

Chapter 7138

Matsushita Heikichi replied, "Waiting isn't a problem."

"Our supplies can last for at least half a year."

"And our fuel can last for more than half a year without long voyages."

"However, if the ship stays here, as the temperature gets colder and the ice-covered area along the coastline grows larger and the ice layer thicker,"

"Once the ice layer exceeds our icebreaking limit, the ship might not be able to move."

"If we want to move again, we can only wait for the weather to warm up and the ice to melt."

Brovnen frowned and said, "That won't do."

"I need you to be on standby along the Antarctic coastline at all times."

"In case I need you."

"You'd better think of a way to meet my requirements."

Matsushita Heikichi said,

"That's simple."

"I can have the ship move outwards every day as the ice expands,"

"Always staying within a controllable ice thickness zone."

"That way, we can respond immediately when you need the ship."

"This way, we only need to move a few kilometers at most each day,"

"And the fuel consumption won't be high,"

"Allowing us to continue for a long time."

Brovnen nodded in satisfaction and then asked,

"Let me ask you, if I ask you to change your plans and not return to Japan for the entire winter,"

"Will somebody immediately contact you?"

"Or come here?"

Matsushita Heikichi said. "Our research vessel is national property."

"If we refuse to obey the order to return home, the government will definitely come after us,"

"And might even send in the army."

"We'll certainly be accused of treason."

Brovnen stroked his beard and clicked his tongue, saying,

"This is troublesome."

"You need to think carefully about how to reasonably keep all these people and the ship in Antarctica."

Matsushita Heikichi thought for a moment and said,

"Well... I can't think of a good solution either."

"It's one thing to be a few days late due to unforeseen circumstances,"

"But if we don't return for the entire winter, no reason will hold water."

Brovnen asked him, "What if the ship breaks down?"

"Or freezes and can't get out?"

"Well..." Matsushita Heikichi said respectfully,

"The government can monitor the research vessel's location in real time via GPS."

"If we report to them that the ship is frozen,"

"But in reality, we're slowly moving it every day to prevent it from freezing,"

"The government will realize we're lying and will definitely send troops to investigate."

Brovnen asked, "If the ship is really frozen,"

"Is your army capable of rescuing us in Antarctica?"

Matsushita Heikichi shook his head: "Our ship is the only heavy icebreaker in the country."

"If it is really frozen, the country can't send any ships to rescue us."

"Even if we ask another country for help, it will be too late."

"By the time their icebreaker arrives after a journey of several dozen days, the ice will probably be hundreds of kilometers thick."

"Even the best heavy icebreakers in the US can't get in."

"At most, they can only dock on the outer edge of the ice sheet and help evacuate the personnel."

Brovnen nodded and said, "That makes things easier."

"You can report back to the country later."

"Say the ship had a mechanical problem and needed repairs,"

"And then keep delaying until it froze over."

"When the ship couldn't move, ask the research team to consult with the country."

"They want everyone to be considerate and not waste resources coming back for a rescue."

"They suggested everyone stay here and work hard."

"Taking the opportunity to accelerate Japan's Antarctic exploration."

Matsushita Heikichi naturally obeyed him without question,

But this lackey was also quite dutiful, respectfully saying,

"You just said the research vessel should be on standby."

"But if we really let the ship freeze, your need for the ship might not be met."

Brovnen sneered, "A mere ice blockage might be a problem for your icebreakers."

"But for me, it's nothing."

“Your ship is just sitting here; when you really need to move it, I can break the ice myself!”

Brovnen’s strength wasn’t enough to cleave a crack in the ice.

The difficulty lay in crossing the devilish Roaring Forties alone, without any support.

The environment—where one can neither fly nor walk, relying solely on spiritual energy to float—combined with towering waves and gale-force winds exceeding level 11, would be unbearable even for Victoria.

Therefore, Brovnen had to leave the ship in Antarctica.

He immediately ordered Matsushita Heikichi to deliberately delay the loading and unloading of supplies,

Slowing down the departure as much as possible.

When the departure could no longer be delayed, and if repairs were assured, to deliberately sabotage the ship’s propulsion system.

By then, ice would have frozen the area for several kilometers,

Even tens of kilometers, with ice exceeding two meters in thickness, rendering the ship unusable even if repaired.

Fortunately, the ship has ample fuel and supplies,

Ensuring uninterrupted power, heating, and water while stationary.

As for the research station, there is no need to worry.

There is a safety margin in supplies, and a large new batch has been added.

Although there are more people, they could certainly handle the workload.

Even if supplies ran out later, they could find a way to airdrop supplies using military aircraft.

And if all else failed, the expedition team could simply live frugally,

As long as they didn't die and could still work—after all, Brovnen himself didn't need to eat.

Having made up his mind, Brovnen instructed Matsushita Heikichi to stay on the ship and carry out his orders,

Then, he called over Kikuchi Kohei, another member of the expedition team, and instructed him in Chinese:

"Kikuchi, you are responsible for arranging for all the expedition team members to return to the research station."

"Also, starting today, dedicate three hours each day to teaching them Chinese."

"Make sure they study with all their might,"

"So that I don't have to give orders only to you in the future."

"Do you understand?"

Polar scientist Kikuchi Kohei bowed deeply at a ninety-degree angle and said respectfully,

"Please rest assured, I will definitely complete the mission!"