

Am I A God 451

Chapter 451: Save the Cats, Stop the Auction

With a heavy sigh, Zhao Yao reached out for Lightning.

He could feel how bristled the cat's hair had become as his fingers grazed against their tips. They were as solid as needles and almost as sharp. There was an odd ringing in his ears as a surge of electric currents traveled from Lightning's body to his.

“Ah!”

Zhao Yao collapsed onto the floor with a loud thump. Blood started to seep through the cloth covering his underarm and crotch regions.

“What in God's name was that?!” he fumed.

Lightning answered his question seriously, “That was the Super Pallas's Cat's Super Static. Any hair that comes into contact with my Super Static will become as sharp and dangerous as the best needle in the world!”

“F**k,” Zhao Yao cursed under his breath, taking a deep breath.

He quickly switched to Lucifer's healing powers before he embarked on the unpleasant task of removing the bristled hairs that had lodged themselves into his skin. The process should have been nasty, but it ended up feeling pretty darn good thanks to the Pleasure of Pain.

Zhao Yao threw the dirtiest look at Lightning as he carried out the removal.

“So,” he started, “Where exactly has Red Packet run off to? Who took you?”

The helpless sea urchin / Pallas's Cat hybrid replied earnestly this time, “The Mao Gang! Their men took us! They separated Red Packet and I. I don't know where they took him.”

He went on to recount a summarized version of what had happened. At the end of the tale, Zhao Yao had a good understanding of the two cats' ordeal. He had also managed to painstakingly pluck every single hair that was wedged in his skin.

There was a malicious glint in his eye when he spoke, "Good job, Mao Gang, for illegally trading supercats, swindling and abducting children, and reducing me to a hair-plucking mess. You. Are. Dead. Each and every one of you!"

He was furious. His resentment towards the gang had taken a very personal turn. He was determined to save Red Packet first, then destroy the organization.

Zhao Yao's knitted brows relaxed suddenly, as if he had just thought of something. He turned to Diana.

"Did you see what I was doing?" he asked her.

Diana widened her eyes at him, momentarily lost for words. In the next moment, she had fallen to the ground, fast asleep.

Zhao Yao's eyes landed on the fat cat, whom started trembling with fear.

"I saw nothing! I know nothing!" he stammered immediately.

Satisfied, Zhao Yao shifted his attention back to Lightning.

"You. Why do you still look like this?" he asked, motioning at his sea urchin appearance.

Lightning was close to tears, "The currents I released just now were too strong. I don't think I can ever return to normal."

"Idiot."

Zhao Yao was not in the mood to help the poor cat, at least for now. There were more pressing matters at hand. The first thing he did was to recall the supercat squad. There was no need for them

to find Red Packet anymore. He was in the hands of the Mao Gang. As Matcha, Ares, Elizabeth, Sphinx Cat, and the rest started returning to the extradimensional belly, he warned them to stay away from Lightning.

After that, he headed straight for the dimension doorway that was placed in Faceless's home. He thought that Red Packet could be hidden there, but that suspicion was ruled out after a recce of the chateau. The cat was nowhere to be seen. In fact, the entire building had been vacated.

This was a result of Zhao Yao's little hotpot fiasco. When Pebble brought the supercats back here, Faceless instructed her to hide there elsewhere. He was not comfortable with the idea of keeping his precious cats here in case that pesky little twat returned.

Zhao Yao returned to the manor and watched the people milling in and out of the room.

He thought, "Red Packet is with them, but I have no idea where they have kept him. He is neither here nor in the mansion.

Faceless would know where he is, but there are too many apostles protecting him. I don't know what his powers are either. If I attacked him now, I could fail.

The wise thing to do would be to focus on finding Red Packet. They seem to see him as a prized possession, so he could very well be kept together with the rest of Faceless's supercats. If I can find all these cats, I would be able to confiscate the superpowers they lent the Mao Gang. Defeating them then would be a piece of cake.

Guess I'll have to find the weakest link to divulge Red Packet's location."

Zhao Yao used his deflective field to lift Lightning in the air.

"Look around," he instructed, "Which of these people here will know Red Packet's whereabouts?"

Lightning blinked his eyes and scanned the surroundings carefully. They widened when he spotted a familiar someone.

"There! That one with a scar on his face!" he exclaimed, "He's the one who took us. He was in charge of keeping watch on us too. He'll know where Red Packet is."

Zhao Yao narrowed his eyes. He had a plan, “What do they call Red Packet around here?”

Centipede moved past throngs of people to reach the bathroom. He stood before a urinal, just about to have a wee, when Faceless’s voice called out to him from the cubicle him.

“Well, Centipede, you’ve been doing quite well recently.”

A tremor ran down Centipede’s spine. He did not expect that his leader was in here too and that he would start chatting with him. He let out a nervous laugh and nodded enthusiastically, “It’s all thanks to you and your guidance of course.”

He found that he was no longer able to pee. Faceless’s presence made him too nervous to do so.

Faceless continued speaking, “Centipede, are all arrangements for the fortune cat complete?”

There was a short pause.

“Erm,” he started, “I believe it is now under the custody of your personal guards, isn’t it?”

There was another pause, this one longer than the one before. The silence made Centipede nervous.

“Boss? Boss? Are you still there?”

He never got his answer. In the next moment, his five senses were robbed and his unconscious body fell through a dimension doorway. Zhao Yao had been the one talking to him all along. He had hoodwinked him by conjuring Faceless’s voice.

Centipede had given him the information he needed to move on to the next step. He appeared next to Faceless and created the illusion that his phone had vibrated with a new text message.

Faceless fished his phone out and unlocked it to read the fake message. Zhao Yao quickly pocketed that phone and replaced it with another one.

Faceless remained perfectly oblivious.

It was tempting to just attack him now, but Zhao Yao reminded himself that he did not know what powers his opponent might have up his sleeve. He forced himself to stick to the plan. He had to rescue Red Packet first. He was now very confident that the cat was kept with the rest of Faceless's treasured supercats, so this was crucial to do first. Once they were rescued, he would be able to do whatever he wanted.

Zhao Yao quickly scrolled through Faceless's contact list. He tried to recall the different tasks that the children were assigned, "Pigeon was sent to the auction. Peacock stayed by his side. That leaves Pebble to keep an eye on the cats."

After a moment of deliberation, he fired a message to Pebble, "We've been compromised. Bring all the supercats back to the mansion now."

The reply was instantaneous, "Ok."

Zhao Yao let out a sigh of relief.

"Well, that went well. He's a kid after all. He probably doesn't suspect a thing. All I have to do is wait at the mansion. Leaving that dimension doorway there was a good idea," he thought to himself.

Just then, the lights in the great hall dimmed.

The auction had begun.

Zhao Yao's brows furrowed. He remembered his sidequest very well. Rescuing the supercats was only one part of it. He had to stop the auction too.

He concocted a plan quickly. First, he moved the dimension doorway in the mansion to the front door. This allowed him to spot Pebble and the guards the moment they returned even while he remained physically in the extradimensional belly.

With the doorway in place, he rocketed to the entrance of the underground warehouse. The supercats that would be auctioned tonight were all congregated there.

Zhao Yao summoned a deflective field to grab Lightning from inside the belly and dumped him by the warehouse.

One of the muscular guards situated by the door stared at the weird-looking creature, dumbfounded.

“Why is there a massive sea urchin here?”

He walked up to the creature and reached for it.

The moment he touched the cat, the man let out a cry of pain and fell to the ground.

Another guard rushed to him when he heard the commotion. He looked at the man kneeling on the floor, “What’s wrong with you?”

“My...my hair...”

The guard stepped forward to help him up, but he collapsed as well with a shriek when his fingers grazed his skin. He inhaled deeply.

Lightning snarled at the two men.

Like them, he was bleeding as well. However, there was no pain in his face. His expression was scarily icy.

“Experience the true power of the Super Pallas’s Cat. You’re in for nothing but despair now,” he said.

Chapter 452: Who in the World are You?

A blonde with bright blue eyes rushed towards the men doubled over in pain.

“What’s wrong? Are you alright?”

The two men shouted at the same time, “No!”

Unfortunately, it was too late. The blonde had reached for them. A sick, scratching sound was heard as his now needle-sharp body hair tore through the seams of his shirt. He joined the men on the ground with a yelp. Blood had also started streaming from his pants.

With more and more of his men falling like dominoes, Faceless was called to the scene. He gawked at them.

“What is this? Why are they on the ground, bleeding all over themselves?” he asked.

He extended a hand to help one of the men up, but was immediately stopped by a bodyguard.

“Boss, you can’t touch them,” he warned, “Once you make contact with them, you’ll meet the same fate.”

Faceless retracted his hand as if he had touched a burning stove. There was a grave expression on his face as he turned to the bodyguard, “What happened to them exactly?”

A pause followed. The bodyguard leaned by his ear and explained the situation in hushed tones. As he spoke, Faceless’s eyes grew as round as marbles.

“You must be joking,” he said in disbelief, “How is it possible that such a stupid superpower exists?”

Lightning, who was hovering a short distance away, was deeply displeased by his words. He had brought even Zhao Yao to his knees! How dare this idiot deem his power stupid? Who did he think he was?

He started protesting indignantly, “Watch your mouth, weakling! Whose powers are you calling stupid? If you think you’re better than me, why don’t you come touch me and have a taste? Come, I dare you!”

As usual, not a person could understand what he was squawking about. All they could hear was impassioned meowing. The supercats in the warehouse, however, heard every word. These were the cats that would be auctioned off tonight.

“Who’s this guy?”

“I think he just defeated those Mao Gang men single-handedly.”

“Fools. That’s no cat. I’ve spent years collecting protection money at the seafood market, so I know my underwater creatures. That’s most definitely a sea urchin.”

The Pallas’s Cat King started to stir as the murmuring grew louder. His eyes snapped open. He looked around in disbelief. There were so many men immobile on the ground.

“Static Pallas’s Cat, is it you? Is this your work?” he called out, “Did you really... Have you really...”

“Yes,” Lightning replied simply.

More blood was running down his butt, but he remained perfectly poised. Even the arrogance in his voice was still there.

He explained to the King, “After you have passed your powers to me, I was awakened as the Super Pallas’s Cat. Do not fear. As long as I am here, the Mao Gang would not dare lay a finger on you.”

The Pallas’s Cat King was overcome with emotion when he spoke next, “I never thought I would live to see this d-,”

Meow!

Lightning interrupted him with a loud yowl. A few bodyguards had surrounded him, each one holding a baton. They used it to whack him repeatedly, shoving him out of the warehouse in the process.

The pain from the beatings, combined with the pins of hair stabbing his flesh, was unbearable. Lightning could not help the screams that escaped his mouth.

“Despicable! Ganging up on me with your batons! You’re nothing more than a bunch of scumbags! I dare you to hit me again!”

By then, the commotion had drawn a small crowd to gather by the entrance. The guests started whispering to each other as they cast furtive glances at the men on the floor and the blood that had pooled around them.

Faceless was quick to step up and offer an explanation, “Everyone, there’s no cause for concern. One of our supercats had attacked our staff, but everything is now under control. You can see for yourself how brutal this particular cat’s power is. The good news is this cat will up for auction tonight. Those of you who are interested stand a chance to take him home...”

Zhao Yao, who stood between the threshold of the doorway, heard Lightning’s screams as well. There was no way that he would allow those men to bully him.

Just as the bodyguards thought that there was no way out for the sea urchin, Zhao Yao extended his deflective field to grab Lightning. Then, he flung him across the room.

In an instant, Lightning had become a shadow that rocketed across the room, slicing through them as they screamed in agony. One by one, they fell to the floor, fresh blood splattering against the walls and the ground.

Lightning eventually fell as well with a thud. He had regained his composure by then.

“Weaklings,” he spat.

The Pallas’s Cat King watched the racket in awe.

“Such power!” he marveled, “The Super Pallas’s Cat is the paragon of strength! He can take down so many opponents at once!”

His daughter, Neoma, was cheering in excitement, “Lightning is the best!”

The cat in question could not help but giggle.

“My dear Neoma, you have seen nothing y – Ah!”

When Lightning exerted just an ounce of strength, his entire body was gripped with pain. He crumpled back onto the floor.

“Lightning, are you alright?” Neoma exclaimed.

He gritted his teeth and put up a front, “I’m fine, Neoma, just fine. Don’t talk to me. Don’t waste your time on me. I’m like a cloud drifting in the sky. I could never stay in one place or with one cat.”

“He is so cool,” she sighed, clearly infatuated.

Faceless, on the other hand, was far from impressed. His expression turned quite sour as he took in the dozens of people on the ground, among them guests.

“Where does this idiotic cat get his power from?” he wondered.

There was a glimmer in his eye when he noticed that there was a survivor left standing. One of his female bodyguards was still standing. Her blonde hair had stiffened and stood on their ends, very much like Goku’s when he went Super Saiyan. However, she did not look at all uncomfortable or hurt.

“This...” he muttered.

The gears in his mind clicked into place. He instructed the woman to grab Lightning. As he suspected, no harm came to her when she did so. She held the cat and brought him back into the warehouse with no difficulty.

Lightning was visibly in shock.

“How is this possible?” he thought, staring up at the woman, “How is she immune to my static powers? Who in the world are you?”

Faceless heaved a sigh of relief as the prickly cat disappeared from view.

“To think that such a power exists on our earth,” he mused, “Seems like I better get a full body wax after this. That’ll be one weakness taken care of.”

Having been captured by the enemy, Lightning started calling Zhao Yao for help. Unfortunately, he received no response because Zhao Yao’s attention was trained on Faceless’s mansion.

Pebble was back.

The boy had barely entered the house when he heard odd sounds from behind him. He turned around to see that his guards had fallen to the floor, fast asleep. Even the supercats in the pet carriers were passed out.

For some reason, Elizabeth’s power did not work on Pebble. Zhao Yao stepped out of the dimension doorway so he could take a closer look at him.

He tilted his head in question, “Hmm? Are you one of the Fantastic Four?”

Pebble did not look like he was made of flesh and bone. Instead, his body was constructed with little rocks and pebbles, much like The Thing. This could be why Elizabeth’s powers failed to affect him.

“Are you always in this state? Is it exhausting to maintain all of...that?” Zhao Yao continued.

Pebble did not bother gracing him with an answer.

Instead, he retorted, “Who are you? You must have a death wish to pick a fight with the Mao Gang.”

Zhao Yao responded by unleashing a blinding beam of golden light. A pair of palms appeared in its glow. They grabbed Pebble’s head and pummeled it into the ground.

In the next moment, the mansion began to crumble and come apart. Figures started running, leaping, and even flying out of the collapsing building.

Time stopped, then started again. When it did, the figures had all fallen to the ground like birds shot out the sky.

Chapter 453: Phone Call

Pebble and the guardsmen were down.

Zhao Yao peered into the pet carriers that they had brought. In them were six unconscious supercats. Red Packet was among them. He decided that the best thing to do for now was to hide them all in the extradimensional belly.

When he stepped foot into the belly, his own supercats started calling for him desperately. They had been watching the warehouse keenly through the dimension doorway.

“Zhao Yao, Zhao Yao! Lightning has been taken away!” Matcha exclaimed.

“I know. Don’t worry, I got this,” he replied coolly.

He studied the collar that sat on the base of Red Packet’s neck. He used the deflective field to give it a gentle squeeze, shattering it into pieces.

Next, he turned his attention to the rest of the sleeping supercats.

A red glow illuminated his eyes, “Time to compel them to take back whatever powers they’ve loaned to the Mao Gang.”

Once that was taken care of, he headed for the doorway by the warehouse, phone in hand. There was no signal in that basement store, but his other doorway opened into Faceless’s mansion, which kept him connected to his cellular network.

He considered what he was about to do next and felt that it was only right to give Ye Mei a heads-up first. He tapped on her contact, sending her a request for a video call.

Ye Mei accepted it within the first few rings. She sounded groggy and not at all pleased.

“Hello? What’s going on? What’re you calling me up for?”

Zhao Yao adjusted his phone such that the camera was trained squarely on the scene outside the dimension doorway.

“This,” he started, “Is where the Mao Gang is holding an auction -,”

His sentence was cut short by a loud gasp from Mei Ye.

“Goddammit!” she hissed, “How did you end up there? What the hell do you think you’re doing? If they found out that you somehow snuck in, you could be in a lot of trouble.”

She had been disoriented just seconds before, but she was now fully awake and nursing a terrible headache. This idiot was a real pain.

“Didn’t I tell you to wait? The Mao Gang will find your cat for you. Why’d you go behind my back and pull this stunt?” she demanded, exasperation seeping from every pore.

Zhao Yao could not help but roll his eyes.

Bright lights began to pour from the doorway, completely obstructing Ye Mei’s view of the warehouse. When the lights were gone, she had a perfect view of the auction hall.

“The Mao Gang has gone rogue. This isn’t just any auction. Look around. These are apostles from dissentient factions all around the world. I’m pretty sure the authorities would never sanction something like this.”

Ye Mei was quick to defend the people that she trusted, “What the heck are you talking about? The Mao Gang would never do that. This must be some kind of misunderstanding...”

Her words, which had tumbled out of her mouth so quickly and confidently, began to slow as she watched the video stream. She could only recognize five or six of the apostles in the auction hall, but that was enough to prove that Zhao Yao was telling the truth.

“Storm Organization...Ivory...Talon...even Star Cats. And Faceless!”

There was a sharp intake of air when she spotted her ally on the screen. When she spoke next, it was through gritted teeth, “Where are you? Hang in there. I’ll send backup right away.”

“I don’t need backup,” Zhao Yao replied, “I’m only calling you to give you a heads-up. I’m going to destroy the Mao Gang. Just help me clean up the mess when I’m done. Oh, one more thing. You can head to Faceless’s mansion in the meantime. I’ve left some of his cronies unconscious there. I’ll text you the address.”

“Hey! What are you talking about? What are you thinking of doing? Hello? Hello?!”

Zhao Yao hung up. He switched off his phone as well for good measure. Then, he moved the doorway back to its original position by the warehouse.

Thanks to the diversion caused by Lightning, the auction was delayed and was only just about to begin. A group of employees was about to take the first supercat up the hall.

Zhao Yao let loose a wave of Five Senses Deprivation, instantly knocking out most of the supercats left in the basement. A handful of them remaining standing. He had no idea how, but he needed to hurry them into the belly.

“Ares, Sphynx Cat,” he called out, “Bring all of them in.”

The two cats tore through the room like a couple of tigers, tossing cat after cat through the dimension doorway. Those who remained unconscious did not stand a chance against them. They were swiftly cuffed and flung in as well.

Zhao Yao nodded with satisfaction as the basement began to empty. With the supercats safely out of the way, he could focus entirely on taking down the gang.

He had not thought about what he should do with the cats. It was impossible for him to take in so many of them, but he could not just set them loose right now. The result would be catastrophic.

He would come up with something once this was over.

“I’ll just ask the cats where they want to go,” he decided for now.

*

While Zhao Yao robbed the auction of its cats, a covert operation was being put together in Ürümqi.

Ye Mei had changed out of her pajamas and was storming out of her house, screaming into her phone, “That man is insane! Just insane! Does he think he is an Avenger?”

She was on the phone with Old Wei, one of her supervisors. He was not as angry as she was, but he was obviously irked as well.

“Alright Ye Mei, calm down,” he said, “Has he sent you the address?”

“I’ve just forwarded it to you. We must send a team there immediately. When that idiot gets caught, Faceless might get spooked and run. It’ll be an utter embarrassment if he slips from our fingers.”

The entire situation was nothing short of catastrophic. The department had placed their trust entirely in the Mao Gang and Faceless had played them for a fool. It was a massive mistake. The only way to rectify it was to apprehend him.

“Okay, I’ve got the address,” Old Wei paused for a moment, “Huh. It’s outside the autonomous region. I’ll send men over, but don’t get your hopes up. We don’t have jurisdiction there, so I can’t send the military, just some apostle officers. We might not be able to seize Faceless...”

Ye Mei did not say anything, but worry clouded her face. Both her and Old Wei felt that Daniel Wu had as good as signed his own death warrant.

On its own, the Mao Gang was powerful. They were, however, not alone. Apostles from the biggest factions were at the auction too. They made up an invincible force that necessitated a small army to tackle.

They had an army, but they could not send it to such a sensitive area. Even with the officer apostles as backup, there was no way they could defeat them all. The best they could do now was to evade everyone else and just bring Faceless back to headquarters.

Ye Mei had a very bad feeling that not many of them will return in one piece.

“God! Why can’t that scumbag just wait to strike when we’re back on home ground?” she spat into the phone, “I’m on my way too. Wait for me.”

With that, she started rocketing towards the city, her legs moving as quickly as the pedals of a speedboat.

Chapter 454: Despair

The guests seated in the hall were beginning to show signs of impatience.

A severe crease was wedged between Faceless’s eyebrows. He turned to the men next to him and said, “Get someone to check why the cats still aren’t here.”

Not one person in the Mao Gang knew that Pebble and his guardsmen had been ambushed or that the basement was being emptied. Just as a couple of them were sent to check on the warehouse, Zhao Yao had already collected every last one of the supercats. He immediately stepped through the dimension doorway, which was transported to the very center of the hall.

As he did this, the content on his mission panel was refreshed.

Lightning and Red Packet had returned to the fold. The supercats that were about to be auctioned off were also in the safety of the extradimensional belly. By accomplishing both of these missions, Zhao Yao was awarded 500*2 and 3,000*2 experience points.

“Nice,” he grinned to himself.

He was also given a brand new task, one that made him laugh out loud.

“Oh boy, this is just perfect for me.”

Sidequest: Despair

Objective: Make Faceless feel your rage and give him a taste of real despair

Reward: 100 to 1,000 experience points will be rewarded according to the amount of despair experienced by Faceless

Punishment: None

Zhao Yao's eyes landed on where Faceless was standing. The corners of his lips were lifted into a smirk.

"Well, you've caused me a lot of trouble and even gotten me injured. I think I really should educate you on what despair feels like."

Matcha could not hear these thoughts in Zhao Yao's head, but he felt an evil aura radiating off his owner. He looked up at Zhao Yao, then followed his gaze to the man in the distance.

He sighed knowingly, "This guy is doomed. I wonder what Zhao Yao is up to this time."

Within seconds, the bodyguards were seen racing back into the hall.

"Boss..." one of them panted, "Boss, this is bad. The supercats are gone. All of them are gone."

"What?!"

Faceless felt slightly faint from the news, but he took a deep breath and forced himself to stay focused.

"Could you repeat what you just said?" he asked.

The guard looked like he was close to tears as he spoke, "The supercats in the warehouse are all missing. It's completely empty."

Faceless's vision became blurry for a second. He had to shut his eyes to steady himself. His entire body was still shaking when he opened them.

"Who?" he breathed out, "Who could have stolen my cats?"

As if in response to his question, Zhao Yao chose to make his appearance at that moment as the Headless Horseman. The ethereal light from the dimension doorway bathed him in a blinding, white glow.

A mixture of shock and curiosity hung on the many faces in the audience. Faceless, however, was glaring openly at him.

"Who's this joker?" he thought to himself.

Zhao Yao did not avert his eyes. He stared right back and addressed him directly, "So, Faceless, how does it feel to have your supercats stolen right under your nose?"

Surprise crossed his face, but that quickly morphed into rage.

"You took my cats?" Faceless repeated incredulously.

Zhao Yao had the audacity to chuckle lightly in response.

"Yep," he said, making sure to pop the 'p', "Every cat that was supposed to be auctioned off tonight is in my hands at the moment."

The revelation transformed the atmosphere in the hall. A buzz of excitement replaced the latent curiosity of the crowd. Every apostle was now staring at Zhao Yao like he was a shiny treasure chest.

"Seize him!" Faceless cried.

His apostles and guards immediately sprung into action, but found that they no longer had their superpowers.

Peacock wore an expression of alarm as he turned to Faceless, “Boss, my powers have been taken from me. That guy...”

Faceless paled.

“Ah, you just realized it, didn’t you?” Zhao Yao said gleefully, “I didn’t just take the cats you wanted to auction off. I took the ones owned by your gang too.”

Faceless felt his body grow limp. His brain was still reeling from the situation, but he could still muster the strength to glare hatefully at the Headless Horseman from his seat.

His fury pleased Zhao Yao tremendously.

“So, what do you think? Are you surprised?” he asked cheerily, “I just want to assure you that this is not all I have in store. I’m not just going to take your cats. I’m going to take your money too. I want it all.”

Zhao Yao’s last sentence sounded oddly familiar to Faceless. Within seconds, something in his mind clicked.

“It’s you?” he said incredulously, “You’re the hotpot man?”

Zhao Yao raised an eyebrow, “You can tell?”

Then, he shrugged his shoulders nonchalantly.

“Yeah, that was me,” he admitted, “What can you do about it? I’ve got your cats already. I’m going to play with them every single day and spend every last dime you own and you won’t be able to do a thing about it. Tell me, does that make you angry? I think it does. You should be angry. I love seeing you angry.”

Faceless was grinding his teeth in anger by now. He asked, “What enmity lies between us? Why are you doing this to me?”

“You stole my cats. That is unforgivable,” Zhao Yao replied coldly.

With that, he waved a hand in the air, expanding the deflective field to reach Faceless. He was going to fight him right here, right now. He had absolutely no regard for the crowd of apostles surrounding them.

He was not worried about them. He had unleashed his full strength in the epic dreamscape battle and he had emerged from it with a newfound confidence in his powers.

However, as the deflective field swooped right for Faceless, it failed to hit him. The impact seemed to avert him and traveled downwards instead, where it shattered the layers of tiles and cement beneath his feet.

There was a hint of surprise in Zhao Yao's eyes, "A superpower?"

He had managed to revoke most of the men's superpowers by taking their cats, but it was obvious that Faceless still had his.

For the first time since Zhao Yao's appearance, Faceless cracked a smile.

"Are you surprised?" he echoed his words, "My own supercat is hidden in a place that only I know of. You will never be able to catch him. With his power, I am undefeatable."

He turned to face the crowd and shouted, "Attention, dear guests! Tonight, if any of you would do me the favor of killing this man here, I would gift to you all the supercats that were meant to be sold at this auction."

After he delivered his declaration, Faceless shot Zhao Yao a look that was dripping with menace.

"You must have a death wish to come for me at an event like this," he thought.

He had never experienced the kind of hatred and rage that he felt for Zhao Yao at this moment. He had spent time, effort, and money to cultivate his empire and it was crushed in this idiot's hands. Without the supercats, his men could not fight and win. His guests, however, could. All he needed was a tantalizing, albeit false, lure for them to do the dirty work for him.

The excitement in the crowd had hit fever pitch because of Faceless's promise. One by one, the apostles turned to face the Headless Horseman.

This was a golden opportunity to capture the hundreds of the Mao Gang's supercats in one fell swoop. The only thing standing between them and the cats was this joker levitating a few feet from the ground.

At first, no one made a move.

However, their eyes were still firmly latched onto Zhao Yao, like a predator that had found its prey.

Faceless's lips twisted into a malevolent grin, "I lose my cats, you lose your life. Are you sure you still want to play?"

His taunt prompted the apostles to take action.

Shuiichi Nanno from the Storm Organization had his eyes trained on Zhao Yao. His fingers were laced around the handle of his long sword, which he slowly slid out of its sheath.

The trio of white-robed apostles from Samsara Sect was looking at him as well, but their faces revealed no discernable emotion. They each pressed their palms together.

There was unmistakable greed in Wind Devil's eyes as he studied Zhao Yao's figure. He spoke to Purple Sabre Fairy from the corner of his mouth, "We'll take him down together. We'll split the cats evenly between us."

Purple Sabre Fairy did not respond. Instead, he had instinctively taken a few steps back. His eyebrows were knotted together.

"Haven't you heard of the Headless Horseman?" he asked quietly.

Zhao Yao was unruffled by the stares that were fixed firmly on him. A hint of a smile played on his lips when he said, "Do you honestly think that this mishmash of foreigners will be able to defeat me?"

“Faceless,” he continued, “The only reason I haven’t swept them up and thrown them with the trash yet is so I can wait for you to get your hopes up, like you have now. Then, I can crush all of that hope into bits and make you feel what true despair is.”

While most of the apostles in the crowd did not understand Zhao Yao because of language barriers, those who did looked livid.

Faceless merely shook his head with a snort of laughter. He did not believe a word of this madman’s threat.

He fell silent when he saw what Zhao Yao did next.

With a jab of his finger, an invisible wave of energy spread across the hall like wildfire, slapping every apostle it touched to the floor in an instant.

Elizabeth’s Five Senses Deprivation.

Faceless’s mouth fell open.

He continued to gape as Zhao Yao lifted his finger, lifting the spell he cast on the crowd.

“Do you see this?” Zhao Yao started, “If I wanted to, I can literally crush all these people with one finger. However, I won’t do that because I want you to experience genuine despair. So…”

In the next moment, every apostle in the hall was startled awake when they felt the immense pain of being pricked in the butt by needles.

“...I will hold back and give all of you one chance to fight me.”

“Come on, chop chop,” Zhao Yao said, looking down at his watch, “You have 10 seconds. Make it snappy. I still have work tomorrow.”

Chapter 455: Despair Part 1

Once he was done speaking, Zhao Yao stole a quick look at the mission panel. Out of the maximum of 1,000 experience points, he had only chalked up 200 so far.

He narrowed his eyebrows. “This Faceless guy is unexpectedly resilient. I shall have to wear him down bit by bit.”

An instant defeat would not enable him to milk this mission of all its worth. He theorized that the best way was to drive him deep into despair by repeatedly getting his hopes up, then dashing them every time.

In the meantime, the apostles in the hall were still trying to piece together what had happened. The Headless Horseman had taken them down so quickly that they were not too sure what he did. All they knew for sure was that he was incredibly powerful.

The greed and fervor in their eyes had transformed into fear and suspicion. No one dared to make a move even after all his trash talk. They were still recovering from the mysterious pain that jolted them awake.

Their hesitance was nerve-wracking for Faceless. These apostles were his last hope. Without them, nothing stood between the Headless Horseman and himself. He could not allow that to happen.

“Don’t panic,” he said bracingly, “If he’s that good, he would’ve skipped the smack talk and jumped straight into the fighting. It’s obvious that he’s hiding a weakness. Perhaps his power depletes after a short time.”

His words were received with mixed responses. Some apostles seemed to buy it, some definitely did not. Others looked deep in thought. None of them moved or showed any signs of taking action first.

These apostles were not friends or allies after all. Why would anyone sacrifice themselves be on the frontlines?

Zhao Yao was starting to grow impatient.

“No one wants to go first?” he asked, “Fine, I’ll go first. Just so you know, none of you are getting out of here from this moment.”

With a flick of his finger, the golden force field that surrounded him morphed into a beam of light. It rocketed through the air and rammed right into a Japanese apostle, whom spat a mouthful of blood as he flew across the hall.

Zhao Yao then traced a horizontal line with his finger. This time, the beam of light transformed into giant waves of energy that swept past a group of other Japanese apostles, knocking them off their feet and onto their backs.

This was, of course, just a small fraction of his powers. He had to hold back so that his opponents would harbor the hope that they could beat him.

” Bakayaro ,” Shuiichi Nanno cursed.

He was glaring at the Headless Horseman was burning rage. A sinister shadow had made its way around the katana that he was gripping, wrapping it in darkness.

He lunged for Zhao Yao.

While his mastery of the shadow powers was not yet on par with Ishida’s, he was able to elegantly integrate them with swordplay. His katana was specially designed to accommodate that. Its unique protrusions ensured that shadows were always cast on the blade, offering an endless pool of power to draw from.

Shuiichi Nanno might not be able to become a shadow, but he can cause just as much damage as Ishida.

The moment he stuck his katana towards Zhao Yao, hundreds of shadows emerged from, all heading straight for the target.

The shadows moved swiftly, coming nose to nose with Zhao Yao in an instant. They were about to pierce right through him when he vanished and reappeared three meters away.

Shuiichi narrowed his eyes, “He can teleport too? Damn it.”

In truth, Zhao Yao had simply moved the dimension doorway.

There was an impish grin on his face as he sent dozens of golden energy waves through the air, this time at five apostles from Singapore. The men let out a roar of anger in unison as they wielded their lightsabers. They swung the lightsabers around, effectively blocking the incoming onslaught. Only one of them was hurt. He took a few steps back as he hissed in pain.

Once again, Zhao Yao was holding back. He wanted them to think that they stood a chance against him. Also, he had no wish to lay all his cards on the table.

Secrecy can keep an apostle alive. A person who knows all your powers knows your weaknesses too. This was why Zhao Yao had never unleashed all of them in real life. The only chance he could do so was in the dream, where witnesses would not be able to discern which powers were real and which were fake.

To him, TimeFreeze and his ability to resurrect himself had to be kept secret. They were his trump cards.

While the five men backed off, Shuiichi Nanno had not stopped trying to get to Zhao Yao. He continued to release shadow figures even though they were easily crushed by his opponent.

He shouted at the Singaporeans, "What are you waiting for? He's not going to let us off even if we surrender."

"He's right," one of the men said, "We've got to work together to take him down!"

This seemed to tickle Zhao Yao, who started laughing joyfully.

"You should listen to him," he advised the men, "Come on, attack at the same time. If not, you won't even have a chance to escape."

He then flicked his finger again, producing hundreds of the same golden waves. They shot upwards, then started raining on the crowd like shooting stars.

No one was safe.

The rest of the apostles had no choice but to use their powers to protect themselves however they could. Some were screaming in fear, others in rage, and they released all that tension by attacking Zhao Yao at last.

Faceless could not help the smile on his face.

“Yes! He’s not God. With so many apostles charging at him at once, he’s not going to survive!”

His heart was brimming with hope.

Zhao Yao dodged each and every attack that was sent his way.

Shuiichi Nanno’s voice could be heard despite the commotion, “He teleports! Aim for the areas where he could teleport to next! Listen to my command!”

Under his leadership, the mad scramble gradually transformed into a systematic attack. In no time, the apostles began to close in on Zhao Yao, reducing the amount of space he could jump to avoid them.

The Singaporeans did not take part in the action. They scattered to five different spots in the hall. They were still holding onto their lightsabers, which were vibrating very violently. It was as if a tremendous amount of energy had been condensed in them and it was dying to be unleashed.

They watched as the Headless Horseman was eventually forced into the center of the hall in a bid to dodge the string of attacks.

It was time.

Diran, one of the Singaporeans, struck as quickly and suddenly as a viper that had been lying in wait. The lightsaber in his hand flew straight up towards the ceiling, then barreled down at Zhao Yao.

All along, he had been waiting patiently for the Headless Horseman to be close enough to attack.

A flash of joy shone in Diran's eyes as the lightsaber was about to make contact with the top of Zhao Yao's head.

"My undulating lightsaber can slice through army tanks like a knife through fruit! Once he's hit, he's a dead man!"

His happiness was short-lived. Zhao Yao lifted a finger cloaked in gold above his head, effectively blocking the lightsaber from touching him. Army tanks might be powerless in the face of the undulating lightsaber, but it was no match against the deflective field.

"What?" Diran gaped in disbelief.

He was still processing what he was seeing when he felt an intense pain radiating from his chest. In the next moment, he was thrown off his feet and sent flying across the hall. He knocked through two walls before landing in a heap of cement and rubble, unconscious.

Diran – Out.

His failure reverberated through the hall like a warning. The golden waves that fanned around the Headless Horseman suddenly seemed a lot more lethal than before.

Shuiichi Nanno released a dozen more shadows. Together, they only managed to take down one ripple of Zhao Yao's energy waves.

"This is not good!" he yelled, worry spelled out clearly on his face, "He's been hiding the true depth of his powers."

Garawa, another Singaporean apostle, was not going to let Diran's sacrifice be made in vain. He let out an angry huff before stepping forward to catapult his own lightsaber at Zhao Yao.

Once again, Zhao Yao's hand shot up to his face to stop the lightsaber from reaching him.

Garawa could only gawk as the Headless Horseman zoomed towards him at lightning speed, one hand crushing the lightsaber. When he appeared right before Garawa, the cylindrical weapon had been squashed into a ball of light.

Wordlessly, Zhao Yao pressed the ball against Garawa's chest, flinging him across the hall.

Chapter 456: Despair Part 2

Garawa – Out.

At this point, the apostles' initial fear of Zhao Yao had been converted into determined rage. When one comrade had fallen, more would take his place.

Three Middle Eastern apostles had metamorphosed into monstrous tigers that were at least five meters long. They ran alongside each other with their supercat, whom had also turned into a tiger. Together, they pounced at Zhao Yao, sinking their razor-sharp teeth in his waist, shoulders, neck, and calf.

A look of triumph crossed their faces when they managed to latch themselves onto the target, "We got him!"

Sharma, one of the apostles, was brimming with pride and excitement. He was indomitable as a tiger. The amount of strength, speed, and power he boasted increased tenfold whenever he transformed into the majestic animal. Once, during a fight back home, he had even crushed a tank in two with his fangs.

Now that all four of them had their deadly incisors deeply embedded into the Headless Horseman, they intended to rip him into pieces.

At the same time, the three remaining Singaporean apostles were ready to strike as well. There was hatred burning in their eyes as a burst of light radiated from their lightsabers, which shot out of their hands and hit Zhao Yao squarely on the chest.

Faceless heaved a sigh of relief.

"Is he dead?" he asked, unable to keep the eagerness out of his voice.

He craned his neck to look at Zhao Yao, who had not dodged the tigers or the lightsabers. Calmly, he raised his middle finger into the air.

His voice, which was eerily calm, boomed through the hall, “Do you know why I choose to remain here instead of avoiding your sorry excuse of an attack? It is because you can’t even get past my defenses. I don’t even need to run. Teleporting would just be a waste of energy.”

Boom!

Once Zhao Yao finished speaking, the golden aura around him swelled meteorically in size, unleashing hundreds of tonnes worth of energy. The four tigers were the first to be hit by the impact. There was a sickening crunch as their teeth were shattered into pieces. They let out feral roars of pain as they flew across the hall, blood splattering the horrified crowd.

Zhao Yao then took a step forward, which generated enough force to dislodge the three lightsabers and send them rocketing back to their owners. The three Singaporeans were also promptly knocked off their feet and out of view.

All Middle Eastern and Singapore apostles – Out.

All the color had drained from Faceless’s face.

“How... How is it that we can’t get past his defenses?”

He fell deeper into despair as his hopes were dashed once more.

Zhao Yao took this as an indication to check out his mission panel.

“600 experience points?” he exclaimed, “Why, you’re quite the buoyant fellow, aren’t you?”

Wind Devil was observing the battle with a look of disbelief on his face, “Just how powerful is this guy?!”

Shuiichi Nanno could see that many of the apostles were beginning to panic. He stepped in immediately and shouted, “We’ve got to keep steady. There is no such thing as an invincible power. As long we work together, we will be able to beat him.”

Faceless quickly jumped in to add, “Yes, yes, yes. Every superpower has its weakness. Hang in there and we will emerge victorious.”

As the two men tried to encourage the apostles, Zhao Yao had begun to wade through the crowd, his entire being caged in the lethal golden aura. Some tried to attack him, but they were quickly swatted away like flies. He slapped an apostle that tried to spit poison at him a few feet away and destroyed the slippery ice laid out beneath his feet with a stomp, completely disregarding the obstacles that stood in his way as he kept moving forward.

Faceless looked positively cadaverous as Zhao Yao gradually made his way towards him, unperturbed by any power or apostle that was flung his way.

Just as he thought that there was no way out, an apostle from Taiwan’s triads appeared before Zhao Yao, blocking his way. This man was named Lee Hao Nan. At this moment, his body was not made of flesh and bone. Instead, it seemed to be entirely made up of silver. Every step he took cracked the tiles beneath him.

Anyone who lay their eyes on him would have no doubt that he possessed an extraordinary amount of physical strength.

Lee Hao Nan wasted no time to throw a punch at Zhao Yao, whom promptly blocked it with his palm. The impact of the collision was so great that it produced debris forces that extended to every corner of the hall.

Each punch and kick that the Taiwanese apostle issued was met with a punch and kick of greater power. For Zhao Yao, this exchange was basically like hitting a metallic punching bag. For Lee Hao Nan, the blows he was receiving were becoming quite unbearable. He had no choice but to take a few steps back. However, even as his metallic body began to become deformed from the heavy blows, he continued to cling to Zhao Yao with all his strength.

“I’ll hold him in place! You guys think about how to defeat him!” he shouted.

“Good!” Shuiichi Nanno nodded passionately, “This cocky bastard thinks that we’re not worthy? This ought to show him.”

He then turned to his fellow apostles with a battle plan, “We’ve got to strike at the exact same time. When we’re all on him, he would not be able to teleport. His defenses might be strong, but there must be a limit to how much they can take. If we all attack him at once, he won’t be able to take it.”

It was common knowledge among apostles that it was impossible for a person to teleport with someone else in tow. This was a weakness that beset every apostle that was widely known to have this superpower.

The apostles in the crowd nodded vehemently, their eyes trained on Zhao Yao.

He surveyed the fierce faces that were turned to him. The apostles that posed the biggest threat to him were the trio from Samsara Sect, Wind Devil from Talon, and the Caucasians from Star Cats.

The men from Samsara Sect stood close to each other as they raised their open palms up to the heavens. A ball of red energy rose from their hands like a tiny sun, radiating heat that reaches unbearable temperatures in little time.

The representatives from Star Cats were not going to be bystanders either. Starlight emanated from their bodies and congregated into what looks like a large shooting star. As the wisps of light eventually solidified into a more concrete form, the objects surrounding it, from the dust and rubble on the floor to the chairs, began to levitate in the air.

The fierce determination demonstrated by the apostles reignited Faceless’s hope of victory.

“Yes! We can win! We can do this!” he thought.

Wind Devil was preparing to join in the fight as well. Tornadoes of wind were precipitating in the palms of his hands. They were spinning faster and faster, belching hisses that sounded like pieces of metal grinding against each other.

He snuck a peek at Purple Sabre Fairy, whom was lying on the floor, conscious but unmoving. His eyes were barely open so that he could catch glimpses of the battle while still appearing very much dead. Wind Devil could not help but give him a good kick.

“Are you just going to continue pretending to be dead?” he asked coldly.

Purple Sabre Fairy did not respond. Instead, he inched surreptitiously away from Wind Devil, whom clicked his tongue in disapproval. He was about to say something else when something major happened on the battlefield.

Zhao Yao reached down and gripped the top of Lee Nan Hao's head.

“Are you trying to hold me down? Did you really think you would succeed?” he taunted.

Wind Devil watched as Zhao Yao tapped a finger above Lee Nan Hao's left shoulder. What he and everyone else in the hall could not see was that a dimension doorway had appeared in the exact position that Zhao Yao's finger had landed.

This meant that Lee Nan Hao's body was outside of the door while his left arm had gone through it.

Zhao Yao granted him access through the doorway, then dragged him one step back.

Lee Nan Hao let out a blood-curdling scream. So far, his metallic body could only be contorted, but not destroyed. This time, his left arm had been sucked into the portal while his body remained resolutely outside of it, held back by Zhao Yao.

His arm had been ripped whole from his shoulder.

Zhao Yao kicked the howling mess of a man away from him, then slammed his palm against the top of his head. He was instantly sent through the ground like a nail driven into wood by a hammer. All that remained was a hole on the floor and the pitiful wails that poured out of it.

Chapter 457: The End for Now

There was a collective intake of breath as the crowd witnessed Lee Nan Hao's tragic end.

“What kind of power could have torn his arm like that?”

“How many superpowers does this monster have?”

Faceless had dived into what felt like the deepest depths of despair so far, “It’s over. Even if everyone attacks him at once, he can still teleport to dodge it all.”

Zhao Yao was grinning from ear to ear at the apostles, whom all looked absolutely terrified. He checked on his mission panel again, “900 points? Cool. Almost there.”

He motioned for the apostles to come closer by curling his finger towards himself.

“Alright, let’s go. I’m not going anywhere. I’ll stand here and take your blows,” he announced.

Shuiichi Nanno and the apostles from the likes of Samsara Sect and Star Cats launched themselves at him with a roar.

In the next moment, countless superpowers were hurled at Zhao Yao. They created a spectacular display of explosions and bursts of color.

As promised, Zhao Yao remained rooted on the spot.

Shuiichi Nanno was gawping at him, “Is he really not going to run? His arrogance is inconceivable!”

As the tsunami of powers crashed into Zhao Yao, swallowing him whole, Faceless could not help the bit of hope that surfaced in his heart.

“Is he dead?” he wondered.

His unspoken question was answered when a group of apostles started shouting manically from the other side of the hall.

“It’s no use! The attacks aren’t working!”

When the whirlwind of colors finally passed, Zhao Yao could be seen in the same position he was last in, perfectly unharmed.

No one could make sense of what was happening because they could not see the two dimension doorways that he had placed in front of and behind him. No matter which direction the powers were launched from, they were captured and devoured by the portals.

What they did see was far more shocking than the doorways.

Zhao Yao opened his mouth as he turned his face to the ceiling, then proceeded to forcefully spew the attacks unleashed on him.

These were the assaults that had been just been swallowed into the extradimensional belly. All kinds of blasts, fireballs, lasers, electromagnetic fields, and gravitational force fields had merged into one big beam of energy that shot upwards, decimating everything that stood in its way, from the ceiling to the furniture. It was like a black pillar leading straight to heaven.

He had to regurgitate these superpowers. If not, the supercats in the extradimensional belly were about to face a terrible plight.

“This... What is this? Is he using our attacks against us?”

“Monster! He’s a monster!”

Even at this point, Zhao Yao had not unleashed the full extent of his powers, but the apostles had already reached breaking point.

Purple Sabre Fairy, who had been sneaking glances at the battlefield, grabbed a fistful of dust on the ground and scattered it on himself, then proceeded to play dead.

Wind Devil collapsed on the ground next to him as well, eyes half opened so he can still catch what was going on.

“If you want to pretend to be dead, can you at least do it further away from me? I don’t want to get caught because of you,” Purple Sabre Fairy said through gritted teeth.

The rest of the apostles were either begging for mercy or attempting to flee, screaming their heads off. For the former, Zhao Yao used his illusory powers to deprive them of the five senses, leaving them unconscious. As for the latter...

“Sphynx Cat,” Zhao Yao called out telepathically, “Knock out the ones who are trying to escape please.”

The cat sprung out of the dimension doorway so swiftly that he appeared as nothing more than a black figure. Each apostle he darted past, be it Shuiichi Nanno, the guys from Samsara Sect or the men from Star Cats, dropped like flies.

Some apostles and supercats attempted to use their powers to escape. Sandstorm, for example, had curled up and stiffened into a rock that was rolling out of the place.

Unfortunately for him, this did not escape Sphynx Cat’s notice. He scooped the rock into his paw and crushed it, knocking out Sandstorm, whom was still inside.

With Sphynx Cat tying up loose ends, Zhao Yao had nothing more to worry about. He could focus on dealing with Faceless, whom he was sashaying towards. The terrified man was shaking visibly. He wanted to turn and run, but found that he could not. His legs had gone all wobbly.

The sight of Zhao Yao expelling the superpowers from his mouth had shredded any hope that he had left.

The plan worked. Allowing him to think that the apostles stood a chance against him, then crushing him time after time, had completely broken his spirit.

This time, when Zhao Yao looked at the mission panel, he noticed that the maximum of 1,000 experience points was reached. He instantly indicated that this sidequest was complete, raking in $1,000 * 2$ points.

Faceless opened, closed, then opened his mouth again like a fish, “I...”

Zhao Yao simply smiled at him, then defeated the broken man of his five senses. He opened the dimension doorway to him and flung him inside.

Faceless was a gang leader who had accumulated a substantial amount of personal wealth. Even if most of it would be frozen or seized by the authorities, he was bound to have secret accounts offshore that held tons of money.

“This little scare isn’t punishment enough for what he did. He’s got to pay for the mental and emotional damage he has caused me,” Zhao Yao thought to himself.

He raised his head and surveyed the auction hall. There was no one left standing. He sent Elizabeth’s power sweeping across the area, making sure that every person or cat, be it those who were beaten unconscious, feigning death, or already had their senses robbed, was well and truly knocked out.

His work in the manor was done. All that was left was for Ye Mei and her team to clean up the mess.

Zhao Yao stepped into the doorway and entered the extradimensional belly. He left the belly through the doorway that he placed at Faceless’s mansion, invisible and with Roly Poly in tow. He had not removed the doorway he placed there, even though it would have come in handy during the battle.

Once he verified that the police were there, examining the scene and digging through the rubble, he left for the airport.

Zhao Yao knew that destroying the Mao Gang was not without consequences. For one, it linked him to the Headless Horseman. Inspector Ho already knew that he was looking for Red Packet and Lightning. Soon, he would find out that the two cats were taken by the Mao Gang, which had just been single-handedly crushed by the Horseman.

Considering that Zhao Yao not only had a motive to go after the Gang, but also boasted superpowers that rivaled the Horseman’s, it seemed very likely that they were the same person.

This would not be the first time the Inspector suspected that he was the Horseman either. He started making the connections between them after the Cat King competition and the peer lending platform incident. This one, however, might be the hardest to shake off.

Zhao Yao had another concern as well. He had just introduced the mighty Headless Horseman to apostles from all over the world. They now knew that such a powerful individual existed.

“Normal, reasonably sane people would not try and find me after they’ve seen what I can do. The idiots who do try and come after me will have to be dealt with even more severely,” he mused.

A few hours later, he touched down in Jiangmen City and was back in his own neighborhood. The moment he got home, he dived back into the dimension doorway that he left at the manor. He waited for half an hour before Ye Mei arrived.

She looked livid.

Zhao Yao shrugged and said, “All done. The men have been rounded up. They’re all in there. If that’s all, I’m going to leave now.”

“You are a..,” Ye Mei started shouting at his retreating figure, but fell silent when he stepped through the doorway and vanished.

Zhao Yao deliberately strolled past security cameras around his estate a few minutes.

Still, two hours later, a report about him and the Headless Horseman would be delivered to the desks of a few high-ranking government officials. It described the powers that were showcased during the battle in the manor, but offered no explanation of how they worked. This was vexing, but perhaps the most distressing bit came at the very end of the report, where it stated that this man had managed to traverse thousands of kilometers in a matter of minutes.

The only conclusion that was drawn was that it would be wise not to engage him as an enemy.

“We should be relieved that the most dangerous man on earth at the moment is an otaku.”

At the same time, news of the failed auction and the subsequent capture of representatives from apostle factions had begun spreading like wildfire, burning its way through every corner of the world.

Chapter 458: Tying Up Loose Ends

Faceless was seated on the ground in the extradimensional belly, sandwiched between the three dimension doorways. From here, he could see what was on the other side of the doors. One of them led to the auction grounds that he had been in just moment before. The other opened into his mansion. The final one led to what looked like Jiangmen City.

“Is this how he teleports between places that are thousands of kilometers apart?” he wondered, eyes darting from one doorway to another.

He had not wrapped his head around exactly how the portals worked, but he understood what they could do.

“There’s no way the authorities would try anything with this guy until they figure out how his powers work.”

He let out a heavy sigh.

His chances of being rescued by the government were slim to none. They would not risk hundreds of their men to save one person, much less someone like him. No one was coming to save him, no matter what atrocities the Headless Horseman might do to him next.

Faceless allowed himself one final sigh. There was no use in wallowing in self-pity. The smart thing to do was to put aside the rage and hatred that was blistering within him and focus on survival.

“He had chosen to bring me here instead of killing me. This must mean that I must be of some use to him. If I worked hard and proved to him that I am valuable, he might continue to let me live.”

Faceless repeated this mantra in his head as a way of comforting himself while he waited for the Horseman to appear. Unfortunately, his captor never showed up. The only visitor he had was a fat cat that sauntered towards him with the haughtiest look.

This was the cat that Zhao Yao had taken in for interrogation from Ürümqi. He was a part of the gang now. Ares and the other supercats had even given him a new name. He was now known as Sun Xiao Tian.

The fat cat cast his beady eyes at Faceless. He whipped out his smartphone and started typing on it. He used the text-to-audio function to communicate with the man, “Are you new here?”

Faceless’s instinctive response was to smack the cat with all his might, but he recalled his newfound mantra. He had to put all anger aside, keep his head low, and survive.

“Yes, I am. May I know who I am speaking to?” he asked politely.

“You can call me Mister Sun,” the cat narrowed his eyes at the man, “New guy, come with me. From today, you are in charge of maintaining the cleanliness here, got it?”

Faceless could not help the furrow in his brow.

“May I know what you are referring to when you talk about maintaining the cleanliness?” he probed, failing to conceal the annoyance in his voice.

“I’m talking about the toilets.”

Sun Xiao Tian pointed at the kitty toilets in the distance with one sharp claw.

“Clean every toilet in there at least once a day. Make sure you empty the cat litter daily too, understand?”

*

When Zhao Yao returned to the extradimensional belly half an hour later, he found Faceless toiling over the toilets.

His eyes widened in surprise.

“What are you doing?” he asked.

Faceless looked at him earnestly as he replied, “I’m cleaning the toilets. Aren’t all newcomers supposed to do that?”

Zhao Yao was rendered speechless momentarily.

Faceless took his silence as an opening for his next words, which he had put together carefully, “I would like to be assistance to you. I am deeply apologetic for taking your supercats. That was entirely my fault and I am terribly sorry. I would like to offer you compensation for all the trouble I have caused. I have at least two hundred million US dollars in my private accounts. I also have properties in other countries...”

Zhao Yao’s eyes lit up.

This did not escape Faceless’s notice. He could hardly contain the hope that was quickly swelling in his chest. He tilted his head towards the unconscious supercats behind him, “And these cats...”

“Are mine,” Zhao Yao interjected.

“Yes, yes, yes. Of course,” Faceless nodded compliantly, even though losing these cats felt like having his front teeth kicked in by a horse, “I can help you deal with these cats. The Mao Gang might be no more, but I still have my connections. You are not intending to keep all of them, are you?”

Zhao Yao narrowed his eyes at him as he spoke, “I. Do. Not. Sell. My. Cats.”

“Of course. I understand,” Faceless added quickly, “But you must need an extra pair of hands to help you with the cats. I can be that person. I’ll take care of them for you.”

Zhao Yao did not respond to his proposition. Instead, he said, “You still have one of my supercats.”

Faceless’s heart sank, but he made sure that his facial expression remained neutral.

“Yes, of course. That cat is in an apartment in Ürümqi. I’ll take you to him right now.”

The next few hours were highly profitable for Zhao Yao but very much the opposite for Faceless. They traveled out of Jiangmen City in order to transfer ownership of some of the latter’s possessions to the former, starting with Faceless’s last cat.

When they entered the apartment, the supercat was lounging on the couch, playing a game on an Xbox. The controller was perched on his bulging tummy. The cat did not even steal a glance at the two men when they appeared.

He only started whining when Zhao Yao unceremoniously tossed him into the extradimensional belly, but turned it down after the Xbox was brought in as well.

The final stop of the day was the bank, where Faceless transferred the aforementioned two hundred million dollars into Zhao Yao's account.

Zhao Yao could not stop grinning like a fool from the moment they left.

He was not even interested in the remaining overseas properties anymore. Two billion dollars, coupled with the recurring profit from the cat cafe, would guarantee that he was going to live very, very comfortably for the rest of his days.

Now that the money was secured, Zhao Yao could focus his energies on dealing with Faceless and the hundreds of new cats in the belly. Also, he had to think about how to maximize the substantial amount of experience points he had earned.

By shutting down the auction and the Mao Gang, he had completed three missions in one go. His Book was currently at Level 6 (26,902 / 20,000). This meant that he had enough to reach Level 7 and integrate the Sphinx Cat's powers as his own.

In the end, Zhao Yao decided not to do so. Sphinx Cat was still growing steadily stronger as he trained, albeit at a slower rate than before. This was not the right time to level up. He was not in desperate need of such tremendous power anyway. It would be best to leave things as they were and allow the cat to continue training.

All in all, the payoff was fantastic. The number of experience points he raked in was pretty impressive. He could level up his Book when the time was right. The dimension doorways had proven to be invaluable and quite unbeatable. He did not even have to touch any of the four revival cards he had carefully accumulated over time.

Zhao Yao was in an excellent position right now.

The supercats had been accruing experience points on their own as well, either through the Michelin-starred cat rice or by completing their own quests:

Matcha Level 7 (4,400 / 20,000)

Elizabeth Level 6 (3,900 / 10,000)

Dust Ball Level 8 (5,755 / 50,000)

Ares Level 6 (4,800 / 10,000)

Lucifer Level 6 (2,600 / 10,000)

Sphinx Cat Level 5 (2,300 / 5,000)

Even after reserving 20,000 points for upgrading the Book when the time was right, Zhao Yao still had an extra 6,902 experience points to use. He was not sure what to do about them. He could use them to level up Ares, Elizabeth, or maybe Sphinx Cat.

“Hmm, I’d better deal with Faceless and the supercats from the auction before thinking about which cats to level up,” Zhao Yao decided.

“I am exhausted. I’ll be the happiest man on earth when all this is done and I can surf the web in peace.”

Zhao Yao had never been a big fan of tying up loose ends. Unfortunately, this was real life, not the movies, which meant that there was always plenty of cleaning up to do after an epic battle.

His body twisted into a blur of colors as he swallowed himself into the extradimensional belly.

He could choose to dedicate one of the dimension doorways as a permanent entrance to the belly, but he realized they were far too useful in combat to be squandered like that. So, using suck-me-in would still be the most viable method of getting in there.

The moment he arrived in the belly, he was greeted with a cacophony of meows and cries.

The hundreds of supercats that were saved from the auction had woken up for a while. The Cat Nation, which once seemed like a vast paradise, now looked fairly cramped.

Chapter 459: Dealing with Things

A cacophony of meows, cackles, and wails echoed in the extradimensional belly. These noises were translated into words when they reached Zhao Yao's ears. He could feel a throbbing ache at the back of his head from listening to the simultaneous conversations. Unsurprisingly, with more than a hundred supercats packed inside, the belly had descended into chaos.

Cats were darting around. Some had withdrawn to the comfort of the pet beds to observe their new surroundings. Others were fighting or squabbling over food or the toilet. A handful was sprawled out on the floor, passing around bags of catmint.

Of course, most of them were napping. These were cats after all.

Ares was seen maintaining a deflective field around the laptops to stop cats from fighting over them.

A variety of scratching posts, toys, and dolls were scattered all over the place.

Zhao Yao could not help but shut his eyes for a moment. He needed some time to think, "I had over 20 cats. Now, there's at least a hundred more. It's not going to be easy to manage 150 supercats and get them to live together in harmony."

It would be a logistical nightmare. He could not imagine how much time would have to be spent on feeding them and clearing their poop. He noticed that the toilets in the belly were already operating at full capacity. The cats who could not hold it in and had done their business in various spots around the space.

"Thank God I'm not in charge of cleaning this place."

The person who was responsible for this ran towards Zhao Yao the moment he laid eyes on him.

Faceless looked like he was close to tears.

“I can’t do this. We can’t do this,” he started rambling, “There are too many cats in here. It would take hours every day to keep this place clean. We need to change the way we manage them. We need a mansion to house them, or perhaps a manor. Oh, we also need more of those automatic toilets. A couple robot vacuums would be good...”

Zhao Yao waved his hand to stop Faceless from continuing.

“We’ll talk later,” he said firmly.

He cast an auditory illusion that blanketed the space in silence so that he could be heard when he spoke.

“Hello everyone. I am the person who has rescued you from the auction. I saved you not because I want to keep you and control you. I will not sell you either. If you have places to go or return to, you are free to leave.”

The supercats immediately began to speak in hushed whispers at the end of Zhao Yao’s announcement.

Faceless jumped out of his skin.

“You’re letting them go?!” he exclaimed, “Do you know how much money they’re worth?”

Zhao Yao pursed his lips. “It doesn’t matter. I have two billion US dollars in my bank account right now. I’m not particularly excited about money at the moment.”

Faceless felt like the blood in his veins was boiling. That was his money. His hard-earned cash.

Regardless, it was a waste to just let these supercats go. He tried to convince Zhao Yao to rethink his decision, but was cut off again.

“You don’t have to say more. I’m not changing my mind. I can’t handle so many cats at once. With the exception of the Pallas’s Cat King, the rest of them are harmless. It’s fine to set them free,” he said.

The bank and secret apartment were not the only places that they went to today. They had also made a trip to the Mao Gang’s base so that Zhao Yao could retrieve the information files of the supercats.

He had pored through each of them to make sure that the cats would not pose too much of a threat to the public if they were let loose. He had assumed that none of them would be particularly dangerous. He found it difficult to believe that the Mao Gang would be capable enough to capture powerful supercats. Even if they did, they would keep them for themselves, not auction them.

In the end, he was right. Only the King had to be handled with extra care.

The following days were spent on dealing with the cats. Some of them had requested to stay with Zhao Yao. He did not refuse them. The rest were released into the wild in batches. Zhao Yao picked places with a relatively low supercat density for them. He would set free a group of four or five cats at each of these locations. They would immediately scatter into various directions when they set foot on the ground.

Zhao Yao was sure that they would integrate themselves into the local supercat network quickly. The world was vastly different from a year and four months ago, when the awakening first happened. Supercat organizations and apostle factions had not just emerged, but also become developed institutions, each bound by their own rules. He was giving each cat the freedom to find the place they belonged to.

However, there were some supercats that absolutely did not suit urban life. The Pallas’s King Cat was a prime example of that.

Zhao Yao had no choice but to make another trip to the Gobi desert so that he can send the King home.

When the King and his daughter, Neoma, left the dimension doorway, they turned back to Zhao Yao, gratitude written clearly over their faces.

“We are eternally grateful to you,” they said earnestly, “The Pallas’s Cat clan will always welcome you to our desert.”

Zhao Yao smiled at them and inched forward to rub their heads. Neoma seemed to enjoy the contact, but the Pallas's Cat King felt that being patted was not particularly dignified for a cat of his position. He blinked awkwardly, but allowed the man to continue patting him. He did not dare refuse him.

At that moment, Lightning could be seen darting through the belly to reach the doorway. Unfortunately, he found that he was unable to cross the threshold. He smacked loudly into an invisible barrier when he reached it. Zhao Yao had not given him permission to cross the doorway. He did not know this, so his face, which was plastered against the barrier, was still shining with unadulterated excitement.

"I'm here. I'm finally here!" Lightning exclaimed.

He closed his eyes intently, as if he was listening to something attentively.

"Zhao Yao, can you hear it? The entire desert is calling my name. They are waiting for the arrival of the Pallas's Cat King."

In response, Zhao Yao dropped his fist on the cat's head.

"It's time to go home," he said.

Lightning immediately hugged Zhao Yao's calf, refusing to let him go.

"No, Zhao Yao, let's stay in the desert just for a while! This is the first time I've even set eyes on it. Please!" he pleaded, looking up at him with sad eyes, much like Puss in Boots in Shrek.

Sidequest: Stay in the desert

Objective: Let Lightning stay in the desert for at least a week

Reward: 10 experience points

Punishment: None

Zhao Yao shrugged. 10 experience points were not much, but they were still points. Lightning did not work at the cafe anyway. He was of more use at the desert than if he was at home, hooking up with random female cats.

Zhao Yao permitted the cat to cross the doorway. Lightning immediately charged through it and sprinted across the grassland, alternating between leaping in the air and rolling on the ground.

“Are you ready?” he shouted, chuckling, “The Super Pallas’s Cat is here!”

Zhao Yao narrowed his eyes at his antics.

“I’ll come get you in a week. Make sure you’re waiting for me right here, okay?” he told Lightning.

“Yeah, yeah. I got it.”

Zhao Yao shook his head in disapproval before turning to the King.

“Please take care of him on my behalf,” he said sincerely.

“Don’t worry!” the King replied cheerily, “We will take good care of the Super Pallas’s Cat.”

With that, Zhao Yao turned around and headed into the doorway. He restricted the access rights so that only him alone can walk through it, then made it invisible from view.

Chapter 460: 456 Choice

After sending away all the supercats that wanted to leave, those that were left over included those who were originally there. There were approximately 50 of them, inclusive of Ares and the rest.

It was much more manageable to take care of them. The supercat which was hidden by Faceless and had life preserving abilities was among them.

As he looked at him gaming on the xbox with a serious expression, Zhao Yao felt like he was staying put in the extradimensional belly for the games.

Speaking of which, the ability of this supercat seemed to be the most effective among those under the control of Faceless. It was a spotless defence as all attacks could be directed to beneath his feet. As long as his feet were placed on something, he would not get hit. It was no wonder that Faceless hid him.

After sending off the supercats, Zhao Yao appeared beside Faceless. He looked at Faceless expressionless.

Faceless felt a tinge of panic while being looked at. He had already removed his mask and was wearing ordinary attire. He looked to be over thirty and was just like any ordinary employee of a company. He seemed to have lost the aura he previously had as the leader of the Mao Gang.

Zhao Yao looked at him and spoke, "I shall give you two choices. First, I let you go but you must wash away your memory of the past 24 hours."

Caesar was the one who was able to cleanse memory. This father ragdoll was able to cleanse the past 24 hours of a person's memory in his or her dream.

After listening to Zhao Yao, Faceless revealed a bitter expression. If he was to be let out now, there wasn't going to be a beneficial result. He would likely be captured and locked up for the rest of his life. In addition, if his recent 24 hours of memory was erased, he wouldn't be left with a single ability. His worth would plummet and besides a lifetime jail sentence, there wasn't an alternative.

Hence, Faceless looked at Zhao Yao attentively as he awaited the second option.

Zhao Yao spoke, "The second option is that you stay here and take care of the cats. But because of what you did in the past, resulting in dire consequences for the society, seriously damaging the relations of the people. These were irreversible damages and hence by staying here, it will be a lifetime stay."

Faceless took a deep breath. Even though he knew he did not have any other choice but when he really heard it, he was still bitter.

But on the flip side, he wouldn't be beaten to death and he heaved a sigh of relief.

Zhao Yao looked at him and said, "Alright, start choosing..."

Faceless revealed an expression of serious deliberation and the entanglement in his heart reached the peak. Zhao Yao looked at the clock and said, "You have 5 minutes. There's no need to rush, think it through slowly."

Faceless had a persistent gaze as he answered Zhao Yao, "I choose to stay here."

"Oh?" Zhao Yao looked at him and continued, "Let me remind you, if you think that you have a chance of escaping by staying here or even borrow the abilities of the cats, you are overthinking. You will only be allowed to stay in this space to work."

"Rest assured, I don't have other intentions." Faceless replied, "If I was to leave and be apprehended, I'm dead. Many people would want that. It's pretty good that I can stay here and take care of the cats for the rest of my life too."

He looked at Faceless' dispirited face and nodded, "That's alright, let me remind you again, your decision is final."

"I won't regret." Faceless said, "I have understood your strength after the past few days. I wouldn't be so foolish as to do otherwise."

Zhao Yao relaxed his shoulders and suddenly snapped, "Matsuo."

"Yes, my owner."

Accompanied by mandarin with a heavy Japanese accent, Matsuo suddenly appeared right in front of Faceless and Zhao Yao.

Faceless was taken aback, "This is..."

"A specter. Before you were here, he was in-charge of taking care of the cats here." Zhao Yao continued, "You just follow him in the future."

Faceless was shocked as he looked at Matsuo and then he realised that in the extradimensional belly, there were weird occurrences like the toilet being cleaned, catmint being swept up as well as computer being started up in the middle of the night. It seemed like they were all done by the specter in front of him.

As he watched Faceless leaving with Matsuo, Zhao Yao called Old Cat and said, "Find a time to speak to this Faceless. I don't want to kill him but don't want him to do as he wishes. Don't be too overboard, let him be a person who love the cats and don't keep thinking of taking revenge for me."

Old Cat smiled at Zhao Yao knowingly, nodded his head and replied, "Yes."

Zhao Yao thought that with Old Cat's guidance, even if Old Cat's ability could only last for 24 hours. But with the culmination of time and effort, it should reform Faceless and would be more effective than prison.

As he finished sorting out the matters of the supercats, Zhao Yao headed home and lay on his sofa satisfyingly. Mango who was a distance away rushed to him excitedly and leaped into his embrace.

As Zhao Yao stroked the cat, he switched on the phone that was connected to cat web and entered the forum.

At this moment, he did not need to be cautious and can use that phone whenever as he wasn't afraid of Uncle Ho and the rest knowing his position.

Zhao Yao accessed the cat web with the intention of looking at news of himself. After flipping through a few pieces of news, he instantly saw discussions about the auction.

But the news that were received by most were that the Mao Gang was taken down by apostles of the authority. They were unaware of the appearance of the Headless Horseman and it was evident that the news was altered by the authority.

Mao Gang was relatively reputable. They were entirely eradicated this time and this had a big impact. The associations became more honest and they was greater respect towards the capabilities of the apostles of the authority.

As for the apostles on the outside, they were condemning and there was an incessant request to release the people but no one cared.

Zhao Yao was pretty satisfied at this circumstance. He allowed the country to be notified about certain things but he didn't want to be known in the realm of superpowers. After all, it was better to keep a low profile and develop. Secrecy was a trump card, if he was more well known, he would be more of a target too.

At this moment, Roly Poly jumped onto Zhao Yao. While he rubbed Zhao Yao's knee, he spoke, "Zhao Yao Zhao Yao, you've worked hard." He rubbed Zhao Yao's thigh and ran to the rear of the sofa and placed his paws on Zhao Yao's shoulders to massage them.

"Let me massage for you."

As he looked at Roly Poly's obedience, he shut his eyes and enjoyed the massage. He then asked, "What happened?"

Roly Poly licked his paws and said, "Nothing can escape your eyes." He lifted his eyes and looked at Red Packet who was standing at the corner of the wall with his paws held high and said, "Red Packet had stood there for such a long time already. He is sincerely repenting and wouldn't dare to run away again."

"After standing for so long, his body will be damaged and would require Zhao Yao's money to heal himself. Let's just forget it."