

I CAN CONTROL RESOURCES

Chapter 9: Squeak Squeak Squeak...

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During her childhood, Shen Ning'Er often dreamed of a certain place.

It was a place of utter darkness. The air was cold and damp, thick with the heavy stench of rot, and all she could do was curl up in a corner, sobbing softly.

It was a lonely world.

But she was not the only living thing in this world.

There was a horde of things skittering about, searching for food, swimming in the water, and flinging filthy droplets everywhere when they came ashore.

The most terrifying part was that these things had no particular purpose; they just loved to dart around aimlessly. Every so often, one would come to her feet, tilt its head up, and stare at her with eyes that gleamed in the dark.

"SQUEAK, SQUEAK..."

'Am I dreaming again?!' Hearing the sound by her ear, a drowsy Shen Ning'Er instinctively frowned and burrowed deeper into her blankets.

Her body trembled slightly, and her hands and feet grew cold.

But the sounds continued. She could even hear things skittering and jumping around the room, gnawing on the wooden cabinet doors with a rustling sound.

Shen Ning'Er's frown deepened. She kept her eyes shut tight, not daring to open them, simply praying in her heart for the nightmare to end quickly.

But just then, her nose twitched.

A foul, rotting stench wafted in, accompanied by the sound of water dripping onto the floor, drop by drop. The surrounding air was gradually growing colder.

Shen Ning'Er's body jolted violently.

This dream felt a little too real. The putrid smell seemed to be coming from right under her bed, making her nerves stretch taut as she curled her body into an ever-tighter ball.

"SQUEAK!"

Suddenly, a loud shriek erupted.

'Too close!'

The thing seemed to have been provoked. It shrieked wildly next to her ear, and at the same time, she felt something step on her.

Shen Ning'Er's eyes flew open.

She was awake!

She curled up and looked around!

An unfamiliar environment. A hotel, maybe? 'Where am I? Right, I am in a hotel. I'm in the Forgotten Land on a classified mission.'

'So it really was a dream?' Shen Ning'Er wondered if she should get up for a drink of water.

But she soon realized that the rotten stench was still there, lingering at the tip of her nose. The air was damp, and the dripping sound persisted.

'What's going on?!' Shen Ning'Er tried to calm herself down, but soon, she heard another sharp "SQUEAK."

Then, she saw a shadow dart over like a flash of lightning. It pounced onto her and began jumping all over her body.

That familiar shadow.

That familiar smell.

And those furry paws and eyes that glinted coldly in the darkness...

BOOM!

It was as if a bolt of lightning had struck Shen Ning'Er's mind, turning her ice-cold from head to toe. Her eyes were fixed on the black shadow on top of her, her face growing paler and paler.

A hotel in the Forgotten Land...

'Has rats?!'

If this were the City of Hope, such a thought would never have crossed her mind. But this was the Forgotten Land, a place "abandoned" by the Alliance.

'There are rats!'

'There are really rats!'

Once that thought flashed through her mind, Shen Ning'Er began to frantically press the switch for the bedside lamp. She mashed it again and again—CLICK, CLICK, CLICK—but the room remained dark.

'The lights...'

'Why won't they turn on?!'

'Are the lights broken? But why is there a rotting smell? A hotel shouldn't smell like this. Where on earth am I?'

'Am I still dreaming?!'

'I haven't woken up!'

Countless thoughts raced madly through Shen Ning'Er's mind. At the same time, a rat leaped onto her again and began to climb up her outstretched arm.

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Shen Ning'Er shot to her feet in an instant.

In the darkness, her aura was extremely unstable. Her gaze swept around the room, searching for the black shadows skittering in the dark.

One, two, three...

The rats kept leaping at her.

The color drained from Shen Ning'Er's face, then flushed red, then turned ashen. Her lips began to tremble, her nerves stretched to their breaking point. Her body felt as if it had been hollowed out, completely devoid of strength.

'I'm dreaming...'

'I must still be dreaming!'

Shen Ning'Er muttered to herself. The memories of her childhood left her feeling lost and helpless, and now those things had appeared before her once again.

The clock ticked away. TICK, TOCK, TICK, TOCK.

It was five minutes to midnight.

Shen Ning'Er's body trembled more and more violently. For in her memory, midnight was when the horror truly began. At that moment, these nightmarish creatures would sense her fear and gather around her. They would crawl up

her legs, tear at her thin clothes, and snatch the last scraps of food from her hands.

"No, stay away!" As a black shadow leaped toward her, Shen Ning'Er's emotions finally began to spiral out of control. She clutched the blanket tightly and swung it frantically in front of her.

WHOOSH, WHOOSH!

The snow-white blanket slammed into the black shadow.

"SQUEAK SQUEAK SQUEAK!" A sharp cry rang out continuously. The black shadow was struck, and it slammed headfirst into the white wall.

Blood sprayed out.

The black shadow's head was smashed to pieces.

A nauseating stench began to spread, grating on Shen Ning'Er's already frayed nerves. But she didn't dare to stop. She just kept swinging the blanket wildly.

She had to smack away anything that dared to charge at her.

THUD!

THUD!

One black shadow after another was smashed against the wall.

Bright red splatters appeared on the wall, mixed with pinkish-white bits of flesh and blood.

Shen Ning'Er's body trembled more and more violently. Her mind was at its breaking point; she was just instinctively, endlessly swinging the blanket.

Finally, the world fell silent.

All the black shadows had been beaten away.

Shen Ning'Er stopped moving. She dashed to the head of the bed like a bolt of lightning and tried to turn on the light again, but the switches still did nothing.

'Is it a dream?!

'Why haven't I woken up yet?'

Shen Ning'Er began to search around, her eyes scanning the room. Suddenly, she saw another black shadow in the corner, crouched on the floor.

She instinctively recoiled.

But the moment she drew back, the black shadow also moved. It lunged toward her, its four paws spread wide. In the darkness, its thick fur stood on end, each strand like a needle.

"SQUEAK!"

A sharp cry rang out.

Shen Ning'Er's body went completely stiff.

Because that black shadow was too big. Its two eyes, as red as blood, were fixed on her, as if it wanted to snatch away her food.

Finally, the black shadow collided with her.

Black fur brushed against her face, and fleshy paws landed on her shoulders. This intimate contact made her nerves finally snap completely.

"AHHH!!!"

Shen Ning'Er let out a bloodcurdling scream. She flailed her arms wildly, sending the black shadow flying with a single punch.

But the black shadow seemed to have locked onto her. After being knocked away, it lunged at her again.

Knocked away!

It lunged again!

Knocked away again!

And lunged again...

In the end, the black shadow pinned her down, pressing its two paws firmly against her face, its black fur rubbing incessantly against her body.

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The "SQUEAK!" sounds continued relentlessly.

After a struggle that repeated a full seven times, Shen Ning'Er's body finally went limp and then became incredibly stiff. The whites of her eyes showed as she fell back onto the bed, completely motionless.

At that moment, the huge black shadow also finally froze. Its blood-red eyes stared down at Shen Ning'Er, whose own eyes had rolled back in her head. A sound escaped its mouth again, as if by reflex.

"SQUEAK!"