

Ice Age 731

Chapter 731: Three Enemy Forces

Zhang Yi and his team arrived at the Operations Command Center.

Gao Changkong's vehicle had arrived moments earlier. When he saw Zhang Yi, he quickly walked over to greet him.

"Chaos, you're here! Let's head up—time's tight."

Gao Changkong addressed Zhang Yi by his codename.

During special operations, real names weren't used to prevent the leak of critical personal information.

Zhang Yi had been uncomfortable with it at first, but over time he got used to it.

He nodded and walked with Gao Changkong toward the elevator without stopping.

As for the others, those not qualified to attend the high-level meeting waited downstairs.

"Do you know what's going on, Wheel King?"

Wheel King was Gao Changkong's codename.

Gao Changkong shook his head. "I just got the call like you did. Let's hear it upstairs."

The two entered the elevator and headed straight to the Operations Command Room.

By the time they arrived, most of the key personnel were already there.

After all, the high-ranking officers had received the alerts first—only afterward were the frontline teams like them notified.

Zhu Zheng glanced at them and waved them over.

"Chaos, Wheel King, take a seat. Listen to what the Defense Ministry has to say."

Zhang Yi and Gao Changkong found open seats and sat down.

The Defense Minister wasted no time—every second mattered now. No empty formalities.

A full holographic image appeared in the center of the meeting room.

Not long after, the door opened again—Combat Minister Tu Yunlie had arrived.

He took a quick look around and sat down not far from Zhang Yi.

With all the core battle members present, the Defense Minister began without further delay.

He pointed at the hologram, where three red dots lit up.

“There are three enemy forces that have suddenly appeared along the coast!”

“Based on our reconnaissance, we’ve basically identified who they are.”

He pointed to Huazhou City.

“Near the waters off Huazhou City, we’ve detected the Yakuza Fiends, a ronin group from the seas around the Eastern Kingdom.”

“This is a group of over five hundred criminals. They’re based on Shōbatō Island and engage in both land and sea piracy.”

Then he pointed to Linhai City.

“At Linhai City, we discovered the symbol of Moon of Corrosion along with many of their members. We can confirm this is their main force.”

Zhang Yi and Gao Changkong both focused on the Linhai City marker, eyes flashing with intensity.

Moon of Corrosion—they were the enemy they most wanted to destroy.

But then, the Defense Minister pointed to a third location, and Zhang Yi’s expression changed.

“In the seas near Tianhai City, we’ve spotted members of the Tianlong Pirate Crew, the dominant force in the southern seas!”

“This pirate crew consists of seven squadrons and is extremely formidable—they’ve already wiped out multiple small nations.”

“Although this time, only one squadron has come, we’ll still need to deploy significant forces to deal with them!”

After the minister's report, the atmosphere in the room turned heavy.

They had originally assumed Moon of Corrosion's reinforcements were just some disorganized rabble.

But the appearance of the Tianlong Pirate Crew changed everything.

The Yakuza Fiends were still manageable. Though large in number, ronin were unorganized by nature—many didn't possess much real power.

However, the Tianlong Pirate Crew was made up mostly of professional soldiers and gangsters from southern nations.

Through constant battle, they had developed formidable strength.

Zhang Yi turned his gaze to Zhu Zheng.

Given the situation, they had two choices—either split their forces and take out one group at a time...

It all came down to how Zhu Zheng planned to arrange the deployment.

Still, the fact that Tianhai City was a target made Zhang Yi feel uneasy.

Fortunately, he had anticipated this and warned Tianhai City in advance.

Zhou Ke'er and the others were well-protected.

As long as they remained inside the shelter, even a full-on assault from the Tianlong Pirate Crew wouldn't harm them.

That place was built to withstand missile bombardment.

As for Xiao Honglian, Xing Tian, and Chen Jinguan, it would depend on whether they followed Zhang Yi's instructions precisely.

Despite the three-pronged assault, Zhu Zheng remained composed.

"Tianlong Pirate Crew, huh? Bunch of reckless fools. They must be tired of living if they dare touch Huaxu Nation!"

"We'll settle the score with them later. For now, let's wipe out these invaders!"

Zhu Zheng's gaze shifted to Zhang Yi and Gao Changkong.

"Chaos, Tianhai City is your territory. You know it best. You'll lead the Celestial Hound Squad there and deal with the Tianlong Pirate Crew first!"

Zhang Yi felt a wave of relief.

Though the pirates were numerous, he believed they wouldn't be as tough as Moon of Corrosion, whose members were all elite fighters.

Taking them down should be significantly easier.

Zhu Zheng clearly assigned him to Tianhai City out of consideration for his strength—or at least, his assessment of Zhang Yi's strength.

"Yes, Commander!"

Zhang Yi accepted the mission.

Zhu Zheng then looked at Gao Changkong.

“Wheel King, Moon of Corrosion is at Linhai City. You’ll lead the Samsara Squad to intercept them.”

“But don’t rush into a full-on battle with them. They possess prophetic abilities and aren’t easy to handle.”

“Use your skills to stall them. Avoid a life-or-death clash. Wait for the Celestial Hound Squad to finish off the pirates and come assist you. Work together to deal with Moon of Corrosion and minimize casualties!”

Gao Changkong: “Understood, Commander!”

That took care of two targets.

Now, only the Yakuza Fiends at Huazhou City remained.

Zhu Zheng’s eyes turned to Tu Yunlie.

“Zhurong, you’ll lead 500 Yan Yun Guards to Huazhou!”

When Zhang Yi heard that codename, he instinctively began analyzing Tu Yunlie’s powers.

Zhurong—the Fire God, an incredibly powerful deity from ancient times.

Did that mean Tu Yunlie’s ability was flame-based?

No... that would be too simplistic.

Zhang Yi thought: Just like how I use the codename Chaos to conceal my true power, Tu Yunlie’s codename might also be a cover.

Tu Yunlie’s face was half-hidden under his oversized battle robe, making it impossible to read his expression.

But from his eyes alone, one could feel a blazing fighting spirit.

“Yes, Commander!”

But just then, Lan Xincheng raised a concern.

“Commander Zhu, if we mobilize the Yan Yun Guard, who will protect Blizzard City?”

Blizzard City operated under full militarization.

Everyone had a role and stuck to fixed patrol routes.

Removing Tu Yunlie, the city's top defender, would weaken its security.

Chapter 732: Sword Pointed at Tianhai

Facing Lan Xincheng's concern, Zhu Zheng clasped his hands on the table and said firmly:

"The greatest threat right now is the foreign invasion!"

"We must win this war at any cost—and win it flawlessly!"

"Blizzard City's defenses are strong enough. Even without Zhurong and his 500 elite Yan Yun Guards, it won't make much of a difference."

Lan Xincheng furrowed his brow slightly but didn't say anything more.

Once the leadership had made a decision, continuing to question it would be inappropriate.

That wasn't how a seasoned official conducted himself.

Zhu Zheng slapped the table. "Now—begin the operation! We must end this war before they unleash chaos. End it outside our national borders!"

"We absolutely cannot let them reach the Central Plains!"

Zhang Yi and the others all stood up together and answered loudly, "Yes!"

Their voices were clear and decisive.

Zhang Yi, Gao Changkong, and Tu Yunlie left the meeting room without hesitation.

There was no time to lose—by now, all three invading forces had likely reached the coastal cities' harbors.

If they arrived even a moment too late, who knew how many lives would be lost?

Linhai City and Tianhai City were less at risk—

Both had suffered major disasters before, and survivors were few.

Tianhai City had even received prior warning from Zhang Yi and was on alert.

But Huazhou City, now facing an assault from 500 Yakuza Fiends, would likely see a bloodbath.

That was why Zhu Zheng had rarely—if ever—dispatched Tu Yunlie before now.

Huazhou City had to be protected. It was the face of the entire Jiangnan District!

As Zhang Yi and the others left the meeting room, they moved quickly downstairs.

Zhang Yi immediately called Zhou Ke'er, who was far away in Tianhai City.

It was midnight, and it took Zhou Ke'er a while to wake up.

When she saw Zhang Yi calling, her face lit up.

“Hey, Zhang Yi! Calling me this late—don’t tell me you’re...”

Zhang Yi spoke fast and clear: “Listen, Tianhai City is in danger! Moon of Corrosion is stirring up trouble again, and a pirate squad from the sea is about to arrive at Tianhai.”

“No one is allowed to go outside. Get everyone into the basement immediately. I’m on my way.”

Zhou Ke’er’s expression instantly turned serious.

She pulled up the strap of her nightgown, swung her smooth, slender legs off the bed, and slipped into her slippers.

“Got it. I’ll notify everyone now.”

“Don’t worry—they won’t breach the shelter. I’ll be there in less than thirty minutes.”

Zhang Yi finished giving instructions and hung up.

Then, he called Chen Jingguan at the Chaoyu Base.

Since the enemy was approaching from the sea, the harbor there would be the first to be hit.

Chen Jingguan was still awake—

With over a thousand people under his care at Chaoyu Base, he had daily affairs to manage and usually stayed up late.

As soon as the phone rang, he picked up quickly.

“Boss, you’re still up at this hour?”

Zhang Yi didn’t bother with small talk and got straight to the point.

“I told you to prepare for this—how did that go?”

Chen Jingguan’s face turned solemn. Though nervous, he answered seriously:

“Everything has been done exactly as you instructed! Everyone is resting in the shelter, and all strategic supplies have been relocated.

Aside from a few massive shipping containers, there’s nothing left at the port.”

Zhang Yi nodded. “Good. Stay hidden, and wait for my orders to act.”

After hanging up, Zhang Yi noticed that the elevator only had three people—himself, Tu Yunlie, and Gao Changkong.

He glanced at the other two, then paused.

He wasn't especially familiar with Gao Changkong and had barely spoken to Tu Yunlie.

There wasn't really anything to talk about now—better to focus on their respective missions.

Surprisingly, Tu Yunlie spoke first.

His deep, muffled voice rumbled:

"I'll deal with those ronin at Huazhou City as fast as possible. Then I'll come support you both.

If things get bad and you can't handle it, take cover and wait for our backup!"

As the head of the Combat Division, Tu Yunlie was one of the top powerholders in Blizzard City.

In this battle, he wanted to rack up major merits too—securing a stronger position for his future.

Still, he had every right to say those words.

The 500 Yan Yun Guards under his command were the finest of the entire Yan Yun force.

Among them were:

Ten Delta-level elite Awakened

Thirty Awakened ranging from Beta to Gamma level

And the rest were well-trained, heavily armed elite soldiers.

Zhang Yi shrugged. He wasn't too interested in merit or accolades.

He only cared about one thing: wiping out Moon of Corrosion and bringing peace to Jiangnan—especially his own home.

“Alright then. If needed, I'll call for backup.”

Gao Changkong smiled but didn't respond to Tu Yunlie.

Instead, he turned to Zhang Yi.

"I'm counting on you to join us in wiping out Moon of Corrosion, remember? They're still our main target."

Without Zhang Yi's ability to block prophetic powers, dealing with Moon of Corrosion was no easy feat.

Even with his command over reincarnation, Gao Changkong would be taking major risks.

From their tone, Zhang Yi could sense something subtle.

Just as Deng Yuanbo had said—Blizzard City's upper echelon was split into factions.

There were both overt and covert power struggles happening constantly.

Fortunately, Zhang Yi was an outsider.

Because he wasn't involved in political games, people didn't guard against him.

Still... it was troublesome.

That was all Zhang Yi could think.

He had no interest in power. To him, it was something that only invited danger.

Before he could reply, Gao Changkong added,

"I've heard of the Tianlong Pirate Crew from the Ironblood Squad. They're strong, sure—but unless the Sea Dragon King himself is leading, their individual squadrons aren't that impressive."

"With your strength, you should have no problem taking them down."

The Tianlong Pirate Crew was famous, and their numbers exceeded tens of thousands.

But in this era—where top-tier Awakened determined the outcome of battles—numbers alone didn't equal dominance.

If they did, Blizzard City wouldn't have needed the Celestial Squad to deal with Moon of Corrosion.

Their 300,000-strong Defense Force could've crushed them easily.

Based on Blizzard City's analysis, two elite squads were all it would take to destroy the entire Tianlong Pirate Crew.

Now, with just one squadron showing up, Zhang Yi's Celestial Hound Squad should be more than enough to handle them.

To most in the room, the western squadron of the Tianlong Pirate Crew was just a smokescreen—lured here by Moon of Corrosion to stir up chaos.

Zhang Yi nodded. "We'll see how strong they really are once the fighting starts."

He had never underestimated any opponent.

Arrogance was the original sin that led to death.

Chapter 733: Rushing to the Battlefield

Zhang Yi came downstairs. The members of the Celestial Hound Squad were already suited up and ready to go, just waiting for his command.

Zhang Yi didn't waste a single word.

"Move!"

Everyone quickly left the operations command center. Outside, armored vehicles were waiting to take them to the airport.

To Zhang Yi's left sat Yang Xinxin, and to his right was Liang Yue. Hua Hua was nestled in Yang Xinxin's arms.

Zhang Yi began by giving everyone a brief overview of their mission.

"We're heading to Tianhai City first to wipe out the Tianlong Pirate Crew that landed there. Tianhai City is my turf—I know the terrain well and have informants stationed there."

"That gives us a clear advantage in the fight. Just stick to what you've trained for."

After laying that out, he gave specific instructions to Liang Yue and Hua Hua.

"During the battle, stay close to Xinxin. It's her first time on the battlefield. Make sure she's protected."

Liang Yue nodded. "Of course."

Hua Hua opened its mouth wide. "Meow!"

Yang Xinxin didn't object to Zhang Yi's special attention.

Although she had awakened her ability, she still needed to learn how to use it in real combat.

Besides, her power was unusual—and came with high risks.

Having Liang Yue and Hua Hua by her side would at least ensure her safety.

“As for the tactical planning, Baili, I’m handing it over to you.”

Zhang Yi looked at Baili Changqing. “Until I give orders, all operational plans are in your hands.”

Leave professional tasks to the professionals.

When it came to combat, Baili Changqing was clearly the more experienced one.

Zhang Yi wasn’t foolish enough to meddle in something he wasn’t good at.

Baili Changqing was visibly moved. He hadn’t expected Zhang Yi to trust him this much.

A leader delegating authority was the greatest form of recognition for a subordinate!

“Yes, sir!”

Baili Changqing didn’t say another word and accepted the order.

This decision brought a wave of relief to everyone else.

If someone like Zhang Yi—who was a total outsider to tactics—had insisted on taking command, they’d have all been on edge.

No one denied Zhang Yi’s individual strength.

But leadership and personal combat prowess were two entirely different things.

The Celestial Hound Squad, the Samsara Squad, and the Yan Yun Troop all headed swiftly toward the airport.

Searchlights tore through the night sky. Blizzard City was steeped in a solemn, murderous atmosphere—yet another sleepless night.

As the fighter jets took off one after another, the three squads flew toward their respective battlefields.

Meanwhile, in Tianhai City, thanks to Zhang Yi's early warning, the shelters and the three local factions had already secured their people and resources in safe zones.

Once the Tianlong Pirates reached the nearby seas, they immediately switched to snow vehicles and stormed across the frozen surface to the shore.

"Boys, loot to your heart's content! Kill all the men and take every scrap of food and resources!"

Kanute roared with laughter, echoed by the crazed howls of over a thousand pirates, all geared up for a full-blown raid.

As long as they pulled this off today, they wouldn't need to go out to sea for the rest of the year.

Everyone had heard about the wealth of Tianhai City.

And after today, they'd finally earn themselves a big name in the pirate world!

So what if it was Huaxu Nation?

They were still ripe for the plundering!

But as the excited pirates stormed ashore, something quickly felt off.

Despite scouring the massive city for a long time, they didn't see a single person!

The entire city was like a ghost town. It was hard to find any trace of human activity at all.

The major bases had already relocated their people and supplies half a month ago. The buildings left behind were buried under thick layers of snow.

From the looks of it, it was as if no one had ever lived here.

Only near the port area of the Chaoyu Base did they find some large containers with supplies inside.

But it was all vehicles, heavy machinery, and scattered materials—not very useful, and hard to transport.

Kanute immediately sensed something was wrong.

He turned to ask the people from Moon of Corrosion what was going on.

Phoenixin Ren gave his answer.

“According to our intel, there are only a few factions left in the city. Their resources have all been centralized. Take them out, and you'll easily snatch most of Tianhai City's supplies.”

Kanute thought it over and concluded that Phoenixin Ren wasn't lying.

Tianhai City had vast resources, and it was unrealistic to move all of it out in such a short time.

There could only be one explanation: the important supplies had been hidden.

As long as they found where the local forces were hiding—in other words, where the stash was—they could take it all!

Kanute immediately ordered his men to dig deep, no matter what, and find where the major factions were holed up.

Little did they know, right beneath their feet, over a thousand people from Chaoyu Base were hiding.

Blizzard City

Zhu Zheng had already sent out the three squads under Zhang Yi's lead.

Now, he was thinking about how to handle what came next.

The Extremist Demons and Moon of Corrosion both belonged to the Ronin organization, and their numbers were no more than a few hundred at most.

But the Tianlong Pirate Crew, which dominated the southern seas, had enough firepower to threaten an entire nation.

Oddly enough, larger organizations were often easier to negotiate or manage.

"The Tianlong Pirates actually dared to attack the Jiangnan Region? Their ambition knows no bounds!"

"We have to teach them a lesson—otherwise, the southeastern coast will never have peace!"

Zhu Zheng said grimly.

Lan Xincheng bowed slightly and replied, "The East Sea Region's patrol ships guard the waters. They must've been guided by a Foresight user from Moon of Corrosion to slip past the patrols."

"Besides, the southeastern sea is full of islands. We still don't know where their main base is. It'll be tough to launch a campaign."

Zhu Zheng's eyes turned sharp.

"That's not a big deal. Once we confirm the location of their HQ, just one blast from the Death Reaper of Love will wipe them out completely!"

All it took was dispatching some scouts. Eventually, they'd find something.

But the issue was that the Death Reaper of Love couldn't be used recklessly.

The Tianlong Pirates might be easy to destroy, but using a weapon like that could open Pandora's box.

In the future, everyone on the planet might resort to such devastating weapons.

Lan Xincheng, however, smiled faintly.

"There are other ways we can deal with them."

Zhu Zheng glanced over. "Oh? What do you have in mind?"

Lan Xincheng grinned. "The Starsea Archipelago is all islands. They rely on imports for both food and energy."

"After the apocalypse, maritime shipping has become more difficult, and their supply chains have become even more limited. All we need to do is mess with those two areas, and we can starve them out completely!"

“Without diesel, their massive fleet becomes nothing but scrap metal.”

Zhu Zheng’s expression lit up with interest, and he smiled. “You always manage to come up with something new!”

Chapter 734: The Pirates

With Huaxu Nation’s influence, it would only take a few conversations with the major regions that export food and energy to the Tianlong Pirate Crew to throw them into chaos.

The pirates' advantage didn’t come from overwhelming strength.

In truth, tens of thousands of ragtag fighters didn’t have much real combat power.

Their dominance stemmed from the complex terrain of the Starsea Archipelago.

If they ever clashed with one of the nearby major nations, their underlings wouldn’t even be worth mentioning.

Cutting off their food and fuel supply would trap them on the islands like sitting ducks.

This was exactly why the Sea Dragon King didn’t dare make a move against Huaxu Nation.

Zhu Zheng gave it some thought and contacted the Shengjing Region.

He asked them to reach out to the surrounding nations that traded with the Tianlong Pirate Crew and request they halt all commerce.

Even after the apocalypse, Huaxu Nation still held weight.

And no one would offend Huaxu over a bunch of pirates.

So this issue could be handled swiftly.

But that was a matter for later and needs no elaboration here.

Tianhai City

The pirates of the Tianlong Pirate Crew began looting all over.

Tianhai City was massive.

While most of the vital resources had already been secured by the major factions, some large industrial factories, raw material depots, and small supermarkets hadn't been completely cleared out.

These leftovers, which the major forces deemed not worth their time, were treasures to the pirates.

After all, in the resource-poor southern seas, everything they ate, wore, or used came from pillaging.

So the trash abandoned by Tianhai's big players looked like gold to them.

But in this environment, it was actually hard for the bases of these factions not to be discovered.

The rest of the city was buried in snow, while only the shelter and the three main faction territories had been cleared.

They were easy to spot.

But even though they found them, they couldn't breach the shelters.

These pirates, used to naval skirmishes in the southern seas, had no clue how to crack through reinforced concrete bunkers that could withstand missile strikes.

Zhang Yi's shelter, especially, was tall and lavish—it made many pirates drool.

They tried everything they had outside, but couldn't even scratch the surface of the outer wall.

Inside the shelter, Uncle You led everyone to the first basement floor, monitoring the situation outside via surveillance.

Zhou Haimei and Yang Siya both wore worried looks.

Uncle You held a machine gun in his hands, his body draped with ammo belts, his expression stern and unflinching.

If danger broke out, he would be the first to step up and buy time for everyone else to escape.

Zhou Ke'er, however, remained calm.

"It's fine. They won't break through the shelter's defenses. Besides, Zhang Yi and the others will be here soon!"

Just then, a deafening noise rang out from outside.

A pirate officer had transformed into a five-meter-tall giant, his skin a bluish hue, and started violently ramming the shelter's main gate!

The door didn't budge, but the sound of the impacts alone was enough to make hearts pound.

Even though everyone trusted the shelter's defenses, their nerves were still on edge.

These pirates were inhuman. They left nothing but destruction in their wake.

In past skirmishes among Tianhai City's local factions, there was still a trace of humanity—non-combatants weren't necessarily killed.

But harboring any such hope with these pirates would be pure foolishness.

Zhou Ke'er's face remained calm, but anxiety welled in her heart.

She quickly called Zhang Yi and reported the situation.

At that very moment, a VTOL aircraft roared across the night sky, arriving over Tianhai City.

Upon receiving Zhou Ke'er's message, Zhang Yi's brows furrowed.

He immediately ordered the pilot to land at the coordinates of his shelter.

Since they were here to kill pirates anyway, it didn't matter where they started.

Zhu Zheng had already made it clear—on the battlefield, Zhang Yi was the top commander.

The pilot followed orders and flew toward the border between the Western District and Lujing District.

Before long, the pirates attacking the shelter were shocked to hear the roar of a dragon overhead.

They looked up, only to find not a dragon—but a massive armed VTOL aircraft!

BOOM!

A deafening blast rang out mid-air.

The head of the giant mutant pirate instantly exploded.

Zhang Yi calmly swapped out his magazine and aimed at his next target.

The massive white sniper rifle, Thunder Judgment, rested in his hands.

Taking out lower-tier mutants was no different from killing regular people.

But to conserve ammo, he only targeted the mutant pirates.

Baili Changqing was the first to move.

Still a hundred meters above ground, he shouted, "Let's go!"

Then, like a cannonball, he plummeted straight down!

The others followed closely behind.

There was no safe landing zone below for the VTOL, but that posed no problem for these top-tier mutants.

To avoid becoming sitting ducks midair, the Strength-type mutants carried others and leapt directly from the aircraft.

Only Meng Siyu stayed by Zhang Yi's side. Her role was recon and healing—not combat.

Even Yang Xinxin rode into battle on Hua Hua.

In Zhang Yi's field of view, Yang Xinxin was already testing her ability.

She pointed her hands at two pirates—who suddenly turned on each other, choking one another to death.

Yang Xinxin grinned with delight.

Zhang Yi, meanwhile, kept an eye on her surroundings, ready to eliminate any threat near her.

There were over a hundred pirates around the shelter, including five mutants.

Seeing these people drop from the sky didn't faze them—they were used to living on the edge, accustomed to death.

They raised their guns and opened fire. "Ratatatatata!"

Baili Changqing took the lead, pulling out two black weapon pieces from his back and locking them together.

It was a massive Fangtian Halberd.

The pole was gilded, the black blade adorned with deep gold patterns—imposing and fierce.

As the bullets rained down, he didn't dodge at all.

The ordinary rounds didn't even tickle him.

With just one charge and swing, dozens of pirates in front of him were sliced in half like stalks of wheat!

Even Baili Changqing was surprised.

“These pirates... are this weak?”

He had expected the pirates, who ruled the southern seas, to have some strength.

But to his shock, they were pathetically fragile.

Thinking it over, it made sense.

The southern seas were full of small, weak nations. Even combined, they couldn't match the Jiangnan Region in power.

No wonder a group like this could dominate there.

But now that they faced elite mutant squads from a powerful nation—they were just cannon fodder.

BOOM!

Another thunderous blast rang out on the battlefield.

Baili Changqing looked up to see the head of a charging mutant had vanished.

Suddenly it clicked.

He scanned the area and realized that any pirate displaying mutant powers had been sniped from above by Zhang Yi!

Baili Changqing swallowed hard.

Zhang Yi, using Thunder Judgment with Sacred Silver rounds—even he wouldn't dare block one.

He'd have to dodge carefully.

No wonder other mutants didn't stand a chance—Zhang Yi was taking them out one by one from the sky.

Who said firearms were useless against mutants?

When a mutant used their power to fire bullets, even other mutants couldn't handle it.

Chapter 735: Heading Straight to Chaoyu Harbor

Zhang Yi led the Celestial Hound Squad into Tianhai City.

Their first stop, naturally, was his home base.

Over a hundred pirates were wiped out by the Celestial Hound Squad in under a minute.

Baili Changqing captured one for interrogation. Meng Siyu stepped up and injected him with a truth serum.

Soon enough, the prisoner spilled everything he knew about the Tianlong Pirate Crew.

"They... they're at Chaoyu Harbor. Our captain is Kanute, the commander of the Western Squadron."

The captive was a nobody—useful intel, but not much depth.

Zhang Yi asked about the strength of the Western Squadron. The guy simply said they were very powerful and had few equals in the southern seas.

That might've been true for him.

But to Zhang Yi, it was total b*llshit.

These small-time fish from the southern seas had probably never seen a real expert in their lives.

Zhang Yi turned to Baili Changqing. "What's your take?"

Baili thought for a moment, then said, "Based on intel from the regional command, the invading force is indeed the Western Squadron, led by Kanute."

"The AI system rates him as a Delta-level mutant, with a power index of 8000."

"His subordinates include several core members, power levels ranging from 4000 to 6000."

"But—"

He pointed to a corpse in the crowd.

"One of the officers has already been killed by your sniper round."

Zhang Yi paused to consider.

The intel from HQ was accurate—the enemy force in Tianhai was the weakest among the three fronts.

It made sense. According to the system's analysis, Zhang Yi's combat power was lower than Tu Yunlie and Gao Changkong.

Plus, his familiarity with Tianhai made him the best choice to handle this front quickly, then regroup at Linhai City with the Samsara Squad to deal with Moon of Corrosion.

"Then let's move out to Chaoyu Harbor! This needs to be a quick operation—Lin Hai is the main battlefield."

As he spoke, he took out a satellite phone and called Chen Jingguan.

Although Chen had already gone underground, surveillance devices had been placed all around the Chaoyu Base.

They could gather crucial intel on the Tianlong Pirate Crew's positions.

This would help Zhang Yi plan his strike more effectively.

At that moment, the shelter's doors opened.

Uncle You and the others came rushing out.

"Zhang Yi!"

Seeing him filled them with relief and joy.

Zhou Ke'er wore a thick down coat, a white fox-fur scarf draped elegantly around her neck.

Zhang Yi gave them a quick glance and said flatly, "The battle's not over yet. Stay inside the shelter. No one is to come out!"

But Uncle You stepped forward. “Let us help! One more fighter is always a good thing.”

Fatty Xu mustered his courage and walked over as well.

“Boss, it’s been so long since we’ve fought side by side. Take me with you—at least I can help control the battlefield!”

With snow falling all around, having an ice-based mutant really could be an advantage in this environment.

Still, Zhang Yi shook his head.

“You’re to stay on standby inside the shelter. If I need you, I’ll call for you.”

Uncle You and Fatty Xu looked a little disappointed.

Zhang Yi explained, “Based on current intel, the enemy’s strength is within controllable limits. We have enough people to deal with them.”

“But just to be safe, you and the people from the three bases need to hold back. If anything unexpected happens, you’ll be our support team on the outside.”

Even though this front was the weakest, Zhang Yi wasn’t about to be careless.

He needed solid planning.

Of course, part of his reasoning was also to protect Uncle You and the others.

Hearing this, Uncle You and Fatty Xu looked around at the elite members of the Celestial Hound Squad—and understood Zhang Yi's point.

This was a critical moment. They couldn't afford to mess around.

They both nodded.

"If you need us, just say the word! We'll be there in a flash!"

Zhang Yi nodded and was about to leave, but then paused.

He took out a box of Sacred Silver bullets and handed them to Uncle You.

The material used to make these rounds was rare—Zhang Yi only had about 3000 of them.

So he gave Uncle You just twenty rounds.

Then he handed him a large, black weapon.

It was a top-tier anti-materiel sniper rifle—GPW Type 2—looted from the Blizzard City armory.

Its firepower was twice that of older models like the Barrett. Originally designed for aerial deployment, it wasn't meant for single-soldier use.

But it was perfect for Uncle You.

Though his powers were simple, he was a seasoned veteran with solid combat instincts.

Pairing the heavy sniper with Sacred Silver rounds would let him deliver serious firepower.

When skill falls short, equipment makes up for it.

Uncle You's eyes lit up instantly.

He excitedly accepted the weapon—Zhang Yi had just told him, without saying it outright, that if the moment came, he'd be joining the fight for real.

Just then, Zhou Ke'er and Yang Siya approached.

Yang Siya handed Zhang Yi a large lunchbox, filled with specially prepared ability-boosting food.

"Save this for when you're in battle."

Zhou Ke'er gave him a case of healing potions.

Zhang Yi felt a warmth in his heart, but there was no time for sentiment. The battlefield called.

He nodded, then pulled out a snow vehicle and led the Celestial Hound Squad toward Chaoyu Harbor.

Meanwhile, on the other two fronts, Tu Yunlie's Yan Yun Troop and Gao Changkong's Samsara Squad had reached their respective battlefields.

Step one: locate the enemy.

Step two: destroy them.

Tu Yunlie's mission was more straightforward.

As soon as the Extremist Demons arrived in Huazhou, over 500 of them rushed into populated areas and began pillaging.

From the get-go, they clashed with Huazhou's local forces.

Once Tu Yunlie's squad arrived, they split into smaller teams and moved to suppress the chaos.

Linhai City, however, was different. The Samsara Squad dared not act rashly.

Gao Changkong knew Moon of Corrosion had come well-prepared, and the Miko's prophecies added tremendous pressure.

So after landing, he didn't rush to deploy his team.

"I'll use my Reincarnation powers to probe their defenses first, then come up with a plan."

"For now, the safest move is to wait for Zhang Yi's team to back us up. Once we can block their foresight abilities, we'll have the upper hand!"

Linhai City was already a dead city—civilian casualties were no longer a concern.

That gave them all the space they needed to unleash their powers.

Everything happening on these three battlefronts was closely monitored by Zhu Zheng and the upper command in Blizzard City.

This time, the entire focus of Blizzard City was on the battlefield.

Zhu Zheng had learned from the last conflict.

He decided to hand over full battlefield control to the mutants.

The era had changed. Mutants were now the true leaders on the battlefield.

Too much interference from the top only tied their hands.

Now, aside from long-range bombing, the most useful support the regions could offer was navigation intel.

Zhang Yi's Celestial Hound Squad split into two vehicles, maintaining a one-kilometer gap, advancing toward Chaoyu Harbor from both flanks.

He stayed in contact with Chen Jingguan, asking for updates.

"What's the situation at the harbor?"

Chen replied, "About 70% of their forces are out scavenging. The other 30% are stationed at the harbor."

"They seem to know you're coming, and they're setting up ambushes using our old defense structures."

Chapter 736: Obstacle

After receiving intelligence from Chen Jingguan, Zhang Yi felt much more at ease.

Most pirates were nothing more than a disorderly mob, not a professional military force.

So after arriving in Tianhai City, their first thought was to loot supplies.

At this moment, seventy percent of the Tianlong Pirate Crew's forces were out on assignment.

That meant only a small group of elites remained stationed at the harbor base, led by none other than Captain Kanute.

Based on intel provided by the district, their Celestial Hound Squad would have no trouble wiping out the Tianlong Pirate Crew's Western Squadron.

Inside the railcar, Baili Changqing had already unfolded a 3D map and was laying out the battle plan.

"Captain, you're good at long-range sniping. So head to Point A—this elevated position right here."

"Qi Guangming, you're with the captain, providing long-range fire suppression."

"The harbor is shaped like a cone. We'll attack from both the left and right flanks. The coastline has already been sealed off by ships from the Eastern Sea District, so no worries about them escaping."

"When the time comes, Kanute is mine and Liang Yue's responsibility."

"Everyone else, focus on clearing the grunts."

Baili Changqing's plan was solid—they had overwhelming force for a sweep.

In terms of high-level Awakened fighters, they held the absolute upper hand.

As for the ordinary pirates? In their eyes, they were nothing but walking targets, waving outdated AKs and spraying bullets like amateurs.

After finishing his breakdown, Baili Changqing looked to Zhang Yi for input.

Zhang Yi nodded.

“No problem, let’s go with this.”

“Remember—safety first. Never underestimate the enemy.”

Everyone shouted in unison, “Understood!”

In less than an hour, they had arrived near the Chaoyu Harbor.

They got out of their vehicle and proceeded on foot, avoiding any chance of ambush.

In terms of defense, their battle suits were far more protective than any armored car.

The vehicles were really just for transportation.

The group advanced in three-person squads.

Snow was falling from the sky, but visibility wasn’t too bad.

Baili Changqing gave Ye Jikang a look.

Ye Jikang understood immediately and pulled a silver metal case from his backpack.

When the case was opened, three miniature drones flew out.

Ye Jikang piloted them toward the harbor base.

But before they could even capture anything, a blur flashed across the feed, and all three drones suddenly plummeted from the sky.

Ye Jikang frowned.

“They’ve got strong anti-recon protocols.”

Even though drone tech was well-developed by now, they were still machines—easy prey for electromagnetic interference.

The Tianlong Pirate Crew had roamed the southern seas for a long time, and many among them were seasoned soldiers or mercenaries.

Baili Changqing let out a helpless sigh.

Since the Apocalypse began, modern tech had become less and less effective on the battlefield.

Zhang Yi turned to Meng Siyu. “Can your ability detect their force distribution?”

Meng Siyu replied, “My range is only three kilometers. From where we are now, it’s at least five.”

Zhang Yi looked at Baili Changqing.

Baili paused to think.

Now, the heavy snow covered almost every structure.

The area around the Chaoyu base was a wide, flat snowfield.

And snowfields offered little cover.

If they advanced within three kilometers, they'd likely be spotted quickly.

However, if they could close the distance fast, they'd still have the advantage.

Even though the pirates were entrenched at Chaoyu Base, they didn't know the terrain.

On the other hand, Zhang Yi had already shared a complete layout of the base with everyone before departure.

Baili Changqing made a prompt decision.

"Keep moving! Xue Miao, stir up a storm to mess with their vision. We're already fighting with our cards face-up—no need to tiptoe around!"

Xue Miao responded, "Got it!"

His ability was wind-based, and in a snowstorm, that gave him a huge edge.

With just a conjured blizzard, he could create a natural smokescreen.

He summoned a powerful storm in one corner of the Chaoyu base, generating a fierce blizzard.

Using the cover of the snowstorm, the Celestial Hound Squad charged straight toward the harbor!

Their movement quickly caught the attention of the pirates.

Kanute was sitting atop a snow-covered war vehicle, grinning with a mouth full of shark-like teeth.

"Is it the Jiangnan District's regular army?"

“Alright boys! Time to kill!”

With a roar, the surrounding pirates crazily raised their guns, howling like madmen.

These were all desperados—fearless regardless of who they faced.

They’d already tossed aside any concern for their own lives.

Gunfire erupted across the snowy field, aimed directly at Zhang Yi’s advancing squad.

But ordinary bullets couldn’t penetrate their battle suits.

And their poor aim meant they couldn’t hit anything through the blizzard anyway.

Baili Changqing led the charge.

“Forget the small fry—focus on killing the Awakened! End this fight as fast as possible!”

Everyone loaded their guns—standard-issue weapons, all equipped with Origin Bullets.

Ratatatatatatata!!

At the harbor base, the pirates stood on tin crates, laughing maniacally as they opened fire in their direction.

Their Awakened fighters didn’t strike immediately.

They were lying in ambush, waiting for close-quarters opportunities.

But as Zhang Yi's team advanced to within a kilometer of the harbor defense line, a strange field suddenly appeared.

Baili Changqing, at the front, was violently bounced back, tumbling across the snow before regaining his stance expertly.

The others were also caught off guard and slammed into the barrier.

"What the h*ll is this?"

"There's a wall up ahead—a transparent wall!"

Something invisible was blocking their path—a transparent force field.

Zhang Yi's eyes narrowed. Their enemy's Awakened had made a move.

He raised the White Owl. "Clear the way!"

The team immediately cleared a path.

Zhang Yi aimed at the invisible wall and fired.

But even the demon-piercing Sacred Silver Bullet paused just before hitting the wall... and then quietly dropped to the ground.

"Even Sacred Silver Bullets don't work? What kind of ability is this?"

While they were stuck and unable to advance, engine roars echoed from afar.

The fearless pirates rode snowmobiles, charging through the container defenses of Chaoyu Harbor straight toward them.

“We got ‘em! And it's a big catch!”

“Hahaha! How much can we trade these guys for with the Jiangnan District? We’ll be rich!”

“Jackpot! This trip was totally worth it!”

Chapter 737: Caged by a Line

Watching the horde of over a thousand crazed pirates charging toward them, Zhang Yi and the others felt like they were staring at a swarm of vile locusts.

“They actually dared to launch a frontal assault? Are they looking to die?”

Wu Di sneered in disdain.

“They have no idea who they’re messing with.”

Pirates only thrived at sea.

Once they set foot on land, it was like cutting off their own arm.

Forget the average squadrons—even the Sea Dragon King himself wouldn’t dare go toe-to-toe with the Investigation Team.

So in Wu Di’s eyes, these fools were walking straight into death’s arms.

But Zhang Yi remained silent, coldly eyeing the pirate swarm.

For some reason, a sense of unease crept into his heart.

After a brief pause, he took a few steps back—

Only to suddenly feel that same solid, immovable resistance behind him.

Reaching back, he touched it.

Sure enough, their way out had been sealed by that same invisible wall!

“We might’ve walked into a trap—check the surroundings!” he ordered immediately.

The team instantly began scanning the area.

And quickly, they noticed something off.

At some point, a massive transparent cage had formed around them, locking them all inside.

Even above and below—nothing had been overlooked.

Meanwhile, the thousand-plus pirates had encircled them completely, weapons in hand.

Grins split their faces like they’d just seen fish bite the hook.

But they didn’t attack right away—nor did they approach.

A path opened among the pirates, and a tall, lean man with a shark-like face stepped out.

He was none other than Kanute, the captain of the Tianlong Pirate Crew’s Western Squadron.

Kanute's cold gaze swept across the Celestial Hound Squad.

"Since you're already here, might as well introduce yourselves."

But Zhang Yi wasn't the least bit flustered.

He didn't even acknowledge Kanute.

Instead, he instructed his team calmly:

"Try to break through. Unless their side has an Epsilon-level Awakened, I refuse to believe any barrier is truly impenetrable."

The team immediately spread out and launched test attacks at various points.

Bullets, abilities—even brute-force punches.

But no matter what they tried, the transparent barrier didn't react in the slightest.

It wasn't reflecting their attacks nor resisting with power.

It was like an ocean—absorbing everything without a ripple.

Seeing no one respond to him, Kanute shrugged helplessly.

"How rude. Haven't you people heard of manners?"

He raised his right index finger.

“But I’ll tell you now—don’t waste your strength! Once you enter this cage, there’s no way out!”

“Right now, you’re just birds trapped in a cage.”

Among the pirates was an Awakened named Chen Siyu.

In his vision, the space where Zhang Yi and the others stood had turned into a massive transparent cube.

His ability was called Draw the Ground to Cage.

Like a bird trap, the prison was pre-set to cover a specific area.

Once someone entered, the trap would spring and lock the target inside.

And anyone caught inside could never escape.

However, to maintain the cage, Chen Siyu himself couldn’t move.

If he did—or if he died—the ability would end.

That was the rule of his power.

The smile on Kanute’s face vanished. With a wave of his hand, he shouted:

“Kill them!”

At his command, over a thousand pirates cackled madly and pulled their triggers.

From all directions, countless streams of bullets rained down toward the cage!

“Defend!” Zhang Yi shouted.

He immediately activated Absolute Barrier Between Two Realms, shielding himself, Liang Yue, Hua Hua, and Yang Xinxin.

There was no choice—its radius was only one meter. Within that range, he was invincible. Outside of it, he couldn’t protect anyone.

Fortunately, the bullets weren’t much of a threat to the rest of the team either.

Each of them used their own abilities to fend off the barrage.

“This isn’t right. Our attacks can’t get out, but theirs can come in.”

“Is this barrier... one-way?” Baili Changqing shouted while using his Fangtian Halberd to swat bullets away.

Zhang Yi remained composed.

Even if they were caged, as long as he could use Dimensional Space, he was still invincible on defense.

Just then, one of the enemy Awakened leapt from the pirate ranks.

He raised both hands, and the shattered ice on the ground rose into the air.

A moment later, it condensed into a massive ice ball—dozens of meters wide!

The ice ball, like a cannon shell, launched straight toward them!

Baili Changqing was about to intercept it.

But Zhang Yi quickly realized that if the ice shattered on impact, their movement would be severely restricted.

Even with their strength, it would be hard to fight effectively in tight quarters.

“I’ll handle it!” Zhang Yi stepped in.

“Liang Yue, Hua Hua—cover me!”

As he spoke, he deactivated Absolute Barrier Between Two Realms.

Then, right in the path of the incoming ice, he summoned a Dimensional Gate.

The massive ice ball vanished silently, sucked into the dimensional space.

Kanute frowned.

“Tch, so this is the guy Phoenixin wanted me to kill? Just like the intel said—his defense is tricky.”

“But if you can’t leave that cage, I’ll wear you down eventually.”

Among the pirates, many had already brought out shoulder-mounted cannons and rocket launchers.

Even Awakened powers had their limits.

Once their abilities ran dry, even they would be torn apart by heavy fire.

To the Tianlong Pirate Crew, this was a long hunt.

And they had all the patience in the world.

But Zhang Yi suddenly opened two Dimensional Gates, swallowing up attacks from the two most intense firing lines.

While the Dimensional Gates had a limit, it would take an entire arsenal of heavy weapons just to reach that ceiling.

Then—an idea struck Zhang Yi.

If external attacks could enter the cage... but theirs couldn't leave...

Then what exactly determined that boundary?

With that thought, he made a bold attempt.

He raised a hand and used the Dimensional Gate to collect a massive batch of ammo.

Then turned it around—

And fired it right back at the pirates!

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

The bullets flew back exactly as they'd come.

But unlike Zhang Yi's team, those pirates weren't wearing battle suits.

In a blink, dozens of them were shredded into bloody sieves!

Zhang Yi's eyes lit up, a grin spreading across his face.

"I get it now. I know how this cage works!"

Chapter 738: A Deadly Trap

Draw the Ground to Cage was a rule-based ability.

Through experimentation, Zhang Yi had figured out how it worked:

Any object that was present inside the area at the moment the cage was formed became "defined" and could not leave.

But anything that was not initially defined was not subject to that rule.

For example, Zhang Yi and the others couldn't shoot bullets through the cage.

But bullets fired by the pirates outside weren't affected—

And could even be reflected back.

Baili Changqing and the others quickly picked up on this pattern.

The problem was... they still had no idea how to get out.

What if the pirates stopped attacking altogether?

What if they just dragged it out, or changed their tactics?

What then?

Kanute was thinking the same thing.

As soon as he saw Zhang Yi reflect their bullets, he immediately gave the order for all pirates to cease fire.

But Zhang Yi? He wasn't planning to stop.

A sly grin spread across his face as he scanned every pirate in sight.

Somewhere among them had to be the Awakened responsible for the trap.

Kill that one person, and the cage would collapse.

"Clear me some space! I'm gonna count to three. When I say 'three,' everyone get down!"

No one knew what he was up to, but as the captain, they had no choice but to follow orders.

"One!"

Zhang Yi opened a Dimensional Gate.

"Two!"

From within, thick barrels of artillery began to protrude.

“Three!”

Everyone dropped to the ground.

And then—

From within Zhang Yi’s dimensional space, five hundred artillery barrels suddenly emerged!

These were the heavy weapons Zhang Yi had specially requested from Blizzard City, using his Celestial Hound Squad captain privileges.

Bulky, outdated gear that normal Awakened could hardly carry or use—

Once considered obsolete in the Ice Age.

But in his hands, they were still terrifyingly effective.

All five hundred cannons were already preloaded and ready to fire.

Modern weaponry was integrated with smart systems—no manual operation needed.

With just a command issued through his battle suit’s smart interface, all five hundred cannons roared in unison, unleashing devastation toward the pirates on all sides!

No one could’ve imagined such a sight—

One man turning into a walking war fortress in an instant.

The pirates had been overconfident.

They were barely 200 meters from Zhang Yi's location.

That single salvo was like firecrackers blowing up a pile of dung—complete chaos.

Only this time, it was shattered flesh and broken bodies exploding in midair like a gruesome firework show.

Kanute and the other Awakened reacted immediately.

Kanute's body began to swell in size, his clothes ripping apart.

His skin turned gray-blue, etched with jagged textures like blades, and his mouth stretched all the way back to his ears.

In an instant, he transformed into a massive, gray-blue shark over a dozen meters long!

Though grounded, his huge frame moved as gracefully as if he were swimming through water.

He twisted and spun, knocking dozens of cannon shells out of the air, saving hundreds of pirates behind him.

The other Awakened joined in as well—

But even so, there was no stopping a full volley of 500 rounds.

In mere seconds, half of the Western Squadron's 1,000 pirates were dead!

Zhang Yi sighed internally.

Unfortunately, this kind of bombardment could only be used once.

There wasn't time to reload all five hundred guns for a second volley.

Still, the results were beyond satisfying—

And it confirmed his theory:

Objects from his Dimensional Space were not subject to the rules of Draw the Ground to Cage.

Baili Changqing watched as Zhang Yi stored away the five hundred cannons.

Now he finally understood why Zhang Yi had insisted on requisitioning so many seemingly obsolete heavy weapons.

Ye He and the others stared at Zhang Yi with admiration in their eyes.

As expected of their captain—he'd figured out a way to counter the enemy's ability so quickly.

Kanute's fury boiled as he looked at the remains of his fallen comrades.

Their agonized screams filled the air.

"You b*stard! I'll kill you myself!" he howled.

Half of his giant body sank into the dirt, yet the snow and mud offered no resistance.

Anything that touched his body rippled like water.

He locked his gaze on Zhang Yi inside the cage, itching to attack and tear him to pieces.

But he hesitated—

Zhang Yi's Dimensional Space could absorb nearly all attacks and reflect them right back.

Rage wouldn't win this fight.

It would only make him reckless.

Meanwhile, Zhang Yi was still thinking—

How could he break the cage?

"We've killed so many pirates, but the cage is still intact. That means the caster hasn't been taken out yet."

His eyes fell on Kanute's towering form.

"That Awakened... must be under his protection!"

They still couldn't escape yet, but Zhang Yi wasn't worried.

The enemy didn't seem to have a good way to deal with them either.

But then—

A notification popped up on Zhang Yi's tactical visor.

It was from Gao Changkong.

“Chaos! Something’s wrong—don’t rush to wipe out the pirates!”

“This might be one huge trap!”

Zhang Yi’s pupils contracted sharply, a chill running down his spine.

“What do you mean?!”

Over in Linhai City,

Gao Changkong and the members of the Reincarnation Squad stood amid ruins.

Before them were a dozen corpses.

Some of them wore the exact same uniforms as the Moon of Corrosion operatives.

“The ones we saw here weren’t even the real Moon of Corrosion! We were completely played.”

Gao Changkong’s voice rang continuously in Zhang Yi’s ear.

“Think about it—if they’re not in Linhai, where else would they be?”

“Who do they fear the most? Who’s their top target?”

Zhang Yi’s eyes widened.

A dreadful premonition wrapped around him like a suffocating shroud.

Even his scalp tingled.

The one Moon of Corrosion feared most—

The one they most desperately wanted to kill—

Was him.

The only person who could neutralize Takeuchi Mayumi's prophetic ability.

Kanute let out a thunderous roar, his shark mouth splitting wide.

"Ronin! What are you waiting for? Show yourselves!"

Zhang Yi looked up.

Atop a small nearby hill—

Familiar faces emerged from the snow-covered slope.

Phoenixin Ren, and all the Moon of Corrosion's Awakened under his command—

Every last one of them... was here!

Chapter 739: Encirclement Hunt

The members of Eclipse Moon didn't head to Linhai City—they showed up in Tianhai City, right in front of Zhang Ye and his team.

This scene immediately shook the upper echelons of Blizzard City.

Inside the Operations Command Center, Zhu Zheng and the others, who had previously acted like everything was under control, were now clearly panicked.

"How could this happen?!"

Zhu Zheng shot up from his seat, his sharp gaze sweeping across everyone present.

"Our operation plan was top secret. No information about splitting the teams was leaked to the outside."

"Then how did they know Zhang Ye's Celestial Hound Squad was in Tianhai City?!"

This mission was strictly classified. Apart from the three deployed teams, only personnel in the command center knew about it.

At this point, it was almost certain—someone inside had leaked the intel!

Lan Xincheng's gaze shifted to a section of the room—specifically, the intel group in charge of communication with the Celestial Hound Squad.

With a cold expression, he strode over.

He stopped in front of the team leader, Lin Caidie.

"What's going on here? How did the intel get leaked?"

Lin Caidie was a refined woman.

Even as Lan Xincheng confronted her, she kept a composed smile on her face.

But as the smile lingered, her complexion suddenly turned pale.

A stream of blood trickled from the corner of her mouth, and she collapsed to the ground.

Gasps of shock echoed around the room.

Lan Xincheng gently pried open her mouth, then turned helplessly to Zhu Zheng. “She had a cyanide capsule in her mouth. She’s taken her own life out of guilt!”

The truth was now obvious: someone within had definitely leaked information to Eclipse Moon.

What Zhu Zheng couldn’t understand was—why would someone choose to die for betrayal?

What was all this really about?

But right now, Zhu Zheng didn’t have the time to dig into those questions—because Zhang Ye was in grave danger.

Eclipse Moon had teamed up with the Dragon Pirate Crew to set a massive trap—just to hunt them down!

“Can the Samsara Squad go provide backup?”

Lan Xincheng replied, “They’re in Linhai City. Even at top speed, it’ll take at least thirty minutes.”

“Tu Yunlie and his team are already engaged in combat—they can’t provide support either.”

Zhu Zheng gritted his teeth and said to Zhang Ye, “Zhang Ye, stall for as long as you can. I’ll send the Samsara Squad to back you up right away!”

Zhang Ye’s eyes turned ice-cold.

He realized there was a mole.

In the end, he had probably stepped on some people’s toes. They wanted him dead.

But killing him? It wouldn’t be that easy.

Zhang Ye didn’t trust anyone now—not even Zhu Zheng.

So, he abruptly cut off communications with headquarters.

This sudden move stunned Zhu Zheng for a moment. But in the end, he had no right to be angry.

Even a fortress like Blizzard City had been infiltrated by Eclipse Moon.

That was his responsibility as the commander.

If Zhang Ye doubted him, it was justified.

After severing the link, Zhang Ye immediately addressed his team:

“Headquarters has a mole from Eclipse Moon. From now on, follow my orders only. No more contact with them!”

The situation was crystal clear now.

This was a trap—waiting for Zhang Ye’s team to walk right in.

They couldn’t trust anyone but themselves.

Gao Changkong was still on comms, saying, “We’re rushing over now! Hang in there—don’t get yourself killed!”

Zhang Ye didn’t respond. He cut off Gao Changkong’s connection too.

He couldn’t tell who was human and who was a traitor.

First, win this battle—then talk.

Phoenixin Ren stood atop a low hill, lighting a cigarette.

“Let’s begin.”

Eclipse Moon and the Dragon Pirate Crew had joined forces.

With such strength, wiping out one investigation squad was entirely feasible.

Especially since the Celestial Hound Squad was considered the weakest among them all.

Their captain, Zhang Ye, had an official ability rating of only 8200 points.

The team itself was hastily assembled.

Back in Blizzard City, Zhu Zheng ordered Lan Xincheng to investigate the possibility of more moles, while also commanding the Samsara Squad to rush to Tianhai City.

But what could he do personally?

Nothing.

He couldn't use missiles or the Reaper of Love's indiscriminate strike—because Zhang Ye's team was there too.

All he could do was wait and hope Zhang Ye held out until reinforcements arrived.

Meanwhile, the enemy had already launched their assault.

The first to attack was Shinguuji Seiichiro.

He pulled ten paper charms from his pocket and tossed them into the air, forming a hand seal with his right hand.

"I call upon the gods and all the Buddhas! Bestow the divine body! Obey the heavenly law!"

Ten white charms emitted a white mist in mid-air, then transformed into ten black hunting hounds.

These were shikigami Zhang Ye had never seen before—inky black, radiating malevolence and dread.

The ten demon hounds charged straight at him, snarling.

Zhang Ye didn't know what their abilities were, but as long as he activated the Dimensional Gate, any attack would become void.

In a flash, the ten black hounds were absorbed into his alternate space.

But at that moment, he saw Shinguuji Seiichiro smirk.

“An alternate dimension,” he said.

“It can absorb all things—but its capacity is limited. Overload it with energy, and it’ll collapse.”

He pressed his joined middle and index fingers to his lips and shouted, “Detonate!”

Zhang Ye suddenly felt a powerful disturbance from inside his alternate dimension.

The ten demon hounds exploded violently.

These were shikigami designed specifically to counter Zhang Ye’s space manipulation ability—Self-Destruct Hounds!

Sensing the explosions, Zhang Ye was visibly shaken.

The energy contained within those hounds was terrifying.

He realized one more thing:

All his ability info had been leaked to Eclipse Moon by the mole.

This was a hunt—targeting him.

Just like the one that had targeted Deng Shentong before!

Someone had wanted Deng Shentong gone from Jiangnan District.

Now, someone wanted Zhang Ye gone as well.

Zhang Ye's eyes grew colder than the snow and ice that blanketed the land.

But after unleashing the Self-Destruct Hounds with full confidence, Shinguuji Seiichiro was shocked to find that Zhang Ye was completely unharmed.

He staggered back in disbelief.

"This... how is that possible?! The explosion talismans I used had an output equivalent to two tons of TNT!"

That kind of explosive force would make even a squad captain back off—not try to take it head-on.

"Could the intel... have been wrong?"

A rare bead of sweat rolled down Shinguuji Seiichiro's forehead.

This situation was no longer under his control—and it was making him panic.

Chapter 740: This Is My Turf

Zhang Ye's eyes were as cold as the eternal snow of the Arctic tundra.

Being betrayed filled him with overwhelming rage.

But at the same time, his mind remained crystal clear—he didn't let emotion cloud his judgment.

Maybe it was because he had witnessed too much twisted human nature in the apocalypse that betrayal, by now, almost felt like a norm.

“Good thing I stayed hidden well enough,”

Zhang Ye thought to himself.

The enemy had underestimated his strength and failed to prepare sufficient firepower.

“Besides... this is my turf!”

“Let’s see who’s the hunter, and who’s the prey today!”

He opened a new comms channel and said quietly,

“Do it.”

The Dragon Pirate Crew and Eclipse Moon had just started to move in for the kill, intending to wipe out the Celestial Hound Squad, who couldn’t escape from the Imprisoning Domain.

But right at that moment, a massive explosion erupted beneath their feet!

A towering shockwave blasted up from the ground, launching pirate corpses high into the sky.

Beneath their location, over a hundred meters underground—

Sat a massive three-story shelter covering tens of thousands of square meters!

The place they were standing on was called Chaoyu Harbor.

Post-apocalypse, this place had become a military-grade base. Chen Jingguan had buried countless traps and explosives all around the harbor.

That was one of the contingencies Zhang Ye had left behind.

“This is Tianhai City!”

“My home turf!”

Zhang Ye said coldly.

The Dragon Pirate Crew and Eclipse Moon were caught completely off guard.

And before they could regroup, a blizzard descended from the skies—snow and wind howling, severely obstructing their vision.

Phoenixin Ren squinted, “Something’s off.”

Among the Dragon Pirates, one of their scouts—an Awakened—sensed where the anomaly originated.

He turned to Kanut in a panic and said,

“Captain! We’ve got enemies suddenly showing up to the northeast and northwest!”

Kanut’s voice dropped, “Where the hell did they come from?!”

When they had first arrived in Tianhai City, they’d searched every corner for locals, planning to plunder their resources—

But found nothing. Not a single living soul.

So now—where did these new forces come from?

They were none other than the reinforcements from the Yangsheng Base and Qingpu Base.

Uncle You and Fatty Xu were also in the mix.

From the very beginning, Zhang Ye had anticipated that this battle might be extremely difficult.

So he had instructed the major bases ahead of time:

Once the fight began, all allied forces were to stay close and await his command.

After all, it made no sense for the boss to be fighting for his life up front while his men sat at home doing nothing.

Zhang Ye had ordered Xiao Honglian's group to disrupt enemy visibility in the area and create chaos—

But not to actually approach the battlefield!

He knew his allies' power levels clearly.

Xiao Honglian led dozens of warriors to a nearby vantage point.

Fatty Xu and Zhuge Qingtin combined forces, conjuring blizzards and storms to create confusion, helping Zhang Ye find a way out.

Uncle You quietly set up his GPW Series II Anti-Material Sniper Rifle, a gift from Zhang Ye, and began sniping pirates from high ground.

Fatty Xu voiced his concern:

“Boss told us not to get close... but with just this level of interference, is it really going to work?”

They didn’t look like much in number, and the ones with real combat power were even fewer.

There weren’t even ten Awakened among them.

Bluffing was one thing—but if it came to a real fight, they wouldn’t last.

Sure enough, the explosion at Chaoyu Harbor only stunned the Dragon Pirate Crew and Eclipse Moon for a brief moment.

Once they regained their composure, they quickly realized that the sudden "reinforcements" weren’t from Blizzard City—

They were just Tianhai City’s local survivors.

That immediately put their minds at ease.

Kanut sneered,

“Just some bottom-feeders. They’re not gonna make a dent.”

He quickly deployed a squad to deal with Xiao Honglian, Xing Tian, and the rest of Tianhai City’s natives.

Then led his Awakened subordinates to join forces with Eclipse Moon, intending to first eliminate Zhang Ye’s trapped squad.

But under cover of the blizzard, no one saw what Zhang Ye was doing.

He took a deep breath. He knew—it was time to go all in.

The enemies he faced today weren't going to be easy.

“Good thing... I've never shown my real trump card.”

Zhang Ye stood in the center of the cage.

He brought his hands together, forming a sphere in the air.

A bolt of black lightning suddenly began to gather between his palms.

Crack-crack!

More and more lightning coiled together—growing thicker and denser, twisting like black serpents slithering across the air.

The terrifying energy made Baili Changqing and the others instinctively widen their eyes and take several steps back.

Only Liang Yue, Huahua, and Yang Xinxin knew what that power really was.

They formed a tight guard around Zhang Ye, allowing no one to disturb him.

That mass of unstable black matter grew denser and denser, eventually condensing into a huge dark orb in Zhang Ye's palms.

Then, following his hand movements, he slowly compressed it—

Until it was the size of a volleyball.

“Everyone, get clear!”

Zhang Ye shouted.

The Celestial Hound Squad members quickly scattered.

He hurled the orb high into the air, then instantly activated 20x acceleration.

Leaping over three meters high, he slammed his right fist into the Void Sphere!

Whoosh!

The black sphere tore through space, pierced right through the invisible prison,

And headed straight toward Kanut’s position!

At that exact moment—Kanut, still busy issuing orders, suddenly sensed danger.

His beastly instincts screamed at him that something lethal was closing in.

But he was too close—less than a kilometer from Zhang Ye.

His flawed assessment of Zhang Ye’s strength led him to not dodge.

Instead—he took it head-on!

With a shrill roar, the enormous shark maw opened wide!

He tried to tank the blow with his massive, armored body.

Because behind him stood Chen Siyu, the caster of the Imprisoning Domain.

In the next instant,

The entire area was swallowed by a massive black sphere rising from the ground!

It was a colossal orb, hundreds of meters in radius, radiating an aura of utter destruction.

Even Phoenixin Ren and the others atop a nearby hill turned pale in shock at its power.

“Woooooaaaaah!!!!”

A low, pained howl echoed from within the sphere.

Kanut’s massive body was blasted skyward from inside it, then came crashing down in the distance.

He was covered in blood—battered and utterly wretched.

Gruesome wounds crisscrossed his body.

His armor-like scales, once as tough as alloy, had been ripped apart like wet paper—

As if tens of thousands of blades had violently shredded his flesh open.