

Ice Age 711

Chapter 711: Codename [Chaos]

Compound No. 6—something Zhang Ye had never heard of before.

But he quickly figured it out.

The X Compounds were a technology exclusive to the Deng family, something even people in Blizzard City couldn't get their hands on.

“Thanks, I understand now.”

After thinking it through, he held back the impulse to inject himself with the syringe.

He decided to wait until Liang Yue finished her trial run and observe the results first.

No matter the situation, caution had to come first.

Better safe than sorry.

...

Over on Deng Yuanbo's end, he informed Zhu Zheng that Zhang Ye had agreed to take the role of captain for the Tengu Squad.

Zhu Zheng was quite surprised—he had no idea what Deng Yuanbo had offered Zhang Ye to get him to say yes.

Deng Yuanbo just chuckled and brushed it off with a laugh.

Zhu Zheng didn't press the issue. After all, so long as Zhang Ye was willing to lead the Tengu Squad, it was great news for all the major powers in Blizzard City.

He thought it over and instructed his secretary, Lan Xincheng, to call Zhang Ye over—he wanted to speak to him personally, mainly to go over a few mission-related matters.

As a result, Zhang Ye barely had time to rest that afternoon before he was summoned back to the Operations Center.

There, he met with Zhu Zheng.

Zhu Zheng greeted him with a kind smile, his gaze full of satisfaction, just like how he used to look at Deng Shentong.

"I heard from Deng Yuanbo that you agreed to become the Tengu Squad's captain?"

Zhang Ye had silently cursed that name a thousand times—thankfully, he wasn't actually a bootlicker.

I mean, Deng Shentong's team was called Heavenly Gods, and his was called Tengu... seriously?

Shaking off that thought, Zhang Ye stood tall, right fist pressed over his chest.

"For the Jiangnan District, for Blizzard City, for the honor of the Huaxia people! Reforging the glory of Huaxia is our sacred duty!"

"I must consider—could this be the one and only chance in my life to lay down my life for my country?"

Zhu Zheng coughed violently and thought: Kid, give it a rest. Back when I was practically begging you, you wouldn't budge. And now you're acting like some hot-blooded hero—who are you trying to impress?

Even though he didn't know what Deng Yuanbo had offered Zhang Ye, it was easy enough to guess—Zhang Ye wasn't the type to move without seeing the reward first.

And whatever convinced him likely had something to do with the Deng family's genetic technology.

Zhu Zheng spoke to Zhang Ye seriously, "Since you've accepted the position, then you need to shoulder the responsibilities that come with it."

"You'll be taking over what's left of the Heavenly Gods Squad and the Black Robes Squad. These superhumans are all tough characters, especially the ones from Heavenly Gods."

"As the captain, it's your job to bring the team together. You can't keep acting like a lone wolf."

"But as an investigation team captain, you'll also have access to very high-level authority. Lan Xincheng will send the permissions briefing to your communicator shortly."

Zhang Ye had no objections to that.

But after some thought, he raised two requests.

"I brought a few people with me—Liang Yue and Yang Xinxin. My pet Huahua is also very strong. I hope all three can be assigned to the squad."

After all, even temporary members could enjoy the rights of regular ones—for example, equipment like battle suits.

That made him think of the volunteers before the apocalypse. They didn't get paid a cent for their work, but they still walked away with a set of gear.

He wasn't greedy—just a set of black battle suits for each of them would do.

Those things were really handy.

Zhu Zheng smiled and nodded. “Of course, no problem. As captain, you have the authority to appoint your own trusted team.”

Zhang Ye continued, “This squad is only a temporary unit. I’ve already said—I’ll just be acting captain for now. Once the mission is over, I’ll return to Tianhai City to live my carefree, shut-in life.”

“So I don’t want my personal information to be overly exposed. Can I operate under a codename instead of my real name?”

Hiding his strength was crucial.

After this battle, Zhang Ye’s name was bound to attract attention from many factions.

With just his name, organizations all over the world could dig up his entire life history.

In this world, ordinary people's personal data wasn't worth much—it had long been sold off globally.

And personal information contained weaknesses. A minor oversight could lead to his death.

Zhu Zheng pondered his request for a moment, then muttered, “What you’re suggesting... was actually brought up during a recent meeting between leaders of the various districts.”

“We do need to assign codenames to core combat personnel to protect their personal data.”

It made sense.

Even in the military, special forces soldiers used call signs.

And for covert operatives, codenames and aliases were essential for protecting their identities.

Zhang Ye asked, "So that means it's doable, right?"

Zhu Zheng smiled and nodded.

"Of course. In fact, the districts have already started working on the codename system. We've mostly finalized the rules."

He rubbed his chin. "Hmm... the current plan is to use names from ancient mythology. Actually, all investigation team captains are issued official codenames."

"I can secure one for you."

Zhang Ye thought about it and made a request.

"I'd like a codename that doesn't stand out."

"Nothing too powerful, nothing too weak, and nothing too famous. Just something that people will immediately think isn't important."

Zhu Zheng understood Zhang Ye's personality and nodded.

"Alright. I'll go check the list later and see what's available."

"As for getting in touch with the rest of the Tengu Squad, Lan Xincheng and Baili Changqing will coordinate with you."

Zhang Ye nodded. That part was no problem.

After Zhang Ye left, Zhu Zheng sat behind his desk, elbows on the surface, supporting his chin with both hands.

His sharp gaze was like a blade, radiating an intimidating glow.

“Zhang Ye really knows what he’s doing. With him leading the Tengu Squad, everything falls into place!”

From the shadows behind him, Sun Luxuan spoke slowly, like a statue coming to life.

“This way, no one in Blizzard City will be able to challenge your authority.”

“Once the mission to eradicate Shiyue is complete, we’ll dissolve the Tengu Squad and quietly let Zhang Ye leave Blizzard City.”

“That would be the perfect outcome.”

Sun Luxuan looked at Zhu Zheng and smiled. “Only thing is—once that happens, the Tengu Squad won’t have a captain anymore.”

Zhu Zheng’s cold mouth slowly curled into a smile.

“Don’t worry. I already have the perfect candidate in mind.”

...

Not long after Zhang Ye left, Zhu Zheng sent over the list of codenames for him to choose from.

Once he confirmed his selection, it had to be registered with the systems of all six districts.

Each person could only have one official codename—no one was allowed to use one already taken.

If someone really wanted to take a codename from someone else, they'd have to use special methods.

Just as Zhang Ye had thought, names like "Wukong," "Yuanshi Tianzun," "Kong Xuan," and "Erlang Shen" were all already taken.

Among superhumans, there were different levels too. Most were prideful and didn't want to feel beneath others.

So now, most of the remaining codenames were obscure or minor deities.

Zhang Ye stared at the list for a long time, deep in thought.

He muttered, "All the flashy god-tier names are already taken. But if I go for something too obscure, it'll look like I'm deliberately hiding something. That could backfire."

"I need something middle-of-the-road—not too famous, not too forgettable."

He went over the list several times before finally settling on one.

[Chaos].

That was the codename he chose.

Chaos—a symbol of confusion and the unknown.

Though it was one of the great ancient beasts, it wasn't as well-known as Qiongqi or Taotie.

It was a mighty being from the primal wilderness, but one that rarely appeared in well-known stories.

Whether from the literal meaning of the name or its low-key reputation, it suited Zhang Ye perfectly.

After finalizing his decision, he submitted the name to Zhu Zheng.

He requested that all public mentions from Blizzard City refer to him only by his codename—[Chaos].

Chapter 712: The Undying and the Prophet

Zhu Zheng paused for a moment when he received the codename Zhang Ye submitted. Then a smile slowly crept across his face.

As if to say—of course.

That's exactly what fits Zhang Ye's personality.

After the codename system was introduced, the six major districts had even squabbled over it.

Popular codenames were like lucky license plates—everyone wanted one.

Superhumans had clashed many times over a single coveted codename.

Just a hot codename could spark a duel between two top-tier supers.

Names like "Sun Wukong," "Erlang Shen," "Lord Guan," and "Hao Tian" had already swapped owners multiple times.

Zhang Ye picked one like [Chaos], which meant no one would bother coming after him for it.

“This guy... steady. Way too steady.”

Zhu Zheng couldn't help but sigh.

If Zhang Ye weren't so insistent on staying out of Blizzard City, Zhu Zheng would've loved to recruit and nurture him personally.

He'd absolutely be a capable right-hand man.

Especially now that the frontier forces had been wiped out, Zhu Zheng's own power base had taken a major hit.

If things didn't rebalance, even his position might become shaky.

“Zhang Ye, Zhang Ye...”

He muttered the name to himself, already thinking about how to win Zhang Ye over—if he completed this mission successfully.

...

Not long after Zhang Ye left the Operations Center, Baili Changqing found him.

As soon as they met, Baili Changqing gave Zhang Ye a meaningful smile.

“Congrats—you ended up becoming the investigation team captain after all!”

His eyes held a mix of feelings.

Looking back, it really was pretty legendary for Zhang Ye, someone from the outer city, to become a team captain.

Zhang Ye noticed the look and could already guess what was on his mind.

So he asked, “What about you? Does that mean you’re no longer captain?”

Baili Changqing shrugged helplessly. “I was only acting captain to begin with. And now I’ve come to terms with it—if you don’t have what it takes, don’t take the job.”

“These past days I had the captain title, but no one really treated me like one.”

“This way’s a bit easier, honestly.”

Zhang Ye rubbed his nose. “That’s not my fault.”

Baili Changqing nodded. “I get it. At least my family’s living standards haven’t changed.”

Zhang Ye said, “I’m only acting as captain for now. Once the Shiyue mission’s over, the Tengu Squad might get disbanded. I’ll step down too. When that time comes, I’ll recommend you to retake the role.”

He smiled and slung an arm over Baili Changqing’s shoulder. “We’re close, right? If I don’t have your back, who will?”

Having connections up top made things smoother, and he definitely intended to look out for Baili Changqing.

Baili Changqing didn’t confirm or deny it. He’d been through this once before, and it left him with complicated feelings.

Only by becoming strong enough could one earn real recognition.

Just like Zhang Ye.

As long as he was strong enough, even without connections or background, people would still value him.

That was the one upside to the apocalypse—it shattered the old social rules and gave ordinary but capable people a chance to rise.

Baili Changqing said to Zhang Ye, “You just became team captain, so there are things you still don’t know. HQ asked me to brief you on the duties and authority that come with the title. Also, I have two important intel packets to give you.”

Zhang Ye’s expression turned serious the moment he heard the word “intel.”

“What kind of intel?”

“One is the personnel file for the Tengu Squad members. As captain, you’ll need to understand their abilities in order to command them properly.”

“As for the Black Robes Squad, I’m already here, and everyone knows your strength, so they shouldn’t have a problem accepting your leadership.”

“But the Heavenly Gods Squad... since Deng Shentong had such high prestige, his teammates are used to being proud and hard to manage. They might not respect a super from the outer city.”

Baili Changqing winked at him. “If needed, show them who’s boss. Let them know who’s in charge.”

Zhang Ye gave Baili Changqing a weird look.

D*mn, are you just using me to settle old scores?

But if those Heavenly Gods Squad folks really didn't respect him, then yeah—he'd have to teach them a lesson.

"And the other intel file?"

Baili Changqing's smile faded.

"It's the last message Deng Shentong sent to HQ before he died."

"This contains the core intelligence on Shiyue."

Meaning—Deng Shentong had traded his life for this data.

Zhang Ye's expression darkened.

He knew nothing about Shiyue's leader, Fujimiya Jin.

Her abilities, her strength—everything was a blank slate.

Though she defeated Deng Shentong, someone of his level surely forced her to reveal quite a few cards.

This intel was critical!

"Let's go. Let's take a look."

Zhang Ye brought Baili Changqing into the living room, where Yang Xinxin was sitting on the couch hugging Huahua.

Zhang Ye poured a cup of hot water for Baili Changqing, who found a good spot to set up and started playing the footage.

“Let’s watch the intel Deng Shentong sent first,” Zhang Ye said.

Baili Changqing nodded and queued up the recording.

Zhang Ye sat on the couch and pushed the cup of water toward Baili Changqing.

The three of them turned their attention to the screen.

It was the last video Deng Shentong left behind.

Most of the beginning was blank.

Because of his ability to manipulate light, recording devices couldn’t capture a clear image.

Only audio could be heard.

But based on the few lines exchanged between the two, some things still came through.

One thing was clear—Fujimiya Jin had the ability to resurrect after death.

“The Undying? That’s definitely a headache.”

Zhang Ye frowned slightly.

How do you deal with someone you can’t kill?

Though he didn’t believe someone could be truly immortal.

Each time Fujimiya Jin resurrected, she must've consumed some ability or resource.

But where was her limit? Who could possibly know?

And from the sounds of battle, her melee combat skills weren't much worse than Deng Shentong's.

After a long while, the blinding white light faded away.

And in its place came a sea of crimson flames.

Zhang Ye saw Deng Shentong surrounded by fire, in unbearable pain.

He also saw that terrifying figure—naked, wreathed in flames.

Fujimiya Jin let out a crazed grin and charged in again and again.

Even then, Deng Shentong hadn't lost his will to fight.

The sacred light around him clashed with the phoenix fire as he fiercely battled Fujimiya Jin!

Chapter 713: Deng Shentong's Final Words

Deng Shentong killed Fujimiya Jin again and again.

But Fujimiya Jin stood back up every single time.

Deng Shentong's voice came through the video, reaching the ears of the three who were watching.

“This guy... where the hell is his weakness?”

“Is he really immortal?”

“No! That’s impossible. There’s no such thing as an indestructible carbon-based lifeform in this world. There must be something I’ve overlooked!”

...

“But... am I really going to lose?”

“No, something’s off. I shouldn’t be losing—how could I possibly lose?”

“His ability is freakish, yes, but I’m stronger than he is!”

“If I’m really about to lose, then something must be wrong.”

“Ah! That’s it. I get it now. I understand everything!”

“There’s a traitor inside Blizzard City. Someone leaked my abilities!”

The moment Zhang Ye heard Deng Shentong say those words, his grip on the cup tightened instinctively.

His sword-like brows furrowed. That lingering doubt in his mind was now magnified.

There really was a mole inside Blizzard City?

Yang Xinxin stared at the screen with a distant look in her eyes, her expression oddly calm.

But Zhang Ye knew—her mind was racing too.

Baili Changqing's face didn't change. Clearly, he had seen this footage before.

Zhang Ye thought to himself: That must mean the higher-ups in Blizzard City have all seen it already.

Zhu Zheng saw it. Deng Yuanbo saw it.

They all suspect there's a traitor in Blizzard City.

Was that why they were so eager to recommend me as the Tengu Squad's captain?

Could it be... they're using me as bait to lure out the traitor?

No—I can't trust anyone too easily.

Not even Zhu Zheng.

Zhang Ye was like a blind man in a storm. As an outsider, he had no idea what was going on behind the scenes.

He knew nothing about the power struggles among the factions in Blizzard City.

So he couldn't make any reckless judgments about this.

But what he could do was avoid getting dragged into it.

He quickly pulled his thoughts back and continued watching the footage.

In the video, Deng Shentong was clearly at his limit. He was about to collapse.

Facing an enemy who could come back from the dead, he had no solution.

But Fujimiya Jin seemed to know his every move—his powers, his attacks—it was like he'd studied them all in advance.

In the end, Deng Shentong lost the strength to stay on his feet and fell among the ruins.

His weak voice came through.

“Listen... I... cough cough... I know what his ability is.”

“He can... see the future—see how I’m going to attack. Remember this, be careful about it.”

“You have to... counter him with causality.”

In the footage, a giant flaming fist came crashing down on his face.

“Let Zhang Ye...”

Deng Shentong’s final three words.

Then the entire screen was engulfed in a blinding white light.

Everyone knew what that meant: a captain-level operative had activated a self-destruct bomb.

That was the end of Deng Shentong’s video.

Zhang Ye folded his arms and lowered his head in deep thought.

The information left in Deng Shentong's final recording was overwhelming.

Fujimiya Jin could see into Deng Shentong's future?

That ability, combined with immortality, was utterly hopeless to deal with.

And that last phrase—"Let Zhang Ye..."

Just three incomplete words, but they thrust Zhang Ye directly into the spotlight of Blizzard City's top brass.

"Causality..."

Zhang Ye understood what that meant.

If he wasn't mistaken, he carried a very powerful causal force within himself.

One that could potentially reverse the cycle of reincarnation.

He'd once believed his ability to come back from the dead was due to some kind of special awakened power.

He just hadn't figured out what it was yet.

"Maybe I should go ask the Deng Corporation for help someday?"

Zhang Ye felt the urge.

At that moment, Baili Changqing's voice rang out beside him.

"Now that you've seen it, what did you take away from it?"

Zhang Ye turned to him with a faint smile. "A lot. I didn't expect the enemy to be that troublesome."

Baili Changqing said, "But Deng Shentong said you could beat him in the end."

"He didn't finish the sentence. Don't jump to conclusions."

Baili Changqing grinned. "Five members of Shiyue have died so far. All five were taken out by you."

"And now it's basically confirmed—the enemy has someone who can predict the future. But you influence causality. That means you're their natural counter."

Zhang Ye replied, "But that alone isn't enough. How do you beat someone you can't kill?"

Baili Changqing asked, "Can you trap him in your spatial ability? Seal him off that way?"

Zhang Ye said, "The spatial domain doesn't work on living things. It operates by using [Thought]. I can only control inanimate objects with it."

"For a living person, unless they willingly enter the spatial domain, I can't force them in."

Baili Changqing slapped his thigh. "Easy! Just break him into pieces and then toss him in. Problem solved!"

Zhang Ye shot him a deep look.

“Did you really just say that out loud?”

“You think I’m Deng Shentong or something?”

Deng Shentong could kill Fujimiya Jin dozens of times because his offensive power was off the charts.

But Zhang Ye specialized in defense.

Even killing Fujimiya Jin once would be a challenge.

Let alone the fact that his future-seeing ability might also work on Zhang Ye—there was no guarantee it wouldn’t.

As the two discussed, Yang Xinxin suddenly spoke up with a thought-provoking idea.

“I remember... when Deng Shentong fought Fujimiya Jin, the shrine maiden Takeuchi Mayumi was also present.”

Zhang Ye and Baili Changqing looked at her.

“Right, and? Are you saying she had an impact on the battle?”

Yang Xinxin bit her soft pink fingertip.

“Fujimiya Jin’s abilities are Trait-type—immortality, fire, enhanced physique. Based on what we know of supernatural powers, he shouldn’t be able to wield time-based abilities as well.”

“So I suspect... this ability was granted to him by Takeuchi Mayumi.”

“In other words—if we eliminate her first, we can cut Fujimiya Jin’s combat effectiveness by at least thirty percent!”

That suggestion sparked something in Zhang Ye’s mind.

“It is a highly probable theory.”

The three of them continued discussing. They’d gotten quite a bit of intel from Deng Shentong’s recording.

Baili Changqing smiled and said, “Honestly, you don’t need to put so much pressure on yourself.”

“Your main job in this mission is to block Shiyue’s shrine maiden from predicting the future.”

“As for Fujimiya Jin... there’s someone more suitable for that.”

Zhang Ye’s gaze sharpened. “You mean... Gao Changkong?”

Baili Changqing answered without hesitation.

“Gao Changkong’s ability is actually well-suited to countering Fujimiya Jin. Of course, I can’t tell you exactly what it is yet.”

“But if I’m right, he will be the lead on this mission. And you’ll be more like his support—just like before.”

Baili Changqing was not only Gao Changkong's friend but also his fan.

Given his understanding of Gao Changkong's abilities—and his partial understanding of Zhang Ye's—he was firmly convinced that HQ would have Gao Changkong lead the next mission to wipe out Shiyue.

Zhang Ye didn't argue with Baili Changqing. His gaze was calm and unreadable.

Logically speaking, Baili Changqing's reasoning was solid.

But he was, after all, a soldier. He didn't understand what power struggles were really about.

Gao Changkong did indeed have better combat skills and leadership ability than Zhang Ye.

However, his background made it impossible for him to lead this operation.

Overshadowing one's superior—that was the deadliest sin a subordinate could commit, from ancient times to now.

To put it bluntly, even if Gao Changkong earned the most merit in this operation, Blizzard City would still focus its propaganda on Zhang Ye—not on him.

“We'll see.”

Zhang Ye slapped his thigh. “Right, now that I'm the Tengu Squad's captain, that means I can access captain-level weapons and gear, right?”

He pointed toward Yang Xinxin. “I've got three people assisting me. They're going to be temporarily added to the Tengu Squad. I've already run it by Commander Zhu.”

“So they need equipment too.”

Baili Changqing nodded.

“No problem. Just tell me what gear you need, and I’ll have someone deliver it.”

Zhang Ye’s smile only grew wider.

He shook his head. “No need. We’ll go ourselves. I need... a lot of gear.”

Baili Changqing’s eyes widened. Looking at the strange grin on Zhang Ye’s face, he seemed to realize what this guy was about to do.

Not long after, Zhu Zheng—still working in his office—received a report from the quartermaster.

“What? Zhang Ye took a massive amount of weapons? Extremely massive?”

“Commander Zhu, he used his spatial ability to collect a huge batch of weapons. The quantity... is a little outrageous.”

The quartermaster whispered from the corner, glancing back at Zhang Ye, who was happily on a shopping spree in the armory.

He had worked this job for years and had never seen anyone collect gear like this.

Zhang Ye looked like a housewife clearing out a discount store.

Zhu Zheng thought for a moment and then smiled, shaking his head.

“This kid really lives by the motto, ‘Only a fool passes up free stuff.’”

“Fine, whatever. Give him whatever he needs.”

After all, it was just regular hot weapons. In the apocalypse, their effectiveness was already greatly diminished.

And manufacturing them wasn't difficult—so long as you had steel and gunpowder, you could crank out as many as you wanted.

After collecting a huge haul of weapons, Zhang Ye returned to the villa in Zone A.

Soon after, Zhu Zheng would formally announce the formation of the Tengu Squad and Zhang Ye's appointment as its captain.

Zhang Ye didn't care about that at all.

The prestige of Blizzard City meant nothing to him.

What did concern him was how Liang Yue was doing.

Rationally, he knew the Deng family wouldn't try anything on Liang Yue at a time like this.

But he'd trained himself to be cautious for years—he never let go of that sense of potential danger.

Around 9 PM, Liang Yue called.

Zhang Ye picked up immediately.

"Liang Yue, how are you feeling? Anything strange going on?"

On the other end, Liang Yue was wearing nothing but a light blue lab outfit that covered only the essentials, showing off her athletic figure.

Surrounding her were more than a dozen staff members in white hazmat suits. Behind her stood a massive blue experiment chamber.

The staff were still performing final checks.

Hearing the worry in Zhang Ye's voice made Liang Yue's heart warm.

She said, "The prep work is done. I'm about to enter the chamber they prepared for me. The experiment will last three days. I won't be able to contact you during that time."

Zhang Ye was quiet for a moment. He wanted to say something like "take care," but it didn't feel quite right.

After hesitating for a while, he finally said, "I'll be waiting for you."

Liang Yue's smile deepened at the corners of her eyes. "Mm."

After that brief exchange, she handed her phone to a staff member, who stored it securely in a lockbox.

A female technician then walked over and asked Liang Yue to lie down in the chamber.

Liang Yue nodded and followed instructions.

Outside the lab, on the second floor, Deng Yuanbo stood watching with Lian Cheng and the lab director.

The director turned to Deng Yuanbo and asked, "Chairman, are we really going with A-grade [Source] supply for this? That level of experiment costs us a lot."

"It's second only to what we spent raising the young master."

Deng Yuanbo narrowed his eyes and replied calmly, “Do it as I said. In business, big upfront investments bring rich returns later.”

“This time, we must not lose again to Shiyue!”

“And I’m going to use this opportunity... to root out the traitor inside Blizzard City.”

A cold gleam flickered in Deng Yuanbo’s eyes.

Zhang Ye knew that rapidly increasing a superhuman’s strength like this consumed a massive amount of energy.

But he had no idea how terrifying the cost actually was.

The more gifted a superhuman, the more energy it took to boost their powers.

And that included the inevitable loss during the energy transfer.

To put it bluntly—the resources it would take to level up someone like Liang Yue could be used to create ten investigation team-level supers.

That’s the cost of forcing growth.

If someone wasn’t truly a genius, this kind of forced upgrade would only drain their potential.

But Deng Yuanbo had no doubts about Liang Yue.

Her body and spirit had been honed through countless trials.

...

After collecting all his gear, Zhang Ye returned to the Zone A villa and started analyzing strategies against Shiyue together with Yang Xinxin.

He didn't know much about warfare, but he had plenty of experience in battles between superhumans.

The intel Deng Shentong died to obtain was extremely valuable.

It was clear that Fujimiya Jin was going to be an incredibly difficult opponent.

He had immortality, brutal close-combat strength, and future vision empowered by a witch.

All those abilities combined made him overwhelmingly oppressive.

But if a power existed, then so did a way to counter it.

Zhang Ye needed to find the exact method to neutralize Fujimiya Jin—and the other powerful supers under him—before he could even think about taking action.

Thankfully, Shiyue was currently in a resting phase.

They still had some time to prepare.

Chapter 715: Reinforcements

"Xinxin, take a guess—what do you think the people from Eclipse Moon are doing right now?"

Zhang Ye asked.

Since the battle in Jiangning City, Eclipse Moon had disappeared for almost a week.

Back then, they used the Death God of Love, which caused most of the electromagnetic systems in the Jiangnan Region to stop working.

As a result, Eclipse Moon's whereabouts were also impossible to track.

But everyone knew that Eclipse Moon would definitely return.

Otherwise, they wouldn't have risked so much just to cross the sea.

Zhang Ye believed that only by figuring out their behavioral logic could they be ready in advance.

Yang Xinxin said leisurely, "They lost five people in the last battle. Even though technically it was a narrow victory for them and the Jiangnan Region's encirclement failed..."

"...if we look at both sides' strength, it's not a guaranteed win for them."

"The Jiangnan Region has deep resources. Even though the Celestial Squad was wiped out, there are still other forces they can call upon. But Eclipse Moon doesn't have much backup."

"So," she looked at Zhang Ye, her eyes glinting like dark stars, "I think the next time they show up, they'll definitely bring reinforcements!"

Zhang Ye crossed his arms in front of him. "Reinforcements? You mean their allies in Nihon?"

According to the intel, Eclipse Moon was structured as an elite squad and didn't have other teammates.

But as a faction that landed ashore, there must be other ronin who share their ideals.

With Eclipse Moon stirring up such a huge commotion in the Jiangnan Region, there might be others tempted to follow, trying to get a slice of the pie.

But Yang Xinxin said, "The opponents we'll face next might come from any force."

"Since the arrival of the Ice Age, the world has completely changed."

"Hua Xu Nation is still holding on—we have top-tier global power, so we can maintain our core territory. But in the southeastern direction, where there are lots of small countries, they couldn't resist the overwhelming power of nature, and they fell apart."

"If I'm right, the southeastern areas, including the southern seas, are already in complete chaos. Private military groups are popping up like weeds."

"Those violent types could raid the borders at any time. It's not impossible that Eclipse Moon might win them over."

Zhang Ye sighed. "That's exactly why I hate those snake-rat types. They might not be that deadly individually, but when there are too many, they get on your nerves."

The only bit of good news was that those regions were fragmented. First, their population wasn't large—some small countries combined didn't even have as many people as Tianhai City.

Second, their technology was more backward.

So in regions like that, the chances of high-level Awakened emerging were relatively low.

...

While Zhang Ye was contemplating the next plan to wipe out Eclipse Moon, undercurrents were stirring in Blizzard City—no one was idle.

Everyone had their eyes on Eclipse Moon.

To ordinary people, Eclipse Moon's existence was a shame that had to be washed away with blood.

But to the various factions within Blizzard City, this was a struggle for power.

Everyone knew that as long as they could defeat Eclipse Moon, they would gain massive prestige in Blizzard City, and with that, grow their faction's power.

Because of this, Zhu Zheng summoned the top brass of Blizzard City.

The meeting was about the next operation to encircle and annihilate Eclipse Moon.

The next day, the combat command center was unusually lively.

A ton of people were attending. Everyone of status in Blizzard City was there.

Not just Zhu Zheng and Tu Yunlie—even some mid- and upper-level managers showed up.

The main meeting room at the combat command center was packed with hundreds of people.

Such a large-scale gathering was extremely rare in Blizzard City's history.

Zhang Ye arrived at the venue with Yang Xinxin.

He wasn't very well-known—it was only after killing Nishina from Eclipse Moon during the last operation that he got some attention.

But when he showed up at the meeting, barely anyone came up to greet him enthusiastically.

At most, someone would make a polite comment and give him a courteous nod and smile.

After all, Zhang Ye was an Outer City Awakened.

That identity alone meant he'd probably never get into the real inner circle of Blizzard City.

Zhang Ye didn't care about these people's attitudes.

He had never liked dealing with these kinds of people—he preferred being left alone.

But Zhang Ye did notice that there were two clearly distinct social circles in the venue.

One was centered around Tu Yunlie, the Minister of Operations.

He was always dressed in that military uniform, with half his face forever hidden behind his collar, giving off an unfathomable air.

The other was centered around Gao Changkong and his Reincarnation Squad.

Both circles had a bunch of people gathered around them, and they weren't even bothering to lower their voices as they discussed how to get a piece of Eclipse Moon's action.

"Minister Tu, we'll fully support you in this operation against Eclipse Moon!"

"Your skills are clearly better than those so-called investigation captains. Why else would they entrust you with the key mission of defending Blizzard City?"

"Those investigation squads are only more famous, that's all. No one actually thinks you're weaker than them, right?"

"This mission against Eclipse Moon is crucial to the Jiangnan Region. As a top-tier combatant, you must join to ensure success!"

"I'll talk to Commander Zhu myself."

Several high-ranking Blizzard City figures surrounded Tu Yunlie.

Among them were heads of the Administration and Finance Departments, all dressed in sharp suits.

Tu Yunlie didn't say much—his expression was as cold as ever, but he politely bowed his head to thank them.

Over on Gao Changkong's side, he brought along Vice Captain Ji Yushen and Gu Man.

Compared to Tu Yunlie, his circle had even more people.

Gao Changkong had always been well-liked—friendly, never putting on airs.

And among Blizzard City's middle and lower levels, he had overwhelming popularity.

Except in the eyes of some women who favored the super-rich second-gen Deng Shentong, few could match Gao Changkong's public appeal.

"Captain Gao, this time the responsibility definitely falls on you. We hope you won't let us down and complete the mission successfully!"

"If you pull this off, even with your humble background, you can ride this merit to the top."

"With our endorsement, you might even break into the power core of Blizzard City in the future."

Gao Changkong looked a bit embarrassed. "You're all too kind. I, Gao Changkong, have no other ambition. As a soldier, it's my duty to protect the safety of the Jiangnan Region and uphold its honor!"

"For that, I will wipe out any invading enemy without mercy!"

When he mentioned Eclipse Moon, his eyes turned sharp like blades.

The faction reps supporting him were quite satisfied with his attitude and nodded with smiles.

Chapter 716: I Nominate Zhang Ye as the Commander

Zhang Ye and his group had arrived a bit early and found a spot to wait.

Before long, Baili Changqing entered the venue. The moment he saw Zhang Ye, he rushed over to greet him.

"Hey, my captain! Why are you sitting here all alone?"

Baili Changqing walked over with a grin and affectionately threw his arm around Zhang Ye's shoulders.

Zhang Ye did look rather solitary sitting there—at least compared to how popular Gao Changkong and Tu Yunlie were, he really didn't have much of a presence.

Zhang Ye smiled faintly. "Everyone loves crowding around the hot stove—no one likes reheating leftovers. As an Outer City Awakened, even if I've been appointed as the Celestial Hound Squad's captain, I doubt Blizzard City's big shots would bother to notice me."

Baili Changqing stroked his beard-covered chin.

"That can't be helped! No matter the time or place, there's always going to be a strict social hierarchy."

"As an Outer City Awakened, you're looked down on by most of the people in Blizzard City. Honestly, you're treated even worse than someone like Gao Changkong who climbed up from the bottom here."

"Let them think whatever they want."

Zhang Ye shook his head indifferently.

"By the way, Baili, who do you think has the better shot?"

Zhang Ye curled his lips into a meaningful smile as he looked at Baili Changqing.

Baili Changqing's eyes flicked between the two groups—he glanced at Tu Yunlie, then at the wildly popular Gao Changkong.

He sat beside Zhang Ye and spoke in a low voice, "Both of them submitted formal requests to Commander Zhu, hoping to take the lead in the Eclipse Moon operation."

"But from the looks of it, Reincarnation Squad has the upper hand."

"That's because the Yanyun Guard has to protect Blizzard City. Even though Tu Yunlie is powerful and capable of leading large-scale battles, the higher-ups still need him for their own safety."

"So if I had to pick between the two, I'd still vote for Gao Changkong."

Yang Xinxin suddenly spoke coolly, "Are they the only two you're considering?"

Baili Changqing paused.

Then he caught the look on Zhang Ye's face and realized he had overlooked him.

But... Zhang Ye, leading the operation?

Baili Changqing chuckled. "Come on, Zhang Ye, quit messing around. You're not that kind of guy."

He knew Zhang Ye well—he wasn't someone who liked chasing fame or competing for power.

If it were up to him, he'd rather be lying flat at home than getting involved in tasks that had nothing to do with him.

After laughing, he said leisurely, "Besides, you're from the Outer City. I don't mean to look down on you, but let's be honest—there's a lot of exclusionary sentiment in Blizzard City. You might not notice it day-to-day, but it becomes obvious at critical moments."

He shrugged. "Wasn't it the same in your Tianhai City?"

Zhang Ye smiled. "If you say so, then sure."

Not long after, Zhu Zheng arrived at the venue with Lan Xincheng and Sun Luxuan.

Everyone immediately quieted down and greeted Commander Zhu.

Zhu Zheng waved to them in response, then gestured for everyone to take a seat.

All eyes turned expectantly to Zhu Zheng, waiting for him to announce the leader of the third Eclipse Moon encirclement plan.

Blizzard City's power structure was about to shift.

Both Tu Yunlie and Gao Changkong looked expectant.

Zhu Zheng stepped onto the stage and began his speech.

First, he summarized the reasons for the failures of the previous two operations and did a bit of self-reflection.

But very soon, he moved on to discuss the gains made during those missions.

"Here, I want to commend someone in particular. That is Zhang Ye from Tianhai City!"

"During the second operation, he single-handedly took down a member of Nishina's Eclipse Moon squad, protecting the dignity of the Jiangnan Region."

"Because of this outstanding achievement, Zhang Ye's personal bravery, and his loyalty to the Jiangnan Region, I have decided to form a new temporary investigative team centered around the Black Robe Investigation Team and the Celestial Squad. It will be called the Celestial Hound Squad, with Zhang Ye appointed as its captain!"

The crowd broke into a buzz of chatter.

But their expressions weren't overly surprised.

This news had already been circulating among the upper ranks.

Everyone understood that a new force was needed.

And given Zhang Ye's combat experience with Eclipse Moon and his outstanding performance, it made sense for him to lead.

But what Zhu Zheng said next changed the tone for many people.

Because Zhu Zheng didn't mention Tu Yunlie or Gao Changkong at all—instead, he kept singing Zhang Ye's praises, calling him a once-in-a-generation talent.

"Effective immediately, for the sake of operational secrecy concerning high-level combat personnel, Zhang Ye's real name will no longer be used externally. He will be referred to by the codename Chaos."

"Similarly, all elite members of other combat units will also be referred to by their codenames."

Those who had codenames were all elites—like members of the investigation teams or squad leader-level personnel within the Yanyun Guard.

In the past, these codenames were only used during missions.

But the Celestial Hound Squad was just a temporary formation.

And yet Zhang Ye had been assigned a special codename.

Moreover, the phrase "from now on" sounded anything but casual.

As people listened to Zhu Zheng's tone, they sensed that something was off.

Gao Changkong lowered his gaze, deep in thought.

Tu Yunlie frowned.

"What does Commander Zhu mean by this?"

Baili Changqing, sitting next to Zhang Ye, gave him a new look. He lowered his head and murmured in his heart: No... no way, right?

Just as that thought crossed his mind, Zhu Zheng's voice echoed through the room.

"After careful consideration, I have decided that in the upcoming operation against Eclipse Moon, the Celestial Hound Squad will take the lead! Reincarnation Squad will assist the Celestial Hound Squad."

"And Zhang Ye will serve as the top battlefield commander! The Combat Command Center will provide strategic support."

That announcement blew the roof off the meeting hall.

Though everyone present was highly trained and generally wouldn't lose their composure in front of someone like Zhu Zheng, this situation was so shocking it left them speechless.

"What? An Outer City Awakened is going to lead the entire operation?"

"Does he have the qualifications? In terms of reputation or tactical skill, how does he compare to Gao Changkong and Tu Yunlie?"

"This feels way too reckless!"

"But... if Commander Zhu made this decision, he must've thought it through. Maybe this Zhang Ye really is something special."

Some people were quietly considering.

"He managed to kill a member of Nishina's Eclipse Moon. He's strong, no doubt. But can he really command people like Gao Changkong and Tu Yunlie?"

Others quickly picked up on the subtext.

"Is Zhu Zheng worried that someone with too much merit will become a threat? So he picked an easily controlled Outer City Awakened to take this important role?"

"But if he's not up to it, and the third operation fails, the consequences could be huge!"

Everyone had their own thoughts.

Tu Yunlie looked stunned at first, but quickly regained his composure.

Over on Gao Changkong's side, Ji Yushen was visibly upset. He exclaimed, "Who the h*ll is he to command us?"

But Gao Changkong shook his head at him.

"Commander Zhu must have his reasons. And I've heard that this Zhang Ye has something unique about him."

Gao Changkong was good friends with Baili Changqing, so he'd heard a few stories about Zhang Ye.

Chapter 717: A Battle We Can't Afford to Lose

Zhang Ye looked completely calm. Commander Zhu and Deng Yuanbo had already given him a heads-up about this, so he wasn't surprised at all.

On the other hand, Baili Changqing looked completely dumbfounded.

He looked up at Zhu Zheng on the stage, then back at Zhang Ye, who looked totally unfazed—and finally realized that Zhang Ye had known everything in advance.

He smacked his own forehead.

“No wonder you agreed to take the position of Celestial Hound Squad captain! So Commander Zhu promised you such a big reward.”

Once the Eclipse Moon operation succeeded, the reward Zhang Ye would get would be massive. He could even become a hero across the entire Jiangnan Region.

Even within all of Hua Xu Nation, stories about him would start spreading among the people.

Honestly, if Baili Changqing had such a chance placed in front of him, he’d be scrambling to seize it too.

Zhu Zheng looked toward Zhang Ye. “Captain Zhang, why don’t you come up and say a few words?”

Zhang Ye immediately stood and walked up to the stage under everyone’s gaze.

His eyes swept across the room, and he gave a standard official speech—nothing worth repeating line by line.

“I’ll do everything in my power to take down these rogue criminals and protect the dignity of the Jiangnan Region—and all of Huaxia!”

“Reviving national pride is a mission we cannot shirk!”

“Thank you.”

“Oh, and just a note—from now on, please use my title during work. No need to call me by my real name.”

After finishing the formalities, Zhang Ye stepped down from the stage calmly and confidently.

Given the timing, Zhu Zheng didn’t waste too much time with talk.

The meeting ended quickly. He then asked Gao Changkong, Tu Yunlie, and Zhang Ye to stay behind for a private conversation.

The point was simple: to have Gao Changkong and Tu Yunlie express their support for Zhang Ye’s leadership.

Tu Yunlie was very straightforward. As a professional soldier, he did have ambition—and some doubt about Zhang Ye’s abilities.

But once the higher-ups made a decision, he wouldn’t go against it.

Gao Changkong also smiled and stated that he would obey the region’s orders and fully support Zhang Ye’s work.

Zhu Zheng turned to Zhang Ye. “Next, your appointment as captain will be announced to the entire city. You’ll be promoted publicly under the codename Chaos.”

“That’s our job on the publicity end. Meanwhile, you need to start contacting your team members and begin training as soon as possible. What’s most important is getting to know your squad and earning their trust.”

Zhang Ye nodded. “I understand. But I have a question—do we have any intel on Eclipse Moon right now?”

Zhu Zheng shook his head.

“Ever since they disappeared, there’s been no movement at all. We even suspect they left the mainland by sea and returned to Nihon to recruit reinforcements.”

Zhang Ye frowned. “Back to Nihon?”

Zhu Zheng said, “That is their home base, after all.”

Then he let out a cold laugh. “With what they’ve done here, they’ve probably built up some reputation back home in Nihon too. I’m sure they’ll rally more ronin to follow them.”

“Perfect timing, too. I’ve been itching to turn this mess around with a solid win.”

Everything was still unknown.

Zhu Zheng added, “Take this time to really get familiar with your team.”

He placed his hand on Zhang Ye’s shoulder and gave it two firm pats, his eyes full of expectation.

“We’re going to build you into a hero. The hopes of everyone in the Jiangnan Region rest on your shoulders. So you need to give it everything you’ve got.”

“Don’t feel too much pressure. We’re very well prepared this time. If necessary, Tu Yunlie and the Yanyun Guard will also be deployed.”

Zhang Ye’s pupils widened slightly.

“You... you’re even sending in the Yanyun Guard?”

The Yanyun Guard was the key force protecting Blizzard City. If they left, the city's defense would be greatly weakened.

Clearly, Zhu Zheng had made up his mind.

Zhu Zheng nodded. "There are no enemies within the region anymore. They're all outside. I've made thorough preparations—no need for you to worry."

Zhang Ye wasn't worried about Blizzard City's defense.

If Tu Yunlie and the Yanyun Guard, Reincarnation Squad, and their own Celestial Hound Squad were all mobilized—

Then this operation's force would be at least three times stronger than the last one.

Based on Zhang Ye's analysis of the Celestial Squad's combat strength, unless Eclipse Moon found even more powerful allies, the Jiangnan Region basically had no chance of losing this fight.

Zhang Ye nodded, feeling more at ease.

"I got it."

...

Meanwhile, Gao Changkong was drinking tea in the first-floor lounge of the command center. Sitting next to him were his girlfriend Gu Man and Baili Changqing.

As for his vice captain Ji Yushen—who had always been hot-tempered—he'd had a lot to say about Zhang Ye being made the operation lead.

So Gao Changkong had sent him away.

Baili Changqing looked at Gao Changkong and said with some regret, “In terms of ability, you’re a better fit to lead this operation than Zhang Ye. But...”

He didn’t finish the second half of his sentence—because that would’ve touched on some complicated internal politics in Blizzard City.

There wasn’t anything Baili Changqing could do to change that.

It wasn’t that he looked down on Zhang Ye.

It was just that, as a commander, Zhang Ye really didn’t measure up to Gao Changkong.

Even Zhang Ye himself would admit that.

However, Gao Changkong just smiled and shook his head, seemingly unbothered.

Still, a fleeting trace of regret in his eyes couldn’t be completely hidden.

“If that’s what HQ decided, they must have their reasons. Commander Zhu wouldn’t gamble the region’s safety.”

“No matter who takes command, I’ll do everything I can to cooperate.”

Baili Changqing smiled. “It’s just a title, really. When it comes to the actual battlefield, Zhang Ye’s going to need your help anyway.”

A sly glint flashed in Gu Man’s phoenix eyes.

“But that title does matter.”

Baili Changqing's face turned a little resigned.

Of course that title mattered.

Leading a force that decisively defeated the Nihon ronin organization—that kind of reputation could allow someone to rise quickly within Blizzard City, gain immense prestige, and even earn a shot at entering the city's power core.

"He's not someone who craves fame—and he's not really interested in joining Blizzard City either."

Baili Changqing explained.

Gao Changkong smiled faintly. "Maybe that's exactly why they chose him."

Zhang Ye walked out of Zhu Zheng's office and met up with Yang Xinxin, who had been waiting outside with a cup of coffee. The two of them headed downstairs together.

When they reached the first floor, they saw Baili Changqing already waving at them from across the lobby.

"Hey, Zhang Ye! Over here!"

Zhang Ye spotted Gao Changkong and Gu Man. He wasn't sure what kind of attitude they'd have toward him.

Gao Changkong was bound to feel disappointed—maybe even harbor some resentment.

Zhang Ye was prepared for that. But since they'd have to work together to take down Eclipse Moon, interacting with the Reincarnation Squad's leader was unavoidable.

Zhang Ye walked over and greeted them with a smile.

“Captain Gao, Miss Gu—we meet again.”

Chapter 718: Death Is Reincarnation

When he saw Zhang Ye, Gao Changkong gave him a polite smile.

He extended his hand and said, “Zhang Ye, congratulations on becoming the captain of the Celestial Hound Squad. From now on, we’re teammates—looking forward to working with you!”

Seeing that Gao Changkong’s attitude was pretty decent, Zhang Ye naturally didn’t slap away a smiling face and shook his hand.

“I’m just a temporary captain. Once the mission is done, I’ll step down. I’ll still be relying on you for a lot of guidance in the coming operation, Captain Gao.”

Gao Changkong replied, “Oh, not at all. Are you free today? I’d like to treat you to a meal. We can also talk about our upcoming collaboration.”

Zhang Ye had no reason to refuse.

With Gao Changkong footing the bill, they headed to a nice restaurant in Area A.

These days in Blizzard City, all overly luxurious restaurants had been shut down.

Even people with status and rank typically dined at small to mid-sized places—for the sake of conserving food and resources.

Middle-class consumption was still acceptable, but extravagance was forbidden—at least for the vast majority of people.

Zhang Ye still vividly remembered that meal at the Deng residence.

The five of them went to an elegant little restaurant. They didn't ask for a private room, just picked a quiet spot by the window.

After exchanging some small talk, they ordered a few dishes.

In this city, meat dishes were relatively cheap, but getting fresh meat was nearly impossible.

As for vegetables, only dehydrated ones were available—steam-cooked before serving, but they always tasted off.

Even so, this was considered top-tier dining in Blizzard City.

Ordinary people could only eat canned food on a daily basis.

Other than Yang Xinxin, everyone else could drink a little.

Gao Changkong's girlfriend, Gu Man, clearly came from a prestigious background. Her manners were elegant, and she could hold her liquor without any hesitation.

Gao Changkong got straight to the point.

"I've already received the full update from Commander Zhu about your role, Captain Zhang. Among the Eclipse Moon Awakened, there's someone who can predict the future. But you're able to block that ability."

"So, I'd like to use that as the foundation for crafting our strategy."

"Because I believe the reason the Celestial Squad was defeated was precisely because the enemy foresaw all their moves."

"I don't want history to repeat itself, so I'd like your support in countering that ability during our operation."

Zhang Ye nodded and replied, "I'm not an Awakened who's good at offense. The commander chose me to lead only because I'm more steady, and because I can neutralize the enemy's foresight."

"So when it comes to actual combat with Eclipse Moon, I'll be counting on you for the heavy lifting."

Gao Changkong gave a light smile.

"Honestly, the first step in cooperation is understanding each other. Right now, we don't know much about each other's abilities."

He put down his glass of baijiu. "So let me go first and introduce my power."

Zhang Ye's eyes flashed with surprise.

Gao Changkong was going to reveal his ability?

That was the most closely guarded secret of any Awakened—not even family members might know.

"That's too generous. It's your precious secret, after all," Zhang Ye said politely.

But Gao Changkong just replied, "Actually, my ability isn't much of a secret anymore."

Seeing Zhang Ye's skeptical look, Gao Changkong explained, "In Blizzard City, the records on Awakened are complete—especially for squad captains. The higher-ups already know everything."

“We all work in the same place, interact often, and sometimes even fight or cooperate. So it’s impossible to keep everything under wraps.”

“Besides, my ability is a bit unique. Even if people know about it, it’s not something I’m worried about.”

As he said that, Zhang Ye subtly glanced at Baili Changqing.

Baili Changqing smiled. “He’s telling the truth—I can vouch for that.”

An ability that didn’t need to be kept secret?

Zhang Ye was definitely curious now.

Come to think of it, Bian Junwu and Deng Shentong were like that too.

Their powers were so overwhelming that even knowing what they could do wouldn’t help you beat them—unless your power was on the same level.

“Well then, I’m all ears,” Zhang Ye said.

Gao Changkong smiled as he revealed his ability.

“My ability is reincarnation. Death is Reincarnation!”

“That’s right—just like the name of our Reincarnation Squad.”

“I can reincarnate between life and death. Every time I die, I return to a point in time before my death.”

“As for how far back I go—I’ll keep that part a little secret.”

“In short, I’m basically unkillable. And I can use reincarnation to gather intel ahead of time. It allows me to dodge deadly situations and effectively analyze the enemy.”

After hearing that, Zhang Ye let out a long exhale on the spot.

“Another unkillable ability user, huh?”

First it was Phoenixin Ren, and now here’s another guy with a reincarnation-type ability.

What the h*ll?

Was this Re:Ice Age from Scratch or something?

These squad captains—each one’s more of a monster than the last.

Hearing Zhang Ye’s remark, Baili Changqing couldn’t help but quip, “Aren’t you the same?”

Gao Changkong smiled at Zhang Ye.

“My ability, in a sense, can even bypass foresight.”

He folded his hands on the table, looking completely confident.

“I’ve studied the enemy’s abilities. Even though there’s an element of causality involved, the range of what she can predict is limited.”

“Otherwise, that kunoichi wouldn’t have been killed by Deng Shentong. And the others wouldn’t have been taken out by you.”

“So their power is not all-knowing.”

“If I run into them, I can use the first encounter to test their powers and tactics.”

“Then I trigger reincarnation and adjust my approach accordingly.”

Zhang Ye caught onto something.

“Your ability can only trigger once?”

Gao Changkong gave him a nod of approval.

“Good eye! From the moment the time loop is triggered, I return to that point once per cycle. The power can only be used once per day.”

He gave an example. “Say I trigger the ability right now, at 12:51 PM. The next time I can use it is when the timeline circles back—so tomorrow at 12:51 PM.”

“All of this is already recorded in the region’s archives. I have no reason to lie to you, so please trust me.”

Even so, it was still an insanely overpowered ability.

Baili Changqing added at just the right moment, “So far, very few people have ever forced him to trigger it. Usually, he’s the one deciding when to use it.”

Zhang Ye nodded in understanding.

He looked at Gao Changkong. “So in other words, you’re plenty strong even without using your ability.”

Gao Changkong smiled brightly and spread his hands. "If you want to be a captain, a few tricks won't cut it. You need real power!"

Chapter 719: Testing Each Other

Zhang Yi looked gently at Gao Changkong sitting across from him.

Gao Changkong was tall and handsome, with the sunny and energetic vibe of a basketball player. It was easy for him to leave people with a positive, uplifting impression.

Zhang Yi quietly took a sip of Gujing Tribute.

"Then I'll talk a bit about my abilities too!"

He briefly introduced his powers.

Aside from hiding the Void Spear, he spoke openly about all the others.

There was no point in keeping those things secret—Jiangnan Region had already collected that information anyway.

By speaking up, he came across as more honest.

However, he only talked about what his powers did, not their actual limits.

For instance, how destructive Divine Power really was, how much force the Dimensional Gate could absorb, or how far he could travel using spatial teleportation.

He knew full well—just like he had hidden Void Spear and his actual combat strength—Gao Changkong was surely hiding something from him too.

Knowing just the abilities without the data wasn't enough to devise a countermeasure anyway.

Gao Changkong hadn't told him how far back Death Equals Reincarnation could rewind, either.

After hearing Zhang Yi's explanation, both Gao Changkong and Gu Man were silent for a moment.

Because based on the intel Zhang Yi had shared, he only seemed like a defensive Awakened.

If his defense rated a ten, then his offense might be just a one.

Sure, Divine Power was strong, but the rest of his attacks were underwhelming.

Most of the time, Zhang Yi relied heavily on firearms for offense.

Still, they didn't know Zhang Yi's stats now.

So they couldn't be sure just how powerful he was when equipped with his exclusive weapon Thunder Punishment, spatial powers, and paired with the Origin Bullet.

Both sides had given a basic intro of their powers—it was at least enough for a general understanding.

This way, even if they had to work together next, they wouldn't be complete strangers.

"In any case, I hope we can work well together and complete this mission."

"Moon of Corrosion must be wiped out. No matter what, it has to be done! Only by destroying Moon of Corrosion can we achieve peace!"

Gao Changkong looked serious as he spoke to Zhang Yi.

Zhang Yi nodded. "I feel the same way."

They had a simple meal together, and the conversation went fairly well.

Thanks to Baili Changqing smoothing things over, the atmosphere wasn't too awkward—even though both Zhang Yi and Yang Xinxin weren't the type to talk much with strangers.

This meal could be seen as Gao Changkong's way of showing his stance to Zhang Yi.

To prove he held no resentment over losing command.

Not just to Zhang Yi, but also as a show of attitude to the higher-ups in Blizzard City.

After dinner, Zhang Yi brought Yang Xinxin back to the villa.

On the way, his expression stayed rather serious.

Even Yang Xinxin couldn't help but ask, "Brother, do you have some thoughts about Gao Changkong?"

Zhang Yi looked up at her and smiled faintly.

"Not really. Who he is doesn't matter to me."

"It's just... I'm really curious about his ability."

Zhang Yi sat on the sofa, and Yang Xinxin softly settled beside him. Her big eyes stared at his profile, sparkling like a sky full of tiny stars.

Zhang Yi leaned back and spoke slowly, "I was just thinking—how far back can his Death Equals Reincarnation power really rewind?"

"If every rebirth lets him go back three days, then that means he has three times the time of a normal person."

"Seven days, and that's seven times. Ten days... ten times!"

His gaze turned solemn. "If that's the case, as long as he keeps using this power, he'll have way more time than anyone else."

"And if he can also predict the future trajectory, then the number of things he can do is almost limitless."

"Even if he had no talent, just using it to train himself, he could still become a top-tier expert!"

"Not to mention, he's already a basketball star—with a body far superior to normal people."

"So yeah," Zhang Yi crossed his arms, "a time-based glitch-type ability like that must have granted him incredible power!"

That was what Zhang Yi was worried about.

Someone who could manipulate the rules of time had nearly limitless potential.

Their growth rate would be far beyond the average.

Zhang Yi was starting to understand how Gao Changkong managed to rise from the bottom to his current status.

But then Yang Xinxin's lips curled up slightly.

Tilting her head playfully, she asked, "But, brother... do you really believe what Gao Changkong told you about his powers?"

Zhang Yi paused for a second.

"Gao Changkong definitely didn't reveal everything. But when it comes to abilities, there's not much point in lying to me."

"His power isn't exactly a big secret among the upper ranks of Blizzard City anyway."

Yang Xinxin's obsidian eyes twinkled.

"Mm... still, I feel like there's something really strange about his ability."

"Can a human really bend this world's timeline?"

Her words brought Zhang Yi's thoughts back to his own rebirth.

He nodded. "Maybe it's possible."

Yang Xinxin couldn't understand why he was so sure.

"But based on what he said, he can freely twist time and keep altering history within a single-day loop."

"That's no longer a human domain."

"It's the realm of gods."

Yang Xinxin said softly.

Zhang Yi was quiet for a long moment.

Finally, he said, "Maybe his ceiling isn't just Delta-level Awakened. But... who knows?"

He shrugged.

Other people's powers—especially time-related ones—were nearly impossible to verify.

After all, he could loop time, and you couldn't.

Well... technically, Zhang Yi could too.

But he hadn't found the key to unlocking that part of his power yet.

He couldn't exactly kill himself just to run a test.

That would be totally messed up.

"Anyway, there's no need to worry about that for now."

"As the captain of the Celestial Hound Squad, I need to meet my team. Also, I need to integrate the Black Robe Squad with the Celestial Squad to prepare for Moon of Corrosion's next move—whenever that may be."

Zhang Yi had no personal grudge against the Reincarnation Squad.

So there was no need to be overly guarded around them.

At most, when carrying out missions, they might compete for credit.

But one thing Zhang Yi was sure of—

When it came to eliminating Moon of Corrosion, there was no disagreement between them.

While Zhang Yi was contemplating how to merge the squads, back in Blizzard City, a campaign to turn him into a god quietly began.

Chapter 720: Inhabited by a God

Out of nowhere, the news about the Celestial Hound Squad captain, codename Chaos, flooded the entire social network across Blizzard City.

Reportedly, this newly appointed investigation captain came from a poor family background—an Awakened from the Outer City.

But relying on his immense strength and exceptional character, he carved out a name for himself in his city.

Allegedly, he was exceptionally intelligent from a young age, incredibly gifted, and beloved by all his neighbors.

It was said he had top academic scores, and because his family was poor, the entire village pooled together a hundred eggs just to get him into college.

When he returned from school, it coincided with the arrival of the Apocalypse. To protect the land that raised him and repay the neighbors who had helped him, he resolutely took up the duty of being Tianhai City's guardian deity!

It was he who safeguarded peace in the city!

It was he who thwarted the Bai Xue Jiao conspiracy in a time of crisis!

It was he who, during the assault on Moon of Corrosion, took on the west alone and killed five of their notorious members!

And this man—he walks in the darkness, guarding the light for the people of the Jiangnan Region.

Yet even after doing so many touching things, he refused to reveal his name.

When people asked him who he was, he had only one reply: "I'm just an ordinary man protecting peace in his corner of the world!"

He was the civilian hero of the Jiangnan Region—codename Chaos!

From the morning news onward, Blizzard City had been using every possible channel to publicize Zhang Yi's story.

However, as Zhang Yi had requested, all critical personal details had been kept hidden.

His place of origin, real name, and date of birth were all unknown.

Only with this level of confidentiality could they ensure the protection of his private information.

But the media campaign clearly worked.

Because the Blizzard City PR team had crafted an inspirational image of a poor yet honorable hero, Zhang Yi quickly captured the attention of the entire population.

Even Gao Changkong's aura as a civilian hero dimmed considerably.

"An Awakened from the Outer City actually killed five members during the Moon of Corrosion operation!"

"Wait, didn't I hear that five were killed in total? Are you saying this Chaos guy took out all five by himself?"

"My god, doesn't that mean he's even stronger than the Celestial Squad? Better than Deng Shentong?"

"There are such powerful Awakened even in the Outer City. Amazing! Our Huaxu Nation really is full of talent—even in the face of the Apocalypse, we still have heroes stepping up to save the people!"

To be blunt, in the eyes of Blizzard City citizens, Awakened from the Outer City had even lower status than those from District E.

So for a time, Zhang Yi became a symbol of inspiration.

People would say, "Look at him—he grew up in such harsh conditions, and still managed to rise up. What excuse do you have not to work hard?"

Although some still doubted that Chaos was just a puppet created by Blizzard City's higher-ups...

Zhang Yi's achievements were solid and indisputable.

He had indeed made significant contributions in Tianhai City and during the operation against Moon of Corrosion.

Even those with ulterior motives couldn't find a single weak spot to criticize.

With such a shining image, everyone wanted to see the legendary Awakened from the Outer City for themselves.

Even though he lived in District A, the daughters and wives of high-ranking officials would often sneak over just to catch a glimpse of him nearby.

Some even tried pulling strings to invite Zhang Yi over for lunch at their homes.

All of these requests were blocked by people from Lan Xincheng's side.

After all, the goal of making Zhang Yi a godlike figure wasn't to turn him into some ladies' man—

It was to make it easier to carry out missions later.

Meanwhile, in the underground lab of the Deng Family Estate, the custom-designed experiment for Liang Yue had finally reached its final stage.

She had stayed in the experimental pod for three whole days, undergoing numerous body modification procedures.

The amount of pain she endured was unimaginable to ordinary people.

But thanks to her battle-hardened body and iron will, Liang Yue endured it all.

Now came the moment to test the results.

Inside the underground lab at the Deng Family Manor, there was a massive white experimental chamber.

Liang Yue wore a black bodysuit with data sensors stuck all over it.

She looked almost the same as before—

Because her physical condition had already been trained to the limit.

She had practiced martial arts since age three, training daily rain or shine for decades.

Her body had become the perfect killing machine.

Paired with her iron will, she was the ideal test subject.

Outside the lab, behind bulletproof glass, stood a large group of researchers in white lab coats.

Deng Yuanbo and Lian Cheng stood prominently among them, quietly observing the results.

A researcher spoke into the mic, "Miss Liang, please begin the third impact test!"

Liang Yue twisted her wrist, then looked at the massive test machines around her.

Grip strength meter, speed tester, power measurement devices...

All kinds of specialized equipment designed for Awakened testing.

Liang Yue walked up to a barbell.

Each end was stacked with massive weights—totaling several thousand kilograms!

But she bent her waist slightly and raised it with just one hand!

During the speed test, her full sprint caused a sonic boom that shattered the instrument.

And the power-testing machine? It couldn't even take one punch from her!

The test technician looked at the glaring red "Error" message on the computer screen, and said helplessly to Deng Yuanbo:

"This is the third time. It's not a malfunction. It's her strength—it's beyond our lab's limits!"

"This result is a first. She's even surpassed Young Master Shentong and Divine Fist Liao Honglei!"

He adjusted his black-rimmed glasses and looked at the woman in the chamber, now wrapped in steaming blue mist.

"There's a god living inside her!"

Deng Yuanbo's breathing grew heavy as he stared at this uncut jade of a woman in the lab.

He actually felt a tinge of envy for Zhang Yi.

Such a gifted Awakened had been brought into Zhang Yi's team.

At the same time, he sighed, "What a waste of talent!"

If they could have trained Liang Yue themselves, she could've easily become a squad leader during these six months of apocalypse!

She'd been left unused for far too long.

But then again, wasn't Zhang Yi himself a terrifying anomaly?

"Forget it, best not to make a move on her for now. Build a good relationship with Zhang Yi—if needed in the future, they'll be mine to command anyway."

Deng Yuanbo thought to himself.

He turned his head and instructed Lian Cheng, "Have Zhang Yi come and collect his teammate."