

Full Time 141

Chapter 141: There is a Carving Standing on the Sand (1)

Hu Ling gently patted his teammate's shoulder and comforted him in a low voice, "It's okay. Everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses. That kid definitely can't compare to you when it comes to explosions."

Boluo was inspired and felt better, nodding in wholehearted agreement.

Glove watched these two from the side. So, the team leader meant Boluo was intellectually challenged, and Boluo actually felt much better after hearing that?

"If we're lucky, we'll find everything we want today. Then we can get out of this damned place!"

"There's more good news." Leder smiled proudly and pressed a button. The interior of the [VSG-47] lit up, followed by a roaring start-up sound.

"Thanks to the outstanding military quality of the Confederation, after a few hundred years, this big guy could still work with just some simple repairs."

Everyone cheered.

Without the heavy armored vehicles, they had all been on foot, which was not only strenuous but also dangerous. Now they finally had a means of transportation.

Leder operated the [VSG-47], taking heavy steps to exit the lair of the Burning Tyrannosaurus. As he passed by the Tyrannosaurus's corpse, he couldn't help but cast a reluctant look back.

There were many mechanical organs inside the massive creature that could have been harvested. However, Leder was now a commander without an army, and it wasn't appropriate to let these Professionals know about harvesting mechanical organs. So, he had to painfully let it go.

Just overnight, the Burning Tyrannosaurus was reduced to an empty shell.

Hu Ling operated the heavy mecha by himself, following behind. Compared to the mobile weapon station, the four-meter-tall heavy mecha looked like an inconspicuous little sidekick.

Like a monkey jumping around behind the Tiger King, it could only be described as lively.

The journey from the battleship wreckage to that coordinate was long. In the plan Leder made before the operation, they were to search one location after another: location one, then two, then three, and so on. The higher the number, the farther the distance.

They were now heading directly for the area between locations six and eight. With just the [VSG-47], it was estimated to take a full three days of travel.

Just as they set off, they encountered a grouchy group of steam-powered mechanical species—a six-meter-long ironclad wild boar, with its family of over twenty members, attacked them all at once.

Whether it was the heavy mecha or the weapon station, the ammunition had expired, so the Professionals had to take the lead.

Thankfully, the steam-powered mechanical species looked frightening but were far less capable in combat. After dealing with the group, Leder drooled over the mechanical organs scattered on the ground. He then reluctantly led everyone away.

Their luck afterward was unbelievably good. Until the morning of the third day, as they approached the target site, they didn't encounter any danger.

Moreover, the weather that day was very clear. The thunderclouds that had constantly hung overhead appeared somewhat "light and breezy." One could even vaguely see the sun of Empire River Star through them.

Hu Ling was in high spirits, jumping ahead to clear the path, whistling while operating the heavy mecha.

Inside the [VSG-47], Leder also seemed full of anticipation. "Let's finish the mission quickly. I really don't want to stay in this godforsaken place any longer."

Chen Gu and Qing Ruyan were also in a good mood, as they had discovered three more traces left by Dilina along the way.

All were combat marks from Biological Nuclear Explosions. They connected the various traces into a route but felt bewildered. No matter how they looked at it, this "rebel" Dilina seemed like a battle maniac who was picking fights everywhere...

Her movements in the Yingudusi Devil's Pit, apart from resting in the battleship, seemed to be just Biological Nuclear Explosion, Biological Nuclear Explosion, Biological Nuclear Explosion...

Chen Gu involuntarily thought of Milna Katerina's very "mature" approach to handling things:

There is no problem that a Biological Nuclear Explosion can't solve; if there is, then the yield isn't enough.

Although he still didn't quite understand what role Dilina played in that great battle years ago, and he lacked clues about the "Hand of World Destruction," Chen Gu felt that what he had found should be enough. It should allow him to exchange for the first two Energy Levels of the Nuclear Combat Technique from the Atomic Holy Church.

As for the latter part... I'll figure it out later.

The [VSG-47] trudged heavily across the wasteland, each step leaving a deep imprint.

Ahead lay a prairie as green as emerald, with towering mountains looming faintly in the distance. Above in the sky, the clearly reduced frequency of lightning seemed like modest embellishments to this tranquil and serene landscape painting, merely adding to its charm!

Boluo's wounds had healed. Seeing his captain bounding about outside while he could only stay cooped up inside the weapon station with everyone else, his heart, so eager for action, couldn't be restrained any longer.

No one knew what he discussed with Hu Ling. After they exchanged a few words, Hu Ling returned to the weapon station. Boluo gave a shout of joy as he climbed into the heavy mecha. Then, he began to frolic, setting himself free on the vast wasteland.

Suddenly, he looked up at the distance and loudly said to those behind him, "I didn't expect birds to survive in a place like this. It's truly not easy..."

Leder and a few others turned pale. From within the [VSG-47], they shouted to Boluo in front, "What did you say? Birds?!" At the same time, Leder rushed to an optical observation post.

"Yep," Boluo pointed at the sky ahead. "Look, can you see? They're flying over here, pretty fast. Probably a lively and friendly kind of bird..."

Chen Gu had already seen them; his physical constitution was stronger than many Professionals. At that moment, sweat dripped down Great Actor Chen's forehead. This was no act.

He gritted his teeth and asked, "What kind of bird do you think could survive in this electromagnetic environment?"

Boluo was taken aback. "Yeah, that's true. Then how could there be birds?"

"Idiot!" This time, even Leder couldn't take it anymore. "Those are Energy Gathering Mechanical Species! Flying Energy Gathering Mechanical Species, don't you find them terrifying?"

Boluo yelped, finally understanding. "Run, run!"

Suddenly, he remembered something. "Let's get this straight, you there, Chen Gu! Don't you dare come up with any human-slingshot tactics again. I won't be your projectile!"

While speaking, he was scrambling out of the heavy mecha. "This little guy isn't safe; its armor isn't thick enough. Let me go back..."

Suddenly, a fierce wind howled from the sky, and a huge dark shadow dived down at high speed before dropping two unknown objects.

Within the [VSG-47], Hu Ling, his eyes nearly bursting from their sockets, bellowed, "Boluo, be careful—"

Just as Boluo had climbed out from the cockpit of the heavy mecha, WHIRR WHIRR, two objects descended from the sky. Amidst a loud SIZZLING CRACKLE and a shower of sparks, Boluo was sprayed full in the face.

He only felt a scorching heat on his face before two gusts of wind swiftly blew past his sides.

When he came to his senses, he saw that the heavy mecha had been sliced into three pieces. Its two arms and the outer portions of its thighs were severed, CRASHING heavily to either side.

Looking ahead again, he saw two serrated discs, each fully two meters in diameter, spinning rapidly as they continued to surge forward for several hundred meters, leaving two deep gouges in the ground...

Chapter 142: There is a Carving Standing on the Sand (2)

Boluo was lucky, finding himself right between two sawtooth discs.

He patted his face. "Good grief, I really am lucky, hahaha!" He laughed heartlessly.

Before his laughter had faded, the sky above once again filled with the enormous sound of something tearing through the air.

As he looked up, he saw a gigantic Flying Mechanical Species dive down, its huge claws aiming straight for his shoulders.

Boluo's complexion instantly changed as he tried to scramble away. "Help! Help! Help! Don't let it catch me—I'm afraid of heights—"

The Flying Mechanical Species swooping down from the sky looked somewhat like a vulture, with a wingspan of over thirty meters and another six sawtooth discs suctioned beneath its wings.

A metallic chain-hook, similar to a scorpion's tail, trailed behind it.

Atop its head was a bright, ring-shaped Energy Core, constantly emitting intense light and heat, providing copious power to the massive mechanical beast.

BANG!

A gunshot rang out, the recoil shaking the VSG-47, and a hole immediately appeared on one side of the Flying Mechanical Species' wing.

This caused its flight pattern to change. After it took some time to stabilize, the group, all hands on deck, dragged Boluo into the VSG-47.

The Flying Mechanical Species wobbled, adapted, and then soared high again, circling several times in the sky before diving once more.

This time, it cunningly changed directions often. The people on the ground fired repeatedly, but even Dora, with her special shooting talent, had difficulty hitting it.

RATTLE, RATTLE, RATTLE...

As it dived, the sound of chains being released was heard. The crowd gasped as the Flying Mechanical Species passed over their heads, rising high, its tail chain-hook detached and snagging onto the VSG-47!

BANG!

The chains tensed, and then the VSG-47 was lifted bit by bit!

"Jump off quick!"

Everyone was in a mess, and Qing Ruyan shouted, "Come to me, everyone!"

Struggling to ascend, the Flying Mechanical Species lifted the VSG-47 over a thousand meters before loosening its grip and letting it fall.

It paid no further attention to the VSG-47 and turned around, flying back. However, its behavior was strangely erratic, and it did not continue the attack.

Qing Ruyan spread her arms wide, everyone huddled close around her, her body trembling slightly, sweat soon appearing on her temples.

Protecting so many people all at once was stretching her limit.

In the sky, the Flying Mechanical Species kept circling, emitting loud, metallic cries, but was unwilling to leave.

Barely managing to speak, Qing Ruyan said, "This won't do. Chen Gu, think of something..."

The moment Qing Ruyan's powers were withdrawn, the Flying Mechanical Species would immediately attack. The creature was too strong, and with it flying overhead, the people without the protection of the VSG-47 were like lambs to the slaughter.

As soon as Qing Ruyan told Chen Gu to think of something, Boluo felt a tightness in his chest.

Chen Gu had already been devising a plan. His gaze swept over everyone's face and finally settled on Glove, who immediately had a bad feeling.

"Don't feel burdened; this strategy is pretty standard," Chen Gu hurriedly explained.

Glove breathed a sigh of relief. "Go ahead."

"Ever caught a bird when you were little?" As soon as Chen Gu spoke, he saw that everyone was baffled and quickly realized: The children of the new era, your childhoods were indeed deprived!

Chen Gu detailed a simple bird trap and then said, "It needs air to provide upward force for takeoff—in this process, air is a medium, which you can use with your ability..."

Glove, prone to fanciful thinking, immediately nodded. "I get it! I'll use my powers to make it so it can never fly!"

And then I'll be the man who saved the whole team! The boss will reward me with a fortune for my meritorious deeds, and both Big Rabbit and the little President, grateful for my lifesaving grace, will have no choice but to dedicate their lives to me!

But Chen Gu looked at him with a pitying gaze. Within Hu Ling's team, intelligence seemed to be in short supply...

"Absolutely not!" Chen Gu said. "Making it fall to the ground once is enough. First, to make it so it can never fly again... how many times would you need to use your ability? Are you sure you can manage that?"

"Besides, this thing might not be so easy to deal with once it's on the ground."

The group looked up at the Energy Gathering Mechanical Species circling above. It had a wingspan of hundreds of meters, a sword-like beak, and terrifying steel claws. They all nodded in solemn agreement, their movements in unison.

Glove asked, "So, what should I do?"

"You just need to make it land once," Chen Gu replied.

Glove was dismissive. "That's simple, leave it to me."

Following on, Chen Gu said, "Next, it's up to Old Mo."

Old Mo, in his listening-to-opera mode, was startled when mentioned. "Me?"

"Yes, you are the key to the whole plan!" Chen Gu said. "Do you know the mechanical species' biggest flaw?"

Old Mo guessed with a puzzled face, "Energy?"

Chen Gu shook his head. As expected, he couldn't guess—it was official, Hu Ling's team had an intelligence deficiency.

"It's wear and tear," Chen Gu spared them any further "difficulty" and simply gave the answer. "Even Mechanical Species are the same; with severe wear and tear, they become nothing but a pile of scrap iron."

"You'll transform into quicksand and hide in the ground. Glove will bring the big bird down, and that's when you'll wrap around it. Then, keep infiltrating its body, using your sand to wear down its inner parts..."

"Hold on a second!" Old Mo interrupted. "Am I wearing it down, or is it wearing me down? Metal is harder than sand, in any case, isn't it?"

"So who's actually wearing down whom here?"

Chen Gu explained patiently, "It's relative. Besides, for you, it's just about the sand getting ground a bit finer, not fatal..."

"But it hurts a lot!" Old Mo bellowed, his protest fueled by the prospect of pain, tossing out Chen Gu's light comments about it being "relative" and "not fatal."

Chen Gu shrugged. "This is the best strategy I can think of. If you're unwilling, you guys come up with something else."

The group exchanged glances. First off, anything from Hu Ling's team could be discounted; with their intelligence running on empty, what kind of plan could they come up with?

Big Rabbit... umm, there's an old saying, something about being big and brainless. So Dora's two ears twirled around, and her gaze gradually became vacant. She was indeed thinking, but coming up empty-handed.

Qing Ruyan simply didn't have the energy to think and was on the verge of being unable to hold on any longer, clenching her teeth and fiercely urging, "Hurry up!"

Liu Shichan and a few others did have some ideas, but after considering everything, Chen Gu's seemingly nonsensical tactic appeared to be the most fitting.

Leder cleared his throat and, in a forceful and persuasive tone to Old Mo, said, "More money!"

Old Mo sighed deeply and relented. "Fine..."

Chen Gu snapped his fingers. "Good. The next step is for you two to go out and get ready. Glove, you'll have to be the bait. Remember the birdcage I told you about just now..."

Glove yelled out, "I have to be the bait too? Didn't you say it was a normal tactic?!"

You scoundrel, you liar!

Chapter 143: There is a Carving Standing on the Sand (3)

Chen Gu spread his hands. "Remember the birdcage I mentioned earlier? We need to put some rice in it. Otherwise, why would the birds come? Since you're going to step forward, just be the bait this once. You don't expect us to be bait, do you?"

Apart from Gloves, everyone else shook their heads simultaneously, their movements once again perfectly synchronized.

Qing Ruyan had already separated the two of them from her ability's influence and urged, "Go now!"

Above their heads, the Avian Mechanical Species let out a cheerful and loud cry, then dove swiftly.

Gloves had no choice, even if he was unwilling. He dragged Old Desert along and they started preparing in a flurry.

They complained together, "Is this even a normal tactic? Who knows if your tactics can kill the enemy, but sooner or later they're going to get your teammates killed!"

As the team leader, Hu Ling kindly reminded them, "Move farther away so you don't drag us into this."

Gloves: "..."

Old Desert: "..."

The two ran a few hundred meters away. Old Desert lay down on the ground, transforming into a pool of flowing sand.

Gloves readied his ability, waiting for the Avian Mechanical Species to land. However, the mechanical bird dove, then suddenly circled back up at the last moment. It continuously revolved around Gloves in the sky, seemingly having noticed something and reluctant to descend.

Chen Gu became anxious. "Hop around a bit! Be lively! You need to act like a living creature!"

"You're so calm, you don't look like prey at all."

Gloves rolled his eyes. Waving his hands, he hopped, jumped, shouted, and yelled.

The Avian Mechanical Species circled doubtfully a few more times. Finally, just as Qing Ruyan looked like she was about to give out, it made a sudden dive.

Its claws stretched out towards Gloves. As it was about to hit the ground, it suddenly felt lighter beneath its wings. Its massive body lost support, CRASHING heavily to the ground and rolling away.

The huge metal creature's impact was immense. The massive gust it created flung Gloves a dozen meters. Due to the collision, the Avian Mechanical Species lost control of its own body, and several chain hooks on its tail thrashed wildly.

Just as Gloves got up, something WHOOSHED past his face. He froze. Damn, that was close!

The chain hook grazed the tip of his nose, then SMASHED into the ground beside him, digging a deep trench.

The shaken Gloves heard his team leader shout from a distance, "Be careful—"

He instinctively turned to look, only to see a round, black shadow BUZZING and spinning rapidly towards him. He ducked, and the serrated disc flew over his head.

Gloves felt his scalp tingle. He touched his head—his hair had been neatly shaved off!

He stood numb for a moment, his legs growing weak, then slumped to the ground. He inwardly cursed Chen Gu, the "tactical mastermind," to high heaven. Is this *actually* a normal tactic?

BOOM!

A loud noise came from the side as the Avian Mechanical Species took off again. Gloves quickly asked, "Where's Old Desert? Was it a success?"

The flowing sand on the ground was gone. Gloves looked up to see the Avian Mechanical Species soaring to an altitude of several thousand meters, some faint marks visible on its body.

Gloves let out a sigh of relief. Qing Ruyan lowered her hands, and everyone tumbled out from her ability's protection, sprawling on the ground.

Qing Ruyan gasped for air, too tired to even move a finger.

In the sky, the sight of so many prey excited the Avian Mechanical Species. It CHIRPED eagerly and dove, but it felt somewhat uncomfortable.

After flying for a moment, its movements became erratic.

It gave up the attack and flew high to readjust. But somehow, the more it tried, the less right things felt.

After flying unsteadily for some time and still feeling awkward, it cried out in annoyance and turned to fly away.

Anyway, I'm not hungry. It doesn't matter if I don't eat these prey.

As it flew farther and farther, Old Desert panicked. This beast is charging straight towards the dense electromagnetic thunderclouds! Avian Mechanical Species surely have special parts to protect them from lightning, but I don't have such abilities! I'll be incinerated!

He actually had two options. One was to immediately detach from the Avian Mechanical Species and drift down with the wind. He definitely wouldn't die from the fall. However, if his sand form scattered over thousands of square meters, or even further, regathering would be incredibly difficult. That was the safer choice.

The other option was to desperately infiltrate the Avian Mechanical Species' body, hoping to disable it before it plunged into the thunderclouds.

Without hesitation, Old Desert executed the second plan—not because he was foolhardy, but because he... hadn't even considered the first one.

So Chen Gu's judgment was correct: Hu Ling's team was indeed lacking in intelligence.

On the ground, Hu Ling's group was dumbfounded. None of them had expected the Avian Mechanical Species to just give up and flee!

It took a while for Hu Ling to let out a strange cry. "Where is it taking Old Desert?"

With a ROAR, Hu Ling transformed and ran wildly in pursuit of the Avian Mechanical Species.

Qing Ruyan looked at Chen Gu. "In this situation, do you have a contingency plan?"

"Uh..." Chen Gu was embarrassed. He hadn't anticipated this situation at all. He secretly decided that when devising tactics in the future, he would definitely incorporate Griffin Wester's memories to review them and avoid such awkward scenarios. Indeed, compared to a true tactical master, I still have a long way to go.

The group scrambled to chase after Old Desert on the ground.

This unexpectedly bought Old Desert some time. The Avian Mechanical Species saw these prey daring to chase it. How dare they! It felt slightly offended.

It turned around for a dive, preparing to throw a couple of serrated discs to teach these audacious prey a lesson.

But it lost control halfway through its dive, twisting erratically in the air.

Unable to control its direction, it deviated severely from its target. It crashed dozens of meters away with a loud BANG, tumbling and becoming disoriented.

Hu Ling bravely charged forward and forcefully grabbed one of the Avian Mechanical Species' wings.

The other Professionals quickly unleashed their abilities, attacking it.

The Avian Mechanical Species, furious, gave up flying and began fighting the Professionals on the ground.

The situation Chen Gu had worried about had occurred: this massive beast was still lethal even without flying.

Its wings were huge and powerful, swatting Hu Ling away like a baseball for hundreds of meters.

Its steel claws were deadly, its chain hooks agile, and it could intermittently release and retract the serrated discs.

The most terrifying was its sword-like beak; one hit would be fatal.

In the midst of the chaos, Chen Gu picked up Qing Ruyan and ran. The President's energy was depleted, and Chen Gu, being an "ordinary person," had no choice but to flee.

Liu Shichan saw this and scoffed disdainfully, "So loyal to that old woman!"

In the midst of the battle, the Avian Mechanical Species suddenly cried out. A ball of blue electricity quickly formed within its beak.

CRACK!

The Avian Mechanical Species spat. Lightning, like a twisted spear, instantly pierced hundreds of meters of void, blasting a massive crater in the ground.

Boluo was the only one nearby. He screamed as he was sent flying, utterly perplexed. Why am I always the unlucky one?

Chapter 144: There is a Carving Standing on the Sand (4)

The Mechanical Bird Species spat out lightning repeatedly, causing everyone to scramble for cover.

We can't beat this! That was the thought in everyone's mind. Hu Ling struggled to his feet and shouted, "Old Desert, how much longer do you need?"

Old Desert didn't respond, but there was no more flowing sand visible on the surface of the Mechanical Bird Species; it had already penetrated its body, indicating good progress.

The Mechanical Bird Species was overpowering, putting everyone in mortal danger.

It screeched again, gathering a ball of electricity. However, just as it was about to spew it out, the ball of electricity suddenly lost control and exploded with a BOOM! inside its mouth.

The Mechanical Bird Species stumbled, then moved as if it were drunk, staggering to and fro. Leder shouted, "Everyone scatter, Old Desert succeeded!"

The team retreated quickly. The Mechanical Bird Species was no longer capable of pursuit. It writhed in agony as the ring-shaped Energy Core on top of its head flashed incessantly until it finally exploded with a loud BANG!

Inside the Mechanical Bird Species, there was a CLICK, CLICK, CLICK sound, followed by a long HUMMM, and its components began to shut down one by one.

The enormous mechanical beast swayed, then finally collapsed to the ground.

Everyone let out a long sigh of relief, exhaustedly collapsing on the ground.

"That was close..."

Had it been any later, it would have been the professionals who wouldn't have held out.

SWISH, SWISH, SWISH...

Fine sand flowed out from the Mechanical Bird Species, forming a puddle on the ground that couldn't gather back together.

Chen Gu, carrying Qing Ruyan on his back, returned. He went over to the puddle of sand—the fineness of the sand had clearly increased by one Energy Level!

Chen Gu rubbed the sand with his finger. Hmm, it indeed felt fine and smooth.

The puddle of sand quivered, and Old Desert's hoarse and weary voice came out, "That's my armpit... I'm ticklish..."

Chen Gu wiped his hand in disgust.

After a short rest, Qing Ruyan was the first to recover. She checked over the Mechanical Bird Species and exclaimed, "So powerful! These native creatures must have caused considerable trouble during the colonial wars."

Boluo silently treated his injuries, his gaze frequently drifting towards Chen Gu. No matter how tough the missions were in the past, they were never like this one... Damn it, I'm getting injured way too often! And this time, even though it was supposed to be unrelated to me, I still took a hit from the lightning. The problem isn't with this mission; it definitely has something to do with this kid! Any tactic he comes up with, I'm bound to be the unlucky one. I must stay away from this guy in the future! After this mission is over, we'll delete each other's contact info, never to meet again in this lifetime!

Leder felt like he was at a huge loss, gaining nothing from this battle. The mechanical innards of the Mechanical Bird Species were incredibly valuable. If we could have taken them back, they would have fetched a fortune. Such a pity... Leder was very disheartened, but as they got closer to the coordinates, he felt somewhat consoled. The plan is going smoothly so far, and as long as we complete it, the President is always generous with bonuses... He glanced at the professionals around him, a sinister smile secretly appearing on his face.

Chen Gu followed Qing Ruyan to the side of the Mechanical Bird Species. He tapped on its large frame with his hand, producing a series of THUMP, THUMP sounds, then listened intently before asking, "Why is there a sound like running water inside?"

Qing Ruyan glanced and said, "Inside is the disassembler organ of the Energy Gathering Mechanical Species. Whatever it ingests is dissolved in there. It uses a highly corrosive solution to break down various foods into elements it can utilize."

Chen Gu, somewhat curious, found a tool to pry open the metal part. "Corrosive solution... we might be able to use that. Is there a container we could put some in?"

Qing Ruyan searched herself and produced a soft water bag made from some unknown material. "Be careful. If it drips on your hand, you'll get a bloody hole."

After Chen Gu pried it open, he carefully collected some of the solution.

The solution was pale green and had a pungent odor.

The solution actually couldn't corrode the water bag, which made Chen Gu marvel inwardly. The Bureau of Mystic Security's resources are indeed very abundant!

He didn't bother with the remaining solution; upon hitting the ground, it started emitting wafts of white smoke from corrosion.

After the solution had finished flowing out, Chen Gu discovered something unexpected. "There's still something inside..."

Qing Ruyan said, "Those are undigested food remains." In this aspect, they were similar to carbon-based life forms.

Chen Gu looked inside. He wasn't surprised to find undigested food, but rather that among the clutter, there was something round and smooth, resembling an egg.

Old Desert rose up from the side with a RUSTLE, feeling as though he had become much "smoother" than before.

Seeing Old Desert's pale face, Chen Gu silently nodded in agreement. Two fists are no match for four, and even a hero can be worn down by a relentless grind—the elders certainly weren't wrong!

Old Desert also saw the round object inside and immediately became curious. "Is this creature pregnant? Is it going to lay an egg? Hey... are Energy Gathering Mechanical Species viviparous or oviparous? Can they lay eggs from their stomach? How fascinating..."

Chen Gu looked at him speechlessly. Old Desert was considered one of the more intelligent members of the Hu Ling organization.

The difference between him and Boluo was that Old Desert, upon reaching this point in his ramblings, could realize he had "made a fool of himself."

He stopped, somewhat sheepishly. "Did I get it wrong?"

Chen Gu used a tool to extract the round object. After cleaning it off, he found that it was indeed an egg. It was unclear what species it belonged to, as it hadn't been dissolved by the highly corrosive solution.

The little thing's parents had probably fallen victim to the Mechanical Bird Species. Chen Gu packed it into his backpack.

Leder had initially wanted to say that all gains from this expedition belonged to the President. However, he reconsidered. That combination of a Second Energy Level master and a freakish tactical planner isn't easy to provoke. The President's strength goes without saying, and every tactic that kid comes up with is

indeed effective against enemies—but it's even more of a trap for his teammates! If I provoke him and we encounter a strong enemy later, and he concocts some devious plan that I have to carry out... forget it, forget it. One shouldn't be too demanding; clear water breeds no fish. Everyone has worked so hard for so long, let them take a little.

"Let's hurry up, everyone," Leder urged. "We're about to arrive at our destination. Let's take advantage of the good weather and strive to complete the mission today!"

Without a vehicle again, everyone had to rely on their legs once more.

Chen Gu was growing impatient and fixed his gaze on Old Desert. Old Desert shuddered, suddenly alarmed, and hugged his arms. "What are you planning!"

Chen Gu asked, "Old Desert, have you ever heard of a sport called sandboarding?"

"We could find a board to stand on, and you could flow underneath. It would speed up everyone's progress considerably..."

"Don't you have a conscience?!" Old Desert was about to explode with anger. Chen Gu curled his lip. "If you don't agree, then forget it. It was just a suggestion. Why get so worked up?"

Chapter 145: Remains of the Mountain (Five Updates Burst!)

"Look over there..." Dora suddenly shouted from the front, standing with her arms excitedly flung wide open.

She stood at the edge of a colossal chasm, stretching tens of thousands of meters with no visible bottom. The strange thing was, at the end of this chasm, stood a huge, oddly shaped mountain, ash-gray in color, distinctly out of place with its surroundings.

Leder looked up at the sky, too excited to speak for a long while.

"Found it, finally found it!"

Chen Gu also realized what it was and exclaimed in astonishment, "That mountain... is the remains of a super life form! It fell here, carving out this huge chasm on the ground, permanently altering the terrain, and then its corpse turned into a mountain!"

But Chen Gu looked around and found something strange. "The surrounding environment... the ground is generally dark red. With weather like today, you'd be able to see such a distinct white peak from far away. It shouldn't be hard to find, so why hadn't previous explorers discovered it?"

His words also made everyone ponder. Indeed, it didn't make sense.

RUMBLE...

CRACK!

Above the sky, a series of strange and massive sounds erupted. Electromagnetic thunderclouds began to roll, quickly darkening the sky as colossal pillars of lightning constantly struck the ground.

The electromagnetic storm began its rampage, thunderclouds rolling and pressing down layer by layer.

Terrifying black winds, mixed with various twisted ball lightning and thunderstorms, surged from all directions.

In just a few minutes, the originally clear sky had turned dark, with visibility dropping to less than thirty meters.

And the wind and sand were intensifying, continuously reducing visibility.

Suddenly, not far ahead of the group, a large cluster of leaping electric lights appeared, flashing like malevolent spirits, shooting out in all directions.

Everyone's hair began to stand on end.

"Run!" they all shouted in unison, leaping into the depths of the chasm—the only place nearby that offered any shelter.

So that's it! Chen Gu realized. "Such fine weather is very rare. The area around the super life form's remains must be constantly surrounded by extremely dangerous thunderstorms."

Dora suddenly said, "I remember hearing rumors that around the remains of a super life form, many terrifying alien species would be bred..."

Chen Gu reached out from the side and firmly covered her mouth!

Around them, pairs of small, mung bean-sized, dark red lights began to shine. At first, there were only seven or eight, but the number soon grew to thousands—and it was still increasing.

The group had not landed at the very bottom of the chasm but on a protruding rock platform in the middle.

The dark red lights first clustered around the rock platform, so densely packed they filled every available space.

Then, the lights started to spread further out, extending to the deepest and farthest reaches of the chasm!

Everyone felt a tingling on their scalps; they were surrounded by an unknown mass of things in the middle of the chasm.

Everyone was too scared to move, keeping their breathing as light as possible.

Then, a rustling sound that made their skin crawl filled the air...

Hu Ling roared, "Run!"

They all scattered, and those rustling sounds suddenly became more frantic. Countless dark red dots swarmed up, rushing towards each of them.

At this point, Chen Gu could no longer worry about staying hidden. He and Qing Ruyan had thought her Psychological Spy ability would shield them from attack, but this time, the dense swarm of dots seemed unaffected by Qing Ruyan's influence, each one crazily charging at them.

Chen Gu swung his fist and shattered one. Only then did he clearly see that they were a type of Energy Gathering Mechanical Species, somewhat resembling a mosquito mixed with a longhorn beetle. Each one was the size of a fist, with sharp, serrated mouthparts!

The longhorn beetle's antennae bore two dark red eyes!

Individually, each of these Energy Gathering Mechanical Species posed no threat to a professional, but their numbers were simply too overwhelming, stretching out like a boundless ocean as far as the eye could see.

This relentless tide easily swept over and scattered the group.

Chen Gu let out a roar and activated Radiation Scouring. All the Energy Gathering Mechanical Insects within a ten-meter radius of him popped and fell.

He turned and saw Qing Ruyan already struggling fiercely. He rushed over, grabbed her, and demanded, "Aren't you a Psychological Spy?"

But the abilities Qing Ruyan had previously displayed were strikingly similar to those of a Psychological Spy.

Qing Ruyan snapped back irritably, "I never said I was a Psychological Spy!"

"Then before... never mind!" Chen Gu decided not to press further. This wasn't the time for such questions. Besides, he was certain that not a single truthful word ever came from this wily woman. Even if he did ask, he wouldn't get an honest answer.

Supposedly, the Psychological Spy's 'Psychic Invisibility' would be the most useful right now, but tough luck, Qing Ruyan wasn't a Psychological Spy.

And supposedly, in this situation, Huo Mei's 'Magnetic Constrictor' occupation would be the most powerful. Even at the First Energy Level, these Energy Gathering Mechanical Insects weren't that strong, but tough luck, Huo Mei had been taken out early!

Chen Gu, with Radiation Scouring active, made a break for the outside. However, this skill wasn't Mind Belief. It wasn't something you could just turn on and leave running indefinitely. Chen Gu's strength was steadily being drained, and he had no idea how long he could hold on.

In such a dangerous situation, Qing Ruyan seemed to show little fear. Instead, she looked at Chen Gu with interest and said, "Hey, your power is really useful. Radiation Missionary is so strong after all. I always thought this occupation could only mindlessly explode, explode, explode..."

She reached out a finger, wanting to poke this Radiation Missionary, who seemed quite different from her usual impression of them.

Seeing her raise her finger, Chen Gu yelled instinctively, "Don't poke me!"

Qing Ruyan hesitated for a while. It seemed she concluded that 'when under another's roof, one must bow one's head.' After all, she still needed Chen Gu's protection. So, she reluctantly lowered her hand.

A clever tactic suddenly occurred to Chen Gu. "Crouch down."

"What?" Qing Ruyan was bewildered.

"You crouch down. I'll get on, and you carry me. I'll keep Radiation Scouring active, and you sprint out at full speed. After all, you're a Second Energy Level expert; you're much faster than me. I don't know how long this skill can last, so let's try to break out as fast as possible!"

Qing Ruyan was extremely reluctant, but she still crouched down in front of Chen Gu, presenting her back to him.

Chen Gu didn't hesitate and mounted her neck.

Qing Ruyan, speechless, clenched her teeth and asked, "Wouldn't it be fine if I just carried you on my back?"

"That would hinder your movement. This position ensures your sprinting speed and doesn't affect my feel for activating my abilities—don't get any funny ideas!" Chen Gu sternly warned her. "I'm just a minor, I don't care about appearances. Why would a seasoned career woman like you, who's navigated the professional world for years, be concerned?"

Gritting her teeth, Qing Ruyan thought, This despicable kid! He talks as if he's the one making a huge sacrifice, but he's the one riding on my neck!

As the Energy Gathering Mechanical Insects swarmed around them, Chen Gu urged her, "Alright, giddy-up! Faster, no time to waste."

To save their lives, Qing Ruyan begrudgingly sped off, with Chen Gu on her neck.

Chapter 146: Riding on my Happy Little Pony (1st Update)

Believe it or not, this speed really did increase significantly. The two of them were like a crude iron plow, shearing through clusters of Energy-Gathering Mechanical Insects that fell in swathes.

As Qing Ruyan was running wildly, suddenly, SNAP! She got smacked on her butt. Her whole body nearly went rigid, and she almost fell.

Chen Gu apologized, "Sorry, I got too immersed and reflexively cracked the whip..."

Qing Ruyan gritted her teeth, seething. Just you wait, you little brat! Once we get past this, I'll definitely bad-mouth you to the Director-General and let her deal with you!

Then Qing Ruyan continued her mad dash, but a curious thought suddenly popped into her head: Where did this kid get a whip?

While on her back, Chen Gu quietly refastened his belt. Fortunately, from her position, Qing Ruyan couldn't see if his pants had actually fallen. It could only be said that the motion felt familiar, a reflex from—Oh, my unrestrained youth from a past life!

In this lifetime, all that remained was running through the insect swarm.

Chen Gu thought, Good thing I have a mount.

The two sprinted onward, their coordination surprisingly perfect. Chen Gu was sweating profusely; large beads of sweat dripped down, landing on Qing Ruyan's face. When she looked up and saw Chen Gu's strenuous effort, the anger in her heart finally dissipated a bit.

Finally, an opening appeared before them. Qing Ruyan stumbled and fell, while Chen Gu tumbled away.

Qing Ruyan apologized repeatedly, "I exerted too much force; my legs went weak."

I'll never admit I did it on purpose.

Chen Gu, dazed and battered, scrambled up with a swollen face and pulled Qing Ruyan. "Quick, those things are catching up!"

The two scrambled and tumbled a good distance away. The Energy-Gathering Mechanical Insects behind them lost their target and finally began to retreat, no longer pursuing.

Leaning against each other, they sat on the ground, both experiencing waves of lingering fear.

Hu Ling's abilities were the least suited for this kind of situation. After transforming, he ran amok, crushing countless Energy-Gathering Mechanical Insects, but even more swarmed onto his body from all around.

He roared and swatted at them furiously, but the sheer number of insects was overwhelming. He had become separated from his teammates—stranded and alone!

The insects landed on him, their terrifying mandibles immediately piercing his body.

In his Hell Titan form, Hu Ling's physical strength was dozens of times that of an ordinary person. Even if shot with large-caliber firearms, bullets would merely deform on impact with his skin and fall away.

However, these Energy-Gathering Mechanical Insects' mandibles were exceptionally terrifying; they easily penetrated his skin and continued to drill into his flesh!

Hu Ling howled in agonizing pain. With a single slap, the Energy-Gathering Mechanical Insects that had burrowed into his skin were flattened within his body.

But there were simply too many insects. Soon, a mountain of them gathered, burying him underneath.

Hu Ling knew his end was near. He had always known this mission was extremely dangerous, but now, truly facing this moment, the profound fear of death made the tough man tremble, his heart filled with unwillingness.

Suddenly, he reached into his pocket and pulled out an object.

It was the serum Leder had given everyone at the start of the mission—a serum that could greatly enhance one's physical attributes.

Although this serum seemed unlikely to help much in the current situation—even with enhanced attributes, without the right skills, it was still a dead end.

But a drowning man will clutch at straws.

Hu Ling forcefully injected the serum into his body. An indescribable pain surged through him, and he let out an inhuman wail as his body swelled once more.

His clothes were specially made with excellent elasticity, ensuring that even after transforming into the Hell Titan, he wouldn't suffer the embarrassment of being exposed.

This time, however, his clothing was utterly shredded. After this new expansion, he became grotesquely misshapen: his lips tore, splitting his mouth into four parts, and sharp, hook-like fangs sprouted around them.

The hair at the back of his head transformed into a mass of writhing, fleshy tendrils.

His body sprouted a dense layer of dark scales, and four new arms grew beneath his original two.

ROAR—

He slammed a fist into the ground and roared at the sky.

The mountain of insects surrounding him was blasted away. The Energy-Gathering Mechanical Insects that had burrowed into his body were strangely drained of their energy and then assimilated.

At that moment, the surrounding Energy-Gathering Mechanical Insects reacted as if they had encountered something terrifying. They scrambled away frantically, bumping into each other in panic.

Hu Ling stood up and, opening his mouth, inhaled sharply at the fleeing Energy-Gathering Mechanical Insects!

His four-lobed mouth, lined with hooked fangs, gaped open, creating a vortex. He swallowed the Energy-Gathering Mechanical Insects in one gulp and began to chew vigorously.

His gaping maw stretched to an unbelievable size.

From a distance, his mouth was wildly disproportionate to his body—larger than his entire physique.

As he continued to chew and swallow, his mouth gradually shrank, though his body showed no other significant change.

After consuming a mouthful of Energy-Gathering Mechanical Insects, his now blood-red eyes glinted with an even greater hunger. He turned his head, searching, his large nostrils flaring. He quickly chose a direction and bolted off like a wild beast.

The instant the Hive outbreak began, Lao Mo transformed into a sheet of flowing sand, stealthily hiding and seeping away underground.

But the insects crawling all over him, burrowing in and out, made him extremely uncomfortable.

Although this caused him no substantial harm, it was certainly unpleasant to have things moving in and out of one's body without permission or preparation.

If it's serious, it's a crime!

Lao Mo cursed inwardly: Damn it, that's a nostril!

So itchy, stop squirming! I can barely hold on.

Damn it, you can't just touch a man there!

OH—finally, one found the right spot... Comfortable...

Thanks to his experience with the Avian Mechanical Species, Glove had a knack for dealing with flying entities.

Whenever Energy-Gathering Mechanical Insects flew within a three-meter radius of him, they would instantly start flailing erratically like headless chickens before plummeting to the ground.

However, the fallen Energy-Gathering Mechanical Insects didn't give up; they relentlessly crawled toward him. Glove, still only at the first Energy Level, had no other recourse but to flee. Fortunately, the insects crawled slowly on the ground.

Glove ran and ran, until suddenly the pursuing Energy-Gathering Mechanical Insects behind him all stopped. They hovered, seemingly hesitant, before finally buzzing away.

Glove caught his breath. Constantly using skills was a heavy burden, even for an adept.

He sat down on a rock, somewhat puzzled. Why did these little bugs stop chasing me?

I've heard that Mechanical Species, like wild beasts, have their own territories. Have I run out of theirs?

Then that raises a question: Whose territory am I in now?

Chapter 147: Such Beautiful Skin (Second Update)

Gloves was suddenly alarmed. He spun around, but the anticipated threat lurking behind him didn't appear. The area behind him was empty. The light was dim, and magnetic storms and lightning constantly flickered overhead, making the place feel terrifying and bizarre, but everything seemed safe.

He breathed a sigh of relief and was about to sit down for another rest when the ground beneath him suddenly split open. Countless fine, sharp metallic spikes shot out with a HISS, like a gaping maw snapping shut, biting into Gloves.

PUFF, PUFF, PUFF...

The spikes pierced through Gloves' body, instantly putting him in a near-death state. His gaze became vacant, and blood continuously flowed from his wounds. He was only breathing out, no longer in.

The ground continued to shake. The metallic spikes slowly rose, revealing a huge metallic flower petal underneath, followed by a second, and then a third...

The metallic spikes clamping Gloves were the pistils of this bizarre Metallic Overlord Flower.

Once the petals completely emerged from the ground, a massive metal stem connected beneath them was revealed.

Then, the entire area began to shake as one Metallic Overlord Flower after another appeared—this metallic plant carpeted the mountains and plains!

Mechanical Species were usually animalistic in form; a plant-like mechanical being such as this was exceedingly rare, likely born under the influence of a super-lifeform's remains.

The light in Gloves' eyes was fading, his life flashing before him.

He had joined the military at a young age and was identified as a Professional. After executing numerous secret missions, however, the rewards he received were meager.

In the Star State, they were an "invisible" presence; their department was nowhere to be found in the government hierarchy.

The disparity between his contributions and his compensation was too great. He gradually found it unbearable; his grievances and complaints mounted, and conflicts with his superiors erupted repeatedly.

During missions, he increasingly defied his superiors' orders, acting solely on his own judgment.

As a result, he became the "latent danger" within the team. However, the operation to "contain" him was leaked. He was prepared in advance, managing to escape the Star State and become a rogue Professional.

Then he met Hu Ling and a few others. Driven by necessity, he joined their squad. Though still operating in the shadows, getting paid what he earned was much better than before.

I never thought... this would be where it ends.

When he defected from the Star State, he knew he couldn't escape a general's unavoidable death in battle; he just hadn't expected it to come so quickly...

Suddenly, Gloves remembered he still had something. He moved his fingers with difficulty. His whole body was pinned by the spikes; only his fingers could move, and each movement sent waves of searing pain through him.

He slipped his fingers into his pocket and felt the button at the end of the vial. He pressed it hard.

HISS—

The needle of the vial shot out, piercing his clothes and injecting its contents into his body.

He didn't know what good this would do, but he was unwilling to let it end just like this.

Blood continued to pour from the multitude of wounds covering his body. Gradually, Gloves felt his consciousness fading away with the outflowing blood.

Unnoticed, the bright red blood began to darken, ultimately turning pitch black!

Gloves' body, locked within the metallic pistils, slowly shriveled as all its substance drained out, until only a layer of human skin remained within the pistils!

The black fluid seeped into the ground, then gathered, quickly finding the rootstock of the Metallic Overlord Flower. Circling it, the fluid locked onto the central Energy Core, which emitted a faint glow.

With a WHOOSH, the black liquid surged upward...

On the ground, the fields of Metallic Overlord Flowers withered in an instant.

The once-rigid steel petals gradually softened. Small spots of rust appeared on them, and soon they completely transformed into rust-covered scrap iron strewn across the ground.

GURGLE, GURGLE...

Black liquid surged up from beneath the ground like a fountain. Gloves desperately tried to condense his form as Laomo had, but after several attempts, he still failed.

He burst into a rage. Damn it! Why is this happening? If Laomo can do it, so can I!

He flowed about, the liquid surging violently, when he suddenly discovered his own cast-off skin. The black liquid GURGLED as it flowed towards it. After slipping inside the skin, he finally regained human form.

He moved his divine body, looked down at his hands and feet, and seemed quite satisfied. He took a step forward. His human skin was still hanging on the now rust-covered pistils. With this tug, the already tattered skin tore completely apart with a RIP.

The black liquid splashed uncontrollably outward.

"AUGH—"

The black liquid let out a roar, unlike any human sound, and an impatient urge suddenly sprang up within it: I need a new skin!

If I find a new skin, I can turn back into a human again!

So the black liquid hurriedly moved, rushing in a direction where it sensed a person.

The black liquid quickly returned to the gathering place of the Energy Gathering Mechanical Species. Wherever it passed, those fearsome energy-gathering mechanical insects scattered as if fleeing a viper!

More than ten minutes later, the black liquid "poked its head out" from behind a patch of black soil. It saw a girl with long, pointed ears that rotated nonstop. Her gun was switched to rapid-fire mode, and she was surrounded by a thick layer of energy-gathering mechanical insect corpses.

What a beautiful skin! the black liquid thought with sincere admiration, filled with desire for that skin.

...

Chen Gu and Qing Ruyan encountered another powerful Energy Gathering Mechanical Species—a mechanical serpent over a hundred meters long—but Qing Ruyan's abilities once again proved effective!

She "confused" the metallic serpent and then, without any discussion, grabbed Chen Gu and executed the "Human Flesh Sandbag Toss" combat tactic!

Chen Gu concluded this unprecedented combat tactic with a spectacular Biological Nuclear Explosion.

He never dared to doubt any of Qing Ruyan's decisions.

He knew she was taking this chance to get her revenge for the "grovelling humiliation."

Let her vent! Pent-up anger is damaging; it's always unhealthy to keep it bottled up.

After wandering for a while longer, Chen Gu and Qing Ruyan exchanged somewhat embarrassed glances. Chen Gu said, "I have a feeling... we might be lost."

A giant ravine! You just follow it in one direction—it should be simple enough—and yet we still managed to get lost!

Qing Ruyan declared with a serious expression, "Based on my extensive combat experience, I deduce that the environment here has been severely affected by the super-lifeform's remains. This may have caused some unpredictable changes in the spatial structure, so it's entirely normal that we got lost."

"You're absolutely right!" Chen Gu agreed.

But the question remained: what should they do next?

Chen Gu always kept Mind Belief active. It was a highly cost-effective skill that, once activated, could be left running passively, making it one of his highly favored abilities.

Chapter 148: The Shadow Emperor among Men, the Red Rabbit among Horses (1) Third Update

The two made marks on the surrounding rocks—naturally, it was Chen Gu who did this arduous task. The President, dignified and aloof, was also looking for trouble after having been ridden for so long.

Chen Gu used his "Fiery Flag" throwing knife to carve a cross mark on a rock.

Qing Ruyan asked curiously, "Why did you choose this mark out of so many?"

Chen Gu feigned conscientiousness. "If I chose another mark, like a checkmark, and someone else got lost here in the future and saw it, they might think it's the way out. Wouldn't that be misleading them?"

"Then why not draw something like a circle?"

Chen Gu had his explanation. "If someone sees it, they'd be puzzled—what does this mean? They might come up with all sorts of reasons, all of which would be wrong—we can't harm others."

Of course, the real reason was that a cross was relatively easier to draw and more conspicuous. He definitely thought about being lazy and just drawing a vertical or horizontal line, but what if he passed by later and missed it...

"A scumbag actually has a conscience? Haha," Qing Ruyan laughed it off.

Chen Gu didn't argue with her. But he couldn't understand: How did she know I was a scumbag? Who leaked this secret?

Making marks seemed quite effective. They walked for a long time without seeing any more marks, and Chen Gu breathed a sigh of relief. "We should have made it out."

Suddenly, Qing Ruyan raised her hand, and both of them stopped, straining their ears toward the faint sounds of battle coming from ahead.

Qing Ruyan gestured to him, and they crept forward quietly.

Chen Gu stepped on something. He picked it up and saw it was the corpse of an Energy Gathering Mechanical Species.

He showed it to Qing Ruyan. "Shot by a gun. They're our people!"

Qing Ruyan immediately sped up. Soon, they appeared at the edge of the battlefield, using the shadows to conceal themselves. Looking out, they saw a huge dark shadow constantly changing shape, besieging Dora, trying to attack from different angles.

Dora clenched her teeth, her face turning beet red. Nine long and short guns floated around her, aiming in different directions. Whenever the dark shadow made its move, it was met with a barrage of powerful ammunition.

Big Rabbit had been forced into her strongest state, single-handedly controlling nine guns.

However, it was clear that she would not be able to hold on much longer in this state.

The dark shadow was also strange. It seemed hesitant; every attack was like a probe, lacking resolve. As soon as it met resistance, it would immediately retract.

It wants to capture someone alive? Qing Ruyan wondered. But what was even more surprising was her exclaimed realization, "Is this a Mutant? There are actually Mutants in the Yingudusi Devil's Pit!"

Chen Gu switched to Griffin Wester's memories, analyzing the situation with the eyes of a tactical master. Soon his expression turned strange. From certain details, he realized that not only was the dark shadow holding back, but its targets... how to put it... were the natural openings on Big Rabbit's body. For instance, her facial orifices, or... well, other such places.

This Mutant is rather perverse, Chen Gu assessed.

Qing Ruyan snorted coldly. "Get ready to rescue!"

Qing Ruyan suddenly leaped out. Though her specific ability was unknown, the moment she appeared, the vast shadow faltered, momentarily distracted. It even forgot to attack Big Rabbit, who was already at her wit's end.

Qing Ruyan landed gracefully, squatting down with her hands pressed to the sides of her body, staring intently at the shifting dark shadow.

If Chen Gu had been standing in front of her at that moment, he would certainly have seen shock, surprise, and then a slow comprehension in her complex expression.

The shadow was affected by Qing Ruyan's ability. Qing Ruyan, in turn, seemed distracted by some "accidental discovery," and neither side made any further moves.

Chen Gu rushed out and asked Big Rabbit, "How are you?"

Big Rabbit pressed her lips tightly together and withdrew her abilities. Although very tired, she still grabbed a gun, ready to assist the President.

Compared to that shameful battle just now, what was a little fatigue?

Not only did Chen Gu realize where the shadow had attacked, but Big Rabbit, as the one in the predicament, was of course aware of it as well.

"I'm fine!" Dora said through clenched teeth. "This thing is very strange. Its whole body is liquid, and it can absorb Energy Gathering Mechanical Species to constantly enhance itself!"

Chen Gu nodded. "Mutants can evolve all sorts of bizarre abilities. I really didn't expect these things to be hidden in the Yingudusi Devil's Pit."

Dora aimed her gun but didn't know what kind of ammunition to use against this thing.

Qing Ruyan confronted the black liquid. It had grown several times larger than when it first appeared. Suddenly, it shuddered, and Qing Ruyan seemed to struggle, her ability no longer enough to suppress her opponent.

Chen Gu, watching from behind, was secretly puzzled. It seemed that Qing Ruyan's abilities were very effective against individual entities, even capable of suppressing such monsters. But when faced with groups, like swarms of Energy Gathering Mechanical Species, they were useless. Similar to a 'Psychological Spy'... What exactly is her class, and what is her ability?

The black liquid, which had been in a standoff with Qing Ruyan, suddenly retreated, surprising her. However, she knew that defeating it would come at a great cost.

Now that Dora was rescued, a mutual withdrawal was an acceptable outcome. So, Qing Ruyan also cautiously backed away, not completely retracting her power, continuing to deter her opponent.

The two parties reached an unspoken agreement, and the black liquid swiftly disappeared into the surrounding darkness.

Just as Qing Ruyan breathed a sigh of relief, Chen Gu immediately came to her side and whispered quickly, "It's a trick!"

Behind them, Big Rabbit's long, sharp ears spun rapidly, then, with a BIU, pointed in the direction where the black liquid had vanished.

Without hesitation, she fired several shots into the darkness. "There's still danger!"

When the black liquid retreated, Chen Gu's 'Mind Belief' hadn't triggered any warnings. Yet, the moment the black slime completely vanished into the darkness, he suddenly sensed an immense threat.

Dora's "elf ears" must have sensed the same thing.

What exactly is going on? Chen Gu grew more and more puzzled.

Qing Ruyan's eyebrows instantly shot up like sharp swords. She thought she had been deceived by the cunning Mutant!

Chen Gu stood by her side and suddenly felt a moment of trance, which made him inwardly alarmed. He quietly moved a little distance away. This was clearly a minor side effect from Qing Ruyan fully unleashing her ability, accidentally affecting him.

Qing Ruyan, in her guise as the "President," operated at the Second Energy Level. Chen Gu estimated that her actual strength was at least that of the Second Energy Level.

Dora's high-powered energy bullets shot into that patch of darkness, followed by a clinking sound as the bullets sparked bright flashes, momentarily illuminating something in the darkness before it vanished.

Chapter 149: The Shadow Emperor among Men, the Red Rabbit among Horses (2) Fourth Update

Chen Gu furrowed his eyebrows. "An Energy Gathering Mechanical Species?"

But according to Mind Belief, the premonition of danger is extremely strong, he thought. It shouldn't be an ordinary Energy Gathering Mechanical Species; it must be at least on the level of a Tyrannosaurus Rex ablaze.

Dora's shooting talent allowed her to know the outcome the moment she fired.

"It's no use. That thing is very powerful!" she said in a deep voice, her two pointed ears trembling slightly, still aimed in that direction.

A deep mechanical sound echoed, and out of the darkness extended a triangular metal snakehead the size of a washbasin! Following that came the sound of heavy machinery tracks rolling over the ground. Then, the second and third snakeheads appeared, followed by its massive mechanical body.

This was a hundred-meter-long, three-headed Energy Gathering Mechanical Snake!

Eerily, this massive Energy Gathering Mechanical Species was entirely pitch-black. Even the blue energy light that should radiate from the crevices of an Energy Gathering Mechanical Species's body was dark on this one. Only its six snake eyes flickered with a sinister red glow.

Chen Gu suddenly understood. "The black liquid has contaminated this Energy Gathering Mechanical Species!"

Qing Ruyan also recognized, through her own abilities, that the enemy they faced was not an Energy Gathering Mechanical Species, but the black liquid from before.

"That thing didn't retreat," Qing Ruyan said. "Instead, it sensed an Energy Gathering Mechanical Species hidden behind us, which it could use to counter my abilities!"

Chen Gu grew more puzzled. "Contaminating an Energy Gathering Mechanical Species can counter your abilities?"

Qing Ruyan did not elaborate, her gaze fixed warily on the three-headed Energy Gathering Mechanical Snake. She waved at the others. "You two go first. It's not convenient for me to use my abilities with you here."

She probably doesn't want Dora and me to see her true abilities, Chen Gu guessed, so he nodded. "Okay."

But Big Rabbit gripped her steel gun firmly. "President, please let me stay and help you! I can restrain it from a distance and won't slow you down..."

Qing Ruyan was already impatiently ushering them away. "Go, quickly!"

Big Rabbit was deeply moved. "President... such responsibility, such dominance!"

Chen Gu was astonished to find twinkling stars in Big Rabbit's eyes. Is that... admiration? Has the President conquered her just like that?

Chen Gu trusted Qing Ruyan completely, so he turned to leave.

But Big Rabbit suddenly hopped in front of Chen Gu and squatted down. "Get on quickly!"

Chen Gu and the vigilant Qing Ruyan were both surprised. Big Rabbit urged, "We can't let the President down! We must escape alive. This is the opportunity the President braved danger to secure for us!"

"You're just an ordinary person; I'm a Professional. I can run faster with you on my back."

Then she earnestly promised Qing Ruyan, "President, rest assured, I will get him out alive!"

Qing Ruyan was speechless. Chen Gu felt a little embarrassed initially, but seeing Big Rabbit's earnest plea, he... lifted his leg and mounted Big Rabbit's neck!

Qing Ruyan's eyelids twitched fiercely. This bastard, is he addicted to this? she fumed internally.

Dora was also momentarily stunned by Chen Gu's unusual posture, but he was already urging her, "Go quickly! This way, you can maintain your speed and keep your hands free. If there's danger, you can react immediately!"

Big Rabbit nodded solemnly. "Worthy of being the President's favored man, always so considerate."

She hoisted Chen Gu onto her shoulders, ready to run, when suddenly Chen Gu reached out and grabbed her pair of long ears!

Chen Gu felt utterly refreshed. I've wanted to tug on these ears for a while now, he thought. Before, I felt we weren't familiar enough for me to make a move. But now the chance is right in front of me, and a man's got to seize it!

From Chen Gu's vantage point, he couldn't see Dora's reaction. The moment he grabbed her ears, her eyes bulged wide, and a crimson flush swiftly swept over her small face. These ears were used for sensing and were, of course, extremely sensitive...

Qing Ruyan watched from the side, silently cursing the little rascal. This is too much! That posture... no matter how you look at it, it's like he's riding a horse, grabbing her ears like reins. Ready to gallop far and wide.

Giddy up! Chen Gu, riding on Big Rabbit's neck, almost shouted uncontrollably.

Big Rabbit suppressed the odd sensation coursing through her body, held a gun in each hand, and said to Qing Ruyan, "President, please take care!" Then she dashed off at breakneck speed.

Chen Gu called out, "Horse... I mean, Rabbit! Mind the clearance when you're running!"

Dora was momentarily flustered. The three-headed Energy Gathering Mechanical Snake focused on Qing Ruyan, ignoring Dora and Chen Gu's departure. Its desire for Qing Ruyan's 'skin' is overwhelming, even

exceeding its desire for Dora's, it thought, or rather, the entity controlling it did. The stronger the Professional, the more durable their skin, allowing it to be worn for longer.

A cold sneer touched Qing Ruyan's lips. "Spreading your consciousness across three mechanical heads? You think that's enough to counter my abilities?"

As she spoke, her eyebrows knitted sharply. One of the Energy Gathering Mechanical Snake's heads suddenly emitted smoke, then WHIRRED and shut down.

The moment the snake head drooped, the massive Energy Gathering Mechanical Species launched an attack. Qing Ruyan leaped and dodged repeatedly. A fierce battle erupted instantly, shaking the earth and whipping up dust and stones.

「 」

Chen Gu was riding on Dora's neck, feeling an urge to let out a triumphant howl, when Dora suddenly collided headfirst with a vast swarm of Energy Gathering Mechanical Insects!

"AH! AH! AH! AH!"

Dora screamed at the top of her lungs. Nine guns materialized around her, all set to rapid-fire mode. BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! They unleashed a barrage, and the insects dropped rapidly within a seven-to-eight-meter radius around them.

Dora's abilities were actually well-suited for such a situation. At the First Energy Level, her biggest shortcoming was insufficient offensive power; against powerful adversaries, she struggled to deal effective damage.

Firing as she broke through the swarm, Dora hysterically shouted, "Bugs! Bugs! They're so terrifying!"

Watching the rabbit girl plunge into a berserk state, shouting loudly while powerfully carving a path through, Chen Gu suddenly had a bizarre thought. The Six Arts for a gentleman—Rites, Music, Archery,

Charioteering, Calligraphy, and Mathematics. When riding on Rabbit Girl's neck, I've basically mastered Archery and Charioteering!

He patted Dora's head, pleased. Truly a fine steed, a horse of a thousand li, he mused.

Chen Gu suddenly looked down at Dora and asked, "Big Rabbit, do you like wearing... um, red clothes?"

The "little filly," as Chen Gu thought of her, was so embarrassed she stomped fiercely, almost tossing her rider off. Gritting her teeth, she cursed, "Pervert!"

"How could a heroic woman like the President ever fall for a sex maniac like you!"

Chen Gu was taken aback. Seriously? he thought. It's one thing if you don't get my joke, but how can you so casually slander my good name?

Dora quietly assessed herself. Her tactical belt was fastened securely, ensuring nothing was revealed. So how did this guy know I'm... wearing red underpants? she wondered.

Chapter 150: Demonic Experiment Subject (5th Update)

They were both a little awkward for a moment. Dora glanced around, saw no danger, shrugged, and said, "Get down!"

Chen Gu reluctantly and slowly dragged himself down. Inwardly, he compared the feel of the two ponies' haunches and silently gave Big Rabbit an extra point.

Qing Ruyan is thin and tall, a bit bony. That's not healthy; they say cyclists are prone to GW cancer—the same principle applies.

「...」

Leder hid behind some ghostly rocks. He watched a massive, all-black creature roar furiously as it smashed an Energy Gathering Mechanical Species to pieces and then devoured it voraciously. He murmured to himself, "Success, success!"

"Next, I must verify the controllability of these test subjects."

He clenched his teeth, took two items from his coat, stepped out from his hiding place, and whistled at the behemoth.

The feasting creature suddenly stopped, spun around, and lunged towards Leder as swift as the wind.

Just as its terrifying claws were about to pierce Leder's body, he gently pressed a button on a transmitter in his hand.

A subsonic wave, indiscernible to ordinary people or even professionals, was released.

The giant monster abruptly stopped, its claw tips just one centimeter from Leder's right eyeball.

Confusion filled its eyes; then, it slowly calmed down, squatting beside Leder like a hunting dog, drooling.

Leder breathed a sigh of relief and quietly tucked away the "prop" he held in his other hand.

If the test subjects proved uncontrollable, he would have to use the prop to destroy them, which would be a great pity.

Leder carefully observed the test subject, took out a small notebook, and quickly recorded various data about it.

Finished, he felt somewhat dissatisfied. "So many professionals, and only this one used the drug?" he muttered. "Judging by its state, it must be Hu Ling. Just an old profession. It would be perfect if the President were here; we've always lacked high-Energy-Level experimental materials."

Leder adjusted the controller in his hand and began to input commands. He made several mistakes in succession, which frustrated him immensely. "These things can't accept complex instructions!" he grumbled. "Let me think... let me think some more... What's the command for seeking kin?"

After a long while, he finally figured it out and pressed the button on the controller. Hu Ling suddenly stood up, sniffed the air a few times, and ran off—THUD, THUD, THUD.

Leder hurriedly followed.

「...」

Chen Gu and Dora proceeded with extreme caution, looking three times for every step they took. Dora, wielding two handguns, was a little scared of the dark. "Hey," she said, "you think we're going in the right direction, don't you?"

Chen Gu didn't know either, but he said confidently, "Don't worry. Back in school, they called me the Human Compass!"

"I'm counting on you," Dora said, greatly reassured, nodding vigorously.

"Wait," Chen Gu suddenly called out, leading Dora to the side where there were some marks on the rock wall.

Years of accumulated dust on the stone wall, combined with the special environment here, had formed a crusty layer. It took Chen Gu quite an effort to remove it.

The stone wall behind it was very smooth, clearly shaped by human hands, with symbols and formulas engraved on it.

Chen Gu was utterly puzzled.

Dora had a very laid-back personality. She was completely oblivious that there were nearly hidden marks on the nearby stone wall—marks that even she, a professional, had failed to notice. The fact that Chen Gu could spot them was highly unusual.

She stared at this section of the stone wall in astonishment, gesturing with her hand. "This... someone smoothed the stone wall directly with their hand, and then wrote these calculation processes with their fingers!"

"That person must be at least Third Energy Level! Even the President couldn't do this!"

Chen Gu looked at her in surprise. "These are calculation processes? What are they calculating, and how do you know?"

Chen Gu had good grades in school. The old principal had high hopes for him, considering him a 'talented recruit' destined for the Tiangong Military Division. Yet, he couldn't understand any of these formulas.

Dora glanced at them casually. "This is probably the level of a doctoral candidate at a top-tier university. It's normal that you don't understand."

"The result of the calculation is a set of coordinates," she added.

Chen Gu looked at the formulas, then back at Big Rabbit. "So, what level are you really at?"

"Me?" Dora was still nonchalant. "In terms of actual ability, I could probably supervise doctoral candidates. But... never mind. Forget it. Just wait for me to work it out."

Chen Gu quietly waited, feeling intellectually crushed.

"Still," Chen Gu voiced another doubt, "who would perform such calculations and insist on carving them into a stone wall? Even if they were extremely powerful and could do this easily, wouldn't the normal reaction be to just grab a stick and draw on the ground?"

"Unless," he continued, his voice trailing off as he thought aloud, "they needed to preserve the calculation process and results long-term, for those who came later."

Chen Gu stroked his chin, speculating further, "Could it be people from the *Four Hundred Braves*? Leaving clues for Dilina and the others?"

Dora had already bounced back like a rabbit. "Done calculating."

"That fast?"

But Dora said helplessly, "Calculating this is very simple. The problem is, we have no way to locate these coordinates."

The team's only positioning device resistant to electromagnetic interference was in Leder's possession. Such devices were expensive and outdated; outside of environments like the Yingudusi Devil's Pit, they were practically useless.

"In other words," Chen Gu concluded, "we need to find Leder now."

Chen Gu looked around, hoping to find more traces. If, as he guessed, the person who originally wrote down these formulas did so to guide those who came later, then they must have left other markers.

He led Dora around, searching for these so-called "clues." After about half an hour, Chen Gu realized that he... was lost.

But Big Rabbit, at his side, wore an expectant expression that clearly said, "We're counting on you!" Great Actor Chen, who had boasted earlier, couldn't bring himself to admit he was lost.

Suddenly, he saw a human-shaped figure squatting on the ground ahead!

He was just about to warn Big Rabbit behind him to be careful, but Dora had already dashed out excitedly. "Boluo, what are you doing here?"

Then, her eyes sparkling, she glanced back at Chen Gu. "You really are a Human Compass, finding a companion so quickly!"

He really is reliable as a guide!

Chen Gu didn't blush in the slightest. "Of course!"

Boluo was surprised to see them too. When he heard Chen Gu's supposed title of "Human Compass," he said eagerly, "Quick, get me out of here!"

Chen Gu stepped forward. "What are you squatting here for? It's dangerous."

Boluo was full of complaints. "I have no idea which unscrupulous person went around drawing crosses everywhere." He pointed to a cross mark on a nearby stone.

Chen Gu winced.