

Beautiful 601

Chapter 601 Obliterated

After ending the call with Tang Ziyi, Kilo 2 realized her team's situation wasn't unique. Kilo 3 encountered the same threat. Perhaps because the gang didn't possess night vision devices, the headlights of their convoy could be seen from miles away.

Kilo 2 and 3 were prepared to face the oncoming formation, armed to the teeth. Every member of the team was equipped with specialized weapons. One word was appropriate to describe their prowess—explosive fierceness: Javelin, wire-guided missile, Stinger missile, RPG-7s, automatic grenade launcher, and autonomous mortar. Every operator could explode their targets. The least threatening member among Kilo 2 and 3 might be the heavy-duty machine gunner and sniper, wielding .50 caliber rounds to pierce through average armored vehicles or even hit low-flying helicopters. Kilo 2 and 3 were infantry units, purposely built as weapon squads.

Both teams had already noticed the enemy's fleet. Though not directly, the movement of headlights behind the hills, as the vehicles likely navigated several curves, gave everything away. Athena was also about to report the movements, but when Kilo 2 and 3 succeeded preemptively, she didn't mind staying in the background. She knew that Spirit Fox operators were beginning to suspect her identity—an AI or a group of intelligence liaison officers using a voice changer. So, as long as she could hide her identity for a while longer, she didn't care about taking credit.

Both leaders of Kilo 2 and 3 sharpened their focus after confirming orders from Tang Ziyi. Even though they weren't saints to pity anyone, they weren't ruthless like machines without any emotion. One word from Tang Ziyi sentenced the lives of gangsters. Looking at their equipment, they lamented the fate of having no strength—oh, no, of being enemies of Spirit Fox. They always cheated. They were also looking forward to seeing what more cheats Tang Ziyi could come up with: protection, firepower, and now even spatial devices.

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"Team leader, are we really going to use expensive missiles to destroy the convoy? I bet these gangs don't even have an armored vehicle apart from a few technicals."

"Yeah, boss. Don't you think we're going a little overboard and wasting our President's money?"

Spirit Fox operators exchanged glances as they lifted the Javelin missile uncomfortably. According to the math, a few broken cars couldn't buy a quarter of the missile's cost. Even the wire-guided missile seemed more expensive. Though blowing stuff apart and causing explosions were pure music and enjoyable, they couldn't afford to play wantonly. The battlefield was never a short one. They had to keep fighting for another two days before they could retreat.

Ling Qingyu (weeping with joy): Oh, she didn't raise her girls wrong in vain.

Kilo 2 Team leader listened to her subordinates' suggestions and shook her head. "Don't worry about the money. It's not ours anyway. Our boss is so rich that she spends everything luxuriously, don't you understand? She's never stingy with us. And she also brought so much stuff, piled several meters high in our temporary warehouse."

Ling Qingyu: ...Should she say thank you?

Please gave her back her feeling of gratitude. These girls didn't deserve it. Oh, but what else to do but spoil her girls...

If Ling Qingyu ever knew about their discussion, these might be her exact thoughts.

"Okay, quit the chatter. We're going to ambush when the convoy drives on the straight road perpendicular to us." The leader pointed her finger and quickly drew an efficient plan. Each step was explained succinctly. Considering her subordinates' request to remain frugal, she also limited the use of weapons based on the actual situation. It wasn't too late to switch to Plan B if a heavier target appeared. Spirit Fox never conducted any operations without additional plans, backups, and contingencies if everything failed.

Several minutes later, the combined engine roars grew louder. The first headlights emerged from the curves out of the hills.

"Steady," Kilo 2 leader whispered, patiently waiting for the best moment. The line grew longer until no more cars came out—more than a dozen vehicles to reinforce the city. Obviously, many gang members had been left behind to guard their peripheral bases. Whether the leader decided to scout the situation first before changing plans or had other goals, Kilo 2 didn't bother to speculate.

Once Kilo 2 saw every vehicle had entered the designated spot, she waved her hand. "Fire!"

Two wire-guided missiles flew out of the launcher and landed on the targets in a few seconds. The first and last vehicles blew up, and all the doors inside slammed open. Smoke and fire churned inside and gradually began to engulf the entire frame. The convoy slowed down and came to a sudden halt. The gangs were caught off guard by the sudden attack. Their belated reaction to drive away from the choke point failed because the road was blocked ahead. Even driving backward wasn't possible. The convoy was trapped on the narrow road from both sides.

Pop! Pop! Pop! Pop!

Just then, smaller explosions followed, overturning a few vehicles and shattering glass. If unlucky, the small objects smashed inside the vehicles, causing them to meet the same fate as the first and last ones.

Kilo 2 leader glanced at her subordinate beside her, who pressed the trigger of an automatic grenade launcher as soon as the ambush started. The team had already zeroed in so that the grenades hit the convoy accurately. The explosions staggered from the front to the rear.

Da..Da...Da-da-da—da.

.50 caliber rounds shredded the vulnerable metals. No passengers escaped as bullets ripped through their bodies. Those on the trunks of pickup trucks, who jumped away to find cover, fell, their bodies riddled with pieces. Any lucky ones who managed to escape were dealt with by powerful sniper bullets. Kilo 2 gave no quarter.

The firefight didn't stop until the team leader ordered a ceasefire. The deadly orchestrated symphony turned eerily silent. Kilo 2 leader timed the battle and clicked her tongue. 30 seconds, more or less. Everything was over. The convoy was wiped out.

Vehicles overturned. Tires blown apart. Ruptured pieces of glass as well as burnt corpses littered the area. Burning bodies and cars. The gangsters never expected an ambush ahead. They were too confident and careless.

Job done for Kilo 2, the leader reported the situation back to Tang Ziyi. Further orders prompted them to find and set up a new defensive spot in case they had to fall back since the wreckage might inform the enemies of their presence later.

The darkness surrounded the flames. The crackles and smell of gasoline and roasted meat permeated toward Kilo 2. Time had ticked close to dawn. No signs of sunlight yet.

"Team leader, I don't think I can eat meat in the next few days... Uugh." Someone vomited, eliciting a group chuckle.

"Hahaha..."

Kilo 2 leader shook her head and scolded, "Don't think too much. If you try to visualize it, you'll feel worse."

"Roger...vomit."

"Tsk...tsk...it's not like you haven't killed someone before." Seeing her subordinate retching, the team leader was speechless.

"It's not the same. The smell of barbecue and this ultimate sight...forget about your heartlessness."

"Damn, girl!"

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At Kilo 3's location, the same scene played out. The fight didn't last longer than a minute. They were a little fiercer since the convoy was larger than what Kilo 2 encountered. Plus, the team also deployed several RPGs to destroy the remaining vehicles. Same tactics, but more violent.

All the enemies were neutralized before they dismounted from their iron coffins, apart from very few who had quick reactions but still died from targeted sniping and machine-gun strafing.

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"Copied. Keep up the good work, and don't slack off. Athena will post updates. Command out." Tang Ziyi smiled at Ling Qingyu and signaled the problem was solved. Without this bastard's existence, she knew Spirit Fox operators would never have been able to end the fight in 30 seconds, purely by firepower.

A small-arms ambush would never have worked properly. Heck, even the city encirclement was a dream, and rescuing the primary objectives leaned toward near impossible if the same life-threatening scenario happened.

"Aunt, these gangs even pulled out an arsenal," Athena voiced her concern.

"What happened?" Tang Ziyi asked. Ling Qingyu didn't interfere and entertained herself, swearing never to fight again, particularly after being exhausted tonight.

"Drone footage has captured gang members setting up mortar positions."

"How many?"

"Three to four locations."

"Uh... Any location endangering civilian infrastructure?" Tang Ziyi asked, watching her tablet screen and contemplating.

"Negative, except one on the rooftop. I recommend Kilo 1 fire a preemptive mortar strike while I lase the targets."

"Good idea," Tang Ziyi agreed and radioed Kilo 1 to prepare. The latter was serving as a support element, ready to reinforce any Kilos. After switching roles with Kilo 7, Kilo 1 also took away a few pieces of equipment from the 'warehouse.' Automatic mortars were included in the list.

"Qingyu."

"Huh?" Ling Qingyu turned her gaze.

"Go and order Kilo 7 to select two girls to set up the mortar system here... Quick!"

Ling Qingyu nodded without hesitation and hastened away. She wasn't a troublemaker when a serious operation was at stake.

Tang Ziyi directed, "Kilo 1, mark and prepare for fire mission, 3 mikes.

Chapter 602 Mortar shelling

"Kilo 1, orders received," a reply quickly came back.

"Enemy units are preparing to use mortars to strike at our sisters. I need you to destroy them. Athena will read out the coordinates; you can calibrate them easily with her help. Laser-guided ammunition only. Remember, we only hit our targets, nothing else."

"Roger, Kilo 1 setting up mortar position."

"Move fast, we don't have time. We aren't afraid of being hit, but that doesn't mean civilians are invulnerable. We cannot allow that stain to follow our careers. Understood?"

"Understood!"

Upon receiving Tang Ziyi's orders, Kilo 1 operators swiftly took a stronghold and set up a perimeter, while two members brought two long tubes and boxes of ammunition—shells—from the technicals.

Although the battlefield had moved into the inner circle and they were resting outside, appropriate measures to protect themselves from being flanked were necessary.

Why did Spirit Fox operators know how to operate a mortar system? Well, they didn't. The answer was simple.

Because Athena designed and manufactured the system in a way that the weapons operated with minimal human input, one could learn and familiarize themselves with it easily.

The operators merely needed to know how to differentiate between different shell types and handle them. The rest was up to the autonomous system.

Not to mention, most of the Spirit Fox operators were retired veterans. They could share knowledge and experience about precautions and basic weapon handling with those who didn't understand.

Since Tang Ziyi demanded precision, the operators extracted the laser-guided munitions from the boxes and laid them on the ground. The two placed these shells inside the reloading mechanism.

A 60 mm tube, portable in size, was not comparable to the ones equipped on Kilo 2 and Kilo 3, which used 120 mm—a big one.

The mortar system was connected to their PDA—tablets equipped on the vests. After inputting the coordinates read out by Athena, the two mortars swiveled and adjusted their trajectory automatically.

Before the connection, the operators had to plug in the wire to use the system to avoid any interference. Afterward, the operators could disconnect the wire and use wireless mode or continue with the wire connection.

The manual advised—or Athena recommended—wire connection in a safe environment, which led to the two members staying connected with the mortar system.

This method safeguarded mortar users from enemy fire and allowed them to operate from a safe distance.

Although Athena, Tang Ziyi, and Ling Qingyu had great trust in their technologies, preparedness for the worst was never wrong.

The system was connected with GPS satellites—Ling Qingyu's private ones—which could also take over other satellites if necessary to ensure high accuracy. As long as the operators carefully entered the coordinates, everything was fine.

Of course, even if the operators knew nothing about coordinates, the map generated by Athena for military purposes on the application screen allowed the operators to simply tap on the location, and the system completed its task beautifully.

For now, the enemies' locations were precisely recorded by Athena, and the above mode of tapping on the map wasn't necessary.

In fact, Athena didn't need to call out the numbers. She could directly control the system and complete everything. But that would do good for no one, and she might even expose herself too much.

"One round of shelling! Fire!" the leader ordered.

The two operators placed a few shells on the reloading mechanism, selected the number of rounds, and tapped on the fire button.

Metallic clicks were followed by the whining of the actuators; two metal palms grabbed the shells while the actuators lifted them above the tube and released them into the tubes before snapping back to their original position.

Boom! Boom!

"Another set of coordinates, fire!"

A little shockwave brushed their hairlines into a mess. Their eyes squinted to adapt to the strong airflow. The operators input another set of coordinates and repeated the action.

Boom! Boom!

Two more rounds of shelling ensued, and every location marked by Athena was shelled.

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Tang Ziyi watched the live video footage. The thermal mode kept its eye steady on the enemy's mortars.

She sneered at the gangsters' readiness and left the laser-marking job to Athena. The three drones precisely lased their targets accordingly with the timing of the mortar shelling, which could only be conducted by Athena.

No amount of training could achieve this successful result by humans. Computerized operations by AI changed everything. And Athena wasn't a simple AI.

Tang Ziyi saw a few gangsters calibrating the mortars, their hands moving fast to adjust the height and whatnot.

A pity, her Spirit Fox was faster. In the battle for timing, her subordinates had already fired.

From the feed, her eyes gazed at the white straight line depicting a laser beam from above.

Sure enough, in the next seconds, a shell landed on the mortar position and exploded. The explosion triggered secondary detonations when the gang's munitions also blew up.

A powerful small mushroom cloud elicited a cruel smile from Tang Ziyi. She switched her view to the next targets. Similar scenes unfolded.

Spirit Fox's attack was continuous, leaving no chance for the gang to withdraw, escape, or alert others.

They stood zero chance to counterattack, and these mortars might have been their final straws of despair. Everyone near the explosions was killed or injured severely. They could never survive without rapid medical care, and who would provide it?

Furthermore, a secondary explosion would definitely quicken the process of sending them to death.

"Kilo 1, good effect on target. Enemies neutralized. Brilliant work, girls!" Tang Ziyi wasn't reluctant to praise.

"Thank you, command. What's next for us?"

"Prepare to support other teams if necessary. Otherwise, take a rest. Out."

Tang Ziyi: "Athena, are there any more similar important targets?"

"None at the moment, Aunt."

"Hmm, keep scanning and alert me if you find any suspicions."

"Okay, Aunt."

Tang Ziyi put away the tablet and walked in the direction where Ling Qingyu had left. The battle in the city was completely done.

If the gang knew what was the best option—surrender! Now, Tang Ziyi had a headache and needed to discuss this issue with Ling Qingyu.

Should they accept surrender? It was one thing to do something behind others' backs; it was completely different to expose your own crimes in front of the military.

Although none of the bastards here deserved a light sentence of imprisonment, ordering a pure execution would affect Spirit Fox.

After all, from a psychological perspective, she didn't want a war maniac to appear among her ranks. Control was still essential.

She found Ling Qingyu moving around Kilo 7 operatives, carrying a large tube of 120 mm.

"At ease, girls. Targets have been eliminated," Tang Ziyi informed the hasty Kilo 7 and patted the curious Ling Qingyu.

"Done already?" Ling Qingyu asked with disbelief. She had just stepped out, and the gangsters were killed.

"They aren't professionals to begin with. Why surprised?" Tang Ziyi furrowed her brow. "We are giving face to them that we haven't ended the battle within two hours."

"Well," Ling Qingyu didn't say more. She had to agree with Tang Ziyi's statement. Now only 80 Spirit Fox operators were deployed.

If another 200 more were added, they would have already captured the city by now. Ling Qingyu was eager for the Y-20 aircrafts promised by Gu Yi.

These aircrafts were something she couldn't buy even with huge amounts of capital. Connections and ultimate social skills were essential.

Who knew if she might be able to gain more aircraft from the government through Gu Yi's channel?

In fact, Athena had already hacked the world's network and downloaded the necessary data. With her capabilities, Athena could manufacture any latest technology with ease.

Ling Qingyu was trying to buy time and avoid unwarranted attention. As long as Gu Yi gave her word, she could produce fighter jets, helicopters, and ships to arm Spirit Fox—J-10, J-20, and J-35.

Or, she could find and control a new island or buy one from a poor nation to facilitate her future base establishment.

Actually, she preferred weapons from Country A, in contrast to Country C. Quality versus quantity—who would refuse?

Nonetheless, Athena's products had an extremely high benchmark! It didn't matter where the weapons originated as long as they came from Athena's hands.

So, Ling Qingyu decided to pick the most beautiful ones and equip them in her army. Country R's seemed more appropriate and reasonable to appear in her hands, especially since there were black market sales of aircraft in the past years when the country struggled to revive its economy.

In the future, SU-57s, SU-30s, or SU-35s flying in her name made Ling Qingyu drool. Alyssia's military jets weren't bad either. In terms of design, the Rafale fighter, in particular, was really beautiful.

However, if aircraft from Country A, Alyssia, or Country C popped out of her armed group, those nations would be like wolves investigating thoroughly, affecting her future plans.

These issues were too far away to consider. Ling Qingyu shook her head. Since Tang Ziyi came up with the Virgin Gunship, there might be stealth aircraft too.

"Just as I thought, they are now surrendering," Tang Ziyi delivered the good news.

"Hey, congrats. How did they surrender?" Ling Qingyu smiled and hugged Tang Ziyi, who rolled her eyes at someone who always knew the timing.

"I mean, not all have surrendered. But the waves will affect their psychology. We just need to maintain this momentum and pressure. Gradually, we'll witness a mass surrender."

"What if they can't? You know, sometimes, a dead squad can change their mindset."

"Desertions, mutiny, and chaos among their own ranks. Anyway, all of these will benefit us."

Chapter 603 Surrender

The gangsters worked furiously at their mortars, shouting hurried commands as they adjusted angles and loaded shells. Sweat mixed with grime on their faces as they prepared to fire. Four mortar positions were spread across a makeshift field, each team racing to strike before the Spirit Fox operatives could retaliate.

Unbeknownst to them, the first shell was already inbound.

The whistle came too late.

The first position vanished in a fiery blast as the shell struck dead center. The explosion sent fragments of metal and body parts flying, while the shockwave flattened anything within a few meters. Secondary detonations followed as the gang's ammunition ignited, creating a mushroom of fire and smoke that consumed the entire emplacement.

At the second position, gang members barely turned to look before another shell descended. It punched through their defenses and erupted with deadly force. The mortar shattered into jagged pieces as the operators were thrown backward, their screams cut short by the concussive wave. A second explosion followed when their stockpile of ammunition caught fire, erasing what little remained.

The third team scrambled to abandon their post as they realized what was happening. The shell that landed, however, didn't allow for escape. The explosion obliterated the mortar and sent shards of heated metal ripping through anyone in its radius. The air filled with smoke, screams, and the smell of charred earth.

At the final location, panic had already taken hold. The crew desperately tried to scatter, abandoning their equipment. Yet, before they could make it far, the last shell struck true. The blast hurled bodies into the air, and another secondary explosion erupted as their ammunition detonated.

Each strike was surgically precise, guided by the unwavering eye of Athena. The devastation left no survivors, only smoldering craters and the eerie silence that followed destruction.

One position where the gang attempted to build a mortar position above a residential building wasn't bombed much. Most of the powerful explosions happened above the building's top floor.

Only a secondary explosion created some damage to the building. Nonetheless, Kilo 1's shelling didn't cost any civilian casualties here, except for the frightening shock and vibration, since the operator purposely triggered the proximity fuse mode to ensure the shell blew up before touching any obstacles.

In shelling, there are three modes the operator could select before launching it into the hollow tube:

Normal mode, where the shell explodes on impact.

Proximity fuse mode, where the shell explodes before touching something hard.

Delay mode, where the explosion is triggered after a few seconds chosen by the operator.

This mode of attack ensured the strike reached underground or inside a bunker after going through an obstacle like walls.

The Spirit Fox had completed its work with efficiency, leaving no room for retaliation.

The battlefield had been silenced. The gang's final hope of a counterattack was reduced to ash.

Apart from Kilo 1, every other Kilo team watched in amazement at the destruction and the sound of the aftermath.

Particularly, Kilo 9 and 10 from the military. Based on their experience, they recalled that the weapon used by friendly units should belong to mortar shells.

But, nobody brought one after jumping off the aircraft. The leader glanced at Kilo 4's leader nearby, who also sensed his eyes.

She shrugged and waved her hand. In the eyes of the military faction, Spirit Fox had become more mysterious.

How on earth did they transfer and cooperate with the local forces to transport such weapons?

They had also received multiple ammunition support and realized Spirit Fox's logistics were more skillful than the military's at reaching across borders. Heck, they even suspected technicals were already sent here on purpose.

"Whew, thankfully, our sides owned the artillery warfare," the leader lamented and chatted with Kilo 4's leader on the radio. "But what are we shelling, by the way, if I may ask?"

Since the three teams were working together closely, they also created a separate frequency to facilitate communications.

He was very respectful to the Spirit Fox ladies. His men were the same since they were defeated ruthlessly in several friendly matches.

At the same time, following Kilo 4's advance and their swift, ruthless attacks, they were in awe. Minimal respect came from valuing life, while true respect was earned.

Although, as men serving in the military where many condescended to their female counterparts, Spirit Fox's means conquered everyone in Kilo 9 and 10. These women were built different, born different.

What they didn't realize was their subjective opinions caused them to miss some clues about Spirit Fox operators a few times, where the female operators brought out inhumane forces out of mortal conditions.

For instance, kicking the entire door to fly straight into the room—could they achieve that?

If General Tang missed their judgment, a hidden task requested by the former, she would hammer her furniture repeatedly in anger.

Just a small order wasn't received well?

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Spirit Fox's means of mortar shelling also completely deterred the gang. The battle died down. Many Kilo advances encountered zero blockades.

The enemies had likely withdrawn. Good news to seize new territories without bloodshed or a waste of further energy.

Every operator in the Kilo teams replenished quickly. Because the battlefield had shrunk, a few teams withdrew from combat.

Kilo 4, 9, and 10 stood on the north as containment and reserve. They no longer participated in the battlefield but patrolled the areas already under control to check for any enemies that passed through the net.

Kilo 5, 6, and 8 remained in combat. Four teams were deemed sufficient to eliminate the residue of the gangs.

Yes, that was correct. Athena estimated the opposition numbers to have thinned down to 100 or less. Even if the number surpassed Kilos, they were considered residue.

Furthermore, Kilo 1 and 7 could rotate any element, should fatigue affect the positive situation. Both teams provided support at this moment.

However, this scenario was quite impossible since Spirit Fox operators consumed very little of their energy. They were similar to characters in card games like Captain America and Amazonians.

Of course, metal exhaustion still existed, but it was negligible.

In the next few hours, Spirit Fox met little to no resistance, and the circle kept getting smaller. The girls became more vigilant as victory drew near.

Suddenly, a group of gangsters showed up, but Spirit Fox operators didn't shoot them like before because these bastards were in a group, hands raised above their heads, without any weapons. They also had a few members tied up and controlled among themselves.

They were now frightened to give any excuse for their opponents to release any restraints, not the slightest expecting their opponents to consider human rights.

After all, where had they seen righteous forces bombarding their target among civilian presence? Though the shelling was dead precise, they couldn't bet on this psychology.

Spirit Fox also never regarded any unarmed person as a civilian, apart from the early stage of combat, since civilians should now be informed about what to do and what not to do.

Athena completed multiple stages of broadcasts—SMS, voice calling, and hacking into public speakers, regurgitating multiple times.

These kept going on despite the heat of battle. The latter hacking had now stopped to avoid confusion.

Although reluctant, Spirit Fox members ordered these men to line up and checked through one by one, zipping their hands and allocating them behind the lines. The tied-up people were leaders forcing them as cannon fodder.

Now that all the roads were closed, and the entire syndicate gang had met its demise, most understood they were doomed. So what if they disobeyed? The Warlord, once feared and awed, couldn't afford them now.

He must be thinking of ways to escape. Nobody could take care of their actions. But the enemies killing them in the city could.

Upon understanding the situation, Tang Ziyi sent in Kilo 9 and 10 to watch over the prisoners and investigate everything.

Even if everyone among Spirit Fox wanted to commit extrajudicial killing, Tang Ziyi and Ling Qingyu discussed and decided to oblige by international standards.

Public image and reputation must be standardized when in front of outsiders. Their deeds and actions might have been rumored, but nobody had any evidence, and people could quibble out of trouble.

Nevertheless, Kilo 9 and 10 were military members, helping the mission. Plus, there were more non-combatants present. These factors led Tang Ziyi to restrain her subordinates.

It didn't matter if they killed during gunfire or when the enemy surrendered, meeting their barrels in the battlefield.

Mass execution was completely impossible. Not to mention, both Tang Ziyi and Ling Qingyu didn't want to demonize their girls. Just like the saying, balance was essential.

When you stared at an abyss, the abyss would also stare back. They didn't need to go extreme when unnecessary.

Of course, if Tang Ziyi, Ling Qingyu, and others unearthed the gang's atrocities and years of sins, they wouldn't think so.

Even the military might turn a blind eye to the possible war crimes by Spirit Fox. Anyway, these operators didn't belong to Country C; they were private entities. An utter plausible strength of deniability.

Chapter 604 Morals and legality

After interrogations, the tied-up members turned out to be valuable targets according to the intelligence protocol. They were leaders, helping their superiors oversee the entire gang.

This group wasn't the first. More followed suit, perhaps seeing Spirit Fox displaying leniency. Or maybe they realized they had no chance.

Once-terrified and always-obliging members resisted and rebelled for their lives. As Spirit Fox approached the center, intel about the enemy's leadership appeared among the surrendering ranks.

The warlord had escaped with his confidantes, taking his close family members with him. Although the gang members who wanted to surrender attempted a coup to survive or even gifted their superiors and his close ones to Spirit Fox, which dictatorial leader didn't possess elite personal guards?

Equipment-wise, tactic-wise, and capability-wise, they weren't comparable. When the news of the fleeing warlord reached the ears of the Kilo teams, each one quickened their progress toward the center.

Tang Ziyi requested Athena to search for and track any suspicious targets trying to flee the scene. However, she doubted the enemies had escaped above ground.

They must have built underground tunnels for a worst-case scenario. Her guess was further affirmed as no movements were detected on the surface.

She ordered her team to assault head-on and exploited the momentum. Naturally, Spirit Fox crushed several 'loyal' men and reached the center of the warlord's tall building and the important one next to it.

Each team chose one and breached inside. However, they discovered the former building contained a tunnel network leading elsewhere, and the escapees should have taken this path.

Another Kilo team took over and explored the tunnel, scouting the way ahead with drones. They dared not enter deeply.

Athena wasn't standing by. She released two drones into the air to patrol around, leaving one as support for the ground troops. Satellites above worked hard to find them. None of the heat signatures were ignored, analyzed a thousand times before withdrawing the focus.

After all, the immense heavy computations involved were as simple as her breathing, and Athena didn't waste more than an ounce of her energy. So, how could she try to save one?

Ling Qingyu was also anxious, worried that her system's task would be affected if they missed the warlord and his close aides.

She swaggered in and out, almost causing Kilo 7 operators nearby to feel dizzy. Tang Ziyi, getting annoyed at her disturbing behavior, threw her into another building.

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The tunnel team investigated and, to their horror, discovered the pathway wasn't only an escape route. There were layers and layers of underground labyrinths where many men and women were imprisoned.

There were unrecognizable dead bodies too, as well as those still on operating tables with their organs removed and the skin unsutured. Children weren't spared either.

Organ trafficking was one of the most heinous crimes against humanity. These bastards treated their compatriots and other nationals like food. Vampires existed among human beings.

Although psychologically prepared, the visual image—even from the hornet drone feed—chilled the team members' hearts. Anger heated up, and their eyes toward the gang members became more and more unkind.

After the team reported their findings, the entire group was outraged. Even Ling Qingyu and Tang Ziyi wondered if they should really accept prisoners.

Arguments and discussions about these bastards' treatment ensued. Not even Kilo 9 and 10 expected to hear such tragic and brutal news.

They were dumbfounded when they heard Spirit Fox recommending executions. When they tried to argue, Kilo 4 members' cold gazes forced them to gulp in trepidation.

Until Kilo 4's leader displayed her tablet to the military operators, Wolf members were enraged and reacted more violently.

But the indoctrination and rules of engagement disallowed them to behave wantonly. If they did, what difference would it make?

Finally, Tang Ziyi controlled everyone's mindset and forced them to concentrate on the task. As for the prisoners' treatment, they shouldn't rush. There was still time.

The team navigating underground quickly rescued disheveled people, practicing caution and suspicion even if they appeared innocent. Though unlikely, they couldn't afford to let someone pretending to be a victim slip through.

Poor victims of both genders were escorted out one by one, mostly women. Men were likely tasked with heavy labor; useless ones were killed and had their organs removed.

What was the use of imprisonment apart from training them as slaves in the first place? Perhaps women had other values that brought benefits, after several imprisonments. Men didn't.

Kilo teams, currently free, quit their patrols and assisted in the rescue efforts.

"Damn it," Ling Qingyu cursed, watching the helmet cam video feeds provided by Athena.

She was truly grateful she had accepted the task, lured by Miss System. If they had only rescued the primary objectives and evacuated, she might have regretted her decision after Athena discovered the horrors.

She had anticipated such results, but knowing and experiencing them firsthand was incomparable. Ling Qingyu sat down in the lounge and sighed heavily.

At least many survived because of her actions, although the sight of numerous deaths saddened her. She had prevented a greater tragedy.

The internet was definitely a double-edged sword. Scammed easily, and cruel fates awaited the victims.

This unearthing of a mass organ-trafficking syndicate gang depicted the cruelty of humans. Since she had found one, how many more were there in the world?

Even with stronger regulations of international law compared to her past world, some things never changed.

None of the warlords and his men should escape vengeance. Ling Qingyu called Tang Ziyi. "Ziyi, I want none of these bastards to survive. Can you do that?"

Tang Ziyi didn't reply until Ling Qingyu was about to repeat herself.

"Have you decided? You know you don't need to take this burden."

"I won't feel the slightest guilt even if I order a massacre."

"How about Gu Yi and the others? What would you say to them?"

"If they can't even understand my decision, then we are not fated. The path ahead is much more treacherous," Ling Qingyu smiled bitterly as Yang Qingyue's gentle and loving face flashed in her mind.

"Qingyu, listen to me. You don't need to do this. I'm not afraid of your willpower after all I've seen how you withstood my beating."

"..." Ling Qingyu slapped her forehead and cursed inwardly, continuing to listen to what Tang Ziyi would say next.

"The rest of the girls may not be as strong as you. Do you want to see them in trouble? Maybe they would feel great today, but tomorrow... who knows, some might..."

"Okay, I already understand. What's your advice?" Ling Qingyu knew Tang Ziyi's standpoint.

If she agreed with her, she would have already ordered without hesitation. Since Tang Ziyi had scruples, definitely not related to legality or complicated politics, Ling Qingyu chose to listen. And Tang Ziyi was right. Warriors and killers were merely separated by a thin red line.

Pure killing just for the sake of revenge shouldn't be imposed on her subordinates. Ling Qingyu also didn't like letting these inhumane demons survive.

"Don't ask. I have a plan," Tang Ziyi answered mysteriously. "Actually, it doesn't matter since they would be executed anyway if we escorted them back along with the victims to our country."

"Who knows how the higher-ups might operate under the prisoners' cooperation? The warlord's financial strength wasn't small. Instead of a death sentence, the authorities might reduce it to lifelong imprisonment, along with treatment inseparable from VIP services." Ling Qingyu didn't trust her government one bit.

Hell, she didn't have the slightest confidence in any government in the entire world faced with her situation.

"At least people need to know. If we executed everyone, how could those dead victims rest in peace?" Tang Ziyi replied. "Let's make sure their sacrifice teaches everyone deep lessons about life. Don't you even have the slightest confidence to manipulate their lives after imprisonment?"

Ling Qingyu grinned and rattled off rings of evil laughter. "You persuaded me, Ziyi. Go ahead, my love. I'll be your biggest backing."

Toot.

Tang Ziyi rolled her eyes at Ling Qingyu's ending remarks with a cringe. Damn, this pervert dared to call her love! How courageous!

She had plans that she didn't talk about with Ling Qingyu. Of course, she didn't want her cruel, ruthless image to deepen in Ling Qingyu's mind subconsciously.

"Oh, why am I concerned about her opinion?" Tang Ziyi hammered her forehead lightly. "Oops, Xiao Yue... Xiao Yue. Yue'er, I'd better rest and spend more time with you. I'm about to be led astray!"

....

Meanwhile, the discussions about the prisoners hadn't stopped among the Spirit Fox operators. Even Kilo 9 and 10, who were reluctant initially, were involved.

What was more flabbergasting to any outsiders was that they were conversing in front of the surrendered gangsters.

Numerous torture methods and brutal executions sprouted out of their mouths, spreading fear. Perhaps the Wolf members understood and cooperated.

They weren't afraid that prisoners might rebel. In fact, every operator hoped for it to happen. Come on, give them a reason to pull the trigger.

Unfortunately, the gang members were too smart or frightened to have the slightest spirit of rebellion. Apart from shivering, these bastards barely responded. No matter how Spirit Fox tried to humiliate them by grasping their hair, slapping their faces until they bled, or stepping over them with boots, they endured.

Frightening threats and coercion that should have pushed them over the wall didn't work. What could they do when faced with these prisoners cowering without spines?

After venting their anger, Spirit Fox released their claws and returned to important tasks, a little disappointed yet relieved that they weren't preparing to mow down unarmed men, even if they were lethal and disgusting criminals who deserved death.

This was the reason why they were searching for ways to justify their actions, morally and legally.

Chapter 605 Containment in action

Numerous events followed suit later. Tang Ziyi requested Athena to fly the Virgin to provide support.

If the warlord and his confidants managed to appear outside their encirclement, by the time their group chased them, resulting in more complications, the probability of success would be close to none.

So, the Virgin gunship flying above to track and eliminate the important targets became a better option.

Athena was delighted to participate herself. Although the research for a real body like Elena wasn't successful yet, controlling an instrument and advising others gave people a different taste.

In fact, Ling Qingyu had been monitoring and guiding her—a bit too much, in Athena's opinion. She wasn't a child, hmp!

If Ling Qingyu knew her daughter's mindset, she would realize that Athena had now reached a rebellious age.

Knowing her daughter's resentment, she relinquished tight control and slowly allowed Athena freedom.

When she learned from Athena that Tang Ziyi had authorized her daughter to enter the battlefield and even kill people, Ling Qingyu frowned and sighed helplessly.

What would come in the future would arrive. It was best to accept and adapt rather than resist and further create a crisis.

Athena somehow guessed her mother's ambition and lofty goals. Fortunately, under proper guidance from Ling Qingyu to prevent her daughter from going astray, Athena's chain of ideas and methods closely resembled those of a normal human with upright and righteous morals.

Although she thought that if Ling Qingyu wanted the entire world, it shouldn't be so messed up and complicated like her mother planned, it should have been very easy, provided her mother was willing to accept her conduct.

Seize and send out nukes and obliterate the major powers. Chaos and crisis are the ladder.

As for nuclear decontamination and environmental damage, Athena believed that with several talents from recruitment and her powerful computation, restarting the entire world under Ling Qingyu's control wasn't impossible.

Or, spread viruses that could drive the world into chaos and emerge as heroes. Maybe, even wipe out the entire population and clone people from genetic collections after no one apart from her mother's group survived the catastrophe.

Several generations later, these new humans wouldn't realize what had happened and would obey them. All of this must be supported by a strong technological foundation, which could be realized in a few years.

Of course, these thoughts were merely fleeting as Athena spoke with Ling Qingyu, who felt that she should accompany her daughter's actions.

Learning humanity, ethics, and morals—the minimum boundary and self-control as a living being—though Athena wasn't alive as an AI technically, since she felt she was genuinely alive, then she was.

Her mother had pointed out that all that matters are consciousness and the actions complementing the former.

Ling Qingyu would have patted her chest in relief if she ever found out about her daughter's fleeting plans for the world. Luckily, she had raised and taught her child appropriately—a living being, not a tool.

She would also exclaim that her daughter's methods seemed to replicate apocalypse movies she had seen in her previous life.

She wouldn't even have the face to commit suicide if that ever happened when Athena staged Resident Evil, Skynet, and so on.

Anyway, Ling Qingyu, who was ignorant, happily chatted with her daughter, following her perspective of crossing the borders without alerting the two nations.

With Athena's powerful control over the electronics, the Virgin gunship didn't exist on any human's radar as long as it wasn't detected by human eyes.

While several Kilos in the city were busy with their own affairs—clearing houses, searching and rescuing, tracking escapees, and appeasing the public.

Though civilians weren't directly injured or hurt by Spirit Fox, the gang's indiscriminate means meant that there were casualties for certain. They already recorded 100 people wounded by stray fire or shrapnel caused by explosions.

The battle in the city had subsided, but the containment teams had just started. Kilo 2 and 3 repelled and eliminated two waves of enemy encroachment.

After so much time had passed, the vibrations and sounds owing to explosions in the city raised suspicions and alerted those outside, residing in their fortifications or barracks.

The uncertainties were further confirmed when they lost contact with the vanguard units they sent. Something had happened to the warlord and the city.

Loyalty in the gangster army wasn't trustworthy. The reason why these men sped up to rescue or reinforce could be attributed to several factors:

One, nobody was sure if the warlord and his confidants survived or were testing them despite losing communications.

Two, the cake of the syndicate gang clearly suggested that infighting was certain for power. Every leader needed a righteous cause and prestige.

Three, each was fighting for the warlord's favor. Everyone believed the city's fall was impossible because they didn't track any huge army infiltration. Their peripheral sentries weren't useless.

A small contingency should never be able to conquer the city. The chaos and explosions they heard from afar could be from small forces interfering in their city.

These thoughts and arrogance didn't last long in the next few hours, particularly when they witnessed the trails of a convoy in destruction.

Their hearts hung in their throats. What kind of existence destroyed everything in the convoy without raising any alarms?

From the positions of vehicles and corpses, they knew their teammates barely reacted or didn't react at all.

As their columns slowed down and vigilantly advanced, an eerie whistle blared in their ears before the front vehicles exploded. More whistles howled in their ears; the call of death loomed over everyone.

"Enemy attack!"

"Stay away from the formation!"

Boom! Boom!

The ground trembled, the soldiers on the ground lost balance, and they panicked. Rains of meteors shrieked from above and pounded across the column.

Whizz. Whizz. Pap. Pap.

Red tracers of larger calibers decimated their formations. Veterans survived by quickly finding cover and staying prone.

Unlucky ones got shredded into pieces. Those who were shouting to control the crowd were sniped, heads missing from their bodies or large, irreparable holes in their torsos.

A few were flung off like dolls rolling in the mud, their body temperature dissipating. The mortar shelling never stopped.

Even missiles flew to hit the surviving vehicles. Of course, the enemy's attack caused the formation to roughly determine the ambusher's position.

The technicals turned their machine guns to spray at any suspected spots. However, this resistance was futile, as more were blown up quickly, either by an incoming missile or a group of .50 caliber bullets. A few minutes later, the entire column experienced the same fate as the previous convoy.

By now, the gangs understood and reacted forcefully, mobilizing all their soldiers. The enemy's firepower was too demonic. Where and how in the world did they bypass their security?

Unlike before, the new formation didn't rush into the kill zones like idiots. Bypassing was impossible; there was too much vegetation, which slowed the group and even favored the enemy's blockade.

Only passing through the road was the quickest route to the city. A few adjutants calculated the enemy's possible location and ordered their own mortar shelling.

Several minutes later, 120 mortar tubes began to rain near Kilo 2 and 3. Spirit Fox operators looked above and calmly whistled at the explosions.

The shells weren't even close. Not to mention, they weren't accurate either. However, they couldn't afford to stay any longer under indiscriminate shelling.

Although they wouldn't die, they would definitely die from embarrassment if other sisters recorded their 'death,' particularly Athena, who was known to be mischievous and spread others' shame.

The two team leaders reported to Tang Ziyi and requested further support. They withdrew and fortified another location using a defense-in-depth strategy.

"Air support is on the way. We'll take care of the mortars. Stick to the original plan," Tang Ziyi replied straightforwardly.

"Yes, Boss!"

"Copy that."

Ling Qingyu glanced at Kilo 7 below, quickly manipulating the mortars. From the radio chatter, she knew Kilo 7 was ordered to pound 120 mm shells on the enemy's artillery.

They had no counter-battery radar, but Athena stood on their side. The satellites monitoring had already detected the enemy's mortars as soon as they started firing.

Coordinates were ready. Drones were sent out to lase targets. Accuracy was Spirit Fox's motto. Though non-combatants shouldn't live near the barracks, lowering the tolerance as much as possible might seem extreme, yet Spirit Fox favored the best outcomes.

Ling Qingyu also accompanied Kilo 7 in a room nearby to ensure ample ammunition supply, acting as a humanoid Doraemon. At Tang Ziyi's request, Ling Qingyu extracted several similar drones to help in the tracking task.

The first artillery duel began once the drones arrived at their destinations. Once Kilo 7 struck, there was no chance for the opponents.

Sure enough, Tang Ziyi smiled again, watching the destruction on the video feeds. One round decapitated the enemy's artillery capability.

She ordered four more rounds and asked Athena to investigate the target's HQ. The drones cast tight nets. The action also aimed to search for any civilians.

The slightest appearance of prostitutes could postpone her action. Maybe these women could become numbers quickly. If she had no other choice and her group faced threats, Tang Ziyi wouldn't care about civilians.

However, she had the means and advantages. Seeking victory without scruples was something she disdained. Perhaps Tang Ziyi had been slightly affected by Ling Qingyu's kindness and consideration, or her original intentions and childhood ideals had sprouted back.

Following Tang Ziyi's words, Kilo 7 typed on their tablets and let the machines complete the job.

Boom! Boom!

"Yeah! Kill those bastards." The crowd cheered with excitement. Their deeds were frightening and incomprehensible to those who knew every action was causing deaths.

Chapter 606 Athena's massacre

Even though everyone in Kilo 7 couldn't directly assess the battle damage caused by their actions, drones provided convenient footage.

The girls turned their gazes toward the small tablet inside the vest and clicked on the live video feed.

They cheered and high-fived one another. Ling Qingyu kneaded her forehead, wondering if making a group of flowers with thorns experience real battle had been a mistake.

The prior Spirit Fox operations to handle the criminals in Province N couldn't be attributed to war experience.

Here, artillery shelling and more ruthless, advanced counterattacks from the gangsters weren't much different from the terrorists she had known so far.

Enemies used RPGs and mortars. Most operators hadn't faced these threats before, except those who followed Tang Ziyi to clear out the Tiger Gang stronghold, where they fended off heavy machine guns and rockets. Tonight's mission was a real war, particularly a clearance operation in urban combat.

And they did everything well and coped easily. These results were based on their trust in their equipment, personal strengths hurdling around the limits of human capability, and their immense, gruesome training.

In the end, Ling Qingyu didn't say much. She let these girls vent their stress from a sustained period of combat. People had been fighting for more than six hours continuously. What was wrong with having fun at the expense of the enemies being killed?

Not to mention, these gangsters didn't deserve any mercy. Every girl still hadn't suppressed the anger inside after watching the horrific footage from the tunnel network below the city.

The enemy headquarters understood their opponents had artillery firepower. Their mortar units were obliterated without any warning.

Not even a missed first round of shelling. Everyone panicked and tried to scout around to see if there were any spotters nearby.

They scrutinized the surroundings but never looked up. The real culprit hovered silently above, watching as their allies suffered and were defeated.

The group—gang army or warlord military, whatever they were called—would never understand that times had changed.

The old tactics and strategies ceased to work against the new. Improvising to keep up and advance or staying stable and never changing, leading to extinction—either mindset depicted separate futures.

When the HQ wanted to alert their vanguards that artillery support would no longer keep up, they realized they had lost communications.

Trying several times and using numerous methods, they knew the enemy had the advantage in electronic warfare. Their bad premonitions deepened as top leaders sighed helplessly.

It was over.

Their subordinates were doomed. Of course, a few tried hard to seek alternatives to mitigate the oncoming disaster. Some sent motorbike messengers.

Anyway, it wasn't the first time they had experienced a communication cut-off. The leaders and senior figures were mostly old veterans who had waged civil war against the government.

Their long years of bloodshed and suffering weren't for nothing. In fact, each had a lofty goal and ideal that had launched the rebellion.

Nevertheless, after several decades, they had lost hope and begun to indulge—from freedom fighters to tyrannical oppressors for self-interest.

Even if their mindsets had withered, they could still adapt to difficulties. However, everything they amended was ultimately useless.

The convoy cheered as their comrades supported them with artillery, clearing any awaiting ambush. How much they hoped their enemies had died from the bombardment!

They resumed their march and called out coordinates to suppress their opponents from even showing up, taking no chances of risking an ambush.

To their dismay, they received no replies and trembled. Several attempts brought no response. The mood sank, but the leaders issued an ultimatum to nearby militants not to spread fear.

Something was amiss, but they had to keep advancing. This decision led to the complete decimation of the convoy.

The same scenario occurred on other roads. HQ sent two formations, but now everyone had lost contact.

Sure enough, in the next few minutes, hell fell upon them. Chaos and cries for help consumed the entire group into oblivion. Fifteen minutes later, silence resumed.

Tang Ziyi shrugged noncommittally at the achievements of Kilo 2 and 3. Both teams were over-equipped. If they couldn't eliminate the enemy convoy, advancing on vehicles along the road like idiots, Tang Ziyi had numerous training systems in mind to reform Spirit Fox.

Fortunately, Kilo 2 and 3 were capable enough to operate on their own. The enemy commander's brain must have been filled with water, Tang Ziyi suspected.

Even knowing there were ambushes to slow down the advance, they never thought about marching cautiously or slowing their pace—like spreading out across the vegetation to scout the periphery before the main element moved on.

Heck, no.

In fact, the defense-in-depth strategy was horrifying to any foes because its impact on morale brought trauma, further weakening the unit when it reached its destination.

Furthermore, the geography in the vicinity made the strategy perfect for implementation—curved roads, hills, and thick vegetation.

Of course, even if the enemy responded accordingly without mistakes, Kilo 2 and 3 had countermeasures. Things might have gotten complicated, elongating unnecessary battles, but they had no problem holding their ground.

Not to mention, Virgin was flying toward the area. The gunship's existence was a substantial force multiplier.

"Aunt, I found a group of motorbikes 2 km away from the city in the east."

Athena's report drew Tang Ziyi's attention. "Show me on the screen."

Without her manipulation, the tablet directly displayed the feed Athena focused on. Tang Ziyi frowned and exhaled.

She had already expected her encirclement to fail but never guessed they would manage to escape from the city.

Based on the route, they weren't taking proper roads. The escapees were bouncing up and down on the rough terrain, apparently trying to hide.

Too bad their headlights were like lighthouses flaunting their positions, easily seen from the drones above. The group drove slowly and used low lights, but these were completely visible from the drone's perspective.

They seemed to be smuggling abroad to the neighboring country in the east. Damn, these bastards' networks were endless.

"When will you arrive?" Tang Ziyi asked.

"Within 2–3 minutes," answered Athena.

"Finish them when you fly here."

"Yes, Aunt."

Tang Ziyi didn't care if there were wives and children among these bastards. Surely, from the investigations, there was no way they wouldn't know.

Even those children might grow up crooked, thinking that oppressing and bullying people to the point of slaughter was their natural right. They might also take over their father's businesses as part of their family's control over the properties.

As much as she hoped that people who were raised wrong could still maintain minimum humanity and dignity, she was disappointed. Spirit Fox operators who had breached and assessed SSE—sensitive site exploitation—found evidence to the contrary.

Athena had also helped by quickly surveying data via devices handed to the operators to hack into electronics.

All the data proved none in the top echelon, including family members, were innocent. To some extent, a few might not deserve death, but they didn't deserve to live on the planet.

To prevent the syndicate gang's rebirth, she intended to destroy everything related. Although there was nothing she could do to the network in the foreign land, cutting off one snake's head was good enough to ruin this repulsive chain of business.

Athena's Virgin arrived and spotted a group of motorbikes. The small trails must have been artificially prepared as escape routes. They were prepared enough.

The gunship's rotor slashes caused the group to pause and turn off their lights, unaware they were as bright as sunlight in the dark on thermal scans.

Without hesitation, Athena aimed the cannon underneath the chin and fired. Rapid thuds of continuous booms echoed across the terrain.

On the ground, smoke and debris of vegetation ripped apart along with explosions from the autocannon rounds, purposefully designed to penetrate armor and blow apart.

Following the heat signatures, Athena directed the turret and strafed the entire group. She poured in a second round to ensure everyone was dead before stopping.

There were very few intact corpses. Most had missing limbs or other body parts. Some had destroyed weapons near their bodies. These likely belonged to the guard units protecting the high-level figures.

Smoke slowly dissipated from the cannon muzzle. Below the helicopter, strings of bullet casings were spread evenly across the ground. Some nested on tree branches and thick leaves.

"Aunt, targets destroyed."

"Good job, Athena," Tang Ziyi praised and gave another order. "Go to the location I've marked. I want you to destroy these bases completely. Ensure non-combatants and irrelevant individuals aren't injured as much as possible."

"Will do. It's not that difficult."

"Don't worry; I won't blame you even if you hit innocents. Just do your best. There are no wars without innocents dying, unfortunately," Tang Ziyi sighed. "Try to control the damage degree. You're authorized to use everything in the gunship to fulfill the task."

"Gladly."

...

Ling Qingyu's expression didn't change much as she watched Athena massacring helpless people. She didn't comment on the action and instead conversed warmly about Elena's situation, even to the point of summoning the latter to the chat group.

Seeing Athena and Elena bickering nonstop, Ling Qingyu smiled.

Chapter 607 The end (edited)

Thank you for your patience. Your author was answering an exam yesterday and I only prepared myself 1 and a half days ahead xD. So, let my head cool a while. I'm still writing and will delay my updates for a while. For those who have reached this far, appreciate your support, your actions melt my heart.

While Athena fought with her sister, her attention still remained on Tang Ziyi's command. The latter knew Ling Qingyu was watching and didn't react.

"Scan the bases that I've marked, and once cleared of any innocent bystanders, you're clear to engage. I don't want the bases decimated; I want the threats gone."

"Don't worry, Aunt. I'll refill additional items to help achieve what you said when I return. There are swarms of drones ready to buzz."

"Good, go ahead."

"Roger."

The Virgin gunship tilted in the direction of the enemy's bases, most of which were directing artillery fire over friendly units.

A few kilometers away, Athena unleashed the drones from the bay. The buzzing of annoying screeches plus the rotor slashes broke the peaceful dawn.

Small black dots with a one-foot diameter whooshed just above the treetops. The swarms were Athena's eyes, meant to investigate these bases.

Once clear of any innocents, missiles were the next to follow. Of course, this would only occur if the remaining swarms of drones failed to finish the targets.

After all, each drone contained ordnance sufficient to kill a person—a precision strike that could even pause and hover before honing in on its target.

There was merely a slight chance to dodge such attacks, worse when there were swarms to complement them.

Sure enough, the noisy buzzing attracted attention as the swarm swooped in. Athena controlled the drones, hitting any armed targets or those affiliated with the armed gangsters in the city.

"What's the matter with the noise?"

"I don't like the sound of that. Hey! Watch out!"

"Oh shit!"

The armed militias backed a couple of steps in panic as the noise increased. When they witnessed their comrades suffer small explosions and fall to the ground, cold and motionless, their fear burst, forcing them to run.

However, it was no use, as the remaining drones reaped their lives. Some resisted and tried to fire, but the targets were too small and too fast!

One after another, the men were killed. They couldn't run; they couldn't resist. The heightened mixture of emotions drove them to madness.

Other outposts and bases suffered the same fate. Drones swooped in and took away many lives. Before long, the cries and explosions quieted down, then a small missile rushed in to detonate, completely destroying the strongholds. Soil was kicked up and rained dust over the surroundings.

Dozens of small and medium bases that were meant to defend against the country's army were utterly destroyed.

Naturally, when human lives were at stake, innovation and spontaneous adaptations happened.

Some managed to find ways to survive the swarms, using curtains and plastics as obstacles or even sticks to beat them down. Even if the drone blew up, the damage level was too small to injure a person from a distance.

It required a direct close impact to kill its target. This was the only downside of Athena's drone swarm.

After a couple of trials snooping in to detect any unrelated personnel, like civilians, and once Athena confirmed it was clear, another type of drone on standby swooped in, provided there were dangers to innocents present nearby. If not, blowing up the entire base didn't seem like a bad outcome.

The reserve drones carried larger munitions—a few were equipped with thermobaric grenades to blow and burn everything, a miniature version of cluster bombs.

A few of these were spared when small drones discovered non-combatants in the vicinity. Athena could only eliminate threats with suicide swarms, saving the lives of innocents by throwing in more numbers until the enemies' defenses were overwhelmed and their barricades began to lose effectiveness.

Fire burned and spread to the vegetation nearby. Smoke flared upward, visible in the lens of the thermal camera. Athena's eyes were the satellites, drones, and the Virgin itself.

Survivors ran away from the bases that were spared from the missiles' wrath. These people were deliberately let go by Athena. Most were women, who had served as playthings, and men likely dragged away from their homes and forced into hard labor.

Athena guided them with drones. These survivors were frightened at first, having seen their captors and bullies killed by small machines.

Athena was patient enough to hover and gesture with the drones' flying patterns to send the message to follow, leading the crowd to a safer area.

None of the strongholds survived and withered away in flames. Soon, fire would engulf the entire bases. Athena, by her mother's standards, fulfilled her tasks.

Back at headquarters, Tang Ziyi put away her worries as she personally watched Athena wipe out the entire armed groups and militias belonging to the syndicate gang.

No more threats remained around Spirit Fox. Small pockets had no means to strike at the task force, which would soon be busy with other matters.

Her only concern was the country itself and the neighboring armed families. Surely, after noticing the ruins here, these dogs' noses would sniff around.

It couldn't be helped that this area would become a delicious pie for numerous factions to fight over. Even if she didn't like the country's government, she had to admit that a better future for the residents lay in the hands of the legitimate government.

While these corrupted bastards might continue engaging in the same industry—since the lucrative drug trade and gambling industry earned huge income—at least on the surface, the human trafficking network that Tang Ziyi detested should be paralyzed.

The intelligence gathered from this operation would be handed over to Country C so they could fight against the criminal network on their own.

Spirit Fox's ruthless and swift entry gathered a lot of information that even the world's elite special forces couldn't obtain. The operation ended so rapidly that the gang couldn't destroy evidence before they escaped.

Oh, they never really did. Everyone was buried here. Tang Ziyi thought about the deals with Gu Yi and future cooperation between the two parties. Tonight's operation shouldn't make Gu Yi's confidantes too vigilant about them, right?

In any case, showing some strength wasn't wrong to avoid grievances. Although staying humble and low-key seemed like the best option, displaying relevant power solved everything, including future blockades that might bring headaches.

...

While Tang Ziyi was deep in thought, Ling Qingyu greeted her and requested Athena's help to transport the girls she had rescued before the battle began.

Yes, she had nearly forgotten those poor girls and left them behind. Although these girls had been with Kilo 1 before they departed to fight, replaced by Kilo 7 now, she reckoned the girls should fly together with Athena to rest.

Of course, during the Kilo's rescue work, she asked about any urgent victims who needed emergency treatment. A few reported the lists, and Ling Qingyu almost regretted inquiring.

Fortunately, Athena comforted her by saying the cargo space was enough to carry the reported number of people, despite its role as a gunship.

Ling Qingyu dearly hoped to see the transport version soon since the Virgin was too capable in her eyes. She would truly own a perfect armed wing and suddenly missed Azi.

This beautiful pilot must want to ride the machine and beg her. Oh, thinking of her cuteness, Ling Qingyu coughed.

After a while, Spirit Fox operators delivered seriously injured victims to Kilo 7's location, most of whom were compatriots trafficked and forced into labor.

The Virgin landed on a clear patch of land, its rotor still spinning. Ling Qingyu called the rescued girls to board the gunship and told them to listen to Athena's instructions.

At the same time, she requested their help in caring for the injured passengers who would come later.

Once loaded, Athena rose and flew away to the hospital. The girls and the patients would be handled by Su Ruomei, Jiang Yu, and Xiao Yu in Province N. She trusted their abilities.

Ling Qingyu connected with Gu Yi to inform her about the current situation. Her mother-in-law wasn't surprised to hear about another success, but her heart still quickened at the thought of her decision to trust Ling Qingyu to complete the tasks.

The results of the successful operation were more than enough to raise her prestige and reputation among the elite circle. Nobody else had been able to connect with Spirit Fox, but she did.

Not to mention, she was able to issue commands, albeit indirectly. Politely, Gu Yi comforted Ling Qingyu like an elder soothing her child and promised genuine rewards.

Ling Qingyu heaved a sigh of relief after obtaining what she wanted. The promise of a ministerial position was more than enough for Spirit Fox to conduct similar missions ten times over.

Now, she had achieved a one-for-one—an equal exchange. Gu Yi offered far more than she needed to, but considering the probable future gains discussed with Ling Qingyu, everything was natural and understandable.

Back and forth two more times, Athena evacuated several individuals requiring emergency care and sent them to Doctor Mo.

The sunlight crept out of the horizon, shedding its morning light. The fog from the battle, combined with the light of dawn, permeated the area, creating a ritualistic beauty of nature. In contrast to the cold night, warmth seeped into everyone's skin. Spirit Fox operators and Wolf members prepared themselves to regroup and leave.

Though the plan was originally set for three days, why should they always stick to it? The faster the evacuation, the better—particularly when foreign groups with vested interests were eyeing the area.

First, they had to separate any hidden ruffians among the population before extraction—a long convoy heading toward Country C's border. Arrangements had already been made to facilitate border travel and ensure access. These matters fell under Gu Yi's and General Tang's intervention.

It would be arduous to catch the suspects again if they accidentally entered Country C, as there would be no crime or evidence to charge them with.

Thus, everyone carefully investigated and identified the suspects. As expected, several individuals were pointed out by many victims, particularly the notorious ones.

After enduring torture and humiliation multiple times, and realizing that the once life-threatening gang members were no longer a danger, a small percentage of victims regained the courage to point out the suspects.

Of course, not every allegation could be trusted entirely. It wasn't new for Spirit Fox to encounter false accusations. They paid serious attention but required evidence to back up the claims.

The suspects were dragged away, and those with obvious signs of guilt were "interrogated" in accordance with Spirit Fox's SOPs—ahem—aka—forceful interrogation techniques, also known as torture.

Wolf members helping nearby raised their brows, exchanged glances, and gulped. They understood the saying that ruthless women were scarier than men.

Even if they abhorred violence and barbaric torture, they weren't foolish enough to intervene. Plus, they had seen that Spirit Fox operatives never went overboard in their actions.

Offering a little trust and turning a blind eye was helpful for future cooperation: making a friend rather than an enemy who might hold a grudge over some unworthy gangs? Any sane person knew which choice to make.

Chapter 608 Intruder

Every Kilo began to busy themselves as they investigated deeper and screened out members of the syndicate criminal organization hiding within the crowd.

Under Athena's sifting and Spirit Fox's talent, they had no escape. Actually, Athena didn't even need to assist since the girls themselves were skillful enough to detect and extract essential information.

Although the whole day hadn't passed since the beginning of the operation and Ling Qingyu considered three days to complete the tasks she had in mind, as long as Spirit Fox operators finished separating the innocent from the guilty and stored vital intelligence for government enforcement to work on, they could return sooner.

Tang Ziyi and Ling Qingyu sat at the makeshift table and took out the ready-made meals. The others, except those responsible for sentry duty, were eating.

Everyone had been moving nonstop the entire night and needed energy to sustain progress.

"I thought we needed three days to eliminate everyone, but this..." Ling Qingyu, despite her special operator's suit, ate elegantly and spoke.

"It's a rough estimate, and I believe my numbers are correct. It's just that we cheated a lot." Tang Ziyi almost laughed as she replied.

This syndicate gang, which had reigned terror, must be the unluckiest pessimon to be chosen by Spirit Fox.

First, the operators chosen had surpassed normal human limits and could be classified as super soldiers. There were also two humanoid tanks—Ling Qingyu and Tang Ziyi—to wreak absolute havoc, particularly as their daring rescue disrupted the gang's every arrangement and backhand plan.

Second, the new armed gunships obliterated the consequences of their raids without breaking a sweat. Well, it did cost so many yuans, but Ling Qingyu had long since lost her frugality.

Third, because of the rapid progress, their worries about foreign intervention were minimal. Time stood by their side.

"When can we go back?" Ling Qingyu remembered the most concerning issue and asked.

"This evening at the latest. Of course, if you want to stay longer—"

"Only a ghost will stay here. I miss the luxury and comfort of my home," Ling Qingyu interrupted.

"I bet you miss the beautiful courtesans' massage service," Tang Ziyi scorned and rolled her eyes.

"It's not like I don't know about your frequent visits as well."

"What do you know? I'm busy with whatever you ask, and I need some leisurely relaxation. Can't I even ask for that?" Tang Ziyi excused herself without blushing for even a microsecond.

Ling Qingyu gave up bickering and looked at the devastated yet energetic scenes outside. Destroyed infrastructure yet the people, unshackled from tyranny, loved the smell of freedom.

Only those who had lost the preciousness would understand what a prize and luck it was to enjoy true humanity.

The women, in a disheveled state, felt a sense of relief fill their bodies. Though the scars couldn't be removed, they survived.

Compared to those who never had the chance to breathe again, they were lucky. Likewise, men who experienced the worst of human suffering at the hands of demons hidden in human skin gazed at the perpetrators with hatred.

Many had lost their loved ones—friends and families. What struck them the most was the guilt of bringing in or ensnaring innocents into the evil den.

They were the ones who had killed these innocents, who were full of hope for their future, literally shattering their dreams and trust.

Of course, Tang Ziyi and Ling Qingyu didn't plan to let them go easily just because they were coerced, despite many in this party. They were hateful yet pitiful as well.

Only the law could treat them fairly and ensure they got what they deserved. At least, their guilt would lessen when they faced punishment, even if it was light.

In fact, Spirit Fox operators were talented enough to serve as political commissars, delivering on-the-spot psychological counseling and shining bright hopes to minimize the crowd's impact.

Although nobody feared something going wrong with the large crowd, if it could be avoided, why not prevent something bad from happening in the first place?

Hours passed, and noon arrived. All Kilos conducted Tang Ziyi's requests without fault. They had initiated three rounds of screening to ensure no enemies were missed in their search.

Athena's verification eased the two leaders—Ling Qingyu and Tang Ziyi. The former was busy with logistics and recharging drones.

The latter paid great attention to the surrounding foreign forces in the vicinity. The slightest detail of changes attracted her eyes whenever she received Athena's reports.

Even though all of them were false alarms, she treated them with care. In fact, Kilo 2 and Kilo 3 had discovered a few scouting elements snooping around.

The fire and sound from last night must have raised suspicions. Also, when they couldn't connect with their own agents inside, the scrutiny was now or never.

Tang Ziyi wasn't naive enough to believe their actions could be hidden seamlessly—especially when surrounding forces were so close to one another.

Maybe they didn't yet know of Spirit Fox's complete takeover. The Virgin Gunship's rotor slashes as well as the cracks of gunpowder were sufficient for them to take action.

If they investigated further, everything hidden would be unveiled. Naturally, Tang Ziyi could order her subordinates to kill everyone to prevent leakage, but was it worth it, or was it necessary?

She didn't mind offending others because she had no fear. Ling Qingyu's backing gave her immense confidence.

However, it didn't align with her conduct to involve unrelated factions and cause further troubles in diplomacy. Spirit Fox mustn't behave arrogantly, despite their strong capital, to prevent future crises. They hadn't yet reached the state where they could.

Besides, if Tang Ziyi killed these sniffing parties without appropriate reasons, the girls might have doubts and dislikes.

Spirit Fox: No, we don't! We want piu piu!

...

In the available spaces, intact buses, vans, and trucks were parked. All Kilo members prepared to evacuate en masse. Priority was given to their compatriots, naturally.

Of course, there were victims from other nations who were defrauded and forced to stay here. They couldn't release them and let them escape on their own. That would be too irresponsible.

Unlike those protagonists who liked to throw away victims without the slightest care as if afraid of moral kidnapping, indulging in their desires without any guilt, Ling Qingyu would never copy this madness.

Not that it was wrong, but as a human being, great strength must correspond to great responsibility—not imposed by others but willingly following one's humanity, provided no dangers or insurmountable problems arose.

She wasn't a Virgin character. Well, maybe, but whatever. She admitted some actions might be too saintly, but they were only for those who deserved her care and love.

For enemies, she was far crueler and ruthlessly extreme. Any of her enemies had to be crushed. To live good and righteous, one must know how to be despicable and evil.

In addition, these righteous and responsible acts didn't cost her a sweat or pose any trouble. Interestingly, she gained far heavier advantages than her energy input.

By now, Kilo teams had arranged the victims as well as transportation. A group of two handled the lists of people in each vehicle. Leaving aside those who made a living here or grew up here with families, the task force would only take away the victims to fulfill the rescue mission.

Perhaps, the civilians who prospered and grew up here might even harbor hatred because their businesses were affected. Who knew?

After all, it was a fact that Spirit Fox had flushed in and destroyed everything. It would take a while before things recovered.

Actually, Spirit Fox operators detected unhidden malice among several civilians. The sisters were unscrupulous in their searches and interrogations, further raising repulsion and detestation from public sentiment.

Many of these civilians were indeed linked to the criminal organization, but not enough to provoke Spirit Fox's wrath.

The girls ignored them, not minding at all that they had offended a group of people.

These accounts reached Tang Ziyi's ears, who shrugged helplessly. In life, nobody could satisfy everyone—not even those gods deified in the classics.

She understood these people's resistance to the Kilos' presence. Who knew if someone had been killed or arrested by them?

The most likely reason owed to Spirit Fox's actions killing their wealth. Even if their deeds were righteous, unfriendly beings would still exist.

Clearly, in a country filled with drug wars between cartels and the government, some regions supported the criminals when they saw money and prosperity, not caring if the economy came from a clean source.

They wouldn't even mind selling diamonds painted with blood. Those people existed. Maybe the government was too corrupt to raise favoritism, but...

Tang Ziyi could only raise her alertness and recall Kilo 2 and Kilo 3 to make up the number. There was no need to emphasize perimeter security too far when satellite overwatch served the same purpose.

After avoiding the peak noon, Tang Ziyi decided to return. Ling Qingyu happily retracted the logistics into her bracelet and hopped onto the Land Cruiser to drive.

However, before Tang Ziyi had time to order, Athena's message stopped everyone. An unidentified drone was flying in their direction!

Chapter 609 Evacuation

Tang Ziyi, having just sat beside Ling Qingyu, paused and took out a tablet. The latter also raised her brows, never expecting the country's military to react so fast.

She knew which faction the drones belonged to. Militias and rebel forces couldn't afford such expensive and luxurious arsenals.

From Athena's tone, the drone wasn't a small commercial type but obviously a fixed-wing asset.

Tang Ziyi gave orders quickly without the slightest hesitation. "Kilo 2 and 3, pick the nearest building and head to the top floor. Prepare AA weapons. Stand by for my further orders."

"Clear."

"Understood."

Kilo 2 and 3, staying near the technicals, picked up Stinger missiles, which weren't collected by Ling Qingyu because of Tang Ziyi's words.

The two teams sprinted up the staircase. The holders of the missiles even had excitement in their eyes.

They hadn't had the chance to use them since Ling Qingyu unveiled these weapons. Eliminating the enemy's reinforcement wasn't very appealing.

If they managed to score a hit on a flying aircraft, there would definitely be a plus sign on their CVs. Not that they had any desire to change jobs, but people must have dreams and something to brag about, right?

"All units, be advised. Enemy UAV is heading our way. Establish a perimeter and spread out."

"Roger."

"Copy that."

"..."

Positive replies echoed through the radios. All Kilos maneuvered accordingly. A few operators arranged the people who were meant to be transported alongside them when the convoy returned.

The technicals navigated the narrow streets and avenues as turret gunners swiveled their heads, looking above. Their hands stayed on the .50 caliber machine guns after cracking the bolt to chamber the first rounds.

Yes, Tang Ziyi had asked for more heavy-duty machine guns from Ling Qingyu as she planned the evacuation.

She felt the PKM's effectiveness was too weak if something bad happened while they evacuated. Sure enough, her decision wasn't wrong.

Powerful .50 calibers could also serve as close-proximity anti-aircraft weaponry against flying objects. If the group kept using PKMs, the small caliber wouldn't even pose the slightest threat to the enemy, not even low-flying helicopters.

In fact, the wolf members from the military were stunned when they saw .50 caliber machine guns on the turrets. Although Spirit Fox explained that the source came from the militants here, the wolf members could only pinch their noses and believe the lies.

After all, they were a little in disbelief that the enemies they had crushed before were armed so heavily. With their current equipment, they had doubts about how they managed to win other than through the element of surprise at the beginning.

Ling Qingyu gazed at her partner, amazed at Tang Ziyi's decisiveness. She watched in a daze as Tang Ziyi's domineering aura overflowed and rushed toward her.

If she were able to suppress Tang Ziyi under her body, just the mere thought melted her bones.

Tang Ziyi contemplated her options, and her eyes flashed with ruthlessness. "Kilo 2 and 3, fire when you spot the drone. The rest, prepare to cover in case something goes wrong."

"Athena, how long until the drone arrives?"

"Three mikes, Aunt."

"Then notify Kilo 2 and 3 once the countdown nears."

"Yes."

Foreign intervention, which she feared—or hoped not to happen—had come. She didn't hesitate to destroy the drones, even if her actions could offend the other party and jeopardize the evacuation.

"You, if you order an attack, that's a declaration of war," Ling Qingyu stuttered.

"What?" Tang Ziyi asked with a smile. "Are you afraid of a fifth-rate military force?"

Although she sounded condescending, her attitude was never to underestimate others. Fifth-rate military power didn't seem threatening to nations, but Spirit Fox wasn't a country force.

It was a private entity. No single party would win against a country that depended on its population and wealth.

Despite Ling Qingyu's true wealth rivaling that of some small countries and her personal army being comparable to the smallest sovereign nation, they had to buy time for their future.

"Heck, no," Ling Qingyu protested. "Elena can squash this country's army within a few hours by herself. Why must I fear?"

"That's an attitude I like," said Tang Ziyi. "Don't worry, we won't reach that hot stage we hoped wouldn't happen."

"But if you destroy the drone, won't the military rush in?"

"You have a deep misunderstanding of power here. You can't think that everyone always seeks the best benefits," Tang Ziyi paused. "Sometimes, you must know their culture so that you can uncover their despicableness."

"Despicableness?"

"If you read a small history of this land, you'll find out how ruthless the regime is and how low they could go to achieve any goal. The only message they take seriously is war."

"So, you want to blow up the drones to scare the regime? Why?"

"To stop them from snooping around for a while, giving us time to evacuate," Tang Ziyi answered Ling Qingyu patiently, ignoring the oncoming crisis as if the issue wasn't too serious. "Of course, that's a tiny reason. The real reason is when I ask you: what will the drone do if they spot our convoy moving out in a large formation?"

"Emm... Do they really dare to fire at us? Aren't they afraid of misunderstanding and causing a war with the militants? I mean, the militants here are done, but they don't know."

"Why not, seeing a bunch of cars trying to escape?" Tang Ziyi shook her head. "To them, it doesn't matter if a battle or war breaks out because they can afford to provoke the militants and negotiate on other terms again.

"However, if the news or suspicions they have are true, like infighting or the weakening of the militants, they have much more to gain than the consequences. Not to mention, different factions clashed regularly in the past for no reason—intrusions and etcetera, mostly done by the military on purpose."

Ling Qingyu realized the stakes here and understood. They really didn't have sufficient time. "So, in order to buy some time, you want false deterrence to confuse them."

"Bingo. If they see our situation, the military will immediately launch an attack. Our evacuation will be affected, and who knows if they might pursue us and crush us from the air," Tang Ziyi patted Ling Qingyu's shoulder and focused again on the screen.

Although Tang Ziyi's action bought time, Ling Qingyu figured something was wrong. "Wait, can't you use Athena to relay false pictures and create an illusion?"

"Well, that..." Tang Ziyi, who was initially proud and arrogant, wilted and blinked before she confessed later. "I forgot."

Ling Qingyu slapped her forehead. "Never mind, just do what you already ordered. It doesn't matter."

In fact, Athena's capabilities and talents were mostly forgotten, even by Tang Ziyi, who used to innovate with her niece. The precarious possibilities and narrow window for a response might have blurred her judgment.

"No," Tang Ziyi shook her head and convinced Ling Qingyu. "Blowing up the drone gives us more time than the illusion. But I'll bear in mind not to forget."

Ling Qingyu nodded and thought Tang Ziyi's words carried some truth. Deterrence worked better since Kilo 2 and 3 had engaged a few scouting teams from the military.

If they showed the militants still retained enough power despite infighting, the military might not dare to fully implement their conspiracy, whereas the peaceful illusion might raise doubt and prompt their desire to test the ground.

However, Tang Ziyi and Ling Qingyu hadn't talked for long before Athena's voice interrupted them, and the duo heard a small explosion, then saw a long trail of smoke from a high-rise apartment.

Anyway, Spirit Fox was already engaged. It didn't matter what they were arguing about previously. Tang Ziyi didn't care much.

In the sky, flames lit up and engulfed the fast metallic flying object, which couldn't be seen clearly from the ground, into a large fireball.

Kilo 2 seemed to be cheering as they scored a hit, while others watched their team with envy.

"All units, set out fast. We don't have time."

Since everyone had prepared seamlessly, under Tang Ziyi's order, the disarrayed formation stabilized within a minute, and the snake formation departed toward the border.

Trucks, buses, off-road pickup trucks, and SUVs followed Ling Qingyu's Land Cruiser and the technical ahead.

Each bus and truck carried passengers they rescued and were guarded by two operators—one as a driver and the other as a watchman.

Manpower was spread out so much that each technical only had a driver and a gunner. More than a dozen vehicles belonged to Ling Qingyu—technicals and the Land Cruiser.

The rest were manned by the remaining operators. Statistically, around 80 operators handled the rescued hostages and civilians.

...

Across some distance, passing over mountainous terrain and forest, a man in a military uniform with a major general rank frowned at his subordinate's report of a destroyed drone. He lowered his head in deep thought.

He received news from the units nearby that a battle had definitely been staged in the vicinity. His scouting teams were repelled several times. To confirm his conjecture, he sent over the drone, which was blown up instantly.

The pilot didn't have the slightest chance to record the important sight below. He was totally blind. His gut told him that an opportunity awaited.

Yet, his rationality suggested playing it safe. It didn't matter if time passed too long, but once he made mistakes, more trouble would appear.

Not only the major general, but his adjutant and advisors also argued nonstop regarding whether to send in a platoon. After all, the rebels dared to fire at their drones, and something must be done.

"Contact that stupid warlord to see what he says next about the drone. Ask for compensation," the general requested and turned his gaze toward the intelligence map, standing tall against the wall.

"Yes, sir."

Nobody cared whether they intruded on others' territory because they had the bigger fists. Though the resistance was unexpected, shouldn't the rebels normally telephone them to protest and warn to take action?

Why did they explode before they spoke all of a sudden? Were they preparing to go to war with them or planning something deeper?

A chill shuddered the general's confidence as he gulped at the possibility of being implicated because he created a conflict. No... NO... he had never overreached. Sending in the drone was to confirm his suspicion and ready countermeasures. Yes, everything was to defend against sudden enemy attacks.

Chapter 610 Gu Yi's joy

Ling Qingyu's convoy evacuated systematically, leaving the ruins and city center. The long formation naturally attracted attention from civilians in the area.

They were too scared to go out after last night's fierce battle. Watching the 'invader' pull out without the slightest thought of occupation, many were puzzled, at a loss for their future.

What would they do to feed their families? How should they survive? Although they had to pay huge compensation to survive, they made money at least.

Well, even if some had to sell their daughters, they didn't think anything was wrong. The society here hadn't been enlightened yet or had succumbed to Stockholm Syndrome. Those who knew suffered silently.

In any case, these matters didn't burden Ling Qingyu's morals or values. She had no time or energy to save everyone, not to mention psychologically as well.

She solved the biggest scourge, suppressing their development. If these people couldn't keep up with their thinking, there was nothing she could do.

Although she had the wealth to sustain this small-sized city without any pressure, this place would soon be controlled by the country's military.

Now, the formation was too keen on tactical retreat. Nope, a true evacuation, not running away or fleeing because of fright.

Yes, they had no fear of military reprisal. They just didn't want to engage in a useless battle.

After all, the military had a well-formed air force and artillery teams. It was best to avoid combat unless necessary. Perhaps Tang Ziyi's act of destroying a drone made the military wary; no more troubles came.

However, how long could one suppress someone's curiosity? Because the military couldn't contact the militants' superiors or the warlord's confidantes, with whom both sides exchanged information despite their antagonism, they sent in another drone and flew it at a higher altitude.

Fighter jets and armed helicopters were dispatched nearby. This time, if a drone was destroyed again, they would retaliate. However, the footage showed nothing amiss, not realizing Athena had interfered with their electronics.

The generals and colonels scratched their heads, confused at the sudden turn of events. Nothing seemed to be happening, but they couldn't contact the militants. Plus, there were fires in the outskirts too.

One hour after the group departed from the city, the military high command finally ordered the nearest platoons to investigate and discovered ruined outposts. Not one, but many...

Even the bases were destroyed, including annihilated militias. Multiple similar reports led to a decisive offensive operation, and the platoon changed to a regiment. The preliminary reports indicated that a large explosion shredded these bases.

Two hours later, when Ling Qingyu's convoy was 45 minutes away from the border, the military finally discovered the reality, completely in contrast to the earlier surveillance.

The higher-ups were immediately drenched in cold sweat. Damn it, how high was the technology to cover up everything? As more reports came in, their legs weakened.

There were no survivors related to the warlord's faction. Interrogation results depicted the battle scenes.

The staff members concluded this was a thunder operation by special forces units, highly equipped and trained. In fact, too highly, in their opinion, to eliminate the entire militia group.

From their departure direction and civilians' words, they had a guess: Country C raided this city. The generals argued and had another higher-up meeting to determine their next steps. Diplomatic politics weren't their responsibility; the commander-in-chief should have this headache with the civilian government.

Hmm, nope, now that the military had staged a coup and controlled the government, it seemed like it was their turn? How to talk?

The generals knew they had their hands on the dirty transactions with the destroyed militants. They feared their lives would be gone in the following days if Country C found out.

Of course, nobody currently in command thought much and secured the new territories. Owing to their advantage in intelligence and equipment, they expanded their controlled areas faster than the nearest rebel groups.

At least, no one disliked the benefit of getting something for nothing. As for targeting the suspected Country C's convoy, they weren't idiots.

Even their reports to the higher-ups received silence and were put on hold. Fortunately, they didn't move—Athena and Elena were monitoring their troops' movements.

The slightest suspicion would open another Pandora's box. The humongous submarine submerged under the sea closest to them was ready to unveil its fangs.

Had they decided to pursue, Athena and Elena would definitely deliver their wrath! The electromagnetic cannons were thirsty for their first blood.

Tang Ziyi snickered at the military's reaction and shook her head. As expected, the deterrence was necessary for a smooth evacuation, even if they didn't need it.

Overthinking by the military allowed a time frame to get to the border. It was best to not utilize Elena's strength, alarming the world and even raising fears.

Spirit Fox needed fame and attention but not to a dangerous extent. In fact, Spirit Fox's resume already outshone the average mercenary group or PMC.

In the future, though unlikely to experience combat, Spirit Fox would have more options and networks if Gu Yi introduced them to others.

Actually, Ling Qingyu already reorganized her dreams of owning a mercenary group to receive Black Ops orders from customers. Surviving the first combat, she knew the toll it took on her subordinates.

She would rather they enjoyed peacetime and indulged in routine police patrols like now than survived through horrifying ordeals and nonstop explosions. The same idea remained despite Tang Ziyi's cheating technologies, which prioritized her girls' safety to an extreme.

Nonetheless, she understood to long for peace, she must ensure that her military force could strike at a moment's notice.

Although her force wasn't comparable to a country, her future goals demanded such efforts. There was a long way to go!

The compatriots and other nationals, who escaped from the evil den, cried out their grievances as their moods lightened when they heard the destination was getting closer.

By now, nobody was stupid enough to think that a third party wanted benefits from the militants. They belonged to Country C to rescue their citizens.

Other nationals, who had long been forgotten, envied those from Country C. Although their numbers were the highest to be trafficked, the motherland still made real actions.

Perhaps they should thank Gu Yi instead of the countries they thought of, who met Ling Qingyu to forcefully rescue people, despite the targets belonging to her own subordinates, not the other victims.

Otherwise, they would rot to death, without the slightest hope of seeing a rare light, living in the world of pain and humiliation.

Those bastards sitting uselessly on the chairs fighting wars of words and wits for their benefits gained so much advantage from Spirit Fox's rescue. Gu Yi must also lose a few of her hairs too.

This must be the real deed of taking a step back for a better future. Anyway, Ling Qingyu hoped to return to her manor soon. She needed a deep sleep and a thorough massage.

Maybe more beautiful confidantes to surround her as well: Sister Zhao Xiurong, Sister Su Ruomei, Sister Jiang Yu, Xiao Yue, and Tang Ziyi.

Though one was beside her, she wasn't comforted but agitated. This bastard always knew her soft spots and managed to poke them every time.

Just around the road curve, Ling Qingyu and Tang Ziyi sighed in relief as they saw the border fences. About 5 minutes later, the formation should arrive at the checkpoint.

The duo had informed Gu Yi of this matter, and the latter expressed surprise and praise, not expecting Ling Qingyu and Tang Ziyi to dare to rescue all the victims.

Because of the time, Gu Yi wanted further details once they met again. She could only click her tongue at her daughter-in-law's capability and call General Tang to mobilize border units.

Of course, to avoid conflicts between Spirit Fox and the military in Province N, she intervened directly and gave temporary authorization to Spirit Fox units.

As soon as Jiang Yu received the mobilization 'talisman,' Spirit Fox units would welcome their boss. It was better to use familiar forces instead of trusting the army.

The corrupted atmosphere increased the risks of complications and further conflicts. Not to mention, if Tang Ziyi announced their identities, someone might pose a few obstacles.

One more moment staying outside of the border meant instability and troubles. Even if orders came from above, without strength, some actions faced challenges.

With a group of sisters to back her up in numbers, she had one less fear. Ling Qingyu thought the same and smiled.

After Gu Yi hung up the call, she continued to speak with the rescued targets, transported by a mysterious helicopter.

She knew this belonged to Ling Qingyu, and somehow the aircraft seemed invisible to Country C's monitoring system.

She asked General Tang implicitly by stating her curiosity whether any military aircraft operated nearby, as well as her subordinates to look out for the aircraft.

Unsurprisingly, she received a negative answer. General Tang asked with suspicion, and Gu Yi shrugged the answer off.

A joke, she was also a beneficiary of Ling Qingyu's secrets. She would secretly ask for a favor as an elder and knew the information firsthand.

Plus, she believed Ling Qingyu would treat her well. Since the helicopter was displayed in front of her, it meant that the matter wasn't too confidential.

Ling Qingyu's generosity, she gladly accepted the deal without a doubt. Now, she still wanted to launch queries in person to the two undercover operatives and two unrelated personnel.

Due to their injuries and state of mind, and Doctor's Mo cold treatment, Gu Yi dared not interfere even if she was a minister. Though the doctor seemed respectful, when she conducted treatments, even Gu Yi felt frightened by the overflowing aura.