

Ice Age 271

Chapter 271: Where's My Explosives?

Ling Feng's team deployed a large number of smoke and incendiary bombs around Cloud Manor to prevent Zhang Yi from sniping the demolition crew. The next step was to send in the bomb disposal team to disarm the traps set around the villa. Their method was simple and crude—not disarming them manually but using detonating cords to set off the surrounding bombs in a chain reaction. This was a common military technique where a chain of explosives would detonate to cover a wide area, setting off any hidden traps.

Zhang Yi turned on his highest level of active noise cancellation, blocking out the external noise. To protect his ears from the impending explosion, he also put on a professional-grade noise-canceling headset. Although this made him almost as deaf as a post, he knew it was necessary with the possibility of 500 kilograms of TNT being used against his shelter.

Outside, the explosions lit up the surroundings. The enemy had triggered all the bombs Zhang Yi had painstakingly planted.

Zhang Yi sighed, "Professional soldiers are truly professional."

There was a bit of regret, but not much. When fighting professionals, you had to be prepared for this kind of outcome. The last time he managed to blow up Shen Hong and his men, it was partly due to luck and surprise. This time, the enemy was prepared, so naturally, they wouldn't be foolish enough to walk right into his traps.

Once the perimeter traps were cleared, Ling Feng gave the order, "Demolition team, move in! Everyone else, get ready to cover them."

Behind him, the three captain-level Superhumans, including Liang Yue, were ready. If Zhang Yi showed any signs of emerging, they would strike immediately. However, with the shelter in place, their abilities had no opportunity to be put to use. Liang Yue secretly hoped that Zhang Yi would surprise her.

Zhang Yi, meanwhile, remained calm. No matter what the enemy did, he allowed them to proceed. After all, the shelter's primary function was defense, not offense. To attack his shelter, the enemy had no choice but to resort to demolition.

Watching the surveillance feeds in his hand, Zhang Yi observed the fog that covered the entire neighborhood. It didn't completely obstruct his view because if the smoke were too thick, even the enemy's demolition soldiers wouldn't be able to see the shelter. The smoke's purpose was simply to prevent him from sniping.

But with the surveillance system that was linked throughout the neighborhood, Zhang Yi could see hazy figures moving closer to the shelter.

"They're here!"

Zhang Yi's gaze sharpened. This was the critical moment. To protect the shelter, the key was to withstand the demolition attempt. He planned to absorb the blast wave using his dimensional space. So Zhang Yi made no move to attack but instead tracked the enemy's demolition point and followed it closely.

A few minutes later, through the remaining external surveillance cameras, he found the demolition team's location. Each demolition soldier carried heavy explosives on their backs. When they reached the wall, they placed the explosives against it and set up detonators.

Zhang Yi watched them intently. The team, highly trained, quickly set up 500 kilograms of explosives and promptly retreated.

Zhang Yi's eyes widened as he stared at the pile of TNT outside the wall.

"Just leaving like that?"

Well, of course, they wouldn't stay and risk being blown up. They needed to get to a safe distance before remotely detonating the explosives.

However, for Zhang Yi, this was a rather baffling situation. He rubbed his chin and muttered, "Maybe I've been overthinking things from the start."

On the other side, after setting up the explosives, the demolition team followed the plan and left Cloud Manor immediately. After all, 500 kilograms of TNT could demolish a skyscraper! They needed to be at a safe distance to detonate it.

Ling Feng and his team moved to a nearby hill, watching the shelter shrouded in smoke. Over the radio, the demolition team reported, "Commander, the explosives have been set, and we've retreated. Ready to detonate at any time!"

Ling Feng smirked. "Received."

He took out the detonator and told his teammates, "This mission is easier than we thought! I figured since Zhang Yi killed so many of our brothers, he'd put up more of a fight!"

He pressed the detonator lightly with his right hand. Everyone covered their ears, bracing for the earth-shaking explosion.

But several seconds passed, and nothing happened.

"Huh? Why didn't it explode?"

Liang Yue frowned, puzzled. Ling Feng, also bewildered, repeatedly pressed the remote detonator, aiming it at the shelter. But nothing happened.

"What's going on?"

Ling Feng, frowning, used the radio to contact the demolition team.

"Why didn't the explosives go off when I pressed the button?"

The demolition team was equally baffled.

"That's impossible! We checked everything thoroughly, and there were no issues with the setup."

Ling Feng was annoyed. It was embarrassing for his team, comprised of elite soldiers, to make such a rookie mistake!

"Well, I'm pressing the button, and nothing's happening. Go check it out and fix it immediately!"

"Yes, sir!"

The demolition team was perplexed, knowing they wouldn't make such a simple error. But since the explosives hadn't detonated, something had clearly gone wrong. The team ran back to inspect the setup, but when they reached the site, they were all dumbfounded!

The explosives they had placed against the wall had mysteriously vanished!

"Huh? Where are the explosives?"

The demolition team was stunned, even wondering if they had gone to the wrong location.

On the other side of the wall, Zhang Yi stared at the 500 kilograms of TNT now sitting in his dimensional space and fell into deep thought.

"Was it... too easy?"

He hadn't expected it to be this simple. The enemy had just piled up a bunch of explosives against his wall and left.

"Good people, indeed!" Zhang Yi chuckled.

Back on the hill, Ling Feng was dumbstruck by the radio report.

"What? Are the explosives gone? How can they be gone? Didn't you set them up yourselves?"

"Did they vanish into thin air, or did you eat them?"

Chapter 272: Everyone Was Shocked

Upon hearing that the explosives had disappeared, Ling Feng was furious, almost cursing out loud.

Everything had been going smoothly, and they were just one step away from detonating the explosives against Zhang Yi's shelter. But then someone suddenly told him that the explosives had vanished into thin air!

"What kind of joke is this?" Ling Feng snapped.

"How could the explosives just disappear? Did Zhang Yi steal them?" he asked through gritted teeth. A single failure was infuriating, but it wasn't the most terrifying part—West Hill Base had no shortage of weapons and ammunition. They had brought enough explosives for another attempt. The key was understanding the cause of the failure.

The demolition team replied, "Impossible! That was 500 kilograms of explosives; he couldn't have moved them that quickly. And even if he had, the explosives were rigged with detonators. As long as you press the button, they should explode!"

"But now, there's no response at all. I... I don't know what's going on."

"This is bizarre—truly bizarre!" The demolition soldiers, who had worked on numerous high-risk demolition projects over the years, had never encountered such a mind-boggling situation.

Ling Feng asked, "Could you have set them in the wrong location? Go and search the entire perimeter of the shelter again!"

"We've searched everywhere. Such a conspicuous target couldn't have just disappeared."

Ling Feng was at his wit's end, his brow furrowed in frustration.

"This is beyond strange, right? It seems Zhang Yi is using some kind of power that makes the explosives undetonable."

"Based on preliminary analysis, his ability appears to be a spatial power. That would explain everything—he moved the explosives into another space, so when I press the switch, the detonator signal can't reach them, and they don't explode."

Ling Feng quickly deduced Zhang Yi's power. However, knowing was one thing; solving the problem was an entirely different challenge.

They needed to bring the explosives close to the shelter and detonate them remotely. But once they had transported the explosives, Zhang Yi could just take them away.

"What if we tried long-range attacks, like missiles?"

Forget it—Tianhai City didn't have the authority to launch missiles against Zhang Yi's shelter. Plus, Ling Feng had no idea if Zhang Yi's spatial ability could absorb missiles as well.

"If his ability really works like that, this is going to be a tough battle!" Ling Feng thought, a shadow of doubt creeping into his heart. He realized this was far more complicated than he had initially imagined.

Although they hadn't encountered much direct resistance from Zhang Yi, even managing to easily detonate the bombs he had set outside the shelter, his greatest strength wasn't his offensive capabilities—it was his defensive prowess.

A nearly indestructible shelter and a monstrous spatial ability that could absorb almost any form of attack.

How were they supposed to deal with that?

This was a century-old dilemma that now lay before Ling Feng.

Behind him, Shi Dayong, built like a bear, approached and said, "Captain, I have an idea. Since our explosives keep getting taken, why not just use artillery?"

Ling Feng looked at Shi Dayong's rough face and tilted his head in response. "Let me ask you, do we have any large-caliber artillery at hand? Can you carry one over here?"

Shi Dayong replied, "Rocket launchers could work too. Even if it's slow, as long as we keep attacking one spot, we'll eventually break through!"

"We have plenty of time to wear him down. The leader already said that taking down Zhang Yi's shelter is worth any amount of time and ammunition!"

Ling Feng took a deep breath, exasperated by the stubbornness of the man before him, and turned away without responding.

Zheng Xuerong, standing nearby, scoffed and approached Shi Dayong. "First of all, how long do you think it would take to breach walls this thick with a rocket launcher?"

"Didn't Shen Hong say before? Regular weapons are ineffective against him. I suspect everything just gets moved into another space."

She couldn't help but frown. "What a terrifying ability! His defensive capabilities are nearly invincible."

Shi Dayong argued, "Then we'll just attack from all sides! He's only one person; he can't defend every angle, right?"

Zheng Xuerong rolled her eyes.

"You think this place is just a regular concrete structure? If it were that easy to break through, would we need to bring in all this equipment and a ton of explosives?"

Fragmented attacks wouldn't work against the shelter, and even with West Hill Base's ample ammunition, they couldn't afford to waste so much firepower.

Only Liang Yue, standing quietly at the back with her Tang sword, looked on with a flicker of admiration in her eyes.

"Zhang Yi, I never thought you'd have such strength!" she mused, her expectations of him growing. However, thinking about how her beloved Loong Roar Sword had been taken by Zhang Yi made her grit her teeth.

Ling Feng, now fully aware of the difficulties Zhang Yi posed, knew he couldn't afford to underestimate him any further. He called over the demolition team to discuss new ways to breach the shelter.

"We still have 500 kilograms of explosives left. That means we have only one more chance!"

"We must think carefully about how to break this iron fortress!"

The demolition team, already frustrated by Zhang Yi's ability to absorb their explosives, reluctantly considered their options.

"To breach the shelter, remote detonation is the best method. But there's one exception... manual detonation."

One of the soldiers suggested this approach, which caused the entire group to fall silent.

Manual detonation of 500 kilograms of explosives? The person doing it wouldn't just die—they'd be vaporized on the spot, reduced to nothing but ashes.

Ling Feng looked at the soldier coldly. "I won't send my men to their deaths."

The group remained silent. Sacrificing one person might be enough to breach the shelter, but who would volunteer for such a grim task?

West Hill was just a militant organization. Everyone there was only united by the goal of survival. Dying to defend one's country was one thing, but dying to attack a private residence? No one wanted that.

Ling Feng continued, "And even if we sent someone, Zhang Yi could still absorb the explosives. Sending too many would lead to massive losses. Sending too few wouldn't stand a chance. We're dealing with a powerful enemy!"

"This plan is off the table. We need to think of something else!"

Chapter 273: Throwing

At this moment, an engineer from the demolition team stepped forward. He adjusted his glasses and said, "I think there's another method we can try."

Everyone turned to look at the engineer. He was a former academician at the Tianhai City Institute of Physics, an elite talent specially recruited by West Hill Base.

"Academician Wu, what's your idea?" Ling Feng asked.

Academician Wu explained, "Zhang Yi's spatial ability might actually support the theory of parallel universes. But as we all know, energy is conserved; the energy from an explosion doesn't just disappear. It can only be transferred."

"So his ability merely absorbs the existing materials or energy and relocates them. But what happens when the absorbed energy becomes too much?"

His explanation was straightforward, and Ling Feng immediately answered, "It would collapse!"

Academician Wu nodded. "He just stole our explosives, but he might not dare absorb explosives that are already in the process of detonation—especially when it's 500 kilograms of TNT!"

Shi Dayong, however, asked, "But what if he manages to swallow the explosive power of 500 kilograms of TNT?"

Academician Wu took a deep breath and replied, "If that's the case, then even if we used the entire power of West Hill Base, we wouldn't be able to do anything to him!"

He was stating the truth. If Zhang Yi could indeed absorb such a massive explosion, then all thermal weapons would become ineffective against him. Attacking his impenetrable fortress with just manpower? That would be a fool's dream.

Even if Zhang Yi let them attack freely, they wouldn't have the manpower or time to destroy the shelter in such extreme cold.

Ling Feng resolutely said, "We have to try to find out! Besides, I refuse to believe someone this powerful could exist in Tianhai City!"

He immediately formulated a new plan: bundling the remaining 500 kilograms of TNT and setting it to a 30-second timer. Then, they would throw the bundle towards the shelter.

Since no better solution was available, this was their best option. The demolition team quickly got to work, bundling the explosives and setting the detonation mode.

Ling Feng didn't rush to act. He ordered his soldiers to fire intensely at the shelter from all directions to distract Zhang Yi.

Soon, soldiers at various positions received the order and began shooting fiercely at the shelter. Inside, Zhang Yi was waiting for West Hill Base's next move, knowing they wouldn't let his theft of their explosives go unchallenged.

When Zhang Yi noticed intense gunfire from multiple directions targeting the shelter, he carefully observed the situation.

"Guns? Don't they know that this is just scratching an itch for my shelter?" Zhang Yi laughed when he saw the gunfire from all directions.

"So, this is just a cover. The real attack is still coming, huh?"

"Alright, let's see what else you've got," Zhang Yi murmured, smiling but remaining vigilant.

Meanwhile, two kilometers away on a small hill, the 500-kilogram bundle of explosives was finally prepared. A normal human would find it impossible to throw such a heavy object over this distance without tools.

Ling Feng walked over to the explosives and placed his hand on them. He exchanged a look with Shi Dayong.

Shi Dayong grinned and quickly stripped off his combat suit, leaving only his underwear in the freezing weather, much to Liang Yue's shock. She didn't understand what this large man was planning.

But she soon found out. Shi Dayong's muscles began writhing as if worms were crawling under his skin, his body expanding as a layer of silver fur sprouted from his pores. Sharp fangs emerged from his mouth, and his fingers turned into claws.

Shi Dayong had transformed into a towering silver-backed gorilla, almost two meters tall! Liang Yue realized that he could transform into a giant ape.

Shi Dayong and Ling Feng grabbed the bundle of explosives together. After setting the timer, Academician Wu signaled them, and the two of them hurled the explosives toward the shelter with all their might.

Although Ling Feng's stature was only a third of Shi Dayong's transformed size, he showed no sign of strain while throwing the explosives.

The bundle flew like a cannonball towards the shelter, perfectly timed to explode 50 meters away. Even if it couldn't blow a hole in the shelter, the damage would be significant.

If successful, they planned to continue this strategy since they had plenty of explosives at the base.

Through the surveillance, Zhang Yi noticed the explosives flying toward the shelter.

"So that's your game plan!"

He immediately understood the enemy's intention. Zhang Yi moved to the location where the explosives were headed, his right eye flashing white. A massive Dimensional Gate, several dozen square meters wide, opened above the shelter. Zhang Yi divided his dimensional space, separating the area where his supplies were stored from the space where the explosives would land to avoid damaging his stored belongings.

The bundle of explosives fell precisely into the Dimensional Gate. Zhang Yi observed the internal changes, only to be shocked by what he saw—the explosives were already expanding, showing intense energy reactions.

Even though the flow of time in his dimensional space was much slower, time still passed. In the outside world, everything proceeded as it should.

In the next instant, Zhang Yi's Dimensional Gate shattered. The raging energy burst open above the shelter, and the deafening explosion echoed through the area. Even Liang Yue and the others, two kilometers away, had to cover their ears.

Ling Feng and his men were ecstatic.

"It worked! This strategy is effective!"

Chapter 274: Unable to Absorb

The explosion outside the shelter was like a volcanic eruption, with flames shooting up into the sky. Even from a distance, the terrifying blast was enough to make anyone tremble in fear! The entire shelter shook violently, and Zhang Yi nearly fell to the ground as he struggled to maintain his balance.

The sudden turn of events was completely unexpected, even for Zhang Yi. His Dimensional Space had been unable to fully contain the rapidly expanding energy. It was forced to release some of the pressure, resulting in the external explosion. This outcome also meant that Zhang Yi couldn't open the Dimensional Gate again for a while.

He could feel his powers slowly being drained to repair the gate of the Dimensional Space. Most of the explosive force had been sealed inside as pure energy, which might come in handy in the future.

The explosion caused thick smoke to billow outside. Zhang Yi took a deep breath, steadied himself, and quickly assessed the damage to the shelter. The glass panes had developed fine cracks, only a few centimeters deep but noticeable nonetheless.

He pulled out his phone. "Xiao Ai, report the damage to the house."

"Understood. I've completed a full analysis of the structure. The southwest corner has sustained damage, with an overall loss of 22.6%."

Since the explosion had been airborne and much of the force was absorbed, the damage was still within acceptable limits. From the outside, one could see that a large portion of the outer wall's surface had peeled off. To break through the fortress, they would need to repeat the same kind of explosion at the same spot at least three more times.

However, they had already used 1,000 kilograms of explosives, and their remaining supply would not be enough to launch another round of attacks.

"I see. So that's the kind of attack you're capable of? Impressive!" Zhang Yi muttered, staring out at the direction from which the explosives had been thrown.

"But you won't get a second chance to use the same tactic!" Zhang Yi had confirmed the enemy's location, and he wasn't about to let them think he would remain on the defensive forever.

The small hill they were using was the optimal spot to throw explosives accurately from a distance. However, with the Dimensional Space currently unusable, Zhang Yi couldn't counterattack just yet. He knew the enemy would likely try the same approach again after tasting success.

"The Dimensional Space has a limit to the amount of energy it can absorb. This incident has served as a warning for me," Zhang Yi reflected. However, the issue wasn't critical. The gate being damaged didn't affect the main body of the Dimensional Space itself. It would slowly recover as he continued to channel his powers.

Zhang Yi glanced at the distant hill before slowly retreating back underground. Even if the West Hill Base soldiers leveled everything above ground, Zhang Yi wouldn't come out. He needed to wait for the Dimensional Gate to be restored, his most powerful defense and counterattack mechanism.

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On the small hill, Ling Feng watched through binoculars and saw visible scars on one side of the shelter's wall. A significant portion of the wall had peeled off, but overall, the structure remained sturdy with no signs of collapse or major cracks.

Ling Feng gasped. "That was 500 kilograms of explosives! Even a thirty-story building would have been destroyed instantly."

Academician Wu walked over, observed the damage, and remarked, "This doesn't make sense. According to our calculations, the result shouldn't be this mild."

He then added, "But—throwing explosives manually is a primitive method that prevents them from reaching optimal effectiveness."

"There's also the possibility that Zhang Yi absorbed a large portion of the explosive force using his abilities."

Hearing Academician Wu's theory, everyone around him looked shocked.

"Absorb? You're saying he can absorb the force of such a massive explosion?" Shi Dayong, Zheng Xuerong, and Liang Yue were all stunned. They were Superhumans, powerful ones at that, but they knew that being at the center of such a terrifying explosion would mean certain death. The idea of absorbing any of that explosive force was unthinkable.

"Zhang Yi truly is extraordinary!" Liang Yue thought to herself, marveling at his strength.

Zheng Xuerong, however, looked anxiously at Ling Feng. "If this is true, doesn't that mean it'll be nearly impossible for us to breach this shelter?"

"Not necessarily," Ling Feng responded, handing her the binoculars. "We still caused significant damage. We just need to repeat this several more times to break through!"

"And besides, there's no need to be overly afraid. His defense is incredibly strong, but he's been hiding inside the entire time, only using a sniper rifle for offense."

"This indicates that he's good at defense but not so skilled at attacking."

Everyone nodded, agreeing with Ling Feng's analysis. If someone were invincible at both defense and offense, they simply shouldn't exist in this world.

"So, what do we do next? We've used up all the explosives we brought," Shi Dayong asked.

Their only transportation consisted of a snowmobile and several dog sleds, making it extremely difficult to transport another 1,000 kilograms of TNT.

Ling Feng replied, "No rush. We'll head back and send someone to the base to get more explosives."

"We'll leave a few people to take turns monitoring the shelter's movements around the clock. We can't let anyone inside escape."

"We'll take our time wearing him down!"

Understanding that without more explosives, there was no way to breach the shelter, Ling Feng was prepared for a prolonged siege. He began organizing his team, setting up a 24-hour rotation with groups of three to watch the shelter's every move. Due to the extreme cold, even with thermal clothing, they couldn't stay out for long, so personnel rotation was essential.

Meanwhile, Ling Feng personally returned to transport the explosives while the rest of the team went back to Xudong Village to rest and recover.

Everyone split up to carry out their tasks.

Back in the shelter, Zhang Yi decided to abandon the above-ground levels temporarily to avoid any unnecessary risks. Even if the enemy managed to breach the surface, they wouldn't be able to penetrate the much stronger underground defenses.

Upon retreating underground, the women immediately surrounded Zhang Yi with worried expressions.

"Big Brother Zhang Yi, what's going on outside? That noise just now sounded like the sky was falling!" Zhou Ke'er asked anxiously.

The other women also looked unsettled. For all of them, it was their first time experiencing such a terrifying explosion. Even in the underground shelter, with noise reduction features in place, the shockwave from the blast had been impossible to ignore.

Zhang Yi reassured the women, "Don't worry. The underground defense is even stronger than the top two floors. They won't be able to threaten us anytime soon."

"I suspect they're running low on explosives, so their attacks should stop soon."

"And as for the next time they come to attack, I already know how to deal with them." Zhang Yi's calm smile put the women at ease. However, he didn't explain anything about his Dimensional Space. His abilities were a secret; unless absolutely necessary, he wouldn't reveal them to anyone.

Zhang Yi waited in the basement for a long time without sensing any further attacks from the enemy. Not even regular gunfire was heard, let alone more explosive attacks.

Zhang Yi could finally confirm that the enemy had exhausted their explosives. The distance from Cloud Manor to West Hill Base was over fifty kilometers, and even if they were to go back now to get more, carrying over a thousand kilograms of supplies would take them at least half a day.

Zhang Yi sat on the sofa in the living room, monitoring the situation outside through the surveillance feeds while Yang Siya prepared food to replenish his energy. Food was primarily the source of his supernatural abilities, and with the Dimensional Gate damaged, he needed to consume a lot to recover.

The large explosion had turned the surrounding villas into ruins, and most of the external surveillance equipment was destroyed. Fortunately, the cameras embedded in the shelter's walls remained operational, allowing Zhang Yi to maintain a watchful eye.

He glanced coldly at the surveillance screen showing the direction of the small hill. "Next time you come, it won't be as easy as this!" Now that Zhang Yi had grasped the enemy's tactics, he was ready to strike back.

Yang Siya brought over a large amount of food while Zhou Ke'er stood behind Zhang Yi, massaging his shoulders to relieve his stress. The safety of the entire shelter rested on this man's shoulders, and the women were more devoted to him than ever.

Zhang Yi pulled out his phone and messaged Fatty Xu, asking about the movements of the troops in Xu Family Town. Not long after, Fatty Xu replied.

"Boss, the commotion at your place scared everyone to death! The explosion sounded like it leveled Cloud Manor!"

"Phew, thank goodness you're okay. What a relief!"

"A lot of the soldiers came back. I saw some leaving the village, heading west."

Zhang Yi immediately understood the situation matched his expectations—they were heading back to get more explosives.

"What about the rest of them?"

"What else? They came back to rest, of course! Damn, it looks like they're planning to stay here long-term. As soon as they returned, they demanded food and drinks."

Fatty Xu's complaints brought a deep smile to Zhang Yi's face. If his shelter couldn't be breached for a long time, the people of Xu Family Town would suffer the most since West Hill Base had turned the town into their supply base. The soldiers would demand the villagers provide food and drink for all sixty-plus members of their team.

Zhang Yi had no sympathy for them; in fact, he was curious to see if the villagers would eventually rebel.

"Good, keep gathering information for me," Zhang Yi told Fatty Xu.

Fatty Xu hesitated, expressing his concern. "Boss, those soldiers are elite, and they have several Superhumans among them. Can you handle it?"

"Of course," Zhang Yi replied calmly, his voice full of confidence. "I've completely figured out their attack strategies."

Zhang Yi was grateful he had decisively taken out the wall-phasing Superhuman that night. Without that, his supposedly impenetrable shelter would have been a joke. As for the other Superhumans, no matter how strong they were, they couldn't compare to 500 kilograms of TNT.

Let them be as strong as they want; he would just keep to his shelter, undeterred.

He reminded Fatty Xu once again, "Fatty, Xu Family Town isn't safe. You need to stay vigilant around those people."

"If you ever sense danger, you can come to my place anytime. Your big brother will protect you!" Zhang Yi valued Fatty Xu, who was obedient and useful. Having another Superhuman around would be an extra asset in any direct conflict. If a battle ever broke out, Fatty Xu's chaotic powers would surely cause the enemy to stumble.

Fatty Xu, deeply moved, nodded. "Thank you, Boss! If that day ever comes, I'll definitely come to you."

But there was an unspoken understanding: that day hadn't come yet. Fatty Xu still had lingering attachments—Xu Lili, the girl he saw only a few times but considered his one true love.

"You do what you think is best!" Zhang Yi said, not pressuring him. This was a decision Fatty Xu had to make for himself.

After ending the call, Zhang Yi continued to eat while enjoying the company of the two women attending to him. A little later, his phone rang again—this time, it was Uncle You.

Uncle You, hearing the explosion from far away, called to check on Zhang Yi's situation. Zhang Yi smiled faintly. Uncle You was one of the few people Zhang Yi completely trusted; their bond was forged through life-and-death experiences.

Without hiding anything, Zhang Yi told Uncle You that West Hill Base was attacking his shelter.

"What? How dare they attack you?" Uncle You exclaimed, outraged. "Aren't they supposed to be protecting us?"

As a retired soldier, Uncle You couldn't contain his anger upon hearing that military forces were attacking Zhang Yi.

Zhang Yi replied calmly, "Uncle You, they're not the same as they were in your time."

"The apocalypse changes everything. The ones who survived are just a militarized organization, loyal only to themselves. Do you understand?"

"They might have strict discipline and a background in official institutions from before the apocalypse, but at the core, they're no different from the gangs we wiped out, like the Tianhe Gang and the Wild Wolf Gang."

"Everyone's fighting for resources to survive. I'm used to it."

Though Zhang Yi spoke casually, Uncle You fell silent, deeply affected. For him, this was a hard truth to swallow.

After a moment, Uncle You spoke with determination. "Zhang Yi, wait for me. I have to come to help you with this!"

Chapter 276: The Burden on Xu Family Town

Even though he knew it was dangerous, Uncle You still insisted on helping Zhang Yi, which warmed Zhang Yi's heart.

"Uncle You, thank you! But for now, it's better if you don't come over. There are many soldiers around, guarding the area," Zhang Yi advised. "If you come, you're bound to clash with them. No matter how strong you are, you can't fend off a pack of wolves alone. They have the numbers, advanced weapons, and several Superhumans. I don't want you to be in danger."

However, Uncle You replied firmly, "You saved my life back then, and the peace I have now is all thanks to you. I can't just watch while you're in danger!"

"Don't worry. I've fought in the military for many years. I'm not afraid of these soldiers."

"Haha, I'm not boasting, but I've been on the battlefield before! These kids don't scare me one bit."

Seeing Uncle You's insistence, Zhang Yi thought it over and finally said, "Alright, Uncle You. I'm safe for now, and they haven't broken in. But I may launch a counterattack later, and when that happens, I'll let you know. I want you to be a hidden asset. How about that?"

Uncle You nodded. "Alright, I'll wait for your signal! But Zhang Yi, promise me that if you're in trouble, you'll let me know. Don't treat me as an outsider!"

Zhang Yi felt a surge of warmth in his heart. Uncle You was indeed a loyal friend.

"I wouldn't dream of it!"

Uncle You was a physically enhanced Superhuman, and Zhang Yi had seen his power firsthand—he could catch a high-speed, full-force charge from his transformed cat, Huahua, with his bare hands. Ordinary firearms couldn't hurt him. Such a powerful close-combat fighter had to be used wisely to maximize his potential.

"I don't need your help yet. Defense comes first," Zhang Yi said, leaning back on Zhou Ke'er's soft chest, eyes half-closed, deep in thought. His pet cat Huahua jumped onto his lap, playfully pawing at his pants leg before curling up comfortably with a purr.

Zhang Yi stroked the cat's soft fur. Between him, Uncle You, and the demonic cat Huahua, they had a formidable fighting force. The enemy had no idea that Huahua and Uncle You were part of his hidden arsenal. If he could get Fatty Xu to join the fight, their chances would be even better.

"No rush, it's only a matter of time," Zhang Yi thought with a smile, petting Huahua's head. He was confident that the soldiers from West Hill Base wouldn't get along peacefully with the villagers of Xu Family Town.

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Ling Feng had gone back to fetch more explosives, leaving most of the soldiers stationed in Xudong Village. Following Ling Feng's orders to prepare for a long-term battle, Shi Dayong called over Fatty Xu and Xu Dongtang.

Shi Dayong instructed them, "We're going to stay here for a while. Make sure to clear out some houses for us to live in. And remember, you need to prepare meals for sixty-five people every day!"

Fatty Xu's heart sank. Sixty-five people? He had seen these soldiers eat before, and each one consumed enough for five villagers. In the post-apocalyptic world, the residents of Xu Family Town were barely scraping by, doing everything they could to stretch their food supplies. They couldn't afford to waste a single grain. But with sixty-five soldiers eating so much, their food wouldn't last long.

Xu Dongtang's expression also changed. After a moment of hesitation, he forced a smile and said, "Of course! It's an honor for Xu Family Town to have your guidance."

"But when do you think you'll be able to deal with that murderer Zhang Yi?"

Xu Dongtang had initially thought that the soldiers from West Hill Base were there to take down Zhang Yi. Once they did, they would leave. He never expected Zhang Yi to hold off their attacks. Now, he just hoped West Hill Base would speed up their assault.

Shi Dayong responded coldly, "The timing and actions are military secrets! Just focus on providing us with what we need."

"Remember, we're here to avenge you, after all."

Shi Dayong's towering presence and authoritative tone left Xu Dongtang speechless, nodding in agreement. After Shi Dayong left, Xu Dongtang straightened up and ordered Fatty Xu, "Chunlei, build more snow houses for our West Hill guests. Make sure you do a good job!"

He then summoned the other village chiefs and instructed them to prepare food for the soldiers. The villagers, eager to please, offered up their best supplies, hoping to leave a good impression on the soldiers.

Fatty Xu watched all of this with growing concern. But he had learned to keep his thoughts to himself; no one would listen to him anyway.

"To them, no matter how strong I am, I'm still just a useless fat otaku!" Fatty Xu thought bitterly, deciding to focus on protecting himself and Xu Lili's family.

...

Back in his shelter, Zhang Yi set up a rotation of guards to monitor the surveillance equipment, ensuring that West Hill Base wouldn't launch a surprise attack while he slept. He was certain their next move would come from the same direction as before, so he kept his cameras focused on the small hill.

While the high-definition cameras couldn't capture clear images from two kilometers away in the blizzard, any significant movement of heavy explosives would cause enough noise to be detected. To ensure nothing was missed, Zhang Yi assigned Lu Keran, the most reliable person in his group, to keep watch, accompanied by Huahua. The cat's keen senses made it a perfect observer.

Huahua, ever so perceptive, agreed to the task in exchange for several boxes of dried fish. When Zhang Yi wasn't keeping watch himself, Lu Keran and Huahua took over. However, that night, West Hill Base didn't make any moves against the shelter. Although a night raid would have been effective, the above-ground floors of the shelter were completely empty, and the soldiers, no matter how fit, couldn't throw explosives with precision in the dark.

At dawn, Zhang Yi was awakened by Huahua's cries. He quickly got up from the sofa where he had been sleeping in his clothes, ready to respond to any sudden changes. Rushing to the surveillance monitors, he noticed some activity near the small hill.

"Trying to attack me while I'm asleep? How sneaky!" Zhang Yi muttered. Ling Feng planned to take advantage of Zhang Yi's deep sleep at dawn to launch an assault. Though unsure if it would work, it was worth a shot.

Zhang Yi noticed the movement and ran upstairs. Preparing a bundle of 500 kilograms of explosives took time and precision—one misstep could turn the dozen people on-site into ashes. The demolition team members were extremely careful, each carrying 50 kilograms of TNT to the target location, setting up the detonators, and configuring the timed explosions.

"Let's make sure our aim is precise!" Ling Feng joked to Shi Dayong, who was beside him. "If we miss, I'll have to go back to get more explosives!"

Shi Dayong laughed. "Relax, boss. I got first place in grenade throwing back in the military competitions!" The two seemed relaxed. They had found a way to deal with the shelter, holding Zhang Yi's life in their hands. To them, once the fortress was breached, Zhang Yi would be easy prey.

From his second-floor position, Zhang Yi used binoculars to observe the small hill. Hidden behind one-way glass, Ling Feng and his team could see nothing but darkness and had no way of detecting Zhang Yi's presence. However, Zhang Yi could clearly see their positions, about 2,400 meters away.

They knew Zhang Yi was a deadly sniper, so they kept a safe distance, unaware that his sniping was far more than just precise—it was enhanced by his Superhuman powers, boosting both range and power.

With the Dimensional Gate fully restored, Zhang Yi was ready to strike back. But he didn't act hastily; opening a window now would expose the shelter to further damage from an explosion. He waited for the enemy to make the first move.

Zhang Yi continued to watch the small hill, and Ling Feng, sensing something, glanced in Zhang Yi's direction as if their gazes met through the glass. "What an incredible intuition!" Zhang Yi thought, squinting slightly.

Ling Feng smirked, folding his arms. "He's watching us!" Shi Dayong and Zheng Xuerong followed his gaze. Ling Feng's instincts were frighteningly accurate, even sensing a watchful presence from such a distance.

"What's he doing? Waiting to die? Or making a last desperate struggle?" Zheng Xuerong asked. Her icy blue eyes made her look like a mixed-race individual despite her Asian appearance.

"Who cares? He's probably scared, but what good does that do him?" Shi Dayong chuckled, hands in his pockets. "His Superhuman powers can't withstand TNT's blast. All he can do is watch us destroy his house."

Ling Feng added, "If possible, I'd actually like to recruit him into our team! His abilities show great potential." Though their encounter had been brief, Ling Feng was intrigued by Zhang Yi's capabilities.

Shi Dayong frowned. "What about our fallen comrades?"

Ling Feng responded coldly, "Dying in battle is a soldier's fate. Besides, our leader specifically wants him alive. The leader knows how valuable a powerful Superhuman is to our organization."

Hearing the leader's name, Shi Dayong immediately fell silent, unwilling to argue further. He watched as the demolition team assembled another massive bundle of explosives, hoping to damage the shelter as they did yesterday.

Shi Dayong transformed into a snow gorilla, and he and Ling Feng together hurled the explosives toward the shelter. Zhang Yi watched the giant bundle fly through the air, took a deep breath, and extended his right hand. The explosives hadn't even traveled halfway before Zhang Yi made his move. Waiting any longer would be too risky; he didn't want them getting too close.

"Dimensional Gate!" Zhang Yi called out dramatically, glad no one was around to witness his corny battle cry. A massive, invisible gate opened above the shelter, and though intangible, Zhang Yi could clearly sense its presence.

This time, he wasn't absorbing the explosives. He had learned that his Dimensional Space couldn't handle such a large-scale blast. Instead, he released the previously stored explosive energy from his

space. The force erupted from the Dimensional Gate, creating a powerful shockwave that sent the incoming explosives flying back in the direction they came from.

Ling Feng and his team's smiles vanished instantly.

"Take cover!" Ling Feng shouted, diving to the ground. The 500-kilogram TNT bundle, propelled by the blast wave, flew back toward the small hill, rolling on the ground.

Thanks to TNT's stability, the impact didn't trigger an immediate explosion, but the timed detonator ensured it would go off within seconds. Moments later, an enormous fireball engulfed the area, melting all the snow within a kilometer radius. The heatwave reached the hilltop in an instant, flinging several soldiers who hadn't taken cover.

They were the lucky ones. Further down the hill, more soldiers had been lying in wait, ready to storm the shelter. They were just a few hundred meters from the blast site. The explosion's fire and shockwave swept outwards, incinerating everything in its path. Protective suits, body armor, weapons—all were reduced to ash in the intense heat. Flesh and blood charred in an instant.

The blazing fire swept across the landscape, wiping out nearly all the ambushed special forces team members. Zhang Yi watched from a distance, smiling at the unexpectedly effective outcome. He had only intended to deflect the explosives away from his shelter, but the resulting counterattack had decimated many of the enemy soldiers.

"Hot weapons are indeed powerful!" Zhang Yi marveled, laughing. "But I use them better than they do!"

Zhang Yi had only released a portion of the stored energy; the primary damage was caused by the TNT itself. The success of this experiment confirmed that he could continue using this method to counter their attacks. Unless the enemy was willing to lose more soldiers, this tactic would be off the table.

The explosion's heat raised the temperature on the small hill to unimaginable levels. At the base of the hill, a massive ice sheet suddenly cracked, and Zheng Xuerong staggered to her feet, visibly weakened. She had managed to create an ice shield in time, absorbing much of the heat and saving her comrades from death. However, maintaining the ice shield had drained her considerably.

Ling Feng broke through the ice, climbed the hill, and was stunned by the scene below. The others emerged to survey the aftermath of the explosion, all dumbfounded by the devastation before them.

What they had planned to do—detonate the explosives near the shelter—had failed spectacularly. Instead, the TNT had been blown back towards them, unleashing its destructive power upon their own forces.

This operation wasn't just a failure; it was a catastrophic loss. Many special forces soldiers died by their own explosives. What had seemed like a foolproof strategy had turned into their downfall.

Ling Feng stared at the charred remains of his comrades, trembling. These were his brothers, people who had survived the apocalypse together, only to die in the blink of an eye due to their own plan.

"No!" Ling Feng roared in anguish, his eyes filled with rage and grief. Shi Dayong dropped to his knees, smashing the ground in fury.

They had only themselves to blame; Zhang Yi had merely turned their own strategy against them in the most devastating way possible.

Chapter 278: Strength of Captain-Level Superhumans

In the recent battle, the ACE Special Forces, including three modified Superhumans, suffered 23 casualties. It was laughably tragic. These were elite warriors, unmatched in individual and coordinated combat skills, destined to achieve great things in the apocalypse. Yet, they died most ridiculously—blown up by their own explosives.

From beginning to end, they never even saw what Zhang Yi looked like.

Life is fragile. It doesn't matter if you're a prodigy or someone with high status; in death, you're just another worthless corpse.

Zhang Yi watched from afar. The area was ablaze, making it impossible to determine the full extent of the damage inflicted on West Hill Base. He could only wait and see their next move to make a rough assessment.

On Ling Feng's side, the atmosphere was unbearably tense. Ling Feng's expression was fierce, like a wild beast ready to devour anyone in sight.

"What the hell was that power just now?" Ling Feng asked, glaring at Academician Wu. His face remained calm, but his barely contained fury was palpable.

The esteemed captain of the ACE Special Forces had led a mission, expecting to end the fight in just three hours and capture Zhang Yi alive. Yet, after days, they still hadn't breached the shelter. Instead, they lost many elite soldiers. Each fallen warrior was a precious asset to West Hill Base, nearly irreplaceable. Ling Feng's pride was in tatters.

They had exhausted their latest strategy, only to see it backfire. What now? Would they resort to a suicide mission to manually detonate the explosives? Even that would be a foolish move, as Zhang Yi's counterattacks were formidable. Plus, no one was willing to be a sacrificial pawn.

Academician Wu adjusted his glasses and analyzed, "Based on our previous assumptions, his space ability can absorb attacks and then redirect them. Shen Hong and his team were defeated this way. The energy from the last explosion was partially absorbed, and Zhang Yi used it to repel the incoming explosives."

Ling Feng took a deep breath. "So, what can we do to avoid being affected by his power?"

Facing Ling Feng's intense gaze, Academician Wu coughed awkwardly. "Based on my calculations, most of the explosive energy was indeed absorbed. If all 500 kilograms of TNT had been detonated normally, it would have completely destroyed a wall. Zhang Yi likely stored some of the blast's energy and used only a fraction of it to deflect our explosives."

"This approach won't work anymore."

Ling Feng, though expecting this answer, couldn't help but grimace when hearing it confirmed by a professional. Everyone else looked equally troubled. Nothing seemed to work. Was Zhang Yi really that difficult to deal with?

Ling Feng forced himself to stay calm. He was furious that he didn't have a missile on hand—otherwise, he would have obliterated Zhang Yi's shelter and ended this nightmare. But even standard missiles would only destroy the structures above ground; they wouldn't touch the more fortified underground levels.

Contemplating their next move, Ling Feng pondered aloud, "What if we dug our way underground and attacked from below? We could plant enough explosives to send the whole place sky-high!"

Academician Wu shook his head. "Typically, apocalypse shelters are built underground, with their subterranean parts much stronger than the above-ground structures. Below, there's no need for aesthetics or lighting; only durability matters. If we can't breach the top, attacking from below is even harder."

Ling Feng's resolve didn't waver. "We're not afraid of challenges; we're afraid of failing the mission!"

Academician Wu hesitated before replying, "But with our current resources, this isn't feasible. We lack the heavy machinery used centuries ago. Even breaking through the frozen ground by hand is an impossible task. And if we're not careful, Zhang Yi will detect our tunneling efforts, making it all for nothing."

Shi Dayong suddenly suggested sinisterly, "Isn't Xu Family Town home to over a thousand people? We could force them to dig!"

Academician Wu objected, "Even if they have the numbers, asking them to dig in this extreme cold with primitive tools would be a death sentence! If not properly managed, the noise alone would alert Zhang Yi."

Shi Dayong fell silent, clenching his fists and glaring hatefully in the direction of the shelter. Ling Feng, however, still hadn't completely abandoned the idea. His only goal was to complete the mission, even if it required sacrifices.

As the smoke cleared, Zhang Yi looked outside. The snow had melted completely, and many houses and dead trees were burning. The surrounding air was unusually warm, with the intense heat vaporizing any water from the melting snow.

Cloud Manor, once Tianhai City's most luxurious villa district, was now half-destroyed by multiple explosions, with only a few solitary villas still standing.

"Now that your turn is over, it's my turn!" Zhang Yi muttered, confirming the enemy's failed attack. He was not one to let others attack without retaliation.

"Dimensional Gate, open!"

Zhang Yi positioned the Dimensional Gate in front of the window and ordered Xiao Ai to open it quickly. He then set up his newly modified heavy sniper rifle and aimed at the group two kilometers away on the small hill.

Ling Feng and his team, still reeling from their losses, were strategizing on how to breach the shelter. Suddenly, an urgent voice came through the radio.

"Captain, he's aiming at you with a sniper rifle!"

Ling Feng's eyes narrowed just as he felt a rush of wind. Time seemed to slow as he spotted a bullet, enhanced by Superhuman powers, speeding toward his forehead.

"Whoosh!" Ling Feng tilted his head, and the bullet grazed his ear. He turned his gaze towards the shelter and caught sight of Zhang Yi behind the window.

Ling Feng's eyes were bloodshot with hatred. "Zhang Yi!!"

Zhang Yi, seeing Ling Feng's reaction, was impressed. "He truly deserves to be their leader!" Though disappointed that his shot missed, Zhang Yi wasn't surprised. Many fighters at West Hill Base had Superhuman abilities that enhanced their physical strength, speed, or durability.

Still, Ling Feng's strength far exceeded that of Liu Ziyang, Shen Hong, and others Zhang Yi had faced. "He's a tough one!"

Wasting no time, Zhang Yi shifted his aim towards the next most obvious target—the giant snow gorilla, Shi Dayong. Ling Feng warned his team, "Watch out, sniper!" No one expected Zhang Yi to be able to snipe from such a distance.

Despite Ling Feng's warning, Shi Dayong, lacking agility, couldn't dodge in time. Blood splattered as the bullet pierced his forehead, but instead of collapsing, Shi Dayong yelled in pain and pulled out the bullet embedded in his skull.

"Damn, that hurt!" Shi Dayong growled, his monstrous defenses proving as tough as a tank. These core members of West Hill Base's special forces were far from easy prey. Ordinary weapons were almost useless against them.

Before Zhang Yi could fire a third shot, Ling Feng and his team had already taken cover, disappearing from his line of sight. A sharp whistle pierced the air as two sniper bullets came at Zhang Yi from different directions.

Both shots were swallowed by Zhang Yi's Dimensional Space. Without a moment's hesitation, Zhang Yi redirected the bullets back to their original shooters. The enemy snipers, elite marksmen, were hit by their own bullets, each shot returning with deadly precision, striking their chests.

Both snipers died without ever realizing that the bullets that killed them were fired from their own guns.

Chapter 279: Extraordinary Physique

Zhang Yi continued using his sniper rifle to search for targets. However, the remaining soldiers were elite fighters; as soon as they realized Zhang Yi was targeting them, they immediately hid. Ling Feng had warned them about Zhang Yi's deadly accuracy, but they never expected his sniper rifle to have such a lethal range, even from over two kilometers away.

After scanning the area, Zhang Yi found no more targets, feeling a twinge of disappointment—not because he didn't kill more soldiers, but because ordinary grunts posed no real threat to him. His true

target was the Superhuman leaders, especially those leading the team. Unfortunately, one of his bullets had been dodged by the short captain, and the other had been withstood by the beast-like snow gorilla!

"Even with a heavy sniper, the bullet's power is greatly diminished over such a long distance," Zhang Yi thought. "But I wouldn't want to fight them up close."

In a one-on-one battle, Zhang Yi wouldn't fear anyone. With the Dimensional Gate at his disposal, anyone attempting to strike him at close range would be dragged into his alternate space. Even Superhumans, trapped inside the near-stagnant time of his dimensional space, would either suffocate or suffer a mental breakdown. However, given the sheer number of enemies, Zhang Yi chose to play it safe.

As Zhang Yi contemplated how to eliminate the opposing Superhumans, his eyes caught sight of something peculiar on the ground in the distance. A sudden plume of dust shot up, as if something was speeding toward him. Zhang Yi couldn't see exactly what it was, but he could feel its presence. The object moved too fast for the naked eye to track.

"What the heck is that?" Zhang Yi muttered just as the object slammed into the shelter's wall at full speed.

"Boom!" The impact was loud, and Zhang Yi, lying by the window, felt a slight vibration. The shelter's walls were incredibly sturdy, so anything that could cause even a minor tremor had to be immensely powerful. Looking down, Zhang Yi saw that the attacker wasn't an object—it was a man.

Wearing a white combat suit, with a buzz cut and dark skin, this man was none other than the short captain Zhang Yi had aimed for earlier.

"This guy's a total freak!" Zhang Yi remarked, watching the man below. Ling Feng, the captain of the West Hill Base assault team, looked up and locked eyes with Zhang Yi. In Ling Feng's eyes, there was fury and arrogance; in Zhang Yi's eyes, there was only cold indifference, as if everything unfolding was just a game within his control.

Zhang Yi adjusted his rifle, aiming directly at Ling Feng's head. At this range, even if his skull were made of steel, it wouldn't withstand a sniper bullet. But before Zhang Yi could pull the trigger, Ling Feng vanished like a ghost. His speed was unlike anything Zhang Yi had ever seen, comparable only to the rapid movements of insects.

The shelter's AI, Xiao Ai, chimed in, "The shelter wall has sustained damage: 0.028%."

Zhang Yi peered at Ling Feng standing outside the shelter. "This guy's a real monster. Not only does he have incredible speed, but his strength is also insane—no wonder he's the captain of the West Hill Base assault team."

Ling Feng pointed at Zhang Yi from afar, shouting, "I'll shatter your turtle shell sooner or later!"

Zhang Yi smirked, taunting him, "Come on, then!" He fired another shot at Ling Feng, but Ling Feng's movements were too fast, like a phantom. Even Zhang Yi couldn't keep track of him. Ling Feng's incredible speed made him both a formidable foe and a tricky target.

Fortunately for Zhang Yi, he was safe inside the shelter. Meeting Ling Feng outside would be extremely dangerous. It wasn't that Zhang Yi couldn't defeat Ling Feng; his extraordinary speed was both an asset and a vulnerability. If Zhang Yi could predict Ling Feng's attack trajectory, he could open a Dimensional Gate in his path, trapping Ling Feng in the alternate space where he would be at Zhang Yi's mercy. However, if Ling Feng avoided the gate, the tables could turn.

Zhang Yi considered a head-to-head fight between them to be a fifty-fifty chance. But why leave the shelter when he could stay invincible inside?

Zhang Yi continued shooting, not expecting to kill Ling Feng but wanting to test the limits of his abilities. After dodging several shots, Ling Feng seemed to realize Zhang Yi's intent. Ling Feng glared fiercely at Zhang Yi before vanishing from sight in a flash.

Zhang Yi scanned the battlefield for more enemies to eliminate, but the ACE Special Forces were already well-informed and wouldn't easily expose themselves. With no good targets, Zhang Yi wondered, "Did they retreat, or are they waiting for another chance to strike?"

Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow. After such a resounding failure, it was unlikely the enemy would try the same strategy again. This was a battle of wits and stamina, and Zhang Yi knew he had the upper hand. His shelter could protect him indefinitely, but how long could West Hill Base keep pouring resources and manpower into attacking it?

Ultimately, this was a battle of endurance—who would break first?

Settling back comfortably at the window, Zhang Yi adjusted his sniper scope and aimed at the charred corpses at the base of the hill. If the special forces attempted to retrieve their fallen comrades, they'd have to be ready to face death.

Ling Feng and his team eventually decided to retreat to Xu Family Town to rest and reassess their strategy. The day's failure had dealt a severe blow to their morale, but Ling Feng wasn't the type to act rashly. Seeing that the battle wasn't going in their favor, he knew it was time to rethink their approach.

"Let's fall back to Xu Family Town and regroup. We need to devise a new plan!" Ling Feng ordered, determined to find a way to breach Zhang Yi's defenses.

Zheng Xuerong let out a sigh of relief. "You scared me! When I saw you charge in earlier, I thought you'd lost your mind."

Ling Feng shook his head. "You really think I rushed in recklessly? I was testing the shelter's wall strength."

Raising his fist, Ling Feng continued, "I've discovered a new method that might damage the walls."

Zheng Xuerong stared at him in disbelief. "Captain, you're not seriously suggesting using your fists, are you?"

Everyone at West Hill Base knew Ling Feng's strength was terrifying, but breaking through the shelter's thick walls with just his fists would take an eternity. Ling Feng, however, was resolute.

"If that's the only viable option, we have to try it!" Ling Feng declared. "Our guns and explosives have lost their effectiveness. The simplest methods might just be the most effective."

He added, "Think about it—why didn't Zhang Yi absorb the explosives and our demolition team when we set them up?"

The others pondered Ling Feng's words.

Academician Wu analyzed, "It's true. If his ability could swallow anything, he could've taken out our entire demolition team along with the explosives. But he didn't—he waited until we left."

Ling Feng nodded. "Exactly. His ability seems to have limitations, especially when dealing with living beings."

"I charged in to confirm the wall's durability and test his spatial abilities. It turns out that his space manipulation doesn't seem to have any offensive capabilities. It's all defense."

Ling Feng continued, "So, using manpower to destroy the shelter is entirely feasible."

The team quickly pieced together Zhang Yi's capabilities. As experts in Superhuman research, they analyzed his powers with precision.

Shi Dayong, excited, said, "This is doable! We've got plenty of Superhumans with enhanced strength. We'll take turns smashing that wall until it falls!"

He turned to Liang Yue. "Teacher Liang, your swordsmanship is incredible. We'll strike together when the time comes!"

Liang Yue raised her eyebrows slightly and said softly, "Do whatever you think is best. I have no objections." She had her own thoughts, but for now, she played along with Ling Feng and the others.

Academician Wu warned, "Are you all serious? Even as Superhumans with immense strength, breaking down that wall with just fists and swords would take ages."

Ling Feng stared at the black fortress, unmoved. "If that's the only way, then we'll do it, no matter how long it takes. Whether for the future of West Hill Base or to avenge our fallen brothers, we won't stop."

Ling Feng knew that Zhang Yi's resources were critical for alleviating West Hill Base's supply crisis. Even a slim chance was worth pursuing.

"Let's go back!" Ling Feng said, feeling the pangs of hunger. He glanced at the burning bodies of his fallen comrades.

"What about our brothers' remains?" Shi Dayong asked, his voice heavy with grief.

Ling Feng, cautious, replied, "Going back now would only lead to another ambush. Be patient. We'll collect their remains once we've taken the shelter."

Chapter 280: New Information

Ling Feng led his special forces team back to Xu Family Town. They had departed with high spirits, but returned utterly defeated. As the group arrived, Xu Dongtang and the other village leaders rushed to greet them.

Xu Dongtang smiled obsequiously and asked, "Captain Ling, did you manage to kill that scoundrel Zhang Yi?"

The other village representatives chimed in, "Yeah, I heard that huge explosion. Did it blow his whole house away?"

"Did you blast Zhang Yi to ashes?"

"As expected of Captain Ling, you achieve great victories the moment you take action. Impressive!"

"Captain Ling is mighty, and so is West Hill Base!"

...

The villagers' flattery poured out, but the more the special forces heard, the darker their expressions grew. They had just suffered a major defeat, losing nearly half their comrades, and were already in a foul mood. The villagers' fawning remarks felt more like mockery.

Shi Dayong snapped, "Shut up!" His voice was so loud and forceful that everyone fell silent, staring at him in stunned silence. Realizing their mistake, the villagers quickly quieted down.

Ling Feng stepped forward and addressed Xu Dongtang and the others, "We're hungry. Prepare more food than usual!" After giving his order, Ling Feng walked toward their temporary accommodations.

Shi Dayong glared at Xu Dongtang and warned, "We fought a hard battle today, so make sure the food is good. Got it?"

"Y-yes, of course!" Xu Dongtang and the other villagers didn't dare to defy their orders; after all, every soldier was armed. But as soon as the special forces were out of earshot, the villagers couldn't help but murmur among themselves.

"Looks like they lost."

"What? They couldn't even handle Zhang Yi?"

"Who knows? Zhang Yi is a ruthless man with wicked methods!"

"But they're the regular army! Look at all their gear; they're armed to the teeth. How can so many of them lose to one person? It's embarrassing!"

...

The villagers' whispers were quiet, but the soldiers, with their enhanced hearing, heard every word. Their faces burned with shame, but they could only pretend not to hear. They had already lost the battle; arguing with the villagers would only make them look worse.

Shi Dayong grumbled to Ling Feng, "These villagers are getting too bold. Let me teach them a lesson!"

Ling Feng glanced at him coldly. "No need! We still need them to supply us with food and labor. If we deal with them, we'll do it after we've dealt with Zhang Yi."

As he walked into the snow hut, Ling Feng added, "West Hill Base also needs additional labor. When the time comes, we'll have them contribute to the organization!"

Shi Dayong nodded. "Lucky for them! Back in the day, I'd have killed a few by now."

West Hill Base's soldiers were all battle-hardened. Although none of them had been in actual war before the apocalypse, they had killed countless people. In the early days, many had tried to force their way into West Hill Base's shelter, and the soldiers, following Chen Xinian's orders, had eliminated every intruder. Later, when The Fourth Life Pod had riots due to resource distribution, it was these same soldiers who suppressed the uprisings.

Xu Dongtang, surrounded by anxious villagers, tried to calm them down. The villagers were growing increasingly worried.

"Mayor, didn't you say they'd be gone in a couple of days? It's been much longer now!"

"I don't think they're leaving anytime soon. They lost the battle, so it looks like it's going to drag on!"

"And these soldiers eat so much. One soldier eats more in a day than my entire family does!"

"At this rate, Xu Family Town can't keep up!"

Xu Dongtang frowned, feeling uneasy. To maintain order, he reassured the villagers to stay calm. Among the crowd, Fatty Xu could only sigh helplessly. Everything Zhang Yi had warned him about was coming true. Xu Dongtang had welcomed these soldiers, but now it was clear that getting rid of them would be far more difficult.

Fatty Xu went home and immediately called Zhang Yi. "Boss, those West Hill Base soldiers came back in bad shape. There's only half of them left. Did you take them out?"

Through Fatty Xu's report, Zhang Yi learned that the West Hill soldiers had retreated. He put away his sniper rifle and closed the window.

"Yes, I sent them packing. How do they look? Are their spirits still intact?"

Judging by their expressions, Zhang Yi wanted to gauge their next move. Understanding the opponent's mindset was crucial.

"They look like beaten dogs, all gloomy and miserable," Fatty Xu said. "And as soon as they got back, they demanded food. Shameless!"

Fatty Xu also felt sorry for the villagers' food supplies. Although Xu Family Town was known for agriculture and fishing, each household only had enough to last a year or so. Feeding a group of ravenous soldiers who demanded the best was becoming unsustainable.

Zhang Yi chuckled, "This is just the beginning. For now, they're still being somewhat polite to you. But over time, they might stop seeing you as people at all."

"Fatty, how's your history knowledge?"

"Not great. Why are you asking, Boss?" Fatty Xu scratched his head.

Zhang Yi said, "I just want to remind you that these West Hill soldiers are ruthless, with no regard for life. Throughout history, whenever there's been extreme food scarcity, soldiers have often resorted to using people as food."

"Xu Family Town is full of people, isn't it? I'd call it a large meat processing plant."

Zhang Yi's words sent chills down Fatty Xu's spine. "Boss, stop! That's terrifying!"

"They wouldn't actually go that far, would they?" Fatty Xu glanced at his own chubby body, feeling like he was just a fat pig in a meat factory.

Zhang Yi replied with a smirk, "Who knows? If I were in your shoes, I'd have fled by now!"

Fatty Xu hesitated, unsure of his next move. Zhang Yi encouraged him, "Don't worry. As a Superhuman, they'll think twice before messing with you. But if you ever feel things are getting dangerous, come to me. I've got your back!"

Zhang Yi wanted Fatty Xu to stay put as his informant, so he reassured him to keep his spirits up.

Fatty Xu, feeling reassured, agreed. "Alright, Boss. I'll stick it out. But if things get really bad, you've got to help me!"

"Of course. Keep an eye on their movements and report any changes to me. Understood?"

"Absolutely!"

After hanging up, Zhang Yi asked Xiao Ai to display the 3D structure of the shelter. "What's the external damage today?"

Xiao Ai highlighted the damaged area. "Damage from gunfire: 0.00001%. Damage from an unidentified impact: 0.028%."

Zhang Yi zoomed in on the unidentified impact, revealing a shallow fist mark. "Ling Feng, huh? What a monster!"

Zhang Yi couldn't help but be impressed. Ling Feng, the captain of the ACE Special Forces, was the strongest Superhuman Zhang Yi had encountered so far, with monstrous speed and strength.

"Could West Hill Base have a way to enhance Superhuman abilities?" Zhang Yi wondered, recalling Liu Ziyang, who had undergone forced mutation at the cost of his health and lifespan. He speculated that Ling Feng's immense power might also be the result of some modification.

For a brief moment, Zhang Yi was tempted by the idea of enhancing his own powers. But he quickly dismissed the thought. It wasn't worth risking his health and safety.

Zhang Yi returned to the basement, where Zhou Ke'er immediately rushed to check on him. "Zhang Yi, are you hurt?"

"I'm fine. They're the ones who got hurt," Zhang Yi replied with a smile, his spirits lifting as he looked at the women around him.

When Yang Siya brought him beer and snacks, Zhang Yi asked Lu Keran, "Our shelter's outer walls took some damage. Can we repair them?"

Lu Keran thought for a moment. "I can fix the high-strength alloy, but I'll need some special materials. And even if we get the materials, repairing the wall means going outside, which isn't possible right now."

Zhang Yi reassured her, "As long as it's fixable, that's good enough. We're not in a rush."

Everyone relaxed, enjoying a brief moment of calm in the aftermath of the battle. As they shared lunch, Yang Xinxin's phone suddenly beeped, catching everyone's attention.

She checked the message calmly and handed the phone to Zhang Yi. "It's from Liang Yue. She says she and her students need our help and wants to talk."

Seeing the name "Liang Yue," Zhang Yi immediately thought of the Superhuman with the Tang sword he had encountered. It seemed Liang Yue had joined forces with West Hill Base.