

Ice Age 1081

Chapter 1081: The Secret Beneath the Qinling Mountains

Upon hearing Deng Yuanbo mention the Qinling Mountains, Zhang Yi immediately became interested.

He quickly asked Deng Yuanbo for more details.

Deng Yuanbo did not hide anything. He was particularly eager to get closer to Zhang Yi and naturally told him everything he knew.

"There is something extremely terrifying beneath the Qinling Mountains. Back then, to obtain the Divine Source, the Shengjing Region mobilized almost all its forces, including its most elite superhumans and tens of thousands of Yan Yun Guards."

"It took them three months to finally retrieve the Divine Source from beneath the Qinling Mountains. It's said they suffered extremely heavy casualties in the process."

"And to this day, that area remains a forbidden zone, heavily guarded. The Shengjing Region even has over a dozen Death Reapers of Love targeted at that location!"

Upon hearing this, Zhang Yi deeply furrowed his brow.

He thought of the mysterious entity that appeared in the Mist Valley on Star Island.

Its formidable power was deeply terrifying. Back then, Zhang Yi, Xuanwu, and Cadillus were as powerless as infants against it.

Xuanwu was directly flipped over, and the joint forces led by the Columbus Ocean were half destroyed.

If that black-armored strange man hadn't been unwilling to leave the area around Mist Valley, probably no one present besides Zhang Yi would have been able to escape.

Zhang Yi frowned as he looked at Deng Yuanbo. "What exactly exists beneath the Qinling Mountains?"

Deng Yuanbo shook his head helplessly.

"That touches upon core secrets. Even with my information channels, I cannot find out."

"Shengjing's supreme commander, Qin Qigong, personally issued a gag order. Not a single word is to be leaked by anyone who participated in the operation!"

Zhang Yi had a vague feeling that there must be some commonality between the Qinling Mountains and the Mist Valley abyss.

There must have been a reason for the sudden appearance of the Divine Source back then.

"If the Qinling Mountains are truly that dangerous, why not just seal it off completely? Under the power of the Death Reaper of Love, I don't believe any carbon-based lifeform in this world could survive!"

Zhang Yi said calmly.

Even though he had now reached the Epsilon level, he still maintained the utmost respect for that kind of ultimate human weapon.

Even he, as he was now, could not possibly withstand a large-yield Death Reaper of Love capable of destroying a major city in a single strike. His only option would be to flee.

A mysterious smile appeared on Deng Yuanbo's smooth face.

"If they are unwilling to destroy it, it's naturally because keeping it brings great benefits."

"It's said that the reason the Shengjing Region has been able to firmly suppress the other five major regions in the field of superhumans since the Apocalypse is closely related to the secret beneath the Qinling Mountains!"

Zhang Yi's mind was a bit chaotic. He felt that as his strength grew and he reached higher levels, he began to encounter some truly terrifying things.

God knows he just wanted to be a comfortable, wealthy man, living a carefree life with ample food and clothing in his Shelter in Tianhai City, with a few beauties for company. That would have been enough for him.

But the wheel of history rolls on, and no one can escape it. Now, it seemed the only path forward for him was to press ahead and overcome all obstacles.

After all, he was already deeply involved in this game. Wanting to keep a low profile was no longer an option.

Zhang Yi conversed a while longer with Deng Yuanbo and Deng Shentong.

Naturally, the two of them couldn't help but try to recruit Zhang Yi during their conversation.

Zhang Yi exchanged polite words with them, neither refusing outright nor explicitly accepting.

Having more friends meant more paths. He wouldn't put all his eggs in one basket.

Maintaining a certain relationship with the Deng Family would also give Zhu Zheng a sense of crisis.

Playing both sides was the way to maximize benefits.

During this time, Zhang Yi also asked Deng Yuanbo about superhuman gene technology and the latest weapons technology.

In the field of technology, Deng Technology had always been unparalleled in the Jiangnan area.

Deng Yuanbo was naturally very familiar with this.

He explained to Zhang Yi, "With the large-scale emergence of superhumans, we have also obtained a massive sample pool for research on how to rapidly enhance a superhuman's strength."

"To put it simply, there is a huge barrier between each level of superhuman. It's at the genetic level, and we currently lack the ability to change it. Perhaps only with the help of special substances like the Divine Source is there a chance."

"However, our technological means for enhancing the power of a superhuman's abilities within a given level are constantly improving."

"But superhuman energy and superhuman abilities are not the same thing. Only those with talent have the value to be cultivated."

Zhang Yi nodded. What Deng Yuanbo said made perfect sense.

It was like giving Baili Changqing's abilities to Fatty Xu. Fatty Xu's comprehensive superhuman ability index evaluation probably wouldn't reach 7000.

The reason was simple. Putting a close-combat ability on a coward meant he absolutely could not develop that ability to its maximum potential.

Superhuman energy was water, and superhumans were containers.

Only if the container was large enough and resilient enough could it hold more water.

As Deng Yuanbo spoke of this, he suddenly looked at Zhang Yi, his gaze becoming fervent.

"Zhang Yi, you obtained the Divine Source, didn't you? I wonder if you have any fragments of it left? If you do, I hope you can give me a tiny bit. I want to research it! To see what exactly this thing is."

Zhang Yi let out a bitter laugh and shook his head. "Uncle Deng, do you think I would still have that stuff? As soon as I got my hands on it back then, I used it all up."

A trace of regret flashed across Deng Yuanbo's face.

"Ah, that's true. After all, no superhuman can resist that kind of temptation. Who would have any left over?"

Zhang Yi felt it was about time and stood up to take his leave.

"Zhang Yi, wait a moment. I've prepared a small gift for you here. It's nothing much, but I hope you'll accept it."

Deng Yuanbo had the steward, Lian Cheng, bring the item over.

Lian Cheng carried over a heavy box and presented it to Zhang Yi.

"What's this?"

Zhang Yi asked curiously.

Deng Yuanbo smiled. "Open it and take a look."

Zhang Yi secretly remained cautious. First, he used his [All Things Follow Traces] ability to lock onto it.

Upon probing, he discovered it contained roughly a thousand bullets and a blue crystal chip.

"Bullets? A crystal chip?"

Zhang Yi was puzzled but still opened the box.

The bullets were a silvery-gray color, their surfaces reflecting a mysterious sheen. The material composition felt somewhat familiar.

Zhang Yi reached out and picked one up, finally realizing what these things were.

"Adamantine alloy!!"

This metal was extremely expensive to produce and had become even rarer since the Apocalypse.

Only members of the investigation teams and Yan Yun Guard officers could apply to have weapons made from it.

And now, the Deng Family was so extravagant as to use it to make bullets?

Deng Shentong walked over, picked up a bullet, and explained to Zhang Yi:

"These bullets were prepared specifically for you. No one else is even qualified to use them."

"With your current power, ordinary bullets can no longer withstand your strength. But Adamantine metal is different. Its toughness is the highest among all known substances."

Chapter 1082: Master, I Have Seen the Light

Zhang Yi was extremely satisfied with this gift. At this point in time, he truly did need to upgrade his weapons.

These bullets were worth a fortune, but they were just perfect for someone like him.

Deng Shentong continued explaining some of the principles behind the bullets.

For example, to facilitate separation, the bullet head and casing were made of different materials, and the gunpowder used was also specially formulated.

It couldn't even really be called gunpowder anymore, but rather a special type of propellant.

Deng Shentong picked up a bullet and activated the special ability within his body. A gentle white light flowed into the bullet.

"Ordinary bullets are propelled by gunpowder, but this special type of bullet uses a material that can absorb special abilities."

"In other words, when you use these bullets, the power of the shot depends entirely on the strength of your special ability."

Zhang Yi was inwardly ecstatic.

Wasn't this type of bullet exactly what he needed?

Deng Shentong then pointed towards the blue chip.

"The synthesis method for Adamantine Metal, as well as the manufacturing technique for these special bullets, are all stored on this chip."

"With your capabilities, I believe you'll find a way to produce them yourself in the future."

Zhang Yi was overjoyed.

The gift he received from the Deng Family was in no way inferior to the supplies Zhu Zheng had given him!

"Isn't this gift a bit too valuable?"

Zhang Yi said with a smile.

Deng Yuanbo and Deng Shentong also smiled.

"Being able to earn the friendship of an Epsilon-level superhuman makes this gift more than worth its price!"

This was a favor.

If one day in the future, the Deng Family needed Zhang Yi's help, based on the accumulated goodwill over time, Zhang Yi would step in.

The Deng Family was in the business of doing business; they knew how to invest in valuable people.

Zhang Yi thought for a moment, then suddenly asked, "Does the higher-ups also possess this type of weapon technology?"

Zhu Zheng had promised him that he would also provide him with this kind of technical know-how.

Deng Yuanbo pondered for a moment before speaking frankly, "They do have some similar technology. The method they use is a very advanced one, but it has more limitations. It's called energy-storing laser weapon technology."

"Compared to physical bullets, its method involves charging energy and then firing high-energy particle beams."

"It's hard to say which method is better or worse; the key lies in the usage scenario."

Zhang Yi immediately understood.

"For example, the bullet can be coated with the demon-breaking substance of the Origin Bullet. But laser weapons eliminate the hassle of reloading bullets, though their energy consumption might be greater, right?"

He had seen both methods used on Billy the Kid.

Deng Yuanbo nodded, "Exactly."

Zhang Yi made up his mind; it would be best to integrate both systems into the firearms.

However, the most effective would undoubtedly be these expensive Adamantine Metal bullets.

Zhang Yi didn't stand on ceremony and accepted the items.

He intended to leave. As he stepped out the door, he saw several military vehicles parked outside.

Baili Changqing's massive frame was leaning against the hood of a car, a pricey Huangwan cigarette dangling from his mouth.

The other members of the Celestial Hound Squad were also nearby. It was obvious they were waiting for Zhang Yi to come out.

Zhang Yi smiled. He had originally planned to meet Baili Changqing for a drink.

He didn't expect the entire Celestial Hound Squad to be here.

"I need to tell Old Zhu sometime that this damn squad should just be disbanded!"

Zhang Yi muttered under his breath.

He didn't like managing people, and no matter how you looked at it now, the combat strength of these team members was somewhat of a liability.

Furthermore, if he needed technical talent, his Shelter lacked for nothing.

"Yo."

Zhang Yi walked out the main gate and waved at them.

The group immediately excitedly crowded around him.

"Captain!"

Their eyes were filled with reverence as they quickly encircled Zhang Yi.

Zhang Yi's gaze swept over their faces, finally settling on Baili Changqing's honest, weathered face.

"You all came? Don't you have training?"

Baili Changqing scratched the back of his head and smiled honestly, "Captain, training can wait a day. But getting to see you isn't easy!"

"You have no idea how much everyone wanted to see you."

The long-haired beauty Meng Siyu took out a communicator from her pocket, opened a text file, and handed it to Zhang Yi.

"Captain, can you sign this for me? My nephew really likes you and insisted I ask you for an autograph."

Zhang Yi shook his head helplessly, "You're not trying to scam me with this, are you?"

Everyone burst into laughter.

Zhang Yi was naturally joking. Under Meng Siyu's blushing expression, he extended a finger and signed the name [Chaos] for her.

Hmm, the handwriting seemed a bit ugly, but he hadn't touched a pen in over a decade, so it couldn't be helped.

Nowadays, the only style he was any good at was cursive script.

"Captain, we've prepared a welcoming feast for you. Let's have a couple of drinks together?"

Baili Changqing said to Zhang Yi, his expression sincere.

Zhang Yi smiled faintly, "Having a couple of drinks would normally be fine. But today might not be the most appropriate."

"Commander Zhu wanted to hold a victory banquet for me, and I turned him down. If I went and had a casual drink with you all, wouldn't that be slapping him in the face?"

Hearing this, everyone's expressions turned somewhat disappointed.

Zhang Yi was now the number one expert in the Jiangnan Region, a hero in everyone's hearts.

Blizzard City's daily broadcasts were filled with his heroic deeds, which almost everyone could recite by heart.

"The number one hero in the world, the exceptionally wise leader, the pioneer of unity and friendship, the saint with an iron will and noble sentiments!"

"He is the pride of our Jiangnan Region, the guardian deity of survivors in the Apocalypse, the selfless and fearless investigation team captain—Chaos!"

Zhang Yi's relationship with most of the Celestial Hound Squad members was actually just average.

He was only slightly closer with Baili Changqing.

He couldn't be bothered to expend energy on pointless social interactions.

Back when he was just an unknown nobody, few people thought highly of him.

Now that they saw he was successful, that he had become a powerful figure everyone revered, they all put on an eager front, going to great lengths to try and establish some connection.

Anyone who could get close to Zhang Yi would have a brighter future in Blizzard City.

But who was Zhang Yi?

He wouldn't get carried away by others' flattery, and he certainly wouldn't waste time on unimportant people.

So, he walked out from the middle of the crowd and said to Baili Changqing, "Let's go. I want to talk with you alone."

The others all wore disappointed expressions, but since Zhang Yi had spoken, they didn't have the courage to follow.

Baili Changqing chuckled, got in the car, and left with Zhang Yi.

The two went to their usual spot, the Cipher Bar.

His arrival once again caused a sensation throughout the bar.

The bar manager personally came to attend to Zhang Yi. However, just as he was about to offer Zhang Yi's tab on the house, Zhang Yi tossed out his own points card.

"Today, all the expenses here are on me!"

Upon hearing this, the bar manager gave a knowing smile. Soon, the sound from the speakers echoed throughout every corner of the bar.

"Today, all expenses here are covered by our esteemed Captain Chaos!"

Zhang Yi thought for a moment, then turned back and said to the manager, "If it exceeds 10 million, just tell them the event has ended."

The manager's smile froze on his face.

After a long while, staring at the closed private room door, he nodded with a serious expression.

"As expected of Captain Chaos. Such a cautious mindset must be a prerequisite for becoming a powerhouse. Master, I have seen the light!"

Chapter 1083: The Indestructible Cockroach

Zhang Yi and Baili Changqing chatted for a while. It was nothing more than asking about the recent situation in Blizzard City and telling him some stories about Star Island.

Originally, such matters were top secret, but since Zhang Yi wanted to talk about them, Zhu Zheng wouldn't quibble with him over such minor details.

After listening, Baili Changqing felt a wave of lingering fear.

"Thank goodness you didn't take me with you back then. Otherwise, I'm afraid I would have become cannon fodder already."

Baili Changqing downed a glass of wine in one gulp and said bitterly.

He never thought that he, a deputy captain, would end up becoming a marginal figure in a battle.

Zhang Yi comforted him, "A battle of this level is the first of its kind since the apocalypse. There won't be many like it. Staying in the Jiangnan Region is enough for you to be a dominant force."

After chatting idly with Baili Changqing for a while, Zhang Yi left the bar, planning to return to Blizzard City.

It wasn't that he didn't value the friendship of old comrades, but as he grew stronger and stronger, the distance between him and some of the people around him also increased.

His friendship with Baili Changqing was forged on the battlefield.

It wasn't like the bond with his shelter companions who had weathered hardships and braved many storms together.

Therefore, as the gap between Baili Changqing and him widened, the distance between the two inevitably increased.

It was like former colleagues who had worked together. No matter how good their relationship was, as one got promoted or left the job, distance would slowly appear.

Zhang Yi didn't have time for sentimental melancholy. He had long been accustomed to the joys and sorrows, the meetings and partings between people.

Just before he left, Baili Changqing suddenly called out to him.

"Zhang Yi... Captain."

Zhang Yi turned to look at him, still holding the Huangwan cigarette Baili Changqing had offered him.

"Hmm? Is there something else?"

Baili Changqing hesitated for a moment before slowly saying, "Can you... not withdraw from the Celestial Hound Squad?"

"I know our current strength can only hold you back. But if the squad is disbanded, we don't know where we'll be assigned."

"But as long as you don't say anything, Commander Zhu, out of respect for you, will keep our unit intact."

Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow, then said lightly, "Then keep it."

Whether to keep it or not was a trivial matter to him.

At most, he'd just be a hands-off boss.

Baili Changqing was overjoyed. "Thank you, Captain!"

Unconsciously, a thick barrier had already formed between them.

Zhang Yi left the bar, exhaled a long plume of white smoke, then threw the cigarette butt on the ground and crushed it under his foot.

A special car was waiting for him outside, and the driver came over to open the door.

Zhang Yi got in the car and said flatly, "To the subway station."

Then he dialed Fatty Xu's communicator. "Had enough fun? Or do you want to stay a couple more days?"

From the other end of the communicator came Fatty Xu's weak, listless voice.

"No, Boss, take me with you! A few days later and I'm afraid I'd be done for here."

This time, to win Zhang Yi over, Zhu Zheng had truly spared no expense. The girls sent were the best in Blizzard City, usually only serving the city's upper class.

This time, Fatty Xu was thoroughly exhausted, and thoroughly delighted.

Zhang Yi took a deep breath, cursed "damn fatty" in his heart, then said irritably, "Get your ass to the subway station, now!"

After he left, the bar door quickly opened, and several people scrambled to pick up the cigarette butt Zhang Yi had thrown away.

Zhang Yi arrived at the subway station, where someone was already waiting, holding the items prepared for him by the region.

Not long after, Fatty Xu arrived, panting heavily.

His legs kept trembling, weak and unsteady, and his lips were somewhat pale.

Zhang Yi rubbed his forehead. "You should at least show some restraint! Be careful you don't lose your life over this."

Fatty Xu retorted stubbornly, "How can you talk about restraint when it comes to an otaku's business? Relaxation, it's called relaxation."

Zhang Yi gave him a glare, then boarded the special train.

On the way back, he thought to himself: I must improve the strength of my family members as soon as possible! This world is starting to become more and more dangerous.

...

Inside the shelter.

Yang Siya and Zhou Haimei were preparing dinner in the kitchen.

Yang Siya was in a very cheerful mood today, humming a tune while cooking.

Seeing her rosy complexion and excellent vitality, Zhou Haimei nudged her with her elbow and teased:

"Looks like you've been well nourished!"

Yang Siya pursed her lips, looking quite smug. "Of course! Our Zhang Yi is young and vigorous."

Zhou Haimei said defiantly, "Our Guang isn't bad either!"

The two bantered and laughed, not noticing a dark, blackish thing crawling towards the trash can under the kitchen counter.

Yang Siya and Zhou Haimei were playfully jostling each other when Yang Siya inadvertently glanced down and saw the thing. She immediately jumped on the spot in fright.

"Ah!!"

Zhou Haimei looked closely. Lying on the floor was a creature that could make any woman turn pale with fright—a cockroach!

And not an ordinary cockroach either. That thing, pitch black all over, gleaming with a brown oily sheen, with disgusting antennae, was actually as big as an adult's palm!

She immediately hugged Yang Siya and also screamed in alarm.

Zhou Ke'er, hearing their shouts, hurried over. When she saw the thing, her face also showed an expression of disgust and surprise.

However, being a doctor who had been in operating rooms, she was quite brave. She immediately grabbed a magazine and smashed it down on the floor!

True to being a doctor, her strike was steady, accurate, and ruthless, hitting the cockroach in one go.

Yang Siya and Zhou Haimei huddled together in a corner of the kitchen, terrified.

"Is it dead? Is it dead?"

Before she finished speaking, the cockroach's huge head emerged from under the magazine.

Zhou Ke'er, suppressing the nausea in her heart, walked over and stomped on it hard several times.

"This time it's definitely dead!"

Zhou Ke'er patted her chest, which was still trembling, and let out a long sigh of relief.

But before her words faded, a buzzing sound suddenly reached her ears.

That cockroach crawled out from under the tattered magazine, then flapped its wings and flew straight at Zhou Ke'er's face!

Even the brave Zhou Ke'er was so frightened that her body froze stiff.

At the critical moment, a flash of blade light swept past Zhou Ke'er's eyes.

"Clang!"

The cockroach's body was directly sliced in two, then fell to the ground.

It turned out Liang Yue, hearing their screams, had rushed over with her sword.

The two severed sections of the corpse on the floor were still writhing, disgusting green liquid flowing from its body, almost making the several women present vomit.

Liang Yue walked over and stabbed her sword into its head. The cockroach struggled a few more times before slowly stopping its movements.

The three women, Yang Siya and the others, all ran behind her. Though still shaken, women love to join in the excitement. They curiously peeked out with both eyes from behind Liang Yue to look at the huge cockroach on the ground.

"This thing... how did it grow so big?"

"Could it be mutated!"

"It must be. I stomped on it so hard just now, and it was completely fine."

Chapter 1084: The Undying Ghost

That dead cockroach sparked quite a discussion within the shelter.

Perhaps it had been too peaceful here for too long, and everyone rarely saw insects, so they casually chatted about this issue.

Zhou Ke'er asked, "Where did it come from? I remember there shouldn't be any cockroaches in the shelter. It couldn't have just fallen from the sky, could it?"

Liang Yue stroked her chin, seriously analyzing, "Maybe it was hiding in the house before. You know, these things are everywhere in the south, incredibly tenacious and very hard to kill."

Right at that moment, Aunt Zhou Haimei brought up a point with a worried expression:

"There's a saying: when you find one cockroach in a room, there are definitely a thousand more hiding in the shadows!"

The faces of the several women immediately changed.

The thought that there could be so many of these creatures lurking in the shadowy corners they couldn't see, and that they had been living alongside them day and night, made their skin crawl.

Just then, Yang Xinxin came into the living room from the back, riding her electric wheelchair.

Although her legs had already recovered to normal, the shelter was simply too large, and her delicate, weak legs would start to ache after walking for a while.

There was no helping it. Even though her legs were better, after years of not exercising them, she still preferred using machinery to get around.

Yang Xinxin had a computer in front of her, intently processing some data.

After overhearing their conversation, she leisurely replied, "That's impossible. This house's Smart System can monitor every corner and naturally includes a pest control system."

"This bug was probably accidentally brought in by someone coming or going!"

"I've already modified the system's code to add cockroaches to the cleanup list. The system will eliminate them as soon as it detects them. There's no need to make a fuss."

These words made the group look at each other in surprise.

"From outside?"

The temperature outside fluctuated around minus sixty degrees Celsius year-round. Basically, very few normal creatures could survive in that environment.

Cockroaches, those detestable and disgusting bugs, could they really have survived until now?

"Probably a mutant."

Yang Xinxin said flatly, "Cockroaches have an incredibly strong ability to adapt to their environment, and their reproductive rate even surpasses that of rats. So it's not strange for mutants to appear."

She paused, then continued, "And due to their massive population size, given sufficient food, large numbers of mutants could even emerge."

Zhou Ke'er frowned, then, mustering her courage, actually reached out and picked up the garbage bag containing the cockroach.

"Then I better take it back and study it carefully!"

Everyone nodded, agreeing that Zhou Ke'er's approach was more prudent.

However, no one paid this matter any special attention.

After all, by now, they had witnessed too many changes, and Zhang Yi's strength had also risen to the Epsilon-level.

They were just some annoying bugs; they wouldn't have much impact on their lives.

...

Tianhai City, West Mountain District.

This was once one of the most densely populated areas of Tianhai City.

It also gave birth to the strongest refuge after the Apocalypse, the West Mountain Base.

However, ever since Zhang Yi completely destroyed it, it quickly became desolate and uninhabited.

The vast base had long been buried under thick layers of ice and snow. People simply couldn't find the sealed entrance on the mountain body of West Mountain.

However, a deathly silent zone didn't mean all life was extinguished.

Deep underground, over a hundred meters down, vigorous life force was currently surging relentlessly. Dense, black ghosts rustled as they crawled through the abandoned corridors, covering the broken walls and ruins.

Within the ruins, the ground was littered with dry bones that had been gnawed completely clean.

And these cockroaches exuded a brown, oily sheen all over their bodies, their size many times larger than ordinary cockroaches.

Even in the corners, crouched cockroaches with even more terrifying sizes, possessing horrifying dimensions of dozens of centimeters, even over a hundred centimeters!

They were born with an appearance that disgusted humans, and now, after becoming gigantic, they were even more spine-chilling.

"Thump!" "Thump!"

From within the shadows, several corpses were thrown into that dense mass of cockroaches that made one's scalp tingle.

"Whoosh!"

In less than a second, the entire ruins seemed to go crazy, as a huge black wave surged forth. Countless cockroaches swarmed over, rapidly devouring those corpses.

"Buzz—"

Several huge cockroaches flew over directly, quickly occupying the best spots, then opened their hideous mouthparts and began feasting heartily.

"Crackle crackle—"

They were a race born to chase food. They would eat anything that could help them survive.

Including their own kind.

The large cockroaches, unable to get to the rotten flesh, began eating the smaller cockroaches around them. The small cockroaches began eating even smaller ones.

Right at that moment, the entire cockroach swarm suddenly became restless.

From the depths of the shadows, a monstrously huge creature slowly crawled out—a mutant cockroach over two meters in size!

Its eyes emitted an eerie glow as it casually moved past the huge wave of cockroaches, then pounced, biting off the head of a cockroach over a meter long in one bite, splattering yellow-green fluid everywhere.

The other cockroaches paid no heed to this danger, competing to devour everything they could get their mouthparts on.

Soon, those corpses were completely devoured, and the still unsatisfied cockroach swarm began turning on each other.

In the shadows, a man revealed a sinister smile at the corner of his mouth.

"Yes, just like this! Devour each other, kill each other!"

"Only this way can we cultivate the most powerful gu insect!"

"Ah~ A gu insect cultivated from mutant cockroaches, this must be an unprecedented, most interesting gu!"

"Zhang Yi, hehehe, you just wait for me! I will definitely give you a huge surprise to repay you for everything you've done!"

...

Zhang Yi and Fatty Xu returned from Blizzard City.

He handed over the weapon technology obtained from Blizzard City to Lu Keran, asking her to help Zhang Yi rebuild Thunderbolt and White Owl.

Lu Keran, being a mechanical enthusiast, was immediately so excited upon seeing this world-class weapon technology that she skipped her meal and ran straight into the workshop to start researching.

Zhang Yi then gave the acquired genetic drugs to Zhou Ke'er.

"Ke'er, study these drugs carefully. Currently, Blizzard City's main method for enhancing superhuman strength relies on drugs."

"However, they can use them, but we must be careful. After all, they can disregard their subordinates' bodies, even willing to shorten their lifespans to gain power, but we don't have that necessity."

Zhang Yi wouldn't easily use this technology on his family unless its stability was confirmed.

Zhou Ke'er nodded, "I'll study them carefully! But this will take some time."

Zhang Yi smiled and waved his hand, "That's fine."

Zhou Ke'er said, "There's one more thing to tell you. Today, a mutant cockroach was discovered in the shelter."

Chapter 1085: Strengthening Security

Zhou Ke'er had been with Zhang Yi for a long time and understood his temperament well.

Therefore, she would report every strange occurrence at home to Zhang Yi, no matter how trivial.

Sure enough, upon hearing about the mutated cockroach at home, Zhang Yi's expression immediately turned serious.

"Cockroaches? That kind of thing is impossible inside the house. The Shelter has a very complete pest control system. If there were any, we would have discovered them long ago."

Zhou Ke'er said, "So we suspect it might have snuck in when we were entering or leaving the Shelter."

Zhang Yi interlaced his fingers and rested his chin on them, analyzing calmly,

"This isn't particularly strange. Haven't there been plenty of mutated creatures since the Apocalypse?"

"Animals, plants, they're all mutating in large numbers. Especially creatures with massive populations and strong survival capabilities are the most prone to mutation."

"After all, it's one of the most tenacious species in the world!"

The fact that a tiny cockroach made Zhang Yi so serious caused the others at home to exchange glances.

They hadn't considered things that far ahead.

Fatty Xu chuckled, "Boss, you're at the Epsilon-level now. What impact could a few measly cockroaches possibly have on you?"

Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow.

"Idiot, in the past, humans were also much stronger than cockroaches, but didn't they still give us headaches?"

"Maybe they aren't dangerous, but having a lot of these things around is definitely disgusting."

Yang Xinxin also said, "These things eat everything and can survive underground. So..."

She looked up at Zhang Yi, "Over twenty million people died in Tianhai City. If those cockroaches, or other mutated creatures, feed on them, then the population expansion rate must be terrifyingly fast."

Zhang Yi and Zhou Ke'er said in unison, "Just like the rat swarms back then!"

That was still only the early stages of the Apocalypse, and there were already large numbers of giant mutated rats.

Now, a year has passed since the Apocalypse began, and many people have long forgotten the initial zombie hordes and rat disasters.

But for Zhang Yi, those events remain vivid in his memory.

"It seems... there isn't a much better solution either."

Zhang Yi spread his hands helplessly.

No matter how powerful a lion is, it struggles to defeat a mosquito.

Even Zhang Yi, at the Epsilon-level, would probably find it difficult to deal with so many mutated insects.

He thought for a moment and said to Zhou Ke'er and the others, "The Shelter is very safe, but you all need to increase vigilance. Don't let those disgusting things get in again."

"Although they're just insects, the mutated ones are quite large. Getting bitten by one is no joke."

"Also, notify the other bases and tell them to be mindful of pest control."

Seeing Zhang Yi's seriousness, everyone quickly nodded, indicating they would handle this matter carefully.

The fact that a single tiny cockroach mobilized the entire Shelter would seem incredibly funny to anyone else.

But everyone understood Zhang Yi's temperament and didn't think that way.

If Zhang Yi hadn't always been this cautious, they would have died countless times by now.

However, precisely because not everyone is Zhang Yi, not everyone took the notifications Yang Xinxin sent to the various bases so seriously.

Qingpu Base.

Upon receiving Yang Xinxin's message, Xing Tian didn't overthink it. He immediately had people follow her instructions, paying attention to all movements around the shelter, especially watching for mutated insects.

He also initiated a cleaning campaign throughout the entire underground shelter to avoid pest infestations breeding due to poor environmental conditions.

Xing Tian wasn't a very smart person, but his clear recognition of this fact made him smarter than many intelligent people.

The problem isn't a lack of brains, but being self-righteous and overestimating oneself.

He was convinced that following Zhang Yi had a future, so he would carry out instructions from the Shelter faithfully, even if they seemed meaningless.

Over at Yangsheng Base, after receiving the order, Xiao Honglian also immediately had Zhuge Qingting take people to execute it.

However, when it came to Dawn Rain Base, Chen Jingguan frowned deeply upon receiving the message.

Dawn Rain Base's external activities were relatively frequent.

Their main food source was sea fishing.

Although fuel supply was limited, preventing frequent sea fishing expeditions,

a single trawler trip could catch enough fish to sustain the entire Dawn Rain Base for months!

Furthermore, according to Yang Xinxin's instructions, the best portion of these catches was reserved for the Shelter, with additional portions allocated for material exchange with Yangsheng Base and Qingpu Base.

Therefore, Dawn Rain Base's environment was perpetually damp and cold, and the base was often in an open state, making large-scale cleaning difficult.

Hearing that Zhang Yi's order stemmed from discovering a single mutated cockroach, Chen Jingguan frowned in thought for a while, then muttered to himself,

"Isn't Boss Zhang being overly cautious? Causing the entire Tianhai City to be on high alert over a single insect."

He looked back at the crates of fish being unloaded at the port and ultimately decided not to follow Zhang Yi's instructions strictly.

He just called some subordinates to put on a simple show of compliance.

However, as it turned out, Zhang Yi's worries—indeed, did not become reality.

For a period of time afterward, the entire Tianhai City remained calm and peaceful, with no major disturbances.

After returning from Mist Island, all external matters were naturally handled by Zhu Zheng.

Zhang Yi also, for once, welcomed a relatively long period of rest and recuperation.

However, during this time, he was certainly not idle at all.

Now that he had advanced to the Epsilon-level, his abilities had undergone a qualitative change, and his superhuman energy had also increased significantly.

However, just like a person who obtains a treasured blade must constantly practice to adapt to its weight and edge to unleash its maximum potential,

superhuman abilities are a unique kind of weapon that also requires continuous practice and exploration.

At home, Zhang Yi persisted in daily training. On one hand, he practiced blade techniques and close-quarters combat skills with Liang Yue; on the other hand, he was also developing the potential of his superhuman abilities.

After reaching the Epsilon-level, improving abilities became even more difficult.

Aside from killing powerful superhumans to obtain their origin, he had no better way to enhance his own abilities.

So, aside from refining his power and exploring his potential, there really wasn't a better method.

However, during this period, he had been continuously helping the others at home improve their strength.

Liang Yue and the others still had immense room for growth.

The technology Zhang Yi obtained from Blizzard City, combined with the method of supplementing superhuman energy using source sprites, allowed their strength to increase rapidly as well.

Among everyone, the one who progressed the fastest was naturally Liang Yue.

Her foundation was too solid, and her combat experience was incredibly rich. She only needed to fully absorb the source sprites, convert them into her own power, and she could quickly adapt, transforming it into combat prowess.

The second fastest in terms of progress speed was actually Old You.

After using the Divine Source fragment, Old You broke through his limits and became a Delta-level superhuman.

While this couldn't elevate his potential to the level of Zhang Yi or Liang Yue,

there was one thing he absolutely didn't lose to anyone in, and that was diligence!

Chapter 1086: The Mysterious Totoro

Old You understood that his foundation wasn't very solid.

Although he was only in his forties, his age did seem a bit old within the shelter.

Therefore, after receiving the Divine Source fragments given by Zhang Yi, he felt immensely grateful to Zhang Yi in his heart. He also swore that he absolutely must not betray Zhang Yi's trust, and even more so, must not hold him back.

Thus, Old You trained exceptionally hard every day.

After several months of training, Zhang Yi assessed Old You's strength based on his experience. Old You's superhuman ability index had now reached a shocking 7,000 points or so!

Placed within the investigation squads, that was already at the level of an elite member.

In comparison, that fellow Fatty Xu was much lazier.

He was naturally fat and not very physically capable. But to train him, Old You dragged him out every day to run in the heavy snow, which utterly exhausted Fatty Xu.

Every time he finished training and returned, he would lie in his room panting heavily, just like Lele.

However, Zhang Yi didn't pity him for this. Instead, he told Old You to increase the training intensity.

The superhuman ability index is a comprehensive score.

Physical fitness, ability, technique, combat thinking, and so on are all criteria for scoring.

Fatty Xu's talent, in theory, was a bit stronger than Old You's.

But he was inherently timid, cowardly, and rather lazy. So when it came to actual fighting, he wasn't nearly as brave and fierce as Old You.

Zhang Yi gave him a low score, around 6,800 points.

"If you improve your physical fitness a bit more, enhancing your evasion and escape abilities on the battlefield, you'll be stronger."

Zhang Yi said to Fatty Xu, who was tired like a dog.

Fatty Xu took several big gasps, finally catching his breath before swallowing his saliva and saying to Zhang Yi,

"Boss, I'm inherently useless! Can't I just stay in the back and play long-range like you, holding a sniper rifle? I can't run!"

Hearing this, Zhang Yi's gaze gradually became distant.

"You like playing sniper, huh? Fine."

He didn't waste words. He directly took an anti-materiel sniper rifle from his Dimensional Space and threw it onto Fatty Xu's belly.

This almost sent Fatty Xu off.

"Damn..."

Fatty Xu rolled his eyes, nearly having his stomach acid knocked out.

"On the battlefield right now, only this kind of large-caliber sniper rifle is effective. It weighs 15 kilograms. You don't have spatial abilities. When you're carrying it, let's see if you can run or not."

Fatty Xu's face immediately turned green.

"Huh?"

"Huh your head! From now on, train properly for me!"

Zhang Yi said, then turned to look at Old You, who was shirtless, revealing a body of solid, well-defined muscles.

Old You usually trained like this too. His physical condition was good, and he wasn't afraid of the cold.

"Old You, from now on, take the attitude you had when you were a squad leader training new recruits, and train him hard for me!"

Old You scratched his head with a simple, honest smile. "Alright!"

He glanced at Fatty Xu lying on the ground, and his expression quickly turned serious.

Then he walked over and gave Fatty Xu's fat thigh a hard kick.

"Get up! You've run less than ten kilometers, and you're lying here like a dead dog for who to see?"

"If you don't finish running twenty kilometers today, you won't get dinner!"

Fatty Xu's face grew increasingly grim. Before he could respond, Old You grabbed him like a chick and hauled him up, then walked outside.

Zhang Yi shook his head helplessly.

For a two-hundred-pound fatty, going through this kind of training was indeed torture.

But to increase Fatty Xu's survival rate on the battlefield in the future, Zhang Yi had to do this.

If you can't endure the hardship of training now, you'll have to endure the pain of injury or death later.

"Training Fatty Xu again?"

Zhou Ke'er walked over, smiling, holding a cup of hot tea.

Recently, her abilities had also been improving. However, improving an auxiliary ability like [Doctor] didn't require physical training; it needed repeated practice.

Zhang Yi took the cup of hot tea, and Zhou Ke'er immediately sat down beside him.

Her elegant figure was captivating no matter how you looked at it.

Over in the living room, two adorable creatures were playing and roughhousing.

One was Hua Hua, and the other was none other than the Totoro that Zhang Yi had captured and brought back.

It was covered in fluffy fur, with huge, deer-like antlers on its head, extremely cute.

Especially when it ran, it looked exactly like a cute creature from a Hayao Miyazaki animation.

Of course, Zhang Yi knew its true nature.

This thing's combat power was not inferior to a squad leader level superhuman.

That's why Zhang Yi had Hua Hua keep an eye on it.

Now, Hua Hua also possessed Epsilon-level potential and a superhuman ability index as high as 9,800 points.

At first, this Totoro was very uncooperative and liked to bare its teeth and snarl.

But, there was nothing that Hua Hua couldn't solve with one slap.

If there was, then just add two more slaps.

So now, the reason the Totoro behaved so obediently at home was entirely because it had been beaten into submission.

"Any progress in the research on this guy?"

Zhang Yi looked at the Totoro and asked Zhou Ke'er.

Back when he brought the Totoro back, it was because this strange creature had a special reaction to the Divine Source.

So as soon as they returned, Zhang Yi had Zhou Ke'er take its blood samples for research.

Zhou Ke'er smiled and shook her head helplessly.

"I've researched its blood, fur, and feces. But this creature has already mutated. It's impossible to determine which creature it mutated from."

"However, part of its genetic sequence is actually similar to humans. About 30% of its composition is the same."

Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow. "So you're saying, it's just a mutated creature that appeared on Star Island. Is that all?"

Zhou Ke'er rolled her eyes upward. "Hmm... but there is one thing about it that's truly interesting."

Zhang Yi looked at her curiously. "Oh, what is it?"

Zhou Ke'er replied, "It can survive in an oxygen-free environment. For a land creature, that's hard to imagine."

Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow again. "I see. That's probably why it isn't worried about being affected by the toxic miasma. Because it doesn't need to breathe oxygen, so it doesn't care about the toxins?"

Zhou Ke'er's eyes shifted. "But there are also some strange aspects. I discovered some... never-before-seen genetic sequences on it. They don't match any known creature in the world."

Zhang Yi blinked. "That's hard to say. After all, in the Great Mutation Era, many people have undergone genetic mutations."

"Or perhaps... it has some connection to those monsters deep under the Mist Valley abyss?"

Zhang Yi's imagination ran wild. "Subterranean creatures?"

If this were in the past, he would definitely think this was a ridiculous notion.

But he had personally seen that giant Black-armored Strange Man.

And he had heard about the strange events in the Qinling Mountains from the Deng Family.

At this point, he couldn't help but suspect that perhaps this world truly had many existences they had never heard of, which began to slowly appear after the apocalypse.

Chapter 1087: Pressure

Three months passed in the blink of an eye.

During these three months, nothing particularly noteworthy happened in Tianhai City.

Zhang Yi had simply trained Lu Dahai for a while before sending him back to Dawn Rain Base.

He intended to groom Lu Dahai to take over Chen Jingguan's position.

To rapidly boost Lu Dahai's strength, he obtained a special medicine provided by the Deng Family and gave it to Lu Dahai.

Lu Dahai was immensely grateful to Zhang Yi. "Mr. Zhang, from now on, I am your dog! If you ever need me to do anything, I will accomplish it even if it costs me my life!"

His kowtow on the ground was performed with utmost sincerity.

He understood clearly in his heart that, aside from this life of his, he had nothing else to offer Zhang Yi.

To survive and thrive in Tianhai City, he was willing to stake his very life.

This was also a gambler's mentality.

Win the bet, and you gain everything.

Lose the bet, and it's just a worthless life thrown away anyway.

Many fishermen on the sea possessed this kind of awareness; it was the only way they could survive in the harsh, competitive environment.

Zhang Yi looked down at him and said calmly, "After you return, I will make you Chen Jingguan's second-in-command."

"He will suspect you and suppress you. But you must endure all of it for me. No rebellion, and absolutely no causing trouble!"

"Moreover, you must actively cooperate with his work and help maintain the Dawn Rain Base properly."

"If Chen Jingguan can manage to keep the Dawn Rain Base stable, you follow him obediently."

"But if he proves incompetent, your chance to rise will come sooner or later."

He was grooming Lu Dahai as an insurance policy.

If enemies ever appeared from the sea one day, Chen Jingguan's strength alone would likely be insufficient to defend Dawn Rain Base.

That would be the time for Lu Dahai to play his role.

However, if everything remained calm and peaceful, he didn't want any power shifts at Dawn Rain Base either.

Otherwise, the other two major bases would also become wary of him.

That wouldn't be good for Tianhai City's unity.

Lu Dahai hurriedly kowtowed again. "Yes, I will do exactly as Mr. Zhang instructs."

Zhang Yi reached out, helped Lu Dahai to his feet, and a meaningful smile appeared on his face.

"I know you're a man with ambition, but remember everything I've said today."

"For me, the most important thing is the stability of Chaoyu Harbor. So don't even think about stirring up trouble to bring Chen Jingguan down."

"If any turmoil occurs at Chaoyu Harbor, affecting Tianhai City's stability, I won't bother looking for evidence. I will deal with you and Chen Jingguan directly!"

Lu Dahai's body stiffened slightly.

He felt the burden on his shoulders grow much heavier.

This meant he had to cooperate fully with Chen Jingguan's work from now on.

Zhang Yi looked into the distance. The snowfall was heavy today, the sky a vast expanse of white, and visibility dropped to nothing beyond a dozen meters.

The two men stood in the snowfield, like two tiny black dots.

"If a person wants to rise to a higher position, there are usually two methods."

"The first is to push the person above you upward. Once they rise, they might pull you up with them."

"The second is to bring down the person above you and take their place. However, this method can only be used once. After you do this, all your future superiors will be on guard against you."

Lu Dahai looked at Zhang Yi, understanding his meaning perfectly.

If he schemed to bring down Chen Jingguan to take his place, he would lose Zhang Yi's trust.

Because if he could scheme against Chen Jingguan, then one day in the future, he might also stab Zhang Yi in the back.

Lu Dahai secretly swallowed hard and quickly made a solemn vow.

"Mr. Zhang, please rest assured! After I return, I will work diligently and will absolutely harbor no treacherous thoughts!"

Zhang Yi nodded and said calmly, "That's for the best."

He took Lu Dahai and his two brothers and arrived at Dawn Rain Base.

Chen Jingguan naturally came to welcome Zhang Yi with extreme caution.

"Boss! You came personally? Is there an important directive?"

Chen Jingguan inquired carefully, though his gaze still swept over the three men behind Zhang Yi, Lu Dahai and his brothers.

A flicker of suspicion and uncertainty passed through his eyes.

Zhang Yi pointed at Lu Dahai behind him and said, "Your base produced a talent. I took him back for observation for a few days and helped train him a bit."

"From now on, let him be the second-in-command of Dawn Rain Base, assisting you in managing the base's affairs."

He walked up to Chen Jingguan, placed a hand on his shoulder, leaned close to his ear, and said:

"He's a Delta-level superhuman, his combat power is quite decent. Dawn Rain Base is currently lacking in this type of talent. Make good use of him."

Chen Jingguan's heart jolted. He instinctively glanced at Lu Dahai, a heavy feeling settling in his chest.

Zhang Yi continued, "Whether you can control him or not depends on your own ability. Think about Zhu Zheng, and that distant relative of yours, Chen Xinian. Learn from their methods of managing subordinates!"

Zhang Yi was reminding Chen Jingguan not to feel jealous or try to sideline a subordinate just because their ability surpassed his own.

Instead, he should learn to skillfully utilize his subordinate's abilities for his own benefit.

At the same time, he was also warning Chen Jingguan not to harbor any petty schemes against Lu Dahai.

After all, Lu Dahai was someone Zhang Yi had personally brought, which already indicated Zhang Yi's stance on the matter.

How would Chen Jingguan dare to object? He quickly smiled and said, "Boss, your arrangements are certainly never wrong!"

"Brother Dahai, I'll have to trouble you to cooperate closely with my work from now on!"

Lu Dahai hurriedly replied, "Not at all, not at all! I will follow your instructions and conduct myself accordingly from now on!"

Seeing this, Zhang Yi nodded, not intending to get further involved.

He would observe how things developed from here, watching how the two men balanced their relationship.

Even if problems arose, as far as he was concerned, Dawn Rain Base would not slip from his control.

"By the way, a few months ago I told you to be on guard against mutated creatures. How's that going?"

Zhang Yi asked casually.

Chen Jingguan's mind raced, finally recalling the matter.

He quickly answered, "Back then, we made preparations according to your requirements. Please rest assured, Dawn Rain Base will definitely not be affected by any snakes, insects, rats, or ants. Our defenses are very thorough!"

Zhang Yi nodded. "Good. I can't be watching over your three bases every single day. Your lives are your own. Be more vigilant yourselves."

After finishing his instructions, Zhang Yi opened a Dimensional Gate and left Dawn Rain Base.

Lu Dahai and Chen Jingguan exchanged a look. Lu Dahai hunched his back slightly, his face full of ingratiating deference.

Chen Jingguan wore a modest, amiable smile on his face, but in reality, he felt an intense sense of wariness towards Lu Dahai.

He felt immense pressure.

Lu Dahai was his replacement.

If one day his work proved unsatisfactory, Zhang Yi would have Lu Dahai replace him as the manager of Dawn Rain Base.

Chapter 1088: The Swarm

In places Zhang Yi couldn't see, hidden undercurrents were surging beneath Tianhai City.

Winter had already arrived. In the deep cold of winter, Tianhai City welcomed its coldest winter yet. Outside the Shelter, it always snowed so heavily that distant views were completely obscured.

Inside the Shelter, however, it was a scene of warmth and tranquility.

The fireplace burned fiercely, its flames radiating a comforting warmth. Hua Hua and Totoro had already become well-acquainted, the two adorable pets playing and roughhousing all day long in the rooms, able to romp all the way from upstairs down to the deep levels of the basement.

Yang Siya and Aunt Zhou Haimei were over by the open kitchen, researching how to bake new pastries to welcome the upcoming holiday.

Fatty Xu was being pressed into service by Old You in the basement training ground, undergoing devilish training every day. After several months of this, it felt like a layer of his skin was about to be stripped off.

Everyone else was also busy. Although they weren't idle, they were incredibly relaxed.

The inside of the Shelter and the outside world had clearly become two completely different worlds.

In the distance from the Shelter, a thick patch of ice and snow was suddenly pushed up, creating a barely noticeable crack.

Then, from within that crack, a blue cockroach emerged.

Its body was about the size of a palm, covered in a layer of blue frost crystals.

After crawling out from beneath the snowdrift, it cautiously looked towards that massive Shelter in the distance.

After a long while, it returned underground.

Passing through the thick layers of ice, snow, and frozen soil, it arrived in a dim, damp sewer pipe.

And this pipe, which had been abandoned for a year, was densely packed with cockroaches of various sizes.

After that blue cockroach returned underground, it seemed to communicate with the cockroach swarm.

Not long after, within the vast and extensive underground network, a terrifyingly massive army of cockroaches began to detour around that Shelter radiating an aura of dread. Like a river forced to split around a giant boulder, they surged towards other areas.

On this day, heavy snow sealed the city, trapping everyone inside their houses, making it difficult to go out.

However, the three major bases were not as leisurely as the people in the Shelter.

They had long since adapted to this kind of cold. Even braving the heavy snow, every single person had to work.

Rest was a very luxurious thing for them.

Even if you couldn't say they worked according to a 007 schedule, they only had two rest days per month.

During blizzard conditions, everyone had to come out promptly to clear the accumulated snow around the base perimeter.

Otherwise, by convention, if a blizzard continued for just a day and a night, the entire area above the underground refuge would be completely buried, which was very troublesome.

Thus, around Dawn Rain Base, everyone was wearing thick clothing, holding snow-clearing tools, and laboring under the heavy snowfall.

Lu Dahai and Chen Jingguan were also nearby supervising the work.

Chen Jingguan stood with his hands clasped behind his back, appearing calm and composed.

He prided himself on having received a higher education, and in the military, he always presented himself as a scholarly general.

Therefore, when directing work, he often preferred to have his subordinates convey his will, avoiding tarnishing his image by yelling and shouting himself.

However, Lu Dahai didn't bother with such considerations.

He remembered Zhang Yi's words, striving wholeheartedly to maintain order at Dawn Rain Base, and thus had been diligently cooperating with Chen Jingguan's work.

The two of them had been working together as a team for a while now.

Chen Jingguan had always been wary of Lu Dahai. In daily work, he would frequently reprimand him and assign him tasks that were either more difficult or more likely to offend people.

Lu Dahai, however, bore the burden without complaint and obediently carried out his assignments.

Up until now, the relationship between the two had at least superficially eased somewhat.

"Clear the area around the base entrance first! Otherwise, the snow will keep piling up, and it'll be troublesome if the entrance gets blocked."

"In weather this cold, the snow won't melt even if it stops. Once it freezes solid, it'll take three to five days to clear."

Lu Dahai shouted loudly, directing the laborers at the base.

The laborers kept their heads down and worked, cursing in their hearts at the damnable weather, the damnable apocalypse, and these damnable dog leaders like Lu Dahai and Chen Jingguan.

However, they didn't dare slack off on the work in their hands.

If they were caught, they might have their dinner rations deducted for the day.

One laborer raised his snow shovel, thrust it forcefully into a snowdrift, stomped down on it twice with his foot, and then heaved it up with all his might.

But after he flipped that shovelful of snow, he suddenly discovered a pitch-black, gaping hole had appeared in the snowfield.

"Huh? Why is there an empty patch here?"

The laborer curiously leaned over to take a look.

The next moment, the most terrifying, and also the final, scene of his life flooded into his view.

From that dark, snowy hole, a cockroach head as large as a human skull suddenly emerged and lunged straight at his face!

"Ah!!!"

The cockroach opened its mouthparts, its sharp, barbed forelimbs directly piercing into the skin of his face.

With a sickening *squelch!* the skin of his face was completely torn off.

In such a frigid environment, and with the cockroach having consumed much carrion and garbage, its body was covered in potent toxins.

The laborer immediately saw black and collapsed to the ground.

The cockroach perched on his head, ignoring the other stunned laborers around, and began voraciously devouring his skull.

Immediately after, that pitch-black hole rapidly expanded, and cockroaches of all sizes surged out from the opening like a tidal wave!

Only then did those terrified laborers snap out of their stupor.

Such a horrifying sight made their souls flee their bodies. They immediately threw down their tools and ran screaming like madmen in the opposite direction of the cockroach swarm.

The massive snowy hole seemed like a bottomless magical artifact, continuously spewing forth cockroaches, quickly inundating the entire expanse of pristine white snow-covered ground.

"Buzz buzz buzz~"

Some of the enormous cockroaches directly flapped their wings and took to the air, then pounced towards those fleeing laborers.

All of this happened in a mere instant, something no one had anticipated.

Humans might have an innate disgust for cockroaches, even a fear of these incredibly hard-to-kill, repulsive creatures.

Seeing this scene, Lu Dahai immediately recalled the orders Zhang Yi had once issued. However, back then, Chen Jingguan had only dealt with it perfunctorily.

They hadn't conducted a thorough inspection and cleanup of the area around the base.

But who could have imagined that so many mutated cockroaches would emerge!

"Quick, fire suppression, fire suppression! Don't let them get close to the base!"

Lu Dahai shouted loudly.

A brownish light flashed in his eyes, and then his entire body underwent a noticeable transformation. His skin turned into the color of seaweed and grew fine, dense scales.

Two bone blades *clanged!* as they extended from his forearms.

He drew a pistol from his waist and shot several of the giant cockroaches. Under his lead, the other base guards reacted, rushing over and beginning to attack the massive, terrifying cockroach swarm with gunfire.

Chapter 1089: Collapse at the First Touch

Due to the heavy snowfall, almost everyone in the entire base had come out to clear the snow.

The sudden cockroach swarm caught everyone completely off guard.

Under Lu Dahai's lead, the guards began taking out their weapons and launching attacks against the cockroach swarm.

Chen Jingguan, who was directing everyone's work from the rear, was stunned by the sight. Recovering quickly, he hurriedly turned on the loudspeaker and loudly issued orders to everyone.

"Children under fourteen years old, get into the shelters immediately! Guards, secure the entrances! Absolutely do not let the bugs get underground!"

"Flamethrowers! Prepare the flamethrowers!"

Seeing that terrifying cockroach swarm, a primal fear welled up in Chen Jingguan's heart.

Of the three major bases in Tianhai City, Dawn Rain Base was the weakest.

Currently, they had fewer than ten superhumans. During the previous wars in Tianhai City, their defensive forces had been destroyed by more than seventy percent.

Later, as Zhang Yi's strength grew increasingly formidable, Tianhai City had gone a fairly long time without experiencing any major crisis events.

Only at this moment did he recall the fear of being enveloped by death.

A powerful wave of regret surged in his heart.

If only he had paid more attention when Zhang Yi warned him earlier, the entire base wouldn't have been caught so completely unprepared by such a sudden attack.

"Everyone, follow me! Hold them back!"

Chen Jingguan drew the sidearm from his waist and rushed to the front line.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

His gaze was resolute as he fired shot after shot at the cockroaches taking flight.

Already, over a dozen laborers had been knocked to the ground by the cockroaches and were being gruesomely devoured. Their agonized screams echoed throughout the entire area.

"Bring out the heavy weapons!"

Chen Jingguan shouted.

The guards began throwing grenades. A grenade exploded amidst the dark, swarming mass of insects, instantly clearing a large area.

But in less than two seconds, that area was quickly filled in again by the cockroach swarm.

That pitch-black hole seemed to be endlessly spewing out cockroaches. The smallest were only finger-sized, while the largest were over two meters long, having already become monsters!

Because Dawn Rain Base was unprepared, the anti-insect equipment was brought out very late.

Flamethrowers were one of the best weapons against this kind of insect swarm.

The others were grenades and rockets.

Lu Dahai moved like a swimming fish, positioning himself in front of the cockroach swarm.

After injecting the potion Zhang Yi had given him, his superhuman ability index had now reached 6000 points, putting him at the level of an ordinary member of an investigation team.

He swung the bone blades on his arms in front of the cockroach swarm, specifically targeting and fighting the giant cockroaches.

He couldn't deal with the small cockroaches, but those things were mostly just disgusting and couldn't cause significant harm to the base's people in a short time.

However, those large ones could truly eat people!

The black cockroach swarm flooded the entire ground. In less than a minute, they had completely compressed the human defensive line, pushing towards the underground shelters.

Some small cockroaches had already fluttered their wings and flown into the shelters.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

The soldiers using flamethrowers roared, turning their weapons to maximum. Tongues of fire over ten meters long could instantly engulf tens of thousands of cockroaches.

Yet these creatures did not fear death. Their existence was solely for feeding and reproduction.

Soon, a soldier had cockroaches crawling up his pant leg.

Ahhhhhhh!!!

The soldier screamed in terror. In the blink of an eye, tens of thousands of cockroaches covered his entire body.

He screamed in horror and agony, yet did not die immediately.

The cockroaches' attack power was limited. Starving, they took bite after bite of the soldier's flesh, inflicting pain on him akin to being sliced to death.

But precisely because of this, he simply couldn't die in a short time.

The soldier rolled frantically on the ground, but it didn't reduce the number of cockroaches on him. Instead, more cockroaches crawled onto his body.

His face etched with grief, Chen Jingguan fired a single shot, ending the soldier's life.

"Boss, let's retreat!"

A personal guard shouted anxiously at Chen Jingguan.

At this rate, it was only a matter of time before they were completely swallowed by the cockroach swarm.

Chen Jingguan looked at the square. Due to the suddenness of the incident, most people lacked the power to fight back and were desperately running back.

If he entered the shelter now and closed the heavy doors, he could survive.

But all these people would die!

Chen Jingguan's eyes turned bloodshot. He gritted his teeth hard, his fists clenched so tightly they cracked.

His heart was filled with immense regret. He practically wanted to slap himself several times.

If only he had listened to Zhang Yi's words and taken the matter of mutated cockroaches more seriously, they definitely wouldn't have ended up in such a wretched state today!

At this point, he had no way out.

If he ran away himself, causing half the people of Dawn Rain Base to die in the cockroach swarm, Zhang Yi would absolutely not tolerate him.

Retreat meant certain death. It was better to fight desperately and carve out a bloody path!

"Do not retreat! If you retreat, your family and friends will die! Concentrate your firepower! Hold the entrance! Let the children get in first!"

Chen Jingguan forcefully threw a grenade, blowing up a group of cockroaches.

Simultaneously, he made an urgent call to Zhang Yi.

"Hey, boss! Help! We need help!"

As soon as Zhang Yi received Chen Jingguan's communication, he saw his nearly broken expression.

Zhang Yi frowned. "What's wrong? Enemy attack?"

"Boss! Cockroaches! So many cockroaches! The base can't hold on much longer! Please, I beg you, come and save us!"

Zhang Yi's eyebrows shot up immediately.

"Cockroaches?"

He himself hadn't expected that his earlier suspicion would actually come true.

So quickly, those mutated cockroaches had become such a huge threat to the bases in Tianhai City.

Zhang Yi, of course, couldn't just stand by and watch. Dawn Rain Base was his important seaport and fishery base.

"Wait for me."

As soon as Zhang Yi finished speaking, whoosh! He vanished from the spot, heading straight for Dawn Rain Base.

At Chaoyu Harbor, laborers fell one by one in agony, becoming food for the cockroaches.

Above the small cockroaches, there were also huge ones, mutated to sizes comparable to cattle or sheep. Their eyes glinted eerily as they fixed on living people, flapping their wings and pouncing to kill.

Lu Dahai and Chen Jingguan led the guard members in a desperate effort to hold them back.

They killed many cockroaches, but these insects exploited every gap, quickly reaching their feet.

The defensive perimeter retreated again and again.

Boom!

A tremendous roar suddenly came from underground. The thick ice and snow covering the ground was directly blasted apart. From below crawled out a giant cockroach over three meters long, standing upright on its hind legs.

Its entire carapace was a disgusting feces-yellow color. Its sharp mandibles twitched slightly before it charged straight at the soldiers in the defensive perimeter!

Chen Jingguan, Lu Dahai, and the others felt their scalps go numb.

Such a massive cockroach swarm, growing like a gu vessel, even devouring each other when food was scarce.

Who the hell knew what kind of monster would be brewed in the end?

Could they still hold them off?

Chapter 1090: The Eraser

The giant mutated cockroach that emerged from beneath the snow caused massive casualties the moment it appeared.

Its sharp claws and pointed mandibles could easily pry open a soldier's skull and then suck out the brain matter.

This thing seemed very picky, only eating the most delicious brain matter. The corpses would then fall, immediately swarmed by other cockroaches.

In the blink of an eye, seven or eight soldiers were killed by it.

Flamethrowers, bullets, and grenades had minimal effect on it.

Chen Jingguan gritted his teeth. "Damn thing, let me handle it!"

He leaped into the air, his entire body shooting toward that cockroach like a spring.

The giant cockroach tangled with him, its wings flapping with a "fluttering" sound as it attacked Chen Jingguan with its sharp claws and teeth.

Chen Jingguan's ability, [Rubber Man], was most effective against close-combat superhumans and mutated beasts.

He nimbly dodged the giant cockroach's attacks, then wrapped around its body like a python. Once he had the cockroach completely entangled, he began to exert force, strangling it!

"Creak... creak..."

The giant cockroach cried out in pain, cracks appearing in its carapace.

It desperately tried to slash at Chen Jingguan's body, but the Rubber Man had extremely high resistance to such physical attacks. Chen Jingguan simply ignored them.

"You die now!"

Chen Jingguan growled angrily through gritted teeth.

He had to take out these big guys first, because they were the real danger.

As long as they were dealt with, even though the remaining small cockroaches would still be troublesome, they could be cleaned up slowly, minimizing the overall losses to the base.

His python-like body continued to exert force, the giant cockroach's body beginning to deform and twist.

However, at that moment, some pores on the giant cockroach's body suddenly opened, spewing out a large cloud of yellow gas.

Chen Jingguan hadn't been prepared for this, so he wasn't wearing his combat suit.

He involuntarily inhaled this yellow gas. Soon, his face turned black, and his vision swam, the world spinning before his eyes.

His body, which had been tightly wrapped around the giant cockroach, went limp and fell away.

The giant cockroach let out an excited "screeching" cry, then turned around, raising its scythe-like forelimbs, and chopped down at Chen Jingguan!

At that moment, no one could help him, because Lu Dahai had entered the fray earlier than him, relying on his own strength to grapple with many giant cockroaches.

At the critical moment, Zhang Yi finally arrived.

Only he could possibly cross almost the entire distance of Tianhai City to provide support in such a short time.

Zhang Yi hovered in mid-air. Seeing the scene below, he couldn't help but swallow hard.

The snow-covered ground spanning several kilometers in radius was actually covered with that disgusting stuff.

Zhang Yi's trypophobia was triggered.

Nevertheless, he quickly took action. Raising his right hand, he flicked his fingers. Over a dozen Void Blades directly sliced that giant cockroach to pieces.

"Whoosh!"

Zhang Yi instantly teleported next to Chen Jingguan, rescuing him from the perilous situation of being about to be devoured by the cockroach swarm.

The sight before him also made him frown deeply.

The cockroach swarm was already entangled with the base's personnel.

He could certainly kill all these cockroaches, but what about these laborers?

After a moment's thought, Zhang Yi made a decision in his heart.

With a wave of his hand, he opened a Dimensional Gate at the base entrance, shouting to everyone, "Everyone, get back here, now!"

As he spoke, he pulled out White Owl and began firing continuously at the large individuals within the cockroach swarm.

One black beam after another shot from the barrels of White Owl. With the support of his Precision Shooting ability, they disintegrated the most threatening cockroaches into a particle state.

No one knew what Zhang Yi was planning, but they trusted him, because Zhang Yi was now Tianhai City's guardian deity.

Under Zhang Yi's covering fire, everyone at the Dawn Rain Base faced significantly less pressure.

Although many people had cockroaches crawling all over them, these little guys were just disgusting and wouldn't pose a life-threatening danger in the short term.

Zhang Yi, draped in a beige overcoat, stood calmly at the entrance to the shelter, the Absolute Barrier Between Two Realms protecting his body.

Two pistols continuously spewed black beams.

Every beam that landed would kill a giant cockroach.

As for the swarms of small cockroaches, he simply ignored them, letting them chase after the humans into his Dimensional Space.

People who entered the Dimensional Space would be instantly teleported by Zhang Yi inside the shelter, preventing them from being harmed by the Dimensional Space.

But the cockroach swarms were teleported several kilometers away, only to repeat their charging action.

In less than two minutes, Zhang Yi had rescued everyone.

The massive cockroach tide truly resembled ocean waves, even piling up high, reaching five or six meters.

These disgusting little creatures, when gathered together, produced an extremely unnerving cacophony of cries.

"Alright, everyone who needed saving has been saved."

Zhang Yi said calmly, then elegantly twirled White Owl in his hands.

"Time to clear the field!"

White Owl had now been modified, equipped with the world's latest energy storage laser technology.

It could store a superhuman's energy and then fire it out as energy waves.

So, with proficient use, one could completely control the output power.

Zhang Yi raised both hands, the corner of his mouth quirking up to reveal his snow-white teeth.

"Heh!"

His fingers squeezed the triggers. One black energy orb after another blasted toward the cockroach tide ahead!

There was no powerful energy fluctuation. Where the Void Power landed, small spherical spaces would appear. An instant later, within a space of several dozen cubic meters, all cockroaches would vanish without a trace.

It was like using an eraser to wipe away scribbled stains on a notebook.

Zhang Yi was now an Epsilon-level superhuman. The amount of special energy within his body was far beyond what ordinary superhumans could imagine.

One Void bullet after another shot out, as splendid as a display of black fireworks.

The massive cockroach tide was disappearing at a speed visible to the naked eye.

One minute later, the area in front of the Dawn Rain Base fell quiet.

Almost all the cockroaches had been cleaned up by Zhang Yi. Only a few scattered cockroaches remained on the ground, fearlessly crawling toward the shelter.

Zhang Yi performed a stylish move, holstering his guns. He then dispelled the barrier in front of the shelter door and turned to walk inside.

Everyone behind him was stunned by Zhang Yi's heroic rescue.

Their gazes upon Zhang Yi were like those looking up at a deity!

Several soldiers quickly grabbed flamethrowers and went out to clean up the remaining scattered cockroaches.

"Mr. Zhang!"

Lu Dahai panted heavily, bowing respectfully to Zhang Yi.

The base survivors also bowed, addressing him as "Sir."

Zhang Yi nodded. His gaze passed over them, landing on Chen Jingguan, who was being given emergency treatment nearby.

His condition was very bad. His entire face was black, like a dead man.

Who knew how many types of viruses were in the toxic mist sprayed by that cockroach? Taking even one breath without a gas mask was something no one could withstand.