

## **Ice Age 861**

### Chapter 861: Stealing the Communicator

Che Haicheng's words successfully drew everyone's attention onto him.

"Mr. Che, do you have any ideas?"

Xie Yunfan asked eagerly.

Rudolf also asked curiously, "Do you have a way to make sure they won't notice the communicator is stolen for at least ten minutes?"

Che Haicheng chuckled, "I have a plan. Though it's a bit risky, it's worth a shot. After all, fortune favors the bold!"

Bai Mo said, "Stop teasing us. Just tell us how you plan to do it."

Che Haicheng slowly revealed his idea.

This matter required the help of another person.

No one else but Che Haicheng's wife, Kim Kimee.

Mentioning Kim Kimee, strange glimmers appeared in Rudolf and the others' eyes.

That former New Rohan girl group member was, apart from her beauty and flirtatiousness, practically useless.

Back on Rockflow Island, Che Haicheng had used her to trade for a lot of daily supplies.

It could even be said that during the time Che Haicheng was out taking a leak, he could meet ten old customers who had traded with her.

Kim Kimee's intelligence wasn't high. After marrying Che Haicheng, she lived like a wealthy wife.

Even in the apocalypse, she had no independent will and always obeyed Che Haicheng's orders.

Whatever Che Haicheng asked her to do, except for telling her to die, she would comply.

As for after boarding the ship, Kim Kimee hadn't stopped having some kind of dealings with the people on board.

Especially those sailors, who could be considered her benefactors.

Che Haicheng didn't mind being cuckolded at all.

As a shrewd New Rohan politician, he had no sense of morality or shame. As long as it maximized his interests, even if every man on the ship cuckolded him, he wouldn't bat an eye.

"We can wait for a good opportunity. Old Xie in the kitchen is a lecher; he's been involved with my wife for a long time."

"Next time he comes to deliver food, I'll have Kim Kimee seduce him."

"At that time, the job of delaying will be done by her. Meanwhile, you all must hurry to complete our plan!"

Hearing Che Haicheng's spirit of dedication, everyone was very moved.

Rudolf even said, "Mr. Che, since you're so generous, even offering your wife, why don't I also..."

Che Haicheng sneered, "As long as you work well, I can let her accompany you!"

Rudolf was delighted, "Rest assured, this is a minor matter for me."

Xie Yunfan raised a question.

“This method is indeed good, but isn’t ten minutes a bit too long? Is that cook reliable?”

Che Haicheng was full of confidence.

“Don’t forget, my wife is a professional!”

“When we were still in New Rohan, she was known far and wide as a war goddess!”

Everyone couldn’t help but laugh.

Being cuckolded and still proudly saying it aloud—no one else but Che Haicheng could do that.

Che Haicheng was completely unfazed, “Because that’s how I met her, so I know well.”

The so-called girl group member was just a plaything for some people in their eyes.

Che Haicheng married her for convenience in his career. Once she grew old and lost her beauty, a sum of money would send her away.

The group divided the tasks.

Che Haicheng's wife Kim Kimee was responsible for seducing Xie Changming.

Then pickpocket Rudolf would take advantage of the opportunity to steal his communicator.

It would then be handed to Eisenmann to operate, contacting the Columbus Ocean fleet.

Others were responsible for lookout, preventing accidents.

If any unexpected situation occurred, they would pretend that Xie Changming accidentally dropped the communicator, and then return it.

Since Xie Changming's attention would be on Kim Kimee, he might not notice the theft.

However, if they failed this time, it might make Xie Changming suspicious, making it extremely difficult to use the same trick next time!

So, their chances were slim, probably only once.

...

The weather on the sea suddenly began to worsen.

Zhang Yi and the others had been at sea for two or three months, but this was the first time they encountered such terrible weather.

The storm mercilessly howled across the sea, roaring like a monster.

Wave after wave surged, the crests rising like mountains.

The massive Golden Edge seemed like a small boat in these giant waves, as if it could capsize at any moment.

Many on board were terrified; some had already started praying to God.

In Zhu Yunque's room, Tommy wailed uncontrollably, his fear making him restless, unable to stop crying.

Zhu Yunque and Su Nuanxi clung tightly to the bed legs to avoid being thrown out.

Hearing the annoying crying at their ears, the usual kindness in their eyes was replaced by disgust as they glared at the wailing baby.

“This is so damn annoying!”

Zhu Yunque thought bitterly.

“If I had known, I shouldn’t have brought you on board!”

There was one thing she never dared to say aloud—that she had even felt the urge to throw him into the sea several times.

...

Zhang Yi was slightly uncomfortable. Though he didn’t get seasick, such violent rocking unsettled his mind.

Fortunately, the furniture in the cabin was fixed in place, so there was no worry about injuries.

“Ke’er, you stay here and rest. I’m going to the control room to have a look.”

Zhang Yi was uneasy. For some reason, he had a subtle premonition.

Something must be lurking deep in the sea, secretly watching the Golden Edge, watching him.

Zhang Yi couldn’t forget the look in the Fin Dragon’s eyes when he grievously wounded it—it resembled the hatred of a resentful human.

So, during the return voyage, he checked the control room daily and ordered the crew to monitor sonar and radar closely.

Any abnormalities must be reported to him immediately.

Zhang Yi used spatial traversal and instantly arrived at the control room.

The situation here was somewhat better.

The crew had seen many storms of this magnitude before; their faces showed little fear and they even chatted leisurely.

After all, given the Golden Edge's tonnage and quality, it could fully withstand this level of storm.

But for Zhang Yi, looking through the window at the vast and terrifying scene outside, the shock in his heart was indescribable.

“Won’t the ship capsize?”

Zhang Yi couldn’t help but ask.

The ship suddenly fell silent. All the crew looked at him with extremely strange eyes.

Old Tian walked over and said, “Mr. Zhang, you can’t say that word on the ship. It’s very unlucky.”

“What word?”

Old Tian said, “‘Capsize.’”

Zhang Yi smiled, “There’s such a taboo?”

Old Tian said, "Don't worry. With us here and this world-class Golden Edge, we're not afraid of storms like this!"

Zhang Yi nodded. This was the advantage of having veteran sailors who knew how to handle danger.

Suddenly, a distant long wail sounded in Zhang Yi's ear.

The sound was very strange, distant and prolonged, muffled and hollow, as if crossing endless ages to reach them, sending chills down one's spine.

Zhang Yi's brow furrowed sharply like a sword, killing intent permeating the air!

"That guy is here!"

"I knew it was there!"

At the same time, the sonar operator issued a warning to Zhang Yi.

"Mr. Zhang, it appeared! A sea monster has appeared! A huge object is rapidly approaching us from the deep ocean bottom!"

Chapter 862: The Fin Dragon Attacks

The Fin Dragon has arrived!

It's finally here!

Zhang Yi had been waiting for it for more than half a month, knowing that this day would inevitably come.

The overlord of the ocean would never tolerate being injured without striking back.

Because the ocean world is inherently a law of the jungle, even harsher than the human world!

Zhang Yi's eyes slowly opened; he had long prepared for this day.

The Golden Edge began to shake violently.

The surrounding seawater surged wildly, with waves towering more than ten meters above the ship's deck!

Looking around, a circular wave formation surrounded the entire Golden Edge tightly!

"This is bad! The ship is out of control!"

A crew member suddenly shouted.

The Golden Edge rocked fiercely, uncontrollable, like a fragile leaf tossed about by the waves.

This was an experience they had never encountered since setting sail, making everyone uneasy inside.

But Zhang Yi remained calm and unhurried, already skillfully wearing the captain-level combat suit specially crafted for him by Deng Technology.

For this voyage, it had an added compressed oxygen function, so even if he accidentally fell into the ocean, he wouldn't drown.

However, such a situation was best avoided; after all, the ocean was not Zhang Yi's home turf.

“It’s that thing causing trouble down there. Don’t panic. I’ll deal with it. You keep the ship steady!”

Zhang Yi infused his power into the entire Golden Edge, causing it to lift off the water, unaffected by the waves and storm.

Soon the Golden Edge hovered in midair, stabilized.

Zhang Yi flew into the sky, overlooking everything beneath him.

From this height, the scene was indeed breathtaking!

The Fin Dragon's massive body stretched over a hundred meters long!

Its long form appeared in the dark, deep water, with hundreds of sharp, rough black dorsal fins cutting through the waves as it swam swiftly.

It was the one creating the massive whirlpools that interfered with the Golden Edge's operation.

However, this time, it did not launch a direct charge at the Golden Edge.

Perhaps the last encounter taught it a lesson, making it realize that attacking the ship's hull first was unsafe.

So it chose to use the ocean's power to capsize the ship—that was its best strategy!

Zhang Yi looked down on it from above, and it sensed that overwhelming pressure, raising its head toward the sky.

Its huge eyes were icy blue, each pupil much larger than Zhang Yi himself.

But staring at this tiny human, its eyes revealed not only deep hatred but also intense caution.

In their first clash, if it weren't for the ocean's cover, it might have been sliced in half by Zhang Yi's blade while severely injured!

But this time, it had clearly healed and returned.

"Screech—"

Suddenly it opened its mouth and let out a sharp roar, then its huge tentacle suddenly fired a purple-white beam toward Zhang Yi in midair!

Thanks to the Echo of Time ability, Zhang Yi predicted the attack's trajectory in advance.

So before the attack was released, Zhang Yi instantly flashed sideways in midair, dodging it.

"Now it's my turn!"

He drew Holy Judgment with his right hand, black void flames spreading across the blade.

The Fin Dragon understood the power of this attack and swiftly plunged into the deep sea with a powerful tail swipe, escaping quickly.

But it did not flee entirely; it used the seawater to conceal its body, preventing Zhang Yi from attacking it.

Moments later, huge waves exploded beneath the Golden Edge!

The surging seawater rushed toward the Golden Edge, a terrifying wave carrying thousands of tons of water, enough to cause massive damage!

Zhang Yi's gaze sharpened as he instantly returned to the Golden Edge.

“Absolute Barrier Between Two Realms!”

Two dimensional gates twisted to form a spherical defense, instantly enveloping the entire Golden Edge.

The massive waves were all drawn into Zhang Yi's dimensional space.

“What a cunning creature. It knows it can’t defeat me, so it chooses to attack the people on the ship instead?”

Zhang Yi realized this Fin Dragon possessed very high intelligence.

It knew how to use its advantages to fight against him.

Zhang Yi sneered coldly, not at all concerned.

No matter how much seawater it absorbed, it was soon expelled from the dimensional space in full.

He issued a counterattack order to Old Tian.

“Old Tian, deploy the deep-sea bombs!”

He had prepared plenty of weaponry for this voyage.

Especially for potential emergencies like this, he certainly wouldn’t neglect.

After receiving Zhang Yi's order, Old Tian loudly commanded his crew:

"To the deck! Deploy the deep-sea bombs!"

The crew demonstrated extremely high combat readiness, already prepared, rushing to the deck at Old Tian's command.

The Golden Edge had no launch tubes, so it used drop-style deep-sea bombs.

These weapons were originally developed to combat submarines hidden on the seabed.

But they were equally effective against giant sea monsters.

As always—thermal weapons have not lost their use in a world filled with superhumans and super beasts, as long as the yield is large enough!

One deep-sea bomb after another was dropped into the ocean depths.

Zhang Yi distracted the Fin Dragon's attention in midair.

So the Fin Dragon did not notice the bombs, which were tiny compared to its massive size—like grains of rice.

But once dozens of bombs were dropped to the Fin Dragon's depth, violent explosions erupted immediately!

“Boom!”

“Boom!”

“Rumble!”

The muffled yet intense explosions echoed in the deep ocean, the fierce shockwaves rampaging around the Fin Dragon's long body.

Its enormous size made it impossible to dodge the blasts.

Soon, its steel-like body was covered with scars and wounds.

The Fin Dragon might never have imagined that such an unarmed civilian ship could unleash the power of a warship!

“Screech—”

It let out a sharp cry of pain.

A white-purple beam shot out from the ocean, soaring thousands of meters into the sky.

Then, like a giant sword, it rapidly slashed down toward the Golden Edge!

Zhang Yi hovered in front of the Golden Edge, stretching out his right hand as dimensional gates rippled invisibly, completely absorbing the atomic breath's power.

Through this attack, Zhang Yi sensed that the Fin Dragon's power level was roughly around 9,200 points in the superhuman ability index.

At this level, it posed no real threat to Zhang Yi.

But because it occupied the terrain advantage of the ocean, it could still entangle with Zhang Yi, who had about 9,600 points.

Zhang Yi couldn't kill it.

But neither could it kill Zhang Yi; its only option was to attack the Golden Edge to exact its revenge.

“Seawater can weaken impact. Whether Divine Power or void attacks, they are greatly reduced by millions of tons of seawater.”

“To kill it, ordinary methods are still very difficult!”

Zhang Yi frowned slightly.

The ocean was not his main battlefield, and this was truly frustrating.

Chapter 863: 40 Minutes

The Fin Dragon's attack failed to cause any trouble for the Golden Edge.

Instead, it suffered considerable injuries from the deep-sea bombs.

With its atomic breath ability completely countered by Zhang Yi, the creature realized continuing the fight would be futile.

Once again, it dove deep into the ocean, and soon the massive terrifying shadow beneath the Golden Edge disappeared.

Zhang Yi shrugged.

Fair enough.

His combat effectiveness was limited at sea.

But once the Fin Dragon came ashore, no matter how powerful it was, it would be rendered useless—unless it possessed an ability like Kanute's [Blue Shark] that allowed movement through solid mediums.

"You got lucky this time. If I'd brought a warship, you'd be dead!"

After all, the Golden Edge was just a civilian vessel, far inferior to warships in both offense and defense.

With the Huaxu Kingdom's current naval capabilities, a proper warship armed with high-speed torpedoes would've sent even this monstrous creature fleeing in terror.

The cunning Fin Dragon would seize any opportunity to strike, but the moment things turned unfavorable, it would immediately retreat.

It clearly understood the small figure in the air couldn't pursue it into the depths.

Zhang Yi returned to the Golden Edge, considering the matter temporarily resolved.

Still, he reminded Old Tian and the crew to remain vigilant.

Such sea beasts held grudges, and there was no telling when it might attack again.

Old Tian repeatedly acknowledged the order.

What had just transpired might have seemed effortlessly handled by Zhang Yi, but to everyone else aboard, it felt like surviving a magnitude 10 earthquake!

A creature of that size could easily sink a 10,000-ton vessel, sending them all to a watery grave.

After the Fin Dragon's retreat, Zhang Yi lowered the ship back onto the sea's surface.

The blizzard continued, the waves violent, but without the whirlpool's influence, the vessel became manageable again.

Progress remained impossible for now—the anchor had been dropped, and they'd have to wait out the storm before setting sail.

As the Golden Edge rocked unsteadily, Zhang Yi remained seated in the control room, unwilling to leave just yet.

He needed to stay alert in case the Fin Dragon returned.

Meanwhile, limited visibility prevented many aboard from understanding what had occurred.

For certain individuals, this ignorance would prove regrettable.

Had they witnessed Zhang Yi's display of power, they might have abandoned their foolish schemes.

...

A full day and night passed before the blizzard gradually subsided.

The Golden Edge was blanketed under thick snow, while the sea's surface drifted with ice fragments and large floes.

Having kept watch in the control room throughout, Zhang Yi now felt drowsy.

"Have the crew clear the snow, then we'll depart," he told Old Tian. "I'll rest for a while—I'm a light sleeper. If the Fin Dragon returns or any issues arise, wake me immediately."

"Understood, Mr. Zhang!" Old Tian replied.

Yawning, Zhang Yi retired to his quarters.

Old Tian promptly ordered several men summoned from the lower deck to clear the accumulated snow.

Soon, the Golden Edge weighed anchor and resumed its journey.

The ship's cook, Old Xie, finally arrived in the kitchen to prepare meals.

Though it should have been lunchtime, food wasn't distributed until past 3 PM.

As usual, he wheeled the meal cart to the Rockflow Group's cabin door, knocking to summon its occupants.

Che Haicheng emerged from his room, while his wife Kim Kimee exited the facing cabin. Catching his meaningful glance, she immediately understood.

Swaying seductively, Kim Kimee approached Xie Changming.

The cook had intended to leave after delivering the food, but the sight of Kim's pitifully coquettish expression changed his mind.

"Oppa, saranghaeyo!" Kim Kimee purred as she reached Xie.

The other diners tactfully withdrew, casting knowing looks between the pair—and more pointedly at Che Haicheng—as they departed.

Kim clung to Xie's arm, pouting plaintively. "Oppa, I've been craving something nutritious lately. Could you help me out?"

Xie chuckled darkly, utterly unconcerned by their audience as his hands began wandering.

"Hungry for something special, eh? No problem—Oppa will satisfy you today."

Dragging Kim along, he hurried toward the restroom—the one place without surveillance, where his colleagues wouldn't witness his live performance.

Xie's face burned with lust. As a former girl group star, Kim Kimee truly excelled at seduction.

She completely monopolized his attention.

So thoroughly distracted was he that Xie failed to notice Rudolf—the bearded man lingering near Che Haicheng's cabin.

For a professional pickpocket like Rudolf, stealing a communicator was child's play.

Moreover, he expertly exploited blind spots to avoid detection by cameras.

Their brief brushing past would appear utterly innocuous on surveillance footage.

Yet in that fleeting contact, Rudolf had already slipped Xie's communicator into his pocket before swiftly retreating into the cabin.

Che Haicheng shut the door behind them as Rudolf delivered the device to Eisenmann, who stood ready.

"Hurry! We have no idea how much time we've got!" Che urged.

Taking the communicator, Eisenmann's expression turned intensely focused. Ignoring Che, he powered on the device.

As expected, it required password authentication—hardly an obstacle for a former top engineer at Pomeg Corporation.

The message draft was already prepared, meticulously composed by Che Haicheng himself.

The ex-New Rohan official knew precisely how to wield words for maximum impact.

His account was deliberately exaggerated, designed to instantly captivate the Columbus Ocean Fleet commander's attention.

Only then would they dispatch forces to retrieve them.

Time ticked by agonizingly. Their lookout pressed against the wall, straining to hear any approaching footsteps.

Meanwhile, in the restroom, Kim Kimee employed every trick she'd ever learned to prolong Xie's distraction.

To everyone else aboard, this was just another ordinary day at sea.

But for this group, each passing second brought unbearable tension—a cocktail of desperate hope and paralyzing fear.

The consequences of failure were unthinkable.

Zhang Yi had never struck them as the forgiving type.

Sweat poured down Eisenmann's forehead as he worked, though his expression remained calm.

The first step—cracking the device—had been simple enough.

Next came establishing contact with the Columbus Ocean Fleet.

Fortunately, by 2051, global communication technology had long since advanced beyond such limitations.

Whether through the Huaxu Kingdom's Nebula Satellite Network or Columbus's StarLink System, worldwide connectivity was guaranteed.

After nearly thirty exhausting minutes, Eisenmann finally resolved the signal frequency issue.

"Quick—send the distress message!"

Though outwardly composed, Eisenmann was drenched in sweat, nearing collapse from exertion.

He thrust the communicator toward Che Haicheng to complete the final step.

Chapter 864: Signal

Che Haicheng took the communicator and involuntarily swallowed his saliva, his hands still trembling.

But time was pressing, so he hurriedly entered the prepared message.

The last step was to click send.

Because he was too nervous, his finger shifted several times on the screen.

In the end, Xie Yunfan couldn't bear it anymore and helped him press the send button.

"Gulp—"

Several people swallowed at the same time, the heavy weight in their hearts finally eased a little.

But the good moment didn't last long; they noticed the screen started spinning the loading circle.

Che Haicheng panicked and quickly asked Eisenmann, "Mr. Eisenmann, what's going on?"

Eisenmann glanced at it and said helplessly, "We're at sea, and this is just an ordinary personal communicator. Slow signal transmission is normal."

Che Haicheng nervously asked, "Could the sending fail?"

Eisenmann was silent for a moment, then shook his head.

The group relaxed, thinking everything was absolutely safe now.

Eisenmann didn't want to discourage them, but he couldn't hide the truth.

"I mean, I don't know either."

Che Haicheng and the others erupted into chaos again.

Every minute and second, they were terrified.

Fortunately, in the end, that loading circle finally finished spinning under their wide-eyed stare.

The green check mark indicated the message had been successfully sent.

Eisenmann exhaled deeply, "Now it depends if it works! If they believe what we said, they might send a ship to get us."

He looked out the window.

"As long as we don't enter Huaxu Kingdom's internal waters, the Colombian fleet will definitely find us and bring us back."

As a Colombian citizen, he was extremely confident about this.

The others didn't have time to listen to his sighs and thoughts.

"Quickly clear all the information, don't leave any trace!"

Che Haicheng hurriedly told him.

Eisenmann picked up the phone and carried out a series of clearing operations.

Meanwhile, Kim Kimee in the bathroom was barely holding on.

It wasn't that she wasn't trying hard; it was just that Old Xie's ability was somewhat lacking.

Eisenmann erased the operation traces on the communicator, then handed it over to Rudolf.

Rudolf cautiously pocketed the communicator and came outside, then coughed loudly twice.

After receiving his signal, Kim Kimee felt a huge relief.

Two minutes later, Xie Changming, still putting on his clothes and wiping his mouth with a handkerchief, walked out of the bathroom with Kim Kimee.

Rudolf pretended to need the bathroom, clutching his stomach as he hurried past.

Then, silently, he slipped the communicator back onto Xie Changming.

As a professional pickpocket, their skill in stealing was shockingly proficient.

Xie Changming's communicator was tucked into his pants pocket. His pants weren't loose, so usually someone taking the communicator would be noticed.

But Rudolf naturally had his methods to do it completely undetected.

Xie Changming was very satisfied with Kim Kimee's service today and left the middle cabin happily.

He was completely unaware of everything Che Haicheng and the others had done today.

Zhang Yi, who had just finished a night of stakeout, was sound asleep in his room.

That message was quickly transmitted via satellite to the Colombian Ocean Fleet stationed at Ropefly Island.

The Reconnaissance Department.

The soldier who received the communication signal casually glanced at it as usual.

Recently, intelligence they could receive had been decreasing.

Seeing it was this kind of privately sent message, they didn't even bother to look.

Because there was no doubt, it was a 100% distress signal.

But now, survivors were fewer and fewer, or maybe they had lost hope and no longer sought help from the navy.

Maybe by coincidence, the soldier on duty today glanced a little closer at the content.

That glance made him notice something different.

"A magical stone that can give people incredible power. Huaxu Kingdom even sent a large number of soldiers out to sea for it."

This distress signal was different.

Past messages were either pleas, curses out of despair, or offers to surrender all their wealth.

Very few had such a description—about superhumans.

As a professional soldier, although he found the claim ridiculous, he still thought it was unusual and carefully reread it.

Out of professional sensitivity, even though he didn't know if it was true, he reported this intelligence to his superior.

As a soldier, he naturally didn't know about the existence of the Divine Source.

Well, at their higher levels, this substance was first translated as the Sacred Origin Material or Human Completion Plan Source Matter.

After the message was passed to his superior, it quickly caught the attention of Reconnaissance Commander Bamte Helisen.

As head of intelligence, he of course knew about the existence of this sacred material.

One of his main tasks was to search for intelligence about this substance.

“A magical yellow stone, Huaxu Kingdom sent a large number of soldiers to obtain it. Very suspicious, extremely suspicious!”

Suddenly, Helisen thought of something.

About three months ago, a Huaxu Kingdom icebreaker ship had sailed into the southeastern ocean.

At the time, they thought it was strange, but after judging, it was just a civilian icebreaker, so they didn't pay special attention.

But combined with this distress signal, it gave a very unusual feeling.

Helisen didn't dare delay and, out of caution, immediately reported it to Douglas, commander of the Ocean Fleet.

The message from Reconnaissance Department was of very high priority, and soon this intelligence was on Douglas's desk.

After reading the intelligence, Douglas took two puffs from his pipe and immediately summoned Helisen to his office.

“Helisen, where did this intelligence come from?”

As soon as they met, Douglas asked bluntly.

Helisen answered, "From the sea. The message was sent by an ordinary private communicator."

Douglas frowned slightly.

He had encountered this situation before.

Because of the importance of the sacred origin material, the navy had issued orders that any discovery of it would be highly rewarded.

So various departments often sent back all kinds of reports to obtain the reward.

But after verification, most were useless intelligence.

Some people in small places who had never seen superhumans would even mistake someone mutated as the effect of the sacred origin material.

"Alright, I understand. You can go."

After sending Helisen away, Douglas thought for a moment and casually handed the intelligence to his assistant.

"Give it to Major Klean Connor on the Copernicus. His ship patrols that sea area. Have him check it out."

Chapter 865: Columbus Ocean Navy

After the Fin Dragon was frightened away by Zhang Yi, the Golden Edge continued its journey toward Tianhai City in the Huaxu Kingdom.

During breakfast the next morning, Zhang Yi saw Zhu Yunque holding a child, looking utterly exhausted as she approached Zhou Ke'er. Compared to when they first set sail, she looked significantly more haggard, like a frostbitten eggplant—her former arrogance and confidence completely gone. The massacre in the lower deck cabin had especially stripped away any right she had to be proud. Nowadays, she even trembled in fear at the sight of Zhang Yi.

Curious about her purpose, Zhang Yi walked over to the two women. The moment Zhu Yunque noticed him, her expression changed. She hastily told Zhou Ke'er, "I'll head back first. Let me know your answer later," before retreating to her room and locking the door tightly from inside.

Zhang Yi smirked, certain that this woman had run into trouble again. She probably wanted his help but was too embarrassed to ask directly, so she resorted to seeking Zhou Ke'er's assistance instead.

He approached Zhou Ke'er and asked with a smile, "What did she want?"

Zhou Ke'er chuckled. Wrapping her fair, delicate arms around Zhang Yi's, she replied gently, "What else? It's about the baby, of course!"

"At first, she was all enthusiastic, trying to play mom and take care of the child. But it hasn't even been that long, and she's already on the verge of breaking down. And that's with two people sharing the responsibility! If she were alone, she'd have collapsed long ago."

Zhang Yi gave a faint smile. "She chose this herself. Why bother with her? Let me make this clear—don't get involved in her mess. Let her swallow the bitter fruit of her own decisions."

Zhou Ke'er nodded with a grin. "Don't worry, I won't agree to anything without your permission."

Feeling the soft yet resilient warmth of Zhou Ke'er's body against his, Zhang Yi felt a stirring in his chest. Leaning close to her ear, he whispered, "Remember our little bet? I won."

Zhou Ke'er's face instantly flushed crimson. The terms of that bet... terrified her a little, though there was also a faint trace of anticipation. That kind of thing—she'd never tried it before.

"A bet is a bet. I'll keep my word," she murmured coyly, casting him a sultry glance before taking his hand and leading him into the bedroom.

---

That afternoon, the Golden Edge cut swiftly through the calm icy sea on its return journey. Old Tian sat in the control room, smoking a cigarette and chatting idly with the crew. Half the voyage was already behind them, and since they had cleared out many obstacles—pirates and small naval forces—on their way here, the return trip promised fewer troubles.

However, Zhang Yi had ordered everyone to stay alert. On their way out, they had carried nothing of value, so even if they had encountered the navies of major nations, there would have been no cause for concern. But now, the ship held critical data. There was no room for mistakes.

Yet, as fate would have it, what they feared most came to pass.

Just as Old Tian and the crew were swapping dirty jokes to pass the time, the Golden Edge's radio suddenly crackled to life with a stern, rhythmic warning. The machine-translated message read:

"Attention, unidentified vessel ahead. This is the Columbus Ocean Navy. Prepare to be boarded for inspection. Cease all movement immediately and comply with our instructions!"

"A word of warning: Do not attempt resistance or evasion. Failure to comply will result in immediate engagement!"

The abrupt announcement sent the entire crew into high alert. Old Tian leapt from his chair and rushed to the control panel as the message repeated. His pupils contracted sharply. "The Columbus Ocean Navy?! This is bad!"

In maritime travel, they were the worst possible force to encounter. Without any ideas of his own, Old Tian hurriedly reported to Zhang Yi.

Upon hearing the news, Zhang Yi's expression darkened. The Columbus Ocean Navy was the last group he wanted to deal with right now. Even though he was now a top-tier superhuman, facing them at sea still filled him with immense pressure.

Before departure, Zhu Zheng had specifically warned Zhang Yi: the greatest threat was the Columbus Ocean Fleet. This was the elite force of their navy—a fleet powerful enough to rival even the Huaxu Kingdom's strongest naval division, the East Sea Region. Among the Huaxu Kingdom's six major regions, the East Sea Region's military might was second only to Shengjing. That alone spoke volumes about the Columbus Ocean Fleet's terrifying strength.

Not only did they possess world-class warships, but they also had numerous powerful superhumans among their ranks. They were the last people Zhang Yi wanted to cross paths with.

"What's the situation? Did they say why they're here?" Zhang Yi asked rapidly as he changed clothes, keeping his communication with Old Tian brisk.

The appearance of the Columbus Ocean Navy was highly unusual. They hadn't been intercepted on their way out—so why now, on their return? The Golden Edge was, on paper, just a civilian vessel. Unwarranted interception and inspection could easily spark unnecessary tensions with the Huaxu Kingdom. The larger the power, the more cautious they should be.

Zhang Yi even began to suspect—had they somehow gotten wind of something?

Old Tian replied, "They just called us a suspicious vessel and said it's a routine inspection."

"Routine inspection?" Zhang Yi narrowed his eyes. They were still in international waters. What kind of routine inspection happened here? "How far out are they?"

"Radar shows about twenty nautical miles."

"Don't make any moves. Follow their orders and halt for now."

"Yes, sir!"

As Zhang Yi finished changing, his mind raced. Seeing his serious expression, Zhou Ke'er couldn't help but ask what was wrong.

"We've run into the Columbus Ocean Navy. This could be a major problem."

"Them?" Zhou Ke'er tensed as well. "What could they want?"

Zhang Yi had never told Zhou Ke'er about the Divine Source, so to this day, she remained unaware of his true mission. She still assumed this trip was simply to rescue someone important.

After fastening his combat suit, Zhang Yi kissed her cheek and flashed her a reassuring smile. "Don't overthink it. There won't be any danger."

Even if a fight broke out, worst-case scenario, he could abandon ship and escape with Zhou Ke'er using spatial traversal. The only regret would be leaving behind over a dozen crew members. As for Zhu Yunque and the others on board—well, some things were simply beyond his control.

Though spatial traversal allowed him to cross vast distances in an instant, each jump had a cooldown; it wasn't a continuous movement. At most, he could carry one person with him. As a special-type superhuman, his physical endurance was only on par with a well-trained soldier.

## Chapter 866: Pass the Buck First

Zhang Yi put on his combat suit and moved the wardrobe aside with one hand. He felt along the wall before deftly opening a hidden compartment.

"Ke'er, go inside and stay there for a while."

This secret room was a specially designed space on the Golden Edge, originally intended as a hideout against pirates. Zhang Yi had specifically instructed Chen Jingguan to reinforce it—not only was it nearly impossible to detect, but also extremely difficult to breach.

Only concerned about Zhou Ke'er's safety, Zhang Yi had her take shelter inside as danger approached.

"Zhang Yi, be careful too!"

Sensing the tense atmosphere, Zhou Ke'er didn't argue and stepped into the compartment, giving him a trusting glance before disappearing inside.

"It won't take long. I'll handle everything soon."

Zhang Yi smiled reassuringly at her.

After securing Zhou Ke'er, Zhang Yi's first move was to contact the Jiangnan Region headquarters. When facing major problems, it was always wise to consult leadership—that way, no matter what happened, the blame wouldn't fall on him.

But before that, he went next door and knocked on Zhu Yunque's cabin door.

Though Zhu Yunque's presence on this mission was more for prestige than practical value, she was Zhu Zheng's niece. Bringing her along when contacting Zhu Zheng would help share responsibility.

With Columbus Navy ships approaching, Zhang Yi opened the door to find a weary-looking Zhu Yunque and the sound of baby Tommy wailing inside.

"We've got trouble. We need to contact Commander Zhu immediately!"

After informing Zhu Yunque, Zhang Yi turned to Su Nuanxi, who was tending to Tommy. "Take the child and leave. Go to another room!"

Su Nuanxi protested, "Can't you see Tommy's crying his lungs out?"

Zhang Yi strode over and slapped her across the face without hesitation.

"Get out!"

The blow left Su Nuanxi's face burning red. Tears welled up in her eyes as she prepared to yell at him, but one look at Zhang Yi's murderous glare froze her in place. It felt like a bucket of ice water had been dumped over her head. Not daring to utter another word, she grabbed Tommy and fled the room.

Zhu Yunque looked displeased but didn't dare show it. "What's the problem?"

"The Columbus Navy is coming to inspect our ship."

Zhu Yunque's brow furrowed immediately. Though inexperienced, she understood the gravity of their mission—especially keeping intelligence from foreign powers.

"Then our priority is silencing Li Zongyu."

Zhang Yi scoffed. "Can you guarantee he didn't share intel with others during those six months on Rockflow Island?"

"Today, no one on this ship can slip up. Otherwise, I won't take responsibility for such massive risks." He pointed at her. "Of course, once we contact Commander Zhu, you can volunteer to shoulder that responsibility yourself."

Zhu Yunque stiffened. "Why should I?"

Despite her complaints, she obediently retrieved the communication device and quickly established contact with Jiangnan Region headquarters.

Soon, Zhu Zheng's stern, square-jawed face appeared on the translucent blue screen.

"Yunque, what's the situation?"

Zhu Zheng asked authoritatively, his hands folded on the desk.

Zhu Yunque glanced at Zhang Yi, who leaned into view. "Commander, it's me!"

In that instant, Zhu Yunque witnessed her uncle masterfully transform his expression. His stern demeanor melted away like snow under sunlight, replaced by a warm, grandfatherly smile.

"Zhang Yi! What's happened?"

Zhang Yi replied, "Worst-case scenario. On our return trip, we've encountered a Columbus Navy inspection."

Zhu Zheng's eyes sharpened. He steepled his fingers beneath his chin. "The Columbus Navy... exactly who I didn't want to run into."

"What's the current situation? Give me details."

Zhang Yi kept it brief. "They've already issued warnings and are approaching fast."

"Unknown whether this is routine or if they've discovered our mission."

"How should we proceed? Awaiting your orders!"

Zhang Yi was no fool. Left to his own devices, he might kill—sinking Columbus Navy ships would create an international incident. When blame got assigned later, whose head would roll?

So he dumped the problem on Zhu Zheng. Whatever you say, boss!

For subordinates, the worst mistake was acting on assumptions during uncertain situations. Stating things clearly didn't make you seem indecisive—it showed prudence.

In short: pass the buck. Workplace survival 101: protect yourself first.

Zhu Zheng fell silent. With unclear circumstances, no ideal solution existed.

"Priority is determining their intentions while ensuring no intel leaks about... that item."

Zhang Yi nodded. "My thoughts exactly. But if conflict erupts or the mission gets compromised, am I authorized to act at discretion?"

A grin spread across his face. "Say... eliminate them?"

This was his real concern.

Destroying Columbus Navy ships required regional backing—otherwise, Zhang Yi wouldn't stupidly provoke their entire ocean fleet alone at sea.

That'd be suicide.

Zhu Zheng's gaze deepened. Without hesitation, he declared: "No. That intel is top-secret, affecting Jiangnan Region's—no, all of Huaxu Kingdom's interests!"

"Zhang Yi, you must prevent leaks at all costs. Whatever it takes, understand?"

Zhang Yi narrowed his eyes. "'Whatever it takes' meaning no limits? Any action is permitted?"

His glance flickered toward Zhu Yunque.

So even abandoning ship was acceptable?

Naturally, for absolute secrecy, he'd slaughter everyone aboard before leaving.

"Correct. No limits! Even war with Columbus Navy!"

Zhu Zheng was resolute.

"Don't worry—if things go south, we'll send reinforcements."

"I'll coordinate with East Sea Region to divert their fleet."

"Your mission is bringing that intel home!"

At this point, if they couldn't monopolize the Divine Source intel, Zhu Zheng would rather share it with East Sea Region than let Columbus Ocean obtain it.

"With your assurance, I know how to proceed."

"Good. Act boldly! Remember—a powerful homeland stands behind you!"

Zhang Yi raised his right hand in salute.

"Loyalty!"

After ending the call, he lowered his hand. The entire conversation had been recorded by his combat suit's camera—insurance against Zhu Zheng's potential blame-shifting later.

#### Chapter 867: Prepare for Battle

After reporting to Zhu Zheng, Zhang Yi immediately knew what to do.

He turned and walked away.

Zhu Yunque hurriedly grabbed his sleeve. "Zhang Yi, what should we do next? Is there anything I can help with?"

Zhang Yi glanced back at her. "If you don't come to make things worse, that's already the biggest help you can give me!"

Zhu Yunque's face stiffened, and she silently let go, feeling ashamed.

"But," Zhang Yi suddenly said, "this matter is not so simple."

"If something special happens, I will indeed need your help. But that might require a bigger sacrifice from you. Are you willing?"

Zhu Yunque thought about it. Throughout this journey, she hadn't really done much useful.

Sacrifice? With Zhang Yi around, there was no way she would actually get hurt.

After all, she was Zhu Zheng's own niece!

So she nodded, "Yes, I'm willing."

A meaningful smile appeared at the corner of Zhang Yi's mouth.

She probably didn't yet realize that kind of sacrifice meant she would become a pawn to be eliminated by Zhang Yi.

"In any case, I will do my best to avoid such a situation!"

Zhang Yi smiled faintly, then vanished from where he stood.

The next moment, he appeared in the middle cabin.

Someone was in the hallway here and was startled to see Zhang Yi suddenly appear.

Zhang Yi ignored their shocked looks, strode to the room where Li Zongyu was, and pushed the door open.

"Li Zongyu, come with me!"

Ignoring the astonished gazes around, Zhang Yi grabbed Li Zongyu's arm and pulled him out of the room.

Once outside, Zhang Yi got straight to the point. "Now, you have to tell me everything about that yellow stone. We're in big trouble, and I must ensure no leaks."

After Zhang Yi's explanation, Li Zongyu quickly understood what was happening.

His face was full of surprise and worry, but shortly after, he nodded. "I understand. I will tell you everything I know!"

At this point, he had no choice but to trust Zhang Yi.

"That stone, I found it in a place called Mist Valley on Star Island..."

Li Zongyu revealed everything about the mysterious yellow stone.

Mist Valley was located in the southeast of Star Island. It was a vast valley.

Because the area was shrouded in fog and the terrain was dangerous, it was a favorite destination for adventurers.

Previously, Li Zongyu went camping there with his girlfriend and accidentally discovered a mysterious yellow light source deep in a mountain stream in Mist Valley.

At midnight, the light cast made the entire stream glow with a translucent yellow.

Out of curiosity, he went deeper into the valley and found a terrifyingly deep fissure beneath, as if leading underground.

It was nighttime, so he didn't dare approach to investigate further.

However, when he returned the next day, everything from the previous night had vanished in an instant — even the deep ravine seemed to have never existed.

Just when he thought it was all a dream, he saw a small piece of fluorescent stone glowing yellow in the stream.

At that time, Li Zongyu didn't know what it was for.

He just picked it up out of curiosity and placed it in the box where he kept small personal trinkets.

"I had no idea then how powerful it was. Otherwise..."

Regret filled Li Zongyu's face.

Back then, the apocalypse hadn't come yet. He had no idea how significant the Divine Source was.

Just a small stone imbued with energy awakened his superhuman ability.

If he had fully obtained the complete Divine Source, no one could say how powerful he would become.

This was the first time Zhang Yi had heard someone describe the Divine Source in detail.

Unfortunately, Li Zongyu hadn't really seen the true form of the Divine Source either.

"Where exactly did that thing come from? The only certainty is that it appeared underground."

Since the apocalypse, too many unbelievable things had happened in this world.

The appearance of the Divine Source even altered Zhang Yi's worldview.

It felt like the apocalypse was not merely an accident.

"Star Island, Mist Valley..."

Zhang Yi noted down the location.

"You all stay on the ship! Don't ask too many questions about other matters."

Zhang Yi told Li Zongyu to return to the cabin.

As for warning Li Zongyu not to speak when the Columbus Navy appeared, it was meaningless now.

Others on the ship surely already knew about this.

So Zhang Yi wouldn't give them a chance.

Either everyone leaves together,

Or...

Watching Li Zongyu's retreating back, Zhang Yi silently thought: You will all be buried in this endless icy ocean!

...

Zhang Yi went to the control room. Old Tian and the crew were already prepared for battle, each wearing bulletproof vests and carrying submachine guns.

Seeing Zhang Yi arrive, everyone immediately shouted, "Mr. Zhang!"

"How much longer until we arrive?"

"About three minutes."

"Good. Don't be too nervous. Just do your jobs. I will handle this."

Against the Columbus warship, these ordinary soldiers wouldn't be very effective.

Meanwhile, on the Copernicus warship,

The captain was Navy Lieutenant Colonel Klean Connor.

After receiving orders from headquarters, he immediately ordered the Copernicus to head toward the Golden Edge.

Connor stood in the command center with his hands behind his back. Seeing the Golden Edge had already stopped, he nodded with satisfaction.

"An icebreaker from the Huaxu Kingdom sailing alone on the sea is indeed very suspicious. I can't imagine civilian forces capable of such a long-range maritime voyage."

"They must be hiding something. Prepare for battle!"

Connor's senses were sharp. Based on his experience, this ship definitely had something off.

The Copernicus's torpedo bay was already open. If anything went wrong, they would launch high-speed torpedoes immediately.

In the ocean, such weapons were extremely powerful and hard to counter manually.

Even if there were superhumans on the ship, once the ship was destroyed, it would likely lose combat capability—except for those with ocean-based powers.

Still, Connor did not order the missile launch bay opened.

In his view, unless facing an especially powerful enemy, there was no reason to waste valuable missile resources.

Times were different now. After the Ice Age began, even Columbus's military industry suffered greatly.

Advanced weapon production slowed drastically, and transporting them across the ocean to Neon's Ropefly Island was very difficult.

Therefore, every missile counted and had to be conserved.

"Kurim, take your men and board the ship for inspection."

Connor said to a man beside him dressed in heavy military gear.

The man had a hooked nose, pale blue eyes, and ghastly pale skin, giving off an eerie vibe.

He was Navy Major Barot Kurim.

Chapter 868: Rain Man

Connor was extremely cautious.

In this era of great mutation, no one knew what kind of enemy they might encounter any day.

So he merely locked onto the Golden Edge with torpedoes from a distance, without directly approaching with the Copernicus.

Instead, he ordered Barot Kurim to board for inspection.

"Yes, Captain!"

Jobana acknowledged the order and departed.

Connor also had his soldiers issue a warning to the Golden Edge.

"Attention vessel ahead. This is the Columbus Ocean Navy Fleet. We will be boarding your ship for inspection."

"Please cooperate fully. Do not attempt to flee or resist! Otherwise, we are authorized to attack your vessel."

...

Upon hearing the announcement, Zhang Yi frowned slightly, a cold smile appearing at the corner of his mouth.

"Boarding inspection?"

Old Tian's face darkened. "Mr. Zhang, should we prepare to attack their ship?"

"Forget it. With the limited weapons we have, how could we fight against Columbus' most advanced cruiser?"

"Everyone stay at your posts. Do nothing until I give the order."

Zhang Yi turned and walked toward the deck.

But upon exiting the cabin, he suddenly noticed with surprise that the sky above had changed color.

The gloomy clouds shifted from gray-white to a deep charcoal, swirling directly overhead.

"Pitter-patter—"

A sound both familiar and unfamiliar to Zhang Yi suddenly reached his ears.

For a moment, it actually made him feel somewhat dazed.

He shouldn't have been unfamiliar with this sound, yet it had been so long since he last heard it.

"Plop!"

Something landed on his shoulder.

Looking down, Zhang Yi was shocked to discover it was a raindrop!

The current external temperature was between -30 to -40 degrees Celsius.

For rain to fall under such conditions made Zhang Yi briefly wonder if he was hallucinating.

But soon, more and more raindrops truly descended from the clouds onto the Golden Edge.

"It's really raining?"

Zhang Yi was astonished, but he immediately realized this was no ordinary rain.

The others, however, remained unaware.

Having been cooped up on the ship for so long, they were overjoyed at the sight of rain after such a long absence, rushing out from the cabins to see the spectacle.

Those in the lower deck cabins couldn't come out, but the Rockflow Group had freedom of movement during daytime.

Thus they scrambled outside eagerly.

"It's raining, it's really raining! How wonderful!"

"Has the ice age ended? Are we returning to how things were before?"

Zhu Yunque and Su Nuanxi were also drawn by the rain.

The two leaned against the window, looking utterly enchanted.

"How beautiful the rain is!"

"Let's go out and see!"

"Come on, let's go together!"

Hand in hand, the two women ran out smiling.

On the deck, people cheered joyfully.

But the celebration didn't last long before screams erupted from the crowd.

Where the raindrops landed on their heads, hair immediately fell out in patches, white smoke rising from their scalps.

Their thick winter coats corroded, developing large holes.

"Ahhh!!!!"

Hideous red spots began appearing on their skin.

No longer cheering, everyone now fought to scramble back inside the cabins.

However, some noticed the Columbus warship anchored on the sea.

Che Haicheng, Xie Yunfan and others exchanged glances, their eyes alight with excitement!

Their plan had succeeded—the Columbus warship had truly come to rescue them!

Su Nuanxi and Zhu Yunque stood by the cabin door.

Su Nuanxi gazed curiously into the distance. "Huh? Is that a Columbus warship?"

She actually said with some delight to Zhu Yunque: "Look how handsome that Columbus warship is!"

Zhu Yunque frowned, giving her a cold sidelong glance: "I doubt they come with good intentions."

"How could that be?"

Su Nuanxi tilted her head, puzzled. "Columbus is a peace-loving nation. They must be here to protect us."

Zhu Yunque took a deep breath, too exasperated to respond, though her eyes nervously tracked the warship on the horizon.

"Everyone return to the cabins. This is highly corrosive acid rain," Zhang Yi calmly instructed the group.

In truth, his combat suit's AI system had already analyzed the rain's composition the moment it started.

Under normal circumstances at these temperatures, it would have been hail.

But the acid couldn't damage his combat suit.

The Golden Edge wasn't so fortunate.

The highly corrosive acid rain fell on the ship's hull, causing the paint to discolor, leaving ugly streaks like tear stains.

The entire vessel appeared aged and dull, as if weathered by time.

Zhang Yi remained on deck instead of returning inside.

His gaze fixed ahead.

From an aerial view, one would see the acid rain only covered the area around the Golden Edge.

The Copernicus hadn't approached.

Yet someone had already arrived.

As a top-tier spatial superhuman, Zhang Yi was acutely sensitive to spatial fluctuations.

The rain continued falling.

Then something bizarre occurred on the deck before him.

The raindrops seemed to pause midair, sliding aside as if encountering an invisible barrier.

Upon closer inspection, the disturbance gradually took human form.

Ten fully armed Columbus marines materialized from nothingness.

Seeing them, Zhang Yi instinctively compared them to the Malaya navy they'd previously encountered.

Just judging by equipment and military bearing, the Columbus marines were at least two or three tiers superior!

They were armed to the teeth with cutting-edge gear.

The man leading them exuded a sinister, chilling aura.

Clad in a thick dark green raincoat with a black face mask, he stood with hands clasped behind his back.

"Superhuman."

Zhang Yi instantly recognized.

As a battle-hardened veteran, his instincts could usually distinguish superhumans from ordinary humans.

"This acid rain must be his handiwork."

He scanned the sea again.

No vessels approached—the Copernicus remained at least five nautical miles away.

Meaning this superhuman likely possessed stealth capabilities too.

At the sight of the Columbus marines, Che Haicheng and the others could barely contain their excitement.

White Mo swallowed hard, immediately wanting to rush over and call for help.

Che Haicheng quickly restrained him: "Not yet! Let's see how this plays out first!"

If they misjudged the situation, they'd expose themselves prematurely.

And Zhang Yi would never forgive them.

White Mo reluctantly suppressed his eagerness, though his eyes remained glued to the scene.

Old Tian and the crew emerged with rifles, glaring coldly at the soldiers.

But to the marines, their defiance seemed almost laughable.

The disparity in firepower wasn't even close.

Especially with the top-tier Copernicus cruiser backing them up.

"This is a Huaxu Kingdom vessel, and we are Huaxu citizens. It's improper for you to intercept us in international waters," Zhang Yi said mildly, going through the motions.

Some formalities needed observing, however pointless.

Until their intentions became clear, basic dialogue was necessary.

Kurim's muffled voice came from beneath his rain hood:

"Are you this ship's captain?"

Zhang Yi nodded. "That's correct."

Kurim continued: "We're the Columbus Navy. We've received intelligence that your ship is unlawfully detaining several Columbus citizens, along with reports of inhumane killings."

"Therefore, we're taking you in for questioning."

Chapter 869: Dilemma

As Kurim finished speaking, White Mo and the others were overjoyed.

They finally confirmed these were the people coming to rescue them!

For over half a month, they had lived in constant fear.

Terrified that Zhang Yi might kill them any day.

Now, their saviors had arrived!

They firmly believed the Columbus Navy was invincible - Zhang Yi would have to let them go the moment these forces appeared.

White Mo raised his hands and cheered: "Oh my God! You've finally come! Praise the Lord, praise the great Columbus Navy!"

He covered his head with his clothes, ignoring the acid rain, and excitedly rushed toward the naval soldiers.

All he wanted was to leave this place and return home to find his wife and children.

Seeing White Mo move, several foreigners from the Rockflow Group also started running that way.

They cheered excitedly as they ran, feeling like Andy escaping from Shawshank.

They believed they'd broken free from a dangerous cage and returned to civilization's embrace.

Che Haicheng raised his hands excitedly: "Long live Columbus! Long live!"

As they passed Zhang Yi and Old Tian's group, they deliberately wiggled their butts mockingly to vent their pent-up emotions, their faces full of ridicule.

Their expressions clearly said: Now we're under Columbus Navy's protection - stay mad!

Su Nuanxi was also tempted, her eyes shimmering with desire.

Suddenly she told Zhu Yunque: "Senior Sister, I want to go with them. After all, I'm a Columbus citizen. I'd rather return to Columbus than go back with you."

Zhu Yunque was furious: "Are you insane? Can't you tell they're hostile?"

Su Nuanxi sighed and looked at her resentfully:

"Senior Sister, stop being so paranoid!"

"Columbus is a wonderful, free country that won't force us to do anything."

"I've had enough of this ship anyway - that Zhang guy has always treated me poorly. I'm leaving with them!"

As Su Nuanxi tried to leave, Zhu Yunque grabbed her tightly: "Idiot! Look at the situation first!"

Only then did Su Nuanxi notice something was wrong - the deck was tense, with Old Tian and crew having unlocked their safeties, ready to open fire at any moment.

Her face paled as she quickly retreated two steps, deciding to wait and see.

On deck, Zhang Yi watched Che Haicheng, White Mo, and Xie Yunfan with surprise in his eyes.

He finally understood these were the ones who secretly contacted the Columbus Navy.

But two things puzzled him:

First, how did they contact the navy when he'd confiscated all communication devices?

Second, and more importantly - why contact them at all?

Zhang Yi had treated the Rockflow Group well aboard the Golden Edge.

They'd never lacked food, warmth or other necessities.

From Li Zongyu and others, he knew Columbus officials wouldn't rescue citizens stranded overseas - White Mo's previous distress calls had gone unanswered.

Yet they still chose to betray Zhang Yi for the Columbus Navy.

As a rational person, Zhang Yi couldn't logically understand this.

But soon he realized - the world has too many fools. No point wondering what pigs think.

In that instant, Zhang Yi figured many things out:

The Columbus Navy wouldn't come without reason - they wanted something.

For them to dispatch warships, the intelligence must be extremely valuable.

So information about the Divine Source might already be leaked by Che Haicheng's group.

Even if they only heard fragments from Li Zongyu, top forces took the Divine Source seriously.

They'd retrieve White Mo and Che Haicheng even without confirming the intel.

By the same logic - Zhang Yi couldn't let them leave!

Zhang Yi waved at Old Tian's group.

Understanding immediately, they blocked Che Haicheng's path with guns.

The escapees' expressions changed instantly:

"What's this? I'm a Columbus citizen! You can't stop us!"

"This is illegal detention! Sir, save us!"

"We've endured inhuman treatment here! We demand protection!"

Emotionally charged, they desperately wanted to leave.

With the Columbus Navy present, they grew bold enough to yell at Zhang Yi.

Even Che Haicheng, who once licked Zhang Yi's shoes like a dog, now wore a defiant expression.

Kurim looked at Zhang Yi: "These are Columbus citizens. We're taking them."

His voice dripped with arrogance: "Also, your activities are suspicious. We're seizing this ship for inspection!"

"From now on, the Columbus Navy commands this vessel. Any resistance will be met with lethal force!"

Since they'd already boarded, there was no need for pretense.

If they wanted confrontation, they'd go all the way - taking the entire ship.

They could even press-gang the crew into labor.

Che Haicheng pointed at Zhang Yi and shouted to Kurim:

"Sir, I accuse that man! He's a high-ranking Huaxu Kingdom official! That woman with him is also related to Huaxu officials!"

"They're hiding major secrets at sea. Don't let them escape!"

Confident against the mighty Columbus Navy, they believed Zhang Yi's group would surrender.

Su Nuanxi couldn't take it anymore. She stepped forward righteously:

"Although he's done some wrong, he did rescue us from the island."

"Let's forget past grievances. Those who want can go to Columbus, others to Huaxu Kingdom."

"Isn't that fair?"

She smiled innocently at Kurim:

"Sir, we Columbus citizens wish to leave. Please don't trouble the others. Thank you."

Her naive expression made many look at her strangely.

Kurim gave her a cold glance before ignoring her completely.

Zhang Yi narrowed his eyes at Che Haicheng's group.

He faced two choices now:

- 1) Kill everyone aboard and escape with Zhou Ke'er.
- 2) Eliminate the Columbus Navy forces and flee across the sea.

Both options had major downsides:

Option 1 meant killing all crew including Zhu Yunque - causing issues with Zhu Zheng.

Option 2 meant open warfare with Columbus Navy on international waters - inviting devastating retaliation.

Option 1 was clearly more convenient.

But Zhang Yi refused.

He might not care about others' lives, but killing his own crew under foreign pressure disgusted him physically.

Soon, Zhang Yi made his choice.

He calculated silently:

The Copernicus had torpedoes locked on the Golden Edge.

Distance: 5 nautical miles. Spatial traversal would take 9 seconds.

With Columbus soldiers aboard, they might not fire immediately - but they could be ruthless enough to sacrifice their own.

First, for mission secrecy, no other high-level combatants were aboard besides him.

Abandoning these people to capture the Copernicus would leave the Golden Edge crew vulnerable.

Second, quickly killing the Columbus soldiers here would prompt torpedo fire once his abilities were revealed.

A true dilemma.

But time wasn't on Zhang Yi's side.

[Rain Man] Barot Kurim was already preparing for their resistance.

He stepped back, vanishing completely into the rain.

#### Chapter 870: Surrender

Che Haicheng and his group continued to arrogantly provoke Zhang Yi and the other crew members. They shamelessly wiggled their butts, flipped middle fingers, and burst into wild laughter, venting their pent-up frustrations from the past half month.

Even though Zhang Yi had provided them with ample food to prevent starvation on Rockflow Island, they still detested him. In their eyes, Zhang Yi and the crew treated them with excessive arrogance, like herdsmen tending livestock. The saying "give them an inch and they'll take a mile" perfectly described their attitude. They clung to fantasies of some idealized distant salvation while nitpicking those who actually helped them.

But none of that mattered anymore. As Kurim vanished into the rain, Zhang Yi made his decision.

"Wait! I want to speak with your commanding officer! I can give him what he wants!" Zhang Yi shouted loudly.

At these words, Kurim's figure reappeared. "Had a change of heart?"

Zhang Yi took a deep breath. "We're just an icebreaker ship - we can't possibly oppose the Columbus Ocean Navy. Since we have no choice, we might as well cooperate voluntarily for better treatment," he said with complete sincerity.

Everyone on board wore stunned expressions. None had expected Zhang Yi to surrender without resistance.

Zhu Yunque stared at Zhang Yi with wide eyes, angrily exclaiming, "Zhang Yi! How could you? Is this how you repay my uncle's trust?"

Zhang Yi cursed inwardly: Damn woman, completely lacking situational awareness!

Fortunately, Kurim didn't recognize Zhang Yi's name.

Che Haicheng's group showed no surprise, exchanging smug looks as if this outcome was expected. After all, who would dare oppose the mighty Columbus Ocean Navy at sea?

"Now that's more like it! A wise man submits to circumstances!" Che Haicheng laughed uproariously.

Xie Yunfan adjusted his glasses and teased, "Your Chinese idioms keep improving!"

Che Haicheng glared. "Nonsense! This is our great New Rohan's six-thousand-year cultural heritage! What's it to you?"

Ignoring Zhu Yunque's murderous glare, Zhang Yi calmly told Kurim, "I won't resist pointlessly. You came for that thing, right? I've gathered substantial information, but I can't tell you directly."

Since the intelligence was already compromised, he might as well use it as bait. "I need to speak with your commander personally about this!"

Everything was observed by Klean Connor, captain of the Copernicus. "Is he talking about the Divine Source?" Connor's eyes gleamed with excitement. After consideration, he radioed Kurim: "Accept his terms! Disarm him completely and bring him aboard."

To them, the Golden Edge was just a fish waiting to be gutted. With Zhang Yi willingly surrendering and offering valuable intelligence about the Divine Source, Connor couldn't resist the temptation. Obtaining this information would mean massive military merit.

Following orders, Kurim demanded Zhang Yi surrender all weapons and accompany them to the Copernicus. Zhang Yi remained cautious but complied, setting down two pistols. Two soldiers thoroughly searched him before handcuffing his hands.

Seeing this, Old Tian and others reluctantly threw their guns onto the deck. Reactions varied across the ship - Zhu Yunque seethed with anger and confusion, thinking: Some Jiangnan War God he turned out to be! Her disappointment left her feeling anchorless. If her identity was exposed and captured by Columbus Navy, it would bring immense shame to the Jiangnan Region. Death would be her only option. She could only hope Zhang Yi wouldn't reveal her.

The Rockflow Group members displayed mixed reactions - some pensive, some worried, others visibly pleased, reflecting their diverse perspectives.

Only Che Haicheng's group reveled in triumph, laughing uncontrollably. Old Tian's crew remained expressionless. Those doubting Zhang Yi simply didn't understand what kind of man he was. Hadn't countless people fallen victim to his schemes over time? A man utterly devoid of martial pride, exceptionally cautious yet ruthlessly cunning. Anyone letting their guard down around him would... well.

"Don't touch my crew if you want the information," Zhang Yi told Kurim.

Kurim snorted. "We're the Columbus Ocean Navy!" Renowned as the world's strongest with strict discipline, this wasn't empty boasting. Currently needing Zhang Yi's cooperation, they naturally wouldn't harm Old Tian's group.

To protect both his crew and the Divine Source intelligence, Zhang Yi had to take this step. Kurim's powerful hand gripped Zhang Yi's arm as he ordered some soldiers to guard the ship while taking Zhang Yi to the Copernicus.

During transit, Zhang Yi observed Kurim's remarkable ability - rainwater moved with him, allowing seamless travel through storms. No wonder they'd boarded the Golden Edge without any vessel approaching.

After Zhang Yi's departure, an eerie silence fell over the ship. No one knew what would happen next, with only the cold-eyed Columbus soldiers standing guard, completely ignoring Old Tian and the sailors' resentful looks. Absolute strength bred absolute confidence - the hallmark of the world's premier navy.

Soon, Zhang Yi arrived aboard the state-of-the-art Copernicus cruiser, armed with multiple autocannons and conventional missiles. Its destructive power rivaled a top-tier Delta-level superhuman! Though as machinery, it had weaknesses - its interior defenses weren't nearly as formidable.

The Copernicus represented the greatest threat. Exactly why Zhang Yi had made his choice.