

Doomsday 151

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 151.1: Fire Seed (21)

Grown a Tail!

According to the “Worldwide Illustrated Guide to Zombie Creatures” published after the apocalypse:

Evolutionary zombies are classified into levels 1-4. Level 4 Zombie Kings retain some human intelligence but lack conscious awareness.

The levels of mutant zombies fluctuate with the original host’s level, decreasing proportionally, with a maximum not exceeding level 4. A level 4 mutant zombie is equivalent to an S-level awakener, but so far, such monsters have not appeared worldwide.

Zombies/mutant beasts only have 1-5 levels, with level 5 mutant beasts posing a severe threat to a particular area. Although their intelligence cannot be compared to humans, even Zombie Kings, each one possesses destructive combat power capable of wreaking havoc.

The District B supplier, who was remotely monitoring the mission, obviously did not anticipate the appearance of a level 5 monster in the Elderly People’s Nation.

The commission they issued was originally just an investigative mission, intended to recover a substantial debt. As the awakens delved deeper, facing both intense radiation and oceanic monster swarms, and now encountering a level 5 armored sea turtle, it has far exceeded their psychological endurance. These suppliers regret their decision; the Elderly People’s Nation is truly a den of wolves, no wonder the system automatically rated it as S!

Clap!

Clap, clap!!

The armored sea turtle continued its relentless attacks. Buildings on the island collapsed with a resounding crash, debris continuously falling. Luckily, the Elderly People's Nation had a large area and could temporarily withstand its destruction, but the situation remained far from optimistic.

Lu Xiaoyu opened the map amidst the turbulence, "The movement speed has increased. In four hours, we will enter the Sea of Misfortune's Triangle."

Song Ke looked around. On the uneven land, awakeners were taking action one after another. Some close combat specialists found their positions and jumped down, landing steadily on the turtle shell.

Faced with the enormous armored sea turtle, Gu Ruoyi's "Gathering" ability was nearly useless. Other group-based abilities also found it difficult, Jennifer's flames were extinguished by the seawater before igniting, and Xu Xing's ice shards hit the back shell with no damage, instead providing an opportunity for the turtle to scrape off many barnacles.

Xu Xing: What?! Is he now a janitor?

Yin Xiao's expression was cold; he quickly climbed to the top of a collapsed hospital building, set up a mortar, and aimed at its two eyes.

They say, "As slow as a tortoise," but this armored sea turtle seemed to have lived for an unknown number of years, with intelligence evidently not low. Seeing the shells flying towards itself, it desperately scraped and jumped forward. Boom!! The explosive shells missed by a hair's breadth, only hitting its incredibly tough shell, leaving behind a burnt imprint.

Yin Xiao cursed under his breath.

Unless there is an instant-activating ability, achieving a one-hit kill is necessary. Otherwise, once there is a wind-up before an attack, it can easily escape. The armored sea turtle, with its sturdy shell and the advantage of the ocean as its home turf, makes the battle particularly challenging.

The tower where the “Kazan Locomotive” is located is the only high ground remaining in the surrounding ruins. Veronica’s eyes lit up, her brown hair flying as she slowly revealed a tarot card in her palm: The Tower card in reverse.

Symbolizing the advent of disaster, complete collapse.

Veronica’s trembling hand stroked the card, murmuring, “мы умрем. (We will die eventually.)”

Vladimir held her head, their foreheads gently touching. “God be with us, Veronica. Wait for me to come back.” After saying this, he turned and left, his robust figure stepping on the falling rubble, leaping towards the armored sea turtle, and slamming his fists heavily on its shell.

Boom! The earth shook, and even the formidable attack of the level 5 beast paused for a moment. Dylan’s sea-blue eyes sparkled with anger as he stared at the gray-white eyeball on the side of the armored sea turtle. His awakened ability, “Nightmare Descends,” was activated, freezing the movements of the beast. Its forelimbs were fixed on the sea surface, entering a state of “sleep paralysis.”

Onlooker Xu Xing’s small face puckered again.

He’s so useless; he’s being outperformed again. He could only scratch the armored sea turtle’s itch while Dylan took control of it.

Song Ke and Su Cha exchanged a glance, their spiritual tools shining in their hands. This battle seemed to have more risks than rewards, but the current situation left them no choice. If they didn’t kill the armored sea turtle, only death awaited them.

“Protect yourselves,” Song Ke anxiously reminded his companions, giving an extra look to Zhuang Qingyan.

Su Cha silently gazed at Lin Youyou, her lips moving slightly as if wanting to say something.

Lin Youyou approached with big strides, lifted her tiptoes to touch his head, and her soft fingers slid down to his neck. She gently pressed, causing Su Cha to obediently lower his head. Their noses touched, and Lin Youyou's lips curved, "I'm not interested in raising another puppy, so... be safe, okay?"

Su Cha's breath hitched, but Lin Youyou quickly let go, stepped back, and turned to shout at Fang Zhixu, "Old Fang! Help me check, am I wearing the life jacket correctly?"

Su Cha steadied himself and followed behind Song Ke. The two of them, one in front and one behind, jumped onto the back of the armored sea turtle with a thud and a clang.

Yang Xiaobo, who was already on top, cursing and slashing at barnacles, tried to knock a hole in it. Seeing them, his eyes widened. Why did V587's slacker come at a time like this? Shouldn't they be hiding?

Yang Xiaobo stood up with a "scoot," hands on hips, advising, "Hey, don't seek your death here. Leave this to Big Brother Yang—"

Song Ke paid no attention, soaring up and down with Su Cha. They quickly traversed the dense barnacle jungle, disappearing from sight.

Yang Xiaobo muttered, "...Big Brother Yang can't save you now."

On their way forward, Song Ke was suddenly stopped by a man.

The man, an awakener resembling a polar bear from Luce Federation, quickly said to her, "@#%&*...!"

Song Ke: "???" What kind of language is this?

Fortunately, the terminal had a built-in translator. Song Ke quickly opened it, and when the other saw her actions, he repeated himself quickly.

“I’m Vladimir, an S5-level close combat awakener. It’s tough to kill this beast alone, and I want to team up with you.”

In such a critical moment, powerful awakeners should unite.

Vladimir looked down at the slender girl in front of him. If Veronica said this person is a “tank,” her divination would never be wrong.

Song Ke performed a graceful knife dance, pointing to her own eyes, indicating that they would attack the beast’s head.

Vladimir: “@#%*&... (Attack together; I’ll deal with its forelimbs.)”

Song Ke glanced at the translator, nodded first, and then raised her fist with a serious expression. “Ura (Charge)!!”

Vladimir pounded his fists, responding, “Ura!”

The three of them acted separately. Song Ke jumped near the armored sea turtle’s head, where the water had already reached her thighs, making movement difficult. With a swift slash of her knife, the blade shining with a dark green glow, Song Ke instantly attracted the attention of the monstrous head, which slowly turned towards her.

On the other side, Su Cha feigned a spear thrust, pretending to stab its eyeball. The armored sea turtle, using the same tactic as before, exerted force on its forelimbs to leap forward. Unexpectedly, Su Cha suddenly changed direction, altering the attack to the thin membrane-like ears behind its eyes. This turned out to be a deceptive move, fooling it into evading in the wrong direction!

Having perfectly relayed to the front, Song Ke pushed off with both feet, splitting the waves as she jumped into the air. The spiritual tool in her palm emitted a blue light, and she accurately and steadily plunged it into the right eyeball of the monstrous beast!

Almost simultaneously, a burst shell came from a distance. Taking advantage of the moment when the armored sea turtle froze, it precisely hit its left eye. Song Ke suddenly looked up, seeing a young man on the dilapidated hospital rooftop with a sniper scope, giving her a thumbs up.

The armored sea turtle, now with both eyes injured, convulsed in pain. Amidst the gasps, it suddenly opened its mouth, and a powerful jet of air burst forth, creating towering waves that instantly overturned a large number of awakeners.

Splash! Song Ke and Su Cha both fell into the water, but they had created an excellent opportunity!

Vladimir, lurking in the water, had already taken his position. Grabbing the powerful forelimbs of the armored sea turtle, his awakened ability "Distortion" was activated!

The ten-meter-long forefin was instantly twisted into a bloody and blurry spiral, with thousands of bone spurs piercing into the fragmented flesh. Vladimir held his breath, blowing out bubbles, and his strong feet pushed against the turtle shell in the opposite direction. Under the extremely terrifying force, the entire forefin was torn off.

Other awakeners followed suit, attacking the remaining three limbs of the armored sea turtle exposed outside the shell. Various awakened abilities rained down, and while they didn't directly tear like Vladimir, there were uneven wounds.

Dylan sprinted on the fragments of the island, finally circling to the front of the armored sea turtle. Staring at its single eye, he activated "Nightmare Descends" again. However, this time, whether due to blindness or acquired resistance, it unexpectedly failed!

Snap! The enraged turtle thrashed left and right, its hard shell colliding with debris. The ground collapsed under Dylan's feet, and he almost fell, with his black-clad bodyguard quickly rushing over to catch him.

With its front limbs gone, the armored sea turtle shook violently in pain, entering a frenzied state. Unprepared, it leaped out of the water, its body rotating 360 degrees, and the awakeners on its back were thrown into the water. Vladimir was even carried up by the rolling waves, uncontrollably falling from a height of over ten meters.

The grey-white eyeball of the armored sea turtle oozed dirty blood, quickly locking onto its retaliatory target. It crazily chased Vladimir, and with a thud! The hard edge of the turtle shell collided with Vladimir, blood splattered in all directions, and a piece of his flesh was cut off raw!

“No—!!” Veronica on the high tower clutched the railing, screaming heartbreakingly.

Her eyes suddenly brightened to the extreme, and behind her, dark clouds gathered with lightning and thunder. The sea where the Elderly People’s Nation was located immediately stirred up fierce winds and huge waves. Everyone was shocked; this was... a weather manipulator? An awakener with the ability to forcibly change local weather, a weather manipulator capable of summoning wind and rain, is typically an extremely powerful S-level awakener!

The armored sea turtle’s retaliation was forcibly halted as it struggled to maintain balance amidst the towering waves. Veronica, an S-level dual-element awakener, had always kept her second ability well hidden. However, seeing Vladimir in a life-or-death situation, she could no longer afford to hold back her strength and only wanted to save her beloved.

Veronica frantically tried to gather a new divination card, but divination had a time limit. Although she was anxious, it was of no use.

Moments later, she muttered a curse and climbed down from the high tower, jumping into the sea to rescue Vladimir.

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Grown a Tail!

With the retaliation target lost, the armored sea turtle began to wildly thrash around the islands. With a swing of its hind legs, another piece of debris was cut off. The space for awakeners to take shelter was getting smaller, and soon they would have nowhere to hide.

Lu Xiaoyu, facing the fierce wind and shouting, said, “Hey! You’re at least an S-level awakener. Can you control it?”

Zhuang Qingyan replied with the same volume, "Even if I control it, I can't kill it!"

This armored sea turtle was not as easy to deal with as the cockroach king in Hua City. It had thick skin and a nearly full defense index. Zhuang Qingyan could indeed control it with mental ability, but he couldn't kill it with a single blow. Moreover, after being controlled once, it would undoubtedly become wary. Dylan's second attempt just now failed, so his mental attack should be saved for a critical moment, coordinated with Song Ke's attack.

...

Song Ke and Su Cha both fell into the water. They stuck their heads out, took a deep breath, and continued diving into the sea, chasing after the armored sea turtle.

Through the murky seawater, Song Ke noticed that they were beneath the belly of the armored sea turtle. This area was its softest and least defended weak point. The slightly pinkish flesh appeared smooth and intact.

Su Cha blew a series of bubbles and gestured to her. Song Ke understood; he suggested that if they could endure it, they should launch an attack from below.

Song Ke also blew a series of bubbles, nodded, and indicated that she could stay underwater for seven or eight minutes without a problem.

She grabbed a semi-submerged piece of the building wreckage beside her, and with a flash of blue light in her palm, two frigid saw-toothed knives appeared. She gently pushed one forward, and Su Cha took the other. The two of them swung their legs, quickly approaching the armored sea turtle.

...

A storm raged overhead, and the armored sea turtle went madly charging and colliding. The already precarious islands worsened under the onslaught.

On the few remaining high ground pieces, Zhuang Qingyan was soaked through, his white casual clothes sticking tightly to his body, looking somewhat disheveled. He took off his waterlogged glasses, ran his fingers through his wet hair, suddenly raised his head, and looked towards the vast sea.

“What’s happening again?” Fang Zhixu held onto Lu Xiaoyu’s mechanical arm, asking in a trembling voice.

“Not good.” Zhuang Qingyan’s expression was unusually solemn.

...

Su Cha made several cuts to open the belly of the armored sea turtle, and the toxic mist quickly permeated. He turned back to signal Song Ke to “retreat, retreat, retreat.”

The two of them agilely moved backward. After a few seconds, the armored sea turtle rolled 360 degrees again, and the chaotic waves pushed them more than ten meters away. However, its wound rapidly decayed due to the spread of toxins. Song Ke’s eyes lit up – there was a chance!

Just as she was about to tell Su Cha to try again a few more times, her eyes suddenly widened!

The seawater was infused with a large amount of fresh blood, both from the armored sea turtle and the awakeners. The strong scent of blood attracted other ferocious beasts in the vicinity.

In the blurry and dim background, a group of mutated man-eating sharks (great white sharks) swiftly swam towards them. Their pupils were vertical, and their blood-filled mouths were full of serrated teeth, attacking the awakeners in the water. Two of them were particularly ferocious, radiating chaos and likely being level 4 ferocious beasts.

Song Ke felt like crying without tears; it was like adding insult to injury. A level 5 armored sea turtle was already challenging, and now two level 4 mutated man-eating sharks had joined the fray!

The awakener closest to the shark group was the first to bear the brunt. Without any chance to evade, they were quickly torn apart and devoured by the sharks. This gruesome feast happened in an instant.

The ferocious beasts didn't stop at just one meal; one of the level 4 man-eating sharks swam towards the abdomen of the armored sea turtle, viciously tearing and biting into it.

The man-eating sharks moved extremely fast. In the blink of an eye, they reached their next target – Su Cha's surroundings.

Fighting in the water was inconvenient, and Su Cha was trapped. Though he fought back with all his strength, the number of sharks was just too overwhelming. A slight delay in turning around resulted in one of the sharks biting into his arm.

Song Ke gripped a piece of building debris at her fingertips, conjuring a phantom blue spear and thrusting it forward. It hit the offending man-eating shark, causing it to release its grip. Su Cha took advantage of the opportunity to escape, but the assault with the spear continued, sweeping through the sea like a boomerang. The spearhead cut through the spindle-shaped bodies of these ferocious beasts, and black blood gushed out, disrupting the formation of the shark group.

Su Cha followed closely behind Song Ke as they escaped. While swimming, he pulled out a securing band, tightly binding the wound to prevent the blood from attracting more monsters.

...

Bang, bang, bang.

The fragments of the islands continued to be violently impacted. The ferocious shark group stuck their heads out, glaring menacingly at the awakeners on the land.

Even more unfortunate was the sudden thunderous roar from the direction of the Sea of Misfortune, causing shockwaves that triggered a devastating tsunami.

“What kind of cursed mission is this?” Lin Youyou felt like crying without tears. “First the armored sea turtle, then the sharks, and now a tsunami!”

Under the triple impact, the once glorious Elderly People's Nation finally crumbled and collapsed.

All the awakeners fell into the abyss!

Lin Youyou, who couldn't swim, closed her eyes tightly and plunged into the water. Despite vigorously flapping her arms and legs, she couldn't resist the sinking trend.

She frantically felt for her life jacket, but her fingertips suddenly stopped. It seemed that when a person is having a stroke of bad luck, even sipping cold water can be problematic. Her life jacket, which she had checked countless times, was unfortunately torn by falling debris.

Lin Youyou suddenly choked on water, and as her lungs rapidly emptied of oxygen, her heart rate slowed down.

Was she going to die? In her next life, she definitely needed to learn how to swim.

As her vision became increasingly blurred and her consciousness disoriented, Lin Youyou hallucinated at the critical moment. A massive black shadow appeared to swim towards her.

...

The intense seismic waves triggered a tsunami that swept away all the ferocious beasts and awakeners.

Song Ke was caught in a whirlpool, floating and sinking without knowing where she was going. She struggled to break free, finally overcoming the dizziness. A level 4 man-eating shark had just finished devouring two awakeners, and its grey-white vertical pupils focused on Song Ke. With a flick of its forked tail fin, it lunged towards her.

Song Ke hurriedly changed direction, forcefully kicking her legs. However, the marine apex predator, the man-eating shark, was evidently faster in its hunting action. In the blink of an eye, it caught up to her, reaching her lower legs and viciously biting down –

But it didn't succeed.

Its jaw was firmly wedged.

A lengthened tri-edge military dagger unexpectedly appeared on Song Ke's lower leg, resiliently holding its jaws open. The shark, caught in agony, violently thrashed about. The sharp teeth with gaps cut through Song Ke's legs, conveying a knife-like pain to her brain. However, she didn't retract her leg. Instead, she turned and lifted it, exerting force from the inside outward with the tri-edge military dagger, piercing through the shark's jaw. Black blood gushed out!

The level 4 ferocious beast, with its limited intelligence, showed signs of retreat due to fear. It desperately swung its dorsal and tail fins, attempting to escape from Song Ke's clutches.

Biting me and trying to run away? Song Ke's upper body quickly approached. With both hands gripping the knife, she thrust it into the shark's dead-white eyeball, cutting out a cross from the inside!

Splash! The entire head of the man-eating shark was split open. Inside the decaying flesh and tissues, a pigeon-blood red crystal sparkled.

Song Ke raised her hand, cut out the crystal, and stowed it in her pocket. The man-eating shark gradually ceased struggling. She then dove into the shark's mouth, recovered the tri-edge military dagger, slowly withdrew her leg, and gave it a firm kick! The heavy body of the man-eating shark sank to the seabed.

Song Ke glanced at her right leg, which was blurred with blood from the shin to the ankle. Pain was something she could endure, but along with the pain, there was an unsettling shiver that had faintly emerged from the depths of her soul since a moment ago.

It seemed that the aftereffects of the 30% excessive radiation were slowly manifesting now. Song Ke's entire cellular structure was burning intensely, and the agonizing pain of genetic tearing made her scream silently. In the unseen back of her neck, a branding-like burning sensation penetrated into her bone marrow.

After a few seconds, Song Ke was horrified to discover that scales had actually grown on the back of her hand?!

She looked around anxiously and hastily took refuge in a coral reef, tightly hugging herself and hiding her hands.

What's happening? Could that man-eating shark have some contagious disease?!

Worriedly, Song Ke touched her leg. Fortunately, her second ability was now taking effect, and her cells were renewing, healing the wound at a steady pace.

It's okay... it's okay... it'll be fine later. Song Ke reassured herself, exhaling a string of bubbles. She had been underwater for almost seven minutes; it was time to go up for air.

Song Ke touched her leg again and felt that it had recovered enough. She slowly swam out of the coral reef.

Then she abruptly stopped, her movements freezing. She lowered her head to look at her legs.

No, those were not legs at all. Her legs had disappeared! From the waist down, Song Ke's lower body transformed into a long snake tail, covered with fine scales, and the tip of the tail emitted a dazzling poisonous light.

Song Ke shook it forcefully, trying to get rid of whatever it was! Why couldn't it change back?

Snap! The barbed fork at the end hit the coral reef where she had just hidden, turning its bright red color into ash white, and then it shattered with a resounding crash.

Huh? It's so powerful? Song Ke dumbfoundedly opened her mouth, letting seawater pour in. She coughed it out.

A figure in the distance swam towards her, and Song Ke raised her head warily.

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Chapter 152.1: Fire Seed (22)

“Utopia”

A faint figure appeared in front, and Song Ke suddenly turned around, trying to hide her tail.

Although she didn't understand why her legs had disappeared, the disastrous situation clearly couldn't be discovered by others, and she couldn't explain it at all!

The newly grown snake tail was heavy and slippery, and it didn't behave. Song Ke tried to coil it up several times, but it quickly unraveled.

The moving figure gradually approached, and Song Ke tightened the spiritual weapon in her hand.

The other party's face was fully revealed.

It was Su Cha.

Song Ke breathed a sigh of relief, too lazy to coil her tail, letting it relax and sway gently in the sea.

After Su Cha found her, he raised his right hand, ready to make a gesture, but his movement suddenly froze.

His eyes widened in disbelief, and upon closer inspection, even his pupils were trembling.

Song Ke: “...” She shook her tail, opened her hands, indicating her helplessness.

Su Cha was indeed Su Cha. His mental resilience was exceptionally strong. He was only stunned for less than two seconds before he came to his senses.

He took off the combat jacket on him, swam over and tied it around Song Ke's waist. The two sleeves were tied in the middle to create a barrier. He lifted the forked tail, making it less noticeable from the front, although it looked a bit strange.

Song Ke patted his shoulder, indicating that she was about to suffocate and needed to go up first to breathe.

With a strong force from her snake tail, she shot out into the distance, moving twice as fast as before, instantly creating a distance between her and Su Cha.

Splash! Song Ke suddenly emerged from the sea, gasping for breath. Three or four minutes later, Su Cha followed suit.

Looking up, the Elderly People's Nation had completely collapsed, and debris of various sizes floated on the sea.

In the distance, awakeners were still fighting the bloodthirsty sea turtles, while also being distracted by the mutant shark group, gradually finding it difficult to cope.

Song Ke was shocked: "What happened to the island?! Collapsed?!" She still had two companions who couldn't swim!

Su Cha's face also changed, and Song Ke quickly pressed the communicator on her collar: "Are you okay? Report your location."

Lu Xiaoyu's indifferent voice immediately sounded: "We're fine. It would be even better if there weren't so many man-eating sharks at the drop point."

The mechanical arm made a faint sound of movement, accompanied by Fang Zhixu's weak groan: "Xiao Lu! Take it slow while swimming, I... feel a bit dizzy."

Then came Xu Xing: "I'm fine! I was picked up by Dylan's bodyguard."

He and Dylan were thrown onto an inflatable boat, far away from the center of the battlefield. Dylan's azure eyes looked at him with confusion, and he muttered in the Cario language, "Where did this little brat come from?"

Xu Xing: "?! What little brat? I'm a year older than you!"

Only Zhuang Qingyan obediently reported his coordinates. He coughed weakly and said with a breathless voice, "Song Keke, come and save me."

Song Ke looked somewhat distressed: "I have some trouble here."

Zhuang Qingyan's "fragility" disappeared in an instant, his voice calm and deep: "Where are you? I'll come to find you."

Song Ke reported her location and asked, "What about Youyou?"

While the others were talking, Lin Youyou had remained silent.

Su Cha frowned, a vague sense of unease rising in his heart. Lin Youyou was the worst swimmer among them, and she also had a severe fear of water.

"Youyou?" Song Ke raised her voice, "Can you hear me? Respond if you hear."

No one answered; there was silence on the channel.

"Lin Youyou! Are you there? Speak!"

Su Cha pressed the microphone on his collar, shouting sternly, the muscles in his cheeks trembling from excessive tension.

His nerves were like a taut string, ready to snap at any moment.

After a full five seconds, Lin Youyou's faint and fragile whisper came: "Here, here..."

Su Cha took a sharp breath, then exhaled, as if a drowning person had regained their breath.

"Where are you? I'll come get you."

"Uh..." Lin Youyou choked on some water, sounding hesitant, "The situation here is... a bit complicated. Don't worry about me, first deal with the ferocious beasts. I'm safe, I'll come to you guys in a while..."

Su Cha casually took care of two or three approaching man-eating sharks, and replied in a low, hoarse voice, "Alright."

Zhuang Qingyan had already swum over, his speed astonishing in the wind and waves. He lay streamlined in the water, and each stroke of his arms was textbook-perfect. In the final stretch, he alternated swinging his legs like a sword leaving its sheath, reaching Song Ke in an instant.

Song Ke looked at him expressionlessly, thinking, 'Not good at swimming, my foot. He swims exceptionally well.'

The seawater slid down Zhuang Qingyan's chin into his collar. He reached back to smooth his hair, revealing a perfect forehead. "What trouble did you encounter?"

Song Ke looked nervously, "I got infected by a shark!"

Zhuang Qingyan was slightly puzzled, "Infected?"

Their location wasn't exactly at the center of the battlefield. Song Ke looked around and slowly lifted her tail.

Zhuang Qingyan's pupils contracted. "Let me see." He reached out to touch.

“Don’t touch, don’t touch,” Song Ke whispered, “It’s poisonous.” She explained the cause and effect of her recent battle with the shark, healing her right leg injury, which then transformed into a snake tail.

“It has nothing to do with that man-eating shark,” Zhuang Qingyan’s eyes darkened, “It’s radiation.”

During this time, Song Ke had absorbed too much excessive radiation, first at Ning Rong’s laboratory with 130%, and then staying for over an hour under the 30% intensity in the Elderly People’s Nation. Although there were no obvious symptoms at the time, the unknown genes in her body had issues.

“Can you control turning back?” Zhuang Qingyan asked.

“No,” Song Ke honestly shook her head.

In the distance, the armored sea turtle, under the relentless attacks, finally showed signs of exhaustion, with another level-4 man-eating shark seizing the opportunity to tear off half of its hind limb.

Zhuang Qingyan glanced at the battlefield. “Deal with it quickly, and let’s return to the Northern Base.”

“I’ll go below,” Su Cha volunteered, sticking to the original plan to continue attacking the armored sea turtle’s abdomen.

“Then I’ll go head-on,” Song Ke said. The armored sea turtle was blinded and heavily damaged, making it the perfect time to kill it.

Her long snake tail twisted and moved, slithering, instantly shooting out more than twenty meters.

Zhuang Qingyan’s eyes flickered slightly, surprised by her speed. He sighed faintly and made an effort to catch up from behind.

Yang Xiaobo was being chased by a level-4 man-eating shark.

He got too carried away after fighting the sea turtle, accidentally using up his awakened energy, and was violently pushed forward by a huge wave. Bang! He collided with the tail fin of the man-eating shark. The ferocious beast slowly turned its head, and its gray-white eyes stared fixedly at him.

Yang Xiaobo's messy hair stood up like a chicken coop, and his legs swung frantically. "Don't eat me! I've had malnutrition since childhood, more bones than meat!"

While shouting wildly, he struggled to gather his awakened ability and threw it forward regardless of the consequences. The man-eating shark, thoroughly angered, opened its massive blood-filled mouth and bit toward his head.

Woe is me! Facing imminent death, Yang Xiaobo let out a desperate scream.

Swoosh! A slender figure swiftly swam by, and in a flash, the strongest V587 slacker had already positioned himself in front of Yang Xiaobo. The toxic forked tail pierced ruthlessly into the man-eating shark from below the sea surface, freezing the ferocious beast's hefty body. Song Ke acted swiftly, her dual short knives flashing blue light as she mercilessly slashed open its head.

The scalding black blood poured over Yang Xiaobo's head and face.

Song Ke extracted the crystal quickly, pulled out her tail, sank and floated, then continued swimming towards the armored sea turtle.

Yang Xiaobo wiped his face and muttered to himself, "Damn, your Brother Yang made a mistake..."

In the center of the battlefield, the life-and-death struggle between awakeners and the armored sea turtle continued.

Dark clouds covered the sky, and Veronica, holding Vladimir's head, closed her eyes slightly as lightning struck.

Gu Ruoyi's awakened ability "Gather" finally came into play. The invisible traction brought the scattered shark group together, while Jennifer and others with AOE attacks skillfully unleashed their abilities to clear the monsters.

Song Ke took a deep breath, submerged her head into the sea, and with her snake tail swinging rapidly like a flexible ribbon, she leaped across the center of the battlefield.

She arrived in front of the armored sea turtle, whose size was still astonishing even when only considering its head. In front of it, Song Ke seemed like a fragile little jellyfish, easily swallowed at any moment.

The bloodshot eyes of the armored sea turtle shed bloody tears as it suddenly opened its mouth, fiercely biting toward her.

Song Ke agilely dodged, and her tail forked from bottom to top, accurately stabbing into its neck. The potent poison quickly spread, causing the entire turtle's head to rapidly discolor and decay, revealing petrified-like cracks.

With successive heavy blows to its limbs and head, and blood pouring out from its abdomen, this level-5 ferocious beast was now clearly on the brink of death.

Its remaining two fins madly slapped the sea surface, and suddenly, it leaped out of the water again, initiating a 360-degree rotation!

Boom!

The counterattack this time was particularly astonishing. The awakeners who had managed to climb onto the turtle's back were once again thrown off, some directly smashed into mincemeat.

As Song Ke bounced up and down with the sea waves, her snake tail strangely maintained balance. The strong airflow propelled her up to a height of fifty meters. In her palm, a trident appeared, radiating a chilling light. The coiled snake tail hid within her coat, and she plummeted down like a projectile.

All the awakeners on the sea looked up in shock. The short few seconds felt infinitely extended, and the scene before them seemed like a slow-motion replay.

A sapphire light flashed by, and the trident pierced through the right eye of the armored sea turtle, relentlessly pushing through and exiting the left eye!!

The armored sea turtle tilted its head back, violently shaking in pain. Song Ke was tossed up and down, feeling dizzy, but she held onto the trident firmly.

She wanted to find the right moment to jump onto its head but couldn't find a suitable opportunity.

“Damn... soloing a level-5 ferocious beast.”

“Is she still human?”

“This person is too crazy. Which team is she from? S-level?”

The onlookers, who witnessed the entire process, swallowed their saliva in disbelief and murmured.

The armored sea turtle, realizing death was imminent, struggled even more frantically. A strong and chaotic radiation burst from its body, causing thousands of air columns to erupt on the sea surface. Awakeners who couldn't dodge in time were lifted into the sky.

“Oh no! It's going to... self-destruct!!” An awakener from the Cario Empire shouted in panic.

Once a level-5 ferocious beast self-destructed, the power it generated was comparable to a nuclear bomb. It was enough to wipe out the entire sea area, leaving no one alive.

Zhuang Qingyan finally managed to swim to the edge of the battlefield and quickly pressed the communicator on his collar. “Song Ke! Countdown three seconds, dissect its crystal!”

Song Ke, still in disarray from the wind, barely replied, “Ahhhhhh, sure, ahhhhhhh—”

Zhuang Qingyan’s eyes narrowed slightly, locking onto the target. He activated his S-level mental ability, telekinetic piercing!

The dead white eyes of the armored sea turtle suddenly froze, and the remnants of its sanity momentarily dispersed. Where was it? It had been sleeping for many years... Why did it suddenly come out from the depths of the sea?

In an instant, Song Ke let go, somersaulting and landing on the turtle’s head. With both hands gripping a massive shovel, she thrust it into the brain with all her strength!

Immediately, she rapidly stirred left and right until the tip touched something solid. With a forceful pull, a crystal the size of a basketball, dazzling with golden light, shot out. It resembled the newborn morning sun, illuminating the entire battlefield and attracting everyone’s attention. Awakeners nearby, unable to resist the temptation, started swimming toward the crystal.

Song Ke jumped upward, cradling the crystal in her hands. In an instant, she stowed it away in her dimensional space, and the dazzling golden light disappeared without a trace.

Those awakeners abruptly stopped and slowly retreated. After the impulsive urge passed, they regained their senses, beads of cold sweat forming on their backs.

Steal the crystal? Are they kidding? This person just soloed a level-5 ferocious beast. It would be like cutting vegetables for her to kill them.

Really, have they lost their minds? Isn’t it better to live peacefully? Why seek a death wish?

“Awesome, V587!!” Yin Xiao clung to the turtle shell, shouting loudly. The resounding cheers echoed layer by layer, reaching everyone’s ears.

Chapter 152.2 – Fire Seed (22)

“Utopia”

The shattered head of the armored sea turtle hung into the sea. The radiation within its body dissipated rapidly. Although it had just died, its body could still float temporarily. After a while, it would sink to the bottom. The remaining shark groups were also cleared out, and the exhausted awakeners swam towards the turtle's back, flipping over and climbing up to rest.

Zhuang Qingyan swam to the side of the turtle's head, propped himself up with both hands, and jumped up. Song Ke, pitifully curled up on top, was trying to figure out how to walk. The coat used to cover herself had long been torn, and no matter how she hid, the tip of her tail still peeked out.

Zhuang Qingyan casually jumped, took out a long coat from the dimensional space, and helped her wrap up again.

Then he bent down, his hands passing through Song Ke's waist. He lifted her horizontally and, as he stood up, his steps were a bit unsteady, stumbling a couple of times. The feeling in the palms was slippery—her snake tail was indeed too heavy.

Song Ke blinked and earnestly suggested, "You should... exercise."

After a while, she couldn't help but mutter, "I can lift you with one hand."

Zhuang Qingyan: "..."

His fingertips moved slightly, and a brand-new wheelchair appeared out of thin air. Carefully placing Song Ke onto it, he said with a cold face, "Tail, coil up properly."

Song Ke puffed her cheeks, promptly coiling it into a ball.

Zhuang Qingyan then took out a blanket and covered her lower body securely.

Yin Xiao was not far away and walked over after escaping the danger. Upon seeing the appearance of the two, he was momentarily stunned. Why was Song Ke, who was in a wheelchair, now sitting there?

Yin Xiao took a step forward, his eyebrows slightly furrowed. "Song Ke, are you injured?"

"No! No!" Song Ke hurriedly retreated. "I-I just need to rest a bit."

Yin Xiao, still concerned, wanted to approach for confirmation. However, Zhuang Qingyan blocked him, his gaze cold. "She's fine. Please maintain social distance."

Yin Xiao glanced at Zhuang Qingyan, observing him standing perfectly on his two long legs, and his mouth twitched. What's wrong with this guy? Sitting in a wheelchair for no reason?

Lu Xiaoyu and Fang Zhixu came from the other side. Although they looked disheveled and had some blood stains, fortunately, they were not injured.

Su Cha also returned from underwater. He was wearing a black tank top, and his muscular arms had clear and smooth lines. His left hand, hastily treated, had poor blood circulation, already turned pale due to soaking in seawater. Fang Zhixu hurriedly ran over to treat him.

"Sister~" Xu Xing ran over with his short legs, wanting to leap into Song Ke's arms. Midway, he was stopped by Zhuang Qingyan, who pressed down on his head, lowering his voice to warn, "Don't lift the blanket, don't let anyone get close to her. Protect your sister."

Xu Xing's radar lit up on his head. Although he didn't understand what was happening, he was quite clever. He immediately ran to Song Ke's side, like a little lion defending his territory with bared teeth and claws.

Veronica dragged Vladimir up, holding his head, continuously kissing his cheeks, and murmuring incomprehensible prayers. Vladimir's eyes were tightly closed, his face pale. A whole piece was missing from the right side of his chest, almost reaching his heart. Although S-level awakeners weren't so easily killed, he later attacked with his injuries and, soaked in seawater for a long time, his condition worsened. Without timely treatment, there was a risk of demotion.

Song Ke silently looked at the man on the ground. There was no doubt that Vladimir, in terms of character and strength, deserved to be S5 level.

She turned her head and called out softly, "Old Fang."

Su Cha's injuries were not severe, and Fang Zhixu had already dealt with them. Upon hearing Song Ke's call, he raised his head and instantly understood Vladimir's situation.

Song Ke opened the translator and skillfully switched to Luce language: "We have a doctor, do you need one?"

Veronica stared at her for two seconds, her eyes sad but calm: "Thank you, but a regular doctor can't save him."

Song Ke pointed to Fang Zhixu: "He is not only a regular doctor but also an A5-level, a healer."

Veronica looked shocked; healing awakeners were too rare. Luce certainly had A-level healers, but they were usually in big cities, well-protected and rarely involved in life-threatening S-level missions.

Veronica gently placed Vladimir's head down, stood up, and expressed the highest respect to Song Ke in the Luce way: "Thank you."

"Thank you," she repeated in the Alliance language with a hint of awkwardness.

Fang Zhixu, carrying the first aid kit, crouched down. After more than half a year of training, he had evolved from an excellent operating room doctor to a field doctor who could treat anytime, anywhere, even in the most basic conditions.

The light-colored ability flowed out slowly, and Vladimir's complexion visibly improved. Fang Zhixu efficiently helped him clean and bandage the wound.

"Vital signs are stable, and the loss of awakened energy is within a manageable range. Go back and treat him well; he can recover."

Veronica also deeply bowed to Fang Zhixu.

Su Cha stepped aside, holding his collar and asked in a low voice, "Lin Youyou? Where are you?"

There was a rustling sound from the other side, and after a while, a voice came out: "Here, here! Oops, wrong, turn right!"

Who was she talking to? Su Cha furrowed his brows slightly.

Yin Xiao looked down at the terminal: "The client has decided to abandon the mission, and a starship is coming to pick us up nearby. Everyone stay put."

The awakeners on the turtle's back couldn't help but feel a bit disheartened. This S-level mission was full of crises from start to finish, dangerous at every step. Yet, in the end, they still couldn't figure out why the residents of the Elderly People's Nation mysteriously disappeared.

In the low-spirited atmosphere, a certain awakener spoke with doubt, "Why do I feel something is off? Didn't this sea turtle die? Why is it swimming even faster now?"

"Look... those island fragments are also moving."

Could there be another unexpected twist? The mentally exhausted awakeners silently screamed.

Lu Xiaoyu thought of something and pulled out a wet screen to confirm, "We've already reached the Sea of Misfortune."

The surrounding magnetic field was in chaos, and the image flickered incessantly. The weather map loaded frame by frame, and Lu Xiaoyu could finally see the whole picture, freezing at the sight.

"Look over there!" someone exclaimed in terror.

In the far distance on the sea's horizon, an immensely large vortex was spinning rapidly, swiftly pulling in everything around it.

"What on earth is that?"

"Damn, is it causing an underwater earthquake!?"

"No, the suction is too strong..."

The corpse of the armored sea turtle was getting closer to the vortex, and the intense water pressure caused a strong feeling of suffocation. If this continued, everyone would perish!

"Dive! Swim back!"

"Don't be foolish, where do we swim to?"

"What should we do then? Wait for death? Unless the rescue starship arrives now, what else can we do!"

"Hey—!!" A clear female voice echoed behind the crowd.

The familiar voice made Su Cha turn around abruptly! A heavy shadow loomed over, and a colossal creature was swiftly swimming in the sea. Describing it as a "colossal creature" was not enough; how large was its size? Even though they were quite far away, no one could clearly see its entire form, only vaguely glimpsing parts of its body as it moved.

This... this... is a ferocious beast, again?!

Caught between a rock and a hard place, the emotions of the awakeners on site were on the verge of collapsing.

A tiny figure sat on the back of the giant fish, and Lin Youyou cupped her hands around her mouth, shouting to the people on the turtle's back:

"Captain—I'm here to pick you up—hurry up and get on!!"

Song Ke's face showed surprise: "It's Lin Youyou!"

Zhuang Qingyan decisively said: "Let's go."

V587 didn't waste any time; the group crossed the turtle's back and ran towards the unknown ferocious beast.

Others were dumbfounded: "What the heck, are they insane?"

But immediately after, more and more people went crazy. "Tustan" and "Peace Dove" followed without hesitation. Yang Xiaobo, while sprinting, shouted loudly: "Listen to your Brother Yang! If you don't want to die, follow V587!"

Veronica helped the recovering Vladimir to his feet and followed closely.

With death on both sides, the remaining awakeners gritted their teeth and also chased after.

The colossal creature emitted a distant and resonant roar, extending half of its wing like a massive palm leaf, serving as a makeshift bridge resting on the turtle shell. The awakeners quickly changed their positions and moved to its back.

Su Cha swiftly walked a few steps to Lin Youyou's side, "You..."

Lin Youyou's long hair was soaked, clinging tightly to her face. Her life jacket was tattered, but her eyes were surprisingly bright. She patted Su Cha's shoulder, winked mischievously, "This time, I really escaped from death. I'll tell you the legendary story later."

Su Cha: "..."

The onlookers, other awakeners, were completely stupefied. What kind of freaks were in this team called V587?

They looked like slackers yet easily soloing level 5 and level 4 ferocious beasts. The healing awakener was perfectly fine but didn't stay in the city; instead, they played on the battlefield for the thrill. And now, there was a woman who could control ferocious beasts?

Did they even understand what a normal awakener should be like?!

Before the crowd could express their amazement, the scene before them changed once again.

In the center of the Sea of Misfortune, the vortex's rotation speed increased rapidly, and the armored sea turtle's corpse was sucked in, instantly torn apart!

Fierce winds, tsunamis, torrential rain... the powerful suction made it hard to breathe, and the sky turned as dark as the deepest night.

At this moment, the colossal creature beneath them suddenly flapped its wings, leaping out of the sea surface! Everyone felt a flash before their eyes, and the whole world became incredibly ethereal. Surrounded by flowing clouds, it felt like one could reach out and touch the sky. No one spoke; the ultimate shock couldn't be expressed in words.

"This ferocious beast..." Zhuang Qingyan spoke with solemnity, "is a Kun."

Ancient texts from the old civilization once recorded: In the northern seas, there is a fish called Kun, its size immeasurable, capable of transforming into a flying bird named Peng. The outspread wings resemble descending clouds.

The mutated marine creature brought by Lin Youyou, regardless of its original form, truly deserved the name "Kun."

However, today was destined to be an extraordinary day, as they were about to witness history unfold.

In the center of the vortex, a colossal black city slowly rose, casting a shadow that covered the sky. The rushing seawater cascaded down like a silver waterfall from the celestial river. After leaving the sea surface, it freed itself from the constraints of gravity, accelerating faster and soon surpassing the Kun where the people were, hovering in the air.

Lu Xiaoyu quietly looked up; at the bottom of the city, an endless stream of “Yiyu” was continuously supplying energy. Even as a former member of the Lu family, he had never seen so many Yiyu at once.

“Utopia,” Zhuang Qingyan slowly pronounced a word.

“What?” Song Ke asked in confusion.

Zhuang Qingyan gazed at the enormous shadow overhead with deep and distant eyes.

“The famous utopianist, Smirel, proposed an idea in the early stages of his theory. He believed that above the 180 districts of the Alliance, there should exist an S-level city where people enjoy the most beautiful life—equality, shared wealth, free from oppression and troubles, like the legendary utopia.”

“That S-level city is called ‘Utopia.’”

Zhuang Qingyan smiled faintly, his eyes chilling: “Unfortunately...”

“Unfortunately... what?” someone couldn’t help but murmur.

Zhuang Qingyan’s tone carried a hint of mockery, “Unfortunately, Smirel himself was considered the most arrogant utopianist in recent history. He was sentenced to death and sent to the Death Prison for multiple crimes. The Central Court believed that his theory was fundamentally impractical and unanimously rejected it, officially abolishing it.”

He opened Song Ke’s terminal, went to the mission page, and without hesitation clicked “Complete.”

Thanks to this accidentally triggered S-level mission, now everyone knew—where did the residents of the Elderly People’s Nation actually go?

The awakeners looked solemn, turned on their cameras, faithfully recording everything before them.

As this floating city stabilized, visible changes occurred in the surrounding area. The storm over the Sea of Misfortune dissipated, and sunlight replaced the darkness. The thick black color on the surface of Utopia gradually faded, revealing a pure white glow, as if it truly resembled the idyllic paradise Smirel described.

However, everyone’s heads were shrouded in an undispersed shadow.

Veronica, sensing something, produced a new divination card in her palm. She slowly flipped it open:

—The reversed World card.

It meant an ungraspable scepter, unclear judgments, and a success filled with flaws. It also symbolized abandoned humanity.

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 153: Fire Seed (23)

You’re not an Alliance person if you don’t watch

As everyone immersed themselves in the extraordinary scene before them, Zhuang Qingyan quickly regained composure and was the first to press the “complete mission” button.

Song Ke, who was originally comfortably seated in a wheelchair, observed his actions. Astonished, she slightly raised herself, causing the blanket to puff up.

—Obviously, that wasn't a posture human legs could contort into.

Beside them, Xu Xing's small mouth widened into an 'O' shape, his eyes staring in disbelief.

Zhuang Qingyan's brow twitched, calmly pressing her down and placing his slender fingers by his lips, signaling both of them not to make a sound.

The big one and the small one nodded in unison.

Regardless of what had happened in the Elderly People's Nation, V587's primary goal was an S-level mission. Completing the task and earning points was the most crucial matter. Although everyone was still unclear about the situation, their thoughts were somewhat chaotic. However, Zhuang Qingyan's mind worked quickly. He had already connected all the clues and deduced the truth.

Since the original mission was an investigation, they still needed to submit a detailed report explaining the ins and outs to the client. With Zhuang Qingyan around, these issues could be effortlessly resolved. After all, he had once volunteered using Song Ke's "mouth" to recommend themselves to Ye Zimei.

Utopia finally came to a stop deep in the sky, resembling a massive floating airship. The chaotic magnetic field around calmed slightly, the mutated Kun changing direction. Its boundless wings flapped, leaping thousands of miles in an instant. Before their eyes blurred, they had already left the Sea of Misfortune.

Lin Youyou slowly bent down, pressed against its back, and sang an ethereal song. The mutated Kun seemed to understand her murmurs, raising its head to emit a mournful long cry. In an instant, it plunged into the sea, transforming into an endless giant fish.

Waves of shock and amazement gradually numbed the nerves of the awakeners. Even witnessing Lin Youyou and the Kun's "brainwave communication," they only stared blankly, their faces expressing, 'V587? How many surprises do you still have that we don't know about?'

Soon, they returned to the Elderly People's Nation's original location. However, there was nothing left here except the vast sea.

After T001 malfunctioned, the natural weather became completely chaotic, as if there was a clear boundary line. Half of the sky was clear and sunny, with sunlight shining everywhere, while the other half rumbled with thunder, pitch-black as the deepest night.

Wandering, confused, and exhausted awakeners, unwilling to think about anything, lay down one after another, waiting for rescue in place.

An hour later, three large starships arrived above. Upon discovering the massive creature in the sea, they hesitated to land and could only hover at low altitude, waiting for an opportunity to lower the gangway. The esper evacuated in an orderly manner, and Song Ke was pushed into the cabin by Xu Xing, panting.

As they left, Lin Youyou looked back, and the mutated Kun emitted a faint and sorrowful sound, seemingly bidding her farewell. It then flipped and disappeared from their sight.

The heart-pounding day finally came to an end. The exhausted group had no energy for small talk or socializing; they quietly took their seats to rest.

After V587, Yin Xiao, Gu Ruoyi, and others bid farewell, they deliberately chose the corner room. They entered silently, and Lu Xiaoyu casually installed a signal jammer behind the door to prevent surveillance and eavesdropping.

After staring at each other for two seconds, a cacophony of voices erupted:

Xu Xing: "Sister, the blanket is crooked #@\$~ What happened?"

Su Cha: "What's the deal with that fish?"

Lin Youyou: "Let me tell you, I had a really unlucky day today. That damn life jacket actually tore!"

Song Ke: "How many points did we get? Let me see."

Lu Xiaoyu: “The starship is lost. How are we going back?”

In the midst of chaos, each spoke their own thoughts, and no one could hear anyone else.

After a silent moment, they all simultaneously exclaimed, “#@\$*%&.....!!”

Song Ke raised her fist: “Stop! One at a time!”

Lin Youyou elegantly raised her hand, making a “Captain first, please” gesture.

The result was Song Ke starting with a deep-sea torpedo. She slowly lifted the blanket: “You guys, need to stay calm.”

A long black snake tail slid down from the wheelchair, quickly occupying the entire space. The cold aura of a snake, with a venomous split hook, slightly curled, emitted a chilling sensation.

Lin Youyou’s pupils widened in shock, unable to say a word.

Lu Xiaoyu remained indifferent, but his mechanical arm flew out uncontrollably.

Xu Xing, after a moment of bewilderment, had starlight shining in his jet-black eyes: “Wow... so cool!”

“Sister~ sister~ so amazing! Can I touch it?” His small mouth was as sweet as honey: “Just once, twice!”

Song Ke was very generous: “Don’t touch the hook, everything else is fine.”

Carefully, Xu Xing touched it once and quickly withdrew his hand. The texture was a bit rough, and the scales rustled, making his palm itch. He looked like he had found a new and fascinating toy and was about to touch it again—

Zhuang Qingyan stepped over the winding snake tail, lifted Xu Xing disdainfully by the collar, and threw him to where Fang Zhixu was.

“Song Ke’s condition is complicated. Preliminary judgment suggests a genetic issue. I will take her for an examination as soon as we return. On the way back, everyone help provide cover,” Zhuang Qingyan explained.

In the sea, it wasn’t obvious, but now, away from the combat environment, others would easily notice.

Everyone nodded, unanimously expressing their willingness to unconditionally protect the captain.

Su Cha finally found an opportunity: “You and that Kun...”

Lin Youyou casually waved her hand: “That doesn’t matter. I want to know what Utopia is all about.”

Su Cha: “...”

Zhuang Qingyan sat close to Song Ke, lazily propping up one leg, terminal projecting, and began writing a report: “The truth is already clear.”

Song Ke unconsciously moved her tail, wrapping it around him and enclosing him. The last part rested perfectly on his knee. From a distance, Zhuang Qingyan seemed to be sitting on a snake-skin sofa.

“The conclusion of this S-level mission is evident. The residents of the Elderly People’s Nation did not mysteriously disappear; they went to Utopia.”

“Have you heard of the ‘Ark’?” Zhuang Qingyan freed his left hand, skillfully caressing the snake tail on his leg, like the most proficient masseur, always finding the right spots. There, the nerves were densely distributed, and a weak electric current continuously washed over the crown of her head. Song Ke comfortably slumped in the wheelchair, eyes slightly narrowed, and the tip of her tail swayed gently.

“The ancient civilization’s ‘Bible’ once recorded that the mortal Noah, based on God’s instructions, built a huge ship named the ‘Ark’ to protect the world’s creatures from God’s punishment.”

“The Alliance...” Zhuang Qingyan’s trailing tone was light and slow, the speed of his one-handed typing neither hurried nor slow. “Not only the Alliance, but Cario and Luce also participated in this plan. The three nations collaborated to build an ‘Ark,’ which is Utopia. They issued ‘tickets’ to a very small number of people.”

Lin Youyou exclaimed, “So you mean the residents of the Elderly People’s Nation left A5 voluntarily because they got the so-called ‘tickets’?”

Lu Xiaoyu interjected calmly, “Perhaps at this moment, they are in Utopia, celebrating with champagne and saying, ‘Oh my God, look at those silly groundhogs below, they will never experience our happiness.’”

This joke is not funny at all. Everyone stared at Lu Xiaoyu with expressionless faces.

“I still don’t understand,” Lin Youyou said slowly, “Setting aside why they so firmly abandoned the Elderly People’s Nation and chose the elusive Utopia, can this matter be hidden for a long time? Even if we hadn’t coincidentally taken on this mission, wouldn’t the appearance of such a large floating city be exposed?”

“Because Utopia has already risen,” Zhuang Qingyan’s tone was gentle, but the cruel undertone in his eyes was evident. “Twenty-one days ago, the Elderly People’s Nation’s Foreign Trade Department lost contact. I believe that at that time, they had already transferred to the underwater Utopia, waiting quietly for the ‘sailing’ moment to arrive.”

Everyone was stunned.

“Even if it’s exposed, it’s futile. No one can stop them; their purpose has been achieved.”

Zhuang Qingyan opened the star network. Some awakers had already uploaded videos of the scene, causing a sensation in a short period. Most people still didn’t understand what had happened and simply followed the trend to criticize the leaders of various countries for conspiracies.

“You said Smirel’s theory couldn’t be realized, right?” Fang Zhixu rubbed his chin, showing deep confusion in his eyes. “Then why would the Alliance do this? When did they plan it? And how was the floating city implemented?”

Zhuang Qingyan patted Song Ke, signaling her to turn around: “Let’s push the timeline back to the very beginning.”

“The New Asia Alliance is a nation rebuilt after the war. Due to the nuclear war, the living conditions on the ground became increasingly harsh, and extreme weather occurred frequently. That’s why the Weather Mimicry System was born. Nevertheless, the Alliance may have long determined that this land was not suitable for survival. They needed to find or establish a new home.”

“And after the apocalypse, the situation got worse.” Song Ke made an effort to think and provided constructive opinions.

“Right, the captain is correct.” Zhuang Qingyan slid along her tailbone, checking for any wounds inch by inch.

The post-apocalyptic zombie tide, ferocious beasts, scarce resources, abandoned cities... made the human survival environment even more challenging.

“As for when Utopia was constructed, perhaps it started even before Smirel was sent to the Death Prison, or perhaps, when the proposal to abolish Utopia was first brought up in the council, the Alliance began to act.” Zhuang Qingyan smiled meaningfully, “After all, ‘Rome wasn’t built in a day,’ and such a massive project requires extensive and prolonged preparations.”

Lu Xiaoyu opened the map and marked a familiar area:

“The Endless Sea is the perfect factory. It’s located at the intersection of the three nations, in a geographically unique position. Although it’s an unofficial ‘no-man’s land,’ if anything happens, the forces of various countries can infiltrate in time. Additionally, the natural chaos of the magnetic field in the Sea of Misfortune makes it difficult to be detected by instruments. The construction work is underwater, so there’s no need to worry about confidentiality issues.”

Zhuang Qingyan nodded slightly, rare agreement in his tone: "After a period of effort, Utopia was finally built. The only challenge left was how to send it into the sky."

"Not difficult," Lu Xiaoyu immediately retorted, "as long as there's enough Yiyu."

Yiyu, a new type of energy discovered at the beginning of this century, was initially monopolized by the Erjia's Lu family for mining and purification methods. Later, the Erjia's Lu family voluntarily handed it over to the Alliance. Since then, flying terminals have experienced a leap in development. In the glorious thirty years, the algorithm-improved Lu starships (improved by Lu Xiaoyu in the 32nd year of the new calendar) became a symbol of splendid civilization.

Lin Youyou raised a question: "I've read reports that the global reserves of Yiyu are limited. The energy needed for Utopia to ascend must be terrifying. How could they collect so much?"

"I know," Song Ke suddenly spoke, "because all the Yiyu in the lower districts was recycled."

In the autumn of the 46th year of the new calendar, just a week after the apocalypse had arrived, Song Ke came alone from District F177 to Hua City. She had witnessed a meteor shower of starships falling, a tragic scene that she would never forget. Since that day, all starships in the lower districts had malfunctioned, making cross-district transportation extremely difficult.

She couldn't understand it before, but now she understood everything. Perhaps at the round table meeting in the Central Court (District A1), apart from Districts A and B, the 155 lower districts (CDEF) were considered expendable. Those people there didn't even have complete permissions and might never see the truth of the world. They were like a bundle of discarded firewood in the corner, to be burned when needed.

Lu Xiaoyu snorted, "I just checked the news from the other two countries. After the apocalypse, the frequency of flying terminal accidents has also increased significantly."

Needless to say, the Yiyu that disappeared with Cario and Luce was also used as the power source for Utopia.

Zhuang Qingyan chuckled, "Back to the present timeline. With everything in place, they chose today as the 'birthday' of Utopia."

"And all the anomalies we experienced, including the failure of T001, the disappearance of the Elderly People's Nation's barrier, and the sudden appearance of level 4 and level 5 ferocious beasts, are all due to the strong tremors underwater affecting the ecology of the indigenous people."

Lin Youyou sighed while supporting her forehead, "We're really unlucky, or rather, those suppliers are the most unlucky, right? Losing both money and goods..."

"I'm not sure about others, but at least V587 is not the most unlucky," Zhuang Qingyan said as he typed the last character. As expected of a high-achieving student from Liuponi, the newly crafted detailed and well-worded report, with rigorous arguments, was ready. He took Song Ke's hand, pinched her index finger, and solemnly clicked "Submit."

If the review is successful, this S-level mission, along with two side missions, will bring them incredible points.

Zhuang Qingyan's deep peach blossom eyes curved, and the handsome face revealed a detached indifference to worldly affairs.

"The storm is about to come."

"As for what will happen next, let those big shots argue. After all, we're just an ordinary team, occasionally earning some points to make a living."

As soon as he finished speaking, he was harshly slapped on the face.

"Beep beep," the terminal notification sound continued, and in the "B10 District High-level Awakeners Matching Conference" channel, countless people were looking for them.

"Oh my god! Have any of you watched this video on the star network? Attached link."

“I did. Who is V587? From our Northern Base?”

“Yeah, the one who recently joined the group. I’ll tag their captain @Song Ke, the best in the world.”

“I don’t believe it. That video must be synthesized.”

“I was on the scene; the video is authentic.”

“@YinXiaoLockedHeart, are you on-site?”

Curious, Song Ke clicked on it, and the first-person perspective of the sea battle recording greeted her. The main title was extremely explosive:

“Shocking! Men will be silent after watching, women will cry – the Alliance’s first-ever video of killing a level 5 ferocious beast, the Armored Sea Turtle!”

The glittering subtitle: “Who is the mysterious V587 ranked 235,706?”

Below that, there was flashing red text: “You’re not an Alliance person if you don’t watch.”

V587: “...”

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 154.1: Fire Seed (24)

Respected General Xie Lan

Zhuang Qingyan made a soft sound, tightening the joints of his fingers resting on the snake’s tail.

He dragged the progress bar back, pressed play from the beginning, and so everyone was forced to watch again the three lines of explosive and provocative headlines: "..."

This video was probably recorded with a ring-shaped terminal, with a limited field of view and occasional shakes. The person filming probably didn't anticipate the astonishing developments later. Starting with a somewhat insincere posing on the deserted streets of the Elderly People's Nation, after a short while, the ground suddenly cracked open. The camera violently shook, the perspective seemingly plummeting like a free-fall ride, inadvertently focusing on the sea—the enormous head of a ferocious beast suddenly appeared!

The realism of a disaster movie hit them head-on. The opening scene was crafted perfectly, no wonder this video went viral, immediately capturing the audience's attention.

In fact, many people on the island were filming videos at that time. Some awakeners even maintained a connection with their clients, making it easy for them to understand the situation on the spot.

However, when the Elderly People's Nation later collapsed, the Armored Sea Turtle went on a rampage, and everyone was embroiled in a fierce battle, too preoccupied to care about recording videos. But this guy not only didn't turn off the camera, he even intentionally switched it to motion capture mode, enhancing the clarity of the footage.

On the screen, a line of text slowly appeared: "Main feature begins."

Lin Youyou chuckled, "Oh, there's even post-production."

"Swoosh..." Two agile figures descended at the center of the frame. Song Ke and Su Cha appeared out of thin air, like twin stars flying together. Snake-like movements, weaving through the barnacles, they headed towards the head of the Armored Sea Turtle. The person filming exclaimed, "Damn," stumbling behind them, tripping numerous times along the way. When he reached the head, he coincided with the exquisite cooperation of the two.

A burst of blue light, Song Ke and Su Cha, one real and one fake attack, both wielding unstoppable spiritual weapons, simultaneously stabbed the two eyeballs of the Armored Sea Turtle! Exciting background music played, followed by the enthusiastic text:

“First blood!”

“Double kill!”

“Roar, roar, roar!!!” The person filming let out an excited and strange shout, the voice vaguely familiar. Song Ke looked surprised, and after a moment, she dredged it up from the corners of her memory. Wasn’t this Yang Xiaobo with the talkative rainbow-colored hair?

Zhuang Qingyan clicked pause, dragged it back to watch again. At this point, Song Ke’s genes hadn’t gone awry, and in the footage, her agile figure was exceptionally lively, with clear views of her legs as she ran.

The Armored Sea Turtle launched a 360-degree spinning counterattack. Yang Xiaobo splashed into the water with a “plop.” The camera floated and sank, creating a suffocating feeling of the deep sea, making it hard to breathe. He finally climbed back up, clumsily wiping off the water droplets on the lens, only to find that Song Ke had disappeared from his sight.

In the distance, a group of mutated man-eating sharks appeared. Yang Xiaobo gathered his abilities, bravely rushing towards them, constantly muttering to himself, “If I die, this will be my farewell video. But it’s okay. Twenty years later, your Brother Yang will be a hero again!”

Lin Youyou supported her chin, looking somewhat worried. “If he keeps filming like this, won’t he accidentally capture Song Ke’s tail?”

Song Ke was suddenly startled, her snake tail shrinking and sliding back, coiling into a large mosquito coil.

Lu Xiaoyu remained calm, shaking his head. “If he really captures something, the Star Network won’t be as calm as it is now.”

The current online discussions covered a wide range of topics, but there were no keywords related to “snake tail.”

“Let’s continue watching,” Zhuang Qingyan said in a deep voice.

The video continued, and considering the time, Song Ke had already grown her snake tail. Everyone in the private room sat upright, fully focused on the screen.

Yang Xiaobo was having a particularly unlucky time. Just as he climbed back onto the turtle shell, he turned his head and collided with a Level 4 man-eating shark. The shark opened its huge mouth, seemingly about to bite off his head, but its movement suddenly froze!

“Triple kill!”

Song Ke emerged from a diagonal thrust, hands crossed for a lethal twist. “Swish!” She slashed the top of the ferocious beast’s skull, and thick black blood sprayed onto the lens. The screen instantly darkened, as if splashing the audience’s faces, but immediately, a pigeon-blood-red crystal attracted everyone’s attention.

Zhuang Qingyan slowly played back frame by frame. When the man-eating shark was pierced, a faint and elusive dark light flashed.

He zoomed in with two fingers, single-handedly grasping the curved fork on Song Ke’s tail, pulling it out and comparing it to the projection. “Can you see it?”

Fang Zhixu approached and observed for a moment. “I would only think it’s a knife.”

Su Cha agreed, “It’s hard to distinguish.”

Others also shook their heads. Song Ke’s attacks were clean and precise, showing no signs of anomalies in the video.

Next was the scene of Song Ke facing the Armored Sea Turtle alone. Yang Xiaobo was somewhat far away, and even at the closest, the lens was still slightly out of focus.

This was also the most likely moment to expose the truth. When Song Ke was propelled into the sky, her tail, not completely wrapped, might be captured on camera!

However, when the killing scene appeared, everyone in the private room fell silent together.

Yang Xiaobo, seemingly lost in thought, manually added special effects. Colorful laser beams lingered around Song Ke, resembling the rotating lights in a low-grade disco, almost blinding everyone's eyes. What was even more outrageous was that he intentionally magnified the trident. As a result, all anyone could see was a flashy, multicolored ball of light and an extremely exaggerated trident descending from the sky, piercing through the Armored Sea Turtle's head.

“Quadra kill!”

“Aced!”

In the moment the Level 5 crystal appeared, Song Ke bathed in a dazzling golden light (added in post-production), resembling the famous Buddha statue in the Rainbow Cloud City.

In such a scene, let alone the tail, it would be reasonable even if she grew wings and ascended in place.

Song Ke sincerely praised, “Wow... it looks good.”

Lin Youyou was incredulous, “You think this looks good?”

Song Ke blinked uncertainly and whispered, “It's, um, pretty good.”

“I shouldn't have asked. Your taste is just like that rainbow-headed guy,” Lin Youyou sighed while holding her forehead.

Yang Xiaobo could be considered a talent; inadvertently, he provided cover for Song Ke.

Even at this point, Yang Xiaobo didn't stop. He consecutively recorded the scenes of Utopia rising and Lin Youyou riding the Kun, adding the same bling-bling effects. However, because the mutated Kun was too large, he couldn't capture it entirely, so he chose to use voice-over commentary, "My savior is the peerless heroine of V587. One day, she came to rescue me riding a giant fish."

After the highlight moment of V587, Yang Xiaobo surprisingly continued for another twenty minutes, sharing a long and meaningless personal journey that no one wanted to hear. The video only truly ended when the rescue arrived.

Lin Youyou was speechless, muttering, "Fine, help the captain attract attention. Anyway, I don't have any dirt they can dig up."

Zhuang Qingyan coldly asked, "Can the video be deleted?"

Lu Xiaoyu replied, "It can't be completely deleted. It spread too quickly, and the download count has already exceeded two billion times."

Although it ended somewhat abruptly, Yang Xiaobo's "First Alliance Video of Killing a Level 5 Ferocious Beast" had enough novelty, and the content... could reluctantly be considered high-quality. In less than two hours, it had spread across all of District B.

"Even if we delete it, if someone shares the local files, it will still pop up, like wild grass that can't be completely burned, growing again with the spring breeze," Lu Xiaoyu's tone was flat and not optimistic.

Zhuang Qingyan closed his eyes for two seconds, then suddenly opened them, "Then destroy the source files."

The processed video might not show any abnormalities for now, but the original video was a different story. Yang Xiaobo might not notice anything right now, but who knows, if he starts to think carefully, he might realize something is off.

Coincidentally, Yang Xiaobo was on the same starship as the "Peace Dove" squad, which included V587.

Zhuang Qingyan, Lu Xiaoyu, and Su Cha pushed the door and went out. The three stern-faced young men walked through the rear cabin and stopped in front of another compartment.

Through a partition, they could hear Yang Xiaobo's chattering noise.

"Sister Ruoyi, do you think I'm going to become popular? Maybe I should switch to being an internet celebrity. Brother Yang still has a promising future, right~"

"Yang Xiaobo, you're so annoying. Can you shut up?"

"Knock, knock." Zhuang Qingyan politely knocked on the compartment door. Without waiting for an answer from inside, he suddenly pulled it open—

Su Cha was at the forefront, his 6'3" height filling the entire space. His gaze was deep, and a dark blue dagger danced in his palm.

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 154.2: Fire Seed (24)

Respected General Xie Lan

Sure enough, Yang Xiaobo's left middle finger had a ring, a skull-headed gothic design, surprisingly matching his eccentric personality.

Zhuang Qingyan pushed his gold-rimmed glasses and looked genteel, like a refined elite lawyer, "Captain Gu, I am the special attorney for V587. Your team member, without the consent of our captain, secretly filmed and disseminated videos, seriously infringing upon our image and reputation rights. Of course, Captain Song is generous, and we have no intention of claiming the originally planned compensation of 40 million Alliance coins from you. We just demand the destruction of the evidence of infringement."

“Image... reputation... what??” Yang Xiaobo was frightened by the combination of soft and hard threats, stammering, “D-d-don’t bully me just because I don’t understand the law. 40 million? That’s robbery! I don’t have that much even if you sell me!”

“We just wanted to make a fortune in silence. You’ve made it difficult for us by doing this,” Zhuang Qingyan said with a casual smile, his eyes carrying a cold edge.

“Sorry for causing trouble,” Gu Ruoyi was a reasonable person, “Yang Xiaobo, delete the video.”

Su Cha’s dagger pointed at Yang Xiaobo’s nose. Trembling, Yang Xiaobo took off the ring and handed it over. Su Cha tossed it behind him, and Lu Xiaoyu’s rhenium arm closely followed, copying the source files and completely destroying Yang Xiaobo’s copy. Even an S-level hacker couldn’t recover it.

“Sorry for the disturbance. Have a pleasant journey back,” Zhuang Qingyan smiled, and the compartment door closed with a “thud.”

Yang Xiaobo looked dejected, his messy rainbow hair completely drooping, “Sister Ruoyi, I’ve thought about it. Being an internet celebrity is too dangerous, even more dangerous than being an awakener. It’s better for Brother Yang to be more grounded.”

...

After dealing with Yang Xiaobo, the three returned to the compartment. Lu Xiaoyu sent the copied source files to Song Ke’s terminal, and Zhuang Qingyan lowered his eyes to carefully review.

With the major issue resolved, only minor matters remained.

Su Cha finally found an opportunity to ask Lin Youyou for the third time, “You and that fish...”

Fang Zhixu was also quite curious, “Right, how can you communicate with ferocious beasts?”

Song Ke and Xu Xing turned their heads, their eyes sparkling as they looked at Lin Youyou.

Lin Youyou flipped her hair and smiled alluringly, "Thought you guys weren't interested. Well then, let me tell you my legendary story."

Before the collapse of the Elderly People's Nation, Lin Youyou had sung a song on the Ribbon Bridge, incorporating a faint awakened energy. She hoped to communicate with marine creatures. However, whether it was due to the wrong frequency or the fact that ferocious beasts, despite their intelligence, lacked spiritual intelligence, there was no response at the time. She assumed that her attempt had failed.

It was at the moment when Lin Youyou, with her life jacket torn, was about to sink and suffocate that she was saved by that mutated Kun.

At that time, she was in a daze, thinking she was experiencing a hallucination until she surfaced, coughing violently, confirming that she had indeed encountered a miracle.

Through the low hum of the mutated Kun, Lin Youyou learned that it wasn't a native creature of the Endless Sea. Due to its unique sound frequency, it couldn't communicate with other members of its kind and could only wander alone in the eastern and northern seas of the Alliance. Today was the first time it heard and understood the song of its "kind."

Lin Youyou still found it unbelievable, "I can't explain why, but I can indeed communicate with it using my ability."

"I feel like it's not a ferocious beast."

After listening to Lin Youyou's description, something flashed quickly in Song Ke's mind, "I've also encountered a strange ferocious beast."

She had encountered a peculiar large bird in the Yue Mountain Martial Arts School after the apocalypse. At that time, she was covered in blood, emitting a fierce aura, but the creature, perched on the window sill, observed her quietly for a long time without any intention of attacking.

Zhuang Qingyan spoke slowly, "Humans can differentiate into zombies and awakeners. Animals, influenced by radiation, can also undergo different mutations. What you encountered can't be truly considered as 'ferocious beasts.' Perhaps they can be called 'animal awakeners.'"

Song Ke had a sudden insight, "A beast that is not ferocious?"

Zhuang Qingyan hesitated, "Well, something like that. Just understand the meaning; the name is not important."

"Alright, you can rest now. Any other questions?" Zhuang Qingyan said.

"Yes." Lu Xiaoyu silently raised a mechanical arm, "The starship 'borrowed' from the Northern Base is lost. The trojan horse I implanted is about to expire. Have you thought about what will happen then?"

"I know, we'll be wanted!" Xu Xing eagerly answered.

Everyone: ...

What's going on? From the Sin City to Mu City and then to Northern Base, they were clearly law-abiding citizens, so why are they on the blacklist everywhere they go?

Zhuang Qingyan helplessly rubbed his forehead, "I'll contact Ye Zimei."

...

In District B6, Beijun.

In a spacious office, a woman's figure blended into the darkness, like a silent statue, silently gazing at the suspended screen in front of her.

On the desk behind her, there was a golden invitation card, and at the bottom was the signature from: Utopia.

This was a pass, or a “boarding pass,” a ticket to board Utopia.

Although a notification could easily be sent through the terminal, for some unknown reason, the person sending the invitation chose the oldest form of paper invitation. It seemed like they wanted to leave the last trace of their existence in the abandoned world.

Few people knew about the existence of Utopia, and even fewer would refuse the precious “boarding pass.” If everything went as planned, the woman in front of the screen should have already been enjoying a new life in Utopia. However, from start to finish, she never cast a glance at the desk, keeping her eyes fixed on the recording, repeatedly pressing the pause button at the same moment.

It was when the Armored Sea Turtle self-destructed, and the massive body generated a very subtle pause. If one didn’t observe carefully, it could easily be overlooked, but the woman was absolutely certain that it was the work of a mental awakener.

A blurry silhouette flashed at the edge of the frame, and no matter how many times she pressed pause, the specific appearance could not be clearly seen.

Even when enlarged to the maximum, the frozen image only revealed mottled pixels.

The focus of the video was on Song Ke, who single-handedly killed the Level 5 ferocious beast. No one would pay attention to the inconspicuous bystander, especially when the person’s face was unclear.

The woman dragged the video back repeatedly, playing those brief two seconds over and over.

The room’s lights turned on, gradually illuminating the woman’s exquisite face. Even though her youth had faded, traces of her once stunning beauty could still be glimpsed. Aside from her appearance, due to years of holding a high position, she exuded a kind of chilling, captivating, and indomitable aura that made it impossible to look directly at her.

The woman slowly spoke, her slightly hoarse voice echoing in the room, "Can this video be deleted?"

The holographic projection on the other end answered respectfully, "I'm sorry, General. I'm afraid... it can't be completely deleted."

"Then suppress the visibility, lower it to the minimum."

"Yes."

"Have Lieutenant An from the Eleventh Unit come over."

"Yes."

Before long, a neatly dressed young man in military uniform appeared. Lieutenant An, removing his military cap, held it in his arm and respectfully lowered his head, "General."

—It was none other than An Qiwen, a former member of the Azure Phoenix Eleventh Unit.

The woman nodded slightly and asked calmly, "I've read the report you submitted, which mentioned the V587 team.

An Qiwen was slightly surprised. V587 didn't have a direct connection with their mission at that time, so he had only briefly mentioned it. After more than half a year, he hadn't expected to hear that name again from the person across from him. The General's memory was perhaps too remarkable.

"Yes, Captain Wu... had dealings with them."

Once again, bringing up the name of Wu Juemin, the grief and anger in An Qiwen's heart erupted like a dormant volcano. His voice trembled a bit.

The woman pressed the play button from across the holographic display, and the looped video restarted once more.

“Do you know these people?”

An Qiwen focused, carefully identifying each figure. “Song Ke, Xu Xing, and two others I’ve seen at U-Lab, named Lin Youyou and Su Cha...”

As for Fang Zhixu, whom he hadn’t met, and the one not appearing in the frame, Lu Xiaoyu, An Qiwen naturally couldn’t recognize them.

He suddenly thought of something but wasn’t sure if that person could be considered a member of V587. After all, at the end of the day, it was challenging for awakeners and ordinary people to form a team based on mutual trust. They might have gone their separate ways a long time ago.

“At that time, there was another person with Song Ke, a wheelchair-bound individual who claimed to be a senior maintenance engineer for the Weather Mimicry System.

“His name is Zhuang Qingyan,” An Qiwen answered truthfully.

“What did you say...?”

“Zhuang Qingyan.”

“Did he say that’s his name?”

“Yes.” An Qiwen was somewhat puzzled by the woman’s reaction but answered decisively, “We verified his credentials, and he indeed came from the Qinglan Research Institute. His work ID bears the name Zhuang Qingyan.”

The office fell into a dead silence.

After a while, a soft sigh echoed in the room.

Dim moonlight outside shone onto the desk, accidentally illuminating the heading of the boarding pass:

“Respected General Xie Lan, we sincerely invite you to Utopia...”

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 155: Fire Seed (25)

Reward in Advance

“It’s ridiculous!!!” The roar of Ye Zimei echoed through the communication, shaking the eardrums of those in the compartment.

Song Ke quickly adjusted the volume down.

This upright third-generation official was obviously shocked by their audacious operation, and her voice trembled as she spoke:

“You... the dignified S7 level, an all-A awakener team, how could you, how could you do something like stealing a starship?!”

“It was Zhuang Qingyan who said that borrowing and returning doesn’t count as stealing...” Xu Xing muttered softly, betraying his teammate without loyalty.

Ye Zimei heard it and immediately retorted, “That’s still ‘committing a crime and getting away with it.’ At most, it’s considered voluntary surrender. Besides, did you return it?”

“Last time, we did return it.” Captain Song, with a sense of responsibility, stepped forward and sincerely admitted, “This time, there was a small accident.”

The energy source of that starship had been absorbed by the ascending utopia, and its main body had long been reduced to debris in the underwater vortex.

“What?! There was a last time?!” Ye Zimei was almost out of breath.

“...” Song Ke sighed, guiltily covering his mouth.

Ye Zimei earnestly advised, “If you need a starship, you can tell me. I can help you apply.”

Lin Youyou sarcastically commented, “By the time the approval process of your Awakener Department is completed, the dishes would have been cold.”

Ye Zimei choked up. The starship was the most advanced flying terminal in the Alliance, with all public routes fully automated. However, for private travel with an undetermined route, it required a specially trained pilot, and the application process was very lengthy. Sometimes, waiting for a schedule could take half a month.

“You can’t steal either...” Ye Zimei sighed weakly. “Forget it, forget it. I’ll handle the damaged starship for you. I’ll also apply for another private one for you. Without a pilot, the approval process can be much faster. With my grandfather supporting you, you can take the backdoor route...”

“Miss Ye, how is the progress of the laboratory you mentioned earlier?” Zhuang Qingyan suddenly spoke up.

“Oh, I’ve already arranged it. Once you land, Bai Qi will take you there. Don’t worry, this time, no one dares to kidnap you.” Ye Zimei vaguely knew that Song Ke had some health issues, and the conflict with He Qihong was also related to this.

When Zhuang Qingyan proposed having a separate laboratory, she didn’t ask much and readily agreed, efficiently arranging the location in less than a day.

Song Ke made a “magnanimous old man” gesture on the opposite side.

Zhuang Qingyan understood and said, “Thank you then. After we handle our current affairs, we will go to see General Ye at the earliest opportunity.”

After ending the communication, his gaze dropped. It had been over 24 hours since Song Ke grew a snake tail. During this time, they tried various methods, intentionally frightening, stimulating with awakened energy, and even having Su Cha cut Song Ke’s tail with a knife, but it still wouldn’t revert.

Afterward, they were sternly educated by Fang Zhixu who criticized them for acting recklessly just because they had a healer and Song Ke could self-heal her wounds.

However, for Song Ke, these signs of transformation were very dangerous. Genes also had their own awareness. If they considered the existence of a snake tail as normal and solidified it, the consequences would be unimaginable. Zhuang Qingyan urgently wanted to take her for a recovery experiment.

Although, theoretically, he could handle this matter independently, he didn’t dare to take the risk with Song Ke. After pondering for a moment, he tapped out another communication.

...

The next morning, the groggy-eyed group heard good news. Zhuang Qingyan’s submitted explanatory report smoothly passed the supplier audit, and the rewards for the S-level commission came belatedly.

Whether it was shutting down the weather simulation system, killing the armored sea turtle, or investigating the truth behind the disappearance of the Elderly People’s Nation, V587 played a crucial role. They became the biggest winners of this mission, receiving a substantial amount of points, totaling several million!

As for the ranking that Song Ke was most concerned about, V587 finally made a breakthrough. From the awkward position of neither high nor low, they leaped to the 52nd place in the Northern Base and the 1314th place in the New Asia Alliance.

*

Five days later.

Outside the perimeter of the Northern Base, at the Starship Port of Qianzhan City.

No matter when, this place was always bustling with people. Those who wanted to join District B hurriedly moved about, and the enthusiastic shouts of intermediaries echoed continuously.

Seven people, including Song Ke, descended from the starship and quickly blended into the crowd in the dim night.

They purposely chose to disembark at the previous station to avoid coinciding with Tustan. In case the enthusiastic father-daughter duo, Yin Xiao and Jennifer, had any sudden suggestions for extending their involvement, it would be troublesome.

Upon leaving the station, Lin Youyou turned around, the lower half of her face securely hidden behind a mask: "Let's head back to the apartment first."

After Yang Xiaobo's video spread, V587 was well-known throughout the Northern Base. It was better for them to keep a low profile.

Lu Xiaoyu waved his mechanical arm and joked, "I hope the captain comes back with more legs than now."

Song Ke had developed a resistance to his sarcastic remarks, "I'll try my best, try my best."

Zhuang Qingyan pushed Song Ke towards Bai Qi and walked towards him. Seeing the change in the person sitting in the wheelchair, Bai Qi seemed unfazed.

The two got into a floating car. With V587's newfound fame, if they were ordinary people, there would surely be some gossip and inquiries about inside information. However, Bai Qi remained silent throughout the journey to the destination.

It wasn't until the two got off the car that he finally spoke, surprisingly, "Do you need me to wait for you?"

"No need, thank you," Song Ke politely replied.

Bai Qi hesitated for a moment, breaking his usual silence, "Miss Ye has bought this place, and I have already removed the surveillance inside."

In other words, whatever they did in the laboratory would not be discovered.

Song Ke gave a mental thumbs-up to Ye Zimei, appreciating her generosity. She had only mentioned "connecting" them with the laboratory, but unexpectedly, she went ahead and directly bought it.

After bidding farewell to Bai Qi, Zhuang Qingyan entered the password provided by Ye Zimei, and the main door opened slowly. The two took the elevator down to the basement.

With no one else around, Song Ke let loose completely. Sliding down from the wheelchair, her long tail covered the corridor as she moved forward silently.

Clattering sounds echoed in the spacious corridor, only the sound of Zhuang Qingyan's footsteps, slowly following behind Song Ke, trying not to step on her.

However, Song Ke was used to walking on two legs. During the days on the starship, she had been curled up in the compartment without a chance to practice the S-shaped balance of a crawling creature. Without taking a few steps, she fell face down on the ground.

Ouch! Tears welled up in Song Ke's eyes as she hummed while covering her nose. Suddenly, a pair of long legs appeared in front of her.

Zhuang Qingyan half-squatted down, his hands around her back, attempting to lift her up. Song Ke felt embarrassed, "I can get up by myself!"

Her fingertips touched the ground, trying to stand up on her own, but the floor was too slippery, and her snake tail kept slithering, and she twisted and fluttered from side to side as soon as she stood up.

Snap! A crisp slap sounded, and Zhuang Qingyan's gold-rimmed glasses fell to the ground.

Song Ke looked at the clear red mark on his face, "Uh..."

The laboratory was silent, and the polished floor reflected the glaring light overhead.

Zhuang Qingyan, with lowered eyes, couldn't see his expression clearly, but anyone could guess that this young master had never been slapped across the face.

Feeling guilty, Song Ke wished she could hide in the floor, "Sorry..."

"It's okay," Zhuang Qingyan sighed and simply sat down on the floor, "Song Ke, let's talk."

Song Ke sat up straight, "Okay."

"Epigenetics, do you know about it?"

Song Ke looked puzzled, using her eyes to convey, 'Do I look like I know?'

Zhuang Qingyan helped her adjust her hair and naturally switched to a more straightforward explanation, "In simple terms, there are significant differences in chromosome number and genome sequence between different species. Even for the same DNA sequence, tiny changes in regulatory mechanisms can have a significant impact on gene expression."

Song Ke nodded and shifted forward, hands on the ground, attentively listening.

Without a change in expression, Zhuang Qingyan subtly moved his knee, conveniently encircling her.

“After entering the New Era, the human genome sequencing progress has reached 100%. This also means that, compared to other organisms, our DNA chain is more transparent and complete. However, you are different. About 16% of your genes are unknown.”

Song Ke hesitated and nodded.

“Although the homology between humans and snakes is 85%, a normal person won’t suddenly turn into a snake without artificial intervention... Not even half a snake. Do you understand?”

Song Ke closed her mouth in frustration and continued nodding.

“So, I suspect that you...” Zhuang Qingyan didn’t finish his sentence. He stared at the girl in front of him, falling into an unusual silence.

“You suspect that I am an experimental subject,” Song Ke raised her head, calmly completing his sentence for him.

Zhuang Qingyan was momentarily stunned, not expecting Song Ke to voice this conclusion herself.

Song Ke wasn’t naive. Ever since Zhuang Qingyan saw the complete report on her awakened energy, he had worn a heavy expression. After experiencing so much post-apocalypse, being exposed to so much, could he truly be unaware of her abnormality? No, in fact, she had a faint premonition.

This premonition received irrefutable confirmation when she inexplicably grew a snake tail.

Zhuang Qingyan nodded slightly, “I suspect you were once involved in a genetic fusion experiment, but you have no related memories. So, we cannot determine the specific location, time, operator, and how to decode it. We need to decode those unknown genes.”

“Decoding? Do you know how?” Song Ke blinked.

“Yes,” Zhuang Qingyan held her hand and slowly brought it close to his forehead, “Here, it contains all the data about genetic experiments, precise to every log, every sequence, every experience of success or failure.”

“As long as we can detect those unknown sequences, I can figure out your origin and find a more stable way for you.”

Actually, Zhuang Qingyan had deeper concerns in his heart, but before confirming, he decided not to tell Song Ke.

“What exactly do I need to do for the experiment?” Song Ke extended her fingertip and lightly poked his forehead.

“You need to attach sensors, inject drugs, undergo instrument checks, and... there might be slight radiation,” Zhuang Qingyan explained.

Song Ke impatiently flicked her tail tip, “I don’t like being locked up.”

The previous experience of excessive radiation was too terrible. She deeply disliked the confined and narrow capsule chamber.

Zhuang Qingyan pinched her cheeks and shook them, “I won’t lock you up, absolutely not.”

He suddenly smiled, and ripples appeared in his profound eyes, “To be honest, even though I have abundant theoretical knowledge, this will be my first time conducting a real experiment. In order to ensure a smooth process, can you...”

“Can I what?” Song Ke asked unclearly.

“...Can you give me a reward in advance?”

Zhuang Qingyan murmured almost inaudibly, his light-colored eyes filled with a teasing smile, and his handsome face seemed to sparkle.

“...Huh?” Song Ke’s heart skipped a beat, not fully understanding, but somehow, her blood circulation suddenly accelerated, rushing to the top of her head.

Their posture was already somewhat ambiguous, with Song Ke nestled between Zhuang Qingyan’s parted legs. So when he slowly lowered his head, and his slightly cool lips covered hers, Song Ke had nowhere to escape. The snake tail instinctively moved and subconsciously wrapped around Zhuang Qingyan’s waist!

It was a light touch with a hint of Zhuang Qingyan’s aura, like delicate butterfly wings.

At first, it was a shallow exploration, drifting and meandering on her lips. Gradually, the mild coolness turned into warmth, and the demanding force became stronger. Then, a faint and teasing laughter echoed, “Silly... open your mouth.”

The thumping heartbeat was deafening, goosebumps erupted on Song Ke’s back, and she was stunned in place, not knowing how to resist. Her fingers curled, and the long snake tail tightened involuntarily, even the scales couldn’t help but stretch.

Zhuang Qingyan’s palm slid from her cheek to the back of her head, about to deepen the moment —

“The instrument is calibrated. What are you two doing, still not coming in?”

A sudden voice echoed at the end of the corridor.

The enchanting atmosphere between the two abruptly came to a halt. Zhuang Qingyan closed his eyes, and his forehead throbbed heavily.

Seeing the newcomer clearly, Song Ke widened her eyes, pushed Zhuang Qingyan away in an instant, and swung her tail, wrapping it around the person’s neck.

Ning Rong's face turned as red as a pig liver, his feet off the ground, choking out a thunderous cough, "Cough, cough, cough, cough, cough!"

Zhuang Qingyan, with his back to the two, pulled his hair back and let out a deep sigh, "Song Ke, I asked him to come."

Song Ke loosened her grip on Ning Rong slightly, keeping a vigilant gaze on him. If Ning Rong made any inappropriate moves, she was ready to take action.

Zhuang Qingyan awkwardly moved his knee, and in a low, throaty voice, he said with a hint of gritted teeth, "Dr. Ning, my mood is exceptionally bad right now. Explain yourself."

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 156: Fire Seed (26)

Wildcat

Ning Rong still had that serious appearance of sleep deprivation, with white streaks in his temples, looking tired. His drooping eyes fixed on the snake tail on Song Ke:

"I know you harbor hatred towards me, but today... cough, I am not your enemy."

He covered his bruised neck, his voice hoarse and dry: "Cough... this kid and I made a deal, he asked me to come here tonight as his experimental assistant."

For someone like Ning Rong, a giant in his field, serving as an assistant to a nobody like Zhuang Qingyan? Saying it out loud would probably drop the jaws of everyone who heard it.

"Aren't you from He Qihong?" Song Ke narrowed her eyes, expressing doubt about his words.

Just as Ning Rong was about to speak, a sudden chill ran down his back, a cold sensation as if he were being stared at by a crawling creature. He raised his head slightly, and vertical pupils appeared in Song Ke's eyes, indicating that her transformation was deepening.

"I belong to no one," Ning Rong sighed, "He Qihong wanted my research results, so she provided money and equipment. I need a team and space for independent experiments, so I temporarily accepted her protection. In the end, we're just in a mutually beneficial relationship. That time before, I suggested her to bring you here, but I didn't expect her to use such an aggressive approach."

"He Qihong is skilled in political tactics but knows nothing about academics. She thought I wanted to use you for human experiments, like those mutated zombies, but she was wrong." There was a certain fanaticism in Ning Rong's eyes as he took a step forward involuntarily. "Since I saw your awakener report, I had a premonition. Your ability to withstand strong radiation will be the key to my breakthrough in research."

People involved in research are not quite normal to begin with, and Ning Rong's persistence and madness surpassed that of ordinary people.

Suddenly, Song Ke raised her hand and threw a blue flying knife, nailing Ning Rong's shoe tip, causing him to stumble and fall to the ground with a "plop."

"Ning Rong, she is not your experimental subject," Zhuang Qingyan slowly stood up, picked up his glasses and put them on, giving a cold warning.

"...I understand. I promised you I wouldn't have any ideas about her again, but you better keep your word too," Ning Rong seemed quite wary of him.

"Why did you look for him?" Song Ke, displeased, bumped her head against Zhuang Qingyan.

"Sorry, I..." Zhuang Qingyan straightforwardly admitted his mistake, but his tone was somewhat hesitant.

Ning Rong, leaning against the wall, awkwardly spoke, "Anti-genetic experiments are extremely dangerous. If any step goes wrong, it could spiral out of control. This kid doesn't have full confidence, and he was afraid you might get hurt, so he had to find someone to assist."

Song Ke was momentarily stunned, recalling Zhuang Qingyan's mention of the "first time." Just as she was feeling disoriented, she almost overlooked this statement.

Does Zhuang Qingyan also have times when he's uncertain? He always seemed indifferent, as if he had everything under control. Could it be that because she was the subject of the experiment, he dared not take any risks?

Ning Rong exerted force with both hands, finally pulling out the flying knife that had pierced through the tip of his shoe, and handed it back to Song Ke, saying, "And I, I have participated in the 'Fire Seed' and 'Eternal Life' projects before. The current research topic is also closely related to genetic engineering. Among the living geneticists in the entire Alliance, you won't find anyone with more experience and suitability than me."

"Furthermore, I am still a member of the Qinglan Research Institute. When he was a child, I even..."

"Dr. Ning, there's no need for some of this nonsense," Zhuang Qingyan interrupted.

Ning Rong waved his hand, "Okay, your situation can't be delayed. Come in quickly."

Song Ke stared at him warily without moving.

Ning Rong sighed again, "Even if you don't believe me, shouldn't you trust this kid beside you? I promise, whatever happens here tonight, no fourth person will know."

Zhuang Qingyan quickly wrote an 'S' in Song Ke's palm.

Song Ke instantly understood and nodded silently. Even though Ning Rong was just an ordinary person, he dared to come here alone, facing two S-level awakeners. The risks he had to bear were much greater, considering that they could easily kill him with their abilities.

Song Ke swayed her tail, not very proficiently maneuvering through the corridor. The three entered the interior of the laboratory.

Without paying attention to the sealed capsule compartments, Zhuang Qingyan chose the most spacious examination room and brought over the necessary instruments.

The room had a constant, slightly cool temperature. Zhuang Qingyan deliberately dimmed the light, making it bright but not glaring. Then, he brought out a soft leather reclining chair, removed the restraints on it, and with a single push from Song Ke's hand, she jumped onto it. Her tail coiled up halfway, with the remaining sharp end hanging down to the floor.

On the spacious and messy experimental table, various instruments were arranged. Ning Rong was about to operate the equipment when Zhuang Qingyan stopped him, saying, "I'll do it."

He lowered his gaze, quickly recalling relevant information in his mind. Frowning slightly at the center of his eyebrows, he seemed unsure of where to start.

Ning Rong pursed his lips and couldn't help but remind him, "Start by operating the blood centrifuge, draw serum, take 400cc from each hand..."

Zhuang Qingyan retorted coldly, "Why do you need so much? It doesn't hurt if I don't take yours, does it? Running a lap with 400cc is enough."

Ning Rong's lips twitched. He thought, "You're not like your genius father. Can you ensure there's no loss when dealing with such a delicate matter?" After all, he still needed replenishment.

But, Zhuang Qingyan indeed made no mistakes. He was more precise and skilled than the assistant who had been with him for four or five years. Ning Rong had nothing to say.

Sensors covered Song Ke's tail, and she curiously poked at them. Zhuang Qingyan came over with a syringe, saying, "Are you afraid of drawing blood?"

Song Ke shook her head, rolled up her sleeve, and confidently extended her arm.

Zhuang Qingyan carefully drew exactly 400cc, his movements delicate and gentle. As soon as he pulled out the needle and was about to apply the hemostatic cotton, the wound had already healed.

His fingers holding the cotton froze, "..."

Song Ke chuckled.

His actions were too slow; her second ability had already taken effect.

Zhuang Qingyan's expression remained unchanged. He casually handed over the cotton, "Press it yourself, don't bleed back."

Song Ke suppressed her laughter and cooperatively said, "Sure."

The results of the blood routine came out quickly, showing that Song Ke's life indicators were basically normal. Zhuang Qingyan lowered his head to control the gene spectrometer, entered the decryption program, and patiently waited for the results by comparing them in the vast database.

Ning Rong, who was observing on the side, sighed silently. This guy had a vacant expression, hands in his pockets. Did he not know he should be recording the critical waveband data?

Opening a holographic screen, Ning Rong diligently started assisting, all the while bringing up another topic, "Last time you asked me whether my research is about the 'Fire Seed' or the 'Eternal Life Plan.'"

Zhuang Qingyan glanced at him, "I told you I'm not interested."

"Neither." Ning Rong answered on his own, "Neither of them... I'm researching a third kind."

Song Ke, with a silver helmet-like device on her head, looked like she was getting her hair done, “What’s the difference between Fire Seed and Eternal Life?”

She never quite understood the relationship between the two. Whenever Zhuang Qingyan and Lin Xiu talked about the “Fire Seed,” they seemed fine, but there was never a good expression when the “Eternal Life Plan” was mentioned.

Ning Rong explained, “Fire Seed is a gene project independently developed by Qinglan, with Vincent as its core. The initial purpose was to make human genes stabilize through selective fusion, thereby reducing the occurrence of diseases and extending the average lifespan.”

“Less sickness, longer life, right?” Song Ke nodded, somewhat understanding. It sounded good, and her body was particularly strong, never falling ill.

“When I joined, a year late and still not part of the core team, the Loak accident erupted. The Fire Seed project went bankrupt, and the Alliance reclaimed all related research permissions.”

“And the Eternal Life Plan is a gene project 2.0 launched by the Alliance later,” Ning Rong’s mouth drooped, “Their ambitions were too great. They not only wanted eternal life but also to awaken powerful abilities in humans. However, the condition was that all results would only serve a specific elite group.”

“The original intention of Fire Seed was completely distorted, and since the Eternal Life Plan involved biological experiments, I withdrew.”

“And my research is 3.0. As the apocalypse approaches, the first batch of selections is completed, and the evolution of awakeners has become a certainty. As long as I find the optimal gene ratio and radiation threshold on this basis, I can make everyone, no, all awakeners...” Ning Rong became more and more excited as he spoke.

“What, is He Qihong complaining that her life is not long enough?” Zhuang Qingyan sneered coldly.

He Qihong appeared fair and just on the surface, but deep down, she considered herself superior and was an extremely selfish utilitarian. To consolidate her position, she secretly supported Ning Rong's research, which seemed reasonable.

Ning Rong shook his head, "I'm not speaking for He Qihong, but what she does might not necessarily be for herself. As you know, that person's health isn't very good, especially this year... relying entirely on an S-level constitution. My research has been stagnant, and she can't sit still."

That person... Song Ke blinked. Ning Rong was probably talking about General Ye Zheng, right?

General Ye's health had deteriorated to this extent?

"Beep, beep."

During the conversation, the spectrometer displayed the results.

Zhuang Qingyan focused his gaze, "It's similar to what I thought. This is not an ordinary snake gene; it's the Hook Snake."

The Hook Snake, a mythical creature in ancient texts of the old civilization, with a length of over twenty meters, amphibious, and possessing a forked and highly poisonous tail, used to capture and prey on humans and livestock.

"Why would it be a Hook Snake?" Ning Rong was surprised. "This is a replicated gene."

Replicated genes refer to those extinct creatures in the natural world, resurrected through artificial recombination. The original samples of these genes are extremely precious and are kept by specialized organizations. Ning Rong vaguely remembered it was called "Tianyi" or "Zhengyi."

"I'm not sure about other organizations, but Qinglan has bulk-purchased replicated genes. At least forty-seven branches, including U—Lab, have preserved copies of the samples," Zhuang Qingyan accurately reported the number.

Ning Rong glanced at him, "Your brain works well."

After thinking for a moment, Ning Rong said, "Replicated genes are not easy to eliminate. Restoring them to normal requires using reverse radiation stimulation, which can temporarily make them recede."

"What are the values?" Zhuang Qingyan asked.

"15-20%, I guess. Snake gene activity is very low. Oh, by the way, adjust the radiation intensity next door," Ning Rong said.

Zhuang Qingyan stood up. Just before leaving, he coldly warned, "Don't touch the instruments."

Once Zhuang Qingyan walked away, Ning Rong lowered his voice and complained, "His face does look like Old Zhuang, and his temper is exactly like his mother's."

Song Ke moved her ears, "Mother?"

She had never heard Zhuang Qingyan mention his parents.

Ning Rong flipped through the holographic screen without much attention, "A group of bandits stormed into the laboratory back then, wanting to take him away. That's when we found out that this kid had actually skipped school in Liuponi, ran over to help Old Zhuang, and even lied to him, saying it was a holiday. It infuriated Old Zhuang..."

Zhuang Qingyan had such a black history?! Song Ke listened with relish, but she suddenly realized something, "Bandits?"

"Under his mother's command, a group of tall soldiers in military uniforms, all of them awakeners. Back then, awakeners were highly valued. Using them to catch truant children was simply a waste of resources," Ning Rong lamented.

Awakeners... tall soldiers... military...

Song Ke looked at Ning Rong in silence. This person hadn't even realized how shocking his words were.

Slap! Song Ke's snake tail once again tightened around his neck, exerting a bit more force.

"Stop talking. You're not allowed to talk about him, anything at all."

"Not a word!"

...

When Zhuang Qingyan returned, the examination room fell silent. Ning Rong stayed far away, and the bruise on his neck seemed to have deepened in color.

He didn't pay it much attention. After adjusting the values, Zhuang Qingyan pulled down the partition board, blocking Ning Rong outside, and went inside to accompany Song Ke while observing her condition.

Even with 15% excess radiation, ordinary people couldn't endure it, but an S-level could persist for a while.

Leaning against the countertop, Zhuang Qingyan looked down at Song Ke, "The reverse radiation test will emit different wavelengths. We need to find the segment that can stimulate you to revert."

Song Ke nodded, "Okay."

Faint radiation surrounded the two, and each time the wavelength changed, Zhuang Qingyan would remind her.

Twenty minutes later, Song Ke's snake tail twitched, and the scales began to fade.

Zhuang Qingyan's eyes curved slightly, but he suddenly thought of something, and his smile disappeared abruptly.

Swiftly, he pulled out a blanket from space and covered Song Ke entirely. After a while, two little feet appeared at the edge of the blanket.

"It turned back!" Song Ke's muffled voice came out, and her toes moved flexibly.

Zhuang Qingyan turned his back, looking somewhat unnatural. "Song Ke, put on your... pants first."

Rustling sounds followed, and Song Ke urged, "Okay, okay, look at it quickly!"

Zhuang Qingyan slowly turned around, and Song Ke was joyfully examining her legs, happily touching them.

He raised a faint smile. She had finally returned to normal.

Ning Rong, who didn't know what was happening inside, knocked on the protective glass from outside. "Hey, come out and take a look."

The radiation was turned off, the partition board raised, and Zhuang Qingyan returned to the instrument. "What's wrong?"

Ning Rong's expression was very serious as he pointed to the instrument screen, "Look, this is the Hook Snake's wavelength. It has weakened, but there are new curves here. Roughly estimating, there are a total of four segments."

Zhuang Qingyan's eyelids twitched. New wavelengths meant... new unknown genes.

Inside the room, Song Ke's nose suddenly itched, and she sneezed, "Ah-choo!!"

Then she saw the sensors on the “hair steaming machine”.

They shone, swaying on top of her head.

Song Ke’s gaze gradually fixed, and an inexplicable longing surged within her. It was as if she was deeply drawn to something. Her hands curved delicately, pressing lightly on the ground, her body’s center of gravity lowered, but her waist and hips raised high. The muscles in her calves were tense, resembling an agile feline, with faint brown spots appearing on her skin.

Then, her two ears moved gently.

As Zhuang Qingyan raised his head, he noticed her abnormality and had a bad premonition, “Song Ke—!”

Startled, Song Ke’s pointed ears stood up instantly!

With a thud, she leaped, jumping a full six meters high, reaching out to grab the swaying sensor while simultaneously smashing through the ceiling.

Lime and debris fell down, dust filled the examination room, and Zhuang Qingyan weakly covered his face.

On the spectrometer, the analysis of the second unknown gene coincidentally appeared—a wildcat.

This was the highest jumping and most ferocious wildcat in the natural world.

Song Ke cautiously peeked half of her head through the hole she had created. She had completely lost control of her physiological reactions, just wanting to grab the shiny thing.

Crack—several more pieces of rubble fell, hitting the ground near Zhuang Qingyan’s feet. He looked up and locked eyes with Song Ke.

Song Ke's eyes were innocent, and reflexively, she meowed.

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 157: Fire Seed (27)

I Couldn't Become a Saint (End of Fire Seed Arc)

"Come down," he said.

The room was filled with smoke, making it difficult for Zhuang Qingyan to breathe. He raised his hand and loosened the collar around his throat.

Knowing she had caused trouble, Song Ke shrank into the hole, revealing only half of her furry head.

Zhuang Qingyan realized his tone was too harsh and quickly lowered his voice, coaxing, "Be good, I won't be mad at you. Come down quickly."

Who could bear to scold a little cat, even if it was a stray cat?

Song Ke cautiously peeked out half of her body, scrutinizing Zhuang Qingyan with suspicion. Then, her spine flexed softly, and she landed silently on the ground, as if she had plushy paw pads. She still held a shiny sensor in her hand.

Luckily, the laboratory was underground, and Song Ke only broke through one layer of the ceiling. Otherwise, if people passing by outside saw it, it would be in the news. However, the newly purchased lab was now in a mess due to this incident, and it was inevitable that there would be a scolding from Ye Zimei.

Zhuang Qingyan lowered his gaze to inspect Song Ke. The spots on Song Ke's body had mostly faded away. Although her limbs were thin, they were covered with a thin layer of muscle, making her look no different from before. The performance of the wildcat gene this time was significantly different from the hook snake gene, only inheriting biological characteristics with no external alien changes.

Because Song Ke broke the power lines, some equipment had stopped running, including the gene spectrum analyzer. Zhuang Qingyan used the remaining instruments to conduct a rough examination and found that her vital signs had returned to the normal level of a typical awakener.

“From the results, the performance of the wildcat gene is more stable.” Ning Rong’s throat was hoarse. He glanced at the spectrum analyzer because of the power interruption, and the decoding of the two genes behind was not successful. “I suggest maintaining the current situation, waiting for the hook snake gene to become recessive, and then switching to other frequency bands.”

“If you want to clarify the DNA structure in her body, you must consider the issues of solidification and radiation. It’s best to have intervals of more than a week between each experiment.”

The unknown genes in Song Ke’s body were like opening a blind box; you never knew what would come out next. If something stable, like the wildcat, was revealed, it was okay. However, if something as highly transformed as the hook snake emerged, it could potentially affect their actions for some time.

After all, reverse radiation would cause irreversible damage to the human magnetic field, which even awakeners couldn’t endure continuously; they had to take it slow.

“Here, this is the data from the just now frequency. I’ve organized it for you.” Ning Rong handed over the light screen.

“No need,” Zhuang Qingyan glanced at it and casually refused, “I’ve memorized it.”

Ning Rong frowned, showing clear disagreement. “Don’t joke around. The matter of the experiment cannot be taken lightly. A small mistake...”

Zhuang Qingyan smoothly reported a string of data, and Ning Rong immediately realized that it was the log of the crucial decoding points. He flipped to the corresponding lines on the screen, finding that they were accurate down to the last detail.

Though he had heard about it earlier, witnessing it with his own eyes was still unbelievable. This guy’s memory was simply extraordinary!

Ning Rong looked at him with an increasingly eager expression. “My work is done. Will you keep your promise?”

“Is the current challenge for you the uncontrollability of excessive radiation?” Zhuang Qingyan asked.

“In high-dose radiation, after the double-strand DNA breaks and reconnects, there’s a phenomenon of single-base pair mutation,” Ning Rong quickly explained. “I remember that Old Zhuang led a specialized study in this area, in the 27th year? Or was it the 28th year?”

Zhuang Qingyan only took a few seconds to think. “In the new calendar year 28, the second stage of the prospective experiment on Fire Seed, focusing on genetic mutation inheritance caused by radiation. I’ll send you the relevant data.”

During their conversation, Song Ke ran around cleaning up the scene, setting the overturned equipment back in place, pushing the leather recliner back, and diligently mopping the floor. Zhuang Qingyan helped with a few things, and after a simple cleanup, they were ready to leave.

Ning Rong stopped him and, with a dry tone from his gritted teeth, said, “You’ve memorized all the content of that central hub, right? Even though I don’t know how you did it, what about the rest of the Fire Seed data? Are you going to let it gather dust forever?”

The air froze for a moment.

“The Fire Seed has already failed,” Zhuang Qingyan’s tone remained steady. “Those data have no significance.”

As if a drop of water fell into hot oil, Ning Rong’s eyes turned red, and his emotions erupted completely. “How can it be meaningless? You don’t understand the importance of the Fire Seed at all!”

“Even if it failed, which step failed and why it failed, all of that is valuable experience and accumulation. As long as it can be made public, why should so many of us, for so many years, blindly stumble forward? It’s clearly something beneficial to all of humanity. If Old Zhuang were still here, he would definitely do it!”

Zhuang Qingyan suddenly clenched his fists, his straight back becoming tense. He turned around, his expression on his face reaching the utmost indifference.

“—Something beneficial to all of humanity, what does it have to do with me?”

Ning Rong froze.

“I’m not him. I have low morals, am despicably selfish; I couldn’t become a saint.”

Zhuang Qingyan lazily pocketed his hands, looking down at Ning Rong from his taller position. The light-colored eyes behind the lenses showed no warmth. “Dr. Ning, the Fire Seed project has no meaning in replication. Whether you want to do version 3.0 or ‘benefit all of humanity,’ I sincerely advise you to ask your former colleagues for the Eternal Life Project data. From a common sense perspective, that direction might yield some results, unlike banging on a bamboo basket and fetching nothing.”

Ning Rong was speechless for a moment, unable to find words.

“We’re leaving, no need to send us off.” When Zhuang Qingyan turned around, he had already resumed his usual indifferent expression.

...

On the way out of the laboratory, Song Ke silently gazed at the sharp jawline of the person next to her.

Zhuang Qingyan lowered his head and met her gaze that she hadn’t managed to divert in time. A hint of mockery flashed in his eyes. “Did I startle you?”

Song Ke shook her head. “What you said, is it true?”

Zhuang Qingyan, a person who lied as naturally as he breathed, made it impossible for Song Ke to be certain about his true thoughts. But since he said he wouldn't lie to her, she might as well ask.

"Which sentence?" Zhuang Qingyan asked with interest.

"The one about 'all of humanity, not concerning you,'" Song Ke replied honestly.

"Of course it's true. Whoever wants to be a savior can be one. I, on the other hand, cannot."

Zhuang Qingyan smiled brightly. "I can't manage everyone, but just you alone is enough to make me worry."

He took Song Ke's hand, and their slender fingertips interlocked, turning into a gesture of intertwined fingers.

"A wildcat is something that can't settle down. I must keep an eye on you," he said.

Song Ke grimaced at him but didn't pull her hand away.

...

In Qianzhan City, the two wore masks as they strolled through the bustling streets and alleys. Song Ke wore a hooded ensemble, a style that neither of them particularly liked.

The night market was lively and bustling, with colorful flying cars soaring across the sky. The crowd enthusiastically discussed the rankings of awakeners in the Northern Base.

They boarded a floating bus headed for the inner city, which had no driver inside, and even the passengers were sparse. After the bus departed, the cool night breeze blew in from the windows. The figures below gradually shrank, becoming tiny like ants.

“Let’s visit Professor Ming and his wife tomorrow,” Zhuang Qingyan suddenly spoke.

Song Ke calculated the date, realizing that tomorrow was Ming Gang and Lucia’s wedding anniversary. “Sure.”

“Remember to bring a bouquet of flowers,” Zhuang Qingyan patted her head.

Ming Zhi’s flowers had withered; someone should replace them.

*

A dedicated starship glided through the night sky and smoothly landed at the platform.

Wearing a dark gray suit, He Qihong quickly walked out, her expression dignified, and a chilly wind followed her movements.

The newly appointed administrative secretary followed closely behind. “Director He, welcome back.”

During the two weeks of her suspension, He Qihong went on a business trip, and no one knew exactly what she did.

“Four S-level awakeners will arrive tomorrow. Arrange their citizenship matters as soon as possible,” He Qihong said as she walked.

“Understood.” The secretary responded, feeling amazed. Since Zhigler was severely injured and Xi Ze dropped to A-level, the number of top-tier awakeners in the Northern Base had decreased drastically. Unexpectedly, after He Qihong’s recent trip, she personally recruited four S-level awakeners. Her actions were quite significant.

While walking briskly, He Qihong inquired about other matters, “What’s the recent situation in the base?”

“There... um, V587 has returned,” the secretary reported nervously. “They just killed a level-5 ferocious beast in the Endless Sea.”

“I already know about that, so what?” He Qihong interrupted.

“So... from now on, their direct contact person is Senior Ye Zimei,” the secretary hesitated for a moment, then, with determination in her eyes, she said, “It’s a direct order from General Ye.”

He Qihong paused for a moment, then continued forward as if nothing had happened. “Whatever the General’s order is, I will follow.”

The secretary breathed a sigh of relief.

“How is the General’s health recently?”

The secretary scratched her head. How could she, a small administrative secretary, know about General Ye’s health?

He Qihong glanced at her. The new secretary wasn’t handy, not sharp enough. She would have to be cultivated slowly.

Taking a step forward, He Qihong looked down at the brightly lit city from a high vantage point. The Northern Base housed millions of high-level awakeners and countless civilians. It was the largest human settlement in the entire Alliance, also the safest fortress.

Just like countless peaceful nights in the past.

However, He Qihong knew that with the rise of Utopia, the tranquility after the apocalypse was being shattered.

A storm was coming.

...

Garden Apartments.

The sound of the door opening caught the attention of the five people in the living room watching the news.

“Sister~” Xu Xing, who was quietly plucking black hair from Fang Zhixu’s head, quickly stood up and hugged Song Ke’s thigh. “You’re okay!”

“Any lingering effects?” Lin Youyou, with a face mask on, asked while taking the opportunity to touch Song Ke’s waist.

“I don’t think so,” Song Ke felt itchy and smiled as she dodged.

Zhuang Qingyan followed behind. “The situation has temporarily stabilized. Don’t worry; I’ll take her for regular check-ups.”

“What are you guys watching?” Song Ke asked curiously.

Su Cha made room for her, and Song Ke tiptoed lightly to sit down.

“The news about Utopia has spread,” Lu Xiaoyu enlarged one of the screens.

After a few days of fermenting, the Utopia incident had completely heated up. Over a dozen magistrates issued a joint statement, demanding an explanation from the Central Court. Various protest marches continued in different districts, and even violent incidents breaking through blockades occurred. Unfortunately, the flying terminals were ruthlessly shot down before approaching the floating city.

Videos about Utopia spread like wildfire on the star network, overshadowing the popularity of V587 killing the Armored Sea Turtle.

On the other hand, the existence of the floating city disrupted the ecological balance, leading to abrupt global climate changes, with coastal areas being the most affected.

In Tokushima (District B16), three massive tsunamis occurred, and in Baishen (District B13), tornadoes ravaged, turning the city into ruins.

On the ultra-clear projection, severe natural disasters engulfed several cities, and Song Ke's expression turned solemn.

"There's another bad news, but it seems like no one cares."

Lu Xiaoyu brought up a screen from District C's terminal. "The aggression of zombies and ferocious beasts in the lower-level districts has increased."

The tide of zombies became more frequent, and the ferocious beasts became more ferocious. The combat power of these post-apocalyptic creatures seemed to have invisibly strengthened.

"We're not sure if these effects are caused by Utopia, but the situation is very grim."

After discussing for a while, the seven people felt powerless against the current development trend of the Alliance. They could only take it step by step.

"Rest early, we'll go see General Ye tomorrow," Song Ke decided.

Yawning, she stood up and, passing by a row of lush potted plants, sneezed twice.

"What's this?"

“Oh, it’s a new variety brought by the AI property management. They say it’s a feature of the Garden Apartments,” Lin Youyou casually replied.

Song Ke’s nose twitched, she sniffed lightly, and then felt the urge to sneeze again. She quickly moved away.

A small fluorescent sign fell from the flowerpot, showing a warm reminder from the AI property management:

[Silver Vine, a family of the ancient plant Kiwifruit. Be cautious if you have a cat at home.]

...

In a half-dreamy state, Zhuang Qingyan felt something on his face, a small tongue, wet and filled with a lingering sense of attachment. His sleep was usually light, and he suddenly opened his eyes, reaching back to grab the person by the neck.

“Song... Ke?”

Song Ke’s eyes were moist, with a few freckles appearing on the sides of her nose. Her two ears, for some reason, were swollen and red, possibly due to an allergy. She was lying on the bed, slowly lowering her head, licking Zhuang Qingyan’s knuckles.

Zhuang Qingyan’s pupils contracted, as if pricked by a needle, and he abruptly withdrew his hand!

The door opened slightly, and Song Ke clearly sneaked in. Her habit of not knocking on the door couldn’t be changed, but how did she end up on the bed this time?

Zhuang Qingyan half-sat up, the sheet slipping down to his waist. He then realized something, quickly putting on a T-shirt, and looked down.

Song Ke’s condition was clearly not right. Could it be that the invisible gene had problems again?

He reached out to feel the temperature on her forehead and cheeks. "Where do you feel uncomfortable? Tell me."

Song Ke looked quietly at him, not saying a word. Suddenly, she burrowed into the duvet, rolled around intoxicatedly, and her small dimples on the cheek were filled with water, resembling ripples.

Zhuang Qingyan: "... " This didn't seem like discomfort; it seemed extremely comfortable.

Carefully, he pulled up his legs, moved back, leaned against the bedhead, and realized something. He hurriedly put on a T-shirt, lowered his gaze, and looked at Song Ke's somewhat abnormal state.

His hands went to touch her forehead and face's temperature. "What's bothering you? Hmm? Tell me."

Song Ke rolled for a while, then on her own accord, snuggled up to him. Her eyelids were thin and reddened, and her lashes were filled with teary glimmers. She tightly hugged Zhuang Qingyan's narrow waist, rubbing back and forth on his faint abdominal muscles. Seemingly dissatisfied, she wriggled into his arms, sneezed lightly twice.

Zhuang Qingyan felt like he was struck by lightning, and the joints of his fingers pressing on the bedsheet suddenly tightened. His hoarse voice changed, "Song Ke!"

Ignoring her, Song Ke, holding him tightly, mumbled indistinctly, then grabbed his hand and put it on her ear.

Zhuang Qingyan frowned in silence, his eyes deep like a cold pond. Song Ke, urging him, touched his wrist again.

Zhuang Qingyan clenched his fists, and the veins bulged out, joints making a "crack, crack" sound. He tried to break free, but the strength of an S7-level awakener was no joke. Even if she was unconscious at the moment, he found it difficult to escape.

After a while, Zhuang Qingyan stiffly moved his fingers, pinched the pair of reddened ears, and Song Ke made a comfortable purring sound in her throat, happily spreading her belly, finally quieting down.

On the messy bed, the sheets were half-slipped, and Zhuang Qingyan sat motionless, mechanically rubbing the ears of the wildcat in his hands, one after another, with varying degrees of force.

...

“Let’s go! Get ready to depart!”

In the early morning, Song Ke stretched lazily, full of energy.

“Hey, Captain, you slept well yesterday.” Lin Youyou came out with a yawn, still half-asleep, completely lacking the self-awareness of a female celebrity.

“Yeah! Extremely well!” Song Ke’s cheeks revealed a small dimple. It was the most sound sleep she had had in half a month. However, when she woke up, the corners of the quilt were tightly secured, and she struggled for a while before finally getting out.

Shortly after, the members of V587 gathered one by one. Fang Zhixu looked around and muttered softly, “Where’s our Princess Zhuang?”

Zhuang Qingyan, with his strong obsession for cleanliness and various picky living requirements, earned himself the nickname “Princess.” Of course, people only dared to call him that in private.

Click.

The bedroom door opened.

Zhuang Qingyan, with a low mood and a dark face, came out. When he saw Song Ke, who had a pure and puzzled expression, his steps halted.

His eyes were bloodshot, dark circles hung on his handsome face, destroying the elegance that was always on display.

“Did you not sleep well?” Song Ke showed concern.

“...Hmm.” Zhuang Qingyan was full of mixed emotions.

Passing by the balcony, Zhuang Qingyan accurately picked up one of the potted plants, glanced at the nameplate, and coldly threw it into the trash bin.

Silver Vine has long been known to elicit euphoric response in cats. The reaction to silver vine is similar to the response to catnip but appears to be more intense. Silver vine is an alternative to catnip, and many cats that do not react to catnip will respond positively to silver vine powder made from dried fruit galls. Typical behaviors include rolling, chin and cheek rubbing, drooling, and licking. The effect usually lasts between 5 and 30 minutes, but afterwards cats exhibit a refractory period lasting roughly an hour during which they are unresponsive to further dosage. – Wiki

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 158.1: Key (1)

Crime Record Plus

Northern Base, General's Mansion.

First time clueless, second time familiar. This time, they didn't need Bai Qi to pick them up; Song Ke and the other six went on their own.

After passing the security check in the villa area, Ye Zimei stood at the door from afar to welcome them... oh no, to question them with righteous anger.

She had a day off today and wasn't wearing the Awakener Department uniform. Instead, she casually put on a summer outfit with her hands in her pockets. Seeing Song Ke, she scolded with a stern face, "Captain Song, first stealing a starship, then blowing up the laboratory. What kind of demolition team is your V587?"

Song Ke rubbed her hands nervously, "Mistake, it was a mistake."

Ye Zimei roared in frustration, completely ignoring that she was facing an S7-level capable of single-handedly killing a level 5 beast, "I stayed up for three nights! Looked through thousands of documents! Selected laboratories carefully! Right after passing the household registration, you ruined it for me. Does that make any sense?"

"N-no sense," Song Ke's tone weakened, and after a few seconds of silence, she uncertainly asked, "Do you want me to compensate?"

As soon as the words were out, she immediately painedly covered her money bag. Her watery eyes looked at Ye Zimei, calculating how much it would cost. They had just become a bit prosperous, and now they had to go back to pre-liberation times?

Seeing her acting stingy, Ye Zimei chuckled, "No need for compensation. I still have some damage budget left. Can you please be more careful next time?"

"Got it, I understand." Song Ke heard that she didn't have to pay, and her eyes curved into crescents.

The group walked inside and met Bai Qi on the way, who nodded at them tersely.

In the artificial garden, Ye Zheng set up a glass water tank in front of him. The old man was in high spirits, playing with a turtle. The turtle was upside down, stretching its neck out from the shell, trying hard to reach the ground. Slowly and leisurely, it turned over with Ye Zheng's slow and leisurely help.

Turtle: ?

Xu Xing, being a child at heart, couldn't help but snicker first, "Pfft."

Ye Zheng seemed to have eyes on the back of his head, knowing it was them. "You're here."

Song Ke subconsciously stood at attention, greeted with proper etiquette, "General Ye." The others also followed suit in greeting.

Ye Zheng waved his hand, indicating they didn't need to be so formal, "I watched the naval battle video of the Elderly People's Nation. Not bad, calm under pressure, brave and strategic. You are all promising fighters, especially Xiao Song." He pointed at Song Ke, "A born 'War God,' even my best adjutants back then couldn't compare to you."

Who was Ye Zheng? He was a seasoned general forged in the battles of half a century, and the number of people in the entire Alliance who could earn his praise was few. Song Ke blushed slightly, scratching her head in embarrassment.

"Bai Qi, you also watched the video. As a practitioner of ancient martial arts, what do you think of Xiao Song?"

"Very strong," Bai Qi straightforwardly replied. Song Ke's combat style was clean and efficient, without any fancy or cumbersome moves. Coupled with her exceptional physical fitness, even Bai Qi admitted that he might not be able to match some of Song Ke's combat skills.

"Your techniques, are they from the orthodox school?" Bai Qi rarely spoke more than a sentence.

Song Ke honestly shook her head, "No, my master is named Zhang Ting, and we belong to the Yue Mountain Sect."

Zhang Ting was once a renowned martial arts master in the Alliance, but he retired too early, and Bai Qi, being under thirty, was unfamiliar with the name.

Bai Qi nodded slightly, not pressing for more information.

Ye Zheng casually rolled up his sleeves and beckoned to Song Ke, "Xiao Song, since you're here, how about a little sparring?"

Both being S-level, Song Ke didn't think much and readily agreed, "Sure."

Ye Zimei, standing beside them, exclaimed in shock, "Grandpa!!"

Bai Qi's expression changed slightly as he stepped forward, "General, it's not advisable."

Ye Zheng glanced at them lightly, and his imposing aura forced the two to retreat, "What's the fuss? It's just a friendly match. I'm not allowed to do this and that all day long. If I don't move my old bones a bit, they'll rust sooner or later."

The old man was determined to have a little bout with the only S7 in the Alliance, and no one could dissuade him. Ye Zimei huffed to the side.

Ye Zheng then winked mischievously at Song Ke, "Xiao Song, I'm old, and my martial arts skills are not as good as yours. Can I use some abilities?"

Lin Youyou used her ability to secretly transmit her voice to her, "Song Ke, Princess Zhuang advises you to be careful. He says General Ye is an early awakener."

Early awakens referred to those who awakened their abilities before the apocalypse. Usually, such awakens would experience a significant improvement in their strength due to the secondary stimulation of the apocalypse radiation, easily overpowering others of the same level.

Ye Zheng, having awakened his abilities after the apocalypse, was now over 90 years old, and even if he was S-level, his level wouldn't be too high.

Song Ke belatedly realized that she had agreed too casually but now was in a dilemma, "Oh."

Ye Zheng lowered his center of gravity, suddenly lifted his knee and sent a straight punch towards her throat. A domineering surge of awakened energy gushed out, causing Song Ke's legs to feel like a thousand pounds, freezing her in place. She was slightly surprised—was it a gravity-based ability?

The glass water tank next to them shook, and the turtle, which was struggling to flip over, was impacted, spinning rapidly like a top.

Turtle: ??

As the fierce punch wind approached, Song Ke gritted her teeth, lifting one leg with difficulty and delivering a mid-air side kick!

Ye Zheng, with excellent awareness, immediately shifted from offense to defense, blocking with both arms. After Song Ke completed her move, the gravitational ability erupted again, sweeping her lower body.

The tilted glass tank spun, and the confused turtle fell to the ground. Bai Qi picked it up and casually placed it aside.

This time, Song Ke was prepared. With a sly smile, she treated it like lifting a few hundred kilograms of sandbags, agilely jumped up, entered Ye Zheng's proximity, elbowing him in the solar plexus, and subconsciously attempted a shoulder throw—only to notice Lin Youyou shaking her head nearby.

Song Ke suddenly realized and changed her approach, disarming Ye Zheng's force and gently pushing him away.

Ye Zheng took a few steps back, steadying himself, and Song Ke also stopped in time.

In just a few moves, she was drenched in sweat, and her limbs felt as heavy as if they were filled with cement. Gravity-type awakeners were indeed formidable.

Ye Zheng, rubbing his sore right arm, laughed heartily, "How fun! You went easy on me, right?"

Song Ke modestly replied, "You also went easy."

An S-level gravity-type awakener undoubtedly possessed far more energy than a mere few hundred kilograms.

Ye Zheng wiped his sweat with a hot towel, casually saying, "I remember you are of the Metal element. The Tang sword you brought in last time was an ability manifestation, right?"

A light bulb lit up in Song Ke's mind, instantly understanding the social subtleties behind his words.

She enthusiastically approached, "Do you like it? I can give it to you."

Sweeping her eyes around, she reached for the tilted glass tank with her magic, a blue light flashed, and a sharp Tang sword with a biting chill appeared in her palm.

The turtle, slowly crawling to the edge of the tank, was utterly confused: ???

Ye Zheng, not expecting her to change things so easily, fell silent for a second, "Did this... not pass the security check?"

The next moment, a deafening alarm sounded throughout the entire mansion: "High-risk weapon detected, initiating Level 1 alert."

Followed by a flurry of footsteps, "Intruders? Assassins? Quickly, protect the General!"

Song Ke unsheathed her sword, looking around in confusion, "???"

Assassins? It wasn't her fault! Didn't she bring it in last time without any issues? Oh, she remembered... Bai Qi had informed them last time.

Song Ke silently sought help from Bai Qi.

“...” Bai Qi silently went to deal with it.

Ye Zheng, not wanting to see her embarrassed, took the sword with a smile, “You’re thoughtful. I’ll accept the sword.”

Zhuang Qingyan coughed lightly, reminding from the side, “Captain, don’t forget about the main business.”

“Grandpa, you’ve had your fun. You need to rest now,” Ye Zimei scolded.

Several people returned from the garden to the study, and Zhuang Qingyan spoke frankly, “General, we would like to seek your advice on the matter of Utopia.”

Ye Zheng didn’t answer directly but opened a drawer and took out an exquisite letter, resembling an invitation.

Song Ke opened it and found it was a pass from Utopia, delivered two days before the appearance of the floating city.

Innocently, Xu Xing asked, “Huh? Grandpa, don’t you qualify? Why aren’t you going up? They’ve all gone.”

“They” naturally referred to the privileged class in the Elderly People’s Nation.

Ye Zheng, highly esteemed and respected, had once made immortal contributions to the New Asia Alliance. It was not surprising that he could obtain a “ticket” to Utopia.

Ye Zheng shook his head slowly, “Even the magistrates in District B don’t all receive this pass. The slots for magistrates are so limited, let alone ordinary people? In the end, we all go through selection.”

“Now, most voices on the Star Network believe that the residents of Utopia have abandoned the world, seeking their own pleasures. But if you think about it carefully, if a person loses the foundation of survival and can only rely on the breath of others to live, is it a blessing or a disaster?”

Ye Zheng sighed deeply, “I won’t live much longer. If I go up, what about the tens of millions left in the Northern Base?”

“This old man can’t let go. I have guarded this piece of land all my life. So I’d better stand my ground and finish my last duty.”

Ye Zheng, like the anchor of the Northern Base, even if he didn’t show up often, as long as he was alive, District B10 would remain stable.

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 158.2: Key (1)

Crime Record Plus

“Xiao Song, in the recent period, it’s better not to go too far.”

Song Ke was slightly stunned, feeling that there was another layer of meaning in Ye Zheng’s words.

Ye Zheng’s old eyes fell on the pass, with a faint gleam of sharpness, “No matter what those above decide, I can see that there are already people below who can’t sit still.”

“Cough, cough!” Ye Zheng suddenly started coughing violently while speaking. Ye Zimei hurriedly went over to gently pat his back.

Apparently, the recent sparring had placed a considerable burden on him.

Suddenly, Song Ke remembered what Ning Rong had said last night, "It's all thanks to S-level physique holding up." Worriedly, she asked, "General, we have an A5-level healer. Would you like him to have a look?"

In fact, her suggestion was somewhat impolite. As the highest authority figure in the Northern Base, Ye Zheng undoubtedly had a well-equipped medical team by his side, and there was no need for their "unconventional" team to be concerned. However, Ye Zheng didn't mind and sighed slowly, "Xiao Fang, right? The doctor from Tongwan in District C60. I visited there when I was young."

Zhuang Qingyan raised his eyebrows in surprise. Ye Zheng was a rare magistrate who could remember the names of lower-level districts.

Fang Zhixu, aged 38, was called "Xiao Fang", blushed with embarrassment amidst the teasing of his teammates.

He put on the stethoscope, focused all his attention, and released his awakened energy. His expression became increasingly serious, and he didn't immediately propose a treatment plan.

Ye Zheng understood and smiled, "As one gets older, the organs inside the body start to malfunction. I apologize for the embarrassment."

Song Ke's heart sank involuntarily.

Fang Zhixu pondered silently for a while, carefully choosing his words, "General, why don't you consider replacing with bionic organs?"

For ordinary organ transplants, one would have to consider issues like compatibility and rejection. However, with the advanced technology today, high-quality bionic mechanical organs were already widespread. As long as it wasn't a brain turned into mush, nearly every part of the body could be replaced, similar to what they encountered with the "Anna Knights" during the Throne Race in Ferrara, even Punk's eyeballs were mechanical.

Ye Zheng remained indifferent, "Since you are a doctor, you must know what bionic organs entail, right? It's not worth it to gain a few more years at the cost."

Fang Zhixu fell silent for a moment.

Lin Youyou and Xu Xing exchanged puzzled glances. Similarly confused, Song Ke tugged at Zhuang Qingyan's sleeve, signaling the all-knowing one to take action.

Zhuang Qingyan explained in a soft voice, "If an awakener replaces their organs with bionic or mechanical ones, it will disrupt the original awakened energy magnetic field, leading to the solidification of their level. This means... giving up the possibility of a second promotion."

Song Ke slightly widened her eyes, reflexively looking towards Lu Xiaoyu.

No wonder... no wonder he would rather have two empty legs than "stand" up again.

The more proud a person, the less they can accept solidification. If one can instantly see their limits, every day they live will be painful.

Ye Zheng was like that, and Lu Xiaoyu was no exception.

...

After leaving the villa area, Lu Xiaoyu revealed the information he had previously cracked using the B-level terminal:

"General Ye is currently S1, but judging by the trend, he is about to break through to S2 soon."

"Bai Qi, S5 level mysticism, specific ability unknown, he has never used it in public."

The crowd sighed for a moment, then discussed where to go next. Anyway, they planned to take on some missions in the vicinity, so they had plenty of time to spare.

“Let’s go shopping!” Lin Youyou said with her hands on her hips. “I’ve been in District B for so long, and I haven’t had a proper shopping spree.”

“I want to go too,” Xu Xing shouted along.

“You guys go, we have some things to attend to,” Song Ke thought for a moment and said, “Do you all have money?”

“I have money!” Xu Xing happily raised his terminal.

“I don’t,” Lu Xiaoyu openly reached out for some pocket money.

Zhuang Qingyan glanced at him, “Just give him some casually.”

Lu Xiaoyu: “?” Was he being treated as a beggar?

Fortunately, Captain Song was still generous. She allocated one hundred thousand Alliance Coins to him, and Lu Xiaoyu walked away contentedly.

When the teammates left, Song Ke faced Zhuang Qingyan, tiptoed, and walked up and down in a cat-like manner. Since she manifested the genes of a wildcat, she unconsciously brought some habits of feline animals with her. “You seem not in a good mood today.”

Anyone tormented by a clingy cat for a whole night wouldn’t be in a good mood. Zhuang Qingyan rubbed his forehead and didn’t want to say much, “Let’s go buy some flowers first.”

Song Ke, displeased, extended her claws, about to speak. However, her footsteps abruptly stopped, and she turned her head to look around.

Silence surrounded them.

“There’s—an—awakener.” She formed the words with her lips, one by one.

Less than two kilometers from the Governor Mansion, under the bright sunshine, a faint and fleeting awakened energy was detected.

If their senses weren’t S-level sharp, and if they hadn’t coincidentally passed by this area, it could easily be overlooked.

The awakener hidden in the shadows remained still, but the residual awakened energy in the air told the two of them—the person was nearby.

Zhuang Qingyan closed his eyes and opened them again. His awakened energy swept out, but he found nothing unusual.

There must be surveillance in the villa area. If there was a strange awakener, the security here wouldn’t be silent.

Unless... the other party’s ability was “invisibility.”

He took Song Ke’s terminal and calmly sent a message: “Within two kilometers, an unidentified awakener has intruded, estimated level between B and A.”

Song Ke’s face turned cold. She slowly released her pressure in place. The two sides didn’t know how long they were in a stalemate, and the invisible awakener couldn’t bear the burden any longer. Their awakened energy suddenly fluctuated, darting in a certain direction.

Song Ke, following the direction, sprinted, and the opponent bypassed the high wall of the garden, disappearing in a flash. Song Ke supported herself with one hand, brown spots appearing on her skin. The leaping ability of the wildcat was brought to the extreme, and she leaped five or six meters high, flipping over the wall. The two were within arm’s reach!

At that moment, pale zombie faces appeared out of thin air, countless and creepy. Each face was filled with more than a dozen eyes of varying sizes, fierce and terrifying. They reached out, grabbing Song Ke's neck, arms, thighs, attempting to hold her back.

For someone with slightly weaker mental endurance, they would be frightened on the spot. Song Ke immediately realized that there were illusion-type awakeners around!

Her palm swept over the wall, and a phantom blue Yanling knife flew through the air, carrying the momentum of thunder, fiercely slashing forward. It shattered all illusions in an instant. The other party's level was obviously not high, estimated to be only B level. Emerging from the zombie heap, she stumbled into view. Song Ke made a backhand slash, piercing through his chest. The man's heart shattered, and large amounts of blood overflowed from his mouth. He fell to the ground, lifeless.

However, due to his intervention, the trace of the invisible awakener disappeared again.

Song Ke carefully sensed with her awakened energy, confirming that the person hadn't left and was hiding within a hundred meters.

Zhuang Qingyan's voice came through the earpiece, "Song Ke, leave one alive and hand him over to Bai Qi."

Song Ke thought for a moment and suddenly had an idea.

She pulled out a portable speaker from her space and placed it on the ground neatly. Then, she took out a pair of special earplugs, inserted them into her ears, and thought twice before adding another pair. Afterward, she approached stealthily and pressed play.

A strange particle waveform was triggered.

Everyone who heard it experienced nerve disorder, a sense of disintegration, as if the world had plunged into nothingness, and their internal organs had completely decayed.

If this awakener had been fortunate enough to visit the Alliance's F180 District, Sin City, he would know that there was something in this world that could lead to irreparable destruction, called the "Crime Record."

The speaker now in Song Ke's possession was a modified version by Lu Xiaoyu, equivalent to the "Crime Record Plus." It indiscriminately swept through, more powerful, stronger, and fiercer.

Thirty seconds later, a slender figure clutched his head, wailing incessantly as he tumbled out of the shadow. Song Ke grabbed him and slammed him to the ground.

The man still wanted to resist, but Song Ke dislocated his wrist joints. She remembered to capture him alive and deliberately left some strength.

The awakener on the ground convulsed incessantly. His pupils dilated rapidly, and he was on the verge of turning into a walking corpse—

Suddenly, a bizarre expression appeared on his face, and he shouted towards the sky, "殺すぜ (I'll kill you)!!"

In his struggles, the collar of his clothes loosened slightly, revealing a crimson glow around his neck. It was a miniature bomb implanted in the subcutaneous tissue!

Song Ke's pupils contracted abruptly. She leaped onto a nearby tall tree like a cat with an exploding tail, swiftly hiding in the highest branches.

BOOM—!!

A mist of blood exploded, like cherry blossoms in full bloom, fluttering down. The man's head was shattered on the ground.

Luckily, she moved quickly, or else it would have splattered on her.

Song Ke silently jumped down and gently kicked the corpse. The awakener died gruesomely, and the only living captive was gone.

She puzzledly turned off the speaker and looked at it. Was this thing so powerful? What kind of death song was it playing that made people commit suicide?

Also... Song Ke scratched her head. Although her foreign language skills weren't great, wasn't that person shouting in the Tokushima dialect just before he died?

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 159: Key (2)

No one can put up a fight

Bai Qi led a few awakeners to the scene.

Because one of the corpses had a shattered head and the fingerprints were deliberately worn off, it took some time for them to collect biological information. The other B-level illusionist, however, quickly produced results.

The person reporting had a solemn expression, "Brother Bai, no identity information, and the entry record is from two days ago."

No identity information meant that they were not legal residents of the Northern Base. Bai Qi glanced at the suspect's face reconstructed through data, ordinary features with no memorable points, easily forgotten in the crowd.

Zhuang Qingyan snapped a tree branch, frowned, and disdainfully opened the collar of the illusionist awakener. Sure enough, he had a miniaturized bomb implanted, but Song Ke's one fatal blow killed him before it could be triggered.

"Did he say anything else?" Zhuang Qingyan threw away the tree branch and wiped his hands with disinfectant tissues.

“No, just that sentence in Tokushima.” Song Ke held the megaphone with one hand, swinging her legs on the tree trunk. The ground was covered with blood and minced meat, sticky. She was quite a clean person. After confirming that the other party had breathed their last, she climbed up again.

“Do you remember how he said it?” Zhuang Qingyan didn’t hold much hope.

“I remember.” Song Ke tilted her head, thought for a second, cleared her throat, imitated the person’s tone, and shouted with vigor, “Kurozu—so!!! (I’ll kill you)!!”

Her voice was loud, her momentum was strong, but her pronunciation was... broken.

“Pfft—!!” Awakeners on the scene covered their mouths, not daring to make fun of the mighty S7, but they couldn’t hold back their laughter, making muffled sounds.

Each person in District B must be proficient in at least three foreign languages before graduation. Due to years of resentment and the need for mutual insults, most people in the Northern Base chose to study Tokushima. It was the first time they heard such a strange “Colonial accent”.

Song Ke: “?” What are you laughing at? She clearly imitated it well.

Zhuang Qingyan’s fingertips itched, wanting to pinch her face, but he resisted.

He turned to Bai Qi, “These two are assassins. They shouldn’t have come for us.”

If it’s not for V587, then it must be for Ye Zheng.

They came all the way, confirming they were not being followed. These two individuals acted suspiciously outside the General’s Mansion, concealing their whereabouts and not daring to approach. With A and B-level abilities, they didn’t pose an assassination threat. They were probably here to gather information, but unfortunately, they ran into Song Ke.

Bai Qi understood his implication and had the bodies removed. “Thanks for taking action.”

“You don’t seem surprised,” Zhuang Qingyan looked at him.

“Lately, there are many ‘sparrows,’” Bai Qi’s eyes showed a hint of killing intent. Though sparrows couldn’t cause substantial harm, they were disturbing and irritating.

“Because ‘summer’ has come,” Zhuang Qingyan hinted that when the weather gets hot, some people can’t sit still.

The scorching sun shamelessly poured down blinding sunlight, making people sweat profusely.

One year ago, the apocalypse caused by radiation came without warning at the end of summer.

One year later, in the distant North, the S-level floating city, Utopia, rose like the Sword of Damocles, hanging high above everyone’s heads.

Ye Zheng was right; some people couldn’t sit still anymore.

Before leaving, Bai Qi looked up at the tree. “This megaphone...”

Song Ke swiftly tucked it back into her space, feigning innocence. “What megaphone?”

Bai Qi paused for two seconds. “...Don’t use it here next time.”

Fortunately, the villa area was equipped with a high-quality soundproof system; otherwise, the general’s desk would have been piled with neighbor complaints.

Song Ke grinned and gave him a thumbs up, implying that it was quite righteous.

After the others left, Song Ke landed lightly. “Those two, are they Tokushima people?”

“Not necessarily,” Zhuang Qingyan said, “The grudges between the Northern Base and Tokushima are not a secret. The phrase he shouted was too deliberate.”

The person in charge of the Northern Base was He Qihong; if they wanted information, they should go to the Awakener Department. Why come to the General’s Mansion? Moreover, Ye Zheng himself was S-level; it would be difficult to assassinate him. The timing and motive of these two’s appearance seemed suspicious no matter how you looked at it.

It was like two seemingly irrelevant pawns on the chessboard, or maybe not pawns at all, but were just coincidentally disrupted by Song Ke.

Zhuang Qingyan believed that the person who made this move must have their own intentions, but further speculation would have to wait for the opponent’s next move.

“Just now,” Song Ke cleared her throat, her gaze wandering, “did I not imitate well?”

Zhuang Qingyan’s train of thought was interrupted, and he chuckled, “Certainly well.”

He finally fulfilled his desire and pinched Song Ke’s cheek, putting aside his perfect score in sixteen foreign languages and shamelessly saying, “Your Tokushima is better than mine.”

*

At the same time, on the high-altitude commercial street.

Holographic billboards flickered and changed, showcasing futuristic floating supercars everywhere. Fashionably dressed men and women occasionally descended from them. The glass doors automatically opened, and AI shopping assistants smiled charmingly, providing attentive and companionable services.

Open-air ice cream shops, immersive cinemas, and a myriad of entertainment venues...

This was one of the most popular places in the Northern Base, consistently topping the charts as the “Customer Satisfaction Top 1” consumer location.

In a high-end store, Su Cha, dressed in all black with a mask and a baseball cap, stood like a wooden stake at the entrance.

Lin Youyou selected clothes at the virtual counter, lightly tapping her fingertips, and physical dresses were delivered to the side, quickly forming a small mountain. Her long curly hair was casually tied up with a hairpin that was entirely dark blue, with a green tint at the tip, resembling a rare jade from an ancient civilization. On closer inspection, it was revealed to be a concealed weapon, a plum blossom needle.

Curious glances from passing awakeners turned into astonishment. Rarely did they see such exquisite weapons.

Two girls approached politely and inquired, “Miss, can we have a link to your hairpin?”

“Oh, this? It’s a creation from my friend...” Lin Youyou paused for a moment before smiling sweetly, “My friend’s original design brand, handmade and custom-made. Limited production. If you want one, you can contact me, but it might be a bit pricey~”

Which girl could resist the temptation of “limited edition”? The girls expressed that “price is not a problem” and happily added her contact information.

“I’m truly a walking billboard...” Lin Youyou mumbled a couple of sentences, typing in the group chat to share the money-making information with Song Ke.

After sending the message, she looked up and saw Su Cha standing coolly at the door. His aura clearly marked him as a high-level awakener, and both men and women around were sneakily glancing at him.

Lin Youyou’s beautiful eyes flickered. She casually picked up two dresses with similar styles but different colors. “Which one looks better?”

Su Cha pointed to the green one. Lin Youyou raised an eyebrow, he hesitated and pointed to the red one.

“Are you sure?”

“Mm.”

“The green one is five times the price of the red one,” Lin Youyou smiled, teasing him, “In your eyes, can I only wear cheap clothes?”

Su Cha, who was content as long as there were clothes to wear, completely didn't understand the existence of “brand premium.” Thinking he made a mistake, he stood up stiffly, feeling constrained, “No, I...”

Lin Youyou snapped some photos in front of the mirror, sending them to Jennifer and asking, “Which one looks better?”

Jennifer instantly replied in a voice message, background noise suggesting a brawl, “Darling, this emerald green matches your cold white skin perfectly. It's noble and stunning, with a tasteful slit at the back, and the skirt sways elegantly. But I think the Burgundy wine red one is also good. My darling looks good in anything! Are you shopping? I'll come over after I finish my job.”

“...Why don't you ask yourself?” Jennifer suddenly scolded someone beside her, “Yin Xiao asked me to find out if your captain is there with you.”

Lin Youyou couldn't help but chuckle, “Focus on your task first. Let's shop together next time. Also, our captain is not here.”

After ending the call, she hooked her finger under Su Cha's chin, “Understand now? Sometimes when girls ask questions, it's not about giving you multiple-choice.”

Su Cha remained stiff, "..."

A lovey-dovey couple entered, the girl affectionately saying, "Baby, just buy whatever you like today. I'll pay."

"Thank you, baby. But do you know? The two most handsome moments for a man are when he swipes his card and when he wins a duel."

Su Cha was staring at Lin Youyou's terminal, enchanted. Upon hearing these words, he came back to his senses, took out his terminal, and silently prepared to pay.

Because Song Ke occasionally sent him money, he now had a few million, no longer as financially constrained as before.

Before Su Cha could reach the cashier, Xu Xing bounced past in a duck-patterned small yellow sunglasses, wearing a floral shirt and flower shorts. A long string of AI shopping assistants followed behind, carrying full shopping bags.

"Dear customer, is there anything else we can assist you with?"

"Yes, I want to buy a bag for my sister."

Captain of V587, Song Ke, who possessed tens of millions in assets, yet still carried a worn-out 80L hiking bag.

Xu Xing walked confidently past the display cabinets, pointing here and there, "This one, this one, not these, but the rest, I'll take them all. Charge it to my card!"

Despite his young age, Xu Xing's bold spending startled the entire high-end boutique.

Xu Xing turned back to look at Lin Youyou, reluctantly pouting, "Pay for hers too."

Lin Youyou wasn't short of that bit of money, but the flattery made her blossom with joy. "Xu Xiao Xing, you're really handsome. Right now, in my heart, you're two meters and eight centimeters tall!"

Xu Xing gave a haughty hum.

Su Cha: "..."

Feeling somewhat at a loss, he pinched his terminal, suddenly thinking that the training in the rainforest might be more suitable for him.

...

In the lounge, Fang Zhixu and Lu Xiaoyu were communicating with the black market, handling the tasks assigned by the captain.

Song Ke decided to sell a batch of crystals and spiritual weapons. Most crystals were below level 3 because V587 had a relatively high average level and rarely relied on "power banks" during battles. They had accumulated quite a few through missions, and as a hard currency, crystals were very popular in the black market, with no worry about sales.

As for spiritual weapons, Zhuang Qingyan suggested going for the high-quality route. So, this time, only a small quantity of 500 were sent to the market. Lu Xiaoyu skillfully wiped off the seller's information, adding this batch to the auction list.

The two spent half an hour sorting it out. When they went out to join the others, a message suddenly popped up on the terminal, surprisingly a private mission:

"C-level Mission (Region Limited): Defeat Fujita Hiro within three hours at the Silver Ring Arena."

The issuer's words were intense, and even through the screen, one could feel his overflowing anger: "I can't stand it anymore! Whoever can kill this scumbag, I'm willing to transfer 400,000 points to him!"

Silver Ring Arena? What place was that?

Clearly, the awakeners on the commercial street had also received the same mission. They hastily headed outside. Lin Youyou put down the clothes she was trying on and turned to her companions, "Shall we go and take a look?"

With nothing else to do, her proposal received unanimous approval.

Following the crowd, the five purchased tickets to the "Silver Ring Arena Station." The unique three-dimensional subway in District B descended rapidly from the high sky. The surroundings transitioned from bright to dim, with the light panels on both sides rapidly changing. The magical spatial tunnel made people dizzy.

Fortunately, V587 was accustomed to Lu Xiaoyu's black car. Otherwise, experiencing it for the first time might make one vomit.

Ten minutes later, the subway doors opened, and a deafening roar and a chaotic surge of awakened energy hit everyone's senses. A prompt lit up before their eyes:

"You have entered an unrestricted area for awakeners."

Simultaneously, a mechanical and monotonous voice echoed in their ears: "A friendly reminder from the Awakener Department, Northern Base does not advocate any dueling activities. Please remember, do not strive for short-term gains, but strive for long-term success."

The lighting on this level was generally dim, giving off an atmosphere reminiscent of Sin City. However, compared to the chaotic District F180, the crowd here seemed more restrained.

Due to the presence of millions of civilians, the Northern Base had strict regulations on the use of abilities. Each entrant would receive a code of conduct that they were required to read, including rules such as no indiscriminate brawling and no harming others.

However, conflicts and clashes between awakeners were common, and physical confrontations were inevitable. How could such a large number of dangerous individuals be regulated and managed?

Until now, they were either staying at home or busy with scoring points, the realization struck V587—Northern Base had another world entirely for awakeners.

The five were pushed forward by the crowd, left the platform, and took several turns. Soon, a massive sunken arena appeared in their line of sight, surrounded by colorful holographic projections. Thousands of awakeners were seated or standing in the spectator stands. Unlike the irrational revelry of Ferrara's citizens, most of them had a serious expression.

“Wow! So many people!” Xu Xing exclaimed with the innocence of someone unfamiliar with the world.

In the center of the Silver Ring Arena, a figure with a black-clothed head and a face covered by a black scarf stepped onto the throne of the arena. Arrogantly surveying the surroundings, he raised his middle finger provocatively. According to the information displayed on the screen, he was the target of the previous C-level mission—Fujita Hiro.

“What's this? Is this all the Northern Base can do?”

“We came all the way here for this? Not a single person who can put up a fight?”

Facing the audience, Fujita Hiro taunted in a sarcastic tone, “A bunch of trash, you know that? Wastes, got it? Idiots.”

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 160.1: Key (3)

Hello, let's settle the points first

Fujita Hiro was provocative, provoking the anger of the entire audience in just a few words.

A vigorous figure sprinted past V587, stepping on the railing and about to jump down. Bang! Numerous faint lights appeared, and he was bounced out by the isolation barrier. The cold prompt sounded: "Non-challengers, please do not disturb the order of the arena."

"I #%! Dog! Tokushima, you daredevil, today, I'll make you search the ground for your teeth!"

It was a young awakener, wearing torn jeans, a diamond lip stud at the corner of his mouth, and boldly dyed pink hair. He looked like a typical well-off, impulsive, and righteous local resident of District B, scolding Fujita Hiro.

Awakener had a special way of communication. As long as a bit of awakened energy was added, the voice could travel far. This young man was probably so angry that his awakened energy was scattered everywhere. The large silver ring arena echoed with his loud curses. Unsatisfied after scolding, he repeated it in fluent Tokushima dialect.

Fujita Hiro's face was tightly covered, revealing only a pair of sinister eyes. He gestured towards him with a hooked little finger, "Don't bark down there, come up if you have the guts."

"Sure, I'll come up! Grandpa is not afraid of you!"

The cursing young man's face turned red with excitement. He rolled up his sleeves and was about to brush the terminal to enter, but his companion beside him quickly held him back, "Are you crazy? Fujita Hiro is A9 level! This is a damn life-and-death situation; you can bet on any damn stakes. Are you going to offer your damn head?"

"I can't stand it anymore! One can be killed but not humiliated!!"

"Even if you can't stand it, you have to endure it. Otherwise, being humiliated as a little B7 will be your fate! By then, that bastard will mock our Northern Base for having no one!"

The young man was awakened by a cold splash of water on his head. The punching and kicking gradually stopped, but he was unwilling. In a fit of rage, he kept tapping on the terminal. If he couldn't beat him, then maybe he could manipulate others? He was willing to use all his points. That bastard must roll off the arena!

A few seconds later, everyone in the area received an update on the C-rank commission: the reward was increased to 800,000 points, quickly approaching the reward for an A-rank mission distributed by the system.

V587's five members found seats and gradually pieced together the situation from the surrounding discussions:

“Do you not know Fujita Hiro? He's quite famous, the captain of the 'Kirigakure (Hidden Mist)' team, ranking in the top ten in Tokushima.”

“Why would someone from Tokushima come to our territory?”

“Revenge, I heard that our newcomer S7 had messed up Lei Zhao and Noguma Yuko before, intentionally coming here to stir things up.”

Xu Xing perked up his ears to eavesdrop and nodded with satisfaction, “That's right, it was my sister who did it.”

“He has won four consecutive matches, why not find an S-level to take him on!” someone enthusiastically shouted.

“...Bullying our S-levels, is that it?” another awakener said dejectedly.

With Zhigler and Xi Ze heavily injured, the number of top-level awakeners in the Northern Base had sharply declined, making them the bottom feeders in District B.

At this moment, Tokushima sending an A9-level here was clearly an intentional attempt to step on them.

“Using an S-level against A9? Even if we win, it’s just level suppression. How embarrassing would it be if word got out?” The first speaker looked serious, “Besides, Fujita Hiro’s awakener ability is too dominant on the arena... you’ll see when you watch.”

The boos from all directions grew louder, with a faint trend of overturning the roof. Fujita Hiro remained unfazed, sitting arrogantly on the throne with crossed legs.

Although most of the awakeners in the Northern Base were sheltered or joined after the apocalypse, they considered this place as their second home. What is a hometown? It’s a place where we can criticize it ourselves, but outsiders have no right to insult.

“I’ll go meet him.”

A man wearing glasses, with a refined appearance, walked down from the audience. His appearance seemed freshly arrived, dust still clinging to him.

“It’s Zhao Zhe! Great, he’s also A9!” Some spectators recognized him from a distance and cheered.

Zhao Zhe took off his coat, swiped the terminal, and stepped into the arena with a steady pace.

The screen displayed the information of the current challenger: Zhao Zhe, A9-level light-type awakener, affiliated with the team ‘Blue Flame.’

The teams of awakeners between the two districts had clashed before. Fujita Hiro squinted his eyes, quickly recognizing him, and sneered disdainfully, “Oh, isn’t this the ‘Blue Snail’ that can’t catch up even if it eats shit?”

The Elderly People’s Nation incident stirred up a lot of commotion in District B. All teams accepting commissions were exposed. However, Blue Flame, due to transportation issues, took a full seven days for the outbound journey and had yet to reach the Endless Sea. Everything had settled, and they ended up making the trip in vain. Their rankings also dropped, falling out of the top ten in the Northern Base.

Zhao Zhe: “Stop the nonsense, sign the wager. If I win, you better get lost.”

One of the features of the Silver Ring Arena was the ability to legally bet anything, including the participants' lives, through duels.

Fujita Hiro's eyes rolled around as he stated his wager, "If I win, you guys have to change your name to 'Blue Snail.'"

Unexpectedly, he didn't bet his life; it seemed like he was just trying to provoke Zhao Zhe.

Under the witness of the AI referee, the two signed the contract. With a ding of the whistle, the fifth-round challenge officially began.

Zhao Zhe looked stern, sending countless light balls with a swift motion, leaping forward across the half-field.

Along the way, he snapped his fingers, and the high-altitude spotlights flashed rapidly. Hundreds of spotlights neatly shone on Fujita Hiro. Once locked on, the scorching heat would roast him!

Fujita Hiro smirked, smashing down a smoke bomb with a "bang," covering half the arena. After the choking smoke cleared, large patches of grass and uneven wooden stakes appeared in the arena, and his figure quietly disappeared.

"Mu Dun Jutsu! (Wood Release Technique!)" The audience exclaimed from the stands, "He's... a ninja!"

Fujita Hiro's awakened ability turned out to be enhanced ninja techniques from the mystic category.

Zhao Zhe found himself waist-deep in tall grass, cautiously maneuvering through it. The light balls in his hands kept shining, illuminating the nearby shadows.

With one in the light and the other in the shadows, the two remained in a deadlock for about five minutes. Zhao Zhe's expression gradually became serious. As a long-range awakener, he was more suited to open spaces. Facing an elusive ninja, he had to be extremely vigilant to avoid being ambushed.

Swoosh! A dark figure flashed behind, and Zhao Zhe quickly turned around, making a decisive decision. Since he couldn't find him, he decided to dismantle everything!

Bang! Bang! The light balls smashed into the wooden stakes, instantly disappearing without a trace. Those were not real stakes at all; they were just illusions!

Whoosh! Whoosh! The sound of rustling through the air came, and Fujita Hiro's shadow swiftly moved through the grass, throwing several shurikens.

Boom! Boom! Zhao Zhe's light balls were pierced, and the spotlights chasing Fujita Hiro were all cut off by hidden weapons. The arena's visibility suddenly darkened, and the sudden change in brightness and darkness made everyone momentarily dazed.

Zhao Zhe didn't dare to stop for a moment, continuously launching attacks towards suspicious positions around him. Where was he? Where exactly was he hiding?

Suddenly, his footsteps came to a halt.

Fujita Hiro, clinging to a thin wooden pole, emerged from the grass between his legs with a sinister smile.

He held a bamboo flute, gently blew a dart, and tiny poisoned needles penetrated Zhao Zhe's mouth.

Zhao Zhe fell straight down.

The audience erupted in a collective gasp, and the cursing guy angrily shook the railing, "Damn, this dog is really cunning!"

Fujita Hiro revealed a sinister smile and was about to finish off Zhao Zhe when a sharp alarm suddenly rang out on the Silver Ring Arena!

Bright red lights flashed, illuminating everyone's faces. It was both a warning and a deterrent. Once a duel death event occurred, the safety level of this area would drop, and the Awakener Department would invite relevant personnel for a "chat."

Fujita Hiro seemed to have some reservations, casting a discreet glance in a certain direction. Then, he kicked Zhao Zhe out of the arena. The Blue Flame team members rushed over to carry him away for medical treatment.

"District B10..." Fujita Hiro opened his palm, counting with each finger, "Beijun, Kongsang, Erjia, Askar, Northern Base. Tsk tsk, is this the strength of District B's fifth place? Let me win five in a row?"

As long as he won seven consecutive matches, he could win the title of challenger in the Silver Ring Arena, gaining both fame and fortune. Before this, such an honor had never fallen to other districts.

"Blue Flame, oh no... now called Blue Snail, can this kind of trash still rank in the top ten? Also, there's Tustan, and that team with numbers, V587. Taking a trip to the sea, finding a group of turtles to perform with, and thinking you're someone?" Fujita Hiro exaggeratedly laughed, holding his stomach, "All these bragging lies! Who can't set up a scene for a photoshoot! Hahaha!"

Boos echoed throughout the venue, and Fujita Hiro raised his middle finger, turning 360 degrees, provoking everyone.

The cursing young man was so enraged that he attempted to climb over the railing again. With numerous talented awakeners in the Northern Base, was it truly difficult to take down even one A9-level opponent? Of course not. Due to the last-place elimination system, most teams were away on missions, and there weren't many top awakeners in the city area. This gave Fujita Hiro the opportunity to act arrogantly.

In the back rows of the audience, Lu Xiaoyu exclaimed in surprise, "Is he mocking us?"

"Clearly, yes," Lin Youyou sneered.

Although Yang Xiaobo's video was indeed flashy, did they really need to rely on staged scenes to promote their reputation? Specifically inviting a Level 5 ferocious beast as an extra? Fujita Hiro clearly had impure motives, intentionally distorting facts and humiliating the awakeners of the Northern Base.

"I don't think he's that impressive," Xu Xing said innocently, supporting his chin with both hands. "He couldn't last three minutes against my sister, could he?"

"How many in the entire Alliance can solo the team captain?" Fang Zhixu smiled knowingly.

"Too bad my sister isn't here, or she would have flattened him," Xu Xing lamented.

"Even if she were here, it wouldn't work. Didn't you hear them say he's A9? If we go for S-level and win, it won't be honorable," Fang Zhixu sighed.

Xu Xing, displeased, pinched his rubber duck sunglasses. "I know, I know, can't always rely on my sister to support me; we have to stand on our own feet."

He repeated verbatim the words Zhuang Qingyan had taught him half a year ago.

"But it's still frustrating."

With a snap, the sunglasses were flattened.

Lin Youyou, with a hint of teasing in her eyes, said, "Oh, our A1 baby is angry. What's wrong, do you want to go up?"

As soon as the words fell, someone next to them stood up. Lin Youyou looked up in surprise, "Are you going to the bathroom?"

"The two most handsome moments for a man are when he swipes his card to pay the bill and when he wins a duel."

Su Cha's mind suddenly recalled the words he heard in a high-end store.

There's no chance to pay the bill now, but the latter could be tried. After all... he didn't like that Fujita Hiro.

"I'm going to earn some points." Su Cha lowered his baseball cap, walked down with a gust of wind, quickly swiped the terminal, and entered the arena.

The remaining people stared at each other, their expressions as if something supernatural had happened. What's going on? This guy isn't usually the type to seek attention, right?

Lin Youyou suddenly stood up, reached out but couldn't stop him, so she could only remind anxiously, "Hey! Be careful!"

Fang Zhixu silently took out a first aid kit. "It's fine. If he wants to go, let him. I'm prepared."

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 160.2: Key (3)

Hello, let's settle the points first

"Oh, damn! Someone went in, who is it?"

The cursing teenager, with half of his leg over the railing, curiously leaned forward, "I don't know him."

In the midst of everyone's gaze, a tall and slender man in black pants and a black shirt flipped over the railing. There was a cold and fierce aura in his eyes, and his movements subtly revealed well-defined muscles, resembling a wild leopard brimming with strength.

The information on the screen slowly appeared: Su Cha, A8-level poison-type awakener...

The on-site audience discussed with concern, their tone filled with worry, “Who is this? He looks quite powerful. Can an A8 level handle it? Don’t get injured again.”

“Why do I feel... this name sounds familiar?” muttered an awakener from a lower-level district.

In the midst of the noisy background, the last line of information appeared: ...affiliated with the team “V587.”

Like a drop of hot oil falling into a cold pan, the audience erupted in an instant. V587? The recently unrivaled V587? The one with an S7-level captain? The V587 who had just been mocked by Fujita Hiro a minute ago, and now he’s confronting him face to face?

Wow, this team’s style... so appealing.

Thunderous cheers echoed through the arena, and all the awakeners from the Northern Base spontaneously cheered for V587.

Fujita Hiro sneered, his attitude still arrogant, “How do you want to play this?”

“If I win, your points belong to us,” Su Cha stated concisely.

“Fine, but if you lose, let...” Fujita Hiro’s eyes revealed a malicious intent, “Let your S7 come to our Tokushima.”

“I can’t make decisions for the captain. I’ll bet my life against yours,” Su Cha casually dropped a bombshell, causing a stir in the audience. Even Fujita Hiro showed a slight change in expression.

“Challenge accepted.”

Lin Youyou in the audience stood up abruptly, lips pressed into a straight line, "This is outrageous. Who allows him to joke about his own life?!"

Fang Zhixu consoled, "Su Cha is not confused; if he dares to step on the stage, he must be confident. Besides, there's still me."

Lin Youyou paced anxiously, nibbling on her nails, "No, in case something happens... I have to find Song Ke."

She lowered her head to send a message, typing just a few words repeatedly, her fingertips couldn't help but tremble.

Inside the arena, the AI referee signaled that the contract was complete, and the two sides could begin the duel.

This time, Fujita Hiro seized the initiative, initiating ninjutsu. A chilling wind surrounded him, and countless ropes with blade attachments appeared out of thin air. Fujita Hiro merged his palms, forming a mysterious seal, leaving behind a stone on the spot, blending into the shadows.

Su Cha had just taken a step when all the blades made a crisp sound, like the ominous bell of death. Fujita Hiro had set up a trap, secretly observing and planning to torment his trapped prey before delivering the fatal blow.

Su Cha remained unfazed, secretly thinking, is this the extent of his ninja skills? He was underestimating him; someone who came from the Rainforest could blend seamlessly with the surroundings at any time.

He moved continuously through the rope array, stealthily maneuvering around all obstacles, his towering figure turning into a fleeting mist, slowly vanishing without a trace.

Both of them disappeared at the same time?!

The onlookers stared at the stage in astonishment, but the arena was empty, only vaguely sensing the flow of awakened energy.

Bang!! The shockwave of the collision of two awakened energies swept through the entire stage. Both of them simultaneously reappeared from the shadows.

Fujita Hiro threw a black shuriken towards Su Cha's eyes, an unavoidable attack at a distance of less than ten meters.

Unexpectedly, Su Cha threw a blue shuriken in return, with a chilly and resolute aura. The two projectiles clashed in mid-air, and Ding! Fujita Hiro's black shuriken split in half.

The blue shuriken bravely continued, cutting through the ropes with blades attached, heading straight for Fujita Hiro's heart. In haste, he dropped a smoke bomb, and the ground instantly caved in. He narrowly escaped the fatal blow.

"What is that?!" The audience exclaimed in shock.

Su Cha held the blue shuriken between his fingers, standing in the arena like a lone wolf. He calmly assessed the obstructive technique constructed with earth manipulation, showing no signs of panic.

Lu Xiaoyu raised his head, surveying the floating screens with interest. His tea-colored eyes sparkled with a glint of ice.

The screen, which was originally displaying sponsor s, suddenly inserted a distinctive commercial. Various ethereal blue spiritual weapons rotated slowly against a deep background color.

The down-to-earth mechanical voice interjected at the right moment, [Which family is the best at monster-slaying after the apocalypse? The Song Clan's spiritual weapons are truly enticing! Your boyfriend or girlfriend can't provide you with 100% security, but Song-style spiritual weapons have it all. If you want to buy, bring them with you. Hurry up and call the order hotline xxxxxx!]

The audience: "... What kind of nonsense is this? Are you here to duel or advertise?"

However, the commercial was too persuasive, and inexplicably, many people noted down that mysterious contact information.

The surroundings became eerie, and Su Cha concealed his figure, holding a tri-edged military dagger in one hand, systematically inspecting every blind spot.

With each obstructive technique destroyed, Fujita Hiro suffered a backlash, but after lurking for so long, he failed to find any flaws in Su Cha.

The air seemed to solidify, and a drop of cold sweat rolled down Fujita Hiro's forehead. This kid's mental fortitude was just too strong.

Since it was like this... don't blame him for being ruthless.

“Die!” A dark figure slid along the ground, and Fujita Hiro chose to confront it head-on!

Su Cha seemed prepared, gripping the tri-edged military dagger, his waist and abdomen tense. With a swift movement, he slashed diagonally forward. Fujita Hiro couldn't evade in time, and his face mask was torn apart, revealing a face with acne scars, pockmarks, and uneven terrain.

“Wow, how ugly can someone be!” The foul-mouthed guy joyfully slammed the railing. “No wonder you have to cover it up. Hahaha!”

Fujita Hiro, infuriated and embarrassed, leaped like a frog. Sleeves flew out, releasing numerous hidden weapons and poison needles. Su Cha's baseball cap was knocked off, but he advanced instead of retreating, lightning-fast arms piercing through the blade ropes. He grabbed Fujita Hiro's neck and slammed him forcefully to the ground!

Bang!!

Fujita Hiro's pupils contracted, rapidly retreating, leaving a dummy behind.

Su Cha's black T-shirt was torn and ragged. Lifting the hem, he casually wiped off the blood. With a backward pull, the fabric shattered to the ground.

He happened to stand at the intersection of light and shadow, revealing his face and upper body. It was undoubtedly a robust physique that had rolled on the edge of life and death countless times, broad shoulders, narrow waist, smooth muscle contours, prominent veins in his arms. Even with bloodstains, it didn't diminish his vigorous explosiveness. Especially the black snake tattoo on his nape, exuding a savage ferocity.

“You're poisoned.”

Fujita Hiro slowly emerged from the shadows, a cold smile on his ugly face. Struck by his specially crafted hidden weapon, the skin would gradually decay, inch by inch, falling away, turning into a pool of corpse water in endless agony.

Su Cha tilted his neck, and the joints made a crisp, crunching sound. He stared at Fujita Hiro as if looking at a dead man.

The big taboo for an assassin is to expose their true trump card to the opponent before delivering a fatal blow. Suddenly, Su Cha pounced like a wolf, spinning to kick Fujita Hiro, flipping him over, pressing his knee against his mouth, and ruthlessly cutting with the tri-edged military dagger!

A severed hand flew into the air.

“Ah—!!” Fujita Hiro screamed in agony, his eyes filled with disbelief. “How is it possible... How could you not be poisoned?”

“Idiot,” Su Cha taunted unusually. When he entered the arena, it seemed like this person hadn't bothered to check his ability information.

— “A8-level Poison-type Awakener.”

Those who could use poison as an ability were naturally resistant to various toxins. Su Cha's mental power had always been on high alert, protecting himself from Fujita Hiro's invasion while quietly releasing poison mist. At the same time, he enjoyed observing the clownish antics of this self-proclaimed master of poison.

"It's you who's poisoned."

From the severed hand to the contorted face, Fujita Hiro suddenly turned entirely green. Before he could wail, the potent neurotoxin damaged his brain.

His neck tilted, breath extinguished, and all the obstructive techniques in the surroundings vanished.

"Is he dead?!"

An A9-level awakener, Fujita Hiro, had died on the Silver Ring Arena like this?

The awakeners from the Northern Base were silent for a moment, followed by an explosive roar of cheers!

Strangely, this time, the safety alarm did not sound, as if even the surveillance had developed a biased sentiment.

With the death of the title holder, the current challenge was considered over, and the barrier surrounding the arena automatically retracted.

While the crowd was still cheering, whoosh! Nearly a hundred awakeners descended from all directions, ranging from A to B levels, surrounding Su Cha.

"Hey, what are you guys doing?!"

Some people sensed that something was wrong. These were not from the Northern Base, so why did so many unfamiliar awakeners suddenly infiltrate?

Moreover, it was too deliberate to act right after Fujita Hiro died. It looked like it was all arranged in advance.

A man with a mask walked down from the spectator seats, half of his face charmingly beautiful, and the other half covered by a fierce evil-looking mask. His tone was fluctuating, a strange mix of both masculine and feminine: "It seems like you violated the rules. Fujita didn't bet his life against you, but you killed him."

Su Cha slowly stood up, his face as calm as water. He couldn't sense the speaker's awakened energy, which meant there were two possibilities: either the person had no ability and was just an ordinary individual, or they were an S-level awakener, at least S3 or higher, capable of completely concealing their presence.

The awakeners from the Northern Base were no longer calm. They jumped onto the arena, and some couldn't hold back, releasing their abilities mid-air.

A piercing alarm echoed throughout the entire area.

As the two groups were about to engage in a brawl, the situation was on the brink of losing control.

A subtle smile appeared on the lips of the masked man. He aimed his pale palm at Su Cha, and his five fingers twitched and trembled.

"Wow! So many people!"

A sincere exclamation sounded above the heads of the crowd. On the high-altitude camera circling the arena, a girl with shoulder-length hair appeared, squatting there unnoticed. She looked down at the chaos below, tilting her head slightly.

"Before you start fighting, can we settle the points you owe us first?"