

Ice Age 721

Chapter 721: The New Liang Yue

The sky was overcast, snowflakes drifting down. This endless snowfall had lasted for half a year already, with no sign of stopping.

Zhang Yi and Yang Xinxin arrived at the Deng Family Estate.

They were waiting in Deng Yuanbo's sitting room.

Though Zhang Yi tried to keep a calm expression, the way he kept glancing toward the door betrayed the nervousness and anticipation in his heart.

What would Liang Yue be like now?

He thought to himself, feeling a mix of excitement and unease.

Before long, Liang Yue arrived.

Deng Yuanbo and Lian Cheng brought her in, and Zhang Yi could already hear laughter from the hallway.

They seemed to be getting along quite well.

Zhang Yi and Yang Xinxin saw Liang Yue.

She still looked the same as before—sharp sword-like eyebrows raised confidently, her hair tied in a high ponytail, and her well-toned body wrapped in a white fitted outfit.

It didn't seem like much had changed.

But sometimes, to understand a person, you had to look past appearances.

Zhang Yi knew that deep down, something in her must have changed.

The moment she saw Liang Yue, Yang Xinxin excitedly ran over and hugged her teacher tightly.

"Miss Liang, are you okay?"

Zhang Yi also wanted to ask her about the experiment, but with Deng Yuanbo and Lian Cheng right there, he restrained the urge.

He calmly walked up to Liang Yue.

"So, how are you feeling now?"

Liang Yue looked up to meet Zhang Yi's gaze. She smiled faintly and nodded.

"I feel great right now. I really have to thank Mr. Deng for all his help."

Zhang Yi thought to himself: Looks like Liang Yue's strength has increased dramatically.

Since there were others around, he didn't bring up anything too specific.

Instead, he smiled at Deng Yuanbo. "Mr. Deng, thank you very much."

Deng Yuanbo responded with a mild smile. "This was part of our agreement. I told you—if you could eliminate Moon of Corrosion, both of us would benefit."

Zhang Yi said with a grin, "Well, since you put it that way, I won't stand on ceremony."

Looking at Liang Yue, a thought suddenly came to Zhang Yi—if all his teammates could go through Deng Family's enhancement process, wouldn't the entire squad level up several tiers?

With that idea in mind, and since Deng Yuanbo still needed him, Zhang Yi brought it up.

After hearing the request, a deeper smile formed on Deng Yuanbo's lips.

At that moment, Lian Cheng, the butler, stepped in to explain:

"Mr. Zhang, you might not realize just how many resources it takes to enhance an Awakened's strength!"

"And not everyone can endure the procedure."

Zhang Yi sighed. "I figured it wasn't going to be that simple."

Deng Yuanbo chuckled, "While they might not progress as quickly as Miss Liang did, we can still improve their physical condition a bit and enhance some of their strength."

Zhang Yi gave a slight smile, already doing calculations in his head.

He had only asked casually and wouldn't be so tactless as to make demands outright.

After all, this was an exchange of benefits, and he had no personal ties to the Deng Family. They had no reason to help him for free.

"I understand. Hopefully, we'll have a chance to work together in the future."

After some small talk, Deng Yuanbo didn't press for anything either.

He was as friendly as an NPC who just came to hand out buffs.

But Zhang Yi didn't dare take him lightly for even a second.

This old fox was far more skilled in power games than he was.

Zhang Yi found an excuse and left with his group.

Deng Yuanbo didn't stop them—on the contrary, he cheerfully had Lian Cheng escort them out.

He even arranged for a Deng Family car to take them home.

Before they left, he handed Zhang Yi a gold brooch.

And told him it was a relic left behind by Deng Shentong.

"With this, it'll be much easier to get the Celestial Squad members to cooperate."

Zhang Yi couldn't help but feel a little impressed—Deng Yuanbo had really thought of everything.

Though for Zhang Yi, he didn't need outside help to rein in a few subordinates.

On the way back, with the Deng Family driver present, Zhang Yi didn't ask Liang Yue too many questions.

But the moment they got home, he couldn't stop talking.

He asked eagerly, "What exactly did the Deng Family's experiment involve? How much stronger are you now? Are you feeling any side effects?"

Liang Yue took off her coat and hung it on the rack.

Seeing Zhang Yi's eager and slightly nervous expression, she smiled.

"The experiment was quite strange. They put me inside a transparent organic-glass chamber. Then they injected me with some drugs and did some... very strange procedures."

Thinking back to the experiment, a chill crept through Liang Yue's veins.

She suddenly shivered.

"It really felt like I was reborn. Literally—reborn."

"Over those three days, my entire skin was replaced. Even my blood and organs changed noticeably."

"Since I had to stay awake the whole time, the sensation wasn't something normal people could bear!"

Her expression turned serious.

Zhang Yi couldn't help but swallow hard.

"It was that painful?"

Liang Yue nodded.

"If someone had weaker physical condition or poor mental strength, they might've died halfway through or had a complete mental breakdown."

Yang Xinxin couldn't help but walk over and gently hug her.

"Miss Liang, you went through so much pain..."

Her voice was full of heartache.

She had always deeply respected this kind and pure-hearted teacher.

Zhang Yi went quiet.

When Deng Yuanbo had brought it up, he hadn't mentioned how painful the process was.

But he had said the requirements for candidates were very high.

And he had specifically requested Liang Yue by name.

Zhang Yi originally thought that was because he had only brought Liang Yue and Yang Xinxin to Blizzard City.

Now he realized it wasn't that simple.

Because this kind of accelerated-growth experiment was not something ordinary people could survive.

Zhang Yi looked at Liang Yue. "You really suffered."

But Liang Yue simply smiled and shook her head.

"This was my choice. They did warn me beforehand."

"Though it was extremely painful, the gains were enormous!"

She clenched her fist. Even she was surprised by her newfound strength.

For the first time in her life, she felt like her body was a fully-fueled sports car, ready to roar at full power!

Zhang Yi stared at Liang Yue, trying to assess her current combat capabilities.

Her combat technique had always been top-notch.

Her only weakness was having devoured too few Awakened, which kept her stuck at an average Delta-level.

Based on his assessment, her overall strength used to be on par with people like Xiao Honglian and Xing Tian.

So now—what level had her power reached?

A new plan quietly formed in Zhang Yi's mind.

A sly smile crept across his face.

"I think... we should find you a sparring partner to test your strength!"

Naturally, the "sparring partner" he meant was one of the members of his Celestial Hound Squad.

Chapter 722: Provocation

The next day, in the underground training arena on the first basement level of the operations center, Zhang Yi summoned all members of the Celestial Hound Squad to gather.

This was their first full team meeting.

As for the Black Robe Squad, there was no issue—Zhang Yi got along fairly well with them, and with Baili Changqing smoothing things over, everyone naturally accepted Zhang Yi's leadership.

But the Celestial Squad was a different story.

Deng Shentong had held huge influence over them.

He was powerful, extraordinarily gifted, and carried a charismatic personality.

Zhu Zheng had once said to his face that he had a noble spirit.

Not only was he a gifted leader, he was also a wealthy second-generation heir—and extremely generous with his team.

Who wouldn't like someone like that?

But now, shortly after Deng Shentong's death, a random Awakened from the Outer City had come to take his place.

The remaining three members of the Celestial Squad clearly weren't happy about it.

The massive training ground was wide and empty—usually used by various squads for regular drills.

The scheduled meeting time was 9:00 a.m.

Zhang Yi arrived at the training ground with Yang Xinxin, Liang Yue, and Hua Hua.

The Black Robe Squad's six members were already there on time.

Baili Changqing cheerfully waved at Zhang Yi.

"Captain, our people are all here!"

Wu Di and the others looked at Zhang Yi, with complex expressions in their eyes.

Not long ago, Zhang Yi had just been the head of a small faction in Tianhai City.

Now, he was their leader.

It just went to show—after the Apocalypse, more and more people were rising to power based on ability alone.

Hierarchy and seniority were becoming things of the past.

Zhang Yi walked in, swept his gaze across the field, and saw only the Black Robe Squad.

None of the three remaining Celestial Squad members had shown up.

He already knew—they were clearly trying to make a statement by skipping his first meeting.

Their profiles popped into Zhang Yi's mind.

As captain, he had already studied each member's abilities thoroughly.

The three who survived were Ye He, Xue Miao, and Lu Yinghao.

Among them, Lu Yinghao ranked last in the squad.

Ye He was mid-tier, and Xue Miao slightly below that.

The fact they were alive mostly came down to luck.

In that last battle, all the top Celestial Squad elites had taken on the toughest opponents.

After Deng Shentong's death, HQ had urgently pulled the rest out—that's how these three made it.

Zhang Yi glanced at his watch in mock seriousness—8:52, still 8 minutes until the scheduled time.

He strolled forward, calm as ever, and said, "Let's wait for the others."

Then he said no more.

Wu Di leaned against the equipment rack and grinned at Kong Sheng. "Watch this—those guys from the Celestial Squad definitely want to give Zhang Yi a hard time."

Kong Sheng shook his head. "That's just how they are. They never take others seriously."

Even though the operation against Moon of Corrosion had failed, their long-standing arrogance wasn't so easy to shake off.

People always clung to the glory of the past.

Zhang Yi waited until the clock hit nine—but the three still hadn't shown.

A cold smile tugged at the corner of his lips.

He clapped his hands. "Everyone, gather up. I've got something to say."

Baili Changqing led the Black Robe Squad members over.

Zhang Yi stretched out his hand and gestured to Yang Xinxin and Liang Yue.

"You're all already familiar with them, so I won't introduce further. From today, they're also part of the Celestial Hound Squad."

Everyone looked toward Liang Yue and Yang Xinxin with surprise.

Back in Tianhai City, Liang Yue's combat level had been far from top-tier.

At most, she was on the same level as Wei Dinghai or Xiao Honglian.

And Yang Xinxin hadn't even been an Awakened back then.

Everyone felt a bit skeptical, but no one objected.

Because in the Great Mutation Era, three days apart could mean a whole new person.

You never knew how powerful someone might become after awakening.

Zhang Yi raised his wrist and glanced at his Rolex, speaking in a neutral tone: "Baili, what's the punishment for being late according to Investigation Unit rules?"

Baili Changqing grinned.

"According to protocol, one major demerit and a public apology in front of the whole team!"

The Investigation Unit was a special forces group. Their missions were critical—potentially affecting the entire Jiangnan Region.

As such, discipline was exceptionally strict.

Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow, voice faintly amused: "Oh? That serious? Then let's go by the book. The three who didn't show—mark them late."

The Black Robe Squad exchanged glances, some of them barely hiding their smirks.

Because if you got two major demerits, the rule was—expulsion from the unit.

Zhang Yi was really laying down the law on his first day.

But Baili Changqing answered seriously, "Understood!"

Discipline is discipline—no excuses. That was the soldier's iron rule.

Just then, a cold voice rang out from above.

"Hey, who are you calling late?"

Zhang Yi's smile deepened as he looked up.

On the second level of the training ground, three men in silver battle suits looked down, their faces full of provocation.

This was open disdain for the new captain they refused to acknowledge.

"Yo, you're Chaos, huh? What a lame codename. If you wanna play captain, at least don't make rookie mistakes. Tossing out demerits to scare people? That's not leadership."

The other two snickered.

Zhang Yi wasn't fazed. He continued speaking to Baili Changqing. "Go ahead with the punishment. Count them late."

The three men's expressions darkened.

They hadn't expected Zhang Yi to actually go through with it.

Some Outer City Awakened, getting lucky and stumbling into a temporary captain position, dared to act like this?

"Hey, what the h*ll are you doing?! We're right here!" shouted Ye He from above.

"I don't see you. Doesn't count," Zhang Yi replied flatly.

"You've got ten seconds to get in front of me. Otherwise, there's no place for you in my squad!"

These bottom-of-the-barrel Celestial Squad leftovers wanted to act tough?

If he didn't show them who was boss, they wouldn't know who held the real cards.

The three men's faces turned downright ugly.

They had tried to make a statement—but Zhang Yi just called their bluff.

Chapter 723: The Challenge

Zhang Yi glanced at the plain, unassuming Rolex on his wrist, silently counting the ticking seconds.

The three men didn't dare keep pushing their luck.

Xue Miao grabbed Ye He and Lu Yinghao by the arms and leapt into the air. A swirling gust surrounded them as they descended from above, landing safely in front of Zhang Yi and the others.

Zhang Yi looked at the second hand and remarked with a touch of regret, "What a shame."

The three of them glared at Zhang Yi, their obvious resentment plain as day—even a fool could see it.

Ye He crossed his arms and said sarcastically, "Chaos, you're really throwing your weight around, huh? First day on the job and already abusing your authority? Impressive!"

He deliberately emphasized the name "Chaos," his tone dripping with scorn.

In his eyes, anyone who chose a name like that had to be some timid little nobody.

True powerhouses, like their former captain, picked names that sounded mighty and awe-inspiring. Deng Shentong's codename, for instance, had been—Erlang Shen Yang Jian.

Zhang Yi stared coldly at the three men.

This situation was completely within his expectations.

The Black Robe Squad said nothing, but their expressions clearly said they were enjoying the show.

Though they knew Zhang Yi was strong, strength alone didn't make a good leader.

He needed the ability to command.

If he couldn't even control these three, how could he lead them into battle against Moon of Corrosion?

Zhang Yi fixed his icy gaze on the trio, his eyes finally locking onto Ye He.

It was obvious—Ye He was their ringleader.

Take him down, and the others would fall in line.

"Did I give you permission to speak?"

Zhang Yi didn't shout like some drill instructor—he didn't want to strain his voice.

He simply said it in a chilling tone: "Next time, ask for permission before you speak. If I allow it, then you talk."

Ye He smirked. "Permission to speak, I—"

"Shut up!"

Zhang Yi snapped, cutting him off mid-sentence.

"Did I say you could talk?"

"You—"

Ye He was furious now. He had never respected Zhang Yi, this no-name captain plucked from the Outer City.

Seeing Zhang Yi deliberately targeting him, he didn't bother hiding his contempt anymore.

"What's the big deal?! Someone like you being captain—fck this shtty Investigation Unit, I quit!"

Zhang Yi didn't even raise an eyebrow.

"If you're done, then leave now."

Fewer people just meant he could ask Old Zhu to send him more replacements.

With so many members in Yan Yun, adding a few elites wouldn't be hard.

But Xue Miao and Lu Yinghao panicked. They quickly grabbed Ye He's arm and pleaded:

"Don't be rash! If you quit now, you're playing right into his hands."

"Even if we wanted to quit, we can't walk away like this—it would disgrace the Celestial Squad name!"

The two of them didn't have the same family background as Ye He.

Even if Ye He left, his family could still get him another post elsewhere.

But for Xue Miao and Lu Yinghao, they were the backbone of their families.

If they stopped being Investigation Unit members, their whole family's standard of living would plummet.

Not everyone could afford to rage-quit.

You had to know your own worth.

So the two tried hard to stop Ye He from going too far.

They'd gone along with him to stir the pot just so they could bargain for more benefits when transferred to a new squad.

At the mention of the Celestial Squad, a flash of pain crossed Ye He's eyes.

Memories of past glory—and the towering figure of Deng Shentong—rose in his heart.

Now Deng Shentong and the others hadn't even been buried properly, and they'd been tossed like garbage into a patchwork squad.

How could Ye He not feel humiliated?

He honestly felt like the region had abandoned them.

Otherwise, why else would they appoint some no-name Awakened from the Outer City as their captain?

Meanwhile, the Black Robe Squad watched with amused expressions.

Ye He gritted his teeth, making a decision.

If he was going to leave, he wouldn't go out like this—he couldn't let people laugh at him.

He pointed at Zhang Yi. "Hey! Aren't you the Celestial Hound Squad captain? Let's see if you're even worthy of that title!"

Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow. "Oh? And who are you to decide that? What the h*ll do you think you are?"

"You... don't think you can just win with words!"

Ye He glared at Zhang Yi and sneered, "There's a rule in the Investigation Unit."

"A squad captain must accept challenges from team members. If he loses, he forfeits his position."

"This kind of challenge cannot be refused. And since I'm still a squad member, that means..." He smiled darkly. "You have to accept my challenge, Chaos!"

Zhang Yi fell silent for a moment.

Not out of fear—but because he was genuinely puzzled.

Did people who stayed in big institutions for too long just get... dumber?

"You want to fight me?"

He pointed at himself, clearly baffled.

Even if he wasn't that well-known, could they really not tell? If Zhu Zheng had personally appointed him, did they think he'd be weak?

Ye He snorted.

"Of course not! One-on-one would be bad optics."

"It'll be the three of us—versus you!"

"Zhang Yi, do you dare accept the challenge?"

The moment the words left his mouth, Baili Changqing and the others immediately perked up, their faces full of interest.

They all knew Zhang Yi was strong.

But how strong, exactly? They didn't know.

Three Celestial Squad members versus Zhang Yi alone—now that would be fun to watch.

Would Zhang Yi accept the challenge?

Baili Changqing frowned slightly, trying to calculate whether he himself could take on the three.

In the end, he wasn't optimistic.

Investigation Unit members were all elites. One-on-one might be doable, but the synergy of three working together could drastically increase their strength.

Even as a vice-captain, unless he had a direct counter ability, Baili didn't think he could win a 1v3.

Zhang Yi lifted his gaze, his tone calm: "If you're looking to die, I'll gladly oblige."

This battle was necessary to assert his authority.

If he didn't fight, he wouldn't be able to lead them going forward.

Ye He and the others lit up with excitement.

They hadn't expected Zhang Yi to actually accept!

Ye He sneered darkly. "Three-on-one? Unless you're a real captain-level Awakened, you won't stand a chance."

"He doesn't really think just because he holds the title of captain, he's actually got captain-level strength, right?"

It was the same situation Baili Changqing had faced when leading the Black Robe Squad—position didn't always equal power.

Chapter 724 – Three Against One

Zhang Ye stepped back to the edge of the training field and said casually, "Everyone else, clear out."

The members of the Black Robe Squad immediately left the training field. Liang Yue also took Yang Xinxin with her and exited.

The huge training field was now left with only Zhang Ye and the three—Ye He, Xue Miao, and Lu Yinghao.

"My time's pretty valuable. I'm too lazy to go to the combat arena. Let's just fight here."

"Let's get this over with so I can clock out."

Zhang Ye turned to look at them, completely unconcerned.

In truth, the Absolute Barrier Between Two Realms had already activated around him, forming a flawless, gapless defense.

The three glanced at one another.

Ye He lowered his voice, “Three of us against one—there’s no way we lose! If we beat him, he won’t have the face to stay on as captain. Who knows, maybe we’ll get a shot at reclaiming our place in the Celestial Hound Squad.”

Xue Miao frowned. “But we don’t know anything about this guy. He might’ve gotten our files through upper management. That gives him a huge edge!”

“That’s exactly why we’re going three-on-one!” Ye He insisted. “As long as we work together, we can beat anyone below captain level!”

The three of them hyped each other up, determined to defeat Zhang Ye here and earn back some pride. Even if they got kicked out of the squad, a good fight would boost their rep and help them get into other organizations.

Zhang Ye watched the three whispering and strategizing, a mocking smirk tugging at his lips.

“Ready?”

The three locked their sights on him.

“Go!”

Ye He shouted.

Lu Yinghao made the first move.

He pressed the tips of his fingers together and stabbed them into the waists of Ye He and Xue Miao.

[Poison Medic] Lu Yinghao, a Special Trait ability user.

His bodily fluids could become deadly poison—or a strengthening tonic.

Right as the fight began, he injected both teammates with Adrenaline, massively boosting their physical intensity, making them faster, sharper, and significantly more responsive on all levels.

He himself also received the full enhancement.

With the buff, Xue Miao pulled a glowing blue dagger from the tactical bag on his back.

A roaring whirlwind surged around him, enclosing all three in a swirling storm.

Zhang Ye didn't budge—he even leisurely reached into his dimensional space and pulled out his twin silver pistols: White Owl.

Thinking for a moment, he loaded them with Sacred Silver Bullets.

As he was loading, a violent gale swept toward him. The entire training field was engulfed in chaos.

The raging wind distorted visibility, churning the air like a sandstorm.

Riding the wind, Xue Miao closed in on Zhang Ye in an instant.

Xue Miao, a Release-type ability user, codename Windstrider, could manipulate storms and excelled in assassination.

Using the wind's momentum, he was instantly at Zhang Ye's back.

The glowing blue dagger in his hand stabbed straight for Zhang Ye's spine!

Zhang Ye didn't even flinch—didn't turn, didn't react.

But in the next second, the dagger stabbed into empty air. Its tip vanished into thin space.

“Huh?!”

Xue Miao’s pupils contracted sharply—he sensed danger.

But he was too fast. His entire right arm had already entered Zhang Ye’s dimensional space.

“Sh*t!”

Xue Miao’s heart sank. He tried to retreat immediately. He didn’t know exactly what Zhang Ye’s ability was, but his instincts screamed that stepping into that strange space spelled disaster.

At that moment, a black gun barrel was already pointed at his head.

Zhang Ye still hadn’t turned around. The muzzle of White Owl was aimed directly at his skull—and he pulled the trigger without hesitation.

“D*mn it!”

Gritting his teeth, Xue Miao whipped up another fierce gust. His figure vanished in an instant, reappearing dozens of meters away.

Bang!

The gunshot echoed across the training field, the bullet slamming into a distant wall with a burst of sparks.

Xue Miao’s eyes narrowed. “A spatial ability? I can’t even get close—how the hell am I supposed to fight that?”

He was an assassin. Speed and elusive movement were his greatest weapons for one-hit kills.

But Zhang Ye was his perfect counter.

“There has to be a weakness. I just need to find his opening...”

That was Xue Miao’s only hope.

Zhang Ye, however, just smirked as he watched him flee in a panic.

“That shot was just a warning.”

Honestly, he’d almost killed Xue Miao just now.

Zhang Ye had a natural sensitivity to attacks from behind. But right before he pulled the trigger, he remembered—it’d be a real pain if any of these guys actually died.

So, he didn’t activate his 20x speed enhancement.

If he had, then within seven steps, his shots would’ve been instant and dead-on. No matter how fast Xue Miao was, he wouldn’t have made it.

“A little scare should be enough.”

Zhang Ye was unusually merciful this time.

Xue Miao quickly relayed his observation to Ye He and Lu Yinghao.

“His ability’s weird—definitely spatial. My close-range attack was completely nullified!”

Zhang Ye's dimensional space couldn't actively attack or absorb living beings on its own.

But if someone entered it voluntarily, their life or death would be fully in his hands.

If Xue Miao hadn't reacted so fast, he would've been toast.

Hearing this, Lu Yinghao said in a low voice, "Let me test him."

He pulled out a dagger and swiftly sliced his own palm.

A slash appeared, but no blood flowed.

Instead, mist-like blood clouds burst out from the wound like a swarm of insects, forming a crimson fog that rushed toward Zhang Ye with the wind!

Lu Yinghao's blood could transform into a deadly toxin.

It didn't need to draw blood—just a touch on skin was enough to seep in and kill instantly.

In seconds, the red mist completely enveloped Zhang Ye.

Lu Yinghao was trying to probe for Zhang Ye's weak point.

But Zhang Ye remained calm as a still lake. He slowly raised both hands and started shooting his White Owls at them.

As long as he didn't kill them, no matter how badly they were injured, the Blizzard City Medical Center could patch them up.

So what if he crippled them?

The red mist was completely sucked into Zhang Ye's dimensional space, not harming him in the slightest.

But the Sacred Silver Bullets—bright silver streaks of light—pierced right through the storm and shot at the trio with deadly precision!

These bullets, empowered by pinpoint aim and a twentyfold speed boost, were practically a long-range death sentence!

Even elite Delta-level superhumans wouldn't dare take that hit head-on!

Chapter 725 – Absolute Defense

The Sacred Silver Bullets rained down on the trio, forcing them to dodge frantically.

The high-speed bullets shot like a silver storm, making them nearly impossible to defend against.

Fortunately, all three had been enhanced by Lu Yinghao's Adrenaline injection, sharpening their reflexes and letting them narrowly avoid the first volley—though they looked downright pathetic doing it.

"Still can't find his blind spot?"

"No way—that's impossible. Everyone's got a weakness!" Ye He said stubbornly.

Beneath his feet, a shifting black shadow danced like a waiting evil spirit.

But without pinpointing Zhang Ye's weakness, he couldn't act recklessly.

Doing so would only expose his trump card.

Watching all this, Baili Changqing shook his head helplessly.

“There’s something they don’t know. If they did, they wouldn’t have been foolish enough to challenge Zhang Ye.”

Wu Di looked at him. “What is it?”

Baili Changqing stared at Zhang Ye, who stood there calm and unfazed, completely untouched no matter the attack.

He said slowly, “In the official database, Zhang Ye’s ability codename is Absolute Defense.”

“Their abilities are basically handing him a free win.”

There was only one known method to break Zhang Ye’s ability: using overwhelming force to exceed the dimensional space’s absorption threshold in one go—temporarily disabling the dimensional gate.

But with Zhang Ye’s current power level, the only people who could manage that would be extremely powerful Release-type or Special Trait-type ability users, and even then, they’d have to be on par with or stronger than him.

“This is what a defense-specialized captain-level superhuman can do,” Baili Changqing said with admiration.

Zhang Ye might not always kill his enemies, but he was nearly impossible to kill himself.

His eyes remained calm as he kept firing mercilessly.

The White Owl pistols were designed primarily for close combat—they were easy to wield.

But in terms of raw firepower, they weren’t even one-tenth the strength of Thunder Wrath.

Of course, Zhang Ye would never casually use Thunder Wrath, especially during training matches like this.

He was afraid that even a slight mistake would blow these guys into pieces.

But even so, the trio—Ye He, Xue Miao, and Lu Yinghao—were already scrambling for their lives.

Xue Miao's movement ability was useless against Zhang Ye. Even if he got close, there was no weakness to exploit.

Lu Yinghao's power was even more ineffective—his poisons relied on physical delivery, which Zhang Ye naturally countered.

Only Ye He hadn't made a move yet, still waiting for the right moment.

But Zhang Ye already had all their data memorized in his mind.

Ye He, Release-type superhuman, codename Phantom Killer.

He could use shadows to assassinate targets within a 300-meter range and swap positions with others via their shadows.

Essentially, he was an assassin too.

And assassins loved to bide their time.

But if the opponent was someone with ironclad defense like Zhang Ye, then that style became utterly useless.

Of course, they could try to run.

If this were a real battlefield, Zhang Ye wouldn't bother chasing them.

But right now, they were trapped in a training field the size of four basketball courts.

Challenging Zhang Ye in here? Escape wasn't an option.

Which meant they were just three sitting ducks.

From the start, Zhang Ye had already calculated everything in his head.

If he wasn't one hundred percent confident in winning this three-on-one fight, he never would've agreed to it.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

The silver streaks of Sacred Silver bullets kept slicing through the air. The three were already using every ounce of their strength just to dodge the bullet trajectories.

The Adrenaline was acting like a supercharged stimulant, temporarily boosting their overall performance.

But once it wore off, they'd be left incredibly weak.

Right now, Zhang Ye's relentless shooting was pushing them to burn through the effects faster.

"D*mn it! There's no way to even get close! And even if I did, I have no idea how to break through that defense!"

“What the hell is that ability—does it really have no blind spots?”

They had never fought Zhang Ye before.

If they had even seen his match against Wu Di, they would've had some idea what they were dealing with.

To Baili Changqing, Liang Yue, and the others, the whole fight looked ridiculous.

Ye He and the others looked like three monkeys, bouncing around trying to dodge Zhang Ye's bullets.

They were clueless, completely out of options against his defense.

And Zhang Ye? He had an endless supply of bullets.

He had Lu Keran, and access to massive resources from Tianhai City. That meant he basically owned an infinite munitions factory.

“Zhang Ye's letting loose like he's got an entire ocean to spare,” Liang Yue groaned, holding her forehead.

His real kill moves—Divine Power or Void Spear—either one could one-shot the three of them.

But right now, Zhang Ye was just using guns, playing with them like a grown-up toying with three naughty kids.

She actually started to feel bad for the poor fools.

After two rounds of shooting, the trio was utterly frustrated.

Their enhanced reactions started to slow as the adrenaline wore off.

Xue Miao was the first to get hit—a Sacred Silver Bullet pierced clean through his leg, front to back.

“Ahhh!!”

He screamed in pain and collapsed to the ground.

Zhang Ye aimed his gun at Xue Miao’s head—and fired right next to his ear!

A wisp of smoke rose from the floor. Cold sweat poured down Xue Miao’s face.

“Don’t—don’t! I give up! I surrender!” he yelled.

He’d only wanted to leverage this fight for some benefits—he had never intended to go all out against Zhang Ye.

So now that the tide had turned, he bailed immediately.

Seeing Xue Miao surrender, Ye He and Lu Yinghao panicked too.

Lu Yinghao, being the weakest member of the Celestial Squad, knew the smart move.

“I give up, Captain! I’m no match for you.”

He raised both hands and obediently backed off to the edge of the field.

He figured—why kill yourself when you can just enjoy life?

Ye He gritted his teeth and cursed under his breath, “Useless!”

His shadow twisted and morphed wildly beneath him, allowing him to dodge round after round by swapping places with shadows in pinpoint precision.

Even Zhang Ye couldn't help but be impressed.

This guy really did have some skills—no wonder he was mid-tier in the Celestial Squad.

“Zhang Ye,” Ye He called out, “you've got the upper hand now because of the setting and the rules. But on a real battlefield, do you really think you can just hide forever?”

“What if I decide to run? What would you do then?”

He couldn't find Zhang Ye's weakness, so he resorted to verbal jabs.

He still wasn't convinced.

He thought Zhang Ye was just taking advantage of the arena.

What he didn't realize was—true experts always make use of their surroundings.

Chapter 726 – Makes You Want to Rip Your Hair Out

Hearing Ye He's words, Zhang Ye silently lowered the two pistols in his hands.

“I was planning to settle this the ordinary way, but all I got in return was your arrogance.”

“Alright then, no more pretending. I'll lay it all out!”

Zhang Ye placed a hand on his forehead and let out a long sigh.

But in his right eye, a white glow was already starting to gather.

As he lowered his hand and looked at Ye He, a wave of deathly pressure instantly enveloped Ye He's body.

A cold sweat broke out across Ye He's back. He quickly used his shadow to teleport himself three hundred meters away.

But Zhang Ye spun around swiftly, eyes still locked dead onto Ye He's position.

Shadow Shift had a cooldown.

Every use required 10 seconds before it could be triggered again.

Now that he'd been locked onto, there was no escape.

"Divine Power!"

Zhang Ye's right eye snapped open. In the space directly ahead, a massive cylindrical area warped instantly.

Without a sound, a massive hole opened up in the training ground wall!

The specially reinforced concrete walls—built for superhuman training—were penetrated like wet paper. A cylindrical passage three meters wide bored straight through it!

And Ye He just stood there, dumbfounded—Death had brushed right past him.

He felt a chilling cold sweep through his skull, bone-deep and terrifying.

Zhang Ye looked at him coldly. “Still want to continue?”

Ye He stood there like a statue, momentarily speechless.

But one thought surfaced in his mind.

How utterly stupid it was to think he could challenge someone like this.

This crushing pressure and suffocating despair—only one person had ever made him feel like this before: Deng Shentong.

That was a man he knew he could never defeat.

But Zhang Ye and Deng Shentong were opposites.

Deng Shentong was pure offense.

Zhang Ye, on the other hand, started with Absolute Defense, then followed up with a devastating offense.

And when he attacked—there were no feints. Every move was lethal.

That whole pistol match earlier? He’d just been toying with them.

“Pfft... HAHAHAHAHA!”

The air froze with tension—until the silence was shattered by peals of laughter from outside the field.

Wu Di clutched his belly, one hand pointing at Ye He, the other resting on Baili Changqing's arm as he doubled over laughing.

The others watching also broke into chuckles they could barely hold back.

Ye He looked confused—but soon realized something was off.

That cold sensation on his scalp? It wasn't just in his head.

Instinctively, he reached up—and felt nothing but smooth skin.

Zhang Ye had shaved off his hair.

“AAAAHHHHHHH!!!”

Ye He screamed in horror.

He was considered a pretty boy in Blizzard City, with a decent fanbase of female admirers.

Now Zhang Ye had chopped off the one thing he cared about most—his hair! How was he supposed to show his face in public after this?

Zhang Ye said coldly, “This farce ends now. Hey—you!”

He looked at Lu Yinghao.

Lu Yinghao replied quickly and respectfully, “C-Captain Zhang, what are your orders?”

“Heh, look at you—changing your tone real quick!”

Zhang Ye shot him a glance.

“Take those two down to get treated.”

Only after receiving the order did Lu Yinghao dare move. He went over to check on Xue Miao’s injury.

Ye He slumped to the ground, completely defeated, a dead look in his eyes.

Zhang Ye, however, had not a shred of sympathy for them.

“From now on, if any of you want to leave the Celestial Hound Squad, feel free.”

“My decision won’t change.”

Ye He looked up at Zhang Ye. His mouth opened like he wanted to say something—but thinking of everything he’d done, he had no words left.

Turned out, the real clowns were themselves.

Baili Changqing still showed some courtesy. He walked over and helped Ye He to his feet, then escorted all three of the former Celestial Squad members out of the training field.

“I know a doctor who’s great at treating hair loss. He’s got this cola that supposedly cures everything. Your hair’ll grow back in no time.”

After sending them off, Baili Changqing returned to the field.

By now, the Black Robe Squad members looked at Zhang Ye with a newfound sense of reverence.

The Zhang Ye standing before them now was far stronger than the one they'd known before.

Especially that impenetrable defensive ability—no one present could even think of a way around it.

Zhang Ye looked at them and said with crystal clarity:

“You all know the Celestial Hound Squad is a temporary team. Once we solve the Eclipse Moon issue, this unit will be disbanded.”

“That’s exactly why those three acted so recklessly.”

“But here’s what I want to make absolutely clear: As long as this squad exists, I am the captain.”

“If anyone tries to make my life harder, I’ll make theirs worse.”

The atmosphere turned serious.

Zhang Ye had made it clear—using Ye He and the others as examples—that he wasn’t someone to mess with.

“The Celestial Squad already failed during the Eclipse Moon mission. Including their captain, eight of them died!”

“I don’t think any of you are arrogant enough to think you’re stronger than them. So from now on, I expect you to treat what’s coming with the utmost seriousness.”

“Otherwise—you’ll die.”

Baili Changqing nodded firmly.

He stood tall, back straight, in perfect military posture.

“Yes, Captain! We are fully prepared!”

They'd had that resolve from day one when they joined the Investigation Team.

That team's members were always rotating—because over 90% of the ones who left had died in the line of duty.

Why did the Investigation Team receive high-level resources?

Because they earned it with their lives.

Zhang Ye nodded. “That's the mindset I want. But we don't need needless sacrifices.”

“My abilities lean toward defense—same as my personality. In battle, I'll do everything I can to keep everyone alive.”

“The mission timeline is unclear. The action plan will depend on where and how the Eclipse Moon appears.”

“In that area, Vice Captain Baili is the expert.”

Zhang Ye looked at Baili Changqing.

His appointment as vice captain was undisputed.

Whether in strength or in reputation, everyone trusted him.

Zhang Ye said, "In the coming days, I want you to intensify training. There must be no slacking off."

Baili Changqing clasped his hands behind his back and responded loudly, "Yes, Captain!"

In fact, their squad had never slacked off in training over the past few months.

Even if upper management didn't think much of their under-strength team, they had never given up on themselves.

They had always been waiting for this day—for their chance to step onto the battlefield.

Chapter 727: Ability Index

Zhang Ye walked up to Baili Changqing and said in a low voice, "As for the three of us, we're going to need some private lessons."

He shot Baili Changqing a playful wink.

Saying something like that in public sounded a little odd. As the team captain, Zhang Ye clearly lacked the basic combat training that members of the Black Robe Squad possessed. Yang Xinxin and Liang Yue were also lacking in this area.

Getting Baili Changqing to personally train them would definitely be beneficial.

Baili Changqing was momentarily stunned, then smiled and replied, "Sure, as you wish!"

He rubbed his hands together. "But your training will be very different from the rest of the team. The methods and intensity levels are on a completely different scale."

"Will that affect our performance in future missions?"

If they couldn't work well together, their teamwork during group operations would definitely suffer.

But Zhang Ye remained calm.

"That won't be a problem. Just make sure you train us well."

He wasn't expecting to gain the combat instincts of a professional soldier overnight. Any improvement was good enough.

"Oh, right—there's one more thing I need your help with."

Zhang Ye leaned in and whispered something into Baili Changqing's ear.

Baili Changqing looked a little surprised. He glanced over at Liang Yue, then slowly nodded.

After that, he turned to the others and said, "You guys go ahead with your regular training. The captain and I have something to take care of!"

Wu Di and the others had no clue what they were up to.

But Zhang Ye and Baili Changqing were now the captain and vice-captain, so whatever orders they gave had to be followed.

The others held back their curiosity and watched as Zhang Ye and Baili Changqing left with Yang Xinxin and Liang Yue.

They headed to the martial practice field.

Zhang Ye looked at Baili Changqing and smiled. "Thanks for helping out today."

Baili Changqing glanced at Liang Yue and shrugged with a grin. “It’s no trouble. We’re all teammates now—it’s only right to help each other out.”

Zhang Ye nodded. “Alright then, let’s run the test.”

He took Yang Xinxin and left the training field.

The area was quickly sealed off.

As an investigation team captain, Zhang Ye now had the authority to request private access to the practice field.

In the blink of an eye, the training field expanded into a massive five-kilometer combat zone.

And Baili Changqing and Liang Yue were today’s main event.

That’s right—Zhang Ye was going to have Liang Yue spar with Baili Changqing to assess her current combat level.

Of course, since this was just a test, he wouldn’t let them go all-out in a life-or-death fight.

Even the weapons they used were dulled practice gear.

Liang Yue gripped a blunt blade, eyes closed. The moment she opened them, a surge of powerful energy erupted from her, sweeping across the entire field!

Baili Changqing wielded an alloy staff. With a casual sweep of his weapon, his own aura burst forth just as fiercely.

The fight began!

Zhang Ye and Yang Xinxin watched from above, observing every detail.

The battle unfolding below was a clash between two elite Strength-type Abnormals.

Strength-types were the most common kind of Abnormal.

Their enhancements primarily boosted physical attributes—strength, speed, endurance. Most of them didn't have abilities beyond close-quarters combat.

But underestimating them because of that would be a huge mistake.

Theoretically speaking, Strength-type Abnormals were among the few who could defeat opponents above their level.

Even an LV2 Beta-level Strength-type, if they got in close, could potentially take down an LV4 Delta-level powerhouse with sheer hand-to-hand skill.

Add their monstrous vitality and self-healing capabilities into the mix, and you had a force that no one could afford to ignore.

And Liang Yue and Baili Changqing, after undergoing enhancements, were some of the best in this field.

Watching them fight was like watching two ancient beasts locked in a ferocious brawl.

Just as Zhang Ye was fully focused on the fight, his device suddenly received data from the training field.

Curious, Zhang Ye accepted the transmission. A blue screen popped up in front of him, showing detailed stats for the two fighters.

His eyes lit up with surprise.

He'd been here once before—but that time, he was one of the fighters.

He remembered the facility could analyze Abnormal abilities.

And he'd guessed right.

Yang Xinxin leaned over curiously, reading the data on Liang Yue and Baili Changqing.

Each of their profiles displayed alongside a breakdown of various abilities.

Liang Yue: Strength-type Abnormal

Weapon: Broadsword

Speed: A1

Strength: A1

Skill: S1

Ability Index: 6800

...

Baili Changqing: Strength-type Abnormal

Weapon: Staff

Speed: A1

Strength: A2

Skill: A2

Ability Index: 7200

...

The screen also showed many complex analytics that were too detailed to go through one by one.

Zhang Ye was a bit shocked.

No wonder the regional authorities could assess Abnormal rankings—they had access to such detailed analytical tools.

“What exactly is the Ability Index?” Zhang Ye asked the training field’s AI system.

The answer came swiftly.

“It’s similar to a combat rating. However, due to the wide variety of Abnormal abilities—including support, civilian, and other non-combat types—this score is a comprehensive evaluation of practical usefulness.”

In other words, the Ability Index wasn’t the same as pure combat power.

Take Zhou Ke’er, for example.

She had a healing-type ability. Even if her Ability Index reached 10,000, her actual combat ability would still be lower than that of a fighter with an index of just 1,000.

But when it came to combat-type Abnormals, the Ability Index did closely reflect their battle strength.

Still, it couldn't fully represent it, since matchups and ability counters also had to be considered.

Zhang Ye's curiosity was piqued. He asked, "So what's my Ability Index?"

The system responded quickly.

"5200."

Zhang Ye raised an eyebrow. "That low?"

But he quickly understood why.

The system was using data from his last recorded fight—with Wu Di.

And he hadn't revealed his full strength in front of Blizzard City at the time.

So this Ability Index wasn't very meaningful for him personally.

Meanwhile, the two monsters below were still going at it, their clash sending shockwaves through the air with every strike.

Zhang Ye, still curious, started chatting more with the system about how the Ability Index levels were classified.

The system responded with the following breakdown:

LV1 Alpha: 1–9

LV2 Beta: 10–99

LV3 Gamma: 100–999

LV4 Delta: 1,000–9,999

LV5 Epsilon: 10,000 and above (unknown upper limit)

These were the officially confirmed Abnormal levels based on the Ability Index system.

Which meant that the power Liang Yue and Baili Changqing were displaying now placed them solidly in the upper tier of LV4 Delta-level combatants.

Chapter 728: A New Vice-Captain-Level

Baili Changqing and Liang Yue fought for quite a while, but neither gained the upper hand.

Though both of them held back and didn't go all out, the outcome still showed one clear thing—Liang Yue's potential had been thoroughly developed.

As she was now, she had reached the strength of a vice-captain-level combatant.

The two stopped at the same time, as if by tacit agreement, and returned to the stands.

Baili Changqing took the initiative to compliment Zhang Ye, "I didn't expect you to have such a powerhouse hidden by your side! Her strength really surprised me."

“If I hadn’t received extensive training from the Jiangnan District, I probably wouldn’t be able to beat her in a one-on-one fight back in the day.”

And he wasn’t just being modest.

What Liang Yue practiced wasn’t flashy martial arts—it was true killing technique.

You couldn’t survive as a bodyguard in that place unless you were an absolute beast.

If it were a life-or-death fight, Baili Changqing wasn’t confident he could win.

He was only ahead because of the longer, more specialized training he received in Jiangnan District.

As for Liang Yue, most of her growth had been raw and unpolished—until she gained support from the Deng Family’s tech.

Zhang Ye nodded, smiling uncontrollably as he looked at Liang Yue.

He finally had someone on his team who could truly fight.

“Oh, right—the Ability Index system. Are you familiar with it?” Zhang Ye asked, turning to Baili Changqing.

Baili Changqing smiled. “Of course. It’s the system developed by the major districts using AI to evaluate the power levels of Abnormals.”

“The classifications—Alpha, Beta, and so on—all have clear thresholds.”

“For example, the line between Gamma and Delta is the ability to wield Co-Devour.”

“And for Delta and Epsilon, the key difference lies in whether the power has reached a breakthrough-tier leap in magnitude.”

“To qualify as Epsilon, the base requirement is having the ability to destroy an entire city on your own.”

“Of course, for some Abnormals, their Ability Index is also described by their impact on other Abnormals.”

He raised a finger. “But this tier-based classification is overly broad. It doesn’t reflect an Abnormal’s true capabilities.”

“There are huge gaps even within each rank.”

“That’s why years ago, researchers in the field proposed the concept of the ‘Ability Index’—which became the standard we use today.”

Zhang Ye nodded. “That does make it much easier to see someone’s actual power level at a glance.”

Baili Changqing asked, “Captain, do you know your own Ability Index?”

“No idea,” Zhang Ye replied bluntly.

Baili Changqing chuckled. “The latest update was after you killed a member of Ximing’s Eclipse Moon.”

“Based on your combat record and abilities, the AI calculated your Ability Index at 8200.”

8200! A full thousand points higher than Baili Changqing himself.

Zhang Ye raised an eyebrow, then asked with interest, “Can I ask what Bian Junwu and Deng Shentong’s Index numbers are?”

Baili Changqing answered honestly, “Captain Bian is at 9100. Deng Shentong is at 9300.”

Zhang Ye couldn’t help but burst out laughing.

Thinking he’d misunderstood, Baili Changqing hurried to explain, “It’s just a number—it doesn’t directly equate to combat strength. There are so many variables that decide who wins a fight.”

But Zhang Ye shook his head.

Baili Changqing didn’t get it.

Zhang Ye wasn’t angry—he was pleased.

Yes, pleased!

Even though he was now a squad captain, most people in Blizzard City still thought of his strength as somewhere between a vice-captain and a full captain.

In other words, no one really knew his true power.

And wasn’t that a great thing?

He still had cards up his sleeve—tricks no one had seen.

Later, after Baili Changqing left, Zhang Ye specifically asked Liang Yue a question.

“You fought him—do you think you could win?”

Because according to the training field's AI, Liang Yue's Ability Index was lower than Baili Changqing's.

But Liang Yue didn't answer directly.

She simply glanced at the blunt-edged training sword in her hand and said calmly, "The blade wasn't a good fit."

...

In the following days, Zhang Ye set a new training plan for the Celestial Hound Squad.

The former Black Robe members continued with their regular regimen—no reductions in their daily load.

The main focus, however, was on specialized training for Zhang Ye, Liang Yue, and Yang Xinxin, led by Baili Changqing, a former colonel of the Yan Yun Guard and a special forces instructor.

What they had to learn was how to actually coordinate on the battlefield, including the basics of small-team tactical formations.

Professional soldiers clearly had the upper hand over them in this area.

The next day, the three members of Ye He's group—now fully healed—sought out Zhang Ye.

They had seen his strength firsthand and were completely convinced.

Led by Ye He, the three of them bowed at a full ninety degrees before Zhang Ye.

"Captain! Please forgive our disrespect. We want to join the operation against Eclipse Moon and avenge Captain Deng and the Celestial Squad!"

Zhang Ye looked at them silently.

They remained bowed at ninety degrees—for a full ten minutes.

Even for trained soldiers, that kind of pressure was hard to bear.

Just as they were about to collapse, Zhang Ye's cold voice came from above.

“Do you accept your punishment?”

They had been publicly reprimanded and written up—a harsh sentence for being late just once.

But they weren't fools—they knew Zhang Ye was using them to establish authority.

And now that they wanted back in, it was all up to him.

Ye He quickly responded, “Yes, we accept it!”

He pulled out a long document from his uniform.

It was a handwritten self-criticism letter, over a dozen pages long.

“This is my reflection.”

Zhang Ye didn't even look at it.

“Members of the Celestial Hound Squad are risking their lives. You're fighting for your country's honor!”

“That means there’s a high chance you’ll die. And if it helps us win, I won’t hesitate to sacrifice any of you!”

“Even knowing that—do you still want in?”

Some things needed to be made clear upfront.

He couldn’t have them hesitate at the critical moment and tarnish the team’s reputation.

The three men answered in unison: “As long as we can eliminate Eclipse Moon, we’re willing to give our lives!”

For veterans like them, death wasn’t the scariest thing.

The real fear was living the rest of their lives with shame.

The fall of the Celestial Squad had turned their once-proud unit name into a cruel joke.

All their past glory vanished in an instant, and they often heard people mocking how they lost to Eclipse Moon.

It was more humiliating than a tournament’s number-one seed losing to a dark horse from a play-in bracket!

They had spent sleepless nights, filled with regret, dreaming of fighting Eclipse Moon again.

Even dying in battle would be better than living on as cowards.

Chapter 729: They're Coming

In the end, Zhang Ye decided to have Ye He and the other two publicly read out their written apologies before allowing them back into the team.

After all, the three of them were still decent combatants and would definitely be useful in the upcoming battle against Eclipse Moon.

Even if they still harbored resentment toward Zhang Ye, once on the battlefield, they wouldn't dare disobey his orders.

Because if they did, Zhang Ye would have every reason to kill them—and no one would question it.

From then on, training became their top priority.

Gao Changkong also kept in frequent contact with Zhang Ye, discussing plans for the eventual joint operation.

Meanwhile, headquarters was monitoring the situation across all major districts around the clock.

Command Center

It had been half a month since the last operation against Eclipse Moon.

In those two weeks, headquarters had finalized a comprehensive plan—just waiting for Eclipse Moon to reappear.

Zhu Zheng personally placed a call to the Commander of the East Sea District.

“Old Li, I’m sure you’ve heard what happened over here. Those Ronin came across the sea. Since the East Sea District is in charge of coastal defense, some of the responsibility falls on your shoulders too.”

Originally, the East Sea District was only responsible for naval defense in the eastern seas.

But after the apocalypse began and ice-era battleships became the norm, traditional navies could no longer conduct deep-sea operations.

So now, the East Sea District patrolled the entire southeastern coastline.

Commander Li Guangxiao of the East Sea District smacked his lips when he heard Zhu Zheng's words.

"Old Zhu, that's a bit unfair, don't you think? We're supposed to guard against sudden pirate groups and potential invasions from other regional forces. That's our job."

"With the Ice Age in full swing, we don't have the manpower to plug every hole. We can't catch every small fish that slips through."

Zhu Zheng nodded. "I get it, I do. But what I'm worried about is that Eclipse Moon's actions might embolden foreign forces."

"So your coastal defenses—especially along our Jiangnan District's southeastern shores—need to be extra tight!"

Li Guangxiao replied, "No need to remind me. I know what time it is. Right now, if any fleet enters nearby waters, we'll give a single warning. If they ignore it, we'll open fire immediately—sink them before they ever make landfall!"

That sounded resolute, but in truth, the East Sea District could only focus on intercepting large fleets.

They simply didn't have the resources to stop every single vessel.

Which was how Eclipse Moon's icebreaker managed to make the crossing.

Then Li Guangxiao asked, "Old Zhu, I heard you guys already wiped out half of Eclipse Moon. And now there's no sign of them. Maybe they've run off for good?"

“You’re really going overboard with all this panic.”

His tone was half-joking.

He and Zhu Zheng had known each other for a long time. He was teasing, not malicious.

“They’ll be back. I know it.”

Zhu Zheng’s voice was dead serious.

“I know those wolf cubs too well. Their ambition’s even bigger than their appetite.”

“Once they smell blood, they go crazy. No way they’re giving up the chance to sink their teeth into Jiangnan.”

“I’m right here, waiting for them.”

Li Guangxiao replied, “Alright then. You handle things on land. I’ll lock down the coast. If we spot them, I guarantee—they’re not escaping by sea.”

Just as Zhu Zheng expected, Eclipse Moon had never given up on conquering the Central Plains.

After the last battle, they had pulled back.

But not just to recover—they were using that retreat as leverage to rally more allies and launch a far more devastating offensive.

On the icy ocean, morning fog rolled in thick, completely obscuring visibility.

The cold seeped so deep into the air that it felt like your blood was freezing.

The Tenryu Pirates, West Division, advanced through the mist into the southeastern waters.

Their destination: the prosperous Jiangnan District.

Onboard the ships, a strict hierarchy was evident.

Only officer-level pirates were allowed to wear combat suits—outdated models from more than a decade ago.

Ordinary pirates were left to fight in bulky cotton coats.

Their messy hair and eyelashes were crusted with ice, but each of them clutched a leather wine pouch, gulping down hard liquor to stave off the cold.

At the bow of the lead ship, Phoenixin Ren stood in his usual thin outfit.

His ability made him immune to the cold.

In his hand was a large, clunky object—a vintage satellite phone. It looked ancient and lacked most modern features.

But its security was top-notch. It could even block satellite surveillance from major districts.

“Moshi moshi.”

The call connected, and a deep male voice came through.

“Jiangnan District is already waiting for your arrival.”

Phoenixin Ren narrowed his eyes.

“Oh? And what kind of force have they prepared for us this time?”

“Quite a bit more than last time.”

“Heh... now that’s exciting.”

Phoenixin Ren glanced back.

Across the frozen ocean, dozens of ships cut through the waves, speeding toward the coastal cities of Jiangnan District.

“My preparations... aren’t lacking either.”

The voice on the other end continued.

“If you want to win this time, there’s one person you must eliminate.”

“Who?”

“Someone who can nullify your prophecy-based abilities.”

Phoenixin Ren’s eyes turned deadly.

He knew exactly who they meant.

If it weren’t for that person, his squad wouldn’t have suffered such a high casualty rate.

In fact, if it hadn't been for that man, after they wiped out the Celestial Squad, they could've stormed inland and taken multiple cities in the Central Plains!

In Phoenixin Ren's eyes, that person was even more dangerous than most of Jiangnan's squad captains.

“Where is he?”

His voice was cold and focused.

The man on the other end chuckled darkly.

“Don't worry. I'll take care of him for you. But first, here's what you need to do...”

Phoenixin Ren listened quietly as the man laid out his plan.

The grin on his face grew wider with every word.

“Well, that sounds delightful.”

“Thank you—for providing us with intel again and again.”

“But you know... I've always had one question.”

He narrowed his eyes, voice tinged with suspicion.

“Who exactly are you? Why do you keep helping us?”

“Are you also an enemy of Jiangnan District?”

There was a moment of silence.

Then the man's voice came through once more.

"Does it matter?"

"You'll never trust me completely. You'll judge the intel for yourself."

"But one thing's certain—you and I share a common goal: taking down Jiangnan District."

Chapter 730: Operation

The voice from Phoenixin's end abruptly cut off.

He had finished delivering the intel and left, just like before.

Suddenly, Phoenixin Ren burst into loud laughter.

This drew the attention of Kanute, the captain of the Pirate Crew.

"You seem... quite pleased?"

Phoenixin turned around with a beaming smile and said, "Of course I'm pleased! Hey, my friend, I've got some amazing news for you!"

"This time, you're going to make a massive fortune!"

"And I need you to slightly alter your course."

Phoenixin narrowed his eyes.

"Your crew's new target is now Tianhai City! I need your help to eliminate a troublesome individual."

Kanute looked at him grimly.

"A troublesome individual? And you want me to deal with it?"

Phoenixin put a finger to his lips.

"Relax. They may be a headache for us, but not necessarily for you."

"Besides, you know how wealthy Tianhai City is!"

Kanute let out a chuckle. "Ronin, you'd better be telling the truth! If I find out you're trying to use me, you lot can forget ever sailing again in this lifetime!"

"Wouldn't dare, wouldn't dare!"

Phoenixin spread his hands, but a trace of disdain and mockery flashed deep in his eyes.

"Now, as long as we follow Mayumi's lead, we can avoid the navy and land safely on the opposite shore."

"Once we get there, feel free to plunder whatever you want!"

For the past half-month, Blizzard City had been focused entirely on preparing for the next mission to eliminate the Moon of Corrosion.

The Celestial Hound Squad and Samsara Squad had been granted top-tier resources.

Inside and outside the city, the only topic was: when would they face Moon of Corrosion again and wipe out the previous shame?

At this moment, annihilating Moon of Corrosion had become Blizzard City's top priority.

All other affairs had been put on hold for this goal.

That night, the Defense Division of the Operations Command Center suddenly issued an alert.

Enemies had appeared near the Jiangnan District!

Upon receiving the report, Zhu Zheng immediately jumped out of bed and rushed to the Operations Command Center.

Not just him—every combat unit was instantly on standby.

They were prepared for a night raid.

Zhu Zheng boarded a vehicle, put on his headset, and began a meeting with senior officers at the command center.

“Where did the enemy show up? Can we confirm it’s Moon of Corrosion?”

The Defense Minister replied, “The anomaly occurred in offshore waters—three different areas, not just one!”

Zhu Zheng frowned and sneered. “Looks like they’ve brought reinforcements! Good—this time we’ll wipe them out completely!”

The minister continued, “Anomalous ‘null zones’ have appeared in the seas off Tianhai City, Linhai City, and Huazhou City.”

“These ships bypassed the navy’s defense lines. We’re pretty certain they’re with Moon of Corrosion. They used prophetic abilities to avoid the patrols.”

Zhu Zheng’s expression turned cold. “Deploy drones for recon! At the very least, we need to identify who they are.”

While drones had limited mobility in extreme cold and couldn’t engage in complex combat,

their high-res cameras could still capture clear images of invading forces.

The Defense Minister replied, “Yes, sir!”

He went offline immediately to dispatch teams to investigate the three routes.

Zhu Zheng then ordered his secretary, Lan Xincheng:

“Notify everyone from the Celestial Hound Squad and Samsara Squad to gather at the command center immediately! This time, we stop the enemy at the border—they will not wreak havoc on our land!”

Lan Xincheng nodded. “Understood!”

Zhu Zheng personally called Li Guangxiao in the East Sea District,

demanding the navy be dispatched to seal off the waters surrounding Linhai City, Tianhai City, and Huazhou City.

This battle—every last one of them must be killed. No survivors.

Otherwise, Jiangnan would face endless future threats.

All the wolves in hiding would pounce without hesitation.

Meanwhile, Zhang Yi was fast asleep.

But the sound from his communicator immediately woke him.

He'd always been a light sleeper—any slight noise would rouse him.

Glancing at the clock, it was midnight.

The satellite phone displayed Lan Xincheng's name.

He picked it up.

“Hello, Secretary Lan.”

“Captain Zhang, the enemy is here! Please bring your team to the command center immediately!”

“Tonight, we go to war!”

Zhang Yi's eyes turned sharp.

“On my way!”

Without wasting words, he got dressed and contacted Baili Changqing to rally all members.

Then he knocked on the next room and woke Liang Yue and Yang Xinxin.

“Moon of Corrosion is here! Get ready—we’re heading to the command center.”

As he spoke, he was already gearing up.

As a captain, his combat suit was custom-made.

Thanks to his partnership with Deng Yuanbo, he had acquired a suit identical to Deng Shentong’s.

It was the most advanced tech in the region.

This suit had many hidden pockets—

For knives, meds, bullets, explosives—you name it.

Heat-resistant, cold-proof, and the inner combat layer was the latest model.

Top-tier in both defense and practicality.

Only two such suits existed in the entire Deng Family.

The one Zhang Yi wore was Deng Shentong’s backup.

After gearing up, Zhang Yi double-checked all the weapons in his Dimensional Space.

Everything was on standby, ready for immediate use.

Guns were off safety, and all other combat tools were in optimal condition.

He confirmed his loadout in the shortest time.

Yang Xinxin and Liang Yue didn't slack either.

After Zhang Yi left the room, they suited up and checked each other's gear.

As for Hua Hua—thanks to its shapeshifting traits, it didn't need any gear.

Its natural hide was its best defense.

In combat, beasts usually outclassed modern humans.

Fifteen minutes later, the three of them—and one cat—stepped out of the villa.

The night was pitch black, but hundreds of searchlights pierced the skies of Blizzard City, lighting it up like day.

Outside, members of the Yan Yun Guard were already waiting, vehicles prepped for Zhang Yi's team.

They got in, and without a single pause, sped toward the command center.

On the main road, they noticed other vehicles heading in the same direction.

Members of the Samsara Squad, Celestial Hound Squad, senior officials from the Yan Yun Guard and Operations Command—

Everyone was converging on the command center.