

Ice Age 121

Chapter 121: Harmony

For the next period, the focus of conflicts shifted away from Zhang Yi and toward the other units and the internal affairs of each building.

Through a successful negotiation, Zhang Yi managed to create cracks in their loose alliance and leveraged the condition of only providing ten portions of food per building to instigate significant internal unrest.

Now, he observed when and how the conflicts would arise. Regardless of the outcome, it would only benefit him.

As expected, the moment Wang Qiang, Huang Tianfang, Li Jian, Chen Lingyu, and Zhang Yunan returned, conflicts erupted!

While the five of them were negotiating with Zhang Yi, some people had already disregarded their safety and tried to storm Building 25. If not for Zhang Yi's deterrence with the sniper rifle, those five wouldn't have survived.

Naturally, these five were furious. After leaving Building 25, they immediately began to settle scores with those who made the decisions to attack. Throughout the entire afternoon, the neighborhood echoed with screams as a bloody purge commenced.

However, the next day, life seemed to return to normal. No matter how many had died, the survivors had to continue struggling to live. Each building sent people to the central plaza to clear the snow.

Zhang Yi knew that the building leaders had likely conspired to hide the "ten portions of supplies" detail. Otherwise, most residents wouldn't obediently come down to work.

Today's snowstorm seemed milder than usual. The long-missed harmonious gathering of over a thousand people in the community wasn't for a scramble over supplies, but for collective labor.

Holding their tools, everyone looked at their neighbors working around them. Their smiles were awkward at first but gradually turned warm.

"It's been so long since we all came out together like this!"

"Before the snow disaster, our community was so lively!"

"Yes, every evening, everyone would come out for a walk. I remember your family had a golden retriever, so adorable!"

"Ah, yes! Our dog, Little Jin, was so well-behaved, that even if you hit it with a stick or a knife, it wouldn't bite back. Such a sweetheart."

"Hehe, let's not talk about it. After the snow disaster, maybe we'll get another one!"

"By then, we might only be able to keep polar bears."

"Let's get to work! Our building leader said the more we work, the more food we get."

"Yes, let's work hard. We can experience the life of farmers!"

"With hope for the future, life is looking up!"

An elderly man looked up at the sky. It was a bleak gray, but he fancied he could see a faint sun, as if the snow clouds were about to clear and bright sunshine would soon spread, driving away all the cold.

"We've reached a peace agreement in our community. No more fighting and killing every day. We can eat and stay warm."

"Life is getting better and better!"

The elderly man smiled contentedly.

The entire community atmosphere turned harmonious. Everyone worked together, chatting and laughing. Despite the ongoing snowstorm, having hope made the hard work seem easier. The large gathering even made it feel warmer.

Wang Qiang and the other building leaders oversaw the work with their subordinates. The residents had long been used to this and even felt it was natural for the leaders to enjoy the most resources without doing any work.

Only Li Jian, as a leader, still worked diligently, shoveling snow with a serious expression while the others enjoyed themselves.

Fully armed, Zhang Yi came downstairs. Seeing this scene, he smiled slightly.

"Hey, Zhang Yi, heading out to find supplies?" Huang Tianfang from the neighboring building greeted Zhang Yi from afar, waving and signaling for the cigarettes Zhang Yi had promised.

Zhang Yi smiled warmly, "Yes, everyone is working hard. I can't slack off! Don't worry, your cigarettes are safe."

From another direction, Wang Qiang shouted, "Zhang Yi, can you manage alone? If there's too much stuff, I can help!"

Zhang Yi laughed heartily, "No need, I have my snowmobile. It can carry as much as needed!"

"Alright then, wait for me to return! And make sure everyone works hard. I'll check the progress when I get back. If it's not good enough, I'll deduct supplies!"

He spoke with a big smile, then pretended to head to the back garage. Soon, the sound of an engine roared, and Zhang Yi rode off on his snowmobile.

Watching Zhang Yi leave, Wang Qiang's face darkened. "Where the hell does he keep that vehicle? I've searched everywhere and can't find it!"

Huang Tianfang muttered, "So it's called a snowmobile, not a sled."

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Leaving the community, Zhang Yi glanced back at the harmonious scene, feeling a strange sense of irony.

However, he had no time to sympathize with the residents. Their large numbers posed a threat to him, and letting them solve their problems themselves only benefited Zhang Yi.

This time, Zhang Yi didn't head to the supermarket but to Tianhai Pearl Mall, a famous old mall with a history of seventy years in Tianhai City. Known for its affordable and good-quality products, the twelve-story building housed mostly small shops selling cheap jewelry, knock-off clothes, underwear, hardware, and more.

Zhang Yi went there because he knew of a veterinary shop in the mall. Upon arrival, he found the upper half of the building sticking out of the snow. Finding a suitable spot, he broke in through a window. Ignoring the other stores with little interest, he headed straight for the veterinary shop.

Inside, Zhang Yi used a crowbar to smash the glass and began rummaging through the medicine cabinets. Nowadays, you couldn't buy arsenic from pharmacies, but rat poison was still available, colorless and tasteless, yet deadly.

Chapter 122: We All Have a Bright Future

The rat poison in the veterinary shop was a hot commodity, so the store had quite a bit in stock.

Soon, Zhang Yi found two boxes, totaling over thirty bottles of rat poison.

"This amount should be enough to poison three hundred people, right?" Zhang Yi mused. "Even if it doesn't kill them outright, it'll cause organ failure, and without treatment, they'll die for sure."

Looking at the small bottles in his hands, Zhang Yi's lips curled into a smile. They had asked him to help collect food, so he had no reason to refuse. If they weren't afraid of death, he had nothing to say. He could only thank them for their trust.

However, poisoning them couldn't be rushed. Especially in the first few instances, they'd be cautious and have others eat first. But they couldn't always be that careful, especially with the current food shortages.

He had researched that rat poison takes ten to thirty minutes to take effect. Even if they tested for poison, not everyone would know about this.

"Finding the right opportunity to poison all of them would be the best outcome!" Zhang Yi smiled, putting all the rat poison into his alternate space.

Having secured the poison, Zhang Yi wasn't in a hurry to return. He needed to make it look like he had gone to great lengths to find food for 300 people.

Leaving the veterinary shop, Zhang Yi looked around. Most of the shops sold cheap clothes and underwear.

An idea suddenly struck him.

"I don't need clothes, but I do need fuel. These clothes are mostly made of synthetic fibers, which are harmful when burned, producing thick black smoke."

"Hehe, this will be perfect for dealing with those hiding in buildings who refuse to come out!" Zhang Yi's eyes lit up with excitement at the thought.

He felt like a destructive genius. Every boy is a natural-born troublemaker from a young age. The thought of setting a big fire with no one to stop him filled him with anticipation.

"Who isn't a little rascal at heart, hehe!" Zhang Yi chuckled and immediately began using his alternate space to collect random clothes.

In no time, dozens of store's worth of clothes were in his space. He didn't take more than needed, just enough for fuel. What would he do with so many cheap women's underwear? Keeping them would be perverted.

Once he deemed the timing right, Zhang Yi headed to the Wanda Mall in the development zone.

The large Yonghui Supermarket below the mall had plenty of supplies. Gathering food for 300 people was easy. Maintaining this for another month wouldn't be a problem, as he was only providing basic survival rations, not enough to fill them up.

He packed the food in large burlap bags, then removed two iron sheets and tied them to his snowmobile, creating a simple sled.

With everything ready, Zhang Yi rode back to Yue Lu Community. By around five in the afternoon, the sky was getting darker, and the community was deserted.

They couldn't work outside all day. Zhang Yi cautiously pulled out his handgun, chambered a round, and went to observe. The snow had been dug into numerous pits, piled around the perimeter.

Estimating the labor involved, he figured they had worked for at least two or three hours. "Given their lack of food and clothing, they must be exhausted after such work."

"I'm eager to see their despair and madness when they realize they've worked all day and haven't received the promised food." Zhang Yi's tone was cold, as if discussing something irrelevant to himself.

He took out his phone and contacted Uncle You, Jiang Lei, and Li Chengbin, asking them to bring weapons.

Soon, they arrived armed, shocked to see the large amount of food Zhang Yi had brought back.

"Zhang Yi, where did you get so much food?" Their eyes were filled with suspicion.

Previously, Zhang Yi had only brought back about thirty portions of food each day. Now, he had ten times that amount! This imbalance made them think Zhang Yi was deliberately rationing their food.

As he notified the building leaders to send people to collect the food, Zhang Yi casually explained, "I had to go further away to find it. The city is big, and the farther you go, the more dangerous it gets. I didn't want to go before, but now I had no choice."

In such cold weather, the farther you went from home, the more dangerous it became. A neighbor nodded, "That's true. Zhang Yi risks a lot every day to find food."

"I agree. If his snowmobile broke down, that would be disastrous!"

Li Chengbin frowned slightly, clearly not convinced by Zhang Yi's explanation, but he said nothing and stood aside with his weapon.

Soon, people from the other buildings arrived, but none of the building leaders came, only their subordinates. Zhang Yi smirked at their caution, worried he'd capture them all at once.

He didn't waste time, calling out, "Start from Building 1, come get your food!"

He took out a knife and slit open a burlap bag, revealing large plastic bags of food. Each bag contained ten portions of food. Zhang Yi tossed a bag a few meters away, letting them pick it up themselves.

They said nothing, collected the food, and left quickly.

After distributing all the supplies, Zhang Yi called the residents of Building 25 to the hallway to distribute their share. Their faces finally showed joy.

With everyone fed, Zhang Yi's expression became warmer. He smiled and said, "From now on, there's no need to be so tense. Although we can't abandon our weapons, we can see the dawn of hope."

"We all have a bright future."

Neighbors looked at each other, their excitement unspoken. If this continued, they wouldn't mind working daily.

Zhang Yi clapped his hands, "Alright, everyone, head back! We have work to do tomorrow."

They obediently returned to their homes. That night, for the first time, they could relax a little and enjoy a good meal.

Chapter 123: Watching from the Sidelines

Zhang Yi temporarily didn't need to do anything complicated. He only needed to go out every day, pretending to collect food, and then distribute it to the neighbors in the community. The enjoyable part was watching the conflicts within the other buildings unfold! Dismantling enemies from within is always the fastest.

Zhang Yi returned home and, as usual, checked the surveillance footage on his phone. After confirming that there was nothing unusual inside the house and that Zhou Ke'er was still in her room, he opened the door and went in. He opened Zhou Ke'er's door and then took a long, hot shower.

Being outside all day, his cold-weather gear kept him from getting frostbite, but his skin still felt the cold, causing his pores to contract. Only when the hot water from the shower sprayed over his head and body did he fully relax.

Zhang Yi washed his face vigorously, feeling incredibly fortunate. "This state won't last long," he thought. "Once I get rid of those troublemakers, I'll find a comfortable place to live a new life."

Having been reborn for a month, Zhang Yi had already dealt with most of the people responsible for his death in his past life, using methods far crueler than what they had used against him. Next, he planned to clean up the entire community, dealing with them along the way. Afterward, he would dismantle his safe house and move it elsewhere.

The quality of the safe house was incredibly sturdy. Zhang Yi's current plan was to find a large amount of explosives and blow up the entire building. The other items in the safe house could be stored in his alternate space. The outer shell of the safe house was made of lightweight and sturdy aerospace metal, almost indestructible even if it fell into the snow. After all, it was designed to withstand the friction of reentry from space!

"It won't take long to deal with these guys," Zhang Yi smiled joyfully. In the near future, he would bury his hatred and pain in this place and start a new life.

After his shower, Zhang Yi wrapped himself in a towel and went to open Zhou Ke'er's door. She sat on the bed, her face flushed, her long legs tightly crossed, trying to endure something.

As soon as Zhang Yi opened the door, she dashed to the bathroom without meeting his eyes. Zhang Yi scratched his chin, wondering, "What's going on?"

Soon, he heard the sound of running water and realized, "I locked her in all day; she must have been bursting!" His lips curled into a mischievous smile. "She's quite particular, not even willing to use a bottle."

Zhou Ke'er emerged from the bathroom, her face still red. She looked exhausted after holding it in for so long. Zhang Yi approached, wrapping an arm around her slim waist and holding her white wrist.

"Are you really that weak?"

Zhou Ke'er rolled her eyes at him. "Try it yourself next time!"

Zhang Yi shrugged. "I'm not that picky. If I can't hold it, I'll use a bottle."

He rubbed his stomach, feeling hungry. He hadn't noticed it outside, but now that he was in a warm room, the hunger hit him.

"Make some food, with extra meat. I've been burning a lot of energy lately."

Zhou Ke'er smiled and nodded. "Alright, I'll make braised pork for you today!"

She happily ran to the kitchen, like a gentle and virtuous wife.

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While Zhang Yi enjoyed the comforts of home, the leaders of the other buildings received the food brought by their subordinates. Seeing the plastic bag of food, their expressions varied, but most were disappointed.

Ten portions of food were just the basic daily ration, fitting into a single plastic bag.

In the Wolf Gang, Wang Qiang ignored his subordinates, rushed up, and tore open the plastic bag. After rummaging for a while, he found a pack of cigarettes. His eyes lit up, holding the pack like a treasure.

His subordinates, all long-time smokers, eyed the pack with hunger. They hadn't smoked in nearly a month, driving them to madness.

The second-in-command, Xiao Lu, couldn't help but ask, "Boss, can I have one?"

Other subordinates, emboldened, also asked, "Boss, give us one too!"

"We're going crazy without a smoke. It's driving us nuts!"

Wang Qiang frowned, displeased. He usually smoked a pack a day. This pack was just enough for him. If he shared, it would be half gone. Seeing the bloodshot, crazed eyes of his subordinates, he was startled.

After some thought, Wang Qiang said, "These cigarettes are hard to come by. I forced Zhang Yi to get them! You're my good brothers, so I'll let you have a taste. Work hard from now on!"

The subordinates, desperate for a smoke, readily agreed to anything Wang Qiang said.

Grudgingly, Wang Qiang handed out cigarettes, his hands trembling, his heart bleeding.

When his men received the cigarettes, they immediately lit them up, their eyes tearing up with happiness. Only true smokers understood the bliss of that moment.

Like widows long without a man, meeting a robust young man.

But the joy was short-lived. The cigarettes were soon smoked up. Wang Qiang quickly pocketed the rest, pretending not to see their longing looks.

"Alright, let's distribute the food!" he announced.

Opening the plastic bag, Wang Qiang saw the low-quality bread and biscuits, but to him, they were treasures. They had been eating "roasted food" for so long, they craved normal human food.

"Swallowing hard," Wang Qiang gestured to a subordinate, who walked over dazedly. Wang Qiang handed him a piece of bread, smiling. "Xu Yi, You're the weakest, you eat first!"

Chapter 124: Conflict

Wang Qiang didn't dare to be the first to eat the food, fearing Zhang Yi might have poisoned it. Xu Yi, thinking Wang Qiang was being kind, grabbed the food eagerly and began stuffing his mouth. Wang Qiang and Xiao Lu watched him eat, waiting for some time to see if anything happened. When Xu Yi showed no signs of distress, they relaxed.

"Come on, everyone, there's enough for all!" Wang Qiang called out.

Similar scenes unfolded in other buildings. Zhang Yi's notorious reputation had spread. After all, he was the one who single-handedly dealt with more than half a building's worth of people and caused significant losses to the fiercest gangs in the community, the Crazy Wolf Gang and Tianhe Gang. Everyone was extremely wary of him.

Despite the wariness, they couldn't refuse the food sent to them. Most building leaders had people test the food first. Understanding human nature, Zhang Yi had provided untainted food on the first day to gradually lower their guard and incite internal strife. He planned to wait for the opportune moment to strike decisively.

That night, every building leader and their subordinates devoured their share of the food. Meanwhile, the ordinary residents at home waited in vain for their portion, still naively believing that the food was meant for everyone.

"Wife, we don't need to worry anymore. They'll bring us food as long as we work hard," a man said optimistically.

"Yes, dear. We'll survive this snow disaster! When it's over, I want to have three children with you—one like you, one like me, and one like both of us!" his wife responded with hope.

Elsewhere, a young man prayed, "Mom, Dad, you must be watching over me from heaven. Don't worry, everything is getting better. There will be no more hunger and killing. I will live well!"

That night, the building leaders and their subordinates ate their fill, while the ordinary residents went to bed with empty stomachs but hopeful dreams.

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The next morning, Zhang Yi woke up around seven. He no longer slept late because the room temperature was maintained between 25°C and 27°C, making the bed less appealing. While brushing his teeth, he heard the commotion outside. With a small devilish smile, he walked to the window, his muscular upper body exposed.

From several directions, he heard intense arguments coming from at least five or six buildings.

"Ge Damin, didn't you say we'd get food as long as we worked? Where's the food now?" a resident shouted.

"I told you, this is the situation we're in. We need to discuss food distribution in a meeting to come up with a plan that satisfies everyone," Ge Damin responded evasively.

In another building, a resident questioned, "Brother Huang, we worked hard as you instructed, but you didn't give us any food!"

"Old man, you dare question me? Your work was pathetic. How dare you ask for food!" Huang retorted angrily.

"But..."

"But what? Work harder today, and you might get some food. No work, no food!" Huang snapped.

In Wang Qiang's territory, a subordinate timidly said, "Boss, you promised us food yesterday..."

"Hah! Who else wants food? Step forward! No one? Good. Remember, letting you live is my greatest charity. Anyone who disrespects me will be dealt with!"

Zhang Yi watched, smiling silently, knowing the purging had begun. He and Zhou Ke'er had a simple breakfast of spicy soup, fried dough sticks, and steamed buns. The spicy soup was made from a soup packet, the fried dough sticks were semi-finished, and Zhou Ke'er had made the steamed buns herself. Zhang Yi enjoyed her homemade food more than the ready-made delicacies stored in his alternate space. Having a woman at home, bustling in the kitchen in the morning, brought a sense of normalcy and life to his days.

After breakfast, Zhang Yi left Zhou Ke'er with lunch and locked her in her room. He then went out, pretending to gather supplies.

At the community center, residents were still busy working. Uncle You, Jiang Lei, and Li Chengbin had Zhang Yi's permission to supervise rather than labor. The other residents, under their building leaders' supervision, continued shoveling snow. However, their spirits were visibly lower than the previous day, their expressions numb, anxious, and filled with unease.

Before leaving, Zhang Yi whispered to Uncle You, “Be extra cautious. With the food shortage in other buildings, chaos is imminent. Protect ourselves and avoid trouble.”

Uncle You, already aware of Zhang Yi’s plan, nodded. “Don’t worry, I know what to do.”

Satisfied, Zhang Yi left the community.

He wandered around for half a day, eventually arriving at a library. This city library was well-built and had not been buried by snow, with most of its books remaining dry. Zhang Yi had never been much of a reader in the digital age, where consuming information on phones was more convenient. But now, with the internet nearly collapsed, he found himself seeking solace in books. He hoped to find comfort and warmth in literature amidst the harsh apocalyptic reality.

After spending half the day in the library, Zhang Yi chose a copy of Haruki Murakami’s “Norwegian Wood” and tucked it into his large pocket, feeling the weight of culture. He left the rest of the books for future visits, thinking that taking them all at once might overwhelm him.

Returning to the community at dusk, Zhang Yi followed his routine, first calling Uncle You and others to maintain order and then notifying residents to come down for their food. This time, he noticed shadowy figures at every building window—faces full of hope watching him distribute food.

Chapter 125: Dead Silence, Decay

The leaders of each building sent people to collect the food in an orderly manner. Zhang Yi also distributed food to the residents of his own building and returned home as usual.

The next day, apart from Li Jian, none of the building leaders distributed any food to the ordinary residents.

That night, seeing their last hope completely destroyed, the residents of the community went utterly mad!

The community became unprecedentedly chaotic.

At some point, the sounds of shouting and killing began to emanate from each building. The desperate screams and furious curses echoed through the corridors, barely muffled by the northern wind.

The pitch-black night was their only cover. When these cowardly ordinary people no longer feared for their lives, the ruling leaders of each building finally realized how powerful they were!

Not everyone had Zhang Yi's perfect defensive fortress and terrifying firepower. Still stuck in the era of cold weapons, the advantage of numbers had a massive impact on the battle.

Zhang Yi sat on his warm, cozy white velvet quilt, quietly watching out the window.

The lights were off, creating a tranquil silence that starkly contrasted with the howling wind, snow, and agonizing screams outside.

He had no idea what was happening outside but knew that the more people died tonight, the better it was for him.

Before going to bed, Zhang Yi checked the security of his room one last time, reloaded his handgun and assault rifle, and then lay down with a satisfied sigh.

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The next morning.

When Zhang Yi stepped out of his building, the sight before him made him gasp in shock.

What had been a pristine white snowy landscape was now covered in blood.

In the courtyard's center, fifty or sixty bodies lay strewn about haphazardly! Judging by their appearance, it seemed they had been forced to jump from high places.

Some curled up into balls before they died, not killed by the fall but frozen to death from their injuries in the icy snow.

Zhang Yi lifted his head, scanning the surrounding buildings. He saw darkened, congealed bloodstains on many windows.

It was clear how brutal the battle had been the previous night!

By this morning, no one had come out to shovel snow, not even to remove the pile of bodies.

Residents of Building 25 stood at the entrance, terrified, not daring to breathe too loudly. They felt incredibly fortunate to be under Zhang Yi's protection. Otherwise, they too would have faced a similar fate.

Uncle You approached Zhang Yi and asked, "Zhang Yi, do we still need to work today?"

Zhang Yi glanced at Uncle You, and then at the nervous neighbors behind him. He replied calmly, "If you want to keep eating, you have to work!"

"Unless," he pointed to the bodies on the ground, "you want to end up like them."

The crowd shuddered. Compared to the dead, they were extremely fortunate! At least they didn't have to fight for scarce food or risk their lives.

"It's just work. As long as we're alive, it's fine!" they thought.

"Yes, yes, we'll get to work right away!" The neighbors, stimulated by the grim scene, eagerly grabbed their tools and started shoveling snow.

Seeing the scene around him, Uncle You asked Zhang Yi, "It seems like no one from the other buildings is out shoveling snow. Should we notify them?"

Zhang Yi glanced at him and then smiled, "Do you think they have the time for that now?"

Uncle You was puzzled, "Huh?"

Zhang Yi explained, "Last night was just the beginning. This conflict is between the ruling leaders and the ordinary residents of each building."

"Unless they can solve the food distribution issue, one side must be completely eliminated!"

"One night isn't enough for that!"

Hearing Zhang Yi's explanation, Uncle You felt a chill run down his spine. "Is this what they call the strategy of killing with borrowed knives?"

"So, what do we do next?" he asked.

Zhang Yi replied nonchalantly, "What does it matter to us? Let them kill each other slowly!"

The right moment had yet to arrive, and he wasn't in a hurry. In the afternoon, Zhang Yi returned and distributed food to his residents as usual. However, he noticed that the people from some buildings had changed; they were no longer the same group he was familiar with.

It seemed that control over some buildings had shifted hands during the scramble for food. But it didn't matter to him who the leader was; he would cooperate with whoever was in charge.

However, that night, Zhang Yi sent a message to the building leaders' group chat.

"If I don't see any labor results tomorrow, I can't guarantee there will be food, including cigarettes."

The next day, when Zhang Yi stepped out, he saw everyone gathering to work once again. However, today, the number of people had decreased by at least a third compared to two days ago! In other words, the issue of unfair food distribution had resulted in the deaths of at least 400 people in two days.

Uncle You, unable to comprehend the scene before him, asked Zhang Yi, "These people clearly know that there are only ten portions of food per building, not enough for everyone. Why don't they resist and fight for a chance to survive?"

Zhang Yi chuckled, "Maybe they haven't reached the point of life and death yet."

"Or perhaps, in extreme despair, they've accepted their fate and see death as a form of relief."

"Human nature is a complex thing, beyond anyone's complete understanding. Not even mine."

Shaking his head, Uncle You murmured, "But this can't last forever. Are we just going to watch them continue like this?"

Zhang Yi shook his head, smiling. "It won't last long. Whether due to a lack of resources or continuous conflict, they'll quickly perish in this apocalypse."

Uncle You swallowed hard, at a loss for words.

At that moment, a woman in a fur coat trudged through the snow towards them. "Zhang Yi, I want to discuss cooperation with you again."

It was Chen Lingyu, the leader of Building 9. She was covered in blood, clearly having survived a brutal fight the previous night.

But she had survived.

Zhang Yi smiled disdainfully, "You? What can you discuss with me?"

Chen Lingyu stared into Zhang Yi's eyes, trying to use the skills she had honed in years of sales. "The community will collapse if it continues like this! The internal conflicts are too severe, making effective management impossible."

"Even if you can bring back more food, there will always be people using force to take more. This will only escalate the conflicts, leading to more deaths!"

Zhang Yi watched her calmly, "Oh, and then?"

Of course, he knew this would happen. The current situation was exactly what he had orchestrated.

Chapter 126: No Help Possible

Chen Lingyu continued, "I can help you manage the community scientifically. If this model works well, it could even expand to other areas."

"In these apocalyptic times, the world's systems are in chaos. We could even establish our own kingdom!"

"You be the king, and I'll assist you. What do you think?"

Zhang Yi just smiled. Despite having graduated from Tianhai Industrial University and having five years of social experience, he wasn't naive enough to be persuaded by a smooth-talking woman selling a pyramid scheme.

"Not interested," he said coldly, dismissing the topic.

"But..." Chen Lingyu tried to persuade him further, but Zhang Yi waved her off.

"No need to say more. We don't know each other well, and I don't want to hear your spiel."

Zhang Yi's firm gaze made Chen Lingyu's face pale as she took two steps back, as if losing her strength.

After the fierce battle last night, this woman was obviously scared. She was here more to seek Zhang Yi's protection than to genuinely propose a partnership.

But who was she? She wasn't pretty; she was getting on in years, and she had no remaining value. Zhang Yi had no reason to protect her.

Chen Lingyu said sadly, "If this continues, we might die one day."

Zhang Yi glanced at her and emphasized, "Take out that 'we' from your sentence."

You might die, but not me, Zhang Yi.

Chen Lingyu shook her head helplessly.

Zhang Yi looked at this woman who could barely be considered a strong figure and curiously asked, "A woman like you, surviving alone in the apocalypse—don't you have a husband?"

Chen Lingyu smiled bitterly and shook her head. "We separated long ago."

"Oh, all alone, huh?"

Chen Lingyu shook her head. "Not exactly. I have a daughter. She's been studying in the U.S. since she was ten, attending a private school."

When she mentioned her daughter, Chen Lingyu's eyes lit up noticeably.

"My life doesn't depend on men. After my divorce, I raised my child by myself. I started by washing dishes for others and working as a trainee in a beauty salon. Step by step, I became the CEO of a pre-IPO company!"

"I'm no worse than any man! Zhang Yi, if you refuse to cooperate with me for this reason, it's your loss!"

Chen Lingyu made one last effort.

Zhang Yi rubbed his nose and said slowly, "Generally speaking, only the heads of group corporations are called CEOs. As the owner of a small company, you should be called the general manager."

Chen Lingyu's face turned awkward.

"Well, it's not strictly like that. There's no rule that only the head of a group can be called a CEO!"

Zhang Yi found it somewhat amusing. It seemed Chen Lingyu's educational level didn't surpass junior high school. In a corporation, there are only shareholders, and the CEO is just a job position.

Not understanding such basic corporate roles, what kind of entrepreneur was she trying to be?

"Alright then, go back to your business," Zhang Yi said, walking around Chen Lingyu, not wanting to argue with a pyramid scheme promoter.

However, as he looked into the distance, he saw a surprising scene.

Building 18, managed by Li Jian, presented a completely different scene from the other buildings.

Li Jian, wrapped in a thick black down jacket, was energetically shoveling snow. Though he was short and inconspicuous from a distance, Zhang Yi felt a certain resilience in him.

In front of Building 18, everyone worked in an orderly fashion. After ten minutes of work, each person rested, and then new people took over.

Zhang Yi was deeply moved. Such a scene was unimaginable in the apocalypse.

He couldn't help but walk over, standing quietly near Li Jian and watching them work.

Li Jian soon noticed Zhang Yi. He looked up, his eyes shadowed with fatigue, his body noticeably thinner.

"Zhang Yi? Why are you here?" he asked.

Zhang Yi didn't answer directly. He looked at the people of Building 18. Although their faces were pale, there was a glimmer of hope in their eyes, unlike the people from other buildings who were numb and living like walking corpses.

Zhang Yi felt both relief and curiosity. He asked Li Jian, "How did you manage this?"

"Manage what?" Li Jian asked back.

"While other buildings have been fighting fiercely over food distribution, your building hasn't. How did you avoid such conflicts? Did you conceal the truth?" Zhang Yi asked.

Li Jian's face showed a proud expression. Despite his short stature, he straightened his back and said, "I didn't hide anything! From the beginning, I told everyone in our building the results of the negotiations."

This result surprised Zhang Yi. He was amazed that Li Jian dared to do so, not fearing internal chaos.

"But there are only ten portions of food. It's impossible for all of you to survive on that. Why didn't they revolt?" Zhang Yi asked.

Li Jian seemed to anticipate this question. He calmly said, "No one in our building wants to become a beast. So, we share the ten portions equally. If there's one portion, we share that as well."

Zhang Yi snorted, crossing his arms mockingly. "But this way, you'll all die. None of you will survive."

"You think you're smart, but you've made the most foolish choice!"

Li Jian fell silent, unable to refute Zhang Yi's words. He knew Zhang Yi was right. In harsh environments, beastly nature suited survival better than human nature.

Zhang Yi shook his head, not intending to delve further into the topic. His curiosity brought him here, but he had no interest in their fate.

As Zhang Yi turned to leave, Li Jian called out, "Zhang Yi, wait! Can't you help us?"

"Sorry, that's not possible!" Zhang Yi replied firmly, with no room for negotiation.

He looked down at the short middle-aged man before him and said indifferently, "With your ability, you could easily rally the most promising people, divide the resources, and ensure your survival."

"But you're hesitant, trying to save everyone. Yet you lack the ability to protect them all. By doing so, you're committing a crime!"

"The path you chose, you walk it yourself!"

Chapter 127: Taking the Bait

Zhang Yi ignored Li Jian's request and turned to leave. Li Jian was a typical idealist. However, achieving ideals required strength, not just slogans.

Returning to Building 25, Zhang Yi passed by Wang Qiang and Huang Tianfang. Both men had cigarette butts in their hands, sucking so hard it looked like they might swallow the filters.

Seeing Zhang Yi, they immediately put on fawning smiles and hurried over.

"Brother Zhang, aren't you going out today? Or did you collect all the food yesterday?" Wang Qiang asked with a wide smile, looking enthusiastic enough to be Zhang Yi's cousin.

"I'm going out in a while," Zhang Yi replied with a smile.

Huang Tianfang also came over, grinning. "Zhang Yi is the biggest contributor to our community! Not like these useless folks," he said, pointing at the residents shoveling snow, "They can't even do a simple task and just keep asking for food! Hmph!"

Zhang Yi laughed. "If they don't know how to work, you should teach them!"

Wang Qiang glanced at the obedient residents he had tamed and sneered. "They have arms and legs, don't they? A good beating will make them obedient!"

Then, with a sly smile, he turned to Zhang Yi. "Brother Zhang, this Jinwan is too strong for me! Next time, could you get me some Yuxi cigarettes?"

Huang Tianfang interjected, "Yuxi? Why not ask for Zhonghua? Just be glad you have cigarettes at all. Don't burden Zhang Yi!"

Zhang Yi smiled. "That's not a big problem. I'll look for some and bring them if I find any. It shouldn't be too difficult."

"Besides, at this time, cigarettes are precious, but there's no concept of whether they are valuable or not. If you ask for Yuxi or Zhonghua, that's fine. But if you ask for brands like Dajiang or Hong Sanhuan, I might have trouble finding those!"

The three of them laughed heartily, the atmosphere very congenial.

"By the way, I'll see if I can find some good liquor for you guys. A bit of alcohol in this cold weather will warm you up!"

Wang Qiang and Huang Tianfang were thrilled by Zhang Yi's words. Both loved drinking, and alcohol was indeed a great way to keep warm in this cold.

"Brother Zhang, you're so generous! I misjudged you before. If you need any help, just let us know!"
Wang Qiang gave Zhang Yi a thumbs up, genuinely moved.

Huang Tianfang, not wanting to be outdone, said, "Zhang Yi, you're our savior! I owe you my life, and from now on, I'm yours to command!"

Zhang Yi smiled warmly, patting their arms. "We're partners now! We're all just trying to survive this apocalypse, and only cooperation will lead to a win-win situation."

"Feel free to ask for anything you need! If I can provide it, I will."

With that, Zhang Yi pointed outside. "I'm heading out now!"

Wang Qiang and Huang Tianfang quickly responded, "Take care!"

Zhang Yi nodded with a smile and went to get his snowmobile, leaving the Yue Lu community.

Wang Qiang and Huang Tianfang watched Zhang Yi's departing figure, their expressions turning a bit complex. They glanced at each other, neither liking the other much, and then walked away separately.

On his way back, Wang Qiang pondered, "Why has Zhang Yi suddenly become so nice? Giving me cigarettes and even offering to bring back alcohol."

"Did I misunderstand him before?"

He furrowed his brows, deep in thought.

After the apocalypse, he coveted Zhang Yi's snowmobile, tried to steal it, and even ambushed Zhang Yi in the snow. Only then did Zhang Yi retaliate against the Crazy Wolf Gang.

Wang Qiang slapped his forehead. "So it wasn't Zhang Yi being untrustworthy; it was me who was wrong first. Zhang Yi's a good guy, someone I can get along with!"

A sinister smile slowly crept across his face. "I like dealing with straightforward people!"

...

On the other side, Huang Tianfang also pondered Zhang Yi's sudden friendliness. "Why is he being so nice to me? Logically, he shouldn't fear me with his strength."

"Maybe he genuinely wants peace and doesn't want to fight anymore. After all, he's alone, and his followers aren't truly loyal to him."

"If the fighting continues, he might die one day too. So he's scared!"

Feeling he understood Zhang Yi's change in attitude, Huang Tianfang smirked smugly. "This is good news!"

...

After leaving the community, Zhang Yi headed to the library again. "Norwegian Wood" by Haruki Murakami was fascinating, its subtle melancholy embodying post-war Japanese culture.

He leisurely finished the book, put it back on the shelf, and left. He wasn't the type to bring books home only for them to gather dust in his alternate space.

Zhang Yi belonged to that group of people who loved buying books at bookstores but lost interest once they got home.

Checking his Rolex, he saw it was afternoon. He should gather some food and return to the community.

He murmured to himself, "I wonder when those guys will fall for it. I need to slowly lower their guard and then find the right moment to strike."

Leaving the library, he gathered the necessary supplies at a supermarket and rode his snowmobile back to the community.

This time, among those collecting supplies, were several building leaders. Wang Qiang and Huang Tianfang were among them, eagerly eyeing the burlap bags at Zhang Yi's feet.

Of course, their goal was the cigarettes and alcohol Zhang Yi had promised. They came in person to ensure they got the rare goodies and prevent conflicts with their subordinates.

Seeing them, Zhang Yi's lips curled into an almost imperceptible smile.

"Alright, everyone line up and collect your food in order!" Zhang Yi called out.

The leader of Building 1 stepped forward and whispered to Zhang Yi, "Zhang Yi, since you can get cigarettes for Wang Qiang and Huang Tianfang, could you get some for us too?"

Chapter 128: Closing the Net

The fact that Huang Tianfang and Wang Qiang had cigarettes was no secret. These two weren't the type to keep things hidden. While others worked, they would openly smoke outside. It didn't take long for the other building leaders to figure out that Zhang Yi was the one providing them with cigarettes.

Soon, other leaders who were addicted to smoking began to make requests. They hoped Zhang Yi could also provide them with cigarettes.

Zhang Yi hesitated for a moment, then smiled and said, "Providing cigarettes for so many people might be a bit difficult."

The other building leaders immediately became anxious.

"Zhang Yi, you can't be biased!"

"We don't ask for much, just one pack a day!"

"This is my lifelong request!"

With a helpless sigh, Zhang Yi said, "Alright, I'll try my best. Starting tomorrow, I'll provide cigarettes for those who need them."

Seeing the smokers' success, those who didn't smoke also stepped forward with their requests.

"I don't smoke, but I like chewing betel nuts. Can you get some?"

"I want to drink a little. Even the cheapest wine will do!"

...

Zhang Yi, feigning exasperation, said, "Alright, alright, I've noted down all your requests. I won't favor anyone, everyone will get what they want!"

Satisfied with his response, everyone left with their supplies, smiling.

After they left, Li Chengbin and Jiang Lei approached Zhang Yi, visibly upset.

"Brother Zhang, aren't you being too generous with them?"

"Giving them food is already a huge favor, and now they're asking for more!"

Zhang Yi calmly replied, "Their requests aren't unreasonable. I can't afford to be biased. It's fine, let's just go with it."

The others looked at Zhang Yi as if seeing a stranger. They couldn't believe how the once ruthless Zhang Yi had become so soft.

But since Zhang Yi was the one finding the supplies, they had no right to complain.

After distributing the supplies, Zhang Yi returned home. He took a hot shower, then lay comfortably on the sofa in his pajamas, staring at the ceiling.

"It's about time."

The infighting among the other buildings had already caused significant casualties. The initial death toll exceeded 400, with hundreds more injured during the fights. These injured individuals were unlikely to survive, and even if they did, they wouldn't pose any immediate threat.

That morning, Zhang Yi walked around the community and observed the number of active people. There were about 700 left.

Using cigarettes and alcohol as bait, he had successfully lured the building leaders out.

The time to close the net had arrived!

Zhang Yi didn't plan to delay any longer. Since major conflicts were unlikely to break out again in the short term, dragging it out served no purpose. Additionally, the food he provided would restore their strength, increasing their threat to him over time.

"Tomorrow is the day!"

Zhang Yi's eyes narrowed, a flash of cold killing intent passing through them.

...

The next day, Zhang Yi left the community as usual. He didn't inform anyone, not even Uncle You, about his plan.

This operation was crucial, and if he missed the opportunity, it would complicate future actions and increase the risks. Zhang Yi trusted no one.

After leaving the community, he went straight to the supermarket. He collected a large amount of food, mainly bulk buns, steamed buns, and bagged bread.

Today, Zhang Yi made sure to find higher-quality food and brought more than usual.

"The last meal should be a good one. I've been kind enough."

After piling up the food, Zhang Yi retrieved the rat poison he had obtained earlier from his alternate space.

The colorless and odorless powder was lethal even in small amounts. Since the food was slightly spoiled and discolored, the poison would be undetectable.

Wearing a gas mask, he found in the military camp, Zhang Yi carefully sprinkled the rat poison on the food. This process took him half an hour to complete.

"Wang Qiang and Huang Tianfang might have someone test the food for poison, but they're too greedy to share cigarettes and alcohol. Old smokers and drinkers tend to drop their guard when it comes to their vices. I'll poison the cigarettes and alcohol."

Zhang Yi took out several packs of cigarettes, removed the plastic wrapping, and carefully mixed rat poison into the tobacco.

He knew that Wang Qiang and others were used to receiving unsealed cigarettes from him. This familiarity would reduce their suspicion.

For the alcohol, Zhang Yi dissolved the rat poison in alcohol and used a syringe to inject it through the bottle caps. It was a crude method, but effective. Returning home near dusk, the dim lighting would make it hard for the drinkers to notice any flaws.

After two hours of preparation, Zhang Yi packed the food into bags and loaded them onto the sled behind his snowmobile.

Despite the lighter snowfall, the wind was still fierce. Leaning against the mall's wall, Zhang Yi lit a cigarette, taking small puffs to avoid freezing his lungs with the cold air.

"Perhaps today is the end. Everything seems to be going smoothly, almost too smoothly," Zhang Yi murmured.

The behavior of the other buildings' people matched his expectations perfectly. This cooperation made Zhang Yi feel uneasy.

"Everything has been too smooth. They're not fools. How could I play them all so easily?" Zhang Yi mused, narrowing his eyes.

"This false harmony is temporary. They're not dumb. They'll act against me sooner or later. Are they waiting for an opportunity?"

"There's a mole in Building 25. Who could it be? Are they still alive or already dead?"

These questions plagued Zhang Yi, but he found no answers. He wasn't Sherlock Holmes or Detective Conan, lacking the skills to uncover such secrets.

However, he had something better in this post-apocalyptic world—his fortress and his guns!

Zhang Yi tossed the cigarette on the ground, crushed it with his foot, and said coldly, "No matter what plans you have, against absolute strength, all schemes are meaningless."

Chapter 129: First Strike, Counterkill!

After everything was prepared, Zhang Yi carried the "special" food, rode his motorcycle, and returned to the Yue Lu community.

Upon arriving at the community, Zhang Yi first called Uncle You, Jiang Lei, and Li Chengbin over to maintain order.

Soon, they arrived at the courtyard, armed with iron rods, shovels, and kitchen knives.

"Zhang Yi, we're here!" Uncle You called out.

Zhang Yi glanced at them and nodded. "Alright, wait here. I'll call everyone down to collect their supplies."

Zhang Yi took out his phone and notified the building representatives to come over.

Uncle You, holding an iron rod, stood beside him like a loyal guard. Li Chengbin and Jiang Lei stood slightly behind Zhang Yi, leading others to protect him.

Zhang Yi glanced at them out of the corner of his eye. Today, Li Chengbin and Jiang Lei seemed more focused than usual. Out of habit, Zhang Yi stepped back a few paces, positioning himself behind the crowd.

Soon, the representatives from various buildings began arriving. Seeing them, a smile flashed across Zhang Yi's eyes. His plan had succeeded! Using rare items like cigarettes and alcohol, he had successfully lured the building representatives out.

Except for Li Jian from Building 18—who adhered to his principles of fairness and refused to personally come to collect supplies—most of the representatives were here. The cigarettes and alcohol they collected were laced with high doses of rat poison. Once ingested, it would take 10 to 30 minutes for the poison to take effect, leading to their deaths.

Zhang Yi narrowed his eyes and smiled, "Alright, everyone come and collect your supplies!"

Starting with Building 1, Zhang Yi threw the supplies two or three meters away, letting the representatives pick them up themselves. One by one, the representatives walked over and took their respective supplies.

"Building 21!" Zhang Yi called, looking at Wang Qiang.

Wang Qiang, head down, walked over. Zhang Yi bent down to pick up a bag of food. Just as he was about to stand up, he heard a shout, "Now!!"

Wang Qiang pulled a handgun from his pocket and fired at Zhang Yi! Zhang Yi's pupils contracted, and he instinctively tried to dodge. At that moment, Uncle You, standing nearby, pushed him away.

"Bang!"

...

"Bang!"

...

"Bang!"

Three gunshots rang out right beside Zhang Yi's ear. The sudden attack made each shot feel like an eternity. Uncle You's body slowly collapsed, knees buckling as he fell to the ground. A ringing filled Zhang Yi's ears as he looked up, seeing a group of people with ferocious expressions charging at him.

Wang Qiang held a handgun, Huang Tianfang brandished a kitchen knife, and Li Chengbin and Jiang Lei, less than two meters away, had betrayed him. Out of the thirty or so people present, at least half were rushing towards Zhang Yi, weapons gleaming coldly.

They had waited a long time for this moment. Zhang Yi intended to lull them into a false sense of security and then eliminate them, but they, too, had grown tired of Zhang Yi and wanted him dead. Zhang Yi was the strongest in the community, and as long as he lived, others could die at any time.

Moreover, they knew Zhang Yi's home was a perfect shelter, comfortable and well-stocked with food. Regardless of their motives, they couldn't allow someone as powerful as Zhang Yi to exist in the Yue Lu community.

Many of them had even bought off Zhang Yi's close aides, Li Chengbin and Jiang Lei. They believed Zhang Yi's death was inevitable. Even with a gun, Zhang Yi couldn't kill everyone at such close range.

As Uncle You fell, Zhang Yi's gaze grew cold and terrifying. Today's plan had been kept secret from everyone, including Uncle You, who didn't know Zhang Yi was wearing a bulletproof vest and pants. Even if the bullets hit him, they wouldn't have harmed him. But Uncle You, grateful for Zhang Yi's help, had unhesitatingly taken the bullets for him.

This stirred a rare feeling of guilt in Zhang Yi, followed by overwhelming rage. Jiang Lei, the closest to Zhang Yi, roared and swung his shovel at Zhang Yi's head. Zhang Yi quickly rolled on the ground, dodging behind his snowmobile. He adjusted his stance and stood up, a black assault rifle suddenly appearing in his hand, loaded and ready.

The attackers' expressions turned from ferocity to confusion, then to fear.

"Rat-a-tat-tat-tat-tat..."

Facing a life-or-death crisis, Zhang Yi squeezed the trigger tightly, holding the gun handle firmly as he began to spray bullets. Li Chengbin and Jiang Lei, the closest to him, were riddled with bullet holes in an instant. Ignoring everything else, Zhang Yi fired at anyone standing.

Behind Li Chengbin and Jiang Lei were a dozen patrol team members, who were stunned when Wang Qiang started shooting. They hadn't joined in the attack, but Zhang Yi couldn't differentiate friend from foe in this chaos. The bullets didn't spare anyone.

With too many enemies, Zhang Yi couldn't take chances. He assumed everyone was an enemy. Killing them all was his only option. Rows of people fell, including the once-arrogant Wang Qiang, who hadn't even reached Zhang Yi before being riddled with bullets. His eyes remained wide in disbelief, unable to fathom where Zhang Yi got the assault rifle. If not for the rifle, they would have won.

The handgun had given Wang Qiang false confidence. But just as Zhang Yi didn't know about Wang Qiang's handgun, Wang Qiang was unaware of Zhang Yi's bulletproof vest and assault rifle. The difference was that Zhang Yi was prepared for a gunfight, so Wang Qiang never stood a chance.

"He has an assault rifle! Run!"

Huang Tianfang, terrified, dropped his knife and fled. The other building leaders screamed in fear and ran, cursing their parents for not giving them more legs.

Zhang Yi, consumed by rage, saw Uncle You lying in a pool of blood, motionless. Even with his hardened heart, he felt a pang of sorrow. "Uncle You, thank you for taking the bullets for me. I'll avenge you and kill them all!"

Zhang Yi's voice was icy. This was the first time since the apocalypse that he faced so many opponents, yet it turned into a one-sided slaughter. As Zhang Yi had said before, in the face of absolute strength, all schemes were meaningless.

Chapter 130: Leave None Alive

A full magazine was quickly emptied. Zhang Yi didn't have time to reload and immediately threw the assault rifle to the ground. Then he drew two police pistols from his waist.

The attackers couldn't run fast in the snow, and Zhang Yi shot them all, each bullet a headshot.

In less than twenty seconds, almost everyone was dead! A few individuals, trembling with fear, stood in the snow with their hands raised, faces filled with terror and pleas.

"Zhang Yi, we're not with them, this has nothing to do with us!"

"I swear, I swear this has nothing to do with me! Please don't kill me!"

Zhang Yi recognized these building leaders. They hadn't moved when Wang Qiang and the others attacked him, so they were likely uninvolved in the assassination plot.

Therefore, Zhang Yi pulled the trigger.

"Bang!" "Bang!" "Bang!"

The heads of the building leaders exploded, and they fell into the snow.

Zhang Yi then aimed at the last person alive, Chen Lingyu, the leader of Building 9. She was so scared that she soiled herself, tears and snot running down her face.

"Zhang Yi, this really has nothing to do with me. Please believe me! I have a thirteen-year-old daughter abroad, and I need to live to see her return."

Zhang Yi looked at her coldly and, after two seconds of silence, fired, ending her life.

The white snow was stained red with blood. Zhang Yi stood alone amid dozens of corpses. Even in the apocalypse, it was the first time he had killed so many people in one go!

He knew that most of these people were probably not involved in the plot to kill him. For example, Chen Lingyu and other patrol team members. But Zhang Yi had no choice. He couldn't let anyone who might harm him live. If he spared them today, they could become a future threat.

Dead people are the safest.

"You would all die sooner or later. Living is so painful; let me send you to heaven."

Zhang Yi exhaled a puff of white smoke, holding his gun.

"From this perspective, I've relieved you of your suffering. You should thank me."

If these neighbors knew this after their deaths, they might sarcastically say: "Thank you, indeed!"

After killing all his enemies, Zhang Yi scanned the surroundings. The loud gunfire had already drawn all the neighbors to their windows. They watched this brutal battlefield, eyes filled with awe and respect for Zhang Yi. Some were even grateful for what Zhang Yi had done.

Zhang Yi's gaze turned towards Buildings 26 and 21, the territories of the Tianhe Gang and the Crazy Wolf Gang. Wang Qiang and Huang Tianfang had initiated the attack on Zhang Yi. Originally, their subordinates were waiting at the entrance to rush in and seize supplies as soon as their leaders made a move.

However, when Zhang Yi pulled out the black M4 carbine, they hesitated. Zhang Yi's gaze made them even more afraid.

Crazy Wolf Gang's second-in-command, Xiao Lu, trembled as he backed away. "Retreat, quickly retreat! Don't let that demon come over!"

Terrified underlings scattered, fleeing down the corridors in panic. Zhang Yi didn't chase them. Instead, he walked over to Uncle You.

Not far away, Li Chengbin and Jiang Lei's bodies lay with over a dozen bullet holes still bleeding. They had been Zhang Yi's loyal subordinates, fighting alongside him many times. But now, they had betrayed him.

Zhang Yi didn't care. He considered betrayal normal, even expecting it from Uncle You and Zhou Ke'er. But after today, Uncle You's status in Zhang Yi's heart would rise significantly. At least, he would trust him with important tasks.

"Uncle You, are you still alive?"

Zhang Yi half-knelt, examining the surroundings to prevent a sneak attack, while checking Uncle You's pulse.

"No pulse!" Zhang Yi was shocked, but he quickly remembered he was wearing cut-resistant gloves, which made it impossible to feel a pulse.

He turned Uncle You over, seeing three clear bloodstains. The bullets hadn't hit the heart, so Zhang Yi didn't know if he could be saved. But he had to try.

From his alternate space, Zhang Yi took out a tube of adrenaline and stabbed it into Uncle You's chest.

Then he shouted towards Building 25, "Help me!"

The neighbors at the entrance stood in fear, shocked by Zhang Yi's display of killing. They didn't dare approach.

Zhang Yi's cold gaze swept over them, startling them into action. Afraid of Zhang Yi, they rushed to help.

"Lift him carefully and take him to my home! Be gentle; if he gets hurt, I'll burn you with him as paper offerings for Uncle You!"

Terrified, the neighbors carefully carried Uncle You, more cautiously than they would their own parents. Zhang Yi followed closely, holding his gun.

As they reached the seventh floor, they heard a woman's cry.

"Uncle You, what happened to you? You can't leave us! If something happens to you, how will we survive?"

Xie Limei, carrying her child, ran down the stairs, crying.

Zhang Yi noticed that Uncle You's eyelids twitched as Xie Limei cried. He sighed inwardly, "Uncle You, you're too kind-hearted! If you weren't so righteous, I might have killed you first."

If someone couldn't be used and was highly skilled, they became a significant threat.

Zhang Yi would kill them without hesitation. However, now he owed Uncle You a great favor, so he couldn't be angry with Xie Limei.

The neighbors, knowing Xie Limei's relationship with Uncle You, made way for her.

Xie Limei, holding her child, knelt beside Uncle You, purposely staying close to Zhang Yi, and began crying loudly.

"Honey! Look at me! I'm Limei, you promised to marry me!"

"And our baby, you said you wanted to watch her grow up. Once the apocalypse is over, we can live happily together."

"Hubby!!!" (A five-second wail here.)

"You can't break your promise!!!" (Same as above.)

"If you leave, how can we live? You might as well take us with you."

"Why did you try to be a hero? Blocking bullets might show your righteousness, but what about us?"

...

Zhang Yi's skin crawled. Xie Limei didn't mention Zhang Yi once, but every word implicated him.

She cried for Uncle You, but it was clear she was telling Zhang Yi that Uncle You had taken bullets for him. If Uncle You died, Zhang Yi would have to take care of her and her child.