

Doomsday 24

Chapter 24 – Rainy Night in Hua City (16)

Please show your ID

Separated by a considerable distance, Song Ke couldn't see Zhuang Qingyan's expression clearly. She could only faintly make out him waving his hand, probably indicating... that he was calling her over?

Just a moment ago, when the swarm of cockroaches suddenly went into a frenzy, Song Ke had prepared herself for a desperate fight. Unexpectedly, as she continued fighting, the surrounding insect tide inexplicably receded. It was truly bizarre. She intended to go over and ask Zhuang Qingyan what he was up to.

Song Ke holstered her spear, leaped off the rock, and walked forward with brisk steps.

The wind picked up.

Raindrops swirled in the air.

From far to near, the muffled rumble of thunder approached.

Song Ke's footsteps gradually slowed down, and suddenly she turned her head. She sensed a strong surge of spiritual energy!

In just a few seconds, a phenomenon emerged.

Dark clouds churned on the horizon, and thousands of purple lightning bolts struck down. The ground was filled with swirling sand and dirt, forming mounds resembling old Mongolian yurts, entrapping the scattered and fleeing cockroach swarm. Following closely, heavy snow filled the air, and a multitude of ice spears rained down, freezing countless cockroaches in their tracks.

Those zombie cockroaches were first struck by lightning, then buried in dirt, and finally frozen. No matter how many there were, they couldn't withstand the onslaught of various natural disasters. They fell in waves, like wheat cleanly harvested.

Such commotion could only be created by those with supernatural abilities.

After the unknown awakeners finished off the cockroaches, they didn't stop. Several tall individuals carrying large equipment swiftly jumped onto a nearby slope. There, they set up mobile artillery that Song Ke had never seen before—sleek and futuristic in design.

“Boom, boom, boom—” Deep red super particle shells were fired in unison, smashing into the zombies inside the sinkhole. The barrage continued, the smoke lingered, and for a good ten minutes, the sinkhole was filled with the sound of the cannonade. No more screams came from inside.

Song Ke stood there dumbfounded, mouth agape, her eyes forgetting to blink.

Zhuang Qingyan finally descended from the rooftop and found his golden thigh. What met his eyes was Song Ke, looking like a naive country girl who had never seen the world.

He smiled, saying, “It looks like reinforcements have arrived.”

Further along the inner circle of the road, four or five people were slowly pushing a massive terminal.

“How's the road clearance?” a thin flat-headed man approached, asking the busy team members.

Ouyang Pei, an earth-element ability user in the group, replied, “The main road is almost crumbling to pieces. We managed to clear a few small paths, but there are still quite a number of zombies and insects here. Is this an insect plague? I've always been afraid of these things; they give me the creeps.”

Ouyang Pei absentmindedly touched the goosebumps on his arm as he continued, “Maybe I should go clear the zombies with Qiangzi...”

The flat-headed man, Maeda Jiu, whispered, "They're just some mutated low-level insects. Get rid of them quickly, and don't let the captain see you acting scared."

At the thought of their captain's cold face, Ouyang Pei suddenly became spirited, as if infused with chicken blood. "Alright, I'll make sure to complete the mission!"

He diligently resumed clearing the insect tide. After a while, he stretched his neck and shouted in surprise, "Doesn't it seem like there are people ahead?"

Before the echo of his words subsided, the others in the team started laughing one after another. "Quick, treat your nearsightedness, Ouyang. You mistook zombies for humans?"

Ouyang Pei spat, "Get lost! I'm nearsighted, not blind!"

An Qiwen had just returned from the front. Upon hearing this, he snapped his fingers, and purple lightning crackled. "Most of the survivors should have gone underground from here. How could there still be ordinary people? Maybe they're awakeners?"

An Qiwen flexed his long legs, stepping directly over the pile of cockroach corpses resembling a small hill, and gazed in the direction Ouyang Pei had mentioned. Indeed, he saw two small black dots—one sitting and one standing—as if engaged in a conversation.

"Hey, there really are people," he turned his head to call a man behind him, "Captain, what do you think?"

"Go over and take a look," Wu Juemin said in a deep voice, "Verify their identities."

Song Ke and Zhuang Qingyan hadn't spoken for long when the group of awakeners spotted them and started walking towards their direction.

A group of tall individuals, all around 1.8 meters in height, strode towards them in unison, indeed carrying an imposing aura. From the scene itself, an intangible sense of pressure was imparted, except

that within this group of tall individuals, a boy of around a dozen years old was mixed in. He was taking small hurried steps to keep up, which appeared somewhat comical and discordant.

Upon drawing closer, one of the men with clear eyebrows and eyes spoke, "Both of you, please present your identification."

Song Ke didn't move.

Identification? What was that? She wondered; she was an undocumented individual, and besides, District F never required such things.

Zhuang Qingyan also didn't move, his gaze skimming over the silver insignia on the soldiers' shoulder patches, lost in thought.

An Qiwen frowned, thinking they might not have heard him well, and repeated loudly, "Please present your identification... Oh? Little sister, you look quite familiar. Have we met somewhere before?"

Though his words sounded like a pickup line, there was no trace of recklessness or frivolity on An Qiwen's face, only a serious contemplation.

"Aren't you that person? The one from the docks! Captain, do you remember?" An Qiwen quickly recalled and loudly reminded Wu Juemin.

Oh no, why is it them!

Song Ke tightened her grip on the spear in her hand, nervously sidestepping behind Zhuang Qingyan. Her disheveled appearance clearly indicated she had just been through a battle; the lingering fierceness on her weapon hadn't faded. Even a fool could tell that she was an awakener.

The worst part was that she had vehemently denied being an awakener the last time, and now, she had been caught red-handed.

Grandfather was right; people really shouldn't lie.

"It's you." Wu Juemin walked closer, his movements deliberate. Yet, with each step he took, an overwhelming pressure surged toward Song Ke.

"Engaging with mutants, concealing one's awakener identity, leaving the safe zone without permission—your actions have constituted a severe threat to public safety. According to Article 45, Section 11 of the Alliance's emergency regulations, I have the authority to detain you."

Zhuang Qingyan looked at Song Ke. He emitted a formidable spiritual pressure, but she seemed unresponsive. Well, her eyelids drooped, her cheeks puffed out—oh? She's unhappy?

It made sense; she had been so badly mistreated, unable to refute them, and she was probably feeling quite indignant.

Zhuang Qingyan chuckled inwardly. He slowly maneuvered his wheelchair forward, positioning himself in front of Song Ke.

"Hold on a moment, Commander."

"I believe you might be mistaken about something."

Wu Juemin cast him a sidelong glance. "Mistaken? Do you have objections to the facts I've listed?"

Unfazed, Zhuang Qingyan maintained his composure and spun a falsehood, "Commander, my friend here awakened as an ability user just last night. There wasn't even time to report, so how could this be considered concealment?"

Song Ke: "..."

While she had long been aware of Zhuang Qingyan's skill at telling lies with a straight face, every time she personally experienced it, she marveled at his thick skin.

Wu Juemin's gaze was as sharp as a blade, and his cold expression seemed to convey: Do you think I believe you?

"As for leaving the safe zone without permission, ah, that's a misunderstanding. We evacuated with the main forces, but we just couldn't compete with others. We weren't able to get into the Bagua Formation and ended up being unlucky to be left outside."

"And... engaging with mutants," Zhuang Qingyan lifted an eyebrow, his tone light and unhurried, "What law has she violated? The Alliance has never introduced any legislation concerning mutants. Or, are you using the internal discipline of the Azure Phoenix to hold a civilian accountable?"

Wu Juemin suddenly fixed his gaze on Zhuang Qingyan, "Who are you?"

Zhuang Qingyan grinned, "I'm a researcher from the Qinglan Institute, and this is my identification."

He looked completely innocent, almost as if he wanted to etch "I'm an upright citizen" on his forehead.

In silence, Wu Juemin accepted his work badge, glanced down to check, and then instructed the team members behind him, "Go verify it."

"Yes, Captain."

Zhuang Qingyan interjected at the opportune moment, "Commander, we've shown you our identification. It wouldn't be fair to detain us, would it?"

Wu Juemin didn't answer, still fixated on Song Ke. "What about her identification?"

Song Ke's face reddened even more.

Zhuang Qingyan raised an eyebrow. "My friend is from District F."

Wu Juemin asked, "And?"

"The high-ranking officials in the military, aloof and detached from the people's lives, might not fully understand the situation. It's forgivable. People from District F not having identification is just the norm, isn't it? And strictly speaking, the military isn't in charge of matters related to household registration, right?"

He spoke with a sharp tongue, targeting Wu Juemin at every turn. The members of the team behind him were visibly angered, struggling to control their irritability.

Wu Juemin didn't seem to mind. He stopped his subordinates with an unaffected expression. "Indeed, the military isn't in charge of that, but I need to confirm whether she poses a threat."

"Commander, perhaps you're being too broad in your oversight. My friend and I are just law-abiding citizens."

Cooperatively, Song Ke nodded at "law-abiding."

"Captain, verification is complete. The documents are genuine," the team member who had just checked the documents reported back to Wu Juemin, lowering his voice to add, "But his clearance level is very high; we couldn't access specific information."

After listening to his subordinate's report, Wu Juemin calmly scanned the identification in his hand once again. The young man in the photograph appeared thin, with prominent dark circles under his pale skin. While his appearance was elegant, an inescapable sense of melancholy seemed to linger.

Then, Wu Juemin looked at Zhuang Qingyan again. Sitting in the wheelchair, he was slick-tongued, not appearing like a researcher, but rather carrying the authoritative manner typical of those well-born young masters from District B, which Wu Juemin had encountered before—bossy and domineering.

"You're a researcher?"

“Without a doubt.”

“What field of research?”

Zhuang Qingyan wiped away a small droplet of water that had splashed onto the wheelchair. He replied with all seriousness, “I am a senior maintenance technician for the Weather Mimicry System.”

Song Ke: “???”

She was so astonished that she nearly bit her own tongue.

Hold on, weren't you a pharmaceutical researcher just two days ago?

Doomsday Spiritual Artifact Master

Chapter 25: Rainy Night in Hua City (17)

Deceiving Them

“I am a senior maintenance technician for the Weather Mimicry System.”

With this statement, several members of the Azure Phoenix team showed expressions of skepticism and caution on their faces.

Deputy Captain Maeda Jiu's reaction was particularly direct. He let out a cold snort from his nose and muttered something in an incomprehensible dialect.

“Huh? What a coincidence?” An Qiwen clasped his hands behind his head and expressed his astonishment in a peculiar manner.

Was it really such a coincidence? Just when they felt drowsy, someone showed up to provide a pillow? Their captain was struggling with the temperamental mimicry system, unable to shut it down or dismantle it. And now, this person appeared out of the blue, claiming to be able to fix it?

“Not a coincidence,” Zhuang Qingyan explained with conviction, “The T014 mimicry system was due for its annual inspection. Headquarters dispatched us for a business trip, but as soon as we arrived in Hua City, heavy rain began. I suspected that T014 had malfunctioned. However, with the city overrun by zombies, I accidentally got separated from my colleague and couldn’t contact anyone else. That’s why there was a delay until now.”

Separated? Didn’t you eliminate your colleagues one by one? Song Ke silently ridiculed, she remembered it all too clearly!

Wu Juemin’s keen eyes scrutinized Zhuang Qingyan. From the latter’s expression, he couldn’t determine if he was lying.

The ID had been verified, it was genuine, and the photo did indeed match him... Furthermore, he likely didn’t know yet, but if he dared to lie about this matter, he would be exposed immediately.

Wu Juemin was more concerned about one thing: “Can you fix it on your own?”

“Of course.”

“Good, I’ll give you the time. You are responsible for restoring T014 to its original state.”

“Wait a moment, Commander,” Zhuang Qingyan’s smile seemed to hold a deeper meaning, “Under what capacity are you ordering me right now?”

Wu Juemin abruptly raised his head. He was dressed in the standard uniform of the Alliance combat task force, which accentuated his aura of seriousness and coldness.

His voice was deep and authoritative, “I am Captain Wu Juemin, commanding the 11th squad of the Azure Phoenix Detachment, a specialized force under the New Asia Alliance. At the moment, I am

requesting your cooperation in our work to restore the normal functions of the T014 Weather Mimicry System, citing a critical military mission.”

Over a decade ago, the Alliance’s Azure Phoenix forces and the Qinglan Institute shared intelligence and supported each other. They had even collaborated deeply for a time. Wu Juemin’s request as a military officer to cooperate with a Qinglan researcher didn’t seem unreasonable.

Unfortunately, that was over a decade ago. Their relationship now... Zhuang Qingyan sneered inwardly.

Of course, he maintained a polite demeanor on the surface.

“Oh, it turns out you’re from Azure Phoenix. I’ll definitely cooperate then. Captain Wu, could you please lead us to the control center of T014? Oh, that center should be in the nearest branch of Qinglan. The exact location...”

“No need,” Wu Juemin interrupted.

“Huh?” Zhuang Qingyan blinked slightly.

“The control center has already been transported here.”

Wu Juemin lifted his wrist and tapped lightly, summoning the projection interface of his communicator. The air around them distorted for a moment, and the next second, the real-time footage of the Azure Phoenix logistics team appeared. A giant terminal was being escorted by four or five people, moving slowly forward.

Song Ke listened to their conversation absentmindedly, her chin resting on her hand. Once her mind relaxed, drowsiness surged over her. She was almost falling asleep when she saw the novel gadget, instantly widening her eyes.

What is this thing? It looks so powerful!

From the projection, Zhuang Qingyan clearly saw that enormous object. His perfect expression finally showed a slight crack.

So, this was what he meant by “transported here.” Were the people from Azure Phoenix all like this now? Unable to establish a connection to the backend terminal, did they simply resort to forcefully dismantling the central unit of T014?

These overbearing military bandits... No wonder the torrential rain in Hua City had only lessened and not completely stopped.

Zhuang Qingyan took a deep breath. He struggled to suppress the mockery on the tip of his tongue. “If the internal system can’t be connected, I must systematically troubleshoot the problems. It might take a few days.”

“That’s fine. We’ll stay here for a few days,” Wu Juemin nodded, then pointed to Song Ke with his finger. “However, until you fix T014, she must stay with you.”

The captain of Azure Phoenix was inherently cautious. He hadn’t completely dropped his suspicion of Song Ke; keeping her close was another form of surveillance.

...

And so, Song Ke and Zhuang Qingyan followed Wu Juemin and his team to the temporary residence of Azure Phoenix.

Although it was called a residence, it was quite rudimentary. It was even cleared out temporarily using their abilities—an isolated residential building.

It would take some time for the logistics team to bring over the central unit. Song Ke found an empty room, and under Zhuang Qingyan’s “strong” request and disgusted eyes, she cleaned herself up thoroughly, washing away the viscous fluid from her encounter with the swarm of zombie cockroaches.

After tidying up, like a boneless cat, Song Ke stretched her limbs and collapsed onto the bed. Finally, she could rest.

Immediately, she turned over, staring fixedly at Zhuang Qingyan.

“That T, T014, can you really, really fix it?” Song Ke expressed a great deal of doubt. What if this ‘Zhuang’ guy was all talk and no substance?

Grandpa had said that some men loved to brag.

Zhuang Qingyan grinned, “You’re this skeptical of me?”

“And you, you even claimed to be a, a pharma, pharmaceutical researcher,” Song Ke countered logically.

“Hmm...” Zhuang Qingyan appeared calm, “That’s correct, a pharmaceutical researcher, but, part-time.”

“Hmph.” Song Ke huffed.

“Actually, being a senior maintenance technician is also part-time.”

Zhuang Qingyan chatted and joked, then dropped a bombshell, “You guessed it right, I can’t fix any weather mimetic system.”

Song Ke: “!”

Seeing her startled expression, Zhuang Qingyan continued to fan the flames, “So, I was lying to them just now.”

Song Ke: “!!”

Her fingers shifted to the edge of the bed, clutching the strap of her backpack. She seemed ready to make a sudden escape at any moment.

Zhuang Qingyan noticed her subtle movement and smiled brightly, his peach blossom eyes sparkling.

“Don’t worry, T014 doesn’t need any repairs, just turn it off.”

“But I’ll need to put in some effort to bypass the firewall. After all, this isn’t my area of expertise.”

He winked mysteriously, “This time I’m telling the truth.”

The Synoptic Mimetic System (SMS) was a cutting-edge technological creation independently developed by the Azure Phoenix Research Institute. It made its official debut in the year 20 of the New Era, alongside the Lu starships, as a remarkable achievement of the “Glorious Thirty Years.” Its primary function was to monitor and improve weather conditions. When extreme weather conditions reached a threshold or were about to exceed the limits humans could endure, artificial intelligence would calculate and automatically intervene and adjust. For example, if an area experienced extreme heat, the SMS could release rain and cooling measures to alter local weather and maintain climate balance.

Currently, over a hundred SMS units were deployed by the Alliance, distributed across cities ranging from Class B to Class D, covering nearly 90% of regions. The unit near Hua City was numbered T014.

The rampage of T014 was the main cause of the torrential rain in Hua City.

After hearing Zhuang Qingyan’s explanation, Song Ke suddenly recalled the day of the heavy rain and the falling incident at the Starship Harbor. Could these two events be related? She quickly shared her speculation with Zhuang Qingyan.

“You think the collision of the starship caused T014 to go out of control? Hmm... that’s not impossible,” Zhuang Qingyan responded with an ambiguous statement.

Song Ke still had one more question, “Why did, did those people want to, to fix it?”

“If the out-of-control T014 continued running indefinitely, it wouldn’t just affect Hua City. It would flood all the areas it covered. By then, it wouldn’t just be solved by sacrificing Hua City.”

“So complicated...” Song Ke scratched her head, finding it hard to fully understand.

Mischievously, Zhuang Qingyan intentionally reminded her, “You haven’t used up your quota for questions today. Do you have any more?”

Actually, she did, but...

Song Ke absentmindedly touched her wrist through the air, hesitated for a moment, and then couldn’t resist, “That thing, thing from earlier, when you tap it and, and a picture appears, what is it?” She swung her legs excitedly and opened her hands wide, mimicking the action.

“Child~” Zhuang Qingyan chuckled. Only a child would be interested in new toys. “That’s a communication terminal specific to District B.”

“...Oh.” As soon as she heard it was from District B, her excitement waned.

District B, it was separated from CDEF, quite far away. Grandpa had strictly forbidden her to go there.

“Interested?”

Song Ke blinked, neither confirming nor denying.

With a slight movement of his right hand, Zhuang Qingyan conjured a female version of the communication terminal out of nowhere, teasing her like a cat, “Here, take it to play.”

It was a mini-terminal in silver-white. Although communication and positioning were forcibly disabled, other functions could still be used. Song Ke fiddled with the built-in camera, projecting images onto the floor and playing with it happily.

“Is it fun?” Zhuang Qingyan asked beside her.

“En.”

“Do you know who this belongs to?” Zhuang Qingyan added casually.

“Who, whose?”

“Wu Yarou’s.”

“Oh, right~ You know her too.”

“How about it? Remember now?”

Song Ke: “...”

It seemed, perhaps... sort of... she had a vague impression?

Song Ke’s memory rapidly rewound to the day when she first met Zhuang Qingyan. At that time, he had taken advantage of the chaos and taken something from the bodies of the two people. She vaguely remembered expressing strong disdain for such behavior.

She remembered.

Song Ke felt extremely uncomfortable.