established a sizable alliance. Are you in?”

“Of course!” Shang Jianyao replied loudly.

Flora asked for the note back and reduced it to the purest mental strength before absorbing it into her body. After doing this, she said to him, “What you need to do is chat with the boss. His Red River name is Revere, and his Ashlandic name is Liu Chuan.”

“Alright.” Shang Jianyao immediately got up and walked to the boss, who had started drinking the coffee.

“Good afternoon,” he greeted warmly.

“How do you know it is noon?” Liu Chuan asked casually.

With a beaming smile, Shang Jianyao replied, “I have a manual clock.”

The name of the manual clock was Jiang Baimian.

Although Liu Chuan didn’t quite understand, he didn’t ask further. He looked at Shang Jianyao and said, “You just said that you want to change the situation in the New World?”

“Yes.” Shang Jianyao nodded heavily.

Liu Chuan’s eyes darkened. “You have to know that once the operation fails, we will become food or batteries for the Kalendarium. If you compromise, other than not being able to leave here freely and occasionally being attacked, you can still enjoy your life. You can even protect the people you want protected and have a vacation in the Ashlands every once in a while. Are you sure you want to make this futile attempt?”

Shang Jianyao suddenly reached out his right hand and pressed it to his left chest, replying firmly, “For all of humanity! This is my ideal and goal, and it’s very unfair for everyone to be locked in this so-called New World. When we change the New World, we should establish a more humane and reasonable order. We should put those who wantonly consume human consciousness on trial and set good people like Flora, Barnard, and you free...”

Not only did he answer yes or no, but he also gave his plans after success.

Liu Chuan stared at Shang Jianyao for a while before slowly nodding. “You have to remember what you just said.”

“Happy working with you.” Shang Jianyao smiled and extended his hand.

Liu Chuan—who was about to say something—had no choice but to shake his hand.

Shang Jianyao then asked, “How do you plan on resisting the Kalendarium?”

Liu Chuan's expression changed, and he almost threw the coffee cup in his hand.

He composed himself and replied, "It's not resistance. We summarized some patterns and know that there will be a chance of escaping this place recently."

With that said, Liu Chuan paused. "Alright, leave first and wait nearby. When there's only one light left in the café, come to me again, and we'll talk about this in detail."

"No problem," Shang Jianyao replied in Ashlandic.

After watching him walk out of the café, Liu Chuan looked at Barnard and Flora and nodded at them, indicating that the latent danger had been resolved.

At the same time, a memory appeared out of thin air in Barnard and Flora's minds: "I've already 'hypnotized' him and strengthened his belief of 'changing the situation in the New World.' He's our comrade. Even if he has thoughts implanted and his memories modified, he won't betray us later."

Phew.

Flora and Barnard exhaled softly.

Outside the café, Shang Jianyao walked to a nearby building and smiled as he muttered to himself, "With the Thought Implantation from before, they should trust me completely."

...

In the tunnel of the Eighth Research Institute.

Jiang Baimian ended her new round of investigations. After repeated confirmation, she revised a judgment she had made previously.

She originally thought that the Eighth Research Institute was providing electricity to the New World in reality to maintain the operation of some important items inside, but after checking the direction

of the wires and the circuitry, she believed that the truth might be reversed: It was the real New World that supplied electricity to the Eighth Research Institute!

In other words, the small nuclear power plant she surmised was in the depths of the real New World. As for those Heartless, their core job was to maintain the operation of the nuclear power plant. Next was to ensure their survival, and lastly, to maintain the power lines to the Eighth Research Institute and the track the Eighth Research Institute used to provide them with supplies.

It was precisely because of this that only about one-tenth of them were active in the periphery.

Yes, that power station must be in the area around the tower, protected by an illusion. And the power station itself exists for something important...?Jiang Baimian muttered to herself. She was already certain that those Heartless had entered an illusion when they disappeared the moment they reached a certain spot.

If she wanted to come into contact with that illusion, she needed to raise her strength as soon as possible.

With this in mind, she restrained her thoughts and entered the Sea of Origins.

She came to the island with the golden elevator again and faced her other self in pajamas.

When that 'Jiang Baimian' saw her, she smiled and asked, "Have you thought it through?"