

Ad Infinitum 951

Chapter 951: Courage to Change the World (4)

Upon seeing this, the weakened Shattered Mirror ignored her situation and joined the ranks of Du Heng and Shang Jianyao.

Subhuti followed closely behind.

Truth sensed that something was amiss and shouted, “There must be a problem with the core research area!”

Just as he said that, his hand wrapped around himself, and he forgot what he wanted to do next. Truth then saw a figure in a white mask appear in the night on the barrier beside him.

Last Man.

“You!” Truth exclaimed in horror.

Last Man replied softly, “I’ve thought it through. If you win, I definitely won’t live. You’re so arrogant that you won’t allow a Kalendaria in the same domain as you to exist. The Arbiter of Fate and the others will definitely help you.”

Truth forcefully retorted, “There’s no such thing.”

Last Man didn’t say anything else. He also turned into a black figure that swam away.

Door of Scorching was also trapped in the barrier. She erupted with a strong desire to live and began to resist.

Arbiter of Fate quickly realized what might happen. She looked at Shang Jianyao and asked, “Are you really not afraid of death? Don’t you miss the stable life in the company? You are already a Kalendaria. As long as you help us imprison Master Zhuang, we are willing to acknowledge you.”

Apart from two to three of them, most of Shang Jianyao's faces smiled and said words that Arbiter of Fate could understand but felt disbelief toward: "For all of humanity!"

...

Ta!?

A tear fell from the corner of Jiang Baimian's eye and smashed to the ground. She had already raised her visor and only observed the dashboard from the corner of her eye to determine if the electromagnetic environment had returned to normal.

At this moment, a familiar female voice sounded in her ears—Big Boss's voice. "Your parents, brother, sister-in-law, and their children have all fled the underground building. Don't you want to reunite with them? Are you planning on dying here?"

"There are still many places in the Ashlands that you haven't been to and many folklore that you haven't come into contact with. There are so many interesting books from the Old World that you haven't read either..."

Jiang Baimian fell silent for a few seconds before sighing softly.

She squatted down and took out the small black speaker with a blue bottom from Shang Jianyao's tactical backpack. She then smiled at the sleeping Shang Jianyao. "If you were awake while saving all of humanity, you would definitely request a song as background music. I'll satisfy you, but I want to play what I like this time."

Jiang Baimian then switched on the small speaker and picked the song she wanted to play.

At this moment, the electromagnetic environment had yet to return to normal.

Arbiter of Fate looked at Shang Jianyao again and said, "Even if you can finish us off and destroy the New World, it's impossible to end this disaster completely. With so many Awakened and the people from the Sixth and Eighth Institutes still alive, they will definitely slowly figure out a way to become stronger and figure out a plan to create another New World."

“When the time comes, there will be another disaster! It’s better for us to live and control this world to minimize the danger of disaster.”

Golden Scale and the other Kalendarium also used similar reasons to persuade Shang Jianyao, Shattered Mirror, and company. They all knew that the core research area’s electromagnetic environment would quickly return to normal. They still needed three to five minutes to break through the restraints imposed by Master Zhuang and the other Kalendarium who weren’t holding back.

Shang Jianyao smiled and solemnly said to the Kalendarium, “There will naturally be others to take over my mantle!”

...

In the vortex-like building, in the core research area.

Jiang Baimian—who had chosen a song and was waiting for an opportunity—heard the Arbiter of Fate’s voice. “If you continue, I’ll extract your parents and family’s consciousness now! Let’s perish together!”

Jiang Baimian smiled and said, “Great, a reunion.”

She then laughed mockingly. “If you could do it, you would’ve done it long ago...”

Before Jiang Baimian could finish speaking, she saw the dashboard return to normal. She stopped talking, sighed softly, and issued the detonation signal to the nuclear bomb.

It would soon explode—once the electromagnetic environment remained normal.

Jiang Baimian sat beside Shang Jianyao, pressed the small speaker, and closed her eyes.

The Kalendarium’s curses and intimidation echoed in her ears.

They originally imagined that the key to this battle was a power struggle between the Kalendarium. It was a battle between them, a chip that they could play. To their surprise, a mortal determined their lives before the deities determined a winner.

Most of the Shang Jianyaos laughed until tears flowed out. He shouted at the Kalendarium, “Welcome to the real New World!”

Amidst the Kalendarium’s curses and intimidation, Jiang Baimian—who had her eyes closed—heard the familiar music: “Do you remember the dreams of your youth?”

“Like a flower in eternal bloom...”

She hummed as white light erupted and instantly filled the space.

Rumble!

A gigantic mushroom cloud rose in the valley, and the ground shook violently.

Chapter 952: Embers

Redstone Collection, Lake Heart Island.

Yama Tiger’s mummy-like body twisted in the coffin.

Wu Meng seized the opportunity when the New World’s order collapsed to use the Subhuti figurine’s Destiny Connection to transfer his consciousness into Yama Tiger’s body. He was busy wiping out the other party’s remaining consciousness and gradually gaining control of the body.

He planned on leaving Lake Heart Island and heading to a human settlement to extract their consciousness and allow his body to recover.

Yama Tiger’s warped face slowly revealed a smile—a smile that belonged to Wu Meng.

At this moment, his expression stiffened.

A precision-guided ballistic missile flew over from somewhere and landed right over him.

Wu Meng was still in a weakened state from his possession of the target and had yet to gain full control. His gaze froze as the ballistic missile accurately landed on Yama Tiger's temple.

Boom!

The invisible barrier only lasted for a second before it shattered. The area was leveled.

In different parts of the Ashlands, several ballistic missiles carried out similar missions.

This was Du Heng's goal in sending Future back into the Ashlands in advance. He got it to infiltrate the Eighth Research Institute's military base and extinguish the poisonous sores' last hope, completely eliminating any latent dangers.

...

In the darkness of the evening, a convoy made up of countless vehicles slowly trudged forward, searching for a suitable camp. This was one of Pangu Biology's surviving groups.

They didn't have much food, fuel, or batteries. They couldn't even equip everyone with a weapon. However, the few high-ranking Security Department employees—who took on a leadership role—told everyone that there were many secret warehouses established by the company not far away. Their existence was to make transactions with other factions.

When everyone arrived, they would receive replenishment in all aspects. They would have the ability to find a suitable place to rebuild a new and miniature Pangu Biology. They could also discuss joining relatively friendly factions.

In short, there was always a way out.

Gu Hong and Long Dayong sat in one of the cars. They couldn't help but stick their heads out the window and look back.

The mountain range—which originally hid the underground building’s entrance—seemed like another world in the darkening sky. The long convoy behind lit up with yellowish or pure white lights.

This was like the Milky Way or a blazing fire dragon in the night.

It was slowly moving forward.

...

Several years later, under the evening night.

In one of the squares of a medium-sized settlement, many people were surrounding a tall silver-black robot.

Genava wore a black uniform and sat under a statue that belonged to the Old World’s sages. He told the children, young adults, and other people who were interested in listening about his experiences. “...Under their sacrifice, humans escaped the Kalendarium’s rearing, and the Heartless disease disappeared.

“Maybe the Heartless disease will make a comeback one day, but I believe that new heroes will step forward one after another...”

The people around him listened attentively. While they found the story abnormally exciting, they were also moved to tears.

Finally, Genava finished speaking. He stood up, squeezed out of the crowd, and came to the edge of the square.

A person in the Salvation Army’s black uniform came forward and said to Genava, “Captain, we should go.”

It was impossible to tell what expression Genava’s metal face had. Only the red glow in his eye sockets flickered twice.

He nodded, stretched out his right hand, pressed it to his left chest, and bowed. “For all of humanity!”

“For all of humanity!” The Salvation Army member replied with the same salute.

...

In Early Spring Town, which had been rebuilt a few years ago.

Han Wanghuo stood on the podium, held a book, and said to the pairs of knowledge-hungry eyes, “Next, let’s recite this passage together.”

The children in tattered but relatively clean clothes recited in adolescent voices. “When the Grand course was pursued, a public and common spirit ruled all under the sky; they chose men of talents, virtue, and ability; their words were sincere, and what they cultivated was harmony.

“Thus, men did not love their parents only, nor treat as children only their own sons. A competent provision was secured for the aged till their death, employment for the able-bodied, and the means of growing up to the young. They showed kindness and compassion to widows, orphans, childless men, and those who were disabled by disease so that they were all sufficiently maintained...”

The End.

Chapter 953: Bonus Chapter: Meal

Tarnan.

A convoy stopped in front of Serene Dream Hotel. Its leader was a person of Red River ethnicity dressed in a black formal suit and bow tie.

He was in his thirties, and he had bleached blond hair and light-blue eyes. Nothing about his appearance stood out.

The man led a small number of subordinates through the automatic revolving door and entered the hotel lobby.

The lady boss at the front desk wore a colorful dress and focused on the computer screen in front of her, ignoring the customers who stepped in.

“Madam Aynor, we need 20 rooms,” said the man in a slightly deep voice. He spoke fluent Ashlandic.

Aynor looked up at these people and curiously asked, “Where are you from? Why don’t I have any impression of you?”

She wasn’t Nanke Convent’s Zhou Yue, so she was good with faces.

The man introduced himself. “I’m the new steward of the Linhai Alliance’s Omnidirectional Commerce, Salinger.”

Aynor was rather relaxed. As she twirled her hair with her fingers, she casually asked, “It used to be Miens, right? Why isn’t he here? He no longer travels long distances like Tarnan because of his age?”

Salinger’s expression darkened. “Mr. Miens passed away during the Heartless disease outbreak.”

Aynor fell silent for a few seconds before sighing and asking, “He contracted the Heartless disease?”

“No.” Salinger shook his head. “He was killed by a neighbor who contracted the Heartless disease. He was completely unprepared.”

Aynor let out a long sigh. “I heard about the Heartless disease outbreak. Did your Linhai Alliance suffer serious losses?”

“It was quite bad.” Salinger’s expression was solemn. “In the few large cities, the people who contracted the Heartless disease and the unlucky people they killed accounted for almost half. The small and medium-sized settlements were relatively fine, and there were only sporadic outbreaks. However, we already had a mature plan to deal with the Heartless. The army was only dealt a blow, and it didn’t collapse. After surviving the initial tragedy, people slowly gained a foothold and restored order bit by bit. It wasn’t as completely chaotic as when the Old World was destroyed.”

Aynor chuckled. “You have to know that when the Old World was destroyed, more than 90% of people either contracted the Heartless disease or died from the indiscriminate attacks. It was countless times worse than this.”

Salinger didn't argue with her and continued, “We also lost a lot of supplies this time, so we brought forward our trading trip to Tarnan.”

“What about elsewhere? Was it similar to yours?” Aynor rarely left Serene Dream, much less Tarnan, but she was very interested in the outside world.

Salinger recalled for a moment before answering, “As far as I know, there were major Heartless outbreaks in the various large factions. However, some suffered seriously while others were relatively fine.

“The Salvation Army was relatively fine, but First City had it bad. It wasn't bad for one-fifth of the population in the Ashlands' largest city to survive. Oh right, I heard that the small and medium-sized settlements in First City had the same outcomes as ours—they only suffered small losses.

“Pangu Biology built a base south of the Blackmarsh Wilderness. It should be because the headquarters was seriously damaged. It was set up by the members outside and the survivors who escaped...”

Aynor quietly listened and laughed self-deprecatingly. “Fortunately, our Tarnan is remote. No Kalendaria pays attention to us. Only a few clergymen became Heartless.”

She retracted her gaze and clicked on the computer, arranging 20 rooms for Omnidirectional Commerce.

Of course, the rooms were definitely not free.

After settling down, Salinger saw that it was already late and that he and the others were still hungry. Therefore, he only left a portion of his people to eat rations and guard the goods, allowing the other subordinates to move around freely and search for food themselves.

He had come to Tarnan a few times with the old steward, Miens. He skillfully left Serene Dream and turned into a main road, planning to find a bar to fill his stomach and kill time.

The lights had just switched on, and the light on both sides of the road extended into the distance. Many Ruin Hunters set up stalls under the street lamps, and robot guards occasionally patrolled the area.

This wasn't much different from the Tarnan in Salinger's memories. The scene was equally lively and beautiful like before, but it lacked scenes of the religions giving away fried chicken wings and their various activities.

Salinger missed it.

He walked to the end of the street and approached the two bars.

Suddenly, he heard loud music and a man shouting '2-2-3-4, 5-6-7-8' ahead.

Curious and having nothing else to do, Salinger walked over. Before long, he saw a group of people dancing a strange dance at Nanke Convent's entrance.

In front of these men and women stood a tall, black-haired man in gray camouflage. He seemed to be the lead dancer as he constantly shouted out a beat and danced with utmost focus and excitement.

Salinger recalled what he had seen and muttered to himself, "After-meal entertainment..."

He watched those people dance for a while and was vaguely affected by the rhythm. His body swayed slightly.

At this moment, an Ashlandic woman walked out of Nanke Convent. She was also wearing a gray camouflage uniform, and she was tall and had a ponytail. She smiled and shouted at the people at the door, "Mealtime!"

The tall man leading the dance stubbornly completed all the remaining eight-beat actions. He cheered. "Time for Pork Stew!"

The people who had been dancing rushed into Nanke Convent.

Upon seeing this, Salinger was just about to return to the bar when the nearly 1.8-meter-tall woman at the door smiled and greeted him. “Let’s eat together. There’s still plenty of room.”

The other party was enthusiastic and sincere, and Salinger was curious about the taste of Pork Stew. He didn’t refuse and walked over, entering Nanke Convent.

There were three to four round tables in the impluvium and the hall. Hot white steam was rising from the pots, carrying a rich and special fragrance.

Gulp.?

Salinger couldn’t help but gulp a mouthful of saliva. The next second, he saw the black-haired Abbess Zhou Yue—who was wearing a white robe tied with a hemp rope.

“Good evening, Abbess Zhou.” Salinger greeted politely.

Zhou Yue widened her eyes and sized him up. “Which faction are you from?”

“Linhai Alliance’s Omnidirectional Commerce,” Salinger replied frankly.

Zhou Yue tersely acknowledged it and happily said, “Miens, so it’s you. It’s been a while.”

Salinger was stunned for two seconds. “I’m not Mr. Miens; I’m Salinger. I’ve only been here two to three times before.”

He felt that Abbess Zhou’s failure to recognize faces seemed to have worsened—much worse.

“Yes, yes, yes.” Zhou Yue heaved a sigh of relief. “No wonder I don’t have any impression of you...”

Before she could finish speaking, someone shouted from the round table in the hall,

“Abbess Zhou, come quickly! I’ve reserved a seat for you!”

Zhou Yue acknowledged him and waved Salinger away before taking her seat.

Salinger casually found a seat and waited for the banquet to begin.

Two people sat down on his left one after another—a man and a woman. They were both wearing gray camouflage uniforms.

The woman had short hair, and the man was about the same height as Salinger—only 1.75 meters tall.

Soon, pickled vegetables, pork belly, blood sausages, and other dishes were served. Salinger skilfully picked up his chopsticks and ate.

The slightly sour pork belly slipped into his mouth. The gravy was delicious, and he almost couldn’t stop eating.

After eating his fill, Salinger sighed with emotion. “It’s really good!”

“That’s right, that’s right!” echoed the 1.75-meter-tall man beside him sincerely.

Salinger glanced at him and casually asked, “Are you guys husband and wife?”

‘You guys’ referred to the man and the short-haired woman beside him.

“Yes, yes, yes.” The 1.75-meter-tall man nodded as he ate the blood sausage.

“From your accent, you don’t sound like a Tarnan native. Are you foreigners planning on settling down here?” Salinger had always liked to chat.

The man smiled and said, “How many real natives are there in Tarnan? We do come from the north. The public security here is good, and there’s sufficient supplies. It’s very suitable for us to live here for the rest of our lives.”

At this point, he glanced at the short-haired woman beside him and smiled gently. “Being with the person you like and watching your child grow up safely and happily is the greatest happiness.”

“Your wife is pregnant?” Salinger was happy for the other party.

The man nodded with a smile. “We still don’t know if it’s a boy or girl.”

“Have you thought of a name?” Salinger asked.

The man glanced at his wife and smiled. “I’ve thought of one, but I still have to respect her opinion in the end.”

The short-haired woman replied with a smile, “I don’t care what they’re called, but you have to prepare an ordinary smart bot to be their teacher, and it has to be in the form of a child.”

“No problem,” the man replied.

Salinger didn’t disturb the couple’s private conversation and focused on enjoying the food.

After such an abnormally lively banquet ended, everyone helped clean up the dishes, and he joined in the labor.

After he was done, he saw the tall woman—who had previously invited him in—move a recliner, sit under the eaves of the hall, and leisurely flip through a book under the light.

“What are you reading?” Salinger—who planned on thanking the other party—went over and found a topic to make small talk.

The woman smiled and raised the book. “Old World’s ‘Study of the Gold Coast’s Folklore.’”

“Oh...” Salinger wasn’t interested and asked, “Any changes in Tarnan recently?”

The woman smiled and replied, “They are strict with foreign robots. They say that they are guarding against spies.”

“Robot spies?” Salinger had a look of disbelief.

At this moment, the tall man—who had previously led the dance—appeared at Nanke Convent’s entrance and said to the people gathered outside, “Today is the recital competition!”

“Recital competition?” In his confusion, Salinger saw the lady in front of him looking at the door and asked, “You know him?”

“Isn’t that obvious?” The lady laughed.

Salinger asked, “What is he doing?”

“Organizing some entertainment activities.” The lady held a book in one hand and raised her finger with the other. “Some time ago, it was a singing competition. A little earlier, it was a dancing competition. Recently, he’s been having radio gymnastics and recitals...”

Salinger saw a faint and obvious smile on the lady’s face as she counted.

As the two of them spoke, the recital at the door gradually sounded. “Generals having suffered ruin and shame after countless battles, gaze in the direction of where they parted. Everything is so distant, that old acquaintances are parted by death.

“The waters of Yi murmur still in wintry westerlies; everyone present has what seems like snow on their clothes and crests.

“Heroic warriors sing away in their never-ending grief. Those crying birds probably wouldn’t be crying tears but blood if they could comprehend such sorrow and gloom.

“Who shall share this intoxication with me under the bright?moon1?”

After quietly listening, Salinger thanked the lady in front of him for her invitation and walked into the hall.

He saw many believers sitting in chairs and praying attentively in front of the dragon symbol formed by the shattered mirror shards.

Zhou Yue had black hair draped over her shoulders, and she wore a white robe with a hemp rope wrapped around her waist. She stood there as if she was untainted.

Salinger walked over, looked back at the lady reading under the eaves, and said to Zhou Yue, “Abbess Zhou, does that lady live in Nanke Convent?”

Otherwise, why would she leisurely set up a recliner here to read?

Zhou Yue smiled and nodded. “Yes.”

Salinger sighed sincerely. “There seems to be many more people in the temple all of a sudden. It wasn’t like this in the past.”

There were very few believers previously.

Zhou Yue tersely acknowledged it and raised her arms. She then raised her body slightly and looked up at a certain spot. “Everything is but a dream. Why so serious?”