

Ice Age 461

Chapter 461: Power Levels of Superhumans

Zhang Yi, no longer hiding the truth, explained to Bian Junwu how he had dealt with the zombie horde.

“In reality, I used flooding to handle the zombies.”

“I can’t claim to have cleared every zombie in the West Hill and Lu River Districts, but within a 50-kilometer radius, there hasn’t been any large-scale activity from zombies or mutated rats.”

After listening, Bian Junwu sipped his hot water before speaking.

“Why didn’t you tell the truth earlier? Was it to let them suffer greater losses because they attacked you before? Or are you hoping to become the king of Tianhai City?”

Zhang Yi responded calmly, neither humble nor overbearing.

“At first, I did think about getting back at them a little,” he admitted.

“Let’s be honest, you can tell the relationships between the five factions aren’t exactly friendly. If they weaken, I get stronger.”

“But that wasn’t the main reason. The truth is, I couldn’t help them even if I wanted to.”

Placing his teacup down, Zhang Yi folded his hands on his knees.

“You know how massive Tianhai City’s subway network is. I’m not capable of helping every faction.

“Besides, I don’t think my method solves the root problem. As long as the Zombie King exists, the zombies will keep coming.”

Bian Junwu didn't refute this but instead asked, "Have you ever seen the Zombie King?"

Zhang Yi shook his head.

"No, but I'm sure it exists."

"Think about it—zombies attack places with large human populations. Yet, our shelter only has nine people, and we rarely go out. Why would a horde target us?"

A subtle, meaningful smile appeared on Zhang Yi's face.

He fixed his gaze on Bian Junwu and said slowly, "Zombies choose their targets. Someone is deliberately targeting the five factions."

Bian Junwu regarded him for a moment before breaking into a smile.

"You're as clever as I thought."

Zhang Yi shook his head.

"It's not wisdom, just a bit of cunning—enough to keep me alive in this apocalypse."

Bian Junwu had already formed some conclusions of his own.

While Zhang Yi's method wasn't a permanent solution, it could maintain stability in certain areas if used judiciously.

However, overuse could provoke the zombies into overwhelming the city, which would require extensive preparation to manage.

The key lay in uncovering the Zombie King's location and nature to execute a decisive strike.

"You have great potential. I'd guess you're at the Delta level. Have you considered leaving this small corner of the world and making a name for yourself in the Jiangnan District?"

Bian Junwu extended an olive branch to Zhang Yi.

Intrigued, Zhang Yi asked, "Wait a second. What's this Delta level you mentioned?"

Bian Junwu realized Zhang Yi wasn't familiar with professional classifications of superhumans and chuckled.

"It's not a secret. Let me explain."

He asked Zhang Yi, "When do you think superhumans first appeared?"

Zhang Yi didn't hesitate. "After gamma rays swept across Blue Star, during the Ice Age."

"Wrong!" Bian Junwu immediately corrected him.

"Human mutation has existed throughout history."

"From an evolutionary perspective, all life is constantly mutating. Beneficial mutations improve survival, leading to greater reproductive success and passing those traits to the next generation."

"Even humans today are almost an entirely different species compared to our ancestors millions of years ago."

"Throughout this process, a small fraction of the population has always exhibited special abilities—be it extraordinary strength, unusual talents, or freakish deformities. They were the original superhumans."

Taking another sip of water, Bian Junwu's expression turned serious.

"Superhumans have always existed. What's different now is the sheer scale of these mutations."

"External factors have stimulated genetic changes across entire populations, resulting in countless superhumans."

"And yet, global research into human mutation began long before this, including the classification of superhumans into levels."

Zhang Yi crossed his arms, nodding. "I've heard of the six major categories of superhumans. But how are their levels determined?"

Bian Junwu explained:

"Currently, there's an internationally recognized standard for categorizing superhumans.

"First is Alpha level, or LV1. Their mutations are weak and lack potential for growth, showing only a fraction of extraordinary strength. These superhumans are merely stronger than ordinary people.

"Next is Beta level, LV2. Stronger than Alpha, they possess the peak capabilities of elite human warriors but still lack significant growth potential.

"Then comes Gamma level, LV3. This level marks the emergence of truly formidable powers.

"Whether it's the ability to fight hundreds or a highly specialized auxiliary skill, Gamma-level superhumans are forces to be reckoned with."

Hearing this, Zhang Yi thought of Uncle You and Fatty Xu. They likely belonged to the Gamma level, as their abilities could rival entire battalions.

“What’s next?” Zhang Yi asked curiously.

Bian Junwu continued, “The next tier is where things get extraordinary.

“Delta level, LV4! The hallmark of this level is the ability to absorb the energy of other superhumans to enhance oneself.”

Zhang Yi’s eyes widened in realization.

An answer to one of his long-standing questions had finally been revealed.

No wonder he, Hua Hua, and Liang Yue could absorb other abilities, while Uncle You and Fatty Xu could not.

“Delta-level superhumans may not initially display strength exceeding the previous tiers, but their potential for growth is unparalleled. They evolve continuously, reaching unimaginable heights before plateauing.

“For now, I estimate that you—and the leaders of the other factions—are at this level.”

Zhang Yi silently repeated the term “Delta” in his mind.

Receiving such a high evaluation from Bian Junwu, placing him at LV4 among superhumans, was certainly no small praise.

“And beyond that?” Zhang Yi pressed.

Bian Junwu’s tone grew somber.

“Above Delta is the pinnacle—Epsilon level, LV5.”

“Epsilon-level superhumans represent the world’s strongest. They are national treasures, capable of both absorbing other superhuman energies and wielding devastatingly powerful abilities.

“Each one is a strategic asset on a global scale.”

Zhang Yi couldn’t help but ask, “Are you an Epsilon-level superhuman?”

The memory of Bian Junwu’s single strike obliterating thousands of zombies still left him in awe.

Bian Junwu smiled faintly but shook his head.

“No, I’m only at the Delta level.”

Zhang Yi took a deep breath.

“If even you’re only at the Delta level, I can’t imagine how terrifying an Epsilon-level superhuman must be!”

Chapter 462: LV4

Hearing Zhang Yi’s words, Bian Junwu suddenly chuckled.

“Oh? Do you think my understanding is incorrect?” Zhang Yi asked.

Bian Junwu shook his head. “There are indeed some nuances. The so-called classification of superhuman abilities doesn’t directly correlate with combat strength.

“What it represents more is the potential ceiling of one’s ability.

“Superpowers vary greatly—not all are combat-oriented. Some are auxiliary or fall under entirely different categories.

“If an ability is countered or the environment isn’t favorable, it’s not unusual for a higher-level superhuman to be defeated by one ranked lower.”

Zhang Yi nodded in agreement.

If superpowers were akin to weapons, then their effectiveness depended on the wielder's skill and the circumstances.

“So,” Zhang Yi said with a smirk, “you’re saying I’m a Delta-level superhuman, or LV4? That means we’re the same rank. You sure have a high opinion of me!”

Taking a sip of tea, Zhang Yi began calculating in his mind.

Bian Junwu had no reason to deliberately mislead him, so there were two possibilities for his claim that they were on the same level.

First, despite Bian Junwu’s immense strength, his abilities might have significant drawbacks. Otherwise, his destructive power would far exceed anything Zhang Yi could currently match. Of course, in terms of defense, that might be a different story.

Second, Bian Junwu recognized the potential of Zhang Yi’s spatial abilities.

Spatial powers weren’t purely combat-oriented, but their versatility was undeniably formidable. Combining offense, defense, and logistical utility, such abilities could justify a Delta-level rating.

Bian Junwu elaborated, “My assessment of you is based on what I’ve observed. Official evaluations are conducted by professionals in the major districts.

“These rankings aren’t absolute and depend on demonstrated abilities.

“From my experience, I’d categorize you as Delta-level.

“Keep in mind, advancing to the next level is always possible for superhumans, but Delta represents a critical threshold. Without the ability to ‘Assimilate’ other energies, a superhuman can’t progress beyond LV3.”

As Bian Junwu explained, Zhang Yi gained a clearer understanding of superhuman classifications.

For now, Bian Junwu’s judgment placed his potential at Delta, or LV4—a level brimming with possibilities but not necessarily indicative of sheer combat power.

Despite this, Zhang Yi couldn’t help but grow curious about the enigmatic LV5, the Epsilon-level superhumans.

How strong were they?

Had such individuals already emerged in this world?

Unable to resist his curiosity, Zhang Yi asked, “Mr. Bian, have you ever seen an Epsilon-level superhuman?”

Bian Junwu slowly shook his head. “I haven’t.”

Zhang Yi was about to comment on the disappointment when Bian Junwu added, “But I know for a fact that there’s an Epsilon-level superhuman in the Shengjing District.”

Zhang Yi’s eyes lit up.

“There’s really someone like that?”

As a superhuman, Zhang Yi couldn't help but feel intrigued by such an existence.

Bian Junwu chuckled. "It's not exactly a secret.

"The major districts, tasked with managing vast territories in the apocalypse, rely on absolute power to suppress mutant creatures and lawless groups.

"Such overwhelming force is necessary."

When mentioning the Epsilon-level superhuman, Bian Junwu's eyes gleamed with admiration and envy.

"That individual's power has reached a level that defies logic.

"They say anyone targeted by them, no matter the distance, can be killed with a single thought. That's true divinity."

Zhang Yi nearly dropped his teacup. His eyes widened in disbelief as he stared at Bian Junwu.

"You... You're joking, right? Killing someone from a thousand miles away? What are they, a satellite-guided missile?"

Bian Junwu smirked and gazed out at the snowy landscape.

"It's far more convenient than that. From what I've heard, there's no escape for anyone marked by them, no matter where they hide."

Zhang Yi rubbed his temples, feeling overwhelmed.

"This sounds more like metaphysics than science!"

Bian Junwu said calmly, “The universe is filled with mysteries. Even the divine rolls dice. The world’s unpredictability is no surprise.

“In theory, there’s one more level beyond Epsilon: the legendary LV6, Omega-level superhumans.

“This classification exists only in theory, as no such superhuman has ever appeared. It refers to individuals with infinite growth potential and no upper limit to their strength.

“At that level, they would truly be gods...”

Bian Junwu’s words trailed off as he suddenly leaned on the table with one hand, covering his mouth with the other, and began coughing violently.

The force of his coughs made the table shake, spilling water from their glasses.

Instinctively, Zhang Yi slid his chair back half a step and asked, “Captain Bian, are you okay? Should I call a doctor?”

Bian Junwu finally stopped coughing after some time. Wiping a trace of blood from the corner of his mouth, he spoke nonchalantly.

“No need. It’s just an old condition.”

Noticing Zhang Yi’s curious expression, Bian Junwu remarked flatly, “I have a terminal illness and only a short time left to live.”

He spoke so matter-of-factly that it sounded like he was describing someone else’s situation.

“If not for this, I wouldn’t have volunteered to lead this team and deal with such troublesome matters.”

Zhang Yi’s suspicions were confirmed.

As he suspected, Bian Junwu's body had significant issues.

Was it a natural illness, a side effect of his abilities, or the result of being artificially modified, like the cyborgs at West Hill Base?

Speculation churned in Zhang Yi's mind, but he refrained from prying further, as such details likely involved Jiangnan District's classified information.

Instead, he offered comfort.

"With today's advanced medicine, even cancer can be cured. Surely there's nothing that can't be treated."

"My family doctor was a lead physician at Tianhai City's First People's Hospital. Perhaps she could examine you?"

Bian Junwu's face remained impassive as he let Zhang Yi finish before responding.

"There's no need to probe. I'm a dying man. I took on this mission to ensure that, after my death, my wife and children could live better lives."

As he spoke, he removed his signature sunglasses, revealing a face even paler than before.

His eyes were eerily gray, devoid of pupils, filled with a lifeless hue.

"My ability comes at the cost of my vision and health. That's why it's limited to Delta-level."

"Otherwise, with more time, I might have reached Epsilon-level myself."

“Unfortunately, its fatal flaws make me a superweapon with limited uses. Do you understand now?”

Zhang Yi’s suspicions were confirmed. Bian Junwu’s ability not only consumed his vitality but also drastically shortened his lifespan.

After a moment of silence, Zhang Yi sighed softly.

“I see. But I didn’t expect you to share the details of your ability so openly with me.”

Chapter 463: Recruitment

Bian Junwu’s expression remained stoic.

In his usual flat tone tinged with indifference, he said, “For the upcoming operation against the zombie horde in Tianhai City, we’ll need your cooperation.”

“Understanding each other’s abilities is crucial. That’s why I’m telling you now—my power isn’t limitless. Overusing it will accelerate my death.”

Zhang Yi nodded, fully aware that Bian Junwu had left something unsaid.

As the leader of the Jiangnan District’s dispatched team, Bian Junwu wasn’t worried about Zhang Yi using his powers against him.

First, Zhang Yi wouldn’t dare oppose Jiangnan District.

Second, Bian Junwu’s current state meant he had little fear of death.

While speaking, Bian Junwu put on his tinted tactical glasses.

“Right now, I’m almost blind. I rely entirely on this visual aid to see. From my perspective, you’re just a blurry red silhouette.”

Zhang Yi nodded again.

Bian Junwu placed his hands on the table and revisited an earlier topic.

“Would you be interested in coming to the Jiangnan District? Your abilities have great potential. You might even advance to Epsilon-level someday.”

“Staying in a small place like Tianhai City will only limit your future.”

Zhang Yi wasn’t particularly drawn to Bian Junwu’s offer.

He smiled and replied, “I’m not an ambitious person. I don’t dream of making a name for myself or achieving great things.”

“I just want to survive in this post-apocalyptic world with the people around me and wait for the world to reset.”

He thought to himself: If I go to Jiangnan District, I’ll end up like them—constantly running missions, fighting and risking my life. Why bother inviting trouble?

“Don’t be in such a hurry to refuse,” Bian Junwu pressed.

“Life in Blizzard City is far better than here.”

“In Blizzard City, people can live as they did before the apocalypse.”

“There are cities, streets, bustling night markets, and even comfortable apartments!”

“You can’t experience these things in Tianhai City no matter what.”

A vivid image appeared in Zhang Yi’s mind—a prosperous city enclosed by steel and concrete walls, with vendors lining the streets and people happily shopping.

Parents held their children’s hands, couples laughed and chatted, and even the constant snowfall seemed like a festive decoration.

For a brief moment, Zhang Yi yearned to see such a scene again.

But he only smiled at Bian Junwu and turned his gaze to the lifeless snowy plains outside the window.

Then he asked, “Could it be more comfortable than my current shelter?”

Zhang Yi wasn’t going to fall for such childlike persuasion tactics.

In an apocalypse, if Blizzard City in the Jiangnan District truly housed a large population, maintaining a high standard of living would be impossible.

Some major bases did offer comfortable environments, but only for a select few.

Seeing that Zhang Yi remained unmoved, Bian Junwu added, “Tianhai City isn’t a safe place. It’s right by the East Sea. If the ice and snow ever melt, this place will be the first to flood.”

“Moreover, there’s a chance enemies could come from across the sea.”

“The central regions are the safest. Have you considered this?”

These points made Zhang Yi frown slightly, falling into momentary silence.

He could disregard human threats but couldn't ignore the forces of nature.

The Ice Age was caused by cosmic fluctuations, and if Blue Star's temperature returned to normal someday, the coastal Tianhai City would indeed be submerged.

But that was a concern for the future.

Thinking too far ahead was pointless. After all, the last Ice Age had lasted millions of years!

Zhang Yi frowned and replied, "Who can say for sure what will happen in the future? Let's deal with it when the time comes."

Seeing Zhang Yi's resistance, Bian Junwu merely smirked slightly and didn't push the topic further.

Solving the zombie crisis in Tianhai City was the priority.

He only needed to plant a seed in Zhang Yi's mind. When the time was right, perhaps Zhang Yi would choose to head to Jiangnan District on his own.

After all, Bian Junwu's days were numbered.

Finding a promising Delta-level talent to fill the gap in the investigation team after his death would be ideal.

The two then shifted their conversation to the zombie horde.

Zhang Yi didn't hold back, sharing everything he knew about the zombies and rat swarms.

After all, they were here to help resolve the crisis. Zhang Yi had nothing to lose from the horde's early eradication.

Bian Junwu finished his glass of warm water and stood up slowly.

"I've said all I needed to. We won't bother you further. I'll contact you if necessary."

With that, he turned to leave the room.

Zhang Yi followed him. "Why don't you stay for a meal? You've come all this way."

He was genuinely worried they might request to stay.

However, their attitude showed that while they envied Zhang Yi's shelter, they weren't overly covetous.

Clearly, the living conditions in Blizzard City were also quite good.

After all, they were high-level superhumans.

"No need. We have our own rations, and we still have tasks to complete," Bian Junwu politely declined Zhang Yi's invitation.

The two entered the quiet living room.

The investigation team and the shelter residents hadn't interacted much, and the atmosphere was somewhat tense.

When the two emerged from the small room, both groups seemed to breathe a sigh of relief.

Bian Junwu addressed his team, "We've rested enough. It's time to move out!"

The team members immediately set down their teacups and stood.

"Thank you for your hospitality!"

They expressed their gratitude to Zhang Yi and Zhou Ke'er.

As Wu Di passed Zhang Yi, his eyes gleamed with fighting intent.

"Zhang Yi, let's spar next time we meet!"

Bian Junwu's high regard for Zhang Yi had piqued Wu Di's interest.

Given Bian Junwu's implication that Zhang Yi might join their team, Wu Di naturally wanted to gauge his strength.

Zhang Yi smiled faintly but didn't reply.

Bian Junwu shouted, "Now's not the time for nonsense!"

Wu Di scratched his head sheepishly and quickly followed his team out.

Zhang Yi and the others watched them depart.

As their vehicle left the shelter, the residents began to chatter.

"Those people have such an intimidating presence!"

“Yeah, you could feel it from a distance. They’re completely different from anyone we’ve met before.”

Zhang Yi took a deep breath and murmured, “Thankfully, they’re not enemies. Otherwise, we’d be in serious trouble.”

Of the seven, Bian Junwu’s terrifying power alone was unmatched in Tianhai City.

Even Zhang Yi would be killed instantly if caught off guard.

However, with proper preparation, the current defenses of the Dimensional Gate could withstand Bian Junwu’s attacks—based on what they’d seen of his power today.

The rest of the team’s strength was also evident. Even Kong Sheng, who wasn’t a high-ranking member, had easily defeated Chaoyu Base’s second-in-command, Chen Jingguan.

The full extent of their team’s power was unimaginable.

Zhang Yi believed that the seven of them could destroy a base without much difficulty, especially with the formidable Jiangnan District backing them.

Just then, Yang Xinxin’s cool voice reached Zhang Yi’s ears.

“But for only seven people to handle the zombie horde, it won’t be easy.”

“That’s not exactly good news.”

Everyone turned to look at the brilliant young woman in the wheelchair.

Zhang Yi leaned forward, his gaze serious.

“Xinxin, what do you think?”

Yang Xinxin wheeled herself to the group. Her intelligent eyes glimmered with insight.

“The Jiangnan District didn’t send them to eliminate the zombie horde in one go. They’re likely the vanguard. Once they locate the source of the horde, larger forces will probably move into Tianhai City.”

“When that happens, the entire city’s balance of power will shift, and we’ll inevitably be affected.”

Zhang Yi nodded. “That’s certainly possible.”

Fatty Xu asked worriedly, “Do you think they’ll drive us out of the shelter?”

In Tianhai City, Zhang Yi’s team dominated, controlling both the West Hill and Lu River Districts.

But that was only because their opposition was weak—small factions stationed in Tianhai City.

The Jiangnan District’s strength, however, was on another level.

Beyond their advanced weaponry, they had numerous powerful superhumans and resources. Destroying a shelter wouldn’t be hard for them.

Zhang Yi frowned. “Probably not.”

His tone, however, betrayed uncertainty.

Given their team’s strength, even if the Jiangnan District stationed troops in Tianhai City, they should show some respect.

Not all conflicts in the apocalypse were resolved through violence. Sometimes, diplomacy and relationships mattered.

Yang Xinxin interjected, “If that happens, it wouldn’t be the worst outcome. The worst-case scenario is that the investigation team determines the horde is too vast, and eradicating it would come at an enormous cost.”

“In that case, things would get really complicated.”

Everyone felt a chill run down their spines.

No one truly knew how many zombies lay beneath Tianhai City.

If every corpse turned into a zombie, the horde could number in the tens of millions.

At that scale, the Jiangnan District’s likely response was self-evident.

Zhang Yi took a deep breath. “If that’s the case, then we must do everything we can to help them resolve the zombie crisis!”

Chapter 464: The Worst Outcome

Zhang Yi understood that solving the zombie horde crisis in Tianhai City was crucial for their future peace. However, as he mulled over Bian Junwu’s parting invitation to join the Jiangnan District, he suddenly realized the unspoken message in Bian’s words.

It was a backup plan for him.

If the zombie horde in Tianhai City proved impossible to manage, the ultimate measure might be to obliterate the entire city. In such a scenario, Zhang Yi would have no choice but to leave.

He thought to himself: Although the shelter was said to be capable of withstanding an H-class attack, if the Jiangnan District's goal was to flatten Tianhai City, the firepower they'd use would be on a completely different scale.

I can't take that risk.

Resolving the zombie crisis would be ideal, but the question remained: how?

Zhang Yi had no clear plan in mind, and everyone's anxious expressions only added to the tension, fearing the worst.

Seated on the sofa, Zhang Yi folded his arms, racking his brain for a solution. The group began brainstorming, openly sharing their thoughts.

Zhou Ke'er furrowed her brow and voiced her concerns:

"We know the zombies and the rat swarms are concentrated underground. Their numbers are staggering—likely occupying the entire subway system of Tianhai City."

"With our current manpower, it's unrealistic to face such a tidal wave head-on. Unless we find the Zombie King and execute a decapitation strike."

As she spoke, Zhou Ke'er gently placed her hand on Zhang Yi's shoulder and leaned against him, seeking comfort amidst the tension.

"There's not much we can do. We can only hope the Jiangnan District provides assistance. So, Zhang Yi, don't overthink it. Our abilities are limited."

Zhou Ke'er wasn't wrong.

The five major factions couldn't afford to send large-scale forces out into the extreme cold for reconnaissance.

Whether it was Zhang Yi's team or the other factions, they were all makeshift groups formed to survive the apocalypse. None had experience handling a situation this dire.

Zhang Yi looked up and murmured, "Fear stems from the unknown. Our biggest problem is that we know too little about the zombies."

"What exactly is the Zombie King? Is it an intelligent mutation or a superhuman?"

Without even knowing what the Zombie King was, planning a decapitation strike was futile.

Fatty Xu interjected, "At least we can rule out the other factions as the source of the zombie crisis. They've suffered heavy losses themselves."

Yang Xinxin immediately countered, "You can't say that for sure. Even if they've suffered significant losses, it doesn't mean they're not involved."

"Take West Hill Base, for example. They conducted extensive human experimentation. Who's to say the other factions didn't engage in similar activities, leading to this outbreak?"

Since the apocalypse began, Tianhai City's factions had done everything possible to bolster their strength. West Hill Base's cyborg program and Yangsheng Base's military stimulants were prime examples.

Everyone shared their theories, but they were largely speculative and lacked evidence.

Their intelligence was limited, and the sudden zombie horde felt like an unforeseen force catching them off guard.

Zhang Yi propped his chin on his hands, unable to make sense of the outbreak or the Zombie King's motives.

If the Zombie King were a superhuman seeking to use the horde to eliminate the other factions and become Tianhai City's ruler, human intelligence should have already overcome the factions' defenses.

RAÑQØEŞ

Yet the zombies they had encountered showed limited intelligence, akin to that of a five-year-old child, learning as they went.

But if the Zombie King were a mutated corpse with newfound intelligence, why had it targeted all five factions across Tianhai City?

The contradictory logic painted a peculiar picture in Zhang Yi's mind.

It seemed both like a tool under human control and unlike something a rational person would orchestrate.

Hmm... Could it be a mentally impaired superhuman?

Zhang Yi chuckled at his own absurd thought.

“We should wait and see for now. At the very least, let's see what the Jiangnan District team is capable of.”

“They have more experience in team operations, stronger superhumans, and advanced technology. They should achieve some results.”

“If they can't handle the situation, then we'll step in.”

Zhang Yi decided on a temporary plan.

Thanks to his Dimensional Gate abilities, he could guarantee an escape if needed during underground operations.

For now, he was content to let Bian Junwu take the lead.

...

At the headquarters of the Followers of the Snow God, St. John's Cathedral, Zheng Yixian returned and pushed open the heavy doors.

Yuan Kongye was, as always, praying devoutly in front of the crucifix.

Zheng Yixian stood three meters behind her. Yuan Kongye slowly opened her eyes and turned to face him.

Her delicate, pale hands folded in front of her as a rare softness appeared in her gaze.

“What did you see on this trip?”

Zheng Yixian’s expression was grave.

“The Jiangnan District sent a terrifying team,” he replied, recounting what he had witnessed.

When Yuan Kongye heard about the team’s power, especially Bian Junwu’s ability to annihilate thousands of zombies in one strike, her perpetually frosty demeanor faltered.

“Jiangnan District...” she murmured.

“Will they interfere with us?” she asked.

Zheng Yixian wasn't certain. "The situation in Tianhai City is already affecting the surrounding areas. If the Jiangnan District intervenes militarily, it could stifle the development of our Followers of the Snow God."

"Moreover, Bian Junwu warned us. If the zombie crisis remains unresolved, the Jiangnan District might resort to a final solution."

Yuan Kongye's eyes wavered.

"The final solution..."

Zheng Yixian declared firmly, "We can't let that happen!"

Yuan Kongye nodded.

"It's likely that Zhang Yi, Xiao Honglian, Wei Dinghai, and Xing Tian share the same concern," she said.

As Yuan Kongye predicted, Bian Junwu's warning had left everyone deeply worried.

For that reason, they all resolved to assist Bian Junwu to the best of their abilities in resolving the zombie crisis.

Helping him, after all, was helping themselves.

Chapter 465: Investigation Team Sets Out

The investigation team left Zhang Yi's shelter and immediately set out to gather intelligence on the zombie horde.

They traveled in a large black RV, which was specially designed by engineers from the Jiangnan District for extended missions. The vehicle offered ample space for seven people to live, eat, and even handle personal needs comfortably.

Beyond its spacious interior, the RV was built to be as sturdy as a military vehicle, crafted from aerospace-grade materials.

Before arriving in Tianhai City, the team had already gathered extensive data through the Jiangnan District's intelligence network—a capability far beyond what Zhang Yi and his group could imagine.

For instance, the Jiangnan District still had access to satellite navigation systems. While Zhang Yi's group had long since lost this function, the military satellites used by the Jiangnan District allowed them to monitor the entire landscape from space.

In other words, everything Zhang Yi's team did was likely visible to the Jiangnan District's Xingyun System. Armed with such intelligence, the investigation team now needed to conduct on-site inspections.

Their first stop was the Ci Qu subway line, where Zhang Yi had sealed the area with ice.

At the subway entrance, they spotted a long, raised mound running along the ground, resembling a giant snake's trail.

Meng Siyu observed, "Looks like the ground cracked and bulged because seawater flooded the area and froze, causing expansion."

Bian Junwu approached the subway line and crouched near the cracked ground, peering through the fissure to see the ice below.

Placing his hand above the frozen surface, he seemed to be feeling the power that had sealed the entire subway line.

With his eyes closed, he visualized Zhang Yi pouring an immense volume of seawater from a dimensional space to freeze the line. The scene in his mind left him taking a deep breath.

“Incredible. That guy is a genius.”

Wu Di, standing nearby with arms crossed, dismissed the praise. “Boss, is that really worth admiring? It’s a pretty basic method if you ask me.”

“If I had spatial powers, I’d know to block the subway with something too. But honestly, all he did was temporarily solve his local problem without addressing the root cause of the zombie outbreak. What’s the point?”

Vice-captain Baili Changqing chuckled and said, “Wu Di, you’re as cocky as your name suggests. If the captain praises someone, he must have a reason. Learn to see the strengths in others instead of looking down on them.”

Wu Di raised an eyebrow, unconvinced. “I’m not looking down on him. I’m just saying, in an underground space like this, I could single-handedly wipe out all the zombies!”

Bian Junwu stood and replied calmly to Wu Di’s boast, “Oh? You’re that confident?”

“Of course!” Wu Di said, his tone full of certainty.

His abilities were particularly suited for situations like this, where group combat was his forte.

Bian Junwu asked, “But do you know how strong the Zombie King is?”

Wu Di paused before replying, “I’ve never seen it, so how would I know?”

Even the team’s intelligence only mentioned powerful armored zombies, but no one had encountered the Zombie King itself—not even Zhang Yi’s group, who had ventured deep into the subway tunnels.

ráóbeš

Bian Junwu said flatly, “Zhang Yi’s team cleared the entire subway line without any casualties.”

“Don’t become overly reliant on your abilities. What matters most is how effectively you use them.”

“Zhang Yi’s talent isn’t purely combat-related. What’s truly remarkable is his ability to strategize.”

He glanced toward the horizon, where a long, frozen ridge marked the subway line, leading toward the Songzhuang transfer station and further north to Tianfeng District—the domain of the Followers of the Snow God.

Wu Di’s expression still showed traces of defiance as he muttered, “Even if he’s clever, what’s the use? If we need a new teammate, it should be someone skilled in combat. We don’t need someone to carry our bags.”

Despite Wu Di’s childish attitude, Bian Junwu merely smiled and said nothing.

Wu Di’s behavior was well-known among the team, and they were all accustomed to it. Especially now, with Bian Junwu’s declining health, Wu Di’s outbursts had only grown more frequent.

The team understood his reasons but chose not to address them openly.

“Let’s go. Time to see what a zombie siege looks like in person,” Bian Junwu said as he climbed back into the RV.

The vehicle was driven by Baili Changqing, a man in his late forties. Despite his age, his muscular physique resembled that of a grizzly bear.

“Where to, Captain?”

“Let’s head to Yangsheng Base first,” Bian Junwu replied.

“Got it!”

Baili Changqing set the coordinates, turned the steering wheel, and drove toward Yangsheng Base.

...

Meanwhile, the three major bases were also busy following Bian Junwu’s orders to evacuate all non-combat personnel into underground shelters.

The goal was to minimize casualties and, potentially, to disrupt the zombies’ targeting by reducing human presence on the surface.

Though reluctant to abandon vital surface facilities like warehouses, workshops, and dormitories, the leaders of each base complied, unwilling to defy the will of Jiangnan District.

However, the logistics were daunting. Each faction had thousands of people and vast supplies to relocate, making the task anything but easy.

At Yangsheng Base, Xiao Honglian worked tirelessly, coordinating defensive measures while ensuring the orderly evacuation of non-combat personnel.

Not far from Yangsheng Base, the investigation team parked their RV on a high vantage point about five kilometers away, providing a panoramic view of the base and its surroundings.

Bian Junwu sat by the window and activated the binocular mode on his tactical glasses, carefully observing the area.

They were waiting for the zombies to arrive.

Although the reports detailed zombie and rat swarm attacks on human bases, Bian Junwu needed to witness the phenomenon firsthand to gather the precise intelligence he sought.

This was why he hadn't involved members of the major factions in their operations.

As time passed, darkness fell in an instant, making it impossible to see anything without light.

Yangsheng Base lit up with floodlights, vital for the humans who relied on illumination to fight the zombies that hunted by sensing life.

In the RV, biologist and medical expert Meng Siyu was heating food in the microwave.

The vehicle was stocked with plenty of space rations, which required minimal preparation.

As they ate, the team used night-vision binoculars to watch the unfolding zombie siege like spectators at a grim theater.

Chapter 466: The Mantis Stalks the Cicada

From the darkness, zombies surged forth in waves, densely packed like an army of ants, spreading across the land surrounding Yangsheng Base. The massive open space around the base was almost entirely sealed off by the horde.

Looking out over the scene, it was clear that the number of zombies exceeded ten thousand.

For the investigation team, it was their first time witnessing such a spectacle in person.

Meng Siyu's eyes widened in astonishment, and her heart raced despite knowing the zombies couldn't directly threaten their lives. She couldn't suppress her anxiety.

“Seeing it in footage is nothing like experiencing it firsthand,” she muttered.

Wu Di, standing nearby, dismissed her unease. “They’re just bigger targets, nothing more.”

“Quiet! You’ll draw them to us,” Baili Changqing whispered, glaring at the pair.

They immediately fell silent, focusing on observing the horde. Meng Siyu diligently recorded the movement patterns of the zombies and rat swarms.

Among the countless zombies were large numbers of screeching giant rats. The smallest were cat-sized, while larger ones were as big as stray dogs, and some massive ones rivaled small pigs. Their overwhelming numbers turned the ground a murky gray.

In response, Yangsheng Base launched its counterattack.

Suddenly, a fiery dragon surged from a distance, igniting the entire perimeter of the base in an instant.

Yangsheng Base’s defenses consisted of three deep trenches filled with black crude oil. Once lit, they became towering walls of fire over ten meters high.

As the zombies and rats approached, the flames roared to life. The air was filled with the crackling of burning flesh and the agonized screeches of giant rats. Hundreds of zombies and rats perished in the inferno.

But the zombies quickly regrouped into several narrow columns.

The leading zombies began leaping into the fiery trenches.

One or two zombies were instantly incinerated, but with their vast numbers, the sacrificial tactic began to work.

As more zombies hurled themselves into the flames, they suppressed the fire, their charred bodies forming makeshift bridges. The remaining zombies and rat swarms crossed over the piled corpses and continued their advance.

Even Bian Junwu frowned at the sight.

“As expected, they’re a coordinated, intelligent group. If we let this chaos continue unchecked, they’ll become a major threat.”

Mindless zombies weren’t frightening. But if controlled by an intelligent being, they were a nightmare.

In a world where the dead vastly outnumbered the living, such a scenario was catastrophic.

“They lack individual intelligence,” Baili Changqing observed quietly. “We need to find the one orchestrating them.”

“Not yet. Let’s wait and see,” Bian Junwu replied, his voice unnervingly calm, even cold.

The zombies and rats breached the first two defense lines, and the third was on the verge of collapse.

Yangsheng Base’s soldiers, armed with flamethrowers, grenades, and explosives, rushed to hold the final line.

But against a horde numbering in the tens of thousands, their defenses seemed pitifully weak.

Fortunately, Xiao Honglian arrived with her team of superhumans, significantly bolstering their combat power.

In battles against such relentless monsters, the strength of superhumans was indispensable.

Xiao Honglian was particularly anxious.

With non-combat personnel still evacuating, the base was in disarray and at its most vulnerable. Desperation fueled her as she unleashed her powers, controlling flames to incinerate zombies and rats alike. RANOBES

“Infernal Furnace!”

Standing atop a tall tower, Xiao Honglian extended her arms as flames coiled around her, forming over a dozen massive fire dragons.

The fiery tendrils wrapped around her body, transforming her into a blazing inferno, her figure obscured by white-hot flames.

In a flash, she leapt from the tower, detonating upon impact like a blazing sun.

Within a radius of several hundred meters, every zombie and rat was incinerated into ash.

Fire strengthened Xiao Honglian’s abilities, and in the heart of the zombie horde, she singlehandedly slowed their advance.

However, Yangsheng Base was too vast for her to protect every corner.

In some areas, zombies and rats infiltrated the population, leaving a trail of slaughter and carnage. Screams echoed across the battlefield.

Such grisly scenes were nothing new. The base’s blackened walls bore testament to the daily sacrifices of soldiers to maintain a semblance of peace.

From their distant vantage point, Bian Junwu and his team observed in silence, making no move to assist.

They weren't here to solve Yangsheng Base's immediate crisis but to study the behavior of the zombie horde.

The battle intensified as darkness enveloped the battlefield. The zombies encircled Yangsheng Base entirely, and both sides were locked in a fierce struggle.

Territory was constantly won and lost, with the base's superhuman captains and soldiers fighting tooth and nail to reclaim breached areas.

"Have all the zombies emerged?" Bian Junwu asked while watching the battle through his binoculars.

Beside him, demolitions expert and engineer Ye Jikang was hunched over a bulky black computer that resembled a thick brick.

Even in the frigid environment, the advanced device operated flawlessly.

On its screen, a map of Tianhai City displayed the area around Yangsheng Base.

Zooming in, Ye Jikang could see a top-down view of the battlefield, tracking the movements of every combatant, zombie, and even their own positions with precision.

This was the power of China's most advanced satellite system—Xingyun.

Ye Jikang analyzed the feed and confirmed, "The zombies in the subway have all emerged."

"However, some larger ones have appeared. They're likely the armored zombies Zhang Yi mentioned."

Bian Junwu's expression shifted slightly. "Oh? Interesting."

According to Zhang Yi's earlier intelligence, previous zombie attacks centered on ordinary zombies and rat swarms.

Now, the appearance of elite armored zombies suggested an escalation in their tactics.

“Could this be related to our presence here?” Bian Junwu wondered.

Still, he addressed his team. “Let’s move. With the horde now drawn out, it’s time for us to act.”

Amid the chaos, a massive armored zombie appeared at the front lines, sending shockwaves through Yangsheng Base.

These monsters, impervious to fire and tougher than steel, were beyond the capabilities of ordinary soldiers.

Xiao Honglian remembered vividly how Dong Hu had been torn apart by two such creatures.

But Bian Junwu and his team didn’t spare the scene a second glance.

They boarded their RV, taking a detour toward the nearest subway entrance.

Chapter 467: Decapitation Strike

“Based on the data from each faction, the zombie horde’s numbers are limited during each attack—peaking at around ten thousand zombies,” Ye Jikang explained, monitoring his laptop as he spoke.

“It’s clear that the Zombie King’s ability to control zombies has an upper limit, or the rate at which it converts corpses into zombies isn’t as fast as we initially feared.

“This gives us an opportunity. While the horde assaults Yangsheng Base, we can strike the zombies’ main nest. If we eliminate the Zombie King, the horde’s coordination will collapse, reducing their threat significantly.”

The vehicle moved silently through the darkness, far from the ongoing battle to avoid detection. In the distance, the chaotic clash between Yangsheng Base and the horde continued unabated, with screams, roars, and screeches filling the air.

Inside the vehicle, the seven members of the team remained unmoved, their hardened hearts forged from countless battles.

They were focused entirely on their mission, with little room for sympathy or distraction.

Bian Junwu turned to the group. “Prepare for combat. According to Zhang Yi, there are likely many armored zombies underground, as well as the unknown threat of the Zombie King.”

Wu Di cracked his knuckles and grinned. “Boss, what’s the big deal? Dead things can’t possibly threaten us, especially when the underground is nearly empty.”

“Don’t worry; I’ll handle them all myself!”

Baili Changqing sighed, casting a weary glance at the overconfident Wu Di.

“Wu Di, this isn’t a brawl. Killing ordinary zombies won’t mean a thing if the Zombie King escapes. Don’t forget why we’re here—stay focused.”

Wu Di scratched the back of his head, his grin faltering. “Right, sorry! Got it!”

Ten minutes later, they arrived at the subway entrance where the zombies had emerged.

The area was now eerily quiet; the horde had already marched toward Yangsheng Base.

The team disembarked, weapons in hand. Bian Junwu held a sleek black pistol with an unusually large and elongated barrel.

The other members carried similarly unique firearms, except for Baili Changqing. He opened a large case, retrieving two sections of a massive weapon.

With practiced ease, he assembled the parts into a towering two-meter-long lance, its conical tip resembling a giant spike.

The medieval knight's lance was an antiquated weapon, long abandoned by history. But in Baili Changqing's hands, its immense size and weight made it a versatile and devastating tool, equally effective for smashing, sweeping, or piercing.

Among the seven, only Wu Di remained unarmed, his hands casually tucked in his pockets.

Standing at the subway entrance, the team didn't immediately descend.

Meng Siyu approached the opening and crouched down, extending her right hand over the void.

“Air Scan!”

A wave of invisible psychic energy flowed down into the subway, clinging to the walls and branching off at every fork to explore further.

After several seconds, Meng Siyu retracted her hand and reported, “There are still some zombies in the tunnels, but no special entities detected within my range.”

Her ability could only cover about two kilometers, leaving the deeper parts of the subway uncharted.

Bian Junwu gave a decisive nod. “Let's go!”

He led the way, jumping into the subway with the others following closely behind.

Moving swiftly through the tunnels, the team relied on Meng Siyu's psychic scans to navigate and locate potential threats.

At the forefront, Baili Changqing used his knight's lance to effortlessly obliterate any stray zombies in their path.

After traveling five kilometers, Meng Siyu suddenly spoke up.

"I found it! There's a massive zombie horde ahead—this must be their main nest!"

Through her psychic link, she saw a dense cluster of zombies, their numbers even greater than those attacking Yangsheng Base. Interspersed among them were armored zombies with strength comparable to superhumans.

Bian Junwu's expression grew serious. "Did you find the Zombie King?"

Meng Siyu frowned, her psychic energy scouring the horde.

"The Zombie King..."

The sheer number of zombies made identifying individual targets difficult. She instinctively searched for something larger or more distinct but found nothing beyond the armored zombies.

Then, she spotted something unusual.

"There's... a white-furred monkey."

“A white-furred monkey?” Bian Junwu asked, raising an eyebrow.

He didn’t hesitate. “Let’s take it down—alive if possible.”

No one had ever seen the Zombie King. It could be anything, even something as unassuming as an ordinary zombie.

From previous encounters, Bian Junwu surmised that the Zombie King had to be close to the horde it commanded. Zhang Yi’s earlier experience underground had confirmed this theory: his group had been lured into an ambush by an army of zombies and armored creatures.

Though Zhang Yi hadn’t seen the Zombie King, it was almost certainly nearby, orchestrating the attack.

If the white-furred monkey wasn’t the Zombie King, capturing it might still yield valuable information.

The team accelerated toward the horde, their movements swift and precise.

As they ran, Bian Junwu issued orders.

“Baili, Wu Di—handle the horde!”

“Meng, monitor the horde for any anomalies and report immediately!”

“The rest of you, come with me. We’re capturing the Zombie King!”

“Yes, sir!” the team responded in unison.

Following Meng Siyu’s guidance, they reached the zombie nest.

The horde noticed them instantly, unleashing chilling roars.

Baili Changqing let out a booming laugh. "Time to die again!"

He charged forward, swinging his massive lance like a human tank.

Boom!

Hundreds of zombies were sent flying as the lance smashed through them, spraying foul blood and shattered limbs like a grotesque rain. Severed heads and mangled torsos were flung high into the air.

In a single sweep, Baili Changqing had carved a path tens of meters long through the horde.

Chapter 468: Pursuit

Wu Di smirked and said, "Vice-captain, you're way too slow. Step aside and watch me work!"

As he spoke, he stretched out his arms, and in the darkness, a bright orb of light materialized, hovering near his right shoulder.

A second orb appeared near his left shoulder, followed by a third above his head.

In seconds, dozens of glowing orbs surrounded him, forming a radiant halo like something out of myth.

Wu Di spread his arms, and the orbs surged forward, merging into a long, blazing beam of light.

The intense white light illuminated everything ahead, and as the beam pierced through the zombie horde, their bodies were torn apart as if made of paper.

One after another, bright rays streaked through the zombies, reducing them to shredded remains.

“Ha ha ha! I’m the king of the battlefield!” Wu Di laughed maniacally.

His ability, Floating Cannons, a trait-based power, converted mental energy into highly penetrating energy blasts. It was devastating in group combat.

Under his assault, the horde crumbled like fragile fabric, leaving a trail of carnage in his wake.

Baili Changqing chuckled helplessly as he scratched his head.

“When it comes to mowing down zombies, I guess I can’t compare to you, Wu Di,” he said with a wry smile.

The zombie horde posed no real resistance as the team advanced steadily.

Finally, their overwhelming firepower caught the attention of the Zombie King.

From the far end of the tunnel emerged several enormous armored zombies.

These copper-armored creatures stood over three meters tall, resembling grotesque stick insects with long, spindly limbs and unnervingly slender waists. Their appearance was unsettling in a way that defied natural symmetry.

Wu Di squinted at them. “So, these are the famous armored zombies? Let’s see how tough they really are!”

He retracted the orbs around him, concentrating a single white light in his right hand.

But before he could act, Bian Junwu placed a firm hand on his shoulder.

“Stand down and rest,” Bian Junwu ordered.

Though Floating Cannons were powerful, they consumed a significant amount of mental energy, and overuse could lead to irreparable damage to the user.

Reluctantly, Wu Di withdrew his power. "Fine, I'll leave this one to you guys."

The team knew well that the armored zombies were a far cry from ordinary ones in terms of combat strength. They approached the fight with caution.

"One for each of us," Bian Junwu declared as he picked his target and raised his oversized black pistol.

Bang!

The gunshot echoed loudly, and a bullet struck the chest of one armored zombie, forcing it to stagger backward.

Clearly, this wasn't an ordinary handgun but a specialized weapon.

Bian Junwu advanced steadily, each shot landing on the creature's long, sinewy body, driving it further back.

Meanwhile, Baili Changqing, Kong Sheng, and Qi Guangming engaged their own opponents.

Baili Changqing, wielding his knight's lance, charged headlong into melee combat with an armored zombie.

Kong Sheng smashed his fists together, and his body turned an ominous metallic shade of dark silver.

Using his Steel Forge ability, he transformed his body into a weapon—impossibly durable and lethally sharp.

In a flash, Kong Sheng appeared mid-air, his right leg descending like a blade to strike the shoulder of an armored zombie.

Crack!

The force of the blow drove the creature to its knees, splitting its shoulder open to reveal blood-red bone beneath.

Kong Sheng frowned in disbelief. "Damn, that's tough!"

His kick could shear through a car, yet the zombie's bone remained intact.

At that moment, a beam of light streaked past him, piercing the zombie's chest and tearing a gruesome hole.

Turning, Kong Sheng saw Qi Guangming holding a peculiar black sniper rifle, grinning.

"This calls for teamwork!" Qi said with a laugh.

Elsewhere, Bian Junwu had pinned his target against the wall, shoving his gun into its mouth and firing upward. The shot obliterated the zombie's head, leaving its body to collapse into a pool of fetid blood.

†††††

The armored zombies, formidable as they were, stood no chance against the investigation team.

Suddenly, Meng Siyu clutched her head and said, "The horde is stirring! The white-furred monkey and six armored zombies are trying to escape, and a massive number of zombies are converging to cover their retreat."

Adjusting his tactical glasses, Bian Junwu's voice turned icy.

“That settles it. The white-furred monkey is the Zombie King, and the horde is stalling for time. We can’t let it get away.”

The Zombie King’s intelligence and capacity for evolution made it an increasingly dangerous foe. If it escaped, it would learn from this encounter, making any future capture nearly impossible.

“Move out! We must capture it today!”

The team dashed toward the fleeing Zombie King, but the horde and rat swarm surged like a tidal wave, attempting to block their path.

Bian Junwu, unwilling to waste more time, removed his glasses and activated his Annihilation ability.

A searing white light filled the tunnel, and in an instant, the space ahead was wiped clean.

Thousands of zombies were obliterated in the blink of an eye.

The strain of the attack caused sharp pain in Bian Junwu’s chest, and he doubled over, coughing violently.

Despite his condition, he pressed forward without hesitation. “Go!”

The team pursued relentlessly, clearing out stray rats and zombies as they closed in on the Zombie King.

Meanwhile, outside Yangsheng Base, the attacking zombies abruptly halted as if receiving an unseen signal.

They turned en masse, retreating toward the tunnels.

The rat swarm followed suit, leaving Xiao Honglian and her soldiers baffled.

Her body, wreathed in flames like a fiery goddess, trembled with exhaustion. Gasping for breath, she stared at the retreating enemy in shock.

“What’s going on?” she muttered.

Unbeknownst to her, the Zombie King was fighting for its life underground, pursued by Bian Junwu and his team.

Chapter 469: The Death of the Zombie King

The investigation team carved through the zombie horde like a blade through cloth, rapidly closing in on the Zombie King.

For the first time, they got a close look at the white-furred monkey.

It was protected by six massive armored zombies, one of which carried the creature on its back as they fled deeper into the subway.

“Capture it alive!” Bian Junwu commanded.

Qi Guangming raised his peculiar black sniper rifle, aiming for the leg joint of the armored zombie carrying the Zombie King.

A sharp crack echoed as a bright beam struck its target, shattering the zombie’s joint with a sickening snap.

The towering creature roared in pain and collapsed, sending the white-furred monkey tumbling to the ground with a shrill scream.

Before it could recover, Baili Changqing surged forward with his knight's lance, pressing its tip against the monkey's head.

The creature's eyes flashed with terror as it cowered on the ground, frozen in place.

The surrounding armored zombies growled and paced, unwilling to attack but clearly desperate to protect their leader.

Bian Junwu's cold gaze locked onto the monkey. "If I'm watching, there's no chance for escape," he said, his tone like ice.

The team surrounded the creature, paying no attention to the armored zombies. They knew the zombies wouldn't act without the Zombie King's orders.

"So this is the Zombie King, the one commanding the entire horde?" Bian Junwu muttered, raising an eyebrow as he studied the trembling creature.

Wu Di let out a loud laugh. "I thought it'd be some kind of unstoppable beast if it could control a horde this big. Turns out it's a weak little thing!"

Baili Changqing, however, remained composed. "This actually makes sense," he said.

"If it's the brain of the horde or some kind of control-type superhuman, it doesn't need to be physically strong. It just needs to command from the back."

Meng Siyu stroked her chin thoughtfully. "No wonder it doesn't dare launch a full-scale attack on human settlements. Its body is too weak, so it has to keep a large portion of the horde and armored zombies nearby for protection."

"With combat abilities this poor, even an ordinary adult could kill it," she concluded.

The surrounding armored zombies growled again, clearly agitated, but without direction from their leader, they hesitated to act.

The white-furred monkey shrieked oddly, its eyes filled with a mixture of fear and resentment.

Bian Junwu pressed his gun to the creature's head. "Order them to kill each other," he demanded coldly.

A flicker of hatred flashed in the monkey's eyes, and its cries grew louder.

Suddenly, the six armored zombies roared in unison and charged at the team, the creature having chosen to go down fighting.

Baili Changqing spat on the ground, gripped his lance tightly, and grinned. "Looks like it wants a fight!"

His body radiated black energy, enveloping him like a shroud. With the strength of a titan, he charged into the fray, his lance sweeping out in a deadly arc.

Slash!

In one devastating strike, all six armored zombies were cleaved in half. Green blood sprayed through the air, mingled with the shattered remains of crimson bones.

"Ha! Who's next?" Baili Changqing roared, his voice echoing through the tunnel.

Despite their terrifying strength, the armored zombies were no match for the deputy captain of the investigation team, Iron Grip Baili Changqing.

However, the tunnel reverberated with distant roars as the horde surged forward, summoned by the Zombie King.

Bian Junwu narrowed his eyes at the creature beneath his gun. "You're not playing fair," he muttered coldly.

Realizing that the horde would soon surround them, Bian Junwu made a swift decision.

He pulled the trigger.

The gunshot rang out, and the monkey's head exploded. Its body collapsed lifelessly, its skull punctured by a massive hole.

Without a word, Meng Siyu pulled a body bag from her pack and carefully stored the corpse.

The team retreated from the subway, emerging through the nearest exit back to the surface.

What awaited them was a shocking sight.

Under the pale expanse of the snowy plains, tens of thousands of zombies had gathered, standing motionless and gazing toward the subway entrance.

Without the Zombie King to guide them, they appeared disoriented, their movements slow and aimless.

"They've lost their coordination," Bian Junwu remarked, watching the scene with a calm expression.

Meng Siyu nodded. "Without a leader, even a massive horde like this can't pose a serious threat to large human settlements."

Intelligent zombies were an entirely different challenge compared to mindless ones. Without direction, even the largest horde could be managed with time and resources.

A few zombies spotted the team and charged, their eyes glowing red with aggression.

“Let’s move,” Bian Junwu ordered. “No need to waste time here. They’ll decay soon enough without a leader to sustain them.”

The zombies, being mere carriers of the virus, would rapidly deteriorate without sustenance.

The team swiftly returned to their vehicle.

Nearby, clusters of zombies wandered aimlessly, paying no mind to the armored vehicle. After clearing a small group blocking their path, the team loaded the monkey’s body into the car and drove off.

Their next task was to analyze the corpse, uncovering its biological secrets and searching for clues about the zombie virus.

Inside the vehicle, Meng Siyu donned a white protective suit and began dissecting the body on a portable surgical table.

The others rested in shifts, their rest brief and uneasy.

As dawn broke, the pale light of day spilling across the frozen wasteland, Meng Siyu removed her gloves and looked up at Bian Junwu.

Her face was solemn as she delivered her findings.

“It’s not a monkey or any type of primate,” she said.

“What we’re dealing with... was once human.”

Chapter 470: Deeper Mysteries

Meng Siyu's revelation left the team surprised, though it wasn't entirely unexpected. In a world overrun by mutated creatures, humans, and corpses, little seemed impossible anymore.

She continued, "The creature's body contains a significant amount of the zombie virus. This virus exhibits distinct colony-like behavior.

"The Zombie King can infect other corpses with the virus, turning them into zombies.

"It also maintains a link with its 'offspring' through some mechanism, enabling it to control the horde.

"However, this link is relatively simple and conveys limited information. That's why the zombies initially exhibit such basic, rigid behaviors in combat."

She paused before adding, "The Zombie King itself, however, possesses intelligence. Its brain remains intact, unlike ordinary zombies. Therefore, it can be killed just like a regular human—by destroying its brain."

Baili Changqing leaned back in his seat, remarking, "So, in some ways, it's not much different from us."

Qi Guangming's tone grew serious. "Does this mean that if we eliminate all the Zombie Kings in Tianhai City, we can resolve the zombie crisis?"

Meng Siyu nodded affirmatively.

"In theory, yes. Without a Zombie King to coordinate them, even the largest horde would be reduced to little more than a scattered nuisance."

In a world where superhumans existed, an uncoordinated zombie horde, no matter how large, could eventually be exterminated with enough time and effort.

Bian Junwu adjusted his tinted tactical glasses, his face an impenetrable mask as he processed Meng Siyu's findings.

“But one question remains unanswered,” he said after a pause.

“If there are multiple Zombie Kings in Tianhai City, where did the first one come from?

“If Zombie Kings are mutated from human corpses, how was the original infected with the zombie virus?”

All eyes turned back to Meng Siyu, who shook her head.

“That’s difficult to determine. The scale of the zombie horde, coupled with our limited resources, makes tracing the origin nearly impossible.

“It’s possible that the Zombie King is simply a variant within the horde, similar to how armored zombies are created by the original King.

“Its sole purpose may be to command the other zombies.”

Bian Junwu’s expression remained cold as steel.

Baili Changqing, attempting to lift the mood, chuckled. “Well, at least we know one thing: killing the Zombie Kings makes the horde manageable. That’s good news, right? フANOBÈS

“This mission might not be as tough as we thought. They’re just large in number!”

Wu Di groaned, rubbing his temples. “Ugh, but there are so many zombies! How long is it going to take to kill them all? If only we could gather them in one spot so I could just biubiubiu wipe them all out with my Floating Cannons!”

The team burst into laughter.

“If only it were that easy!” someone said. “If it were, HQ wouldn’t have sent us in the first place.”

Amid the banter, Bian Junwu, who had been silent in thought, suddenly spoke up.

“Gathering them all in one place and eliminating them in one strike... that’s actually not a bad idea.”

His words caught everyone off guard.

Wu Di’s eyes lit up, and he grinned. “See? I knew you’d get it, Boss! Great idea, huh?”

Baili Changqing frowned slightly. “But how would we do that? The zombies in Tianhai City are scattered everywhere.”

Kong Sheng added, “And if we do gather them all, the sheer number would be overwhelming. How would we deal with that?”

Bian Junwu crossed his arms, his expression as icy as ever.

“Zombies are drawn to humans. That much is certain.

“So, if we bring all the humans in Tianhai City together, we can lure the zombies to one location.”

“Once they’re all in one place, we can annihilate them—along with their Zombie Kings.”

“And doing so might also confirm a suspicion of mine.”

The word suspicion piqued everyone’s curiosity.

“What’s on your mind, Boss?” Wu Di asked.

Bian Junwu’s lips curled into a faint smile.

“So far, the zombie horde in Tianhai City has shown only minor tendencies to spread to nearby cities. Most of the zombies remain concentrated in Tianhai City.

“That’s highly unusual. If the virus is driving them, they should naturally spread outward, seeking more prey as their local food supply dwindle.”

“But instead, they remain here, persistently attacking the five major factions.

“Even Zhang Yi’s small shelter has faced sustained attacks from a zombie horde.

“Why?”

His eyes glinted with a hint of amusement.

“I want to find out if someone is pulling the strings behind the scenes.

“Maybe the Zombie Kings aren’t natural at all.

“Maybe they were created deliberately.”

“And if that’s true,” he concluded, his voice dropping to a menacing growl, “then we’ll dismantle this hidden force entirely.”

...

Another night passed.

The investigation team's success in eliminating the Zombie King near Yangsheng Base marked a turning point.

For the first time, humans had managed to kill a Zombie King, and the surrounding horde, now leaderless, descended into disarray.

Without coordination, the zombies behaved like wild beasts driven solely by instinct.

Some zombies even wandered into Yangsheng Base during daylight hours, initially causing panic among the exhausted defenders.

However, after a brief skirmish, they discovered that the zombies were far less threatening without leadership.

The creatures no longer avoided traps or barbed wire, and even ran directly into flamethrowers, incinerating themselves en masse.

The defenders erupted in cheers.

Zhuge Qingtian rushed to report the news to Xiao Honglian, whose tense expression finally eased.

“Is it true?” she asked.

At the front lines, she observed the disorganized horde with her own eyes. Though their numbers were significant, their movements were chaotic and uncoordinated.

For the first time in days, she exhaled deeply in relief.

“Whatever happened, it's a good sign,” she said.

Zhuge Qingtian speculated, “Could it have something to do with the investigation team from Jiangnan District?”

Thinking of the investigation team and their formidable capabilities, Xiao Honglian’s expression turned serious.

“It’s possible,” she said.

Both Xiao Honglian and Zhuge Qingtian couldn’t hide their astonishment.

“Is this the strength of Jiangnan District?”

“A team of just seven people, and on their first day here, they’ve already resolved a major crisis!”

Their respect and awe for the Jiangnan District deepened further.