

Ice Age 401

Chapter 401: Xing Tian's Legion

Around midday, Xing Tian finally arrived at Xu Family Town with a group of his men.

Their slow pace made Zhang Yi suspect they were also struggling with inadequate transportation. But operating on his own turf, Zhang Yi had little reason to fear.

He called for Uncle You and Fatty Xu, along with Hua Hua, before setting out. Liang Yue, meanwhile, remained secluded in her own world. She had become oddly withdrawn—no longer complaining to others, but instead spending her days alone in her room, quietly contemplating with her Tang Sword in hand.

Zhang Yi wasn't sure if this change was good or bad. For now, he decided not to disturb her and left her out of this mission.

The group set off cautiously in a snow vehicle, heading across the river toward the meeting point.

Meanwhile, Xing Tian and his entourage, as Zhang Yi had predicted, arrived at Xu Family Town with rudimentary transportation: dog sleds.

It was no surprise—one couldn't expect a team of steelworkers to master vehicle modification, nor did they have the abundant fuel resources of Yangsheng Base or Chaoyu Base.

However, the dogs they bred were massive, hardy, and well-suited for survival in the apocalypse.

Unlike pampered pets of the past, these dogs were fierce and versatile, equally adept at fighting and hauling sleds. Being omnivorous, they were also relatively easy to feed.

At the forefront of the pack was a gigantic silver-gray dog, towering like a small house. On its back sat a cute little girl, humming a familiar nursery rhyme as the icy wind whipped around her.

Xing Tian wore no combat gear, clad instead in his signature gray-blue worker's uniform. Not even a thick coat adorned his frame. Yet despite the biting cold, he stood tall and unbothered, as if his compact, muscular body were forged from steel.

The other workers around him were equally robust, their years in the steel mill evident in their hardened physiques.

Nobody in their right mind would want to fight a team like this—strong, unyielding, and as solid as the steel they once forged.

Standing in the biting wind, Xing Tian rolled up his sleeve to glance at the Patek Philippe watch on his wrist. The luxury timepiece, said to cost over ten million yuan, was looted from Director Gou. Despite its price tag, Xing Tian valued it not for its monetary worth—money was meaningless now—but for the sense of fulfillment it gave him, a symbol of the luxuries he could never have afforded before the apocalypse.

"Zhang Yi is slow," he muttered, wiping frost from the watch face before carefully tucking it back under his sleeve.

At that moment, a few workers approached him.

"Boss, we found some survivors in the area!"

Xing Tian raised an eyebrow. "What's their relationship with Zhang Yi?"

"They don't seem to have one, but they're terrified of him," one worker reported.

Xing Tian nodded thoughtfully. "Makes sense. If they were under Zhang Yi's protection, he wouldn't have brought us here. Leave them be."

A mischievous grin spread across the workers' faces.

“Boss, there are a lot of women in this town. And they’re young,” one said, rubbing his hands together suggestively.

The Qingfu Steelworks still had several thousand workers alive, 99.9% of whom were men. The few women who remained had long been claimed by the supervisors. The rest of the men had little chance to find female companionship, especially in the desolate surroundings of their base.

It was no wonder they struggled to suppress their desires.

Xing Tian smirked but said, “Let me discuss it with Zhang Yi first. This is his territory, after all, so we should give him some respect.”

Then, with a sly grin, he added, “Of course, if I make the request personally, he’ll have to return the courtesy.”

The workers eagerly nodded, excitement lighting up their faces.

“Absolutely!”

“Boss, you’re the man!”

Before long, the roar of an engine echoed from the distance.

Zhang Yi’s snow vehicle appeared, approaching cautiously.

Xing Tian’s eyes sharpened as he watched Zhang Yi’s arrival. Standing in the middle of the road with his arms crossed, he exuded an air of challenge. The icy wind whipped at his collar, but it did nothing to shake his imposing stance.

Zhang Yi stopped the vehicle and carefully stepped out. The atmosphere between the two groups was tense. Though they had agreed to cooperate, neither side fully trusted the other. Any slight misstep could spark an immediate confrontation.

It had been nearly ten years since the two had last seen each other. Both had changed significantly.

Zhang Yi had grown steadier, his once youthful brightness replaced by an aura of cold detachment. His mere presence was enough to put Xing Tian and his men on edge.

Zhang Yi wasn't doing anything intentionally threatening, but the sheer number of lives he had taken had etched a deadly aura into his very being. Whenever he focused, that aura seemed to seep from his every movement and gaze.

"This guy is not someone to mess with," thought everyone from Qingfu Base, even Xing Tian himself.

But as the leader, Xing Tian had to maintain his composure.

They scrutinized each other. Xing Tian had also changed—a more muscular physique and the ability to endure subzero temperatures in nothing but his worker's uniform suggested a significant enhancement of his physical capabilities.

Zhang Yi recalled the West Hill Base's report on Xing Tian. His power was said to be unique: a group-wide buff that significantly boosted his and his comrades' strength.

And then there was the enormous mutated dog. Its presence alone was impossible to ignore.

Hua Hua and the beast immediately locked eyes, their throats rumbling with low, dangerous growls.

The girl on the dog's back, Zhou Lingling, patted its head gently. "Lele, be good. Don't growl at others."

The dog calmed down, squinting its eyes as if pacified. Hua Hua, meanwhile, seemed disinterested, standing quietly by Zhang Yi's side but keeping its sharp gaze fixed on the other animal.

“Hahaha! Long time no see, old classmate!” Xing Tian suddenly broke into hearty laughter.

“Who would’ve thought, after ten years, we’d meet again under these circumstances?”

Zhang Yi smiled warmly. “Indeed. I thought the next time we’d meet would be at a class reunion over a drink!”

“But look at you now, Xing Tian—one of the big shots of Tianhai City!”

Zhang Yi’s flattery visibly pleased Xing Tian, whose smirk lifted slightly.

“Not bad, not bad. And you’re doing well yourself. Even if you don’t have a vast territory like mine, you’re still a significant figure in Tianhai City.”

Xing Tian sighed theatrically. “Who would’ve thought that someone as inconspicuous as I was back in school would end up here?”

It was a humblebrag, meant to highlight his achievements.

Zhang Yi chuckled inwardly, choosing not to expose him. He knew exactly what Xing Tian sought: admiration and validation, a remedy for his years of insignificance and inferiority.

Chapter 402: Yang Siyah’s Superpower

As agreed, Zhang Yi handed over a third of the food as a deposit to Xing Tian. With plenty of people and sleds at his disposal, Xing Tian’s team easily loaded up the supplies for transport back to their base.

Watching himself gain these resources without shedding a drop of blood, Xing Tian was thrilled.

Meanwhile, Zhang Yi made a show of looking slightly pained by the exchange, further boosting Xing Tian's satisfaction.

"Zhang Yi, don't feel bad about this. Working with us at Qingfu Base will definitely be worth it!" Xing Tian said with a grin.

Zhang Yi's lips curled into a faint smirk. Squinting slightly, he replied, "Do you remember back in middle school when I fought some kids from the class next door?"

Xing Tian paused, then nodded as memories resurfaced. "Yeah, I remember. Those punks were after Fan Xingcan, but she secretly had a crush on you. That's why they ganged up on you."

Zhang Yi nodded. "There were five of them against me. I knew I couldn't win, so I went after the loudest one and knocked out three of his teeth."

Pointing a finger at Xing Tian, Zhang Yi's expression grew colder and sharper.

"This time, I'm giving you food, and I expect you to honor our agreement. But if you betray me, even if your entire team comes at me, I'll make sure to drag you all down with me."

"We'll go down together, and then we'll see if Qingfu Base can still survive in Tianhai City!"

Xing Tian felt a chill run down his spine and instinctively swallowed.

"Haha, Zhang Yi, you underestimate me! Let me tell you, I, Xing Tian, built my reputation on loyalty. Just wait and see!"

Zhang Yi smiled. "Good. I'd prefer to avoid bloodshed between old classmates."

Xing Tian gathered his men and food supplies before leaving Xu Family Town. He glanced back cautiously at Zhang Yi several times, even forgetting to bring up the request to take women from the town back with them.

Once Xing Tian was gone, Zhang Yi called for Uncle You and the others to return to the Shelter.

“Let’s go. It’s time to prepare for battle,” Zhang Yi said.

Uncle You added, “Let’s hope the food doesn’t go to waste! Otherwise, we’ll have lost both resources and allies.”

Zhang Yi dismissed the concern. “The supplies we gave them were canned goods confiscated from West Hill Base—hardly anything special. Once things settle down, with my and Fatty Xu’s capabilities, we can replenish those easily. No need to feel sorry for it.”

Uncle You chuckled but warned, “I just hope we didn’t feed a pack of ingrates. If they turn on us, it’ll be a big loss.”

“Unlikely,” Zhang Yi said calmly but with confidence. “Even after all these years, Xing Tian’s personality hasn’t changed much. A person’s nature is hard to alter. He’s gone from an unremarkable nobody to a leader with powers and influence, but that doesn’t make him a brilliant strategist or commander.”

“He’s cautious and afraid of losing what he has. He excels at maintaining his position but lacks the boldness to take risks. Having already tasted some benefits, he’ll prefer to stay passive and profit without conflict.”

Of course, Zhang Yi admitted internally that no one was immune to such temptations. If he were in Xing Tian’s shoes, he too might opt for the safer option of taking the food and walking away.

Still, Zhang Yi added, “We’ll prepare for any possibility, just in case.”

Returning to the Shelter, the group was greeted by the aroma of freshly cooked food wafting through the air.

The scent was especially rich today, invigorating everyone who caught a whiff. Zhang Yi's eyes flashed with a guess and he headed to the kitchen.

Sure enough, Yang Siyah, fully recovered, was busy cooking in the open kitchen. Several other women stood nearby, captivated by the tantalizing smells.

When Yang Siyah saw Zhang Yi, her eyes lit up with excitement. "Zhang Yi, I've mastered my ability! Come and try my cooking!"

Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow, smiling as he approached. "Oh? That quickly? Impressive."

After changing into more comfortable clothes, he walked toward the kitchen island.

"I take it you've all sampled Chef Yang's cooking?" he asked the others.

Lu Keran nodded enthusiastically. "Yes, boss! Yang Siyah's cooking is amazing! It even feels magical—after eating, I'm full of energy and ready to take on anything!"

Zhang Yi pondered this revelation. It seemed her ability worked not just on superhumans but also on ordinary people. That was incredibly convenient—food that could restore not only physical strength but also energy was exceedingly rare.

At the kitchen table, Zhang Yi noticed Liang Yue. Her complexion looked much better, and she seemed more spirited than before.

Curious, Zhang Yi turned to Yang Siyah. "Even Teacher Liang isn't gloomy anymore after eating your cooking?"

Waving her spatula proudly, Yang Siyah replied, "Of course! My cooking boosts energy, clears the mind, and even removes negative conditions!"

Zhang Yi was startled. This was practically a built-in cleanse potion!

Yang Siyah offered him a bowl of chestnut porridge with a look of eager anticipation. "Zhang Yi, try this!"

Not wanting to dampen her spirits, Zhang Yi smiled and accepted the bowl. He set Hua Hua aside, scooping a small portion to let the cat sample it first.

Hua Hua sniffed, its sharp eyes narrowing in apparent thought before eagerly eating the offering.

Only then did Zhang Yi take a sip.

As the porridge slid down his throat, a surge of energy flooded his body, erasing all fatigue. He felt rejuvenated, ready to drop and do a hundred push-ups right then and there.

"Good stuff!" Zhang Yi exclaimed.

Hua Hua, noticing the empty bowl, pounced to paw at it, prompting Yang Siyah to serve the cat its own portion.

Yang Siyah's support-type ability had proven invaluable. While it wasn't flashy or offensive, its effectiveness brought joy to the group, especially with the looming battle.

Both Zhou Ke'er and Lu Keran couldn't hide their envy, wishing Zhang Yi would soon use the remaining Ice Soul on one of them.

Zhang Yi, however, brushed them off, preferring to observe Yang Siyah's progress further.

Yang Xinxin, on the other hand, scoffed at the Ice Soul, declaring her brain to be her ultimate weapon. To her, gaining a mundane ability like cooking would only be a burden.

Everyone who tasted Yang Siyah's cooking praised her power. Zhang Yi, initially cautious, relaxed as he found no adverse effects.

He then inquired about the specifics of her ability.

Yang Siyah explained, "Since I just awakened, I can only enchant food in limited quantities—about five servings at a time. The benefit is that it quickly restores both physical and superhuman energy."

Zhang Yi asked, "Can the enchanted food be stored, or does its effectiveness diminish over time?"

"I'm not sure," Yang Siyah admitted. "But I've noticed the fresher the food, the stronger the effect."

"That's fine," Zhang Yi replied. "From now on, focus on making large batches of convenient foods, like energy bars. I'll handle the storage issue."

By storing her creations in his spatial storage, Zhang Yi could ensure their efficacy wouldn't fade, effectively creating a stockpile of potent rations.

In the future, with superhumans dominating the battlefield, such rations would undoubtedly become a strategic resource.

Chapter 403: The Battle Begins

According to the intelligence provided by the Baixue Sect and Xing Tian, the major factions would unite to attack Zhang Yi's Shelter in three days.

This war was ostensibly about avenging the two bases Zhang Yi had annihilated, but everyone knew it was really about carving up territory and consolidating power. Each faction had its own ulterior motives, striving to maximize its gains, yet they were all committed to this inevitable clash.

Three days later, the Western factions would leave a portion of their forces behind to defend their bases while the rest, led by their leaders, advanced toward Cloud Manor by the Lu River.

The agreed-upon time for the attack was 2:00 PM.

Due to the uncertain conditions within the Ice Fortress surrounding the Shelter, a night raid was deemed too risky—it would place them at a disadvantage in unfamiliar terrain and make them susceptible to ambushes. With their overwhelming numerical superiority, a direct frontal assault was considered the safest approach.

Yangsheng Base's forces were the most imposing, deploying fifteen vehicles, including specialized engineering vehicles and heavily modified armored cars. No other base in Tianhai City could boast such a formidable convoy.

In the third armored car, Yangsheng Base's leader, Xiao Honglian, sat in a fiery red combat suit, her sharp gaze resembling that of an eagle.

Her ability, Inferno Forge, was unique. Using flames, she could not only enhance her physical strength but also unleash intense heat to melt through any material. Classified as both an enhancement and emission-type ability, her combat prowess was exceptional.

Given the conspicuous nature of her flames, her combat suit was appropriately red. Subtlety was unnecessary for someone like her—she was always the center of attention.

As the convoy advanced steadily toward Cloud Manor, Xiao Honglian picked up her communicator to confirm with the other three faction leaders that they would arrive on time.

Satisfied with their responses, she relaxed.

However, her deputy, Zhuge Qingtian, wore a troubled expression.

"This morning, the flagpole outside our base collapsed," he remarked.

Xiao Honglian glanced at him and scoffed. "Superstitious, are we?"

"It's not superstition," Zhuge Qingtian replied, shaking his head. "It's just... I have a bad feeling, and it's getting stronger."

“This is the largest war since the apocalypse began. We’ve never mobilized such a massive force for a battle that could determine Yangsheng Base’s fate.”

In his heart, he added, If we lose, the consequences will be unthinkable. But he dared not voice this fear in front of Xiao Honglian.

Without hesitation, Xiao Honglian dismissed his concerns with a resolute tone.

“We will win. The key factor in West Hill Base’s destruction was the Jiangnan District missile, not Zhang Yi.”

“That tiny Shelter has fewer than ten people. Even if they’re all superhumans, so what? With the Western factions united, crushing them will be effortless.”

Pausing, she added, “If I weren’t concerned about unnecessary risks, I wouldn’t have bothered calling on the other three factions.”

“Rest assured, nothing will go wrong this time. There’s no force in Tianhai City that can withstand an assault from all of us combined.”

Zhuge Qingtian remained silent for a moment before voicing another concern.

“I just hope the other factions don’t mess this up.”

Xiao Honglian laughed loudly.

“Of course, they’re unreliable! Those bloodthirsty scoundrels are like sharks—drawn to the scent of blood. They’ll swarm in eagerly for the spoils.”

Her gaze turned sharp as a blade.

“That’s why they’re dependable. At least for this battle, their greed makes them trustworthy. Zhang Yi is a plump target, and they won’t hesitate to fight over the juiciest piece.”

“We all enjoy bullying the weak, especially fat, helpless prey. Who could resist such temptation?”

Xiao Honglian felt no doubt about their operation. Even Zhang Yi’s vaunted Shelter defenses wouldn’t be an issue—she had brought Wu Huaiaren, an expert in dismantling fortifications, to ensure their success.

The Western factions all believed that Zhang Yi’s team had merely gotten lucky with West Hill Base, riding the coattails of Jiangnan District’s missile strike.

To Xiao Honglian and Wei Dinghai, Zhang Yi was just an overinflated sheep ready for slaughter.

Zhuge Qingtian finally smiled. “You’re right. From a purely strategic standpoint, there’s no reason we could fail.”

Xiao Honglian patted him on the shoulder.

“You’re just too tense! Once we win, we’ll celebrate properly, and you’ll see how sweet victory tastes.”

Relieved, Zhuge Qingtian nodded. “You’re right. I’m probably overthinking this.”

The convoy continued its journey through the snow toward Cloud Manor.

On the other side, Zhang Yi had long learned of their planned 2:00 PM attack. Still, to ensure readiness, his team began preparing at dawn.

Cloud Manor's advantageous location, nestled between two small mountains and overlooking the Lu River, made the rear difficult to access, forcing any attackers to approach through the open terrain at the front.

Zhang Yi arranged his team at the first defensive line. Liang Yue, Uncle You, Fatty Xu, and Hua Hua were stationed there, while he remained inside the Shelter.

"I'm not a close-quarters fighter," Zhang Yi explained. "But supporting from the rear with my Dimensional Gate and sniping abilities will maximize my contributions."

Though Zhang Yi never explicitly claimed leadership, his orders carried the weight of authority. Even Fatty Xu, despite his fear of death, complied without protest.

The impending battle seemed to awaken something in Liang Yue. Her demeanor shifted dramatically—silent, focused, and radiating a simmering killing intent.

She blamed Yangsheng Base for her students' deaths and was determined to exact revenge.

As she prepared to head to the front line, Zhang Yi stopped her.

"Liang Yue, borrow this for now," he said, tossing her a weapon.

Catching it, her eyes lit up with excitement—it was her treasured Tang Sword, the Loong Roar!

"Return it after the battle," Zhang Yi said calmly.

Since he wouldn't be fighting on the front lines, the sword would be better used by Liang Yue.

Her expression froze momentarily before she stomped a foot in mock frustration.

"Got it!" she huffed.

Chapter 404: The Perfect Sniping Spot

After assigning tasks to the frontline personnel, Zhang Yi turned to the support team, reiterating instructions he had already emphasized many times.

"Ke'er, be prepared to treat the wounded."

"Yang Siyah, focus on resting and producing as much energy-restoring food as possible."

Both Yang Siyah and Zhou Ke'er nodded seriously, acknowledging their roles.

Next, Zhang Yi addressed Yang Xinxin and Lu Keran.

"Xinxin, all the frontline firepower installations are under your control. Our firepower output points are numerous, and most people can't handle them simultaneously."

"Some of the enemy forces might even include our allies—or at least neutral parties. Follow my orders before targeting anyone."

Yang Xinxin's excitement was unmistakable, her face flushed with anticipation. She clasped her reddened cheeks with both hands and exclaimed, "Ah~ I finally get to kill enemies myself! What a wonderful battle this will be! Zhang Yi, I'll be your best helper!"

As for Lu Keran, there was no immediate task for her. Her main role had been pre-battle preparation—calibrating weapons and ensuring the firepower systems were in working order. Zhang Yi instructed her to stay with Yang Xinxin and wait for further assignments.

With the tasks delegated, Zhang Yi dismissed them.

"Alright, return to your stations. The enemy could arrive at any moment. Don't stress too much; this battle might be over quickly, or it could drag on. Tension will only lead to mistakes."

He then turned and ascended to the second floor of the Shelter.

Much like before, Zhang Yi had already secured important items from the first and second floors. He was prepared for the possibility, however slim, of the Shelter's surface being breached.

The women watched as Zhang Yi climbed the stairs alone, each secretly wishing they could follow him and fight by his side. However, they knew he disliked anyone deviating from his plans, so they returned to their posts to await the enemy's arrival.

On the second floor, Zhang Yi made his way up to the attic—a rarely visited space in the Shelter.

The attic was modest, just over fifty square meters in size, equivalent to a bathroom in the Shelter. Its purpose might have been as a study, a music room, or simply a vantage point for enjoying the scenery.

Zhang Yi chose it for its height and panoramic views. With skylights surrounding the attic, it offered an unobstructed view of the battlefield—a perfect sniper's nest.

Standing at a window, Zhang Yi gazed out at the expanse before him.

The battle with West Hill Base had leveled much of the terrain in front of Cloud Manor, leaving it wide open.

Not far ahead lay the Lu River, with Xu Family Town and its snow huts visible on the opposite bank. East and west stretched vast snow-covered plains—once filled with buildings or forests, now erased by the apocalypse's snowstorms and buried under layers of frost.

This open expanse was ideal for an advancing charge but equally advantageous for sniping.

From his spatial storage, Zhang Yi retrieved a metal case, pulling out a heavy sniper rifle.

Methodically, he set up the rifle at the window, unpacking several boxes of ammunition and placing them nearby. He even brought a chair, ensuring he could remain steady and avoid fatigue during prolonged sniping.

Once ready, Zhang Yi commanded, "Xiao Ai, open the window in front of me."

The Dimensional Gate had been positioned to seal the area, preventing any shots from penetrating the attic. With it now adjusted, Zhang Yi prepared to scan for the enemy's approach.

Though he had once taken down Ling Feng in a one-on-one fight, Zhang Yi didn't consider himself a close-quarters combatant. Despite his speed-enhancing abilities and the martial arts training he'd received from Liang Yue, he instinctively avoided hand-to-hand combat—it wasn't his strength.

Victory, he believed, lay in two principles:

Exploit the weak and avoid the strong—choose the right opponent.

Play to your strengths—never expose your weaknesses.

This philosophy dictated his decision to stay behind as a sniper rather than engage in direct combat.

The abilities he had absorbed from Ling Feng had significantly enhanced his skills. Not only had he gained Divine Power, but his precision shooting had improved dramatically.

With the heavy sniper rifle, Zhang Yi's effective range was now 3.5 kilometers, with a maximum range of 5 kilometers. At that distance, he could eliminate unprotected targets or even soldiers in standard body armor. For elite combat gear, his accuracy dropped but remained lethal within 1.5 kilometers.

However, soldiers in specialized combat suits or higher-ranking leaders were another matter. Such targets would either be heavily guarded or resistant to gunfire. Those would be left to Liang Yue and the others, who had the appropriate weapons and skills for the task.

That was why he had entrusted Liang Yue with her cherished Loong Roar Sword.

The other major upgrade to Zhang Yi's abilities was his Dimensional Gate. It now spanned a larger area and could withstand greater energy loads—an enormous leap in power.

Still, Zhang Yi recognized his limits. If he faced Ling Feng again in an unprepared skirmish, he estimated a 50% chance of being killed.

“Even so, as long as I play to my strengths and maximize my abilities, I'll be the enemy's worst nightmare,” Zhang Yi murmured, narrowing his eyes.

Today, his objectives were clear:

Eliminate as many ordinary soldiers as possible before the battle escalated. Superhumans were harder to kill and not worth prioritizing. Ordinary soldiers, however, were easy prey—each bullet a guaranteed kill with his lock-on precision. Their deaths would demoralize the enemy, and with enough losses, the attackers might abandon their assault altogether. For Zhang Yi, winning without a fight was the ideal outcome.

Use the Dimensional Gate to support Liang Yue, Uncle You, and the others in their defense.

Once these goals were achieved, Zhang Yi planned to retreat from the first defensive line and regroup at the Shelter, ensuring no enemy would get close enough to endanger him.

“No matter what, I won't let anyone reach me,” he resolved, steadying his focus on the battlefield ahead.

Chapter 405: Precision Kill

At the Shelter, everyone had been on high alert since morning, awaiting the enemy's arrival without a moment's rest. They ate energy bars to stave off hunger and conserved Yang Siyah's ability-enhanced food as a critical resource for the battle itself.

Finally, around 1:00 PM, Zhang Yi's tactical monocle captured subtle movement across the snowfield.

“Attention, everyone! The enemy has appeared,” Zhang Yi announced over the comms.

The team's eyes sharpened with vigilance as they quickly readied themselves for combat. Liang Yue, in particular, struggled to contain her fierce battle spirit.

But Zhang Yi's next words tempered their excitement: "They're still 5 kilometers away."

A collective groan followed, though no one dared relax. Instead, they waited for the enemy to approach.

For now, the battle belonged solely to Zhang Yi.

The forces of Chaoyu Base were the first to arrive. Unlike the other factions, they faced fewer concerns about risking their resources. Their primary assets—ports and ships—were too specialized for anyone else to use effectively.

Seeking to secure the best position for an assault, their convoy moved steadily across the snowfield.

The fleet consisted of over a dozen modified vehicles, each packed with armed soldiers. Dressed in white combat suits adorned with wave insignias, the soldiers and vehicles blended seamlessly into the snowy landscape.

Upon nearing Cloud Manor, they spotted the imposing 20-meter-high Ice Fortress.

Wei Dinghai, the Chaoyu leader, assessed the scene. "The others haven't arrived yet. Stop here for now. Let's secure advantageous terrain so our artillery can target the Shelter's front."

His deputy, Chen Jingguan, peered through binoculars and scoffed.

"An ice fortress? Clever, but ultimately pointless! This structure will never withstand our artillery. If anything, it gives us an environmental advantage. They'll never see it coming."

Wei Dinghai remained composed. "Remember this: despite their small numbers, building such a massive fortification suggests they have a powerful superhuman among them."

Chen Jingguan chuckled dismissively. “No superhuman can withstand the combined assault of the Western factions.”

Wei Dinghai smirked, casually flexing his wrist. “This isn’t a battle—it’s an execution. Still, I’m curious about the people inside. If they survive, I might consider recruiting them.”

“That would be their greatest honor,” Chen Jingguan said sycophantically.

The convoy slowed as they neared Cloud Manor, halting a few kilometers from the fortress. Their plan was to unleash a barrage of artillery fire from a safe distance and demolish the icy defenses.

But before they could set up, chaos erupted.

The windshield of the lead vehicle shattered, followed by a deafening crack! Blood sprayed as the driver’s head exploded like a watermelon.

“Enemy attack!” shouted the soldier in the passenger seat. He ducked instinctively and broadcast the alert over his comms.

But just seconds later, a bullet pierced the engine block, then ripped through his chest, leaving a massive, gaping hole.

The convoy froze in confusion, the soldiers scrambling for cover amidst the sudden chaos.

Inside one of the middle vehicles, Wei Dinghai and Chen Jingguan were startled by the unexpected attack.

“Where is this coming from?” Wei Dinghai demanded. “This is an open snowfield—where could the enemy possibly be hiding?”

The intelligence suggested fewer than ten people were defending the Shelter, yet now they were being ambushed like this.

Unable to process the situation, Wei Dinghai barked out a command: “Everyone, stay alert! Find the enemy and take them out!”

The Chaoyu soldiers—many of whom were mercenaries, bodyguards, or hired thugs—immediately chambered their rounds. Using their vehicles as cover, they cautiously scanned the snowy expanse for the unseen sniper.

“Bang!”

Another soldier dropped, his head obliterated in a bloody explosion. Zhang Yi’s anti-materiel sniper rifle turned each kill into a grotesque spectacle, sending waves of fear through the ranks.

The soldiers who were preparing the artillery were now panicked, making them easy targets.

“Bang! Bang! Bang!”

Three more soldiers fell, their upper bodies reduced to crimson mist by the sheer force of Zhang Yi’s rifle.

The rifle’s massive caliber left no room for survival. Chaoyu’s soldiers, many of whom were inexperienced, froze in terror at the sight of their comrades’ grisly deaths.

The few who tried to hide behind vehicles fared no better. Zhang Yi’s bullets pierced through the cars and struck those behind them, adding to the carnage.

As long as those soldiers exposed any part of their bodies, Zhang Yi would pull the trigger without hesitation.

If it was a head, he’d aim for the head. If it was a foot, he’d aim for the foot.

At these subzero temperatures, even a glancing blow would mean death.

The gunfire never stopped, each deafening shot echoing across the frozen expanse. One soldier after another fell, their deaths gruesome and horrifying. Blood sprayed across the pristine snow, staining the field in grotesque splashes of crimson.

Some tried to hide behind vehicles, but Zhang Yi's anti-materiel rifle showed no mercy. Both the cars and the soldiers using them as cover were pierced through in a single, devastating shot.

Not once did the Chaoyu forces locate their assailant. Every attempt to pinpoint Zhang Yi's position ended in failure—and death.

The relentless assault shattered their morale, leaving them panicked and confused.

Faced with such a humiliating massacre, Wei Dinghai finally lost his composure.

"Using my men as targets for practice?! How arrogant can he be!" he bellowed, his voice trembling with rage.

Chapter 406: The Invisible Enemy

After Zhang Yi eliminated 15 soldiers, a dense, swirling white mist suddenly rose around the convoy, and a blizzard enveloped it completely. The entire convoy disappeared from Zhang Yi's sight.

He paused, lowering his rifle momentarily.

"An ice element superhuman? Their ability seems somewhat similar to Fatty Xu's," Zhang Yi mused with a faint smirk, his eyes remaining fixed on the tactical monocle.

"How long can this ability last, I wonder? You're here to attack me, and I don't believe you'll stay still for long."

All Zhang Yi needed was for his enemies to show the smallest flaw—just a brief moment of vulnerability.

At the center of the convoy, Wei Dinghai activated his Ice and Snow Lord ability, summoning a fierce blizzard to shield the vehicles temporarily.

But this was only a stopgap measure. They were still a considerable distance from Cloud Manor, with no nearby terrain to provide adequate cover. Prolonged use of his ability would deplete his energy, leaving him weaker for the upcoming fight.

"The priority is to find that sniper!" Wei Dinghai ordered sharply.

"Why can't we locate him?" he demanded, his voice filled with frustration.

None of his subordinates could provide a satisfactory answer.

The snowfield offered no suitable vantage points for a sniper. From the trajectory of the shots, it was clear they came from an elevated position, but there wasn't even a tree nearby—just the vast, empty sky.

Chen Jingguan speculated, "I believe Zhang Yi's team has a highly skilled superhuman sniper."

He pointed in the direction of the Shelter.

"The sniper's position must be over there. That's where the shots are coming from."

Wei Dinghai's eyes narrowed. "But that's over 3 kilometers away! This sniper fired over a dozen shots without showing signs of fatigue, and yet he hasn't targeted our key personnel."

This led both Wei Dinghai and Chen Jingguan to a chilling conclusion: the sniper wasn't just skilled—he was terrifyingly powerful.

Not only did his superhuman ability provide overwhelming firepower, but his energy reserves were vast enough to allow him to "waste" shots on ordinary soldiers.

Without hesitation, Wei Dinghai made his decision.

“Order the convoy to retreat! The other factions haven’t arrived yet, and there’s no reason for us to suffer unnecessary losses. Just move out of his firing range!”

The order spread quickly among the soldiers. They rushed back into their vehicles, and the convoy began to reverse course, attempting to escape the sniper’s reach. Wei Dinghai maintained the blizzard to obscure Zhang Yi’s line of sight.

Turning vehicles in the snow was a clumsy process, inevitably exposing some of them to Zhang Yi’s scope.

He anticipated their retreat and waited for the convoy to reach 3 kilometers from the first defensive line. At that range, his heavy sniper rifle could still pierce their armored vehicles with ease.

“Bang!”

A shot landed squarely on the front wheel of a vehicle, puncturing the tire and damaging the tracks. The vehicle tilted sharply to one side.

Unperturbed, Zhang Yi calmly reloaded and fired again, this time taking out both the front and rear wheels of another vehicle, rendering it immobile.

Inside the damaged vehicle, panic erupted.

“The car’s down! What do we do?”

“Don’t leave us behind—help us!”

“If we leave the blizzard, we’ll be sitting ducks!”

They were gripped by fear, knowing their attacker was a long-range superhuman they had no way of countering. This was far more terrifying than facing a conventional sniper, who at least operated within human limitations.

A single mistake in this confrontation meant death.

Wei Dinghai knew abandoning nearly 20 soldiers in a single vehicle would be disastrous.

“Slow down! Let the soldiers in the disabled vehicle transfer to another one!” he ordered.

Chaoyu Base’s forces lacked any comparable long-range superhuman attackers. Even though they had powerful superhumans of their own, Wei Dinghai wasn’t about to send one to recklessly engage Zhang Yi before the other factions arrived.

This war was about profit, not pride.

As the vehicles slowed, Wei Dinghai expanded the blizzard to make targeting more difficult for Zhang Yi.

The swirling snow obscured Zhang Yi’s line of sight, but he wasn’t deterred. Even without precise targeting, his heavy sniper rifle’s power ensured that any hit would be devastating.

Each shot was aimed at the general area of the retreating convoy, exploiting the density of their formation to maximize damage.

“Bang!”

A bullet punched through the rear door of a vehicle, shattering the thin steel plating. A soldier inside screamed as his leg was grazed, leaving a bloody mess where flesh once was.

“Damn it! Our armor’s too thin to withstand a weapon like this!” one veteran shouted angrily.

He had fought in countless battles, but never had he felt so helpless.

The bullets kept coming, their terrifying sound echoing through the blizzard. Soldiers, unable to trust the vehicles' armor for protection, cowered on the floors of their compartments.

But even that wasn't always enough.

Those lucky enough to die instantly were spared the agony of the wounded, whose screams filled the air like haunting wails. The convoy's morale plummeted as fear gripped every heart.

This sniper was no ordinary threat—he was a nightmare in the flesh.

Chaoyu Base's soldiers had no idea they were up against the most formidable sniper in Tianhai City.

Listening to the screams outside, Wei Dinghai's expression darkened.

"Get us out of here! Move faster! If there are injured soldiers, leave them behind—they're unlikely to survive anyway!"

From his vantage point in the attic, Zhang Yi emptied two magazines before switching to a fresh sniper rifle to avoid overheating.

Each shot rang out like a death knell, precise and unrelenting. Zhang Yi was wholly focused, saying nothing to his teammates over the shared comms.

Meanwhile, Fatty Xu, Uncle You, and Liang Yue listened to the gunfire through their shared channel.

To them, it didn't feel like a battlefield.

Instead, it sounded like a shooting range—a series of calm, rhythmic gunshots.

With every pull of the trigger, another life was snuffed out.

Sometimes, killing was as simple as playing a game.

Chapter 407: One Man, One Gun

Zhang Yi, alone with his sniper rifle, forced the entire Chaoyu Base to retreat.

Gunfire echoed across the snowfield, each shot sending a chill of terror through the Chaoyu soldiers. Even their modified vehicles couldn't withstand the destructive power of Zhang Yi's rifle.

Chen Jingguan couldn't take it any longer. "If this keeps up, who knows how many more he'll kill? I'm going out there!"

He opened the car door, leaping into the icy storm. Agile as a monkey, he climbed onto a vehicle before vaulting into position at the rear of the convoy.

In the blink of an eye, his body expanded and stretched, transforming into a massive, leathery shield covering the last two vehicles.

"Bang!"

A bullet from Zhang Yi's rifle slammed into Chen Jingguan's barrier-like body. Though it didn't penetrate, the sheer force left a deep dent in the steel plating behind him, the bullet falling harmlessly to the snow.

Pain twisted Chen Jingguan's expression. The bullet's power was immense. Even with his ability to resist most physical attacks, the impact caused significant discomfort.

"This sniper... his power is terrifying," Chen Jingguan muttered grimly.

Unaware that a superhuman was now shielding the convoy, Zhang Yi continued firing methodically. If one rifle overheated, he calmly switched to another. Having raided West Hill Base's arsenal, he had five heavy sniper rifles at his disposal.

After five or six minutes, the Chaoyu convoy finally vanished from Zhang Yi's sight, disappearing over the horizon.

"They've fled?" Zhang Yi smirked. "Looks like they're waiting for reinforcements before making another attempt. No matter who comes, though, they'd better be ready for my sniper fire."

Through the comms, Zhang Yi's teammates, hearing the sudden silence, quickly inquired about the situation.

"Zhang Yi, what happened? Did they retreat?"

"Yeah," he replied nonchalantly. "I killed a few dozen of them, and they pulled back. I think they're waiting for the other factions to arrive before launching a coordinated attack."

His words left everyone stunned.

"You killed dozens of them already? Damn, boss, you're insane!" Fatty Xu exclaimed, his voice filled with awe.

From the first gunshot to now, less than ten minutes had passed.

With just a sniper rifle and his unmatched skill, Zhang Yi had routed the entire Chaoyu convoy, inflicting heavy casualties without suffering any losses.

It dawned on everyone that Zhang Yi himself was the true first line of defense for the Shelter. His sniper range alone had rendered the initial defensive line almost unnecessary.

"This is just basic," Zhang Yi replied calmly.

To him, it wasn't anything extraordinary. If he couldn't achieve this level of efficiency, then all the superhuman power he had absorbed would have been wasted.

In terms of sheer capability, Zhang Yi might already be the most formidable superhuman in Tianhai City. After all, one of his victims, Ling Feng, had been a top-tier superhuman before Zhang Yi devoured his abilities.

“Long-range sniping and defense are my strengths,” Zhang Yi explained. “If they manage to breach my range and reach the defensive line, it’ll be up to you to hold them off.”

“And if necessary, I can use Divine Power to take down a few key superhumans.”

The combination of Divine Power and precision shooting was devastating. Within 300 meters, it was even deadlier than his sniper rifle, offering unparalleled lethality against all but the most heavily fortified superhumans.

Fatty Xu chuckled nervously. “Let’s see if they even have the guts to survive your sniper fire first!”

Zhang Yi remained composed. This was routine for him. True mastery would be when he could snipe someone like Ling Feng from five kilometers away—that would be a true testament to his power.

Back at a safe distance, Wei Dinghai ordered his men to assess the damage.

The report was grim:

“One vehicle is completely totaled, three more are severely damaged and may not make it back. We’ve got two squad leaders lightly injured, and 35 soldiers are confirmed dead.”

Wei Dinghai’s expression darkened.

They had brought 300 elite soldiers—Chaoyu’s finest. And now, before even reaching Zhang Yi’s Shelter, they had already lost a tenth of their forces.

“This... this is a disaster. Zhang Yi’s team has a superhuman this powerful? It doesn’t make sense!”

As a top-tier superhuman himself, Wei Dinghai had a deep understanding of what superhumans were capable of. But he couldn’t fathom anyone being able to snipe from 3.5 kilometers away, penetrate 3mm steel plating, and decimate soldiers so effortlessly.

“Could Tianhai City have produced an Epsilon-level superhuman?” he wondered aloud.

“No, it’s not that extreme,” he reasoned after a moment. “This sniper is just incredibly specialized in long-range combat. That means his close-range abilities must be weak.”

Wei Dinghai quickly formulated a plan.

“To achieve such excellence in one area, there must be a glaring weakness elsewhere. If we can close the distance, we can exploit his blind spots.”

He tapped his chin thoughtfully.

“Once we breach the Shelter, that so-called ‘death sniper’ will no longer pose a threat.”

At that moment, Chen Jingguan climbed back into the vehicle, his face pale from the strain of blocking Zhang Yi’s bullets.

“Boss, that sniper is too dangerous. We can’t keep advancing head-on. I suggest we take a detour, even if it’s longer, to avoid him.”

Wei Dinghai stroked his beard, contemplating. “A detour?”

Based on Zhang Yi’s effective range of 3.5 kilometers, a detour would require a significant reroute.

Chen Jingguan pulled out a satellite phone, opening a map.

“Here,” he said, pointing to Xu Family Town. “We can launch our attack from this direction. The terrain has plenty of cover, which will make it harder for him to target us.”

Wei Dinghai nodded. “Not a bad idea, but let’s hold off on any action for now. Find a place to hide.”

“Hide?” Chen Jingguan asked, puzzled. “But he already knows we’re here. What’s the point?”

Wei Dinghai’s lips curled into a cold smile, his eyes flashing with cruelty.

“That sniper’s wrath shouldn’t just be our burden. Let the others feel what it’s like to be hunted like animals.”

Chen Jingguan’s eyes widened in realization.

The Western factions were only temporarily united. Once this battle was over, they would inevitably turn on each other in their scramble for territory.

If Wei Dinghai could maneuver the other factions into suffering similar losses to that sniper, it would make them easier to deal with later—and Chaoyu would benefit from their weakened state.

Chapter 408: Full Counterattack

The loss of dozens of subordinates left Wei Dinghai in a foul mood. Yet, the confrontation yielded a crucial piece of intelligence—the sniper was far less lethal against superhumans.

At least against Chen Jingguan’s formidable defense, the sniper’s bullets failed to penetrate.

“The role of ordinary soldiers on the battlefield is becoming increasingly limited,” Wei Dinghai muttered to himself. “It seems the future will truly belong to superhumans.”

This revelation deepened his conviction. He decided to stay put, deliberately withholding the information about the sniper's power from the other factions.

Before long, Yangsheng Base's convoy arrived from a different direction.

As they entered Zhang Yi's effective range, the hunt began anew.

This time, Zhang Yi refined his approach. He targeted the vehicles' tires first, leaving several immobilized before picking off the drivers.

As more vehicles were disabled, chaos spread through Yangsheng Base's convoy.

The initial response mirrored Chaoyu Base's—rely on the vehicles for cover while searching for the hidden sniper. Lacking prior warning, their tactics were predictable.

Confident in their superior numbers and firepower, they believed they could flush out and eliminate the sniper.

But that miscalculation allowed Zhang Yi to systematically eliminate his targets.

Heads exploded into bloody mists, and limbs protruding from vehicle gaps were shattered in an instant.

"Ahhhh!"

"My hand! My hand!"

For the dead, their suffering was over. But for the wounded, the agony was unbearable. They writhed on the ground, their screams piercing the cold air like knives.

Zhang Yi ignored them. The wounded were as good as dead, and their cries served to demoralize the rest of the enemy.

Xiao Honglian quickly seized control of the situation, issuing firm orders.

“Find that damn sniper and take him out! No one ambushes us like this and lives to tell about it!”

But despite their efforts, her soldiers failed to locate Zhang Yi.

No one could have imagined a sniper capable of hitting targets accurately from 3.5 kilometers away.

Even if they identified his position, not a single superhuman or soldier in Tianhai City could retaliate effectively from that distance.

Sometimes, even Zhang Yi underestimated his own strength. But in battle, his adversaries were always reminded of his devastating prowess.

Suddenly, a blur of white streaked across the battlefield.

As one of Zhang Yi’s bullets streaked toward the convoy, the white figure leapt into its path. Sparks erupted as the bullet was deflected mid-air, forcing the figure to stagger back from the impact.

“Oh? Finally, someone interesting?” Zhang Yi muttered, his lips curling into a faint smirk.

Adjusting his scope, he focused on the figure—a tall, wiry humanoid with a wolf-like head and silvery-gray fur.

It was a beast-type superhuman, his agility and strength explaining how he could deflect a bullet with his bare hands.

As Zhang Yi observed him, the beastman's sharp eyes located the sniper's position.

"That far?" Liu Xian, nicknamed "Mad Dog," narrowed his eyes. Even with his speed and reflexes, it was an incredibly difficult distance to cover.

If it were a one-on-one fight, he could have closed the distance in seconds. But Zhang Yi's fortified position inside the Shelter made such a move reckless.

Before Liu Xian could act, another bullet whistled toward him.

Growling, Liu Xian bared his fangs and charged, his body a blur as he intercepted the projectile.

Zhang Yi remained composed, firing repeatedly.

Each shot cost him only a bullet and a small amount of energy, while a single mistake could cost Liu Xian his life.

One shot.

Two shots.

Three shots.

By the third, Liu Xian's claws were trembling, his stamina waning. Even as a beast-type superhuman with a robust physique, the relentless barrage was taking its toll.

Despite his fatigue, Liu Xian's lips curled into a sly grin.

"It's ready!" he snarled.

From one of the convoy's armored vehicles, a dark green cannon barrel emerged.

The artillery operator quickly took aim at Zhang Yi's position and fired.

The shell roared through the air, hurtling toward the attic of the Shelter.

Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow. "They brought heavy artillery? Interesting."

But as the shell approached, it vanished as if it had plunged into water. It had disappeared into Zhang Yi's Dimensional Gate, never reaching its target.

Inside the armored vehicle, the artillery crew waited for the expected explosion.

"Was it a dud?" one gunner asked, confused.

Moments later, a bullet pierced through the gunner's torso, slicing him in half. His bisected body crumpled to the floor, eliciting horrified screams from his comrades.

The surviving artillery operators, pale and shaking, scrambled to reload.

Fear gripped them, but desperation drove them to continue firing.

Several more shells were launched toward Zhang Yi's position.

Moments later, the artillery shells reappeared—this time, hurtling back toward the convoy.

“Get down!” someone screamed in terror.

The first shell detonated near the vehicles, a thunderous explosion sending snow and debris soaring into the air.

More explosions followed in quick succession. The powerful blasts caused vehicles to tilt precariously, their occupants thrown violently about.

Liu Xian roared as he leapt into action, his body expanding as he tried to intercept one of the shells.

But the power of the shells was not comparable to that of sniper bullets. Liu Xian gave it his all, his muscles bulging as he leapt to meet the incoming projectiles, his claws slashing desperately to deflect their paths.

“Boom!”

The first shell shifted slightly off course, exploding to the side of the convoy. The blast sent snow and debris surging into the sky like a tidal wave.

“Boom! Boom!”

More shells followed, each veering slightly from their original trajectories, but their proximity still sent shockwaves through the area. Vehicles tilted precariously, their occupants thrown violently against the interiors.

Liu Xian roared in defiance, but the immense force of the final explosion hurled him across the snowfield. He skidded to a stop, blood dripping from his mouth as his body trembled under the strain.

The convoy itself was in disarray. Though the cars had avoided catastrophic damage, the panic and confusion left them vulnerable.

Xiao Honglian, her sharp gaze taking in the chaos, made a swift decision.

“Retreat!” she commanded, her voice cutting through the cacophony of cries and explosions.

Her forces wasted no time, scrambling to pull back as the snowstorm of destruction began to settle, leaving behind shattered confidence and wounded pride.

Chapter 409: Hidden Agendas

In the convoy from Yangsheng Base, many soldiers threw out smoke bombs, quickly creating a thick fog that obscured the surrounding view.

Zhang Yi casually hummed a tune as he fired his rifle indiscriminately. Yangsheng Base suffered even heavier losses than Chaoyu Base. Zhang Yi had damaged several vehicle tires and tracks right from the start, rendering them immobile.

Additionally, their attempts to counterattack wasted valuable time. During this window, Zhang Yi injured Liu Xian and killed over a dozen soldiers.

Despite the significant losses, Xiao Honglian still refused to launch a direct assault on the Shelter. Much like Chaoyu Base, they couldn’t afford to throw all their resources into a single attack. Since this was a joint offensive by the Western Alliance, everyone had to contribute and share the brunt of the Shelter's firepower.

After abandoning several vehicles and losing over a dozen lives, Yangsheng Base retreated to a safer area.

“A sniper with incredible abilities, who can even counter artillery strikes. We can't be certain if this is one person or two with separate abilities,” Xiao Honglian said, her expression grim. “Either way, both powers are terrifying in their own right.”

Vehicles and common soldiers weren't the biggest concern. What truly mattered was understanding the opponent's strength. Zhang Yi's display had delivered a massive shock to everyone. Yangsheng Base's elite forces were rendered completely helpless, forced to retreat in disarray.

"I finally understand now," Xiao Honglian muttered to herself, "why a handful of them were able to hold off West Hill Base for an entire month."

Some thoughts she couldn't voice in front of her subordinates. But based on her assessment, the sniper in the Shelter could rival her own abilities.

Zhuge Qingtian ordered everyone to hold their positions and had Liu Xian begin treating his injuries. Fortunately, although many had died, the core combat units remained intact, and morale wasn't entirely broken.

He approached Xiao Honglian's vehicle and asked for instructions. "Leader, what should we do next? A frontal assault could work, but we're still seven kilometers from Cloud Manor. Along the way, we lack effective means to counter their sniper. If their ability can reflect attacks, it would render firearms and artillery almost useless."

Xiao Honglian glanced at him with a calm, unbothered look. "What's there to fear? They only have a handful of Superhumans. There's no way they can maintain prolonged combat. Our combined forces from the Western Alliance total in the thousands. Even a war of attrition would crush them eventually.

"However, we shouldn't press forward for now. Let the others take the lead instead. Let that sniper waste his energy and powers on them."

Zhuge Qingtian nodded and relayed the order for everyone to rest. Meanwhile, Xiao Honglian picked up her satellite phone to call Wei Dinghai of Chaoyu Base.

"Hello, Wei Dinghai. Where are you now?"

On the other end, Wei Dinghai responded, "Oh, we'll be there shortly. Have you arrived yet?"

Xiao Honglian smirked. "Not yet. Our route is longer, so we'll probably be the last to arrive. But don't worry; we'll make it in time as planned."

Wei Dinghai chuckled. "Ah, I thought you were already there. I wanted to ask about the situation on your end."

Xiao Honglian laughed. "What a coincidence! We both had the same thought!"

"Alright, let's talk when we meet then."

After they hung up, both of them thought the same thing: Go ahead and taste that sniper's bullets first.

From Zhang Yi's perspective, the two convoys came and left quickly after suffering a few casualties.

"Only a few dead, and you're retreating already? Are you planning something sneaky again?"

The open snowfield gave Zhang Yi a massive advantage. Still, he knew his opponents weren't fools. Having suffered once, they would undoubtedly choose alternative routes to avoid his sniping range.

But that didn't matter. As long as they launched their attack from the Shelter's front, they'd still fall within his line of fire.

"I'll make sure everyone knows this: today, I'm claiming all the grunts on this battlefield as my own!" Zhang Yi grinned wickedly.

The others could only look at him with exasperation.

Liang Yue shook her head. If she hadn't seen it with her own eyes, she would never believe this man had taken down the nearly invincible melee commander Ling Feng.

"You're already this strong, yet you insist on being so... evasive!"

Fatty Xu hurriedly shouted, “Boss, if you have a chance, take out the Superhumans first! That’ll ease the pressure on us at the front line.”

Superhumans were the real problem in prolonged combat.

Zhang Yi replied indifferently, “Oh, I’ll try. But don’t get your hopes up.”

“For Superhumans who’ve survived this long, especially Enhancement and Beast Types, firearms are barely effective anymore.”

He shrugged. “You know, my strength only doubles against enemies I’ve marked as amateurs. If I think an opponent is strong, I’ll instinctively go into stealth mode.”

Fatty Xu twitched at the mouth. “I hereby declare you the ultimate golden left hand!”

Zhang Yi smirked. “But I usually prefer my right hand—or both.”

Though Zhang Yi spoke nonchalantly, everyone knew he was deliberately downplaying his capabilities. He never exaggerated his strength, ensuring enemies underestimated him and teammates didn’t overly depend on him.

But when Zhang Yi truly wanted someone dead, his methods could push the boundaries of cruelty and cunning.

Scanning the distance through his tactical scope, Zhang Yi observed a deathly still landscape, brimming with tension, like the calm before a storm.

“I’ve intentionally revealed my ability to reflect attacks. This should deter them from using heavy weapons, which buys our first line of defense more time. Without heavy artillery, breaking through the 10-meter-thick ice wall will be extremely difficult.”

Zhang Yi's Dimensional Gate had limited coverage—it couldn't shield the entire front line spanning kilometers. However, by showcasing it as a threat, he maximized its strategic value.

"I wonder who's coming next?" he murmured, cradling his rifle.

It didn't take long for his question to be answered. From the distant snowfield, a massive group of Bai Xue Jiao devotees approached on foot, numbering in the thousands.

"Well... I won't waste my bullets on them," Zhang Yi said, shaking his head.

He should have expected it. Bai Xue Jiao would undoubtedly send their zealous followers to march toward their deaths.

Chapter 410: The Five-Army Battle

Following Chaoyu Base and Yangsheng Base, the members of Bai Xue Jiao arrived near the battlefield. Unlike the others, their strength lay in sheer numbers.

Although the cultists were not particularly skilled in combat, they were fearless and fanatical, thanks to Bai Xue Jiao's brainwashing. Many firmly believed that dying in the holy war would send their souls to a paradise filled with flowers and feasts.

This time, Bai Xue Jiao's High Priest, Zheng Yixian, led over a thousand followers. Despite being closest to Yuelu Manor, their lack of vehicles delayed their arrival.

Zhang Yi refrained from attacking them immediately. For one, killing ordinary cultists was pointless. For another, there was a tenuous agreement that they might assist him if necessary.

Through the comms channel, Zhang Yi notified everyone:

"Bai Xue Jiao has arrived. Now, all three factions are here except for Qingfu Base."

Liang Yue's eyes burned with eagerness, her killing intent almost palpable. Ever since learning that Yangsheng Base was nearby, she had been itching to avenge her fallen students. Only their blood could assuage her guilt and sorrow.

Uncle You, however, remained rational and asked, "Weren't Bai Xue Jiao and Qingfu Base supposed to be our allies? What if they charge the lines? Do we kill them?"

Zhang Yi's reply was decisive: "Anyone approaching the defensive line dies. No exceptions!"

Allies or not, they were wolves in sheep's clothing. The moment Zhang Yi's side showed weakness, they'd undoubtedly join the assault on the Shelter.

"Understood. That simplifies things," Uncle You said, visibly relieved.

He lifted a tarp to reveal a stash of ammunition and two Gatling guns. These heavy-caliber cannons could tear through armored vehicles, let alone human targets.

After arriving at the battlefield, Bai Xue Jiao found no sign of the other factions, which struck them as odd. They immediately tried to contact the other groups.

Xiao Honglian and Wei Dinghai, eager to see more of Bai Xue Jiao's forces expended, pretended they hadn't arrived yet and advised Zheng Yixian to wait near Cloud Manor.

Although Zheng Yixian sensed something amiss, he didn't press further. After all, they were only here to exploit opportunities, not to risk their lives against Zhang Yi.

"If Zhang Yi can fend off a few waves and deplete the other factions' forces, we'll strike them from behind," Zheng Yixian said with a smile. "If Zhang Yi fails, we'll just break our agreement and join the looting."

"There are no eternal friends or enemies, only eternal interests," he added.

Not long after Bai Xue Jiao settled near the Shelter, Qingfu Base also arrived. Their transportation was primitive, relying on a pack of sturdy sled dogs.

Their leader, Xing Tian, and his adopted daughter, Zhou Lingling, rode massive mutant hounds, followed by over 500 men in white combat gear, their presence intimidating.

The sleds carried not only firearms and ammunition but also specialized melee weapons—giant axes, war hammers, cleavers, and steel-forged shields—evoking a sense of returning to an era of cold weapons.

From a distance, Xing Tian used binoculars to observe the Shelter. He instructed his men, “No one is to attack Zhang Yi’s Shelter without my order. We’re here to enjoy the show.”

...

The factions of the Western Alliance finally assembled, marking the time for their coordinated attack. As the instigator of this operation, Xiao Honglian initiated a group call with the other leaders.

“Everyone’s in position, right? As per our plan, we’ll attack the Shelter from multiple directions,” she said.

Xing Tian replied, “We’ll approach from behind for a surprise assault!”

Wei Dinghai sounded puzzled. “The Shelter is backed by low hills. Are you planning to climb over them?”

The hills, though only about a hundred meters high, were difficult to scale in the snowstorm, let alone serve as a vantage point for an attack.

Xing Tian smirked inwardly. He had no intention of fighting and chose the rear to avoid being noticed slacking off. “Precisely. It’s the element of surprise! You handle the front; we’ll deal with the back.”

The others had no objections, even if they had doubts. Each faction in the Western Alliance operated independently, and no one could command another.

Unbeknownst to Xiao Honglian and Wei Dinghai, Xing Tian had already made a secret deal with Zhang Yi. From their perspective, this was a surefire operation destined for victory.

“Fine, then. The frontal assault is up to the three of us,” Wei Dinghai agreed.

Xiao Honglian added, “By the way, there’s a very strong sniper among them. Be cautious.”

“Additionally, one of them has the ability to reflect artillery attacks. So think twice before using heavy weaponry; it might backfire and harm us instead.”

Wei Dinghai chimed in, “Yes, I wanted to mention that. We’ve already suffered some losses because of it.”

Both assumed Bai Xue Jiao and Qingfu Base had also encountered Zhang Yi’s attacks and shared this information to avoid friendly fire.

“Got it,” Xing Tian and Zheng Yixian replied indifferently.

Neither had any real intention of fighting, preferring to watch from the sidelines. However, learning about Zhang Yi’s rare spatial abilities and his capability to counter heavy weapons still surprised them. After all, this rendered their heavy firepower useless.

Using artillery in such circumstances was akin to signing their own death warrants.

“Alright, let’s synchronize. At 2:30, we’ll launch the attack from all directions,” Xiao Honglian concluded.

Yangsheng Base and Chaoyu Base opted to approach Cloud Manor via Xu Family Town, one of the few areas offering some cover.

To counter Zhang Yi’s sniping, they fortified their formation. Heavily armored vehicles with thick steel plating led the charge, while lighter ones followed behind. They also used snow or smoke bombs to obscure Zhang Yi’s vision.

Concerned about Zhang Yi's spatial reflection ability, they abandoned long-range artillery tactics, opting for close-range breakthroughs instead.

Zhang Yi observed these developments calmly. This was all within his expectations. His enemies weren't fools who would charge recklessly into his crosshairs. But if they wanted to break through, they'd eventually have to disembark from their vehicles, exposing themselves.

There was no rush. A good hunter always has patience.

Just then, Yang Xinxin's voice came through his earpiece.

"Brother Zhang Yi, enemies spotted at the rear hills!"

Zhang Yi's eyes sharpened.

Yang Xinxin, stationed in the control room, relayed information quickly via surveillance. Moving deftly in a mechanized wheelchair crafted by Lu Keran, she transmitted the visuals to Zhang Yi.

Upon seeing the figures in the rear hills, Zhang Yi's expression relaxed.

"So, it's them! No need to worry; they're just here to slack off," Zhang Yi said.

The terrain in the rear hills was too poor for any effective assault. The slopes were steep, between 70 and 80 degrees, making a charge down them practically suicidal. Without Zhang Yi even firing a shot, they'd injure themselves.

Xing Tian's motives were crystal clear. He was here to spectate, nothing more.