

Ice Age 921

Chapter 921: Becoming a Captive

Zhang Yi and Linghu Feixue joined Xuanwu's gambling game.

They were playing Fight the Landlord, with answers to questions as the stakes.

If the question touched on sensitive areas, they could refuse to answer, and no substitutions were allowed.

Because sometimes, the refusal to answer itself was a form of answer.

This meant not only did they have to win, but they also had to carefully consider their questions, otherwise the other party had the right to refuse.

Playing cards—this was an area Zhang Yi excelled in.

When he worked in the warehouse, he often played cards with his colleagues.

And the most crucial point was that he could cheat.

The cards Xuanwu used weren't special; Zhang Yi had the same ones in his warehouse.

Moreover, during the game, he could subtly put away one or two useless cards to significantly increase his winning rate.

Then, at the start of the next round, he could put them back while drawing cards.

This way, he could do it without anyone noticing.

For seasoned card players, such tricks weren't hard to detect.

However, Xuanwu clearly didn't have such advanced gambling skills, and he never imagined Zhang Yi could use his superhuman abilities to cheat.

The three of them sat around a table, with each round lasting only a few minutes, passing by quickly.

Zhang Yi won more and lost less; unless the other got a heavenly hand or he intentionally went easy, he basically couldn't lose.

For the three of them, this process was an exchange of intelligence.

All three were tight-lipped about their own abilities and didn't go into detail.

However, Zhang Yi did ask Xuanwu and Linghu Feixue how their respective abilities had awakened.

Linghu Feixue lowered her hat brim and answered very simply and directly: "An experiment by the Science Department."

She glanced at Zhang Yi and Xuanwu and said lightly, "Anyway, it was an experience so painful that no one would want to recall it."

Xuanwu raised an eyebrow. "I'm about the same, but also a bit different."

Zhang Yi looked at him curiously. "Oh? How so?"

Xuanwu said calmly, "Before the ice age hit, I was a dive club owner with some assets."

"After the apocalypse, a few partners and I took a boat, planning to flee to islands near the equator to escape the disaster."

He pursed his lips and spread his hands.

"Later, we had a little conflict."

Zhang Yi rubbed his chin. "A little conflict? What happened after that?"

"After that," Xuanwu said with a reminiscent expression, "they threw me into the sea to feed the sharks!"

As he said this, he even joked, "There were so many great white sharks in that area! One bite nearly tore me in half—it hurt so, so much!"

He laughed, but a deep, dark light shone in his eyes.

"Heaven took pity on me; I didn't die."

Zhang Yi smiled. "I see. Because of your fear of the deep sea and sharks, you chose to become a giant sea turtle in this way. The thick shell and massive body are for self-protection, right?"

"Maybe. Who knows?"

Xuanwu said leisurely.

"But you're truly a genius."

Linghu Feixue sighed with genuine admiration.

"You're a natural Epsilon-level—a peerless talent unmatched among millions!"

Xuanwu didn't seem to care.

"After the apocalypse, countless people have experienced death like I did. I was just a tiny bit luckier."

The two of them looked at Zhang Yi and asked about the conditions for his ability awakening.

Zhang Yi coughed. "First, I was a warehouse manager at the time."

The two nodded. "Makes sense, that's reasonable!"

"Second, I was also killed by people close to me."

Zhang Yi omitted the part about his rebirth.

In his telling, it became awakening his ability at the moment of death.

He had to keep some secrets about his abilities.

And he knew Linghu Feixue and Xuanwu must also have things they hadn't revealed.

Along the way, the three asked each other questions, automatically skipping sensitive ones without overstepping boundaries.

Yet they very amiably completed their intelligence exchange.

Suddenly, Xuanwu put down his cards and said to Zhang Yi and Linghu Feixue, "We're here."

Zhang Yi and Linghu Feixue knew they had reached the East Sea Region's military port.

Zhang Yi thought for a moment, then put down his hand.

Double Jokers plus three twos.

"One last question: after we go ashore, how will your people treat us?"

Xuanwu shrugged. "I really don't know. I'm only responsible for carrying out missions; other matters are left to the officials."

"Click-clack—"

The parasitic beetles inside Xuanwu crawled over, and Xuanwu pointed outside. "You two, please step out!"

As Xuanwu's spirit body, he couldn't leave this place.

And his main body would likely never set foot on land again in this lifetime.

This Epsilon-level superhuman of the East Sea Region, who had once been thrown into the sea to feed sharks, would spend the rest of his life accompanying the endless icy sea.

Zhang Yi stood up. "We'll meet again soon!"

Xuanwu propped his chin on one hand and responded with a smile, "Good. I hope next time we set out together as comrades."

Zhang Yi and Linghu Feixue left Xuanwu's body under the escort of the beetles.

They walked out from Xuanwu's mouth, and the cold sea breeze outside brushed against their faces.

Before them was a massive harbor filled with warships.

The Blue Rose had been controlled by Xuanwu and brought back.

The members of the Rose Squad on board had also been "invited" to disembark.

The girls looked at Zhang Yi and Linghu Feixue with angry expressions.

It was somewhat ridiculous that they had been captured by their own allies.

Zhang Yi's face showed little expression.

He wasn't a soldier and had no military dignity to speak of; in the end, he was just an employee and wouldn't keep secrets for Zhu Zheng.

Flexible adaptation was the way to go.

Linghu Feixue's demeanor was different from his.

A cold smile played on her lips, and her hat brim hid her sharp, blade-like gaze.

At the port, a group of soldiers in combat suits surrounded several officers who appeared to be waiting for them.

The two leaders both held the rank of major general.

One wore glasses and had a gentle appearance; the other had a long, narrow scar over his eye and a cold, ruthless expression.

After Zhang Yi and Linghu Feixue walked out.

The scar-faced man waved to the soldiers beside him.

Immediately, two fully armed soldiers took out handcuffs and walked toward Zhang Yi and Linghu Feixue.

Zhang Yi slowly narrowed his eyes, and Linghu Feixue instantly flew into a rage.

"What does the East Sea Region mean by this? Treating us like criminals?"

The scar-faced man sneered. "With superhumans of your strength, we can't afford not to be careful!"

Just then, the officer wearing glasses beside him waved his hand.

"Brother Li, they are guests. We should treat them with courtesy!"

He smiled at Zhang Yi and Linghu Feixue. "Besides, they've already been injected with Compound 3. Smart as they are, they won't put up futile resistance."

Never mind that Zhang Yi and Linghu Feixue had been injected with Compound 3.

Even at their peak, it would be hard for them to cause much trouble at the East Sea Region's military port.

Xuanwu was right behind them, watching.

The narrow-eyed man walked up to Zhang Yi and Linghu Feixue and said with a smile:

"Welcome to East Sea City! I am Liang Simiao, head of the East Sea Region's Intelligence Department. I'm here on orders from the East Sea Region's supreme commander, Commander Li Guangxiao, specifically to receive you!"

He then gestured to the side, making way.

"You've worked hard fighting at sea. We've prepared food and rest rooms for you and the members of the Rose Squad. This way, please!"

Zhang Yi's gaze fell on Linghu Feixue.

Linghu Feixue remained silent. At this point, aside from maintaining some dignity, there was nothing they could do.

Chapter 922: Zhang Yi's Confession

Linghu Feixue walked ahead, with Zhang Yi following beside her.

The members of the Rose Squad on the other side were being escorted by soldiers toward East Sea City.

Along the way, many soldiers from the East Sea Region gathered around to watch.

They looked at these people with curiosity.

After all, these weren't ordinary visitors.

Zhang Yi, this investigation captain codenamed [Chaos], was the number one expert in the Jiangnan Region.

The Rose Squad consisted entirely of women, including several beauties.

Such a team was particularly eye-catching, attracting extensive discussion among the East Sea Region soldiers.

"Look, look! I like the third woman - her figure is really good."

"I'm different, I prefer the second one. Her legs are very long, and she'd definitely look sexy in stockings."

"Heh heh, I like them all!"

"Those two over there are the investigation captains from the Jiangnan Region, right?"

"That female captain seems quite imposing. But the man looks a bit sloppy, without any military bearing. Quite ordinary."

...

The soldiers commented all around, watching Zhang Yi and the others as if they were rare exotic animals.

A cold glint flashed in Zhang Yi's eyes.

As one of the largest war zones in Huaxu Kingdom, the East Sea Region maintained strict military discipline and wouldn't normally permit soldiers to engage in such inappropriate behavior.

The current situation could only mean one thing.

Someone was deliberately trying to humiliate them, to suppress their spirits and thus achieve their own objectives.

That long-unfelt emotion resurfaced in Zhang Yi's heart.

In these chaotic times, only strength was the true measure of power.

Otherwise, no one would give you respect, not even so-called allies.

Behind Zhang Yi and the others, Li Tianyang watched the scene with a meaningful smile curling at the corner of his mouth.

"The number one expert of Jiangnan Region, the military's top beauty - both are proud and arrogant types. If we don't first suppress their arrogance, they probably won't easily disclose intelligence!"

Liang Simiao glanced at Li Tianyang and said with a slight smile, "I'm just worried about going too far, Brother Li. After all, we and the Jiangnan Region are brother regions, and we still rely on their food supplies and technical support. Let's not take things too far."

Li Tianyang snorted lightly, speaking dismissively, "If it weren't for our East Sea Region deterring the maritime areas and defending the national borders, where would they get to enjoy such carefree lives?"

"To gain something, one always needs to pay some price. They've been living their comfortable lives for too long; it's time they learned a lesson."

"Besides, this time they provoked the Colombian Navy. Without our help, they would have likely ended up at the bottom of the sea."

"Even if they have grievances, they'll have to swallow them down!"

Liang Simiao just smiled without saying anything more.

Li Tianyang had always been this domineering in character; otherwise, he wouldn't have become the head of the East Sea Region's Operations Department.

Zhang Yi and Linghu Feixue were escorted to a mobile command vehicle.

The surrounding soldiers treated them relatively politely since they weren't enemies, so they didn't treat them like actual prisoners.

However, when facing two captain-level figures, even though Zhang Yi and Linghu Feixue had been injected with Compound 3, they remained highly vigilant.

A tiger injected with tranquilizers was still a tiger, and no one dared to lightly provoke it.

Several vehicles drove into East Sea City.

Zhang Yi looked at the buildings outside through the window.

Somewhat similar to Blizzard City, but slightly more rudimentary, without tall structures.

Only various watchtowers and fortresses could be seen everywhere throughout the city.

From the tall watchtowers extended long cannon barrels aimed at the sky and the outskirts of East Sea City.

This place carried a more lethal atmosphere than Blizzard City.

Even the air carried a salty, damp smell.

Not seawater, but the scent of blood.

Zhang Yi thought to himself: No wonder the East Sea Region's strength is formidable. Having to face numerous powerful forces in the southeastern sea areas daily, they couldn't survive without solid capabilities.

He had thought the Jiangnan Region was dangerous enough, but now it seemed they were relatively comfortable.

Before long, Zhang Yi was taken to a residence.

Linghu Feixue was held separately from him.

Though called detention, the room was fully equipped with all necessary facilities.

The person responsible for guarding him was an exceptionally imposing soldier.

Although Zhang Yi didn't have combat goggles to see through this person's strength level.

But judging from his iron-willed military bearing and the current situation, this person's strength was at least at Baili Changqing's level.

The man said to Zhang Yi, "You'll rest here for now. If you need anything, you can notify us at any time, and we'll try our best to accommodate."

Though the tone was stiff, the attitude was relatively polite.

Zhang Yi nodded, having no particular objections.

He requested some food and water, then plopped down on the sofa in the living room.

There was a bookshelf against the wall with a row of books; Zhang Yi casually picked one up and started reading.

All his current behavior was completely visible to the intelligence department's surveillance.

Liang Simiao appeared in the monitoring room of the intelligence department with his team.

They weren't just monitoring Zhang Yi; the same applied to Linghu Feixue and the other female team members.

However, they maintained basic professional standards.

For example, female staff were responsible for monitoring the Rose Squad members.

On the screens, everyone's behavior varied.

Linghu Feixue sat on the sofa, motionless like an ice sculpture.

She didn't even touch the water and food they had sent.

The Rose Squad members behaved similarly.

Only Zhang Yi ate and drank as if nothing was wrong.

Liang Simiao looked somewhat surprised, "What a calm person. I don't know whether to say he has excellent psychological resilience or that... he's a true master."

The intelligence department staff examined Zhang Yi and also frowned.

"He doesn't even look like a professional soldier. Professional soldiers receive special training and wouldn't behave like this after capture."

"But the investigation captain of Jiangnan Region must be a formidable character! Especially since he currently has the highest superhuman ability index among their captains."

"Disguise! This must be his disguise!"

Deep light reflected from behind Liang Simiao's thick glasses.

"It seems getting the intelligence we want from him will be somewhat difficult!"

"Don't rush, we have plenty of time to slowly extract information from him."

At this point, Liang Simiao looked toward a female staff member with a ponytail on his left.

"Xiao Li, how are those people we brought back from the ship doing now?"

Li Hongyu quickly responded, "They've been affected by an anesthetic alkaloid and won't wake up for a while. I've already sent them to the medical department, and their response is that there's no life danger - they'll regain consciousness after 12 hours."

Liang Simiao nodded: "We'll need to question each of them when they wake up. I think they might possess important intelligence."

Chapter 923: He is too scary

Zhang Yi settled into the guest accommodations at East Sea City, behaving as if he'd just checked into a luxury hotel.

He knew the East Sea Region had no grudge against him and naturally wouldn't harm him.

They simply wanted intelligence about the Divine Source.

He had decided that as soon as they came to ask, he would answer straightforwardly.

To avoid any unnecessary physical discomfort.

Zhang Yi never considered himself some tough guy, and besides, even real heroes know when to avoid obvious trouble.

As the old saying goes, life is like that thing—if you can't resist it, you might as well relax and enjoy it.

This laid-back attitude and behavior, however, left the East Sea Region's intelligence department completely baffled.

So they first interrogated the Rose Squad.

After obtaining no useful intelligence from them, they finally came to have a detailed discussion with Zhang Yi.

That morning, the East Sea Region provided Zhang Yi with an exceptionally lavish meal.

It included plenty of fresh seafood, likely caught that very day.

The entire table was filled with food, and they assured Zhang Yi he could eat without concern.

Zhang Yi didn't hold back at all—lobster leg in one hand, grilled squid in the other, eating until oil dripped from his mouth.

After he had eaten and drunk his fill, someone came to clear the dishes.

At that moment, the interrogators who had been waiting outside exchanged glances, then pushed open the door and entered with determined steps.

Liang Simiao had gathered all the elite members of the intelligence department.

This included psychology experts, micro-expression specialists, language experts, and other professionals.

The two interrogators, Li Hongyu and Chen Liang, were among the absolute elite of the intelligence department.

Under these circumstances, if Zhang Yi lied, they could easily detect it.

The biggest problem would be if Zhang Yi refused to speak entirely, completely rejecting cooperation.

If that happened, Liang Simiao would have a real headache.

They had ways to make Zhang Yi talk, but using those methods on an ally might create an irreparable rift with the Jiangnan Region.

Because of this, Liang Simiao's expression was exceptionally grave today.

Li Hongyu and Chen Liang suppressed their nervousness and entered Zhang Yi's room.

"Mr. Zhang Yi, hello. I hope you found the meal satisfactory?"

Li Hongyu smiled as she addressed Zhang Yi by name.

Zhang Yi acted as if he hadn't heard her.

While picking his teeth, he smiled and replied: "Not bad. Your seafood here is excellent, even better than what we get in Tianhai City."

A professional smile appeared on Chen Liang's face.

"We have some matters we'd like to understand from you. We hope you can cooperate with our work."

"After all..."

He had prepared his approach—first lower Zhang Yi's guard, then gradually break through his defenses.

But before he could even finish half his prepared speech, Zhang Yi interrupted him.

"I know what you want to ask. You just want information about the Divine Source, right? I'll tell you everything."

Zhang Yi said this while still meticulously picking his teeth—a piece of lobster meat was stuck between them, causing him great discomfort.

Chen Liang's smile froze on his face.

This elite member of the East Sea Region's intelligence department with twelve years of experience was completely thrown off by Zhang Yi's response!

Brother, why aren't you following the script!

Chen Liang's mind went completely blank.

Everything he had learned was about how to extract intelligence from reluctant subjects.

But when someone voluntarily discloses everything upfront, what was the point of all his careful preparation?

At that moment, Liang Simiao's voice came through their earpieces.

"He wouldn't disclose information this easily—it must be some scheme of his! Continue questioning."

Chen Liang composed himself.

"Ahem, it would be best if you could cooperate. We do want this intelligence. Could you provide us with detailed information?"

Zhang Yi spoke, and he provided extremely detailed information.

Li Zongyu and Zhang Weiwei were both in the East Sea Region's custody anyway.

Once they woke up, a simple questioning would reveal everything, so hiding information served no purpose.

"The Divine Source was discovered in a place called Mist Valley on Star Island."

Zhang Yi spoke as if it had nothing to do with him.

This cooperative behavior created the greatest crisis the East Sea Region's intelligence department had ever faced.

The micro-expression expert said in disbelief: "His expression shows no flaws! I don't see any signs of lying."

Liang Simiao's eyes widened.

Looking at Zhang Yi on the monitor, he said incredulously: "You mean to say he's reached the level where he can even deceive himself?"

"First, you must believe your own fabricated lies, then when you speak them, you can deceive anyone."

"As expected of Chaos! As expected of the Jiangnan Region's top combatant!"

The psychology expert offered his perspective.

"From his speech and behavior, I don't detect any signs of deception. He's so natural, as if he's speaking complete truth."

After saying this, he actually pressed his hand to his forehead and pounded the table in frustration:

"He's the most difficult opponent I've encountered in my entire career!"

Cold sweat nearly dripped from Liang Simiao's forehead.

How were they supposed to handle such a difficult opponent?

Among the group, a young woman in her twenties, seeing everyone's reactions, couldn't help but whisper:

"Could it be... that everything he's saying is true?"

The moment she said this, everyone's gaze fell upon her.

Various looks were directed at her—some mocking, some pitying, some shaking their heads and turning away to chuckle quietly; others looked at her with the sympathy one shows a child.

Liang Simiao looked at the new department member, his expression grave as he said:

"Xiao Liu, this isn't the time for jokes."

"You need to understand that we're dealing with an extremely powerful individual, the most difficult person to handle in the entire Jiangnan Region!"

"Our task is to extract intelligence about the Divine Source from him. This is an S-class mission!"

"Do you really think he would be foolish enough to simply tell us everything?"

Xiao Liu's face turned pale. She realized her recklessness and felt immediate regret.

After studying intelligence for so many years, she had actually made such a basic mistake.

She quickly apologized, asking her superiors to forgive her erroneous statement.

Liang Simiao didn't have time to deal with her, instead seriously instructing Li Hongyu and Chen Liang to continue questioning Zhang Yi.

The two also became serious, employing everything they had learned throughout their careers.

One hour later, the two emerged from Zhang Yi's room.

The moment they stepped out, they weakly collapsed to the floor.

Chen Liang's eyes were filled with pain and despair.

"All the interrogation techniques I've studied for years were completely useless against him!"

Li Hongyu leaned against the wall, her eyes completely vacant.

"Every single question we asked, he answered flawlessly without any gaps."

"Indeed, someone as cautious as him probably anticipated everything that might happen today. He likely prepared for the possibility of capture by the Colombian Navy, hence his response."

"I... I don't know what to do anymore."

Chapter 924: Truth Serum

Zhang Yi's honesty completely baffled the intelligence department.

Perhaps due to Zhang Yi's aura, or perhaps because the Divine Source was their top priority, they simply couldn't believe he would so easily reveal the truth.

However, they had no way to verify the falsehood of this matter.

Because so-called intelligence is essentially information in one's mind.

Zhang Yi had told them this crucial intelligence as casually as mentioning he had rice for lunch - how could they believe it?

How could they know that Zhang Yi had long been mentally prepared?

Even if he told the East Sea Region about the Divine Source's location, they would find it difficult to travel to Star Island to retrieve it.

Because they would have to pass through the Colombian Navy's blockade.

Secondly, the worst-case scenario would be the East Sea Region monopolizing the Divine Source.

But for Zhang Yi, he didn't have an absolute must-obtain mindset about the Divine Source.

Getting it would be best, but not getting it wouldn't mean he couldn't survive.

Well, simply put, it was about "lying flat."

However, while Zhang Yi could lie flat, this matter couldn't be dragged on indefinitely.

The East Sea Region taking away the Rose Squad and Zhang Yi was quickly discovered by the Jiangnan Region.

There are no walls that don't leak - the major battle in the southern sea was too conspicuous, and a simple investigation revealed what had happened.

Zhu Zheng immediately called Li Guangxiao, demanding he return the people.

The specific details of their conversation remain unknown.

Only that after the call ended, Li Guangxiao summoned several important officials.

These included Chief of Staff Qu Liangshao, Intelligence Director Liang Simiao, and Operations Director Li Tianyang.

Once everyone had gathered, he got straight to the point:

"The Jiangnan Region has communicated with me - they're demanding we return their people."

"We and the Jiangnan Region are brotherly allies. We don't want to tear face and make things too ugly."

"So you need to find a way to extract the Divine Source intelligence."

Intelligence Director Liang Simiao frowned upon hearing this:

"Actually, Zhang Yi has already disclosed the Divine Source's whereabouts. It's just that we temporarily cannot verify the truthfulness of his statements yet."

He repeated Zhang Yi's words.

"Star Island?"

Li Guangxiao tapped the table. "If it's really there, that makes things quite difficult!"

If it were elsewhere, at least they could send people to verify.

But to reach Star Island, they must pass through the Colombian Ocean Fleet's defense line.

Joking aside, after recent tensions, who would dare go now?

Li Guangxiao could only tell Liang Simiao to think of more methods.

At most, they had three days. If there was still no progress, they would have to return Zhang Yi and the others to the Jiangnan Region.

After all, other regions were watching too.

If he made things too ugly and damaged his reputation, it might create bad feelings among all five major regions.

As the main coastal defense force, the East Sea Region still needed other regions' assistance, especially support from the Jiangnan Region.

They couldn't push things to the extreme.

Liang Simiao walked out of the office with knitted brows.

Time was tight - he needed to find a good method to make Zhang Yi tell the truth.

But without using torture, relying only on observation and verbal guidance was actually quite difficult.

Just then, Chief of Staff Qu Liangshao approached with a smile:

"Old Liang, still troubled by this matter?"

Liang Simiao smiled bitterly: "How could I not be troubled? After all, he's not our enemy but someone from a brother region. Our methods are indeed somewhat limited in application."

Qu Liangshao mysteriously told him: "I actually have a method. Come with me."

Liang Simiao looked at him in surprise, then seeing Qu Liangshao's confident expression, followed him away.

After the two left, Operations Director Li Tianyang revealed a cold smile at the corner of his mouth, then took several subordinates and headed toward where Zhang Yi was being held.

What was Zhang Yi doing at this time?

It was his third day in the East Sea Region, daily routine involved answering questions from intelligence department staff.

Other times, he read books or turned on the TV to watch old movies.

Answering the same questions every day was starting to irritate him.

He had clearly told them everything, yet they still wouldn't let him go - how could that make him happy?

Just as Zhang Yi waited in his room for the routine interrogation.

The door was forcefully opened, but he saw several unfamiliar faces.

They were soldiers with cold expressions.

They entered the room without a word, then one person placed a glass of water in front of Zhang Yi.

Zhang Yi frowned. "What does this mean? Are you trying to poison me?"

Li Tianyang walked in from outside with his hands behind his back.

He sat opposite Zhang Yi, eyes fixed intently on him.

"Kill you? No. Your death holds no value for us, but alive, you're most useful to us."

He pointed at the glass of water on the table.

"Rest assured, this water contains no toxins. It has only one purpose - to make you tell the truth!"

"I admit, as a soldier, you possess excellent professional quality. You almost fooled everyone into thinking you were just an ordinary person."

"But," he stared at Zhang Yi, pointing at his own eyes, "you can't hide from my eyes! I know you've been lying all along!"

"Don't try playing these little tricks - it won't benefit you in any way."

"So now, drink this water. Answer all my questions obediently! If you don't cooperate, I'll have to use methods you won't want to see."

Zhang Yi fell into silence.

He slowly closed the book in his hand and placed it on the table.

Then he stared at the glass of water. After a few seconds, he reached out, took the glass, and slowly brought it to his mouth.

Li Tianyang's mouth revealed a victor's smile.

He felt somewhat smug.

Liang Simiao was too cautious - if they had used forceful methods earlier, they would have obtained all the intelligence they wanted directly.

Why bother with all this trouble?

Not long after Zhang Yi drank the water, his eyes became dazed.

He shook his head forcefully, his eyelids seeming to weigh a thousand pounds as his body slumped weakly onto the sofa.

Li Tianyang stared at him, slowly asking: "Zhang Yi, tell me, where exactly is the Divine Source hidden?"

"At... at... I can't..."

"Answer me! Where exactly is the Divine Source hidden?"

Li Tianyang intensified his tone.

Zhang Yi's expression showed painful struggle.

After a long moment, he finally spoke intermittently:

"Somewhere... between Malai and Star Island."

Li Tianyang said in a deep voice: "Then why did you say it was in Mist Valley?"

"Because... Mist Valley is dangerous. I wanted to delay your discovery time."

"Specifically? Where exactly was it found?"

"Right between Malai and Star Island... in the sea... found it. The Divine Source... is in the sea."

Chapter 925: Communication Game between Regions

Li Tianyang obtained the intelligence he wanted and left Zhang Yi's room quite satisfied.

They didn't see the faintly mocking glint that flashed deep in Zhang Yi's eyes after they departed.

He couldn't quite understand why these people preferred hearing lies over the truth.

When he told them the actual location, they suspected deception.

Yet when he provided a vague, ambiguous place, they believed it was genuine.

What Zhang Yi didn't realize was that Li Tianyang's confidence stemmed entirely from the fact that Zhang Yi had been injected with Compound 3, which suppressed his superhuman abilities.

Under such conditions, consuming truth serum would guarantee one hundred percent honesty.

However, nobody knew that Zhang Yi could mentally connect to his Dimensional Space, allowing him to utilize it even with his abilities suppressed.

Over the past few days, he had appeared to accept all food delivered by the East Sea Region without refusal, but in reality, he had secretly transferred everything through the Dimensional Gate in his throat.

He actually consumed his meals covertly under his blankets during nighttime rest.

Even the truth serum Li Tianyang made him drink today—he hadn't swallowed a single drop.

Nevertheless, Zhang Yi felt extremely displeased about Li Tianyang's methods.

Resorting to truth serum tactics was truly despicable behavior.

"This feeling of being at someone's mercy—like fish on a chopping block—is utterly infuriating!"

Zhang Yi narrowed his eyes slightly.

"If only I were stronger, would they dare act so boldly?"

"Ultimately, it boils down to not being powerful enough. In this world, personal strength truly matters most, no matter the circumstances!"

A subtle shift occurred within Zhang Yi's mindset.

The East Sea Region.

Every humiliation they had inflicted during this visit would be repaid a hundredfold someday.

Naturally, this premise was that he would possess the capability to do so.

Zhang Yi held grudges quite fiercely.

...

After obtaining what he believed to be the "correct answer," Li Tianyang eagerly went to report to Li Guangxiao.

On his way, he encountered the bewildered Liang Simiao returning from his diversion.

Qu Liangshao had summoned Liang Simiao to another location earlier and engaged him in rambling, meaningless conversation for quite some time without addressing any substantive issues.

Only when he encountered Li Tianyang midway did he finally learn the truth.

Apparently, this had been Li Tianyang's deliberate tactic to sideline him.

"I used the simplest method—just forced truth serum down his throat. He confessed everything!"

Li Tianyang's face radiated smug satisfaction.

"I told you before, he's just a prisoner now! No need to waste effort on elaborate approaches. Direct force gets the job done."

Liang Simiao's expression transformed dramatically upon hearing this.

"Li Tianyang! Have you lost your mind?"

"You administered truth serum to the Jiangnan Region's investigation captain... Do you... do you realize what this implies?!"

A captain-level superhuman would inevitably possess access to core intelligence within their region.

Forcing truth serum upon them equated to probing another region's classified secrets.

This was precisely why Liang Simiao had never dared entertain such ideas.

Only a madman like Li Tianyang would employ such extreme measures.

Li Tianyang remained completely unfazed, smiling as he patted Liang Simiao's shoulder:

"Don't worry so much! The Jiangnan Region's capabilities are what they are. Right now, they need our military support more than we need theirs."

He clasped his hands behind his back, speaking calmly: "Besides, even if we don't intervene, do they realistically possess the strength to acquire the Divine Source on their own?"

With matters already reaching this point, Liang Simiao had little left to say.

He could only sigh deeply, "Very well then, report this intelligence to the commander immediately. Let him make the final decision!"

Li Tianyang departed triumphantly.

After some contemplation, Liang Simiao first returned to the intelligence department.

An investigator approached to brief him on a development.

"We've investigated the survivors who arrived with Chaos. One named Li Zongyu has been confirmed as the discoverer of the Divine Source."

"The location he described matches exactly what Chaos previously provided."

Liang Simiao frowned momentarily before his expression smoothed naturally.

"Someone of Chaos's caliber wouldn't leave such obvious loopholes. Whatever information comes from his mouth must have been prearranged by Chaos himself."

"Still, we should maintain vigilance. Compile this intelligence and forward it to the commander along with the other report."

Soon enough, Li Guangxiao received both reports submitted by Li Tianyang and Liang Simiao.

Both documents pointed toward the nation of Star Island.

Li Guangxiao leaned more toward trusting Li Tianyang's report.

He found it difficult to believe that Zhang Yi, stripped of his superhuman abilities, could possibly resist the truth serum's effects.

Modern interrogation drugs employed by the military far surpassed those from decades past.

Once administered, even the strongest willpower couldn't withstand their influence.

"Thus we can determine the Divine Source lies within the maritime region between Star Island and Malaya. Hmm... this presents rather troublesome complications!"

Li Guangxiao recognized this situation's complexity.

Malaya currently maintained close relations with the Columbus Ocean nation.

As for Star Island—it was merely a small nation of over ten million people.

Post-apocalypse, the country existed in name only, with minimal population surviving within its territories.

For the East Sea Region to bypass the Colombian Navy and access those waters to obtain the Divine Source would prove exceptionally challenging.

Li Tianyang offered his recommendation:

"We could deploy an elite unit via nuclear submarine to conduct thorough reconnaissance in those waters. Since an ordinary person discovered the Divine Source's existence, it must possess relatively identifiable characteristics."

Chief of Staff Qu Liangshao countered: "However, such action might expose our intentions. We cannot afford carelessness here. Considering potential detection by the Colombian Navy, we must prepare for every contingency."

He looked toward Li Guangxiao, speaking gravely: "We must remember that if we deploy forces to Star Island, we might face opposition beyond just the Colombian Navy."

"The most likely scenario involves encountering joint forces assembled by the Columbus Ocean nation. Engaging them directly with our current strength would be extremely risky."

Li Guangxiao regarded Qu Liangshao: "What's your suggestion then?"

Qu Liangshao responded: "Both we and the Jiangnan Region possess knowledge of the Divine Source. Now that we hold the initiative, we shouldn't overplay our hand."

"If we attempt to monopolize this, the Jiangnan Region might disclose everything, potentially creating a lose-lose situation."

"Therefore, we should return the Rose Squad and Chaos to reopen negotiations. If our two regions combine forces, we significantly improve our success probability!"

Chapter 926: Four Spirits

Qu Liangshao's suggestion clearly displeased Li Tianyang.

He snorted coldly and said, "Since we already know the location of the Divine Source, why should we share it with others! In my opinion, we should send our elite troops to sneak over and secure the Divine Source directly!"

"If absolutely necessary, we can deploy Xuanwu! He can completely avoid the Colombian Navy's sonar detection, moving without a trace."

"At worst, after we obtain the Divine Source, we can offer some compensation to the Jiangnan Region! By then, they'll have no choice but to agree."

Qu Liangshao shook his head and sighed, "That approach seems too risky. Our greatest enemy now is external forces. Why scheme so deeply against our own people?"

Li Tianyang sneered, "Even brothers keep clear accounts! There should be order and hierarchy within a family."

After listening to their argument, Li Guangxiao reached a decision.

"Enough, stop arguing."

He sat in his chair, rubbing the corner of the table with his right hand as he pondered for a long moment before making his decision.

"In three days, send the Rose Squad and Chaos's group back to the Jiangnan Region. Tell them we were protecting them for safety reasons."

"Additionally, as Minister Li suggested, send people via submarine to investigate the area between Malaya and Star Island. Prepare both options."

"As for Xuanwu, do not deploy him."

Xuanwu had completely transformed into a giant sea turtle, spending most of his time dormant on the ocean floor.

Each of his movements consumed enormous amounts of energy.

As the East Sea Region's trump card, Li Guangxiao would not easily deploy Xuanwu.

Li Tianyang and Qu Liangshao accepted their orders and went to arrange their respective tasks.

...

After Zhang Yi "woke up," he immediately flew into a rage, angrily demanding to see Li Guangxiao.

He punched the sofa, leaving a deep crater in it.

"You actually used interrogation tactics on me! This is utterly shameless! Completely despicable! Is this how a major region should behave?"

Faced with Zhang Yi's attitude, the guards could only pretend not to hear.

Liang Simiao and the intelligence department staff felt quite awkward.

Using such underhanded methods on their own people would have meant court-martial in the past.

As the East Sea Region's trump card, Li Guangxiao would not easily deploy Xuanwu.

For the next few days, Zhang Yi maintained an angry demeanor.

The intelligence personnel no longer came to question him.

They only provided him with all necessary daily supplies.

Three days passed in the blink of an eye.

Chief of Staff Qu Liangshao arrived with his team and opened Zhang Yi's door.

"Captain Chaos, I hope you've been resting well during your stay in our East Sea Region?"

Qu Liangshao asked with a smile.

Zhang Yi gave him a cold glance but didn't respond.

Qu Liangshao wasn't offended at all, smiling as he said, "We're here to send you back. Please get ready—our special train will depart shortly."

Zhang Yi rose from the sofa with an expressionless face and walked toward the door.

Soon, he was riding in a military vehicle to the East Sea City subway station.

Linghu Feixue and the Rose Squad members had already arrived.

In the adjacent carriage sat Old Tian and the other crew members and passengers from the ship.

Zhang Yi and Linghu Feixue exchanged glances, both their faces cold as ice, neither saying a word.

The East Sea Region personnel escorted them onto the special train.

As captains, both Zhang Yi and Linghu Feixue enjoyed separate luxury compartments.

Qu Liangshao smiled and said, "The effects of the medication will take about a week to wear off, so you'll need to rest for some time after returning."

Zhang Yi sat on the train seat and had already closed his eyes.

Qu Liangshao didn't mind at all. After counting the passengers and confirming no one was missing, he instructed the people beside him: "The escort mission is in your hands. You must safely deliver our honored guests to Blizzard City!"

"Don't worry, Chief of Staff. With us here, there won't be any problems."

As these words fell, several people entered the carriage.

But the moment they appeared, Zhang Yi's instincts triggered a strange sensation.

It was the instinctive reaction when powerful beings encounter each other.

He looked up and saw three people: two men and one woman.

One had long hair, a square face, and a robust build;

One was bald with somewhat pale skin and sharp, narrow phoenix eyes;

And a woman with long hair tinged with burgundy, exquisite features, standing with arms crossed.

Zhang Yi immediately realized these were all captain-level experts.

But it made sense—this escort mission was critically important.

If anything happened to Zhang Yi, Linghu Feixue, and the others en route, it could lead to complete rupture between the Jiangnan and East Sea Regions.

It might even potentially trigger war between them someday.

"Are you all investigation captains from the East Sea Region?"

Zhang Yi asked calmly.

The long-haired man shook his head.

"No, in our East Sea Region, we only have fleet commanders. I am Qinglong! They are Baihu and Zhuque."

Zhang Yi narrowed his eyes slightly.

The East Sea Region's four most famous experts were Qinglong, Baihu, Zhuque, and Xuanwu—the Four Spirits.

He had already met Xuanwu, an immensely powerful Epsilon-level expert.

So these three before him, while perhaps not as terrifying as Xuanwu, were definitely top-tier experts.

"The East Sea Region is being quite cautious, sending three of the Four Spirits fleet to escort us back!
Hah!"

Zhang Yi said with slight sarcasm.

Given his current situation, he should indeed display some anger.

The three weren't bothered by Zhang Yi's attitude.

They sat down opposite Zhang Yi.

Zhuque spoke, her voice clear like a lark's.

"No, this mission wasn't originally ours. We just all felt curious about you, so we wanted to meet you."

Baihu pulled a bottle of baijiu and four cups from his pocket, while Qinglong took out a food container with some peanuts and fish skin.

"The strongest expert of the Jiangnan Region—that title inevitably makes people curious. You could say we've admired your reputation for a long time!"

Qinglong said with a smile.

Baihu shrugged. "And we get to see the Jiangnan scenery while we're at it. Reasonable slacking off!"

Smiles appeared on all their faces.

Zhang Yi watched the three of them, unsure what these guys were up to.

But since they were here, he would play along with whatever they had planned.

If they wanted to drink, he would drink!

After all, he had ways to transfer the alcohol.

But soon he realized he was overthinking it.

These people had straightforward personalities. Their conversation mostly involved asking about life experiences and sharing their own stories from the apocalypse.

Perhaps at their level, they rarely encountered people worth opening up to.

After all, very few people qualified for them to communicate with.

Zhang Yi could somewhat sense their sentiment.

Throughout the Jiangnan Region, everyone who met Zhang Yi now regarded him with awe and reverence—how many dared to share drinks and casual conversation with him?

Last time he visited Blizzard City, he encountered Chen Xiaoxiao from Bacheng.

She had been excited to run over and catch up with him, but after approaching, her expression suddenly changed.

Zhang Yi clearly saw her bow and call out "Captain."

Chapter 927: Provocation

After Zhang Yi had chatted with the three of them for a while, he found their personalities quite straightforward and refreshing.

Unconsciously, he began opening up more in conversation.

However, he deliberately brought up the matter of the Divine Source.

Pretending to be casual, he raised his wine glass. "You've already obtained the intelligence about the Divine Source. I thought the East Sea Region would send you there! Surprisingly, you're here on escort duty instead."

"This is rather strange. Even if there is a Divine Source, logically it should be given to you first, right?"

Confused expressions appeared on their faces.

"Divine Source?"

"What is that thing?"

The three of them looked genuinely puzzled, not like they were pretending.

The key point was that since Zhang Yi had already disclosed everything, they had no reason to fake it now.

Zhang Yi smiled inwardly.

This was pretty much what he had expected.

Something as classified as the Divine Source wouldn't be easily known unless you were directly involved in the mission.

If he hadn't been tasked with going to the ocean back then, even Zhu Zheng wouldn't have told him.

He put on a surprised expression. "You really don't know? Seriously?"

Then he proceeded to explain everything about the Divine Source to all three of them.

"That thing, they say it can break through genetic limitations. Simply put, it can cause a second mutation in superhumans stuck at the Delta level, unlocking genetic restrictions and opening the door to Epsilon!"

As soon as these words were spoken, their expressions instantly changed.

Currently, these three were already top-tier superhumans in the East Sea Region.

However, within the Four Spirits, there still existed strict hierarchies.

The gap between them and Xuanwu was literally like heaven and earth.

Sometimes they even felt like they were just there to make up the numbers.

It was only because Xuanwu Meng Yingchuan requested that title that the other three were gathered to complete the set.

Not being Epsilon-level meant they stood almost no chance against a true Epsilon.

Even if all three of them combined their strength, they wouldn't be enough to take on Xuanwu alone.

Of course they hoped to break through their genetic limitations and become more powerful superhumans!

Zhang Yi downed his glass of wine, his eyes slightly unfocused as he spoke casually:

"Don't worry, good steel should be used on the blade's edge, not on the back. If the East Sea Region obtains the Divine Source, they'll definitely use it on one of you three. When that time comes, I'll have to congratulate that person!"

Zhang Yi's words stirred up complicated feelings within them.

Although none of them were fools and knew Zhang Yi was deliberately trying to sow discord.

But they couldn't deny that what Zhang Yi said was the truth.

If there was only one opportunity, who would be willing to give it up?

Just then, Zhang Yi murmured: "But it's hard to say for sure. If there really is such an opportunity, I believe there might be others besides you three who would want the Divine Source."

"The East Sea Region is full of talented people. While you three are the top experts, there might be others with comparable talent."

He chuckled: "To be honest, if I were Li Guangxiao, I'd definitely give that thing to someone closest to me. After all, in this apocalypse, you can only trust your own people."

Qinglong suddenly laughed loudly: "Brother Chaos, you're exaggerating a bit too much. Commander Li is completely selfless, focusing entirely on the peace and stability of the East Sea Region and the maritime defense of Huaxu Kingdom. He would definitely handle things impartially!"

Zhang Yi nodded: "Ah, right right right. I've had too much to drink, heh!"

He downed another glass of wine, noticing the subtle changes in their expressions.

Zhang Yi smiled inwardly.

It was quite satisfying to mess with the East Sea Region like this.

If in the future, the East Sea Region somehow obtained the Divine Source but didn't give it to these three, their unity would probably fall apart.

However—

Whenever he thought about the Divine Source, a cold glint flashed deep in Zhang Yi's eyes.

His original plan had been to hand over the intelligence to Zhu Zheng.

Facing the Colombian Ocean Fleet at sea, it would be difficult for the Jiangnan Region alone to obtain that thing.

Even though Zhang Yi possessed spatial abilities, his lifelong cautious nature made him unwilling to take reckless risks.

Spatial abilities weren't absolute.

His previous encounter with Cadillus had taught him that lesson.

Against a truly powerful expert with absolute strength, even he could be killed.

Therefore, Zhang Yi believed cooperation between the Jiangnan Region and East Sea Region was the best approach.

But instead, the East Sea Region had chosen underhanded methods and imprisoned Zhang Yi.

This made Zhang Yi extremely unhappy.

If given the opportunity, he would definitely strike back at the East Sea Region.

Zhang Yi knew when to stop and didn't continue the conversation further, having planted the seed in their minds.

About half a day later, they arrived at Blizzard City.

The three had come purely out of curiosity about Zhang Yi personally, taking this escort opportunity to get to know him without any other agenda. After delivering him, they returned.

The welcoming party for Zhang Yi and Rose Squad was much more elaborate.

For the first time, Zhu Zheng personally came to the station to receive someone.

Almost all high-ranking officials from the Operations Command Center were present, with heavy security surrounding the area.

As Zhang Yi got off the vehicle, Zhu Zheng immediately approached and firmly grasped both his hands.

"You've suffered during this time!"

Zhang Yi looked moved. "It wasn't hard. Serving the region!"

Linghu Feixue and the others also disembarked. Zhu Zheng arranged for Rose Squad members and Old Tian's group to be taken to reception areas for proper accommodation.

Linghu Feixue was handled by Tu Yunlie.

Clearly, compared to Zhang Yi, Linghu Feixue's status was considerably lower.

Zhu Zheng led Zhang Yi by hand to a vehicle heading toward the Operations Command Center.

The driver was none other than his chief bodyguard, Sun Luxuan.

With Sun Luxuan driving upfront, Zhu Zheng and Zhang Yi sat in the back.

Zhu Zheng asked solemnly: "Did you receive any improper treatment in the East Sea Region?"

Zhang Yi replied calmly: "They administered Compound 3, sealing my abilities. It will take about a week for the drug's effects to wear off. Right now, I'm just an ordinary person."

"Also, they made me drink truth serum. I told them the location of the Divine Source."

Zhu Zheng's face immediately darkened.

"That Li Guangxiao, how dare he pull this on me!"

Zhang Yi looked at Zhu Zheng: "What do you plan to do? I'm worried they might get there first."

Zhu Zheng frowned deeply.

"Right now your abilities are sealed, and we're lacking combat strength. This is a serious problem. The inhibitor's effect is too strong, and there's no way to counteract it."

"But don't worry, I won't let this matter rest! Heh, if the East Sea Region thinks they can keep everything for themselves, I won't allow it!"

Zhang Yi nodded. "I trust you have arrangements in place. But I'm too exhausted now and would like to go back for proper rest. Would that be alright?"

After speaking, Zhang Yi closed his eyes, appearing thoroughly fatigued.

Zhu Zheng looked at him with heartfelt concern.

Then Zhu Zheng let out a long sigh. "You've truly worked hard! You definitely deserve good rest. Don't worry, just stay in Blizzard City. No one can bother you here anymore. I'll provide you with the best recovery environment!"

Chapter 928: Subtle Changes in Blizzard City

Zhang Yi's journey this time had kept him drifting at sea for nearly five months.

During this period, he had experienced too many things and had brushed shoulders with death's danger.

If his luck had been slightly worse and he encountered Cadillus, he might have long been buried at sea!

Even a leader like Zhu Zheng couldn't make more demands of Zhang Yi.

He simply felt Zhang Yi was a good comrade.

Zhang Yi shook his head.

"I'm too exhausted. Right now, I just want to be with my family."

Zhu Zheng nodded: "That's understandable. What you need most now is your family's warmth. Very well, rest here for a day first, and tomorrow I'll have someone send you back."

"Additionally, for this mission, I can give you 2 billion points! You can freely exchange them for items."

Zhang Yi raised his eyelids: "Including Compound 3?"

After using that drug that could suppress superhumans once, he had set his sights on it.

That thing was too powerful.

If applied properly, it could play an extremely significant role.

Of course, trying to inject this drug into enemies during combat wasn't very realistic.

But there would always be opportunities to use it, wouldn't there?

Zhu Zheng smiled slightly, "That's a restricted drug. In principle, even team captain level personnel cannot obtain it unless for special operations."

He raised one finger: "But this time, I can make an exception for you! You can exchange for up to three doses of Compound 3."

Zhang Yi nodded.

The two arrived at Zhu Zheng's office, where Zhang Yi informed Zhu Zheng of the Divine Source's location.

By now, the East Sea Region had already begun sending people to Star Island.

After listening, Zhu Zheng fell into deep thought.

"Star Island... that place isn't very ideal! Currently, it's within the Colombian Navy's control range."

Zhang Yi shrugged: "Which sea area isn't?"

Except for Huaxu Kingdom's territorial waters, the ocean regions were basically controlled by the Colombian Navy.

Because the Ocean Fleet was blockading around Huaxu Kingdom's maritime territory.

To break through this chain, they would have to confront the Ocean Fleet head-on.

Zhu Zheng nodded: "This might not necessarily be a bad thing. At the very least... the East Sea Region won't have such an easy time obtaining it."

He planned to have a good talk with Li Guangxiao later.

The two chatted a bit more about what happened at sea.

Zhang Yi truthfully told Zhu Zheng everything.

One particular matter made Zhu Zheng extremely happy.

That through successive battles and absorbing the essence of both the Fin Dragon and Nirot, Zhang Yi's superhuman ability index had significantly increased again.

According to Zhang Yi's estimate, it should be around [9800] points.

"Excellent, excellent, this is truly wonderful news! Hahaha, our Jiangnan Region will soon have our own Epsilon!"

Zhu Zheng laughed heartily.

He walked over, patted Zhang Yi's shoulder, and looked at him with paternal warmth.

"Zhang Yi, you are the Jiangnan Region's key cultivation target! I will devote all resources to help you level up as quickly as possible!"

Zhang Yi shook his head: "Currently, it seems only superhumans or creatures at team captain level or above, or that so-called Divine Source can help me. Other things... are unlikely to have much effect."

Zhu Zheng pondered for a moment, slightly frowning: "This is indeed a problem. But rest assured, whenever a suitable opportunity arises, you will be the prime candidate!"

Zhang Yi nodded without overthinking it.

When leaders make grand promises, you just accept them politely but don't take them too seriously.

Then he brought up Zhu Yunque's matter.

"Ms. Zhu performed quite well at sea, consistently cooperating with my work throughout."

"It's just that she worked too hard and accidentally got captured by villains, then suffered some abuse."

Zhang Yi looked at Zhu Zheng: "I'm somewhat concerned about her physical condition."

Zhu Zheng frowned; he still valued this niece of his greatly.

Zhang Yi knew how to phrase things diplomatically, giving him plenty of face to facilitate Zhu Yunque's resume enhancement.

However, Zhu Yunque's capture did worry him somewhat.

But this matter couldn't possibly be blamed on Zhang Yi.

Under those conditions, probably no one in the entire Jiangnan Region except Zhang Yi could have emerged unscathed.

At the very least, Zhu Yunque was still alive and hadn't lost any limbs.

"You've done your best. It's good that she's still alive."

Zhang Yi nodded, thinking to himself: Now that I've ensured her safe return, you can't find fault with me.

After exchanging a few more casual words, Zhang Yi stood up to take his leave.

He knew Zhu Zheng still had many matters to attend to.

For example, he still needed to communicate with the East Sea Region.

Since his work report was complete, he wouldn't take up more of Zhu Zheng's time.

As Zhang Yi left Zhu Zheng's office, everyone he encountered along the way treated him with extreme respect.

Zhang Yi smiled and nodded in acknowledgment.

But gradually, he noticed a somewhat strange phenomenon.

In the new Operations Command Center building, the number of superhumans seemed to have increased significantly.

There had been quite a few superhumans before, but now there were at least twice as many!

He raised an eyebrow and muttered to himself: "Maybe Old Zhu got scared by the assassination attempts and strengthened security."

Going downstairs, he saw Tu Yunlie walking down the corridor.

Zhang Yi greeted him, "Minister Tu, long time no see!"

Tu Yunlie immediately frowned.

"Chaos, during work hours please use codenames. Call me Zhurong!"

Zhang Yi rubbed his nose, "Minister Zhu, long time no see."

Tu Yunlie found it awkward but didn't correct him.

"I heard you were injected with Compound 3. You'd better be careful during this period and not leave your residence casually."

Zhang Yi smiled and nodded: "Thank you for your concern."

He looked around but didn't see Linghu Feixue, so he couldn't help asking: "Where's Moon Palace?"

Tu Yunlie said gruffly: "She failed her mission and was captured. According to military management regulations, she needs to be confined for a week!"

Zhang Yi's heart sank slightly.

"Being captured by the East Sea Region counts as capture?"

Tu Yunlie said: "Fortunately she was captured by the East Sea Region. If she had fallen into the Colombians' hands, it wouldn't be just a week of confinement!"

"Our attitude toward captives has always been this strict."

Zhang Yi lowered his eyelids and said quietly: "By that reasoning, I count as one too."

"No, you're different. You brought back important intelligence, and besides..."

Tu Yunlie stared at Zhang Yi: "You're Commander Zhu's lifesaver."

These words seemed to explain many things.

A playful smile appeared at the corner of Zhang Yi's mouth, but he didn't probe further.

He waved goodbye to Tu Yunlie and left the Operations Command Center, planning to find Baili Changqing to learn about any changes that might have occurred in the Jiangnan Region during his five-month absence.

At the same time, he sent a message to Liang Yue, asking her to come to Blizzard City to pick him up.

Chapter 929: Population Increase

Zhang Yi left the Operations Command Center, and Zhu Zheng arranged a car for him.

He called Baili Changqing and learned that Baili Changqing was currently training.

Upon hearing that Zhang Yi wanted to meet him, Baili Changqing immediately said he would come right away.

The two met at their usual spot, Cipher Bar.

Just over half an hour later, they were in a private room at Cipher Bar.

However, this time, Zhang Yi also experienced the treatment Gao Changkong had received before.

Complimentary drinks, plus a VVVIP-level membership card.

At this moment, he was clearly the biggest celebrity in Blizzard City.

Zhang Yi didn't feel particularly strongly about this - fame comes quickly but fades just as fast.

Still, he had to admit it felt pretty good to enjoy the perks.

When he met Baili Changqing, the man knew the protocol and first asked Zhang Yi if he could talk about what he'd been doing recently.

Zhang Yi said casually, "Went out to sea. Telling you the specific mission details wouldn't be useful anyway."

This was true.

The Divine Source held little significance for Baili Changqing as a deputy captain.

Even if obtained, it wouldn't be used on him.

"Tell me if anything interesting has happened in the Jiangnan Region recently."

Zhang Yi clinked glasses with Baili Changqing and drank half a martini.

"You've been gone way too long!"

Baili Changqing took a deep breath, seeming quite emotional.

"While you were away, we didn't get any complex missions - spent most of our time training in Blizzard City."

"However, there is one thing that's had quite an impact."

He rubbed his chin.

"Recently, Blizzard City started large-scale recruitment, bringing in large numbers of survivors from outside. The population here has already reached 3 million!"

Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow. "They solved the resource problem?"

Without sufficient resources, it would be impossible to sustain such a large population.

Food and energy were the two core issues.

Baili Changqing said, "There have been improvements in that area, thanks to the Deng Group and the Research Department."

"Anyway, you can see new people entering the city every day now. Even the number of superhumans has increased!"

He spread his hands: "This is the normal development pattern in the apocalypse. After the chaotic period, regions inevitably stabilize."

"Slowly, humans will adapt to the apocalypse, survive, and eventually grow stronger."

Zhang Yi nodded: "That's good news."

"Everything else is pretty much the same, nothing particularly unusual."

Baili Changqing said.

Zhang Yi understood the current situation but didn't gain much more insight.

However, Baili Changqing's words made him curious about Blizzard City's current state.

Five months was enough time for earth-shaking changes to occur in Blizzard City.

It was even possible that more powerful superhumans had emerged.

After all, he wasn't the only one making progress - everyone else was working hard too.

And there might be new, powerful superhumans appearing.

Zhang Yi checked his watch. There was still some time before Liang Yue would arrive in Blizzard City, so he picked up a bottle of alcohol and asked Baili Changqing to drive him around the city.

Baili Changqing nodded, and the two left the bar.

Baili Changqing drove while Zhang Yi sat in the passenger seat, window open, letting the icy cold wind blow against his combat suit.

The strong liquor warmed his throat, keeping his body cozy.

Baili Changqing drove Zhang Yi around Blizzard City.

Indeed, the population had grown significantly.

Compared to the previous desolation, the place now bustled with activity.

When they reached the buildings in Zone E, Zhang Yi happened to see a group of ragged survivors who had just been brought there by soldiers.

But abruptly, Zhang Yi spotted a flash of red light that instantly made his drowsy eyes snap open.

The survivors were lining up to receive some fruits from a staff member.

Red fruits, blood-red.

"Isn't this... the blood vine's fruit?"

Zhang Yi's gaze sharpened.

But Baili Changqing said quite naturally, "Yeah, although the original blood vine was destroyed, we managed to salvage some root sections and brought them back."

"Unexpectedly, the Research Department used technical means to cultivate it into a new type of food crop."

Zhang Yi glanced at Baili Changqing: "That plant is toxic."

Baili Changqing chuckled: "Don't underestimate the professionals' methods! That issue was dealt with long ago."

"What about the blood vine's energy source? I remember the original blood vine used corpses to obtain energy and bear fruit."

Baili Changqing rubbed his nose.

"Well... Zhang Yi, you have to understand that our top priority right now is keeping more people alive. So..."

He gave Zhang Yi a meaningful look.

Zhang Yi immediately understood.

They couldn't bear cannibalism.

But if they used deceased bodies as fertilizer to produce food, that was more acceptable.

Most importantly, it also avoided prion infection.

"Fair enough, but I'm not eating it."

Zhang Yi said.

"I don't eat it either. This stuff is only provided to survivors who recently joined Blizzard City, the people in Zone E."

Baili Changqing said casually.

Suddenly, Zhang Yi's communication device transmitted Liang Yue's voice.

"Zhang Yi, I've arrived at Blizzard City. Where are you?"

Zhang Yi smiled slightly, "Wait at the subway station for a bit. I'll be right there."

Zhang Yi looked at Baili Changqing: "Let's go, take me to the subway station."

Baili Changqing asked, "Not staying in Blizzard City a while longer? Your friend really enjoys coming here. Honestly, the service industry here is booming now. And many of the workers are former celebrities!"

He said with a suggestive expression: "After all, that's about all the value they can provide now."

Blizzard City had too many people - they couldn't expect everyone to remain celibate.

Thus, this oldest profession still needed practitioners.

Only now, this industry had become openly accepted. Everyone was just trying to survive, which was understandable.

"I don't need it."

Zhang Yi waved his hand.

He usually got carsick and didn't like buses. Private cars suited him better.

Baili Changqing pursed his lips: "If you change your mind next time, come find me. I'll show you around."

Zhang Yi laughed heartily: "You keep that for yourself!"

The two shared a smile that men understood, and Baili Changqing stepped on the gas, driving toward the subway station.

Soon after, Zhang Yi arrived at the subway station.

Liang Yue stood on the steps waiting for him, wearing a silver-gray combat suit with Dragon's Roar held in her arms.

As soon as she saw Zhang Yi, she quickly walked over. Though her tone remained somewhat cool, her eyes clearly showed unconcealable worry.

"Weren't you supposed to return quickly? Why were you gone so long? And why couldn't we contact you? Do you have any idea how worried we've been!"

"Had a little unexpected situation. I'll explain everything in detail when we get back."

Zhang Yi smiled and put his arm around her shoulders, waving goodbye to Baili Changqing with his other hand before guiding her into the subway station.

Chapter 930: Resting for a While

Zhang Yi and Liang Yue boarded the subway, leaving Blizzard City to return to Tianhai City.

As for the other people on the ship, they remained in Blizzard City.

They were all involved in this secret mission, so they needed to undergo questioning by Blizzard City authorities.

Zhang Yi had already leaked the secret of the Divine Source to the East Sea Region, so other matters were no longer important to him.

Blizzard City was just following standard procedure, and he had no objections.

But this time during the return trip, he was unusually silent.

He sat with his arms crossed the entire time, quietly sitting on the seat, his eyes devoid of any light, as if lost in deep thought.

Seeing this, Liang Yue slightly furrowed her brows.

She concernedly sat down next to Zhang Yi, lightly coughed once, and asked: "Did something troublesome happen?"

Zhang Yi raised his head and glanced at her, his expression indifferent without any fluctuation.

"It's not really that..."

He let out a long sigh, wanting to say something, but didn't know what would be best to say.

For a long time, he had considered himself a laid-back person who never liked competing with others for anything.

As long as he could live a happy and stable life, that was enough.

But this sea voyage had created significant turbulence deep within his heart.

Those without sufficient strength cannot establish themselves in this cruel world.

The words sound nice.

The East Sea Region is an ally, and Zhu Zheng had previously promised Li Guangxiao that even if they shared the Divine Source intelligence with them, it wouldn't matter.

But that feeling still left Zhang Yi somewhat uncomfortable.

Especially after experiencing the incident where Li Tianyang forced him to drink the truth serum, it made him feel humiliated in his heart.

And all of this was simply because he wasn't strong enough.

That's all there was to it.

"Perhaps I really need to change my way of living," Zhang Yi murmured to himself.

Liang Yue blinked her eyes and curiously pressed further: "What kind of lifestyle do you want to change to?"

Zhang Yi smiled and shook his head: "I don't know either. Maybe I'll gradually understand!"

Since they were still on the train, Zhang Yi wouldn't casually reveal his inner thoughts.

Because this train definitely had monitoring equipment installed, keeping quietly silent was the best choice.

Zhang Yi closed his eyes and stopped speaking.

Liang Yue had no choice but to do the same.

Before long, the two returned to Tianhai City and arrived at the long-unseen Xiaomiaoshan Subway Station.

The two walked out of the subway.

Zhang Yi felt the discomfort of his superhuman abilities being suppressed within his body.

But fortunately, his Dimensional Space could still be summoned.

Zhang Yi took out a snow vehicle and returned to the shelter with Liang Yue.

After Zhang Yi returned home, everyone was waiting for his return with slight concern.

Only when they saw he was safe and sound did everyone finally breathe a long sigh of relief.

"Brother Zhang Yi, how did you suddenly lose contact?"

Yang Xinxin walked over, asking with a worried expression: "Did something unexpected happen outside?"

Zhang Yi sighed.

"It's too complicated to explain!"

He returned to the room, changed out of his combat suit, put on casual clothes, then sat cross-legged barefoot on the sofa. While drinking the hot coffee Yang Siya poured for him, he told them about his recent experiences.

When they learned that Zhang Yi had successively battled the Tianlong Pirate Crew, encountered the Columbus Ocean Navy's Epsilon-level superhuman, and was finally taken away by the East Sea Region for interrogation,

Everyone felt both retrospective fear and anger!

"This is simply too much! Zhang Yi, you're a hero who brought back extremely important intelligence. How could they treat you like this!"

Even veteran Old You felt ashamed of the East Sea Region's actions.

"They actually imprisoned you and forced you to take truth serum. This is absolutely a major crime that should be brought before a military tribunal!"

Hearing this, Zhang Yi smiled dismissively.

"The times have long changed. The six major regions each have extremely large jurisdictions. For something like the Divine Source, it's worth them doing this."

Now that the mission was over, Zhang Yi no longer hid the existence of the Divine Source from everyone, discussing it very casually.

Fatty Xu held his large face and let out a long sigh.

"This is really frustrating! The most crucial thing is, now that the East Sea Region has obtained the Divine Source intelligence, they must have already taken the lead!"

These words indeed made everyone feel indignant.

Zhang Yi worked hard for five months at sea to finally bring back the Divine Source intelligence.

Yet the East Sea Region ended up reaping the benefits.

But Zhang Yi just smiled faintly: "You can't really say that. If the East Sea Region hadn't pinned down the main forces of the Columbus Ocean Navy on the front lines, I probably wouldn't have been able to bring everyone back from the sea."

"And," he interlocked his fingers, his gaze becoming profound, "I gave them misleading information, enough to delay them for some time."

"Trying to cross the Columbus Ocean Navy's blockade and find the Divine Source right under their noses—how could that be simple!"

Old You swallowed hard, seeming to want to say something but hesitating.

However, after looking at the others in the room, he lowered his head and suppressed his thoughts.

Actually, it wasn't just him—many people in the room had similar thoughts.

Zhang Yi's current superhuman ability index was around 9,800 points.

It was absolutely certain that he would eventually reach Epsilon-level combat power.

But what about the others?

The gap between them and Zhang Yi would only grow wider.

But if they could obtain the Divine Source, perhaps they all would have a chance to make breakthroughs.

Even Hua Hua jumped onto Zhang Yi's lap, looking up at him with eager eyes full of longing.

Zhang Yi smiled and reached out to stroke its head.

"This matter won't end so easily. The East Sea Region wanting to obtain the Divine Source definitely won't be that simple either!"

Something unusual stirred within his eyes.

...

Several days later, Old Tian and Li Zongyu's group were sent back.

Zhang Yi had already given the most critical intelligence to Zhu Zheng. The others were just undergoing routine investigations, and actually couldn't provide much more useful information.

Zhu Zheng kept his promise and sent the people back to increase Tianhai City's population.

Naturally, Yang Xinxin took responsibility for arranging everything, which was handled without any issues.

Zhou Ke'er was responsible for receiving the people.

When meeting Old Tian, Zhou Ke'er asked, "Do you know how Zhu Yunque is doing now?"

Hearing this, Old Tian showed a strange expression on his face.

He scratched his messy hair, "When we were in the East Sea Region before, we lived not far from her. According to medical staff, it seems there's something wrong with her mind."

Old Tian pointed to his temple: "Here, because she was hit by high-voltage electricity, she's now acting completely crazy."

Zhou Ke'er sighed softly in her heart.

If Zhu Yunque hadn't been so troublesome and had left a better impression on Zhang Yi, none of this would have happened today.

Because in that case, Zhang Yi would definitely have gone back to rescue her immediately after sending Zhou Ke'er back.

But at this point, who could they blame?

They could only blame her for not being sensible enough.