

Ice Age 331

Chapter 331: Private Tutor

Zhang Yi remarked, "Teacher Liang, with your skills, you could have had an easier life. I didn't expect you to be struggling so much... Truly a fine example of a People's Teacher!"

Zhang Yi praised her with a smile.

Liang Yue frowned slightly, feeling a bit uncomfortable.

Though Zhang Yi's words seemed complimentary, she couldn't shake the feeling that he was calling her foolish, as if only an idiot would be this self-sacrificing.

Without disputing this, she slowly sat down on the sofa.

The warm room and soft cushions eased her tension significantly.

Yang Siyah walked over, carrying two steaming cups of coffee, and placed one in front of Liang Yue with a smile.

"Please, have some."

"Thank you!"

Liang Yue lifted the cup, feeling a rush of warmth at the rising steam.

Seeing the foam on top, she realized it was a cappuccino, a drink she normally avoided for the sake of keeping fit, preferring espresso instead. But now wasn't the time to be picky, so she took a big sip.

Sweet! It must have at least two lumps of sugar!

Liang Yue thought to herself.

For the first time, she didn't find the sweetness revolting; instead, it made her feel almost tearfully grateful.

Taking a slow sip of coffee, Zhang Yi finally asked, "So, what brings you here?"

Holding her coffee cup, Liang Yue looked at Zhang Yi intently and said, "We agreed before that I'd help you retake West Hill Base, and in return, you'd provide shelter and food for me and my students."

"Now that West Hill Base is wiped out, and we have shelter ready in Xu Family Town, I'd like you to supply us with more food."

She sighed slightly and added, "You know, most of my students have been pampered all their lives. It's going to take them time to learn to forage or catch fish in the Lu River."

Zhang Yi immediately countered, "So they didn't suffer enough hardship at West Hill Base, huh?"

Liang Yue paused, shaking her head. "Let's not get into that. I just need enough food to get them through this rough patch. I'll figure out the rest."

Zhang Yi nodded, "Of course."

Right in front of her, he opened the Dimensional Gate.

And then—

"Whoosh—"

A mountain of food cascaded onto the floor, piling up over a meter high!

Bread, bags of steamed buns, spicy sticks, chicken feet...

Zhang Yi's Spatial Storage held plenty of things he'd once grabbed without much thought, including many foods he didn't particularly enjoy himself.

Picking out a portion, he set it aside for Liang Yue.

Pointing to the pile, Zhang Yi said, "This should be enough for you and those dozen students for half a month. Take it; this is part of our agreement."

Seeing the mountain of food, Liang Yue's face lit up with joy. "Thank you, Zhang Yi!"

"It's what you're owed."

Zhang Yi took a sip of coffee and smiled, his expression gentlemanly.

Liang Yue breathed a sigh of relief.

She had been anxious coming here, fearing Zhang Yi might renege on their deal.

After all, with West Hill Base gone, she had no leverage over him.

Zhang Yi honoring his word so freely filled her with a sense of appreciation toward him.

Zhang Yi grabbed a few travel bags, asking Yang Siyah to help pack the food.

Liang Yue had initially intended to stay a bit longer and enjoy the warm, sweet coffee, but staying too long felt awkward, like she was taking advantage of the warmth.

So, she knelt to pack the food into the bags.

Watching her, Zhang Yi suddenly asked, "Must be hard for a woman to take care of so many teenagers alone, huh?"

Liang Yue paused mid-motion.

He had struck a chord.

Since the apocalypse began, she had poured her heart and strength into protecting her students.

To them, she was a pillar of support. But who had ever cared if she was holding up well?

In truth, she was just a young woman in her twenties who, at times, also needed comfort.

Looking up, Liang Yue gave Zhang Yi a grateful smile.

"Thank you! But I can't abandon those students. If I did, they'd never survive in this world."

Liang Yue sighed softly, "I couldn't forgive myself for that."

Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow.

He understood the undertone of her words.

Liang Yue's effort in protecting her students wasn't necessarily because she cherished them all.

What she truly upheld was her duty as a warrior and as a teacher.

People could die for their beliefs.

Once one betrays those beliefs without justifying it to themselves, living can feel worse than death.

A thought flashed through Zhang Yi's mind.

If I could somehow get rid of her students in a way that seemed natural, she'd probably be overjoyed.

Yes, she'd outwardly grieve, but deep down, she'd finally feel at peace, able to move on to a new life.

"If there's ever a chance, getting rid of those hangers-on wouldn't be a bad idea," Zhang Yi mused to himself.

He disliked Liang Yue's students primarily because of Yang Xinxin and Lu Keran.

Back at Tianqing Academy, those kids had used violence against Yang and Lu.

To Zhang Yi, they were no good, a waste of food and potential risks for the future.

Finding a way to eliminate them would be best.

Looking at Liang Yue, Zhang Yi understood that it wasn't time to act against those students just yet.

He didn't want her to resent him.

He wanted this strong, innocent teacher to be his.

"You're too indulgent with them. They're mostly adults now, aren't they? Yet they're still clinging to you like babies."

"Liang Yue, what will you do when this food runs out? Are you going to support them all by yourself?"

Liang Yue felt her head throbbing from Zhang Yi's words.

Those students had always been spoiled.

She had thought their suffering at West Hill Base would teach them self-sufficiency.

But when sent to chip ice and fish in Lu River, they cut their hands open.

When asked to patch up the snow huts, they somehow managed to make big holes in the walls.

Not only that, they complained that the clothes and blankets left by the villagers were worn by the dead, calling them unlucky and filthy, refusing to wear them.

After three months of the apocalypse, who had the luxury to wash clothes and blankets?

Liang Yue's brow furrowed, unsure of what to do.

She could only hope they would mature one day, lightening her load.

Watching her, Zhang Yi suddenly spoke gently, "Liang Yue, you're working too hard. Why don't I help you?"

Liang Yue's eyes widened in surprise, staring at Zhang Yi in disbelief.

"What... What did you just say?"

She had to ask again to confirm.

Zhang Yi smiled, "I said, I can supply food for you all."

"Everyone knows by now that I've got plenty of supplies. Food is the least of my worries, even with a dozen more mouths to feed."

Zhang Yi sighed.

"Seeing you struggle like this, I just can't sit by and watch—I'm too kind for that!"

Liang Yue felt a flash of joy but quickly grew cautious.

She knew Zhang Yi's character well enough to be wary of any favors from him.

"Let me ask first: If you help us, do you expect us to do something for you?"

A mysterious smile appeared on Zhang Yi's face.

"You're mistaken. I'm not helping 'you all.' I'm helping you. And I'll need a fair exchange for the food."

Liang Yue relaxed; this was the Zhang Yi she knew.

"Go ahead, tell me what you need from me!"

Zhang Yi chuckled and pointed his finger at her with a mischievous grin.

"I want you."

Liang Yue froze, and then, a deep blush spread across her face as she jumped to her feet, backing up several steps.

“You... You’re going too far!”

She was trembling with anger, pointing at Zhang Yi in both shame and fury.

Nearby, Yang Siyah noticed the commotion and couldn’t help but look over.

“Does Zhang Yi have feelings for Teacher Liang too?”

A surge of anxiety filled Yang Siyah’s heart.

Liang Yue pointed at Zhang Yi, gritting her teeth as she enunciated, “I would never sell my body!”

Zhang Yi’s mouth curled into a wicked grin.

Watching her reaction, almost like an angry little kitten, gave him immense satisfaction.

He leaned back on the sofa, looking at her with a confused expression. “I only wanted to ask you to be my tutor and teach me martial arts. How is that indecent?”

“Huh?”

Liang Yue froze, stunned.

A private tutor?

Zhang Yi smacked his forehead, exclaiming in realization, “Oh! So you thought I meant something else!”

“Oh, what’s going on in that head of yours? You’re a People’s Teacher, remember?”

His face was full of mock exasperation, though he was laughing inside.

Sure enough, Liang Yue was left speechless by his teasing.

Realizing she might have misunderstood, she blushed and stammered, “I... I’m sorry. I misunderstood you.”

Zhang Yi feigned anger. “Do you really think I’m that kind of person, Liang Yue? You underestimate me!”

“Fine, be my tutor if you want. If not, no big deal. You can go.”

Zhang Yi waved dismissively, signaling for her to leave.

But Liang Yue was flustered.

This was an opportunity she didn’t want to miss.

If she could earn food just by teaching Zhang Yi martial arts, of course, she was more than willing.

“No, no, I... I’ll do it!”

Seeing Liang Yue’s flustered expression, Zhang Yi laughed internally.

This powerful yet adorably earnest teacher—she was his, without a doubt.

Chapter 332: The Database

Zhang Yi and Liang Yue came to an agreement: she would visit the Shelter every day to teach him martial arts for at least two hours. In return, he'd provide food rations for ten people.

It wasn't a complete ploy. While Zhang Yi indeed wanted to win Liang Yue over to his side, he was genuinely interested in improving his close-combat abilities. His greatest weakness was still his lack of melee strength, and learning from a former high-profile bodyguard was sure to be valuable—possibly even lifesaving in the future.

"Ten people's worth of food, huh?" Liang Yue hesitated.

Including herself and her students, there were sixteen people, so ten rations wouldn't be enough to feed everyone.

"Could you give us a little extra? We have sixteen people in total," Liang Yue requested.

Zhang Yi gave a slight smile. "Ms. Liang, I hope you understand my position. This isn't a one-time supply; it's ten portions of food every day."

"Besides, you wouldn't want your students to become lazy, relying solely on my support to get by, right?"

There was a strategy behind Zhang Yi's approach. First—he couldn't allow the students to be too comfortable. If people are too well-fed, they start thinking more, and those thoughts can often lead to trouble.

Second, by giving them just a bit of hope but never full satisfaction, Zhang Yi could keep Liang Yue and the others firmly under his control.

Liang Yue's face showed a moment of embarrassment at Zhang Yi's words. She'd once proudly declared she'd help her students solve their survival problems, but here she was, needing Zhang Yi's help to feed them. It felt like a slap in the face.

“Fine, ten portions it is,” she decided.

She planned to take some food from Zhang Yi and have her students work to gather the rest, ensuring they wouldn’t struggle too much to survive.

Satisfied, Liang Yue accepted Zhang Yi’s terms. After collecting the food, she returned quickly to Xu Family Town. Her students had already gone hungry for a day, huddled together in a snow hut, and any further delay could mean someone starving to death.

Meanwhile, Zhang Yi pulled a blanket from behind the couch, draped it over himself, and lay back, idly watching TV.

Just then, he heard the sound of a wheelchair rolling.

He looked over to see Lu Keran pushing Yang Xinxin toward him.

Zhang Yi smiled faintly, “You’re a bit late; your teacher just left.”

Yang Xinxin gave a slight smile. “I came because she left.”

“Oh? Don’t you want to chat with your teacher?” Zhang Yi asked.

Yang Xinxin shook her head. “If we’d been here, our presence would’ve affected your negotiations with her.”

Zhang Yi smirked.

If it were a significant decision, he wouldn’t let anyone’s presence influence his thinking.

As she drew closer, Yang Xinxin suddenly asked, “Brother, are you trying to court Ms. Liang?”

Zhang Yi nearly choked on his coffee, almost spilling it out his nose.

“Cough, cough...”

“Why would you ask that out of the blue?” Zhang Yi tried to keep his expression steady.

But his reaction had already given him away.

Honestly, Liang Yue was quite attractive, with her mix of endearing awkwardness and strength. Having her around could be very useful. Shaping her into one of his people was actually a solid option. ♦

Zhang Yi did have such thoughts, but he wouldn’t force them.

Yang Xinxin pouted slightly, while Lu Keran’s eyes flashed with a strange emotion, though she quickly hid it with a laugh.

“Wow, Brother, aren’t you a bit greedy? You already have two sisters, and now you’re eyeing our teacher!” Lu Keran teased.

Yang Xinxin, however, analyzed it seriously: “Considering human history, it’s certainly one of the most effective ways to forge alliances.”

“Ms. Liang is strong, and from a female perspective, she definitely has the ability to attract men.”

“And with her limited intelligence...” She looked at Zhang Yi with a knowing smile. “It’s not surprising you’d be interested, Brother.”

For someone with high intelligence, Yang Xinxin could view things with complete objectivity. To her, it made perfect sense that Zhang Yi would want to bring Liang Yue over to his side.

Zhang Yi felt like he'd found a kindred spirit!

He wasn't interested in playing romantic games—such things could add flavor to life but weren't necessary.

If Liang Yue were just an attractive teacher with a strong sense of justice, Zhang Yi wouldn't have even looked at her twice.

But he was intrigued by her strength, wasn't he?

Zhang Yi spoke plainly to Yang Xinxin and Lu Keran, "You two are sharp, so I'll skip the roundabout talk."

"Liang Yue's combat abilities are strong and useful to me. I want to recruit her as part of our team."

"As for any romantic feelings—those don't exist."

In his mind, everything was about practical value and desire.

Zhang Yi wasn't opposed to something happening with Liang Yue if it could help him secure her loyalty. But that wasn't essential to his plan.

Hearing this, Yang Xinxin was reassured that Zhang Yi remained the level-headed, almost cold-hearted man she knew. She smiled with relief.

"Got it! In that case, go for it, Brother. Xinxin will support you."

She flashed him a bright smile.

"Support me?" Zhang Yi asked with a chuckle.

Yang Xinxin's smile turned mysterious. "We know Ms. Liang better than you do. I know exactly how to convince her to join us."

Zhang Yi coughed. "Actually, there's no need to complicate things. Given what we're offering, it won't be hard to win her over."

Yang Xinxin nodded in agreement but then added, "The hard part is how to deal with those troublesome students of hers!"

On this point, everyone agreed.

Those surviving students had previously mistreated Yang Xinxin, leaving her with no good feelings toward them. To her, they were all burdens.

Zhang Yi shrugged. "For now, let's leave them alone. I don't want to make things too tense with Liang Yue. If she found out I eliminated her students, she'd probably come after me without a second thought."

"There will be a chance," Yang Xinxin said softly.

Her dark eyes gleamed with a sharp, icy edge.

Zhang Yi grinned, "If you have a plan, feel free to act on it—just make sure Liang Yue doesn't find out."

"Understood," Yang Xinxin replied with a nod.

"Oh, by the way, Brother Zhang Yi, there's something else I need to tell you."

She was about to leave but turned back to him.

"Oh? What is it?" Zhang Yi asked, curious.

Yang Xinxin explained, "These past few days, I've been combing through the West Hill Base's information database."

"Since West Hill was originally an official establishment, its equipment is comprehensive, and it holds a massive amount of data. I wanted to see if there was any useful information."

"And it turns out I've found some interesting things. I think you'll be very interested!"

At her words, Zhang Yi immediately sat up. "What kind of information?"

Chen Xinian had once been a high-ranking figure in Tianhai City, so he was bound to know more than Zhang Yi did.

With his limited sources, Zhang Yi urgently wanted to learn more about the apocalypse, as well as the current situation in Tianhai City and surrounding areas.

The battle at West Hill Base had already demonstrated how crucial intelligence was.

Yang Xinxin gave a mysterious smile. "There's too much information; I haven't finished organizing it yet. I just wanted to give you a heads-up."

"But based on what I've gathered so far, I can confirm that West Hill Base isn't the only heavily armed organization in Tianhai City!"

Her gaze turned contemplative. "Brother Zhang Yi, with all the noise we've been making, do you think it might draw attention from other forces?"

Chapter 333: Defense Line Plan

Yang Xinxin's words made Zhang Yi frown slightly, "I know about this already."

He spread his hands, speaking calmly, “In such a huge place as Tianhai City, there can’t be only one powerful armed force like the West Hill Base.”

“After all, this is a massive city with a population of 20 million. Even if only 5% survived, that’s still a million people.”

Yang Xinxin’s smile grew more profound.

“Not all forces are alike. What if there are several forces as strong as the West Hill Base?”

Zhang Yi looked up at the ceiling, where an extravagant chandelier worth tens of millions hung above.

“Surely we’re not unlucky enough to clash with more factions?”

“However,” Zhang Yi suddenly changed his tone, “we don’t look for trouble, but we’re not afraid of it either. If we do encounter other factions, with our current strength, we really don’t have to worry!”

Counting Liang Yue, they had five *Superhumans* in total.

Any force that wanted to be their enemy would have to think carefully.

“I understand.”

Yang Xinxin nodded, “I’ll organize all the information quickly and then hand it over to you, Brother!”

“Mm, thanks for the hard work.”

After Zhang Yi finished speaking, he turned to look at Lu Keran, “Keran, come here for a second.”

Lu Keran pointed to her nose, looking a bit surprised.

“Big Bro, if you need anything from me, just say the word!”

She still felt a bit guilty, feeling that she hadn’t been much help in the recent West Hill battle.

Zhang Yi said to her, “It’s like this. Right now, it’s not just us living at Cloud Manor. Fatty Xu and Uncle You’s family have also moved in, setting up around us.”

“If we encounter another enemy invasion someday, I don’t want to be caught in a situation where we can only defend passively.”

“So I’d like to ask you to help design blueprints for a defensive fortification. Then, we can establish a defensive line around the three families’ homes to fend off enemies.”

Lu Keran looked a little puzzled and said, “Drawing up the plans is easy, but building a large-scale fortification with just us isn’t enough, right? Not to mention the lack of heavy machinery; transporting materials would be very difficult.”

Zhang Yi laughed, “What do you think we’re lacking?”

He counted off on his fingers, “I can handle material transportation. If we need manpower, we’ve got Uncle You. Fatty Xu can control ice and snow, which you could also use.”

“If we need materials cut, we’ll call in Liang Yue. Hua Hua can also help with heavy lifting. Do you still see any issues?”

After thinking it over, Lu Keran couldn’t help but praise, “You’re right! Though we’re few, each of us has a unique skill, so creating an impenetrable defensive line now doesn’t seem impossible!”

Zhang Yi nodded, “You handle the design first. Then, let me know the materials and steps needed, and I’ll take care of the rest.”

“Understood!”

With their new tasks, Lu Keran and Yang Xinxin went back to their workspaces and got to work.

For the next few days, Zhang Yi continued to recuperate.

With Dr. Zhou Ke'er's attentive care and nutritious meals, Zhang Yi's recovery was swift.

Within a few days, his discomfort vanished.

So, he started getting busy in a new area.

In the past month, dealing with the West Hill Base threat, he had neglected Yang Siyah and Zhou Ke'er a bit.

Now, with ample time and energy, he naturally wanted to make it up to the two of them.

...

The next morning during breakfast, Yang Siyah and Zhou Ke'er were all smiles, looking radiant and more refreshed than before.

Zhang Yi sat on the sofa watching TV while the two women, after working in the kitchen for a while, brought breakfast over to him.

“Zhang Yi, have some food to recharge!”

Zhou Ke'er looked at him with a soft gaze, her face still showing a satisfied look from last night's events.

She handed him a bowl of soup. Zhang Yi took it, opened it, and found it filled with nourishing ingredients.

“Are you kidding? Do I, Zhang Yi, need stuff like this?”

Zhang Yi laughed, then downed half the bowl in one go.

Can't deny it, last night was indeed exhausting.

Lu Keran nudged Yang Xinxin over to have breakfast.

As they passed by the kitchen, Yang Siyah saw their expressions and gasped, covering her mouth.

“Oh my! What happened to you two last night? You look terrible!”

Lu Keran and Yang Xinxin turned their heads away, unsure of how to explain.

But inwardly, they thought, *How could you not know?*

Their rooms weren't far apart; even with decent soundproofing, any loud noise was still audible.

Another pleasant day began, with the five of them enjoying breakfast together in the living room.

Now the *Shelter* had returned to its former state. The luxurious villa was serene, and life was very peaceful.

As for Uncle You and Fatty Xu, Zhang Yi had provided them with ample food, a generator, fuel, and coal for their place.

Zhang Yi had them handle their house independently, needing only to solve food and heating issues; after all, the villa's other amenities were high-end.

Being the top luxury villa area in Tianhai City, the house had everything needed for a comfortable life.

Still, Zhang Yi had shown extra care for Fatty Xu.

That guy was still hurting from his heartbreak, now a bit wary of women, so Zhang Yi got him a high-end, limited-edition latex girlfriend from Japan.

It was the kind with a warming feature and intelligent voice capabilities.

Best used with VR goggles for an optimal experience.

As a friend, that was all Zhang Yi could do.

After breakfast, it wasn't long before Uncle You, his wife, and Fatty Xu came over for a visit.

Humans are social creatures; without interaction, it's easy to develop psychological issues over time.

Now neighbors and comrades who had survived life-or-death battles, their bond was stronger than ever.

Taking this opportunity, Zhang Yi called over Uncle You and Fatty Xu to discuss his idea for creating a defense line.

"With the three of our homes as a center, let's build a solid defensive line around us!"

"That way, if there's a surprise attack, we'll have more time to respond."

"It doesn't need to be as secure as my *Shelter*, but at least it should give you time to retreat here."

“That way, if we meet a powerful enemy, we won’t be so passive. Even if the first line of defense falls, we can retreat into the Shelter to continue holding our ground.”

Zhang Yi shared his plan.

Uncle You and Fatty Xu nodded in agreement after hearing it.

They would benefit the most from this plan.

Fatty Xu was delighted and said on the spot, “Bro, you and I were thinking the same thing! Honestly, I worry about someone barging in and holding a gun to my head one night.”

As a veteran, Uncle You shared his perspective.

“If we’re setting up a defense line, it shouldn’t just focus on defense. We need some offensive capability too! I suggest placing heavy firepower around the line.”

Fatty Xu asked, “Where will we get weapons and ammo?”

Zhang Yi replied, “That’s easy. Keran can make bullets, and I have plenty of guns.”

“But given the strong forces that might attack us, we’ll need heavy firepower.”

Zhang Yi rubbed his chin, making a decisive statement, “Once we’re all fully recovered, let’s go check out the ruins of West Hill Base. There’s plenty of good stuff there!”

Even though he’d destroyed West Hill Base with a scheme, according to the base’s engineering data, an explosion of that magnitude couldn’t completely destroy all its structures.

His goal had been to trigger a massive shock underground, making it easier for him to move.

But in such a vast base with extensive underground spaces, much of it should still be intact.

And within it, there would be a massive stockpile of weapons, including heavy firepower.

Uncle You and Fatty Xu, naturally, had no objections and readily agreed.

“As for building materials, we can probably get what we need from West Hill Base too.”

Uncle You suggested, “Given West Hill Base’s defensive capabilities, it can’t be much weaker than your Shelter. We could dismantle some materials to reinforce our defenses.”

Zhang Yi frowned, questioning, “Their construction is mostly integrated casting. It won’t be easy to dismantle!”

Uncle You thought for a moment, then reluctantly added, “But where else can we get so much building material?”

“To build fortifications, we need reinforced concrete. Without it, are we supposed to make a snow wall?”

He joked.

Yet his words sparked an idea in Zhang Yi.

He looked at Fatty Xu with a meaningful smile, “Using ice blocks for a defense line might not be a bad idea.”

Zhang Yi shared his thought with the two of them.

“The Lu River is right there; we could use a massive amount of ice blocks from it to build walls for our defense line.”

“With this temperature, we wouldn’t need to worry about melting, and repairs would be easy. It’s actually a pretty solid material choice!”

“We can insert steel bars inside for support, and voilà, an ice wall for defense!”

Chapter 334 : Private Lessons with the Tutor

Zhang Yi and the others discussed their plans for building a defensive line.

Meanwhile, the women gathered together, led by Zhou Haimei, to play mahjong.

As Zhou Ke’er came over to refill her water, she overheard the three men talking and couldn’t help but laugh, “Now that West Hill Base is gone, you’re all even more cautious than before.”

She felt that there would likely be a prolonged period of peace now.

After all, with an organization as powerful as West Hill Base destroyed, any remaining factions would be too intimidated to approach this place lightly.

Zhang Yi responded, “Better safe than sorry! We can’t count on what others might do, but we can make sure our own security is top-notch!”

In the apocalypse, proper safety measures are absolutely essential.

The three of them thoroughly enjoyed the discussion.

After all, men are forever passionate about things like construction, cars, and women. Even if they didn't need it, they'd still love to build a wall just for fun.

That's what you call a perfect blend of hobbies and reality.

But Fatty Xu asked, "Boss, do you really think there'll be any foolishly bold armed forces that would come here?"

"There's no way Tianhai City has any faction stronger than West Hill Base, right?"

Fatty Xu's question wasn't without reason.

West Hill Base had controlled the only stationed army in Tianhai City, making it the most formidable armed organization there.

Zhang Yi smiled faintly.

"Fatty, you're forgetting one possibility."

He tapped his fingers on the table, saying with a playful look, "It's true that we destroyed West Hill Base, but not everyone knows that."

"To outsiders, we're just a group of regular people, hardly even a faction."

Fatty Xu's eyes lit up with realization, "You're right; that makes sense."

"Then we better get this defensive line set up fast! Honestly, I am a bit worried."

Zhang Yi nodded in agreement, ready to get moving on the project.

The sooner the defensive line was complete, the safer they'd feel.

He asked, "Fatty, Uncle You, are you both at peak physical condition right now?"

Uncle You patted his chest, "My body's fine. Those meds didn't have much of a side effect on me."

Zhang Yi chuckled, "So the stimulants didn't have much effect on you either?"

"There's still some effect," Uncle You replied.

Just then, Fatty Xu quickly spoke up, "I still need to recover a bit; I've been feeling more and more exhausted lately."

Zhang Yi looked at him knowingly, "Maybe you've overused that life-like girlfriend I got you?"

Fatty Xu's face turned bright red, as if his secret had just been exposed.

"'Overused' is a bit much! A single guy like me has to ease the loneliness somehow. That's not overindulging!"

The living room filled with laughter.

Fatty Xu's visits always seemed to lighten everyone's mood.

But even when he wasn't around, they still enjoyed this kind of camaraderie.

"My strength has recovered pretty well, too. How about this—three days from now, let's head to West Hill Base and gather whatever useful stuff we can find." ♦?

"Sounds good!"

“Boss, think you can spare me some herbal supplements to help with my energy?”

Zhang Yi replied sympathetically, “I’ll throw in some goji berries too. Have them with every meal!”

“Thanks, Boss! You’re the best.”

The three of them continued chatting, brainstorming ways to make the defense line even more effective at resisting enemy attacks.

But after experiencing the assault from West Hill Base’s Special Forces Team, Zhang Yi’s mindset had undergone a significant transformation.

Even if he faced another large-scale battle in the future, he wouldn’t feel any panic.

Especially since his own strength had increased immensely after absorbing the powers of Ling Feng and several other Special Forces members.

Confidence comes from true strength.

After a while, Liang Yue arrived and rang the doorbell.

“Isn’t that Teacher Liang? What’s she doing here?”

Fatty Xu rubbed his chin, giving Zhang Yi a suggestive look, “Boss, don’t tell me you’ve added her to your list?”

Zhang Yi grinned, “Get your mind out of the gutter. Liang Yue and I have a purely professional relationship. She’s my private tutor. Got it?”

Uncle You chuckled, “A ‘pure’ relationship between a man and a woman? You sure have an interesting definition of pure.”

Fatty Xu’s mind was already wandering, imagining various “tutors” as he said admiringly, “Boss, you sure know how to enjoy life!”

Ignoring their mischievous looks, Zhang Yi opened the door for Liang Yue.

Upon entering, she noticed how lively the house was, with everyone gathered.

The men sat together, drinking tea and chatting, while the women played mahjong, gossiping in between.

The warm, welcoming atmosphere made her feel as if she’d entered another world.

After all, back in Xu Family Town, she was busy looking after her students, struggling in subzero temperatures, playing the role of both father and mother to them.

She couldn’t help but feel a touch of envy for Zhou Ke’er and the others.

Lu Keran and Yang Xinxin warmly greeted her.

They genuinely respected this teacher of theirs.

In the apocalypse, someone who maintained kindness was rarer than a national treasure.

She was a true saint, not a “fake saint.”

The difference between the two is significant.

A real saint thinks, *They need help, so I'll help them.*

A fake saint thinks, *They need help, so you should help them.*

Though Liang Yue might be overly protective of her students, she relied on her own strength to support them rather than imposing moral obligations on others.

Seeing her students doing well, Liang Yue's face softened into a warm smile.

"Seeing you two so happy makes me feel at ease!"

Yang Xinxin smiled sweetly, "Mm-hmm! Brother Zhang Yi treats us so well, and we're very happy here."

She sighed regretfully, holding Liang Yue's hand with a sincere expression, "Teacher Liang, it must be so hard for you out there. If you'd like, I could ask my brother to let you stay with us."

"I really miss you."

Liang Yue had always doted on Yang Xinxin, partly because of her disability.

Hearing Yang Xinxin's words, she felt a bit swayed.

But thinking of her students in Xu Family Town, she shook her head and sighed.

"I can't leave them. If I go, it'll be tough for them to survive in such harsh conditions."

"As a teacher, the least I can do is teach them to adapt and survive."

Yang Xinxin nodded, "Teacher Liang, you're as gentle as ever!"

“But, actually, these two things don’t conflict.”

She explained with a smile, “If you moved into the Shelter, you could still help them.”

“After all, they’re old enough; they won’t need you by their side constantly, right?”

“If anything, letting them fend for themselves could teach them the survival skills they’ll need in the apocalypse.”

“Don’t you think I have a point?”

Liang Yue’s gaze flickered, clearly moved by Yang Xinxin’s suggestion.

“But... Zhang Yi probably wouldn’t agree to let me stay here, would he?”

She scratched her cheek, a little embarrassed, “It’s not like we’re that close.”

“Besides, if I stay in the Shelter, it wouldn’t be fair to leave Wu Chengyu and the others out there, would it?”

Yang Xinxin smiled innocently, sensing that her teacher was already leaning toward the idea.

“I’ll talk to Brother Zhang Yi about it!”

“As for the other students, no matter where you live, their conditions won’t change.”

“If they were to stop you from staying here, wouldn’t that be selfish?”

The little devil knew exactly how to manipulate.

Once Liang Yue moved in, there would be no going back.

She wasn't foolish; used to the comfort here, she'd never want to return to the icy wilderness.

With Liang Yue's protection gone, the other students would be vulnerable.

One day, if the chance arose, they could be "dealt with" easily.

With a plan forming in her mind, Yang Xinxin's smile became all the more innocent and harmless.

"I... I'll think about it."

Liang Yue's words were cautious, but her heart was already tempted.

Knowing she'd succeeded, Yang Xinxin held back, not wanting to push too hard and cause resistance. She nodded with a sweet smile, "Alright, Teacher Liang. If you decide, just let me know!"

"Okay."

Liang Yue smiled back.

Not far away, Zhang Yi rose from the sofa and walked toward Liang Yue.

Although he didn't know what they had talked about, he was sure Yang Xinxin was trying to win Liang Yue over.

"Liang Yue, let's head downstairs! Too many people here; it's not convenient."

Zhang Yi smiled as he spoke.

The women playing cards nearby couldn't help but look over.

Liang Yue's face flushed; Zhang Yi's words sounded a bit misleading.

But thinking about it, there was nothing really wrong with what he'd said, so she nodded and followed him to the basement.

They went down to the third underground level—the gym.

Zhang Yi glanced at Liang Yue's worn clothes and took out a fresh set for her from his **Spatial Storage**.

Down jacket, wool sweater, thermal wear, and sneakers.

He even included undergarments and socks.

Of course, he didn't forget an indoor athletic outfit.

"There's a shower over there. You should wash up first."

He pointed to a nearby bathroom.

Liang Yue's face turned a deep shade of red.

Though she was a martial arts master, she was still a woman.

Zhang Yi hadn't mentioned anything about her being unclean, but she couldn't help but feel a bit self-conscious.

She lowered her head and muttered, "It's not like I have the luxury of new clothes or hot showers outside."

Zhang Yi chuckled, "I didn't say a word! You're overthinking."

Flushed, Liang Yue grabbed the clothes and went off to shower.

After a good while, she returned, freshly showered and dressed in the new athletic gear Zhang Yi had prepared.

Her upper body was clad in a gray sports tank, revealing her healthy, tan skin and clearly defined abs.

She wore fitted black athletic pants below, her toned muscles and perfect curves a testament to her years of training.

With a black sweatband across her forehead, her already resolute expression gained an added layer of charisma.

Zhang Yi took in her appearance with satisfaction.

"All right, Teacher Liang. Let's get started!"

Liang Yue gave Zhang Yi a faint, mischievous smile.

"Learning martial arts is tough. You'd better be ready!"

Chapter 335: Not Fearing Scarcity but Inequality

Liang Yue's teaching was genuine.

Because Zhang Yi had been quite good to her, she wanted to return the favor in this way.

However, mastering real martial arts wasn't easy.

At the very least, you had to start by getting used to being hit to build up your body's resilience.

Luckily, Zhang Yi was already physically fit from regular exercise, allowing him to keep up with Liang Yue's pace.

After two and a half hours of practice, he was drenched in sweat, and his whole body ached.

"You've got a solid foundation, but mastering martial arts isn't something that happens overnight. You'll need to be mentally prepared for a long journey," Liang Yue said, wiping the sweat from her forehead.

"I don't expect to become some martial arts master; I just want another way to keep myself safe," Zhang Yi replied, panting as he sat on the foam mat.

Liang Yue couldn't help but comment, "You even managed to kill Ling Feng; there aren't many people who can threaten your life."

Zhang Yi smirked and said calmly, "The world is full of surprises. Nobody should gamble with their life."

He knew why he was able to defeat Ling Feng.

It was purely due to the advantage of hidden information and thorough preparation.

If the two had fought in an unknown setting without knowing each other's capabilities, Zhang Yi wouldn't have been confident about winning against Ling Feng.

If his Dimensional Gate couldn't catch Ling Feng off guard, then Zhang Yi would surely have died.

"Let's continue tomorrow! I'm done for today," Zhang Yi said, getting up.

He pulled out a bag of food from his Spatial Storage, enough to barely feed about ten people.

He was always true to his word.

Zhang Yi left the downstairs bathroom for Liang Yue and went upstairs to take a shower himself.

Watching Zhang Yi head upstairs, Liang Yue thought about Yang Xinxin's suggestion.

If those words had come from Zhang Yi, she would have suspected some hidden agenda.

But she couldn't bring herself to doubt the intentions of that innocent, wheelchair-bound girl.

"Could I live in that place?" Liang Yue felt unsure. She wasn't a fan of living under someone else's roof.

But it was so comfortable there!

Caught in this inner conflict, she was already leaning towards the idea.

After Liang Yue left, Fatty Xu came over and asked Zhang Yi, "Boss, should we bring Liang Yue along when we head to West Hill Base the day after tomorrow? Having an extra person would mean more security."

"To be honest, while we've assumed that West Hill Base is devoid of survivors, no one's actually gone down there to confirm it," he added cautiously.

Uncle You couldn't help but laugh, teasing him, "Xu, you're as timid as a mouse!"

Fatty Xu chuckled, "Better safe than sorry! That's what the boss taught me."

Zhang Yi smiled, "Fatty Xu does have a point. But right now, it's not appropriate to invite Liang Yue."

"She's not one of us yet; we're only working together. If we ask for her help, we'll owe her a favor. There's no need for that."

"It'll just be us. We're only searching through ruins, so it's not risky."

All high-level Superhumans like Ling Feng had been eliminated, and Leader Chen Xinian was burned to ashes by Zhang Yi. It was unlikely that there would be any remaining threats at the base.

Meanwhile, Liang Yue left the Shelter with mixed emotions.

On her way back, she mulled over what Yang Xinxin had said.

Would it be possible to move into the Shelter?

The thought of its superior living conditions was very tempting.

But she'd need to discuss it with her students.

As their teacher, Liang Yue felt responsible for considering their feelings.

Yang Xinxin made a valid point: whether or not she moved into the Shelter wouldn't really affect her students' environment.

Zhang Yi wouldn't let them all stay in the Shelter, anyway.

“In that case, moving into Zhang Yi’s place might be doable.”

“Sigh, I’ll still need to discuss it with them, hear their thoughts.”

“Thinking about it carefully, we really do need to get closer to Zhang Yi so he can help us more!”

The more Liang Yue thought about it, the more reasonable it seemed.

She also wanted to enjoy a better life, as Zhang Yi had once pointed out. She just needed a reason to convince herself.

Liang Yue returned to Xu Family Town.

When she placed the food she’d gotten from Zhang Yi in front of her students, the hungry students cheered with joy.

“Awesome! We’ve got food!”

They all rushed forward, grabbing eagerly.

Watching them, Liang Yue sighed slightly.

She looked toward Ye Xiaotian and Wu Chengyu, the two students now in charge of managing everyone.

Ye Xiaotian had been modified by West Hill Base and was the group’s main fighter.

Wu Chengyu, who was sharp and had previously served as class monitor, was their intellectual leader.

"Ye Xiaotian, Wu Chengyu, did you manage to organize the others to cut through the ice and catch fish in Lu River this morning?"

Wu Chengyu's gaze drifted evasively as he replied, "Teacher Liang, you know that everyone was exhausted from pedaling bikes at West Hill Base every day. Now that we finally have some rest, asking them to brave the cold and work again... it's tough."

Ye Xiaotian frowned slightly, pointing to the table in the snow house. "I managed to catch a few. But with just pickaxes and hoes, the tools are too crude, so it's not very efficient."

Seeing the pitiful two fish on the table, Liang Yue felt a pang of disappointment.

She wasn't familiar with ice fishing, and back in Xu Family Town, villagers had relied on proper tools and sled dogs to succeed.

These students had no experience, and the tools weren't ideal. Trying to rely on this method for food was a fantasy.

Liang Yue sighed, "You both need to figure out how to improve our fishing efficiency."

"These supplies were given to us by Zhang Yi as part of our deal. But we can't expect him to keep feeding us."

"When we run out, what will we do? We have to rely on ourselves to survive in this frozen apocalypse!"

Though Zhang Yi promised to provide some food in exchange for her martial arts lessons, she knew he wouldn't provide enough to sustain ten people.

As the students divided the food, they complained about the meager portions.

"There's so little! We're still hungry," they grumbled.

“If we don’t get enough, we’ll easily fall sick in this cold.”

Ye Xiaotian quickly interjected, “Let’s be thankful. Teacher Liang worked hard to get this from Zhang Yi.”

“We can’t rely on others forever; we have to get our own food.”

“Let’s eat and brainstorm ideas on how to improve our food situation.”

Reluctantly, the students nodded, not looking thrilled.

Braving the freezing winds, breaking through ice to fish was a challenging task.

Wu Chengyu looked at Liang Yue and suddenly suggested, “Teacher Liang, since you’re training with Zhang Yi daily, could you ask him if we could stay in his Shelter?”

“Look, Lu Keran and Yang Xinxin are staying there. Since we’re from the same class, it shouldn’t be too much to ask.”

Other students’ eyes lit up.

“Yeah! His Shelter is huge; a dozen of us should fit.”

“We could even eat less, help out...”

“Yang Xinxin and Lu Keran live there; why can’t we?”

These students, from influential families in Tianhai City, felt they deserved better treatment.

Liang Yue sighed inwardly, explaining, “You’re different from them.”

“Yang Xinxin is Zhang Yi’s girlfriend’s sister, and Lu Keran is her best friend. You don’t have that connection.”

“Plus, both of them have professional skills. That’s why Zhang Yi allowed them in.”

“Do any of you meet either of those criteria?”

The students fell silent, discontented.

They understood but couldn’t help feeling resentful.

The luxurious Shelter was just across the river, yet they were stuck in a snow hut, eating charity.

“Teacher Liang, please try a bit harder!” someone pleaded.

“You’re our teacher; you’ll find a way!”

Their hopeful stares created immense pressure for Liang Yue.

She’d intended to discuss Yang Xinxin’s offer with them, but now, she couldn’t bring herself to mention it.

...

Three days flew by.

Zhang Yi, Fatty Xu, and Uncle You had regained peak physical condition.

They prepared their gear and planned a trip to West Hill Base to see how much they could salvage.

Meanwhile, Lu Keran had revised her defense plans several times.

With Zhang Yi's approval, they finalized the design.

Once Zhang Yi and the others brought back building materials, they could start construction.

"By the way, can we repair the outer wall?" Zhang Yi asked, recalling the damage caused by the Special Forces Team.

Lu Keran replied, "It was constructed as a single unit, so repairs are challenging but doable. The materials needed, though, are more complex."

Zhang Yi nodded; the outer wall's 20% damage wasn't urgent.

"Make a list of the materials, and we'll look for them in the city's construction warehouses."

"Yes, big brother!"

Lu Keran gave him a playful salute, and Zhang Yi couldn't help but pinch her nose.

"Let's do this!"

Chapter 336: The Four Major Organizations

Zhang Yi, along with Uncle You, Fatty Xu, and his loyal battle pet Hua Hua, headed out to West Hill Base.

The group boarded a snow vehicle, with Hua Hua sitting on Zhang Yi's lap as he activated the autopilot mode.

This wasn't their first trip to West Hill Base, so they were fairly relaxed.

Looking at Hua Hua, Fatty Xu blinked and asked Zhang Yi, "Boss, why do I feel like Hua Hua's a bit different?"

Zhang Yi glanced down at the obedient cat on his lap, stroking its soft fur.

"Oh? How so?"

Fatty Xu thought for a moment, then shook his head. "I can't say exactly. It's just a feeling, like something has subtly changed."

"That's natural," Zhang Yi replied with a knowing smile.

Though he didn't fully understand the mechanism, he knew that some mutated creatures possessed a shared absorption ability. For instance, he, Ling Feng, and Hua Hua all had the power to absorb other Superhumans' abilities to evolve.

Last time, Hua Hua devoured several Superhumans, and its abilities had become stronger. But exactly how much stronger, they'd only know after some combat testing.

After Zhang Yi, his team, and Hua Hua left, Yang Xinxin suddenly wheeled herself out of her workshop into the living room, where she spotted Zhou Ke'er watching TV.

She asked, "Where's my brother?"

Zhou Ke'er blinked and replied, "They went to West Hill Base to gather supplies. Do you need something from him?"

Yang Xinxin furrowed her brow slightly. “I just organized some data I wanted him to see. I guess it’ll have to wait until he’s back.”

Curious, Zhou Ke’er leaned over with a grin. “What interesting data? Let me take a look!”

Yang Xinxin rolled her eyes and smirked. “Cousin, you’re not a combatant, so there’s no use in you knowing!”

Zhou Ke’er puffed out her cheeks in annoyance. “Hmph, I’m an important support team member! Don’t underestimate me!”

“Ha!” Yang Xinxin stuck her tongue out and then wheeled away.

She had no intention of sharing critical intelligence with anyone but Zhang Yi. Secretly, she also liked that the data she provided was valuable to him; her worth to Zhang Yi lay in information and network security.

What if Zhou Ke’er took credit with her intel?

Returning to her workshop, Yang Xinxin used the supercomputer at her console to contact Zhang Yi en route.

“Hey, brother, have you reached West Hill Base yet?”

Receiving her message, Zhang Yi glanced out at the snowy landscape and replied, “Not yet! We’re about halfway there.”

“Okay, there’s something I just discovered that I need to report.”

“Oh? Sounds important.”

"Yep! I've uncovered intel about other major armed groups in Tianhai City. Since you're out, I thought I'd brief you, just in case you encounter them."

Zhang Yi's expression grew serious. "Alright, go ahead."

Yang Xinxin explained, "According to intel from West Hill Base, there are a total of four large-scale military shelters in Tianhai City. They're located in the West Hill, Qingpu, Yangsheng, and Chaoyu areas."

"These shelters were established by the government years ago and have been maintained for sudden wars or natural disasters."

"Each of them has underground shelters, massive arsenals, and extensive wartime supplies."

Zhang Yi nodded. "I've heard about these."

The information wasn't surprising. Having lived in Tianhai City for years, he'd heard rumors, and he even recalled news reports showing glimpses of these underground shelters years ago.

"So, besides West Hill Base, there are three other major military powers: Yangsheng, Chaoyu, and Qingpu. Each of these areas is quite far from our Shelter," he mused.

"But given what happened at West Hill Base, it's likely these forces will take notice."

The commotion at West Hill Base that night had been significant enough to attract attention.

If they learned that the West Hill Base in the Xishan and Lu River areas had been destroyed, there was a chance they'd expand their reach here.

"No, there's one more unique faction," Yang Xinxin added. "Based on the data from West Hill Base, there's a heavily populated region around Tianfeng and Changlan. It's become a force to be reckoned with, though the records on them are limited."

Zhang Yi nodded. "That's not surprising. With so many people in Tianhai City, it's natural for dozens of factions to form."

"It seems like these powers don't know much about each other yet."

"Probably because the apocalypse hasn't been around long enough. They're all too busy ensuring their own survival and development."

For example, West Hill Base was destroyed before it even gathered full information on its neighboring districts.

In fact, the attempt to take him down likely stemmed from their internal desire to secure their territory.

The other factions were probably in similar situations.

"Excellent work, Xinxin. This information is very useful."

Yang Xinxin blushed happily at his praise. "Brother, I'll keep compiling information on them. When you're back, I'll give you a full report, alright?"

Zhang Yi chuckled and nodded. "Of course!"

After the call, Zhang Yi noticed Fatty Xu and Uncle You looking at him curiously.

Without hiding anything, Zhang Yi relayed what Yang Xinxin had told him.

"So, the other armed forces in Tianhai City are as large as West Hill Base? That's a bit worrisome. Let's hope they keep their distance," Fatty Xu said with concern.

Zhang Yi, however, was calm. "It's to be expected. But Tianhai City is vast; as long as we don't actively provoke them, there shouldn't be any conflict."

“With at least 90% of the city’s population gone, the remaining resources are more than enough for the surviving factions. No one’s eager to risk their lives fighting.”

Uncle You, who had been silent, suddenly sighed. “Let’s just hope things go that smoothly. I’ve got a feeling we’ll be running into them soon enough!”

Chapter 337: Returning to West Hill Again

In truth, it wasn’t just Uncle You who felt this way; both Zhang Yi and Fatty Xu also sensed that they were on the verge of encountering other major powers.

Nothing in this world happens by coincidence. There’s only the inevitable and the willful actions of people.

The commotion caused by the battle at the West Hill Base was simply too great.

It was bound to attract the attention of other factions in Tianhai City.

And when they notice the power vacuum in this area, they will start expanding their influence here.

Can Zhang Yi guarantee peaceful coexistence with them when the time comes?

“No one knows how things will unfold from here, but there’s one thing I know: as long as we become strong enough, no one will dare to mess with us!”

Zhang Yi glanced at the two of them. “Let’s go. We’re heading to the West Hill Base to collect all the weapons there!”

“Mm, let’s do it.”

Both of them nodded seriously.

The car raced through the snowy landscape, heading toward the long-missed West Hill Base.

West Hill.

Located in the southwestern area of Tianhai City, it's a range of low mountains, with an elevation of less than 200 meters.

It was once near the military district of Tianhai City, so when the apocalypse came, it was one of the first places designated as a refuge under the control of the Tianhai military district.

In fact, the Tianhai West Refuge was established close to large government facilities.

This was to ensure that important personnel could quickly reach safety in case of war or disaster.

In theory, the West Hill Base had the strongest armed forces among all the West Refuges.

This was due to a full-structured armed unit and the fact that most weapons from Tianhai's military camp were collected here.

Outside the entrance to the West Hill Base, two groups of people stood in the snow.

Both groups wore completely white clothing, dyed specifically to blend in with the snowy environment.

One group wore combat uniforms nearly identical to those of the West Hill Base.

The only difference was their emblem, which featured a blue wave, while the West Hill Base's symbol was a golden sword.

Not far away, the other group wore simpler clothing.

Most of them were dressed in thick white down jackets that didn't match, looking as if they had been scavenged from a mall.

The two sides watched each other warily, gripping their weapons tightly, their gazes fixed on each other.

"This entrance has been completely sealed. Looks like we won't be able to retrieve anything from below," said a tall man with a piercing gaze, who led the group in combat uniforms. P

The leader of the mismatched group was a lean, short man who chuckled as he crossed his arms and replied, "Who would've thought a missile destroyed this place? I don't know what Chen Xinian did to offend the Jiangnan District, but he got what he deserved!"

The tall man, Wang Ruixuan, sneered, "That guy was always arrogant. It's no surprise he ended up like this."

The short man, Han Chang, didn't pick up on the topic; his group had little association with Chen Xinian.

In fact, his faction didn't have close ties with the West Refuge's forces either.

He was here simply to assess the condition of the West Hill Base.

Looking at the scene before him, especially the gaping hole on the mountainside left by a bunker-buster missile, he could pretty much conclude that there was no one alive down there.

Han Chang sighed, "What a wasted trip!"

Wang Ruixuan also frowned deeply.

The entrance was completely blocked, covered in rubble and wrecked cars.

Clearing it would require too much effort.

Their base was far from here, so mobilizing more people was not an option right now.

Yet, the West Hill Base was still a valuable prize.

If they could open this passage and enter, they would gain access to vast reserves of supplies left behind.

Han Chang noticed the glint in Wang Ruixuan's eyes and smirked.

Amused, he taunted, "Even if you could use your Superhumans to clear this entrance, how would you transport all those supplies back to Chaoyu Harbor Base?"

He gestured broadly from the east to the southwest.

"Your base is nearly 200 kilometers from here, crossing the entirety of Tianhai City!"

Wang Ruixuan snorted, "You think you could do any better?"

Han Chang shrugged, "We never had high expectations. I only came to confirm the West Hill Base's status."

He chuckled, "Now that we know everyone there is dead, that's already the best news for us."

"Look at the other two bases. They were smart and didn't waste much time here."

"They're the closest ones; they probably checked this place out ages ago."

Wang Ruixuan frowned, admitting to himself that Han Chang had a point.

Their Chaoyu Base was indeed far from the West Hill Base. Even if they planned to scavenge, bases like Yangsheng and Qingfu, which were closer, would have a geographical advantage.

With the land now covered in snow, every additional kilometer of distance would pose a challenge for transportation.

Han Chang suddenly sighed, "What a pity! West Hill Base is gone, but your Chaoyu Base won't get a chance to seize it."

He gave Wang Ruixuan a playful look. "Yangsheng and Qingfu will end up benefiting. They'll slowly strip the West Hill Base of its assets and emerge much stronger!"

Among all the West Refuges, the West Hill Base had the most abundant armory.

This was a fact that attracted the envy of other bases.

Of course, each base within the West Refuge held unique advantages.

"Are you trying to sow discord?" Wang Ruixuan asked coldly.

Han Chang sneered, "The internal conflicts among your West forces don't need me to stir anything up."

Wang Ruixuan scoffed, "I don't believe for a second that your Followers of the Snow God would let Yangsheng and Qingfu take this without a fight. Or are you scheming something else?"

Wang Ruixuan's gaze turned sharp as he stared intently at Han Chang, hoping to spot some telltale reaction.

With the fall of the West Hill Base, the balance of power in Tianhai City had been disrupted.

Besides the massive inventory of supplies in the West Hill Base, there were also various factories, supermarkets, and even live captives within its control.

These resources were highly coveted by all factions.

“Everyone knows the rules. Let’s see who has the skill to claim them! No need to play the noble hero here.”

Han Chang grinned, flashing his teeth like a ferret ready to pounce.

Just then, the sound of a car engine broke through the distance, capturing everyone’s attention.

Chapter 338: The Most Arrogant Person I’ve Ever Seen

Zhang Yi drove up to the entrance of the West Hill Base.

When he was about a hundred meters away, he vaguely noticed a few people up ahead.

After all, with the icy snow all around and them dressed in white, they were practically invisible.

But those people noticed Zhang Yi’s vehicle first.

“A snow vehicle,” Wang Ruixuan instantly recognized it, a fiery gleam in his eyes.

In the south, this type of vehicle was extremely rare.

After the arrival of the Ice Age, it had become the most convenient mode of transport.

Chaoyu Base had their own vehicles—snow vehicles they had modified themselves—but these modifications couldn't compare to the real thing.

Their vehicles weren't as fast, consumed more fuel, and even then, the number of usable vehicles was limited.

Han Chang whistled, "Looks like people from another base are here!"

At this point, Zhang Yi noticed them, his gaze hardening slightly.

"Someone's already here!"

Fatty Xu and Uncle You also tensed up, readying themselves for combat.

Uncle You said in a low voice, "Could this be one of the factions Yang Xinxin mentioned?"

Fatty Xu swallowed, "Hard to say. It could also be some surviving locals."

Zhang Yi chuckled coldly, "Now's not the time for wishful thinking. How could there be any living people around the West Hill Base?"

If there were, they'd have been captured long ago, first used as test subjects and later turned into high-quality protein.

"So... they might be enemies?"

Fatty Xu asked nervously.

"Probably. But so what? The West Hill Base is ours."

Zhang Yi pulled out his Golden Desert Eagle and calmly loaded it with armor-piercing rounds.

“Even if it comes to a fight, we’ve got nothing to fear.”

While these unknown adversaries presented a possible threat, it was unlikely they were the main forces of any major faction.

With their current combat power, Zhang Yi’s team had nothing to fear in a confrontation within Tianhai City.

The car came to a stop near the groups from Chaoyu Base and the Followers of the Snow God.

The three doors opened simultaneously, and Zhang Yi’s group stepped out.

Dressed in combat uniforms, Zhang Yi’s team also had an unusual-looking black cat perched on his shoulder, which made the people from Chaoyu Base and the Followers of the Snow God tense up.

They noticed the golden sword emblem on Zhang Yi’s team’s uniforms and assumed they were Special Forces Team members from the West Hill Base.

Among the soldiers and Superhumans, the West Hill Base was known as one of the most formidable forces within the West Refuges.

“I thought everyone at the West Hill Base was dead. Didn’t expect there’d be survivors,” Wang Ruixuan said icily, looking at Zhang Yi’s group.

Everyone was on high alert, prepared for battle. The relationships among these factions were complex. Rather than direct enemies, they were wary of each other, all vying for territory in Tianhai City.

It was no surprise if alliances suddenly formed or if anyone initiated an attack on another.

Zhang Yi glanced at the clothing of the two groups.

One side wore combat gear, while the other was dressed in ordinary clothes.

He deduced that one group was from another shelter, while the other was likely an unaffiliated faction, as Yang Xinxin had described.

Having both groups appear at the entrance to the West Hill Base was a minor complication.

Zhang Yi wanted to avoid any conflict, as he currently had sufficient resources and no need to compete with others.

However, since he had claimed the West Hill Base, giving it up was out of the question.

Hearing Wang Ruixuan's words, Zhang Yi had a flash of inspiration. "Why are you here? Don't tell me you want to start a war with the West Hill Base?"

At his words, Han Chang chuckled, raised his hands, and began to back away.

"Don't misunderstand. We're just here for the spectacle. The Followers of the Snow God value peace and aren't looking for conflict with anyone."

With that, Han Chang led his men away, smiling as they went.

He never fought battles without benefit.

Fighting with Chaoyu Base over a snow vehicle was not worth the risk.

Since the entrance to the West Hill Base was already sealed off, there was nothing to gain by staying.

But Wang Ruixuan didn't see it that way.

He observed the obviously war-torn West Hill Base and sneered, "It looks like the West Hill Base is already destroyed. You few West Hill stragglers still dare to talk big?"

They had been in the West Hill area for a long time.

If the West Hill Base were still as powerful as before, they wouldn't have taken so long to arrive.

So Wang Ruixuan concluded that these were merely the remnants of the West Hill Base.

Zhang Yi narrowed his eyes.

He had blocked the entrance to the West Hill Base himself.

Without someone like him or Uncle You, clearing out the rubble and moving the supplies inside would be impossible.

He looked at Wang Ruixuan and said, "If you're so sure the West Hill Base is destroyed, there's no need for all this talk."

"Alright, do whatever you want."

With that, Zhang Yi began to back away, quietly instructing Uncle You and Fatty Xu, "We're leaving."

Since the two groups couldn't access the base, he decided to feign retreat, planning to return once they left.

He wanted to avoid unnecessary conflict if possible.

But his intentions didn't mean the others would agree.

Wang Ruixuan had set his sights on Zhang Yi's snow vehicle from the moment they arrived.

Zhang Yi's vehicle was top-tier, an extremely rare asset in this ice age that anyone would covet.

Assuming Zhang Yi's group were mere stragglers, and with more men on his side, Wang Ruixuan wasn't about to miss the chance to take advantage.

"Hold it! Did I say you could leave?"

Wang Ruixuan sneered, calling out.

The three of them had been about to leave, but upon hearing Wang Ruixuan's arrogant tone, they narrowed their eyes.

Even Hua Hua's eyes flashed with irritation.

Was he talking to them?

Zhang Yi looked at Wang Ruixuan with an expression that suggested he was dealing with an idiot.

Did this guy even realize he was up against three Superhumans and a powerful mutated creature?

"We don't want trouble. Do whatever you want, just don't try to mess with us," Zhang Yi warned.

He didn't want to fight, considering Wang Ruixuan had the backing of an organization no weaker than the West Hill Base.

Killing him might stir up trouble, disturbing his peaceful life.

Wang Ruixuan burst out laughing.

“Do you even realize what situation you’re in?”

“Leave the car; you can go.”

He raised his arm as he spoke.

“Remember one thing—in this chaotic world, power is the only truth!”

“I could easily kill you all. So whatever I say, you’d better obey!”

With that, he took off his gloves, revealing two slender hands.

The next moment, his hands glowed a deep blue, and the air around him seemed colder, though it was likely the effect of the cold glow. Zhang Yi and his team, dressed in temperature-controlled combat uniforms, felt no change in the surrounding temperature.

“A Superhuman?” Fatty Xu frowned.

Wang Ruixuan sneered, “That’s right. I am a Superhuman! I’m sure you’ve heard of us. Killing you small fries would be as easy as squashing ants.”

“Leave the car, and I’ll spare your lives! Otherwise, I don’t mind staining this white snow with a bit of red.”

Even the usually mild-tempered Uncle You was getting angry.

“All these years, and I’ve never met anyone so arrogant!”

Wang Ruixuan sneered, "Well, you're meeting one now!"

"Enough talk. Leave the car and get out of here!"

The people with him chuckled, though they didn't move, clearly thinking Wang Ruixuan could handle Zhang Yi's group easily.

Zhang Yi shook his head in exasperation.

"I didn't want trouble. But if you're looking to die, I can't help you."

Before he even finished speaking, the previously smug Wang Ruixuan suddenly felt the scene shift before his eyes.

Without even looking up, he saw the sky filled with dark clouds.

"Huh?"

Before he could react, his mind went blank.

To the others from Chaoyu Base, it looked like Wang Ruixuan's head suddenly separated from his neck and fell heavily to the ground.

It hit the ground with a dull thud, spilling blood everywhere.

Everyone was terrified, unsure of what had just happened.

Before they could react, a massive maw came down, devouring half of them in one bite.

“Ahwooh!”

Hua Hua chomped down, chewing a few times, then spat them out, apparently displeased with the taste.

“Only one Superhuman among them?”

Hua Hua only spit out the regular humans.

Zhang Yi walked over, picked up Wang Ruixuan’s head, and absorbed his Superhuman Energy.

It turned out he had barely any energy left, adding almost nothing to Zhang Yi’s reserves.

“So, he was just a newly awakened Superhuman. I have no idea what he was so arrogant about.”

Fatty Xu jeered, “Exactly! Arrogant kids, acting invincible because they gained powers. He got what he deserved!”

Zhang Yi said flatly, “People like that who’ve never tasted real hardship often end up this way. Chaoyu Base clearly hasn’t fought any large-scale battles if they let Superhumans at his level think they’re unstoppable.”

Zhang Yi wasn’t sure what Wang Ruixuan’s ability was exactly.

But flaunting himself within Zhang Yi’s Divine Power sniping range? That was a death sentence.

Chapter 339: West Hill Armory

Zhang Yi stored Wang Ruixuan and his team’s corpses into his Dimensional Space.

They might have items that could be useful later, so he figured he'd collect them now and sort through them later.

As for potentially inciting a grudge with Chaoyu Base over this, Zhang Yi wasn't worried.

He preferred avoiding trouble, but he wouldn't shy away from it either.

Had Wang Ruixuan not crossed the line, Zhang Yi hadn't planned to kill him.

But it was done, and that was that.

"Let's go. Let's get into the West Hill Base, clear out what's left, and avoid hanging around here."

Zhang Yi wasn't sure how many more people might come from Chaoyu Base, so the sooner they wrapped up, the better.

No one knew who he was anyway, and even the Followers of the Snow God, who had left earlier, had mistaken them for remnants of the West Hill Base.

The group quickly moved to the entrance of the West Hill Base.

Zhang Yi had previously blocked it off with a pile of junked cars and rubble to prevent anyone from scavenging.

Now, he, Uncle You, and Hua Hua worked together to clear the blockage, storing the debris into his Dimensional Space.

It took them less than half an hour to clear a path.

"Hua Hua, you take the lead!"

Zhang Yi patted Hua Hua's head with a smile.

Animals often had a keener sense than humans. If there was any danger below, Hua Hua would sense it first.

Zhang Yi was primarily concerned about the low air quality down there, not wanting the team to descend only to find themselves unable to return.

With a flick of its tail, Hua Hua strode confidently down the passageway.

Seeing this, Zhang Yi grinned. "Looks like there's no danger down here."

The three of them followed Hua Hua into the base.

The West Hill Base had sustained missile attacks and further explosive blasts, leaving visible cracks along the thick concrete walls, exposing thick rebar underneath. ↴

The dark passage forced them to use headlamps for light.

Zhang Yi navigated according to the base's layout, heading toward the Third Life Pod.

The Fourth Life Pod held no real value; it was merely housing for the West Hill Base's labor force.

This sector, housing 80% of the base's population, held less than 0.1% of its total value—a common story across societies.

The air below was heavy, with the ventilation system destroyed and the entrance sealed, causing a stale, putrid smell.

The source of this stench lay behind a massive dark green iron door not far to their left.

During the West Hill battle, the Fourth Life Pod's inhabitants had been forcibly detained inside.

The thousands left in there... just imagining what they must have gone through made Zhang Yi's skin crawl.

Even with the blood of many on his hands, the horror of this death was disturbing.

Sealed underground, with no light, no water, no power, and finally no air... all left to suffocate together.

"Your deaths aren't my fault," Zhang Yi murmured without guilt. Even if they hadn't died now, a miserable end would've found them sooner or later.

Fatty Xu cowered behind the other two. "Boss, that area feels... icy. Like something creepy's in there. Could there be ghosts?"

"I'm not afraid of the living; why would I be scared of some ghost?" Zhang Yi scoffed.

Fatty Xu's fear was almost laughable.

"Come on, let's not waste time here. Let's head over to find the storage room, the armory."

The three of them turned toward the Third Life Pod.

But shortly after they moved away, the massive green door shuddered violently, as though something was trying to break free.

They, however, didn't see it.

The corridors were littered with corpses in various states of decay—mostly West Hill soldiers, many of whom had died horrifically.

Some were killed by Zhang Yi's team in the initial battle, but most had suffocated.

They lay slumped against walls, clutching at their throats, some with broken vocal cords from clawing at their own necks.

In the warm subterranean air, the bodies had begun to decompose, creating a chilling atmosphere 100 meters underground.

Zhang Yi, however, felt no fear.

After witnessing countless horrors since the Apocalypse, he had grown numb.

The Third Life Pod served as the soldiers' quarters, and the armory was located here as well.

Following the West Hill Base blueprint, Zhang Yi quickly located the armory.

Its door was ajar, apparently left open in a last-ditch effort by the soldiers to retrieve weapons and break free.

Clearly, they had failed.

Peeking through the door, Zhang Yi caught sight of the room's contents and felt his mind explode as if a hundred bombs had gone off at once.

“My god!”

Uncle You and Fatty Xu squeezed in beside him, staring in shock, frozen like statues.

They had expected the West Hill Base's armory to be well-stocked, but this was beyond their wildest dreams!

In the center of the room sat a fully armed helicopter.

The massive storage area spanned thousands of square meters, containing dozens of tanks, armored vehicles, and cannons.

And that wasn't even counting the crates of munitions and state-of-the-art combat equipment, leaving Zhang Yi's head spinning.

"With all this equipment, you could arm a full modern battalion!" Uncle You exclaimed.

As a retired soldier, he knew the value of what he was seeing.

"This isn't just the West Hill Base's stockpile; it includes weaponry from the Tianhai Garrison, all moved here together."

Regaining his composure, Zhang Yi's face lit up with joy.

Like any man, he couldn't help but admire these tools of warfare.

He opened the armory doors and strode in.

Fatty Xu, trailing behind, muttered, "These weapons are great, but with the world covered in snow, where would we even use them?"

Zhang Yi approached the helicopter, his hand trailing along its cold surface.

“Of course I know that! If they were usable, Ling Feng would’ve deployed them long ago to attack the Shelter.”

Despite the challenges posed by sub-zero temperatures, Zhang Yi couldn’t help but admire the sight of this war machine.

“What they couldn’t use doesn’t mean we won’t find a purpose for it!”

Zhang Yi’s gaze swept across the arsenal, a pleased smile forming.

“The biggest hurdle in deploying them is transportation, but that’s no problem for me.”

“We could set up these cannons and tanks around the perimeter as a defensive line. They’d be perfect!”

Already, Zhang Yi had plans for how he’d use this enormous arsenal.

He was a man who believed in never wasting a thing, a lesson he’d learned from a general who cherished his troops.

In any case, he planned to take everything with him!

At that moment, Uncle You approached him, “Zhang Yi, this one looks like a great fit for me! Mind if I take a couple?”

Zhang Yi and Fatty Xu turned to see Uncle You happily examining a massive Gatling gun.

This thing wasn’t even meant for individual use but for mounting on vehicles or helicopters.

Only someone like Uncle You, with his physically enhanced Superhuman strength, could handle it.

While normal firearms wouldn't be effective against Superhumans, weapons of this caliber were a different story.

Only someone with near-invulnerability like Zhang Yi could withstand it.

Even Ling Feng, known for his resilience, could only dodge it by moving at high speeds.

Zhang Yi nodded. "No problem, Uncle You. I'll store two for you in my Dimensional Space. You can use them whenever you need."

This made sense—carrying something that bulky everywhere wasn't practical, so Uncle You agreed.

Zhang Yi gestured to the enormous selection of weaponry, telling Uncle You, "Browse around. If anything else catches your eye, I'll set it aside for you to use in battle."

Uncle You nodded enthusiastically; there were other things he could use as well.

A rocket launcher, for instance, was like a shotgun in his hands.

Fatty Xu wasn't too interested in the weapons themselves but was practically starstruck by the tanks and armored vehicles.

Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow. "Why are you so excited over those? At most, we'll set them up as fixed cannons. There's no way they'd move in this snowy terrain."

With their massive weight, even on treads, there was no chance of them driving through the snow.

Fatty Xu hugged a tank, chuckling. "Boss, you don't get it. This tank model—it's my wife!"

Zhang Yi stared, dumbfounded. Then, realization dawned, and he looked at Fatty Xu in disgust.

Blame the game developers—everything had been anthropomorphized into girls, from jets to ships, and even trains.

Fatty Xu had clearly been influenced by a war-themed anime game, now fully lost in his delusion.

Zhang Yi shook his head. "Fine, if that's your wife, I suggest you have your honeymoon right here."

He glanced at the tank, teasing, "But which part will you start with? There's plenty of access points."

Fatty Xu blushed. "How can you say something like that? Pervert!"

Zhang Yi: "I'll be d*mned! How can a pervert call me a pervert?"

It was utterly maddening for Zhang Yi.

Chapter 340: The Strange Object

Zhang Yi and his companions found a large stockpile of weapons, a massive gain for him.

"Fear comes from a lack of firepower. With so many weapons, I'll have more confidence even when facing stronger enemies in the future," he thought.

"Take it all!"

Zhang Yi opened his Dimensional Gate and swept the entire weapons cache inside.

"Let's keep looking to see if there's anything else worth taking!" Zhang Yi said with a grin to his two companions.

The harvest was so abundant that, despite the eerie atmosphere of the underground tunnels lined with corpses, they didn't feel down.

Aside from the armory, there was nothing else of value in the Third Life Pod.

Following the map, the three of them made their way to the Second Life Pod. But as soon as they reached the entrance, they were met with a scene of ruins.

The Second Life Pod had been the epicenter of an explosion.

Although the buildings were built with reinforced concrete and were incredibly sturdy, they still couldn't withstand an explosion of this scale. Cracks ran through the walls, and many pillars had collapsed, though the pod itself hadn't caved in.

According to the map, a protective dome layer reinforced the entire underground shelter from above. At over ten meters high, the dome had only absorbed limited impact and remained intact.

Right away, Uncle You transformed into a burly figure and went over to lift a massive pillar, nearly two meters thick, with one hand!

He slowly cleared the path as Zhang Yi walked cautiously, keeping his Dimensional Gate ready above his head to deflect any falling debris.

Once they entered the Second Life Pod, Zhang Yi couldn't help but sigh at the sight.

The explosion had destroyed most of the rooms, including all the lab equipment.

Without those precise instruments, there wasn't much left intact.

Not that Zhang Yi planned to run human experiments or create an army of Modified Humans, so he didn't particularly need the equipment. However, bringing it back could be useful for Lu Keran and Zhou Ke'er's research. Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of such technology might help if they ever encountered more Modified Humans in the future.

The West Hill Base had only produced a handful of Modified Humans, but what if a stronger force existed elsewhere, capable of creating a more formidable army?

“What should we do, Boss? These machines are all busted,” Fatty Xu said to Zhang Yi, looking regretful.

“It doesn’t matter,” Zhang Yi shrugged. “Let’s take the leftover pieces back. We might find some valuable information, especially in the computers—there could be critical intel that Xinxin hasn’t discovered.”

Zhang Yi didn’t care if the parts were useful or not. He’d take everything anyway since he had plenty of space.

They went through each lab, storing anything they didn’t recognize in Spatial Storage.

Even if it was junk, at least they’d have something to throw at people later!

Suddenly, Fatty Xu shrieked and stumbled backward, landing hard on the ground.

Zhang Yi and Uncle You instantly tensed up, prepared for combat as they turned to look.

“What happened?”

Face pale, Fatty Xu pointed ahead. “T-There’s something nasty over there!”

Zhang Yi aimed his helmet’s flashlight in that direction, revealing only a pile of broken stones and rubble—nothing strange in sight.

“What exactly did you see?” Zhang Yi asked, frowning. His right hand gripped his gun, ready to unleash his Divine Power.

Fatty Xu swallowed, then picked up a rock and hurled it into the rubble.

“Thud!”

The stone hit the pile, and a moment later, a swarm of dark, wriggling creatures emerged from the cracks, scurrying into the darkness.

Zhang Yi grimaced.

He wasn’t exactly afraid but found the sight rather revolting—oversized cockroaches!

“This must be that protein lab Liang Yue mentioned earlier,” Zhang Yi muttered, stifling his nausea.

“Experiments to make food out of cockroaches and earthworms were conducted years ago. Disgusting as it sounds, these creatures are high in protein. If Bear Grylls saw them, he’d be thrilled!” he joked to Fatty Xu.

Uncle You laughed at Fatty Xu’s reaction. “Come on, Little Xu! How can you be so scared? You’re acting like a girl!”

Fatty Xu huffed, getting back on his feet. “I’m not afraid of cockroaches! They just startled me, that’s all.”

Zhang Yi figured the equipment nearby was likely a protein processing machine, though it seemed badly damaged.

Rubbing his chin, he wondered if Lu Keran might be able to repair it.

Then again, even if fixed, what would he use it for?

Soon, Zhang Yi decided he might as well take it—could come in handy someday.

“Let’s do this!”

Zhang Yi and Uncle You began clearing the rubble until a huge, broken protein processor lay before them. It was smashed into three sections, with some areas completely crushed.

Zhang Yi didn’t mind and stored it anyway.

Since Fatty Xu had no special abilities without an icy environment, he could only make small talk on the side to ease the awkwardness.

“These cockroaches are freaks! They can survive in such harsh conditions,” he muttered. “Imagine how tough they’d be if they mutated!”

Hearing that, Zhang Yi felt a chill.

If cats could mutate, why not cockroaches?

So far, Flower was the only known case of a mutated animal. But since most animals in Tianhai City were domesticated pets, their limited adaptation to natural disasters meant they’d freeze to death easily, even if they did mutate.

But cockroaches? Their resilience was practically unstoppable.

If they developed Superhuman Energy, they’d be a nightmare.

“Ugh, the more I think about it, the more it creeps me out. Thank goodness there are no cockroaches at home!”

After clearing up the equipment, Zhang Yi and his group left the area.

“Meow—”

Suddenly, Flower turned, hissing into the darkness with an intense, amber-eyed glare.

Frowning, Zhang Yi stared in the same direction.

In the dark, it felt like something huge was watching them.

But when he looked closer, the feeling vanished.

A subtle tension crept into Zhang Yi's mind.

It seemed like something strange and powerful might indeed be lurking here, hidden among the endless dead.

“This place doesn't feel right. Let's strip it clean and get out of here as soon as possible,” Zhang Yi said to Fatty Xu and Uncle You.