

Ice Age 141

Chapter 141: Poison

Xu Hao waited outside for a few minutes before he heard the door open. He quickly peeked out to see Zhang Yi walking over with a silver briefcase. Xu Hao's eyes were drawn to the mysterious case, wondering what was inside.

Zhang Yi approached Xu Hao and spoke in a calm tone, "Do you know what I did before all this?"

Xu Hao shook his head, confused. In the past, Xu Hao had been a wealthy heir, and Zhang Yi was just an ordinary young man in the community. Xu Hao had never cared about Zhang Yi's background.

Zhang Yi continued, "I was a fighter. In 2041, I won my first Southeast Asian free combat championship. In 2042, I defeated Japanese Heavy Artillery Raylong and then went on to sweep through Japan's karate masters for three consecutive years."

"Later, I joined the French mercenaries and fought in the Middle East for years. They called me the Half Fox."

"Growing tired of the constant fighting, I returned to China and became a simple warehouse manager and part-time hitman."

Xu Hao was taken aback. He had never imagined that the man before him, besides being handsome, had such a hidden past. It made sense now why Zhang Yi's marksmanship was so precise and why he was so ruthless in killing.

Xu Hao thought to himself, "No wonder. No wonder his marksmanship is so accurate, and he's so merciless when killing."

"This man is either a retired urban war hero or a professional hitman. It all makes sense now!"

"This is a real boss. Following him in the apocalypse is the only way to survive!"

As Zhang Yi spoke, he opened the silver briefcase. Inside, he took out a syringe filled with a blue liquid. The deep blue color made Xu Hao instantly think of poison.

Movies often depicted scenes like this, and the sight filled Xu Hao with dread. He took several steps back, fear gripping him. "Brother Zhang, what are you doing?"

Zhang Yi smiled slightly and approached with the syringe. "This is a slow-acting poison we commonly used. It takes a week to take effect, and without the antidote, it's fatal."

"If you want me to believe you, let me inject this. Don't worry; once we take Wang Siming's shelter, I'll give you the antidote."

Xu Hao's eyes widened in terror. "Poison? No, please don't come near me!"

Zhang Yi, losing patience, replied, "You don't have a choice now. Whether you want it or not, you're getting the injection."

With that, he pinned Xu Hao against the wall, pulled down his pants, and slowly injected the needle into his buttock. Xu Hao felt humiliated and began to cry.

Zhang Yi quickly finished, put away the syringe, and smiled, "From now on, you're one of mine."

Xu Hao, shaking, pulled up his pants, but suddenly felt dizzy and collapsed to the floor. "Ugh... ugh..." he dry-heaved, feeling extremely unwell. His head spun, and he had difficulty breathing.

This convinced Xu Hao that he had been poisoned. Zhang Yi spoke calmly, "No need to panic. This is a slow-acting poison. I did this so we don't have to doubt each other."

"If you betray me, you'll die too. And once I get the shelter, there's no reason for me to kill you. In fact, I'll provide you with ample food and a comfortable living environment."

After dry-heaving for a while, Xu Hao realized he had gained Zhang Yi's trust, even though he felt resentful. "I understand. I'll contact Wang Siming as soon as I get back. Let's move quickly."

Zhang Yi nodded. "Good. Go back now. I'll give you further instructions soon."

Xu Hao, breathing heavily, struggled down the stairs. Zhang Yi watched him go, feeling slightly relieved. Agreeing to work with Xu Hao and investigate the billion-dollar shelter was a significant challenge.

In truth, the so-called poison didn't exist. Zhang Yi had used methylene blue injection, a treatment for methemoglobinemia. If injected too quickly, it caused dizziness, dry heaving, and chest tightness, mimicking poisoning symptoms.

This ensured Xu Hao wouldn't deceive him and prevented any future betrayal. "First, I need to clear out the remaining problems in the community. Then, I'll check out the shelter," Zhang Yi planned.

Returning home, Zhang Yi checked the surveillance footage of the sickroom. Uncle You was awake, and Xie Limei sat beside him, whispering. Zhang Yi couldn't hear but guessed it wasn't anything good.

He smiled and walked over to open the door. Hearing the door, Xie Limei immediately stopped talking and pretended to comfort her child. Ignoring her, Zhang Yi approached Uncle You with a smile.

"Uncle You, you're awake! You scared me. I'm glad you're okay."

Uncle You, looking weak, managed a smile. "Thanks to the doctor here, I would've died without them."

"I heard you dealt with Huang Tianfang and the others? Well done!"

Zhang Yi laughed, "They were nothing. Not worth mentioning."

He opened his jacket to reveal his bulletproof vest. "I was wearing this. They thought their gun was some secret weapon, but it was useless against me."

Uncle You, eyes wide in surprise, looked embarrassed. He had risked his life to protect Zhang Yi, not knowing Zhang Yi had been wearing a bulletproof vest all along.

Zhang Yi said, "I should have told you earlier. Who knew they would suddenly attack?"

"Luckily, you're okay. Otherwise, I'd feel guilty."

Uncle You, still embarrassed, said, "I didn't do much. You saved me."

Zhang Yi waved his hand, "No need for formalities. Your intention was enough for me."

In a few words, Zhang Yi made it clear that he didn't owe Uncle You much, just acknowledging his good intentions. This clarified their relationship, preventing future complications.

Chapter 142: Surgery

Zhang Yi comforted Uncle You for a while. At this moment, Uncle You held a different significance for Zhang Yi. Uncle You's body had mutated, and although the specific abilities were still unknown, based on Zhou Ke'er's description and current observations, it seemed to enhance his physical abilities. This was crucial for Zhang Yi! What he needed was someone reliable—well, it might sound harsh—a strong laborer and a meat shield.

"Take your time recovering; you don't need to worry about other things right now," Zhang Yi comforted.

Uncle You, sounding weak, said, "No, I feel like I have no strength at all right now. I can't even lift my arms. If this continues, I don't know how long I'll be a burden to you."

Zhang Yi knew it was the muscle relaxants taking effect. "Don't worry, just focus on getting better. I'll handle everything else!"

Uncle You looked gratefully at Zhang Yi and nodded.

Overhearing this, Xie Limei quickly chimed in, "Zhang Yi, you're so good to my husband. Our family doesn't know how to thank you! From now on, we will rely on you!"

Uncle You blushed and weakly said, "Amei, we can't always trouble him. Once I'm better, I'll take care of you."

Xie Limei placed her hand on his shoulder and, sounding aggrieved, said, "It takes a hundred days to heal from bone injuries, and you were shot! Who knows how long it will take for you to recover? Even when you do, your body won't be the same. What can you do?"

"Zhang Yi is so capable. If he wants to take care of us, why would you refuse? It would just waste his goodwill."

Uncle You's face turned red. Being naturally inarticulate, he didn't know how to refute Xie Limei's words.

Zhang Yi smiled slightly and said, "Sister Xie is right. I will take care of your family."

Xie Limei's eyes lit up, and she excitedly said, "Zhang Yi, you promised! You can't go back on your word!"

Zhang Yi smiled and nodded. "Of course, I never go back on my word."

Uncle You, feeling extremely embarrassed, stammered, "Zhang Yi, I... I..."

Zhang Yi stopped him. "Just focus on recovering!" With that, Zhang Yi stood up to leave. As he reached the door, he mentally counted down: 3, 2...

Before he reached 1, Xie Limei's voice called out, "Zhang Yi, wait a moment. I need to talk to you!"

Zhang Yi curled her lips slightly. Xie Limei had been confined in this room for a day. Although he provided food and hot water, people always wanted more, and she would undoubtedly have more requests. When she came, she hadn't brought any personal belongings for herself or the baby.

Turning around with a smile, Zhang Yi asked, "Sister Xie, what do you need?"

Xie Limei said, "Zhang Yi, we've been here all day. My phone's out of battery, and the baby needs a diaper change. Could you get some things for us?"

Zhang Yi smiled wryly. "Sister Xie, I've been busy all day and am really tired. You know, my days are filled with fighting and killing, which is physically and mentally exhausting."

"Besides, I'm not familiar with your place or Uncle You's. I don't know where anything is. Why don't you go get it yourself?"

Xie Limei hesitated, glancing at the bedridden Uncle You for reassurance. Pretending to joke, she said, "Just make sure you let me back in when I return!"

Zhang Yi laughed, "Come on, do you think I'd do that? Uncle You is still here. If I didn't let you back in, what would that make me?"

Xie Limei slyly smiled, suddenly placing the baby in Zhang Yi's arms. "Alright, you take care of the baby for a bit. I'll be back soon!"

She thought Zhang Yi and Zhou Ke'er couldn't handle a baby, so by leaving the child, Zhang Yi would have to let her back in. Zhang Yi saw through her little scheme and laughed internally.

You think I can't abandon this child?

Outwardly, he smiled and said, "No problem. But make sure to come back quickly. I'm not good with kids."

Xie Limei beamed, "Don't worry; I won't stay out long. It's such a nice place; I wouldn't want to leave!"

She glanced around the comfortable apartment, satisfaction evident in her eyes, as if she were inspecting her new home. Zhang Yi opened the door, letting her out.

After closing the door, Zhang Yi looked down at the swaddled baby. The child had fair, tender skin, cool to the touch, like a piece of delicate jelly. Zhang Yi felt a rare pang of tenderness. He touched the baby's cheek, feeling the cool, soft skin.

Taking a deep breath, he muttered, "I'll find someone to take care of you later."

He then took out his phone and messaged Xu Hao. With the baby in his arms, he returned to Uncle You's room to chat.

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Leaving Zhang Yi's apartment, Xie Limei was hit by a bone-chilling cold. She shivered, quickly putting on her hat and shoving her hands into her pockets.

"So cold! It's freezing out here!" She glanced back at Zhang Yi's sturdy door, her eyes filled with jealousy and longing.

"It's so warm inside. Compared to this, outside is like an ice hell!" she thought.

"For my baby to grow up healthy, we must live here. We can't leave!"

Imagining her child's future in that warm apartment, Xie Limei smiled contentedly. However, the biting cold soon snapped her back to reality. Hugging herself, she hurried downstairs.

When she reached Uncle You's apartment and took out the key, a shadow appeared behind her. Xu Hao raised a blood-stained kitchen knife and swung it at her neck.

"Thud!"

Blood sprayed like a fountain. Xie Limei collapsed to the ground, her eyes wide with fear and reluctance. Xu Hao delivered a few more blows to ensure she was dead. Satisfied, he quickly left the scene.

Back at Zhang Yi's place, he held the baby and chatted with Uncle You. "I've decided. Let Sister Xie and the baby stay here. Once you're fully recovered and the baby grows up, they can move back."

Uncle You nodded, touched by Zhang Yi's kindness, unaware of the sinister plot unfolding outside.

Chapter 143: Making an End

Uncle You was deeply moved by Zhang Yi's words, unsure how to express his gratitude.

"This... this is too much trouble for you. Your resources are limited! Adding three more people means we'd need more than double the coal just for heating."

"I'll move out once I'm healed. I have arms and legs; I can't just let you support us."

Zhang Yi smiled and replied, "Let's not talk about that now. Just focus on your recovery. We'll discuss the future when the time comes."

Just then, the baby in Zhang Yi's arms suddenly started crying loudly.

Zhang Yi had no experience with babies. The way he was holding the child was incorrect, which quickly woke the baby up and made her cry nonstop.

Zhang Yi tried to soothe the baby, but no matter what he did, she wouldn't stop crying. The noise was giving him a headache.

Even though he had faced dozens of killers, he had never felt such a headache.

Uncle You, equally helpless, said, "It's always been Xie Limei who took care of the baby at home."

With no other option, Zhang Yi went to ask Zhou Ke'er for help.

"Can you think of a way to calm this baby down?" Zhang Yi asked, looking desperate.

However, Zhou Ke'er was just as clueless when she saw the crying baby.

"I... I don't know how to take care of a baby either!" she admitted.

Zhang Yi had a sudden idea. "How about giving her a sedative? If that doesn't work, maybe a bit of a sleeping pill?"

Zhou Ke'er looked at him in disbelief.

"Giving a baby sleeping pills would be very harmful to her body. That's not a good idea. Where is her mother?"

Zhang Yi replied coldly, "She went back to get some things."

With no other choice, Zhou Ke'er took the baby from Zhang Yi.

Both of them were inexperienced in handling babies, and Zhou Ke'er couldn't calm her down either.

Suddenly, Zhang Yi had a thought. "Could it be that she needs a diaper change?"

Zhou Ke'er realized the same thing. She opened the swaddling clothes and found that the baby's diaper was indeed full.

Zhang Yi coughed and stepped back a few paces. He took out a bag of diapers from his alternate space and placed it on the ground.

"It's all yours," he said, stepping further back.

Zhou Ke'er rolled her eyes but had no choice. She spent a good amount of time changing the baby's diaper, and the crying finally subsided.

Zhang Yi and Zhou Ke'er then went to Uncle You's room to keep him company and have Zhou Ke'er check on his condition.

Zhang Yi asked, "Uncle You, have you noticed any changes in your body? Anything unusual?"

Uncle You weakly shook his head.

"I feel completely drained. The only thing I notice is that my wound itches."

Zhou Ke'er reassured him, "That means your wound is healing. It's a normal phenomenon."

Zhang Yi learned that Uncle You's mutation didn't grant him immunity to drugs. This was valuable information.

They chatted for another half hour, but Xie Limei still hadn't returned.

Uncle You began to worry. "Why isn't she back yet?"

Zhang Yi's pupils narrowed as he replied, "Could she have encountered danger?"

He quickly stood up, looking concerned. "The situation outside is chaotic. People are still fighting between buildings. Even Jiang Lei and Li Chengbin attacked me yesterday."

"We can't guarantee there are no traitors among the remaining people."

"This is bad. Sister Xie might be in danger!"

Zhang Yi looked tense.

Uncle You, equally worried, said, "Zhang Yi, please go check on her! Make sure she's safe."

Zhang Yi nodded. "Ke'er, take care of Uncle You and the baby. I'll go check!"

After saying that, he quickly left the room.

Zhang Yi returned to his apartment and began gearing up.

A bulletproof vest, bulletproof pants, tactical belt, pistol, and knife. An M4 slung over his shoulder, and a bulletproof helmet clicked into place.

Fully prepared, Zhang Yi took out his phone and sent a message to the community's group chat.

"Everyone, gather in room 1301 on the 13th floor. I will distribute supplies and decide the allocation of units in the Yue Lu community."

"You can choose any unit. First come, first served."

After sending the message, Zhang Yi specifically messaged Xu Hao: "Stay put at home."

Then he put his phone away and walked out the door.

Zhang Yi's pace was slow, but he could hear the rush of footsteps echoing in the stairwell.

The neighbors, knowing that Zhang Yi was going to distribute supplies and allocate units, were thrilled.

They scrambled to the 13th floor, eager to claim the best units.

Zhang Yi, with an assault rifle in hand, walked down the stairs at a leisurely pace.

It took him five minutes to descend the stairs from the 11th floor.

When he reached the 13th floor, he heard excited chatter from room 1301.

The neighbors were ecstatic, imagining a future filled with peace and prosperity.

"With the other buildings subdued, our community will be ours to rule!"

"Haha, Zhang Yi is generous, letting each of us manage a building. Imagine having the other units as our servants!"

"The main concern is the supply of resources. Zhang Yi needs to keep providing food or share the snowmobile with us."

"I think he'll agree. The community is stable now; he won't want to disrupt the peace."

"We can support Zhang Yi as the community leader, and in return, he provides food and safety. It's fair."

"In return, we can offer labor and help defend the community from outsiders."

They didn't know Zhang Yi was outside the door, listening to their fantasies.

He smiled coldly, hearing their naive plans.

With a mocking grin, Zhang Yi pulled out two grenades from his alternate space.

He also grabbed a riot shield, positioning it in front of him.

Prepared, Zhang Yi pulled the pins from the grenades and rolled them into the room.

He quickly raised the riot shield and stepped back.

Inside, one of the neighbors noticed the rolling objects.

"Huh, what's this?"

He bent down to take a closer look.

When he recognized the grenades, it was too late.

A burst of fire swallowed him instantly.

"Boom!!!!!!"

The explosion blew apart the dozen people inside, shaking the entire building.

Chapter 144: Not a Single One Left

Zhang Yi leaned against the corner of the hallway, using the riot shield to protect himself.

The explosion was louder than he had anticipated, causing his eardrums to ache.

However, the blast's power didn't reach him; only some dust fell from the walls.

Zhang Yi let out a long breath.

Holding the riot shield firmly, he gripped his loaded assault rifle and slowly walked to the door of Room 1301.

Seeing the scene inside, Zhang Yi's body relaxed.

The grenades had worked excellently.

The room was a mess, with bodies scattered everywhere. The furniture had been knocked over, crushing some of the people underneath, leaving only parts of their bodies visible.

In a corner of the room, a man covered in blood struggled to get up but failed. He glared at Zhang Yi with intense hatred.

"We helped you so much... Why did you kill us?!"

As he spoke, blood filled his mouth, but he continued to roar in anger.

He felt betrayed, believing they had helped Zhang Yi for so long, only to be discarded like used tools.

"You helped me? I don't think so," Zhang Yi replied coldly. He raised his gun, aimed at the man's head, and ended his life with a single shot.

Pathetic neighbors. They still thought they had helped Zhang Yi until the end. Without Zhang Yi's protection, they would have died long ago. Allowing them to live until now was Zhang Yi's greatest kindness to them.

Zhang Yi then aimed his gun at each person or corpse on the ground, shooting them all in the head.

Sure enough, one of them couldn't keep pretending and got up, screaming and trying to fight Zhang Yi. But he was met with a cold, merciless bullet.

"Bang!"

...

"Bang!"

...

"Bang!"

...

Each bullet fired from the carbine took a life, the sound slow but powerful.

Every shot from Zhang Yi hit its mark; he never wasted a bullet. Ammunition was incredibly precious in the apocalypse.

After five minutes, Zhang Yi had shot every person. During that time, some cursed, some begged, and others screamed in despair. But Zhang Yi was fair, treating each one equally with a single bullet.

"One, two, three, four... fifteen, sixteen... hmm?"

Zhang Yi frowned slightly and counted again.

"The number doesn't seem right."

He had previously counted. Excluding himself and Uncle You's families, there were 18 survivors in the unit. Subtracting Xu Hao, there should be 17 left. But no matter how he counted, there were only 16 bodies.

"Indeed, there's a clever one who realized I intended to kill them, so they didn't come."

Zhang Yi smiled faintly, then thoughtfully stroked his chin.

"It seems... it was that guy, right?"

Zhang Yi recalled the person, a real estate agent.

"Damn, why struggle so hard? It's not like you can survive!" Zhang Yi sighed, then raised his gun.

He started searching floor by floor.

Zhang Yi knew where the person lived, so the search area was greatly reduced.

An hour later, Zhang Yi found him hiding in a kitchen cabinet.

"You think you're smart?" Zhang Yi mocked.

Under the man's despairing gaze, Zhang Yi gave him a taste of brain surgery with a bullet.

With that, the entire Building 25 had only five survivors left.

The culprits who had invaded Zhang Yi's home and tried to eat him alive were all dead.

Although Xu Hao was an outsider, he had suffered a worse fate in the previous life.

As a high-profile wealthy heir, he had drawn attention by buying supplies in the group, making his family one of the first to be attacked and overrun.

Zhang Yi's revenge journey had finally come to an end.

With no more obstacles in his heart, Zhang Yi felt the world become clearer, even his breathing smoother.

"Feels great!" Zhang Yi exhaled contentedly.

From now on, there would be no one in the Yue Lu community who could threaten him.

In the days to come, he would enjoy a peaceful life.

Of course, this depended on him and Xu Hao successfully taking over Wang Siming's doomsday shelter, said to be capable of withstanding H-bombs.

Then he would leave this place, completely disappearing from everyone's view.

Zhang Yi sheathed his assault rifle and returned home.

He approached Uncle You's sickroom, putting on a sorrowful expression.

"Uncle You, I have some bad news. Sister Xie... sigh!"

Zhang Yi clenched his fist and sighed deeply.

Uncle You, realizing something was wrong, asked in disbelief, "What happened to Xie Limei?"

Zhang Yi explained, "The neighbors have been dissatisfied with us for a long time. They secretly colluded with people from other buildings, planning to kill us and take our supplies and my home."

"Although I killed Jiang Lei and Li Chengbin, there were still traitors among the remaining people."

"Fearing my retaliation, they acted first, killing Sister Xie... sigh!"

Zhang Yi's face was full of grief, his expression one of profound sorrow.

Uncle You closed his eyes in pain and slammed his fist onto the bed.

"Bang!" The steel-framed bed's corner collapsed from the impact.

Zhang Yi's eyes gleamed.

It seemed he was right; Uncle You's mutation was strength-based.

This was perfect, complementing Zhang Yi's abilities well. With Uncle You handling heavy labor, there would be no shortage of manpower for physically demanding tasks.

"Uncle You, don't worry! I made sure they didn't get away. I killed them all, avenging Sister Xie!"

Uncle You slowly opened his tear-filled eyes.

He was a sentimental man. Although he initially stayed with Xie Limei for her body, they had grown attached over time, making it impossible for him not to feel heartbroken.

"Those people deserved to die. I knew they were unreliable. Despite all our efforts for this building, they neither appreciated us nor even resented us!"

"They deserved to die!" Uncle You said angrily.

He had no doubts about Zhang Yi's words.

Firstly, over the past month, he had witnessed the neighbors' ingratitude firsthand. He had also seen Jiang Lei and Li Chengbin's attack on Zhang Yi.

Thus, Zhang Yi's claim that the neighbors had conspired with outsiders to kill them made sense.

Secondly, and most importantly, Zhang Yi had been with him in the sickroom for a long time after Xie Limei left, making it impossible for Zhang Yi to have been the one who killed her.

Zhang Yi approached, speaking sincerely, "Uncle You, I bear responsibility for this, too. I didn't expect them to be so ruthless! Don't worry, I'll find you a young and beautiful wife with great skills!"

Uncle You was silent for a moment.

He then slowly said, "I prefer mature and voluptuous women."

Chapter 145: Entrusting the Orphan

Uncle You seemed to understand things clearly. Those who have experienced the apocalypse tend to see life and death with more clarity, having been through so many separations and losses. Moreover, he and Xie Limei were a couple who got together late in life and didn't have a deep emotional foundation. Her death didn't plunge him into unbearable grief.

Seeing Uncle You's reaction, Zhang Yi smiled in relief. "No problem, I'll make sure to find someone who'll satisfy you!"

As they spoke, Zhou Ke'er came over, holding the crying baby, looking lost and helpless. "Zhang Yi, Uncle You, she's crying again. What should I do?"

Zhang Yi and Uncle You exchanged glances, both equally clueless. They were an old bachelor and an experienced driver, neither with any experience in taking care of a baby.

"Maybe... she's hungry?" Zhang Yi suggested, glancing at Zhou Ke'er, his gaze lingering on her well-endowed chest.

Her face turned red with embarrassment. "What are you thinking? I haven't had a child, so I don't have milk for her!" she said, a bit flustered.

Zhang Yi said, "We really aren't equipped to take care of this child. We need to find someone experienced." He looked at Uncle You. "Uncle You, should we send this child to someone else?"

When Xie Limei was alive, Uncle You could take care of the baby for her sake. But with Xie Limei gone, expecting Uncle You to take care of the baby was unreasonable. Uncle You wasn't foolish; he wouldn't do such a thankless task.

However, as he looked at the baby wrapped in the swaddling clothes, he hesitated, feeling a bit conflicted. "But if we send the child away, will she survive?"

Zhang Yi nodded affirmatively. "Don't worry. After this battle, the community is unlikely to face large-scale conflicts again. I'll find a reliable family to take her in and provide some essential supplies. She'll be fine!"

Uncle You felt relieved by Zhang Yi's assurance and nodded. "Yes, that seems to be the best solution."

Seeing Uncle You agree, Zhang Yi went over to Zhou Ke'er and took the baby from her. The baby seemed to understand what was about to happen and started crying even louder.

"I'll find a good family for you," Zhang Yi said coldly, looking at her pink little face. "Sorry, though you're innocent, I can't carry this burden. Too many innocent people have died in this world; blame it on the world."

Zhang Yi knew that sending the child away meant she had less than a 1% chance of survival. Both he and Uncle You understood this. Sometimes, pretending ignorance was the only way to cope. Avoiding the truth might be cowardly, but it was practical.

Zhang Yi couldn't bear to harm the child, but he couldn't take care of her either. Leaving her with someone else was the only option. Her fate would be left to the heavens.

Zhang Yi found a backpack and packed two packs of diapers, two bags of formula, and a ten-pound bag of rice in it. Carrying the backpack and holding the crying child, he left the house with his gun in hand.

Building 25 was now eerily quiet. The neighbors were all dead, and the world seemed to have become peaceful. Zhang Yi walked down the stairs and headed towards Building 18.

The entire community was silent. Zhang Yi had killed most of the people in a single battle, especially all the combatants. The remaining residents were not a significant threat, at least not to Zhang Yi.

Some people peeked through their windows, eyes filled with fear as they watched Zhang Yi.

"Is Zhang Yi coming to kill us?" they whispered in terror.

Zhang Yi walked steadily towards Building 18, a place known for its slogan of harmonious living. The residents of Building 18 were scared to death. The building still housed over sixty people, with deaths mainly due to freezing or complications.

Li Jian has managed to maintain his ideals as an idealist until now, which is why Zhang Yi hasn't attacked Building 18.

Zhang Yi stood at the entrance of Building 18 and fired two shots into the air.

"Li Jian, come out!!"

Soon, Li Jian appeared before Zhang Yi, his short, frail body looking even more exhausted. Dark circles under his eyes and a sallow complexion made him look like he could collapse at any moment.

"Zhang Yi, I'm here," Li Jian said, summoning the courage to stand before him.

Zhang Yi observed Li Jian, noting that the man wasn't trembling. Understandable, given all he had been through, Li Jian was likely numb to the prospect of death.

"Aren't you afraid of me?" Zhang Yi asked with a smile.

Li Jian swallowed hard. "I am. But fear is useless. And I think you didn't come here to kill us today."

He pointed to the swaddled baby in Zhang Yi's arms, from which crying could still be heard. "You came alone, holding a child. Knowing your character, you wouldn't come to kill with a child in your arms."

Zhang Yi nodded. "You're right. I always knew you were a smart man. I came to bring you a child. Your building has the most survivors. Are there any nursing mothers among you?"

Li Jian's eyes lit up with excitement. He saw a chance for survival in Zhang Yi's words.

"Yes, yes, we have! Are you looking for a wet nurse for the baby?" Li Jian nodded quickly, eagerly affirming.

Zhang Yi nodded. "Good! This child is now yours to care for. In return, I won't kill any of you."

He handed the child to Li Jian. Overwhelmed, Li Jian took the baby, looking at her with deep gratitude. The child had just saved the lives of everyone in his building.

Zhang Yi dropped the backpack on the ground. "This contains diapers, formula, and a bag of rice."

"I know you might not use the formula for the baby, but just make sure she stays alive. If you can't manage, I won't blame you. But don't deliberately harm her. Baby meat is tender and fatty; keep an eye on your people."

"Since I'm entrusting her to you, I expect you to show some respect."

Li Jian nodded quickly, glancing at the heavy backpack and listening to Zhang Yi's blatant threat. "Rest assured, we will take good care of this child! She'll be fine."

Zhang Yi nodded, satisfied, and turned to leave.

Chapter 146: Hope

Li Jian turned back and called out loudly into the building, "Liu Mei, Liu Mei! Come down quickly!"

Soon, a long-haired woman ran over. Li Jian solemnly handed the baby to her and said, "From now on, this child is in your care. Treat her as if she were your own daughter who passed away. She mustn't suffer any harm. She is our lifeline, understand?"

The woman named Liu Mei, who had recently lost her daughter, looked at the baby girl with intense emotions. She hugged the baby tightly, unwilling to let go.

Zhang Yi smiled casually, "Looks like I can be at ease, right?"

Li Jian nodded repeatedly. "Yes, you can be completely assured!"

Zhang Yi said nothing further. He felt he had done his part for the baby; her fate was no longer his concern.

He glanced at the emaciated Li Jian and then looked up at Building 18. Suddenly, he asked, "How many people are still alive in this building?"

Li Jian cautiously replied, "There are 66 people left."

"66?" Zhang Yi laughed happily. That number is quite lucky. It looks like I'll have good luck soon!"

Li Jian forced a smile in response.

Zhang Yi continued, "What's your plan for survival? I won't be providing you with any food, you know!"

Li Jian hesitated for a moment before saying, “We’ll find a way! We’ve survived this long, facing many hardships.”

“As long as we’re alive, there’s hope. Heaven never seals off all exits, I firmly believe that!”

Zhang Yi smirked and leaned in closer to Li Jian, speaking temptingly, “Solving the food problem is simple. See those buildings I burned down? There’s enough food in there to last you a while!”

Li Jian’s face turned ashen. He shook his head firmly, “No, we won’t stoop to that level. Once you start down the wrong path, destruction is inevitable.”

“I’d rather die with dignity than live dishonorably. At least our conscience will be clear.”

Zhang Yi was genuinely surprised. He hadn’t expected to find someone with such unyielding principles in these desperate times.

“It’s rare to see someone maintaining their integrity in these conditions,” he thought, genuinely impressed.

He smiled slightly at Li Jian, “Honestly, I admire you.”

Li Jian struggled to smile, “Thank you, but I admire you more. You have the ability to survive and thrive, even in the apocalypse. That’s something I can’t do.”

Gathering his courage, Li Jian tried one last time, “Zhang Yi, I have a request...”

“Stop!” Zhang Yi raised his hand to cut him off. “I know what you’re going to say, but there’s no need. I won’t help you. I don’t have the time.”

Li Jian, puzzled, asked, "Why not? You provided 300 portions of food before. Now the whole community's population is about that number. With your ability, managing the community and leading everyone to survive is possible!"

Zhang Yi chuckled. "All beings suffer. I'm not a Buddha who can save everyone."

"Even if I did save them, they might not be grateful. I understand the principle of 'a bushel of rice gives thanks, but a peck of rice breeds resentment.'"

"In these chaotic times, taking care of oneself is already a great feat. I don't have the ambition or the capacity to care for everyone. I just want to live well."

Li Jian's last hope crumbled, his face showing his despair. Despite his optimistic words about finding hope, he knew their chances of survival were slim.

Zhang Yi looked at him and suddenly said, "In life, you have to rely on yourself. You've somewhat touched me, proving that humanity still has some light even in the apocalypse."

"So, I'll give you a chance."

Zhang Yi theatrically reached into his pocket and pulled out a bag of corn seeds. He threw it on the ground and continued rummaging, soon pulling out seeds for wheat, rice, soybeans, potatoes, and sweet potatoes.

"These are your chances. You can try to grow your food. Of course, you can also eat them if you want. It's up to you. This is all I can do for you."

Zhang Yi didn't know much about farming, so he provided various seeds and tubers. It was like tossing fish into a pond, hoping for a miracle. If Li Jian and his people survived, it would show that heaven favored those who maintained their integrity. If not, they would perish.

Having done his part, Zhang Yi turned and left Building 18 without hesitation.

Li Jian stood there, stunned, looking at the seeds and tubers on the ground, feeling overwhelmed. “Can these things grow in temperatures of minus 60 to 70 degrees?”

Suddenly, a white-haired old man hurried out of the hallway. Ignoring the cold, he picked up the seeds and tubers, stuffing them into his clothes to keep them warm.

“Quick, gather these seeds. If we can grow them, we won’t have to worry about food!” the old man urged.

Li Jian’s eyes lit up. This was a retired professor who had specialized in crop studies at an agricultural university. Due to his advanced age, he had survived in Building 18.

“Professor Ge, can you grow these crops? Even in this cold weather?” Li Jian asked excitedly.

Professor Ge, trembling from the cold, replied, “There’s a chance. We must try! Even if hope is slim, if we succeed, we can survive!”

Li Jian realized the opportunity and quickly helped gather the precious seeds and tubers, stuffing them into their clothes for warmth.

...

After completing his task, Zhang Yi returned home, feeling immensely relieved. The grudges and conflicts within the community were finally over. Now, he just needed to complete one more task before he could enjoy a peaceful life with Zhou Ke'er, perhaps having ten children together.

As Zhang Yi lay lazily on the sofa, Zhou Ke'er emerged from the room after changing Uncle You's bandages.

Seeing Zhang Yi, she asked, “Are you done with everything?”

Zhang Yi nodded, “Yes, I’m hungry. Go make us some food.”

"Alright, what do you want for lunch?" Zhou Ke'er asked, heading to the kitchen and putting on an apron.

Zhang Yi walked into the kitchen, hugging her from behind, and whispered, "I want you!"

She blushed, "What are you doing? Uncle You is still next door!"

"Don't worry, the soundproofing is good. He can't hear us."

"I need to cook. Can't you wait a bit?"

"You cook, I'll handle my own business. No conflicts."

...

Chapter 147: Xu Hao's True Colors

That night, Zhang Yi stayed up very late. With the community's issues finally resolved, he felt an immense sense of relaxation. He had been holding back, but this time he indulged without reservation. Zhou Ke'er, having accumulated her own desires, also released everything that night. However, there was still a disparity between them. Zhang Yi's stamina and energy were robust, and he was still full of vigor the next morning. Zhou Ke'er, on the other hand, was exhausted and could barely get out of bed to make breakfast.

Zhang Yi, in a good mood, took some food from his alternate space and ate. Next, he had to see how Xu Hao's contact efforts had gone. Once he received word from Xu Hao and felt confident about their chances, he would go check out the situation with him. Zhang Yi wasn't in a hurry, but Xu Hao was very anxious. After being injected with what he believed to be poison, Xu Hao hadn't slept well all night, convinced he was on the verge of death.

In the morning, Xu Hao messaged Zhang Yi. "Brother Zhang, I've already communicated with the other side. When are we going over?"

Zhang Yi smiled slightly and quickly typed back, "Come over to my place; let's discuss this in detail."

Soon, Xu Hao arrived at Zhang Yi's door. When Zhang Yi opened the door and let him in, Xu Hao's expression mirrored the shock and delight previously seen on Zhou Ke'er and Xie Limei. He looked around, his face lighting up with a foolish smile, as if a beggar had entered a paradise filled with gold and jewels.

"It's so warm here; is this heaven?" Xu Hao said foolishly.

Zhang Yi rolled his eyes. "This is my home."

Xu Hao snapped out of it, immediately feeling unbearably hot. Wrapped in six or seven layers of clothing, the 26-degree temperature inside made him feel like he was in an oven. He quickly stripped off several layers of down and cotton clothes, then approached Zhang Yi somewhat awkwardly.

"Brother Zhang, I've talked with Wang Siming. I'll pretend to cooperate with him and then bring you over. When he opens the door, we'll take the opportunity to take him down!" Xu Hao said eagerly.

Zhang Yi, sitting on the sofa with his legs crossed, pointed to the sofa opposite and said, "Sit! No rush, let's talk this through."

Xu Hao looked at the high-end, pristine white sofa but didn't dare sit on it, fearing he'd dirty it after not having bathed for a month. Instead, he sat on the carpet, still feeling immensely satisfied.

"An entire month, a whole month! I finally feel warmth again!" Xu Hao thought, filled with gratitude.

From his seated position, Zhang Yi looked down at Xu Hao. The once arrogant wealthy heir, now resembled a humbled stray dog. No, he was indeed a stray dog. Xu Hao looked up at Zhang Yi, trying to curry favor.

"Brother Zhang, let me tell you how the conversation went," Xu Hao began.

Zhang Yi smiled slightly and extended his hand. "No need for that trouble; I'll see for myself."

Xu Hao's face froze. "Wh-what? See for yourself?"

"Give me your phone. I want to read the chat history between you two!" Zhang Yi's smile was bright, but to Xu Hao, it looked terrifying.

There were things in his conversation with Wang Siming that he couldn't let Zhang Yi see. Just as he had disparaged Wang Siming in front of Zhang Yi, he couldn't let Wang Siming know either.

"Hurry up and give me the phone. You're not hiding anything from me, are you?" Zhang Yi's narrowed eyes revealed a slit of murderous intent.

"No, I... I..." Xu Hao's forehead started to sweat, his eyes darting, his right hand instinctively covering his pocket.

Zhang Yi, losing patience, pulled out a black handgun and pointed it at Xu Hao's head. "Can't you behave when I talk nicely?"

Xu Hao quickly pleaded, "Brother Zhang, don't shoot! I did say some bad things about you to him, but it was only to mislead him. I didn't mean any of it!"

Zhang Yi, growing impatient, barked, "Give it to me now!"

Terrified, Xu Hao shakily handed over his phone, unlocking it first. "The battery... it's dead," Xu Hao whispered, trying one last time to resist.

Zhang Yi took the phone and saw that the battery was indeed almost dead. Given the limited daily power supply for ordinary residents, it wasn't surprising. Xu Hao and Wang Siming must have talked for a long time. Zhang Yi grabbed a power bank from under the coffee table and plugged it in.

Xu Hao's face turned deathly pale, his body deflating like a punctured balloon. Zhang Yi flipped through the chat history with Wang Siming, scrolling back.

"Oh, you've been in contact for half a month already?" Zhang Yi noted with a smile.

Xu Hao stayed silent, unable to utter a word.

Zhang Yi scrolled further, his lips curling into a disdainful smile.

No wonder Xu Hao hadn't wanted him to see the chat history. The content was quite rich. Initially, Xu Hao had planned to have Wang Siming deal with Zhang Yi and then take over Zhang Yi's safe house and supplies. At that time, Xu Hao had referred to Zhang Yi as "that damned dog, strutting around just because he has a gun. Why does he get to live in such a nice place?"

"Hmph!" Zhang Yi's cold laugh made Xu Hao tremble with fear.

As Zhang Yi continued reading, he saw how Xu Hao's evaluation of him changed over time. When Zhang Yi had subdued the entire building and defeated the Tianhe Gang and Crazy Wolf Gang, Xu Hao's comments turned to, "This guy is ruthless, killed dozens of people in one go. Not easy to deal with."

After Zhang Yi wiped out nearly all the building leaders and burned down twelve buildings, Xu Hao's tone shifted again, "Zhang Yi is tough, really capable. Brother Ming, I can't handle him alone, but the two of us together can definitely take him down."

Xu Hao had used numerous insulting terms to describe Zhang Yi in the early conversations, filled with disdain. He had indeed planned to lure Zhang Yi to Wang Siming's place, hoping Wang Siming's trap would eliminate him.

Zhang Yi, sneering, shook the phone in front of Xu Hao. "How do you explain this?"

Xu Hao swallowed hard, hastily explaining, "Brother Zhang, let me explain! I said those things to mislead him, to make him think I was on his side. Only by doing that could I deceive him!"

Raising his right hand to the light, Xu Hao swore, "If I have any ill intentions towards Brother Zhang, let me die a horrible death!"

Zhang Yi scoffed, "Swearing doesn't mean anything now. Be practical."

Chapter 148: The Fake Surrender Plan

After reading through Xu Hao's chat history, Zhang Yi felt a sense of calm. There were no surprises; everything Xu Hao said matched what Zhang Yi had anticipated. He never believed that someone like Xu Hao, who was opportunistic and self-serving, would be loyal to anyone but himself. Xu Hao was merely hedging his bets between Zhang Yi and Wang Siming, choosing whichever side benefited him the most.

Xu Hao, panicked, knelt before Zhang Yi, trying to justify his actions. "Brother Zhang, you injected me with poison. I can't harm you. If anything happens to you, I'm dead too. Yes, I spoke ill of you before, but I never acted against you. Now, I'm fully on your side!"

Zhang Yi remained silent, stroking his chin in thought. From the chat logs, he gathered several important pieces of information.

Firstly, Xu Hao had revealed Zhang Yi's weaponry to Wang Siming, but only mentioned the handgun. He hadn't disclosed Zhang Yi's assault rifles, sniper rifles, or grenades. This suggested that Xu Hao had considered betraying Wang Siming to join Zhang Yi earlier than expected.

Secondly, Wang Siming's primary interest was Zhang Yi's vast supplies and the snowmobile. Xu Hao had described Zhang Yi's safe house as a treasure trove of resources, enough to last a couple of years. This showed Wang Siming's shelter was indeed running low on supplies, likely because he lost interest and cleared out most of the stored food.

After processing all this, Zhang Yi had a basic plan forming in his mind. He threw the phone onto the table and asked Xu Hao, "Tell me more about the specifics of Wang Siming's shelter, especially the weapons and defense systems. Don't leave anything out."

Relieved by Zhang Yi's calm demeanor, Xu Hao detailed everything he knew. "After the shelter was built, Wang Siming invited many people from our circle to visit. He's always been ostentatious, eager to show

off. The shelter has five floors—two above ground and three below. The ground floors look like a regular villa. The underground floors house a sports arena, waterbed room, entertainment rooms, storage, and a control room."

Zhang Yi nodded, urging Xu Hao to continue. "What about the defense systems?"

Xu Hao thought for a moment and replied, "The shelter was built to withstand nuclear attacks, using materials similar to those in spacecraft. It's nearly impossible to breach it directly. However, it lacks heavy weaponry due to strict domestic regulations. The strongest firepower inside includes a couple of gold-plated Desert Eagles Wang Siming collected."

"But there are gas and flame traps. There are devices that can release tear gas and sleeping gas, and the entrance has a high-temperature flame thrower. During a demonstration, Wang Siming showed us how it could roast a chicken in a second. It can turn the passage into a giant oven, reaching temperatures of 1800 degrees Celsius. Even steel would melt."

Zhang Yi listened carefully, not missing a word. He began mentally mapping out the shelter's layout and defensive systems. Then, he took a piece of paper and started sketching.

Ensuring his safety was paramount. No matter how enticing the shelter was, if the danger exceeded 3%, Zhang Yi would abandon the plan. His current safe house was risk-free and provided a decent quality of life. However, staying there indefinitely wasn't viable, as rumors about his supplies would inevitably spread, attracting trouble.

"Now, Wang Siming's primary targets are my snowmobile and supplies. If he can't get those, killing me serves no purpose. We have no personal grudge. So, I'll hide the snowmobile when we go. The worst-case scenario is being captured, but he won't kill me outright," Zhang Yi reasoned aloud.

Concluding his thoughts, Zhang Yi turned to Xu Hao. "Your plan is to pretend to cooperate with Wang Siming and lure me there. He won't kill me but will use gas to capture me. Once he opens the door, we can attack him together, right?"

Xu Hao nodded eagerly. "Exactly! Once we're inside, I'll pretend to capture you, then take the chance to kill him!"

A hint of joy flashed in Xu Hao's eyes.

Zhang Yi realized that Xu Hao didn't know about his gas masks. In Xu Hao's mind, he would use Zhang Yi as bait, then kill Wang Siming himself. It was a classic "fake surrender" strategy

Chapter 149: The Power Experiment

Xu Hao looked at Zhang Yi and said with real eyes: "Brother Zhang, my life is now in your hands, are you still afraid that I will betray you?"

"If anything should happen to you, I will die too!"

Zhang Yi believes that the plan is indeed feasible.

Xu Hao understand Zhang Yi will use him as a shield, plus Xu Hao thought he was poisoned, can not pit Zhang Yi.

And once successfully into the shelter, with Wang Siming that two golden sand eagle can not be difficult Zhang Yi.

"The success rate is very high, at least above 95 percent."

Zhang Yi gave the evaluation in mind.

But, eventually, there will be a little unease.

His way of being is a word of "if"!

He's good at defense, but he's not good at offense.

I'd be lying if I said I wasn't nervous about attacking a super sanctuary for the first time.

"Fire, gas, if only there was a way to solve this problem once and for all."

Zhang Yi sighed in her heart.

He can't rest easy when the initiative is not in his own hands.

Suddenly, Zhang Yi's mind flashed a light.

No, wait a minute!

Fire, gas...

Why do you think I forgot something?

Zhang Yi wanted to seize that spark of inspiration.

He instinctively sensed that it was important, that he had something else to use.

"Got it!

After some hard thinking, Zhang Yi finally realized what it was.

His power space!

For a long time, Zhang Yi only regarded the power space as the ability to store objects, and never considered applying it to the combat level.

However, different Spaces can receive objects, and time within them is close to absolutely static.

If you can use this function, can it become a very powerful combat ability?

Zhang Yi is a little excited, if you can really tap out the potential of your ability, the harvest is undoubtedly unimaginable!

Zhang Yi immediately can not wait to stand up.

Kneeling on the ground Xu Hao is still waiting for Zhang Yi's reply.

Zhang Yi waved at him and said: "You go back and wait for my news, I will give you an answer in a few days."

Xu Hao was terrified, "But Brother Zhang, even if I can wait, the poison in my body can't wait!"

Zhang Yi gave him a white look: "What are you afraid of?"

I said seven days to poison. Seven days.

I will give you an answer in three days, or in one or two days.

Just wait!"

Xu Hao hair numbness, God knows how bad he felt after the shot.

Now he also felt that his body had become weak.

Xu Hao also wanted to say what, but Zhang Yi fierce eyes let him retreat.

"That...

I'll go back and wait for your answer.

You must contact me!"

Xu Haola this bitter melon face left Zhang Yi.

While Zhang Yi was still inspired, he hurried back to the room and continued to think about how to develop his ability.

In fact, for different Spaces, Zhang Yi has always only used it to store objects.

For its ability, Zhang Yi's understanding is not transparent, just know some of the approximate, enough is enough.

For example, different Spaces can contain objects that exist independently.

And once there is a strong external force, it is difficult to collect.

Let's say a house in a building.

Or dig a patch of snow out of the ground.

All of this is very difficult.

And what is the effect on living organisms, Zhang Yi has only done experiments with a fish.

How it works in people, he doesn't know.

"In the future, when I have time, I must spend my energy to develop my abilities."

I don't know if there are other areas for me to develop besides different space and accurate shooting.

"But for now, I have to think about how I can use my abilities to block the attack methods of Wang Siming's sanctuary."

Zhang Yi touched her chin and looked serious.

"Gas gas, heat spewing flames."

"When they burst out of the trap, they are actively coming at me, so there is no resistance to collect."

In theory, it can be done!"

Zhang Yi's eyes became brighter and brighter, and his thinking slowly opened the door of a new field.

"The inside of my alien space is absolutely still or almost absolutely still."

"So, if I keep the kinetic energy the same, as long as I turn the direction, make the vector change.

I can even return the object that attacked me!"

Zhang Yi excitedly paced back and forth in the room, her eyes bursting with excited light.

After some thought, he left the room and went downstairs to an empty house.

Then he started a fire and tested it.

After the flame burned up, Zhang Yi extended his right hand toward the flame, five fingers open, using his own ability to collect with different Spaces.

Not surprisingly, the process went very smoothly.

Because Zhang Yi uses the rules that exist in different Spaces.

Only in the past, he used to fight with heat weapons, and did not pay attention to the development of powers.

After receiving the flame, Zhang Yi immediately opened an exit from the direction of the flame inside the different space, but it was the original location of the flame in the outer space.

"Whew --"

The flames "rub!"

It was sprayed out.

If it looks from the outside, it looks as if Zhang Yi has performed some kind of magic to bounce back the collected flame!

"Isn't that -- full counterattack?"

Zhang Yi opened her eyes wide and laughed with surprise.

"Ha ha ha, I see!"

Different Spaces can also be used in this way."

"This is the magic of defense!"

At this time, Zhang Yi is like a child who has discovered a new toy.

Man to death is a young man, whose heart has not had a dream of becoming the motherland?

In excitement, Zhang Yi clenched her fist, and her eyes became extremely bright in the light of the firelight.

"Next, I need to master this skill.

Then any attack at a distance, nay, even at close range, will be useless against me!"

"However," Zhang Yi pinched her chin, "if this ability is used on people, what effect will it have?"

Zhang Yi's different space only let live once, that is, a pomfret in the tank.

But the next day, he was dead.

At the beginning, Zhang Yi did not think much, but felt that it was a pity that she could not build a shelter inside.

But now when it comes to combat...

Then we'll have to do it on a living person.

Zhang Yi hugged her arms, and her eyes gradually became indifferent.

Isn't that easy?

That night, Zhang Yi went to a unit building, let them hand over a person out.

He led the man into the empty room and handed him a "knife" rolled up in A4 paper.

The middle of the house is lit by a fire, and Zhang Yi's tall figure is full of oppression under the reflection of the fire.

And the poor fellow held the fake knife, and his body trembled with fear.

Zhang Yi looked at him and smiled and waved.

"Come, come and attack me!

If you can beat me, I will reward you with a piece of bread."

Chapter 150: The Power of Spatial Ability

The man was still frightened by Zhang Yi's words, but he had no way to escape. He had to follow Zhang Yi's command. So, he waved the fake knife in his hand and rushed at Zhang Yi.

Zhang Yi's expression was extremely focused. When the man charged at him, a white light flashed in Zhang Yi's right eye. After a month of use, opening and closing his spatial ability had become instinctive.

In an instant, an invisible and intangible spatial portal appeared in front of Zhang Yi.

As the man swung the fake knife towards Zhang Yi's shoulder, something terrifying happened. His arm vanished into thin air right in front of Zhang Yi, as if it had entered an unseen world.

Panicking, the man tried to stop himself. Zhang Yi grabbed his arm and yanked him into the spatial space.

Zhang Yi's perspective switched to inside the spatial space, where he observed the man he had just brought in. The man was completely still, not even his breathing or heartbeat showed any signs of life.

Zhang Yi frowned slightly, unsure if the man had died upon entering the space or if his time had stopped and he would revive upon leaving.

He quickly released the man from the spatial space. As soon as the man emerged, his face turned pale, and he collapsed, gasping for air.

"Oh? It seems this does affect living beings. If they stay too long, they could die!" Zhang Yi nodded, gaining critical information.

"What did you feel just now?" Zhang Yi asked.

The man, weak and pale, replied, "I felt like I entered a world of white, with mountains of supplies stacked everywhere. It felt like I stayed there for a century; it was terrifying. I might have been hallucinating."

Zhang Yi's pupils shrank.

It turned out that while the body remained still in the spatial space, the consciousness continued. This meant the time in the spatial space wasn't completely static; it was just incredibly slow compared to the outside world.

Staying there for too long would be unbearably painful, potentially causing mental collapse and death.

"So, if a living being stays too long in the spatial space, they might die from mental breakdown? Interesting!"

Zhang Yi gained more insight into his spatial ability.

He gestured for the man to stand up, who trembled as he got to his feet. Zhang Yi tried to pull him back into the spatial space, but it felt as difficult as moving a skyscraper.

"Does this mean it doesn't work on large living beings? Or is there another reason?"

Zhang Yi frowned, approached the man, and pulled a knife from his leg.

Before the man could react, Zhang Yi slashed, severing two of his fingers.

"Ah!!" The man fell to the ground, clutching his wound and screaming.

Unfazed, Zhang Yi used his spatial ability to collect the severed fingers, which worked without issue this time.

"Live bodies don't work, but severed parts do. Why is that?"

Zhang Yi returned the fingers, curious about his spatial ability.

However, he had gathered valuable information.

Looking at the man groaning on the ground, Zhang Yi thought for a moment, then took out a roast chicken from the spatial space and placed it before him.

"Eat this as compensation."

He also gave the man a roll of gauze to bandage his wound.

Despite the pain, the man eagerly grabbed the hot chicken, his eyes filled with tears. He was too hungry, having even gnawed on his leather sofa at home.

Ignoring his pain, he started devouring the chicken.

Zhang Yi patiently waited by the fire.

Once the man finished eating, Zhang Yi said, "Now let's continue. This time, throw something at me."

Instead of resenting Zhang Yi, the man seemed grateful and eagerly nodded. After bandaging his wound, he continued to assist Zhang Yi in his experiments.

A few hours later, Zhang Yi had all the experimental data he needed and a deeper understanding of his spatial ability.

First, there were limitations on collecting materials; it couldn't collect objects with strong external forces and didn't work on living beings.

Second, he could open a portal connecting the real world and the spatial space. While he hadn't figured out an offensive use, he could transfer physical attacks and redirect them.

These insights were a treasure trove for Zhang Yi.

"Now I know how to deal with Wang Siming's sanctuary."

His last bit of concern vanished. Looking at the man who helped him, Zhang Yi sincerely said, "Thank you for your help."

Before the man could respond, Zhang Yi's knife swiftly cut his throat.

"Spurt!"

Blood splattered, and the man fell. Fear flashed in his eyes before giving way to relief. He even died with a smile, glad to escape the cruel world, at least after eating a delicious roast chicken.

For the next two days, Zhang Yi brought someone in daily to continue his experiments and practice his new skills, ensuring he could use them seamlessly for his safety in upcoming actions. Each person who assisted him got a full meal before being killed, as Zhang Yi couldn't risk anyone learning about his abilities.

Three days passed quickly.

Zhang Yi had mastered his skills and called Xu Hao, "We can go now!"

Xu Hao looked much older these days, his face pale, lips purple, and deep dark circles under his eyes, even though he wasn't actually poisoned.

"Brother Zhang, I feel like I'm dying."

Zhang Yi chuckled internally. These days, he had provided food for Xu Hao, and logically, Xu Hao had been living easier than before.

Pretending to think, Zhang Yi fetched a vial of saline solution and said, "I can give you an injection to temporarily alleviate your symptoms."

Xu Hao, seeing hope, quickly bared his arm.

"Give me the shot!"

Zhang Yi injected the saline and calmly said, "This will ease your symptoms for at most five days, but you'll still die from the poison. So, you'd better hope this mission succeeds, or neither of us will survive."

Feeling the saline's effect, Xu Hao's spirits lifted.

"Brother Zhang, I won't gamble with my life. This time, I'm fully committed to following you!"