

## Doomsday 101

### Chapter 101 – When the Roses Bloom (19)

He panicked

Kansu claimed he could take them out, and it wasn't a joke.

His awakened ability was rather bizarre, often ridiculed by friends as useless. However, Kansu himself felt it was okay. He didn't enjoy violence; his only interest lay in studying the award-winning projects of urban planning competitions. His biggest dream was, "The world is so vast, and I want to see it."

Previously, due to the stringent access restrictions of Mu City, this dream had been indefinitely postponed. Unexpectedly, after the apocalypse, his tunneling ability granted him freedom, reigniting hope.

Kansu spent a good half-year digging through hundreds of winding passages beneath Mu City, more complex than the municipal hall in Luli Port. Without his guidance, an ordinary person might never find their way out.

Leading Irene and the others, Kansu arrived at a secluded alley. After confirming no one was watching, he pried open the manhole cover: "The way out of the city is somewhat special, and it'll be a bit of a hardship to use the sewers."

The girls, having endured torment, had already toughened their spirits and didn't complain about the hardship. Silently, they queued up and climbed down. Finally, Kansu, meticulously restoring the manhole cover, couldn't help muttering, "Initially, I just dug randomly, but somehow people always came down for exploration. Hey, guess what happened? They got themselves lost! When I found out, the bodies had swollen like balloons..."

The girls showed disgusted expressions, prompting Kansu to quickly change his tone, "Sorry, sorry, I won't talk about it. I just wonder why these people have such strong curiosity? Later, I had to dig all the entrances in hidden places..."

The sewer was dim and damp, occasionally with unidentified flying insects, water rats, and bats passing by. Eventually, they lost all sense of direction and had to rely on Kansu. Irene kept her gun aimed at him, not entirely dropping her guard. If Kansu showed any suspicious behavior, she'd immediately disable him.

About an hour later, Kansu stopped at a dead end, "You guys stay back a bit. I sealed this place last time, need to dig again."

Lin Youyou and the rest stepped back as Kansu's hands emitted a faint sandy-yellow glow. He turned into a rapid drill, swiftly digging into the ground. Soon, sunlight penetrated as a hole about half a person's height appeared out of nowhere.

Lin Youyou used both hands and feet, struggling to climb out, realizing they were near the lifeline.

She glanced around, confirming the direction to Shaye base, "Let's go."

Under the sunlight, Lin Youyou's face gleamed, unaffected by the traces of dirt, radiating her beauty.

Kansu stared at her for two seconds, "Miss, you seem familiar. Have we met somewhere?"

Lin Youyou initially thought, "Not good," but then quickly composed herself. In moments like these, she couldn't afford to appear guilty. She straightened up, hands on her hips, and scolded assertively, "Don't think that just because you helped us, you can casually strike up a conversation. I'm not interested in you!"

Kansu was startled by her shouting and hurriedly tried to explain, "I-I wouldn't dare! It's just that... I also want to go to Shaye, but I don't have any way in. Can you take me with you?"

After Kansu finished speaking, he smiled innocently. In fact, he could have used this as a bargaining chip, demanding Irene and her group's compliance within the city. However, he didn't. It wasn't until he had safely escorted all the girls out that he foolishly asked his question. This guy truly lacked any cunning or hidden agenda.

Lin Youyou coincidentally received a message from Song Ke, her lips curved slightly, "Of course."

At Shaye Base, Zhuang Qingyan browsed through the list of awakeners, occasionally pulling up a few profiles and making notes on the screen. He pondered various combinations in his mind while Song Ke idly counted his eyelashes with her hands resting on the wheelchair's back.

Lin Mo poked his head in, "I've detected, the people you mentioned seem to have arrived."

"Great, I'll go greet them." Song Ke instantly brightened, leaving Zhuang Qingyan behind as she rushed toward the base's gate.

Traces of the previous war still lingered, amid rolling sand dust, a female awakener with a cannon in her left hand and an empty right arm emerged. Her gaze was resolute, her steps steady, followed by dozens of disheveled girls supporting each other.

Above the base, Zhang Ci confirmed their identities and nodded, signaling, "Let them through."

Rita's team had prepared hot water, clean towels, and coats at the end of the drawbridge. Irene took a towel, wiped her face, and looked up at the imposing city walls. Emotions swirled within her. As a native of Mu City, she had never imagined that she'd end up leaving her home and relying on refugees from elsewhere.

"From now on, this will be your home," Rita held the youngest, Marsha, and said solemnly.

The girls, who had endured fear and worry throughout the journey, couldn't hold back their tears any longer and began sobbing uncontrollably.

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Mu City, Miao Lun's private residence.

“Useless!” The boiling teapot was knocked over, and a tea cup flew, crashing heavily toward the two kneeling figures on the ground.

Godanwei’s forehead was hit, instantly turning red from the scalding, while Hu Chao, positioned next to him with his head close to the ground, was drenched. Neither dared to move.

Miao Lun’s eyes narrowed into a straight line, brimming with unquenchable fury. “You can’t even capture a group of women! What use are you to me?”

Zhang Wanyao was kneeling by his feet. Miao Lun suddenly erupted in anger, and the overturned teapot happened to fall towards her. Despite dodging quickly, her hand was still scalded red.

Marie, in the corner, intended to step forward, but Zhang Wanyao shook her head, her expression indifferent, as if nothing had happened.

“Sir, those deserters didn’t leave through the city gates...” Godanwei attempted to defend himself.

Miao Lun snorted coldly, “Are you questioning Mu City’s defenses? Tell me, faced with the encirclement of weapons from all directions, do you think those damned women grew wings and flew away, or did they turn into eels and slither through some hole?”

Godanwei cried foul in his mind. He had checked thoroughly, but the people did indeed vanish right under his nose. He couldn’t shirk responsibility. Glancing at Hu Chao, Godanwei looked for any sign of support, but Hu Chao remained as silent as the dead. In such moments, he always achieved a new level of cowardice, enduring beatings and scoldings without a word of complaint.

Miao Lun’s nostrils flared as he breathed heavily, his chest heaving violently. The Rose Army was the fruit of his labor, meticulously selected and nurtured with considerable time and effort. Now, with nearly half of them lost, Miao Lun seethed with resentment.

Was that ‘Sly Fox’ so omnipotent? Could they find people so accurately and effortlessly take them away?

Miao Lun's sinister gaze glanced at the most beautiful rose on the ground. Zhang Wanyao's fingertips trembled, yet her demeanor remained as composed as ever.

Outside the door, a servant cautiously knocked three times. "Sir, General Nai Kang has arrived."

The people in the room were momentarily stunned. Why would Nai Kang come here?

Nai Kang always summoned warlords in the Reunification Palace. Besides, this place was merely a private residence, not the gathering place of the Miao family. Having just suffered a defeat in Shaye, his sudden appearance here was highly unusual.

Miao Lun said coldly, "Get up."

Godanwei and Hu Chao immediately stood up, obediently positioning themselves behind him.

As the door was pushed open, Miao Lun's face had already resumed its smiling demeanor.

Nai Kang, with a dignified appearance, walked in. He wasn't moving fast, but his inherent aura from long-held authority inexplicably lightened the atmosphere.

Nai Kang took the main seat, resting his arm on his knee, and for a while, he remained silent. The room was as silent as a tomb.

"Why did the General come here today? Any instructions?" Miao Lun spoke nonchalantly, maintaining his composure.

"Ruan Wenjun is dead, and his Iron Eagle team is leaderless. Divide it between you and Mu Qin; more usable manpower," Nai Kang spoke.

"Thank you, General," Miao Lun graciously accepted.

Nai Kang stared at him deeply for a while before continuing, "Furthermore, promote someone from among those minor warlords to take Ruan Wenjun's place. Handle this matter yourself."

This was a blatant delegation of power to Miao Lun. Promoting a high-ranking warlord held lucrative opportunities, and Miao Lun could use this to consolidate his influence. Over time, his power would only grow stronger.

Nai Kang's second statement finally brought a hint of joy to Miao Lun's face.

"Are your people reliable?" Nai Kang glanced at Hu Chao and Godanwei.

Miao Lun was well aware that Juramani had died in Shaye. He thought Nai Kang might have his eye on one of his private soldiers. "If the General likes, feel free to take them. Among my subordinates, loyalty is unquestionable."

Nai Kang waved his hand, seemingly just asking casually, "No need, keep them."

Zhang Wanyao trembled all over, barely able to control her emotions. This was her first time seeing Nai Kang up close, and her hatred intensified. The enemy was right in front of her; she couldn't contain her feelings. Tiantian's face kept flashing in her mind, and she wished she could rush forward and kill Nai Kang right then and there.

Marie sensed her trembling and moved closer to her.

A tear fell from Zhang Wanyao's eye, and her knee suddenly twitched.

Marie acted swiftly, grabbing her immediately. Her sixth sense warned her that if she didn't stop Zhang Wanyao, something terrible might happen.

The commotion drew Nai Kang's attention. He cast an indifferent glance, passing over the trembling Zhang Wanyao and Marie.

Nai Kang was well aware of Miao Lun's unsavory hobbies in private, including the Rose Army's seemingly glorious but actually bloodstained and dirty operations. However, Nai Kang didn't care. Miao Lun was a clever person, and clever people are inherently difficult to control. But he brazenly exposed his weakness for lust, never intentionally hiding it, which in turn became a challenge for Nai Kang to exploit.

To ascend to the position of the top warlord in Mu City from an ordinary person's status required a depth of thought that couldn't be underestimated, especially when coupled with a keen sense of self-preservation.

Satisfied, Nai Kang left. His visit seemed merely to exchange inconsequential words.

Miao Lun looked in the direction where Nai Kang disappeared, his eyes narrowing slightly as a faint smirk played on his lips.

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Shaye Base.

Zhuang Qingyan, Zhang Ci, and Song Ke were in a meeting when Lu Xiaoyu barged in, controlling the wheelchair.

"I have some bad news and some worse news. Which one do you want to hear first?" Lu Xiaoyu asked.

Zhuang Qingyan lifted his head, his expressionless gaze meeting Lu Xiaoyu's. The others remained silent, no one answering his question.

Disappointed, Lu Xiaoyu shrugged. "Okay, seems like you guys don't get humor."

"The first bad news is that Nai Kang has issued new laws, a region-wide warrant for the arrest of four S-level awakeners from Shaye. In other words, from now on, we are also gloriously wanted fugitives. The path of forging admission permissions is no longer viable," Lu Xiaoyu stated.

His icy gaze flickered, projecting a deciphered string of text in front of everyone. “The second, even worse news: I intercepted several one-way confidential messages. They were ‘Request for Intervention’ orders sent by Nai Kang. I have strong reason to suspect that the Alliance has already received them.”

“What’s a ‘Request for Intervention’?” Song Ke asked, puzzled.

Zhuang Qingyan’s expression grew more serious. “The District Magistrate holds the highest authority within their jurisdiction. In the event of an uncontrollable situation, they can relinquish a portion of their interests and request intervention from the Alliance. The Alliance then dispatches ‘Special Envoys’ to briefly intervene in local affairs and help the magistrate ‘resolve the issue.’

Song Ke caught on immediately, “Is Nai Kang panicking?”

A person so domineering voluntarily bowing down and relinquishing the magistrate’s supreme position to request Alliance intervention was itself unthinkable. Could Juralamani’s death have hit him that hard?

Zhuang Qingyan smiled faintly, “I believe this opens up another approach for us. If Nai Kang has made this decision, it seems that his remaining two puppets might not match Juralamani’s strength.”

“However, these are just speculations. Given the current situation, within the next three days at most, the Alliance’s Special Envoys will arrive in Mu City. They might not send just one S-level. When they arrive, it might be challenging to deceive or outwit them,” Zhuang Qingyan warned.

A chill ran through everyone. Their plan involved assassination, not recklessly confronting S-level awakeners!

“We’re out of time; we need to quickly get into the Reunification Palace,” Zhuang Qingyan concluded decisively.

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 102: When the Roses Bloom (20)

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I had seven times despised my soul

Two unexpected guests arrived at the heavily guarded entrance of the Reunification Palace.

Before they could approach the restricted area, armed guards aimed their weapons at the two, warning them to halt.

“We’re here to claim the bounty.”

One of them slowly raised his head. A grim scar ran from the corner of his eye to his jaw, his eyes unusually gloomy. Coupled with a voice that seemed scorched by flames, his hoarse tone made anyone listening uncomfortable, sending shivers down their spine.

Next to Scarface stood a silent, thin man, both carrying peculiarly shaped black boxes.

The captain of the guards couldn’t help but be startled. What bounty could they be claiming at the Reunification Palace? Then, his expression changed as he quickly recalled the most prominent recent bounty, the one personally issued by the General: “To kill any one of the four S-level awakeners of Shaye and claim a substantial bounty by presenting their head at the Reunification Palace.”

The authority of this warrant was high, its difficulty immense, nearly impossible for anyone to accomplish. However, correspondingly, its rewards were astonishingly abundant, even allowing requests to be made directly to the General himself. Under this high reward, there must be brave souls willing to attempt the impossible. Could it be that someone had actually fulfilled this warrant?

Only an S-level could kill another S-level awakener...

The captain felt a chill down his spine. When he looked back at the two, his attitude immediately became respectful. “Two heroes, we need to verify the token first.”

Scarface sneered. Simultaneously, he and the thin man pressed a switch on their boxes. A small door automatically lifted from the side, revealing two bloody human heads!

The captain's heart turned cold as he hurriedly retrieved the footage from the battle with Shaye. The identities of these S-level fugitives were unknown, lacking their biological information, which forced them to resort to traditional methods of verification. After scanning the video and pausing it, he scrutinized the blurred, fleshy heads. Eventually, he managed to identify them: the crippled man controlling the mechanical vehicle on the city wall on the left, and surprisingly, the one on the right bore a striking resemblance to the leader of the refugees, Qiong Qi.

The captain was shaken to the core. He took a step forward, wanting to examine more closely.

Scarface promptly closed the small door with a click and ominously stated, "I want to see the bounty."

"Please wait a moment. I'll report to the General immediately!"

The captain moved aside and communicated discreetly via his communicator. The message was swiftly relayed upwards, and Nai Kang's order came promptly: Let them pass.

"Please come in."

The guards who received the order made way for the two visitors.

Scarface and the thin man carried their boxes, passing through the security checkpoint. Precise instruments scanned them from head to toe, ensuring no weapons or sharp objects were allowed. The indicator lights blinked twice, all remained calm, no alarms sounded.

After entering through the main gate, they walked for almost fifteen minutes before officially entering the realm of the Reunification Palace. Along the way, they encountered patrolling awakeners; the security level here was so high that not even a bug could fly in.

Scarface stared at the majestic and grandiose buildings ahead, a peculiar smile on his lips. "The General is indeed wealthy. Look at this lavish life. Once we claim the bounty, we'll get ourselves a big house like this."

Scarface and the thin man exchanged glances, envisioning the good days to come, bursting into hearty laughter.

The captain of the guards twitched at the corner of his mouth, deliberately avoiding any response.

At the bottom of the black boxes, several small openings suddenly split open. Mechanical spiders fell out densely, some crawling into nearby bushes, others disappearing into crevices in the buildings, without drawing anyone's attention. The eight eyes of each spider faintly glowed as they swiftly collected data from their surroundings.

In a space several meters underground, a black-haired girl retracted her ears, which had been eavesdropping for any movement. From the hole in the ceiling, she leaped down, landing soundlessly like a panther. Taking two steps forward, she activated a faint light. In the winding and dark tunnel, hundreds of advanced awakeners were quietly lurking.

Lu Xiaoyu's fingers danced, projecting a screen. The real-time footage collected by the mechanical spiders streamed back. It began with rows of marching boots, then zoomed out, presenting a clear view of the buildings within the Reunification Palace, becoming increasingly complete as the spiders moved.

“Enough.”

“Have you found Nai Wen's location?”

“It'll take time.”

These people, naturally, were Song Ke and their team. As for Scarface and the thin figure, they were their accomplices.

Zhuang Qingyan discovered an awakener with the ability of “reverse molding”. His mind worked swiftly, formulating the entire plan in an instant.

First, Lu Xiaoyu crafted fake heads using machinery, then the awakener with reverse molding ability conducted “cosmetic surgery” on them. Finally, they sent two new faces “legitimately” into the

Reunification Palace to investigate the internal situation, while Song Ke's team used Kansu's ability to infiltrate the palace through underground tunnels.

In the selection of the bounty heads, Zhang Ci, as the leader of Shaye, held undeniable value, undoubtedly occupying a slot. Zhang Ci himself had no objections to this. As for the other one... it was volunteered by Lu Xiaoyu.

One couldn't deny that the genius's way of thinking was indeed difficult for ordinary people to comprehend. Lu Xiaoyu's smile and the scene of him playfully massaging his own head would certainly remain unforgettable for a lifetime.

...

In the Reunification Palace, within an ordinary building, the sound of objects shattering echoed.

"Get lost." A terrifying-looking teenager, covered in brown patches, smashed all the vases in the room, muttering hoarsely.

His eerie gaze contradicted his young age, yet his body was frail and shorter than others his age. The guards, possessors of extraordinary abilities, stood silently in his way, thwarting his attempt to leave.

The boy erupted in rage, "Good, I couldn't leave the palace before, but now I can't even leave this room? Who gave you the guts to confine me?"

"Young Master Nai Wen, this is the General's directive, all for your safety," one of the guards explained calmly.

"Safety? What do I have to fear?" Nai Wen revealed a demonic grin. "What's the point of living like this? If I die, so be it. I don't even care. Why should you dogs interfere?"

Nai Wen reached under the bed, his expression revealing a sinister and bloodthirsty intent. "I heard Shaye's leader's head was delivered? I'll go take a look. I plan to make a new ball out of it."

“Young Master Nai Wen, you cannot leave the room...”

“Boom!” A burst of flame shattered the speaker’s head.

Nai Wen wiped the blood splattered on his face, twistedly smiling. “Don’t tell me what I can’t do.”

He cleared a path with a particle gun, forcing the guards of the security team to step back, finally walking out of the room.

...

Several dozen miles away from the Reunification Palace, in another tunnel, Marsha sat on a bench, waiting for Kansu and the others to return for her. She fiddled with the terminal, conversing telepathically with Marie atop her head.

“Sister, is that sister named Yao around?” Marsha suddenly remembered something, silently asking in her mind.

“She’s here, what’s wrong?” Marie glanced at Zhang Wanyao beside her, who sat motionless, staring at her hands. Since Nai Kang visited, she had grown increasingly silent.

In the underground chamber, Marsha rummaged through her pockets and retrieved a neatly folded piece of paper.

“There’s someone named Fang Zhixu who asked me to read this passage to her.”

“I had seven times despised my soul,

The first time, when it could have dared to strive but chose to comply with the status quo;

The third time, between difficulty and ease, it chose ease;"

Marsha's tender voice read aloud the beautifully rhymed poetry.

In the courtyard dozens of meters above, Marie repeated the heard words and phrases word for word.

"The sixth time, it scorned the ugly faces, unaware it had the same countenance;

The seventh time, the soul lay askew in the filth of life, unwilling yet hesitant.

All errors should be concluded at the seventh time,

From this day forth, I am willing to burn my soul to secure a joyful new life for you."

Marsha earnestly finished reading, and the two sisters simultaneously sighed in relief.

So difficult to read, so awkward, what does this poem really mean?

Zhang Wanyao blinked slowly, a faint curve forming at the corner of her mouth. She seemed to be smiling, yet poignant tears fell incessantly.

"It's still the same as before..."

"What do you mean, the same as before?" Marie asked in confusion.

"When he made a mistake before and didn't dare to apologize face-to-face, he would secretly write a poem and place it on my easel. If I opened and read it, it meant I forgave him. If not, he'd continue writing until I did forgive him."

In Tongwan, Fang Zhixu had an excellent reputation as a respected doctor. But at home, in front of Zhang Wanyao, he appeared awkward, like a young lad in his early twenties, always clinging to her, unwilling to let go even after a long embrace.”

“Is he your husband?” Marie asked cautiously, “Did you leave him because you were angry?”

“No, I never...” Her voice trailed off quietly.

Zhang Wanyao wiped her tears, her resolute eyes filled with determination: “Can you ask your sister if Fang Zhixu is at the Reunification Palace now?”

Marie closed her eyes for a moment. “Marsha says he went to the Reunification Palace.”

...

Under the protection of layers of awakeners, Nai Kang received two individuals who had come to claim a bounty.

Seated on a chair, he stared intently at the box they held. “Where is the head of the Qiong Qi? Show it to me.”

Scarface sternly refused, “Wait a moment, General. We haven’t discussed the reward yet.”

“The reward can be claimed directly from my internal affairs officer,” Nai Kang replied.

“What we want can only be given by you, General,” Scarface chuckled strangely.

Frowning, Nai Kang asked, “What do you want?”

“I want to live in a palace,” Scarface blurted out.

“Forget it. Didn’t we agree on just money and crystals?” A thin, silent man suddenly opposed loudly.

“What money? Can’t I change my mind?” Scarface retorted coldly.

Due to a disagreement over how to split the loot, the two men argued fiercely, faces turning red, hinting at an imminent physical altercation.

Nai Kang’s patience dwindled away. Raising his right hand, numerous heavy weapons were aimed at the two, silencing their argument instantly.

“I’ll ask you one last time, what do you want?” Nai Kang sneered. In the past, he wouldn’t have even entertained the idea of meeting such people, let alone listening to them.

Scarface glanced at him, then grinned. “General, how about you let me take your place for two days?”

Nai Kang’s pupils contracted sharply. These two were definitely not here to claim a reward!!

He stood up abruptly, shouting, “Kill them!”

Scarface and the thin man fiercely hurled the black box forward. With a “whoosh,” just before the explosion of the shell, they vanished on the spot.

“General, they’re spatial anchor awakeners!” someone in the guard unit recognized.

Spatial anchor awakener belonged to an extremely rare branch within spatial awakener. By setting one or more anchor points, they could instantly return to the anchor point within the range of their ability, making them the perfect choice for committing crimes and escaping.

“Not good!” Nai Kang realized something, his face turning pale. “Where’s Nai Wen?”



“Beep beep—”

A piercing countdown alarm sounded from the black box on the ground. In the next second, a scorching blast soared into the sky!

This wasn't the head of an S-level awakener; it was clearly a high-powered explosive device!

The Guard Unit and Nai Kang's figures were instantly engulfed.

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 103: When the Roses Bloom (21)

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You are not worthy of being human

In the Reunification Palace, within the underground passage, the southwest direction on the projection screen suddenly displayed scrambled snowflakes. The real-time footage flickered twice and vanished.

“There's a hyper-frequency band in this area,” Lu Xiaoyu said, “the behavior pattern of the mechanical spiders is being disrupted, and data cannot be transmitted back.”

“Heh, it seems the security here isn't so hopeless after all,” he sarcastically remarked.

“The scrambled area is the core of the Reunification Palace,” Zhuang Qingyan inferred, “Nai Kang and his son should be inside.”

Zhang Ci furrowed his brows at the statement. “But this place is not small. If we search it one by one, it'll take too much time and pose a risk of exposure.”

Lu Xiaoyu cracked her knuckles confidently. “Need me to crack it? I'll get it done within five minutes, no, within three.”

“What about Scar and the others?” Zhuang Qingyan asked without answering.

“They’ve entered the reception hall, engaging with Nai Kang. They can last at most another ten minutes,” Zhang Ci responded calmly.

“Ten minutes...” Zhuang Qingyan narrowed his eyes.

“Now, what do we do?” Song Ke asked softly.

Zhuang Qingyan pondered for a moment, then turned to Lu Xiaoyu. “You crack that, we’ll figure out a way to lure Nai Wen out.”

“No need,” Lu Xiaoyu enlarged a certain area of the footage, “this kid is coming out on his own.”

In the clear projection, Nai Wen held a particle gun, forcing the guards of the security team to slowly retreat.

“Young Master, what you’re doing is too dangerous. Please put the gun down.”

“Please return to your room, Young Master.”

“It’s not that we won’t let you out, it’s the General’s orders...”

Under the bright light, the brown patches on Nai Wen’s face became more pronounced. His limbs of varying lengths gave an unsettling sense of discordance. His thin body seemed like a bizarre creature draped in human skin, taking step by step toward the reception hall.

Lu Xiaoyu swiftly locked Nai Wen’s position, and Kansu activated his abilities, tunneling frantically toward that spot.

“Considering the time for reinforcements after the alarm is triggered, we have nine minutes left,” Lu Xiaoyu said.

“Enough,” Song Ke nodded.

Zhang Ci donned a hood, his entire face disappearing into the shadows, leaving only a faintly visible prominent nose. He turned back, fingers clasped together, gesturing an attack signal behind him.

Including Fan Yiwen and Samuel, the Shaye awakeners lowered their body centers, poised and ready.

Nine minutes to take down Nai Wen, more than enough.

A faint blue light emerged as Song Ke manifested a triangular military dagger. This weapon was known as the “Reaper’s Blade,” capable of instantly destroying human tissues; one stab, blood sprayed, causing fatal wounds that led to the enemy’s demise.

As she made her move, she unexpectedly noticed the trembling in Fang Zhixu’s hands. This tremor wasn’t due to fear or dread but rather the manifestation of an uncontrollable shiver when someone’s conviction to do something reached its peak.

Song Ke quietly observed him for two seconds, then swiftly walked over, handing the triangular military dagger to Fang Zhixu. “We will succeed.”

Fang Zhixu looked down at her.

In the refuge of the Luo Jia Shelter, he had once been desolate, seeking only death. It was Song Ke who forcibly pulled him back from the edge of the cliff, firmly promising him with unwavering eyes, “I can do it.”

Perhaps it was the lingering resentment and intense hatred within him, or perhaps it was because of the resemblance between her and Tiantian’s dimples. At that moment, Fang Zhixu chose to take a gamble, to trust this stranger, Song Ke.

Initially, he observed as an outsider, watching the team called V587 strive tirelessly for his revenge. Gradually, he found himself unknowingly involved, following them into the desert, enduring hardships, and trials, all the way to Mu City.

Fang Zhixu gradually understood how fortunate he was to have encountered a group of companions he could entrust his back to.

In just a few months, they had indeed overcome all difficulties and reached the final step.

‘Nai Kang, Nai Wen, today would surely be your death sentence.’

Fang Zhixu took a deep breath, the tremors slowly fading away, taking the spiritual weapon from Song Ke’s hand.

“Let’s go.”

...

The dome of the reception hall could be seen in the distance. Nai Wen had an excited smile on his face. He was just about to speak when suddenly, a large hole cracked open in the ground ahead, and one after another, people with supernatural abilities leaped out.

“Enemy attack!” exclaimed the nearest member of the guard, immediately triggering the alarm.

“Prepare for battle—”

Before the word was fully spoken, a dark blue triangular army dagger sliced through his throat. The guard fell wide-eyed, and as he hit the ground, a torrent of blood gushed from his neck.

Song Ke withdrew the dagger, swiftly producing a multitude of shurikens between her fingers, launching them accurately towards the guards who were trying to block the hole. The shurikens, gleaming with a cold light, found their marks.

Zhang Ci held a sword in one hand and swiftly formed seals with the other, unleashing the devastating Five Thunder Gods' Decree, clearing out interceptors from another direction.

The underground passages created by Kansu were like that of moles, a new hole for each escape route. Within seconds, a dozen or so openings appeared on the ground, continuously allowing high-level awakeners to emerge. In this urgent moment, he even thoughtfully created a ramp for Zhuang Qingyan and Lu Xiaoyu's wheelchairs for easy access.

The scene descended into intense combat. Song Ke made a sudden dash towards Nai Wen and unexpectedly collided with a resilient water shield, sinking into it entirely.

This was... a water-based defensive ability? Yet, there were no individuals with abilities within five meters of Nai Wen.

Emerging from the water shield, Song Ke stared coldly at him. "Six months ago, in Tongwan, you killed an eight-year-old girl."

When Song Ke attacked, a trace of panic flashed across Nai Wen's grotesque face. After she was blocked by the water shield, he quickly regained his composure.

Facing her accusation, Nai Wen seemed indifferent, even smirking arrogantly. "Who? I've killed too many people to remember."

Song Ke forcefully thrust the triangular army dagger into the water shield, which dissolved the flowing liquid, dispersing it like a clump of cotton in the air.

"Her name was Tiantian. Her father was a doctor. He tried his best to save you, but you killed his daughter."

"Tiantian? Oh... I vaguely remember, there was someone like that," Nai Wen said casually, "But it was quite boring. She didn't know anything. Even when I undressed her, she only knew how to scream, giving me a headache."

“Afterward, when I made her bleed, she stopped screaming, just like a doll. If you put it that way, she was quite sweet.” Nai Wen licked his lips, and his underdeveloped, deformed body twisted involuntarily.

There was a moment of bewilderment in Song Ke’s eyes at Nai Wen’s words. She didn’t fully understand what Nai Wen meant, but in the next moment, she suddenly saw Fang Zhixu’s eyes—those eyes were crimson, almost the color of blood.

‘Made her bleed... Undressed her... made her bleed...’ Song Ke’s mind was violently shaken. Her grip tightened on the triangular army dagger. How could a fourteen or fifteen-year-old person be so evil?

“Boom!”

A deafening explosion echoed from the direction of the reception hall. The Guard Unit, alerted by the alarm, joined the battlefield. Song Ke agilely dodged an attack, taking down two guards swiftly.

She needed to find the water-based awakener first, break the shield protecting Nai Wen. But with the overwhelming number of guards at present, she needed to think of a way...

Suddenly, Song Ke turned back and locked eyes with Zhuang Qingyan. They understood each other without a word in this critical moment. Their thoughts connected in an instant, sparking understanding between them.

Zhuang Qingyan closed his eyes, his powerful mental ability quickly analyzing all the types of abilities present on the scene. Then, he abruptly opened his eyes, targeting a specific direction, raising the rapid-fire crossbow in his hand and shooting several arrows in that direction.

Song Ke abandoned the attack on Nai Wen and sprinted toward the target alongside the flying arrows.

The water-based awakener, seeing the approaching Song Ke like a grim reaper, frantically conjured a water shield around himself.

“Clang!”

Sharp edges pierced the surface of the water shield, creating a deep dent, the cross-shaped puncture inches from the person’s forehead.

Breathing a sigh of relief for narrowly escaping, the person’s expression changed drastically once again.

Song Ke tightened her grip on the dagger handle, the blue light becoming increasingly dazzling. Her powerful awakened energy erupted to the extreme, inching forward, exerting pressure. No matter how strong the defensive ability, no shield could withstand the knife in her hands!

“Splish, splish—” The entire water shield shook violently. The water-based awakener realized his imminent peril, his face drained of color. Panicked, he turned and ran.

Song Ke, determined, shattered the water shield, and the triangular army dagger pierced through the person’s spine!

A high arc of crimson blood sprayed out in a straight line, and the person slowly collapsed, his supernatural ability dissipating.

Song Ke turned around, her shoulder-length hair tousled by the wind. From a distance, she shouted at a retreating figure, “Fang Zhixu!”

Nai Wen frantically raised his particle gun, wildly firing shots. “Crack!” A mechanical arm viciously swung in, mercilessly knocking him down, snatching away his weapon, and disassembling it into pieces.

Nai Wen fell in a sorry heap at someone’s feet.

Fang Zhixu squatted down, gazing down at this demon. “Do you remember me?”

Nai Wen met his bloodshot eyes. These eyes, he had seen them before, amidst a haze of consciousness on the operating table. Back then, he felt he was about to die, but the masked doctor nodded at him, saying, "You will survive." And miraculously, Nai Wen did survive.

He remembered, of course; it was Dr. Fang who saved him.

Nai Wen sighed regretfully, "Dr. Fang, it's your bad luck, I didn't even know she was your daughter..."

He paused, his speech gradually picking up pace, "If you really care about this, then have another one. Next time, I promise I definitely won't..."

"Poof—" Before he could finish, Fang Zhixu's military dagger pierced his chest.

The aim was precise. Nai Wen's face contorted, in immense pain, yet he did not die on the spot.

"You're actually quite afraid of death, aren't you?" Fang Zhixu rotated the triangular military dagger expressionlessly, the blood groove harvesting within him, forming a clot.

Fang Zhixu had seen countless patients' expressions on the operating table. Nai Wen might have kept saying, "If I die, I die," but his eyes spoke differently; he wanted to live more than anyone else.

"Tiantian is the best daughter in the world. She rarely cries, hardly ever throws tantrums. Even if I don't have time for her, she never blames me; she just sulks on her own. Every time she says 'I love daddy the most,' I feel like I can give her everything."

"That day, when Tiantian finally forgave me, I bought her favorite strawberry ice cream. I bought two, the first time I ever did, so she could secretly eat one without telling her mom. It was our little secret between father and daughter."

"I had made plans with her, but I will never see her again."

"Because I saved you. Because I overslept for those forty minutes."



Fang Zhixu meticulously removed Nai Wen's kidneys, spleen, stomach, lungs, intestines, liver... His hands were remarkably steady, devoid of any tremor. Despite his organs emptying, Nai Wen felt remarkably conscious; he couldn't die.

"Someone like you will never understand what Tiantian meant to me."

"You don't deserve to live, let alone be called human."

The person before Nai Wen was no longer the image of a doctor saving lives; he resembled a ruthless butcher dissecting a corpse.

Fear enveloped Nai Wen, escalating rapidly as his life drained away. Finally, like a child, he whimpered in tears, "Don't... Don't! Father, father, save me!"

Nai Wen's plea of "Father, save me," pierced Fang Zhixu's deepest wound.

When Tiantian died, she must have wanted him to save her, too.

Fang Zhixu sliced open Nai Wen's ventricle, plunging a blade into his pulsating heart.

Nai Wen's cries abruptly ceased as he watched his heart being extracted, his body shattered, and his soul fragmented.

Nai Wen ceased breathing.

Fang Zhixu's hands were soaked in fresh blood, tears streaming down his face.

In a hazy vision, Tiantian with her soft braids nestled in his arms like a mischievous little mouse. Happily, she held a strawberry ice cream, cream smeared on her dimples. "Daddy, don't tell mom, okay? I like you the most~"

“Nai Wen!!!” A desperate and agonized roar echoed.

Nai Kang, covered in ash, appeared outside. Those two damned bombs had killed all the awakeners in the living room. Only Nai Kang, protected by his causality-based ability, survived. He urgently dispatched reinforcements, but it was too late once again.

Under the fierce attacks from Zhang Ci, Lu Xiaoyu, Samuel, and others, the scene became a battlefield with incessant gunfire, swiftly eliminating the guards.

An opportunity!

Song Ke headed straight for Nai Kang, leaping high and bringing down a triangular military dagger.

Awakeners protecting Nai Kang retaliated together. Song Ke faced various attacks, refusing to retreat. Just as she was about to make contact, a misdirected shell exploded mid-air, sending her flying. After rolling several times, Song Ke barely managed to stop her retreat.

The causality on Nai Kang remained!

Song Ke slammed a fist onto the ground.

The piercing alarm echoed throughout the Reunification Palace, drawing more and more awakeners to the scene, surrounding them.

Zhuang Qingyan’s wheelchair stopped beside Song Ke. He reached out a hand, helping her stand, and spoke calmly.

“The energy around him has weakened. Nai Wen is indeed his puppet.”

“But I can’t kill him,” Song Ke said resentfully.

“Because there’s one final layer of causality on Nai Kang,” Zhuang Qingyan remarked.

The last layer of causality.

The final puppet.

‘Who could it be?’ Song Ke lifted her gaze, looking at the multitude of faces within the battleground.

Triangular Dagger –

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 104.1: When the Roses Bloom (22)

Chapter 104.1 – When the Roses Bloom (22)

The third puppet

Guards kept arriving, surrounding Song Ke and the others. After Nai Wen’s death, the scene fell into a stiff standoff.

At this moment, Nai Kang surprisingly calmed down. All emotions—be it shock, sorrow, fear, or anxiety—vanished from his face. Only the sternness belonging to a magistrate and the dignity accumulated over nearly three decades remained. An internal affairs officer brought him a fresh military uniform. Before everyone’s eyes, Nai Kang unbuttoned his collar and cuffs, calmly changed into the new clothes, meticulously fastening every button.

“A group of rats from the sewers, trying to infiltrate everywhere, attempting to meddle in others’ affairs.”

Nai Kang’s piercing gaze landed on Zhang Ci. “Are you Qiong Qi? Stirring up this drama to replace me?”

Zhang Ci coldly stared back. "It's your self-destruction. Your tyranny, your oppression of the people, your allowance of the twisted caste system that plunged Mu City into chaos. You are utterly undeserving of being a magistrate."

With an arrogant lift of his chin, Nai Kang retorted, "Young people often have heroic ideals, thinking they're saviors. Understandable, but mostly self-deception. What you say now sounds grand, but if you ever sat in my position, you might turn out to be even more of a 'tyrant' than I am."

"Nai Dog, stop talking rubbish!" Fan Yiwen roared. Nai Kang was clearly trying to throw dirt onto Zhang Ci.

Nai Kang sneered, his gaze shifting to Song Ke, Zhuang Qingyan, and Lu Xiaoyu. These three sudden S-level awakeners were entirely beyond his control. Their secret alliance with Qiong Qi was the main reason he found himself in this predicament.

"And you, what's your purpose?" Nai Kang asked coldly.

"To kill you," Song Ke pointed her triangular military dagger straight at him.

"Nai Kang, you allowed your son to commit murder, killing my daughter. You deserve to die," Fang Zhixu, his hands soaked in blood, slowly stepped forward. Yet, it wasn't his blood; it belonged to Nai Wen.

Nai Kang squinted, taking a while to match the face with the name. "Dr. Fang, never expected, you were the mastermind behind the scenes. I underestimated you. If I had known you'd cause so much trouble, even if it meant eradicating Tongwan, I should have killed you back then."

Even at death's door, Nai Kang's attitude thoroughly infuriated the awakeners present.

Song Ke and Zhang Ci led a hundred people charging forward.

The guards scrambled to defend, but the relentless artillery and supernatural abilities razed the surrounding buildings. Countless attacks surged towards Nai Kang, yet mysteriously diverted before reaching him.

Nai Kang's close aides, seeing the dire situation, fled. Barely a few steps away, sharp talismans descended from above, piercing their backs, and numerous supernatural abilities surged towards Nai Kang. He smirked coldly, unmoving from start to finish.

Zhuang Qingyan, amidst the chaos, stared intently at Nai Kang, his brow gradually furrowing.

If the third puppet was indeed on the scene, given the current chaos, there was a constant risk of being killed. How could Nai Kang remain so composed?

Zhuang Qingyan glanced towards Lu Xiaoyu, who immediately turned the screen towards him. The monitoring on it was crystal clear—aside from their core area, where they were, Nai Kang hadn't stationed any troops in other locations identified by the mechanical spiders.

Zhuang Qingyan paused for a moment, then raised his voice to shout at Nai Kang from a distance, "You're left with only one puppet. Why do you think we can't kill you?"

Nai Kang sized him up directly. "Interesting. You even know I have a puppet."

Zhuang Qingyan, leaning on his cane, stood up and took two steps forward. Nai Kang subtly raised his hand, and the guard unit switched to a defensive retreat.

The melee halted, casualties on both sides, but Nai Kang's losses were evidently more severe, with only a third of the high-level awakeners remaining.

Next came the time for psychological warfare.

Zhuang Qingyan smiled faintly. "It's been five minutes since the explosion. I was just wondering why not a single warlord rushed to save you. Unless... you never issued the order for reinforcement."

“And you’d do this for only one reason,” Zhuang Qingyan spoke slowly, each word deliberate, “you’re protecting your puppet, and in doing so, you’re safeguarding yourself because as long as he’s alive, you won’t die.”

“You can maintain composure now because you know the other person isn’t in the Reunification Palace, ensuring we can’t find him.”

Nai Kang’s lips gradually tightened. This kid had an uncanny ability to see through people’s intentions.

Zhuang Qingyan’s eyes narrowed slightly as all the pertinent information raced through his mind.

“Your first puppet, Jularamani, an almost S-level awakener, chosen because he’s hard to kill.”

“The second, your son Nai Wen, imprisoned in the Reunification Palace, firmly under your control. You’re confident here due to the top-notch security, believing no one would breach it before us.”

“Turning these two into puppets, although secure, poses risks. As long as the existence of your causality-based supernatural ability is known, they can be easily wiped out together. One shouldn’t put all eggs in one basket, a principle a general like yourself must understand. So, the third puppet must be entirely different from conventional thinking.”

Zhuang Qingyan’s composed voice reverberated in the vast space, “You must ensure that even if he’s not under your nose, he can survive unharmed. This means he surely possesses self-defense capabilities, maybe even more so, and his situation outside is safer and less conspicuous than staying in the Reunification Palace.”

Nai Kang’s eyelids trembled ever so slightly.

“Peasants, workers, or mercenaries? Too risky. Merchants or the wealthy? Not secure enough. Based on Mu City’s hierarchical structure, he must be at least at the second tier or higher, wielding substantial power and status, with a large private militia for protection. High-ranking officers and small warlords are absorbed or assassinated; they aren’t your best options.”

“Then, we’re left with the three major warlords. Ruan Wenjun is dead, so is it Mu Qin or Miao Lun?”

Zhuang Qingyan stared at the tightening back of Nai Kang’s hand, smiling brightly, “Do you think I’m going to guess Mu Qin? After all, he’s an awakener, with a better chance of survival compared to Miao Lun, an ordinary person.”

“But there’s a question that’s been bothering me. The three major warlords, each holding different powers, create a balance and a check on each other. Mu Qin and Ruan Wenjun had many overlapping interests, causing constant friction between them. However, Miao Lun seems to have no direct conflicts with anyone. General, can you tell me why?”

At the Hero Banquet where Song Ke participated alone, Mu Qin and Ruan Wenjun were at odds, but Miao Lun managed to navigate smoothly. Zhuang Qingyan had felt a sense of incongruity then. Furthermore, during large military actions like the attack on Shaye, the other two warlords participated, even Nai Kang himself commanded on the field. Why was it specifically Miao Lun who was excluded?

“Why do you particularly favor Miao Lun? It’s not because of trust but because…”

“—Miao Lun is your most deeply hidden puppet,” Zhuang Qingyan declared conclusively.

Nai Kang’s calm facade shattered.

With a few words and an intricate sequence of reasoning, Zhuang Qingyan breached Nai Kang’s psychological defenses.

To kill Nai Kang, they had to eliminate the puppet first—Miao Lun had to die.

Zhang Ci immediately signaled a dozen people. “Come with me.”

He turned to Song Ke, who seemed about to say something, and nodded. “Leave it to me.”

Fang Zhixu wiped his face and stood resolutely in front of Zhang Ci. “I’m going with you.”

As for Ayao... she was still with Miao Lun. He didn't know if she was in danger. He had to go himself to feel assured.

Fang Zhixu turned back, looking at Song Ke, Zhuang Qingyan, and the others, bowing deeply. "...I'm counting on you."

"Stop them!!" Nai Kang bellowed.

Song Ke swiftly conjured a Shaolin staff, charging forward, sweeping through the opponents and knocking down the pursuers. Zhang Ci, Fang Zhixu, and others took the chance to leap into the tunnel, disappearing in an instant.

A hint of anxiety flickered in Nai Kang's eyes, yet he managed to maintain composure. "Just with a dozen of you, you think you can kill Miao Lun?"

"We will definitely do it! Once he's gone, you'll be left waiting... waiting to die!" Song Ke spoke resolutely.

She wasn't sure how strong Miao Lun's self-defense capabilities were, but she knew Zhang Ci well. Her senior brother was the kind of person who, once making a promise, would give his all to fulfill it.

"What if I tell you that even if you kill Miao Lun, you still can't harm me?"

Nai Kang quickly regained his calm demeanor, even arrogantly finding a chair and sitting down.

"Not good," Lu Xiaoyu from the back suddenly spoke up. His ice-blue eyes swiftly flickered, displaying data streams. "Detected interference from unknown signals, five starships are heading towards Mu City, estimated to arrive in an hour."

At this timing, arriving at Mu City on starships clearly exposed the identity of the approaching party. They hadn't anticipated that the actions of the Alliance's special envoy would be quicker than expected.



Nai Kang received the same information. His features relaxed, and he burst into laughter. "I told you that you couldn't touch me. I not only sent a 'request for intervention' but also submitted an 'emergency refuge' to the Alliance. Before you find Miao Lun, I might have already left Mu City."

Nai Kang was planning to escape? Song Ke was stunned by his shamelessness.

Zhuang Qingyan looked at Nai Kang, who was laughing heartily, and grinned. "Once you submit an emergency refuge, it means you'll lose all privileges as a magistrate. You won't be able to return to Mu City for the rest of your life. General, you're willing to hand over the kingdom you've painstakingly built. I must admire your magnanimity. Oh, are you this afraid that we'll kill you?"

When it came to cutting remarks, Zhuang Qingyan ranked second to none.

Nai Kang's laughter faded.

Chapter 104.2 – When the Roses Bloom (22)

The third puppet

Mu City, in a private militia camp at a certain location.

A group of mercenaries was on their routine patrol. As they turned a corner and took a few steps forward, there was a slight "crack" beneath their feet. Without reacting in time, they stumbled upon hidden frost traps. Ice blades, solidified like whirling knives, slit everyone's throats in an instant. With a muffled thud, the unfortunate squad fell neatly in unison.

In a camp several meters away, awakeners were idling away, playing cards.

"Double nines! Sweep! I win! Huh, what's that smell?"

"Smells like rotten eggs..."

“Rotten eggs? Isn’t this hydrogen sulfide... Not good!”

Outside the camp, massive frost-wrapped shells plummeted from the sky. Upon impact, they burst open without any flames, releasing a green poisonous gas. The awakeners who accidentally inhaled it clutched their throats, writhing in agony.

The enemy assault alarm sounded, prompting mercenaries armed to the teeth to charge from all directions.

“Our feelings are like trapped in a weird loop~ The more we love, the more confused we become, the more we love, the more confused we become~”

A clear, soothing voice began to resonate, causing the mercenaries to lose focus. They were ensnared in a confusion debuff, dropping their weapons one by one, scrambling around like headless flies, clutching their heads in panic. Silent frost bombs relentlessly pounded the ground, and in a blink, the entire private militia camp fell silent once more.

From a distant high-rise building, hidden awakeners cautiously peeked out.

Xu Xing tied his headband, tiptoed to the window, controlling frost traps while coordinating with Su Cha and Irene to create “super frost poison gas bombs.” He became the most powerful offensive force in destroying the militia camp, no longer relying solely on hexagonal ice blades. His attacks were versatile and unpredictable, achieving a perfect balance between multitasking, visibly progressing through trials and tribulations.

“All done,” Lin Youyou glanced at the terminal, marking off another location on the map. “The operation at Rita’s end went smoothly. Mu Qin and Ruan Wenjun’s militia camps have been cleared. Only Miao Lun’s remains. We need to accelerate.”

As a covert team, their primary mission was to dismantle the armed forces of major warlords, preventing them from aiding Nai Kang. Thus, to minimize attention, Irene opted not to use more overt firepower but instead employed the newly developed frost poison shells.

“Something’s odd,” Su Cha, who had gone to scout ahead, emerged and said in a low voice, “The alarm at the Reunification Palace has been blaring for almost three minutes, yet there’s no movement at this camp.”

Lin Youyou paused, realizing that while the lack of defense when they initially attacked was normal, continuing to play cards calmly even after the alarm had been blaring for so long seemed too composed.

“Stick to the plan for now. I’ll contact Zhuang Qingyan’s team,” Lin Youyou decided after a moment of thought.

...

“Boom—”

A deafening explosion echoed from the direction of the Reunification Palace. After a few seconds, a piercing alarm sounded.

Miao Lun’s hand, in the midst of rolling a cigarette, paused. He squinted, gazing into the distance, half of his face obscured by smoke.

After a while, a newly transferred aide hurried in, softly reporting, “Sir, the General has been attacked.”

“Attacked...” Miao Lun repeated the words, “Has the General ordered me to reinforce?”

“Yes, there’s an order, but not for reinforcement. The General’s exact words were ‘stay put unless requested otherwise.’”

“Heh,” Miao Lun suddenly sneered, “Stay put unless requested otherwise. What a brilliant order.”

He fiercely stubbed out the cigarette on the table, leaving a grim scar, then stood up abruptly, striding out purposefully, with Godanwei and Hu Chao trailing behind him.

“Sir, where are you... going?” The aide knelt, wondering if Miao Lun was openly defying orders?

Miao Lun’s voice was chillingly cold, “Summon all the private militia, immediately return to the estate.”

“Sir! Something terrible has happened, sir!” A servant rushed in, scrambling and falling at Miao Lun’s feet. “Our militia camp has been attacked!”

“Where?” Miao Lun’s face turned ashen.

“Ev...everywhere...” The servant’s voice trembled, not daring to meet his gaze.

Everyone present knelt in genuine fear. Miao Lun’s fluctuating breath felt like an impending guillotine.

Suddenly, he pivoted, heading towards the backyard.

Zhang Wanyao and Marie were speaking softly when Miao Lun barged in without a word, slapping Zhang Wanyao across the face. “Bitch!”

Zhang Wanyao fell to the ground, half of her face swelling, lips bleeding profusely.

Marie snapped her eyes open, interrupting her telepathic conversation with Marsha, rushing to help her up, glaring at Miao Lun. “Why do you hit someone!”

Miao Lun’s face was incredibly dark. Step by step, he advanced, his immense shadow gradually enveloping Zhang Wanyao’s slender figure. Marie rushed forward to shield Zhang Wanyao but was kicked aside by Miao Lun and restrained by Hu Chao.

Gripping Zhang Wanyao by her hair, Miao Lun dragged her up from the ground. “I’ve raised you for so long, never thought I’d nurture a treacherous spy, a two-faced wench. The location of the militia camp was leaked by you.”

Zhang Wanyao coldly responded, “Yes.”

Miao Lun, enraged and without interrogation, had already concluded her guilt. No matter what she said, it couldn't change his furious reality. The portraits Zhang Wanyao had given to Irene several times used her unique layering technique. At first glance, it depicted a girl trapped in the Rose Army, but beneath the surface, through a specific method, it revealed the map of the militia camp.

Furious beyond measure, Miao Lun kicked her abdomen, causing Zhang Wanyao to curl up in pain.

“Sir, should we still go to the estate?” Godanwei asked softly.

“Go,” Miao Lun wiped his hands, saying coldly, “Take them all.”

Several girls in the backyard had their eyes blindfolded, mouths taped shut, hands and feet tightly bound before being loaded into a transport vehicle.

Marie moved within the darkness of the rear compartment, trying to locate Zhang Wanyao by scent. She lay motionless on the ground, causing Marie to grow increasingly worried. She nudged her with her head, attempting to wake her up.

After a while, Zhang Wanyao slowly regained consciousness, lightly brushing against Marie. Sensing that she wanted to communicate, Marie turned around quickly. Their hands met, and Zhang Wanyao's warm fingertips swiftly wrote a word in Marie's palm.

Marai carefully discerned the word — “sister” in the local dialect.

Marie immediately understood her intention. She closed her eyes and initiated a telepathic connection, desperately calling out for Marsha.

As the sun gradually descended, following the last remnants of light along the horizon, hundreds of fully armed awakens guarded a single person, hurriedly entering Miao Lun's ancestral estate. The gates shut tightly behind them, the footsteps of guards on patrol becoming more vigilant.

...

Time passed second by second in the Reunification Palace.

The security detail had been cleared out, leaving only a few. Song Ke wiped off the blood splatters on her face, her eyes fixed unblinkingly around Nai Kang. She retained the last bit of her awakened energy, waiting for Zhang Ci's signal. As soon as her senior brother succeeded, she would instantly deal with Nai Kang.

"The Special Envoy is estimated to arrive in thirty-five minutes," Lu Xiaoyu reminded.

There was still time, and Song Ke felt slightly relieved.

The terminal lit up with a notification. Zhuang Qingyan glanced down, and his gaze froze instantly. It was a message from Zhang Ci: "Miao Lun has escaped."

Zhuang Qingyan swiftly typed in response. Zhang Ci succinctly explained the situation: Shortly after the explosion at the Reunification Palace, Miao Lun led his group away from the estate. They found nothing, which either meant Miao Lun had a spy monitoring the General's every move, or... he knew his puppet status, sensed danger, and retreated early.

Zhang Ci's next message arrived: "Heading towards the estate. Help me locate Marsha's position."

Fortunately, Marsha was in the underground passage of the estate, maintaining telepathic contact with her twin sister all along. After Miao Lun fled, she followed Marie through the tunnel and relayed the information promptly. However, for some unknown reason, despite the surface sounds transmitting into the tunnel, the signals inside were exceptionally weak. Zhang Ci's terminal couldn't locate her.

Zhuang Qingyan tossed the terminal to Lu Xiaoyu. "Lu Xiaoyu!"

Lu Xiaoyu caught it and quickly started typing upon scanning the information.

“What’s wrong?” Song Ke asked, concerned.

Zhuang Qingyan squeezed her hand but before he could say anything, Nai Kang in the distance glanced at the terminal and burst into loud laughter. “I just said it, you can’t kill Miao Lun, nor can you kill me.”

Song Ke furrowed her brow, ready to hurl her swallowtail dart to silence him when suddenly, she became alert.

A familiar spatial rift appeared in the sky.

“Trouble,” Lu Xiaoyu said with a sigh as she located Marsha’s position, “The Special Envoy hasn’t arrived, but the Paw Squad has.”

One after another, towering figures emerged from the void, their powerful awakened energy causing intense fluctuations in the air.

Three of them. S-level awakeners.

Wait a minute!! Song Ke widened her eyes suddenly.

The person walking at the rear, over two meters tall, with the left side of their face burned and necrotic, muscles fused together, an eerie white eye, and the right side riddled with numerous knife scars, appeared neither human nor ghost.

This was... the Bloody Hunter, Punk.

...

Mu City fell into an eerie silence. Streets emptied, residents aware that something significant was underway, kept their doors and windows shut, huddled inside without daring to peek out. As for other warlords, merchants, and wealthy elites, they observed the situation from a distance.

Numerous high-level awakeners surrounded Miao Lun's residence.

Due to urgency, Zhang Ci's group didn't even take the tunnels, instead traversing straight through the city, emanating a lethal intent as they zeroed in on their target.

In the vast night, Zhang Ci issued a cold command, "Prepare for a strong assault. Top priority: eliminate Miao Lun."

The forceful and thunderous Divine Purge Invocation sounded the attack, Shaye's awakeners exploded with awakened energy, shattering the mansion's gates, engaging in a fierce battle with the pouring private militia.

Fang Zhixu closely followed Zhang Ci, wielding a triangular military dagger, fearlessly fighting the private militia. If knocked down, he'd rise again; if injured, he'd hastily administer rough self-treatment before charging forward.

Ayao, Ayao was still in Miao Lun's clutches. He had to move faster, quicker to rescue her.

"Boom—"

Dazzling cannon fire leveled an entire row of buildings. The voices of Irene and Lin Youyou resounded, "We've come to help!"

With the addition of area-attack awakeners like Irene and Xu Xing, the assault on the mansion accelerated. Soon, flames crackled, thick smoke billowed, and scattered figures ran helter-skelter.

"Qiong Qi, northeast corner, someone's trying to flee!"

Detection-type awakener Lin Mo noticed the disturbance and loudly warned.

Zhang Ci and the others turned to chase the fleeing figures at the northeast corner. Dozens of awakeners protected a portly figure in military attire, desperately trying to escape.



Su Cha acted the quickest, vanishing and reappearing among the group, a poisoned dagger swiftly bypassing the guards, relentlessly severing the fat man's neck, almost simultaneously followed by Zhang Ci's Soul Annihilation Curse piercing his brain!

With dual fatal injuries, Miao Lun was undoubtedly doomed!

The rotund figure froze, staggered a few steps, and slowly collapsed to the ground, the military cap tumbling off to reveal the entire face.

Just as everyone breathed a sigh of relief, their expressions suddenly shifted. This wasn't Miao Lun at all!

Miao Lun wasn't at the mansion; he'd used a decoy, successfully deceiving everyone.

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 105: When the Roses Bloom (23)

Chapter 105 – When the Roses Bloom (23)

On Children

When Zhang Wanyao woke up again, the room was pitch black.

Marie curled up at her feet, hands behind her grinding ropes against the table corner. However, the ropes were specially made, rendering her actions meaningless.

"Marie, where are we?" Zhang Wanyao asked softly.

Upon hearing her voice, Marie immediately leaned closer. "Ayao, you're finally awake. Miao Lun brought us to his estate."

Zhang Wanyao propped herself up, looking out of the window. Beneath the bleak moonlight, her lips were as pale as snow. "No, this isn't Miao Lun's estate."

She had once accompanied Miao Lun to his estate, a luxurious mansion situated in Mu City, in a quiet and affluent area. Lights there never ceased, but at this moment, outside was shrouded in thin mist, desolate with no signs of life, only Miao Lun's private soldiers on edge, resembling more a suburban villa area.

Zhang Wanyao hadn't been here before, but Miao Lun owned numerous properties, beyond her complete knowledge.

"What? But before we left, Miao Lun clearly said we were going back to his estate..." Marie muttered in confusion, then smacked her forehead suddenly. "Oh no, that means the message I sent to Marsha was also false. The reinforcements she sought must have gone to the wrong place!"

Marie's voice lowered in concern as she glanced at Zhang Wanyao. "Ayao, you look really pale. Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," Zhang Wanyao shook her head. "Can you still contact your sister?"

"Yes, she came with us."

"I want to know what's happening in the Reunification Palace," Zhang Wanyao said.

"I'll ask her right away." Marie activated her powers and communicated with Martha underground.

Nai Wen was dead, Nai Kang had three puppets, and the last one was Miao Lun. Only by killing Miao Lun could Song Ke have a chance to take down Nai Kang.

Zhang Wanyao's misty eyes narrowed slightly; Miao Lun probably knew he was a puppet long ago.

As she approached Miao Lun, although this person was initially reckless, he didn't live as cautiously before. However, gradually, there were more and more private soldiers around Miao Lun. In the end, they never left him no matter what he did. Moreover, he was secretly gathering various rare awakeners, such as Hasa who excelled in data tracking, Sang Bo who could turn into black mud, and Hu Chao and Godanwei, who were always close bodyguards.

When did Miao Lun realize Nai Kang's manipulations on him? It's unclear. But his mind was extremely deep, quietly enduring it all, seemingly bargaining with Nai Kang on one hand and seeking opportunities to break free from the constraints on the other. Miao Lun obviously wanted to transfer the puppet elsewhere, but the causality awakener had died, and other high-level causality awakeners were even rarer to find. Thus, Miao Lun's plan had to be temporarily shelved.

Lately, Miao Lun's gaze toward her had been increasingly peculiar. Clearly, he had sent someone to follow her, harboring suspicions, yet he wasn't in a rush to deal with her. Perhaps, Miao Lun's retention of her wasn't due to favor but rather as preparation to serve as a vessel. However, before he could implement this plan, Nai Kang fell into multiple assassination crises.

While Zhang Wanyao and Marie were whispering, a girl's cry suddenly came from outside the room. Godanwei dragged them all out. The number of private soldiers Miao Lun brought wasn't substantial; a large part had been dispatched to his estate to divert attention. However, those who remained were the elite.

Shortly after, Godanwei kicked open their door. "The master requests your presence. Will you go by yourselves, or shall I escort you?"

Marie fearfully bit her lip, while Zhang Wanyao replied calmly, "We'll go by ourselves."

Including Zhang Wanyao, six girls were taken to a spacious bedroom, where they were startled by the gruesome scene. Hu Chao held an extremely thin blade, slicing at a person's face. The individual's skin showed no inch of relief, tortured to the point of unrecognizability, whimpering in agony.

Miao Lun sat in front, spreading his legs apart. "I'll ask you again, what is that old man's plan?"

The secretary sent by Nai Kang couldn't endure the torture, pleading, "General, the old man has submitted an urgent asylum request. The Alliance will pick him up tonight. Please, I've told you everything I know. Please spare me."

Miao Lun stared at him in silence.

Hu Chao murmured, "His answers from seven times are consistent, General. There are few cuts left. Should we continue?"

In other words, this person hadn't lied.

Miao Lun raised a finger. Hu Chao swiftly struck, giving him a swift end, terminating the secretary's life.

Having obtained the desired answers, Miao Lun stood up with suppressed anger, pacing back and forth in the room. He violently kicked over a chair, cursing furiously, "Old man, damn that old man!"

"Take the person away."

Servants entered quietly and dragged away the lifeless body of the secretary.

Miao Lun suddenly turned around, panting heavily as he pressed down on Godanwei's shoulder with force. "I don't care what it takes. Tonight, guard the door for me, no flies allowed in. Understand?"

Godanwei knelt down on one knee following his pressure, bowing his head. "Godanwei swears to guard the master with his life."

Miao Lun nodded in satisfaction. "Go."

Once Godanwei left, Miao Lun's grim expression remained unchanged. He seemed like a desperate trapped beast, grabbing the whip on the table and venting his frustration, causing varying degrees of harm to the girls in the room. Hearing their painful sounds, Miao Lun suddenly reached for one girl's head, pressing it forcefully onto the still-congealing blood and flesh, casting a hefty shadow.

The girl's screams were agonizing, causing Hu Chao's eardrums to twitch. Subconsciously, he glanced up and met Miao Lun's ferocious gaze. His body shook, stepping back two paces, hiding behind the screen. From there, he could clearly see Miao Lun's silhouette but didn't have to directly witness those cruel scenes.

After a while, Miao Lun stopped, the girl covered in blood, barely clinging to life, slipping into unconsciousness.

Miao Lun turned his gaze toward Marie, coldly commanding, "Come here."

Terrified, Marie retreated, but Miao Lun impatiently whipped the air, lashing around her neck and forcefully dragging her closer. Marie resisted, kicking and punching, but Miao Lun's grip tightened. Her breath became labored, her eyes rolling back, and her struggles grew feeble.

Zhang Wanyao rushed over, attempting to pry Miao Lun's hand away. Irritated, Miao Lun kicked out, a resounding "thud" as Zhang Wanyao's back collided with the iron bed frame, blinding her vision for several seconds.

Miao Lun relaxed, a bloodied grin forming. "Why the rush? Your turn is coming soon."

Good things are always saved for a slow, enjoyable end.

Hu Chao, hearing the commotion inside, peeked beyond the screen. He saw Zhang Wanyao lying almost lifeless on the ground, while Marie's eyes were shut tight, a ring of marks around her neck, her hand under the table spasming.

Hu Chao recoiled. At this moment, he especially missed the deceased Sang Bo. If not for having no choice, he truly didn't want to engage in this filthy work.

There's no more time.

Zhang Wanyao endured the intense pain, forcing herself to calm down. She had to do something.

As long as Miao Lun died, Nai Kang would lose his final protection. Her abilities were limited; she couldn't personally kill Nai Kang. But she could expedite his demise, giving him a push toward death.

From Miao Lun's perspective, it seemed inevitable that Nai Kang had a trick up his sleeve. Miao Lun's purpose in hiding was clear: as long as they could endure tonight, both Nai Kang and Miao Lun could continue to live unharmed.

"There's no time, no time."

Zhang Wanyao crawled forward slowly. Miao Lun, dissatisfied with the whip, tossed it aside and instead used both hands to grip Marie's neck.

Zhang Wanyao's trembling fingertips reached the tip of the whip. With sudden and astonishing strength from her slender body, she gritted her teeth, swiftly and skillfully entwining the whip around Miao Lun's neck, creating a tight knot and pulling it backward—

Miao Lun tensed all over, eyes bulging, reflexively groping at his own neck, trying to undo the knot. However, Zhang Wanyao, having practiced the same action countless times, tied the knot in an extremely intricate manner. It was impossible to loosen it quickly. Miao Lun, frustrated and desperate, made gasping sounds in his throat. His left hand reached back to try and grab the whip's end while his right hand, freed, slapped Zhang Wanyao's face and seized her hair, pulling upward.

Zhang Wanyao resisted with all her might, refusing to release the whip.

Yet, the energy a strong and healthy man could muster in a life-or-death struggle far surpassed that of a weak and injured woman. Amid Miao Lun's vigorous struggle, Zhang Wanyao's fingertips bled, her strength steadily draining.

Marie awoke from suffocation, witnessing the scene before her. She opened her mouth, silently calling out, "A Yao..."

Tears streaming down her face, she desperately clawed at Miao Lun's arm, her fingernails deeply embedded in his flesh. She lowered her head and, like a wild beast, bit and gnawed, forcibly pulling Miao Lun's hand away from Zhang Wanyao's hair.

Hu Chao heard the commotion and, peering through a screen, saw Miao Lun slightly tilting his head, hands pressing down on Ma Rui, trembling uncontrollably. Hu Chao instantly made a connection, glanced once, then silently lowered his head again.

Miao Lun's face had already turned blue and purple, and Zhang Wanyao was on the verge of giving up, her strength drained. The tip of the whip slid forward a few inches—

At that moment, a hand covered in scars came in and, adding to her force, tightened the whip together!

It was another girl from the room, just pushed into the pool of blood by Miao Lun. Her appearance was immensely tragic, but her eyes were filled with resolute determination.

In the silent confrontation, a third hand covered in, followed by a fourth, a fifth...

These girls from the Rose Army, stripped and vulnerable, seen as toys by Miao Lun, chose to resist with their lives. They made no sound, either staggering forward or crawling, tightly gripping the whip with unwavering determination.

They only had one thought: Miao Lun must die.

Miao Lun, on the brink of breaking free, suffered another blow. His eyes glazed over with a deathly pallor, his brain rapidly starved of oxygen, the blood in his neck artery ready to burst. Miao Lun's struggle grew stronger, finally managing to knock over a teacup with great effort.

The sudden sound of shattered porcelain startled Hu Chao, who vigilantly raised his head, only to look towards the door.

Faint sounds of a scuffle emanated from the darkness, sporadic flashes of supernatural light. Hu Chao furrowed his brow slightly. What was Godanwei up to? He couldn't even handle something as simple as guarding the door. They might as well switch roles, let him watch over Miao Lun...

Wait!

Hu Chao suddenly realized he hadn't heard Miao Lun's voice for several minutes, and even the cries of those girls had disappeared. He was drenched in cold sweat, pushing the screen down to rush forward.

A sharp talisman suddenly pierced through the back of Hu Chao's head.

Zhang Ci and Irene rushed in with a group of people, everyone shocked by the scene before them.

The girls, battered and bruised, held onto the whip in various poses, while its other end was wrapped around Miao Lun's neck. He lay stiff, barely clinging to his last breath.

"Ayao!!" Fang Zhixu dropped his triangular dagger and rushed over, picking up Zhang Wanyao from the ground.

Zhang Ci grabbed Miao Lun, the Seven Star Sword piercing his head accurately. Miao Lun had no strength left to resist.

After confirming his death, Zhang Ci sent a message to Zhuang Qingyan's side.

Miao Lun's body was dragged away, Marie fell from the table, landing on the ground, coughing violently.

Zhang Ci paused, removed his robe, turned away, and covered her body full of wounds.

Lin Youyou and Irene also took out clean coats and distributed them to the other girls.



The Shaye awakeners at the scene fell silent. These girls were heroes. Perhaps Miao Lun, even in death, wouldn't have imagined that his glamorous life would end with being strangled by the very Rose Army he had "nurtured."

Fang Zhixu anxiously checked Zhang Wanyao's limbs, urgently asking, "Ayao, you're hurt? Let me treat you."

Zhang Wanyao gently placed her hand on his, "Why are you in such a mess?"

Fang Zhixu wasn't much better off than her. His face was stained with blood, and his hair was tangled.

Zhang Wanyao smiled tenderly, "How many times have I told you? Clothes are hard to clean."

Fang Zhixu hadn't heard her nagging for a long time. His heart felt sour and bitter, "I'll clean them. I'll do it."

"Ayao, Nai Wen is dead. I killed him with my own hands. Nai Kang, Nai Kang is about to die too. None of them will escape."

"I finally, finally avenged Tiantian," Fang Zhixu said, choking up.

"I know," Zhang Wanyao said softly, "You've worked hard during this time."

Fang Zhixu shook his head quickly, "I haven't. It was all my fault before. I couldn't handle things, I always made you angry. When things settle here, can we leave Mu City? Go back to Tongwan, or wherever you want to go?"

"No, just go back to Tongwan. I want to go home," Zhang Wanyao said softly.

The phrase "go home" filled Fang Zhixun's eyes with tears. Clumsily, he reached out to hold Zhang Wanyao, but she stopped him again.

Fang Zhixu looked up in confusion.

“There’s something I need to figure out how to tell you.”

Zhang Wanyao took Fang Zhixu’s hand and placed it on her abdomen. Fang Zhixu released his awakened energy, then his face froze.

—Zhang Wanyao’s spleen was shattered.

Not only the spleen but other organs also suffered rapid deterioration due to massive blood loss and external pressure. Although she had no visible wounds on the surface, her body was riddled with injuries. Miao Lun’s kick at the private residence was unusually vicious, and Zhang Wanyao, despite enduring for a while, couldn’t hold on any longer after repeated heavy blows.

“It’s okay, it’s okay. I’m an A-level healer, I can save you!”

Fang Zhixu’s speech was incoherent, his hands trembling incessantly. He desperately released his awakened energy, channeling it into Zhang Wanyao’s body.

However, Zhang Wanyao was just an ordinary person, her constitution hadn’t undergone any enhancement, and the absorption of awakened energy was exceptionally slow. Fang Zhixu’s voice trembled, “Ayao, don’t be afraid. I’m a doctor, I’ll perform surgery on you, let’s do it now!”

Zhang Wanyao held Fang Zhixu’s hand, stopping his futile efforts. There was no more time, she knew.

“Before, what I said was all out of anger. Axu, you’re not just a good father but also a very, very good husband.”

“It’s just regrettable that I can’t accompany you any further. Don’t be sad; I’ve never regretted what I did.”

She cupped Fang Zhixu's face, crying, "This time, don't fall apart. Promise me to live well, can you do that?"

Fang Zhixu cried as he shook his head, "I can't, I can't, Ayao. I'm worthless. I can't save Tiantian, I can't even save you."

"You're not worthless; you're the best doctor in the world."

"Promise me." Zhang Wanyao stubbornly stared at him, insisting on an answer.

Fang Zhixu, in immense pain, nodded tearfully, "I promise you."

"Promise me what?"

"...To live well."

"Nai Kang is dead," Zhang Ci suddenly spoke, "Song Ke killed Nai Kang. Nai Kang is already dead."

"Dead? That's good; he got what he deserved," Zhang Wanyao's voice grew fainter. "Axu, I seem to see Tiantian."

This dream was a long-awaited beautiful one. Tiantian wasn't crying anymore; instead, she was saying something, her dimple showing, and she smiled sweetly.

Zhang Wanyao hurried forward, finally hearing clearly. It turned out she was calling, "Mommy!"

...

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

...

For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 106: When the Roses Bloom (24)

Chapter 106 – When the Roses Bloom (24)

Touch my people

Three S-level awakeners emerged from a spatial rift and walked towards Nai Kang. Except for Punk, the other two were dressed in matching combat suits.

The leading man, upon confirming Nai Kang's identity, presented his credentials and introduced themselves, "Former Mu City Magistrate, we are Alliance Special Operations Team members, Gasta and Roy. We arrived at District C55 at 17:27 local time as scheduled."

"Why is it only you? Where are the Special Envoys and the Starships?" Nai Kang's expression soured. "I demand an immediate departure."

"The starship escorting you is estimated to arrive in thirty-three minutes," Gasta replied.

"Then I command you to kill these people now," Nai Kang said, pointing at the awakeners Song Ke and the Shaye awakeners across from him.

Gasta remained unmoved, showing no regard for Nai Kang's demands. "Former Mu City Magistrate, our mission is to ensure your personal safety until the Special Envoys arrive. You have no authority to issue orders to me."

Gasta and Roy exuded a calm and restrained demeanor, unlike Punk, who stared intensely at Song Ke. The scars on his face twisted grotesquely, clearly recognizing her as the culprit who had blinded his right eye on Manzoni Street, forcing him to replace it with a mechanical eye.

Punk took a slow step forward, without any warning, and suddenly erupted.

A series of bloody smoke explosions ensued. Fortunately, Song Ke was prepared, instantly transforming her shield. With a flick of her left hand, a handful of shurikens flew towards Punk.

Punk's face contorted as he charged like a wild beast. Song Ke morphed her shield into a blade, striking at his lower body. Punk jumped to evade, and simultaneously, Song Ke leaped higher than him. Leveraging her aerial advantage, she delivered a brutal sweeping kick to Punk's chin.

A "boom" echoed as fireworks exploded, the strong recoil causing Song Ke to spin in mid-air before landing steadily. Meanwhile, Punk staggered backward, his feet leaving deep marks on the ground, his lower jaw almost dislocated.

The exploding fireworks still managed to injure Song Ke. The cuff of her coat was blown off by the explosion. Despite dodging quickly during the face-off, she was grazed by Punk's blood explosion, leaving a wound on her arm. Fortunately, it wasn't serious.

Samuel and the others wanted to intervene but were stopped by Song Ke. "You guys, step back."

In a fight between S-level awakeners, ordinary awakeners couldn't intervene. Samuel and his group would only be massacred by Punk.

Gasta stood in front of Punk, speaking coldly, "Bloody Hunter, acting without authorization, this is your first warning."

Punk sneered, "You brought me here to quell the rebellion, didn't you? What's wrong with me killing her?"

Gasta remained unfazed, "All actions are subject to the Special Envoys' directives. If it happens again, I will initiate containment orders and send you back."

Punk clenched his fists in frustration.

His distinct eye revealed a fierce hostility, akin to a vicious dog on a leash, though he refrained from initiating any further attacks.

Gasta turned to Song Ke. "Are you an S-level awakener? Which unit do you belong to? What's your designation? Who's your superior?"

Song Ke paused for a second before honestly replying, "I have no unit, no designation, and my superior... I am, I am the highest."

A wild S-level awakener? Gasta gradually furrowed his brow. S-level awakeners were extremely valuable as strategic assets and were surely subject to various attempts by the Alliance to recruit them.

Gasta didn't want to engage in direct conflict with her at this moment. "The Alliance is officially executing a mission. Take your people and leave the Reunification Palace immediately."

"No, Nai Kang must die," Song Ke countered, raising her blade without stepping back.

Seeing her stubbornness, Gasta's tone grew colder. "Intentionally obstructing, hindering official duties. Do you know the consequences?"

Punk formed blood beads at his fingertips, provoking madness, while Nai Kang in the distance felt triumphant, expecting his imminent escape.

Talking was futile with them. Song Ke gripped her Tang sword tightly, bypassing Gasta in preparation for a forceful breakout!

Punk laughed maniacally, confronting her head-on. "She struck first, you can't blame me!"

Gasta and Roy felt a headache coming on, forced to join the fray. As they moved forward, blockers appeared before them.

Roy faced off against Lu Xiaoyu. The man in front of him moved with the aid of six huge mechanical arms, engrossed in a screen, tapping his fingers rapidly, appearing dismissive. He easily intercepted Roy.

With composure, Roy initiated his attack. His ability, the "Prism," manipulated refraction rates of different colored lights, creating illusions of displacement and dispersion during combat, inflicting numerous cutting injuries. Roy mastered his ability to perfection. His prism, angled sharply, shot directly at Lu Xiaoyu, emitting a blinding seven-colored light.

Lu Xiaoyu inputted the final code, confirming Marsha's location. Done. He happily curved his lips, sending it to Zhang Ci.

Then, seemingly nonchalant, Lu Xiaoyu casually lifted his head. The nearest prism had flown close, less than an inch from his nose. His ice-blue eyes gleamed with an extraordinary radiance, displaying the code "101010" from his pupils, altering the prism's structure, slowly disintegrating it.

Lu Xiaoyu swung all six arms together, a torrential data flow erasing Roy's formidable attacks effortlessly. Those terrifying prisms seemed like mere toys, effortlessly eradicated by him.

Only then did Roy clearly see his opponent's appearance: silver hair, ice-blue eyes. He exclaimed in disbelief, "You're... from the Lu family?!"

Lu Xiaoyu blinked in confusion. "What Lu family? No idea."

...

Gasta was also an offensive-type awakener, possessing the rare ability known as “Biogenic Current”: controlling the electrical currents in biological entities with awakened energy, causing them to erupt explosively, thereby stunning or killing the target.

Gasta glanced at Zhuang Qingyan, who was seated in a wheelchair, not underestimating him. Daring to actively obstruct an S-level awakener, the opponent’s strength was not to be underestimated.

As the secretive biogenic currents attached to Zhuang Qingyan’s various organs, tissues, and cells, about to unleash, suddenly, each current encountered formidable awakened energy and was instantly obliterated!

Gasta felt deeply shocked; the opponent’s energy control was even more exquisite than his own.

Zhuang Qingyan’s counterattack mirrored Gasta’s electric currents. Taking a page from his opponent’s book, he controlled awakened energy to strike back. The radiation field in the air fluctuated intensely. Gasta felt as if his thoughts were weighed down by heavy stones, continuously retreating, momentarily falling into a disadvantage.

“...An Early Awakener?”

Gasta thought of something and abruptly lifted his head.

Early Awakeners referred to a group of individuals who had awakened their abilities before the apocalypse. They absorbed more intense radiation than ordinary awakeners, had more time to adjust their states, and mastered their abilities, making them even more powerful.

However, nurturing an Early Awakener required massive manpower and financial support. Whether it was the nutrient tanks, laboratories, exclusive potions, or the stages of radiation absorption, all were highly confidential data that only the major families in District B could manage. As far as Gasta knew, the genetic optimization program implemented by the Lu family aimed to nurture Early Awakeners. So, who exactly was this person in front of him?

Surveying the battlefield, Gasta gradually realized that the three S-level awakeners were intent on killing him. No wonder the Mu City magistrate had requested asylum.



...

Song Ke, engaged in combat with Punk, remained highly vigilant, always mindful of her positioning. Although both were evenly matched at the moment, her opponent had yet to use his other ability: time reversal.

All three battlefronts were locked in a stalemate, with little time left before the Alliance Special Envoys arrived.

Above the Reunification Palace, the outlines of five starships faintly appeared. Among them, the smallest one suddenly surged its engines, accelerating instantly and appearing overhead. It slowly descended, hovering at low altitude, extending a gangway.

Nai Kang impatiently stood up, striding hastily toward the gangway.

Ignoring everything, Song Ke swiftly forced Punk back with a series of strikes and chased after, determined not to let Nai Kang board the starship!

Gasta and Roy's primary task was to protect Nai Kang. Without hesitation, both diverted their attention and charged towards Song Ke.

Nai Kang ascended the gangway, standing at the doorway, looking down at Song Ke, who was desperately chasing after from behind. As she threw hidden weapons and swung her blade toward him, each strike deviated from hitting him.

A merciless smirk graced Nai Kang's lips: How does it feel, watching helplessly as you let me depart, powerless to stop it?

Nai Kang moved his lips, about to speak, but a faint cracking sound echoed in the air.

The sound was light, easily overlooked, but Nai Kang felt as if struck by lightning. His pupils sharply contracted.

—Miao Lun... is dead!

Song Ke's spirit surged. Her senior brother had succeeded; the final layer of causality on Nai Kang had vanished.

Nai Kang, now devoid of any protection, was at the mercy of others.

Pale-faced with terror, Nai Kang turned his head and scrambled into the cabin, slipping multiple times in his panic, barely managing to enter the compartment. The cabin door closed slowly, and the starship began to ascend.

With a leap, Song Ke caught the remaining piece of the gangway with her hands, gripping it tightly with her legs, swiftly climbing upward. She hung from the underside of the starship like a precarious kite.

“Bang! Bang!”

Blood explosions continuously exploded behind Song Ke. Attacks from prisms and biogenic currents came relentlessly towards her. Unable to evade, she became a living target, enduring the damage. Flipping herself onto the top of the starship, she struggled to maintain balance against the powerful airflow as the starship ascended.

Moving forward, she located Nai Kang's position and thrust her Tang sword.

“Clang!”

The formidable metal-based ability created a deep crack in the cabin window but didn't shatter it.

Nai Kang and she locked eyes through the transparent glass, his gaze filled with terror.

“Boom!”

A cloud of blood mist billowed from her abdomen as Punk's explosions intensified. Song Ke staggered; her whole body slipping off the starship, seemingly about to plummet from the height. At the critical moment, she gripped her Tang sword with one hand, flipping herself back up.

Far away, Zhuang Qingyan's eyes turned chillingly cold. He retrieved the last remaining seal from the space and prepared to inject it into his leg.

"No longer want your leg?!" Lu Xiaoyu's mechanical arm extended, stopping his action, his face uncharacteristically devoid of mockery.

"Don't need it. It's nice to accompany you. Happy?" Zhuang Qingyan's smile was radiant. He forcefully pushed Lu Xiaoyu away, resolutely injected himself, and the potent seal took effect once more. In extreme agony, he stood up again, running swiftly in Song Ke's direction.

Lu Xiaoyu couldn't help but stay silent. He knew his own situation very well. With years of chronic illness, his broken leg couldn't regenerate. Yet Zhuang Qingyan clearly had hope for a cure but was willing to take such a risk. He used to be such a proud person. Could he really accept a lifetime in a wheelchair?

"Madman." Lu Xiaoyu rolled his eyes.

One couldn't deny, this person was becoming more and more insane but also more... like a living person.

Song Ke's right hand, blood flowing profusely, covered the surface of the starship. Her awakened energy surged at a terrifying speed, causing the surface of the starship to emit a faint blue light, trembling incessantly.

Nai Kang's panic grew, wondering what kind of monster she was to want to forcibly destroy the starship's hull!

Nai Kang anxiously looked at the control panel; there were five seconds left until the next leap.

[Five]

Song Ke gripped the Tang sword with her left hand, inching it into the porthole.

[Four]

Gasta and Roy unleashed their abilities, launching their most ferocious attacks at Song Ke, while Punk lit blood explosions on her.

[Three]

Just as Song Ke seemed about to fall again, two figures rushed forward, powerful and icy waves of awakened energy erupting. A torrent of data formed an inescapable defensive net, repelling prism, bioelectric currents, and blood explosions.

Zhuang Qingyan and Lu Xiaoyu were thrown more than ten meters away. Zhuang Qingyan, who always cared about appearance, had a torn and tattered coat. Lu Xiaoyu fared worse with six mechanical arms broken, but this wave of attacks hadn't harmed Song Ke in the slightest.

[Two]

Punk's left eye flickered a deathly white, time rewound—activated.

Song Ke exerted all her strength, her eyes bursting with a brilliant blue light. The starship's hull collapsed, the Tang sword unstoppable as it pierced Nai Kang's heart.

[One]

“Boom—” The entire starship exploded into dazzling fireworks.

Time's flow slowed down, eventually freezing and reversing.

Under the gaze of all, an intact starship reappeared. Punk's ability had taken effect!

Everyone held their breath, looking up at the sky.

A graceful figure leaped high and landed soundlessly. Slowly, with injuries all over, Song Ke stood up.

Behind her, the starship, just recovered from the explosion, stayed in place for two seconds before its hull shattered into pieces.

Nai Kang's corpse slammed heavily onto the ground, a Tang sword stuck in his mouth.

Time reversal could only revert non-living entities to their state a few seconds prior.

But on the starship's surface, the impact left by Song Ke's ability remained. Even with time reversal, it would still shatter.

Moreover, long before Punk activated his ability, Song Ke had already killed Nai Kang.

The scene fell into dead silence.

Song Ke's eyes flashed with blue light, her awakened energy gushing out wildly, crackling with electricity like a rampaging madman.

She passed judgment on Punk's trio: "Who gave you permission to touch my people?"

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 107: When the Roses Bloom (25)

Chapter 107 – When the Roses Bloom (25)

## S-level Romance

Behind Song Ke, Nai Kang crashed to the ground, bones shattered, piercing his organs, and crimson blood spread out.

Anyone could see that this once prestigious magistrate now met a dismal end, dead beyond any possibility of survival. The Tang sword, which had rung with such resounding authority, echoed like a funeral bell in everyone's ears.

The onlookers were petrified, staring at Song Ke as if she were a monster.

Amidst the pursuit and blockade by three S-level awakeners, the ruthless killing of the magistrate from District C was not the most terrifying aspect. What truly shattered nerves was Song Ke's act of single-handedly destroying a starship. This transcended human limits, and even among awakeners, the effect was explosively remarkable.

Consider this: the hull of the starship was entirely constructed from Rhenium (Re), a rare element possessing stability comparable to diamonds—hard, wear-resistant, heat-resistant, and corrosion-resistant. Except for its expensive cost, it had virtually no flaws. Yet, solely with her awakened energy, Song Ke disintegrated it into shards. One could imagine the astonishing energy she unleashed in that brief moment.

The remaining four starships hovered in high altitude, afraid to descend easily upon the Reunification Palace. Inside the foremost command cabin, a man in formal attire with meticulously groomed hair solemnly observed Song Ke on the floating screen.

"Trouble, such trouble," muttered Park Jae-woo, deeply troubled. Even though he had mentally prepared before coming, the complexity of the situation in District C55 far exceeded his imagination.

The demise of the applying-for-emergency-asylum magistrate would undoubtedly invite scrutiny upon his return for duty. What troubled him more were the three unidentified S-level awakeners below, poised to potentially trigger a new round of conflict at any moment.

Park Jae-woo was an extremely astute politician, keen on promotions and averse to war and violence. Out of self-interest, he leaned towards resolving disputes through peace and non-violence—if it could be avoided, no battles should be waged. As any battle would result in casualties, and casualties would affect his political achievements, hindering his path to advancement. Nai Kang's death was a settled matter, but there might still be room for maneuvering, perhaps even a chance for negotiation?

“Have you found information on these three individuals?” Park Jae-woo's expression turned serious.

Two S-level operatives from the Special Operations Team and a team of fully armed A-level awakeners were on the starship, following Park Jae-woo's orders.

The civilian aide brought up the file screen and reported to Park Jae-woo, “Sir, we could only find details on one person, named Song Ke, biological ID: VUL7700523, registered in District C72, awakener level... um, A-level?”

The A-level awakener seated behind immediately exclaimed in surprise.

“What? A-level! How does she even remotely resemble an A-level?”

“District C72, that governed by artificial intelligence, Ferrara? This is too chaotic, isn't it?”

“What's going on at Ferrara's registration center? S-level awakeners slipping through? If they'd reported in time, maybe this could've been resolved earlier.”

“Sir, her energy fluctuations are quite abnormal,” Odin, also an S-level awakener, cautioned in a deep voice.

Park Jae-woo looked at the energy detection device on the console. The detector connected to it was circling around Song Ke, and the radiation levels kept skyrocketing. Various lines on the screen danced erratically, displaying energy far exceeding the threshold of an S-level.

“We can't engage, we can't,” Park Jae-woo's expression remained unchanged, but internally, he sighed deeply.

“Issue an immediate broadcast for surrender.”

The cannons on the four starships were raised, armed with the Alliance’s latest heavy weaponry. Simultaneously, a small unmanned drone descended to low altitude, its loudspeaker repeatedly playing a mechanized message: “Those below, please disarm immediately! Any grievances can be resolved through dialogue! A step forward leads to a sea of fire, but stepping back might offer a way out. Special envoy urges—”

Song Ke, annoyed, her eyes flashing blue, conjured a dozen crossbow arrows out of thin air, turning the unmanned drone into a hedgehog.

Park Jae-woo: “...” It’s over. The chance for negotiation shattered.

Due to excessive strain from their supernatural abilities, Gasta and Roy collapsed to the ground, drained of energy.

Punk, seemingly unaffected, stared at Song Ke with a sly smile. “You’ve got guts, killing in front of me.”

“I’m quite curious, how did you survive last time?” Wisps of blood mist faintly appeared around Punk’s fingertips. “But it doesn’t matter. Today, I’ll watch you breathe your last.”

Song Ke raised her right hand, forming a phantom blue Sovereign Spear without relying on any external aid.

“It’ll be you breathing your last.”

“What does she intend to do?”

“Is she insane? She wants to kill Punk? He’s an S-level dual-elemental!”



People within the starship looked surprised, discussing among themselves. Several months ago, Punk, the Bloody Hunter, had his secret of possessing a second awakened ability exposed, stirring considerable discussion within the Alliance.

Song Ke launched an attack with the spear, and Punk confronted her head-on. Their exchange was so swift that it became difficult to follow—both possessed formidable supernatural abilities, their magnetic fields colliding relentlessly. Purely in terms of combat skills, Punk wasn't Song Ke's match, but his brutal explosive attacks often caught Song Ke off guard.

Song Ke didn't retreat a step, fighting with a total disregard for her own safety. Unless it threatened her vitals, she didn't bother evading. Her attacks grew more ferocious, deftly dodging the misty explosions, swiftly lowering her center of gravity, and seizing the opportunity. The Sovereign Spear, like a serpent, ruthlessly pierced through Punk's left palm and flung his entire body backward.

"Bang!" Punk crashed into the outer wall of a building, causing it to collapse, rubble and debris scattering around.

His whole body was drenched in blood, his mouth contorting in a strange twitch, in the next moment, Song Ke's arm erupted into a crimson firework, joints shattered, and her entire right arm hung limp.

Punk's left eye flashed wildly as he triggered a time rewind, breaking free from her control and returning to his position several seconds earlier.

Unable to use her right hand, Song Ke remained unfazed. She calmly switched to her left hand, and her awakened energy manifested audibly, reforming into a spear, thrusting toward Punk.

Seeing the spear in her hand approaching, Punk triggered a time rewind! Song Ke retreated to her previous position, but her offensive remained unaffected. In the instant of her attack, the spear transformed into twin maces, like two iron plates crashing down with immense force, catching Punk off guard, hitting him in the mouth, damaging his internal organs, and causing blood to spurt out.

Song Ke's transformations were erratic, driven solely by combat instinct. Her opponents couldn't predict which weapon she would use next, and these weapons could appear at any time, in any unexpected manner. She shifted between swords, spears, crossbows, turning into staffs, halberds, and dual blades in the blink of an eye, incorporating a variety of concealed weapons, making her attacks unpredictable.

Punk had never seen such bizarre ancient weapons and couldn't discern their characteristics. He could only increase the frequency of his blood explosions.

Song Ke sustained more and more wounds, shocking onlookers as she seemed to fearlessly withstand the blood explosions.

"Sir, the radiation levels are still rising," Odin frowned.

"Is... is she still human?" a trembling A-level awakener asked.

"Should we intervene, sir?"

Park Jae-woo's expression became inscrutable. Among the awakeners accompanying his actions, only Punk's identity was somewhat delicate. Strictly speaking, he was Park Jae-woo's political adversary, sent ostensibly to quell rebellion but actually tasked with monitoring Park Jae-woo, looking for any grounds to seize upon.

Park Jae-woo's mind raced while maintaining a grave countenance. "Don't rush in. Let's wait a bit longer."

Others didn't notice, but Punk, locked in battle with Song Ke, struggled increasingly against the mounting pressure. Gritting his teeth, Punk deliberately exposed a vulnerability, lunging forward, igniting blood mist at Song Ke's left arm.

Song Ke quickly shook herself, and suddenly, an Emei thorn appeared in her right hand.

Impossible! Punk's pupils constricted. Her right hand was supposed to be useless!

In that moment of Punk's exposed vulnerability, Song Ke seized his head and forcefully slammed it into the ground, the Emei thorn piercing his intact mechanical eye!

“Ah!” Punk let out a heart-wrenching scream.

Through his blood-hazed vision, he witnessed the miraculous changes occurring on Song Ke’s body. The originally fatal wounds, deeply penetrating bones, visibly healed at an incredibly rapid pace, gradually reverting to minor flesh wounds.

Wide-eyed, Punk gasped, “You, you’re d-dual...”

Song Ke didn’t give him a chance to finish speaking. The Emei thorn pierced through his right hand, severing tendons, rendering both of Punk’s hands useless.

Following this, she conjured an axe and brutally chopped off Punk’s legs.

Punk’s mechanical eye was damaged, his limbs demolished, only his left eye could still move.

“Sir, should we...?” Odin couldn’t sit still, asking anxiously.

Under Park Jae-woo’s gaze, deeply conflicted, he spoke sorrowfully, “Go ahead. In urgent moments like this, we must watch out for each other. Punk has done his utmost; we can’t let him bear the risk alone.”

Odin and another S-level awakener leapt from the starship, successfully joining forces with Gasta and Roy, aiming to support Punk. However, just as they moved, four heavily scarred mechanical arms shot out, blocking their path.

Zhuang Qingyan assisted Lu Xiaoyu onto a wheelchair, his voice icy cold, “Personal grudges—wouldn’t it be inappropriate for you all to intervene?”

Odin snorted, utilizing his supernatural abilities. Before striking the two obstructing figures, a plethora of runes descended from the sky. A young man in a black Taoist robe flickered before them, and countless thunderbolts crashed down, delineating a clear boundary between the two groups.

“Qiong Qi!” Samuel and the others exclaimed excitedly.

At a crucial moment, Zhang Ci had returned.

Park Jae-woo, inside the command cabin, took a sharp breath. Another S-level? What sort of gathering ground was Mu City for these monstrous entities?

On Zhuang Qingyan's side, several S-level awakeners engaged in a chaotic skirmish. Meanwhile, Punk, paralyzed in all four limbs, stared fixedly at Song Ke, bursting into raucous laughter.

"No wonder, no wonder you survived..."

"Wishing to kill me? Can you bear the consequences? I'll drag all of you down with me to hell!"

Punk's pale eyes suddenly flickered at a high frequency, his body rapidly inflating like an overblown balloon, emitting a faint, piercing crimson light.

Not good, he's about to self-destruct!

Song Ke widened her eyes slightly and hastily released her awakened energy to counteract it.

However, the energy unleashed by an S-level awakeners' self-destructive force was capable of cataclysmic destruction.

"Quick, retreat!"

Gasta and Odin screamed in terror as the four remaining starships swiftly veered away in the sky, the remnants of the security team and Shaye awakeners fleeing outside.

Punk's dual abilities were merging gradually. He intended to use himself as a catalyst for one final blood explosion, utilizing time rewinds to repeatedly return to the moment of the blast. The destructive force would not just affect the awakeners but might reduce the entire Mu City to ashes.

Song Ke discerned his intentions. She attempted to attack the eye from which he was releasing his abilities but was obstructed by the explosion enveloping Punk's body. Several times, she was blown away, struggling to keep her eyes open in the raging wind, cold sweat slowly soaking her back. Punk's self-destruction was inevitable, but the chain of explosions had to be stopped. Was there any way to interrupt him?

"Think fast, think of a way!" Song Ke clenched her fists tightly, biting down on her lip.

At that moment, a hand reached out to support Song Ke.

Zhuang Qingyan approached against the powerful gusts, clasping her hand from behind, enveloping her in his embrace. Song Ke felt the warmth against her back as she looked up. Despite the man's disheveled appearance, it didn't diminish his handsome features. His deep peach-blossom eyes curved as he teasingly said, "If you don't want to sacrifice yourself alongside me, Song Ke, seize the opportunity."

Zhuang Qingyan lightly pinched his fingertip, sending forth an immeasurable awakened energy, rushing towards Punk.

His awakened energy, like a sharp knife, pierced through Punk's skull, wildly churning within his mind. Punk's consciousness stalled for less than half a second.

Song Ke's eyes narrowed, instantly materializing a dagger, her eyes turning deep blue. Her entire awakened energy surged to its peak, breaking through the layers of interference. In a split second, she stabbed into Punk's left eye!

"BOOM—"

A thunderous explosion erupted, the Reunification Palace razed to the ground, and the entire Mu City violently shaking.

The scorching airflow surged towards them. Song Ke instinctively held onto Zhuang Qingyan, their different awakened energy tightly intertwining.

The flames engulfed the silhouette of the two figures.

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 108: When the Roses Bloom (26)

Chapter 108 – When the Roses Bloom (26)

The best ending written by fate

In the choking smoke, coughs echoed incessantly. The chain explosions orchestrated by Punk were timely halted, yet the scene remained engulfed in smoke and fire.

Some surviving water and earth elemental awakeners attempted to extinguish the flames, but their efforts were futile. The fire at the Reunification Palace grew fiercer by the moment.

Zhang Ci dispersed the thick smoke and glanced in the direction of Song Ke, vaguely spotting the silhouette of a tall man.

The man's body swayed, then slowly collapsed forward. A slender pair of hands caught him.

Song Ke opened and closed her mouth, speaking anxiously. Zhuang Qingyan leaned against her shoulder, offering a comforting smile. He lifted his fingertips, extinguishing a small tuft of her burning hair, then retrieved a wheelchair from the storage space. With Song Ke's support, he sat onto it.

Gaster, Odin, and Lu Xiaoyu, among others, slowly rose. After a while, four fully armed starships returned, hovering again above the Reunification Palace. Would Nai Kang and Punk's successive deaths push the situation irreversibly into the abyss? Would the Special Envoy declare war? Tension gripped everyone.

Amidst the crackling sparks and explosions, Zhuang Qingyan's clear voice pierced through the smoke, echoing in everyone's ears: "Special Envoy, according to Article 22, Clause 9 of the Alliance's wartime emergency regulations, as the disadvantaged party, I have the right to request ceasefire negotiations."

Odin couldn't help but glare at him. Shameless! You assassinated the magistrate, took out an S-level awakener, took every advantage, yet you shamelessly declare yourselves "disadvantaged" while turning District C55 into chaos?

Unfortunately, Zhuang Qingyan was never one to have a sense of shame.

Park Jae-woo's eyes lit up inside the starship. Good, finally someone who understands. Negotiation is what's needed.

The holographic projection descended slowly, and Park Jae-woo's image appeared clearly in front of Song Ke and the others. As a smooth and cautious politician, he wouldn't risk coming down personally, especially now when even the starships weren't safe.

"Chief Park," Zhuang Qingyan quickly ran through the Alliance officials' files in his mind, matching the person before him with the information. He raised an unexpected eyebrow upon recognizing Special Envoy Park Jae-woo.

"Do you know me?" Park Jae-woo looked surprised, gazing at Zhuang Qingyan. The young man's face was unfamiliar; he was certain they hadn't met before.

Zhuang Qingyan had prepared a different set of words, but upon realizing the Special Envoy was Park Jae-woo, he instantly changed his approach. "Former Magistrate of District C30, known for integrity and dedication during your tenure, promoted exceptionally to the Alliance's Regional Affairs General Bureau due to outstanding achievements. Chief Park's reputation resounds, even among us insignificant folks."

Park Jae-woo received a hefty dose of flattery, feeling immensely pleased, yet his expression remained stern, maintaining a firm and upright demeanor. "Since you seem so well-versed in Alliance laws, you should understand the consequences of killing a District C magistrate. Let's not touch upon Punk's matter for now. You all must come back with me and face trial at the Alliance's highest court."

"Chief Park planned to bring us back for a trial?" Zhuang Qingyan smiled, "In that case, your performance report wouldn't look good."

Park Jae-woo cursed inwardly: Damn it, my performance report looks this bad, all because of you guys!

Zhuang Qingyan's expression became meaningful. "Actually, I have a better suggestion. Chief Park, why not listen first?"

Park Jae-woo nodded without affirming or denying, "Go ahead."

"The Magistrate of District C55 should have been replaced long ago," Zhuang Qingyan dropped a bombshell.

"The magistrate's excessive power isn't beneficial for the Alliance's development. Nai Kang's control over C55 for twenty-seven years led to countless tragedies. Chief Park, during your visit, witnessing the dire situation of the Mu City people, deeply troubled you. Considering the long-term development of the nation and its people, you decided, in the name of justice, to remove Nai Kang from duty and stabilize the situation in Mu City."

"Doesn't this report sound much better?" Zhuang Qingyan's smile deepened.

If Nai Kang were still alive, he would definitely have vehemently denounced Zhuang Qingyan's nonsense. Unfortunately, he was long gone; the dead have no say, and history has always been written by victors.

Song Ke, pushing the wheelchair, looked utterly confused. Somehow, with Zhuang Qingyan's words, it seemed like the achievements were all attributed to the special envoy, and they had nothing to do with it? However, after such a long time, she had gotten used to it. Whenever Zhuang Qingyan spun tales, silence was the best response.

Park Jae-woo didn't comment on Zhuang Qingyan's words. Instead, he pointed out another crucial issue, "How do we explain the former magistrate's death?"

The chaos in District C55 could be glossed over, but Nai Kang's public demise while seeking refuge—this, reported to the Alliance, was something they couldn't avoid.



Park Jae-woo looked directly at Zhang Ci, “From what I know, the main reason for Nai Kang seeking refuge was a rebellion. You are the leader of the refugees, Qiong Qi, right?”

Zhuang Qingyan’s expression revealed a hint of surprise, “What Qiong Qi? What rebellion? There’s no refugee leader. Thanks to Chief Park’s dedicated governance, Mu City is clearly peaceful; the people have returned to their hearts.”

Park Jae-woo was momentarily speechless. He didn’t dare exaggerate things this much even to himself.

But suddenly, he realized that if the report mentioned “rebellion” and “refugees,” as a special envoy, he’d have to take responsibility for suppressing the rebellion and show concrete results. Wouldn’t that be trouble for himself? This person was right—there was no rebellion in District C55 from start to finish!

Park Jae-woo humbly sought advice, “If it wasn’t caused by a rebellion, then Nai Kang’s death...?”

“Of course, it was a personal vendetta,” Zhuang Qingyan tapped the wheelchair lightly with his fingertip, speaking without hesitation, “The one who killed Nai Kang was an obscure team of awakeners—V587.”

Song Ke stared blankly, wide-eyed and unable to comprehend. How did it end up that, in the end, the blame was still on them?

In the holographic projection, Park Jae-woo fell into contemplation, then slowly lifted his head, his expression solemn and commanding. “I will stay in District C55 for three days to reorganize internal affairs. During these three days, I do not want any one of you to appear in front of me.”

“Rest assured, Chief,” Zhuang Qingyan chuckled loudly.

A covert deal was thus struck, diffusing the imminent war, allowing Song Ke’s team and Shaye’s awakeners, to leave unharmed.

Fan Yiwen and the others were dumbfounded. They had known this person was a big talker, but they hadn’t imagined he could even hoodwink a special envoy!

Gasta and Odin exchanged a glance, smartly choosing to remain silent, offering no opinion. Roy and another younger S-level awakener showed discontent and disbelief on their faces. They couldn't fathom the deeper meaning behind the clash between Park Jae-woo and Zhuang Qingyan, nor why the deaths of Nai Kang and Punk were glossed over so lightly. Why let these people go?

In the world of Alliance politics, being an awakener wasn't enough; intelligence mattered too. Everyone there had hundreds of schemes in their minds. Obviously, Zhuang Qingyan was more familiar with the rules of the gray area than they were.

Park Jae-woo, on the starship, gazed into the distance below where the four S-level awakeners walked away together, and behind them was the burning Reunification Palace.

Park Jae-woo sighed deeply, "Shaye... Mu City... it seems there will be a significant change in the Alliance's next regional ranking assessment."

The old District C had collapsed, and new flames were spreading. Would Shaye replace Mu City in the future? Time would tell.

Park Jae-woo's gaze returned to Song Ke. This person's power probably surpassed the S-level. If she couldn't be utilized by the Alliance, she would inevitably become a significant problem in the future, just like Nai Kang's fate—a lesson to be learned.

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The moment they stepped out of the Reunification Palace, Song Ke's terminal flashed a notification: "Remaining validity of your admission application: 0 days 0 hours 0 minutes. Please update it promptly, otherwise, you will not be allowed to stay in the city."

Coincidentally, fifteen days ago, they had forged their identities and entered the completely unfamiliar Mu City with an uncertain future. Fifteen days later, Nai Kang was dead, the assassination target successfully eliminated, and right as they were about to leave, this fake admission application happened to expire.

Just like the best ending written by fate.

...

The next day, at Shaye Base.

Fang Zhixu finished examining Zhuang Qingyan's legs, looking grave. "It's not optimistic. The excessive injections have affected your left leg's nerves. The symptoms of muscle atrophy will only worsen. It's in both legs now, but it'll soon spread throughout your body if delayed further."

Since the morning, Zhuang Qingyan had lost sensation in both legs, unable to stand even with crutches.

"What... what can be done?" Song Ke asked anxiously.

"Let's go back to Tongwan. I'll contact my colleagues at 119 Hospital to arrange surgery as soon as possible," Fang Zhixu mentioned the hospital without hesitation.

Lin Youyou hesitated to speak, looking worriedly at Fang Zhixu. "Are... are you okay?"

Although Fang Zhixu's eyes were bloodshot, with dark circles, clearly indicating lack of sleep, his current expression was too calm, so calm that it seemed abnormal. When Zhang Wanyao died in his arms, Fang Zhixu's breakdown and pain were beyond words. Lin Youyou was concerned about his mental state.

"I know what you're worried about, but I... I promised her," Fang Zhixu held a small vial around his neck, his eyes showing tenderness and nostalgia. Ayao only changed the way she accompanied him. What he needed to do now was take her home and then listen to her, to live well as she wished.

Knock knock.

As the door rhythmically tapped, Song Ke had just said, "Come in," and a group of people squeezed in, all seniors and fellow practitioners from the martial arts school.

Surprisingly, the one leading was Mo Yan, wrapped in bandages all over his body. Despite enduring pain, he hooked his arm around Song Ke's shoulder, grinning through gritted teeth, "Little junior sister, heard you had a rampage at the Reunification Palace yesterday! It's frustrating, ahhh, I missed it! I don't care, I want to spar with you and analyze!"

"Such vanity, you and little junior sister in a fight means you getting beaten up. You insist on glorifying it as an analysis," Rita bluntly dismantled his facade.

Zhang Ci lounged against the door frame, casually observing the people in the room bickering and playing around. He wasn't wearing his Taoist robes today but regular clothes, the kind he used to wear during training sessions back at Yue Mountain. When he was with the people from the martial arts school, he wasn't Qiong Qi; he was just their simple eldest senior brother.

Song Ke's hair was messed up by Mo Yan's rubbing, leaving her in a sorry state, only her eyes visible, making it impossible for Song Ke to retaliate.

"Ah!" Mo Yan suddenly exclaimed.

"What's wrong?" Others looked nervously, fearing he might accidentally touch an injury.

Mo Yan said, "I suddenly remembered something."

Fan Yiwen said, "Just say it, why startle everyone."

Mo Yan grinned mischievously, "Now that Nai Kang is dead, the base can develop peacefully. Zhang Ci, did you and the junior sister take care of things?"

"It's been so hard raising the adopted daughter; do it quickly, don't let that outsider steal her away!"

Fan Yiwen instinctively glanced at Zhuang Qingyan's expression. Mo Yan, not having been part of yesterday's action, wasn't aware of the situation, but they saw it clearly: the junior sister and that "outsider" were clearly embracing each other.

Fan Yiwen awkwardly coughed a couple of times, signaling Mo Yan with a meaningful look, but Mo Yan didn't catch on. He was still muttering to himself, "By the way, what do you need for a wedding? Should I get some new light screens as gifts? Hey, Zhang Ci, say something."

Zhang Ci, lost in thought, interrupted by Mo Yan, slightly straightened up and looked at Song Ke.

Others realized he was about to speak and quieted down.

Zhang Ci slowly spoke, "Song Ke, have you ever considered staying in Shaye?"

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 109: When the Roses Bloom (27)

Chapter 109 – When the Roses Bloom (27)

A New Journey (End of Mu City Arc)

"Have you ever considered staying in Shaye?"

Zhang Ci had a calm nature, and his true thoughts were hard to discern from his surface demeanor. He seemed to mention it casually, yet it felt as if he had contemplated deeply. No one knew exactly what he was thinking when he uttered those words.

Song Ke didn't react immediately, blinking blankly. "Huh?"

Before she could reply, a member of V587 exploded. Zhang Ci seemed to be poaching in front of them. No, it was beyond that; it was like he intended to tear down the entire wall! Song Ke was not only the captain of V587 but also the backbone that held everyone together. If she was taken away, the team would disperse in minutes!

"No way!" Xu Xing was the first to speak out, his curly hair standing on end. "She belongs to us!"

“What ‘belongs to you’? She’s been like a little sister to us since childhood!” Mo Yan retorted with defiance.

“But she enjoys being with us now!” Xu Xing’s voice cracked with frustration.

“You said ‘enjoys.’” Mo Yan, wrapped up tightly, caught the loophole in his words, a mischievous glint in his eyes. “When you’re done playing, you always return home. Without the martial arts school, Shaye is our home.”

Mo Yan brought up the weighty notion of “home,” leaving Xu Xing momentarily at a loss. He quickly looked around for support. However, Lu Xiaoyu had an amused expression, seemingly enjoying the spectacle. Su Cha, with his perennially calm demeanor, showed no emotional fluctuations. Lin Youyou covered her red lips, smiling faintly, clearly indicating she had no intention of getting involved. Fang Zhixu... better not hassle him when he’s in a bad mood.

Xu Xing looked eagerly at Zhuang Qingyan sitting in the wheelchair. Why wasn’t he saying anything? Whenever he tried to get close to his sister before, Zhuang Qingyan would threaten him fiercely. Now, when someone else was about to take his sister away, why was he staying quiet?

Not only Xu Xing but even Fan Yiwen and others who were aware of the situation sensed something amiss. Even though this “Little White Face” was now confined to a wheelchair, let’s not forget, he was a master at never taking a loss.

Zhuang Qingyan didn’t rush to express an opinion. He absentmindedly pinched Song Ke’s finger and suddenly said, “Song Ke, my leg hurts.”

Song Ke immediately grew tense, massaging his leg. “Where does it hurt?”

“On the left side, um... a bit more to the left,” Zhuang Qingyan lazily directed her. “It seems it needs a bit downward pressure too.”

“Ah, you’re pressing too hard.”

“S-sorry. I’ll be gentler.”

“Okay.”

Song Ke massaged and kneaded aimlessly, resembling a diligent daughter-in-law tending to chores. The others gradually understood the situation but felt powerless to comment. If Zhuang Qingyan truly had a leg issue, Dr. Fang stood nearby; there was no need for Song Ke to intervene.

This wasn’t about a leg ache; it was a statement of authority from the insufferable “Little White Face”!

As Zhuang Qingyan helped Song Ke fix her fallen hair, he glanced unexpectedly towards a man at the door.

He smirked, leisurely starting, “Upon reflection, since everyone involved is here, it’s better to clarify some things. Child brides, a custom originating from the old civilization, should have been abolished long ago. Brother Zhang, by using this to retain someone, do you think Song Ke is an easy target?”

What child bride? She already said she was not a child bride. Song Ke got angry, pinching Zhuang Qingyan’s thigh hard. However, he remained unfazed; his leg nerves had long ceased to transmit pain signals. It took Song Ke a moment to realize: This liar!

“Child bride is just a joke; it’s not real,” Zhang Ci’s tone remained calm, but the next moment, he uttered something astounding, “However, I’ll oversee Song Ke’s affairs.”

The members of the martial arts school were dumbfounded. After joking for over a decade, Zhang Ci was taking this seriously?

Rita felt a pang of bitterness and couldn’t help but ask, “Zhang Ci, what do you mean?”

“Propose! Hurry up and propose!” Mo Yan shouted, eager to stir things up.

Fan Yiwen smacked his head, covering Mo Yan’s mouth, leaving him to mutter incomprehensibly.

Zhang Ci remained silent, his gaze lowered.

When Song Ke had first arrived in Yue Mountain, she was like a skinny little monkey. Zhang Ting had pitied her and arranged for her to celebrate birthdays with Zhang Ci. They'd sit side by side in front of a cake, awkwardly blowing out candles. Over the years, they'd continued this tradition. People joked that Zhang Ci had picked up a child bride, and because neither of the involved parties bothered to explain, it gradually became an unspoken truth.

Zhang Ci's emotional attachment, be it romantic or not, was rather weak. He didn't have grand feelings for Song Ke; he simply felt responsible for taking care of her. In fact, everyone in the martial arts school was his responsibility, but with Zhang Ting no longer around... his personal sense of responsibility towards Song Ke might have been a bit stronger.

"It's too dangerous for her to follow you," Zhang Ci said.

Assassinating Nai Kang, resisting Punk's explosion, everything Song Ke does now feels like walking on a tightrope.

"Is it safe to stay by your side? Brother Zhang is too confident," Zhuang Qingyan stood firm.

"Song Ke is from Yue Mountain, we will all take care of her," Zhang Ci calmly retorted.

"Please, Brother Zhang, understand this clearly. Song Ke belongs to no one; she is free. What right do you have to control her?" Zhuang Qingyan sneered.

"I am her senior brother. If she wishes, I can be something else, but no matter my identity, I am more qualified than you," Zhang Ci's dark eyes gazed firmly, sharpness evident. "You ask about my identity, then what about you? What role do you play in her life?"

Zhuang Qingyan froze: "..."



What role did he have? What was he to Song Ke? Zhuang Qingyan, who had always been a good with words, was unusually silent.

In the end, Song Ke was his chosen golden thigh, while he, himself, was merely picked up by her... an outsider. He indeed had no right to control her.

Seeing the atmosphere deadlocked, Song Ke stepped forward voluntarily and seriously told Zhang Ci, "Senior brother, I won't stay for now. There are things to be done."

She aimed to heal Zhuang Qingyan's leg, attend the finals of the Throne Race Competition, fulfill Lin Youyou's wish, and if there was a chance later, she wanted to visit District B... When all settled, she might return to Shaye.

After listening, Zhang Ci stayed silent for a while and didn't force her, "Alright, whenever you come back, Shaye will always be your home."

"Yes, little junior sister, Shaye will forever be your home!" the senior brothers and sisters exclaimed.

"Mm!" Song Ke nodded happily. She knew they were her strongest support.

\*

Before leaving Shaye, Song Ke deliberately sought out Zhang Ci. "Senior brother, Master has... something for you."

Before her eighteenth birthday, Zhang Ting had given two gifts, one of which was to be passed on to Zhang Ci through Song Ke. Unexpectedly, after that day when they descended the mountain, a solar storm struck, and doomsday arrived, temporarily shelving this matter. After a gap of more than half a year, she and Zhang Ci finally met under convoluted circumstances.

Song Ke had already opened and examined her own gift, a quaint-looking medallion for tranquility, cold to the touch with a unique material that resisted water and fire. Although she didn't understand why Master gave her this, she kept it carefully.

Zhang Ci opened the plastic bag, revealing a transfer agreement inside. Zhang Ting had transferred all his movable and immovable property, as well as ownership of the Yue Mountain Martial Arts School, to Zhang Ci. He was a strict master but not a qualified father, their relationship constantly eroded through repeated disputes, yet it never entirely vanished.

Zhang Ci ran his fingers over the thin pages, remaining silent for a long time.

Now, with Shaye needing extensive reconstruction, this money was like a timely help, enough to support him for a long time.

“By the way, Bai Ruotong wants to ask for your help,” Zhang Ci said.

Concerning Zhang Ting’s death, Zhang Ci had always harbored doubts. Based on memories retrieved from Tun Qin’s mind, a team in uniforms had killed Zhang Ting. During this time, Bai Ruotong had questioned the personnel at the base to ascertain the origin of these individuals. The backgrounds of the members in Song Ke’s team were complex, and she wanted to inquire if there were any clues.

After listening to Bai Ruotong’s description, Song Ke shook her head. “I don’t know.”

Bai Ruotong shrugged in disappointment.

Song Ke silently added the latter half of the sentence, “...Zhuang Qingyan definitely knows.”

In her mind, Zhuang Qingyan, the omniscient information hub of the Alliance, knew everything.

The three found Zhuang Qingyan and met Zhang Ci again. Both acted as if nothing had happened. Based on the information Bai Ruotong provided, Zhuang Qingyan casually sketched a fierce vulture on the screen.

“Is this the pattern?”

Bai Ruotong nodded excitedly. "Yes! Exactly the same."

Zhuang Qingyan frowned. "Are you sure?"

"I'm sure, I directly extracted it from Tun Qin's memory. He saw the vulture pattern with his own eyes," Bai Ruotong said.

"You are familiar with these people," Zhang Ci keenly noticed.

"Not exactly familiar, just heard about them," Zhuang Qingyan said. "They come from Vulture, your Master's death is not simple."

Vulture Section Six, nicknamed the "Vulture" Unit, was the Alliance's highest intelligence agency, primarily tasked with openly or secretly gathering various intelligence. They also engaged in investigations involving subversion, assassinations, explosions, and other activities.

Why would the Alliance's intelligence agency find Zhang Ting and even kill him? What secrets did Zhang Ting hold?

This matter seemed shrouded in dense fog, becoming increasingly complex. Song Ke looked worriedly at Zhang Ci.

Zhang Ci closed his palm, calmly saying, "Thank you. I'll investigate the rest."

...

Song Ke stood at the lookout tower, gazing down.

In the distance, a dark mass of people crossed the lifeline, facing the roars of the undead outside the iron fence as they slowly made their way toward Shaye. This time, it wasn't an army attacking Shaye but rather people fleeing with their families to seek a new life. The entrance to the base was bustling with

activity, and nearby cities like Xiangang and Emerald City had become part of Shaye, merging into one city.

The situation in Mu City was rapidly changing. Among the three warlords, only one remained. Mu Qin was currently overwhelmed, while Park Jae-woo's methods were adept at cutting through chaos. Not only did he limit the warlords' power, but he also abolished the deformed hierarchical system. Soon, new administrators would take their positions. However, faced with the chaos and decline of Mu City and the burgeoning and increasingly forceful Shaye, no one could predict the future.

Inside the base, the liberated Rose Army girls spontaneously gathered, placing flowers at a pristine statue. Holding hands, they sang distant local ballads. The statue had a sacred and beautiful appearance, with a plaque underneath that read: "In memory of the strongest Rose, Ayao. She led us in resisting an unjust fate."

Irene stood quietly behind the crowd, holding a cannon in one hand, watching.

Lin Youyou patted her shoulder. "Hey, Irene, we're getting ready to leave and wanted to bid you farewell. What are your plans now?"

"I plan to return to Ferrara and continue participating in the finals," Irene initially wore a serious expression that gradually softened. "But I won't push too hard anymore because my wish has been fulfilled. See you in the finals. Even if we're friends, I won't hold back. That's the pride of a mercenary."

"We won't either. See you in the finals," Lin Youyou grinned.

Samuel patrolled the base with his torso exposed, his python tattoo vividly displayed, yet nobody feared him. Children gathered around him, enviously wanting to touch him.

Lin Mo and Lu Qiu were both engrossed in different activities. One was entangled with Lu Xiaoyu, learning mechanical skills, while the other followed Fang Zhixu eagerly, almost thirstily absorbing his teachings. They were among those who couldn't bear to see V587 leave.

Chatterbox Kansu sneakily glanced at Marie with every opportunity, mumbling to himself, "You don't look anything like your sister. Of course, your sister is cute too, but I think... I think you're prettier..."

“What do you want?” Marie stared at him guardedly.

“I mean, you, you’re very brave. I admire you!” Kansu stumbled over his words.

As Kansu spoke, he blushed, awkwardly scratching his head. “Uh, do you want to come play in the tunnels with me?”

Marie’s face still bore scars, and her mouth was swollen, but her eyes sparkled. “Sure, my grandpa loved talking about tunnel warfare!”

Song Ke enjoyed the breeze, observing the diverse scene below.

Zhuang Qingyan’s wheelchair stopped beside her. “Reluctant to leave?”

Song Ke shook her head. “I’ll come back.”

“Song Keke,” Zhuang Qingyan called her name, smiling gently. “After the surgery, let’s talk. There’s something I want to tell you.”

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 110: Life-and-Death Marathon (1)

Chapter 110 – Life-and-Death Marathon (1)

S-Level Mission: Guarding Tongwan

Three days later, as the situation in Mu City stabilized slightly, the newly appointed official assigned by the Alliance took office. After completing the handover with Park Jae-woo, they officially set off and departed.

Shortly after the majestic fleet of starships flew out, an old civilian model starship slowly ascended from the Shaye Base, entered orbit, and under Lu Xiaoyu's command, set its course for Tongwan in the District C60, engaging the autopilot.

The return journey seemed particularly relaxed. Lin Youyou hummed a tune, applying makeup in front of the mirror after a long time. After outlining her eyebrows, she admired herself satisfactorily for a moment, casually remarking, "Park Jae-woo surprisingly didn't cause trouble for us. Quite unexpected."

"No need to be surprised. After all, Great Benefactor Zhuang gifted him a big favor," Lu Xiaoyu commented solemnly.

Zhuang Qingyan glanced at him, indifferent to his sarcastic tone, "Park Jae-woo is an official fanatic. You should be glad it was him who came. Otherwise, it wouldn't have ended so well. Without him holding the scene that night at the Reunification Palace, the remaining S-levels wouldn't have let us off."

If a fight really broke out, the other side still possessed heavy weaponry and over a hundred A-level awakeners, making casualties in Shaye inevitable.

Speaking of the Reunification Palace, Song Ke remembered another matter, "Punk is dead. Will anyone come to cause trouble for us?"

Zhuang Qingyan curved his lips slightly, but there was little amusement in his eyes, "Don't worry, Park Jae-woo will handle these loopholes. He's been given credit for nothing, but he needs to handle it well. If he can't even control the mouths of those around him, he won't be fit for his special envoy role."

When Zhuang Qingyan said to relax, Song Ke felt at ease. She lowered her head to tinker with the terminal for a while, then suddenly exclaimed in surprise, "We're becoming famous, huh?"

The headlines across Mu City were split. Half discussed the changes the new official would bring, while the other half speculated on the identity of the V587 squad that assassinated Nai Kang due to "personal grudges." Because all visual data had been burned in a large fire, some unofficial media described V587 as a burly man and exaggeratedly boasted that all of them were S-levels.

After skimming through the reports, everyone found it utterly absurd and simply laughed it off.

But speaking of fame, Lin Youyou raised her terminal, pulling up another article, “Ferrara isn’t doing too bad either. Look at this video, ‘Detailed Analysis of the Underdog V587’s Road to Championship,’ with over sixty million views. Our popularity now exceeds ‘Shunxing Tea House’ and is second only to ‘Three Grandsons and One Grandpa.’”

“Tongwan as well. You gained a lot of fame after repelling the zombie tide,” Fang Zhixu mentioned when he found a moment.

“And there’s the Sin City. The legend of ‘My name is Su Cha, remember it’ is still circulating,” Lu Xiaoyu finished his last attack.

Su Cha was unexpectedly called out and suddenly froze, recalling the embarrassing slogan he once shouted.

Song Ke puffed her cheeks, a bit annoyed, “Grandpa used to say, ‘Be humble in life, being too famous isn’t good.’”

Zhuang Qingyan comforted her, “With the star network disconnected now and slow communication between regions, even if you’re famous, it’s only within a small scope, so you...”

As he spoke, he suddenly hissed in pain.

Fang Zhixu swiftly pressed on his pressure point, stimulating the numbed nerves with his ability. Despite the pain, Zhuang Qingyan managed to joke, but having spent an extra day in Shaye, his left hand gradually lost sensation. He couldn’t even complete simple grip exercises now.

Song Ke stared intently at Zhuang Qingyan’s legs. He hadn’t followed the doctor’s advice and had two consecutive seal injections due to helping her.

“When we return to Tongwan, we’ll... undergo surgery,” she said, poking him, completely serious.

“Yeah, undergo surgery,” Zhuang Qingyan smiled.

“Some people, their abilities aren’t enough but they insist on showing off. They swear they don’t want their legs, but deep down, they regret it so much,” Lu Xiaoyu multitasked, coding while controlling the starship, managing to slip in a few sarcastic comments to taunt Zhuang Qingyan.

Zhuang Qingyan smirked, “Because I’ve thought about it, there’s already one useless person in the team. It’s not suitable to cause more trouble for everyone.”

Lu Xiaoyu’s movements halted, struck right in the heart. His mechanical arm was damaged, severely reducing his combat effectiveness. Even his coding speed had slowed down, something Lu Xiaoyu couldn’t bear.

Lu Xiaoyu looked at Song Ke, speaking seriously, “Captain, I request a replacement for a new mechanical arm.”

“Approved,” Song Ke nodded promptly. It was the least she could do; Lu Xiaoyu’s mechanical arm had broken because he shielded her from harm.

“This is the material list,” Lu Xiaoyu shared a super long list with her, looking serious.

Song Ke’s eyes spun, she sucked in a breath of cold air—why was it twice as much as last time? How much money would this... cost?

Zhuang Qingyan took the terminal and glanced at it, sneering lightly, “Don’t be outrageous. You dared to put 98% purity rhenium on here. Do you know how much rhenium is worth?”

“Rhenium is a necessary material, and I calculated the minimum usage,” Lu Xiaoyu maintained seriousness, arguing logically.

“What necessity? It could be replaced with carbon steel or alloy steel.”

“You could use a bicycle too, why did humans invent starships?”



“With our current conditions, all you can ride is a bicycle,” Zhuang Qingyan bluntly crossed it off and handed it back to Song Ke. “Don’t spoil him.”

Lu Xiaoyu clicked his tongue, shrugged his shoulders. His serious expression relaxed; he had wanted to bluff through it, and being exposed by Zhuang Qingyan didn’t embarrass him at all.

Ever since arriving in Mu City, V587 had been entirely focused on assassinating Nai Kang, not taking on missions for a long time, and therefore, not earning any income.

Song Ke sighed softly, feeling the weight of needing to make money and shoulder the responsibilities of a captain.

“Sister!” Xu Xing, who had been leaning against the railing, suddenly exclaimed, “Come and see this.”

Song Ke looked in the direction he pointed, where a modern and futuristic city should have been below them. However, at this moment, thick black smoke billowed from the top of skyscrapers, a bridge across the river was snapped in the middle, and the surface of ring roads and flyovers was covered in a heavy black layer.

“Slow down, something’s not right,” Zhuang Qingyan frowned.

Lu Xiaoyu reduced the speed of the starship and instinctively activated the control panel. The map navigation showed they were directly above the District C74, and through the hazy clouds, that pervasive blackness seemed to be in motion.

“Should I go and take a look?” Song Ke asked.

“Wait,” Lu Xiaoyu released a drone, and the external camera zoomed in continuously, gradually approaching the airspace above the city. The group witnessed an unbelievable sight—the entire layer of blackness was actually densely packed with zombies!

“This is a dead city,” Lu Xiaoyu said.

The drone was equipped with a thermal imaging detector, yet within a radius of several kilometers, there were no signs of any life.

Song Ke looked at Zhuang Qingyan, asking, "District C74, where is that?"

Zhuang Qingyan's expression turned serious, "Rongzhou."

Rongzhou (District C74) was renowned as the design capital of the Alliance due to its bold and magical architectural style. Despite being numbered towards the end of the C districts, designers from Rongzhou were highly praised for their exceptional skills.

Such a once bustling and famous C-level city had now become a playground for zombies.

"Rongzhou is still a C-level city after all, what could have happened?" Lin Youyou asked, puzzled.

"It's a zombie tide," Zhuang Qingyan sketched out Rongzhou's terrain and analyzed, "Rongzhou has a dense population, with a terrain mostly composed of mountains and basins. If a continuous zombie tide occurs, it's easy to get trapped in multiple layers of encirclement, making it difficult to escape."

"A continuous zombie tide..." everyone fell silent.

"Hopefully, the tragedy in Rongzhou is an isolated case," Lin Youyou murmured.

However, things didn't unfold as they hoped. After Rongzhou, they passed through another C-level city filled with zombies, followed by several D-level cities destroyed one after another. The situation was getting worse.

"When we arrived in Mu City, these cities were fine. Just half a month, and how did they get overrun by zombies?" Lin Youyou couldn't make sense of the current scene. "Even if the number of zombies is increasing, there should be more ways to deal with them. Logically, it shouldn't be like this."

“Over there, there are people,” Song Ke pointed in a certain direction.

An empty highway, a supermarket at a gas station, a few figures were busy moving things around.

“They’re humans,” Zhuang Qingyan affirmed, “ordinary people.”

“I’ll go and ask. Xiao Xing, come with me,” Song Ke said.

Lu Xiaoyu switched to low-orbit mode. Song Ke and Xu Xing jumped off the starship and quickly moved towards the gas station.

There were seven or eight individuals in the group, two keeping watch while the others swiftly cleared the shelves in the supermarket. When Song Ke approached, she made some noise deliberately, a sort of warning.

“Who’s there?!” The two on lookout immediately raised their weapons, shouting in panic, “Don’t come any closer! We found this place first!”

Xu Xing stepped forward politely, trying to start a conversation. “Uncle, Auntie, we won’t come closer, we just want to ask something.”

As the commotion arose, more people from the supermarket rushed out. Thin and pale from hunger, they eyed Song Ke and Xu Xing cautiously, even though there were only two of them. “Ask your questions but then leave quickly!” they demanded.

Xu Xing stood still obediently. “Uncle, Auntie, why are there zombies everywhere here? It wasn’t like this the last time my sister and I came.”

“You don’t know?” The person replied with some surprise. “A zombie king has appeared nearby, capable of commanding zombies of all levels. Many cities have been destroyed by it.”

Song Ke was startled. Capable of commanding... a zombie king?

In Xiangang, they had fought against a level-3 zombie once. Though that monster was huge and formidable, it didn't have the ability to command other zombies. Could this zombie king possibly be a level-4 zombie?

After returning to the starship, V587 held an emergency meeting.

"From the current information, we deduce that the zombie king was born near Rongzhou. After destroying that C-level city, it moved eastward," Zhuang Qingyan analyzed.

"Tongwan is also in the east," Fang Zhixu's voice turned anxious, "Considering its trajectory, could it pose a threat to Tongwan?"

Mu City was situated in the southwest of the Alliance. Lu Xiaoyu had set the return route northeastward, passing through Ferrara and eventually reaching Tongwan.

Tongwan's outpost, the Luoja Shelter, had survived a major zombie tide with the support of V587. As a medical hub, Tongwan had relatively weak military strength; otherwise, it wouldn't have been surrounded by Nai Kang's troops back then. If they encountered the zombie king leading a massive army, the crisis they'd face wouldn't be lighter than Rongzhou's.

Zhuang Qingyan's finger followed the path of destruction on the map until it stopped just inches away from Tongwan.

"Based on the zombie king's current trajectory, it will just narrowly miss Tongwan."

Just as the group breathed a sigh of relief, Zhuang Qingyan's fingertip suddenly slid left by one grid.

"But, what if it changes course midway? Looking at this intersection, the cities in the left section are obviously more densely populated. We can't determine the extent of intelligence a level-4 zombie has," he explained.

"Hurry, let's get back to Tongwan," Song Ke urged.

Tongwan couldn't have any trouble, not just because it could heal Zhuang Qingyan's legs, but also because it housed millions of doctors similar to Lu Ning, willing to risk their lives to save others. If Tongwan fell, the impact on the entire Alliance would be catastrophic.

Lu Xiaoyu switched to manual mode, and the starship accelerated sharply, streaking across the sky.

Lin Youyou tried to reassure everyone, "There seem to be fewer zombies here than before. Maybe the zombie king followed its original route."

Before she could finish her sentence, the terminals of the group suddenly flashed with an urgent message: "The Alliance Supernatural Ability Headquarters has issued an emergency announcement: 'A series of zombie tides have emerged in Tongwan (District C62). Known zombie numbers are as follows: Level 4: 1, Level 3: 167, Level 2: xxxx, Detected mutant zombie count: 1257. All district awakeners are requested to provide immediate support. Depending on the number of zombies killed, different amounts of points and Alliance Coins will be rewarded.'"

Damn it, Zhuang Qingyan was right—the intelligence of that zombie king is exceptionally high! It actually changed its path!

The swiftly moving starship rushed to Tongwan in the shortest time possible. However, the scene before them left everyone horrified. The ground was devastated, and the horde of zombies, densely packed and black, was more terrifying than the insect tide Song Ke had experienced in Hua City. Compared to LuoJia Shelter's previous large-scale zombie tide, the number had almost increased tenfold. Even from high altitude, the end of the horde was nowhere in sight.

The three outposts serving as the vanguard seemed on the brink of collapse. Once the defense lines were breached, Tongwan would have no buffer zone and would be exposed to the zombies.

At the forefront of the battle lines, numerous awakeners were fighting desperately. However, despite killing one wave, new zombies surged forward incessantly.

Song Ke opened the hatch, anxiously seeking a place to land. At that moment, the LuoJia Shelter, overwhelmed, had its defense lines breached. As if receiving some command, the zombie horde surged over the walls in unison, heading relentlessly towards Tongwan, several kilometers away.

“No!!” Fang Zhixu grabbed the railing and shouted.

The air seemed to freeze, everyone’s heart stuck in their throats, and Tongwan seemed to resonate with a mournful cry.

At the very moment when the first wave of zombies was about to breach the gates, a golden light suddenly shimmered above Tongwan. It flashed and, in an instant, the zombies “thudded” against an invisible barrier. Some were flung away, others fell to the ground, piling up in layers, unable to move forward.

This... was Domain-type supernatural ability?

Song Ke, Zhuang Qingyan, Lin Youyou, and the others exchanged astonished looks. In their minds, a name suddenly appeared.

Almost forgot, Tongwan still had a Domain-type awakener.

Wait, strictly speaking, it should be a Domain-type mutant dog.