

Ice Age 261

Chapter 261: Secret Discovered

While Zhang Yi was strategically preparing for a prolonged battle, Shen Hong and Yu Lang were retreating in disgrace with the remaining soldiers. They had started with thirty men, but now nearly half were dead, leaving only eighteen! The worst part was that they hadn't even managed to touch a hair on the enemy's head. Despite concentrating all their firepower, they couldn't even scratch the shelter's walls.

The team was dejected, and Shen Hong, their leader, was deeply frustrated, unsure of how to report this to West Hill Base. Yu Lang walked over, patting his shoulder. "We need to report this to the base immediately. This is an enemy beyond our capabilities."

Shen Hong felt bitter, unable to find words; his heart was filled with sorrow and guilt. Yu Lang, seeing his struggle, offered, "If you don't know what to say, I can report it for you. The mission is the priority."

Shen Hong nodded. Yu Lang immediately pulled out the communication device to report the mission's outcome to West Hill Base. Since the base was underground, direct communication between individuals was impossible; only the base's Information Department could receive the messages.

The moment the report came in, the Information Minister, Geng Yilin, quickly forwarded it to the leader, Chen Xinian. The report first passed through the hands of Chen's secretary, Ge Rou, who took a quick look and immediately turned pale.

"Twelve soldiers dead!" she exclaimed. West Hill Base had only about five hundred soldiers, mostly elite troops and special police officers from before the apocalypse. Each death was an irreplaceable loss. Losing twelve soldiers in one mission was sure to enrage Chen Xinian.

But what was even more alarming was Yu Lang's report, which mentioned a terrifying enemy: an impenetrable fortress immune to gunfire and a powerful Superhuman. This had become a thorn within West Hill Base's territory, severely undermining their control over the surrounding area.

Ge Rou dared not delay and immediately reported the news to Chen Xinian. After reading the report, Chen's face remained expressionless. However, he read the document three times before slowly putting it down in front of him.

Ge Rou was startled. Having been Chen Xinian's secretary for five years, she knew his temperament and habits well. She sensed that Chen's calm exterior was masking deep turmoil.

Ge Rou stepped forward and said, "Leaders Shen Hong and Yu Lang failed in their mission, disappointing both you and the organization. I suggest punishing them severely as a warning to others!"

Shen Hong and Yu Lang's performance was abysmal. They were sent to rescue Liu Ziyang and Xie Huanhuan. Even if they failed, they were expected to bring back useful intelligence. But now, all they had managed was to find the place where the attack on Liu Ziyang and Xie Huanhuan had occurred. Worse, they had lost a significant number of soldiers with little to show for it.

Had West Hill Base not been short on manpower, Chen Xinian would have considered executing both of them.

Chen Xinian glanced at Ge Rou, and that single look made her feel as if she had fallen into an ice pit. He retracted his gaze and said calmly, "Encountering a formidable enemy can't be entirely blamed on them. We need every capable person we have right now. We'll address this later."

"However, I am quite intrigued by that mysterious shelter and its owner. Do we have any intelligence on that?"

Intelligence was key. Knowing the enemy was crucial to making any strategic decision. Chen Xinian rarely left West Hill Base, and without sufficient information, he couldn't make a move.

Ge Rou, competent beyond her appearance, had come prepared. As soon as Chen Xinian asked, she pulled out a tablet and handed it over. On the screen was a map of Tianhai City, zoomed in on the area around West Hill Base.

"According to Shen Hong and Yu Lang's report, the shelter is located in Cloud Manor by the Lu River. Based on previous intelligence, I suspect the person behind it is likely a man named Zhang Yi."

"As for the shelter itself, I've traced its origins—it was built ten years ago by Wang Siming. At the time, it was largely ignored, but our engineers now estimate that its defensive capabilities could rival our own West Hill Base."

Chen Xinian furrowed his brow. "Zhang Yi? Who is that?"

Given his many responsibilities, Chen Xinian couldn't recall such an ordinary name.

Ge Rou reminded him, "He's the man suspected of having access to the missing goods from the Walmart warehouse."

Worried Chen Xinian might not remember, she added, "The lowly warehouse supervisor."

At this, Chen Xinian's memory stirred.

"Him? Well, that does make sense." He frowned, slightly surprised. "An inconspicuous nobody with no education or background, now a big problem just because of some mutant abilities. Hah, what luck this guy has."

Chen Xinian now remembered Zhang Yi but still didn't see him as a significant threat. In his eyes, Zhang Yi was just a small-time figure who had gotten lucky.

To Chen Xinian, a small person gaining power wouldn't know how to wield it properly and would ultimately be undone by it. This was in stark contrast to someone like him, born of a prominent family and rooted deeply in power.

Chen Xinian stood up and picked up the report again, studying it closely. Several clues were connecting in his mind, a revelation on the verge of coming together.

"Walmart warehouse supervisor—"

"Superhuman—"

"An ability that ignores bullets—"

"Powers... Superhuman..."

Chen Xinian pondered for a good ten minutes before suddenly realizing where the problem lay.

"If he were just a regular awakened individual, upon encountering Xie Huanhuan and Liu Ziyang, he should have chosen to flatter them, avoid confrontation, or even plead to join West Hill Base."

"After all, in an environment where resources are scarce, it's nearly impossible for a person to survive alone."

"But instead, he not only refused to submit but took the risk of offending West Hill Base to kill Xie Huanhuan and Liu Ziyang."

"This can only mean one thing: he has a secret that absolutely cannot be discovered—something that Xie Huanhuan and Liu Ziyang might have stumbled upon."

A gleam flashed in Chen Xinian's eyes. He slammed the table, exclaiming, "In the apocalypse, what's the biggest secret anyone could have? It's resources!"

"In other words, the massive amount of missing goods from Walmart—they must be in his possession, hidden by his special ability!"

Chapter 262: ACE Special Forces

After analyzing the recent intelligence, Chen Xinian concluded that Zhang Yi was in possession of billions worth of goods from Walmart. He was so excited by this revelation that he couldn't sit still, pacing back and forth in his room.

"It must be like this; it's the only explanation for all his actions," he mused. "If that's the case, we must capture Zhang Yi!"

Ge Rou, standing nearby, was equally shocked and delighted upon hearing the news. "Congratulations, Leader! We've found another massive cache of resources for West Hill Base!"

Chen Xinian nodded, pleased. This accomplishment would certainly add to his legacy.

"Our base's supplies are dwindling, especially food and energy, which are in a state of net depletion with no effective replenishment. But if we can secure the goods from the world's largest warehouse, we can ensure at least ten years of abundant resources!"

Chen Xinian tossed the documents onto his desk and decisively ordered, "Bring Ling Feng to me!"

Soon, Ling Feng, the captain of the ACE Special Forces, arrived at Chen Xinian's office. Chen Xinian gave him a direct order: breach Zhang Yi's shelter at any cost and capture Zhang Yi alive.

"If you can take that shelter, you're authorized to request any resources you need from the base!" Chen Xinian declared generously.

Ling Feng, adhering to his military discipline, didn't question the reasoning behind the order. For him, obeying commands was his duty, and orders from the leader were absolute.

"Yes, sir. I guarantee the mission will be completed!" Ling Feng's expression was as steely as iron, showing no doubt that he could fulfill any task given to him.

Ge Rou, trying to be helpful, added, "It's said that shelter was built for ten billion dollars—extremely robust. If you need assistance breaching it, I can arrange for our engineers and demolition experts to help."

"Our base is never short on weapons!" she assured.

Ling Feng nodded, a hint of battle hunger glinting in his eyes. It had been too long since he had faced a worthy opponent, and now, finally, someone was interesting enough for him to stretch his skills.

After leaving Chen Xinian's office, Ling Feng immediately began preparing for the upcoming assault. Chen Xinian leaned back in his chair, rubbing his forehead.

"This battle is one we must win! Our base's resources will only last for another six months. If we can't secure victory, we'll have to 'optimize' our internal personnel or wage war on other shelters to alleviate internal pressure."

Ge Rou bowed slightly, offering comfort. "Don't worry, Leader. Zhang Yi is just a small fry. He's not some superhuman."

"We will win," she assured. "By the way, what would you like for lunch? You've been working so hard lately, and you seem a bit tired. Should I ask the kitchen to make you a ginseng chicken soup?"

Chen Xinian nodded. "Sure, just something simple."

Ge Rou smiled, pulling out her communicator to inform the kitchen that the leader wanted chicken for lunch. Suddenly, Chen Xinian's eyes lit up with inspiration. "Ge, I just had another idea regarding the food shortage problem. Let's see if it's feasible."

Ge Rou's heart sank a little. Every time Chen Xinian had a bright idea, it meant a lot of work for the team, regardless of whether the plan would work. For instance, the idea to process corpses into high-protein food was one of Chen Xinian's spur-of-the-moment decisions.

However, Ge Rou still put on a cheerful and admiring face. "Leader, what brilliant idea have you thought of this time? Please, do tell."

Chen Xinian smiled confidently. "The base is short on food, right? Well, I think there's room for improvement."

"Look, we've already addressed the issue of food by breeding American cockroaches and reusing human remains. We've managed to feed many people that way."

"We need to keep pushing forward and think about other potential resources that are being wasted."

"For example, can feces be reused? Digestion isn't a perfect process, after all."

Ge Rou felt a wave of nausea but managed to swallow it back. She maintained her admiring smile, clapping her hands in approval. "Leader, that's an absolutely fantastic suggestion! I can't believe we didn't think of it sooner."

"I'll contact the experts in the biological lab immediately to come up with a plan on how to turn waste into high-quality food."

Chen Xinian laughed heartily. "Yes, it's just an idea. Check its feasibility."

Ge Rou continued to flatter him. "Your insight is truly unparalleled, Leader. This idea could greatly ease our food supply issues. It's sure to work!"

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Meanwhile, Ling Feng, having received his orders, immediately mobilized the combat department to prepare for the upcoming assault. He ordered Shen Hong, Yu Lang, and their troops to set up a temporary base near the shelter and conduct a detailed reconnaissance of the area, paving the way for the main force's arrival.

Unsurprisingly, they chose Xu Family Town as their staging ground. The location had ample food, suitable housing, and was close to Cloud Manor.

Ling Feng then summoned the team leaders among the Superhumans, instructing them to stay alert and ready for combat at any moment.

"Our opponent this time is also a Superhuman, and based on the intel, he's incredibly powerful. He defeated both Xie Huanhuan and Liu Ziyang, and Shen Hong's team lost over a dozen men. We cannot afford to underestimate him!"

In the corner, Liang Yue listened to Ling Feng's battle plans, her mind suddenly stirring.

Zhang Yi?

Wasn't that the man who had barged into Tianqing Academy and taken Yang Xinxin?

Liang Yue remembered that Zhang Yi was accompanied by two other Superhumans, but Ling Feng hadn't mentioned this detail. The difference in combat effectiveness between facing one Superhuman versus three was significant.

Liang Yue's brow furrowed slightly, her eyes flashing with a peculiar light. She had no intention of sharing this crucial information with Ling Feng. She had no desire to stay in West Hill Base any longer. However, leaving was easier said than done; finding a suitable place to live afterward was another challenge altogether.

A bold idea suddenly crossed Liang Yue's mind. Perhaps she could contact Zhang Yi and seek his help. After all, Yang Xinxin was her student, and Liang Yue believed their connection might provide a way to negotiate with Zhang Yi.

Taking a deep breath, she approached Ling Feng and said, "Captain, I request to join the team on this mission!"

Chapter 263: Internal Affairs

Ling Feng was still organizing the deployment of personnel. After all, they couldn't bring all their forces out; a significant portion had to stay behind to protect the base. Staying behind meant no risk, but going out meant facing possible death. Zhang Yi had killed Xie Huanhuan and Liu Ziyang, and he could just as easily kill them too.

Liang Yue's unexpected request to join the mission drew many eyes toward her, including Ling Feng, who was somewhat surprised. Liang Yue was new, had a rather distant relationship with others, and rarely interacted with her peers.

Ling Feng cautioned, "Going out isn't child's play—it's a life-and-death situation. The outside environment is nowhere near as comfortable as the base. Are you really prepared for that?"

Liang Yue nodded slowly but firmly. "I've only just arrived at the base and haven't earned any merit, yet I enjoy high treatment here. I want a chance to prove myself!"

Ling Feng nodded approvingly. "Alright, you'll come with us on this mission!"

He then pointed at two other soldiers. "Zheng Xuerong, Shi Dayong, you two will also join us!"

Both stood up and saluted. "Yes, Captain!"

"Captain, when do we depart?" they asked eagerly, their eyes blazing with anticipation. They were determined to destroy Zhang Yi's fortress and avenge Xie Huanhuan and Liu Ziyang, knowing that the two likely hadn't survived.

But Ling Feng calmed their excitement. "Not yet! That place is an incredibly sturdy fortress. Shen Hong and Yu Lang have already tried using regular explosives and heavy snipers, and they barely left a mark."

"I've ordered Shen Hong's team to gather intelligence and have our engineers and demolition experts assess the situation. We must be fully prepared before we proceed!"

Even though everyone present was a Superhuman, Ling Feng didn't dare to underestimate the task ahead. Superhumans were not invincible and with the exception of someone like Zhang Yi, who possessed spatial abilities, even other Superhumans had to be cautious around modern weaponry.

Ling Feng's team soon received new orders from Shen Hong and Yu Lang's squad. They were instructed not to return yet but to move to Xu Family Town on the opposite side of the river, where they would continue to gather intelligence and await the main force.

When Shen Hong received the orders, he immediately led his team to Xu Family Town. The arrival of more than a dozen heavily armed soldiers immediately caught the entire town's attention. The town's mayor, Xu Dongtang, calmly stepped forward to greet them in his official capacity.

"Gentlemen, are you from West Hill Base?" Xu Dongtang asked.

Shen Hong nodded. "Yes, we're here on a mission and will be staying in your town temporarily."

Xu Dongtang nodded eagerly. "We're honored to have you here. It's a privilege for Xudong Village!"

Other village residents had also wanted to curry favor with the soldiers but didn't dare challenge Xu Dongtang's authority, as he wielded the most power. Instead, they returned to their homes and brought out whatever they could to welcome the soldiers.

The soldiers were baffled by the villagers' hospitality. They couldn't understand why these people were so enthusiastic, but it spared them the trouble of using force, which was a relief.

Their arrival caused quite a stir, enough to catch Fatty Xu's attention. Ever since Zhang Yi's warning, he had been on edge, worried that West Hill Base would eventually involve him and the whole village. And now, his worst fears had come true.

Seeing the armed soldiers mingling with his villagers and relatives, Fatty Xu's heart twisted painfully as if stretched taut and tied in a tight knot. He slumped to the floor, lamenting, "Oh heavens! You're asking for trouble—why bring this disaster upon us?"

Fatty Xu couldn't understand Xu Dongtang's eagerness to align with West Hill Base. All he knew was that these soldiers' presence would bring great calamity to Xudong Village. If Zhang Yi found out they were hosting West Hill soldiers, his ruthless nature would not spare them!

After much hesitation, Fatty Xu made the smartest decision he could think of—contact Zhang Yi. Even if Zhang Yi sought retribution later, this might at least save his own skin.

Soon, the call connected. Zhang Yi's steady voice came through, "Hello."

Fatty Xu, sitting on the floor and clutching his phone, whispered nervously, "Boss, we... we've got a problem!"

In the shelter, Zhang Yi frowned slightly. As he suspected, it was related to West Hill Base. Since they could locate his shelter, there was no reason for them to overlook Xu Family Town, such an obvious target.

"Did West Hill Base people show up at your place?"

"Boss, you're spot on! A squad of soldiers just arrived in our village."

Zhang Yi wasn't surprised. Given the timing, it was likely the group he had driven away. His tone grew serious.

"Fatty Xu, you'd better be extra careful!"

"I've warned you before; these people aren't part of any official organization. Tianhai City is already divided among various factions, so they aren't bound by morals or laws!"

"Watch out for them raiding your village's food, and keep an even closer eye on your own safety!"

Fatty Xu swallowed hard, his fear evident. "Don't worry, Boss. If I need to run, they won't catch me easily." His abilities made him quite adept at self-preservation.

"They're now being treated as honored guests. Every household welcomes them warmly. No one listens to anything I say."

Zhang Yi chuckled softly. "Then don't bother with them. It's pointless to advise those who are determined to meet their fate. Just protect yourself and the people who matter to you."

"But remember this, Fatty," Zhang Yi's voice turned cold. "I've always treated you as a brother and valued you greatly. But if you ever betray me, you know what will happen."

Fatty Xu, ever the coward, wasn't even aware of his own potential strength. His power to manipulate ice and snow, if fully developed, could become terrifying. Zhang Yi didn't want to lose such a capable subordinate, but if Fatty Xu were to betray him, he wouldn't hesitate to end him.

Fatty Xu quickly reassured him, "Boss, you can count on me! I'm loyal to you!"

Zhang Yi nodded. "Good."

He was about to suggest that Fatty Xu come to the shelter to avoid danger, but an idea suddenly struck him, and he changed his mind.

"Stay in the village for now, Fatty. I need someone there to keep an eye on things and keep me updated on their movements."

Chapter 264: Hidden Line

West Hill Base was more than fifty kilometers from Cloud Manor. In the icy and snowy conditions, it wasn't feasible to make such long journeys repeatedly. If they wanted to sustain a long-term assault on Zhang Yi, they needed a nearby base of operations, and Xu Family Town was the obvious choice. It had free labor, and the villagers' stored supplies were readily available for their use.

However, just as West Hill Base planned to exploit the town, Zhang Yi had similar ideas. Instead of bringing Fatty Xu to the shelter, Zhang Yi decided to let him stay and act as his undercover agent to gather information on the enemy's intentions.

Initially, Fatty Xu was reluctant. "Boss, I'm not cut out for undercover work. Those soldiers are scary as hell. Just seeing them freaks me out."

Zhang Yi was speechless at Fatty Xu's reaction. Despite his powerful combat abilities, which made slaughtering ordinary soldiers laughably easy, Fatty Xu was just too timid.

"Don't worry. I don't need you to confront them directly. All I need is for you to quietly gather intelligence."

Fatty Xu's timid nature made him vulnerable in direct confrontations, and Zhang Yi didn't want to get him killed. Zhang Yi had grown fond of this chubby guy, who was at least adorably naïve.

"Complete this task, and I won't skimp on your reward," Zhang Yi promised.

Hearing he wouldn't have to fight, Fatty Xu relaxed significantly. "That's a relief! As long as I don't have to fight, I'm on board."

As Zhang Yi spoke on the phone, he walked into a game collection room on the second floor—one of the many left behind by Wang Siming. The 80-square-meter room was filled with rare figurines, many of which were limited to less than ten sets worldwide, some even out of production. Zhang Yi picked up a golden Saint Seiya figurine and snapped a picture, sending it to Fatty Xu.

"If we can resolve this situation, I'll give you the complete set of Golden Zodiac figurines made of pure gold!"

Fatty Xu's eyes nearly popped out when he saw the picture Zhang Yi sent.

"This... This is the Golden Zodiac figurine set from 2035! Made of pure gold, with only five sets released globally."

"Boss, I'll make sure this job is done perfectly!" Fatty Xu's chubby face beamed with excitement. In the past, just one of these could fetch over three million yuan, let alone the whole set. It was beyond his wildest dreams!

For a die-hard otaku like Fatty Xu, happiness was that simple.

Zhang Yi hung up the phone, feeling slightly disappointed that he couldn't convince Fatty Xu to come to the shelter. With Fatty Xu's abilities, dealing with West Hill Base would have been much easier. However, Fatty Xu had his family, and Zhang Yi didn't want to force him, fearing that coercion might backfire. Zhang Yi did not want anyone with divided loyalties in his shelter.

"No worries. Leaving you there might be the better option," Zhang Yi thought. "But if you think you can coexist peacefully with those West Hill Base soldiers, you're in for a rude awakening."

Zhang Yi shook his head, lamenting the naivety of the people in Xu Family Town. They were treating West Hill Base as if it were a legitimate government organization. Zhang Yi understood, though; not everyone had access to the kind of high-level information he did. The ordinary people of China were used to being governed.

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On the other side, after finishing his conversation with Zhang Yi, Fatty Xu knew he couldn't just sit back any longer. Following Zhang Yi's instructions and providing sufficient intelligence was the only way to ensure he and the villagers wouldn't face retribution later.

After much thought, Fatty Xu decided to talk to Xu Dongtang. He put on his knitted hat and stepped outside. Just as he was about to head toward Xu Dongtang's house, he spotted a familiar figure running toward him from a distance.

"Xu Lili!" Fatty Xu's heart skipped a beat, and his face lit up with joy. She was the first young woman in five years to greet him on her own. From that moment, she had captured his heart completely.

"Brother Chunlei!" Xu Lili cheerfully ran up to him, catching her breath before flashing a bright smile.

"Lili, what are you doing out here? It's freezing. Shouldn't you stay warm at home?" Fatty Xu asked with concern.

Xu Lili glanced toward Xu Dongtang's house and said, "Grandpa said every household should contribute food for the soldiers. My parents took some cured meat over, and I came by to bring you something."

She pulled a pair of cotton gloves from her pocket and handed them to Fatty Xu.

"I made these myself!" Xu Lili said shyly.

Fatty Xu was touched. The gloves were rather ugly and clearly handmade, but the thought of this girl doing something so thoughtful for him filled his heart with warmth.

"She really does love me!" Fatty Xu thought happily.

"Thank you, Lili! You're so good to me," he said with a silly grin.

Xu Lili smiled sweetly. "As long as you like them! Try them on."

Fatty Xu put on the gloves. Though they were a bit tight, they made his heart feel warm.

"Brother Chunlei, do you think these soldiers coming to our village is a good thing or a bad thing?" Xu Lili asked, her brow suddenly furrowing.

Fatty Xu's heart skipped a beat. "Lili, why are you asking that?"

Xu Lili sighed. "These days, life is hard for everyone. But before the soldiers came, we could at least rely on our stored food and weren't starving."

"But now that they're here, we have to feed all of them. A meal or two is fine, but I'm afraid they'll..."

Xu Lili trailed off, glancing around cautiously. The villagers feared the soldiers would stay for good—and worse, that they would start seizing food by force. After all, the soldiers had guns.

Seeing Xu Lili's worried expression, Fatty Xu's protective instincts flared. He looked at her, his eyes firm. "Lili, don't worry! No matter what happens, I will protect you!"

Xu Lili beamed. "Thank you, Brother Chunlei! I knew you were a good man. And you'll protect my parents, too, right?"

"Of course! I won't let anyone hurt you or your parents," Fatty Xu promised, thinking to himself: Your parents will be mine too one day, so of course, I'll protect them.

Chapter 265: Formidable Enemy

After receiving Fatty Xu's promise, Xu Lili was overjoyed and thanked him before heading back home. Watching her leave, Fatty Xu clenched his fists and vowed, "I must protect this home!"

Gathering his courage, he went to find Xu Dongtang, who was busy arranging for the villagers to serve the soldiers from West Hill Base. Not only did he provide accommodations, but he also made every household bring out their food supplies to prepare meals for the soldiers. Xu Dongtang's smug expression made him look like a lackey from a century ago, eagerly currying favor with the invaders.

But Xu Dongtang's gains weren't limited to his own village; he had exploited the entire Xu Family Town, including five or six nearby villages. Other village chiefs, trying to show loyalty to West Hill Base, even increased their contributions to food and supplies.

When Fatty Xu arrived, he found Xu Dongtang's home bustling with activity. Xu Dongtang stood proudly outside his house, his demeanor like that of a father whose son had just been crowned top scholar.

Fatty Xu took several deep breaths to muster his courage. He walked up to Xu Dongtang and called out, "Grandpa!"

Seeing Fatty Xu, Xu Dongtang's expression changed slightly. "What are you doing here?" he scolded, frowning. Fatty Xu was Xudong Village's secret weapon, and Xu Dongtang had no intention of revealing his existence to West Hill Base just yet. He was worried that if West Hill Base discovered Fatty Xu's talents, they would take him away, leaving the village without its top asset.

"Come with me!" Xu Dongtang pulled Fatty Xu aside to a secluded spot and said sternly, "Your identity as a Superhuman is Xudong Village's secret. No one else can know! Stay home and wait for my orders."

Fatty Xu, however, chuckled. "Grandpa, do you really think you can keep this a secret? You've already dragged the whole of Xu Family Town into this mess. Even if you don't tell, other villagers might."

"The fact that I'm a Superhuman will be exposed sooner or later. Why not just admit it openly?"

Xu Dongtang's face hardened, and after a moment of silence, he stared at Fatty Xu. "Chunlei, you've grown wings and have your own ideas now, huh?"

Fatty Xu said nothing but stared back. Xu Dongtang sighed and continued, "It's fine if you want to climb higher, but don't forget you're part of the Xu family!"

Fatty Xu replied, "Grandpa, I don't want much. I just want to share some of the burdens. At the very least, let me into the inner circle of the family. For example, when hosting higher-ups, you didn't even inform me. It's like I'm an outsider. That hurts, you know!"

Initially, Fatty Xu felt nervous bargaining with Xu Dongtang; years of subservience to his elders had drained him of the courage to speak up. But once he started talking, he realized it wasn't as difficult as he had feared. More importantly, he noticed that Xu Dongtang seemed afraid—he was backing down!

This realization boosted Fatty Xu's confidence. These family elders who bowed and scraped before West Hill soldiers—how could he, a Superhuman, be any less?

Seeing Xu Dongtang's hesitant expression, Fatty Xu stepped forward. "Even if you want to keep me hidden, West Hill Base will eventually find out about me. If they think you're hiding things, it won't end well. Let me meet them. It'll show your sincerity."

To gather intelligence on West Hill Base, Fatty Xu knew he had to get close to the soldiers.

Xu Dongtang hesitated for a long time, finally saying, "Once they know what you can do, they might take you back with them! Chunlei, my good grandson, the Xu family needs you!"

Fatty Xu's vanity was greatly satisfied. For Xu Dongtang, the village chief, to speak to him so respectfully was something he never would have imagined in the past.

"Don't worry, Grandpa. I won't leave the Xu family," Fatty Xu reassured him. His beloved Lili was here; he couldn't bear to leave.

Xu Dongtang realized that Fatty Xu's mindset had changed; he was no longer as easy to control. Reluctantly, he said, "Alright, I'll introduce you to the officers. But remember your promise: you can't leave with them."

Fatty Xu readily agreed.

Xu Dongtang grudgingly led Fatty Xu to meet Shen Hong and Yu Lang's group. At that moment, they were resting inside a snow hut. A fire burned in the center, and the soldiers were warming themselves while eating.

When they saw Xu Dongtang enter with a chubby man, the soldiers all turned to look.

Xu Dongtang greeted them with a fawning smile. "Officers, I hope you find the food we prepared to your satisfaction?"

Shen Hong nodded. "Not bad."

Yu Lang chuckled, "Thanks a lot, old man!" He pointed to Fatty Xu. "Who's this?"

From the moment Fatty Xu entered, he remembered his mission to gather intelligence for Zhang Yi, so he discreetly observed everyone present. His peculiar gaze naturally caught Yu Lang's attention.

Xu Dongtang introduced him with a proud smile. "This is my grandson, Xu Chunlei. He's a Superhuman. I wanted to introduce him to you all."

Hearing that Fatty Xu was a Superhuman, the soldiers immediately stopped what they were doing and stared at him in surprise. Superhumans were incredibly rare, as most mutations led to death, with only a few resulting in powerful abilities. Even West Hill Base didn't have many natural Superhumans.

Although all the soldiers present were highly trained, not a single one of them was a natural Superhuman. Both Shen Hong and Yu Lang had become modified Superhumans, but only after paying a heavy price.

When they heard Fatty Xu was a Superhuman, their eyes filled with curiosity, envy, and even jealousy.

Shen Hong immediately stood up and approached Fatty Xu. "You're a Superhuman? What's your ability?"

Hoping to earn the soldiers' trust, Fatty Xu replied, "I can control ice and snow. You see, all these snow huts in Xudong Village were built by me!"

As he spoke, he lightly waved his right hand, causing the snow on the ground to float up and form a snowball in his palm.

Shen Hong and the others widened their eyes, completely convinced. Shen Hong, especially, was so excited that he grabbed Fatty Xu's shoulder and shook it vigorously.

"Good, good, good! Who would've thought such talent would be hiding in this little village!"

Finding a Superhuman was a huge achievement! With this discovery, the failure of their previous mission could be offset. Shen Hong couldn't be happier.

Not only Shen Hong but all the soldiers warmly invited Fatty Xu to join them for dinner, drinking, and chatting. Natural-born Superhumans were treated as team captains in the ACE Special Forces as soon as they joined West Hill Base. Everyone wanted to be on good terms with Fatty Xu, their potential future leader.

"Old Xu, go get more food and drinks; today, we're going to have a great time with this brother!" Shen Hong waved at Xu Dongtang, ordering him to prepare more provisions.

Xu Dongtang's face turned awkward. Seeing the soldiers, who treated him, the town chief, with indifference, show such enthusiasm for his nerdy grandson was a bitter pill to swallow. But he didn't dare protest and could only smile and nod in agreement.

Fatty Xu never expected the soldiers to be so welcoming. It wasn't until he started chatting with them that he understood why. People like him were given special treatment at West Hill Base.

Shen Hong explained, "Natural Superhumans have limitless potential. Take our captain, for example. He wasn't all that much stronger than us initially, but after awakening his powers, he's grown leaps and bounds. Now, he can single-handedly take on an entire company."

Shen Hong's tone was full of envy as he patted Fatty Xu on the shoulder. "Brother, when you make it big, don't forget about us!"

Fatty Xu laughed. "Of course, of course!"

As they drank and talked, Fatty Xu carefully probed for information about West Hill Base. Shen Hong and the others, unaware of Fatty Xu's secret dealings with Zhang Yi, only knew of the animosity between Xudong Village and Zhang Yi. They assumed that the entire village held a deep-seated grudge against Zhang Yi, and thus, they had no suspicion of Fatty Xu. They openly shared some light yet valuable information.

"That Zhang Yi is really tough to deal with! Our advance team wasn't adequately prepared and paid a heavy price," Shen Hong admitted. "But don't worry, Brother. West Hill Base has plenty of soldiers and talent. Taking down his little shelter will be a piece of cake!"

Fatty Xu nodded, praising them. "That's right! You guys are professional soldiers; how could an ordinary man like him compare?"

Shen Hong agreed. "An individual's strength can't compete with a powerful base. It's impossible."

"The problem is the harsh winter. A lot of our heavy weapons are unusable in this weather. Otherwise, we'd have leveled his shelter in minutes!"

Fatty Xu poured more wine for Shen Hong and casually asked, "So when is your main force arriving? I can't wait to see you take down Zhang Yi!"

"That Zhang Yi deserves to be skinned alive! He's caused over a hundred deaths in our village. I can't wait to eat his flesh!" Fatty Xu declared dramatically.

Shen Hong swirled his wine glass, laughing confidently. "Brother Xu, don't rush. His fortress is sturdy, and even blowing it up takes time to prepare."

"Oh? Isn't it just a matter of using more explosives?" Fatty Xu asked curiously.

Yu Lang, sitting nearby, explained, "It's not that simple! Executing a pinpoint demolition requires a detailed survey of the terrain. We then upload the data to our engineers and demolition experts. They analyze it to find the optimal blast points and the amount of explosives needed to achieve the best effect."

"If we use too much or too little, it could ruin the operation."

Fatty Xu nodded thoughtfully. "Oh, so that's how it works! That's some serious expertise."

He remembered everything they said. After finishing the meal, he immediately relayed all this intelligence to Zhang Yi.

Upon hearing the information, Zhang Yi couldn't help but look at Fatty Xu with newfound respect. The chubby guy was learning to be cunning, perhaps due to the influence of love. Something like the power of love, as ridiculous as it sounded.

"I see. Thanks for the intel."

"But Fatty, are you sure you don't want to join West Hill Base? Following me might not be the best choice," Zhang Yi said teasingly.

Fatty Xu smiled confidently. "Boss, I trust my instincts."

Though he hadn't known Zhang Yi long, Fatty Xu could tell that Zhang Yi was honest with him. In contrast, the soldiers from West Hill Base always made him uneasy, especially the way they looked at the villagers—as if they were livestock. It made him uncomfortable.

Fatty Xu felt that while Zhang Yi might not be a noble person, he was at least genuine, which made him more trustworthy than the mysterious West Hill Base.

"You won't regret your choice today, Fatty!" Zhang Yi chuckled.

If Fatty Xu ever betrayed him, Zhang Yi wouldn't be surprised. However, if Fatty Xu chose to stay loyal, Zhang Yi would ensure that he was well-rewarded.

"Keep observing them. Your intel is crucial right now. Report any changes immediately."

"Yes, Boss!"

After hanging up, Zhang Yi began strategizing based on the new information. "Demolition really is their best option against me."

"I'm sure West Hill Base has enough explosives to flatten ten shelters. But to carry out the demolition, they need to get close and plant the charges. And that's where I have the upper hand. This is my turf!"

Zhang Yi wasn't overly concerned. Given the shelter's strength, it would take a massive amount of explosives to breach it. Plus, he could always retreat underground and abandon the above-ground

structure. The three underground levels were even more robust, impervious to bombs and even missile strikes.

After considering it, Zhang Yi made a decision. He called all the women in the shelter together and briefed them on the situation.

"West Hill Base will attack soon. For safety, we're temporarily abandoning the top two floors and moving everyone underground."

The women looked tense at the news.

"But don't worry, I'm here!" Zhang Yi reassured them with a smile. "I'm well aware of West Hill Base's capabilities. They can't threaten our safety!"

With the vast amount of information he had gathered, Zhang Yi had already formed a rough assessment of West Hill Base. Tianhai City had no major military garrisons, and the number of soldiers was limited, so West Hill Base's armed forces couldn't be overly powerful. This was evident from the performance of their rescue team.

Additionally, the extreme cold and heavy snowfall had neutralized their greatest advantage—heavy firepower—significantly weakening their combat effectiveness. Now, they had only numbers and a surplus of weapons and equipment.

But Zhang Yi already had plans to counter them.

Chapter 267: Combat Suit

Seeing Zhang Yi's confident demeanor, the women in the shelter felt much more at ease. Together, they began packing up the items from the top two floors. With Zhang Yi's spatial storage ability, the process was swift. They quickly cleaned up new rooms in the underground levels and moved everything down.

Zhou Ke'er and Yang Siya handled the cleaning and organizing, while Yang Xinxin and Lu Keran continued with their respective tasks as instructed by Zhang Yi. Zhang Yi called Yang Xinxin over to check on the progress of hacking into West Hill Base's network.

Yang Xinxin candidly admitted, "Their network security is excellent. I've tried many times to infiltrate, but they blocked every attempt."

Zhang Yi wasn't surprised by this. "After all, they're well-prepared, with advanced network equipment and plenty of experts."

West Hill Base housed the top figures from Tianhai City. Zhang Yi didn't comment on their morals, but their brains and foresight were far superior to those of ordinary people. The base had experts in every field, making it difficult even for a top hacker like Yang Xinxin to break through their defenses.

However, Yang Xinxin felt slightly underestimated and bit her lip in frustration. "Zhang Yi, it's not that I'm any worse than their people; it's just that I lack the resources. They're using an internal LAN. Unless I can connect to their intranet or plant a Trojan virus on their devices, it's nearly impossible to hack them!"

Seeing her aggrieved expression, Zhang Yi quickly reassured her with a smile. "I wasn't blaming you. Just focus on keeping our network secure. If you can counter-hack them, great; if not, it's no big deal."

Zhang Yi had no immediate plans to launch a counterattack. His priority was to protect the shelter's safety. As for infiltrating West Hill Base's network or planting viruses, those were mere fantasies for now—he had no feasible way to accomplish them.

Yang Xinxin puffed out her small chest. "Don't worry! With me here, no one can breach the shelter's network."

Yang Xinxin had installed a firewall for the shelter's network, filtering all incoming and outgoing data. Additionally, she personally monitored the network, ensuring it remained impervious to outside intrusions.

Leaving the network control room, Zhang Yi headed over to Lu Keran's workshop. "Keran, I have a question for you."

Lu Keran set aside her work and quickly pulled up a chair for Zhang Yi. She wiped the sweat from her forehead, and although she wore a sweatband, her face was still covered in tiny beads of sweat from working in such conditions.

"Big Brother, what do you want to ask?"

Zhang Yi crossed his hands and asked seriously, "I'm wondering if West Hill Base plans to demolish our shelter, what methods would they typically use?"

Without hesitation, Lu Keran replied, "To demolish a building, they'd usually use TNT explosives paired with detonators. This is the standard method used domestically for tearing down old structures."

"Our shelter is built extremely tough, so they'd have to resort to that method to breach it."

Zhang Yi nodded. "Can you estimate how much explosive they'd need to blow a hole in our shelter?"

For a genius like Lu Keran, this wasn't a difficult question. "Based on the building materials and wall thickness, it would take about 300 to 800 kilograms of explosives to breach our shelter."

Lu Keran scratched her head with a smile. "I haven't measured it precisely, so that's just an approximate range."

Zhang Yi stroked his chin thoughtfully. "So roughly 500 kilograms would be needed. If they transport that much, it'll be hard to conceal."

"What if I try sniping to detonate it halfway—would that work?"

Zhang Yi hoped to cut off the demolition threat at its source. However, Lu Keran immediately shook her head at his idea. "Big Brother, I strongly advise against that."

"Oh? Why not?"

"TNT is a very stable explosive. You can't detonate it with bullets or by setting it on fire. It requires a detonator."

Zhang Yi immediately dropped the idea of sniping to trigger an explosion. "I see. I guess I'll have to stick to defense."

Zhang Yi chuckled to himself, thinking, "Time to go with Plan B."

He looked at Lu Keran. "How's the equipment I asked you to prepare to come along?"

Lu Keran quickly turned around and presented her completed work to Zhang Yi. "Big Brother, take a look at these. Are you satisfied?"

Lu Keran had been busy crafting weapons and gear for Zhang Yi. The most straightforward were the explosive bombs, of which she had made many. However, two other items piqued Zhang Yi's interest.

One was the heavy sniper rifle Zhang Yi had recently acquired. This rifle had an effective range of up to 1,850 meters, capable of piercing through armored vehicles. With Zhang Yi's precision shooting ability, its range could extend to a terrifying 5,000 meters!

In other words, Zhang Yi could kill targets from over ten miles away! However, this also presented a problem: Zhang Yi's ability allowed him to shoot at such distances, but his eyesight couldn't keep up. To solve this, he asked Lu Keran to modify an optical scope. With this new scope, Zhang Yi could become an unmatched sniper, taking down enemies from extreme ranges.

Aside from exceptionally agile opponents like Liu Ziyang or heavily armored creatures, most Superhumans who crossed his sights would be as good as dead—even those like Xie Huanhuan, who could pass through walls.

"The scope was easy to make. It only took me half a day," Lu Keran explained. "But the combat suit took me much longer!"

With that, Lu Keran pulled a black metal case from under the workbench. She struggled a bit to lift it onto the table and opened it in front of Zhang Yi. Inside was a pure white combat suit identical to those worn by Liu Ziyang, Shen Hong, and the other West Hill soldiers!

Zhang Yi's eyes lit up when he saw the combat suit. It was beautifully made—after all, it was modeled after the gear used by special forces, designed not only for functionality but also for a sleek appearance. In the snowy environment, it offered excellent camouflage.

Lu Keran proudly explained, "The materials are made from special alloys. Ordinary sniper bullets would have a hard time penetrating it."

"Its material costs are at least twenty times higher than those used by West Hill Base soldiers! But Big Brother, with all your resources, you're not short on materials."

"What I don't understand is why you wanted it to look exactly like the West Hill soldiers' suits."

Zhang Yi picked up the combat suit, a mysterious smile flashing in his eyes. "It's important. You'll understand when the time comes."

Chapter 268: The Grand Lineup

Zhang Yi, armed with the explosives crafted by Lu Keran, fully equipped himself and stepped out of the shelter. Before West Hill Base's main force arrived, he needed to set up all possible defenses around the area. His first task was to plant a large number of bombs around the shelter. Even if the enemy knew there were traps, they would still have to pass through the bomb-covered area to get close, making this strategy an open secret.

Although Zhang Yi wasn't sure how much damage these bombs would do to the Superhumans, he was willing to try anything that could potentially harm the enemy. In no time, he buried over fifty bombs in the snow around the shelter, which he could detonate at any moment using a remote trigger.

Next, Zhang Yi focused on setting up a surveillance system. Cloud Manor had no shortage of cameras. As a luxury villa district, its security facilities were top-notch. However, due to long-term neglect and a lack of stable power supply, the surveillance system had been abandoned. Zhang Yi reconnected the circuits and linked the cameras' power supply to the shelter. He then asked Yang Xinxin to hack into the security system, allowing him to monitor the entire neighborhood's movements.

With these preparations in place, Zhang Yi's initial defensive setup was complete. The upcoming confrontation with West Hill Base would be a matter of adapting to whatever the enemy threw at him, an unpredictable battle where anything could happen. Zhang Yi hadn't informed Uncle You of his plans; against a high-firepower military attack, Uncle You's presence wouldn't change much. It was better for him to stay away, possibly serving as an unexpected asset if needed.

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Two days later, Ling Feng led his team out of West Hill Base toward Xu Family Town. This time, he brought fifty members of Team A, including twelve modified soldiers. Counting himself, they had one of the strongest Superhuman captains in the Western Division.

Team A consisted of the elite, chosen from the best of the best. Whether they were top special forces from the military or experts in other fields, they were unmatched. Their mission was clear: to storm the shelter at Cloud Manor and eliminate Zhang Yi.

Ling Feng and his team were full of confidence. With their current lineup, they were certain they could take on not just one rogue Superhuman but even an army of a thousand soldiers. Among the group, only Liang Yue harbored hidden intentions that no one else knew about. Her goal was not to defeat Zhang Yi but to prepare for her and her students' escape from West Hill Base. Finding a suitable place to live after leaving was critical, and Zhang Yi was one of her potential allies. If Zhang Yi could withstand West Hill Base's attack, she would consider collaborating with him. If not, she would look for another path.

Fifty of West Hill Base's finest warriors set out in a mighty procession. Most rode sleds, and the only snowmobile at the base was authorized by Chen Xinian to carry their explosives. Gasoline was extremely scarce, making this snowmobile invaluable to West Hill Base. However, they needed it to transport the massive amount of explosives required for their mission. The snowmobile carried two heavy crates, so heavy that the vehicle sank into the snow. Even with its snow-ready design, it struggled along the way.

This proved how serious West Hill Base was about dealing with Zhang Yi; the amount of explosives they had brought was substantial.

The journey was slow, and it wasn't until midday that they finally reached Xu Family Town's Xudong Village. Shen Hong and his team had been waiting outside the village for their arrival. Fatty Xu, who was seen as a promising member by Shen Hong, was also called to join them. Recently, Shen Hong had been treating Fatty Xu exceptionally well. To make up for his failures on the previous mission, Shen Hong needed to leverage Fatty Xu's potential as his ticket to redemption within the organization.

As they waited, Fatty Xu grew increasingly impatient. Finally, he saw flashes of light on the horizon. In the ice and snow, fifty-plus soldiers slowly emerged, all wearing pure white combat suits with their weapons wrapped in white cloth. The sight of the team filled Fatty Xu with an overwhelming sense of pressure. He realized these fifty men were about to unleash a violent storm upon Cloud Manor.

Fatty Xu swallowed hard, silently praying that this storm wouldn't engulf the entire Xu Family Town.

The special forces arrived in Xudong Village, and Shen Hong and Yu Lang quickly stepped forward to salute.

"Captain!"

"You're finally here!"

Xu Dongtang and the other village leaders also stood by, awaiting the arrival of Captain Ling Feng. Fatty Xu scanned the crowd, aware that many of these individuals were formidable, especially the Superhumans. Among the fifty elite members, even the regular soldiers were seasoned veterans with extensive combat experience. Not a single one of them was easy to deal with.

Fatty Xu couldn't even tell which ones were the Superhumans. Then, the snowmobile at the back slowly came to a stop, and the soldiers made their way. A short soldier in a white combat suit stepped down, followed by three others: one exceptionally tall, nearly two meters high; another slender and agile, clearly a woman; and the last, wearing a fur-lined collar, brown leather gloves, and holding a black Tang sword.

The short soldier approached Shen Hong and Yu Lang, removed his helmet, and revealed an unremarkable square face.

"You've all worked hard!" Ling Feng said, smiling faintly at the rescue team soldiers. Shen Hong and the others looked embarrassed. As part of the rescue team, they had failed to save anyone and had lost soldiers, hardly deserving praise for their efforts.

Ling Feng's smile faded as he spoke in a calm tone, "That man is not easy to deal with. We underestimated him before, not knowing his true strength. You don't need to blame yourselves too much."

Shen Hong and his team were touched by Ling Feng's understanding.

"Captain!"

Ling Feng's gaze suddenly sharpened, his eyes like two sharp blades. "But I won't let the man who killed my comrades have a good ending. Now that we're here, his fate is sealed."

Shen Hong straightened his back, glancing at the powerful figures behind Ling Feng. He was convinced that Zhang Yi's fate had only one outcome: total defeat.

"This is his retribution!"

Chapter 269: Battle Plan

As Ling Feng chatted with Shen Hong, he noticed the chubby man standing beside him. Ling Feng looked curious and pointed at Fatty Xu. "Who's this?"

Shen Hong quickly introduced him. "Captain, this is a Superhuman I found! His name is Xu Chunlei, and he has the power to control ice and snow. His potential is limitless!"

Upon hearing that Fatty Xu was a Superhuman, Ling Feng and the others couldn't help but take a closer look at him. Liang Yue immediately recognized him; they had crossed paths before at Tianqing Academy. However, she didn't expose his identity because she wasn't fully on West Hill Base's side either.

Fatty Xu swallowed nervously, wearing a flattering smile but with fear and anxiety in his eyes. As Zhang Yi's undercover agent, his legs were trembling, a sight that did not escape Ling Feng and his team. As seasoned soldiers, they held nothing but disdain for cowards, and Fatty Xu's appearance as a weak, useless otaku only deepened their scorn.

Ling Feng crossed his arms, asking, "So your power is controlling ice and snow?"

"Yes, I built all these houses!" Fatty Xu pointed to the ice-and-snow structures in Xudong Village.

Ling Feng had noticed the unusual architecture of the village, but now he finally understood why. Despite the display of power, Ling Feng didn't think much of Fatty Xu. To him, a man who was weak or cowardly was unacceptable, let alone someone to join his elite team.

Ling Feng thought, "I'll take him back to see if he's of any use to the leader. But we don't need him for this mission."

Ling Feng walked over and patted Fatty Xu on the shoulder. However, the simple gesture, infused with Ling Feng's immense strength, knocked the already frail Fatty Xu to the ground, drawing laughter from the crowd. Ling Feng's eyes widened. "How could any man be this weak?"

Out of courtesy, he reached down and pulled Fatty Xu back up. "Sorry about that, buddy. So... you're a Superhuman, huh? Not bad. When we finish this mission, I'll report your situation to the base."

"You might even get the chance to join us officially!" Ling Feng didn't pay much more attention to Fatty Xu. His primary focus was on taking down Zhang Yi. After a brief exchange, he led his team to the strategy meeting, leaving the village leaders, including Xu Dongtang, standing on the sidelines without a word.

A soldier approached the village leaders, instructing them to prepare accommodations and food. Xu Dongtang, not daring to show any discontent, could only smile and comply.

With over fifty special forces members and a dozen more from the rescue team, the room was packed and bustling as the strategy meeting began. A professional engineer pulled out a laptop and projected a 3D model of Villa 101 at Cloud Manor.

Ling Feng addressed the group, "Our next goal is to breach this fortified shelter!"

Pointing to a rear corner of the building, Ling Feng continued, "According to our engineers' calculations, this is the optimal spot for a breach."

"To blow open this wall, we need 500 kilograms of TNT. We've brought 1,000 kilograms this time, giving us two attempts."

Ling Feng spread his hands and smiled confidently. "Even if we fail both attempts, our base has plenty of explosives in reserve. Failure isn't an option; it's just a matter of how many times we need to try."

The soldiers laughed, feeling relaxed and confident. West Hill Base was strong, well-armed, and ready to take down what they saw as a mere shelter.

Liang Yue, holding her Tang sword, frowned slightly at these words. She was worried about the safety of Yang Xinxin and Lu Keran, her students who were currently inside Zhang Yi's shelter.

"Zhang Yi, can you really survive this crisis?" she wondered.

According to Ling Feng, Chen Xinian's orders were to capture Zhang Yi alive. Therefore, they wouldn't use destructive explosives on the shelter. This was her chance to intervene and save her students.

Ling Feng continued, "There's still one unpredictable variable: this Superhuman, Zhang Yi!"

He glanced at Shen Hong and Yu Lang. "Superhumans have all sorts of abilities. To defeat him, we must understand his powers and identify his weaknesses."

"From your reports, he's primarily a sharpshooter. But our investigation shows Zhang Yi has no military training—he was just an ordinary warehouse supervisor."

"So this must be one of his abilities," Ling Feng speculated.

"Good marksmanship isn't terrifying, but if his ability allows him to lock onto targets, that's a different story."

Shen Hong interjected, "Luckily, his attacks are affected by his line of sight. We can interfere with his vision to neutralize his ability."

Ling Feng nodded. "Exactly. During our attack, we'll deploy a large number of smoke and incendiary bombs to disrupt his vision."

"However, his second ability is even more troublesome. He can ignore bullet attacks and even reflect them back."

Ling Feng chuckled. "This means long-range attacks might be useless against him."

"So this time, we won't engage him head-on. Instead, we'll stealthily block his view and sneak in to plant the explosives."

Ling Feng exuded confidence. "I refuse to believe his abilities cover every possible scenario. If he excels at long-range combat, there must be a weakness in close-quarters fighting."

"Once we breach the shelter, we'll storm in and take him down in no time!"

The rest of the team nodded in agreement, approving of the plan. In close combat, with Ling Feng leading, any opponent would be swiftly dealt with. As West Hill Base's top combatant, Ling Feng's strength was terrifying, something everyone in the room—except for Liang Yue—was well aware of.

Shen Hong added, "Zhang Yi is cunning. He's set up many traps around his shelter. We lost several men to landmines because we were careless."

Ling Feng simply smiled, his hands clasped behind his back. "You all lack real battlefield experience."

"If he's set up mines and bombs, we'll just disarm them, simple as that."

A demolition expert from the special forces team looked at Shen Hong and Yu Lang. "Leave that to me! Any traps set by an amateur are child's play for a professional like me."

Chapter 270: Preparing for Battle

Shen Hong and Yu Lang felt both ashamed and relieved. They were embarrassed by their failed mission but glad that West Hill Base had strong soldiers, ample firepower, and an abundance of talent. With such a formidable force, Zhang Yi would be no match this time!

After the strategy meeting ended, Ling Feng announced, "Alright, let's set off now. Let's aim to end this battle within three hours—better yet, just one!"

Ling Feng's face was relaxed and smiling. He didn't see this mission as a big deal. With absolute strength on their side, all defenses would be meaningless. After all, they were a group of well-equipped, highly-trained elite warriors. How could they possibly fail to handle one ordinary man with some Superhuman abilities? That would be a joke.

Ling Feng began organizing his fifty soldiers, assigning them tasks such as carrying explosives and securing various positions around Cloud Manor. Shen Hong and the rest of the rescue team were left behind in Xu Family Town because their combat skills weren't on par with the special forces.

"We'll be back soon! Shen Hong and Yu Lang will guide us, and the rest of you stay here and watch our supplies," Ling Feng instructed.

"Yes, sir!" Shen Hong and Yu Lang replied immediately. Yu Lang then whispered to Ling Feng, "Have the higher-ups given any orders on how to deal with the townspeople?"

Ling Feng glanced at Xu Family Town and casually said, "There's no rush. There are so many of them, and they can't run away. We'll handle Zhang Yi first, then ask the leader for further instructions."

Shen Hong and Yu Lang nodded and had no further questions. Ling Feng led the soldiers, weapons in hand, explosives and gear strapped to their backs, marching toward Cloud Manor. Dressed in white uniforms and armor, with their weapons wrapped in white cloth, they moved like ghosts in the snowy landscape. If not for careful observation, they would have been nearly invisible.

As they approached the outskirts of the manor, they saw the towering entrance gate still standing, with the golden character "Cloud Manor" shining in bold strokes. Shen Hong pointed to the center of the villa area. "The shelter is right in the middle, very conspicuous! But they have a sniper, so we can't just rush in."

Last time, Zhang Yi's precise marksmanship had wreaked havoc on their thirty-man team, picking them off one by one from hundreds of meters away. Without the cover of the surrounding houses, they might have all died there that day.

Ling Feng nodded, then turned his attention to a few soldiers. "Find good positions and lock down that building for me!"

Three soldiers carrying heavy sniper rifles immediately stepped forward, dispersing to predetermined locations. The sniper points had been mapped out before they even set off.

Shen Hong whispered, "But guns don't seem to work on him."

Ling Feng looked at Shen Hong thoughtfully and said, "Shen Hong, you're not a natural Superhuman, so you don't fully understand the characteristics and flaws of Superhuman abilities."

"Don't just look at the surface. I refuse to believe someone can truly be immune to bullets. Perhaps it's a power we don't understand. If it's an ability rather than him turning into a transparent monster, we just need the right moment to put a bullet through his head. Simple."

Ling Feng's words enlightened Shen Hong, though he couldn't help feeling a pang of envy. He wished he could be a natural Superhuman like Ling Feng.

Ling Feng stood on the outskirts of Cloud Manor, methodically organizing his team for the assault. They had ample time, manpower, and ammunition, so there was no need to rush.

Inside the shelter, Zhang Yi and the others had already moved almost everything from the top two floors to the underground levels. The shelter was fully powered, and bright lights illuminated every corner, maintaining a warm and inviting atmosphere. Zhang Yi sat in the first-floor underground living room, reading a paperback book, with multiple surveillance screens showing the interior and exterior of the shelter.

Since the apocalypse had freed him from the need to work, Zhang Yi had embraced a slower pace of life and developed a love for reading. Some books were from the library, while others came from Wang Siming's private collection. The book in Zhang Yi's hands was "Ordinary World" by Lu Yao. Reading it now, he couldn't help but feel nostalgic. The days of ordinary life were gone forever, replaced by a world buried in ice and snow. Yet, the resilience of humanity remained constant; people always found ways to survive even in the harshest environments.

Zhou Ke'er, barefoot and with her legs curled up, leaned quietly against Zhang Yi, enjoying the peaceful moment together. But suddenly, Zhang Yi's peripheral vision caught something unusual. He looked up at the wall-mounted screen. Among the hundreds of surveillance feeds, thick white smoke was seen rolling in from all directions toward the shelter.

"Snap!"

Zhang Yi calmly closed the book in his hand and said lightly, "They're here!"

Zhou Ke'er quickly fetched Zhang Yi's sneakers and helped him put them on, crouching in front of him. Zhang Yi remained unnervingly calm. He equipped himself and retrieved his heavy sniper rifle from the dimensional space, slinging it over his shoulder as he headed upstairs.

"Stay down here, and don't come up!" Zhang Yi instructed Zhou Ke'er. The upcoming fight was a man's battle, and he didn't need the women getting involved.

Zhou Ke'er nodded firmly, knowing she couldn't help Zhang Yi at this moment. Her own powers were best left unused, especially on Zhang Yi.

Zhang Yi climbed to the first floor, where thick smoke had already obscured all visibility outside, save for about a meter around the outer walls. Beyond that, everything was shrouded in white.

"Looks like they've learned to fear my sniping. It's a smart move," Zhang Yi mused, knowing his opponents were highly trained military professionals capable of adapting quickly.

"So the next step is likely to breach the shelter with explosives," Zhang Yi muttered with a sly smile. That was indeed the only real threat to him, but Zhang Yi had already devised a way to counter it.

Clearly, the enemy had no idea of the extent of his powers. Since absorbing Xie Huanhuan's abilities, Zhang Yi's dimensional powers had grown significantly stronger. The Dimensional Gate's capacity had expanded, and he had tested it in the basement using grenades. Even the shockwave from a blast could be absorbed.

This newfound confidence allowed Zhang Yi to stand his ground against a fully armed, military-style assault.