

Ice Age 601

Chapter 601: The Return Journey

Deng Shentong was at a loss for words.

He wasn't an idiot—of course he understood that Zhang Yi was politely declining his invitation.

But Zhang Yi still gave him enough face. His words made it very clear. He, Zhang Yi, was a defensive genius who simply didn't enjoy running around risking his life every day.

It really wasn't suitable for him to join the Investigation Team.

After staring at Zhang Yi for a few seconds, Deng Shentong suddenly laughed.

Pointing at Zhang Yi, he said, "You really are something. Smooth-tongued, strong as hell, yet so damn... cowardly."

"Cautious!" Zhang Yi corrected him.

"But don't you get bored staying in that ghost place all day?" Deng Shentong looked at him playfully. "People, once they gain power, will always crave an outlet to show it off. Otherwise, they'll feel this emptiness inside."

"Are you really planning to hole up in one corner for the rest of your life?"

Zhang Yi nodded honestly. "I can."

What's wrong with staying alive?

Besides, it wasn't like he was suffering in the mountains or anything. His home environment was great—no worries about food or clothes—and he was surrounded by plenty of beautiful women.

Life is so comfortable, why the hell would I go out there and fight? I'd have to be crazy!

Deng Shentong: “...”

Deng Shentong's eyes showed a hint of confusion. He couldn't quite understand Zhang Yi's mindset.

But then again, that was normal.

The things Zhang Yi wanted were things Deng Shentong was born having.

Deng Shentong was chasing after the dream of being a hero, enjoying supreme glory and the thrill of battle.

“You...” Deng Shentong pointed at Zhang Yi, wanting to say something, but eventually sighed helplessly.

“Fine, everyone has their own aspirations. Since that's how you feel, I won't force you.”

“But if you ever change your mind, you can contact me.”

“Not that I'm desperate for you to join my squad. I'm just giving you the opportunity. You'd better come find me early, or if I meet someone more suitable, you'll have to settle for being a backup.”

Zhang Yi was laughing like crazy inside, but on the surface, he said sincerely, “Thank you, Captain Deng! I'll seriously consider it when I get back.”

Although Zhang Yi had declined Deng Shentong, he had done so while giving him enough respect.

Deng Shentong didn't get upset—in fact, he ended up chatting with Zhang Yi for a long time.

Even though Deng Shentong looked like the typical rich second-generation playboy, he was actually quite tight-lipped.

He was happy to talk about food, fun, and random topics, but whenever Zhang Yi tried to fish for information about Linhai City, Deng Shentong smoothly dodged the subject every time.

Zhang Yi silently noted, This guy's no fool after all. Definitely not someone to underestimate.

The two chatted for a while, and their personalities weren't too incompatible.

As night fell, Zhang Yi stood up to take his leave.

"Hold on, I've got a little gift for you," Deng Shentong said, snapping his fingers toward the door.

A maid walked in, carrying a black case.

Zhang Yi eyed the box. "What's this?"

Deng Shentong chuckled. "Open it and see."

Zhang Yi nodded, took the box in hand—it was surprisingly heavy—and opened it.

Inside, tightly packed, were pitch-black bullets!

"Origin Bullets!" Zhang Yi blurted out. There had to be at least a hundred Origin Bullets in there!

According to Lu Keran, just one Origin Bullet cost no less than 100,000 before the apocalypse.

Now, with resources so hard to come by and production conditions so limited, its value could easily be ten times that.

And Deng Shentong just casually handed him a box of a hundred?! Rich kid behavior at its finest!

Zhang Yi put on a flustered expression. "Captain Deng, this... this is too much! I can't accept something so valuable."

Deng Shentong waved it off with a calm smile. "This kind of thing is nothing to me. But you, you probably need it, right? Just take it. It'll come in handy one day."

Seeing his attitude, Zhang Yi stopped declining. "Then I'll thank Captain Deng properly. If you ever need anything from me, just say the word. I'll do my best."

Deng Shentong nodded with satisfaction.

"Alright, let's leave it at that for today. Next time you visit Blizzard City, we might get another chance to meet."

Zhang Yi casually stored the Origin Bullets into his spatial storage.

This little trick clearly piqued Deng Shentong's interest.

Zhang Yi then left the Deng residence.

Deng Shentong watched Zhang Yi's departing figure, feeling a trace of regret.

Spatial abilities like that are incredibly rare. If I could have someone like him on my team, it would make missions so much easier.

Not to mention, Zhang Yi's combat strength isn't weak either.

Bai Chunyu walked up behind Deng Shentong and asked, “Captain, did Zhang Yi agree to join our Investigation Team?”

Deng Shentong replied calmly, “No, he declined.”

Bai Chunyu was shocked. “What? He actually refused?! Do you know how many people would kill for this opportunity? And he just turned it down?”

Deng Shentong’s lips curled slightly. “Maybe that’s what makes him interesting.”

Heh, you’ve caught my attention, man!

“But you still gave him a whole box of Origin Bullets!”

Deng Shentong smiled indifferently. “It’s just a box of Origin Bullets. No big deal. As long as someone is useful to me, I’m willing to pay any price to win them over.”

“Those aiming for kingship and dominance can’t be stingy about trivial things.”

“Even if Zhang Yi never joins my Celestial Squad, today’s favor will make sure he remembers my generosity.”

Bai Chunyu took a deep breath and respectfully saluted.

“Captain, you’re wise indeed! Your intellect and generosity are truly admirable!”

...

...

Zhang Yi left the Deng residence, where a driver was already waiting. Seeing him approach, the driver promptly invited him into the car to take him back.

Zhang Yi couldn't help but think better of the Deng family.

Originally, he thought that rich kids from big families must all be arrogant and domineering, the type who destroy anyone who dares oppose them.

But Deng Shentong's demeanor made him realize that not all second-generation heirs were like that.

Even after Zhang Yi turned down the invitation, Deng Shentong didn't show the slightest dissatisfaction.

Making friends with someone like this isn't a bad thing, Zhang Yi thought to himself.

He got into the car and returned to the apartment.

Once he got back, the rest of the team immediately gathered around to ask how his talk with Deng Shentong went.

After hearing his story, everyone finally relaxed.

Luckily, Deng Shentong hadn't made things difficult for Zhang Yi.

Otherwise, causing trouble on Blizzard City's turf would've been bad news for Zhang Yi.

And they couldn't afford to be separated from him.

Zhou Ke'er asked, "So, what do we do next? Are we heading back?"

Zhang Yi thought of the superhumans back in Daze City, his eyes dropping slightly as he replied calmly, "Time to head back! And let's prepare a little gift for them while we're at it."

Chapter 602: The Speculation of Daze City's Superhumans

Over on the side of Tianhai City's superhuman groups—

After Zhang Yi finished his talk with Deng Shentong, he had no more reason to stay in Blizzard City.

He immediately called over Xiao Honglian, Xing Tian, and Chen Jingguan.

The three entered Zhang Yi's room, where Zhang Yi's entire team was already gathered.

Zhang Yi pointed to the sofa, "Have a seat. There's something I should tell you all now."

The three looked puzzled but obediently sat across from Zhang Yi.

Staring at them seriously, Zhang Yi said, "I'm heading back to Tianhai City. Tonight. If you don't have anything urgent, you should come with me."

The three were visibly shocked.

Xiao Honglian glanced at the darkening sky outside and asked, confused, "That rushed? It's already dark. Can't we wait until tomorrow?"

Chen Jingguan, now Zhang Yi's follower, thought for a moment and then asked, "Boss, is this because of those superhumans from Daze City?"

Everyone was stunned by the way Chen Jingguan addressed him.

Zhang Yi hadn't yet told anyone that he had become the leader of Chaoyu Base.

Seeing the strange looks on their faces, Zhang Yi casually explained, “Oh, by the way, Chaoyu Base is under my control now. Chen Jingguan is my subordinate. Just so you all know.”

Zhang Yi said it lightly, but for Xiao Honglian and Xing Tian, it was like an earthquake.

Chen Jingguan had willingly submitted to Zhang Yi—so what about them?

Although they had always been willing to submit to Zhang Yi in the past, they naturally had ambitions of leading a base themselves.

Being someone’s subordinate and being the boss were two very different things, and they knew exactly which felt better.

Chen Jingguan’s decision forced them to seriously consider their own future.

Especially with superhuman groups from other cities already eyeing Tianhai City—it wouldn’t be long before they invaded.

Now that Chaoyu Base was part of Zhang Yi’s forces, it was sure to receive his protection.

But as for them? Not guaranteed.

The two of them hesitated, secretly wondering if they should follow Chen Jingguan’s lead and officially align with Zhang Yi.

For now, they decided to wait until they got back to consider it carefully.

Zhang Yi didn’t bother prying into their thoughts and continued, “I know you’re all angry about what Daze City’s people did.”

“But like I said, the most important thing was the district assembly. Everything else had to be put on hold. Now that the assembly is over, we can focus on dealing with those guys.”

“Based on the current situation, they’ve already assumed Tianhai City is weak. They’ve practically decided to invade.”

“And chances are, they’ll strike while the Jiangnan District’s attention is focused on Linhai City.”

“So, we need to hurry back and get ready. Fighting on home turf is our advantage!”

Zhang Yi gave a simple and direct explanation.

He had already told his own team this plan earlier, but this was the first time he was sharing it with the heads of the other three forces.

Chen Jingguan’s eyes lit up instantly, and he said with excitement, “Boss, you’re brilliant! Laying low and making them underestimate Tianhai City’s strength—then we hit them when they’re careless.”

“We’ll set up a massive net, wait for them to step into it, and wipe them out in one go!”

His eyes glowed brighter and brighter. “By then, everyone will know Tianhai City’s true power, and no one will dare look down on us again! This is genius!”

Chen Jingguan really lived up to his role as second-in-command—his flattery skills were top-notch.

Zhang Yi couldn’t help but smile.

This guy had clearly relaxed ever since giving up the burden of being Chaoyu Base’s leader and was now letting loose.

Some people just weren’t suited to be in charge. Chen Jingguan was clearly one of them.

Meanwhile, Xiao Honglian and Xing Tian couldn't hide their excitement.

They had been humiliated a lot recently.

The superhumans from Daze City constantly mocked them, and even the ones from other cities looked down on them.

Because of Zhang Yi's orders, they had held back and avoided conflicts, swallowing their anger.

But now that Zhang Yi had finally said it was time to retaliate, of course they were thrilled to vent their frustrations.

Xiao Honglian leaned forward eagerly. "Do you have a specific plan? How can we assist?"

Zhang Yi replied calmly, "Adapt as the situation demands."

He spread his hands. "We don't even know what actions they'll take yet. But since we'll be fighting on home turf, we've got the advantage in timing, geography, and unity."

"When you get back, make sure your people are on high alert, organize your weapons, and don't let your guard down for a second."

"As for the next step? We'll decide based on how they move."

Zhang Yi knew himself well. He wasn't some genius strategist like Zhuge Liang who could toy with his enemies effortlessly.

He preferred to make solid preparations and ensure he had an unbeatable position first.

At the very least, if it really came to a fight, with his current strength, there weren't many in all of Jiangnan District who could stand against him.

Everyone nodded in agreement.

With so little intel on Daze City's superhuman forces, this was clearly the most reliable approach.

Zhang Yi immediately ordered everyone to pack up and prepare to take the special train back to Tianhai City.

Commander Zhu Zheng had already said they could leave Blizzard City at any time.

It's just that if they wanted to return in the future, they'd need Blizzard City's permission.

Everyone knew the sooner they got back, the sooner they could get ready for the coming battle.

After all, no one knew when Daze City's superhumans might make their move.

So, everyone quickly went to gather their soldiers and left the apartment together.

Their numbers weren't small, and their departure certainly didn't escape Daze City's spies.

Some people had been specifically assigned to tail them. As soon as they noticed the group leaving, they immediately reported it to several of their leaders.

Sun Jianming's eyes flickered when he received the report, then he sneered.

"Leaving in the dead of night? Afraid we'll make a move on them? How cowardly."

His disdain for Tianhai City's superhuman organizations only grew stronger.

"Looks like it's time to act. Tianhai City is rich in resources. It's a waste to let those weaklings occupy it."

After the incident where he beat up Chen Jingguan, Sun Jianming was riding high in morale.

Everyone could see it—he was definitely going to make a move against Tianhai City, or at the very least, raid Chaoyu Base's fleet.

However, he wasn't as reckless as he appeared. Beneath that arrogant exterior was a careful mind.

"Tianhai City may be weak, but if I go alone, even if I win, it'll be a costly victory. I need other forces to cooperate."

With that in mind, Sun Jianming immediately took out his phone and contacted Chen Liangyu and Gu Hongdie, inviting them over for tea.

Chapter 603: Unifying Tianhai

Chen Liangyu and Gu Hongdie both knew exactly what Sun Jianming was thinking the moment they got his message.

After Chen Jingguan exposed Tianhai City's current strength, it wasn't just Daze City—many superhuman organizations from other cities were already eyeing Tianhai like hungry wolves.

Everyone was just waiting for an opportunity to devour this juicy prize.

And among them, Daze City, sitting northwest of Tianhai, was practically within arm's reach. They had the best shot at getting in first!

But even a broken ship still has three pounds of nails.

Even if Tianhai City had been wrecked, the foundations left by its various forces couldn't be underestimated.

To play it safe, it was smarter for everyone to team up and carve up the spoils together.

Chen Liangyu and Gu Hongdie arrived at Sun Jianming's room.

Since they were all old acquaintances, Sun Jianming didn't bother with pleasantries.

"Both of you, the grunts from Tianhai City slipped away under the cover of night. So, what do you think about this juicy piece of meat?"

Gu Hongdie chuckled sweetly, though a sly glint flickered through her eyes.

"Let's not beat around the bush. We all want a bite of this fat prize, right? Sun Jianming, why don't you just spit it out and tell us what you're thinking."

She glanced at Chen Liangyu. "I'm guessing all three of us are on the same page here."

Chen Liangyu smiled and nodded.

Sun Jianming laughed heartily. "Alright, I'll be straight with you! Tianhai City is sitting there like a fat lamb, and we need to move fast or someone else will snatch it away!"

"No single group can take it all on their own. It's better for the three of us to join forces."

Sun Jianming sat down heavily on the couch, one hand pressing against his knee.

"But even though their forces are weak, they still have a few decent superhumans. Like Xiao Honglian from Yangsheng Base, Xing Tian from Qingfu Base, and that Zhang Yi guy—they're not exactly pushovers."

“If we fight them head-on, it’ll just cost us a lot and give some third party the chance to swoop in.”

“So here’s my suggestion: the three of us should team up and pressure them into surrendering most of Tianhai City’s resources!”

“We’ll leave them a small lifeline.”

“After all, Tianhai City is huge. Leaving them a few scraps is more than enough for them to survive.”

“That way, we can grab the lion’s share of the land and supplies without even lifting a finger. Beautiful, isn’t it?”

Gu Hongdie’s eyes flashed with approval after hearing him out.

She nodded. “That’s a good plan. If we can avoid starting a war, we’d prefer not to.”

“If they know what’s good for them, fine. If not, we’ll just crush them!”

The three of them already treated Tianhai City like it was firmly in their pockets.

And who could blame them?

Judging by the number of people Tianhai sent to Blizzard City, Tianhai’s forces really were pathetically weak.

Other powers would at least send superhumans to Blizzard City.

But Tianhai City?

Most of their superhumans had already died fighting Yuan Kongye.

They even had to bring in regular folks just to fill the ranks.

Honestly, if you added up all the superhumans left in Tianhai City now, they probably didn't even outnumber Sun Jianming's personal forces by much.

Chen Liangyu said, "Then let's move quickly before someone else tries to snatch this prize."

After hashing it out, the three factions pulled out a map of Tianhai City and began divvying up the territory.

Once they finalized the split, they drafted letters to send to the heads of Tianhai's remaining factions.

Zhang Yi and the others hurried back from Blizzard City, taking the Jiangnan Express straight to Tianhai City.

After stepping out of the Xiaomiaoshan Subway Station, Zhang Yi immediately told everyone to head back to their respective territories and start preparing for defense.

Xiao Honglian seemed uneasy.

She looked over at Zhang Yi. Chen Jingguan was right behind him, staying one step back like a loyal subordinate.

She frowned slightly, feeling a little bitter inside.

It was obvious that the lines of closeness and distance had already been drawn.

Knowing Zhang Yi's personality, if a war broke out, they were likely to be the ones sacrificed first.

She walked up to Zhang Yi and asked pointedly, “If the superhumans from Daze City attack, you’ll come save us, right?”

“Of course.”

Zhang Yi answered with a bright, carefree smile.

Xiao Honglian: “...”

She didn’t say anything else.

Zhang Yi’s answer had come too quickly—it just didn’t feel real.

Having dealt with Zhang Yi for so long, she knew what kind of person he was.

He always put himself and his closest circle first.

Thinking of this, Xiao Honglian made a decision deep in her heart.

She clenched her fists quietly, took a deep breath, and then looked Zhang Yi straight in the eye in front of everyone.

“Zhang Yi, please take Yangsheng Base under your wing too!”

The place fell silent.

Everyone turned to look at Xiao Honglian, then at Zhang Yi.

It was surprising—but at the same time, it made sense.

Yangsheng Base couldn't handle another major armed conflict.

Without Zhang Yi's protection, unless they hid in the Underground Shelter forever, they wouldn't survive another crisis.

But if they did that, they'd lose everything they owned on the surface.

Chen Jingguan curled his lips into a grin.

"Smart move!" he said proudly.

He was feeling pretty pleased with himself.

Sure, they were all throwing in with Zhang Yi, but even that had an order to it.

Since he had pledged loyalty first, his status was bound to be higher.

Though... admittedly, he wasn't as strong as Xiao Honglian.

Not far away, Xing Tian—who was about to leave—was dumbfounded.

Holy sh*t, there were only a few factions left in Tianhai City, and now they were all lining up to follow Zhang Yi. What was he supposed to do?

After hesitating for a moment, he gritted his teeth and rushed over to Zhang Yi.

"Old Zhang, from now on, Qingfu Base is with you too!"

Zhang Yi's expression stayed calm and indifferent.

He wasn't particularly excited about all these forces throwing themselves at him.

He didn't really lack resources.

What he wanted was a stable environment for himself and his team.

And these factions were crucial for maintaining peace in Tianhai City.

Zhang Yi looked calmly at Xiao Honglian and Xing Tian.

"Do you understand what this means?" he asked quietly. "Once you're under me, you'll have to follow my orders no matter what."

A wicked grin spread across his lips.

"Even if I tell you to die!"

Xiao Honglian and Xing Tian both flinched.

Of course, they weren't about to agree to that literally.

But they quickly realized Zhang Yi was just making it clear: absolute loyalty was non-negotiable.

Truth be told, nobody liked that idea.

But the situation left them no choice.

Tianhai City's resources were way too tempting.

They were bound to attract the attention of other cities and factions.

Even though Xing Tian and Xiao Honglian were Delta-level superhumans, without a faction to back them up, they couldn't accomplish anything.

Lone wolves didn't survive long in the apocalypse.

Not everyone could be like Zhang Yi.

Since they had to pledge allegiance anyway, it made sense to choose someone they knew well.

At least with Zhang Yi, they could stay in Tianhai City and still hold onto some power.

Chapter 604: Visitors from Daze City

Xiao Honglian and Xing Tian both nodded, agreeing to Zhang Yi's conditions.

"From now on, whatever you ask us to do, we'll do it," Xiao Honglian said. "All we ask is that you protect the people at our bases and let them survive."

Xing Tian looked at Zhang Yi.

"Old Zhang, we've always gotten along pretty well. You're not gonna screw me over, right?"

Zhang Yi chuckled.

He waved a hand casually. "Just carry on as usual. Wait for my orders."

He didn't say too much—after all, he didn't expect much from these three factions anyway.

Besides, no matter how many demands he made, if real trouble hit, these guys would still put their own interests first.

Loyalty?

What a joke. That sort of thing only existed because of strength.

Xiao Honglian and Xing Tian nodded, then took their men and left Xiaomiaoshan Subway Station.

"Let's head back too," Zhang Yi said.

He pulled out the Snow Vehicle, and everyone piled in for the ride back to the Shelter.

The mood on the way back was a little heavy.

After all, the days of peace were coming to an end.

Barring any surprises, they'd soon be clashing with forces from other cities.

"Why's it always gotta be fighting? I'm exhausted!"

Fatty Xu grumbled, face full of frustration.

"This is just how things are now," said Uncle You.

"In a world where civilization has collapsed, it's survival of the fittest. Darwin's law rules everything."

"All we can hope for is that Jiangnan District sets up a proper system soon to keep these factions in check."

Zhang Yi sat in the front passenger seat, arms crossed, listening to them chat. He said lazily,

"Once we win this fight, things will be a lot more peaceful."

A cold light flashed in his eyes.

He hadn't forgotten the humiliation from those Daze City bastards.

"We need a warning—a chicken to set an example."

"This time, I'm not just killing a chicken. I'm tearing down the whole chicken coop."

Everyone arrived back at the Shelter, where the women of the household came out to greet them.

Zhang Yi and the others hadn't been gone long, so everything at home was still calm and peaceful.

But when they finished recounting what had happened at Blizzard City, Zhou Haimei and Yang Siyah wore helpless expressions.

"Another war, huh?"

"Why can't people just live in peace? Why do they have to fight to the death? I really don't get what goes on in their heads,"

Zhou Haimei said, shaking her head, full of regret.

She seemed to be scolding those who couldn't appreciate a good life and insisted on throwing it away in battle.

Uncle You put an arm around her shoulders and smiled warmly.

"Don't worry. No matter how big the problem, we'll handle it. You just focus on your work here at home—leave the rest to us."

Zhang Yi sat on the sofa as everyone gathered in the living room.

He immediately started assigning tasks.

"Xinxin, get the Tianhai City network system running."

"Through that, we can monitor movements across all districts of Tianhai City."

Yang Xinxin nodded.

"Got it, Brother Zhang Yi. Besides that, I can try hacking into the networks of other cities too."

Zhang Yi blinked, surprised.

"You can do that?"

Yang Xinxin smiled and nodded.

"I didn't before because our main enemies were inside Tianhai City. But now, with outside forces threatening our safety, it's necessary."

"Aside from Blizzard City's network—which I wouldn't dare touch—hacking the public networks of other cities shouldn't be a problem for me."

Even though it was the apocalypse, the network systems hadn't completely collapsed.

After all, national-level forces like the Six Districts still maintained basic infrastructure.

Most factions relied on communication devices and central control systems.

That dependence created weaknesses Yang Xinxin could exploit.

Zhang Yi's eyes lit up.

"Then try hacking into Daze City's network! I want their combat data—especially intel on their superhumans and abilities."

Yang Xinxin smiled sweetly.

"Leave it to me."

Then Zhang Yi turned to Lu Keran.

"Keran, you've come into contact with a lot of new tech at Blizzard City—especially that black combat suit and those construction materials."

"Absorb everything you learned, and for now, focus on replicating that combat suit."

Zhang Yi had been seriously tempted by those training suits from the Training Arena.

It was the first time he'd seen clothing that could enhance a person's physical abilities.

Kind of like a human exoskeleton.

He'd heard of exoskeleton technology online before the apocalypse, but seeing it miniaturized into clothing was a first.

With something like that, their whole team's strength would jump dramatically.

Even the girls who weren't good at fighting would have a much better chance at survival.

"Roger that!"

Lu Keran gave a playful salute.

Then Zhang Yi turned to Yang Siyah.

"Your job stays the same. Stockpile as much Superhuman Energy Food as possible."

Yang Siyah nodded sweetly.

"Got it. I haven't been slacking either."

Zhang Yi gave her an approving nod.

"Good. Keep it up."

He continued handing out tasks—mostly defensive preparations—nothing too complicated, just making sure everyone stayed battle-ready.

The next day, a letter arrived from Daze City.

The messengers came in two Snow Vehicles, ten people in total, all superhumans who exuded a powerful presence.

They'd already figured out during the Gathering that Zhang Yi was the true leader of Tianhai City's forces.

So the vehicles rolled straight up to the area near the Shelter.

The moment they got close, the Shelter's AI system sounded an alarm, alerting Zhang Yi.

He checked the monitors and saw two black armored Snow Vehicles, immediately guessing they were outsiders.

The markings on the vehicles weren't anything he recognized.

Zhang Yi quickly changed into his Combat Suit and left his room.

Liang Yue and Uncle You, both suited up, were already waiting at his door.

"Let's go see what's up," Liang Yue said.

"They're being cautious—stopped about two hundred meters away. Judging by their gear, they're not from around here."

As they headed downstairs, Zhang Yi said,

"I know. They're probably from Daze City."

Uncle You frowned.

"Are they here to declare war?"

"Declare war?"

Zhang Yi laughed and shot Uncle You a look.

"You ever seen anyone so polite that they announce a war before starting it?"

Uncle You: "Then what are they here for?"

Zhang Yi smirked.

"They're here to intimidate us—to scare us into surrendering without a fight."

Chapter 605: Dressed in Righteousness

After hearing Zhang Yi's explanation, both Uncle You and Liang Yue had strange looks on their faces.

Coming here to negotiate a surrender?

It actually made sense.

Even though Tianhai City had collapsed badly, it still had a few superhumans and some armed forces left.

If they really pushed Tianhai into a corner, nobody would come out unscathed.

But—big but—Zhang Yi's side wasn't weak at all!

Surely no one seriously thought Zhang Yi's team was weak, right?

Even months ago, Zhang Yi had crushed multiple bases attacking at full force.

Not to mention now, Zhang Yi's strength had undergone a complete transformation.

He had taken down Yuan Kongye, who was Epsilon-level—who would dare say they could beat him?

Even the top dogs of Blizzard City probably wouldn't dare to try.

The corners of Zhang Yi's mouth lifted into a playful smile.

"Let's go see what they want!"

Zhang Yi and the others headed downstairs.

Everyone inside the Shelter was already waiting for them.

Once Zhang Yi showed up, it was like everyone found their backbone.

He smiled lightly.

"What are you all staring at? Relax. Go back to what you were doing."

Hua Hua jumped onto Zhang Yi's shoulder, and he gently stroked its soft fur.

"Uncle You and Teacher Liang, you two come with me."

After all, it was just a bunch of grunts—no need to give them more face than necessary.

Otherwise, it'd look like they were scared.

The three of them walked through the snow toward the vehicles.

Zhang Yi raised his right hand in front of him.

"Dimensional Shield."

A circular, invisible shield materialized, covering all angles around them.

Right now, Zhang Yi's Dimensional Gate had three defensive modes:

Dimensional Gate: widest range and strongest defense, but immobile.

Dimensional Shield: smaller range and medium defense, but flexible and good for close-range defense.

Absolute Barrier Between Two Realms: smallest range, but provides full 360° coverage; however, defense is the weakest due to the spherical distortion of the gate.

Zhang Yi had to choose carefully based on the situation.

They trudged through the snow toward the two vehicles.

The people in the vehicles, ten fully armed superhumans, were watching cautiously.

Seeing Zhang Yi's group approaching, a burly superhuman with a scruffy beard said lazily,

"They're coming."

Another one stuck his head out the window.

After just one glance, he said carelessly,

"Just hand them the letter and let's get out of here. No point wasting time in a dump like this."

A skinny guy in the backseat patted him on the shoulder and laughed,

"Come on, don't be so eager. Pretty soon this place will be ours anyway."

The other man curled his lip.

"Let's hope they have the sense to know what's good for them."

Their casual chatter showed they didn't take Zhang Yi's group seriously at all.

In their eyes, Tianhai City had already collapsed, and its leftover forces were no match for Daze City's Big Three.

Zhang Yi and the others walked right up to them.

"Who are you people? What are you doing here?"

Zhang Yi asked coldly.

The scruffy-bearded man squinted at Zhang Yi.

"You're Zhang Yi?"

Zhang Yi nodded.

"That's right."

The man grinned and pulled a brown envelope out of his pocket.

"We're messengers from Daze City's Big Three. Our leaders sent this letter for you. Hope you read it carefully."

He handed over the envelope and added,

"By the way, there's contact info inside. Once you figure things out, just send an email to that address."

Zhang Yi smiled faintly.

He stretched out his hand, and the envelope disappeared into his spatial storage.

The Daze City superhumans whistled.

"Wow, rare spatial-type ability. Not bad."

But their mocking smirks showed they still weren't taking him seriously.

The scruffy-bearded man continued,

"You've got one day to make a decision. Actually—" he looked at his watch, "—make that 19 hours, since we've already spent time getting here."

Zhang Yi didn't say a word.

The man tapped his fingers against his forehead.

"Well then, see ya! Good luck."

The group laughed as they piled into their vehicles and drove off with a roar.

Uncle You looked angry.

He leaned over and whispered to Zhang Yi,

"Why didn't we just kill them? They're way too cocky!"

Zhang Yi replied calmly,

"I'm not interested in dealing with small fry."

"And if we strike now, it'll only put them on guard."

"Better to see what they're up to first."

He watched as the Daze City superhumans disappeared into the distance before turning back toward the Shelter.

Uncle You took a deep breath and stared after Zhang Yi, full of admiration.

"He's only in his twenties, yet he can stay this calm and composed. Really incredible."

Liang Yue teased,

"Didn't they say? The dog that bites doesn't bark."

From the distance, Zhang Yi's voice drifted back,

"Don't think I can't hear you just because I'm far away!"

Liang Yue quickly covered her mouth.

"I-I wasn't bad-mouthing you!"

Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow and looked back at her.

"Saying it to my face is even worse."

Liang Yue's cheeks turned pink.

"I was complimenting you! Saying you're steady!"

"I'll pretend you were."

Zhang Yi shook his head speechlessly.

Some teacher she was—her way of praising people was really... special.

Then again, he almost forgot she was a P.E. teacher.

Back at the Shelter, Zhang Yi immediately had Zhou Ke'er join him in the infirmary.

He ordered a safety check on the envelope before opening it.

Even powerful superhumans could die easily if they weren't careful.

You could never be too cautious.

After Zhou Ke'er's scan confirmed the envelope was clean, Zhang Yi used tweezers to carefully open it and pull out the contents.

Inside was just a single piece of paper—a handwritten letter addressed to Zhang Yi.

Zhang Yi placed the letter on the table, donned his tactical helmet, and leaned in to read it.

After finishing, a meaningful smile crept across his lips.

The contents were simple.

In short, Sun Jianming, Chen Liangyu, and Gu Hongdie were offering to "help defend" Tianhai City.

【Tianhai City has suffered a devastating war, with a massive loss of population, leaving the remaining local factions unable to defend themselves.】

【As friendly neighbors, the three major forces of Daze City are willing to assist in defense efforts out of humanitarian spirit. Please do not refuse.】

Zhang Yi couldn't help laughing, louder and louder.

"What a righteous-sounding excuse! These people are hilarious—bet they all used to be office workers or something."

Hearing his laughter, Zhou Ke'er and the others gathered around to see what was going on.

Zhang Yi showed them the letter.

"You have to admit, they're smart.

If they do it this way, even if Jiangnan District tries to accuse them later, they'll have a ready-made excuse."

Chapter 606: Preparing Bait to Fish for Turtles

Everyone finished reading the letter, their expressions all turning very strange.

Because they all felt incredibly... disgusted.

Clearly, they were just coming over to seize Tianhai City's territory and resources, yet they were doing it under the banner of "humanitarian aid" to "help with defense."

Wasn't this just wanting to be both the villain and the hero?

Lu Keran was young and didn't quite understand these things yet. She only felt extremely indignant.

"They might as well just rob us openly! At least if they acted like bandits, it wouldn't be so disgusting. Why bother pretending?"

Everyone exchanged smiles and shook their heads helplessly.

Lu Keran was still too naive to grasp the layers behind this kind of play.

Zhou Ke'er explained to her, "Some things, even though everyone knows the truth, you still have to keep up appearances."

"For example, by their account, they're just here to assist with defense. But defense assistance can't be free, right? They'll need areas for their troops to station, and we'll have to provide them with all the essential supplies they need to live."

Lu Keran rolled her eyes. "If we don't give it to them, they'll just rob us anyway, right? How would they explain that?"

Zhou Ke'er smiled and said, "They'll say we were the ones being unreasonable first, so their people had no choice but to act. Worst case, after looting the supplies, they just apologize and move on."

"If we can't take it and fight back, then they'll say it's self-defense and have every reason to attack us."

"They think they have Tianhai City in the bag. As long as things wrap up quickly, they can use this excuse to explain things to Jiangnan District."

"By the time the dust settles, Jiangnan District will be too busy handling the ronin uprising in Linhai City and will just turn a blind eye, tacitly approving their control over Tianhai City."

After hearing all that, Lu Keran was so angry her face turned red.

"So basically, they're robbers pretending to be good guys? And we're the ones at fault?"

Zhang Yi said calmly, "It's just an excuse. Whoever wins gets to define what's right."

"Giving Jiangnan District an out saves them from losing face right after the Superhuman Federation was just established. Jiangnan District will have no choice but to turn a blind eye."

“These things aren’t worth your concern. It’s just simple political posturing.”

In simple terms, the three major organizations from Daze City were demanding Zhang Yi’s group to surrender unconditionally.

That way, they could at least leave Zhang Yi’s group with a bit of space to survive and some basic resources.

Liang Yue’s gaze, sharp as a blade, was also filled with anger at the shamelessness of Daze City’s superhuman forces.

“Zhang Yi, let’s fight them!”

“Yeah, fight them! Teach them a lesson they’ll never forget!”

“These shameless bastards underestimate us — we have to make them pay!”

Everyone was burning with righteous anger.

Zhang Yi nodded slightly.

“Of course we’ll fight. But the question is how. The three superhuman forces from Daze City are probably no weaker than the big base organizations we faced before.”

“If we refuse their offer outright, they’ll know we’re ready to go all-out, and they’ll prepare accordingly.”

“So, it’s better to lull them first — pretend to accept their proposal.”

Yang Xinxin smiled. “Brother, I get it. You want them to let their guard down so we can lure them into a trap. And then we catch them like turtles in a jar, right?”

Zhang Yi nodded approvingly.

Yang Xinxin could always guess what he was thinking.

“We need to win this with the least possible cost — that’s our goal.”

Uncle You asked, “Zhang Yi, what should we do? You give the orders.”

Zhang Yi thought for a moment and said, “Call Xiao Honglian and the others over. Right now, we’re all in this together. They need to be part of this plan too.”

Adding the superhumans from the three major forces would give them more strength, and they definitely needed that.

As for the battle plan, Zhang Yi had already formed a rough outline in his mind.

Ever since the conflict with Daze City began, he’d been thinking about how to wipe them out.

He had at least three different strategies in his head, and the current situation was the one he preferred most.

The next step was to set the stage and lure these arrogant fools into his trap.

Soon, Xiao Honglian, Xing Tian, and Chen Jingguan arrived at Zhang Yi’s Shelter.

It was their first time entering Zhang Yi’s Shelter.

Seeing the luxurious house and feeling the paradise-like living environment inside, they were all filled with envy.

Zhang Yi hosted them in the living room, warmly inviting them to sit down. Then Zhou Ke'er poured them tea.

But Xiao Honglian seemed to sense something and anxiously asked, "Zhang Yi, is there some movement from Daze City's superhuman forces?"

As soon as she spoke, Chen Jingguan and Xing Tian also put down their teacups, their expressions turning tense.

Zhang Yi glanced at them calmly and said, "You guessed right. It's about them."

He briefly explained the message from the three major forces of Daze City.

After hearing it, the three of them looked both shocked and angry.

Right now, they didn't have the strength to go head-to-head with Daze City's three major forces.

Chen Jingguan swallowed nervously and pleaded, "Boss, you're not going to abandon us, right?"

Xiao Honglian coughed, her face flushing slightly as she quickly corrected herself, "B-Boss, you have to help us figure something out!"

Zhang Yi: "....."

He gave Xiao Honglian a deep look. This woman really knew when to change her tune — fast, when it mattered most.

He calmly sipped his hot tea. "I already have a plan. You won't have to do much. Just follow my lead."

Indeed, given the strength of the three base organizations, their role in this operation would only be supporting characters.

The key was what Zhang Yi himself would do.

“First, we need to lull the enemy — make them careless.”

“We’ll pretend to compromise and lure them into Tianhai City. As for what comes next, I’ll tell you when the time comes. For now, just prepare the defenses and act your parts well.”

Zhang Yi didn’t reveal too much about the plan.

These three base organizations had just been absorbed; Zhang Yi couldn’t fully trust them yet, so he kept some cards close to his chest.

The three leaders (well, they couldn’t really be called leaders anymore) listened quietly and agreed to follow Zhang Yi’s instructions.

Still, they looked worried and kept confirming with Zhang Yi that he would protect them if things went wrong.

Zhang Yi understood how they felt, so he gave them many verbal promises as a special favor.

In the past, he would’ve scoffed at any verbal promises.

But now, with the three base organizations hanging by a thread, they would cling to any hope like a drowning man grabbing a straw.

Zhang Yi could understand their desperation.

Over on the side of the three major forces from Daze City,

after sending the message to Zhang Yi, they were just waiting for his reply.

But honestly, it didn't matter even if Zhang Yi didn't respond.

They had already finished assembling their troops and could set out at any time to seize all the major resource points in Tianhai City.

However, not long after, they did receive an email reply from Zhang Yi.

Since the email address they had left for Zhang Yi was shared among the three groups, they could all see the email he sent.

“To the Three Major Forces of Daze City,

Today we received your letter. From your wording, it's clear you intend to seize the territory and resources of Tianhai City. On behalf of Tianhai City's major forces, I firmly oppose such actions!

We are fully capable of protecting our own home and do not need external intervention.

I hope you will exercise restraint and refrain from drawing weapons. Otherwise, we will report this to the Jiangnan District Headquarters and let them decide on this matter.

However, if you can behave like friendly neighbors, we are willing to offer a portion of our resources as a gesture of goodwill.

Tianhai City, Zhang Yi.”

After reading the email, Sun Jianming and the others couldn't help but burst out laughing.

“Hahahaha! Did Zhang Yi really write this email? It’s killing me!”

“He’s clearly scared out of his mind but still trying to save face. Does he really think name-dropping Jiangnan District will scare us?”

The way the email tried to act tough while clearly trembling underneath made it hard for them to hold back their laughter.

Sun Jianming’s contempt for Zhang Yi deepened even further.

“A guy like this — a little more intimidation and he’ll fold for sure.”

Chen Liangyu and Gu Hongdie’s reactions were pretty much the same after reading the email.

Gu Hongdie was laughing so hard she was clutching her stomach and couldn’t even straighten up.

“Hahaha, what an adorable little brother! I’ve decided — after we take over Tianhai City, I’ll make him my little sidekick! He can tell me jokes every day!”

While she laughed with wild abandon, there was a cold glint flashing in Gu Hongdie’s eyes.

“He better know what’s good for him.”

After receiving the email, the three of them immediately started chatting in their group chat.

Sun Jianming: “Did you guys see Zhang Yi’s reply? Hahaha!”

Gu Hongdie: “I’m dying here. Such a good mood today. That little brother is just too cute.”

Sun Jianming: "Don't get distracted by how cute he is. If he doesn't cooperate, we strike immediately!"

Gu Hongdie: "I actually think there's no rush. If we can avoid a fight, we should. Judging by his tone, he's terrified. We can scare him a bit more."

There was a hint of something deeper flashing through Gu Hongdie's eyes as she typed:

"After all, in the apocalypse, everyone who's still alive has one thing in common — they really don't want to die."

Chen Liangyu finally spoke:

"I also think we should talk to him a bit more. And... have you considered the possibility that he's putting on an act?"

Chen Liangyu was an extremely cautious man.

He wouldn't judge Zhang Yi as weak just based on a single email.

Someone truly incompetent could never dominate a place like Tianhai City.

However, they honestly didn't have much intel on Tianhai City.

They knew even less about Zhang Yi's legendary achievements.

Sun Jianming frowned, then snorted coldly, "Chen Liangyu, aren't you being a little too paranoid? Whether he's faking it or not, everyone knows Tianhai City is weak."

"Our army can sweep through them like a tide!"

Chen Liangyu replied blandly, “It’s not that simple. We’d better talk to Zhang Yi a bit more. If we can settle this peacefully, no one wants to pay the price of bloodshed.”

Seeing Chen Liangyu’s message, Gu Hongdie happily tapped away at the keyboard.

“Alright then, let’s talk to him some more. As long as he hands over the territory and resources, we can spare their lives.”

“People — as long as they have even a tiny hope of survival — won’t willingly seek death. No need to push him too hard.”

Since both Chen Liangyu and Gu Hongdie said so, Sun Jianming had no choice but to agree.

“Fine, we’ll talk to him again. But he needs to know our patience is limited. We don’t have time to play games with him!”

The three of them reached a consensus: they would try communicating with Zhang Yi once more.

But while they were hemming and hawing over there,

over on Zhang Yi’s side, top-tier hacker Yang Xinxin had already breached their organization’s network firewall and retrieved all their intel!

Not every force had a strong cybersecurity system.

Tianhai City, being one of Huaguo’s most advanced cities in information technology, still had a few powerful programmers back when the major bases were standing strong.

But neighboring Daze City had suffered from Tianhai City’s “siphon effect,” so experts of that caliber were rare over there.

For Yang Xinxin, breaking through their firewall was as easy as walking through a spiderweb — effortless.

Immediately, she pulled all the information on the three major forces and handed it to Zhang Yi.

Zhang Yi sat cross-legged on the couch, barefoot, wearing a warm yellow set of pajamas.

A laptop rested on his knees, and Yang Xinxin sat beside him, explaining the intel she had gathered.

“Based on the information so far, these three forces aren’t exactly small.

While they don’t match the peak strength of Tianhai City’s Five Major Forces, the gap isn’t that big.”

“After all, Daze City had a permanent population of over eight million and relatively abundant resources. They had room to develop their strength.”

Zhang Yi’s fingers slid across the touchpad, carefully flipping through the detailed combat intel of the three forces.

The most interesting thing was that they didn’t just have their own internal data —

they had also kept records on the other two forces.

Which meant Zhang Yi’s harvest was huge.

After all, no one would normally record their leader’s abilities and weaknesses right inside their own database.

“Sun Jianming, Enhancement-type superhuman, ability codename **【Dark Force】**. It can penetrate armor and strike internal organs. In close-quarters combat, even heavy armor won’t protect against him.”

“No wonder Chen Jingguan got thrashed by him! Sun Jianming completely bypassed his external defenses and struck his organs directly. Nothing Chen Jingguan could do about that.”

“I knew Chen Jingguan wasn’t that useless — he was just countered hard.”

“Gu Hongdie, Mental-type superhuman. Ability codename 【Crimson Kiss】. She can bewitch the mind, turning someone into her puppet — and not just superficially. They’ll fall in love with her from the bottom of their heart.”

Zhang Yi couldn’t help but suck in a sharp breath.

That ability was seriously twisted.

Even if the target knew they were under her control, they would still be utterly unable to resist because of the overwhelming affection.

No wonder, Zhang Yi recalled, Gu Hongdie had the largest number of subordinates.

Such overwhelming control ability could let her command a massive following —

she was practically a weaker version of Yuan Kongye.

“Oh, here it even notes her ability’s weakness. Crimson Kiss has a range limit — it can only be triggered within 100 meters.

The closer the distance, the stronger the effect. If she kisses someone directly, even a Delta-level superhuman would fall under her control.”

“D*mn... and this Gu Hongdie used to be a professional tech specialist too!”

Chapter 608: Full Mobilization

Zhang Yi carefully studied their abilities.

The leaders of the three major forces were all Delta-level superhumans, and their abilities were seriously overpowered.

However, no matter how overpowered an ability was, it still had its weaknesses.

Even Zhang Yi, whose power had now reached the peak of the Delta-level, could still be vulnerable to close-range attacks.

That's why he always stayed cautious, never underestimating any enemy.

“Chen Liangyu, Beast-type superhuman, ability codename **【Jaguar】** . Has running speed close to the speed of sound and predatory hunting instincts.”

...

Zhang Yi calmly finished reviewing the detailed profiles of every superhuman under the three major forces, and had a rough assessment of their strength.

They weren't as strong as Tianhai City's Five Major Forces at their peak, but they were still extremely formidable.

In terms of weapons and equipment, however, they were nothing special — far inferior to West Hill Base.

Clearly, when they set out to invade Tianhai City, they hadn't brought along much heavy weaponry.

“With that, their strength is already reduced by at least twenty percent.”

Zhang Yi carefully calculated in his mind, not missing a single detail.

Just then, a notification popped up in his email.

A glint flashed in Zhang Yi's eyes — he knew Daze City had responded.

He reached out and opened the email to read it.

It took him less than a minute to scan through its contents.

It was still the same hypocritical rhetoric, though the underlying tone was tough and overbearing.

【Tianhai City is an important city on the southeastern coast. It must not fall. This is not just an issue for your local forces, but for all of Jiangnan District and even Huaguo as a whole!】

【Therefore, the joint defense operation by Daze City's three major forces is absolutely necessary. We ask that you prioritize the greater good.】

【If you insist on resisting, we will have no choice but to take tougher measures. Should any conflicts or casualties occur, that would be unfortunate.】

【Please think carefully about your decision.】

At the end, they added:

【We're already on our way. See you soon in Tianhai City.】

After reading the email, Zhang Yi narrowed his eyes slightly, a playful smile tugging at the corner of his mouth.

The purpose of his previous email was simple — to deceive.

To make the people of Daze City underestimate Tianhai City's strength.

If he had surrendered immediately, it would've only made them suspicious.

Zhang Yi leisurely sat down again, sipping tea and watching dramas.

After half an hour, he sent another email to them.

【It's not impossible for you to assist in defense. Our defenses are indeed a bit overstretched right now. We can allocate a portion of the area for you, but you cannot touch our current bases.】

When the leaders of Daze City's three major forces saw this email, they secretly laughed.

Zhang Yi's behavior made it obvious he had no power to resist Daze City.

He had even agreed to cede territory — his weakness and fear of battle were plain as day.

Today a city, tomorrow another — at this rate, the three forces would soon swallow Tianhai City whole.

By then, even Zhang Yi and the three other base organizations would be theirs for the taking.

After all, they held the most crucial resources —

supplies, weapons, and superhumans!

The leaders of the three forces gathered again for a meeting.

Sun Jianming said, "He's softened up. Looks like we can take Tianhai City without shedding a drop of blood. What do you think?"

Gu Hongdie said, "What are we waiting for? No time to waste — let's lead the troops over immediately! First, occupy their key resource areas, then we can slowly nibble away the rest."

Chen Liangyu said, "That's not a good idea. They still have some forces left. I think we should make them surrender their weapons first. Only then can we be truly at ease."

Gu Hongdie smiled and said, "Chen Liangyu, aren't you overthinking it? If we demand they surrender their weapons right away, they might fight us to the death. Even though we're not afraid of their little army, losing people in battle would still be a waste."

Sun Jianming also said, "Their surviving superhumans may not be many, but they are elites. No need to push them into a corner."

Chen Liangyu frowned and said, "I just don't think they'll give up their land and resources so willingly. Only when they completely lose the ability to resist will I feel at ease."

Sun Jianming said, "Of course they won't be willing. But the strength gap is obvious. They don't have a choice even if they're unwilling!"

Gu Hongdie persuaded, "It's better to leave them a way out. Tianhai City is huge — we can just carve out a barren area for them. Let them live, that's enough."

Sun Jianming said, "I think that's a good idea."

Chen Liangyu said, "Fine, but we need to be wary of a counterattack."

Gu Hongdie smiled sweetly and said, "Then let's bring enough of our best! Against absolute strength, all tricks are just a joke."

After discussing, they decided to bring the finest elites from their headquarters and head straight to Tianhai City.

This couldn't be delayed — if Jiangnan District caught wind of it, it could cause problems.

Once they reached Tianhai City, they would use overwhelming force to pressure Zhang Yi and the others into surrendering their territory and resources.

The three forces reached a consensus and immediately began organizing their men to set off.

Of course, they didn't send any reply to Zhang Yi, to avoid giving him a heads-up and risking an ambush.

Although they believed their strength was overwhelming, there was no need to take unnecessary risks.

What they didn't realize was that every word of their discussion had been overheard by Yang Xinxin.

Which meant Zhang Yi knew all about their plans.

Zhang Yi slowly stood up from the couch, his eyes icy cold, and sent a message to the leaders of the three base organizations:

“Get ready for action!”

...

...

In the frozen, snowy wilderness, as the cold western wind howled, the convoy of superhumans from Daze City entered the outskirts of Tianhai City.

Sun Jianming and the others had made up their minds: their first move was to storm West Hill District —

because that was Zhang Yi's home base.

There, they would set up camp, intimidate Zhang Yi, and force him to bow and surrender.

What they didn't know was that Zhang Yi had already seen through their every move.

In West Hill District stood a landmark — the 37 Tower.

It had once been Tianhai City's broadcasting tower, standing 52 meters tall, visible even from far away.

Even after the apocalypse, it still stood proudly amidst the snowy landscape.

On the way from Daze City to West Hill District, they would inevitably pass by the tower.

Without satellite navigation, people naturally relied on obvious landmarks to find their way.

Daze City's convoy rumbled toward the 37 Tower.

A total of 50 war vehicles, 800 elite warriors, and 72 superhumans from the three forces!

Eighty percent of Daze City's entire fighting strength had been mobilized.

Led by three powerful Delta-level superhuman leaders,

they intended to settle everything in one battle and claim the resource-rich Tianhai City!

They weren't even worried about leaving their home base exposed.

After all, once they took Tianhai City, they could relocate their headquarters here.

Tianhai City was far larger and richer than Daze City.

Chapter 609: Condensing the Void

The convoy from Daze City moved forward at a steady pace.

They didn't have access to Tianhai City's navigation system. Although the Jiangnan District had granted limited Nebula Network permissions to the factions within each region, it was strictly confined to their own territory.

After all, Zhu Zheng didn't want to see battles erupting between cities—it would only be harmful to the entire district.

So the lead driver was a veteran in the transport business, very familiar with Tianhai City's layout.

He could navigate based on the surrounding buildings.

To get from Daze City to the West Hill Base, they would definitely pass near the Three-Seven Tower.

Inside a combat vehicle in the middle of the convoy, fully painted in white, Sun Jianming, Chen Liangyu, and Gu Hongdie were looking over a map, discussing where they would drive Zhang Yi and the other local factions once they'd taken over Tianhai City—some barren wasteland, no doubt.

They also talked about how to divide up Tianhai City's key resource points.

Sun Jianming pointed at the Chaoyu Base. "Chaoyu Port is mine! Our fleet can make good use of it."

Gu Hongdie calmly tapped the Yangsheng Base. "I want the refinery at Yangsheng Base."

Chen Liangyu, arms crossed and expression cold, pointed toward the steel plant at Qingpu Base.

Suddenly, a flicker of curiosity flashed across Sun Jianming's eyes.

“Speaking of which, that guy named Zhang Yi—where's his turf, anyway?”

Chen Liangyu and Gu Hongdie's eyes also lit up.

They were curious too.

No one had said it out loud, but it was clear to all of them: Zhang Yi was currently the leader of the most powerful faction in Tianhai City. The area he occupied had to be the most valuable.

But ever since the apocalypse, intel between different regions had been completely cut off. They'd all been busy fighting over territory in their own cities—who had the time to worry about others?

Sun Jianming suddenly grinned. “When the time comes, we'll just summon that guy Zhang over and have him take us there for a tour. Either way, he's gonna have to give it up!”

“True.”

Gu Hongdie and Chen Liangyu both nodded.

With smiles on their faces, they already treated everything belonging to Tianhai City's major factions as their own spoils.

At that moment, Gu Hongdie caught a glimpse of something tall and bright out the window.

She turned her head and saw, a few hundred meters away, a white tower rising into the sky, blanketed in snow. It looked silent and mysterious.

“Three-Seven Tower.”

Gu Hongdie murmured the name, then turned back to continue discussing the division of territory with Sun Jianming and Chen Liangyu.

Night had fallen completely.

If it were broad daylight, perhaps she would have noticed the extremely faint shadow atop the tower.

As the convoy passed near the Three-Seven Tower, Zhang Yi was standing right at the top, coldly watching everything below.

He silently calculated the distance between himself and the convoy.

When they were just 500 meters from the tower, the tactical scope in his vision clearly picked up the convoy.

He slowly opened his right hand, and a dark, flickering spark suddenly appeared in his palm—like black lightning.

Condensing the Void!

Jet-black void energy began to rapidly expand in his hand, crackling with instability, teetering on the edge of collapse.

Zhang Yi clenched his fist, and the mass of dark void energy extended into a spear nearly two meters long.

This was Zhang Yi's most powerful killing move after absorbing a fragment of Yuan Kongye's origin: Condensing the Void – Spear of Annihilation!

This was his first time using it in actual combat.

Zhang Yi's icy gaze locked onto the center of the convoy, utilizing his Precision Shot ability to target the area.

Then, he raised the spear high—and hurled it with all his might!

“Whoosh—”

Pierce the void!

In an instant, the black spear vanished from sight, hurtling toward the convoy from Daze City under cover of night.

The world remained eerily quiet. Snow continued to fall.

But just one second later, a massive black sphere appeared on the ground, centered right where the Daze City Superhuman convoy was!

The sphere of darkness enveloped an area nearly a kilometer wide. It made no sound, as if it had always existed there.

Almost the entire convoy was swallowed by it, leaving fewer than ten vehicles outside the range.

Even when a car behind them crashed into the edge of the sphere, it vanished without a sound.

“Screech—”

A driver in one of the trailing vehicles slammed on the brakes. When he saw the massive black sphere ahead, his face twisted in terror.

He felt the threat of death looming over him.

“Wh-what the h*ll is that thing?”

Above the Three-Seven Tower, Zhang Yi’s gaze suddenly sharpened as he looked toward a blurry figure sprinting across the snowy ground.

But he didn’t care. He simply spoke into the communicator with a calm tone:

“Close the net.”

He paused for less than a second, then added:

“Leave no survivors.”

Panic erupted within the convoy.

That massive black sphere had devoured almost everything. The few Superhumans from Daze City in vehicles outside the zone hurried to contact those who’d been swallowed.

But they got no reply.

Chaos reigned. They had no idea what had just hit them.

Moments later, the black sphere vanished.

Everything it had swallowed was completely gone. All that remained was a perfectly smooth, bowl-shaped crater in the ground.

No vehicles, no people—not even a speck of dust.

The terrifying scene left even the most battle-hardened warriors drenched in cold sweat, their faces pale with fear.

One Superhuman collapsed to the ground, screaming in horror like he'd seen a demon, then scrambled up and ran madly into the distance.

But at that moment, Superhumans from Tianhai City appeared across the snowfields—from all directions.

Elite fighters from the three major bases, along with Zhang Yi's team, blocked off every possible escape route.

This time, there would be no survivors!

Because Zhang Yi would not allow anyone to spread word of his strength.

Xiao Honglian, Xingtian, and Chen Jingguan had initially had no idea what Zhang Yi was planning.

They had been racking their brains, trying to figure out how to defeat the Daze City Superhumans, who outnumbered them several times over.

But the moment that enormous black sphere appeared, they finally understood.

There had always been an unbridgeable gap between them and Zhang Yi.

They simply weren't in the same league.

“Kill! Follow the Leader’s orders—wipe them out, leave no one alive!”

Chen Jingguan drew the pistol from his waist and charged at a Daze City Superhuman fleeing in his direction.

Meanwhile, Zhang Yi’s face had gone slightly pale.

The Dimensional Spear took a massive toll on him.

He had to immediately consume large quantities of Superhuman energy food to replenish himself.

Then, with a single step, he crossed through two layers of Dimensional Gate, teleporting to the site where the void had devoured everything.

Almost everything had been completely wiped out.

But in the deepest part of the crater, a mangled body lay sprawled out.

It was impossible to tell who it was—he was covered in blood, with no skin left intact.

But anyone who could survive Zhang Yi’s ultimate move had to be incredibly powerful—a Delta-class Strength-type specialist.

One of the three faction leaders from Daze City: Sun Jianming.

Zhang Yi slowly approached, drawing his Adamantium-forged Holy Blade: Judgment with his right hand.

“Quit playing dead. You really think you can fool me?”

Chapter 610: The Lion Mauls the Rabbit

Void Spear was a new skill Zhang Yi gained after devouring a fragment of Yuan Kongye's origin.

Compared to Divine Might, it had longer range and a wider area of effect—perfectly making up for Zhang Yi's lack of AOE power and long-range offensive capability.

However, when it came to powerful Strength-type or Beast-type Superhumans, it didn't guarantee a one-shot kill.

Take Sun Jianming, for example—an elite Delta-class Superhuman.

Zhang Yi held Judgment, his Adamantium blade, in his right hand, with the Dimensional Shield raised in his left, slowly advancing toward Sun Jianming.

No half-measures—Zhang Yi always followed the principle: If people don't mess with me, I won't mess with them. But if they do... I'll eliminate them to the root.

Not a single one of Daze City's Superhumans was going to walk away alive today!

Sun Jianming's bloodied body twitched on the ground.

Zhang Yi's careful approach was actually unnecessary at this point.

Just moments ago, Sun Jianming had instinctively unleashed his full strength, which was the only reason he hadn't been completely obliterated by the void energy like the others.

But nearly every bone in his body was broken, his internal organs severely damaged—he couldn't even crawl.

Terror flooded Sun Jianming's heart, quickly giving way to confusion, and then—at death's doorstep—everything boiled down to one emotion: rage.

Yeah, rage!

Why were you so f***ing strong but still pretended to be weak?

If you'd told us from the start, would we have even dared to mess with you?!

Sun Jianming struggled to lift his head, glaring fiercely at Zhang Yi.

With his last breath, he let out a furious roar from his throat:

“WHY!!!!”

Zhang Yi stopped exactly one hundred meters away.

Casually, he opened a Dimensional Gate, raised Judgment in his hand, as if adjusting for the perfect strike.

“There’s no ‘why’ about it.”

Zhang Yi said calmly—and slashed through the Dimensional Gate, his blade piercing straight through Sun Jianming’s skull.

“You were just too weak.”

With that, over 80% of the invading Superhumans from Daze City had already been wiped out midway through their operation—

Including two Delta-class faction leaders.

Zhang Yi's face remained expressionless.

Everything was unfolding exactly as he had planned.

For high-level Superhumans, the power gap with those beneath them was absolute and crushing.

This feeling reminded him of when Wu Chu first arrived in Tianhai City with the frontier army.

Even among others at the Delta level, he stood on an entirely different tier.

Elsewhere, a figure was sprinting frantically across the snowy plains, kicking up a massive spray of snow in his wake.

It was Chen Liangyu, one of Daze City's three faction leaders.

As a Beast-type Superhuman, his transformation was 【Jaguar】.

Driven by primal hunter's instinct, he had sensed imminent death the moment Zhang Yi activated Void Condensation.

Within just one second, he had escaped the attack's range.

As he looked back at the massive black void still lingering in the distance, Chen Liangyu was filled with dread.

“Is... is that guy even a Delta-class Superhuman? He's gotta be on the same level as the Investigation Captain from Blizzard City!”

“What kind of monster have we provoked?!”

“I have to run—I’ve gotta get out of here or I’m definitely dead!”

All other concerns flew out the window. When your life’s on the line, everything else becomes disposable.

But just as he sprinted forward, a massive wall of flame suddenly rose in his path!

Fire roared up into the sky, thick with the smell of alcohol.

“What the h*ll?”

Chen Liangyu was forced to stop in his tracks by the intense heat.

He looked up—and saw two Superhumans standing ahead of him.

One was a woman radiating magma runes across her body, her gaze as sharp and cold as a blade, holding a massive wine gourd.

Behind her stood a man with a soft, feminine face, smiling with narrowed eyes.

It was Xiao Honglian, the leader of Yangsheng Base, and her deputy, Zhuge Qingtin.

They had been waiting there for some time.

Zhang Yi didn’t bother chasing after the rest. The remaining grunts were scared out of their minds—he didn’t need to lift a finger.

After absorbing Sun Jianming’s origin, he returned to the base of the Three-Seven Tower, pulled out a chair, sat down, and rested while waiting for updates.

Half an hour later, everyone gradually regrouped—each carrying several heads in their hands.

Red frost had formed on their bodies—frozen blood.

But every single one of them was smiling.

This time, Daze City had sent in their elite forces—many of them Superhumans.

After they were killed, and with Zhang Yi's silent permission, the Superhumans of Tianhai City absorbed their origins.

Aside from those that had been completely annihilated by Zhang Yi's void attacks, the rest had become fuel for Tianhai's rise.

Hua Hua and Liang Yue especially—both had the highest kill counts, and reaped the most benefits.

Xiao Honglian strode confidently toward Zhang Yi, dropping Chen Liangyu's head at his feet.

“This was one of the three faction leaders from Daze City—Chen Liangyu!”

Pride was written all over her face.

After all, killing a major faction leader was an almost unheard-of feat in the entire Jiangnan District.

But in front of Zhang Yi, her pride melted into complete humility—pure, wholehearted submission.

Before, she might've had some lingering unwillingness.

But after tonight, that was all gone.

Everyone had seen Zhang Yi's true strength.

He was on a level they simply couldn't reach.

One by one, everyone lowered their heads before him, not out of fear, but from heartfelt respect and reverence.

Zhang Yi turned toward Liang Yue.

She wore gray deerskin gloves and held a longsword, her face calm and cool.

“Count the heads. Does the number match what Xinxin reported?”

Liang Yue couldn't help but say, “That might be a little tough. You blasted most of them into dust.”

Zhang Yi let out a dry laugh. “Fair enough.”

Then his expression turned serious:

“But tonight, no one lets their guard down! I've said it before—none of the Superhumans from Daze City are walking out of this alive!”

“And everything that happened tonight—no one says a single word to the outside world!

Even if Blizzard City asks, tell them to come talk to me directly. Got it?”

His power and abilities might eventually be exposed.

But the later that happened, the better.

Every day he could keep them secret was another chance to exploit the information gap to assassinate his enemies.

Exposing himself too soon would only attract attention from the Jiangnan District leadership.

Chen Jingguan was the first to step forward, straightening his back.

“Yes, sir! Whatever the Boss asks, Chaoyu Base will follow to the letter—no exceptions!”

Xingtian quickly added, “Same goes for me!”

Xiao Honglian, seeing the others jump in first, bit her lip in frustration.

“Do we even need to say it?! I already belong to the Boss, body and soul!

If anyone dares to disobey him, I’ll be the first to take them down!”

As soon as those words left her mouth, everyone looked at her with very strange expressions.

Then their eyes bounced back and forth between her and Zhang Yi.

Only then did Xiao Honglian realize what she’d just implied in her panic.

Zhang Yi looked mildly speechless.

“Ahem, what I meant was—”

Zhang Yi waved her off. "Alright, alright, we get it."

Explaining it any further would just make it worse.