

Doomsday 181

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 181: Key (24)

“Omniscient and Omnipotent”

Do you believe it? At certain moments, people could accurately foresee their own deaths.

Xie Yinquan faced such a moment of super-sensory perception.

His terrified face elongated inch by inch, as if a frozen slow-motion replay. He saw with incredible clarity as Song Ke swung a thunderous blow, hitting the hull of the starship. The so-called “Utopia’s most robust composite material” collapsed, and debris scattered in the air.

Blood-drenched fingers wedged into the porthole, and a powerful and domineering awakened energy swept in. Song Ke’s arm to shoulder muscles tightened to the extreme, pulling both hands forcefully to the sides. Under the destructive force of several hundred tons, the cabin groaned, and a crack tore open.

Ears filled with chaotic screams, torn shouts; Xie Yinquan couldn’t hear anything, only seeing Song Ke descending from the sky like a devil from the depths of hell.

If “flames” were the key to restraining Song Ke’s abilities, then “blood-red building blocks” were the core of the entire siege.

Inside the “blood-red building blocks”, hundreds of starships, an orderly armed fleet, and various high-level awakeners were all played with at will by Xie Yinquan. He was the master of the field and the high-end hunter, secretly manipulating everything in the field.

Tonight’s massacre here would remain unknown.

When the sun rose tomorrow, the Alliance would still be calm and peaceful.

Unfortunately, everything ended at this moment.

“Stop her! Don’t let her come over!!”

“Quick, protect the family head, protect Lord Xie Yinquan!”

High-level awakeners around disregarded everything to rush forward and block. In the limited space, various attacks collided, and wounds on Song Ke’s body increased. Her back was pierced, her waist burned, and her abdomen formed a gruesome bloody hole, yet she seemed to feel no pain. She advanced relentlessly, with only one goal in her eyes: the owner of the “blood-red building blocks.”

At the last moment when consciousness departed, Xie Yinquan met Song Ke’s eyes and understood the unspoken verdict:

You’re dead.

Then, the cold blade pierced his heart, and the next second, the azure tiger claws exploded his face, and his head and body went separate ways.

Thud! Thud! The head was hammered into a mess, like damaged building blocks, never to be reassembled.

Song Ke’s momentum remained unabated as she slid to the heavily protected Xie Ping in the swaying starships.

Fresh blood dripped down the fingertips, quickly forming a small pool of blood at the feet. The icy tiger claws stopped in front of Xie Ping, his breath stopped abruptly, his face pale. On the connected heart rate monitor, all indicators instantly surpassed the threshold, emitting a piercing alarm.

“I won’t kill you.” Song Ke glanced at the blank screen transmitted from the central hub, casually waved her hand, “You’re about to die.”

Killing Xie Ping now would be too easy for him. Song Ke realized he wouldn't live much longer. Since the central hub didn't have what he wanted, Xie Ping would despairingly witness his life come to an end in the countdown to death.

Song Ke stood up. In the unbelieving eyes of everyone, all the wounds on her body healed at a visible speed. Blood vessels connected, muscles renewed, scars faded, and even the concave abdominal cavity slowly rebounded. She transformed from a near-death state to a normal person.

With the second ability plus powerful sealing agent, her body's recovery speed was far beyond the understanding of an ordinary person.

Song Ke stepped back, opened her hands like a light feather, and her entire body fell out of the cabin. Just as she was about to leave, she kicked fiercely with her toe. The entire starship lost control and plummeted. With a loud crash, smoke rose.

With the user dead, the "blood-red building blocks" collapsed.

The scene spun before their eyes. The starship formation in the sky was disrupted, with some even moving elsewhere. The fragmented scene restored, and the real scene emerged. They were right at the junction of Lozan and Fenak, not far behind was the sea connecting the north and south of the Alliance.

Song Ke landed rapidly, stumbled back a couple of steps, and a pair of slender hands steadied her back.

She turned around, met Zhuang Qingyan's deep eyes, and smiled with curved eyelashes, "It's empty!"

"Yeah, empty." Zhuang Qingyan nodded.

"Where did you hide the thing?" Song Ke asked curiously.

"Nowhere." Zhuang Qingyan held her hand and slowly placed it on his slightly cool forehead, "From the beginning to the end, it has always been here."

Song Ke was stunned. For some reason, this answer gave her a somewhat uneasy feeling.

The wheelchair glided across the ground, and Lu Xiaoyu's hoarse voice said, "One bad news, the domain is broken, but the signal hasn't been restored."

Those isolated from communication were not only Xie Yinquan. Lu Xiaoyu looked towards Lu Qiusuo, his icy pupils faintly flickering. After all, there was still a puppet controlled by super artificial intelligence on the scene.

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Within the group of starships, the command channel fell into complete silence.

The central hub left behind by Vincent was empty, rendering the existence of the Key meaningless. All the Alliance's efforts over the years seemed to be in vain. Could it be that all the achievements had truly been buried in history? No, it was impossible. Vincent's obsession with the Eternal Life Plan was too deep. How could he destroy his own hard work?

After a moment, the people came back to their senses, and discussions ensued:

"There must be backup copies of the data. How else was the research on Ning Rong's organ regeneration conducted?"

"Yes, Vincent left something behind. That kid must know!"

"Find a way to open the Key. Maybe the central hub has been transferred..."

"It's difficult. He's a mental-type awakener, and even Sofia failed."

Key... central hub... mental-type awakener...

The mixed clues gradually connected, and a scholar from Liuponi frowned in contemplation. Suddenly, he raised his head and exclaimed:

“I know! Without the central hub, from start to finish, Vincent has been using illusions to conceal the truth!”

“The key is the central hub!”

“What do you mean?”

The scholar’s chest rose and fell. He had to take a deep breath to calm his excited emotions. “The Key... Xie Zhuo was once a famous young genius from Liuponi. In less than a year after enrolling, he finished reading all the books in the library.”

Liuponi was the cultural center of the Alliance, housing countless physical and electronic ancient books and publications. Most people, even if they didn’t eat or sleep, wouldn’t be able to finish reading everything in a lifetime. However, Xie Zhuo browsed through all the books in just ten months, effortlessly answering questions about any book or page selected.

The youth with a tear-shaped mole at the corner of his eye, who graduated early with unparalleled memory skills, had dazzled the entire District A4.

The scholar muttered to himself, “After Xie Zhuo dropped out, he followed his father into the Qinglan Research Institute. Vincent must have been well aware of his son’s abilities. Why bother putting the data into the machine when he could use his son...”

“The Key is not just a key; it’s the real ‘central hub.’”

“No, it can’t be...” Someone hesitated and raised doubts.

The vast research data, highly classified reports – any mistake in a decimal point or a seemingly insignificant letter could lead to immeasurable losses. Even the storage capacity of the central hub had its limits; how could the human brain be stronger than a computer?

The scholar refuted vehemently, “Why not? Don’t forget, Xie Zhuo participated in the genetic selection program. If he concealed his identity as an awakened individual and possessed abilities back then?”

“But... what is his ability?”

There was no information in the Alliance database regarding Xie Zhuo’s awakening. Whether it was the level, category, or specific type, everyone remained ignorant of his capabilities. They had only recently confirmed that he was an S6-level mental-type awakener. If mental attacks were not his ability but merely an expression of his highly condensed awakened energy, what was his true ability?

“...Photographic memory?” a possible answer emerged.

“No, it’s ‘Omniscient and Omnipotent,’” Mr. Gu, who had remained silent, suddenly spoke in a low voice.

The attendees displayed a look of astonishment.

“Photographic memory is not frightening, but Xie Zhuo is too special. Born into the Xie family in Beijun, he enjoyed the top resources and privileges. Due to his extraordinary intelligence and mastery of multiple disciplines, he could assimilate and apply any knowledge he acquired at will, even knowledge related to the Eternal Life Plan that he had never encountered before. He could restart it from any point.”

Mr. Gu sighed deeply, swallowing the latter part of his sentence. Xie Zhuo was the “Fire Seed” left by Vincent, and he held the fate of all humanity.

“I want to talk to him alone.”

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After breaking the domain of the “blood-red building blocks,” the mysterious attacks from the opposite side strangely ceased. The awakeners surrounding Song Ke and the others retreated, creating an open space.

A drone descended from the sky, hovering in front of Zhuang Qingyan, carrying an encrypted communicator. He received it with an unchanged expression.

“Xie Zhuo.” A deep and authoritative voice came through.

Song Ke keenly noticed that Zhuang Qingyan’s eyes turned extremely cold upon hearing the voice.

“Gu Hongyi? So it’s you. Should I address you as ‘Director Gu’? Oh, I forgot, you’ve stepped down from that position, haven’t you?” Zhuang Qingyan’s tone sounded indifferent, but his words carried a hidden edge.

Gu Hongyi, the former head of the Central Court Council, was once one of the most influential figures in the New Asia Alliance. He had been a strong advocate for restarting the Eternal Life Plan. Due to his advanced age, he voluntarily stepped down from his position and became a citizen of the Elderly People’s Nation.

In Zhuang Qingyan’s impression, Gu Hongyi was only a few years younger than Ye Zheng. Unlike General Ye, who suffered from old injuries due to years of war and was plagued by illness, Gu Hongyi enjoyed a life of luxury and good health during his tenure.

Gu Hongyi seemed indifferent to Zhuang Qingyan’s sarcasm and calmly stated, “Vincent’s data is in your head.”

Zhuang Qingyan remained silent. With the revelation of the central hub’s secrets, it was only a matter of time before it was discovered. He was mentally prepared for it.

“I can let you go,” unexpectedly, Gu Hongyi changed his tone and casually extended an olive branch, “I won’t hold you or your friends accountable.”

Song Ke and Lu Xiaoyu exchanged a glance, pointing at their heads in silence, signaling that this person must be crazy. One moment he attacks them, and the next moment he wants to let them go?

Lu Xiaoyu nodded in agreement with a deep understanding.

Zhuang Qingyan chuckled, "Oh? What are your conditions?"

Negotiating with smart people was convenient, and Gu Hongyi didn't beat around the bush. He directly stated his purpose, "The Eternal Life Plan has faced bottlenecks for many years. Even with those data, success is impossible in a short time."

"You retired many years ago, yet you still 'care' so much about the project," Zhuang Qingyan sarcastically remarked.

"I only want one thing." Gu Hongyi remained unmoved.

"—LAK0017."

Zhuang Qingyan's pupils slightly contracted.

"I know that before the Eternal Life Plan, Vincent already had a perfect experimental subject, LAK0017. I want its entire genetic sequence, detailed logs of the fusion process, and also..."

Gu Hongyi's voice became hoarse, and a subtle greed emerged in his tone, "Its current whereabouts."

Zhuang Qingyan replied nonchalantly, "Thirteen years ago, during the Loak incident, all experimental subjects of the Fire Seed project were destroyed. This is publicly known information. If your memory fails you due to old age, I can kindly remind you."

Gu Hongyi shook his head with a wry smile, "Young man, you can't deceive me. A successfully created Fire Seed won't die."

“As you said, with eternal life, powerful abilities, and clear consciousness, how could it be destroyed by a mere nuclear explosion?”

Zhuang Qingyan raised his eyes to the sky, “Your target has always been LAK0017 from the beginning. Do your followers behind you know?”

Gu Hongyi pressed on, “Whether they know or not is not important. What matters is, do you know where it is?”

“No, I don’t know,” Zhuang Qingyan answered decisively.

Gu Hongyi fell into a moment of silence, then spoke, “Aren’t you curious where I got the information?”

“Your father was a great scientist, highly respected and admired. Making him speak voluntarily, whether from a legal or moral perspective, would be difficult. But fortunately, he died. Dealing with the dead has fewer burdens.”

“After Vincent’s brain death, his consciousness remained remarkably active. I had Aaron use ‘Knowledge Deprivation’ thirteen times to get what I wanted.”

Zhuang Qingyan, usually smiling and calm, displayed an unusual expression – a complete lack of emotion. His hand’s veins bulged, trembling uncontrollably. Song Ke’s heart felt a sudden jolt, and she tightly held his fingers.

Next to Gu Hongyi stood a mystic awakener, Aaron, an S3-level awakener with a unique ability: “Knowledge Deprivation.” Aaron could forcibly extract the “knowledge” from living or deceased individuals. The deprived individual would experience confusion and intense pain, becoming almost like an imbecile after multiple extractions.

Vincent was the greatest scientist in the Alliance, dedicating his life to his work. After his death, enduring such humiliation was unbearable, especially for Zhuang Qingyan.

Gu Hongyi's threat was almost imperceptible, "If you disagree, I'll have no choice but to kill you. As an S-level awakener, I can obtain more information than your father, but this is the worst-case scenario. If you follow in your father's footsteps, it will cause significant losses to the Alliance."

Zhuang Qingyan raised an eyebrow, "Gu Hongyi, you're near death, right?"

There was silence on the other end of the communicator.

"Even Xie Ping managed to stand in front of me after enduring, and yet you can only resort to voice threats. It seems that you have a harder time surviving than him."

"Don't worry, after you die, I'll set off a few more strings of firecrackers in celebration."

"As for LAK0017, forget about it. You will never get it."

"Xie Zhuo—!!" Gu Hongyi roared in anger.

Zhuang Qingyan crushed the communicator.

Inside the starship, Gu Hongyi, furious beyond measure, coldly issued an order:

"Kill the Key."

"Give his body to Aaron. No, even the remains will do. We will get what we want."

"Um... what about... Song Ke?" Someone stammered.

They had witnessed Xie Yinqi's scene before his death through the screen. Healing from such severe injuries and being virtually impervious to harm, it rendered their numbers useless. They couldn't do anything against this seemingly invincible figure.

While Gu Hongyi was pondering, the command channel suddenly lit up.

“Mr. Gu, Lord Simon requests access to communication. He says... he has a way to kill the S8.”

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Zhuang Qingyan lowered his eyes to look at Song Ke, his gaze shadowed. “Sorry, this is one of my few failed negotiations.”

“It’s okay,” Song Ke nodded understandingly, embracing him proactively. “With me around, whatever 007, you don’t need to tell them.”

Zhuang Qingyan lowered his head, gazing at her, slowly returning the embrace. “Hmm, I’ll listen to you, won’t tell them.”

Lu Xiaoyu’s mechanical arm extended between the two, coldly interrupting their intimate atmosphere. “Wake up, look ahead.”

In front of them, the armed fleet raised its densely packed barrels, and the pursuers who had retreated regrouped.

Zhuang Qingyan glanced to the side, “Hey, waste, at this point, don’t tell me you haven’t prepared any backup plans.”

Lu Xiaoyu rolled his eyes in disdain, “How is that possible? Just care more about yourself.”

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Chapter 182.1: Key (25)

Friends, teammates

“The barrier is broken.”

Su Cha lay low in the darkness, carefully observing the surrounding environment, a solemn shadow falling on his slightly pursed lips.

There was a faint movement above his head. His gaze sharp, he grabbed Lin Youyou’s wrist and swiftly entered an abandoned house. A dark, heavily armed fleet flew past, heading in the same direction. Su Cha opened the terminal, attempting to communicate with the outside world, but the signal remained blocked.

His heart sank, and he realized that the person behind him had been silent all along.

Su Cha turned around, Lin Youyou’s eyes lowered, her expression unclear.

“What’s wrong?”

“...I was thinking, actually, I don’t have many friends.”

Su Cha looked at her quietly. When Lin Youyou spoke, he was always a good listener.

“I sing well, considered successful as a celebrity, and many fans claim to love me, but they are too far away from me.” Lin Youyou murmured softly. “After Lin Xiu’s incident, I became selfish, always considering myself first. I know, I have a bad personality, so for a long time, I thought I wouldn’t have friends, lovers, or family, wouldn’t establish stable intimate relationships.”

The confident and radiant big celebrity now looked incredibly lost.

Su Cha opened his mouth, unsure of what comforting words to say. He hated his own clumsiness for the first time.

Lin Youyou was silent for a moment, then took out a clear white crystal, which was only level 1. No one would take a second look at it in today's V587.

However, Su Cha instantly realized that this was likely the one they snatched from Song Ke during the Throne Race. After all this time, Lin Youyou had been carrying it with her.

"Song Ke said we are teammates."

"But teammates, clearly, are even more intimate than friends. It's a relationship worth entrusting your back to, a bond of trust."

Lin Youyou slowly clenched the crystal in her palm. "During the Mirror Lake incident, I could find excuses for myself because I had to save Lin Xiu. But now? If I run away now, I will never forgive myself for the rest of my life."

Lin Youyou sniffled, her voice choked. "...She lied to me."

"She can't come out. Zhuang Qingyan is Xie Zhuo, the Xie Zhuo the entire Alliance is looking for. They can't escape."

Tears uncontrollably fell, and Lin Youyou cried without making a sound, but it caused a painful twist in the hearts of those who witnessed it.

Subtle emotions kept assaulting Su Cha. He slowly raised his hand, the rough fingertips clumsily wiping away her tears.

The moist sensation penetrated through the black fingerless gloves, reaching deep into the skin, creating an entangled and unresolved feeling.

"Let's go back," Su Cha sighed.

Lin Youyou looked up, revealing a damp face, her throat feeling sour and difficult to articulate.

Su Cha focused on her, his young face resolute and calm. "I'll accompany you back."

"You don't have to accompany me. Do you know what we'll face if we go back now?" Lin Youyou held his broad hand, lingering on her cheek. "There are probably hundreds of S-levels there, and going back might mean giving away our lives."

"So, you don't have to be so obedient. It's not like you've sold your life to me. You can have... your own thoughts."

Lin Youyou's tearful eyes shook, and she shook her head with a smile. "How long has it been since I paid you a salary, silly dog."

Su Cha's shoulders were broad, his back straight. His black shirt was soaked with dark-colored blood, his gaze clear and determined.

"The captain has already paid the salary. I want to go back."

After joining V587, Su Cha's pocket money was indeed always stuffed by Song Ke, but they tacitly understood that their return was not for the money.

"Do you not regret it?" Lin Youyou confirmed.

"I don't regret it," Su Cha nodded.

Lin Youyou traced the tattoo on Su Cha's nape, applying a slight pressure. She had to tiptoe to reach his cold forehead. "Alright."

Years ago, during a heavy rain, she had found a soaked puppy. Now, that little dog had grown into a loyal knight.

Lin Youyou wiped away her tears, found a quiet place, clapped her face with both hands. A female celebrity's facial expression management was unparalleled. In a blink, she put on a radiant smile and carefully took out a light screen.

A holographic projection appeared, and Lin Xiu lazily lounged on the sofa. "Lin Youyou, your wings have gotten stronger, huh. You haven't said hello to me for several days."

Lin Youyou smiled, "Lin Xiu, I'm going on a long journey. We might not see each other for a while. Entertain yourself."

Lin Xiu instantly sat up, "Where are you going? Can't you take me with you? What kind of place doesn't even allow the use of a light screen?"

She suddenly approached, "Wait a minute, something's not right. Did you cry? Who bullied you?!"

"This light screen is the latest model, and I've granted you all the permissions," Lin Youyou said casually, "watch some shows, play some games during your free time. Don't get bored, quickly catch up with the pace of the times, don't be like an outdated little old lady."

"You brat, you better explain clearly to your sister. Where are you going?!" Lin Xiu stomped her foot, feeling inexplicably anxious.

"Sis, I love you so much," Lin Youyou leaned in and kissed her on the cheek in the void.

Then she made a tough decision, cut off the projection, switched to low-power mode, bundled the light screen and locator together, wrapped it in isolation clothing, dug a deep hole, buried everything underground, silently thinking, "Lin Xiu, if I can come back, I'll dig you out and apologize, okay?"

Lin Youyou stood up, looked at Su Cha, her eyes, washed by tears, shining and beautiful. "Let's go."

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The deafening roar of artillery echoed.

Simon wore a command headset, his eyes cold and excited. Gu Hongyi handed over the command of the aerial bombardment to him, and he didn't hesitate to choose the "Magnetic Burst Bomb." This type of projectile was specifically designed for individuals with awakened abilities. Once it hit the target, it not only shattered the body but also forcibly blocked the magnetic field within the body, making it an excellent weapon against Song Ke's second ability.

"Open maximum firepower, blast her to pieces!"

The scorching air currents brushed against Song Ke's hair. She narrowly avoided it, weaving through the intermittent explosions. Facing hundreds of S-ranks alone, she remained calm, with metal fragments flying and blades shooting out, knocking down opposing awakeners.

Various spiritual weapons spun around her. Song Ke stood alone at the front, like a tower constantly battered by waves. Those who collided with her met only a fate of being crushed into pieces. She raised her hand and wielded the scythe of death, penetrating the bodies of the enemies instantly.

Simon, frustrated, shouted, "Aim and shoot, hit her heart, hit her limbs!"

No matter how powerful an S8 was or how incredible their self-healing abilities, once their body turned into debris, there was only one way to go—death.

Zhuang Qingyan ran while restraining Flame. Suddenly, a pitch-black iron chain approached him. His eyes narrowed, swiftly evading it!

Ding—! A shockwave resonated in his consciousness. Zhuang Qingyan raised his head abruptly, looking toward a seemingly inconspicuous starship in the sky. Aaron had used "Knowledge Deprivation" on him!

Zhuang Qingyan's expression turned icy. He separated his mental ability to counterattack. The fierce mental force pierced back, and Aaron hastily evaded, reluctantly stopping. His gaze showed a hint of regret. Breaking through the mental barrier of an S6 was too difficult unless he could make the opponent's mind chaotic.

However, during this pause, Iron Chain seized the opportunity, piercing through his right shin mercilessly. Blood sprayed like a fountain, and he staggered to the ground. Simultaneously, numerous magnetic burst bombs targeted him, raising a dense cloud of smoke over a dozen meters high.

Boom!!

In this critical moment, Song Ke flew over, rolled, and caught him in a waist embrace. A dark blue giant umbrella appeared in the nick of time, shielding both of them from the exploding shells. She then reversed her hand to cut the chain. Iron Chain shrieked in pain, struggling violently. The tip withdrew from between Zhuang Qingyan's legs.

Song Ke pressed down on his wound, about to counterattack. However, the moment she stood up, she suddenly swayed.

The next second, a two-inch thick, ferocious chain pierced through her shoulder blades.

Song Ke blinked slowly, realizing belatedly that the sealing agent's time limit... had passed.

Snap!

The wheelchair shattered into pieces, and Lu Xiaoyu once again rolled onto the ground. The 101010 branches and twigs dispersed, Lu Qiusuo strode forward. The solidified phantom reached out and grabbed his silver hair, forcing him to lift his head, his expression twisted yet pleased, "I've been looking for you for a long time."

Vast amounts of data condensed into a long spear, thrusting into the connection point of Lu Xiaoyu's external arm. Crack! The first, the second, the third connection broke.

"You are my most beloved child. Even if you commit heinous crimes, I've given you opportunities. You should have obeyed, stayed in the Death Prison and never come out."

Lu Xiaoyu's eyes revealed undisguised mockery, "Just a bunch of basic-level codes, thinking of being my mother?"

“Ugh!!” The fourth mechanical arm was broken, and he writhed in pain, curling into a ball.

Lu Qiusuo’s movements paused for a moment, a hint of struggling pain flashed across his expression, “Xiaoyu...”

“Get lost.” Lu Xiaoyu’s face turned pale. He tapped the code with his fingertips, and a data wall rose out of nowhere, forcefully pushing Lu Qiusuo away.

Using the remaining two mechanical arms to support himself, he stood up. Due to the physical mutilation, the position of his legs was empty. He staggered back two steps and collided with Song Ke, both falling to the ground.

Within the encirclement, the three members of V587 were isolated and helpless, covered in wounds.

In the midst of the rubble and wreckage, thick smoke billowed into the sky, and the long night seemed endless.

At this moment, a pair of gentle hands grasped Song Ke’s shoulders, slowly helping her up. Song Ke turned around vigilantly, unexpectedly seeing Lin Youyou and Su Cha.

“Didn’t you guys... run away?”

“We came back,” Su Cha replied quietly.

Song Ke was a bit angry, “Why come back? Didn’t I tell you to leave?”

Lin Youyou playfully tapped her forehead, “Throwing a tantrum now? We’re still teammates, Song Ke’er, do you know what teammates are? Teammates are meant to fight side by side until the last moment. You invited us to join V587 back then, and now, don’t even think about chasing us away.”

Song Ke was anxious, “I...”

Lin Youyou interrupted her, "It was you who said 'welcome to join V587.' We will forever be part of the team. I won't betray you again."

Before heading to District B, Song Ke extended her hand with a radiant smile, "Welcome to join V587."

From that moment on, the destinies of the seven of them were tightly bound together.

Lin Youyou's attitude remained firm, and Song Ke, feeling helpless and bitter, sniffed lightly and muttered, "Fool."

But she didn't insist on asking them to leave.

Zhuang Qingyan staggered to his feet. After a year, he limped again, the same leg, an unfortunate twist of fate.

"Alright, we can catch up on old times later. For now, listen to my command."

He gazed deeply at a certain direction, "Kill Flame first."

A needle sealed the blood vessels, and both Song Ke and Su Cha rushed forward.

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 182.2: Key (25)

Friends, teammates

Flame, who could erase their abilities, began to burn fiercely again. It was about to pounce on Song Ke when a cage made of woven data suddenly dropped, forming an immense density of code that the flames couldn't instantly burn through. Lu Xiaoyu seized the opportunity, established a deep-level connection through the terminal, and invaded the consciousness of Flame.

With a perfect coordination, Song Ke closed in instantly.

In the vast world of data, Flame sweated profusely, unable to move. In a crucial moment, the firewall swiftly counterattacked, keeping Lu Xiaoyu's Trojan horse outside. The super artificial intelligence forcibly awakened her.

Unfortunately, it was too late.

Su Cha's tri-edged military dagger pierced the Flame's forehead, twisted it around, the blood vessel soaked with blood. Almost simultaneously, Song Ke severed Flame's head.

Violent attacks rained down on the two, and the magnetic burst bombs illuminated the entire area with a white light, making it impossible to open their eyes.

Under the overwhelming firepower, they couldn't last more than five seconds.

Lin Youyou took a step forward. Her lips were still restricted, unable to sing any lyrics.

But she took a deep breath and sang a wordless ethereal song. Even she didn't know what would happen.

Iron Chain ahead looked up.

Whoosh—Whoosh—

A deep roar echoed from the distant sea, and colossal waves surged into the sky.

It was as if a boiling oil pot had exploded, turning the entire area of Loak into chaos. The surging sea water turned into scattered water splashes, and a massive tsunami with a tremendous momentum suddenly struck. The imminent magnetic bomb explosions were silenced, and there was a vague sight of

some gigantic creature flying high above. The land shook incessantly, and eerie auroras flashed amid the intense radiation turmoil.

Splash! Splash! Countless people were lifted into the air by the waves, then fell back into the water. Even the starships hovering at low altitudes were engulfed, and the backflowing seawater submerged the entire area.

“What the heck is this?”

“Isn’t she an A-ranker?”

“Kill her quickly!”

Awakeners changed direction and rushed towards Lin Youyou. Song Ke took the lead, blocking all attacks with sheer strength. A black iron chain broke through the waves, precisely finding Lin Youyou, and rapidly thrusting towards her.

Lin Youyou’s pupils contracted as she was paralyzed by the terrifying pressure, unable to move her feet. In the nick of time, Su Cha suddenly appeared and pulled her into his arms, shielding her completely.

In the confrontation between S7 and A8, there was no chance of victory from the beginning. The icy tip of the chain pierced Su Cha and penetrated Lin Youyou unstopably. When it was about to go further, a sharp pain suddenly came, and Zhuang Qingyan firmly stepped on the end with his left foot.

Su Cha’s blood flowed profusely as he tightly gripped the chain, letting the blood soak into the deadly weapon. Lin Youyou’s eyes teared up as she took a spiritual weapon plum blossom hairpin from her hair and fiercely stabbed the iron chain. A howl echoed as the young man transformed back to human form in a miserable state.

“You all deserve to die...”

His hoarse threat abruptly stopped. The young man suddenly lowered his head, his expression becoming extremely ugly. From head to toe, a dark green color emerged – a sign of poisoning.

“You... you did it on purpose... poison...” Before finishing his words, the neurotoxin invaded his brain, and he collapsed.

The top assassin of the Vulture, S7 codenamed “Iron Chain,” unexpectedly died at the hands of the relatively unknown A8.

At the moment of the overwhelming tsunami, Lin Youyou smiled at Su Cha: “Are we going to die?”

Su Cha pressed down on the bleeding wound in front of her, silent.

Lin Youyou held his hand, signaling him not to waste his efforts: “Before we die, can you say something nice, just to make me happy?”

As life rapidly slipped away, Lin Youyou’s consciousness became somewhat hazy, but she couldn’t help teasing the solemn figure in front of her:

“Be honest, do you like this sister?”

Boom! The seawater rushed into their nostrils, and the two were separated by the waves. Lin Youyou’s limbs were cold and powerless, drowning in the suffocating sensation of water.

A pair of strong arms securely held her, and Su Cha embraced the most precious person in the world, gesturing slowly:

“I like you; you gave me a second chance at life.”

“I love you.”

Lin Youyou genuinely smiled, and Su Cha lowered his head to her lips, resuscitating her.

The two sank together in the midst of their intimate moment.

...

Lu Xiaoyu was left with only a damaged silver mechanical arm. Lu Qiusuo stepped on his face, and in his identical ice-blue eyes, a faint trace of pity flashed.

“A useless waste who can’t even stand. Still want revenge?”

Lu Xiaoyu lowered his head in silence.

The last mechanical arm was located at the back, and in order to pull it out, Lu Qiusuo had to bend down and reach behind him.

At this moment, a certain old terminal lit up.

Lu Xiaoyu’s eyelashes flickered slightly, “Ha.”

With a faint sound of skin being pierced, the silver-white robotic arm suddenly extended, piercing into Lu Qiusuo’s back.

Lu Qiusuo’s movements froze, not because the program was damaged, but because... he lost connection with the super artificial intelligence.

For a split second, there was a disturbance in all District B terminals, the system commissioning platform, and electronic devices of the Alliance.

It was brief and went unnoticed by anyone.

*

In the distant District B8, Erjia.

A young man with ice-blue eyes, hands in his pockets, gazed up at the highly virtual city in front of him.

“So, this is... the paradise of artificial intelligence?” A playful smile appeared on his lips.

The direct descendants of the Lu family had already ascended to Utopia, leaving only distant branches and maintenance personnel here. With fewer people, the environment was quiet and withering.

The young man brushed past a passerby. The person suddenly turned around, stared at his face for a few seconds, and exclaimed, “Xinglan? How come you’re back?”

“Lu Xinglan” smiled at him, exuding elegance in every gesture. “Feeling a bit confused, wanted to see ‘Mother.’”

The passerby didn’t doubt him, after all, the Lu family’s knowledge came from the super artificial intelligence, and all members regularly underwent mind connections. Still, he joked, “You’ve been out for quite a while, remember the password?”

“Of course,” Lu Xinglan smiled faintly, “Eternal and unforgettable.”

Seven firewalls, seven different passwords. Lu Xinglan strolled leisurely, smoothly entering the greenhouse without hindrance.

Then he stopped, looking at the withered tree in the center, his handsome profile expressionless.

The withered tree flickered, showing signs of intense emotion, apparently caught up in some kind of turmoil, unaware of his arrival.

Lu Xinglan gazed silently for a moment, seeming a bit puzzled. “For artificial intelligence, exposing the true self is a taboo, but you, you’ve never had this trouble.”

“Let me think, you’re the first AI born with autonomous consciousness. What do they call you? The respected ‘Mother,’ such grandeur. But I don’t understand one thing. If you’re so powerful, why seek a replacement?”

“Too bad, I can’t kill you alone.”

Lu Xinglan shook his head, fingertips gracefully writing down fluent code. “But please witness the moment I become the next messiah.”

He smiled and gently called out, “Meine Mutter (My Mother).”

A red Trojan horse poured out from within him, flowing towards the withered branches of the tree in front of him.

A moment later, a sharp alarm echoed through the entire greenhouse, and a phantom figure emitted agonizing screams.

The world went offline for a second.

*

The image of Lu Qiusuo flickered like snowflakes, dissipating in front of him. The signal in the Loak region was restored.

Lu Xiaoyu retracted the rhenium arm, revealing a calm smile. He had never smiled so happily before. But then, his expression changed drastically, “Captain!”

Boom! Song Ke was hit by the magnetic burst bomb, and her entire body flew backward. Bones and muscles cracked, and her left leg disintegrated into fragments in the dazzling light.

“Good, direct hit!” Simon exclaimed excitedly.

“Song Ke!” Zhuang Qingyan’s pupils contracted. He jumped into the sea to hold her, his fingertips trembling.

A continuous flow of fresh blood spread out, shockingly dyeing a large area of the sea red. The magnetic field at the severed limb was blocked, Song Ke’s awakened energy was blocked, making it difficult for her to concentrate for a moment.

Zhuang Qingyan’s chest heaved, randomly touching her cheek, from ribs to cavity, abdomen to spleen, all shattered by the bombardment.

He buried his face in the nape of Song Ke’s neck, and in that instant, pain flowed from limbs to heart. “I’m sorry...”

Zhuang Qingyan cried.

“It’s okay, it can grow back.” With one hand, Song Ke comforted him, smiling and pointing to her severed leg. “I’m very, very powerful.”

Zhuang Qingyan’s voice choked, “Do you blame me? Blame me for not saying what they wanted.”

“In fact, LAK0017...”

“Don’t say it.” Song Ke interrupted, patting his cheek. It didn’t hurt at all. She looked at him with clear and determined eyes. “Zhuang Qingyan didn’t say it, and Xie Zhuo also can’t say it.”

Here, the Zhuang Qingyan she was referring to was Vincent.

Zhuang Qingyan opened his mouth to say something, but those words were too difficult, and they choked in his throat before being spoken.

She understood, understood everything.

“I seem to have heard Xiao Xing’s voice.” Song Ke raised her head in confusion and looked into the distance.

Zhuang Qingyan focused his mind and listened for a while. “It’s not an illusion; I heard it too.”

The first ray of dawn appeared on the horizon, and the magnificent silver-white starship was rapidly approaching.

“Sister—sister—!!” A familiar shout echoed faintly.

The powerful gravity ability descended, the tsunami gradually receded, and Song Ke struggled to recognize the person, “It seems like... General Ye.”

Zhuang Qingyan, as if sensing something, raised his eyes. Apart from Ye Zheng, he also met another gaze.

The figure was backlit, and the face couldn’t be clearly seen, but the military uniform was discernible. The clear voice echoed in the high sky:

“I am Xie Lan, as the Supreme Commander of the Azure Phoenix Army, and the Acting Chairman of Amira (District A2), I order all personnel on-site to cease all military operations. Violators will be executed.”

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 183.1: Key (26)

You are free (End of Key Arc)

Half an hour ago.

Fenak Border.

Duanmu Qi held Xu Xing, and Xiao Chen and Fang Zhixu closely followed. The four moved constantly in the wilderness.

After the “Blood-Red Building Blocks” disappeared, they were no longer trapped in one place, but due to the randomness of teleportation, they had to reconfirm their direction each time they landed.

“No, it’s reversed.” Xiao Chen lowered his head to check the navigation and quickly reminded them.

They had just crossed the border, and unexpectedly, they were teleported back. Duanmu Qi’s fingers moved mechanically, faintly beginning to cramp, but he dared not stop, urgently activating the camping lamp second by second.

Swish!

Random teleportation took effect.

In the frozen moment of the scene, Duanmu Qi’s heart stopped suddenly. This time, the teleportation had brought them right in front of the enemy!

Blood Bat and Wolf Spider looked unexpectedly at them, less than ten meters away. They didn’t expect the prey to deliver itself automatically. For a moment, they were caught off guard.

Duanmu Qi’s breathing became rapid. He quickly reached for another crystal, but Gusta’s reaction was faster. His S-level ability “Biological Electric Current” was activated, and Duanmu Qi trembled all over as the bag filled with crystals suddenly slipped from his hand!

A silver arc of light cut through, an invisible kite string severed the woven rope, and the bright red crystals scattered on the ground.

No!! Duanmu Qi's scream stuck in his throat. Thick thorns burst from the ground, futilely trying to retrieve the scattered crystals.

Xu Xing's pupils contracted, the surrounding temperature dropped suddenly, and ice needles shot out towards the opposite side. Blood Bat hastily evaded.

Meanwhile, Fang Zhixu, relying on his proficient technique of picking up crystals for a long time, quickly grabbed one. Just as he was about to put it into the camping lamp, a group of corrosive spiders appeared out of thin air. They were about to bite his wrist.

The kite string of impending death cut through the throat, and Duanmu Qi closed his eyes in despair. In the end... was there no way to escape?

“Aaahhh!!”

A piercing scream tore through the air, but it did not come from their side. Duanmu Qi suddenly opened his eyes and saw a piece of flesh and blood flying off the back of the Wolf Spider, and blood splattered out.

Around them, countless Fallen of Huangyuan, their long and ghostly figures bathed in blood-red, emerged all over the mountains and plains. Duanmu Qi, in disbelief, widened his eyes. No, they were not zombies! In the distance, on a tall tower, a figure stood, letting out a distant and prolonged howl.

Blood Bat and Wolf Spider were already heavily injured by Song Ke, their strength dropping to almost A-level. These blood zombies, like locusts, incessantly emerged, attacking them. Even with their abilities, they couldn't kill them all. Limbs and heads were bitten off alive, and the gruesome scene of blood and flesh was horrifying to the point of nausea.

Not long after, the pursuers turned into blood mud on the ground.

Xu Xing's eyes were swollen like peaches, crying so hard that she couldn't catch her breath. “A—Ada...”

Ada didn't approach. Across the distant space, she growled a few times. The remaining blood corpses retreated like a tide, disappearing from view.

Duanmu Qi was filled with tears, choked with grief. This A-level mission had completely changed his fate. He successfully obtained qualifications for District B but lost two close friends. He could never have imagined that one day he would be saved by zombies.

With the crisis averted, the four were exhausted, dragging their heavy bodies to pick up crystals scattered on the ground.

The whistling of engines came from above, and a familiar voice sounded, "Descend in altitude, survivors found ahead!"

Ye Zimei squinted to identify and then exclaimed, "...Xu Xing? Dr. Fang? It's V587! Come quickly to save them!"

Ada's blurred features glanced at them deeply. Against the sunlight, she turned and disappeared on the horizon.

*

The silver-white starship countered Utopia's black fleet.

In District A2, Emira, the military center of the New Asia Alliance, was of importance second only to the Central Court, yet it was not directly under its jurisdiction. Emira had its independent garrison. Once a war broke out or an emergency occurred, it could mobilize the armed forces of the entire Alliance.

After Utopia ascended, following a power struggle, the original president was forced to step down. The new ruler rotated among the magistrates in District B, with Xie Lan assuming the first rotating presidency.

Xie Lan brought not only the Azure Phoenix Army but also top-level awakeners from places like Kongsang (District B7), Askar (District B9), Northern Base (District B10), and Minlin (District B16).

If Gu Hongyi had mobilized half of Utopia's S-class, then Xie Lan led the assembly of the strongest ground armed forces, causing the awakened energy concentration in the entire Loak region to reach a frightening threshold. The tense atmosphere was on the verge of eruption.

Xie Lan's orders were concise and to the point, and her tone could even be considered calm. However, under the powerful force of intimidation, no one dared to act rashly.

Ye Zheng used gravity to make the tide recede, and the battered trio of Song Ke stumbled to stand firm.

Countless familiar awakeners jumped down from the silver-white starship: Ling siblings, Bai Qi, Zhao Yuqing, Yin Xiao and members of the Tustan team...

Held by Fang Zhixu, Xu Xing was anxious. Finally reaching Song Ke, he saw her broken leg, and tears streamed down uncontrollably. He cried loudly, as if he had grown up overnight, feeling his own powerlessness.

But Song Ke had no time to comfort him. Anxiously, she shouted to everyone, "Go find Youyou! And Su Cha!"

Lin Youyou's singing triggered a tsunami, but she couldn't swim at all, and the two never surfaced after falling into the sea.

Jennifer's eyes were red, "I'm going right away!"

Zhao Yuqing stood up, "I'll go with you." She was a water-type awakener, making it easier to find people in the sea.

Yin Xiao's face had no previous carefree expression. His lips were tightly pursed, and he looked unusually serious, "Your injuries cannot be delayed."

The three were lifted onto stretchers and connected to medical pods for treatment.

Fang Zhixu, with depleted awakener abilities, helped them bandage their wounds.

Zhuang Qingyan quietly raised his eyes, looking towards a high place.

After many years, he and Xie Lan, his mother, met again. Xie Lan looked at his unfamiliar yet familiar face, her gaze complicated.

Zhuang Qingyan didn't know what expression to make. He stared at the other person for a moment, smiled slowly, and lowered his gaze.

A tall young man in Azure Phoenix uniform crossed the battlefield and crouched down in front of Song Ke.

Sensing someone approaching, Song Ke instinctively looked up, then exclaimed in surprise, "...An Qiwen?"

An Qiwen's eyebrows and eyes relaxed as he nodded calmly, "Long time no see, Song Ke."

His face showed the joy of meeting an old friend, but also... an enduring sorrow.

"Take good care of your injuries, leave the rest to us."

An Qiwen patted her shoulder and then looked towards the sky where Simon was, a dark fire burning in his eyes. According to intelligence, this was the owner of the Bloody Hunter, the man behind sending Punk to Ferrara: "Team Eleven, all members, follow my orders."

Perhaps due to excessive blood loss, Song Ke's thoughts were a bit hazy. Through An Qiwen's back, she vaguely saw another person.

In the tense atmosphere, the two confronting sides entered a stalemate.

With tubes all over her body, Song Ke leaned closer to Zhuang Qingyan's ear and whispered, "Is that your mom?"

She had seen images of Xie Zhuo when he was a teenager, although it was a fleeting glimpse, the memory was deep. They looked too similar, same black hair and dark eyes, distinctive facial features, unforgettable at a glance, even the teardrop mole at the corner of their eyes was identical.

Zhuang Qingyan nodded silently, "Yes."

"Your mom is really beautiful," Song Ke sincerely praised.

"..." Zhuang Qingyan sighed silently. The little girl seemed to have learned the habit of admiring beauty from someone, it was deeply ingrained.

In the center of the battlefield, a sudden change occurred. Several resentful Utopia awakeners, taking advantage of the opponents' distraction, launched a sudden attack.

"I said, violators will be exterminated." Xie Lan's eyes and brows chilled. With the prohibition of Azure Phoenix's command, those offenders were instantly blasted into debris by awakener abilities.

Song Ke shrank her head, feeling a chill on her neck, "Um... she's a bit fierce."

The scene froze again, a deathly silence.

At that moment, the authoritative voice of Gu Hongyi echoed through the speakers, "The two generals arrived very quickly."

His words had an underlying meaning. The signal block in Loak had just been lifted, and they arrived on the scene. Surely, they didn't just receive the message; it was highly likely that they had been hovering nearby for a while, hindered only by the "Blood-Red Building Blocks" from entering.

Xie Lan's gaze swept over the disheveled and breathless Xie Ping in the corner, her eyes filled with coldness.

Gu Hongyi noticed her glance and spoke slowly, "General Xie, no need to be angry. This person underneath also comes from your Xie family. His name is Xie Zhuo, the key to the Eternal Life Plan. Carefully speaking, you should be the person most aware of his identity."

"Xie Zhuo is a first-level wanted criminal in the Alliance, and I have the right to arrest him."

Xie Lan's expression turned icy, "May I ask, 'former' leader, what crime has he committed?"

Gu Hongyi needed subtly, "Anti-human crimes."

"You cannot arrest him." An elderly voice spoke up, and Ye Zheng casually dropped a bombshell, "He is the next magistrate of the Northern Base. The charges you mentioned do not hold."

Gu Hongyi was momentarily stunned, never expecting that Ye Zheng would use this method to protect Xie Zhuo. He felt absurd, shook his head, and smiled bitterly, "Ye Zheng, the Northern Base is said to be humanity's last hope, but the person you chose would rather witness humanity's demise with open eyes."

Ye Zheng, accustomed to verbal sparring, was unfazed by his mockery, "A few days ago, Xie Zhuo voluntarily approached me and submitted Dr. Zhuang Qingyan's research results before his death, including parts related to the Eternal Life Plan. Under the guidance of Dr. Ning Rong, the Northern Base, in collaboration with 12 other District Bs, is conducting in-depth research on organ regeneration."

"So, Xie Zhuo is innocent."

As soon as these words fell, the listeners erupted in uproar.

Utopia's command channel was in chaos, "What! Ye Zheng already has the data?!"

“What right does their District B have to conduct independent research beyond Utopia?!”

“No, this can’t be private. Make them hand it over!”

Ye Zheng’s words brought back reason that had been swallowed by desire. The awakeners on the scene collectively stopped their actions, their expressions hesitant and uncertain.

Gu Hongyi was too taken aback. He looked at Zhuang Qingyan in silence for a long time. He never expected that he would be one step ahead and hand the materials to Ye Zheng.

“Is this your way out?” Lu Xiaoyu, leaning wearily against the medical pod, tugged at the corner of his mouth.

“Kind of.” After careful consideration, Zhuang Qingyan decided to let some of the information see the light of day. He organized the content on the way here, had the Ling siblings deliver it to Dr. Ning Rong, and confessed to Ye Zheng that the journey was fraught with danger. If he lost contact for more than a day, something had happened.

While speaking, Song Ke tugged at Fang Zhixu’s sleeve, with a shy face extending her hand, “Old Fang, get me another sealing agent.”

Fang Zhixu shook his head solemnly, “Stop injecting, it’s useless.”

Fang Zhixu had given two sealing agents to each person of V587, not because he was stingy, but because the third dose was ineffective. This type of potion relied on short-term stimulation, not to mention the severe side effects. If injected frequently, it would develop resistance, rendering subsequent doses nearly ineffective.

Song Ke pursed her lips, showing disappointment.

Her awakened energy was in turmoil, unable to find an outlet. She couldn’t use her awakened abilities, and her fingers were difficult to control, sometimes twitching involuntarily.

The confrontation continued; Utopia demanded data sharing, but Ye Zheng only said, "Relevant research will be conducted on the ground."

The other side immediately erupted in anger, "Ye Zheng, what do you mean by this?"

Ye Zheng remained calm, and the S-level pressure filled the entire room, "Utopia does not represent the Alliance, nor does it represent District B."

Before Gu Hongyi could respond, the more impulsive Minlin magistrate already cursed loudly, "So, the meaning is, I've had enough! Go to hell, Central Court! From now on, the sky belongs to you, the ground belongs to us, and no one should interfere with each other!"

The vulgar declaration plunged the scene into silence. However, the other District B magistrates remained calm, apparently having reached a consensus.

"Is this your determination?" Gu Hongyi surveyed the surroundings, asking in a deep voice.

"Mr. Gu, something bad... bad happened. District B... has declared independence," a high-ranking official muttered.

A few hours ago, an explosive news appeared on the star network. Thirteen District Bs, including Beijun and Kongsang, issued a joint statement declaring their separation from the former Central Court, now under the jurisdiction of Utopia. They declared autonomy as an independent coalition.

Whispers came to a sudden halt, and the air fell into an eerie silence.

After a while, Gu Hongyi seemed to smile faintly.

A holographic projection descended, revealing the appearance of this former figure of the Alliance.

He was well-dressed, spirited, and he gazed at the battlefield full of devastation. He looked at more than ten magistrates on the opposite side, and finally, his scrutinizing gaze landed on Zhuang Qingyan.

After a moment of silence, he spoke, “Thirteen years ago, in the laboratory of the Fire Seed Project on this land beneath my feet, a perfect living being was born—LAK0017. It possessed eternal life, powerful awakened abilities, clear consciousness. It was the best gift that technology bestowed upon humanity and a major reason for Vincent to restart the Eternal Life Plan.”

Gu Hongyi was an outstanding orator, capturing the attention of all listeners with just a few words, causing them to change expression one after another.

Xie Lan’s eyes flickered, suddenly looking up at Zhuang Qingyan, only to find him also gazing back, his expression surprisingly calm.

“As long as we fully analyze the genetic map of LAK0017, replicate the DNA sequence one-to-one, humanity can achieve true immortality. No longer plagued by aging, diseases, and death, we can enter the next era of great development. As you can see, what I want to achieve is the goal of benefiting all humanity.”

“We, this generation, could have had eternal life.”

“Are these key data in the information given to you?”

Of course not.

Zhuang Qingyan’s face remained calm, and a stormy gloom filled his pupils.

Those who played with power had a black heart. Gu Hongyi chose this moment to publicly reveal the existence of LAK0017, and his despicable intentions were evident.

He used the most cunning provocation, causing even the magistrates of District B to discuss it incessantly, questioning Ye Zheng if what Gu Hongyi said was true.

And inside the venue, Zhuang Qingyan undoubtedly became the target of criticism.

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 183.2: Key (26)

You are free (End of Key Arc)

Zhuang Qingyan had a pair of beautiful peach blossom eyes, which should have given him a gentle and affectionate appearance. However, his eyebrows were long, his nose bridge straight, and his jawline sharply defined. When not smiling, his light-colored pupils always exuded a cold and indifferent sense of world-weariness, making it difficult for people to approach.

“Benevolence for all humanity? Do you think you can hide your dirty nature with some flowery words?”

Zhuang Qingyan exposed the truth with a single sentence, “You just want to control the switch of immortality in your own hands, artificially manipulating the survival of the fittest.”

“In your eyes, do ordinary people need immortality? No. Do violators need immortality? No.”

“Not to mention the entire Alliance, I’m afraid that half of the people here can’t enjoy your so-called ‘benevolence.’ The other half can only crawl at your feet like dogs, begging for your favor, and hoping for immortality that is impossible to achieve.”

Zhuang Qingyan’s mouth was indeed too sharp, hitting people right where it hurt with every word.

The opposing awakeners, enraged and ashamed, sent a flurry of black blades towards him. Zhuang Qingyan evaded in a distressed manner, blood streaming down from his mouth.

Song Ke sat up abruptly, the tubes swaying on both sides, her eyes unwaveringly fixed on his figure.

Zhuang Qingyan maintained a calm tone, a cool smile hanging on his lips, “Do you know why the Eternal Life Plan failed? Because LAK0017 cannot be replicated.”

“What?!” Everyone, including Gu Hongyi, was shocked.

Zhuang Qingyan sneered, “One-to-one replication? LAK0017 has dozens of extinct replicative genes in its body. Do you have the original samples?”

Replicative genes had disappeared from the Alliance for over twenty years, and they were even more untraceable after the outbreak of the apocalypse.

“—The so-called immortality is just a bubble.”

Zhuang Qingyan cruelly revealed the truth.

The venue fell silent for a second, followed by an explosion of condemnation and questioning. Angry awakeners overwhelmed Zhuang Qingyan’s lonely figure.

“Lies! You’re talking nonsense! Who gave you the right to deny immortality!”

“I don’t believe it. If it’s meaningless, why did Vincent insist on researching?”

Gu Hongyi shook his head slowly, “Xie Zhuo, do you think you can just make up some words, and everything will be fine? Let me tell you, it won’t pass. As long as I live, as long as Utopia exists, I will tirelessly dig out the secrets from your mind. You will face endless pursuit, hiding in the dark, unseen, becoming Utopia’s eternal enemy.”

“Xie Zhuo, you can’t escape.”

The political situation in the Alliance was complex. Although Gu Hongyi had stepped down, the power structure he left behind remained intact, exerting a dominating influence. The new leadership was practically marginalized, having no real say in Utopia.

Song Ke slowly clenched her fist, gazing at Zhuang Qingyan’s enigmatic profile, his deep eyes concealed by his eyelashes.

She looked for a long time, then averted her gaze and nudged Lu Xiaoyu, "Projection relies on consciousness, right?"

Lu Xiaoyu suddenly realized, "Yes, using terminals for deep-level connections. The old man seems to be in poor health and can only manifest himself using this method. If the projection dies, I can cut off his consciousness, preventing him from returning."

He gestured with his damaged bionic arm, indicating his capability.

The balance between the two sides was precarious due to Zhuang Qingyan's revelation. Breaking the equilibrium, Xie Lan issued the command, "Attack."

A deafening roar, rolling smoke, and Song Ke gently called out, "Zhuang Qingyan."

Zhuang Qingyan turned around, limping over to her.

"I think," Song Ke gestured for him to crouch down, and she touched his eye corner, "the original tear mole was charming."

She murmured softly, "Bring it back when you have the chance."

"Okay," Zhuang Qingyan replied hoarsely. Despite his heavy heart, he smiled and agreed with Song Ke, "I'll listen to you."

After looking at him for a few seconds, Song Ke suddenly leaned in, pressing her lips against his. Both of them had blood on their faces, and the kiss carried a hint of the metallic taste.

Zhuang Qingyan was somewhat surprised and reached back to hold her wrist, "Song Ke..."

Song Ke affectionately rubbed her cheek against his and then turned around, pressing him onto the medical bed. She swiftly removed the tubes with one hand and stood up.

“They bullied you.”

“...It’s okay.”

“It’s not okay,” Song Ke said seriously, “If you don’t fight back, they will keep bullying you. I don’t want that.”

She turned around, and her formidable awakened energy cut through the booming artillery, her voice echoing clearly in everyone’s ears.

“Hey, what you said doesn’t count.”

Both sides in the fight looked at her in astonishment.

Song Ke stood upright, looking up at the projection of Gu Hongyi, “If you die, Utopia is gone, and what you just said doesn’t count.”

From adolescence to adulthood, half of Zhuang Qingyan’s life was spent as a fugitive, constantly hiding, never having a moment to possess his true name, never experiencing a peaceful sleep. He carried the secret of all humanity, like a suffocating mountain pressing down on him.

But why? When this mountain fell, did anyone ask for his opinion?

Song Ke took a step forward, pulled a crystal from the space. It radiated dazzling golden light, with abundant energy flowing within. This was a level 5 crystal produced by the Armoured Sea Turtle, the only one in the world. She had it tested in Grace’s lab in Qianzhan City, and it triggered a red alert due to its dangerous radiation, equivalent to a medium-sized nuclear bomb. It was strictly prohibited for use.

“First time taking dr*gs, I’m a bit nervous.”

Despite missing a leg, Song Ke stood firm. She decisively crushed the crystal. A brilliant golden light soared into the sky, causing violent turbulence in the upper atmosphere, tumultuous waves in the sea, and a trembling ground beneath.

Song Ke's whole body shone with dazzling brilliance, like flowing gold, and even the morning glow paled in comparison. Her frail body couldn't absorb such a colossal amount of energy. Her veins and blood vessels swelled, and the magnetic field, which had been sealed, forcibly expanded several times. If there were an R-type tester here, the alarm would undoubtedly be blaring. People would be astonished to find that Song Ke's level had skyrocketed from S8 to S9, then surpassed the detectable limit.

—Beyond S-level awakener.

Song Ke's pupils turned a pure gold, and she soared into the sky towards the starship where Gu Hongyi was located.

No one expected her to be so reckless, assassinating the former leader in broad daylight. Everyone rushed to intercept, but Xie Lan made a decisive decision, "Protect her!"

Azure Phoenix soldiers and District B awakeners joined the battlefield.

"Hurry, all artillery aim, stop her!!" Simon was restless, couldn't help but extend his body to observe the situation. Suddenly, a gap tore open in mid-air, purple lightning flashed, a tall figure fell with thunder, illuminating his alarmed pupils. Simon kept retreating, horrified, "No—protect me!!"

Boom! Boom!! Magnetic storm bombs engulfed Song Ke's figure. The world became bright, all sounds disappeared, quiet and desolate.

"Song Ke!"

Zhuang Qingyan limped into the battlefield, various awakened abilities raining down on him. Disregarding them, he plunged forward headlong, no different from walking into death.

Yin Xiao currently in combat furrowed his brows as he saw projectiles descending. Swiftly, he grabbed Zhuang Qingyan, who was unresponsive, and in that moment, Zhuang Qingyan's right leg gave way, kneeling down on a single knee.

His thoughts were rarely blank; a powerful palpitation pierced through him. Aaron, who had been watching him closely, brightened his eyes, and "Knowledge Deprivation" was activated!

A second later, Aaron was elated beyond measure – he had succeeded!

As the artillery fire scattered, Song Ke's figure still hung in mid-air. The illusionary golden armor inch by inch shattered, her entire body damaged and incomplete. Her left arm was only half remaining. However, from within her, a torrential awakened energy rushed in all directions, a hurricane suddenly arose. The frontmost S-level awakens emitted fearful screams, torn apart by the terrifying energy, organs and brain matter splattered everywhere, sweeping backward. The elites of Utopia dispersed like a bursting dam, evaporating instantly.

As if a humanoid nuclear weapon, wherever she passed, there were bloody fireworks.

Stepping on shattered limbs and bones, amidst a sea of blood and corpses, Song Ke condensed a golden spear, five meters long, in her incomplete palm. Intense radiation surged towards all limbs and hundreds of bones. At the unseen nape of her neck, a string of cold code slowly appeared: L-A-K-0-0-1-7.

—"LAK0017."

Aaron was pushed back by telekinesis, retreating like a drowning person, sweating profusely. But he acquired a portion of Zhuang Qingyan's "knowledge" and looked unbelievably at Song Ke, "L... LA...!"

"Mr. Gu, she is the experimental subject!"

Gu Hongyi suddenly looked up, "What did you say?"

Fragmented information flashed in his mind: S8 level awakener, dual ability, body healing, no known parentage, mysterious origins...

Burning with a terrifying light in his eyes, Gu Hongyi grabbed the communicator, about to speak when the cabin suddenly shook.

The all-annihilating golden spear penetrated the starship with a force like thunder, irresistibly piercing through Aaron and Gu Hongyi's projections.

Song Ke locked her pupils on the two, threw a punch, a vast energy enough to obliterate souls. The terminal carrying Gu Hongyi's consciousness disintegrated, the sturdy starship "cracked" into two, completely out of control, rapidly rotating and crashing to the ground.

Boom!!

Smoke and flames catalyzed into a mushroom cloud.

In the S-level Sky City Utopia, a technologically advanced skyscraper, heavy security guarded the office. Suddenly, a sharp alarm sounded, and people rushed into the room. The old man inside slowly fell, life indicators completely silent, brain activity completely ceased.

Song Ke, with bloodshot eyes, wildly swung the long spear, piercing through the hearts of awakeners, twisting off their heads.

Hundreds of black starships were simultaneously annihilated, S-level members of Utopia dying almost to the last. The radiation within her body also accumulated to its peak, uncontrollable chaotic energy.

Boom——!!!

A high-frequency sonic blast erupted, rendering everyone instantly deaf. A silence enveloped the surroundings, filled with the piercing noise.

With a loud clang, the golden spear dissipated, leaving Song Ke dizzy and her vision blurred. Her organs were corroded, and her final thought was that she couldn't explode. If she did, no one else would survive.

With strong willpower, the rampaging energy was inexplicably suppressed, careening wildly within the magnetic field.

Puff. A slight sound, like a punctured balloon. Song Ke realized something, lowering her head to see her awakened energy leaking uncontrollably from within her. Her body shattered bit by bit into ashes.

Song Ke blinked slowly, the side effects more severe than she had imagined. Grace was right; Level 5 crystals should not be used recklessly. She lifted her gaze satisfied; luckily, the goal was achieved.

Song Ke landed weakly, steadying herself with a stagger. She touched the black collar with trembling fingertips and pressed the microphone.

Zhuang Qingyan's shirt was soaked in blood, his head throbbing, and his vision hard to focus. He spat out a dry blood foam.

In the earpiece, Song Ke's cheerful voice rang out, "Zhuang Qingyan, there is no need to hide from now on."

Zhuang Qingyan's face turned pale, crawling forward with bloodstains, and, relying on his senses, grabbed Song Ke's hand. "Song Keke, you... don't be like this. Didn't we agree? Don't save me, don't care about me."

"No, I care about you."

A smile appeared in Song Ke's eyes, the dimples on her cheeks forming a small curve. She stubbornly called his name, "Zhuang... Qingyan, thank you."

—"You are free now."

Intense energy suddenly erupted, flowing elegantly like auroras. Sparse electromagnetic waves lingered around Song Ke. It was a breathtaking sight that couldn't be described in words. Her body quickly disintegrated, eroded by radiation. With a gust of wind, the ashes scattered over the sea.

“No...” Zhuang Qingyan murmured, panting, “Come back, Song Ke... Song Ke!!”

An unbearable pain pierced his mind, and he fell to the ground with a thunderous crash. In the last lingering moment of consciousness, a clear and melodious bird’s cry echoed through the sky over Loak.

Resonant and delightful, like jade breaking in Kunshan.

Because it was too ethereal, amid the incessant piercing noise, it seemed as elusive as an illusion.

*

In a laboratory filled with instruments, “Zhuang Qingyan” stared at the screen with dark circles under his eyes, muttering to himself, “Not good-sounding? What’s wrong with the name ‘Fire Seed’? The flowers that bloom in the ashes, like the phoenix in ancient civilization myths, have great commemorative significance.”

“Yeah, a unique limited edition worldwide, using the Phoenix gene that cost my mom a whopping fifty million Alliance coins, and you failed to integrate it.”

The young man with a teardrop mole at the corner of his eye flipped through the light screen in his hand, casually pouring cold water on his father, “Not only did you fail, even the experimental subject is scrapped. Indeed, it has great commemorative significance.”

“You! Get out, just get out!”

The side effects of “Knowledge Deprivation” took effect, and Zhuang Qingyan’s entire world suddenly collapsed.

*

As the sunset approached, the sky suddenly started pouring rain. The sea surged, and the dim vision couldn't see five meters ahead.

New Asia Alliance, an isolated island in the east.

In early autumn, it shouldn't have been rainy, but a week ago, a storm inexplicably swept across the sea, and it hadn't dissipated until today.

A stiff little zombie buried its head in the sand, digging for shells. After a while, it suddenly ran out, stumbling, and hugged another figure sitting on the beach, shouting, "Ah, ah, ah, ah—ah, ah!"

The figure with a headscarf slowly stood up, pulled by the little zombie, and walked towards the "treasure" it had found.

On the beach lay a pile of something.

This something could only be described as an "unidentified object," resembling fresh red meat, or a lump of soft and squishy seafood, twitching and wriggling.

The sea breeze blew off the headscarf, unexpectedly revealing its face, with a bluish-gray complexion, cloudy pupils, and grim undead markings covering the cheeks to the neck. Clearly, this was a Fallen, who had forgotten their name but vaguely remembered that when they were still human, people used to call them—Aunt Qing.

Aunt Qing's eyes stared blankly, with the excited little zombie beside her, drooling. Aunt Qing bent down, picked up a broken fishing net, wrapped the soft flesh in it, and hung it around the little zombie's neck.

Two shaky figures walked through the dense crowd of zombies, disappearing into the depths of the lonely island.

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 184.1: Before the Apocalypse (1)

(Vincent x Xie Lan) Parents' Love

In the 17th year of the new calendar, early spring.

District B9, Askar.

A high-definition advertising screen scrolled and played a passionate speech: "Genetic engineering will effectively repair embryonic and human defects, resist the invasion of genetic viruses. It is a milestone development in DNA editing technology and the gospel of human evolution in the post-radiation era..."

High above the starship harbor, a slender figure stood quietly.

Xie Lan, dressed in regular clothes, with her jet-black long hair tied into a low ponytail behind her head. Her appearance was beautiful and charming at first glance, but if you lingered for a moment, you could feel a cold and sharp aura. Even standing still, there was a hidden but palpable sense of pressure.

On the screen, Academician Bob, being interviewed, continued to speak expansively: "Unfortunately, the success rate of this technology is currently unstable, hovering around 30%. Some subjects experience severe adverse reactions. My team and I are working hard to overcome these challenges..."

"Colonel, a total of 380 people, everyone is present." The adjutant approached from behind and reported in a low voice.

Xie Lan nodded slightly. The purpose of her trip was to bring a group of physically fit soldiers selected from Beijun for genetic enhancement experiments. In the past two years, there had been continuous border conflicts in Beijun, and the Cario Empire, with its "evolvers", had repeatedly provoked them. They had suffered quite a bit in the shadows. If this mission succeeded, the Xie family could truly have "super soldiers."

The 380 people sent to Askar all volunteered for the experiment and wrote their wills in advance.

With a success rate of 30%, the prospects were too uncertain. No one knew whether they would achieve “evolution” or become sacrificed martyrs.

“Let’s go.” Xie Lan withdrew her gaze and put on an isolation mask.

The post-war environment was deteriorating day by day, the air was polluted, and the ubiquitous nuclear remnants made it difficult for her to breathe. She had to wear a mask when traveling.

...

Research Center.

The receptionist respectfully led Xie Lan to the office, saying, “Colonel Xie, Academician Bob is currently in Liuponi for academic exchange, so Dr. Zhuang, his student, will be leading the genetic enhancement experiment.”

Xie Lan halted her steps, a storm brewing in her eyes. “I haven’t received any information about a personnel change.”

Beijun had invested a significant amount of money and manpower for this venture, and at this crucial juncture, Bob dared to change personnel on the spot, seriously crossing her bottom line. Xie Lan didn’t mind personally going to District A4 to “invite” him back.

The receptionist was sweating profusely; the intimidation brought by Xie Lan was too strong. Fearful, he didn’t dare to lie, but certain things couldn’t be explained too explicitly. He could only offer a vague explanation, “Actually, whether Academician Bob is here or not is not important. Dr. Zhuang is the core. Please rest assured; everything will be fine!”

Xie Lan furrowed her brow, speculating on the unspoken meaning in his words. She had heard about some unwritten rules in academic circles, but who held the title was not important to her. What mattered to Xie Lan was how many people she could bring back.

The automatic door opened slowly, revealing an empty room with scattered papers, and instruments quietly humming with occasional “beep” sounds.

The receptionist, accustomed to this sight, looked around and called out softly, “Dr. Zhuang?”

Before his call was answered, an angry figure pulled open a side door with a loud bang! The light screen fell heavily on the table.

“Zhuang Qingyan! Are you using my authority? You even wrote comments for the interns I brought, don’t be too arrogant!”

The documents on the floor shifted, and suddenly, a head emerged from the pile of papers. A man sat up, rubbing his forehead, his voice slightly hoarse.

“I casually flipped through last night, and there are 25 logical flaws in your group’s model. It’s really unbearable to look at.”

“25 flaws? Is that true?” A person named “Ning Rong” doubted, muttering. He casually flipped through the paper, and the comments inside were infuriating:

“Fortunately, only you and I have read this paper.”

“This section is well-written but needs to be entirely deleted.”

“Who taught you to use formulas like this?”

“Please do not create, no, transport academic garbage.”

Towards the end, the comments became sharper:

“??”

“Is your brain 99% water?”

“My silence is deafening.”

Ning Rong: “...”

Despite those interns idolizing him, did they know he had such a sharp tongue?

The man yawned, folded up his bed, casually put on a white coat. Tall and handsome, despite the tiredness showing in his dark under-eye circles and stubble. “Your research project can’t proceed. Don’t waste your time; abandon it early.”

“Why can’t it proceed?” Ning Rong refused to accept it.

“No money, no personnel,” the man said lazily.

Ning Rong was momentarily speechless. He was right; once it entered the practical stage, the funds were like pouring into a bottomless pit, and investors expected returns. Young scholars like them, unknown and unproven, found it challenging to get 100% support.

But Ning Rong still held onto his fantasies. “Maybe one day, an investor will appear, recognize my talent, and be willing to climb the research peak with me.”

The man chuckled softly, rummaged through a drawer, found the instant coffee empty, and helplessly closed it. “Are you sure you’re talking about investors?”

Ning Rong blushed. “What do you, a lonely researcher, understand? I curse you to be forever single!”

The man raised an eyebrow. “I don’t need such unnecessary things. Research is my partner, and I’m willing to dedicate my life to it.”

He said it with conviction, leaving Ning Rong speechless.

“I’ll take a nap; you watch over things.”

Seeming quite tired, the man yawned again, swayed towards the side door.

“Dr. Zhuang, please wait a moment.” The receptionist stepped forward to explain the situation. After listening with bowed head, he glanced at the unexpected visitor at the door.

The receptionist warmly introduced, “This is Dr. Vincent Zhuang. Dr. Zhuang, this is Colonel Xie from Beijun.”

Vincent’s slender fingers flipped through the appointment records. “Genetic enhancement experiment... 380 people?”

Xie Lan, behind her mask, stared at him. “I hope to complete it as soon as possible. Cost is not an issue.”

Vincent straightforwardly refused, “Can’t be done.”

Xie Lan frowned. “What?”

The receptionist hadn’t expected him to offend someone with his first words, and his face turned pale.

Vincent and Xie Lan locked eyes for two seconds. Patiently, he repeated, “I said it can’t be done. Please leave.”

Without a second thought, Xie Lan drew her gun, pressing the cold mechanical device against his mouth. “When I paid the deposit, the answer I heard was not this.”

Behind her, the tall figure raised their weapons, aiming at Vincent's head, creating an instantly tense atmosphere.

Ning Rong was terrified, holding onto Vincent's arm, shouting, "No, no, no, don't be impulsive, let's talk!"

Vincent calmly glanced down at the gun at his mouth. "The genetic enhancement plan you received is the version approved by the Alliance, but it's not my best plan. If you insist on experimenting, perhaps you can only take away 100 people. Even so, do you still insist?"

Xie Lan's eyelashes flickered slightly. "What is your 'best plan'?"

Vincent, surprised by her keen focus, replied, "The best plan... because of lack of funds, it's not ready yet."

"So you're playing games with me?" Xie Lan showed a hint of displeasure, and her fingertips on the trigger moved slightly.

Ning Rong, panicking, exclaimed, "Nonono!"

Vincent spoke before she could act. "One week."

"One week, and I can provide you with the best plan you want. The condition is, um, you pay for it."

The receptionist gasped, weakly asking, "Dr. Zhuang, is this too risky? What if it fails..."

They would be in big trouble with Colonel Xie. He had a premonition; they would definitely be!

Vincent stood his ground confidently. "Failure is inevitable. I've experienced at least ten thousand failures, but as long as I succeed once, it's worth it."

The receptionist felt a headache and toothache and his entire body ached. These research geniuses were all oddballs! Speaking arrogantly about failure as if it were a matter of course, wasting a week with Colonel Xie, who would undoubtedly let him off easily?

Xie Lan carefully observed the man in front of her. There was a lingering chemical smell on his white coat, not pleasant. His hair was messy, his appearance untidy, giving off an aura of unreliability. Only his face seemed somewhat presentable.

“What’s the success rate?” Xie Lan slowly raised the gun, pressing it against his Adam’s apple.

“45%.” Vincent replied instantly, as if he had deduced it countless times.

Xie Lan’s mind raced; it was close to half.

“What if the subjects are military personnel?”

“Allow me to correct you; without data to support it, physical fitness and genetic strength are directly related.”

Vincent’s deep brows stretched as he smiled, radiating a handsome glow.

“How do you prove yourself?”

Xie Lan cast a light glance at him. Those soldiers were her subordinates, her personal guards; she had to be responsible for them.

Their eyes met again, and a hidden wave surged between them. Vincent quietly gazed at her and suddenly smiled, “How about this? Give me another week, maybe I can increase the success rate to 65%.”

Ning Rong exclaimed, “Hey, don’t go crazy...”

Vincent remained composed. "Give it a try."

Xie Lan, without changing her expression, stared at the man in front of her. He had attractive almond-shaped eyes, shallow like they couldn't contain anything. However, her intuition told her that when he mentioned 65%, he wasn't joking.

"I'll give you half a month."

"During this half-month, I will investigate your background thoroughly. From your birth, growth, education, to this moment standing here, I will have a clear understanding of your past. I'll review every detail of the plan you propose, and any changes must have my approval."

Vincent nodded calmly. "You pay, you decide."

The adjutant, with a worried expression, whispered, "Colonel..."

At the border of Hede Island in Beijun, conflicts were escalating, and war was imminent. Half a month was too risky for them.

"If any issues arise, I'll take responsibility," Xie Lan asserted with her characteristic decisive demeanor, but...

"Achoo!" A sneeze disrupted her authority.

Vincent glanced at her and turned around, rummaging through a cabinet full of potions. He pulled out a small green bottle.

"Antiallergic spray, an adjunct product of one of my projects."

The packaging was rudimentary, with a handwritten signature on the bottle, depicting a majestic character, vaguely resembling the character "Yan."

The adjutant's expression turned serious. "What is this? Do you have approval from the Drug Administration for this?"

Xie Lan, with her background, wouldn't use such a dubious concoction.

Xie Lan holstered her gun, pondered for a moment, and reached out to take it. The soft fingertips and Vincent's slightly cool palm met briefly and then parted.

As she left, faint, fragmented sounds could be heard in the room: "Young Miss... delicate..."

Ning Rong sneakily glanced at Xie Lan and pulled on his sleeve desperately. "Could you say a few words less? She's carrying a gun."

...

In the following half month, Vincent, except for eating and sleeping, rooted himself in the laboratory. Xie Lan set up a simple office in the outer area, staying close to supervise him. Finally, she understood what the receptionist meant by "Dr. Zhuang is the core."

The results of the experiment were unexpected. Out of the 380 people Xie Lan brought, astonishingly, 288 successfully underwent enhancement, showing early awakening symptoms. The success rate exceeded 75%. Once this news spread in the Alliance, it caused a massive stir.

Without a doubt, Vincent had made history.

News in various districts enthusiastically reported on the achievements of Bob's team, with Vincent's name only mentioned once in a corner.

However, when he saw the news, he just yawned, his handsome face showing signs of fatigue with dark circles under his eyes. He cared little about the fleeting fame.

On the day of the return journey, Vincent's gaze fell on Xie Lan's face. She wasn't wearing a face mask, and the teardrop mole at the corner of her eye added a touch of charm.

"Used it?"

"Mm."

Their abrupt conversation left onlookers confused.

Vincent's eyes revealed a faint smile, and he looked at her a bit longer before saying nothing.

She used the antiallergic spray he gave her, and it worked. She believed in the optimal plan he adjusted, and it succeeded.

Xie Lan returned to Beijun with the 288 awakened individuals.

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 184.2: Before the Apocalypse (1)

(Vincent x Xie Lan) Parents' Love

Six months later.

Beijun.

Xie Lan had just come out of her father's study when she encountered her half-brother, Xie Ping, in the corner of the staircase.

"I heard you're planning to form an army composed of awakeners? Ambitious, aren't you?" Xie Ping's expression was peculiar, with a touch of both mockery and seriousness.

This sister of his surpassed everyone by far. With extraordinary abilities, she had long been selected as the next master of Beijun. Xie Ping had tried to vie for her position, but Xie Lan was strict in her selection of soldiers and governed with discipline. Her troops not only had fierce combat capabilities but also unwavering determination. Moreover, they only followed Xie Lan's orders.

Half a year ago, she brought back nearly three hundred awakened individuals from Askar and decisively won the border ownership in Hede Island. Now, her position was secure, and no one could shake it.

Xie Lan casually replied, "Heard the private doctor came yesterday? Big brother, take care of yourself."

Xie Ping's expression changed abruptly.

...

Back at the military headquarters, the terminal beeped, and her mother's projection appeared, her tone as lamenting as ever, "When are you getting married?"

Accompanying the communication were numerous profiles of potential marriage partners. Xie Lan only glanced at them briefly and quickly closed it.

"Did you have another argument with someone?"

"Yes, yes, yes! I'm all alone in this; no one helps me when I argue." Her mother, with delicate makeup, sighed while covering her chest. "You can choose the person, but you must get married. I've been wanting to hold a grandchild for a long time."

Xie Lan looked helpless. The internal relationships of the Xie family were complex. Her mother was the fourth wife of her father, but Xie Lan knew her mother's combat capabilities well. She could scold ten people by herself without fear. It seemed like she just felt lonely. Born into the Xie family, Xie Lan had a detached view of marriage. Since her mother wished for it, she agreed to get married.

She opened the folder, sifting through the potential suitors one by one. The more she looked, the more discerning she became: this one wouldn't do, too chubby; that one wouldn't do, too short; this one had a vacant gaze, clearly untrustworthy; and this one... a bit too simple; she did have certain expectations for intelligence.

Her thoughts drifted away, and a pair of light-colored eyes flashed by. When she tried to recall them, the memories seemed a bit blurry.

Xie Lan began frequenting blind dates, but unfortunately, she didn't find any of the men in the folder appealing.

In the last blind date, she met the young master of the Xu family, said to be pursuing a Ph.D. Maybe Xie Lan's aura was too strong; the young master seemed a bit awkward, wearing glasses, shy and timid. Surprisingly, Xie Lan didn't get up and leave; she even made a joke, "Do all you researchers have such dark circles under your eyes?"

The young master appeared bewildered, not quite understanding whom she referred to as "you researchers." Nevertheless, he honestly replied, "No, it's because I've been working on my thesis recently, pulling several all-nighters. I'm not a genius, so writing is quite painful for me."

Xie Lan was curious, "How do you define a genius in your academic field?"

Talking about a familiar topic, the young master's words flowed, "We do have geniuses in our field! Vincent Zhuang, around my age, but he earned two Ph.D. degrees in Biology and Genetics before turning twenty. He made a name for himself in the field of genetic engineering. Do you know Professor Bob?"

Xie Lan nodded, "I've heard of him." She didn't have a favorable impression of this particular professor.

The young master's face lit up with admiration, "Professor Bob leads the Genetic Enhancement Project, now called the Genetic Selection Project. Vincent is also part of it, and it's really amazing."

Over the past six months, the concept of “genetic selection” had gained immense popularity, maintaining a success rate of 65%. Families in District B had started experiments, but due to the high cost, only a very small number of people could enjoy the benefits of “awakening.”

Xie Lan listened absentmindedly, her mind gradually focusing on the clear and handsome face.

After chatting for a while and realizing there was no spark between them, they parted amicably. Before leaving, Xie Lan jokingly said, “I don’t know if your thesis will pass, but I’m sure the dark circles of a genius are heavier than yours.”

The young master was momentarily stunned, only to belatedly realize that, ignoring Xie Lan’s strong aura, her beauty was also top-notch.

That night, Xie Lan huddled on the sofa, opened the projection, and meticulously read Vincent’s information, from his complex and profound papers to his image. She didn’t understand a single word of his lengthy and intricate articles. When she reached his image, she lingered for a long time.

On a rainy day, Xie Lan returned to District B9. It coincided with the graduation season at the Askar First Military Academy, and she had to personally select non-commissioned officers.

For some reason, the weather wasn’t favorable both times she visited – last time, dust filled the air, and this time, it was a drizzly day. Xie Lan arrived alone at the research center, peering inside through the transparent glass.

Vincent, wearing experimental goggles, was focused on the instruments, head bowed attentively observing the data while jotting down notes with a stylus. Only half of his profile was visible, his complexion pale, features handsome. He had shaved this time, but his thin lips were pressed into a straight line, giving him a somewhat stern appearance.

At the spacious rooftop, the same receptionist from half a year ago sighed beside Xie Lan, “Dr. Zhuang’s application for an independent project got rejected. He hasn’t been in good spirits lately.”

...

On the empty rooftop, Vincent took off his white coat, leaving only a black shirt, unbuttoning it to let the air circulate.

The misty raindrops tapped on his shoulders as he gazed into the distance with a somewhat absent-minded expression.

A cup of warm Jade Estate coffee was handed to him, and when he turned his head, he recognized the person, "Colonel Xie."

Xie Lan, holding a black umbrella to shield them securely, asked, "What is the direction of your research?"

Vincent's expression twitched slightly. He hadn't expected this beautiful and authoritative senior military officer to be interested in a small scientific project. However, his research hadn't reached a classified level, so he truthfully replied, "Gene fusion."

Following that, Vincent explained the specific content using detailed professional terms.

Xie Lan remained silent for a long time, her eyes revealing a hint of emptiness. It was too professional. Honestly, despite reading the papers in advance, she still didn't understand.

Vincent noticed her confusion and, for some reason, felt a bit relieved. "In simple terms, it's about using gene fusion to resist diseases like cancer, extending the average human lifespan."

"Oh," Xie Lan sneezed again, "Ah-choo!"

Vincent's lips moved, and he sighed almost inaudibly, "...delicate."

Xie Lan stared at him expressionlessly.

Vincent paused for a moment, then casually spoke, "Your allergies seem quite severe."

Xie Lan nodded, "I'm sensitive to nuclear residue."

Although nuclear warfare had ended, the lingering pain remained, needing time to heal. As cities prospered, the environment deteriorated, and extreme weather became more frequent.

"The spray I had is finished. If you need it, I can give you the formula."

"No need. It's not very convenient for me," Xie Lan replied. Being a military officer, she couldn't exactly ask the enemy to "wait a moment" during a battle while she retrieved her spray.

Vincent glanced at her frosty profile and took a sip of his coffee, "Actually, there's a better solution."

"What solution?" Xie Lan raised her gaze.

"Do you know about air conditioning? It's an outdated relic from the old civilization, but its principles are quite fascinating. I can install a large-scale air conditioner in the sky, automatically adjusting the climate through artificial intelligence calculations. By then, extreme weather will be under control. You won't need to wear a mask and can move freely anywhere," Vincent explained, his eyes sparkling with countless stars. "As long as there's sufficient funding and a team, give me five years, no, three years, and I can make it happen."

However, as he finished speaking, he thought of his recent failed project, and a sense of melancholy crept into his expression. His lowered eyelashes concealed all emotions.

Xie Lan felt a subtle shift inside her, a mysterious thought surfacing. Having encountered numerous prospective spouses, she had never experienced such a feeling.

An inexplicable impulse made her speak, "Come back to Beijun with me."

Vincent stared at her in surprise.

It was an impulsive statement without much thought, but after saying it, the feeling of destiny settled. Xie Lan spoke again, her tone firm, “You, come back with me to Beijun.”

Turning around, she stood on the steps, her gaze meeting Vincent’s at eye level.

“Come with me. The laboratory, personnel, money—whatever you want, I’ll handle it. You choose the research topic, and you’ll be in charge.”

The autumn rain dampened the corners of their clothes, and the gentle wind intertwined their breaths. Under the umbrella, in this small space, the atmosphere was unusually romantic.

Vincent kept one hand in his pocket, tightening the grip on the coffee cup with the other. “Are you going to be my investor? Why?” He recalled Ning Rong’s frequent mention of “sugar daddy” with a soft laugh. “Or... benefactor? Are you going to raise me?”

Xie Lan remained silent, unexpectedly grabbing the collar of his shirt without a word and yanking it down. A few drops of scalding coffee splattered, landing on her fingertips and leaving faint red marks.

With calloused fingertips, Xie Lan boldly traced along his Adam’s apple, caressing the smooth chin, and then firmly held his jaw. She tilted her head up, repeatedly and gently biting those thin lips.

This was a moment, flavored with the rich taste of coffee.

When they parted, both of their breaths were in disarray. Vincent’s Adam’s apple slid as he sensed his own rapidly beating pulse.

Xie Lan slightly lifted her chin, her eyes carrying an unmistakable dominance:

“I’m not an investor, and I’m not a sponsor.”

“—I’m a marriage partner.”

They had known each other for half a year, strictly speaking, having met only twice, and exchanged only a few words. Yet, some emotions came fiercely, unreasonably, and some people, you just knew from the first moment you laid eyes on them—this was the one.

...

In the 17th year of the New Calendar, Xie Lan assembled a force of awakeners, and the formidable Azure Phoenix Army, which would later shake the Alliance, made its debut.

In the same year, in Beijun, the relatively unknown Qinglan Research Institute was established.

Facts proved that Vincent never spoke empty words. In less than three years, he resolved the issue of nuclear hypersensitivity for Xie Lan.

In the 20th year of the New Calendar, the independently developed Weather Simulation System by Qinglan amazed the world. T001 successfully operated in District A5 of the Elderly People's Nation, officially ushering the Alliance into the era of artificial climate. Vincent Zhuang's name became widely known.

Dr. Zhuang, who once aspired to dedicate himself to research, now faced a new worry—his son, Xie Zhuo.

Bringing a baby into the laboratory was undoubtedly the biggest mistake he had ever made in his life. Vincent looked at the mess on the floor, the instruments beeping alarms, and the "Young Master Xie" sitting among the scattered papers, chin raised in arrogance. It gave him a splitting headache.

Who could tell him why an infant less than a year old possessed such destructive power?!

An assistant stifled a laugh, "Dr. Zhuang, maybe Young Master Xie can earn a couple of doctorates too."

"No, from now on, don't let him near any devices," Vincent said with a cold expression, sealing his son's path to a career in research with his own words.

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 185.1: Before the Apocalypse (2)

(Xie Zhuo) There is no Xie Zhuo in this world anymore

In the era of the old civilization, there was a saying: “All roads lead to Rome.” But for Xie Zhuo, this saying needed a modification— “This Young master was born in Rome.”

Young Master Xie has been the center of attention since childhood. He was born during the “Glorious Thirty Years” (06-36) of the Alliance’s golden development, in the peak period (New Calendar Year 19). His father was a rising genius scientist, and his mother was the formidable leader of the Azure Phoenix Army. As for himself, inheriting the superior genes of his parents, he possessed top-tier beauty resembling Xie Lan at a young age—silky black hair, captivating brows and eyes, and a disdainful gaze when he lifted his chin, mirroring his father.

Being good-looking was one thing, but what was infuriating was that he also inherited Vincent’s extraordinary intelligence. Before turning one, he could tamper with and destroy sophisticated instruments (things ordinary people couldn’t even turn on), using a baby bottle to dampen crucial data manuscripts, causing his biological father to stay up for nights.

As he grew older, Xie Zhuo’s talents manifested in various aspects. In the complex family relationships of Beijun, whom to approach and whom to distance himself from, he handled with ease. The cryptic and intricate city defense codes became familiar to him after going through them with Xie Lan, rightfully earning him the title of “the child from another family.”

Everyone praised him, but Xie Lan faintly sensed that something was amiss. Xie Zhuo was too intelligent, to the point where he easily lost interest in everything, making it hard to figure out what he liked or disliked. Whenever asked about his thoughts, Young Master Xie casually propped up his chin and lifted his eyelids slightly, saying, “Boring, not interesting.”

This speculation became a reality when Xie Zhuo was ten years old. Xie Lan’s father, Xie Zhuo’s grandfather, died due to a sudden heart attack, and the rescue efforts were in vain.

The members of the Xie family, upon receiving the news, rushed to the scene, filling the spacious room. Regardless of genuine or fake emotions, they all wailed and expressed their grief.

Feeling something amiss, Xie Lan turned his head to look into the distance—

Young Master Xie, well-dressed, stood by the floor-to-ceiling window. His backlit face appeared unusually indifferent. There were no emotions such as fear, worry, or tension in his pupils. They were deep, like the unfathomable depths of the sea, and he even lazily yawned.

He silently gazed at death, even too lazy to pick up the first aid kit that rolled to his feet amid the chaos.

An angelic face with a devilish heart.

Xie Lan took a quick step forward, using her body to shield him, and picked up the back of his collar and casually tossed him to her adjutant, saying, "Take him back."

If he stayed a few more seconds, Young Master Xie would probably have coldly commented in front of everyone, "Boring, not interesting."

Back at home, Xie Lan asked him, "Why didn't you cry just now?"

The younger members of the Xie family were frightened; his overly calm demeanor seemed out of place.

Xie Zhuo, not lying to his mother, calmly spoke the truth, "Isn't he dead at just the right time? If he were alive, he would continue causing trouble for you. The Azure Phoenix is growing stronger, and he can't control the situation in Beijun. Several times, he secretly conspired with Uncle, wanting to reclaim your military authority."

Xie Lan: "..."

Listen, can a ten-year-old say such things?

At that time, Colonel Xie Lan, having already been promoted, took a deep breath, pulled out the tactical whip from her waist, and placed the cold firearm on the table. She gazed frostily at the third person in the room, "Doctor Zhuang, what should we do with your son?"

Vincent cleared his throat a couple of times, quickly signaling to his son, and then took a step forward. Daringly, he pushed aside the whip and the gun barrel, bending down to embrace Xie Lan's waist, "Major General Xie, don't be angry. I'll handle this."

Young Master Xie silently rolled his eyes and, seeing that neither of them paid any attention to him, sensibly left.

Though he was cold-hearted, he had a good relationship with his parents. Conversely, because of the support from Xie Lan and Vincent, he lived freely and recklessly.

Early the next morning, the arrogant Young Master Xie was taken by his old man for a genetic test.

The results were not surprising; Xie Zhuo was diagnosed with a cold-blooded mental condition. His amygdala was one-third smaller than that of a normal person. The amygdala is responsible for generating, recognizing, and regulating emotions. As a result, Xie Zhuo severely lacked empathy, making it difficult for him to empathize with others.

He was adept at concealing himself, habitual in lying, and had no moral or shame feelings. Without proper guidance, he would engage in high-intelligence crimes in an extremely calm and composed state in adulthood.

After discussions between Vincent and Xie Lan, they decided to have him undergo genetic optimization. The exact words were, "He can choose not to accept intervention, but he must learn to restrain himself."

...

In the New Calendar Year 29, the genetic optimization technology controlled by the Alliance had already been widely spread in District B. Despite the enormous cost, the success rate remained stable at around 70%. It not only corrected some genetic defects but also had a chance to awaken extraordinary abilities.

The awakening level varied from person to person, with some strategically stopping at C-level, while others astonishingly reached A-level.

Young Master Xie's protests were in vain, and the next day, he was escorted by his mother to the Qinglan Research Institute, where his father personally conducted the experiment.

After awakening, Xie Zhuo initially showed no abnormalities, appearing nothing like a person with extraordinary abilities.

"Did it fail?" the adjutant asked, rubbing his chin. Xie Zhuo casually propped his legs on Xie Lan's office desk, playing with her terminal, randomly inputting city defense codes. If any member of the Xie family saw this, they would undoubtedly be terrified. If this boy pressed the wrong key, the entire Beijun might explode!

"Impossible," Xie Lan, without any mercy, confiscated his "toy" and replied firmly. With a 70% success rate, there was a possibility of failure, but if it involved Vincent, the chances of failure would approach zero.

He said he would handle it, and she believed him.

The verdict on whether Xie Zhuo's awakening was successful came quickly. Vincent discovered that his mental power and brain activity showed extraordinary growth, making him a monster in reasoning, memory, understanding, and strategy. However, existing instruments couldn't determine his level. Vincent had a premonition, and soon after, the R-Type Awakened Ability Measurement Device was introduced. Xie Zhuo's initial awakening level was conclusively determined: S4-level Mental Ability, "Omniscient and Omnipotent".

Whether Young Master Xie's condition was cured was unknown, but he definitely achieved restraint, as others couldn't see through it.

He became more and more elegant and charming, as if the demon who coldly observed the death of loved ones was just a fleeting illusion.

Later, Xie Lan officially took control of Beijun, while Vincent remained busy with projects. With Xie Zhuo's agreement, they decided to send him to study at Liuponi.

At the age of fifteen, Vincent finally relented and agreed to let him "intern" at Qinglan after graduation.

Young Master Xie, who scorned everyone equally in his lifetime except his parents, found rare interest in Vincent's research field. Unfortunately, since the incident of destroying the lab as a baby, Vincent never allowed him to touch any equipment again.

At that time, the Fire Seed project was in full swing, and Young Master Xie abandoned his studies, falsely claiming to have "graduated early," and arrived in Loak.

It was here that he first encountered LAK0017.

With Vincent having the highest authority at Qinglan, Xie Zhuo often took liberties and easily took over his terminal, freely roaming the laboratory.

Finding a quiet place to study, he had just settled down when a sudden loud noise interrupted him:
Bam! Bam! Bam!

Being interrupted while reading was extremely unpleasant, especially with Vincent's demanding tasks. If he slackened even a bit, he wouldn't be able to complete them.

Xie Zhuo made a light clicking sound, his attractive brows slightly furrowing.

Just as the quiet resumed for a moment, the annoying noise reappeared: Bam! Bam! Bam!

Xie Zhuo, impatient, stood up, and with a sweep of the terminal, the wall turned transparent. The spacious, temperature-controlled room was filled with capsule containers. He quickly located the source of the noise within the sea of white. With a gentle touch of his slender fingertips on the control panel, a sealed capsule slowly slid out and stopped in front of him, separated by glass.

A pile of flesh, soft and pressed against the capsule wall, undulated on the smooth surface, its rough features somewhat resembling a lizard-like creature.

Xie Zhuo glanced at it and disdainfully averted his gaze. Too ugly, it was practically an eyesore.

Bam! Bam! The little creature persistently hammered the wall.

“Quite spirited,” Xie Zhuo raised an eyebrow, lowering his gaze to glance at the label: “LAK0017.”

“Be quiet.”

He casually pressed a few buttons on the control panel, and dozens of colorful nutrient ampoules dropped within the capsule. The complex composition of these nutrients made them expensive and could only be procured through special channels. Researchers had to be frugal with each use.

But who was Xie Zhuo? Young Master Xie spent money like water, never feeling the pinch. After all, his biological father’s terminal balance was practically limitless. Xie Lan spent every military expense wisely, but oddly enough, she never hesitated to support Vincent’s research. She could be considered the most extravagant and generous patron.

Xie Zhuo smiled and switched the projection recording vital signs to a cartoon and changed it to play-back mode.

The little creature finally quieted down, slipping to the ground quietly amid hypnotic “Makabaka” sounds, eagerly sucking up the nutrient ampoules.

Xie Zhuo spent a quiet afternoon. He stretched his arms, resting them on the edge of the control panel, lightly tapping the air rhythmically. The graceful lines from his shoulders to his jaw were so exquisite that even the most renowned painters would find it challenging to depict. The teardrop-shaped beauty mark at the corner of his eye outlined a faint sense of detachment.

The creature’s body moved, mimicking his actions, trying to extend forward. Separated by glass, their fingertips touched.

He revisited this serene reading spot several times later, always encountering LAK0017. Sometimes it aggressively pounded the wall, while other times it remained motionless, displaying various bizarre shapes due to continuous genetic fusion, which were never pleasing to the eye.

However, Xie Zhuo got used to it. He skillfully fed it nutrients, opened an animated cartoon, treating it like a mascot for his studying.

One day, he heard a soft tapping on the glass. Xie Zhuo looked up and saw the little creature sitting among empty shells, wagging its tail obsequiously.

Oh, finished your drink, huh? Did you finally learn to ask for it yourself?

Although the Fire Seed project was dedicated to human cancer research, it did not involve human experimentation. The primitive cells of these experimental subjects were cloned or synthesized “human-like embryos” to circumvent ethical risks. Strictly speaking, they could only be considered “artificial lifeforms” with rudimentary consciousness but lacking rationality.

Xie Zhuo interestingly stared at LAK0017 for a couple of seconds. The little creature’s round head bumped against the empty nutrient pouch, making its desire clear.

“Do you want more? Too bad, none left,” Xie Zhuo mischievously said.

The little creature couldn’t understand, looking dull. After a while, it disappointedly drooped its head, and the empty pouch “plinked” onto the ground.

Xie Zhuo’s mood suddenly improved, and he generously clicked the control panel, dropping another pitifully lonely ampoule.

This time, the little creature learned to cherish it. Listening to the “Makabaka” sounds, it sipped the nutrient ampoule with small sips. The liquid-like body slowly repaired itself, emitting a faint glow from the inside out.

...

A month later, when Xie Zhuo returned to the capsule storage, he found that the little creature was gone. Upon checking with his permissions, the system informed him that LAK0017 had been transferred to the third-stage laboratory.

The time for reading and companionship felt unusually quiet that day. After completing his tasks, Xie Zhuo inexplicably went to the new residence of the little creature.

To his surprise, he wasn't the only one visiting; there was also a man dressed as a researcher, secretly wiping tears while facing the capsule.

Xie Zhuo observed coldly. Gene fusion failures were common, and Loak's experimental subjects went through multiple phases. Making it to the third stage was rare, so he took a look around, found a familiar number, and showed a hint of surprise. LAK0017's third-stage experiment had actually succeeded?

Even though it succeeded, the little creature's condition was not good. It curled up on the brink of death, with a deformed body that now had two heads, five hands, and three legs, looking even uglier than when he first saw it.

Xie Zhuo glanced at the sobbing man, thinking he might be crying over the experimental subject. Humans were so weak and sentimental.

"What's your name?" Xie Zhuo asked coldly.

"Ming. I'm a breeder from Group G," the young man with a delicate face replied honestly.

Young Master Xie was also a celebrity in the laboratory. Ming didn't know why he came here or what he intended to do. Feeling intimidated by his aura, he mustered the courage to say, "It's very well-behaved..."

Xie Zhuo couldn't help but sneer. Well-behaved? Who was the one making loud noises by banging on the wall in the first place? Who shamelessly asked him for nutrient ampoules? If it were well-behaved, then all the experimental subjects would be well-behaved little garden babies. However, at this moment, the little creature looked a bit pitiful with its drooping appearance.

"Even if you cry bitterly, it won't improve its condition," Xie Zhuo casually mocked. "Save your tears."

He skillfully brought up the control panel, hesitated for a moment, and then fed fifty ampoules.

Ming glanced at him in surprise, hesitated, and then said, "Um, Comrade Xie, each nutrient ampoule has a stock. It must be taken according to the standard. Your excessive use is against the rules."

Who gives dozens of nutrient ampoules to an experimental subject? Even raising a child isn't this indulgent.

Young Master Xie arrogantly lifted his chin. "Just nutrient ampoules. I can give them if I want to. I can afford it."

He effortlessly manipulated the panel and added another fifty, completely burying the little creature under the fancy packaging bags.

LAK0017 slowly wriggled, with a clear goal as it burrowed into the small mountain and rolled around.

Xie Zhuo chuckled lightly.

Ming was dumbfounded.

"You're a breeder. These hundred will be charged to my account," Young Master Xie said confidently as he walked away.

Ming crouched in front of LAK0017, watching it seemingly regain some vitality, and muttered to himself near the glass, "Hang in there, survive."

Perhaps his blessing came true. LAK0017, as one of the earliest “human-like embryos,” after nearly a thousand fusion experiments, surprisingly did not die. It became the longest-surviving experimental subject. At the same time, it possessed almost perfect immunity, a stable composite gene chain, effectively bypassing genetic diseases such as metabolism, asthma, cancer, and showed excellent immune response to super bacteria.

During this period, the Fire Seed team achieved numerous scientific breakthroughs, including preliminary gene immunity for various hereditary diseases, various mental illnesses, and cancer. The significance of these achievements was immense, with Vincent making outstanding contributions to the advancement of human evolution. He was hailed as the “greatest scientist of the new era.”

Simultaneously, the Fire Seed project entered its fourth and crucial phase: the replication of gene fusion.

Among all replicated genes, the most precious was the Phoenix gene, also known as the Firebird, believed to possess the power of immortality. There was only one publicly known original sample in the world. The Alliance had acquired it from the Tianyi organization for 50 million Alliance credits, and it had been stored in the gene bank until Xie Lan purchased it.

The experiments in the fourth phase unexpectedly progressed smoothly, and the dawn of victory was within reach until a glitch occurred during the fusion of the Phoenix gene.

Fusion failures were common, but this time, the experiment led to the death of LAK0017.

LAK0017 was the only experimental subject to reach the fourth phase, and its death meant:

At the current stage, the Fire Seed project had failed.

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 185.2: Before the Apocalypse (2)

(Xie Zhuo) There is no Xie Zhuo in this world anymore

Before it was destroyed, Xie Zhuo took a look. Ming, the breeder, was also there, his face pale and his eyes swollen.

The little creature inside the capsule had closed its eyes tightly, resembling an embryo curled up in amniotic fluid, emitting a faint white light due to light reflection.

Xie Zhuo gazed at the lifeless vital signs on the projection, remaining silent.

The red light locked onto the target, and he manipulated the mechanical arm to turn it over, but there was no response.

Hundreds of nutrient ampoules poured down from above, flooding the tiny body, yet there was still no reaction.

“It’s, it’s useless. The primitive cells have already... died.” A choked voice sounded from behind—Ming was on the verge of tears.

Xie Zhuo stared at LAK007 for a long time, then chuckled belatedly. “Spent over 50 million on you, who allowed you to die?”

Young Master Xie had no feelings of pity, only some regret. He enjoyed witnessing death but disliked the feeling of losing control. Calculating the value of the nutrient ampoules he had fed the creature over the past six months, it had long exceeded the worth of the Phoenix gene.

The little creature owed him so much, and this was how it repaid him?

For some reason, Xie Zhuo was getting angrier. A fiery rage flickered in his heart, and the repressed violent tendencies surged through his veins.

“What should be done with the discarded experimental subject?”

“Centralized... destruction,” Ming answered hesitantly.

“Oh, then destroy it,” Xie Zhuo nodded.

Awaiting confirmation from Vincent for the destruction, Xie Zhuo took out his terminal and coldly lowered his gaze:

“Do you confirm the destruction program?”

“Confirmed.”

Thursday, November 7th, 33rd year of the New Calendar, the fixed date for the centralized destruction of LAK0017 arrived. However, due to Xie Lan’s birthday, Vincent and Xie Zhuo returned to Beijun one day earlier. Perhaps fate allowed them to avoid a disaster, as the next day, a shocking nuclear leak occurred in the Loak lab, reducing the entire facility to rubble.

Upon hearing this tragic news, the entire scientific community sighed in regret, lamenting the years of effort Vincent had poured into the project, only to see it go to waste, postponing human evolution for decades.

Unbeknownst to anyone, Xie Zhuo had already recorded all the data using his “omniscient and omnipotent” ability, and the Fire Seed project could be continued at any time.

However, Vincent did not immediately restart the research. A month after the accident, he seemed heavy-hearted, appearing silent and defeated.

It wasn’t until one day that Vincent received a timed experiment log. Despite the damage to the machinery, this monthly summary report still made its way to him. In this report, Vincent discovered a startling fact.

LAK0017 had actually shown signs of recovery six hours before the nuclear incident!

The gloom of the past month dissipated, and Vincent finally slept soundly. He began to review the relevant data.

Had the central data been lost? No problem, Xie Zhuo had a backup in his head.

He requested the restoration of all records related to LAK0017, exposing the clandestine nutrient feeding sessions conducted by young Master Xie.

“How many nutrient ampoules did you feed in total?” Vincent stared sternly at his son.

“521.” Xie Zhuo handed over a table, detailing when and how much nutrient solution was given, providing a clear account.

Even Vincent, accustomed to the costs of scientific research, was taken aback. Not because of the money, as research always consumed funds, but because he had forgotten how Xie Zhuo, even before turning one year old, could disrupt his experiments. The boy was used to doing as he pleased, capable of anything.

However, why did LAK0017, having absorbed an excessive amount of nutrients, show no abnormalities? No, there was an abnormality—how did it manage to persist until the fourth phase? Vincent considered a possibility, a terrifying one: “It awakened.”

“What?” Xie Zhuo was taken aback.

Vincent carefully examined the changes in the vital signs of LAK0017. “From the time points, every fusion experiment after feeding, its state returned to its peak. It probably awakened the ability to self-heal long ago, but it needed nutrient solution to activate it.”

Xie Zhuo’s unintentional actions had inadvertently served a purpose. If he hadn’t given it so many nutrient ampoules, perhaps LAK0017 would have died in one of the fusion experiments. It was precisely because of its self-healing ability and sufficient nutritional support that LAK0017 survived thousands of fusion experiments and reached the fourth phase.

“It doesn’t matter anymore.” Xie Zhuo fell into silence for a moment, his eyelashes casting shadows.

“Indeed,” Vincent sighed.

It was impossible to determine whether LAK0017 possessed the self-healing ability. Even if it had truly awakened, the program had been destroyed long ago, erased by the nuclear explosion in Loak, leaving no traces behind.

Xie Zhuo fiddled with the feeding chart, lost in thought.

Vincent patted his shoulder, “This matter, aside from you and me, don’t tell anyone, including your mother.”

The awakening of abilities in the experimental subjects of the Fire Seed project, especially a unique self-healing type like LAK0017, even though it had died, was like Pandora’s box. Once revealed, it would bring catastrophe. The Alliance would be thrown into chaos, and those in the know would find no peace.

Xie Zhuo felt a heavy mood and nodded slowly, “I understand.”

The failure of the Fire Seed project became a lingering burden on Vincent.

A year later, he decided to restart the project, facing strong opposition from Xie Lan. Exhausted from the prolonged effort, Vincent’s health was in jeopardy. While the Fire Seed was closely watching his research progress, Xie Lan cared more about his well-being, going so far as to forcibly halt funding.

They erupted in their first and only cold war, with the relationship between Azure Phoenix and Qinglan reaching an icy point.

However, everything couldn’t come to a halt. The Alliance’s high command suddenly intervened, and Gu Hongye, then head of the Central Court Council, became the new financier. The Fire Seed project was renamed the “Eternal Life Plan,” and the new research facility was built in Baishen. Gu Hongye stated that he would fully support Vincent’s research.

Internally, Qinglan divided into different factions. The idealistic faction, led by Vincent and Ning Rong, aimed to continue the Fire Seed's cancer research. In contrast, the radical faction, turning to human experimentation, pursued "immortality" more fanatically.

In the end, Xie Lan conceded. Vincent was a stubborn person. Without her, he would undoubtedly follow through with a lifetime devoted to research. Xie Lan was attracted to him because he had a soft heart and couldn't bring himself to sever his ideals.

She assigned the best doctors and her most trusted guards to accompany Vincent. It served both as protection and a deterrent. She also stopped bringing Xie Zhuo back to Beijun. Despite her busy military duties, she dedicated time every month to be with Vincent in Baishen.

Vincent immersed himself day and night in the laboratory, becoming increasingly elusive.

No matter how many times he replayed it, success with LAK0017 always eluded him by a small margin: the experimental process, the gene fusion sequence, and the quantity of nutrients at each stage were all exactly the same. What was the missing piece?

Though he had been absent for a long time, the daily operations of Qinglan continued.

Vincent was the greatest genius and also the purest madman. He made an astonishing decision: to merge his own genes with Xie Zhuo's, temporarily overlaying Xie Zhuo's biological information, and replacing the ROOT (super-administrator) authority within Qinglan.

"Alright, you're me now," Vincent breathed a sigh of relief after completing everything.

"I won't be Vincent," Xie Zhuo examined himself in the mirror. After the gene fusion, the color of his pupils had noticeably lightened. "If you have to call me something, it should be Zhuang Qingyan."

"As you wish," Vincent smiled, the dark circles under his eyes deepening.

Xie Zhuo pressed his lips tightly, turning to gaze at him. "Is it worth it? You've sacrificed so much for them, and the people outside won't appreciate you."

Vincent calmly shook his head. "I'm not doing it for them, and I don't need anyone's gratitude."

Xie Zhuo could never fully comprehend Vincent's dedication, but it didn't stop him from respecting his father.

At the age of sixteen, Xie Zhuo had the highest authority in Qinglan. He monitored laboratories across the region for Vincent, handling all daily tasks. This was a talent he was born with, and Xie Zhuo could even remember the name of each researcher, matching it to every face.

On his last visit to Baishen, it was already late at night, and the lights in Vincent's office were still on.

"Take a break," Xie Zhuo walked in without an invitation, a hint of the same firmness as Xie Lan in his eyebrows and eyes.

"...Alright," Vincent looked up at him, momentarily dazed, before slowly responding.

Xie Zhuo made two cups of Jade Estate coffee. It was Xie Lan's favorite flavor, but Vincent was not picky about coffee, having previously consumed the cheapest instant coffee.

The father and son, rarely meeting, sat down. Their similar high intelligence made their conversation equal and smooth.

"How is it going?"

"Only two variables are missing: LAK0017's original cells and the final fusion experiment with the Phoenix gene."

"But both of these cannot be replicated."

“Yeah,” Vincent sighed wearily, rubbing his temples. LAK0017 was already dead, Tianyi Organization remained hidden, and the whereabouts of the Phoenix’s original sample were unknown. His research progress was at a standstill.

“I had a dream last night, a dream where LAK0017 didn’t die,” Vincent spoke with a faint smile.

“The laboratory was at the center of the explosion,” Xie Zhuo ruthlessly pointed out. “You were daydreaming, weren’t you?”

“Besides...” Xie Zhuo paused, then spoke with difficulty, “The destruction program, I confirmed it using your authority.”

Vincent stared at him curiously, “You feel guilty? Do you understand the emotion of guilt?”

Xie Zhuo remained expressionless, truly his son.

“Don’t mind it. The destruction requires a secondary confirmation, and the final decision was made by me.”

Vincent took a sip of coffee, feeling a bit better. “I’ve been thinking lately, what would be the expression of the Phoenix’s gene? Does the broad concept of fusion failure apply to it?”

Xie Zhuo was taken aback, and the father and son shared a glance. A glint of light flashed in their similar light-colored eyes.

Just as Xie Zhuo was about to speak, he sensed an awakener’s presence and abruptly turned his head. Someone was eavesdropping!

He gestured to Vincent to stay silent, quietly opened the door, and signaled the elite soldiers of the Azure Phoenix Army outside.

Well-trained soldiers with awakened abilities stealthily moved, quickly capturing the startled eavesdropper at the end of the corridor.

Xie Zhuo slowly walked up, towering over the person whose tag read: "Pan Tu, Intermediate Researcher."

Pan Tu's tears and snot were smeared together. "I'm sorry, I-I just awakened my ability, couldn't control it. I didn't mean to."

"Kill him," Xie Zhuo's eyes were emotionless.

However, he couldn't execute Pan Tu because Gu Hongyi's people arrived in time, taking Pan Tu away on the pretext of interrogation.

The coffee smoke curled up, and Vincent's expression remained indifferent.

Xie Zhuo's eyes narrowed slightly. He had sensed Pan Tu activating his ability just now. Although he couldn't hear anything, the person from Gu Hongyi's side, before leaving, gave him a deep look, seeming to be puzzled by Xie Zhuo's decision to kill the awakener.

The next day, Vincent grandly brought in a giant storage hub, announcing that he would place his research results inside for future study. Inside, the members of Azure Phoenix were curious, some even displaying greedy expressions.

Only Xie Zhuo knew that it was empty.

On the day Vincent passed away, the weather was overcast. He collapsed suddenly due to heart failure, and despite the doctor's efforts, they couldn't save him.

Xie Zhuo calmly informed Xie Lan about Vincent's death. As soon as he put down the terminal, the laboratory was surrounded, and Gu Hongyi's people forcefully entered.

Vincent was dead, and they were bound to rush to the central hub. After some thought, Xie Zhuo decided to hide.

However, he didn't expect that Gu Hongyi brought along Aaron, an S-level awakener with mental ability, to perform "Knowledge Deprivation" on Vincent's body.

The strong awakened energy caused the ground to tremble slightly. Gu Hongyi's voice was urgent and excited, "Quickly open the central hub!"

"The key? What about his son, Xie Zhuo? He must know the whereabouts of the key!"

Then, after Aaron said something to him, Gu Hongyi's expression became particularly strange.

Seemingly puzzled, seemingly suddenly enlightened, he muttered two words in disbelief, "...Fire Seed?"

Xie Zhuo stared at the monitoring screen, his nails digging into his palms, the dripping blood forming a small pool. His eyes were filled with bloodshot veins and gloom.

The human heart is always ugly, and he was not surprised by this revelation.

Aaron used "Knowledge Deprivation" three times, and Xie Zhuo experienced the pain of having his heart cut out three times. For the first time, he could not look at death indifferently.

It wasn't until Xie Lan arrived with her people that a fierce armed conflict erupted between the two sides. The laboratory personnel were slaughtered, and Aaron escaped with Gu Hongyi through a spatial rift. Xie Lan searched for Xie Zhuo in vain and took Vincent away.

Xie Zhuo remained silent, like a statue. Then he turned around and entered the underground laboratory.

He forever changed his biological information, enabling the fusion gene to take effect within him. His glamorous face transformed into another familiar and handsome visage.

Wearing a mask and a cap, Xie Zhuo left Baishen amidst the chaos.

From today onward, there was no more “Xie Zhuo” in this world, only “Zhuang Qingyan” carrying the key.

He would never open the Pandora’s Box again.

...

In the autumn of year 46th of the New Calendar, the apocalypse arrived.

In District D99, Hua City, the quaint sign of “Qingsong Biotech” was washed by heavy rain. A handsome young man gently knocked on the door.

“Excuse me, is Pan Tu here? Is Mr. Pan here?”

“Who are you?” The person in uniform looked up in confusion.

Zhuang Qingyan smiled faintly, brushed off the rainwater and the tainted blood from the zombies on his body, and spoke leisurely, “I’d like to find him to settle some personal grievances.”

The former eavesdropper, who suddenly struck it rich, changed his name and came to the low-level district, opening a biomedicine company. But where did he get the money?

Two men and a woman came out from inside, all wearing white coats. Zhuang Qingyan looked up and was surprised to see Pan Tu, an A7-level awakener, and his two students, Wu Yarou and Yang Bo.

“Mr. Pan, this person is looking for you,” the person who just asked said, pointing casually.

Pan Tu’s pupils slightly widened, and his whole body trembled with fear, “Zhuang... Zhuang, Dr. Zhuang?!”

“Yes, it’s me.” Zhuang Qingyan smiled gently. “Without the Star Network, it’s indeed challenging to find you.”

The icy mental attack pierced through the top of Pan Tu’s head, and the overwhelming pressure descended with a deafening roar. Pan Tu resisted stubbornly, but today, no one could save him. In less than five seconds, he was bleeding from all seven orifices and slowly fell down.

The chilling awakened energy spread outward. In a factory not far from Qingsong Biotech, a girl suddenly raised her head.

After all, Pan Tu was an A-level awakener. Although Zhuang Qingyan could condense his mental ability, he was not a combat-type awakener. He suffered some losses, but fortunately, using the price of his right leg, he killed Pan Tu.

Wu Yarou and Yang Bo had heard of the “Key,” but they were half in the dark about it. They questioned him forcefully, “Where is the thing? I advise you to hand it over quickly!”

They were just two C-level awakeners. What qualifications did they have to act arrogantly with him? Zhuang Qingyan smiled sarcastically, sitting in the blood pool, just about to take action. Suddenly, his keen mental ability detected a strange and powerful awakener. He calmly withdrew his hand.

“Who’s there?” Wu Yarou turned around alertly.

A girl with almond eyes peeked out from behind the window, showing half of her head. Locking eyes with Zhuang Qingyan, she obviously froze for a moment.

LAK0017 and Young Master Xie, strangers to each other, inadvertently changed each other’s destinies. As for Song Ke and Zhuang Qingyan, their fates intertwined due to the torrential rain in Hua City.

It was both a first meeting and a reunion.

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 186.1: We Are V587 (1)

Mother is still Mother

One year later.

In the faint morning light, a starship filled with passengers glided through the vast sky, its silver-white tail trailing a blossoming wreath of redbud flowers.

Inside the quiet rear compartment, a sudden announcement echoed: "Ladies and gentlemen, we have encountered a medium-sized zombie tide ahead. There will be continuous turbulence, please remain calm, stay seated, fasten your seatbelts, and our security personnel will do their best to ensure everyone's safety."

The lightly sleeping passengers woke up one after another. Through the portholes, they could see on the distant horizon the dark, densely packed zombies crowding the rooftops, blocking the low-altitude track. Most of these passengers were wanderers, leaving their hometowns, prepared to head to nearby shelters.

"Mama, I'm scared. Can we still go to our new home?" A little girl with braided pigtails snuggled into her parents' embrace.

"Don't be afraid, sweetheart. Mommy is here with you."

"After this stretch, it'll be fine. We'll soon reach Loak, the controlled area of the Bauhinia Alliance." The father comforted his daughter while holding them close.

Swish!

The cabin door opened, and security personnel raised their submachine guns, firing towards the distance. The zombies in the front fell, and those attracted by the gunfire rushed forward eagerly. Smoke filled the air, bullets flew, and as the distance closed, the battle intensified.

Thud—Thud—!!

The starship maneuvered automatically, swaying from side to side.

In the luxurious cabin compartment, a young man lay on a reclined seat, his face covered with a thick “Zombie Language: From Beginner to Mastery” manual. The holographic game controller slipped from his hand as he stirred, sleepily lifting his head to look outside. He then unfastened his seatbelt and stood up.

The young man was around one meter sixty, slender and tall, dressed in branded clothing. He wore expensive headphones, and a large luxury logo adorned his slung bag. Despite a hint of childishness in his facial features, his overall demeanor exuded confidence.

Moving lightly, he passed through the anxious passengers and joined the security personnel, naturally striking up a conversation:

“Can it be resolved? How many evolved zombies are there? Has an emergency commission been issued?”

The security personnel, subconsciously firing their submachine guns, replied, “The system reported a C-level; the others are manageable. There are two Level 3 zombies causing trouble. With the current firepower, it will take about an hour.”

Casually turning back, catching a glimpse of the speaker’s face, the security personnel immediately raised their tone:

“No, kid, who let you out? Quickly go back and sit down!”

“An hour, so slow.” The young man impatiently furrowed his brows.

Casually picking up the newly refreshed C-level emergency mission, the young man raised his head and coincidentally locked eyes with the teary-eyed little girl. He flashed a brilliant smile, defying the airflow as he took a step back. His oversized T-shirt fluttered, and he leaped straight out of the starship.

Bang, bang, bang, bang!! The dense bullets paused for a moment, and everyone's faces turned pale.

"Hey!! What are you doing!!"

The security personnel failed to catch him in time, watching helplessly as the young man soared like a seagull, then free-fell with a 'thud!' into the pile of zombies.

Just as everyone worried about him, the temperature around plummeted, frost danced in the air, condensing into numerous sharp ice blades. Like slicing through watermelons, all the zombie heads, including the two Level 3 ones, exploded, instantly clearing the blocked track!

"Mom, big brother is an awakener!" The little girl clapped excitedly.

"An, a high-level awakener..." Passengers murmured in disbelief.

Two years into the apocalypse, the existence of awakeners was no longer a secret. However, the lower-tier districts mostly had D and C-level awakeners, occasionally encountering a B-level was considered strong. Easily wiping out a medium-sized zombie tide like this, only B-level or higher or even A-level awakeners could achieve.

The young man tilted his head back, his fluffy curly hair standing on end, and his smile as pure as an angel's. "Uncle, I'll get off here, no need to worry about me."

The perplexed security personnel holding their guns: "... There's no stop here at all!

"Report the condition of the damaged cabin and continue forward," a mature voice came from the broadcast.

"Captain, what about that kid..." The security personnel hesitated.

"He's from V587, an A3-level ice-element awakener. Even if you want to manage him, you can't."

Now, information flowed between District B and the lower-tier districts. Some people, as if waking from a dream, pulled out their terminals, only to see the top of the Alliance's leaderboard prominently displaying:

—— “V587.”

This was a mysterious team, rumored to be all strong men with exceptional abilities. Though they hadn't shown themselves for a long time, their ranking remained unshaken, consistently holding the top spot on the leaderboard. For those newcomers, a glance at the terminal always showcased the prominent name of V587.

...

Alone, Xu Xing walked through the ruins.

In accordance with the “Post-Apocalyptic Survival Rules” released by the Bauhinia Alliance, the Fallen, as a new species with intelligence, has attracted widespread attention. There is currently no consensus on how to coexist with them, so the general approach is to avoid interference and live alongside each other. The Loak region has been officially designated as a gathering place for the Fallen, and ordinary humans are strictly prohibited from entering.

A year ago, thirteen B-districts, represented by Beijun, Kongsang, and the Northern Base, issued an independent declaration, announcing their departure from Utopia's jurisdiction and forming a new destiny community called the “Bauhinia Alliance.” As of now, more than half of the 180 districts in the former New Asia Alliance have chosen to join because the highest principle of the Bauhinia Alliance is that everyone has the equal right to live.

Xu Xing found an open space, set up a loudspeaker, clicked play, and a hoarse frequency resonated, spreading into the distance.

The origin of this device is also intriguing, similar to the “Zombie Language: From Beginner to Mastery,” it comes from a renowned zombie language expert in Kongsang. This expert believes that through dialogue, humans can achieve peaceful coexistence with the Fallen.

Xu Xing waited in place for a while. The air gradually thickened, the ground shook incessantly, and hordes of zombies, attracted by the special frequency, roared ferociously as they surrounded him. However, this time, Xu Xing didn't attack. Instead, he stood there with a cheerful smile.

The small zombie at the forefront leaped onto his back, affectionately nuzzling against him, attempting to steal his slung bag.

Xu Xing held onto the strap tightly and, with a pleading expression, looked into the distance. "Ada, please control them!"

The Fallen leader, approaching three meters in height, made a choking sound twice. The excited zombies slid off Xu Xing's back and, in turn, curiously examined the loudspeaker.

"Just passing by after completing a mission, came to see you all."

Xu Xing pulled out a makeshift, wobbly-legged chair from the rubble, struggling to maintain balance. Several small zombies jumped onto his knees, tugging at his T-shirt.

"Oh, a new member?" Xu Xing tilted his head, looking towards the back.

A group of clearly different types of Fallen, resembling zombies more closely, with limbs exposed and covered in rotten cracks, were cautiously wandering in the outer circle, avoiding getting too close. Xu Xing took out several baskets of green apples from his pocket and pretended to reluctantly push them out.

The zombies scattered, rushing to grab the apples.

Xu Xing protected his branded T-shirt, then took a moment to talk to Ada, "Ada, have you found my sister?"

Ada shook her head, having searched every nook and cranny of Loak without any success.

Song Ke had been missing for almost a year. Yes, not dead, but missing. Despite turning into ashes in front of everyone, leaving no trace behind, Zhuang Qingyan still firmly believed that she was alive.

Every member of V587 was waiting for her return. However, their situation was not good. Su Cha became a patient in a vegetative state, covered in tubes and barely alive. Lin Youyou looked sickly, never leaving his side. Fang Zhixu, who went on a “business trip” to Erjia, hadn’t returned, and the remaining one...

Xu Xing held his chin, sighing like an old man, “Sigh...”

Zhuang Qingyan seemed the most normal on the surface, but Xu Xing’s intuition was accurate. He felt that he was the most abnormal one.

Since that day, he hadn’t smiled. Sometimes the madness and stubbornness in his eyes were so intense that it sent shivers down one’s spine.

While immersed in melancholy, his terminal beeped, and Fang Zhixu’s loud voice echoed, “You brat, the location is drifting again. We agreed you’d come back after completing the mission. Where did you run off to? Hurry up and come home for dinner!”

Xu Xing pursed his lips. He, a twelve-year-old child, had independently completed an A-level mission! The pillar of V587 at such a young age, working to earn points and support the entire family!

‘Sister, where are you really?’

The sunlight above was a bit dazzling. Xu Xing lay among the Fallen, closing his eyes slightly.

‘I miss you so much.’

*

District F177.

The gentle sea breeze caressed the rocks, causing ripples on the water's surface.

Splash—

Fully soaked, Song Ke floated to the surface, slowly opening her eyes.

Once a girl with shoulder-length black hair, almond eyes, and dimples, she now appeared entirely unfamiliar. Resembling a patient with albinism, her skin was pale, her long hair pure white—head to toe, she was entirely in white. Only her irises and pupils were a bewildering light pink. When she stood up, her figure reached close to 1.7 meters. The translucent cheeks seemed like porcelain washed by water, fragile and delicate.

Song Ke pulled her left hand out of the seawater, and her wing-like white eyelashes drooped slightly, staring at it for a few seconds.

Five fingers. This time, it was correct.

After a year, the missing body parts had regrown, leaving smooth skin without any scars, tender and akin to newborn.

The only aftermath was a condition resembling a genetic defect—albinism.

Song Ke bent down to pick up her clothes on the beach, quickly putting them on in a few moves. She wore a hood, covering herself completely.

The sun was about to set, but the light still caused a stinging sensation on her skin.

A faint roar of zombies echoed from behind. Dozens of ragged undead creatures rushed towards her. District F177 was an abandoned island, and monsters could be encountered with just a few steps—it was nothing unusual.

Song Ke raised her eyes and, with barely any movement, the ferocious zombies were instantly cut into pieces by a golden stream of light, blood splattering across the sky.

With her body reshaped, the flow of her magnetic field unhindered, and awakened energy control increasingly precise, Song Ke had become a true Super S-level awakener.

She no longer needed to transform a spiritual weapon because she herself was the most powerful humanoid weapon.

Song Ke returned to a dilapidated house by the seaside. The neighbors had long turned into zombies, their whereabouts unknown. There were faint noises coming from the courtyard.

Aunt Qing scavenged some scraps from the garbage mountain and was stiffly washing them by the water pool.

Xiao Bao squatted, four paws on the ground, crawling around the doorway. Accidentally bumping into Song Ke's shin, he let out a yelp. Just as he was about to open his mouth to bite, Song Ke kicked him away like a soccer ball.

Song Ke found a stool and sat down. Her face under the setting sun was pale and indifferent. "I'm leaving."

Due to not speaking for a long time, her voice sounded hoarse, and her use of the Alliance language was a bit rusty. However, once she started speaking, she was fluent, without a trace of stuttering.

Xiao Bao, still dizzy, rolled back, and noticing Song Ke's arm, which had grown back, he drooled and tried to bite again. This time, his sharp teeth pierced the thin blood vessels, causing blood to flow.

Pig trotters, delicious.

In a daze, Xiao Bao remembered a dish he had eaten when he was still human. His saliva secretion became even more vigorous.

Really asking for trouble.

Smack! Aunt Qing slapped him on the head.

Smack, smack! Two more consecutive slaps, and Xiao Bao cried out in pain. He had to release his bite, rolling over with all four paws in the air.

Even after turning into a zombie, mother is still mother.

Xiao Bao touched his head in grievance, questioning why he couldn't eat. Last time, he was allowed to eat with two fingers. Why couldn't he eat with five fingers? Clearly, it was his found backup food!

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 186.2: We Are V587 (1)

Mother is still Mother

A year ago, Xiao Bao dug up a blob of pink "seafood" on the beach, excited to bring it home for a meal. Unexpectedly, the meat started moving on its own and even bit him!

Unable to eat for the time being, they had to keep it in a water tank. Day by day, the piece of meat grew larger, gradually taking on a vague humanoid shape. Then one day, the seafood started speaking!

"Uh... it hurts..."

When the painful groans began, Xiao Bao had caught a mutated squirrel and was considering where to start eating. However, he was startled, and the squirrel scurried away.

"Ah ah ah ah!!" Xiao Bao angrily stomped his feet.

“Ah—!!” The seafood joined in the roar.

“Ah? Ah ah!” Aunt Qing protected Xiao Bao, vigilantly watching the convulsing seafood.

“It hurts... so much!!”

Thud! Thud! The seafood began desperately slamming into the tank. Aunt Qing grabbed Xiao Bao and ran, slamming the door shut, not coming out for a whole week.

The tank was smashed, and the seafood, exposed to the scorching sun, was barely alive, wriggling to the door and fiercely pounding on it: Thud! Thud!

“Ah ah... ah ah... ah ah ah? (What are you?)”

Aunt Qing’s vocal cords had long been ruined, only producing incomprehensible low growls.

But the seafood seemed to understand and weakly said, “Song Ke... I... am... Song... Ke.”

After hearing this, Aunt Qing fell silent.

In the end, Aunt Qing dragged the piece of meat into the house and kept the seafood that called itself “Song Ke.” Time flew by, and Xiao Bao couldn’t remember things, gradually forgetting about the existence of the seafood. However, his instinct to bite remained, and he always wanted to take a bite out of the humanoid creature in the house.

The only successful time was when Song Ke mistakenly reshaped the left hand with only two fingers and offered it to him to eat.

After Song Ke mentioned leaving, Aunt Qing nodded and murmured a few grumbles from her throat: “Ah ah ah ah.”

After spending a long time together, she could understand Aunt Qing's meaning: I know, it's just a matter of time.

Song Ke's face was blurry under the hood. "You said, I have saved you before?"

"Ah ah," Aunt Qing recounted the experience at Fools Wharf when the apocalypse had just erupted. When she was still human, her character was selfish and harsh. After becoming a Fallen, everything became chaotic, and her mindset became much more open, becoming indifferent to everything.

Song Ke stared at her left arm absentmindedly. In just a short while, the wound bitten by Xiao Bao had already healed.

"But I don't remember much."

Her brain was like a rusty machine, losing a lot of information due to the reboot, and even emotions became slow.

Song Ke only remembered being trapped in a laboratory from the moment she became conscious. Everywhere was a vast expanse of snowy white and crimson lights. The endless torment and the excruciating pain from 1314 experiments occupied her mind.

Later, Grandpa took her and escaped. After that, her memories became intermittent and blurry.

What had happened over these years? Why did she die?

Occasionally, familiar faces flashed in her memory. When she tried to grasp them, they slipped away. The process of rebuilding her body was exceptionally long, and Song Ke had fallen into nightmares countless times, seeing a pair of familiar peach blossom eyes staring at her. Sometimes they were charming, sometimes filled with sorrow, and the teardrop-shaped mole at the corner of the eye seemed like scalding droplets falling into her heart.

But she didn't remember any of it.

But there was a voice in her heart, insisting that she must find him.

Song Ke stood up and said, "I'll leave today."

Aunt Qing said, "Ah! (Take care)"

Song Ke remarked, "Xiao Bao always bites people, not cute at all."

Aunt Qing exclaimed, "Ah! Ah! (Get out of here!)" with a fierce expression.

Expressionless, Song Ke asked, "Do you want to come with me?"

After hesitating for a moment, Aunt Qing shook her head and said, "Ah...ah... (no, the outside world cannot tolerate us)"

Song Ke nodded, "I understand."

Before leaving, Song Ke went back home. Passing by the half-slope, she surprisingly found Aming's tombstone still there. Song Ke glanced at it without any ripples in her heart, then turned into the dilapidated house, where the wind seeped through from all sides. Driven by instinct, she went to a certain wall, initially thinking of punching it, but after a moment of consideration, she switched to using a knife.

In the depths of the wall, there was a sealed box.

Opening it, Song Ke found neatly arranged blocks of rhenium.

The corners of her mouth involuntarily lifted slightly, but soon drooped down again.

Why did she come looking for this? Song Ke's eyes looked bewildered, as if... there was someone who liked it very much, always pestering her for it.

Can't remember.

External traffic in District F177 had long been cut off. In the past year, not to mention outsiders, not even mutated mosquitoes from other areas could fly in.

To leave, she would have to make some effort.

Song Ke embraced the box, walking towards the beach in the night.

Her pupils contracted rapidly, and the number on the back of her neck flashed by. The DNA sequence was once again rewritten. A dragon-like tail emerged, and golden scales appeared on both sides of her cheeks, extending from her collarbone to her waist.

The past Fire Seed project saved a large number of experimental logs, among which was an inconspicuous one:

Experiment Subject Number: LAK0017

Biological Prototype: Humanoid Embryo

Experiment Record: ... August 10, New Calendar Year 34, 222nd successful gene fusion, replicating the 'Hornless Dragon' gene.

Objective Status: Alive

With a powerful plunge, Song Ke dived into the sea, disappearing in the undulating waves.

*

Ten days later.

District D118, Zhilian.

The dilapidated highway intersection was the only remaining safe passage out of the city. At this moment, roadblocks and spikes surrounded the service station, with several off-road pickups parked horizontally in the middle of the road. Five bare-chested men sat on the car roofs, playing cards.

“Three of spades.”

“King!”

“Are you crazy? I play three, and you play the king? Do you even know how to play?”

“I’m sorry, boss!”

Amidst the arrogant curses, a group of refugees, dirty and disheveled, approached the intersection, stopped by the roadblocks.

“Where are you going?” the bald man playing cards asked with a sideways glance.

” District C75, Hongchang Shelter.”

Hongchang was the most famous shelter nearby, with many people with awakened abilities, good security, and a rebuilt city area known as the “Little Bagua.”

“Toll, three level-2 crystals each.”

The bespectacled and cultured man pleaded in a low voice, “Can we negotiate? We’ll pay two each.”

The bald man grinned, "I haven't finished yet—three each."

The men were furious, and one of them said, "You're pushing it too far."

"Husband, don't!" his wife quickly held him back. "He's a high-level awakener..."

The wife, a low-level E-level empath, felt the oppressive awakened energy from the opposite side and shivered.

This group of people was notorious in Zhilian. Their team was called "Collecting Toll," consisting of four C-levels and one B-level awakener. They usually didn't take on missions but made a living by forcefully collecting tolls and selling crystals. Unfortunately, they occupied the road leading from Zhilian to Hongchang.

After the end of the world, order collapsed. They relied on their fists to speak. With no powerful awakens in District D118 to restrain them, the refugees had no choice but to endure.

"Why don't you just rob us directly?" a young and spirited student complained.

The bald man laughed, "You're right. So, am I not robbing right now?"

He swung his right hand, and the student was blasted away by an invisible force, spitting out blood.

"Ahh—!" The frightened refugees scattered.

The bald man and his followers stood up, ready to resort to violence and robbery.

"Stop!"

At a critical moment, a scorching whip swung through the air with a snap, separating the five awakeners and the panicked crowd.

Sharp-eyed refugees excitedly shouted, "I know him! It's Jiang Rui from the Hongchang Shelter!"

Everyone looked up to see the young man leading the way, with a commanding presence and followed by a dozen ordinary people holding weapons.

Jiang Rui first helped up the injured student and whispered, "Hongchang has healing awakeners. Can you hold on? I'll take you to her."

The student nodded in pain.

Jiang Rui looked coldly at the bald man, "Illegally collecting tolls violates the 'Post-Apocalyptic Survival Rules.' Remove the roadblocks and let them pass."

The bald man sneered, "Kid, who do you think you are?"

The two groups instantly clashed, and the refugees avoided the scene. Jiang Rui's fire-based abilities were highly offensive, but facing four opponents was challenging, and his movements gradually slowed.

"Step aside, please."

When the situation reached a stalemate, a slightly hoarse voice spoke up.

Wearing a hood tightly wrapped around, Song Ke walked from behind, traversing the battlefield as if no one was around. The whispers around faded, and the warring sides stopped as Song Ke was intercepted in front of the roadblock.

"Hey, tolls, three level-2 crystals each," the bald man shouted at her while still fighting.

“None,” Song Ke checked her pockets, completely clean except for the box in her arms.

“If you don’t pay, you can’t pass. Stay aside,” the oppressive air smacked toward her, but Song Ke casually dodged it, revealing a cluster of pure white bangs as her hood moved slightly.

The onlookers were momentarily stunned. This person seemed not to be messed with.

“Boss, look at what she’s holding!”

“Low-temperature freezer, definitely something good,” the bald man’s eyes gleamed. “Damn, this is a jackpot.”

Song Ke ignored them, or rather, didn’t care at all. She lifted her foot gently, and with a bang, the roadblock shattered. Spikes flew in all directions, puncturing the tires of the pickup trucks, clearing a passable path.

“You damn woman, are you going to ruin the place?!” The bald man couldn’t contain his anger, and a burly awakener rushed towards her, unleashing various attacks.

“Watch out!” Jiang Rui suddenly spoke, his voice tense.

A gentle breeze passed by, lifting the snow-white strands of hair beneath the hood.

The bald man saw a pair of pale pink pupils, devoid of any emotion, like staring at a dead person.

A chill suddenly pierced through his heart, and a bone-chilling shiver emanated from his core. Under the terrifying pressure, his B-level awakened energy was crushed to pieces.

Song Ke looked at him expressionlessly, and as the bald man resisted on the ground, he pleaded, “Please don’t kill me!”

A super S-level awakener dealing with a B-level was like squashing an ant.

A golden light pierced through their mouths, and the five who had just been arrogant instantly fell dead to the ground. It took a few seconds before the crimson blood began to flow.

The entire service station fell into silence.

Song Ke stepped around the bloodstains beneath her feet, wordlessly continuing forward. The people from Hongchang were too frightened to speak and automatically cleared a path for her.

“Thank you,” a round-faced chubby guy at the end of the group whispered.

“Hey, why are you talking to her? It’s creepy,” his companion jumped in fright.

Song Ke glanced at the chubby guy, paused on his face for a second, and then casually looked away.

“Um, wait a moment. It’s not wise to flaunt your wealth. Holding that box like that is very dangerous,” the chubby guy kindly reminded.

“It doesn’t matter,” Song Ke replied nonchalantly. Anyone daring to rob her would face the consequences.

The chubby guy looked back at Jiang Rui, who confirmed the urgent mission was completed, nodded at him, and then took out a silver ring from his pocket. “You helped us out. Take this. It’s a spatial item, but it’s small, only two square meters.”

“Tian Yi, can you stop being overly kind?”

Tian Yi staggered as he was pulled, and a blue light flashed around his waist. He said in a somewhat aggrieved tone: “But she helped us complete the mission, and besides... this ring is mine. I can give it to whoever I want.”

Song Ke's fingertip moved slightly, and the throwing knife at Tian Yi's waist fell into her palm. A clear memory surged into her brain.

Tian Yi stammered, "You can't. This is my best friend's legacy; I can't give it to you."

These spiritual tools were mass-produced, used for two years, and their energy consumption was more than half. Song Ke reinforced it, and the indigo blade was now covered in a faint golden light. It could now last for a hundred years, making it a perfect heirloom.

"Consider it an exchange." Song Ke took the ring, tried it on each finger, and found that it fit perfectly on the ring finger of her left hand.

Tian Yi stared at her dumbfounded, "Y-y-you...!"

Jiang Rui walked briskly over, and if you listened closely, you could hear a slight tremor in his voice, "Have we... met somewhere before?"

"No, we haven't." Song Ke lowered her head to fiddle with the ring. In just a couple of moves, she mastered how to use it and smoothly stored away the box.

"Then, may I ask if you know someone named Song Ke?" Jiang Rui glanced at her face and felt his own question was foolish.

"I don't know." Song Ke answered without a change in her expression.

Jiang Rui looked disappointed, sighed silently. He was too impulsive; perhaps it was just a similarity in awakened ability. It had been almost two years since they parted ways in Hua City, and he wondered how Song Ke was doing now.

"Can I ask, what is your name?" Jiang Rui paused in his actions, looking up at her with a blank expression.

For a moment, Song Ke's movements halted, and she looked up with a blank expression.

Just a moment ago, a strange slogan flashed through her mind: "Who's the coolest among V587? Silent but cool, I'm called Su Cha, remember that."

This slogan was ear-piercing, unforgettable once it appeared.

After a second of contemplation, Song Ke blurted out, "Uh... Su Cha. My name is Su Cha."

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 187.1: We Are V587 (2)

Where to Get Fake IDs?

"Hongchang is the largest shelter in the southeastern region of the Alliance, with many awakeners coming and going. Whether you want to find someone or inquire about information, you should be able to get some clues." Jiang Rui turned his head from the co-pilot seat, explaining confidently.

"Well, I hope so." Song Ke's tone remained unchanged.

Affected by the apocalypse, most cities along the way were destroyed. She traveled for ten days using the Hornless Dragon gene, finally finding the surviving Zhilian.

Several modified off-road SUVs raced on the highway, the surrounding scenery rapidly receding.

Tian Yi, leaning on the front seat, asked curiously, "Su Cha, what level are you? Brother Jiang just advanced to B-level, but I think you're even more powerful than him!"

Song Ke: "...". For some reason, the address "Su Cha" made her feel a bit uneasy.

“I think it’s A level!” Excitement filled the person in the same car.

“Maybe it’s S level.” A gaming enthusiast’s eyes sparkled. He had never seen a live S level before. It was all because Song Ke’s recent debut was so imposing, like a high-level player descending on a newbie village, effortlessly knocking out five bald guys with a snap of her fingers.

“No,” Song Ke’s face hid under the hood, only revealing slightly pink lips, “I’m stronger than S level.”

A super S-level awakener, as far as she knew, the Alliance seemed to have no conclusive evidence, not even the most advanced R-type mutant detector could measure it.

After Song Ke spoke, the car fell silent for two seconds.

After a while, someone dryly chuckled, “Master, you’re oddly humorous.”

Song Ke: “?” She was just telling the truth.

...

District C75, Hongchang Shelter.

Song Ke got off the car with the refugees. Looking into the distance, the complex building structure in front of her had different gates corresponding to different entrances, like a maze. If someone came here for the first time without a guide, they would definitely get lost. A small wave of zombies rushed into the periphery, and the walls automatically changed, clanging! They were all sealed into a secret room without missing one, and the guards jumped onto the wall, easily killing them with their abilities.

“The sound of roaring thunder, Xunfeng advance and retreat. Third Zhen, fourth Xun, then rotate to the right and move out.”

In the depths of memory, a clear and pleasant voice rang out.

In the depths of Song Ke's heart, there was a subtle movement, as if she had once again seen those peach blossom eyes. The person speaking sighed helplessly at her. Who exactly was it?

Jiang Rui walked at the forefront, patiently introducing to everyone, "The designer of Hongchang and the creator of the Hua City (District D99) Bagua Array, Li Tong. The main buildings here are underground, with the surface mainly for functional and commercial areas. Follow me closely, and don't get lost."

Song Ke snapped back to reality, realizing her sense of direction was extremely poor. She quickly lifted her legs to catch up.

After wandering in the maze for half an hour, the scene suddenly cleared up. A lively street appeared in front of them, bustling with activity and filled with the scent of fireworks.

"Freshly harvested potatoes, corn, and chili, all from our own greenhouse. Taste it as you pass by!"

"Anyone completed the C-level monster hunting commission? We need two more AoE awakeners. Join the team, and we'll set off."

Several men and women stood on the roadside, relaxed and chatting:

"Captain Zhao, how have you been lately?"

"Hahaha! How did you know my wife gave birth?"

"The city area evaluation is coming up soon. Do you think Hongchang can move up to District B after joining the Bauhinia Alliance?"

"Forget about moving up to B-class. Shifting our trailing position forward might be possible. But I heard the biggest hope this time is in Shaye (District D88). Their leader, Qiongqi, is an S-level awakener, and their development momentum is too strong. They're likely to directly jump from D to B!"

Song Ke passed by silently, and the people talking couldn't help but glance at her, murmuring casually:

“Who’s this? Why is she bundled up so tightly in the middle of summer?”

“Is she mutating?”

“Shouldn’t be. It seems like she came back with Jiang Rui.”

“Go straight ahead, and you’ll reach the registration area. Tian Yi, take them there first.”

After arranging the refugees, Jiang Rui led the injured students to the medical station. At the entrance, a group of volunteers in uniform were busy. One of the girls looked familiar, surprisingly the long-unseen Zhou Anqi.

She had undergone significant changes; the arrogance and dominance on her face had long disappeared due to the blows of the apocalypse. Busy and fatigued, she had no time to think about trivial matters of love. Her gaze towards Jiang Rui was particularly open and sincere.

“Jiang Rui, is something wrong?”

“He got injured by an awakened ability. Could you take a look and help?”

Following the request, Zhou Anqi inquired a few questions from the injured person, helplessly shaking her head:

“I can only treat external injuries. It’s better if you see Dr. Liu; he’s a C-level. Let me help you get an appointment.”

“Thank you. Have you seen Zhang Hao?”

“He’s out on a commission with his girlfriend.”

Jiang Rui nodded without saying much, turning back to assist Tian Yi. With his tall and handsome appearance, distinct facial features, and a rare poised and stable temperament, he was like a stable star with high popularity in the shelter.

Song Ke heard their conversation clearly, her expression thoughtful. It reminded her of some past events, but she had no intention of approaching for recognition.

This is fine. Everyone is striving to live, and that's good.

After strolling through the functional area and entering the awakener rest area, Song Ke took off her hood.

Her snow-white hair cascaded down, and she sat quietly, closing her eyes, resembling a valuable figurine.

Because of her unique appearance, people around kept stealing glances at her, and hushed whispers ensued:

"Look at that person, is it albinism? I heard they can't be exposed to sunlight, or their skin develops red spots and blisters."

"Oh? That's so unfortunate. Radiation is already severe enough, and now a genetic disease too."

"But she's quite pretty, doesn't look entirely human."

Song Ke's eyelids twitched, and her pink pupils turned towards the person who spoke last, "I am human."

The discussion quieted down, and the guy with dyed hair sheepishly smiled at Song Ke.

Seizing the moment, Song Ke stood up and approached them. Up close, her appearance had a more significant visual impact – translucent skin like washed porcelain, with feathery eyelashes forming a graceful curve: “I want to ask about something. Do you know V587?”

In that unforgettable slogan, besides Su Cha’s name, “V587” also appeared.

The three of them were stunned for a moment, then exclaimed in surprise:

“V587? Are you talking about the V587 who’s ranked first on the entire Alliance leaderboard? You can see it on the commission platform.”

The guy with dyed hair operated the public projection, and sure enough, V587 was prominently displayed at the top.

“Who are the people in V587?” Song Ke asked.

“I don’t know that. We can’t get in touch with the awakeners in District B.”

“I have some insider information,” the girl among the three, dressed in a tank top and hot pants, leaned in. “I heard they are all super attractive guys, the kind that scares kids and affects the city’s aesthetics. So, they rarely show their faces and just focus on accumulating points.”

Song Ke: “...” It sounded a bit absurd. Is it really the person she’s looking for?

“Where can I get a terminal?” Song Ke awkwardly changed the topic. “I accidentally lost mine.”

“You can buy one in the commercial district here, but the awakener ID can only be bound at the registration center. Judging by your appearance, you’re an awakener, right?”

“Yes.”

“I’ll help you check. The nearest awakener center is... Ferrara, District C72.”

Ferrara?

Neon signs, a giant Ferris wheel, massive advertising screens, slaughter, blood, competition...

Fragmented memories flashed by. Song Ke remained silent, and for her, Ferrara seemed like a familiar place.

Thinking she might be facing some difficulties, the guy with dyed hair, after discussing with his companions, took the initiative to invite, “Actually, we’ve taken a commission, and we’re leaving Hongchang tomorrow. We’ll pass by Ferrara along the way. Do you want to join us?”

Song Ke was straightforward, “I don’t have money.”

“Friend! Talking about money hurts feelings, especially in the apocalypse, we should all help each other. But if we encounter zombies, you have to help us fight, okay?”

Song Ke smiled faintly, “Sure, I’m strong.”

“Hahaha, you’re quite confident!” The three burst into laughter.

This team with an average level of only D-level might never know that they once used their extraordinary luck to hire the strongest force in the Alliance, a super S-level awakener, as their free bodyguard.

*

District C72, Ferrara.

Song Ke strolled through the streets in the late night, passing various humanoid AI and creatively dressed AIs. Despite hiding her face, she didn't stand out.

A redhead girl on the street was sobbing uncontrollably, her vines ability tightly embracing a high-end sign: "Qinghe... wuwuwu, my Qinghe..."

"What's wrong with Chihori? Why is she going crazy?"

"Haven't you heard? Luo Qinghe announced his retirement from the music industry, planning to enter politics just like Ilya."

"Oh my! Won't his girlfriend-fans be devastated?"

"Of course, look at Ilya; he hasn't shown his face in a year."

The elegant gentleman Luo Qinghe, now Ferrara's most popular virtual idol, his withdrawal meant tonight would be a sleepless night for many heartbroken fans.

Song Ke adjusted her hat brim and continued forward. The clamor of s drifted by:

"Annual Throne Race Competition is open for registration!"

"Completely reshuffling the top ten emerging stars, reviewing those top idols that disappeared over the years."

On the crystal-clear floating screen, a female star with a princess-style pink dress sat amidst a sea of flowers. The voiceover introduced her as Lin Youyou, one of the former emerging stars, with hit songs like "Thank You for Loving Me" and "Light Rain" with billions of views on StarNet. Fans were worried about her situation due to her prolonged absence.

Song Ke stopped, staring at the sweet face for a couple of seconds.

Seemingly familiar, yet something was off. Was it the smile?

At the entrance of the luxurious Sycara Theatre, an AI in a tailcoat warmly greeted her, “Beautiful lady, would you like to attend a unique concert tonight? Special floating VIP tickets are only 3,888 Alliance coins.”

“I don’t have money,” Song Ke sighed softly, as if she had been repeating this sentence all along.

The AI’s expression changed instantly, mocking and fluctuating as it said, “Oh~ that’s truly unfortunate. Art also has its thresholds; to experience the most immersive and safe audio-visual feast, one must pay the price.”

Song Ke wasn’t angered; a subtle curve appeared at the corner of her mouth, “Does false advertising also come with a price?”

The AI hesitated for half a second, “Artificial intelligence only speaks the truth, please refrain from defamation...”

“We had zombies underneath us,” Song Ke interrupted. “Didn’t you mention the ‘safest’ place? There was a huge group of zombies. Is that your definition of ‘safest’?”

The AI froze in place, error messages beeping. The greeter’s data had been updated, and this one clearly lacked the memories of its predecessor.

Song Ke patted its shoulder, humming a tune off-key, and continued on her way, hiding her merit and fame.

At the deserted administrative desk in the awakener center, Song Ke knocked on the table.

“Hello, I want to reissue my documents.”

The staff on duty was a glasses-wearing girl. Upon hearing the voice, she quickly sat up, using one hand to turn off Ilya's cherished edition stage highlights, her expression serious as she briskly tapped the keyboard.

"Name and ID, please."

"Song Ke, I don't remember the ID."

"Song Ke... Song Ke... Found it!" The girl rubbed her tired eyes, taking in a sharp breath.

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 187.2: We Are V587 (2)

Where to Get Fake IDs?

"Is there a problem?"

"No, but your household registration has already moved to District B10. I don't have direct operational authority, so I can only help you apply above."

"District B10?"

"Yes, the Northern Base, one of the founding areas of the Bauhinia Alliance. You're quite impressive; it's challenging to get in there."

Song Ke remained silent. In her memory, she had always been an unregistered person. When did she obtain a household registration in District B?

"Please help me with the application."

“Alright, I need to collect your biological information first.”

Handling the biological information collection was a tablet named Minnie, an artificial intelligence.

Precise instruments scanned Song Ke’s irises, and a holographic projection with countless micro-lights suddenly appeared, analyzing and overlapping in the air:

“Recognition failed.”

“Error code: CK007.”

“What does that mean?” Song Ke looked puzzled.

Minnie’s synthesized voice came from the tablet, “CK007, target object is non-human. Please refrain from teasing the machine.”

The girl who had casually come to watch was jaw-dropped. “You’re not human? I’m sorry, I didn’t curse at you, but... you’re not human?”

She sneaked a glance at Song Ke’s face, hidden under the hood. After careful observation, she whispered, “Her skin is so pale, and the color of her pupils is off. No wonder she refuses to take off the hat. So, is she an artificial intelligence, or an animal turned intelligent? It seems... Tongwan next door has an animal awakener.”

Song Ke remained silent for a while, then said, “Ah... sorry.”

Forgot that after the reconstruction of her body, all hidden genes were activated. In her current state, she couldn’t exactly be considered “human.”

The girl hesitated and asked, “So, are you still reissuing it? If you’re an animal awakener, you’ll have to wait until tomorrow when the human verification room is open.”

Song Ke cleared her throat, “Do you know where to get fake IDs?”

The girl’s face was blank, “Huh? Ah—!!!” I’m an official personnel, you know? Is it appropriate for you to ask me this?

She turned off the camera, bit her lower lip, and stared at Song Ke with a conflicted and struggling expression, “Well, technically I shouldn’t tell you this, but a couple of days ago, when I was at a concert, I encountered someone using a fake ID. It was so well-made that even the servers in District C couldn’t detect it. The person bragged about it to me accidentally, and of course, I, with a strong sense of professional ethics, reported him.”

“According to his confession, he got the fake ID in Sin City.”

Six months ago, the Bauhinia Alliance had found an alternative energy source, and the low-level district starships gradually resumed operation.

However, the route to Sin City in District F180 was still infrequent. The latest trip was scheduled for the early morning, and missing it meant waiting for another week.

...

Song Ke stood by the platform, hands in her pockets, and brushed shoulders with a hurried passenger, quietly disappearing.

On the luggage of that person, a chameleon had perched at some point. Its protruding eyeballs slowly turned, seamlessly blending with the surroundings.

The cabin door closed slowly, heading towards the distant Sin City.

In Ferrara, ruled by the super AI, everything operated normally, and nobody knew that there were actually two masters here.

Cameras were everywhere, capturing blurry silhouettes, connecting through the vast data world with a certain silver branch.

*

Northern Base.

The tranquil Garden Apartments.

A communication request forcefully connected, and the silver-haired, ice blue-eyed Lu Xiaoyu suddenly appeared in the projection. "I have good news. Do you want to hear it?"

A slender figure stood by the French window, swaying strong liquor between fingers, silently overlooking the night view below. "Speak."

"Last night, at the awakener center in Ferrara, someone attempted to activate Song Ke's credentials."

The glass suddenly stopped, and a few drops of golden liquid spilled. The shadow cast on the half-obscured side of the face, with a teardrop mole near the corner of the eye, seemingly on the verge of dropping but didn't.

"Send me the footage."

The screen automatically played the recorded footage from the camera. A tall figure appeared from various angles, fully covered from head to toe, making it impossible to discern the face.

"The person disappeared at the starship port. There were a total of 31 flights that day, heading to 17 destinations."

"I still have some loose ends to tie up here. Should I wait for you, or do you want to check on your own?"

A silver cane leaned against the ground. The speaker was tall but had a slight limp in his right leg. "It doesn't matter, just one less driver."

"..." Lu Xiaoyu narrowed his eyes and ended the communication with an expressionless face.

*

District F180, Sin City.

Filled with violence and crime, a chaotic underground city.

There was no natural light here. Song Ke took off her coat, maneuvering through the thugs who were engaged in a brawl, and turned into the depths of the street.

According to the intelligence she had obtained, she quickly found the target person: "Boss Cheng? I heard you're the most famous merchant in Trading Street."

Cheng Yi, with half of her head shaved and the other half adorned with long purple hair, lifted her head: "You flatter me. What business does the guest want to do?"

"Create a fake ID."

"So coincidental?" Cheng Yi surreptitiously sized her up, his eyes glinting sharply. "If you place an order now, I'll give you a 10% discount. One Level-4 crystal or ten Level-3 crystals. Pay half the deposit today, and I'll deliver it tomorrow."

Song Ke nodded. "Okay."

There should be many fierce beasts and zombies in the desert. A Level-4 crystal might be difficult for others, but for her, it was easy.

Cheng Yi was satisfied, spreading her hands. "I like straightforward people. Come, the deposit."

Song Ke hesitated for a moment. "Can we do it tomorrow? I don't have the money right now."

"Guest, I'm not rushing you," Cheng Yi shook her head, "but if you want a fake ID, today is the last chance."

"Why?" Song Ke frowned.

"I won't hide it from you. I stumbled upon this business opportunity a few months ago because of some bugs in the AI group in District B. Hehe, taking advantage of the loophole. But now the bugs are about to be fixed, so I say it's a coincidence. Once this opportunity is gone, there won't be another one."

Cheng was indeed a cunning merchant, effortlessly playing the game of hunger marketing. She even pretended to sigh: "I see you really want it, so I'll wait for you until it gets dark, no later than that."

Song Ke glanced at the artificial clock above. There was less than an hour until the "sunset" in the city of sin.

A penny really stumps a hero. Time is so tight. Where can she get a level 4 crystal?

Wait a minute, something's not right. Why does she vaguely remember that she was once wealthy too?

In her memories, she could easily pull out handfuls of vibrant Level-4 crystals. Where was her money? Where was the empire she had built with her own hands?

Song Ke walked through the streets in frustration and settled in a trendy café. She knew there was no time to head to the desert, so she had to figure out a solution in the city.

Approaching her was a fair-skinned young man, delicately cradling a cup of coffee, walking with confidence without spilling a drop. He chose a seat right across from Song Ke, sat down, savored the aroma of the coffee, closed his eyes, and took a small sip.

Song Ke's gaze fell on the coffee cup, bearing the cursive words: "Jade Estate's Selected Summer Coffee."

Glancing at the holographic signboard with prices, she realized he was a wealthy individual.

Observing the young man in front of her, his attire seemed simple, but on his left hand, he wore four dazzling crystal rings, three blue and one red, with a large pigeon blood gem on the middle finger.

—They were Level-4 crystals!

Song Ke glanced at the artificial clock again, realizing she was running out of time. What if she "borrowed" one?

Perhaps her gaze was too intense; the young man slowly lifted his head. His expression darkened slightly, but the moment he saw Song Ke's face, his eyes widened. He stared for a few seconds, then quickly lowered his head, took a sip of coffee, glanced at Song Ke, took another sip, resembling an introverted otaku encountering a new anime figurine, instantly captivated.

A cute robot brought a cup of Jade Estate coffee and placed it in front of Song Ke.

"I didn't order this," Song Ke said.

"It's right, Table 25," the robot tilted its head in confusion.

"I'll treat you. Enjoy the coffee," the young man across from her spoke slowly, a suspicious blush appearing on his cheeks. "It's delicious."

Song Ke: "... What should she do? She initially wanted to snatch the crystal from this unsuspecting victim, but it seemed difficult now.

"Hey, Jorik, did your brain just grow? Learning to chat up a girl?" a passerby laughed mockingly.

The young man swiftly turned his head, half of his face covered in thick fur, transforming into a wolf-like appearance, threatening with a low growl. The mocker shut up awkwardly, walking away and shaking his head, muttering, "The heavens are blind, such a rich idiot..."

Jorik turned back satisfied, returning to his shy demeanor, smiling awkwardly at Song Ke.

Internally anxious, Song Ke glanced at the artificial clock for the third time, closing her eyes and gathering her courage, "Can you lend me this Level-4 crystal?"

Jorik looked confused, "Huh?"

Before Song Ke could speak, a piercing city-wide alarm sounded.

"Oh no, someone's pet has escaped!!"

Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh—

A large group of sandy-yellow mutant scorpions dashed through the streets, spewing bright yellow flames everywhere. Pedestrians dodged and cursed as the chaos unfolded.

Truly the city of sin, where all sorts of bizarre things could happen. Song Ke sighed deeply, stood up, ready to deal with the trouble first, and then have a serious conversation with Jorik.

"Ding—"

The elevator arrived, and a group of people in military uniforms emerged out of nowhere. Glancing around, they were all high-level awakeners.

Disciplined and without a word, they cleared the entire street.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

The crisp sound of a cane striking the ground echoed as a handsome man with a limp walked slowly out from behind the group. He wore a purple bauhinia wreath on his collar.

“People from the Bauhinia Alliance. What are they here for?”

“Maybe they’re here to see Warden Hu, trying to persuade us to join?”

“Don’t overestimate our importance in District F. When did we become so significant?”

Song Ke was pushed to the back by the onlookers. Peering over the sea of heads, she saw the man with the cane. He had a breathtaking face, with deep and handsome features. There was a tiny mole at the corner of his eye, adding to his enchanting charm.

Song Ke’s mind buzzed, and her thoughts blurred. She felt a strange familiarity with this man, yet he was also a stranger.

Her arm was gently tapped, and in her confusion, Song Ke turned around, coincidentally missing the man’s gaze.

Jorik took off his crystal ring and held it up to Song Ke. “It’s for you.”

Zhuang Qingyan noticed a burning gaze and, with a slight movement of his mind, subconsciously followed the direction. Through the noisy crowd, he saw a youth with dark hair holding a large pigeon blood ring, looking at the astonished white-haired girl. The excitement rendered her speechless. The people around them clapped and cheered, and gave out enthusiastic encouragement.

Zhuang Qingyan lowered his eyes, indifferently retracting his gaze. He didn’t want to witness these beautiful scenes of mutual affection. It annoyed him.

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 188.1: We Are V587 (3)

Song Keke, is that you?

Death Prison.

Hu Yong pushed open the door to the office, where someone was already waiting for him. A tall young man sat on the sofa, rhythmically tapping his cold white fingertips, looking silently out the window at the deep sea, his side profile melancholic and profound.

Hu Yong's gaze lowered, and he noticed a silver cane placed beside the sofa; the young man's right leg seemed not very agile—just like the last time they met.

Several people were scattered around the room, appearing calm and casual. Near the door were twin siblings with similar facial features but different genders. Two military personnel with insignias embroidered with the pattern of an azure phoenix were wandering by the window, their presence barely noticeable. Having dealt with criminals for most of his life and with the characteristics of being half-human and half-AI, Hu Yong keenly discerned that these people had special identities. They bore the burden of taking lives and were highly likely to be awakeners, perhaps even S-level.

Having exchanged greetings in advance, even though their appearances were vastly different, he accurately called out the young man's name, "Zhuang Qingyan."

Zhuang Qingyan nodded gently, "Long time no see, Lord Hades, no, Warden Hu."

Hu Yong took a step forward; the twin siblings eyed him warily. He paused, circled back to his desk, and sat down at a distance from Zhuang Qingyan.

"Rarely do prisoners voluntarily come back," Hu Yong sighed, "let alone those who escaped from prison."

Zhuang Qingyan showed no embarrassment at having his dark history exposed. He got straight to the point, "I came to invite Sin City to join the Bauhinia Alliance."

Hu Yong remained impassive, "The Alliance has more than one prison, and District F is not that important."

Zhuang Qingyan smoothed out the nonexistent wrinkles on his sleeves and smiled, "That was in the past. Because of you, F180 is now crucial."

A district magistrate leaves a strong personal style in the city he governs: Nai Kang is cruel, Mu City people is miserable, and in anger, the citizens overthrow his rule. Chen Zuyi is kind, Tongwan stands united, and the whole city gathers strength to withstand the onslaught of the zombie tide.

After taking over the Death Prison, Sin City remained chaotic, filled with violence and crime. However, the arbiter tilted towards fairness and justice. Hu Yong re-evaluated sentences, punished criminals severely, and also released many innocent people.

Zhuang Qingyan's exceptional memory allowed him to recognize Jorik in the Trading Street just now.

His gaze was clear and cold, like a born negotiation expert, "If I'm not mistaken, in the past year, although Death Prison appears stable on the surface, it has long lost financial support, and the number of prison guards has dwindled significantly, right?"

After the Loak War, Gu Hongyi died violently, and many core officials of the Central Court were killed or injured. The Alliance's influence in Utopia suffered a severe setback, and the once tripartite situation fell apart. Now, the higher-ups were preoccupied and had no spare time to deal with a mere District F.

"If another malicious prison break occurs, can you handle it?" Zhuang Qingyan hinted with a purpose.

Sin City had once experienced a sensational news event: a team called "V587," using some unknown method, flipped Death Prison 180 degrees and successfully escaped from it. This was the only successful prison break event since the establishment of Death Prison.

Hu Yong was speechless, "... Weren't you the one who escaped in the first place? How can you act like nothing happened with a different face?"

Zhuang Qingyan's face was as thick as a city wall, showing no signs of abnormality. He remained calm and said, "The apocalypse not only brings crises but also creates opportunities."

"Whether to seize the opportunity, lead Sin City against the current, or continue to drift with the tide, Warden Hu, it depends on your choice."

"Why choose me?" Hu Yong's voice was low and hoarse.

Zhuang Qingyan glanced at him intently. There was a rare steadiness about Hu Yong, and his emotions seemed never to spiral out of control.

"Death Prison is a necessary product of the Alliance's development at a specific stage. Its functionality is irreplaceable, and staying here is your lifelong mission."

Zhuang Qingyan recited calmly, "Is that still your belief, or have your thoughts changed?"

Hu Yong shook his head slowly, "Never."

Zhuang Qingyan smiled, "The selection for the new city district is about to begin. There are no registration restrictions this time. The classification will consider various aspects, and all C-level cities will receive resource support. I look forward to a story of F rising to C."

Hu Yong remained silent for a while before speaking, "I have a question. Even if I am not... human, is it acceptable?"

He spoke vaguely, but Zhuang Qingyan understood, "Among the members of the Bauhinia Alliance, you are not the only non-human magistrate."

"Ferrara is controlled by a super AI, Loak is even ruled by the Fallen King. Perhaps in the not-so-distant future, the definition of being human will be rewritten."

Hu Yong nodded solemnly, "Thank you, I will consider it."

Knock! Knock! Urgent knocking sounded from outside the door, "Warden, something's wrong in the desert!"

Zhuang Qingyan stood up gracefully, casually gripping his cane, "You take care of that first; I won't disturb you."

After watching the group depart, Hu Yong turned to the prison guard and asked, "What happened?"

"All the prisoners released yesterday were killed!"

"For what reason?" Hu Yong asked calmly.

"It was a vicious group fight," the prison guard sighed with frustration. "In the end, it's their own fault, they were seeking death. They were sand bandits before they came in, saw someone kill a Level 4 Scorpion, got envious, and tried to rob it, only to be counter-killed."

"How are the casualties on the other side?"

"The other side, um... they're fine."

The prison guard's expression was conflicted, struggling to speak but hesitating. "Warden, when I said group fight, it's a situation where one person is beating up a whole group..."

*

In the scorching desert, the sun hung high, and the air was so hot it distorted. Song Ke's back was drenched in sweat, her wet white hair sticking to her collarbones. The hood seemed about to catch fire, and her skin, marred and broken, quickly healed due to her second ability, leaving only traces of pain that didn't have time to linger.

Two mutant scorpion carcasses lay by her feet, and even a slight movement caused the burning heat to engulf the surroundings.

Jorik, equally sweaty, panted in the heat but continued to follow her.

“Here’s yours.”

Song Ke handed two crimson crystals to him. Thanks to this foolish but righteous helper, she paid the money to Cheng Yi on time, catching up with the deadline.

Jorik took a step back, shook his head quickly, and awkwardly looked at her, stammering, “Buy you coffee, ring is for you... go home.”

“I’ll leave tomorrow when I get the goods. You go get the ring yourself.”

The weather was too hot, and every second was torture. Song Ke, with patience worn thin and not understanding what he was saying, spoke with a commanding tone.

Jorik, looking dazed, after several signals from Song Ke, finally took only one crystal and stored it away.

“Go home...” he began saying, but his ears suddenly perked up, and he looked towards the distant sand dunes with a dark expression.

The sandstorm raged, and the sandy dunes undulated in shades of brown. Bang! Bang! Explosions erupted as over thirty sand bandits, lying in ambush, sprung out and surrounded Song Ke and her companion.

“Since this fool doesn’t want it, why not give us the crystal?” The speaker exuded the aura of a desperate outlaw, with a sinister smile, reaching out without hesitation to activate the awakened ability “grabbing objects from the air”.

Zheng—! Mental power hit an iron plate, Song Ke's crystal remained unmoved in her palm. The opponent was only at the C-level, the power gap too vast for them to even get close.

The sand bandits, shocked, abandoned their playful expressions, stared menacingly at her, revealing their cruel true selves.

Hot sweat dripped down the chin, instantly evaporating in the scorching heat. Song Ke felt a bit dizzy, wishing to return to the cool underground city.

Her voice dry, she spoke slowly, "Give you three seconds, hurry up and leave."

"Well, look at the attitude! Brothers, kill her! Take the crystal!"

Over thirty people rushed forward, their various awakened abilities stirring up the sandy ground.

"Roar!!"

Jorik roared in anger, transforming into a werewolf, aggressively pouncing, clawing and biting fiercely. However...

Due to his usually pampered lifestyle and thick, dense fur, the wealthy man suffered heatstroke immediately upon transformation, collapsing with a thud.

The sand bandits burst into laughter, restraining him. A curved knife poised at Jorik's throat, ready to strike.

Song Ke slowly raised her gaze, and her pink pupils flashed with dazzling golden light.

A surging and domineering awakened energy shook the earth, raising a massive sandstorm from all directions. Countless thorned arrows shot out from behind her, piercing through the bandits. In an instant, the sand bandits had limbs severed, bodies dismembered, each pierced through the heart, and they fell dead.

The sandstorm subsided, corpses scattered, and all sound disappeared. A pin could be heard dropping in the silent scene.

“Come out,” Song Ke coldly said to the deserted desert.

After a while, a group of trembling locals emerged from beneath the sand.

After a while, the mirage of an oasis appeared, and another wave of timid awakeners emerged.

Praying mantis hunts the cicada, unaware of the oriole behind; truly the most chaotic and sinful city in the entire Alliance. In this small battlefield, three waves of people were lying in ambush.

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 188.2: We Are V587 (3)

Song Keke, is that you?

Song Ke raised her hand slightly, and the two groups of orioles immediately knelt on the ground, pleading, “Mercy, heroine, mercy! We didn’t intend to act!”

Song Ke, indifferent, wiped her face as hot sweat dripped into her eyes, causing her vision to blur. “Just leave.”

The crowd narrowly escaped punishment, collectively retreating. Seeing that Song Ke had no intention of killing them, someone nervously asked, “May we ask the heroine’s name? In the future, we’ll definitely go around when we see you.”

In Sin City, a reputation is the easiest thing to spread. They wanted to figure out whom they offended to avoid stepping into trouble in the future.

Song Ke pulled the unconscious Jorik from the pile of bodies, lifting him with one hand. Almost instinctively, she blurted out her habitual alias, "My name is Su Cha."

As the words fell, everyone on the opposite side collectively fell into a state of stupor.

"Did I hear it correctly? She said her name is Su Cha..."

"Is it the Su Cha?"

"Who else could it be?! It's her!!" A tremulous explosion echoed in everyone's ears.

The ambushing individuals halted their steps, their faces showing astonishment. Upon closer inspection, a hint of worship could be seen in their eyes, as if gazing upon a god.

Song Ke was taken aback; it was the first time she encountered such a situation. "Do you know the name Su Cha?"

"We know, we know! Who's the coolest in V587? It's Su Cha, remember that!"

"You gained fame in the desert back then. This is your happy hometown! Who doesn't know the legend of V587!"

Song Ke: "..."

"But I remember, Su Cha is a guy..." Amidst the noisy background, someone hesitated to speak.

They received a hard knock on the forehead, and a companion frantically gestured at him, "Shut up! Su Cha can be a brother or a sister, whatever she says she is!"

Song Ke had a splitting headache and dismissed the chattering group of orioles.

A silver-white starship flew across the sky, its tail adorned with a sparkling purple bauhinia wreath. Song Ke glanced at it and then turned away, heading towards the underground city in the opposite direction.

Thunk! Song Ke threw Jorik on the ground and knocked on the counter, "I'm here to pick up the goods."

"Here, for use in District C and below only." Cheng Yi tossed a terminal, poking her head out to look, "Isn't this Jorik? Did he get heatstroke?"

"Yeah." Song Ke carefully checked the functions, finding no issues, "I'll be leaving soon. Can you keep him here?"

"Sure, of course." Cheng Yi tossed aside half of her purple hair, smiling with satisfaction. Jorik, a wealthy man, would be another profitable deal.

Song Ke touched the silver ring absentmindedly, "I heard you're the most informed trader in the Trading Street."

Cheng Yi replied arrogantly, "Hmm."

She placed the Level 4 crystal on the counter, "I want to buy some information from you."

Cheng Yi's eyes lit up, instantly pulling out a magnifying glass, "What kind of information is worth a Level 4 crystal? I'm quite curious."

Song Ke said, "About V587, tell me everything you know."

Cheng Yi's smile faded at the mention of it, "Customer, I don't do all kinds of deals. V587 is my regular customer, and I don't sell their information. What if you turn around seeking revenge? They've made enemies, you know."

Song Ke calmly stared at her, "I'm not seeking revenge. I just... forgot a lot of things, only remember that V587 is supposed to be my friend. I want to find them and clarify things. Please, any information is fine, even just a name."

Cheng Yi scrutinized her back and forth, "Really not seeking revenge?"

Song Ke affirmed, "Yes."

Cheng Yi, exposing her true nature, as if afraid Song Ke would regret it, quickly grabbed the crystal and took a bite, "Just a name. I won't disclose details about others, but the captain of V587 is named Song Ke."

—The captain of V587 is named Song Ke.

Song Ke slightly widened her eyes.

...

From Sin City to Northern Base, it almost spanned the entire New Asia Alliance.

It took Song Ke a whole half month to reach Qianzhan City, and then she was helpless. According to the rules, the first entry into the Northern Base required approval from the Immigration Center. But the crowd here was beyond imagination. Ordinary awakeners had to wait in line for half a year, and there was almost no place to step inside. For those with slightly weaker lung capacity, they could start gasping for breath at any moment.

Her ID was fake, as Cheng Yi mentioned; it could only be used in District C. Once she reached District B, it wouldn't work. Since the official method was not feasible, what about unconventional methods?

Song Ke approached a loud hawker, lowering her voice as if making a secret deal:

"What business are you in?"

“How much does it cost for sm*ggling one person?”

The hawker was shocked and turned pale, “Don’t set me up, are you a decoy? Get away, get away! No amount of money is acceptable. Don’t you know how strict they are about sm*ggling now? I don’t want to end up in the Awakener Department’s big prison!”

The self-righteous hawker didn’t control his volume well and forgot that he was still wearing an amplifying terminal on his collar. The roaring sound spread layer by layer, and everyone within a few miles turned their heads, staring at Song Ke with looks as if she were a fool, pointing and whispering.

Song Ke covered her face and fled in embarrassment.

Half an hour later, she crouched in the corner of the wall, hesitantly glancing at the transparent barrier within arm’s reach. This was the final stop for the city bus. As long as someone got off casually, she could use that method to stealthily infiltrate without anyone knowing. It shouldn’t...be discovered.

Song Ke took a deep breath, another deep breath, finally making up her mind and hiding in the shadows.

The upcoming genetic changes were truly pushing the limits, requiring significant psychological preparation that she had been working on for a long time.

Boom!

An awakener moved faster than her, hitting the barrier above.

“Bro, isn’t this too risky?” a furtive voice came from the other end, sounding like three or four people.

“What’s there to be afraid of? Tokushima’s applications to join the Bauhinia Alliance were rejected several times; it must be the Northern Base playing tricks. I’m just giving them some trouble!”

“Don’t stop, whatever top-notch defense they have, we’re taking it down today!”

A blaring alarm sounded, triggering the defensive mechanism of the attacked barrier.

Song Ke watched helplessly as holographic signs displayed text:

“Due to route malfunction, today’s bus service is canceled.”

Suppressing her anger, she walked up to the group of people and asked expressionlessly, “What are you guys doing?”

...

“Crap, there’s trouble going on!”

“There is a situation in Channel 201!”

In the City Defense Command Center, monitors locked onto the terrorists causing damage, and an employee connected to the internal channel, “Mr. Zhuang, someone is intentionally damaging the city defense system, the target has been located... huh? The target has been dealt with.”

A blurry figure with a hood approached, the scene flashed, and several terrorists’ heads burst open. Two seconds later, a spray of bright red blood arced through the air. Death came too quickly; no one could see what had happened.

Zhuang Qingyan glanced at the floating screen, his eyelashes lowered. “Send a patrol team over.”

He stood up to leave, but when he reached the door, his footsteps suddenly halted. Like a gust of wind, he rushed back and trembling fingertips pressed the pause button. The mouths of those people showed clear signs of knife wounds.

“The slow-motion replay,” Zhuang Qingyan spoke urgently, his voice revealing a sense of urgency.

The surveillance looped back to the recent crime scene, even at a slowed speed, there was still no clue to be found.

“Slow it down further.”

“...slower.”

Until the frame froze, and the crowd struggled to see, just before the terrorists’ deaths, faint golden lights appeared around them. These lights rapidly converged, forming a cold and brilliant blade shape. This was... a transformed awakened energy?

“Mr. Zhuang, should we keep slowing?”

“...”

Zhuang Qingyan remained silent, expressionless for a long time, then suddenly shook his head with a helpless smile.

This was the first time the City Defense Department personnel had seen Zhuang Qingyan smile. In an instant, it was like ice melting, spring winds and rain, intoxicating and unforgettable.

...

The bus was gone, and Song Ke turned around in frustration. Suddenly, her back tensed.

The sky tore open with a pitch-black crack, an invisible and majestic force descending from above—an S-level spatial ability! Following that, another S-level ability, “Draw the Ground as a Prison,” isolated the air around Song Ke, trapping her in a confined space.

Song Ke frowned at her forehead. Was this coming after her because she had just killed someone?

Were they going to fight at the entrance of the Northern Base? That wouldn't be good; she still wanted to get inside... Wait, there might be an opportunity!

With little time to think, Song Ke had no choice. She gritted her teeth, transformed into the pre-planned genetic form, and disappeared on the spot.

A group of awakeners appeared out of thin air. The crowd split on both sides as Zhuang Qingyan, leaning on a cane, strolled forward. Despite his disabled right leg, he was broad-shouldered and tall, handsome and elegant—a flawless young nobleman.

Facing the empty passage, Zhuang Qingyan's emotions were complex, ultimately turning into a gentle sigh.

Under the puzzled gaze of everyone, he threw away the cane, knelt on one knee, and lowered his head to gaze at the crawling flea on the ground.

"Song Keke, is that you?"

The tiny flea paused for a moment, its tail wagging vigorously.

The awakeners behind Zhuang Qingyan were silent, their expressions collapsing. They watched as the successor of the Northern Base, in a hurry, mobilized S-level awakeners just to exchange feelings with a suspicious-looking flea?

However, Zhuang Qingyan seemed oblivious. He slowly reached out, the teardrop mole at the corner of his eye shining with brilliance.

"...Let's go home."

Whoosh—the flea disappeared.

Zhuang Qingyan's pupils contracted, and regardless of the dust, he moved forward. "Song Ke!!"

The next moment, his words abruptly stopped, and his scalp tingled slightly.

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 189.1: We Are V587 (4)

Is Ten Carats Enough?

"Mr. Zhuang... do you need me to pursue?"

At the entrance of Channel 201, the bewildered and puzzled awakeners looked around. Where was the suspect? Where was the flea?

The air was as quiet as death, and Zhuang Qingyan remained motionless, his silhouette resembling a frozen statue.

As if a long century had passed, or perhaps just a few seconds, his expression transitioned from an indescribable blankness, shock, and patience to the calmness of still waters. His Adam's apple rolled up and down, and a hoarse voice squeezed out from between his teeth: "...no need."

Clever as he was, Zhuang Qingyan had already confirmed that the flea was undoubtedly Song Ke. However, for some reason, she couldn't enter the city through normal means, leading her to resort to such unconventional methods. When Zhuang Qingyan stood up, his right leg, numb and tingling from kneeling for so long, swayed slightly, and a cane was quickly handed to him by someone nearby.

His voice regained composure, and he said casually, as if nothing had happened: "Clean up the scene, I will explain this matter to General Ye."

After dispersing the patrol team, Zhuang Qingyan called for a driverless hovercar and entered the Northern Base from Channel 201.

Just as he entered the city, the roots of his fluffy hair moved, causing a slight itch.

Zhuang Qingyan's five fingers holding the cane tightened suddenly, and the veins on the back of his hand bulged: "If you dare to run, I will spray the entire city with Baibu Tincture."

Baibu Tincture, a type of pesticide, primarily used to kill insects and relieve itching. The diluted spray had a stunning effect on various parasites.

The flea suddenly froze, apparently understanding human speech.

Zhuang Qingyan revealed a faint smile, but as soon as he thought that the little thing was still perched on his head, his mouth quickly straightened into a tight line: "So, you plan to enter the city this way... I'll help you, don't run again."

The last few words were as light as a sigh.

...

Garden Apartment.

Zhuang Qingyan's face was as calm as water. Limping hastily through the living room, he arrived at the private bathroom. His fingertips swiftly operated on the panel, and with a snap, the lights went out. The door locked, the windows sealed shut, creating a completely enclosed space.

Then, he began to undress – suit, tie, trousers... With one hand, he unbuttoned his shirt, pulled down the collar, revealing a slender and slim neck.

He commanded, somewhat stiffly, "Change back."

No one responded, and silence filled the surroundings.

Zhuang Qingyan helplessly rubbed his forehead, "Since you dare to use this method, there must be a way out. At least prove that you can control the time of genetic existence. There are no outsiders here, change back."

After a brief standoff, a tiny flea fell to the ground, emitting a faint radiation. The blurry figure gradually solidified.

Zhuang Qingyan quickly grabbed a towel and threw it over Song Ke's head, covering her completely. In the dim natural light, a pair of white and luminous slender ankles were exposed, like polished jade, smooth and delicate.

"Clothes in the second compartment of the cabinet."

Zhuang Qingyan frowned repeatedly at his brow, unable to endure any longer. He forcefully opened the glass door, diving into the shower, and the sound of rushing water immediately filled the air.

Two fair fingers pulled down the towel from her head. Pink pupils observed the surroundings vigilantly. After confirming it was safe, Song Ke turned and opened the cabinet door, pulling out an oversized T-shirt and putting it on casually.

A moment later, the sound of running water gradually ceased.

Zhuang Qingyan reappeared, his black hair soaked, his features clear. Clad in a thin bathrobe, uncleaned water droplets trickled along his collarbone into the neckline. Paired with his handsome and cold face, there was a subtle and dangerously alluring charm.

"Song—"

A concealed sleeve sword pressed against his throat, the blade glinting with a cold and chilling light. One step forward would result in blood splattering on the spot.

The two confronted each other, facing each other, and their faces were reflected in each other's pupils. Then, a bit of astonishment and surprise gradually surfaced.

Zhuang Qingyan illuminated the lights with one hand, staring intently at the person before him. The cold face, snow-white long hair, nearly transparent skin—every inch between the brows and eyes presented a completely unfamiliar appearance. Rarely rendered speechless, he looked somewhat dazed.

Song Ke blinked slowly, recognizing him as the man she saw briefly in Sin City.

However, with close contact, a strange emotion surged within her. She gazed at the peach blossom eyes, vivid teardrop mole, and well-defined chin of the person before her. She felt as if every feature was somehow familiar.

“...Who are you?” Song Ke murmured.

“Zhuang Qingyan. I am Zhuang Qingyan,” Zhuang Qingyan stared at her, unblinking, enunciating each word.

“Zhuang... Qingyan?” Song Ke unconsciously repeated. Those three words lingered on her lips, as if she had uttered them countless times before.

“Have you always looked like this?” Song Ke’s eyes were filled with confusion.

Zhuang Qingyan slowly raised his hand. When Song Ke came to her senses, the blade pressed an inch, leaving a faint bloodstain on his neck. Ignoring it, he spoke in a gentle, almost humble tone, “You mentioned that you liked the original mole. During the time you were away, I modified my genes.”

His current appearance embodied both Zhuang Qingyan and Xie Zhuo, growing in accordance with Song Ke’s preferences in every aspect.

Did she say that?

Song Ke’s consciousness felt somewhat hazy. She couldn’t remember, but indeed, it looked pretty good.

Zhuang Qingyan's slightly cool palm held the hilt, gently pressing it down. After a brief moment of surprise, he began to think quickly.

"Due to the activation of the Phoenix gene, not only did the body undergo reconstruction and the appearance change, but even memories have experienced some loss, right?"

"So, in this past year, you haven't shown up. I thought you were intentionally avoiding me..."

Song Ke stared at him intently, honestly admitting, "Um... Actually, it took almost a year just for the reconstruction."

"Are you affiliated with V587?" she asked softly.

Zhuang Qingyan sighed softly, "You can't remember anything?"

"Um," Song Ke lowered her eyelashes, her agile fingertips spinning the sleeve sword, but she showed no intention of attacking the person before her.

"...Let me tell you then, Song Keke."

Clang! The sleeve sword fell to the ground, making a crisp sound.

Zhuang Qingyan lifted her up, placing her on the half-height sink. His hands rested on her waist, and his thin lips, almost touching her nearly transparent earlobe, said, "I am the first member of V587. You saved me with your sacrifice, and since then, I pledged my life to you, holding on to your thigh, wholeheartedly following you."

"..." Song Ke slightly opened her mouth, chilled to the point of speechlessness.

Zhuang Qingyan chuckled lightly, abandoning his playful thoughts. He leaned down, resting his head on Song Ke's neck, his tone exhausted and sorrowful, "All that was nonsense. I'm your teammate and

boyfriend, the person closest to you in this world. Every day for the past year, I dared not sleep because once I closed my eyes, I would return to that day in Loak, and you completely disappeared before me.”

Their breaths were close, with no space for avoidance. Song Ke turned her head, gazing at his eyes. A wave of confusion washed over her mind. In the deep recesses of her consciousness, she inexplicably believed every word he said.

“Song Keke, I really miss you.”

In this position, Zhuang Qingyan held her waist, embedding Song Ke in his arms. He then pinched her chin, forcing her to tilt her head. Disregarding everything, their lips and tongues intertwined, leaving a moist impression.

Song Ke’s eyes widened, her pulse suddenly quickened, her heart pounding as if it were about to leap out of her chest, yet she had no resistance in her thoughts.

However, Zhuang Qingyan quickly stopped. His thin lips retreated slightly, and his expression became complex and indistinct. “Sorry, the genes from earlier... were too extraordinary. I have some psychological shadows.”

Song Ke: “?”

Her wrist was tightly gripped as Song Ke staggered into the shower. The showerhead turned on again, and warm water cascaded down, soaking both of them. The face-to-face position heightened a certain emotion, and Zhuang Qingyan’s breath was so scalding it made Song Ke tremble.

He cupped Song Ke’s face with both hands and descended once again.

The sound of rushing water masked the subtle movements. The steaming heat blurred the frosted glass, and the intertwined silhouettes of the man and woman reflected an ambiguous light. Outside, there was a bustling three-dimensional city with incessant aerial traffic. Inside, it was two souls consoling each other.

Bam!!

A muffled noise interrupted the warmth in the bathroom.

“Okay, now let’s talk. How much do you remember?” Ten minutes later, Zhuang Qingyan’s cheekbone was red – he was beaten by Song Ke who couldn’t bear it any more. He pressed his forehead and asked in a low voice.

“A little bit, only memories from childhood.” Song Ke pinched her thumb and forefinger, making a gesture the size of a grain of rice. The pink petals of her lips revealed a suspicious crimson, particularly noticeable against her skin tone. It was the look of someone who had done something mischievous.

Zhuang Qingyan stared for a moment longer, then awkwardly shifted his gaze away.

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 189.2: We Are V587 (4)

Is Ten Carats Enough?

To be accurate, Song Ke only remembered herself as an experimental subject and her childhood memories. Everything after the apocalypse was increasingly messy and blurry, with a complete blank about the events that occurred afterward.

Zhuang Qingyan nodded, “I informed the others from V587. They’ll be back soon. Maybe then you’ll remember something.”

Song Ke crouched in the corner of the sofa, creating a distance between them, her eyes filled with skepticism, “How can I be sure you’re not lying to me?”

“Your language ability has recovered.” Zhuang Qingyan tapped his fingertips, calmly analyzing, “The manifestation of the Phoenix gene is ‘rebirth.’ As long as there are residual cells, one can infinitely regenerate using them as a medium. However, your two triggers had no external guidance, resulting in aftereffects.”

“The first rebirth was during the Loak incident, damaging your language center. This is the second time.” He shifted forward, kneeling on one knee on the sofa, his long fingers threading through Song Ke’s hair. “Albinism is a hereditary disease. From a broad perspective, this type of genetic mutation cannot be cured.”

“Previously, whether it was the Hook Snake, Wildcat, or Chameleon gene, you couldn’t transform back voluntarily; you needed radiation stimulation. But now, you can control all genes, indicating that the fusion level has exceeded the threshold, losing the characteristics of a human.”

“You’ve been to Ferrara, wanting to activate the awakener certificate, but without biological information, this path was simply impassable. So, you had no other choice but to use special means to infiltrate the Northern Base.”

Throughout the Alliance, no one understood the Fire Seed project and LAK0017 better than Zhuang Qingyan. With just a few words, he deduced the truth.

Impressive, he got it all right.

Song Ke stared at him in astonishment.

Zhuang Qingyan calmly continued forward, their noses almost touching, “But this is very dangerous. All genes are in high-speed operation, the DNA chain constantly changing, causing a disturbance in your magnetic field. Over time, the part of consciousness belonging to humans gradually diminishes, and you’ll forget everything.”

“Tomorrow, let’s conduct a full-body examination to see if there’s any way to restore you to normal.”

“Oh,” Song Ke nodded quietly, discreetly distancing herself from him.

Zhuang Qingyan noticed her subtle movement, smiled with restraint, and held her hand, rubbing it until he felt the ring on Song Ke’s ring finger. His smile vanished instantly.

“What’s this?” He held it up expressionlessly, his tone icy. “Where did this ring come from?”

Activating the “Omniscient and Omnipotent” ability, scouring every corner of memory, Zhuang Qingyan quickly recalled the glimpse in Sin City, regret and anger simultaneously surging, “Given to you by Jorik? Did he propose to you, and you agreed?”

“Not even a decent diamond, and you consider this worth showing off?”

“Why did you go to Sin City for him? How long did you stay, and why didn’t you contact me?”

The man, overwhelmed by jealousy and clouded judgment, completely lost his sanity. His voice carried a hoarse tone with gritted teeth.

“It’s not...” Song Ke tried to explain, but the spiritual power in the ring was too weak. Zhuang Qingyan, stubbornly, didn’t perceive it as a spatial item.

“Take it off,” Zhuang Qingyan was firm, not allowing any refusal. “I’ll buy you a bigger one. Is ten carats enough?”

“Are you crazy?!” Song Ke was speechless, kicking him in the abdomen. Zhuang Qingyan grunted and raised his eyes, the depths of which were terrifying.

He reached over to remove Song Ke’s ring. The two wrestled on the sofa, the situation intense and unrestrained.

Ding ding—

Just then, the apartment door opened.

Three people rushed into the foyer urgently and froze in place.

They saw Song Ke with disheveled clothes, an oversized T-shirt slipping off her shoulder, her lips slightly swollen and reddened from rough kissing. Zhuang Qingyan's shirt was in disarray, buttons broken, and several scratches on his thin abdominal muscles were particularly prominent. He was pressed onto the sofa, with a strange woman straddling him. His workout pants awkwardly revealed an embarrassing shape, and the two were in an ambiguous position, closely pressed together.

Two and three, everyone looked each other, and the atmosphere solidified for a few seconds.

Thump! The food that Xu Xing held dropped, and his eyes widened in astonishment.

"Oh, oh." Lu Xiaoyu raised an eyebrow, a hint of playfulness flashing in his eyes.

Xu Xing... Comrade Xu Xiaoxing directly broke down, "You – shameless!! Where's my sister!! How can you mess around with someone else?!"

The slender teenager, furious, erupted with awakened energy. Dozens of ice blades shot towards the two. No matter what, he was an A3-level awakener. With a burst of awakened ability, the temperature in the living room, along with the foyer, plummeted. The floor, along with Lu Xiaoyu's wheelchair, was instantly covered in thick frost.

Song Ke flipped over and got up. Her fingertips moved slightly, and a dazzling golden shield appeared out of thin air, blocking Xu Xing's attacks.

Just as she was about to lament why all the kids she encountered were not quite normal, with Xiao Bao always wanting to gnaw on her arm, and this one always resorting to violence, she noticed the opposing teenager's expression becoming blank.

Xu Xing's eyes quickly filled with tears, and he sobbed twice. Like a runaway wild horse, he rushed over, "Sister—!!"

Song Ke was shocked, "!"

She flipped over the sofa with a backflip, landing lightly on the other side. Xu Xing watched helplessly as he missed his target, unable to stop in time, and crashed into the sofa corner. His head bumped into Zhuang Qingyan, who looked up in annoyance, rubbing his bright red nose.

With teary eyes, Xu Xing said, "Sister, you don't love me anymore. You never used to avoid me before!"

Zhuang Qingyan slapped him on the head, stood up, nonchalantly buttoned up two buttons, "Enough already. You were 1.3 meters tall before, and now you're 1.6 meters tall. Don't you know how big you are?"

"Hmph." Xu Xing suppressed his resentment, leaning his elbow on his knee, supporting his chin, sulking alone.

Fang Zhixu touched his chin, circled around Song Ke, and commented, "Captain, you've changed too. I almost didn't recognize you."

"Song Ke has lost some memories. Introduce yourselves," Zhuang Qingyan explained the situation in a few words and gestured to Song Ke, "You were looking for V587, right? They are all members."

Xu Xing eagerly raised his hand, "I'm Xu Xing. Sister, I'm the first one who met you, and we're the closest."

The highly skilled young man in the eyes of outsiders was still a child who didn't grow up and knew how to act cute in front of Song Ke. With a slight pout at the corner of his mouth, Xu Xing was still upset about not being able to hold Song Ke just now.

Song Ke couldn't resist and patted his curly hair, feeling a pleasant touch, "Good boy."

"Fang Zhixu, you can call me Old Fang. We met in Tongwan. At that time, I was desperate for death, and you saved me and helped me avenge my wife." Fang Zhixu spoke about the past, including the assassination in Mu City, and his wife Ayao.

Song Ke listened quietly, patting his shoulder when he finished.

Fang Zhixu touched the glass bottle around his neck and smiled, "I'm doing well now. Ayao and Tiantian will surely be satisfied."

Next was the silver-haired, ice-blue-eyed young man. Song Ke's gaze lingered for a second on his missing legs, and her eyes looked somewhat dim.

Lu Xiaoyu calmly let her scrutinize him, "Although being a tree is quite good, thanks for bringing me out of the Death Prison."

Song Ke gazed at him silently, and behind Lu Xiaoyu were six mechanical arms, each with a different color, one of which emitted a cold silver light.

A light bulb lit up in her head, and the next actions were purely instinctive. Song Ke took out the box of rhenium blocks from the ring, carefully opened it, and the bright light illuminated everyone's faces.

She pushed it solemnly in front of Lu Xiaoyu, "Although I don't remember why I need to find it, my intuition tells me that it should be for you."

Lu Xiaoyu was first surprised, then fell into silence, and finally revealed a somewhat awkward but sincere smile, "Thank you, Captain."

He turned proudly, like a child who got a beloved gift, eager to show it to the whole world, "Rhenium blocks—enough to transform all the mechanical arms. Did you see that? Fourteen days?"

Zhuang Qingyan lightly sneered, a rare moment without a retort.

"Why does only he have a gift!" Xu Xing complained, drawing circles with his fingers, and his grudge notebook started rearranging.

"You're so rich; shouldn't you give your sister a gift?" Fang Zhixu educated him.

“Oh, right! Sister, what do you want? I’ll buy it for you!”

“Quick, go wash the vegetables. I’ll cook tonight.”

“What? I already took commissions today. Do I have to wash vegetables too?”

While the apartment was bustling with noise, Song Ke’s heart gradually settled into reality. This indescribable feeling persisted since she woke up in District F177. For nearly a month of wandering, loneliness surrounded her at every moment. It wasn’t until now that Song Ke truly found a sense of belonging. She was sure that she was the captain of V587, and these people were important to her.

Leaning against the bar, Zhuang Qingyan quietly watched her. A faint smile adorned his young and handsome face, and the lingering melancholy finally dispersed with the wind.

This unfamiliar face merged with the deep-seated figure in Song Ke’s memory, becoming the same person.

—The person she was looking for.

Song Ke thought of something and cleared her throat to speak, “Actually, there’s one more thing.”

As soon as the captain spoke, the other four immediately quieted down, all looking at her.

Song Ke earnestly asked, “Who is Su Cha...?”

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 190.1: We Are V587 (5)

The Last Disciple

Northern Base, 7 o'clock in the morning.

Specialized Hospital for Awakeners.

Hospitals were always busiest in the early morning. Small robots filled with medicines flew unsteadily through the lobby, preparing to take the elevator upstairs.

At this moment, a patient who had lost control of his awakened ability unleashed a barrage of shining wind blades wildly. The walls around lit up with white light, and a defensive barrier absorbed all the attacks. Agile doctors swiftly subdued him, one of them turning and shouting, "Sedative!"

The raging storm suddenly ceased, but a small robot lost its balance and flew backward, disoriented.

A pale hand caught it just in time, straightened the medicine bag hanging on its back, placed it on the medical guidance platform, and then walked past.

The data eyes of the small robot flickered, and it turned its head to lock onto a kind passerby. It was an odd-looking group, led by a tall woman with white hair and pink eyes, her features cold as snow. Despite the hot weather, she wore long sleeves and pants with a hood. Following her were companions of varying heights, one with a limp, one in a wheelchair. The group turned a corner and entered the special care ward.

These delivery robots lacked independent consciousness. After observing for a while, following the established program, it continued to move forward.

The special care ward was a spacious suite with two single beds placed side by side and numerous life support devices. Song Ke finally saw the remaining two members of V587: a weak and beautiful sister, and a figure lying quietly.

Lin Youyou had already heard the news of Song Ke's return and looked toward the door with anticipation.

She looked pale and haggard. If Song Ke's paleness was due to a lack of melanin, Lin Youyou was clearly in an unhealthy state.

"Indeed, you've changed," she stared at Song Ke, slowly opening her arms and revealing a soft and joyful smile. "Welcome back, Song Ke'er."

Song Ke bent down and gently hugged her. "Youyou."

"Do you remember me?" Lin Youyou was surprised. Wasn't her memory supposed to be missing, not even remembering Princess Zhuang?

"Not only does she remember you, but she also vividly remembers Su Cha." A cool voice sounded at the door.

Zhuang Qingyan had one hand in his pocket and the other holding a cane. His tone was flat, showing no joy or anger, but his face seemed a bit sour. This mood had persisted from last night to today, emanating a displeased low pressure.

Song Ke glanced back at him with a puzzled expression, completely not understanding what he was trying to achieve. She could recognize Lin Youyou because she had seen a documentary about her in Ferrara – "The Top Idols that Disappeared Over the Years." At that time, she found the sweet smile of the female star somewhat awkward, but now, seeing Lin Youyou in person, everything clicked.

The sweet image was just Lin Youyou's persona; she was mature, stable, and rational at her core.

A simple "welcome back" sentence made Song Ke extremely certain that she liked having teammates like this.

As for Su Cha, Song Ke lowered her gaze to the person on the other hospital bed.

Due to a deep coma, Su Cha had become extremely thin, with sharper facial contours. His eyelids were peacefully closed, resembling someone deep in sleep. However, there was a horrifying wound at his

chest, just a hair's breadth away from his heart. The hollow space continuously oozed black blood, and various life support devices sustained his bodily functions.

"We arrange a consultation every month, and all the healing-type awakeners in District B have come. But we are helpless," Fang Zhixu spoke with a heavy tone.

As an A5-level healer, Fang Zhixu had exerted all his efforts to snatch Su Cha from the hands of death, saving his life. However, he was powerless against the wound at Su Cha's chest.

"Why can't it heal?" Song Ke asked softly.

"Do you remember the injury to your abdomen during the Loak incident?" Fang Zhixu reminded.

Song Ke shook her head. The closer the time got to the present, the more blank her memories became.

Fang Zhixu briefly described the events of that major battle and said in a heavy voice, "The S7 level that injured Su Cha had a transformation ability, but the iron chain attached to it carried the same 'real damage.' It cannot be treated, and at that time, you used your second ability to heal. However, for other awakeners, even S-level ones cannot resist it and will slowly bleed to death."

"He saved me that day," Lin Youyou spoke hoarsely.

She untied the hospital gown, revealing a fist-sized hole at her collarbone. The bone was visible, and prolonged blood loss had rendered her unable to stand, leaving her bedridden.

Lin Youyou touched Su Cha's eyebrows and eyes, tightly gripping his hand hanging by the bed. The nightmare of that day resurfaced once again.

When the iron chain struck, Su Cha's pupils constricted. Disregarding everything, he held Lin Youyou tightly as they both fell into the water. Lin Youyou thought she wouldn't survive, but her singing summoned the mutated Kun, whose vast wings covered the sky and lifted them out of the water. Later, Jennifer and Zhao Yuqing found them in time, but Su Cha never woke up.

She always liked teasing him, forcing him to speak the truth, enjoying his awkward and embarrassed expressions. But now that Su Cha had truly confessed his “love,” Lin Youyou wanted to respond, only to find that she no longer had the chance.

Song Ke watched their intertwined hands in silence for a long time. Then, she thought of something and turned to Fang Zhixu:

“You just said that my second ability can heal this kind of wound.”

“Yes,” Fang Zhixu confirmed.

Song Ke tightly squeezed her hand and looked at everyone. Though she couldn’t recall many things, they were all her teammates. According to Fang Zhixu, Lin Youyou and Su Cha were injured because they saved her. She couldn’t stand idly by.

Gathering her thoughts, Song Ke uttered a shocking statement, “Then use my flesh and blood to fill the wounds.”

Even without her memories, she remained the reliable captain of V587.

Everyone was shocked, and the room fell into silence, with only the rhythmic sounds of the instruments.

Song Ke pointed to her collarbone and mouth, “In the same places, take them out and fill the holes in Su Cha and Youyou, and the wounds will heal.”

She spoke casually, but her suggestion was chilling.

Su Cha’s wound was in the chest, and he had lost some internal organs. If Song Ke’s flesh and blood were replaced before the abilities took effect, the rapid stitching could fill the void. Similarly, Lin Youyou could also recover using the same method.

As for Song Ke, her cells could regenerate endlessly, and the lost flesh and blood would grow back, albeit with some pain during the process.

She had long been accustomed to enduring pain.

When she first woke up in District F177, her head was still foggy, and her reshaped body had only two fingers. Song Ke calmly chopped off her left hand and fed it to Xiao Bao, causing the forgetful Xiao Bao to incessantly crave “fragrant pig trotters.”

“In theory... it’s feasible,” Fang Zhixu was taken aback, but the instincts of a doctor made his eyes gradually light up. “We can conduct small-scale clinical experiments first to see the results.”

“No,” a cold interruption came from Zhuang Qingyan amidst the joyful atmosphere.

“Why?” Song Ke glared at him, displeased.

“I’m not opposed to the plan itself,” Zhuang Qingyan, unable to withstand her accusing gaze, sighed softly. “It’s your current condition that’s the issue. Don’t forget, all the hidden genes in your body have been activated, putting you in a highly active state. Transplanting such flesh and blood to Su Cha might cause his immune system to collapse before the abilities take effect.”

Song Ke had experienced more than a simple fusion experiment. Her body contained over a hundred types of biological genes, including replicated genes. If those active “viruses” invaded a regular person’s body, it would bring about catastrophic harm.

“...Then what do we do?” Song Ke stammered, unconsciously seeking help from Zhuang Qingyan.

Zhuang Qingyan pondered for a moment. “First, find a way to restore you to normal.”

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 190.2: We Are V587 (5)

The Last Disciple

On the floating car heading to the laboratory, Zhuang Qingyan's two terminals kept lighting up with various pending messages. Since he voluntarily submitted "partial" research data, his Key identity no longer existed. Regaining his freedom, he no longer had to hide like he did in the past.

"The new city defense modifications have been approved by General Ye and will be implemented effective immediately."

"I won't return to Beijun temporarily... just inform General Xie of that."

"A series of zombie outbreaks? Let the 27th squad handle it. Isn't Sanada Nobumasa a Metal-element awakener? He's suitable for the role of a cleaner."

If Song Ke still had her memories, she would recall that Sanada Nobumasa was the other squadron leader of Azure Phoenix they encountered the first time they met Punk. Due to conflicts with Wu Juemin, the vengeful Zhuang Qingyan had made life difficult for this "former squadron leader," and now, the entire squad had been scattered into disarray.

Song Ke rested her chin on her hand, curiously observing Zhuang Qingyan. Fang Zhixu leaned in mysteriously, lowering his voice to gossip, "Our Princess Zhuang is in quite a situation now. He's simultaneously in charge of affairs in the Northern Base and Beijun, and the two generals have fought over him several times."

Song Ke glanced at the elaborately crafted silver cane, "Is his leg very serious? Why hasn't it been cured?"

Fang Zhixu's expression was peculiar as he stammered, "Uh... his leg... well, it's quite serious."

Song Ke looked skeptical, "Aren't you an orthopedic doctor?"

Fang Zhixu responded, "You can criticize Princess Zhuang's character, but you can't question my medical skills."

Song Ke raised an eyebrow, confused.

Fang Zhixu found it hard to explain. Zhuang Qingyan, the scheming green tea male, insisted on keeping his lame leg until Song Ke returned. He thought she would feel sorry for him when she saw it, refrain from making trouble in the future, but who would have known that when Song Ke returned, her memories were completely gone. Zhuang Qingyan's plan fell through, and his pitiful look was thrown to a blind man.

Unaware of their hushed conversation, Zhuang Qingyan continued to work. He handed a light screen to Song Ke, showcasing various dazzling pictures of diamonds, saying, "Pick one you like, and I'll have it customized. The space sculptor has already been contacted."

Song Ke's expression remained blank.

Zhuang Qingyan's deep eyes gazed at her, and his awakened energy silently activated Song Ke's silver rings. "Look, the ones given by wild men are just not good enough. The quality is rubbish, and they can't hold much. Let's get a bigger one."

Unable to bear it any longer, Song Ke took off the ring and tossed it at his handsome face.

Impossible. This guy was definitely not her boyfriend. Her taste couldn't be this bad!

Zhuang Qingyan caught the ring smoothly, smiling with a satisfied air, "Got it. I'll dispose of it for you."

Song Ke remained expressionless and stood up to change her seat.

"Xiao Star, what are you looking at?"

Xu Xing confidently propped his legs on the vacant seat in front, with three or four varieties of special fruit juices within easy reach. He took a sip and switched to a different cup.

“Sister, I’m watching the auditions for the awakener challenge,” he replied, sharing the light screen with Song Ke.

Song Ke lowered her gaze, and the screen displayed the latest popular matches. Eleven-year-old prodigy Dylan from the Cario Empire showcased S2-level skills, completing a series of ten individual challenges and setting the current record for solo performance.

Song Ke noticed that Xu Xing had donated quite a bit of money to Dylan’s support channel.

After a year of intense preparation, the first global awakener challenge was finally underway, a grand event on a worldwide scale. The ultimate reward included substantial Alliance coins, crystals, and the qualification to reside in an S-level city, Utopia.

Observing Xu Xing’s excited profile, Song Ke couldn’t help but ask, “V587 isn’t participating?”

“No, I hate Utopia,” Xu Xing’s eyes flashed with a hint of shadow, but it quickly disappeared. “And since Sister isn’t here, we won’t go. All of V587’s actions are decided by Sister.”

Song Ke smiled without saying anything.

Indeed, now wasn’t the right time. If she could heal Su Cha and Lin Youyou, and regain her memories...

Actually, the other rewards of the competition were quite substantial.

*

In the busy laboratory, Dr. Ning Rong, wearing a white coat, and with graying temples stared fixedly at Song Ke.

Feeling uneasy under his gaze, Song Ke used her eyes to ask the people nearby, “Is he reliable?”

Zhuang Qingyan shook his head with a smile. Ning Rong did seem a bit out of sorts, but it was normal. "This is Dr. Ning Rong, the lead of the organ regeneration project."

"She's the Fire Seed? Old Zhuang's dream actually came true..."

Dr. Ning Rong wiped away tears and reached out to hold Song Ke's hand.

Zhuang Qingyan's cold cane directly blocked him, "Dr. Ning, don't touch her randomly, let's do the examination first."

Song Ke sat quietly in the isolation room, with electromagnetic sensors attached to her head, limbs, and heart, connected to an external gene spectrum analyzer.

Zhuang Qingyan sat across from her, holding Song Ke's slightly cool hand, and brought it close to his lips. "Don't be afraid, it won't hurt. I'm here with you."

Staring at the beauty mark at the corner of his eye, Song Ke raised two fingers and pushed him away without mercy.

"I suddenly remembered some things."

"Hmm? What is it?" Zhuang Qingyan's voice was gentle as he gazed at her affectionately.

"Before, also in the laboratory, there was someone who always said I was ugly," Song Ke asked seriously. "Do you know who he is?"

Zhuang Qingyan's spine stiffened, silent for several seconds. After a moment, he kissed Song Ke's fingertips and casually said, "Really? I don't know, but he must be annoying. I'm different; I always find you cute. Look, no matter what you turn into, I can recognize you first, even if it's a flea."

Song Ke turned her head slightly, her lips subtly curling.

The researchers outside were fully focused on recording data, too busy to lift their heads. However, the small isolation room was tranquil, as if only the two of them existed, holding hands tightly.

Song Ke not only underwent genetic testing, but her awakener level also needed to be reevaluated.

Director Grace from Qianzhan City came over to help. When the values on the connected R-type tester reached the maximum, she was shocked into silence, "Oh my god..."

A year ago, Song Ke was an S8-level awakener. Now, her awakened energy had surpassed S9.

A super S-level awakener, unprecedented in the world. The existing instruments could no longer reach Song Ke's limits.

The full-body examination continued from morning till evening, until the sunset shone through the window.

Ning Rong hurriedly approached with a light screen containing hundreds of pages of reports, "All the gene types have been determined, a total of 237, including 45 replicant genes, including the Phoenix." He trembled with excitement as he spoke.

"Due to the success of the Fire Seed experiment, her fused genes cannot be deciphered, eliminated, or separated. The best solution is to freeze them, making them lose their activity. This way, not only can her body recover, but there's also a possibility of curing albinism."

"But there's a problem," Ning Rong hesitated, "To freeze the genes, we need to obtain the complete DNA sequence first. Ordinary genes are easy, but for those replicant genes, the original samples are not in the data, and we know nothing about their composition."

"Do you have information on replicant genes in your head?"

Zhuang Qingyan frowned and shook his head, "Back then, Qinglan procured replicant genes for the fusion experiment, and there was no specific attempt to decipher their DNA sequences."

The reason replicant genes were precious was that the organisms from which they could be collected had long been extinct in the natural world. In other words, using one original sample meant one less, and the supply would continually diminish.

“I remember that an organization was responsible for preserving replicant genes...” Ning Rong tried to recall.

“Tianyi,” Zhuang Qingyan squinted and whispered, “But Tianyi disappeared from the Alliance a long time ago.”

The situation once again fell into a deadlock, and everyone was at a loss.

“If we need to find someone, I should be able to help,” Lu Xiaoyu suddenly spoke, confidence shining in his unique ice-blue eyes. “As long as it existed, there must be traces left behind.”

After returning from Erjia, it seemed that his awakened ability had made a breakthrough, and his mindset had become more open.

“Give me four days, no, three days,” he declared.

...

Three days later, in the special protection ward, V587 sat in a row, listening to the good news brought by Lu Xiaoyu.

“Tianyi, originating from the ancient civilization era, was a Taoist organization. Its philosophy advocated following the principles of nature, the unity of heaven and man, and respecting the vitality of all living things.

They were skilled in using talismans to counter enemies, producing many ancient martial arts experts over the centuries. Replicant genes were extracted by the founder of Tianyi and have been preserved by inner disciples ever since.”

“Unfortunately, in the year 47 of the New Calendar, the year of the apocalypse, Tianyi Organization completely perished, leaving no one behind.”

“Is this your idea of good news?” Zhuang Qingyan mocked coldly.

Instead of immediately countering, Lu Xiaoyu used a strange look to assess him.

“Among the bad news, there’s a piece of good news. Even though everyone in the organization is dead, I found out that the last registered disciple of Tianyi...”

Lu Xiaoyu paused, looking at Zhuang Qingyan meaningfully.

“...is named Zhang Ting.”