

## **Ice Age 631**

### Chapter 631 – Friction Within the Team

Zhang Yi could feel Peng Li's gaze, but he didn't care.

After all, it was always better to be the one giving orders than taking them. At least that way, he'd have some autonomy.

As for the upcoming mission—if they didn't listen? Then he'd just ditch them.

Honestly, having Hua Hua and Liang Yue with him was already more than enough.

Oh right, almost forgot—he was pretty damn strong himself. What a pain.

Zhu Zheng began announcing the configurations of the remaining two teams.

Everyone listened carefully—after all, being chosen as team leader meant recognition from Jiangnan District Headquarters.

“Team Two, leader Zhuo Feiyu. Members: Yu Zhengyang, Yuan Hao, Liu Yuchun.”

“Team Three, leader Wu Shifang. Members: Mo Zhongning, Li Weihai, Jia Heting.”

Once the groupings were revealed, the atmosphere turned a bit stiff.

The ones named team leaders felt a bit proud, but at the same time anxious—would their team members follow their orders?

And the team members? They were sizing up their teammates' strength while quietly questioning the authority of their assigned leaders.

They were all used to calling the shots in their own territories. Now being ordered around by someone else? Who'd be happy with that?

But Zhang Yi's attention was focused elsewhere.

Only twelve names had been announced. But there were thirteen Outer City superhumans present.

His eyes landed on that pretty-boy Yuan Hao, then quickly shifted to the woman sitting next to him—his girlfriend, Xia Lingling.

“No Xia Lingling?”

Zhang Yi frowned. He didn't think HQ would make such a basic mistake.

Liang Yue was someone he brought in personally, and even she was deemed qualified to join as combat strength.

Even if Xia Lingling wasn't a faction leader, she should've at least been named.

Unless—she was like Hua Hua... actually a kind of battle pet?

Sensing the strange looks directed at her, Xia Lingling crossed her arms and huffed, “What are you all staring at? The two of us are a unit. Got a problem with that?”

Yuan Hao panicked. “Lingling, don't be mad.”

Then he stood up and bowed repeatedly to everyone, drenched in sweat.

The scene made Peng Li snort with laughter.

Zhu Zheng folded his hands on the table and said seriously, “Team assignments are final. We based the team configurations on your individual abilities, and the leader selections were carefully considered.”

“I hope all of you can cooperate and complete this mission together.”

He glanced at his watch.

Before anyone realized, it was already past 3 PM.

“That’s it for today. Same time tomorrow afternoon, we’ll meet here again.”

“By then, I expect everyone to have thoroughly analyzed the Moon of Corrosion intel and come up with the most effective combat strategies.”

“Because in two days—we march!”

The Moon of Corrosion wasn’t going to sit around and wait for them to come knocking. Every extra second could change the situation on the ground.

And this mission had far-reaching consequences.

Some matters don’t seem heavy until they hit the scales—and then they weigh a thousand pounds.

If Jiangnan District failed to handle this properly, not only would its standing among the Six Major Districts plummet, it might even drag down the global influence of all the districts combined.

This wasn’t just about wiping out some Ronin anymore.

The meeting adjourned. Zhu Zheng stood up and left the conference room.

Lan Xincheng added, “The intel will be transmitted to you shortly!”

Then he adjusted his gold-rimmed glasses and followed Zhu Zheng out.

Seeing that Zhang Yi still had people around him, Deng Shentong figured he must have team matters to handle, so he didn’t come over to chat.

Soon, the HQ personnel had all left.

Only the thirteen Outer City superhumans remained, each deep in their own thoughts.

Zhang Yi was the first to stand.

Hands in his pockets, he said casually to Liang Yue, “Let’s go. Time to dig into those files.”

Liang Yue nodded and followed him out.

As they walked past Chen Xiaoxiao and Peng Li, Chen’s elegant eyebrows twitched slightly. She pressed her lips together, planning to say a few words if Zhang Yi came over.

Peng Li still looked defensive and defiant, ready to fire back at the first sign of arrogance from him.

But to their surprise, Zhang Yi didn’t even glance their way. He just walked straight out of the room.

Chen Xiaoxiao and Peng Li were stunned—as if they’d built up all this momentum for a strike, only to swing at thin air.

“He just... left like that?”

Chen Xiaoxiao was baffled.

At a moment this important—on the verge of going to war with those deadly and vicious Neon Ronin—

Zhang Yi was acting like it didn't matter at all.

Chen Xiaoxiao suddenly felt a bit angry.

What did he think this mission was?

And what did he think his role as team leader meant?

“Hmph!”

She abruptly stood up and said to the equally stunned Peng Li, “Come on. Let's go find him.”

Then she strode after Zhang Yi, and Peng Li quickly snapped out of it and followed.

Zhang Yi and Liang Yue were walking down the hallway, about to reach the elevator—

When a crisp, clear female voice called from behind:

“Zhang Yi, please wait!”

He didn't even need to look back to know who it was.

But out of courtesy, he lazily turned his head and gave a glance.

“What's up?”

His indifferent attitude made Chen Xiaoxiao even more frustrated—but she wasn’t some naïve girl. She wasn’t about to let her irritation show.

She walked up to him, forcing a slight smile.

“We’re on the same team now, and you’re the team leader. I think it’s important we get to know each other better.”

“Plus, working through the Moon of Corrosion intel together will be easier with more people discussing it—don’t you think?”

Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow.

Chen Xiaoxiao’s decisive, no-nonsense attitude reminded him a bit of Xiao Honglian.

Seemed like she was also the bold, headstrong type—not one to back down easily.

Chen Xiaoxiao opened her arms slightly and smiled. “Let me formally introduce myself! I’m Chen Xiaoxiao, and this is Peng Li. We’re both from the same organization in Bāzhōu.”

Then she glanced around cautiously before lowering her voice and saying,

“You know, this isn’t the best place to talk. How about we find somewhere else to sit down and chat—what do you say, Captain?”

The word “Captain” was deliberately softened, drawn out syllable by syllable from her lips.

Zhang Yi thought: You sure sound more like the team leader than I do.

He knew Chen Xiaoxiao and Peng Li were probably unhappy with him being chosen as team leader. But so what?

That was Zhu Zheng's decision. If they had a problem, they could take it up with him.

Still, even though they were a little headstrong, Zhang Yi didn't find them annoying.

Since the six of them would be working together, as long as they didn't cause trouble, getting on decent terms wasn't a bad idea.

Zhang Yi nodded and gave a thumbs-up.

"Alright then! Let's hit Cipher Bar—my treat!"

#### Chapter 632 – Ice Dancer

Zhang Yi generously offered to treat them, which prompted Liang Yue to lean over and whisper in his ear, "Do we even have any money?"

In Blizzard City, "money" referred to points, which only local residents could earn through work or missions.

Naturally, Zhang Yi had none. He was relying on rationed supplies just to eat here.

Zhang Yi curled his lips. "It's fine—I've got a friend!"

He was referring, of course, to Baili Changqing.

That guy was now a captain in the Investigation Team, swimming in points.

Plus, he owed Zhang Yi big time. Booking a private room and drinks under his name would be no problem.

But Chen Xiaoxiao and Peng Li smiled and politely declined Zhang Yi's offer.

"Drinks can wait. How about we head to your room for a proper chat instead?"

Even though they were faction leaders, the two of them still kept their guard up—especially about drinking with a man they'd just met.

Still, their suggestion couldn't help but come off... questionable.

Your room... to chat.

Even Zhang Yi's mind couldn't help wandering.

What, are you into me or something?

Peng Li noticed his expression looked off and snapped a little, "It's not what you're thinking! It's just—we don't really have any other place to go right now!"

As outsiders to the city, they weren't familiar with the area, and finding a quiet, discreet place to talk wasn't exactly easy.

Zhang Yi scratched his head. "My bad, my bad. Alright then, let's go with that."

So the four of them headed to the elevator, on their way to Zhang Yi's room for a proper sit-down.

After they left, other superhumans began trickling out of the meeting room as well.

Team Two's captain, Zhuo Feiyu, didn't say much to his teammates either.

Everyone knew—getting these proud and independent types to obey was going to be tough.

It would take more than a few words to earn their respect.

“Zhuo Feiyu!”

A low voice called out just as he was about to leave.

Zhuo Feiyu’s eyes flicked back. Behind him stood Yu Zhengyang—the grizzled veteran from Xichuan.

“What is it?” Zhuo Feiyu asked coolly.

Yu Zhengyang stopped a few meters away and said flatly, “I won’t say much about Zhu Shuai’s team assignments. But let me give you a heads-up—don’t think that just because you’re the team leader, you can boss us around.”

His eyes glinted coldly.

“And if you ever try something stupid, don’t expect me to follow you!”

Zhuo Feiyu shot him a glance and replied calmly, “Do as you like.”

“Hmph. You bet I will.”

With that, Yu Zhengyang turned and walked off.

And it wasn’t just them. The situation in Team Three wasn’t looking too great either.

Clearly, none of them had any real respect for the so-called “team leaders.”

These people had fought their way through the apocalypse on their own terms.

They had their own codes. Taking orders from someone else? Not likely.

Zhu Zheng and the others were well aware of this, too.

But right now, Moon of Corrosion had to be dealt with. That meant deploying these powerful lone wolves.

What happened on the battlefield would depend on their ability to adapt. HQ would be monitoring remotely anyway—no fear of things spiraling out of control.

Compared to the others, Zhang Yi’s team was actually the most harmonious.

Chen Xiaoxiao and Peng Li followed him back to his room.

Zhang Yi flopped down into the comfiest seat on the couch, while Liang Yue sat on the armrest, holding her Loong Roar Sword.

Chen Xiaoxiao and Peng Li dragged over two chairs and sat across from Zhang Yi.

Peng Li crossed one leg over the other. Because the chair was higher than the sofa, she looked down at Zhang Yi from above.

Her eyes were filled with undisguised arrogance—a warning not to think he could order them around.

Zhang Yi couldn’t care less.

These so-called teammates—if they were helpful, fine. If not, he didn't need them.

But if they wanted to fight alongside him, they'd better fall in line.

“Alright, no one else is around. Let's talk properly.”

Zhang Yi stroked Hua Hua's fur and smiled at them.

Chen Xiaoxiao also smiled and said, “Since these teams were assigned by the District, let's follow protocol.”

“We all know the superhumans in Moon of Corrosion are incredibly powerful. Some may even be stronger than any of us.”

Zhang Yi just smiled without saying a word.

Chen Xiaoxiao continued, “Which is why we need to work together, to stay alive and actually complete the mission.”

“So at the very least, we need to know each other's abilities. That way we can cooperate more effectively when the time comes.”

She spread her arms. “I suggest we all share our powers. And to show I mean it, I'll go first—if you agree, of course.”

Liang Yue glanced at Zhang Yi, waiting for his call.

Zhang Yi smiled lightly and nodded without hesitation. “Sure, sounds good to me.”

Even if they all revealed something, no one would really give away their full hand.

He knew Chen Xiaoxiao and Peng Li probably wouldn't either.

Chen Xiaoxiao gave a faint smile. "Alright, I'll introduce myself first!"

She placed a hand over her chest. "My ability is called Ice Dancer. I'm an Enhancement-type superhuman, and I studied Brazilian battle dance for ten years—so in combat, I specialize in kick-based techniques."

She then gestured to the woman beside her.

"Peng Li's ability is called Priest—she's an Emission-type superhuman."

"As the name implies, her power is support-focused. She can boost people's basic physical attributes significantly, and heal injuries."

"If it's not a fatal wound, she can usually heal it pretty fast."

Zhang Yi glanced at Peng Li.

So these two were a combo.

A powerful close-combat Enhancement-type backed by a support-type healer—a perfect pairing.

Peng Li's ability reminded him of a toned-down mix between Xing Tian's Legion and Zhou Ke'er's Doctor Ability.

But if someone could provide both boosts and healing to one person, the result could be a  $1 + 1 > 3$  kind of synergy.

Zhang Yi could tell they weren't being fully transparent.

The most obvious clue was Chen Xiaoxiao's own ability.

Ice Dancer—those words didn't actually show up in her description of what she could do.

Zhang Yi gave a faint smile. "Guess it's our turn, then!"

"I'm Zhang Yi. Trait-type superhuman. My power is spatial."

"Codename: Dimensional Space. I can open spatial dimensions to store items and defend myself, and I can also use the Dimensional Gate for teleportation."

When he finished, Chen Xiaoxiao and Peng Li's faces grew visibly serious.

"Spatial-type...!"

### Chapter 633: Power

Spatial-type abilities were incredibly rare, and due to their comprehensive strength, they had always been a legendary power that others could only dream of.

After all, up until now, the only Spatial-type Superhumans Zhang Yi had seen—aside from himself—were the faceless one from Blizzard City's Training Arena, and the female Superhuman from West Hill Base he had taken out early on, the one who could phase through walls.

Chen Xiaoxiao muttered, "No wonder Commander Zhu had you take the lead as captain! A Delta-level Spatial-type Superhuman—well, that explains everything."

At first, the two of them had some doubts about Zhang Yi being the captain. But now, they gradually came to understand.

Zhang Yi chuckled, "So my ability is actually pretty desirable, huh?"

"Well, obviously!"

Chen Xiaoxiao shrugged and smiled. "You have no idea how useful this kind of power is nowadays."

Peng Li pouted and said sourly, "Exactly. People always take what they have for granted and never realize how lucky they are."

In this icy, snow-covered world, even if Spatial-type abilities were only used for support, their convenience made every other type of Superhuman green with envy.

For example, Zhang Yi could use Dimensional Space to transport large quantities of heavy weapons and gear.

If two armies were facing off, the side with a Superhuman like him would have an overwhelming advantage in terms of equipment.

And when going on long missions, other Superhumans had to carry a ton of supplies.

Heating, food, medicine, hygiene... the list went on and on.

Even Superhumans were incredibly fragile in a post-apocalyptic world.

A lack of supplies could mean infection and death after a battle.

But if you had a Spatial-type Superhuman in the group, all those concerns were basically eliminated.

Zhang Yi had gotten so used to using his power, he didn't even think about it. But to others, it was seriously envy-inducing.

Chen Xiaoxiao looked at him suspiciously. "Zhang Yi, then what's your combat style? I mean, I get you can't show all your cards, but you're holding back a lot, aren't you?"

Zhang Yi gave a calm smile. "My offensive methods are actually really simple. Guns."

"Guns???"

Chen Xiaoxiao and Peng Li both looked confused.

To high-level Superhumans, ordinary firearms were basically useless.

Zhang Yi explained, "My Spatial-type ability enhances my shooting—extends range, boosts power. I can still deal damage even to Superhumans."

"Unless they're ridiculously tough Enhancement-types or Beast-types, I can hurt just about anyone."

Not to mention, Zhang Yi had a good stash of Origin Bullets and Sacred Silver bullets on hand now.

Chen Xiaoxiao nodded, and then a bright smile spread across her face.

"Then we're really lucky—to be teamed up with you."

Peng Li blinked curiously. "Huh? Why?"

Chen Xiaoxiao explained calmly, "With a Spatial-type Superhuman in the team, we won't have any problems with logistics or supplies. Meaning, we can operate in the field for longer periods."

“And based on what Zhang Yi said, he seems more like a defensive counter-attack type. He’s better at defending than attacking.”

“That means we’ll be a lot safer with him around.”

Peng Li nodded, and even the look in her eyes toward Zhang Yi softened noticeably.

“So that’s how it is!”

From his interactions with them so far, Zhang Yi was starting to get a feel for their personalities.

Chen Xiaoxiao clearly had experience leading teams. She liked being in control.

But thankfully, she was smart and had a clear, logical mind.

And Zhang Yi had always liked dealing with smart people.

Zhang Yi turned to Liang Yue and introduced her. “This is Liang Yue. She’s an Enhancement-type Superhuman—a Martial Arts Master. Nothing else much worth mentioning, really.”

He smiled at Liang Yue as he spoke.

Her ability was indeed simple—just your typical Enhancement-type power.

But her personal combat strength? Absolutely insane.

To the point where, even without Superhuman powers, her martial arts alone could let her go toe-to-toe with a Level 2 Beta-class Superhuman.

Sometimes, Zhang Yi couldn't help but think—someone this gifted, if she ever gained the upper hand in close combat, might even pull off a cross-tier kill.

He swallowed quietly.

Yeah... he'd better treat Liang Yue nicely in the future.

But in truth, he'd been trying hard to win her over from the very beginning.

Peng Li and Chen Xiaoxiao didn't react much—just nodded politely toward Liang Yue.

To them, Enhancement-types weren't all that special.

And they didn't quite get what "Martial Arts Master" even meant.

"Then what about that one?"

Chen Xiaoxiao suddenly pointed at the creature sitting on Zhang Yi's knee—Hua Hua.

A flash of insight sparkled in her eyes as she grinned. "Don't tell me that's just a pet. No animal could survive minus sixty-degree weather! And you don't seem like the type to bring a pet along at a time like this."

Zhang Yi gave a faint smile. "Not bad—you've got good instincts. Yeah, my Hua Hua is no ordinary cat."

Peng Li asked, "What, is it the same cat from Wang Wei's poem or something?"

Everyone gave her strange looks, and she just rolled her eyes. "Geez, can't I joke around a little?"

Chen Xiaoxiao quickly explained to Zhang Yi and Liang Yue, "She's always like this. Don't take it personally."

"It's fine."

Zhang Yi stroked Hua Hua. "She's a mutated creature. If you were to classify her by human Superhuman ranks, she'd be Delta-level."

Hua Hua could evolve by devouring other Superhumans, so calling her Delta-class was no exaggeration.

"That's awesome!"

Chen Xiaoxiao's eyes lit up as she stared at Hua Hua, visibly excited.

"That means our team now has the equivalent of five Delta-level fighters! And one of them is a rare Spatial-type."

"With this lineup, our chances of scoring high on mission points are way better than the other teams."

Peng Li also grinned. "So that means... we might actually have a shot at taking Linhai City, huh?"

Chen Xiaoxiao nodded. "Exactly."

Zhang Yi just smiled and stayed quiet.

Chen Xiaoxiao, clearly eager, turned to him and said, "Well then, let's go over those mission materials a few more times together! It's always better to brainstorm as a group than to analyze alone."

"Sure, let's take a look together."

Zhang Yi gave a faint smile and reached for his cup.

But when his fingers touched the side, he realized—the water had already gone cold.

Liang Yue picked up on it right away. She took the cup from him and went over to the heater to refill it with hot water.

Zhang Yi smiled as he looked at Chen Xiaoxiao and Peng Li, then slowly spoke:

“But before we dive into the plans... shouldn’t we talk seriously about team cooperation?”

He spread his hands. “What I mean is, I hope you two can understand—since we’re now part of the same squad, during operations, I expect you to follow my lead.”

Ever since they met, Chen Xiaoxiao had been actively trying to seize the initiative.

And Zhang Yi didn’t oppose it. He just smiled and played along.

Not because he was stupid—but because he didn’t really care.

This so-called “team” wasn’t that important to him.

After all, even Zhu Zheng and the others still had no idea how powerful he really was.

Maybe he wouldn’t be able to wipe out a few members of the Moon of Corrosion in the upcoming mission.

But if he decided to walk away—there wasn’t a single person who could stop him or threaten his life.

However, if Chen Xiaoxiao and Peng Li wanted to team up with him, they’d have to play by his rules.

## Chapter 634: Research Data

The moment Zhang Yi finished speaking, Chen Xiaoxiao's gaze sharpened instantly.

Peng Li also stared at him with a serious expression.

In the end, team leadership and who held the final say was still an unavoidable issue.

Chen Xiaoxiao had originally intended to guide the pace from the start, naturally becoming the team's de facto leader, with Zhang Yi just a captain in name.

But clearly, Zhang Yi wasn't about to just follow her lead so easily.

Chen Xiaoxiao said, "Your ability is indeed rare and powerful. If you're the captain, we'll respect your opinion."

"But if you make an inappropriate decision during the mission, we have the right to correct it."

On the surface, that sounded reasonable.

"We'll listen to you—but if you're wrong, we'll step in and 'correct' you," meaning they'd steer things their way instead.

But if you thought about it carefully, the control was still in their hands.

To put it plainly—they didn't really intend to accept Zhang Yi's leadership.

Zhang Yi's face remained calm, carrying that same easygoing smile.

“In that case, there’s no need for us to act together.”

He shrugged. “You two can go your own way. No need to stick with us.”

“Judging by the team composition, Liang Yue, Hua Hua, and I are only one person short compared to a standard five-person squad.”

He glanced at Liang Yue beside him, then affectionately patted the sleeping Hua Hua on his thigh.

“Besides, we’re already part of a long-running team with good coordination. They’ll follow my orders.”

“So having you two or not really doesn’t make a difference.”

“If we’re not aligned in principle, we’re not meant to work together. That’s what you’re thinking too, right?”

A flash of surprise crossed Chen Xiaoxiao’s eyes.

Peng Li looked at Zhang Yi in shock. “You’re serious?”

“This mission is extremely dangerous! The ten squads that went before us were all wiped out. Sticking together is the only way to improve our odds of survival.”

“With the five of us (well, four and one animal), we should have the best chance of completing the mission. If you split the group like this, it’s bad for all of us.”

Zhang Yi leaned back slowly on the sofa, crossing one leg over the other.

"But you don't acknowledge me as captain. If our hearts are divided, we'll just drag each other down. What's the point?"

Chen Xiaoxiao replied calmly, "We haven't been working together long. It's hard to build chemistry quickly. But with more people, our chances of surviving still go up."

The curve at the corner of Zhang Yi's mouth deepened.

Even Liang Yue had to stifle a laugh.

She glanced at Chen Xiaoxiao and Peng Li with a bit of pity, thinking to herself:

Do you two have any idea who you're talking to right now?

At this point, Zhang Yi was one of the top-tier elites in the entire Jiangnan District!

Especially with that life-saving trump card of his—damn, even the most seasoned fighters would curse in disbelief.

A Delta-level Superhuman with defense ten times stronger than offense—even a legendary Epsilon-level Superhuman would get a headache going up against him.

If you don't believe it, just go ask Yuan Kongye.

And you're here talking to him about "increasing survival chances"?

Zhang Yi never really wanted them tagging along—it would only interfere with his movements.

But he couldn't outright refuse the team assignment either. That would raise suspicions from others.

So Zhang Yi said, "Alright then. We can act together. But if a disagreement comes up, you're free to break off and go your own way. Don't worry about us."

That pushed Chen Xiaoxiao to her limit.

As a shrewd team leader, she thought Zhang Yi's behavior was childish.

"Zhang Yi, this isn't a game. This is life or death! You can't let personal emotions put us all in danger."

Zhang Yi sighed lightly.

He leaned forward, propping his chin on his hands.

"All I'll say is—my survival ability guarantees that my people and I will absolutely make it through this mission alive."

"So tell me—do you think I have any obligation to protect people who won't follow my orders?"

He had made himself perfectly clear.

If they still didn't get it, Zhang Yi wasn't going to waste another breath.

"You're saying... you can guarantee you and your team's survival?"

Chen Xiaoxiao rested her chin on one hand, deep in thought.

Not long after, she took a deep breath. "I see. So that's how it is!"

Peng Li asked in a whisper, "You see what?"

Chen Xiaoxiao looked at Zhang Yi and said with some awe, “This is the advantage of a Spatial-type ability! He mentioned it before—he can perform Spatial Jump. In other words, if things go south, he can just teleport out.”

“With how rare Spatial-types are, as long as he wants to run, almost no one can catch him.”

“Even if the enemy has a countermeasure, with the Celestial Squad drawing attention from the front, the Moon of Corrosion can’t possibly send their full force after him.”

“So doesn’t that mean he’s practically untouchable?”

Peng Li gave Zhang Yi a strange look and muttered, “Man, that’s so rat-like.”

Zhang Yi: “You do realize I can hear you, right?”

“I said it on purpose!”

Peng Li grinned at him smugly.

Zhang Yi: “...”

This was just... speechless.

After thinking it over seriously, Chen Xiaoxiao finally made a decision.

“Alright then. During the mission, we’ll follow your lead. But if your orders are too outrageous, we’ll go our separate ways. Each of us on our own. Sound fair?”

Zhang Yi nodded. “Deal.”

Honestly, if it weren't for appearances, he would've gone straight to Zhu Zheng and asked to only bring Liang Yue and Hua Hua.

Chen Xiaoxiao and Peng Li didn't seem all that bad. He'd take them for now.

But if they became a burden later, Zhang Yi wouldn't hesitate to ditch them and go solo.

"Alright then, let's get started on researching the intel about Moon of Corrosion!" Chen Xiaoxiao said.

"Oh, we're starting just because you said so?"

Zhang Yi smiled.

Chen Xiaoxiao's tone faltered for a moment.

Zhang Yi waved his hand. "Just kidding! Alright, let's get into it."

Chen Xiaoxiao always liked being in control.

But Zhang Yi had to make it clear—who was really in charge now.

Chen Xiaoxiao picked up on his intent.

But since she didn't want to damage team cohesion at this point, she let it slide.

The four of them gathered together and opened the files sent by Lan Xincheng, starting to analyze them in detail.

A few hours later, the four had gone through the footage and data again, carefully reviewing it.

Since they'd already seen it once before, they were now able to skip past the less important sections and focus directly on the key parts.

Among them, Peng Li was responsible for taking notes and drafting a meeting summary, jotting down all the critical points.

Once they were done, Zhang Yi sat back on the sofa and smiled. "Now that we've gone through it all, let's talk about what we think. As the captain, I'll go first."

Regardless of any underlying agendas, when it came to dealing with Moon of Corrosion, they all shared the same goal.

So Zhang Yi wasn't planning to hold anything back on this front.

### Chapter 635: Three-Front Strategy

"The current intel footage is limited—we don't even have full information on the enemy's abilities."

"But there's one thing we do know that's absolutely critical—they have an incredibly powerful intelligence-gathering capability!"

"If they were able to fully analyze the first ten Superhuman teams that went into battle, we have to assume the same could happen to us."

At this point, Zhang Yi couldn't help but find it a bit amusing.

If the Moon of Corrosion truly had someone that capable in their ranks, then the moment he showed up on the battlefield, probably no one would want to go up against him.

“But that’s just speculation. We don’t actually know how they’re gathering intel on us, or how detailed that intel might be.”

“So being fully prepared is never a bad idea.”

Zhang Yi took a deep breath and gave Chen Xiaoxiao and Peng Li a cheerful smile.

“Just like in the first battle, they always made sure to send their Superhumans against opponents they had the best chance of beating.”

“So it’s very possible we’ll face enemies specifically tailored to counter us.”

“That’s probably why the district chose to split us into three teams, pairing Superhumans with different ability types.”

“It’s the only way to compensate for each team’s weaknesses.”

Chen Xiaoxiao listened carefully, nodding along. She clearly agreed with Zhang Yi’s reasoning.

Zhang Yi took a sip from his cup, then continued:

“Also, there are a few people among them whose combat strength is clearly on another level.”

He picked up the satellite phone, projecting the profiles of the thirteen Moon of Corrosion members into mid-air.

Zhang Yi pointed to the former sumo wrestler, Daiku Kai Enzu.

“That guy’s strength is at least on par with a Vice-Captain of an Investigation Team.”

In the footage, Daiku Kai Enzu had singlehandedly crushed two Superhuman teams head-on.

That kind of raw power—even Zhang Yi had to give it a second look.

By his estimation, this man’s strength might even rival Baili Changqing.

“Shhhff shhhff shhhff—”

Peng Li was scribbling quickly in her notebook.

Even though she sometimes came across as a playful girl, she was all business when it counted.

Zhang Yi then pointed to another in the group of thirteen—Tsukamoto Nobunaga, the one with the long topknot.

“Tsukamoto Nobunaga. A master of Neon Nation swordsmanship. Some even call him the modern-day Sword Saint.”

“Granted, Neon folks love their over-the-top titles—Rice Immortal, Ramen Immortal, heck, they’d probably give a toilet its own deity.”

“But this guy’s strength seems legit. We should take him seriously.”

At the mention of Tsukamoto Nobunaga, Liang Yue’s eyebrows shot up, and her cold eyes ignited with a proud battle spirit.

As a Martial Arts Master from Huaguo, she had her pride.

In the path of martial arts, she certainly wasn't going to bow to some Neon Ronin.

Hearing Zhang Yi's assessment of Nobunaga lit a fire in her.

"If possible, I'd like to test myself against him."

Chen Xiaoxiao and Peng Li looked over at Liang Yue, intrigued.

There was some doubt in their eyes.

To their knowledge, Liang Yue was just one of Zhang Yi's subordinates.

And yet, she dared to say something like that?

They knew Tsukamoto Nobunaga was the kind of person who had taken down an entire Superhuman organization by himself—and even captured Li Tianlong alive.

On the battlefield, capturing someone was always harder than just killing them.

Liang Yue sensed their skepticism, but she couldn't be bothered to explain. She wasn't much of a talker to begin with.

And for a martial artist, the best way to prove yourself could be summed up in one word: fight.

Zhang Yi continued, "Other than those two, there are three whose strength we know nothing about."

He pointed to the projections of Phoenixin Ren, Takeuchi Mayumi, and Nishijumu Satoru.

"We need to be extra cautious of these three—no room for sloppiness."

“Especially the squad leader, Phoenixin Ren. In Neon Nation, where strength rules all, there’s no way he’d be made group leader unless he had power to match.”

Zhang Yi’s expression grew more serious.

“If even his subordinates are that strong... then what level must he be at?”

They hadn’t been able to gauge his abilities in the first battle.

Which meant that in this upcoming second confrontation, Zhang Yi and his team would be the ones to uncover it.

Afraid?

Not quite.

Zhang Yi was one of the best in the business at staying alive.

But going up against an unknown meant you couldn’t easily wipe them out, and that opened the door to all kinds of complications.

Chen Xiaoxiao could see the concern in Zhang Yi’s expression.

But she calmly said, “When facing enemies at this level, all we can do is handle our own responsibilities.”

“Don’t forget, this mission is being led by Headquarters, and the main firepower is coming from the Celestial Squad, not us.”

“Which means—” she stared directly at Zhang Yi, her eyes blazing with clarity, “I think I’ve figured out what Headquarters’ battle plan is.”

At those words, Zhang Yi and Liang Yue both glanced at her in surprise.

Peng Li’s lips curled slightly into a proud smile.

She and Chen Xiaoxiao had only met after the apocalypse, but their personalities meshed so well that they’d become best friends.

Their powers complemented each other perfectly, just like their friendship—supporting each other, rising step by step to the top of Dominion City’s power structure.

Chen Xiaoxiao’s intellect was something even Peng Li took pride in.

“Oh? Let’s hear it.”

Zhang Yi smiled and gestured for her to continue.

Chen Xiaoxiao said, “You’re right. The Moon of Corrosion didn’t reveal their true strength in the first battle. Which is exactly why we need to split into two echelons for this mission.”

“Assuming they have exceptional intel-gathering abilities, they’ll likely counter us with the best lineup possible.”

Superhuman powers had strong counter relationships—like how water beats fire.

If you lost the edge in that matchup, you could get overwhelmed fast.

Chen Xiaoxiao continued, “But we do have one advantage on our side—numbers.”

As she spoke, she reached for four cups on the tea tray.

She placed two cups in front.

“These represent our three teams—the first line of battle.”

“Our role is to force Moon of Corrosion to strike first, exposing their strength.”

“Even if they use intel to form an optimal strategy against us, we still have a second line of defense!”

She placed two more cups behind the first row.

“And that’s the Celestial Squad!”

“All we need to do is assign Celestial Squad members whose abilities don’t overlap with ours—maybe even complement them—and have them follow behind.”

“Then we can completely neutralize the enemy’s tactics!”

Chen Xiaoxiao tapped her chin in thought for a moment, then smiled.

“Basically, it’s like playing rock-paper-scissors. That should make it easier to understand, right?”

“And even if the enemy realizes what we’re doing, there’s not much they can do to stop it.”

“Because honestly—I don’t believe they’re stronger than us in terms of raw power.”

Chapter 636: The Fall of Jiangning City

Chen Xiaoxiao's analysis had Zhang Yi nodding along the whole time.

He completely agreed with her perspective.

"Exactly! That's what I think too!"

These superhumans from Neon may all be Delta-level,

but compared to Zhang Yi and Chen Xiaoxiao's crew, they weren't all that different—

mostly freelance superhumans without formal combat training.

Maybe there was a skill gap compared to those who fought in the first battle.

But this current batch, over a dozen of them,

were all elite-level talents from the outer zone of the Jiangnan District.

Zhang Yi didn't think they were any weaker.

In fact, aside from falling short in team coordination and discipline,

on an individual level, their power wasn't beneath your average investigation team member—

some might even rival a team captain.

Chen Xiaoxiao was clearly pleased Zhang Yi shared her viewpoint.

"That's why, if we keep fighting this way and avoid letting them use the intel gap against us,

our chances of winning are actually really high."

Zhang Yi leaned back on the couch, glanced at Liang Yue beside him, then said casually,

"Well, if that's the case, this mission might actually be pretty simple!"

"After all, being bait and wasting other people's time is what I do best!"

As long as he didn't throw himself into certain death,

no one—based on what they currently knew—could kill him.

Just then, Peng Li, who had been quietly taking notes, suddenly looked up.

She stared at Zhang Yi with surprise and a hint of disdain.

"But our goal isn't just to play bait, you know."

"Don't forget, if we rack up enough merit on this mission, we could take over all of Linhai City!"

Zhang Yi frowned. "So what?"

"So what?" Peng Li was visibly shocked.

"Linhai City is loaded with resources! If we take it—heck, even just part of it—

our faction's strength would skyrocket!"

Chen Xiaoxiao chimed in calmly,

"Even though the Jiangnan District Headquarters established a federation

and strictly forbade inter-faction conflicts within its regions...

Let's be real, they can't actually enforce that."

"Sure, Jiangnan District's strong. No one dares provoke them.

But they can't fully govern the whole region either."

"That's why faction wars in Jiangnan will definitely become the norm going forward.

The only way to avoid being pushed around is to grow stronger."

Zhang Yi nodded. "That does make sense."

"But I'm not interested."

Peng Li scoffed. "You're supposed to be the big boss of Tianhai City,

but with that kind of mindset, don't be surprised if someone steals your turf one day.

You can't live too comfortably, you know!"

Zhang Yi just smiled.

"But I don't think there's anything wrong with living comfortably."

Chen Xiaoxiao frowned and exchanged a look with Peng Li—

this was starting to get complicated.

Their goal was to earn merit this time and cash in on the Jiangnan District's mission rewards,

which included getting territory in Linhai City.

But now, two people on their team weren't on board with that plan.

How were they supposed to compete with the other two squads now?

Clearly, they'd be at a power disadvantage.

Chen Xiaoxiao took a deep breath.

"Zhang Yi, think about it again—

Linhai City is right next to Tianhai City.

If you secure the land and resources there,

it'd be a perfect extension of your territory."

Zhang Yi didn't want to argue anymore. He waved her off.

"Did you forget what we agreed on from the start?"

"In this team, I'm the captain. You all follow my lead.

If there's ever a disagreement, you're free to leave.

I won't stop you."

Chen Xiaoxiao was momentarily speechless.

That was true—they'd agreed on this.

No matter how many ideas she had,

if Zhang Yi didn't give the green light, there was nothing she could do.

On paper, Zhang Yi was their captain.

"You really are a strange one," she said helplessly.

Any other team of superhumans would've jumped at the chance.

Zhang Yi's lips curled into a subtle, meaningful smile.

He didn't say more, just knocked on the table.

"Alright, let's move on!"

There was still a lot to go over.

For example, how to come up with tailored countermeasures

against each member of the Moon of Corrosion.

While Zhang Yi's group was busy analyzing intel on the Moon of Corrosion,

a new message came through from the intelligence division

at the Operations Command Center and landed in Commander Zhu Zheng's hands.

When Zhu Zheng read it, he couldn't help but furrow his brow deeply.

Because the message clearly stated:

The Xingyun satellite system had detected

that the Moon of Corrosion had begun pulling out of Linhai City

and was heading northwest—toward Jiangning City.

"We can't wait any longer!

Those psychos really want to push into the Central Plains!

B\*\*tards!"

Zhu Zheng clenched his fists, his face grim.

The Moon of Corrosion was way more audacious than he'd expected.

"You think just because you won one skirmish,

you can act like the Jiangnan District is nothing to you?"

A blade-sharp gleam flashed in Zhu Zheng's eyes.

An intense killing intent radiated from him.

Jiangning City, located northwest of both Linhai City and Tianhai City,

was a bustling second-tier metropolis.

The Moon of Corrosion rolled into town in stolen vehicles,

cruising past the border and straight into downtown.

Jiangning Square, one of the city's most vibrant commercial zones,

used to be held by the largest superhuman faction in Jiangning.

But now, as the Moon of Corrosion walked its streets,

hundreds of corpses lay sprawled across the roads.

Crimson blood stained the entire area—

then froze into icy red sheets before it could even flow far.

At the front was the miko, Takeuchi Mayumi.

Phoenixin Ren walked along with his hands in the pockets

of his gray suit vest, casually whistling.

"We need to find a well-stocked place first."

"Rest up a bit, resupply, then keep heading inland.

I think the next stop's that place called Lingdu."

He looked down at a device in his hand.

The screen showed a full map, detailed down to each road.

Of course, after the apocalyptic blizzard hit,

most of those roads were no longer usable.

It was a pre-apocalypse map—

useful now only as a reference.

A few steps behind him to the right was Shinguuji Seiichiro,

slicked-back hair, gold-rimmed glasses, and a perpetually sour expression.

"Things aren't going to go as smoothly as we thought."

"That last battle—it was clear those weren't

official Jiangnan District headquarters personnel.

Just some freelance groups."

"After we wiped them out, we sent out a signal...

but Jiangnan hasn't responded at all."

He exhaled a cloud of white breath, visibly irritated.

"That means those guys...

are still dead set on fighting us to the end."

Chapter 637: Let Me Say a Few Words

Phoenixin Ren listened to Shinguuji's grumbling, but the corners of his mouth curled into a lighthearted smile.

Shinguuji Seiichiro, a former stock trader, was a dyed-in-the-wool pessimist.

From the day they met, Shinguuji had never stopped filling Phoenixin's ears with all kinds of gloomy forecasts.

But truth be told, it was thanks to him that the Moon of Corrosion had grown to what it was today—

and managed to repeatedly escape **【Izumo】**'s crackdowns across the Kanto region.

Shinguuji, the eternal pessimist, was also one of the staunchest advocates for invading the mainland.

Ever since the apocalypse began, he was convinced that the Neon Archipelago would be swallowed whole

by the great flood that was bound to come.

If not for that belief, someone as cautious and meticulous as him would've never agreed to Phoenixin Ren's insane plan to land on the continent.

Phoenixin smiled and said,

"Shinguuji, don't be so gloomy all the time. Everything's playing out exactly how we planned!"

He spread his arms wide and turned his back to the group.

"At most, there'll be one more punitive expedition.

Then the Jiangnan District will fully grasp the extent of our strength.

After that, they'll back off and stop trying to wipe us out."

"I'm sure there are plenty of smart folks over there who'll realize the truth.

Especially since, let's be real—they've got more than just us to worry about now."

As he spoke, Phoenixin narrowed his eyes.

"Just like back in Kanto."

When the Moon of Corrosion ran rampant through Kanto,

they clashed repeatedly with the local superpower: 【Izumo】 .

But those sitting at the top of Neon's power structure—

most of them were former members of official government agencies.

And those types always thought of their own interests first.

Wiping out the Moon of Corrosion would've come at an enormous cost.

It might have severely weakened their own faction,

which would've made it easy for other powers to swoop in and take their place.

That's exactly why Izumo ultimately chose to let them be.

Shinguuji scowled. "Tch. But this isn't Neon.

How do you know the people in Jiangnan are anything like Izumo's top brass?"

Phoenixin raised a brow and said with a sly grin,

"Aren't all those elites around the world the same? Sitting in their high towers, pretending they're  
untouchable?"

The others chuckled as they watched the two bicker.

Clearly, they were already used to this kind of back-and-forth.

Stepping over the corpses of Jiangning's former factions,

they strolled into what was once a bustling street.

Shinguuji adjusted his glasses.

"In that case, to prevent Jiangnan District from launching an assault,

we should carry out a full sweep of this area."

He looked up, eyes glinting with the cold gleam of a snake.

"Within a five-kilometer radius of Jiangning Square—

don't leave a single survivor!"

A day passed quickly.

Everyone regrouped in the Operations Center's meeting room.

After some quick preparations, they would soon head to the front lines to battle the Moon of Corrosion.

Zhang Yi and his team arrived, while Chen Xiaoxiao and Peng Li sat not far off.

Zhang Yi's gaze swept across the other outer zone superhumans—

clearly, they'd done some talking yesterday too.

But the atmosphere between them was... delicate.

They were a temporary team, after all.

Expecting real coordination was unrealistic.

As long as no one screwed up mid-battle, that'd be good enough.

After all, they weren't the main combat force for this mission.

Not long after, Zhu Zheng and Deng Shentong entered the room as well.

But today, Zhu Zheng's expression was far more grim than yesterday's—

a look that instantly gave Zhang Yi's group a bad feeling.

Sure enough, when Zhu Zheng stepped up, he didn't ask how they were prepping.

Instead, he addressed everyone solemnly:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I have some very bad news to deliver."

"This morning, the Moon of Corrosion left Linhai City...

and arrived in neighboring Jiangning City."

The moment he said that, someone slammed the table and shot to their feet.

"What!!"

Zhang Yi recognized him—Wu Shifang, leader of Jiangning City's superhuman faction.

"What's the situation in Jiangning now?!"

Wu Shifang was visibly shaken. His family and friends were all in Jiangning.

And judging by what happened in Linhai City,

once the Moon of Corrosion reached a new location,

they'd wipe out every force there without mercy.

Zhu Zheng addressed him directly.

"Wu Shifang, don't panic.

We've already warned the people in Jiangning to hide and avoid any conflict with the Moon of Corrosion."

"At the moment, they've taken over Jiangning Square.

All the groups in that area... have likely been eliminated."

Wu Shifang took a deep breath, calming down a little.

Sure, if his forces had been attacked, someone would've contacted him.

Still, he couldn't fully relax.

As long as those butchers stayed in Jiangning,

his faction was at constant risk.

Wu Shifang stared at Zhu Zheng and said seriously,

"Commander Zhu, I want to go back and handle affairs within my faction."

Zhu Zheng didn't answer right away.

His secretary, Lan Xincheng, stepped forward instead, face stern.

"Wu Shifang, do you think this is the time to just do as you please?"

"Right now, your top priority is cooperating with headquarters

to eliminate the Moon of Corrosion!"

Wu Shifang looked conflicted. "But I'm worried about them..."

"Worrying won't help!" Lan Xincheng snapped.

"You really think you alone can take out the Moon of Corrosion?"

Wu Shifang had no retort.

Charging in solo would be pointless.

Then Zhu Zheng's gentler voice cut in.

"Enough, Xincheng.

He's just concerned about his family and comrades.

It's understandable."

Wu Shifang felt a warmth rise in his chest.

He turned to Zhu Zheng with grateful eyes.

"Commander Zhu..."

Zhu Zheng stood with his hands clasped behind his back,  
his face stern.

"Rushing won't help.

They've only just arrived in Jiangning.

Their numbers are limited.

They can't destroy all of Jiangning's factions overnight."

"We'll finalize our operation plan in today's meeting,

and set out at dawn tomorrow!"

"As for the city's various groups—

we've already contacted them.

They've been instructed to go into hiding

and avoid engaging with the Moon of Corrosion."

"You can rest assured they'll be safe for now."

Wu Shifang nodded and finally sat down.

Zhu Zheng looked around the room.

"Their objective is clear—they're aiming for the Central Plains.

We need to act fast and take them out before they move inland!"

"We absolutely cannot let these damned Ronin take one more step forward!"

"Now then, let's begin our final strategy meeting.

Each of the three squads, have your captain share your team's conclusions."

He turned his gaze toward Zhang Yi.

"Zhang Yi, you go first."

All eyes shifted to Zhang Yi's side.

Zhang Yi gave a short cough and stood up, steady and calm.

"Well, since you're asking—

I've got a few things to say."

Chapter 638: Final Mobilization

Zhang Yi gave a concise summary of what his group had discussed the previous day.

Given how important this operation was, he held back almost nothing—except his own ability.

“The most critical thing,” he said, “is to get a complete grasp on every Moon of Corrosion member’s superhuman ability.

Especially, we need to find a way to crack how they’re gathering intelligence.”

“That’s all I’ve got. I’m done.”

Once he finished and sat back down,

many in the room lowered their heads in thought, mulling over his words.

Even Deng Shentong had one hand propped under his chin, deep in contemplation.

Zhu Zheng nodded at Zhang Yi in approval.

“Zhang Yi is right.

In our war against the Moon of Corrosion, intel is the key!

At the moment, we still don’t know where they’re getting their information from,

so we're at a slight disadvantage there."

Then Zhu Zheng's voice suddenly grew louder and more forceful.

"But in every other aspect, we hold absolute superiority!"

"Whether it's our superhumans' strength, our numbers, or our home-field logistical support."

He crossed his arms and gave a confident smile.

"Most importantly, we have armed reinforcements from the District!"

The crowd turned their attention to Zhu Zheng with interest.

"You're planning to use thermal weapons for precision strikes?"

asked Yu Zhengyang, a superhuman from Xichuan, his eyes glowing with excitement.

Missiles were one of the most powerful strategic weapons in the current era.

Their destructive power could crush nearly any superhuman.

However, due to the apocalypse, missile production lines had mostly collapsed—

what remained had to be rationed carefully.

That meant even district-level powers couldn't use them lightly.

Zhang Yi and the others had long wondered

why the District hadn't already used missiles for pinpoint strikes on the Moon of Corrosion.

Zhu Zheng, clearly aware of their doubts, explained:

“The Moon of Corrosion has satellite disruption devices.

Our Xingyun System can only give us a rough idea of their location—

it can't pinpoint their exact coordinates.”

Lan Xincheng added,

“They can disrupt satellite scans within a five-kilometer radius.”

Zhu Zheng nodded. “Exactly. Five kilometers.

Trying to bomb an area with a five-kilometer radius is incredibly difficult.”

“But don’t worry.

We’ve prepped something else this time—something that’ll give them one hell of a surprise.”

Everyone perked up a bit.

Whatever it was, it sounded like the Jiangnan District’s secret weapon.

It made sense—there was no way a major district didn’t have a trump card or two up its sleeve.

Next, the Second Squad's captain, Zhuo Feiyu, stood up and shared his team's strategy.

Zhuo Feiyu pulled a satellite phone from his pocket and opened a text file,

reading word-for-word from the screen:

“Based on the failures of the first battle, we've drawn one key lesson:

do not split up our forces.”

“Even if we divide into three squads,

we must stay within two kilometers of each other at all times.”

“And we need to establish a rule:

if any team encounters the Moon of Corrosion,

the other two must move to support them immediately.”

“There’s no reason to let the enemy lead us around by the nose.”

“If their strength lies in intel and choosing counter-abilities to target us directly,

then we should switch opponents on the battlefield as needed.”

That last point made Zhang Yi’s eyes light up.

He glanced at Zhuo Feiyu again.

The man looked to be in his early thirties,

hair slick with grease from days without a shower.

His face was plain, and his reading was stiff and monotone—

but he had clearly nailed the heart of the problem in the first battle

and offered a solid solution.

“Switching opponents... That’s actually a brilliant idea.”

Zhang Yi couldn’t help but mutter under his breath.

The reason the ten superhuman teams were crushed so quickly in the first battle

was largely because their captains’ abilities had been directly countered.

In battles between Delta-level superhumans,

the impact of lower-ranked members was almost negligible.

And the Moon of Corrosion’s 13 members were all infamous killers from Kanto—

the cream of the crop among Delta-level fighters.

So essentially, the first battle was

13 of them going up against 10 outer-zone Delta-level superhumans.

Zhang Yi had thought about this before:

what if they'd been allowed to switch opponents mid-fight,

to avoid letting the enemy control the tempo?

Even if the task force couldn't defeat the Moon of Corrosion,

they wouldn't have lost so badly.

Now Zhang Yi wondered:

if the Moon of Corrosion really had such a ridiculous intel-gathering ability,

how much would they know about his own powers?

Could they see through his real strength?

And if so, who would they send to take him out?

He didn't have an answer.

Everything was a big unknown.

He figured it was safest to keep a low profile.

After all, he was in the light; they were in the dark.

One misstep, and it could be over.

So Zhang Yi resolved to keep hiding his cards.

Survival came first.

Zhang Yi's and Zhuo Feiyu's words sparked deep thought in the room.

Zhu Zheng was already considering whether to make their suggestions official policy.

He nodded at Zhuo Feiyu. "Excellent suggestion. I'll take it under consideration."

Zhuo Feiyu nodded back and slowly sat down.

Xia Lingling propped her chin on one hand and looked at Zhuo Feiyu with amusement.

"Heh. Captain, not bad!"

Zhuo Feiyu just gave her a faint smile and said nothing.

Her boyfriend, Yuan Hao, started to panic a little.

He tugged gently on Xia Lingling's sleeve.

"Lingling, I had some good ideas too! Can't you praise me a little?"

Xia Lingling turned to him.

Yuan Hao was staring at her like a loyal little puppy, eyes full of hope.

She grinned mischievously and grabbed his chin.

“You dummy!”

“Even if other guys say smart things,

none of them can compare to you in my eyes.

I love you the most.”

Then, without a care in the world, she planted a kiss on him.

The sound of that smooch echoed awkwardly through the meeting room.

The two of them weren’t far from Zhang Yi’s group.

Liang Yue’s cheeks flushed red—

she quickly turned her head,

but couldn't resist sneaking a peek again.

Everyone else wore blank expressions,

clearly used to such public displays.

After all, in the apocalypse,

the world was full of oddballs,

and people were way more uninhibited than before.

Fortunately, Zhu Zheng had seen plenty of weirdos among the superhumans.

So he didn't react at all to Xia Lingling and Yuan Hao's behavior.

Instead, he looked at the Third Squad's captain, Wu Shifang.

“Wu Shifang, you’re up next.

Let’s hear what your team came up with.”

Chapter 639: Set for the Early Hours

Wu Shifang proposed a much more cautious action plan.

He believed that the individual members of the Moon of Corrosion were all extremely powerful. If they tried to fight them head-on, even if they won, it would likely be a pyrrhic victory.

So, the best approach was to first wear them down using superior numbers.

Wu Shifang’s suggestion was: “Deploy ten thousand soldiers to lock down Jiangning Plaza! Each one should be equipped with Origin Bullets. Then we use heavy firepower to bomb them out!”

“That way, they’ll either have to endure the bombardment or come out and face ten thousand soldiers armed with Origin Bullets!”

“I don’t believe even the strongest superhuman can hold up against that kind of formation!”

After Wu Shifang finished speaking, the room fell into silence.

The people from Headquarters looked at him with strange expressions.

Even Zhang Yi couldn't help shaking his head.

It wasn't a bad idea, but unfortunately...

Lan Xincheng voiced what everyone else was thinking.

"That's not even remotely feasible."

He pushed his glasses up and looked at Wu Shifang.

"You think Origin Bullets are that easy to manufacture?"

"Even here in the Jiangnan District Headquarters, only a few elite units can be equipped with them. And the supply is strictly limited."

"Forget ten thousand, even arming a thousand soldiers with Origin Bullets is unrealistic."

"So your proposal simply won't work!"

Wu Shifang's face darkened. He clenched his fists and said in a low voice, "But with just a few dozen of us, we might not be able to completely wipe out the Moon of Corrosion! Having more people would be better."

A sharp glint flickered in Zhu Zheng's eyes.

How could he not understand everything Wu Shifang had just said?

But Wu Shifang didn't get it—there just weren't that many resources in the Jiangnan District right now.

Even the Six Investigation Teams had their western divisions deployed elsewhere on missions.

Jiangning City was Wu Shifang's turf, so his anxiety was understandable.

But Jiangnan District couldn't afford to throw all its strength at the Moon of Corrosion.

Zhu Zheng slowly spoke. "Our goal this time is to destroy the Moon of Corrosion organization!"

Then he shifted gears. "But we don't have to wipe them out all in one go."

“These people are cunning. They’ve been playing cat and mouse with us from the start. If they can escape from Linhai City to Jiangning City, then they could just as easily run off again.”

“To surround and eliminate them completely, we’d need to mobilize at least ten times their numbers! That would mean gathering top-tier superhumans from every city in the Jiangnan District.”

“If we did that, we’d risk leaving ourselves vulnerable to attacks from other external organizations.”

As The Art of War says: “When outnumbering the enemy ten to one, encircle them; five to one, attack; two to one, divide; equal in strength, prepare to fight; fewer, prepare to flee; much weaker, avoid battle altogether. Know your enemy and yourself, and you will never be defeated.”

Wu Shifang became a little agitated. “Then what are you suggesting?”

Zhu Zheng replied, “We strike hard and fast! Engage them directly and break their organization! Find out what they’re hiding!”

“That way, even if we can’t finish them all at once, we’ll crush their arrogance.”

“Don’t forget, we’re fighting on home turf. A prolonged war of attrition favors us.”

“Our manpower and supplies can be continuously replenished, while they only have thirteen members. The longer it drags on, the easier it gets for us.”

Zhu Zheng was a strategist at heart, and he was thinking strategically from the very beginning.

He never intended to wipe out every last member of Moon of Corrosion in one shot.

Of course, that would be ideal, but it was far too difficult to pull off.

And the Moon of Corrosion wouldn't be dumb enough to throw their lives away knowing they couldn't win.

Down below, Deng Shentong's expression turned a little impatient as he listened to Zhu Zheng.

Arms crossed, he said lazily, “Maybe there's a simpler way!”

“And that's to just take out their leader right from the start!”

“Once the wolf king falls, the pack will scatter.”

The moment Deng Shentong spoke, he drew everyone's attention.

Understandably so—Celestial Squad was clearly the main force in this operation.

And as their team captain, Deng Shentong was openly recognized as the top combat strength on this mission.

Zhu Shuai chuckled.

He was very familiar with Deng Shentong's personality—bold and flamboyant.

But time and again, Deng Shentong had delivered results.

Zhu Shuai appreciated young people like that—ones with fight and fire.

Lan Xincheng, the secretary beside Zhu Zheng, spoke up. "We don't have much intel on Moon of Corrosion's leader, Phoenixin Ren."

"Even back in Kanto, his personal file was sealed. Based on preliminary assessments, his combat power should be at least on par with a captain of one of the Six Investigation Teams."

“So attempting a decapitation strike would be extremely difficult.”

“Of course, if Captain Deng can pull it off, it would drastically speed up our campaign.”

Deng Shentong tilted his head, and his long silver hair cascaded like a waterfall.

“That part’s mine, then,” he said casually.

His eyes were filled with confidence—not arrogance or ego, just a clear understanding of his own strength.

“Any target I’ve marked... not a single one escapes.”

“As of now, he’s already a dead man.”

Deng Shentong spoke in a soft, almost offhand tone.

That level of confidence only deepened the smile on Zhu Zheng’s face.

Across from Deng Shentong, Baili Changqing, a member of the operations command team, looked a little conflicted.

As someone newly promoted to captain, he didn't have the same confidence as Deng Shentong to say things like that.

And that's the gap in strength.

Once Deng Shentong had spoken, the rest really didn't have much to add.

The picture was clear. Everyone basically understood—they were just discussing the details of the operation.

"Well, if no one else has any issues, let's get to the main point—tomorrow's battle plan," Zhu Zheng said as he swept his gaze around the room.

No one had anything to say.

The thirteen superhumans from the Outer City all knew their role—they were backup. The Celestial Squad was the real main force.

Their job was to draw out the Moon of Corrosion's main forces and create an opening for the Celestial Squad.

Zhu Zheng gestured for Lan Xincheng to explain the plan to everyone.

Lan Xincheng cleared his throat and began outlining the plan they had already drafted.

Today's discussion added a few extra details to it.

And the time for the operation was confirmed: tomorrow at 2:00 a.m.

That's the time when most people are in deep sleep—at their most tired, and most likely to slip up.

Chapter 640: Receiving Weapons

The urgency of time caught Zhang Yi off guard.

He glanced at the satellite phone. It was already 3:30 PM, which meant that in just over ten hours, they'd be setting off for Jiangning City to carry out the mission.

Following the planned outline, Lan Xincheng explained the mission briefing to the three teams.

"The enemy is currently active in Jiangning Plaza, right in the heart of Jiangning City."

“It’s one of the busiest commercial districts in the area. They’ve employed tech that blocks satellite detection, so we can’t monitor them in real-time.”

“When the time comes, we’ll begin by carrying out a full-scale bombardment of Jiangning Plaza.”

“Then, your three teams will serve as the vanguard, advancing slowly from three different directions.”

“When the enemy shows up, your mission is to hold them back and engage in a prolonged fight. The rest will be handled by the operation’s main force — Celestial Squad.”

As for the finer details, Lan Xincheng merely skimmed over them.

Zhang Yi understood that the real core of this mission lay with Celestial Squad.

And what they were going to do didn’t need to be disclosed to too many people.

That was to prevent information leaks and avoid a repeat of the mishap during the first battle.

After Lan Xincheng finished speaking, he looked around and asked again, “Any other questions?”

Xia Lingling let out a cold laugh and folded her arms, completely indifferent.

The others had similar expressions.

They were all very clear on their role and had mentally prepared for it long ago.

But so what if they were just bait?

As long as the mission succeeded, the benefits would be substantial.

Not only could they fulfill their patriotic duty and earn a name for themselves, they could also gain a ton of resources and territory.

Definitely worth the risk.

Lan Xincheng waited a few seconds. Seeing that no one raised any objections, he continued, "Then, please go prepare for battle!"

"Battle prep?"

Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow. He was already fully geared up, so there wasn't anything he particularly needed to do.

Chief of Operations Tu Yunlie slowly stood up and said in a deep voice, “For this operation, Headquarters has prepared specialized gear for you. Follow me in a moment to receive your loadout.”

He paused, then emphasized, “It’s custom gear used by the Yan Yun Guards!”

Everyone’s eyes lit up with curiosity and anticipation.

They’d never used the elite gear issued to the professional units in Blizzard City.

But they’d all heard about it — and knew how powerful it was.

Zhang Yi immediately thought of those black, skin-tight combat suits and the standard-issue cold weapons forged from Adamantine alloy.

And of course — Origin Bullets.

So far, with Lu Keran’s help, Zhang Yi had only managed to replicate the Origin Bullets.

As for the Adamantine weapons and black combat suits — either the materials were too hard to synthesize, or the tech was too advanced for Lu Keran to recreate in the short term.

“Everyone!”

Zhu Zheng stood up, followed by the others.

His face was serious, like a slab of cold black steel.

“This battle concerns the reputation of the Jiangnan District — and the honor of our nation!”

“So I ask you all — fight with everything you have. Make sure these Ronin are wiped out!”

Everyone shouted in unison: “Yes!!”

Their loud and resolute voices rattled the ceiling.

It didn’t matter where these people came from — whether they were kind, wicked, vile, cunning, or just plain survivors.

But in the face of national duty, none of them would hesitate.

This was the kind of glorious moment they could proudly boast about for years to come.

After the meeting, Zhu Zheng kept Deng Shentong, Tu Yunlie, and a few others behind.

As core members, they had more detailed strategies to go over.

Meanwhile, taking Zhang Yi and the other Outer City superhumans to choose their equipment was left to Baili Changqing.

Truth be told, Zhang Yi felt a bit frustrated.

He was a squad captain too — technically on the same level as Deng Shentong.

But clearly, Baili Changqing wasn't part of the inner circle in the operations command.

In Blizzard City, strength was everything. Your ability decided your rank.

Zhang Yi and the others followed Baili Changqing to the armory below.

After several rounds of identity verification, Baili Changqing opened the warehouse door.

What appeared before them was a massive weapons depot — rows upon rows of neatly organized gear!

Firearms, cold weapons, battle suits, tanks, armored vehicles, even armed helicopters!

Baili Changqing turned around with a smile and gestured broadly: “Everyone, you’re free to choose any weapons here. Take as much as you can carry!”

Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow. “Oh?”

Baili Changqing’s smile froze, and he quickly corrected himself: “I mean, anything you can carry on your person. Space ability users aren’t allowed to stash it in their spatial zones.”

Zhang Yi just shrugged indifferently.

He wasn’t that interested in regular gear anyway.

From the moment he stepped in, his eyes had been fixed on the battle suits.

Everyone else rushed into the armory, eyes lighting up at the sight of the cutting-edge weapons inside.

Veteran Yu Zhengyang made a beeline for the anti-material sniper rifles. He opened a heavy weapons case and pulled out a massive Barrett sniper rifle.

Wu Shifang went straight to the battle suit section, picking out a heavy-duty suit of armor.

This suit weighed at least 20 kilograms, with layers of metal plating on the outside and an exoskeletal structure inside to enhance strength.

Perfect for close-combat Enhancement Types like him.

Some knew exactly what they needed and quickly grabbed the right equipment.

Others were still debating what weapons best suited them.

Zhang Yi headed over to the suits and pulled a black, skin-tight suit off the wall.

But the moment he touched it, his brow furrowed slightly.

It didn't feel anything like the one he'd worn at the martial field.

He tried a few other suits — all had the same off-feeling texture.

“What's going on? Was that one just a higher-grade suit?” he thought.

Looking up, Zhang Yi scanned the entire armory.

The gear here was definitely advanced — but all standard issue.

Thermal weapons didn't mean much to Zhang Yi. With White Owl and Thunderstrike, the custom weapons Lu Keran made for him, he was already equipped with cutting-edge personal arsenal.

Those two weapons alone easily outclassed things like the Barrett or Desert Eagle.

As for cold weapons—

Zhang Yi casually picked up a dark dagger and tested its weight.

Sure enough, it wasn't made from Adamantine alloy.

He pretty much got the picture.

The weapons available to them in the Jiangnan District armory weren't the best of the best.

Zhang Yi quietly made his way back to Baili Changqing.

Lowering his voice, he said, "You're sending us out with this stuff?"

Baili Changqing gave a dry chuckle. "We're not shortchanging you. These are the standard weapons used by the Yan Yun Guards."

"Then..."

Zhang Yi looked at him, confused.

Baili Changqing explained, "The suit you wore at the martial field — only investigation squads and a few higher-ups with special clearance are allowed to use that."

"As for Adamantine weapons, same deal. That stuff's not exactly off-the-shelf."

