

Ice Age 621

Chapter 621: A Cloud of Doubt

Baili Changqing chuckled. "No need to rush. This time, Commander Zhu is truly furious. He's summoned a bunch of top-level powerhouses from all across the Jiangnan District, not just you."

"And this kind of mobilization also needs to be discussed in a meeting with the other regional leaders."

"As for the specifics... I'm not exactly sure myself."

Baili spread his hands. "You know how it is—I'm just a combat guy."

A flicker of doubt passed through Zhang Yi's eyes.

Just a combat guy?

That was probably a bit of an understatement.

Truth be told, Baili Changqing's strength was still quite a distance from that of someone like Bian Junwu or Deng Shentong.

He'd only barely been promoted to captain of the Black Robe Squad. But not everyone necessarily acknowledged his authority.

Zhang Yi didn't say any of that out loud. He just nodded. "Alright then—let's go."

Baili and Zhang Yi walked up front while the others followed behind.

After leaving the subway station, they got into Baili's car, and in no time, arrived at the Cipher Bar.

Baili had a private room there.

Zhang Yi had been there before, so once they entered, he casually made himself comfortable on the orange-red couch in the center and crossed his legs.

Liang Yue, with the Loong Roar Sword strapped to her, curiously glanced around at the decor and sat down not far from Zhang Yi.

Baili called for a server and ordered two bottles of whiskey. Wu Di and Meng Siyu also picked their drinks.

"Zhang Yi, Miss Liang Yue—what would you two like to drink?"

Zhang Yi gently stroked Hua Hua's soft fur. "Two glasses of milk."

Baili Changqing: "..."

Wu Di couldn't help but roast him. "You came to a bar to drink milk?"

Zhang Yi glanced at him. "Commander Zhu could summon me at any time. You want me showing up reeking of alcohol?"

Baili laughed. "Fair enough. Though maybe you don't know—Commander Zhu enjoys the occasional drink too. The weather's freezing after all. White liquor's become a staple beverage."

Liang Yue calmly added, "I'll have an oolong tea."

Baili gave the order to the server.

Once the server closed the door behind them, Baili finally dropped the friendly smile and sat upright to talk business.

"The situation in Linhai City is extremely complicated. If it weren't, Commander Zhu and the other higher-ups wouldn't be going to such lengths with troop movements."

“As for Moon of Corrosion, we’ve gathered some intel on them through our own channels.”

“They’re very powerful. Every member is a Delta-level superhuman. Back when they were in Neon Nation, they dominated the Kanto region, and not even the top organization there—Izumo—could deal with them effectively.”

“But even so, there’s no way they could’ve destroyed ten superhuman squads so easily without some kind of preparation.”

Zhang Yi frowned, a chill running down his spine.

“You’re saying there was a traitor inside Blizzard City who leaked all our movements to them?”

Baili’s brows furrowed too, and he replied slowly, “That’s a possibility—but not a likely one. Ever since the apocalypse, to prevent info breaches targeting Blizzard City, Headquarters implemented the highest level of information security.”

“And the Operations Center is one of the most secure departments in the city—S-Class security level. No one could leak intel from there without making waves.”

Zhang Yi took a deep breath, his voice grim. “But if they didn’t have full intel on those ten teams, there’s no way they could’ve wiped them all out so effortlessly.”

“That’s exactly what’s baffling us.”

Baili crossed his arms, his tone heavy. “Don’t forget—we’re living in an era filled with mutated beings. We don’t know what kind of powers their superhumans have.”

“Maybe someone on their team has an ability like that.”

Zhang Yi’s breathing grew heavier.

“You’re talking about... future sight?”

If that was true, how could they possibly fight back?

No matter what move you made, the other side would always be one step ahead.

It’d be like playing rock-paper-scissors, except you had to show your hand first.

Baili scratched his head. “Right now it’s just speculation. We don’t have solid proof. But personally, I think that’s a bit of a stretch.”

“If they really had that kind of power, they could’ve conquered all of Neon Nation’s superhuman organizations. Why would they bother crossing the sea to fight us?”

Zhang Yi scoffed, arms crossed. “Sounds like someone didn’t do their homework.”

But Baili quickly responded, “That’s not fair. We paid a heavy price to get the intel we do have.”

Zhang Yi’s smirk faded into something colder—more contemptuous.

“You mean the ‘price’ you paid was sacrificing those ten superhuman teams who volunteered to go to Linhai City, right?”

Only then did Baili seem to remember—Zhang Yi was technically one of the Outer City leaders.

Maybe it was because Zhang Yi’s power was just too overwhelming—it made Baili subconsciously separate him from the rest of the outer city forces.

“Well... that was something we couldn’t avoid.”

Baili gave a bitter smile.

Zhang Yi shrugged. “Doesn’t matter. It’s not like it affected me. In fact, I should thank you for the heads-up back then.”

Zhang Yi didn’t hold any particular grudge toward Zhu Zheng and the other leaders of Blizzard City.

This was war.

When you’re playing chess and trying to take the king, you can’t protect every single piece. Some of them have to be sacrificed.

As long as the piece being sacrificed wasn’t him, Zhang Yi couldn’t care less.

But inside, Zhang Yi’s sense of caution had grown sharper.

Even if he came here with a desire to repel foreign invaders, he wasn’t about to be turned into cannon fodder.

Suddenly, a new thought popped into Zhang Yi’s mind.

“Baili—do you think any of their people could be Epsilon-level?”

Baili fell silent for a moment—even Wu Di and the others looked over in surprise.

Epsilon.

Just hearing the word was enough to send chills.

They'd seen firsthand during the battle in Tianhai City what kind of terrifying power an Epsilon-level superhuman had.

If Moon of Corrosion really had someone at that level, wiping out ten teams wouldn't be shocking at all.

But Baili shook his head decisively.

"No. There's video footage from the battlefield. We saw those Ronin in action. They were strong, sure—but definitely not Epsilon level."

Zhang Yi nodded. "In that case, there's still hope."

These were Ronin—not some inexperienced rookie like Yuan Kongye.

If there was an Epsilon among them, even Zhang Yi couldn't rule out the possibility that he might die out there.

Chapter 622: Phoenixin's Provocation

Zhang Yi and Baili Changqing continued chatting, probing deeper into the situation in Linhai City, especially for any intel on Moon of Corrosion.

By now, he was certain—unless something unexpected happened, he would definitely be heading to the battlefield.

And in moments like these, he needed to gather as much information as possible.

But Baili didn't know much more about Linhai City either.

The real classified data was in the hands of top leaders like Zhu Zheng and Tu Yunlie.

Still, seeing how serious Zhang Yi was, Baili smiled and offered a bit of reassurance. "Actually, you don't need to worry that much. You outer city folks are just here for support."

"If we weren't short on personnel in the investigation teams, we wouldn't have needed you at all."

Zhang Yi gave him a curious look. "Are you guys going?"

Baili's gaze dimmed as he shook his head.

"Orders from the top said we haven't fully recovered from our last mission injuries, so we're to sit this one out."

The battle with Yuan Kongye had left the Black Robe Squad seriously wounded.

But that excuse was clearly just that—an excuse.

With Blizzard City's advanced medical technology, most of their injuries would've been healed by now.

Take Wu Di, for example. He was already bouncing around full of energy.

The truth? Without Bian Junwu, the belief was that Baili simply couldn't hold the team together.

At least not enough to handle a mission of this scale.

"But you don't have to worry. If nothing goes wrong, the Celestial Squad will be taking on this mission. And when they act? They've never failed."

Baili smiled as he said it.

Just then, the doorbell rang—the server arrived with their drinks.

Zhang Yi took the two glasses of milk—one for Hua Hua, one for himself.

"I can tell you've got a lot of faith in them," Zhang Yi said, sipping milk while keeping his eyes on Baili, waiting for the rest of the story.

Baili continued, "Among the Six Investigation Teams, no one really admits anyone else is better—it's always neck and neck. But the Celestial Squad? Their mission completion rate is the highest. They've been at the top of the leaderboard for a long time."

Wu Di muttered, "That's just 'cause they've got money."

Zhang Yi couldn't help but grin. He wiped the smile from his lips and said, "You mean they're backed by the Deng family, right?"

Baili nodded. "Exactly. The Deng family is a major pillar of Blizzard City. The city's technology, especially in biotech, relies heavily on them."

"Stuff like Origin Bullets, enhancement compounds for superhumans—that's all from the Deng Group."

"And Deng Shentong, as the Deng family's direct heir, is naturally their top-priority investment."

Zhang Yi quietly sipped his milk, catching a strange undertone.

"Sounds like they're trying to build a god," he muttered. "If Deng Shentong keeps this up, he might overshadow all the other teams."

"He might even end up as Zhu Zheng's successor."

That was a sensitive topic.

But the Deng family's intentions were so blatant, everyone pretty much knew it.

Baili didn't even try to hide it. "Blizzard City is heavily dependent on the Dents. Commander Zhu might be the top dog, but even he has to show respect to the head of the Deng family."

"It's not surprising they're trying to profit off the chaos of the apocalypse."

After that, Baili suddenly laughed and raised his glass of whiskey.

"Hahaha! What do guys like us care about all that? Whoever ends up in charge—as long as they keep the people living well—we'll follow their orders. That's enough for me!"

“Let’s drink, drink!”

Zhang Yi raised his glass of milk with a cheerful smile. “Cheers!”

He downed the milk in one go.

And Baili followed suit, knocking back a full glass of whiskey without flinching.

The guy clearly could hold his liquor.

At the same time Zhang Yi arrived at Blizzard City, a high-level meeting was underway in a conference room at the top of the Operations Center Headquarters.

Present were:

Zhu Zheng, Supreme Commander of the Jiangnan District,

His secretary Lan Xincheng,

His ever-present personal guard Sun Luxuan,

Tu Yunlie, Minister of Operations,

Deng Yuanbo, Chairman of the Deng Group,

And Deng Shentong, Captain of the Celestial Squad.

These individuals were, aside from the six investigation team captains who were out on missions, the most powerful figures in the entire Jiangnan District.

And today, they were all gathered for one reason:

Because of a single man who'd been sent back by Moon of Corrosion—Li Tianlong, leader of the Yunzhou faction.

During the first battle, all ten factions that had been sent were wiped out. Li Tianlong was the only one they let live.

But once he returned to Blizzard City, he rapidly lost all vital signs.

However, on the satellite phone found on him, they discovered something Moon of Corrosion had specifically sent to Blizzard City.

A message from their leader—the man in the gray newsboy cap, always dressed in a gray three-piece suit.

That important piece of footage had been immediately delivered to Zhu Zheng.

And that's why he had urgently summoned the high-level leadership of Blizzard City.

The room was now dark, and the massive screen lit up—Phoenixin Ren's face filled the display.

Everyone present sat upright, watching to see what this arrogant Ronin leader had to say.

A few seconds into the video, the man in his thirties beamed at the camera, waving cheerfully.

(Note: Phoenixin speaks in Neon language, but the senior officials all wore translation devices.)

“Hi there, Jiangnan District folks! Hope you’re doing well!”

“Nice to meet you all. I’m Phoenixin Ren, leader of Moon of Corrosion, very pleased to make your acquaintance.”

“Looks like we’ve had a few... minor misunderstandings lately. Things have gotten a little—let’s say—tense!”

He gestured with both hands, palms down, trying to appear serious and composed.

“I think now’s a good time for all of us to calm down. Truthfully, we shouldn’t be enemies. Continuing this fight benefits neither side.”

He raised one finger, a sly and indifferent gleam flashing in his eyes.

“All we want... is a piece of land in what you call the Central Plains—somewhere we can live.”

“After all, so many of your people are dead already. You’ve got way more land than you could possibly use.”

“So why not spare a bit... for poor wanderers like us? Of course, we’d be eternally grateful for your generosity!”

He gave an exaggerated bow.

“So let’s stop this farce. If you pull back all your troops, promise not to attack us again, and hand over a slice of land—then we’ll stop slaughtering your people.”

Phoenixin narrowed his eyes, his smile as sly as a fox.

“Please think carefully. I’ll be waiting for your answer.”

“But if you do insist on fighting... well, I think you’ve already seen what happens. Those superhuman squads from before? Consider them your warning.”

Chapter 623 – High-Level Meeting

The video came to an end around this point. Inside the conference room, everyone’s face looked grim.

There wasn’t a single person who wasn’t furious.

Those d*** Ronin—how dare they have such wild ambitions, demanding land from Huagu right on its own soil?

“Bang!!”

Zhu Zheng slammed his hand down on the table on the spot. As a soldier, his eyes were practically blazing with fire.

“Arrogant b*****s! How dare that bunch of Ronin come to our land to stir up trouble? We have to wipe them out on the spot—not a single one gets out alive!”

Deng Shentong stood up, his tall frame and resolute eyes radiating confidence.

“Commander Zhu, let me lead the team to take them out! Give me a day, and I’ll bring you their heads myself!”

Zhu Zheng looked at Deng Shentong with clear approval in his eyes.

Young people had that drive, that fire.

But just then, someone coughed inside the meeting room.

“Cough, cough, cough cough cough!”

The sound even made Zhu Zheng turn his head slightly.

It was Deng Yuanbo, Chairman of the Deng Group and Deng Shentong's uncle. He lowered his right hand and smiled as he said,

“Why go to all that trouble to deal with a few Ronin? Just use the Reaper of Love directly and lock onto them for bombing. Problem solved, isn't it?”

He was a bit short, in his fifties, but looked younger than his age. His smooth skin barely had a wrinkle.

And yet, that Buddha-like face of his always carried a faint smile, the type that reminded you of the phrase harmony brings wealth. You could never read a change of expression on that face.

He was the head of the Deng Family, known as the “Eight-Faced Buddha” Deng Yuanbo.

In the tech scene of Blizzard City, the Deng Group provided at least half of the technological power.

Even Zhu Zheng had to give him some respect.

When Deng Shentong heard his uncle speak, he immediately got a little anxious.

“Uncle, it's just a few Ronin. There's no need to make such a big fuss! I'll take a team and wipe them out directly!”

Deng Yuanbo squinted at him with a smile and gently pressed down his hand.

“Shentong, calm down. Sit down, sit down! Ah, you young folks really let things get to your heads too easily. Why not use your brain and think things through first?”

Deng Shentong listened to his uncle and obediently sat back down.

But judging by the dissatisfaction on his face and the tapping of his fingers on the table, it was clear he still wanted to go fight Moon of Corrosion.

Zhu Zheng turned to Deng Yuanbo and said with a chuckle,

“Mr. Deng, Reaper of Love isn’t something we can just deploy at will!”

He folded his hands behind his back and spoke seriously,

“Our Jiangnan District only has a limited number of Reapers of Love, and each use needs to be reported to the other districts.”

“What’s more important is—if we use such a powerful weapon on a small group of Ronin, and do it on our own turf, wouldn’t that be saying Jiangnan has no capable people?”

“The whole world would laugh at us!”

Deng Yuanbo smiled and shook his head.

“Face is one thing, but I think substance matters more.”

“We still haven’t figured out the full strength of this Ronin group.”

“Ten superhuman organizations—sure, they’re all from the Outer City—but a swarm of ants can still bite an elephant to death. And these guys aren’t ants. They’re a pack of hyenas.”

“And yet, this kind of powerful force was completely wiped out by Moon of Corrosion in under an hour! Honestly, I don’t even think our investigation teams could’ve pulled that off.”

His stance was clear:

This mission was too dangerous. He didn’t want his nephew to take that risk.

Deng Shentong was a key figure nurtured by the Deng Family—someone with great expectations on his shoulders.

As the saying goes, “A child of wealth should not sit under a collapsing roof.”

Even in past missions, the Deng Family had always mobilized all their resources to gather intelligence before making a move.

But now, Jiangnan District had too little intel on Moon of Corrosion.

Deng Yuanbo couldn’t rest easy.

Just then, Minister of Operations Tu Yunlie also spoke up.

“I don’t believe Moon of Corrosion is stronger than our investigation teams.”

“According to our research, Moon of Corrosion comes from the Neon Nation’s Kanto region. Its members come from all walks of life—gangsters, office workers, shrine maidens, even students and hikikomori.”

“Even if they’ve awakened superhuman abilities, they haven’t undergone professional training like our investigation teams.”

“You can tell from the footage.”

“We’re amateurs evaluating amateurs, so they seem strong. But in reality, they’re not.”

“In terms of combat readiness, the Celestial Squad is way ahead of them!”

Zhu Zheng added,

“Plus, this time, it’s not just members of the Celestial Squad in action. I also pulled in some of the best superhumans from the Outer City to join the operation.”

“With them, the Celestial Squad, and support from the entire Jiangnan District, taking down these Ronin won’t be a problem!”

Seeing Zhu Zheng speak so seriously, Deng Yuanbo could only smile politely.

As the Deng Family head, he held considerable influence in Blizzard City, but it wouldn’t be wise to publicly go against Zhu Zheng.

Still, he offered another suggestion in a gentler tone.

“In that case, could we at least recall members from the other investigation teams to join the mission together?”

Lan Xincheng pushed up his gold-rimmed glasses and calmly replied,

“The Demon Squad, Reincarnation Squad, and others are all on critical missions. In terms of mission priority, I doubt they’re any less urgent than the situation in Linhai City.”

Jiangnan District was massive, and now, while they were trying to pacify internal chaos and restore order, everyone was extremely busy.

No one had spare capacity.

When he heard the names of the other investigation teams, Deng Shentong immediately frowned.

"There's no need to wait for them to come back! Our Celestial Squad alone is enough for this mission! If we wait, those guys will probably be long gone!"

There was a subtle rivalry among the Six Investigation Teams. Each wanted to be recognized as the top squad.

And as a proud scion of a major family, Deng Shentong cared deeply about his reputation.

If word got out that he needed help from the other teams to complete a mission, people would laugh their heads off.

Deng Yuanbo frowned slightly at his nephew, clearly a bit exasperated.

But before he could say anything, Zhu Zheng made the final call.

"You're right. Time is of the essence! If these guys slip into another city and start killing again, it'll be a disaster!"

"The Celestial Squad will handle this operation!"

"We have to end this farce quickly!"

Even knowing the risks, some things had to be done.

The point of an investigation team wasn't to only take on safe missions.

It was to use their strength and blood to carve out peace and order for this land!

Deng Shentong looked determined.

“Yes, Commander!”

Zhu Zheng looked at him with a stern face, but there was a touch of gentleness in his eyes.

“When the superhumans from the Outer City arrive, make sure you meet with them. After all, they’re joining your operation.”

Deng Shentong stroked his chin, then suddenly asked,

“Is Zhang Yi from Tianhai City coming along for this mission?”

Zhu Zheng nodded with a smile.

“His name is indeed on the list.”

Chapter 624 – Sharing a Room

At the Cipher Bar, Zhang Yi was casually chatting with Baili Changqing, learning about some of the recent changes in Linhai City.

He had already done some mental calculations. For this operation, his top priority was still his own safety.

While ensuring his own well-being, he would eliminate as many of the Ronin as possible.

After all, Moon of Corrosion only had thirteen members. Zhang Yi knew very well that the only reason they were able to stir up chaos in Linhai City was because no local forces had held them in check.

Jiangnan District's territory was too vast to concentrate a large number of troops just to deal with them.

Otherwise, if the Six Investigation Teams and five thousand Yan Yun Guards took action, even if Moon of Corrosion doubled in size, they wouldn't stand a chance.

So, the end of this farce was inevitable—the only unknown was what the process would look like.

Moon of Corrosion couldn't possibly be stupid enough to go head-to-head with Jiangnan District.

If they chose to flee, or kept hopping from city to city within the district, that would be the real headache.

Aside from Blizzard City, the headquarters of the district, there weren't many cities in Jiangnan that had the strength to face them.

That said—Tianhai City was an exception.

If they dared step foot on Zhang Yi's turf, they wouldn't gain an inch.

But Zhang Yi didn't want things to come to that.

By the afternoon, Zhang Yi received a message from Lan Xincheng.

He was informed to report to the Operations Center the next morning to attend a strategic meeting.

Seeing the message, Zhang Yi chuckled softly.

"I thought Commander Zhu might want to speak with me privately. Guess I was overthinking it."

He shrugged toward Baili Changqing.

Which was a good thing—it meant Zhu Zheng didn't consider him a special focus. Zhang Yi was just as happy not being the center of attention.

Baili Changqing laughed, "All the people summoned from the Outer City this time are top-tier experts. It's not just you!"

"There's no way Commander Zhu can meet with each of you individually—it's much more efficient to brief everyone together."

His eyes glinted, "This time involves some very important and complicated matters. There's a lot of intel you all don't know yet, so it needs to be explained in full."

Zhang Yi nodded, "That's fine too."

He was actually quite interested in meeting the top experts from the Outer City.

There were too many people last time, so he couldn't gauge who was strong and who wasn't.

But this time, because of the mission's nature, those who came had to be elite fighters.

It wouldn't be bad to talk with them a bit.

As Zhang Yi was thinking about this, he unconsciously forgot something:

His own strength was already top-tier across the entire Jiangnan District.

It was an old habit of his.

His overly cautious mindset made him always take others seriously.

But since Zhu Zheng wasn't seeing him today...

Zhang Yi tapped his fingers against the black acrylic table and smiled at Baili Changqing,

"Then let's have a few drinks together."

Baili Changqing grinned and pressed the service bell, "Sure! Tonight we're drinking to our heart's content!"

Zhang Yi had always been a good drinker. That night, he and a few others emptied bottle after bottle.

Meng Siyu's cheeks were flushed bright red, and she was swaying so much she could barely walk straight.

Wu Di came over carrying two bottles, his eyes blazing—he was dead set on avenging his earlier defeat at Zhang Yi's hands.

Though he had lost in a fight, he thought maybe he could win back some pride at the drinking table.

But this time, he lost even harder.

Even the normally quiet and reserved Liang Yue was coaxed into drinking a little by Meng Siyu.

It wasn't until late into the night that Baili Changqing drove them to the apartment arranged for the Outer City superhumans.

Whether it was on purpose or by accident, Baili Changqing only got them one room.

Liang Yue had drunk less, so her head was still fairly clear.

When she saw Zhang Yi lying on the bed, she realized the two of them were sharing the same room. Her face instantly flushed.

Just as she was thinking of going to get another room, Zhang Yi suddenly sat up in bed.

Though his eyes were a little unfocused, his mind was still sharp.

That amount of alcohol wasn't enough to get him drunk.

And knowing Zhang Yi's character, there's no way he'd let himself get wasted in unfamiliar surroundings.

"Did everyone else leave?"

Zhang Yi yawned as he spoke.

Liang Yue bit her lip, set her long blade aside, and said calmly,

"They left. Were you pretending to be drunk?"

"Not quite."

Zhang Yi replied indifferently,

"Even if I'm drunk, my head's still clear."

He had indeed drunk a lot—but only in the beginning.

Later, even when Wu Di was desperately trying to outdrink him, Zhang Yi quietly used his spatial storage ability to dump most of the alcohol away.

He took out a bottle of milk from the spatial space and handed it to Liang Yue, asking her to warm it up using the electric kettle.

Then Zhang Yi sat on the room's sofa. With a wave of his hand, Hua Hua jumped up and curled into his lap.

Zhang Yi gently petted Hua Hua while leaning back and processing the information he had gathered today.

His eyes were crystal bright, flickering with a sharp gleam of insight.

"This time, the district summoned top-tier superhumans from the Outer City—not representatives from various factions like last time. That means the strategy has changed."

"We're no longer relying on numbers to carry out siege tactics. Now, it's elite-focused teams."

"In other words... numbers don't matter anymore?"

Zhang Yi narrowed his eyes slightly.

This was indeed the right move.

Once a superhuman reached Delta-level, especially combat-types, their strength already surpassed the limits of normal human understanding.

They could even shrug off most light firearms.

At that point, lower-level superhumans and regular humans—even trained soldiers—were essentially useless.

After ten superhuman organizations were wiped out, Jiangnan District finally realized this and began changing its combat strategy.

Next, Celestial Squad would lead the charge, and the Outer City superhumans would likely serve as auxiliary support.

So then, what was the role of Zhang Yi and the other Outer City elites?

“Cannon fodder?”

Zhang Yi murmured the words softly.

But he quickly shook his head and dismissed the idea.

If cannon fodder were needed, they’d just bring in large numbers of regular superhumans or elite troops.

And the people summoned this time were definitely stronger than the first batch from those ten organizations.

“We Outer City superhumans might not match Blizzard City’s elite teams in coordinated operations. But when it comes to personal combat ability—we’re not necessarily weaker.”

“From the intel I’ve gathered, Moon of Corrosion only has ten combat units.”

“So maybe the district’s plan is for us to tie those enemies down... and create opportunities for the Celestial Squad?”

Liang Yue handed him the now-warmed milk.

"I was thinking... maybe our job is just to make sure the Ronin don't escape."

"Once they sense something's off, they'll probably try to flee. And chasing them down is way harder than taking them out."

Chapter 625 – Heartbeat Flutter

Zhang Yi nodded as he took the bottle of milk, sipping the warm liquid.

Drinking this after alcohol really did soothe his stomach and make him feel a lot more comfortable.

"Exactly. Winning a fight is one thing—but this is a war. No one's going to line up and fight you to the death."

"They'll use all kinds of tricks. If they can't beat you, they'll just run."

Suddenly, he thought of an old parable and looked at Liang Yue with a grin.

"Teacher Liang, I've got a question for you. If a mouse carrying fire runs into an ammo depot... what should you do?"

Liang Yue blinked, but she quickly caught on.

It was a classic riddle from a decades-old film.

"Then you send a cat with water to chase it down," she answered with a smile.

"We're the cat. Moon of Corrosion is the mouse."

Zhang Yi chuckled. “But in this story—what do you think the water and fire represent?”

Liang Yue furrowed her brow slightly. That part, she wasn’t too sure about.

“The fire probably stands for the chaos and damage they bring. As long as they exist, there won’t be peace within the district, and externally, it’ll make us look weak and incapable.”

“As for the water... I’m not really sure.”

Water was supposed to extinguish fire—but how exactly Jiangnan District planned to deal with these Ronin, she had no idea.

Zhang Yi took a deep breath.

“Maybe the water... is us.”

“Us? I... don’t really get it.”

Liang Yue looked puzzled.

Zhang Yi gave Hua Hua a firm rub on the head.

“We’re moving with the Celestial Squad. They’re the main force. That probably makes us the bait—or the sacrifice.”

“If it comes down to it, I have no doubt the district’s top brass wouldn’t hesitate to trade our lives for the annihilation of Moon of Corrosion. Don’t you think so?”

That thought was the core of Zhang Yi’s concerns.

He didn't mind danger. He was willing to face Moon of Corrosion head-on.

But he didn't want to be cannon fodder.

Liang Yue's gaze wavered—she wanted to say something, but no words came out.

Because, honestly... that was just how things usually worked.

"I don't really blame Jiangnan District if that's how they operate. Even on a battlefield, it's common to lure enemies in by sacrificing a unit. Some soldiers are sent in as bait."

"War has always been like that. To win the big picture, pawns—and even larger pieces—can be sacrificed. Everything's about taking down the king in the end."

"But—"

Zhang Yi's tone grew firmer.

He looked down, stroking Hua Hua's soft, warm fur—that feeling was still one of his favorites.

"I'm not that noble."

"Especially when I have you and Hua Hua with me. When we're together, I have to be even more cautious."

"No matter what happens, remember one thing: our safety comes first.

If there's ever real danger—get to safety immediately."

Liang Yue fell silent after hearing that.

Then suddenly, she looked up and asked seriously,

“Even if escaping causes the mission to fail... you still want us to do that?”

Zhang Yi glanced at her, eyes filled with teasing amusement.

“You think you’re that important?”

“If Jiangnan District really wanted to wipe out Moon of Corrosion, they’d find a way. The only question is—what’s the cost, and is it worth it?”

“In fact, it’s even possible... if the price gets too high, they might negotiate with Moon of Corrosion and let them stay on this land.”

“This is the apocalypse. Everyone’s got their own interests to protect. Even the top brass in Blizzard City aren’t exceptions.”

Liang Yue looked completely shocked. She cried out,

“No way! If they did something like that, the whole world would condemn them!”

But Zhang Yi smiled calmly.

“From the moment Blizzard City summoned all the superhuman organizations in Jiangnan District and founded the Superhuman Federation, it already meant—they couldn’t govern this place anymore.”

That wasn’t just the reality in Jiangnan. It was happening all over the world.

Huagu was powerful enough to maintain the stability of its six major districts.

But other regions had already crumbled. Superhuman factions large and small sprang up everywhere.

Even the Neon Nation had split into the Pelican faction in Kansai and Izumo in Kanto.

And beneath them, smaller organizations like Moon of Corrosion stirred in the shadows, eyeing opportunities to flip the hierarchy.

Conflict and chaos would only become more frequent as superhumans continued to emerge and grow.

To borrow a classic Three Kingdoms phrase:

When the world is long divided, it must unite. When long united, it must divide.

Zhang Yi had long been mentally prepared for this.

Even though Liang Yue had matured after her past hardships, a person's true nature was hard to change.

Zhang Yi had to make it clear to her—so she wouldn't lose her head at a critical moment.

After all, this wasn't the first time she'd let her passion drive her into danger.

Liang Yue wasn't as eloquent as Zhang Yi.

She pouted, arms crossed, and after a long silence finally muttered,

"You always think you're right! Fine, whatever you say, I'll do it!"

She was a P.E. teacher.

Using a blade came naturally to her—but using her brain? That was asking a bit much.

Zhang Yi gave a satisfied nod.

“That’s more like it.”

He glanced at her, then at Hua Hua—who was curled up in his lap, purring contentedly—and thought to himself,

This is such a great team.

Strong in battle, obedient... just perfect!

Remembering that they had a meeting tomorrow, Zhang Yi said,

“Alright, it’s getting late. Let’s get some rest.”

He stood up, still holding Hua Hua, intending to go wash up and head to bed.

Liang Yue’s face instantly turned bright red.

“R-Rest...”

Zhang Yi blinked—only now did he remember that Baili Changqing had only booked one room for them.

Maybe he drank a bit too much and forgot.

Or maybe Baili Changqing just assumed the two of them were close.

“Crap. It’s already late. The front desk staff probably finished for the day too...”

Zhang Yi scratched his chin, feeling a bit troubled.

Heaven knows he didn’t do this on purpose. His head had been entirely filled with strategies for handling Moon of Corrosion—he hadn’t thought of anything else.

Liang Yue’s face was flushed with embarrassment. She tried to play it cool, grabbing the doorknob to head out.

“I’ll just... go stay somewhere else!”

But Zhang Yi called out flatly from behind her,

“It’s freezing outside. You trying to freeze to death?

Besides, if you don’t rest properly tonight, you’ll embarrass yourself at tomorrow’s important meeting.”

Liang Yue lowered her head, her voice barely a whisper.

“But... there’s only one room. How are we supposed to sleep?”

Zhang Yi glanced over at the bed—it was a pretty large double bed.

“Well... it’s a big bed. We can squeeze in a bit. No big deal.”

Chapter 626 – A Strange Couple

There was no way Liang Yue would dare share a bed with Zhang Yi.

At their age, one little slip and things could easily spiral out of control.

Zhang Yi might've been chill about it—he never lacked opportunities. But Liang Yue... well, better not go there.

So Zhang Yi had no choice but to give up the bed for her and crash on the couch in the living room.

He was still a gentleman when it came to his own people.

The next morning, Zhang Yi got up early.

He hadn't slept particularly well—not like being at home, where he could sleep in.

And thinking about the potential trouble ahead filled him with unease.

Everything was unknown—and the unknown was always the scariest part.

After washing up, he sat in the living room and turned on the TV.

Jiangnan District still had its own television network.

After all, this city was still operating somewhat normally.

And for the residents of Blizzard City, television was the cheapest form of entertainment.

New programs were a no-go, of course—what aired were old shows and films.

But every day, Jiangnan TV still broadcasted the news.

Zhang Yi flipped on the morning news channel—JNTV1.

On screen was a long-haired female anchor with a sweet smile.

Compared to the past, anchors now dressed a lot more... revealing.

You could clearly see the curves that once would've been unthinkable to show on TV.

Zhang Yi understood, though.

This was another way to comfort the people, especially single men who lacked companionship.

“April 26th. The Ronin group that crossed the sea from the Neon Nation is now under full surveillance by the district.”

“Their every move is within our field of view. Command has already convened a strategic meeting and is assembling elite forces to wipe out this invading group in one go.”

...

“Today’s outdoor temperature has risen slightly. Daytime highs will reach minus 52°C. Residents, please take proper cold-weather precautions.”

...

Zhang Yi watched with great interest.

Even though the content was dull and possibly half-made-up, it was still real, live news—something he hadn’t seen in a long while.

It gave off a faint sense of what life was like back in peacetime.

Before long, Liang Yue also woke up and came into the living room.

Remembering how she and Zhang Yi had spent the night under the same roof, she bit her lip, feeling a little conflicted inside.

She hadn't expected Zhang Yi to be so well-behaved last night.

Could it be... she just didn't have enough charm?

Sure, in terms of looks, she might not beat Zhou Ke'er or Yang Mi.

But in other areas—like martial skills—she was way better!

She quickly shook her head to clear the thought.

Honestly, you couldn't blame her. The oppressive state of the world, coupled with her age, made it natural to develop feelings for one of the rare, high-quality men around.

Zhang Yi saw her and greeted her,

"You're up! Hang tight a sec—want something to eat?"

He was referring to the food stored in his spatial space.

As for the apartment's breakfast delivery, that wouldn't come until 7 a.m.

And Zhang Yi never touched that stuff anyway.

Resources in Blizzard City were limited—it wasn't like they were handing out gourmet meals.

Liang Yue shook her head. "I'm not hungry yet."

She walked over and sat a little distance away from Zhang Yi.

He didn't think much of it and kept watching TV on the couch, bored out of his mind.

But inside, he wasn't nearly as calm as he looked.

He was nervous and curious about the upcoming meeting.

Soon, a staff member arrived with a food cart, delivering their breakfast.

It was decent enough: two boiled eggs, a glass of soy milk, a small side dish, and four buns—two veggie, two meat.

Everything was still steaming hot, making it hard to resist taking a bite.

But Zhang Yi smoothly swept it all into his spatial space, then pulled out his own set of gourmet dishes to share with Liang Yue.

At 8:30 a.m., he got a call from Baili Changqing, telling him to report to the Operations Center at 9.

Without delay, Zhang Yi grabbed Liang Yue and headed over.

Just as they stepped out of the apartment building, they saw two people up ahead walking closely together, being all lovey-dovey.

They were hugging and whispering sweet nothings as they walked.

The residential area in Zone B was pretty big—not everyone lived in the same building.

Zhang Yi looked around. It was so quiet, you could probably hear a pin drop.

No one else was around.

That meant the couple ahead had to be superhumans from the Outer City.

Zhang Yi didn't say anything.

He simply took Liang Yue by the hand and kept a safe distance.

You never knew what kind of abilities others had, and getting too close was a good way to get yourself caught off guard.

Liang Yue also curiously examined the two people ahead.

They looked like a young couple. The guy seemed to be in his mid-twenties, short, and dressed in a white down jacket.

The girl next to him was a full head taller. They couldn't see her face clearly, but her laughter was bold and carefree.

What stood out was how odd their dynamic was.

The guy clung tightly to her arm, snuggling up affectionately.

The girl, though, looked sharp and confident—marching forward with strength in her stride.

“I think... I’ve seen them before,”

Zhang Yi thought to himself.

“Pretty sure they’re superhumans from Xiying City.”

He didn’t know anything beyond that.

Back during the first assembly, everyone had just gotten a brief look at each other—no real info had been exchanged.

These two had barely left an impression.

Anyone who saw them now would think they were just a totally normal couple—hardly worth a second glance.

But the fact that they were here, in this place, already meant one thing:

They were definitely not ordinary.

“People really can’t be judged by appearance,”

Zhang Yi couldn’t help but reflect.

With how close they were, the couple ahead clearly noticed Zhang Yi and Liang Yue—but they acted like they didn’t exist.

They just kept walking and murmuring sweet nothings like no one was around.

Zhang Yi didn't react, but Liang Yue frowned, then rubbed her arm like she was trying to wipe something off.

"What's wrong?"

Zhang Yi asked, curious.

"I've got goosebumps,"

Liang Yue muttered through gritted teeth.

For a single woman her age, the sight in front of her was too much to bear.

Zhang Yi chuckled and then casually turned his head away.

"Chill. Don't assume they're just some regular couple."

Liang Yue gritted her teeth, still glaring at them.

"I get it—but damn, it's just so irritating to watch!"

With that, the two pairs—one ahead, one behind—made their way to the Operations Center.

Chapter 627 – Another Meeting

When Zhang Yi and the couple arrived at the Operations Center, someone was already waiting at the entrance to greet them.

Most likely because their information had already been entered into the system, the woman at the door smiled warmly and gestured, “Please follow me! The conference room is on the 16th floor.”

Zhang Yi and the couple got into the elevator heading to the 16th floor.

Once the elevator doors closed, the small space brought the five people uncomfortably close to each other.

Which gave Zhang Yi a good chance to take a closer look at the couple.

The man had a soft, almost feminine look—baby-faced, pale skin like a girl’s, and with his short stature and round glasses, it was hard to even tell his gender at first glance.

From the moment they met, he’d been sneaking peeks at Zhang Yi... more accurately, at Hua Hua on his shoulder, his eyes sparkling with delight.

Clearly, he was a cat lover.

As for the woman, she was the opposite—her figure and demeanor came off strong and commanding.

While Zhang Yi was observing them, the two were also sizing up him and Liang Yue.

Before long, the woman spoke up. “You two are from Tianhai City, right?”

Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow, a slight smile at his lips.

“Oh? You know us?”

The woman gave a dismissive laugh. “Last time I came to Blizzard City, you two made quite a name for yourselves. But back then, it wasn’t exactly in a good way.”

“Still, seeing you here now is honestly a surprise.”

She gave Zhang Yi a bold once-over, eyes full of curiosity.

Because of what happened when Chen Jingguan got beaten down by Sun Jianming, people from other cities had formed the impression that Tianhai City was weak and pathetic.

But now, with Zhang Yi and Liang Yue showing up here—clearly invited by headquarters—it was a sign of their strength, and the woman couldn't help being a little surprised.

“Well, it's not that surprising.”

Zhang Yi didn't bother explaining further.

The annihilation of the Superhuman Alliance in Daze City hadn't spread yet, due to the info lockdown.

So it made sense the couple didn't know.

“I remember you two are from Xiying City, right? May I have your names?”

With a bit of sincerity, Zhang Yi introduced himself. “Oh right, I'm Zhang Yi. And this is Liang Yue.”

He made a point not to refer to Liang Yue with terms like “subordinate” or “underling.”

The woman folded her arms and cautiously replied, “I'm Xia Lingling. This guy here is my husband, Yuan Hao.”

Immediately, Yuan Hao looked flustered. He waved his hands and quickly explained, “Actually, we're not married yet! We're just dating.”

“Pfft,” Xia Lingling scoffed, wrapping her arm around his neck. She looked down at him with an air of dominance. “At this point, if I say you’re my husband, then you are. Got it?”

Yuan Hao looked up at her with wide eyes like a helpless bunny—genuinely pitiful.

He nodded quickly, “I... I got it.”

Zhang Yi and Liang Yue were barely holding in their laughter. The two really were a hilarious pair, though honestly, not all that uncommon in this day and age.

More importantly, Zhang Yi wasn’t the type to look down on people just because of how they acted.

Same as always—if someone made it to Blizzard City for this mission, they had to be the real deal.

Suddenly, Xia Lingling wiped Yuan Hao’s lips with her thumb, then boldly leaned in and kissed him.

She was so completely unconcerned with others’ presence that Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow—D**n, she’s got guts!

Liang Yue looked super uncomfortable, her eyes darting around trying to find somewhere else to look.

Thankfully, just then, the elevator dinged, signaling they’d arrived on the 16th floor.

Xia Lingling and Yuan Hao were still kissing like nothing else existed, completely undisturbed.

It wasn’t until the staffer gently reminded them that they reluctantly pulled apart.

Yuan Hao looked bashful under the gaze of Zhang Yi and Liang Yue, burying his face in Xia Lingling’s chest.

She, on the other hand, looked totally unfazed. Chin high, chest out, arm around him as they strolled off toward the meeting room.

“Impressive,” Zhang Yi commented, shaking his head.

“Meeooow—”

Hua Hua, still perched on his shoulder, suddenly let out a soft meow.

Zhang Yi turned to look. Hua Hua was staring intently at the couple’s backs, eyes sharp and focused.

It seemed like she had noticed something unusual.

Unfortunately, Zhang Yi didn’t speak cat, so he couldn’t figure out what it was.

Still, he grew a bit more cautious and followed alongside Liang Yue into the conference room.

Once they stepped inside, Zhang Yi saw that many people were already waiting.

Including them, there were about ten or so.

The small conference room had a circular layout, with noticeable space between each seat.

Only one pair of women sat next to each other—clearly acquaintances.

Zhang Yi quickly scanned the room. From appearances alone, there wasn’t much he could tell.

So he and Liang Yue quietly found a free seat and settled in.

The others briefly glanced at the newcomers, then just as quickly looked away. The room grew so silent you could hear a pin drop.

Zhang Yi didn't see Baili Changqing or Deng Shentong.

He figured they'd probably arrive alongside Zhu Zheng.

And as expected, just before 9 a.m., the sound of footsteps echoed from outside the room.

Everyone turned to look.

A tall, dignified middle-aged man strode confidently into the room.

Behind him were five or six others.

No one needed an introduction—this was Zhu Zheng, the supreme commander of the Jiangnan District.

Trailing him were his personal guard Sun Luxuan, secretary Lan Xincheng, Minister of Operations Tu Yunlie, Captain Deng Shentong of the Celestial Squad, and the current Black Robe Squad Captain, Baili Changqing.

After entering, Zhu Zheng's sharp gaze swept across the room. Then he turned to his secretary Lan Xincheng and asked, "Is everyone here?"

Lan Xincheng nodded. "All present."

"Good."

Zhu Zheng strode to the front of the room.

The rest followed suit and took their seats.

Zhu Zheng placed both hands firmly on the table, speaking with stern authority.

“Everyone, I believe you already know why you’re here today. A few days ago, our vanguard unit sent to Linhai City to eliminate the ronin group Moon of Corrosion suffered a major defeat!”

Bang! He slammed the table.

“This failure was a wake-up call. The Moon of Corrosion forces that have surfaced in Linhai City are extremely powerful and absolutely not to be underestimated!”

“That’s why I’ve pulled together the best elites from across the entire Jiangnan District for this operation.”

“In other words, each and every one of you here is the best of the best. I’m proud to have you all.”

“Some of you, in particular, didn’t hesitate at all. You came here without a second thought, ready to give your all to drive out these bandits. That... really moves me.”

Chapter 628 – The Landing Faction

Zhu Zheng’s passionate and rousing speech marked the beginning of the meeting.

He didn’t drag it out with a long speech—everyone present was already aware of the situation.

“Next, we’ll form a special task force with the Celestial Squad as the main force, assigned to handle this operation specifically,” Zhu Zheng said, his eyes turning to Baili Changqing.

“As for the Black Robe Squad, since they just wrapped up their mission in Tianhai City, they’re currently still in recovery. For now, they won’t be participating directly.”

“However, Baili Changqing, being a veteran, will provide tactical support for this mission.”

Baili Changqing gave a sharp military salute. “Yes, sir!”

The Superhumans from the Outer City had mentally prepared for this much, so no one voiced any objections. They simply listened quietly.

From the standpoint of status and authority, they were expected to follow the orders from headquarters without question.

Still, the fact that Zhu Zheng took the time and effort to explain things personally was a gesture of respect.

Pressing both hands to the table, Zhu Zheng continued, “If no one has any objections to the mission structure, then let’s move on to the main event of today.”

“When our first wave of Superhumans was deployed, they carried video equipment that managed to capture valuable footage.”

“This is the intel we’ve gathered so far about the Moon of Corrosion.”

“Everyone, watch the footage first so you can get a general understanding of the enemy we’re facing. After that, I’d like to hear your thoughts.”

Once he finished speaking, Zhu Zheng gestured to Lan Xincheng to begin the playback, then sat down slowly.

As expected, the atmosphere in the room turned serious.

Intel gathering was absolutely critical in battles involving Superhumans.

Everyone was curious to see what kind of power these ronin had, that they could wipe out ten Superhuman organizations from the Outer City in under an hour.

This would have a huge impact on their upcoming operation—maybe even determine who lived or died.

The room darkened, and a large projection screen lit up on the wall, showing the footage taken from that day.

The video began with the first attacked group—the Superhuman organization from Heying City, led by Peng Jialuo.

The recording was long. Even though it had been edited, in order to preserve all key information, it still played for over three hours.

Thanks to footage from multiple angles, the video basically reconstructed the battles that the ten Superhuman groups faced that day.

Even so, some scenes were incomplete. A few battles ended so quickly that the footage didn't even manage to catch much.

Throughout the entire viewing, everyone was laser-focused—not even daring to blink.

Once it ended, Lan Xincheng stepped forward and spoke solemnly. “In addition to the footage collected onsite, our headquarters has also gathered intelligence on the Moon of Corrosion through various channels. Please take a look.”

“Also, all of the footage will be sent to you afterward.”

Zhang Yi felt a little more at ease. That meant he could review it multiple times, analyze the details, and study the abilities of those ronin more thoroughly.

Then Lan Xincheng pulled up a dossier and projected it for everyone to see.

“The Moon of Corrosion originated from the Kanto region of the Neon Nation.”

“They currently have thirteen members. Before the apocalypse, they came from all walks of life—they weren’t trained military personnel.”

“After the apocalypse, their leader Phoenixin Ren began gathering powerful Superhumans, forming the Moon of Corrosion—a group both strong and vicious.”

“Back in Kanto, they were already known as a notorious executioner gang. And they didn’t kill for survival—they slaughtered Superhumans in Kanto on a massive scale, using cruel methods.”

“According to partial intel provided by the Kanto-based governance group Izumo, the reason they began such large-scale killings was that they discovered something early on—Delta-level and above Superhumans can absorb the superhuman energy of others to evolve their own abilities.”

“Because of this, the Izumo organization began leveraging its own strength to launch a campaign to wipe out the Moon of Corrosion.”

“According to Izumo, the Moon of Corrosion was defeated by them and forced to flee overseas.”

Lan Xincheng adjusted his glasses, the lenses catching a ghostly blue reflection that gave off an eerie vibe.

“But there’s another theory—that they are devout followers of the Neon Nation’s Landing Faction! It wasn’t that Izumo drove them out—they chose to land on our Chinese territory on their own!”

Zhang Yi picked up several new terms from that—like how Neon’s current power structures worked, and this so-called Landing Faction.

It was interesting, but also felt confusing and murky—not a good feeling.

Zhang Yi raised his hand. “Excuse me, what exactly is the Landing Faction?”

Lan Xincheng pushed up his glasses. “The Landing Faction is a long-standing extremist ideology in Neon.”

“Since the Meiji Restoration, some thinkers in Neon have argued that the island nation is unsuitable for the future development of the Neon race. The most widely known and influential belief is the Neon Sinking Theory.”

“This theory claims that as an island far from the continental shelf, Neon will eventually be dragged into the sea due to tectonic movement.”

“In their view, the ultimate fate of the Neon people is to move onto the continental landmass—only then can they survive.”

“In short, Landing Faction believers think they must leave Neon’s homeland.”

“And the most ideal place to relocate? The land across the sea.”

Zhang Yi muttered, “Across the sea? That still doesn’t quite make sense.”

He thought through it carefully. “If they wanted to land somewhere, wouldn’t it be easiest to go through Silla or Baekje? Those places are small and probably don’t have the strength to resist.”

Lan Xincheng nodded.

“You’re absolutely right! In the past, that was exactly what the Landing Faction did—starting with Silla and Baekje, and only later setting their sights on China’s territory.”

“But now we’re in the Ice Age. Things have changed.”

“At one point, the Moon of Corrosion’s leader even sent a video message demanding we give them land to settle in the Central Plains.”

“That tells us they’re worried that when the glaciers melt, the coastal regions will be submerged by rising sea levels.”

Lan Xincheng added, “The Landing Faction is made up of paranoid lunatics. If survival in higher-altitude regions weren’t so difficult, I wouldn’t be surprised if they tried to seize the plateau region too.”

Chapter 629 – The Thirteen Members of Moon of Corrosion

After hearing Lan Xincheng’s explanation, Zhang Yi couldn’t help but frown slightly.

Because he had once entertained similar thoughts as the Landing Faction.

The arrival of the Ice Age came without warning—human beings had no way to fight back against the forces of nature.

No one knew when it would end.

But once this global deep freeze passed and temperatures began to rise, the melting of ice and snow would surely cause massive floods to sweep across the world.

When that happened, Tianhai City, situated along the coastline, would undoubtedly be swallowed by the sea.

In that sense, the Neon Nation’s foresight was impressive—and it was understandable given their fragile island-nation environment.

Of course, Zhang Yi didn’t feel the slightest bit of sympathy for them.

Now that a natural disaster had arrived, surviving was a matter of one's own strength.

Trying to seize the fertile lands of the Central Plains? Pure delusion.

“Hmph!”

A cold snort rang out, followed by the loud sound of a fist slamming on the table.

Everyone looked toward the source and saw a man completely wrapped in gray-white clothing, including an exaggerated hat that concealed almost his entire body.

His eyes glinted with fury as he gritted his teeth. “Those d**ned dogs... they even dare set their sights on the Central Plains? They must have a death wish! We need to wipe them out—make sure everyone on that godforsaken island sees what happens when you cross us!”

Though his emotional outburst disrupted the flow of the meeting, no one criticized him.

Everyone in the room was burning with righteous anger. They were all itching to strike down these ronin and send a message to the rest of the opportunistic scavengers eyeing their borders.

Only once that man calmed down did Lan Xincheng continue.

“In short, that’s the origin of the Moon of Corrosion. They’re not made up of professional soldiers or special ops members—just true ronin, through and through.”

“However, their leader, Phoenixin Ren, did serve five years in the Neon Maritime Self-Defense Force. We’ll get into more detail on him shortly. For now, let’s move on to the profiles of each member.”

“Some intel was provided by the Neon side, but because we can’t verify its authenticity, we’ve chosen not to reference it.”

“The following information comes solely from our own intel networks.”

“I won’t read everything out loud—there’s a lot. Please take a careful look yourselves.”

Lan Xincheng stepped back as the projection shifted to files on the Moon of Corrosion’s members.

Everyone instinctively leaned forward, studying every word with intense focus.

Even though they hated these ronin, they had to admit—their strength was terrifying.

<h3>Partial Member Profiles of the Moon of Corrosion:

Leader: Phoenixin Ren, male, 36

Enhancement-type Superhuman, ability unknown.

Served in the Neon Maritime Self-Defense Force from 2033–2037.

Note: Did not engage in the first battle. No combat footage available.

Takeuchi Mayumi, female, 22

Heir to the Takeuchi family, apprentice miko of a traditional shrine.

Ability unknown.

Note: No combat footage from the first battle.

Tsukamoto Nobunaga, male, 33

Real name: Tsukamoto Oki, later changed to Tsukamoto Nobunaga.

Successor of Niten Ichi-ryu, licensed master swordsman, expert in iaido.

Martial arts fanatic; imprisoned in 2042 for killing an opponent in a duel; released after 7 years.

Enhancement-type Superhuman, ability unknown.

Note: Captured Li Tianlong from Yunzhou alive during the first battle.

Daiku Kai Enzu, male, 33

Former Neon sumo wrestler, ranked Yokozuna.

Beast-type Superhuman, ability codename: Tidal Tiger.

Weapon: Dragonfly Cutter.

Note: Extremely powerful melee specialist. During the first battle, singlehandedly wiped out two Superhuman squads—Meng Shucheng from Xiying and Li Guoqiang from Bawang City. Extremely dangerous!

Shinguuji Seiichiro, male, 42

Former stock trader before the apocalypse.

Emission-type Superhuman, ability unknown.

Note: No combat footage from the first battle.

Akutsu Shinichiro, male, 29

Former senior member of the Fang Clan in Chiba Prefecture.

Enhancement-type Superhuman, melee fighter specializing in baseball bat combat.

Kamiya Gedou, male, 38

Former professional baseball player for Mifune East Baseball Club.

Beast-type Superhuman, ability codename: Orochi. Can transform into a 15-meter-long ancient serpent.

Nishijumu Satoru, male, 19

Became a NEET after high school.

Ability unknown; did not participate in the first battle.

Wagatsuma Nanako, female, 26

Former reserve member of idol group KBA48.

Special-type Superhuman, ability codename: Kamaitachi.

Known abilities:

① Create illusions through sound;

② Use sonic resonance to attack internal organs.

Takizawa Takashi, male, 27

Former network engineer for Shindouji Corporation.

Emission-type Superhuman, ability codename: Railgun—can control and weaponize electricity.

Naruse Hanachiyo, female, 24

Heiress of a ninja family in Neon, skilled in ninjutsu.

Known for ambush attacks; rarely appears in open battle.

Ability unknown.

Kurosawa Akira, male, 34

Former Neon Maritime Self-Defense Force member, now retired.

Emission-type Superhuman, ability codename: Divine Judgment—can release superhuman attacks through specialized weapons.

Sakuraba Yushimitsu, male, 28

Road worker from Nara Prefecture.

Ability unknown; no combat footage from the first battle.

That was the basic intel on all members of the Moon of Corrosion.

After reading it, Zhang Yi was left speechless.

The intel was too vague—nowhere near enough to develop a solid strategy.

At most, it meant he'd have to be extra cautious when encountering any of them.

So many lives lost in the first battle, and this was all the information they got?

After the video and dossiers were finished, Zhu Zheng remained seated, studying everyone carefully.

“All right. You've now reviewed all the intel we have on hand. Is there anything you want to say?”

“If you have any suggestions for the upcoming operation—or if you have questions—now's the time to speak. Let's discuss it openly.”

“After all, compared to the Blizzard City soldiers who are used to team tactics, you are the true lone wolf experts.”

That last line revealed Zhu Zheng's true thoughts.

Judging from the Moon of Corrosion's combat style, they weren't a group that specialized in team battles.

Each of them was a lone wolf that Phoenixin Ren had brought together.

And the dozen or so Delta-level Superhumans gathered here from the Outer City? They were basically the same kind.

Chapter 630 – Team Three

Under Zhu Zheng's encouragement, someone finally spoke up.

The first to speak was one of the two female superhumans sitting together.

She had a short haircut—probably for combat practicality—and her oval-shaped face was always marked by a serious and focused expression.

She was Chen Xiaoxiao, a superhuman from Overlord City.

Graduating from a top national university and serving as the student council president for years, she didn't carry the airs of a bureaucrat. Instead, she gave off a vibe of boundless energy, like someone who never seemed to tire.

This positive, go-getter spirit helped her quickly build a large team in the apocalypse.

Now, she stood as one of the leading faction heads among the seven powers of Factory No. 3 in the Western Society of Overlord City.

Chen Xiaoxiao sat upright in her chair, smiling calmly as she analyzed, "From the footage just now, I noticed something off."

"Even though these Ronin are strong, likely all around Delta-level, they still shouldn't have been able to wipe out ten fully armed superhuman squads so quickly."

"I had my suspicions before, but after watching the video today, they've only gotten stronger!"

Zhang Yi couldn't help glancing at her a couple more times.

Zhu Zheng also turned to look at her.

"Oh? What are you suspecting?"

Chen Xiaoxiao said, “The reason our first batch of ten superhuman squads was wiped out so easily is because they each encountered the exact type of opponent they were weakest against!”

She crossed her arms. “We all know superhuman powers come in all shapes and forms—each with their own strengths and weaknesses. So naturally, there are very obvious counter-relationships between different powers.”

“Those good at ranged attacks fear getting close, Enhancement-types fear being kited around, and so on and so forth.”

Zhu Zheng nodded approvingly.

“You’re absolutely right. That issue was already on our radar.”

Chen Xiaoxiao’s eyes lit up with a smile as she nodded at Zhu Zheng. “Then you probably understand what I’m worried about.”

Zhu Zheng straightened up, his tone serious as he addressed her and the others present:

“I can assure you! The first operation—there was absolutely no intel leak!”

“This isn’t just about trust in the Jiangnan District Operations Center staff!”

“It’s also about trust in the Headquarters’ cyber defense systems! No one can breach it to send information to Moon of Corrosion.”

Chen Xiaoxiao furrowed her brows.

“If that’s the case, then that’s even worse.”

Her close friend Peng Li, sitting beside her, couldn't help but ask, "No traitor is actually worse? Why would you say that?"

Chen Xiaoxiao explained, "If it's just a mole in HQ, then the solution is simple—root them out, and we can avoid another defeat like the first battle."

"But if there really wasn't a leak... then it can only mean the enemy has a terrifyingly powerful superhuman with insane intel-gathering abilities!"

Among the dozen or so people present, she wasn't the only one who had that thought.

Just like Zhang Yi and Chen Xiaoxiao, many sensed something was seriously off.

Unmasking a traitor was easy.

But if the enemy truly had the ability to predict their every move in advance, then no matter what strategies they came up with, the enemy would always be one step ahead.

Liang Yue couldn't help resting her chin on her hand. "No wonder in the first battle, even though we made the first move, it still felt like they were completely prepared for us."

At that moment, a sharp-eyed man with a buzzcut sitting not far from Zhang Yi looked up and finally spoke.

He was from Yunzhou—name: Zhuo Feiyu.

"Commander Zhu, we've taken in a lot of information today. We can't really give any solid suggestions just yet."

"Could you give us some time to go through the data more thoroughly before we discuss further?"

Zhang Yi nodded in agreement. “I support that. Just watching once isn’t enough to remember everything clearly—it’s hard to contribute meaningfully that way.”

Other superhumans raised their hands too, echoing Zhuo Feiyu’s suggestion.

Zhu Zheng thought for a moment, then nodded. “That’s fair—but don’t take too long. Time waits for no one. Every day we delay, those Ronin could be running off to who knows where.”

“If that happens, our fellow countrymen on this land will be in danger!”

A strange look flashed in Zhang Yi’s eyes.

It made perfect sense that Zhu Zheng, as Commander of Blizzard City, would think that way.

But would the superhumans from the Twelve Cities really care about ordinary people’s lives?

Back when they fought over resources to survive, nobody held back—each more ruthless than the last.

So now, suddenly bringing up protecting civilians felt a bit... off?

But thinking deeper, Zhang Yi realized there was some truth to it.

He might be ruthless and merciless in a fight—not exactly a saint.

But he’d never gone after people who hadn’t crossed him first.

And when it came to foreign invaders, protecting this land and those good, decent folks who deserved it—that, Zhang Yi was willing to do.

People like Li Jian, for instance—Zhang Yi genuinely hoped he’d survive and do well in the apocalypse.

To help preserve some spark of human civilization.

Zhang Yi shook his head with a wry smile.

Humans really are walking contradictions.

Then Zhu Zheng spoke again: "I'll give you just one day to study this intel. Then we prepare for battle—we're taking the fight to those d*mn Ronin!"

"Now, since everyone's here, I'll announce the basic combat teams."

"Because the superhumans in Moon of Corrosion are exceptionally powerful, acting solo would be far too risky. So, the twelve of you here will be divided into three teams for joint operations."

"Your mission: Support the Celestial Squad. The Celestial Squad will be leading the main assault!"

"Also, for operational flexibility, each team will have one team leader. In the absence of direct orders from command, all members must follow their team leader's commands!"

Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow.

He was going to have to work with people from other factions?

He glanced around, and saw others also looking at each other.

This operational setup wasn't bad. Since they were all top-tier superhumans, grouping up like this meant even if they encountered a tough opponent, they could buy enough time.

That would give the Celestial Squad their window to strike.

Worst-case scenario, they'd at least gather more intel on Moon of Corrosion.

“Next, I'll announce the teams!”

Zhu Zheng pulled a list from the pocket of his military overcoat and began reading in a steady, firm voice.

“Team One, Team Leader: Zhang Yi!”

The first name announced was Zhang Yi's—and he was appointed team leader directly.

That drew curious glances from everyone around him.

Deng Shentong looked at Zhang Yi with a playful smile, a glint of admiration in his eyes.

This renowned princeling, and captain of the Celestial Squad, had never stopped trying to recruit Zhang Yi into his team.

Zhang Yi simply gave a soft cough to ease the tension.

“Team members: Liang Yue, Chen Xiaoxiao, Peng Li.”

Liang Yue remained calm—she was already one of Zhang Yi's people.

But when Chen Xiaoxiao and Peng Li heard they'd be under Zhang Yi's command, displeasure clearly showed on their faces.

Chen Xiaoxiao was more reserved and quickly regained her composure.

But Peng Li? She glared straight at Zhang Yi, her doubt and defiance written all over her face.

After all, they were all regional powerhouses in their own right—why should they have to answer to Zhang Yi?