

Ad Infinitum 921

Chapter 921: Cooperation

The weak Liu Chuan stopped and asked, “What’s wrong?”

As Shang Jianyao looked at the darkness that spewed out air streams, he shouted, “I have a question. How should we join forces to attack later? Should we stack our strength together and strike out? Should we smash it, stir it up, or are there other ideas?”

This was a very realistic technical problem. Barnard, Chen Wen, and the others fell into deep thought as they considered what to do later.

Almost at the same time, the low and ethereal voice echoed in their ears again. “Gather your power and stab it deep into the darkness. It’s very simple; there’s no need to think too much about it.

“Continue forward. Don’t delay any further.”

“Oh, oh!” Shang Jianyao had an ‘I see’ expression.

Liu Chuan, Chen Wen, and the other New World powerhouses continued forward.

“Wait!” Shang Jianyao’s voice suddenly sounded again.

“What’s wrong now?” Liu Chuan asked with a slightly warped expression.

At this moment, the tower’s interior seemed to be cloaked in a shadow.

“I have another question.” Shang Jianyao was very calm. “After we stab it, what will happen to the darkness? Will it collapse and spew air streams all over us? If that happens, what should we do?”

The shimmering air streams could melt the consciousness of a New World powerhouse!

At this moment, the New World powerhouses present were highly wary of the air streams and were prepared to dodge at any moment. Nobody dared to underestimate it.

To Barnard, Chen Wen, and the others, this was indeed something they needed to pay attention to. After all, nobody wanted to be an unnecessary sacrifice just before dawn was imminent—their return to the Ashlands.

The next second, the low and ethereal voice sounded in their and Shang Jianyao's minds again. "I'll provide you with protection. Stop wasting time on these trivial matters. Victory is right ahead of us."

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For some reason, Barnard vaguely felt that the words sounded like they were said through gritted teeth.

"Alright!" Shang Jianyao agreed readily. He took the lead to take a step forward, walking toward the gigantic darkness that spewed out blasts of air.

Liu Chuan, Chen Wen, and the New World powerhouse carrying Barnard followed closely behind.

Light flickered in their eyes, and the air streams were chaotic. The darkness burgeoned and contracted, and the atmosphere was so tense that it felt like doomsday was imminent.

"Wait!" Shang Jianyao's voice broke the atmosphere.

Liu Chuan slowed down and almost broke down as he roared, "What else do you want to ask?"

Shang Jianyao shook his head. "It has nothing to do with you."

Liu Chuan almost vomited blood when he heard this answer. Fortunately, he was now a spiritual body and a consciousness lifeform without blood.

Shang Jianyao looked at Barnard behind him and asked seriously, "Aren't you worried?"

"About what?" the trembling Barnard asked with a frown.

Shang Jianyao sincerely said, "Our escape from the New World might bring disaster to the Ashlands. As the Linhai Alliance's first president, you chose to push open the door in advance to protect the people there. Entering this place made you their hero. Aren't you worried that your current actions will bring an unstoppable disaster to the Linhai Alliance?"

Barnard fell silent for a few seconds before saying, "I've already made up my mind; I can't care less. If I don't leave this place soon, I'll definitely go crazy and live a life filled with suicidal urges. We'll talk about any subsequent disasters later. When the time comes, I'll definitely contribute my strength without reservation."

After saying that, he didn't wait for Shang Jianyao's response and looked down at the New World powerhouse carrying him. "Let's approach the darkness. We can't wait any longer."

Just as he said that, the darkness instantly expanded. The edge came close to them as if it had reached its limits.

Accompanying this was more violent, shimmering gusts of air. If not for the fact that Shang Jianyao and the others had been paying attention to this problem and were prepared to dodge at any moment, duck quickly, or pounce to the ground, a portion of them definitely wouldn't have been able to escape this calamity.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The air streams slammed into the tower wall as if someone was smashing it with a sledgehammer.

With a crashing sound, glass shattered one after another, and pieces of plaster fell, revealing mottled walls.

This was the first time the tower suffered damage.

The ground near the door also cracked for the first time. This spread out and deepened.

A stream of air flew out the door and collided with a New World powerhouse coming from another direction.

This person didn't even have the time to scream. His face distorted extremely before he was destroyed along with the air stream.

As the earthquake and hurricane brought about by the expansion continued spreading, the darkness contracted like before.

Shang Jianyao, Liu Chuan, and the others stood up one after another. Their ears were filled with a low and ethereal voice. "Go over. Go over..."

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In the vortex-shaped building.

Jiang Baimian finished searching the three corpses' pockets and only found chocolate and other items of no value.

Their bones indicated that they hadn't suffered heavy injuries, nor did they show any signs of poisoning. The only wound present was on the security guard named Fei Yingwu. His right arm was resting on a submachine gun, and there were signs of bone fractures.

Jiang Baimian imagined the scene back then.

In just an instant, Fei Yingwu died like the people in Tai City. His submachine gun landed on the ground first, and his body followed closely behind. His right arm slammed into a protruding spot on the gun, fracturing his bone.

Everyone here probably died the same way...? Jiang Baimian retracted her gaze and stood up.

Her greatest confusion now was: Why were the packet of bear biscuits and the piece of chocolate well-preserved and not moldy from the humidity? Why were these corpses only left with bones and stained clothes?

Jiang Baimian—who was temporarily puzzled—walked to the skeleton sitting on the sofa.

The white skeleton was also wearing a black uniform, but it didn't have a submachine gun beside it. There was a pistol in the holster at its waist.

Jiang Baimian's gaze landed on the skeleton's right chest. On the black name tag there were words written in golden Ashlandic: "Security Supervisor: Brian Stanley."

Under this row of Ashlandic text was a line of relatively small Red River text.

A last name and first name I've never heard of...? Jiang Baimian muttered to herself, squatted down, and checked Brian Stanley's pockets.

Apart from some food, there was nothing.

"The management back then was pretty strict." Jiang Baimian thought for a moment and didn't dare to waste any time before moving to the other corpses in the area.

After a quick inspection, she cast her gaze at the passage deep in the reception area.

The sliding metal door was half-open.

Jiang Baimian tried to take a step in, and her head immediately throbbed.

This familiar feeling made her quickly retreat.

Jiang Baimian didn't dare to advance any further. She stared at the far end of the passage and muttered to herself, "The core object is inside?"

Unable to enter for the time being, she looked around and found the stairs that led to the second floor.

Without hesitation, Jiang Baimian—who was wearing a military exoskeleton—approached and stepped on it.

Everything was calm; no signs of the Heartless disease appeared.

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“Go over. Go over...”? Amidst the low and ethereal voice, Chen Wen, Liu Chuan, Shang Jianyao, and the others fanatically dodged the shimmering air streams and arrived in front of the darkness.

At this moment, the darkness’s expansion and contraction weren’t as intense as before. It appeared rather weak, or it would’ve directly enveloped Shang Jianyao and the others.

“Let’s begin.” Liu Chuan—who was under Truth’s orders—stretched out his right palm and pressed it against the darkness’s surface.

“Alright!” Shang Jianyao had always been proactive and placed his right palm behind Liu Chuan’s hand.

Liu Chuan turned his head to glance at this fellow in surprise, confusion, and helplessness, unsure what he was up to.

“Didn’t we agree to combine our powers?” Shang Jianyao had an expression that said: “What’s wrong with that?”

Under his guidance, Barnard, Chen Wen, and the New World powerhouse carrying Barnard also stretched out their right palms and stacked them behind Shang Jianyao and Liu Chuan’s hands from different angles.

“Begin!” Shang Jianyao ordered excitedly.

Five New World powerhouses used Matter Interference at the same time, raising the effects to the highest level they could achieve.

The air quickly condensed in front of their hands and compressed into an extremely thick spike.

The spike suddenly stabbed into the darkness’s depths.

The darkness suddenly stopped. Not only did it not expand, but even its contractions disappeared.

After a brief pause, the gigantic darkness suddenly erupted. It exploded like a punctured balloon with a bang.

Accompanying this change were countless glimmers that gathered into balls and spewed out in all directions.

Liu Chuan, Shang Jianyao, and the others—who were right in front of this—couldn't dodge in time. They were directly hit in the face by the shimmering air streams, as well as their bodies and their consciousness.

In an instant, they felt their auras rapidly dissipate, and their expressions clearly warped.

The protection mentioned by Truth didn't appear.

Shang Jianyao came to his senses and quickly transferred his consciousness into his Mind Room.

His Room 131 was already collapsing inch by inch, but this didn't affect the room's existence.

Shang Jianyao quickly ran two steps before suddenly jumping into the LCD television that the Sea of Origins had become.

In his Sea of Origins, the shimmering sea quickly evaporated, and part of the sky turned to chaos.

Such a trend inevitably affected Shang Jianyao's body. Shang Jianyao repeated his actions and blinked to the rift representing Xiaochong before hiding in the gap.

However, the chaos in the sky didn't stop there. It spread all the way to the rift's surface.

Upon seeing this, the rash Shang Jianyao shouted, "We will definitely die if we head out. We can only take a gamble!"

This time, not a single Shang Jianyao objected.

Shang Jianyao quickly stretched his body and truly drilled into the shimmering rift formed by Xiaochong's black shadow.

Chapter 922: Familiar

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At that moment, Shang Jianyao seemed to sink to the bottom of a deep ocean. His body experienced intense pressure, and his vision turned dark. His ears heard nothing.

They had long gathered their strength and shouted at this critical moment, "Xiaochong!"

After a brief pause, the feeling of being pressed down by the sea vanished, and Shang Jianyao saw light again.

What appeared in front of him was a place similar to the Mind Corridor. There were rooms everywhere, but there was more than one aisle here. It was crisscrossed and winding as if a maze had been built.

The walls, ceiling, and roads in the maze were painted white. The doors were of all colors, and there was no pattern whatsoever.

"A Master Zhuang lives in every room?" Shang Jianyao guessed excitedly.

He knew that Master Zhuang had split personalities, and every personality seemed to act independently. This could be seen from the dream in Tai City's No. 1 Senior High School. The brightly lit buildings around the tower also provided proof.

Shang Jianyao looked back and didn't see the corresponding rift. Only a white wall blocked his return, but it also eliminated the prior dangers.

He jogged casually and constantly opened the rooms on both sides of the aisle.

Clang! Clang! Clang!?

Shang Jianyao was like a child playing a prank. He only looked in through the open door before shuttling past.

There was nobody in those rooms, nor was there any furniture. They were empty as if they had just been built.

Thud!

Another door was opened by Shang Jianyao.

He swept his gaze and saw an LCD screen, a black game console, and a child sitting on the ground holding a controller.

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“Xiaochong!” Shang Jianyao excitedly and happily braked.

That was his good friend, Xiaochong.

Xiaochong—who was wearing a green hoodie—ignored Shang Jianyao and continued sitting there, playing games.

Shang Jianyao didn't mind. He approached and patted Xiaochong's shoulder. “You aren't on form today.”

On the LCD screen, the tank controlled by Xiaochong had just been blown up.

Xiaochong still didn't respond, and Shang Jianyao's right hand passed right through Xiaochong's shoulder.

He didn't touch anything. Xiaochong in this room was only an illusion.

Shang Jianyao tersely acknowledged it and checked the black game console, the LCD screen, and the short white cabinet under the screen. He realized that they were all illusions.

“Holographic projections?” The calm and rational Shang Jianyao stroked his chin and turned around.

He cast his gaze at the snow-white ceiling, where a very advanced projector hung.

“Who took this video? Xiaochong’s parents?” Shang Jianyao was well-read in the Old World’s entertainment, and his thoughts were jumpy. His train of thought had always spanned broadly. “Recording a child’s growth?”

He then squatted beside Xiaochong and watched him play games.

In less than a minute, Xiaochong’s tank was blown up again, identical to the scene from before.

The recording was playing on loop.

“Lame...” Shang Jianyao muttered as he stood up. Then, he left the room and continued walking the maze and playing the door-opening game.

With a clang, the doors opened, revealing empty interiors.

It was only when he turned into another aisle that Shang Jianyao saw a single bed in a room.

The single bed was laid out with a white four-piece bedding set. The frame was made of metal, and there were wheels at the bottom that allowed it to be pushed.

It also seemed to be able to raise the back area through certain buttons, allowing the people above to sit up.

Shang Jianyao was no stranger to such single beds—these were hospital beds.

The room where the bed was located was very small, giving off a clearly oppressive feeling.

Shang Jianyao entered the room and touched it left and right. He confirmed that there was really nobody lying on the bed, nor were there any animals.

“This is Master Zhuang’s mind world. Is this one of ‘His’ memories?” Shang Jianyao stroked his chin and cast his gaze at the short wooden cabinet beside the bed.

On the short cabinet was a stack of disposable paper cups, but there was no water inside.

Shang Jianyao bent down and pulled open the drawer above the short cabinet.

Inside the drawer was a slightly darker wooden partition. Apart from that, there were no snacks.

Shang Jianyao couldn’t help but shake his head. He then opened the drawer below.

There was a piece of white paper here.

Shang Jianyao picked up the piece of paper and saw many items for inspection listed in Ashlandic. A line of black text was printed at the top of these items: “Observation Target 1: Du Shaochong.”

“Oh, oh.” Shang Jianyao revealed a look of enlightenment.

As for what he understood, he didn’t know either. He only felt that he should come to a realization after reading this sentence.

Shang Jianyao stroked his chin again. “The term ‘observation target’ is very interesting. This doesn’t imply a volunteer or an experimental subject... Could it be because Xiaochong is Master Zhuang’s body of descent and had Awakened since he was young, giving him abilities?”

The ‘past scenes’ that the Old Task Force had seen in Dajiang City’s Linhe Village indicated that Xiaochong was suspected of having the ability to implant thoughts into others during his childhood.

In this cramped and oppressive room, Shang Jianyao felt very uncomfortable. Upon seeing that he had gained nothing else, he turned around and walked out.

Clang! Clang!

He quickly recovered from his emotions and opened the doors of the other rooms in the aisle.

He kept circling. When Shang Jianyao didn't know where he had circled to and only habitually opened the door, he saw a spacious living room behind the door he had just opened.

There was a dark coffee table and sofa in the living room, and a person sat on the sofa.

It was a middle-aged man wearing an ordinary black jacket. His dark-brown hair was a little messy, and his beard had clearly been shaved. However, there were still some visible strands.

After seeing Shang Jianyao, this person revealed an honest smile, but his dark-blue eyes were rather spirited.

“Sorry to disturb you.” Shang Jianyao quickly bowed and apologized for brazenly opening the door. This was like being caught red-handed while pulling a prank.

The next second, Shang Jianyao straightened his body and looked at the middle-aged man's face. He asked in confusion, “Have we met? Why do I find you a little familiar?”

As the other party looked to be of Red River ethnicity, he spoke in the Red River language.

The person picked up a bag of biscuits with a bear symbol on it from the coffee table, picked one out, and stuffed it into his mouth.

He maintained his smile and looked at Shang Jianyao. “My name is Winst Garland.”

...

In the vortex-like building, Jiang Baimian went to the second floor and saw a signboard with two languages written on it: “Administrative Zone.”

This area shouldn't involve confidential research results...?Jiang Baimian thought to herself and planned on quickly passing through.

Wearing the military exoskeleton, she ran as fast as she could.

She suddenly stopped running. This wasn't because she had found another corpse—along the way, she had already discovered seven to eight skeletons scattered in this area.

She only saw a room sign: "Administrator's Office."

Is it Teacher Du Heng's office in the Second Research Zone or the administrator's??Jiang Baimian revealed a thoughtful expression.

As there was the possibility of the former, she turned around and entered the office.

The room wasn't small, but it wasn't large either. Apart from the desk and the chair behind it, there were only two filing cabinets, a paper shredder, a trash can, a sofa, a small coffee table, and two chairs. They were very close to each other, making them appear abnormally compact.

At this moment, a corpse—which had turned to bones—was sitting in the administrator's seat.

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This skeleton was wearing a white female blouse and the corresponding black professional suit. If it wasn't a cross-dresser when it was alive, it should've been a woman.

On her right chest was also a black metal name tag. On it were words in Ashlandic and Red River language: "Administrator: Zhao Danlin."

Jiang Baimian recalled and confirmed that the name was very unfamiliar. She then cast her gaze at the items on the desk.

The most obvious were the computer screen and a few books. The latter were: How to Raise Dogs, Love and Care for Animals, Deep Analysis of Random Movies, and Ancient Chu Culture...

As Jiang Baimian picked up these books and casually flipped through them to see if there were any notes or other items mixed in, she scanned the other items on the table.

There was no valuable information here. The paper shredder beside her might provide the answers.

Jiang Baimian only discovered the meeting schedule, the cafeteria allowance, and other research institute applications. As for the meeting schedule, there was only an explanation of which meeting room was used and when.

Jiang Baimian roughly looked around and confirmed that there were only three research teams here. Their numbers were 1, 2, and 3. They seemed closely connected to each other, and they often used the large meeting room together in groups of two to three.

She had no choice but to focus on the books.

As she quickly flipped through the pages, she suddenly saw two terms. They all came from the book, Ancient Chu Culture. They were: “Arbiter of Fate,” “Arbitress of Fate.”

Chapter 923: Prevention

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The Arbiter of Fate and Arbitress of Fate were legendary deities somewhere in the Old World. ‘They’ controlled the life and death of humans.

That place was called ‘Chu.’

To Jiang Baimian, this wasn’t anything important. It only added a little new content to her folklore library.

She was more concerned about seeing the word ‘Arbiter of Fate’ here.

Jiang Baimian cast her gaze at the administrator named Zhao Danlin again and at the corpse that had already turned to bones. She hesitated about searching the corpse’s pockets.

After a brief hesitation, she made up her mind. She circled around the desk and came to the corpse's side.

She thought that since she had already come this far and ventured deep into this vortex-like building, what else was there that she didn't dare do?

Since it was extremely dangerous no matter what, any choice worked.

Jiang Baimian flipped through the corpse's pockets, but she only found a plain, neatly folded square scarf. She then checked the desk drawers and the file cabinet to the side.

She didn't find any valuable clues and only memorized a bunch of names—these didn't belong to the researchers. They were either administrative personnel, people from finance, or under the security supervisor, Brian Stanley.

Jiang Baimian didn't make repeated confirmations because she knew that time was of the essence. She turned around and walked out of the office, heading elsewhere in the administrative zone.

After circling around for a while, her gaze suddenly froze.

An office with the same layout as before appeared in front of her again! The room sign also said 'Administrator's Office.'

Jiang Baimian slowly walked to the door and glanced at the skeleton sitting behind the desk.

The skeleton wore a white female blouse and the corresponding black professional suit. On its right chest was a metal name tag with the words 'Administrator: Zhao Danlin.'

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Upon seeing this, Jiang Baimian's scalp tingled.

Everything from before had happened again.

The next second, Jiang Baimian considered another possibility.

After careful recall, she roughly understood what had happened: She was lost... She had walked back to the administrator's office in the administrative zone!

Phew, it's not a maze, nor is it a spatial reset or a temporal loop...?Jiang Baimian clearly heaved a sigh of relief.

In this place with an abnormally chaotic electromagnetic environment, the time displayed on her electronic watch and military exoskeleton wasn't accurate enough, making it difficult to make a judgment.

After calming down, Jiang Baimian used her trusty solution once more—take it slow, think it through, and execute—and walked toward the area connected to the administrative zone.

...

"Winst Garland..." Shang Jianyao stood at the door with the dark-red door and repeated the other party's name.

Winst Garland ignored his actions and continued sitting on the sofa, eating the bear biscuits one by one.

"I've never heard of this name..." Shang Jianyao thought for a moment and shook his head. He looked at Winst Garland again and asked in confusion, "This is Master Zhuang's mind world. Are you one of 'His' personalities or a character in a particular memory?"

Winst Garland maintained a slightly honest smile. "I guess you can say the latter."

"But as a character in a particular memory, how do you interact with me and answer my questions?" Shang Jianyao was rather perplexed. "Could it be that Master Zhuang implanted different thoughts and a complete set of thoughts into everyone in the memories?"

Winst Garland smiled and said, "The character in a memory I'm talking about might be different from what you understand."

“Then, you have to make it clear. Do you want me to comprehend it myself?” The honest Shang Jianyao expressed his dissatisfaction.

Suddenly, a scene flashed across his mind, and he stroked his chin.

Shang Jianyao looked at Winst Garland and thoughtfully said, “I seem to remember why I find you familiar. I saw a group photo at Ceningmis, at the home of the Kalendaria’s Son named Brooklyn Garland. The middle-aged man in it resembles you. Heh heh, you have the same last name as that Kalendaria’s Son. Garland...”

At this point, Shang Jianyao suddenly paused. His pupils suddenly dilated, reflecting Winst Garland’s figure.

The next second, he blurted out, “Are you Shadow of Distortion? Are you April’s Kalendaria, Shadow of Distortion? Why are you here?”

Winst Garland sighed, put down the bag of bear biscuits in his hand, and slowly stood up. “If you continue on, no matter what choice you make, it won’t be what I want to see. The Arbiter of Fate once made contact with me through you, but I still hope to maintain the status quo. Therefore, I came here.”

Shang Jianyao didn’t listen to what Winst Garland was saying seriously. When the other party spat out the first word, he had already turned around, strode forward, and ran.

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This was called running away on the spot!

However, every word Winst said shook the surrounding space, producing high-frequency vibrations.

The light around Shang Jianyao instantly dimmed as if he were covered by a gigantic shadow.

The airflow appeared in a visible manner, condensing into an invisible cage. Not only that, but the space around him was also bending as if it wanted to wrap around him and turn him into an egg.

Shang Jianyao used his abilities without reservation, wanting to affect Winst Garland. But be it Thought Implantation in his shouting or the silent Corny Person, they were restrained by the curved space around him and couldn't land on Winst Garland.

When the space bent and the airflow condensed to a certain extent, Shang Jianyao's perception range was compressed to the surface.

He lost the existence of Winst Garland in his consciousness.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Sizzle! Sizzle! Sizzle!

Shang Jianyao alternated between using the two basic abilities, Matter Interference and Electromagnetic Interference. He sometimes smashed the condensed airflow and bent space with a hammer, and sometimes, he created an electromagnetic storm.

As an Awakened in the Master Zhuang domain, his Electromagnetic Interference ability became closer and closer to Electromagnetic Manipulation after entering the New World. But be it the silver-white light that condensed into clouds and released thick bolts of lightning in all directions or the air hammer's forceful swings, they were like an ant trying to shake a tree. They couldn't budge the approaching airflow or stop the bending of space.

In his rush, Shang Jianyao tried to interfere with the airflow and space directly, but compared to the 'giant wave' created by Winst Garland... The influence he exerted was like a spray from a water gun.

The condensed airflow only took two to three seconds to crush all of Shang Jianyao's resistance and wrap around his body.

Shang Jianyao could only use his trump card and shout. "Xiaochong, save me!"

At this moment, the warped space was about to turn into his coffin.

At the end of the Eighth Research Institute's corridor, behind the iron-black door.

In the tactical backpack beside Shang Jianyao's body, the Life Angel necklace didn't change, but the Six Senses Beads lit up with a faint green glow.

This faint light spread out and enveloped Shang Jianyao's body.

In Master Zhuang's mind world.

Shang Jianyao—whose consciousness was collapsing—suddenly came to his senses. He then saw green light, the calmed airflow, and space.

He also heard Winst Garland's cold voice. "Subhuti, are you also in cahoots with the Arbiter of Fate and the others?"

The ruthless Shang Jianyao couldn't be bothered to listen to the conversation. He ran to the end of the aisle before the others recovered.

He had to make the best use of his time to distance himself from Winst Garland.

The latter was suspected to be April's Kalendaria—Shadow of Distortion!

...

As the end of the administrative zone wasn't too far, Jiang Baimian didn't get lost and successfully arrived at her destination.

On both sides of the aisle ahead were several meeting rooms.

Jiang Baimian opened them one by one and realized that there were only tables, chairs, whiteboards, projectors, and other items inside. There were no corpses.

There were no meetings that day??Jiang Baimian scanned the area and muttered to herself,?Then, where were the researchers gathered? Their laboratory or the place downstairs that's guarded by security?

It was a place that evoked signs of the Heartless disease the moment she tried to enter.

Jiang Baimian examined the meeting room beside her again and memorized the white walls, brown door, the long, pale-white table, more than ten matching chairs, a hanging projector screen, and the row of windows opposite her.

She continued forward.

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Thud! Thud! Thud!?

Shang Jianyao ran through the maze until he was a little mentally exhausted. He stopped and held a vermilion door as he panted to recover.

With a creak, the door he was pressing against was ajar. It suddenly opened backward, and he almost staggered into the room.

After stabilizing himself, Shang Jianyao saw a bay window. It was dark outside.

At this moment, a young woman sat cross-legged on the windowsill. She had long black hair and wore a white dress. Her face was beautiful, and her expression was cold.

Shang Jianyao asked in confusion again, "Have we met? Why do I find you a little familiar? Why do I find everyone I meet familiar? Do I really have brothers and sisters everywhere?"

The beautiful woman raised her chin slightly and said, "I'm Jiang Xiaoyue."

Chapter 924: The Old Task Force's Real Mission

"Jiang Xiaoyue!" Shang Jianyao jumped up. "You're still alive?"

Jiang Xiaoyue replied expressionlessly, "Of course, I'm still alive."

“Aren’t you a vegetable?” Shang Jianyao had a shocked expression.

Jiang Xiaoyue—who was sitting cross-legged by the bay window—said coldly, “It’s cured.”

Clap! Clap! Clap!?

Shang Jianyao clapped and praised sincerely, “A medical miracle.”

Jiang Xiaoyue’s eyebrows twitched slightly when she heard that.

Perhaps sensing the sarcasm in this sentence, Shang Jianyao quickly diverted the other party’s attention. “Why does the person who enters your room contract the Heartless disease?”

Jiang Xiaoyue raised her chin slightly and replied, “How can I waste food that comes knocking on my door?”

Shang Jianyao fell silent for a while before arguing, “But I was fine after entering Dawn’s dream.”

“What he thinks has nothing to do with me.” Jiang Xiaoyue still had the same forced expression and tone.

Shang Jianyao fell silent again, and his expression became extremely serious.

Jiang Xiaoyue didn’t seem to care if anyone spoke. She remained sitting cross-legged by the bay window and looked at Shang Jianyao at the door.

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Shang Jianyao’s expression was extremely calm as he seriously said, “I remember your room number in the Mind Corridor is 503.”

Jiang Xiaoyue nodded slightly and didn’t make a sound.

Shang Jianyao said, “Is this Master Zhuang’s mind world?”

“Not entirely.” Jiang Xiaoyue’s expression changed a little.

Shang Jianyao continued, “The first person I encountered here is suspected to be April’s Kalendaria, Shadow of Distortion. Then, are you May’s Kalendaria, Monitor?”

Jiang Xiaoyue didn’t answer directly. “That’s not important. What’s important is the choice you make in the future.”

“Are you here to intercept me like Shadow of Distortion?” Shang Jianyao quietly took a step back out the door.

‘Intercept’ here included the option of humanitarian destruction.

Jiang Xiaoyue faintly gave an ingenuous smile. “In theory, I should do so, but I’m in some sort of dilemma. That’s why I’m telling you so much. I’ve already thought it through. Even if I want to maintain the status quo, I have to be the one dictating it.

“You can leave this room now. It won’t be a problem for you to pass through this area in any way.”

“Oh, oh.” As the Shang Jianyaos tried their best to control the one who abhorred evil and claimed to be the embodiment of justice, they slowly moved their feet back to the aisle.

At this moment, the honest Shang Jianyao took control of the body and asked, “I have a question. Were you really dating that middle-aged tycoon back then?”

The air in the room suddenly froze, and the light dimmed significantly.

Shang Jianyao quickly raised his hands and covered his mouth. They wished they could kill the honest one on the spot.

Jiang Xiaoyue narrowed her eyes and muttered to herself, “I didn’t want to stop you...”

With a sizzling sound, illusory lines appeared around Shang Jianyao.

They came from Jiang Xiaoyue and were extending toward Shang Jianyao's body. They were dense and countless.

"Mind control?" Shang Jianyao shouted in horror and ran.

The illusory threads gathered into waves that surged toward his back layer by layer. During this process, no matter what ability Shang Jianyao used, there was no response.

Upon seeing that the illusory lines were about to stab into the back of Shang Jianyao's head and back, Jiang Xiaoyue's expression changed. She raised her right hand and gently pressed down.

The illusory lines instantly disappeared—all of them.

Shang Jianyao didn't notice anything and ran like a rampaging bull.

After running for a while and seeing that he seemed fine, Shang Jianyao stopped.

"This place is really dangerous." He sighed sincerely. "I can't defeat anyone!"

He then stroked his chin. "Why did Jiang Xiaoyue say that this isn't completely Master Zhuang's mind world?"

As he muttered to himself, Shang Jianyao sized up his surroundings and observed where he had fled to.

His current location remained a maze. There were five aisles at the intersection that led in different directions.

The ceiling, walls, and ground were still painted white. The doors on both sides were painted different colors.

This left Shang Jianyao completely confused about where he was.

“Besides, where should I go next? I can’t check each room, right? That’s too dangerous...” The ruthless Shang Jianyao was a little afraid of his current situation.

He didn’t know how to leave this ‘maze’—or rather, he didn’t know where the exit was. His escape route was already blocked. If he wanted to leave, he could only find another way.

Just as Shang Jianyao was about to search for the maze’s pattern, a slight commotion came from a room in front of him. Right on the heels of that, the corresponding white wooden door opened by itself.

Shang Jianyao was curious and vigilant. He leaned to one side, prepared to peep into the room.

Suddenly, a slightly clear male voice sounded in the room. “Don’t you want to know your current situation and what to do next? Come in, and I’ll tell you.”

This was spoken in the Red River language.

“How do I know you’re not lying to me?” Shang Jianyao was rather vigilant.

He had already finished nudging toward the door and began peeping. He then saw a male figure in a floral shirt.

The voice replied, “There’s no need for me to go through so much trouble to lie to you.”

“These words sound so familiar...” Shang Jianyao muttered. “Write a promissory note!”

The person in the room fell silent as if he didn’t know how to respond. After a few seconds, he said, “Apart from me, nobody else will give you an answer. You have no choice.”

“How do I know if you’re lying to me?” Although Shang Jianyao said that, his body honestly walked to the room under the rash Shang Jianyao’s lead.

At the same time, he repeatedly emphasized, “You said it yourself. You must not lie to me.”

This sentence had the power of Thought Implantation mixed in.

From the beginning, Shang Jianyao had been preparing for Thought Implantation. Of course, he had no way of knowing if it would be effective in the end. The Winst Garland and Jiang Xiaoyue he had encountered here had somehow 'avoided' his influence.

After arriving at the door, Shang Jianyao saw the speaker clearly.

He was a young man with side-parted blond hair. His looks were above average, and he exuded obvious arrogance.

At this moment, he was sitting in a cushioned chair. He was wearing a floral shirt and loose beach pants with a pair of sunglasses on his head. He looked like he was on vacation.

Although Shang Jianyao no longer bothered about whether he was lying, the young man still resolved his worries. "If lying is useful, there's no need for you to bear the consequences."

"Why?" Shang Jianyao was confused.

The young man's voice deepened. "You'll know later."

"Oh." Shang Jianyao asked politely, "How should I address you?"

The young man laughed. "We just met not long ago. I'm Truth."

"You're Truth? This wasn't how you spoke previously!" Shang Jianyao was shocked.

Truth answered his trivial question. "On the one hand, something happened to me previously, affecting my ability to speak outside the tower. On the other hand, that way of speaking matches my status as a quasi-Kalendaria."

"I like the latter reason." Shang Jianyao clapped. He then curiously asked, "What's a quasi-Kalendaria?"

Truth's expression turned cold. "A quasi-Kalendaria is an existence that will definitely become a Kalendaria."

"You want to replace Last Man?" Shang Jianyao recalled the Old Task Force's guess.

Truth revealed a mocking smile. "It's only a matter of time before that coward is replaced. Furthermore, he's in the camp wanting to maintain the status quo. Heh heh, I can tell you now that Last Man's price is weak-minded. 'He' is now an incurable coward. Even if you aren't a Kalendaria, he will submit if you are a little tougher on him."

Shang Jianyao had a look of joy. "I see."

He then asked, "Why are you helping me?"

Truth replied, "For freedom and the future of the Ashlands."

"What do you mean?" Shang Jianyao pressed.

Truth smiled and explained, "Most Kalendarium no longer want to maintain the status quo; they want to escape the rules set by Master Zhuang. In the Ashlands, the Arbiter of Fate has already prepared a sufficiently compatible body for us. That way, we no longer need to feed on human consciousness. We only need to change bodies regularly to maintain our condition. We will also restrain the Awakened's actions and allow the humans in the Ashlands to completely escape the Heartless disease."

Shang Jianyao came to a realization. "Big Boss is in the camp that wants the situation changed? Are we the chosen ones chosen by 'Her'?"

Truth seemed to answer every question. 'He' smiled and said, "Although it's not too accurate, you can say that. After all, you're the only one who succeeded among so many Old Task Force members."

"Successfully finding the real New World?" Shang Jianyao asked calmly and rationally.

Truth shook 'His' head. "How can the Arbiter of Fate not know the real reason for the Old World's destruction and the Heartless disease's essence? How can she not know where the New World is in reality?"

"She sent out Old Task Forces because she hoped that you guys would come into contact with Master Zhuang's personalities scattered across the Ashlands during this process and make friends with one of 'Them.' Master Zhuang's personality always revolves around matters related to the Old World, but the other Old Task Forces failed for various reasons."

Chapter 925: Research Zone (1)

"I see..." Shang Jianyao came to a realization. "I always thought that there was a chosen one in our team, but it turns out to be a product of probability."

Not only was he not disappointed, but he also heaved a sigh of relief. It was unknown how his brain worked.

Without waiting for Truth's response, he asked, "Since most Kalendarium want to change the situation, why do you want us to befriend one of Master Zhuang's personalities?"

"I understand. 'He' should be the boss who maintains the status quo, but you have the numbers. You can completely resolve the problem yourself." As he spoke, Shang Jianyao thought of a possibility and asked in 'shock,' "Could it be that all of you combined aren't Master Zhuang's match? Uh, the ones who support 'Him' are the minority!"

Truth—who was wearing a floral shirt and beach shorts—chuckled. "It's not that we can't swarm him, but once it develops to that point, it will definitely rip the New World apart completely and wipe out the humans in the Ashlands again.

"The simplest point is that as the Kalendaria that represents the entire year, Master Zhuang is the strongest and most special. Furthermore, he has several supporters. If we really fall out with him and do our best, the outcome will naturally be our final victory. But in this process, every Kalendaria will definitely have to absorb tons of human consciousness under them to maintain their peak condition.

"Most Kalendarium are benevolent, compassionate, and unwilling to excessively harm the human communities that rely on them. They don't want to pay such a high price to change the situation. Just like the Arbiter of Fate, she definitely won't sacrifice Pangu Biology's employees unless she has no choice."

Truth glanced at Shang Jianyao and added, “When we leave this place and have a compatible body, we won’t need to have humans under our control to prevent hunger. When the time comes, humanity will obtain final liberation and freedom.”

Clap! Clap! Clap! Shang Jianyao’s applause was never absent.

He sincerely asked, “How does establishing a relationship with a certain personality of Master Zhuang help with the subsequent development?”

Truth smiled and nodded. “I’ll show you the way later. Keep walking—when you reach the end, you’ll see a blood-red door. Behind the door are all of Master Zhuang’s personalities.

“After you reach the door, repeat what I just said. You will naturally have the support of the Master Zhuang personality that has hopes of changing the situation.

“As you know, Master Zhuang has split into countless independent personalities. Every personality has its own position and judgment; this is our opportunity. With some of Master Zhuang’s cooperation and our majority, the problem is very easy to resolve.”

.....

Shang Jianyao wore a perplexed look. “During this process, my relationship with Xiaochong—no, a certain personality of Master Zhuang—doesn’t seem to come into play. What’s the point of Big Boss painstakingly sending out so many Old Task Forces?”

Truth shook his head and retorted, “It’s filled with meaning. If you didn’t establish a relationship with a certain personality of Master Zhuang, you wouldn’t be able to see the blood-red door at all. Even if you see it, you wouldn’t be able to push it open. If you did, you would only become Master Zhuang’s food.

“To put it simply, that Master Zhuang personality will provide you with protection.”

“I get it!” Shang Jianyao clenched his right fist and punched his left palm. “It’s just like how I want to visit a family and seek help. If I can build a good relationship with their child in advance and

become good friends in gaming, I can easily get hold of their address and obtain an excuse to visit. The probability of their family agreeing to help will also be higher.”

“That’s right.” Truth nodded.

Shang Jianyao then frowned. “But won’t I be beaten up by the parents if I help the child play video games?”

“...” Truth fell silent for a second before saying, “This is only an analogy. There’s no such problem with your subsequent actions.”

“Alright.” Shang Jianyao didn’t insist. He then raised other questions. “Then, why did you say that you couldn’t lie to me? In any case, I’ve already become friends with a certain personality of Master Zhuang. You can completely ‘hypnotize’ me or modify my memories to make me trust you completely and repeat what you said to Master Zhuang.”

Truth smiled and said, “We can’t treat Master Zhuang as an idiot. Can’t he tell that you’re controlled and that your words don’t come from the bottom of your heart? This is just like how I have to use reason and favors to get the help of your friend. The outcome from forcing him to agree at gunpoint means something completely different.”

“That’s true.” Shang Jianyao imagined the scene. “For the latter, I’ll only think of a way to save my friend and blow up the threatening person’s head with the same gun.”

Truth fell silent for a few seconds before saying, “This still depends on whether you have the ability.”

‘His’ voice then sank a little. “Go. Convince Master Zhuang’s personality with our sincerity and friendliness.”

Shang Jianyao remained motionless. He still had unanswered questions. “Is it really a good thing to let the Kalendarium enter the Ashlands?”

Truth couldn’t help but ask, “Are you asking me? I’ll definitely answer that it’s a good thing.”

“Why is it a good thing?” The Shang Jianyao that valued relationships said seriously, “I’m not someone who will believe you just because you say so. You have to persuade me.”

Chapter 926: Research Zone (2)

Truth changed his sitting posture on the sofa. “Didn’t I just say? When we leave this place and have a compatible body, we no longer need to feed on humans—we can be self-sufficient. At the same time, we don’t want to live in an abandoned world where supplies are scarce and humans are on the brink of death. We will definitely keep the Awakened in check and allow them to truly integrate into human society and showcase their strengths.”

“But won’t humans ultimately have to listen to you?” Shang Jianyao asked with a frown.

Truth laughed. “In the Old World, humans once had emperors, presidents, controllers of conglomerates, and other rulers. Didn’t they also have the corresponding order that led to a peaceful life and the development of civilization? Can’t you accept changing the titles of emperor, president, and consul to the Kalendaria?”

“Besides, the Kalendarium aren’t of one mind; they each have their own thoughts. After a period of competition, a balance of power will definitely form. Nobody will cross the line.”

“That seems to make sense.” Shang Jianyao first agreed before muttering, “But having more than ten jackals tell a flock of lambs that there’s no need to be afraid; that we will split our power and restrict each other to ensure your safety and freedom; that we are to work together to build a beautiful new world... It just feels odd.”

Truth slowly exhaled and said, “You can’t make such an analogy. Most Kalendarium are benevolent and compassionate. After having the corresponding bodies, they no longer have any desire for human consciousness. Instead, they prefer a civilization created by humans. This brings you no harm.”

Shang Jianyao nodded. “What about other Awakened? Can you really control them? They will definitely climb the stairs and attempt to enter the Deities’ Forbidden Zone to become new Kalendarium.”

“The birth of a Kalendaria will definitely be accompanied by great chaos. Great chaos will bring about a terrifying disaster.”

Truth laughed. “You can rest assured about this. Kalendarium are deities—there are only 13 positions. People like me can only call ourselves a quasi-Kalendaria. We have to wait until the New World’s order undergoes a fundamental change. We have to obtain enough Kalendarium’s support before we have a chance to replace the coward, Last Man.

“There won’t be any new Kalendarium in the future. With our level, we can control Awakened below the New World.”

Shang Jianyao heaved a sigh of relief. “Then, I’m relieved.”

Truth—who was sitting on the sofa—smiled back and pointed at the door. “Since the problem has been resolved, you can turn around and walk to the right. When you reach the end, you will see the blood-red door.

“Go. Head there and have a chat with Master Zhuang. Talk about how to peacefully dissipate the haze that blankets the Ashlands.

“I hope we don’t reach the point where the Kalendarium have to absorb a large amount of human consciousness and fight to the death.”

Shang Jianyao nodded solemnly. “Alright.”

Reading on Mybo xno vel. com ,Please!

He immediately turned around and strode toward the aisle on his right.

Just as he raised his left foot, Shang Jianyao suddenly paused and turned to look at Truth, who was sitting on the sofa.

He stabilized himself and raised his hand. “I have another question.”

Truth’s expression didn’t change, but he slowly said after a few seconds, “What is it?”

“I want to know which Kalendarium are reformists and which ones want to maintain the status quo,” Shang Jianyao said sincerely. “If I encounter the latter ones later, I have to escape quickly and not greet them.”

Without waiting for Truth’s response, he added, “Can you tell me which domains each Kalendaria controls? It would be best if you could point out the price or weaknesses as well!

“Don’t you want me to reach Master Zhuang’s door smoothly? Those who want to maintain the status quo might stop me. Although you have the numbers, every Kalendaria has their own uniqueness. Maybe someone will bypass the defense line you built.”

Shang Jianyao’s request was very reasonable.

Truth fell silent for a moment before saying, “At present, the ones who have clearly indicated their intention to change the current situation and have contributed to it are: December’s Kalendaria, Arbiter of Fate. September’s Kalendaria, Mandara. June’s Kalendaria, Golden Scale. February’s Kalendaria, Dawn. October’s Kalendaria, Eidolon Nun. July’s Kalendaria, Double Sun. And me.”

Shang Jianyao began to count. “One, two, three, four, five, six, seven... Only half. How is it the majority?”

Adding the 13 Kalendarium and Truth, there were a total of 14.

Truth smiled and said, “Among the seven people who hope to maintain the status quo, a few have already secretly changed their positions, but I can’t specify who they are.”

“Oh...” Shang Jianyao came to a realization. “No wonder Jiang Xiaoyue didn’t stop me!”

The Kalendaria—Monitor—that was suspected to be May.

On second thought, Shang Jianyao had a new question. “Why didn’t you list down the names in the order of the month? Even if there’s no ranking, isn’t this too irregular?”

Truth chuckled and said, “I just named the person that came to mind. For example, the first person I think of is the Arbiter of Fate, and the reason is that you’re standing in front of me. Do you want me

to rely on name-calling the months to recall who are allies now that things have developed to this point?”

“That’s right. That’s too unreliable!” Shang Jianyao agreed.

Truth didn’t want to continue the topic and introduced the Kalendarium who wanted to maintain the status quo.

Chapter 927: Research Zone (3)

“The entire year’s Kalendaria, Master Zhuang, is the Master of Thought and the Nemesis of Wills. He exists in the form of multiple personalities...

“March’s Kalendaria, Last Man, is Memory Dominator. At the same time, he can cause obstacles to human bodies. The price is weak-minded...

“November’s Kalendaria, Shattered Mirror, is the Goddess of Illusions and manages cognitive and stimulation abilities. Her price is very hidden. I only noticed one phenomenon: she has never appeared in person...

“August’s Kalendaria, Door of Scorching, rules over muscles. She also has domains that can affect one’s thoughts and mind in certain aspects. Her problem is that she’s afraid of the cold...

“January’s Kalendaria, Subhuti, is the Source of Consciousness. I’m not sure of his price...

“April’s Kalendaria, Shadow of Distortion, is the Balancer and King of War. He controls balance, judgment, and other mobility-related abilities. His price is the fear of distorted creatures...”

Truth didn’t mention May’s Monitor.

Shang Jianyao nodded repeatedly and took the initiative to say, “Thank you, thank you. I’ll set off now to open the blood-red door!”

He left the door in high spirits and passion and walked to the end of the path that Truth had mentioned.

...

In the vortex-shaped building, Jiang Baimian came to the end of the meeting area.

She felt very lucky about this because after walking down a path, she saw signs in Ashlands and Red River language: "Common Research Zone."

Under the words 'Common Research Zone' were two warnings: "Entry is forbidden to unauthorized personnel. Smart bots in the zone are authorized to automatically identify and attack unregistered personnel."

.....

I wonder if the smart bots here can still move after so many years...? Jiang Baimian raised her guard and carefully entered the Common Research Zone through the open partition door.

She immediately saw two robots standing at the bend in the corridor. She didn't dare to delay and gently rolled into the nearest room.

Before Jiang Baimian could get up and finish rolling, she saw large Petri dishes or similar devices with grayish-white human brains floating inside.

Human brains...? Jiang Baimian frowned and cast her gaze elsewhere.

Deep in the room were glass cylinders filled with liquid. Inside were human corpses with exposed brains.

On the walls and tables around them were sticky notes of various colors. They were very messy.

Jiang Baimian first noticed the one beside the door. On it was a lot of Ashlandic text: "Frontal lobe: In charge of thinking, calculations, and the concept of quantity. It's related to an individual's needs, emotions, and will. Some patients have symptoms like agraphia or motor aphasia..."

"Uh..." Jiang Baimian was stunned. Some thoughts instantly surfaced in her mind and crazily burgeoned.

She quickly looked at the other notes, one after another. “Occipital lobe: It’s in charge of processing language, motion perception, abstract concepts, and visual information. It affects the establishment of conditioned reflexes. It will result in obvious obstacles in the experimental subject’s ability to learn memories. It’s easy for this area to suffer from retrograde amnesia due to damage...”

“Temporal lobe: It comes with the hippocampus and is related to human emotions, mind, and memories. Lobe lesions often result in brain fog, speech disorders, emotional disorders, or memory loss...”

“Memory disorders are basic symptoms. There are short-term memory, long-term memory, or immediate memory disorders. There are obvious spatio-temporal memory flaws.

“Automatism is also common. When they act up, their activity isn’t controlled by consciousness. They can show mental stimulation such as object destruction, assault, impulsiveness, self-mutilation, nudity, horror, and anger.

“Memory disorders can appear when the hippocampus is destroyed, and memory disorders can be accompanied by directional disorders.

“The superior temporal gyrus is also the cortical center of the vestibule. Therefore, lobe lesions can result in loss of balance and dizziness.

“Sensory aphasia can appear from the damage to the superior temporal gyrus. The patient can hear speech without understanding its meaning, nor can they understand their own words. When the back of the superior temporal gyrus in the dominant hemisphere and the supramarginal gyrus is damaged, anomic aphasia can happen.

“When the temporal lobe is damaged, quadrantanopia blindness might occur.

“Oculomotor nerve palsy may occur in large lesions of the temporal lobe;

“The hippocampus plays a role in memory and spatial positioning. The symptoms of hippocampus damage are memory decline and loss of orientation perception...”

“Parietal lobe: the sensory center, including many other important areas. Damage to the parietal lobe can result in symptoms such as abnormal cerebral cortical sensations or sensory impairment, dyspraxia (apraxia), spatial orientation impairment, and physical atrophy, in addition to the following:

“Limb Agnosia: The patient denies having limb paralysis and believes that the paralyzed limb on the left doesn’t belong to him. It’s a negative body image disorder.

“Phantom Limbs: Phantom limbs refer to the appearance of a third phantom limb, which is a positive body image disorder.

“Analgesia: Analgesia means that one doesn’t recognize pain stimuli despite the pain existing. For example, no pain response to the burning of fingers with a cigarette, nor is there any protective reflex when discarding a cigarette butt. Lesions in the left supramarginal gyrus with partial involvement of the angular gyrus and superior temporal gyrus are less common.

“Prosopagnosia: Prosopagnosia refers to the failure to recognize close acquaintances or even one’s face in the mirror. It’s often accompanied by agnosia in colors, objects, and orientation. It’s a rare symptom of damage to the parieto-occipital area.

“ ... ”

Chapter 928: Research Zone (4)

“Insula: Receive information about the body’s physiological state and then generate subjective experiences. For example, using hunger to drive people to eat, or driving people to get more cigarettes and cocaine.

“The insula receives signals from visceral and skin receptors, including heat and cold, itchiness, pain, taste, hunger, thirst, muscle pain, visceral sensations, and air sensations...

“The insula is pertinent when processing events that haven’t happened. When you decide to go out in cold weather, your body is prepared before you are exposed to the cold weather. For example, raising your blood pressure to enhance your metabolism. This is the role of your insula.

“Suppression of insula activity must be done with extreme caution, because people might lose interest in sex, food, and work after losing their cravings for smoking, drinking, and consuming drugs...”

“Striatum: Affects muscle tone, and is also associated with one’s attention, mental state, and thoughts to a certain extent. It can lead to chorea and tremor paralysis, increased muscle tension, bradykinesia, delirium, mania, and pseudobulbar affect...”

“Amygdala: The brain tissue that produces, recognizes, and regulates emotions.

“Child autism also seems to be related to an enlarged amygdala. When stimulating a conscious animal’s amygdala, the animal will appear confused, anxious, terrified, and show signs of flinching, anger, or aggression.

“Stimulating the head end of the amygdala induces evasion and fear, and stimulating the tail end of the amygdala induces defensive and offensive responses. From this, it can be seen that one of the amygdala’s main functions is to generate appropriate emotions according to the various external information that enters the brain’s neocortex.

“Humans with their amygdala on both sides destroyed lack the ability to recognize and react to fear.

“One of the functions of the amygdala is to deal with facial muscles and expressions. When a person faces a face, the amygdala will scan them to determine if they are friendly or hostile to determine whether to face the person or avoid them.

“The amygdala is also an autonomic center. It can regulate the body’s respiratory, cardiovascular, gastrointestinal tracts, especially, the autonomic responses that are accompanied by emotional stimuli that are directly regulated by the amygdala. It also participates in regulating the body’s sexual activity and food intake, as well as the role of the hypothalamus. It thereby participates in controlling and regulating the secretion of pituitary hormones and the regulation of the neuroendocrine system’s functions...”

“Clastrum: A switch for suspected consciousness. When the claustrum is stimulated by high frequency, the patient will be discovered to be unconscious. This means that he can’t respond to external commands, his eyes will be blank, and his breathing will slow down. Once the high-frequency stimulation of the claustrum stops, the patient will regain consciousness, completely unaware of what had just happened...”

“White matter: Tripolar disorders that can cause hemiparesis, hemiphonia, and hemisensory loss...”

.....

“Thalamus: It’s the core organ that produces consciousness and synthesizes thalamic sense.

“Although the thalamus can synthesize thalamic sense to produce consciousness, the thalamus isn’t a place where consciousness is active, nor does consciousness exist in the thalamus. Thalamic sense can make the brain produce consciousness regarding things. This refers to ‘knowing’ and ‘understanding.’ In clinical studies, damage or lesions in the thalamus will result in impairment or a loss of consciousness.

“The thalamus is also responsible for the relay of sensation and motion control. It’s worth mentioning that among all the sensory information, only olfactory information is directly transmitted to the cerebral cortex without passing through the nuclei on the thalamus...”

“Hypothalamus: maintains bodily homeostasis, controls the autonomic nervous system, emotions, etc.

“Apart from the function of sample analysis and output, the hypothalamus also has the function of secreting hormones.

“The hypothalamus analyzes and produces sensory samples and activates the anterior thalamic nucleus to synthesize thalamic sense, generate feelings, produce preferences, hobbies, biases, desires, aesthetics, motivation, pleasure, fear, excitement, depression, and so on toward people and things...”

“Cerebellum: Coordinates the movements of the skeletal muscles, maintains and regulates muscle tension, maintains the balance of the body...”

“Brainstem: There are many important nerve centers in the brainstem, including the cardiovascular motor center, respiratory center, swallowing center, as well as reflex centers like vision, hearing, and balance...”

After quickly scanning the post-it notes that were related to various parts of the human brain, Jiang Baimian’s expression under the visor changed a few times.

She gritted her teeth and said, “There’s no Kalendaria’s body of descent at all! That’s not the case at all! Back then, the Eighth Research Institute didn’t study Awakening but the secrets of the human brain!”

At this point, she was suddenly shocked. “Not good! If we follow our previous guesses, Hey will make a mistake in his judgment. I have to warn him immediately!”

Chapter 929: Another Question

Coupled with the fact that Xiaochong was Observation Target 1 and that he had shown Awakened talent at a young age, Jiang Baimian suspected that the Eighth Research Institute had actually studied the relationship between the human brain and superpowers back then. They tried their best to grasp the secret to the birth of consciousness and sublimate humans.

This could also be indirectly confirmed by the fact that the Northern Company’s young scientist, Lin Sui, was very interested in research related to human consciousness.

In the research using Xiaochong and the other natural Awakened as a blueprint, the Eighth Research Institute must’ve gained a lot. They were even confident that they could restore a vegetable’s consciousness and step into the Deities’ Forbidden Zone to obtain a qualitative change in life?

Therefore, they got Li Hui, Jiang Xiaoyue, and other volunteers to participate in the project and put the results into practice. Later, a major problem with an experiment resulted in the instant deaths of humans in this building and the surrounding area. The Heartless disease began to erupt in the Ashlands??As Jiang Baimian ran out of the room, her thoughts raced as she quickly sorted out the matter in her mind.

The laboratory where the incident happened was undoubtedly the area downstairs that she couldn’t enter yet!

If that were the case, it meant that most or even all Kalendarium were humans who slowly became deities. There was no such thing as being born at an elevated level. As long as the subsequent generations grasped the right method, they could also reach the Kalendarium’s current level.

Repeatability in scientific experiments was one of the most important criteria! If one misjudged this point, they would veer off the right path in many matters.

Of course, Jiang Baimian couldn't guarantee that it was really what she thought. What if the Eighth Research Institute really touched on the secrets of deities while studying the human brain, consciousness, and superpowers? After all, in most legends of creation, humans were creations of deities. It was logical for a sliver of divinity to remain in their most important brains.

After returning to the corridor, Jiang Baimian looked around and suddenly hesitated.

She originally planned on immediately retracing her steps and telling Shang Jianyao everything she had discovered in this vortex-like building. She wanted to remind him not to be deceived by some seemingly normal and reasonable words. However, it was impossible for her to retrace her steps with her bad sense of direction.

This would definitely waste a large amount of her time. Now, time was life!

Back then, I felt that being directionally challenged was a good price and that there was a way to make up for it. Now, I realize that being directionally challenged can also kill...?Jiang Baimian walked to the meeting room in frustration.

She didn't go in the wrong direction because two smart bots were standing on the other side. However, it was unknown if they had long been damaged or if the abnormally chaotic electromagnetic environment here reduced them to scrap metal. In short, they didn't move or attempt to attack Jiang Baimian, an intruder.

.....

After retreating to the meeting room, Jiang Baimian's gaze swept across the window in the room beside her.

Her heart skipped a beat as she came up with an idea: She planned on returning to the ground floor by breaking the windows.

When the time came, she would be able to see the entrance to this area as long as she followed the outer walls of the vortex-like building without looking back.

Compared to this, it was 100% guaranteed that she would get lost by going around in circles inside the building. The time wasted would increase exponentially.

After making up her mind, Jiang Baimian immediately rushed into the room with the long white table and pushed open the two glass windows by force. She then jumped down and firmly landed with the military exoskeleton.

Jiang Baimian looked back and confirmed that she was outside the vortex-shaped building and not anywhere else.

She ran along the outer wall all the way back to the main entrance. Then, under the premise that she could directly see her destination, she rushed straight to the entrance to the core area.

Along the way, she flipped over any obstacles in front of her and faced the Heartless in the Mirror Dimension. This allowed her to return to the periphery of the small city before long.

The pungent smell of blood filled the air. Heartless fought and hunted each other everywhere.

Jiang Baimian only casually sized them up a few times before discovering many Superior Heartless. This made her rather satisfied with her previous caution.

After roughly determining the direction of the tunnel, Jiang Baimian didn't care if she was right or not. She chose a place without any Superior Heartless and ran in a straight line.

Her goal was very clear: to step out of this small city regardless of the consequences.

When the time came, she would eventually see the tunnel door if she kept circling the edge of the city.

This plan's route definitely couldn't be the shortest, but it was the easiest to prevent her from getting lost. She only needed to walk a long straight line and an arc of varying sizes to reach her destination.

Even if she got lost along the way, it would at most make Jiang Baimian take a slightly larger arc. With the military exoskeleton's help, it wouldn't waste much time.

As for whether she could maintain a straight line, Jiang Baimian didn't care. In any case, it was fine as long as she could leave the city in a clear direction. Any deviations during the process were unimportant. She only needed to pay close attention to whether she found herself in a spatial loop or whether she would be running around in the same place.

As she ran, the Heartless around Jiang Baimian were brought into the Mirror Dimension one after another. Regardless of whether they had Awakened abilities, they couldn't resist this.

Further away, beyond Jiang Baimian's range of abilities, a few Heartless seemed to have discovered the anomaly and rushed over.

Jiang Baimian didn't stop her attempt to 'cross every obstacle.' She raised her right hand and fired a grenade at the Heartless.

Boom!

Amidst the explosion, she climbed to the rooftop and jumped down from the other side, trying her best to maintain a straight line.

...

Truth—who was sitting on the sofa—watched Shang Jianyao's figure disappear from the door, but his expression didn't change.

'He' was just about to wave 'His' hand and close the door when 'He' suddenly heard a familiar voice. "Wait!"

Truth then saw Shang Jianyao's face appear from the side of the door and return to his eyes.

"I have another question." Shang Jianyao raised his hand.

Truth's eyes seemed to instantly darken a little. 'He' said after a few seconds, "What is the question? Time is of the essence. Don't ask if it's not important."

“It’s very important,” Shang Jianyao replied seriously. “If you want my help, you can just say it directly. I was previously hesitating about whether to enter the rift. Why did you lure us into the tower and use the darkness to counter-attack to force me here? This makes Barnard, Flora, and the others’ deaths very worthless. It’s equivalent to murder!”

Truth smiled. “You really have a pure and righteous heart.”

“Us,” Shang Jianyao emphasized.

“Who said so? I don’t!” The ruthless Shang Jianyao expressed his dissatisfaction.

Just as they were about to quarrel, Truth replied, “Rivelle, Barnard, and the others aren’t dead yet. I provided them with protection at the last moment. When the New World’s order is changed, they can return to the Ashlands directly. As for Flora and the others, that was inevitable. Breaking into the tower itself is a very dangerous matter.

“I wasn’t lying to you when I asked you to enter the tower and search for a way out. If you hadn’t come here, we would only be able to provide you with limited help even if you had entered the rift. We wouldn’t have been able to help you pass the obstacles from those who object to eventually persuade Master Zhuang’s personality.

“I didn’t explain this in the beginning because I was worried that the secret would be leaked and that a Kalendaria would block the rift in advance.”

“I see.” Shang Jianyao’s serious expression softened significantly.

He accepted Truth’s explanation and frowned. “But you guys previously ate countless human consciousnesses, bringing about Heartless outbreaks again and again.”

Truth seemed to have expected this question and calmly said, “Haven’t you also hunted beasts to fill your stomach? Before obtaining a compatible body, we are pure deities. The difference between humans and us is greater than that between humans and beasts. Since you can hunt beasts for survival, we can also absorb human consciousness due to hunger.”

Without waiting for Shang Jianyao to retort, Truth added, “When we enter the Ashlands, have a body, and obtain a certain level of human attributes, such a thing won’t happen. Compared to

struggling with this problem, why don't you consider how many humans you can save in the future?"

Shang Jianyao thought for a moment and said, "That seems to make sense... But as a human, I have a nagging feeling that it's odd."

He didn't completely accept Truth's words, but time was of the essence. The opportunity to save the Ashlands was fleeting.

He didn't dare to delay any further. He turned around and walked to the end of the right aisle.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

Shang Jianyao strode forward and ran.

Upon seeing this, Truth exhaled silently.

Chapter 930: Division of Work

As the Heartless were still fighting each other and Jiang Baimian only cared about the direction without distinguishing her path, she chose not to stop. Moreover, the range of her abilities was large, and there was no need to mention her equipment. Therefore, after repelling three waves of attacks, she successfully broke out of the small city that appeared to be in the New World in reality.

Of course, this was a little far from the target location she had expected. This meant that she would deviate even if she only cared about the right direction.

Thankfully, this was within her expectations, so she wasn't depressed. She looked at the layout of the terrain and circled around the periphery of the city.

She drew an arc in less than ten minutes of running and saw the heavy iron-black door at the tunnel entrance.

Thankfully...?She heaved a sigh of relief.

She quickly pushed open the door, walked to Shang Jianyao's side, and kneeled on one knee.

Jiang Baimian quickly went through the process and saw Shang Jianyao, but before she could speak, the guy waved his right hand. "I happen to have something to discuss with you!"

"Me too." Seeing that Shang Jianyao was still alive and kicking, Jiang Baimian's strung-up heart immediately felt relieved.

Shang Jianyao was very humble this time. "You first."

Jiang Baimian didn't refuse and said directly, "I found something in that vortex-shaped building..."

She started from the human brains and the corresponding post-stick notes to the corpses of Zhao Danlin and Winst Garland and the area she couldn't enter yet.

"I bumped into Winst Garland!" Shang Jianyao clapped his hands.

If it weren't for the fact that his posture didn't allow it, he definitely would've slapped his thigh.

.....

"You ran into him?" Jiang Baimian had thought that Shang Jianyao would be in danger after the chaos began, but she never expected him to face the suspected Kalendaria, Winst Garland, so quickly.

"Yeah." Shang Jianyao sighed. "He threatened me while eating the bear biscuits. Thankfully, Subhuti helped me out for a while, allowing me to escape successfully."

At this point, he emphasized, "Winst Garland is suspected to be April's Kalendaria, Shadow of Distortion."

"I guessed it." Jiang Baimian was very calm. "If that's the case, the Eighth Research Institute's administrative director, Zhao Danlin, is very likely Big Boss."

“Wow.” Shang Jianyao sighed in amazement. “As expected of Big Boss.”

He then raised a question. “But as the administrator of the Eighth Research Institute, how did she become Pangu Biology’s Big Boss? It’s as different as night and day.”

Jiang Baimian combined her prior guesses and thought for a moment before saying, “Big Boss is in charge of the communication between the Eighth Research Institute and the other research institutes. There’s a high chance that she knew about the underground building and knew that a group of people was doing genetic research. When she became a Kalendaria, and considering how she was dead with her body unpreserved, she came up with the intention of establishing Pangu Biology and preparing a perfect body for herself. Eh, it’s also a way to rear stock in captivity.”

Pangu Biology’s employees didn’t immediately enter the underground building after the Old World was destroyed. They also experienced the outbreak of the Heartless disease and the chaos. Later on, under the guidance of some people, they hid underground and established Pangu Biology.

In terms of timing, this matched Jiang Baimian’s guess.

“Right, right, right!” Shang Jianyao immediately agreed. “Truth said that Big Boss has prepared a batch of compatible bodies for the Kalendarium and quasi-Kalendaria who want to leave the New World.”

“Truth told you this?” Jiang Baimian was surprised.

“He said a lot...” Shang Jianyao suddenly froze before saying angrily, “He lied to me!”

It would be abnormal if he didn’t lie to you...

?Jiang Baimian murmured inwardly. She asked cooperatively, “What did he lie to you about?”

“He said that before obtaining a compatible body, he and the Kalendarium were deities—creatures that were completely different from humans. Therefore, the extraction of human consciousness is just a law of nature,” Shang Jianyao said indignantly. “He also said that there are only 13 Kalendaria positions. Under normal circumstances, it’s impossible for anyone to replace them. Therefore, they can suppress all Awakened and establish an order that’s conducive to human survival and development. Liar!”

From the looks of it, every Kalendaria's domain corresponded to a certain part of the human brain. And because the functions of different parts of the human brain intersected, the abilities controlled by different Kalendarium would overlap to a certain extent.

After stripping away the mysticism content and leaving only science... Be it Shang Jianyao or Jiang Baimian, they couldn't find a reason why an Awakened definitely couldn't become a Kalendaria.

As long as he could develop the corresponding areas of his brain step by step and raise his strength to the extreme, he had a chance of becoming a Kalendaria.

As for how to develop it, the Eighth Research Institute's results definitely had the corresponding content. It was just that there was a higher risk and probability of failure. Otherwise, the Kalendarium wouldn't have lost their bodies in that disaster.

"If this secret gets out, no matter how many Kalendarium are behind the various factions, those Awakened in the Mind Corridor will be tempted. When that happens, the Eighth Research Institute will become a public enemy. It will be a crime to hold such a treasure." Jiang Baimian sighed sincerely.

The path to apotheosis was right there. Most people wouldn't be able to withstand the temptation.

Shang Jianyao felt enlightened. "No wonder Vice President said that if the secret they are guarding is leaked, the Ashlands will fall into eternal chaos and endless calamity."

"This is only a possibility. In the end, a small number of people will become deities and rule over the remaining ignorant people. As for how many people will die in the process, nobody knows," Jiang Baimian said based on her experience and feelings.

She didn't have the time to do an in-depth analysis.

Without giving Shang Jianyao a chance to digress, Jiang Baimian took the initiative to ask, "What else did Truth tell you? Why did he tell you these things?"

Shang Jianyao quickly told her the key points of his conversation with Truth.

“There’s a certain level of credibility, but the details are definitely filled with a large number of lies,” Jiang Baimian stated bluntly. “It should be true that a portion of the Kalendarium wants to break free of the New World’s restraints and return to the Ashlands. It’s most likely true that Big Boss has prepared a batch of compatible bodies for them. As for the rest, there are either some embellishments or just casual promises. At the very least, I think they still have the intention of escaping Master Zhuang’s suppression. Once they are no longer suppressed by Master Zhuang, nobody can predict what these Kalendarium—who have long mutated into non-humans—will do.”

Due to her lack of understanding, other than the lie that the Kalendarium were gods to begin with, she didn’t elaborate on what were the lies that Truth might’ve told Shang Jianyao.

“Then, what should we do next?” Shang Jianyao asked habitually.

Jiang Baimian tersely acknowledged it. “After hearing what those who want the status quo changed are saying, you definitely have to understand the reason for maintaining the status quo. Get both sides of the story. The more you understand the situation, the more you know what decision to make.”

Clap! Clap! Clap!?

Shang Jianyao clapped. “Good idea.”

After the praise, he changed the topic. “However, those Kalendarium who want to maintain the status quo can’t wait to skin me alive and absorb my psychic force the moment they see me. They don’t give me a chance to communicate!”

“That’s true…” Jiang Baimian wasn’t stumped by the difficulty of this reality. As she deliberated, she said, “Some of the Kalendarium who want to maintain the status quo are friendly to us. For example, Shattered Mirror. She’s very likely to be Lin Sui. If you encounter her, you can try communicating with her. Also, you can understand why Subhuti is leaning toward changing the status quo. Yes, it’s very strange that he made the monks give up their bodies to enter the New World. Finally, you have to ask Master Zhuang’s friendly personality directly why he established that order and bound the Kalendarium.”

“Understood,” Shang Jianyao replied in high spirits. “I’ll do it now.”

In order to ensure that her mind wouldn’t be exhausted in the next few hours, Jiang Baimian didn’t dare to keep the communication up for too long. She nodded and said, “Alright.”

She was about to cut the contact with her consciousness when Shang Jianyao suddenly raised his hand. “Wait!”

When he saw her look over, he quickly explained, “Did you just say that the abilities of the Awakened come from the development of the brain and that the area you can’t enter at the moment might very well be hiding a high-precision product that stimulates the brain and induces humans to enter the Deity’s Forbidden Zone?”

Jiang Baimian was stunned for a moment before the corners of her mouth twitched. “You just realized?”

That was clearly the main point of everything she shared!

Shang Jianyao smiled. “I’m just making confirmation. In a while, bring my body to the vortex-shaped building. When you can enter that area, see if you can use the experimental results there to stimulate my brain and promote me to the level of a Kalendaria from the New World.”

Jiang Baimian thought for a moment and said, “Alright.”

She then added, “I almost forgot to say that I’ll carry your body to the Second Research Zone. I don’t want to waste time traveling back and forth every time we communicate.”

It would be fine if she was bad with directions. With the help of the military exoskeleton, a round trip took less than ten minutes.

Unfortunately, there were no ifs.

“Perfect!” Shang Jianyao smiled and waved his hand. “All the best!”

After the conversation ended, Jiang Baimian carried Shang Jianyao’s body on the back of the military exoskeleton and secured it tightly with a strap. Then, she checked the biological agents such as FECA and glanced at the crate containing the nuclear warhead.

She picked it up and held it in front of her with her left hand. Jiang Baimian then turned to the tunnel exit.

She hesitated for a few seconds, sighed softly, and ran to the small city.

...

In the maze, Shang Jianyao slowed down and opened the doors on both sides that were of different colors.

He didn't encounter anyone despite opening all those doors.

After walking for more than ten minutes, his gaze suddenly froze.

A blood-red door appeared at the end of the aisle in front of him.

"Where are they? Where are they?" Shang Jianyao was very disappointed. "Were they all obstructed? I can't even find someone to chat with!"