

Ice Age 931

Chapter 931: Recall

During this week that Zhang Yi spent recuperating at home, none of the various factions remained idle.

Zhu Zheng urgently recalled all field investigation teams from the entire Jiangnan Region.

Any urgent mission became less pressing when compared to the key item [Divine Source] that could enable someone to advance to Epsilon-level.

On this day, a figure draped in tattered robes with disheveled hair and a grimy face appeared before Blizzard City's massive thirty-meter-high walls.

Through long eyelashes, a deeply emotional gaze fell upon the seemingly impregnable walls, then transformed into a profound sigh.

He walked up to the city gates.

Beneath the enormous main gate was a smaller door large enough for one person to pass through.

Before he could even approach, a robotic voice issued a warning.

"Halt! Please verify your identity information!"

The man thought for a moment, then pulled out a golden card from his pocket and held it up.

Soon, the robot completed its identification of the visitor.

"Celestial Squad Captain, Deng Shentong, codename [Erlang Shen]."

The city guards could hardly believe their eyes.

The once lofty, arrogant investigation captain, the noble young master of Jiangnan, now dressed like a beggar.

But the robot's verification couldn't be wrong, so they hurriedly opened the gate and went to welcome him.

Deng Shentong had been away from Blizzard City for several months.

He hadn't brought any subordinates nor reported his whereabouts to the Deng Family.

He went alone to train in the most dangerous areas of the Jiangnan Region.

For the first time in his life, he truly understood the brutality of the apocalypse.

Traveling alone through the vast icy wilderness, he faced death multiple times.

In the most ridiculous instance, while resting in a cave, he was nearly killed by a Beta-level venomous snake.

If not for carrying antidote with him, he might have become the captain with the most absurd death in Jiangnan Region.

He never expected cold-blooded creatures to be active during this cold season.

But he quickly realized the key issue—the Great Mutation Era had arrived, and this world could no longer be understood through past logic.

Dangers lurked everywhere outside.

Traveling alone felt like walking on thin ice; no matter how powerful one was, there was no guarantee of absolute invincibility.

This instilled a sense of fear in his heart.

He also quickly understood why superhumans like Zhang Yi existed.

Months of arduous training had profoundly changed his mindset and completely transformed his combat methods and philosophy.

In life-or-death battles, victory rarely depended solely on personal strength.

Strategy, environment, and even luck were all critical factors.

Just like in the arena, even without sharp teeth or claws, an adult wild buffalo could use its brute strength and horns to kill lions or tigers.

Deng Shentong smiled and greeted the city guards when he saw them.

His unexpectedly friendly attitude made the guards somewhat uncomfortable.

The guard leader promptly arranged for a vehicle to transport Deng Shentong into the city.

Deng Shentong didn't refuse; he needed to go to the new Operations Command Center first to meet Zhu Zheng.

After Deng Shentong left, the guard leader suddenly remarked with emotion.

"That makes the fourth one. All the field captains have now returned!"

...

Over at the East Sea Region.

Following Li Guangxiao's orders, Li Tianyang dispatched an elite investigation team to the waters between Star Island and Malaya to investigate the Divine Source.

The ridiculous part was that they didn't believe the actual destination Zhang Yi had plainly provided them, instead falling for the diversion tactic.

Naturally, they found nothing.

Since the area was close to Malaya, their submarines didn't dare surface.

Thus, their investigation couldn't be sustained for long.

Li Tianyang believed it was understandable that they hadn't gotten results yet simply because the sea area was vast.

He didn't doubt Zhang Yi's later statements at all.

After all, Zhang Yi had no special abilities at that time and had consumed a truth serum dose no human could possibly resist.

Meanwhile.

At the Tianlong Pirate Crew.

The Dragon King had his Mirage Dragon avatar shattered by the combined efforts of Zhang Yi and Linghu Feixue, and lost his most capable subordinate, 1st Squadron Commander Nirot.

This enraged the Dragon King to the extreme.

Before dying, Nirot had relayed information obtained from Zhu Yunque.

Although she didn't know the exact location of the Divine Source, Zhu Yunque vaguely knew that something very important was located where Li Zongyu had been.

Combined with Li Zongyu's identity as a teacher at Star Island's elite school.

This made the Dragon King realize that the Divine Source was likely on Star Island.

Although Star Island was small, it was still a country.

Finding an energy source across an entire nation was extremely difficult.

But for the Dragon King, the Divine Source was something he absolutely had to obtain!

Because he had lost too much and now faced a massive crisis of power.

When encountering supreme forces like Columbus Ocean or Huaxu Kingdom, he could only submit to their mercy.

To change this situation, he had to break through his limitations and advance to become an Epsilon-level superhuman!

Once he succeeded, even the supreme powers would change their attitude toward him.

Therefore, the Dragon King also gathered a group of elite subordinates and began planning how to advance toward Star Island.

...

While storms were gathering outside, what was Zhang Yi doing?

Compound 3 had a one-week delayed release period.

During this time, he stayed home, playing with his cat and walking his dog.

That's right, there was now a dog in his home.

The dog was actually kept by Xing Tian's goddaughter Zhou Lingling, but it was currently at Zhang Yi's place.

After biological mutation, creatures seemed to become smarter than usual.

Hua Hua's intelligence was no less than a human's, while Le Le seemed a bit slower but could already understand human language.

Lu Keran created a translation set for them.

Essentially devices that received their brainwaves and converted them into language.

Thus, both Hua Hua and Le Le now wore black scarf-like translation devices around their necks.

Hua Hua remained lazy as ever, stretching out on the rug in front of the burning fireplace.

Le Le was a big dog, only Gamma-level in ability, far inferior to Hua Hua.

Therefore, it clearly understood its place in the household and tried hard to please everyone.

Zhang Yi sat on the sofa with Le Le lying at his feet as a footrest.

"Le Le, your name sounds a bit too childish. I don't think it sounds imposing enough for times like these. How about changing your name to Black Panther?"

"Woof! Woof!"

Le Le barked twice but kept shaking its big head side to side, clearly dissatisfied with this name.

"My name is Le Le. This is the name my owner gave me. Whether you like it or not, I'm Le Le."

Zhang Yi rested his chin on the back of his hand. "But when we go out to fight later, I'm afraid our opponents might die laughing when you introduce yourself."

Chapter 932: I Will Operate Like a Lone Wolf

No matter how Zhang Yi argued, Lele refused to change its name.

Dogs may be a bit less intelligent than humans, but their loyalty is something people cannot match.

Zhou Lingling was its owner, so when Zhou Lingling called it Lele, it recognized only that name.

Even though Zhang Yi was powerful enough to intimidate it, basic principles couldn't be abandoned.

Zhang Yi smiled and nudged its big head with his foot.

This thing really was enormous, and unlike Hua Hua it couldn't transform.

So normally it just lay there in the room, looking like an oversized black plush toy, and it even provided its own warmth. To be honest, it was kind of amusing.

Just at that moment, Zhang Yi's satellite phone rang.

He picked it up and saw that the call was a video from Zhu Zheng.

A playful glint passed through his eyes.

A week had already gone by, and his ability had completely returned to normal.

Zhu Zheng's reason for calling was naturally about the Divine Source operation on Star Island.

Zhang Yi knew that the East Sea Region had wasted too much time in the wrong place and had only slowly realized their mistake afterward.

But it was obvious that if they tried to monopolize things, it would be extremely difficult.

No one could be certain because of the Colombian Navy's movements.

Zhang Yi connected the call, and Zhu Zheng's face, which always looked kindly toward him, appeared on the screen.

"Zhang Yi, how have you been resting lately? Is your health better? Any lingering effects?"

Zhang Yi said calmly, "I think there are. Lately I feel weak all over, can't summon energy for anything, just want to lie at home."

The moment Zhu Zheng heard that, he knew Zhang Yi was fine.

He laughed and said, "Since your health has recovered, hurry over to Blizzard City! We're waiting for you now."

The investigation team leaders in Blizzard City had already returned; they were just waiting for Zhang Yi to come back to hold a combat meeting and decide the next course of action.

When he heard the words "combat meeting," Zhang Yi, for some reason, suddenly sneezed and felt a chill run down his spine.

He frowned and asked, "The East Sea Region didn't succeed? It's already too late for us to set out. And without their assistance, we simply can't break through the Colombian Navy's blockade."

Zhu Zheng said with a smile, "This time, even heaven is on our side! Most of Star Island, especially the areas around Mist Valley, have been shrouded in a mysterious massive fog!"

"The coverage exceeds six cities — over twenty thousand square kilometers! More than half the territory is shrouded in fog."

"This fog can't be penetrated by satellite detection and it's highly toxic. To explore it, you have to rely on primitive methods."

"So the East Sea Region hasn't found a good approach in the short term."

"Hehe, they brought this on themselves. They wasted time there and made noise, which drew the Colombian Navy's attention."

"So this time they actively approached us for cooperation, proposing to form a joint armed force to enter Star Island and search for the Divine Source."

Zhang Yi heard the news without surprise.

"Mist Valley has always been a dangerous area shrouded in miasma. Now that there's a Divine Source, any changes are unsurprising."

"But working with the East Sea Region? Heh."

Zhang Yi sneered, disdain written all over his face, with a flash of disgust deep in his eyes.

Zhu Zheng understood that Zhang Yi still resented the East Sea Region for their disrespectful behavior toward him.

He quickly soothed him, "Zhang Yi, these are extraordinary times. I know the East Sea Region offended you. But right now, cooperating with them is our best option."

"If you really want revenge, the only way is to make yourself stronger!"

"Trust me — people meet again. When you are strong enough, sooner or later they will come begging. That will be your chance for revenge. Not now."

"Because right now we truly aren't as strong as they are."

Zhang Yi was silent for a moment, then let out a long sigh.

"I understand. I'll head to Blizzard City immediately and follow headquarters' arrangements."

Zhu Zheng nodded with relief, "That's the right attitude. When you're out in the world, dignity is earned by yourself; sulking over slights achieves nothing."

After they ended the call, the anger and unwillingness on Zhang Yi's face vanished instantly.

"East Sea Region? This time I have plenty of time. I can play with them properly."

He looked at Hua Hua on the sofa and Lele on the rug and raised an eyebrow.

"It's time to leave!"

Zhang Yi said goodbye to everyone at home.

This time he didn't take anyone with him; he only brought a cat and a dog.

No one at home objected.

Lu Keran delivered equipment to Zhang Yi.

Zhang Yi checked everything carefully — every detail on the brand-new combat suit was inspected.

This combat suit was so well-armed that calling it armed to the teeth understated it; it was armed down to every thread.

"It's time to make the trip!"

Zhang Yi said his farewells to everyone at home, took Hua Hua and got into the car.

As for Lele, because of its enormous size, it could only run alongside.

That posed no problem — it could run through the snow like a gale.

Watching Zhang Yi drive off, the people at home displayed varied expressions.

Liang Yue's eyes looked a little lonely, but she quickly let it go.

Zhang Yi not bringing her along was clearly a deliberate decision.

Besides, the battle for the Divine Source was a major mission. Even captains would likely be mobilized en masse.

Even if she went, she would be taking a huge risk.

If she felt that way, others would be in even greater danger.

Yang Xinxin's eyes, however, showed a near-mad excitement.

"This time, brother, give them a real surprise!"

...

Zhang Yi, with Hua Hua and Lele, arrived at the Jiangnan Region.

There was no time to rest; Bai Li Changqing came to greet him immediately.

After all, Zhang Yi was officially the commander of the Celestial Hound Squad, and Bai Li Changqing and the others were his subordinates.

"Commander, you're here! Zhu Shuai asked you to come to the Operations Command Center. Once you arrive they'll immediately open a high-level meeting. All the investigation team leaders will attend!"

Zhang Yi nodded. "Mm, I know."

Bai Li Changqing looked at Zhang Yi with some surprise since he didn't see Liang Yue, Yang Xinxin, Zhou Ke'er, or the others.

He only saw a huge dog and the black tabby cat perched on its head.

"You didn't bring anyone this time?"

Bai Li Changqing asked curiously.

Zhang Yi said lightly, "Bringing many people this time is meaningless."

Headquarters can send more people as needed.

Searching for the Divine Source requires a large number of personnel and must be done in primitive ways.

But Zhang Yi would not let people close to him take such risks.

Chapter 933: Operation Star Island Combat Meeting

Baili Changqing didn't feel it appropriate to ask further. He wasn't privy to the details about the Divine Source, but judging by the current situation in Blizzard City, something major was clearly about to happen.

It was worth noting that even when the Moon of Corrosion had given the Jiangnan Region headaches previously, they hadn't recalled all investigation teams on such a massive scale.

Baili Changqing drove Zhang Yi to the Operations Command Center.

As he entered the main hall, he brushed past someone wearing a thick military overcoat.

Both men instinctively glanced at each other.

The man wore a white mask that concealed his features, his tall stature completely enveloped by the dark brown military coat.

Zhang Yi caught an extremely intense scent of blood from him.

Baili Changqing hurried over and said, "Captain, that's the leader of the Ironblood Squad, [Lilong]."

Baili Changqing's expression showed clear wariness toward the man, appearing unwilling to get too close.

However, upon hearing their conversation, Lilong seemed to recognize who Zhang Yi was.

He touched the brim of his hat and nodded toward Zhang Yi. "So you're the leader of the Celestial Hound Squad, [Chaos]? I've heard much about you."

His voice sounded as raspy as if it were coming from a rusted paint can.

Zhang Yi nodded. "Mr. Lilong, pleased to meet you!"

Before they could converse further, a beautiful black-haired woman in professional attire approached and said with a smile, "Captain Chaos, Captain Lilong, everyone else has already arrived. Please come to the conference room!"

Zhang Yi nodded and followed the black-haired woman.

As just the deputy captain, Baili Changqing wasn't qualified to attend this high-level meeting, so he remained waiting below.

However, as they passed near the reception area, Zhang Yi heard a somewhat familiar voice seemingly arguing with someone.

He couldn't help but glance in that direction.

It turned out to be an officer applying for operational funds, but for some reason, he was arguing with the clerical staff handling the matter.

"We're all working for the region! Do you have to make things so difficult? We risk our lives on missions every day, and you're holding things up over a few typos!"

"You're simply going too far! I'm going to report you to higher authorities!"

But the woman in the gray uniform, with her peculiar expression, showed an eerie smile.

She tilted her head. "Go ahead and report me if you want! You don't actually think I'd be scared, do you? I'm much more shameless than you can imagine!"

"What a troublemaker."

Zhang Yi was slightly taken aback.

He hadn't expected that Zhu Yunque had ended up working as a receptionist clerk at the command center.

But judging by her appearance, it made people somewhat concerned about her mental state.

If Zhang Yi didn't know she had suffered severe trauma from falling into pirate hands, he might have thought Zhu Yunque was on drugs.

In this condition, Zhu Yunque clearly no longer met Zhu Zheng's standards for cultivating trusted aides. Being placed in such a position likely meant she had been essentially discarded.

Now, she could only get through her days by making things difficult for others.

After all, as a relative placed there by leadership, others couldn't really confront her too directly.

Finally, Zhang Yi watched as the Yan Yun Guard officer left in anger.

He shrugged.

"How unpredictable life can be!"

Zhang Yi and Lilong took the elevator up together.

Soon, they arrived at the conference room.

Most of those seated here were familiar faces.

Tu Yunlie, Deng Shentong, Deng Yuanbo, Zhu Zheng, and others were all present.

Like him, Linghu Feixue had also appeared at the scene after the effects of Compound 3 had worn off.

Despite the shame of having been captured, the Jiangnan Region was currently in need of personnel, allowing her to atone for her mistakes through merit.

However, there were two faces that were completely unfamiliar to Zhang Yi.

Not far from Deng Shentong sat someone with white hair and a cold, aloof expression, yet he wasn't particularly intimidating.

This was because he was quite handsome and appeared to be only sixteen or seventeen years old—he looked every bit like a middle school student.

Across from him sat a dignified woman with gray hair, dressed entirely in black combat gear, with her eyes covered by a black cloth.

Zhang Yi couldn't help but feel puzzled.

One of these two must be the captain of the Demon Squad.

But who was the other person?

While Zhang Yi was observing everyone, they were also sizing him up.

The current Zhang Yi was officially recognized as the strongest in the Jiangnan Region.

Although a superhuman's strength isn't absolutely tied to their ability index, Zhang Yi had saved Zhu Zheng's life and directly repelled Gao Changkong, making him the most acknowledged top expert.

Whether the various captains present shared this view was another matter entirely.

But as they say, fame attracts attention, and it was only natural that Zhang Yi would be scrutinized.

Seeing Zhang Yi, Zhu Zheng said with a smile, "Chaos, and Lilong, please come take your seats! We've been waiting for you."

Strictly speaking, the meeting had mainly been waiting for Zhang Yi.

Zhang Yi's seat was to Zhu Zheng's left, the position closest to him.

After Zhang Yi was seated, Zhu Zheng first introduced the two newcomers.

The handsome white-haired youth was the captain of the Demon Squad, codenamed [Taotie].

The mysterious woman with the black eye patch was the captain of a newly formed team—[Night Crow Squad]—her codename was [Jingwei].

"A newly formed squad? They discovered new captain-level talent this quickly?"

Zhang Yi suddenly realized that during the five months he'd been away from the Jiangnan Region, this place had undergone tremendous changes.

Things had changed, and people had moved on—this was only natural.

Zhang Yi didn't dwell on it, simply asking calmly, "Calling such a hurried meeting—did we receive some news?"

Zhu Zheng nodded.

"Basically, everyone present already knows the situation."

"The East Sea Region's operation failed, and they even had a clash with the Colombian Navy. The situation isn't optimistic, and there's even a possibility that the Colombian Navy might also discover the Divine Source's location."

"The region has decided to join forces with the East Sea Region to search for the Divine Source together!"

Hearing this, everyone couldn't help but frown.

If the Colombian Navy were to obtain the Divine Source, it would mean they would possess two Epsilon-level superhumans.

That would not be good news for the entire Huaxu Kingdom!

"How did they discover it?"

Deng Shentong asked, puzzled.

"The East Sea Region's operations aren't that reckless—they couldn't have been discovered so easily."

Lan Xincheng said with some schadenfreude: "That's hard to say. The Colombian Navy isn't incompetent either. Serves them right for trying to backstab us and act alone! This is just karma!"

Zhu Zheng glanced at him, and Lan Xincheng immediately closed his mouth.

Zhu Zheng continued: "This time, both sides will dispatch a group of top-tier superhumans to participate in the mission. My view is that since our strength is inferior to both the Colombian Navy and the East Sea Region, we need to concentrate our forces for major tasks!"

"Therefore, every investigation team must be deployed!"

A stack of documents lay before Zhang Yi, all containing various intelligence collected by the Jiangnan Region.

He casually flipped through them—they even included some intelligence on East Sea Region superhumans and the Colombian Navy.

"Qinglong, real name Xu Xiaolong, former Marine Corps major. Beast-type ability user, ability unknown, suspected to be giant sea creature."

...

While browsing through the materials in his hands, Zhang Yi listened to Zhu Zheng's speech.

Most of what Zhu Zheng was saying, Zhang Yi already knew.

The rest was just repetition of familiar topics.

"This time, our headquarters will send personnel to accompany the East Sea Region's team to the mission area!"

"Whichever side discovers the Divine Source first will receive sixty percent, with forty percent going to the other side."

Hearing this, Zhang Yi asked calmly, "Commander Zhu, can the Divine Source even be divided?"

Zhu Zheng chuckled. "That's something we don't know either."

Everyone present looked at each other with strange expressions.

Not even knowing what the Divine Source was—this intelligence was far too scarce.

Zhu Zheng said: "So to address this issue, we've come up with a solution. If the Divine Source truly cannot be divided, then corresponding resources must be provided as payment!"

Deng Shentong countered: "But is there anything more valuable than an Epsilon-level superhuman?"

Lan Xincheng answered on Zhu Zheng's behalf: "If quality isn't enough, make up for it with quantity!"

Chapter 934: Refusing to Team Up

Lan Xincheng's answer made every team leader show mocking smiles.

The words sounded nice, but everyone wanted to obtain the Divine Source and become a higher-level Epsilon superhuman.

Taotie crossed his arms and said bluntly: "So our primary goal is to seize the Divine Source first! Then we'll give them the corresponding supplies afterwards."

Zhu Zheng's gaze deepened.

"Theoretically speaking, that's indeed correct. This mission won't be easy to complete!"

"The East Sea Region is a war zone, and both the quantity and strength of their top superhumans exceed ours. So you must be extremely careful in everything!"

"If the opportunity arises, you can use the Divine Source immediately. Ultimately, whoever has the capability should use the Divine Source!"

Zhu Zheng had to say this.

Because by that time, even if he strictly forbade it, the team leaders wouldn't listen to him.

Zhang Yi's heart stirred slightly as he glanced at Zhu Zheng.

Back then, Zhu Zheng had promised him priority in using the Divine Source.

But now, the story had changed.

Zhu Zheng pretended not to see Zhang Yi's gaze. "The matter is already settled. We depart promptly at 7:00 AM tomorrow for the East Sea Region! Then we'll proceed to the mission area."

"You must adjust your condition properly. More importantly, be prepared for potential clashes with surrounding forces!"

Everyone nodded without raising further objections.

Once they reached Star Island, it would be every person for themselves based on their abilities. Ultimately, everything depended on strength and some good luck.

None of them were rookies, so there was no need to ask unnecessary questions.

Naturally, all weapons and equipment needed for this mission would be generously supplied by the region—except for Zhang Yi.

The meeting concluded in less than twenty minutes, clean and efficient.

Zhang Yi barely spoke a few words from beginning to end.

Since he had been a participant from the start, he could already imagine how things would unfold.

After everyone left, he caught up with Zhu Zheng.

"Commander Zhu."

Zhu Zheng turned to look at Zhang Yi, his expression completely unsurprised.

"I knew you'd come. What I promised you before might be difficult now. We're not the dominant force in that battlefield, so you'll have to fight for it yourself."

"But if you have any other needs, feel free to mention them."

Zhang Yi shook his head; that wasn't why he had come.

He understood Zhu Zheng's difficulties and didn't mind.

"I haven't thought of any needs for now. I'll mention them later if necessary."

"But I have one request—I won't bring Baili Changqing and the others on this mission. I'm going alone!"

Both Zhu Zheng and Sun Luxuan looked at Zhang Yi with astonishment.

"Going alone?"

Zhu Zheng asked: "Do you realize how dangerous that place is? Besides being filled with highly corrosive toxic miasma, we need to pass through the Colombian Navy's blockade. There's a high probability our movements will be detected."

"Although I know your survival abilities are exceptional, being alone in an area where you can't distinguish directions, filled with toxic miasma everywhere, is too dangerous!"

Zhang Yi nodded.

"I'm aware of all that. But precisely because I know, I don't want to bring others along."

"My abilities lean toward defensive counterattacks and assassination. I operate more comfortably alone. Team coordination has never been my strong suit."

"Besides, with so many team leaders there, having more people isn't necessarily better."

Zhu Zheng considered for a moment before nodding: "Indeed, your integration time with the team has been too short. I've noticed you never really wanted to be a leader anyway. Since that's the case, do as you please!"

"However, Baili Changqing will be quite upset!"

Zhang Yi slightly curled his lip. "He can join other teams. With his capabilities, I'm sure he can easily become a deputy leader."

Zhu Zheng clasped his hands behind his back and said seriously: "He hasn't integrated with other teams either. Even if he goes, suddenly participating in such an important operation would be dangerous."

Zhang Yi smiled faintly: "You can arrange it as you see fit!"

Zhu Zheng had no choice. "Alright! Since you insist, I'll respect your opinion. Anyway, given your capabilities and working style, even operating alone, I believe you can perform excellently!"

Zhang Yi smiled and nodded: "Thank you, Commander Zhu!"

Zhang Yi went alone to the quartermaster to collect large quantities of supplies.

Nothing more than tons upon tons of heavy weapons, hundreds of tons of TNT and C4 explosives, medical supplies, antitoxins, and massive amounts of food...

In short, he maxed out his allocation—after all, there was no reason not to take Blizzard City's resources, and taking them meant no loss.

Others had to calculate carefully, afraid that carrying too many supplies would affect combat.

But Zhang Yi only worried his allocation wouldn't be enough.

Just as he was collecting supplies, Baili Changqing suddenly approached him.

"Captain Chaos, I'd like to talk with you!"

Baili Changqing glanced at the quartermaster nearby before speaking to Zhang Yi.

Zhang Yi glanced at Baili Changqing. "About the mission?"

"Exactly! Why did you choose to operate alone? And you're not taking any of us?"

Baili Changqing's expression looked somewhat unpleasant.

After the battle against the Moon of Corrosion, he and others in the team hadn't received any decent missions.

If this continued, his people would become completely useless!

Zhang Yi said calmly: "I can't disclose mission details, but remember this—I'm doing this for your own good."

Just kidding, he simply found bringing these guys along too troublesome.

Baili Changqing paused.

His brow slightly furrowed, expression hesitant.

After a long while, he cautiously asked: "Is it a very dangerous mission?"

Zhang Yi said: "Didn't you see who attended the meeting? This mission's importance exceeds imagination. Even if you went, there would be significant danger, let alone the others in the team."

Baili Changqing said somewhat puzzled: "But it seems members from other investigation teams are also participating in the operation."

Zhang Yi said: "But you should also know what kind of person I am. We're friends, right?"

Baili Changqing scratched his head: "Hmm."

Zhang Yi said with a smile: "But if real danger arises, I probably couldn't protect you. You have good professional ethics, but I'm accustomed to being a lone wolf."

"I'm not Bian Junwu—I don't have that great spirit of sacrifice. So I suggest we can be private friends, having drinks and chatting together casually."

"But when it comes to the battlefield, don't become comrades with someone like me."

He lightly punched Baili Changqing's shoulder: "Without discussing those matters, our friendship won't deteriorate."

Baili Changqing rubbed his shoulder as Zhang Yi, having finished inventorying supplies, left the quartermaster.

Leaving only Baili Changqing alone there feeling melancholy.

Chapter 935: I Only Trust Myself

Zhang Yi's arrival at Blizzard City this time completely resembled that of a lone wolf.

From the beginning of attending the meeting, he hadn't expressed many opinions.

After the mission concluded, he silently collected supplies alone and returned to his residence to feed his cats and dogs.

This attitude left many people feeling astonished.

Yet when they considered Zhang Yi's previous experiences at sea, everyone thought he might not have moved past that period yet, so they found it understandable.

For this mission, the Jiangnan Region naturally took it very seriously, making thorough preparations in all other aspects.

These won't be elaborated on one by one here.

Simply put, to complete the search operation, they dispatched Deputy Minister of Operations Situ Xin to lead the team, along with five hundred professional reconnaissance personnel.

That evening.

Zhu Zheng's office remained lit.

He sat at his desk, hands clasped supporting his chin, his tightly furrowed brow revealing his current state of mind.

Regarding this mission, he harbored enormous ambitions.

However, actually achieving his goals presented incredibly difficult challenges.

The most critical point remained that he lacked sufficiently powerful forces at his disposal.

Among the current five investigation squads, the Night Crow Squad had just been established, while the Celestial Hound Squad had become scattered due to Zhang Yi's passive approach.

If they truly went to Star Island, they would likely struggle to form effective combat effectiveness.

Most crucially, they lacked a suitable leader to command and support the entire team.

"Ding dong."

An electronic prompt sounded, "Commander Zhu, Night Crow Squad Captain Jingwei requests to see you."

Hearing the name "Jingwei," Zhu Zheng immediately said, "Let her in!"

Soon after, Jingwei, dressed in black combat suit with her eyes covered by a black veil, stood before Zhu Zheng.

"Commander Zhu!"

Her voice sounded cold, like an emotionless machine.

Zhu Zheng looked at Jingwei and said thoughtfully, "Did you meet him today?"

Jingwei nodded.

"I met him. Feeling-wise, he's very strong."

Zhu Zheng also nodded.

"Don't forget your mission for this operation. He's an absolute conservative. Staying close to him during this action is the safest option for you."

"But," a faint gleam flashed in Zhu Zheng's eyes, "when necessary, you can utilize him."

"After all, something like the Divine Source is very important to the region!"

Jingwei raised her right hand to her temple.

"Yes, Commander Zhu! I'm very clear about my mission!"

Zhang Yi returned to his residence in Blizzard City with a large quantity of supplies.

Hua Hua and Lele were waiting there for his return.

After returning home, Zhang Yi's first task was preparing food for them.

Both creatures had enormous appetites.

Hua Hua was relatively better - before transforming into giant combat form, its energy requirements weren't excessive.

But after every battle participation, it would consume enough food for dozens of people.

Not just Hua Hua - actually, Zhang Yi, Liang Yue, and others were all the same.

Nowadays, the energy consumed by supernatural abilities all came from converted food.

The higher the level of superhuman, the greater their dietary energy requirements.

Fortunately, Zhang Yi's Dimensional Space contained ample supplies.

Otherwise, given their current state of development, food might not last several decades.

For ordinary wild superhumans, even with high talent, they dared not engage in combat easily due to food scarcity issues, or couldn't obtain sufficient energy replenishment.

However, fortunately, supplies in the Jiangnan Region were abundant.

They employed special food production and processing methods that could support an increasing population.

Supporting superhumans was completely within their capabilities.

This was why Zhang Yi always took supplies openly whenever he came to collect them.

To put it jokingly.

Every operation by superhumans like Zhang Yi consumed energy possibly comparable to deploying a large warship.

Superhumans had become strategic weapons of the new era - expensive to maintain yet offering extremely high cost-effectiveness.

Fortunately, superhumans didn't require much maintenance in daily life, which was the only good news.

Zhang Yi sat on the sofa, preparing mountain-like piles of food and drinking water for them, then sat on the sofa himself, taking out hamburgers and cola from his Dimensional Space to eat.

His expression appeared completely indifferent.

This sharply contrasted with the various levels of Blizzard City units currently bustling with activity.

All this simply because he clearly understood one thing at this moment.

That during the upcoming Star Island operation, the region could hardly provide them with much assistance.

And expecting help from the main responsible party for this operation - the East Sea Region - was also unrealistic.

He had to rely on himself to obtain everything he wanted.

Moreover - he had detected something unusual from Zhu Zheng's attitude.

Not just because Zhu Zheng had forgotten his previous promises.

But more because Zhu Zheng hadn't appointed him as the overall commander for this operation.

Considering this from conventional perspective, when the Jiangnan Region's strength was clearly weaker than the Colombian Navy and East Sea Region.

The best approach would be concentrating forces for major tasks.

Having him, the strongest in the current Jiangnan Region, lead the team with all five investigation squads acting in unison would be the optimal choice.

Yet Zhu Zheng hadn't mentioned this at all.

This indicated that Zhu Zheng still maintained some wariness toward Zhang Yi.

This couldn't be considered wrong.

As the region's supreme commander, who had been betrayed by trusted subordinates just six months ago.

So Zhu Zheng didn't want to see Zhang Yi becoming overwhelmingly dominant.

"I'm just somewhat curious, besides relying on me, who else can he depend on now?"

Zhang Yi frowned while eating his hamburger, completely puzzled by this.

Zhu Zheng needed powerful forces as the foundation of his authority.

And other investigation squad members basically had backing from various power factions within Blizzard City.

Any faction growing too powerful would make Zhu Zheng uneasy.

Precisely because of this, Zhang Yi's existence appeared particularly valuable.

Zhang Yi knew that unless new superhumans emerged who were easier to control and possessed strength not inferior to his, Zhu Zheng's attitude wouldn't change so rapidly.

"Could it be that during these five months I was away, he discovered new talents?"

"This seems very possible."

Zhang Yi took a bite of his hamburger, his dark pupils shimmering with intense light in the night.

Soon, he raised the corners of his mouth.

"This makes perfect sense. This is how a region's supreme commander should operate."

"Not trusting anyone, only believing in the power held in one's own hands!"

Zhang Yi felt no disappointment whatsoever.

He and Zhu Zheng were merely using each other from the beginning.

He cooperated with Zhu Zheng's work only because Zhu Zheng's position could provide him maximum convenience.

"I just fear you've miscalculated this time."

Zhang Yi said calmly.

Chapter 936: Gathering Troops

That evening, Zhang Yi's residence welcomed a guest.

Deng Shentong, captain of the Celestial Squad.

After not seeing him for many days, he now appeared somewhat weathered. His skin no longer had that aristocratic paleness but showed some pigmentation, and one could even see sparse stubble on his chin.

It was clear that during the nearly half year Zhang Yi had been away from the Jiangnan Region, he hadn't stopped his training.

The two exchanged brief pleasantries.

Zhang Yi directly asked him about his purpose for visiting tonight.

"For this trip to Star Island, does your Deng Family have any special plans?"

Zhang Yi smiled while staring into Deng Shentong's eyes.

Although he knew Deng Shentong wouldn't answer his question, he still wanted to test the waters.

But unexpectedly, Deng Shentong actually answered directly.

"Of course. My goal this time is very clear—to obtain the Divine Source."

"Not just me, everyone has the same objective."

"After all, in this apocalypse, strength is everything! Only the powerful can have a voice."

Zhang Yi nodded: "Then why did you come to me? If that's really the case, we should be competitors."

Deng Shentong laughed.

"What you say seems correct, and you should be the person in the entire Jiangnan Region I consider most as a rival."

"But our real trouble doesn't come from within."

Zhang Yi said calmly: "You mean the East Sea Region?"

Deng Shentong continued: "Even the Colombian Navy, and numerous countries in the southeastern sea regions!"

"Such a large-scale operation has a high probability of being discovered. When that happens, it could turn into a major free-for-all battle."

Deng Shentong sighed repeatedly.

But Zhang Yi said: "Since we've decided to go, we should be mentally prepared for this. Over these past six months, I feel your mindset has matured considerably. Surely you're not afraid?"

Hearing this, Deng Shentong gazed distantly out the window.

"Of course I'm afraid."

"I wasn't afraid before because I lacked reverence. But now, I've learned the world's cruelty."

"No matter how powerful someone is, they can still be killed. They might even be killed for inexplicable reasons."

Zhang Yi's heart stirred slightly.

If it were the Deng Shentong of years past, he would never say such words.

It seemed that during these six months, he had undergone significant transformation.

"So, what exactly is your purpose in coming to me? Cooperation?"

Zhang Yi said with a smile.

But Deng Shentong shook his head.

"You're a very clever guy. I can't persuade you. You wouldn't even bring Baili Changqing, which shows you plan to operate as a lone wolf during this mission."

Zhang Yi: "Oh? Then your visit isn't just to say hello, is it?"

Deng Shentong rubbed his nose.

"At the very least, I acknowledge your strength is considerable. If necessary, I hope we can join forces rather than oppose each other."

Zhang Yi's heart slowly sank.

Deng Shentong's meaning was clear.

Before the Divine Source, what friends could there be?

The East Sea Region and Jiangnan Region would secretly scheme against each other.

Even within the Jiangnan Region investigation teams, people would disregard so-called comradeship for that slim chance to advance to Epsilon.

There was one thing Zhang Yi didn't say to Deng Shentong.

The so-called key to advancing to Epsilon didn't mean much to him.

Because Zhang Yi, with his current 9800-point superhuman ability index, didn't have this limitation.

He just needed to kill more powerful superhumans and absorb their essence.

However, it was true that as he approached the 10,000-point threshold, the gains from absorbing Delta-level superhumans became smaller.

To truly break through that boundary, he didn't know how many powerful superhumans he'd need to kill.

But for this mission, the mantis stalks the cicada, unaware of the oriole behind.

He would become Epsilon through a method nobody could anticipate.

"Hopefully. I've always followed the principle of not provoking others if unprovoked."

Zhang Yi said.

Deng Shentong smiled and nodded: "That's good."

Having said this, he stood up: "It's getting late, I should go. I still need to meet with some others later!"

The others he referred to were naturally the other investigation team captains.

But just as he was about to turn and leave, he suddenly stopped.

"Oh, there's one thing I hope you'll pay attention to recently."

Deng Shentong glanced back at Zhang Yi meaningfully:

"Recently, it seems some changes have occurred in Blizzard City."

Zhang Yi narrowed his eyes slightly, saying in a light tone: "Yes, after all, I've been away for six months. Half a year is enough time for many things and people to become different."

Deng Shentong nodded and left Zhang Yi's residence.

However, his words made Zhang Yi even more certain that something major had definitely happened behind the scenes in Blizzard City, perhaps brewing a massive storm.

He had sensed this atmosphere since his first day back.

And the Deng Group, as one of the powerful organizations in the Jiangnan Region, must know something.

But Deng Shentong wouldn't plainly tell him such things unless there was benefit exchange.

"Such trouble, such a headache."

Zhang Yi rubbed his temples.

"But it's not that headache-inducing either. I just need to become stronger. Strong enough to dismantle all unknown fears."

Zhang Yi's eyes sparkled, carrying a faint smile.

This trip to Star Island would definitely give everyone a huge surprise!

...

The next morning, Zhang Yi brought Hua Hua and Lele to assemble at the Blizzard City subway station.

Along the way, soldiers and superhumans cast strange looks at the two animals beside Zhang Yi.

The other investigation teams were all fully equipped, each person carrying extensive weaponry and strategic resources.

Yet Zhang Yi had no people with him, only two animals.

However, in the apocalypse, cats and dogs weren't as commonly seen as before.

Even superhuman families found them difficult to support.

Therefore, some female superhumans' eyes immediately filled with heart symbols when they saw Hua Hua and Lele.

Linghu Feixue saw this from afar. Although she still maintained a cold expression, her occasional glances in this direction betrayed her true feelings.

Zhang Yi walked to the front as if nobody else was around.

His team consisted only of himself, a cat, and a dog—very spacious.

Meanwhile, the surrounding areas were already packed with people.

Because this operation wasn't just about the several major investigation teams.

An army marches on its stomach.

To organize a large-scale combat mission, logistics work must be done properly.

There were hundreds of logistics personnel alone.

Not to mention the scouts needed as advance troops to open paths in Star Island's toxic miasma zones.

All in all, Blizzard City was deploying over a thousand personnel for this operation.

Zhu Zheng, supreme commander of the Jiangnan Region, delivered an important speech for this mission.

In his speech, he mentioned that the Jiangnan Region and East Sea Region had always been brotherly theaters with harmonious relations since ancient times.

This mission adhered to the spirit of unity, mutual assistance, cooperation, and win-win outcomes, actively striving and working hard to achieve the early restoration of normal living environments for Huaxu Kingdom.

Chapter 937: Showing Fist

Zhu Zheng and the others' words went in one of Zhang Yi's ears and out the other.

He only remembered some key pieces of information.

The East Sea Region would be taking the lead in this mission to Star Island.

So next, they would first take a military special train to East Sea City, then proceed to Star Island from there.

Zhang Yi estimated they would either travel by submarine or use Xuanwu, that super biological warship, to navigate underwater to the vicinity of Star Island.

This would avoid detection by the Colombian Navy and navies of surrounding nations.

After all, by now, the Colombian Navy had most likely already learned about the Divine Source and was actively searching for its whereabouts.

That meant they would definitely be closely monitoring all movements of the two major regions.

After Zhu Zheng finished his brief and clear speech, Zhang Yi and the others gradually boarded the train cars.

Zhang Yi was assigned to the same car as the Night Crow Squad.

This newly formed team gave Zhang Yi a feeling of quiet deathly stillness.

It wasn't the coldness of ordinary soldiers.

More like a machine-like sensation.

Of course, this didn't mean they were robots—Zhang Yi could still distinguish between living people and machines.

It was just that all eight members of this team, including their captain Jingwei, hadn't exchanged a single word with him from start to finish, and they didn't even change their expressions or movements.

After boarding the special train, they quietly took their seats.

They maintained this posture throughout; without careful observation, you might not even notice them making any movements.

Zhang Yi didn't know where they came from, but he didn't care either.

This world was so vast, and there were plenty of things he didn't know. If he had to dig to the bottom of everything, he'd be exhausted to death.

So he took out his earphones, sat quietly on the special train, and listened to music.

Nothing unusual happened along the way.

The special train raced through underground tunnels like a giant dragon until, after about three hours, it gradually began to slow down and finally came to a complete stop.

After a week's interval, Zhang Yi had returned to East Sea City once again.

As they stepped off the special train, Situ Xin and some staff members engaged in formal exchanges with the East Sea City officials who had come to receive them.

But among these people, Zhang Yi spotted a familiar face.

Li Tianyang, Head of East Sea City Operations Department.

Remembering how this guy had forced truth serum down his throat before, Zhang Yi immediately frowned.

Li Tianyang soon noticed Zhang Yi too.

He had been stern-faced the whole time, with an unpleasant expression.

But upon seeing Zhang Yi, that expression turned even uglier, his eyes sharp and venomous like a snake's.

Zhang Yi naturally understood why he looked like this.

Because Zhang Yi had later tricked him, providing false intelligence.

This caused the East Sea Region to waste their efforts in the waters near Star Island for nothing.

Zhang Yi secretly laughed to himself—this was Li Tianyang's own fault for reaping what he sowed.

He had told the other party the real intelligence from the beginning, but Li Tianyang himself didn't believe it and insisted on playing games with him.

Li Tianyang suddenly strode over toward Zhang Yi.

"Chaos! Don't you plan to give me an explanation for what happened last time?"

"Do you have any idea how much time we wasted because of you? We were almost discovered by the Colombian Navy! And we lost two deep-sea frogmen!"

"All of this is your fault!"

Li Tianyang harshly rebuked Zhang Yi.

And he had three of the Four Spirits from the East Sea Region following beside him.

This was probably what gave him confidence.

Zhang Yi drooped his eyelids, his hands hanging naturally at his sides, and said lightly, "What, you think you're in the right here?"

Hua Hua still lazily sprawled on top of Lele's head, but its narrowed eyes opened a slit as it watched Li Tianyang, Qinglong, and the others.

If Li Tianyang dared to make a move here, without a doubt, Zhang Yi and Hua Hua would counterattack immediately!

However, Li Tianyang wasn't foolish enough to take action at such a time.

He stared grimly at Zhang Yi and said coldly, "Fine, fine, fine! I underestimated you! Heh, Chaos, you've really got some skills. But you remember this—after this mission is over, I'll find time to settle all accounts with you!"

He had been smugly clever, taking it upon himself to force truth serum down Zhang Yi's throat.

He thought he had accomplished a great merit, but it turned out to be all for nothing, and they had almost exposed their target.

This incident had caused him to lose all face among the higher-ups of the East Sea Region.

Naturally, he blamed all of this on Zhang Yi.

Situ Xin coughed and walked over with a smile. "Minister Li, whatever matters there are, we can discuss them slowly later. Is that alright?"

Li Tianyang glared fiercely at Zhang Yi one last time, snorted coldly, then turned and left.

From beginning to end, his expression carried a hint of arrogance from someone in a superior position.

This wasn't just directed at Zhang Yi, but at the entire Jiangnan Region delegation led by Situ Xin.

Confidence came from strength.

With military power that surpassed the Jiangnan Region in every aspect, they indeed had the right to be arrogant.

This attitude could be clearly felt by everyone present.

It made everyone feel somewhat displeased, though no one showed it openly.

"Time waits for no one. Take them and set off immediately! Now we have to race against time."

Li Tianyang glanced at his watch and spoke to Situ Xin in an icy tone.

Situ Xin smiled and nodded. "You're absolutely right. Please lead the way, we'll follow right away."

Li Tianyang got into a military vehicle and headed toward the departure port.

Zhang Yi crossed his arms, a cold smile playing on his lips.

But Deng Shentong, Linghu Feixue, and the others had rather unpleasant expressions.

"Although I knew this was how it would unfold, actually experiencing it still feels really unpleasant!"

Deng Shentong said leisurely.

This statement pretty much voiced the sentiments of everyone from the Jiangnan Region.

The investigation teams that dominated the Jiangnan Region came to someone else's territory and immediately received a warning shot across their bows.

While it seemed like Li Tianyang was targeting Zhang Yi, in reality, it also made all the investigation teams lose face.

"Is this a warning to us?"

Lilong, captain of the Ironblood Squad, said in a hoarse voice.

Situ Xin clapped his hands and said to everyone with a cheerful smile, "Alright, alright, everyone, don't dwell on these small matters. The East Sea Region, as the main force defending maritime territories, has borne most of the pressure for us."

"They have some emotions, and we should understand that. But I believe that during the upcoming mission, everyone will cooperate well with each other."

"Don't take this matter to heart. Let's set off!"

Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow, a mocking smile at the corner of his mouth.

Situ Xin's diplomatic words were quite well-spoken.

Everyone knew now wasn't the time for emotional reactions, so they all boarded the military vehicles prepared by the East Sea Region.

Over a thousand people headed toward the departure port outside East Sea City.

When they reached their destination, they saw East Sea Region soldiers already deployed in formation.

The port surroundings were filled with well-armed soldiers of extraordinary presence; even before getting close, one could feel a stern, murderous intent.

"A warning shot? Displaying their fists?"

Zhang Yi watched this scene through the window, inwardly sneering incessantly.

The person in charge of this operation for the East Sea Region was Li Tianyang, that guy Zhang Yi had zero goodwill toward.

He wanted both to request assistance from the Jiangnan Region people and to suppress the Jiangnan Region—really trying to have it both ways.

"If you're really that amazing, why don't you just go to Mist Valley yourselves and face the pressure from the Colombian Navy?"

Zhang Yi said lightly.

Chapter 938: I Deserve Yours

After the Jiangnan Region personnel arrived at the port.

Li Tianyang glanced back at them, a contemptuous smile curling at the corner of his mouth.

Only by comparing themselves with the Jiangnan Region team could the true strength of their East Sea Region be highlighted!

He spoke into the communicator: "Xuanwu, emerge!"

Moments later, the seawater around the port suddenly began churning violently.

Linghu Feixue and Zhang Yi had seen Xuanwu before, so they weren't particularly surprised.

However, this was the first time for everyone else here, and they watched the massive water disturbance with confusion, unsure what was happening.

"Is there something underwater? A submarine?"

"No, impossible—a submarine wouldn't cause such massive movement. Could it be some new type of weapon?"

Amid the crowd's discussions, Xuanwu's enormous head emerged like a small mountain.

Then, its island-sized massive body began rising to the surface.

A black deep-sea leviathan, a giant turtle hundreds of meters long, revealed itself before everyone's eyes!

Deng Shentong, Lilong, and the others watched with eyes narrowed to slits.

That overwhelming oppressive force and shock was something even they were experiencing for the first time.

Deng Shentong took a deep breath, furrowing his brow as he said:

"An Epsilon-level superhuman? With this, what chance do we even have to compete?"

To put it bluntly, even the lowest-tier Epsilon-level superhuman could take on their entire group.

This massive Xuanwu before them, as the East Sea Region's ultimate combat asset, undoubtedly possessed fearsome power.

With its appearance, the Jiangnan Region stood almost no chance in this mission's competition.

Zhang Yi and Linghu Feixue exchanged glances, both understanding the other's thoughts.

Although Xuanwu was formidable, its massive size prevented it from coming ashore.

In other words, they still had a chance to obtain the Divine Source.

Though Xuanwu providing support near Star Island would indeed create tremendous psychological pressure.

Li Tianyang was quite satisfied with the Jiangnan Region team's expressions.

He spread his hands and said with a smile: "Let me introduce—this is the trump card of our East Sea Region's Four Spirits Fleet: Xuanwu!"

"And this time, we'll be traveling to Star Island aboard it."

Situ Xin narrowed his eyes, his face clearly showing his astonishment.

After a long moment, he sighed deeply: "I never imagined even Xuanwu would be deployed! It seems your East Sea Region is absolutely determined to obtain that thing this time!"

Li Tianyang said to Situ Xin with a smile: "We're brother military regions, Minister Situ. No need to worry—after we obtain that thing, we'll provide your share of resources exactly as agreed!"

Situ Xin smiled: "That would be for the best."

While everyone else focused on Xuanwu, Zhang Yi carefully observed the other people around them.

This time, the East Sea Region had also deployed numerous top-tier combat assets.

The entire Four Spirits Fleet—Qinglong, Baihu, Zhuque, and Xuanwu—had all been mobilized.

Additionally, combat forces from several other fleets stood among the crowd, positioned behind the Four Spirits members.

Looking carefully, they were two squads composed of elite superhumans.

Xuanwu opened its massive mouth, revealing a huge passageway inside.

Li Tianyang gestured for Qinglong and the others to enter first.

Only after all East Sea Region personnel had entered did the Jiangnan Region team get their turn.

The interior space within Xuanwu was incredibly spacious, having been transformed into a super warship that could easily accommodate thousands of people.

This time, the East Sea Region had also assigned hundreds of specialized reconnaissance personnel to support the superhumans' investigation efforts.

Different professions excelled in different areas—while superhumans might be skilled in combat, their search capabilities weren't particularly impressive.

And around the entire Mist Valley, all six cities were completely enveloped by toxic miasma.

The magnetic field there fluctuated violently due to the Divine Source's presence.

Not only was satellite navigation impossible, but even compasses couldn't be used.

Once you entered the toxic miasma zones, you couldn't even distinguish directions properly.

This made these professional personnel especially crucial.

To prevent complete communication loss, the East Sea Region specially prepared new communication chips that could be installed on every person.

This way, the command center could track everyone's location at all times and maintain communication with them.

Zhang Yi quietly led Hua Hua and Lele into Xuanwu's interior.

After everyone had boarded, Xuanwu closed its massive mouth and slowly submerged beneath the water.

It would travel from the deepest parts of the ocean, crossing the great sea toward Star Island.

Li Tianyang and Situ Xin gathered all squad leaders to a central conference room for a strategy meeting.

"We will land at Bato City along Star Island's coast, then split into two teams."

"Each team's advance reconnaissance units will scout the path ahead, leaving markers as guides. The superhuman forces will follow afterward."

"Currently, the entire Mist Island is shrouded in toxic miasma and filled with dangerous unknown creatures, so everyone must exercise extreme caution when the time comes."

Upon hearing this, Deng Shentong and the others raised their eyebrows.

"Dangerous unknown creatures?"

The East Sea Region hadn't provided detailed information about this to the Jiangnan Region.

However, this might be one reason why the East Sea Region needed to collaborate with the Jiangnan Region.

If the Divine Source were truly easy to obtain, they wouldn't have generously shared the opportunity with the Jiangnan Region.

Li Tianyang sat upright in his chair before a three-dimensional map of Star Island.

He held a pointer and casually indicated an area.

"The Jiangnan Region teams, being relatively weaker, will depart from Golden Phoenix City."

"While our East Sea Region teams will advance from Karadayan."

"We'll split into two routes, left and right."

Seeing the routes Li Tianyang had assigned, all Jiangnan Region personnel's expressions subtly changed.

Because according to the map, Golden Phoenix City was farthest from Mist Valley, while Karadayan was clearly closest to Mist Valley.

And there was another major problem.

Golden Phoenix City's location placed it closer to the Neon Pirates and Malaya.

Based on previous intelligence, the Colombian Navy had been monitoring the two major regions of Huaxu Kingdom, seeking information about the Divine Source.

So now, they had likely already identified the area around Star Island, just not the exact location.

And with two major regions jointly operating and deploying forces on such a scale, it would be impossible to completely conceal from the Colombian Navy.

It was only a matter of time before they came knocking.

When that happened, the Jiangnan Region superhuman team at Golden Phoenix City would likely bear the brunt of the Colombian Navy's pressure.

This unreasonable allocation plan immediately made the Jiangnan Region squad leaders' faces darken with anger.

Zhang Yi said with a cold laugh: "Minister Li, what excellent calculations you've made! You take all the benefits while making us shoulder all the risks!"

Li Tianyang snorted coldly, staring at Zhang Yi: "And these risks were all brought by you! Naturally, you should bear them."

He remembered that incident, still grinding his teeth about it to this day.

"If you hadn't given us false intelligence, we would have obtained the Divine Source long ago!"

Zhang Yi glanced at him: "Do I owe you something?"

"You!"

Just as Li Tianyang was about to explode, his adjutant restrained him.

"Minister, please calm down."

Li Tianyang maintained a stern expression: "Regardless, this operation is under our East Sea Region's leadership! This arrangement of mine was made after thorough consideration."

Chapter 939: Arriving at Star Island

Situ Xin turned his head with a smile and said, "Of course, we don't doubt Minister Li's goodwill and strategic thinking. It's just that our Jiangnan forces are relatively weaker, yet we're being placed in dangerous locations, which is somewhat difficult for us to accept."

Li Tianyang explained, "The island is full of dangers, and the closer you get to Mist Valley, the more severe the threats become."

He clasped his hands and said gravely, "We previously sent scouts to investigate. There exists a terrifying mysterious creature around Mist Valley. Everyone we sent to investigate died—none survived!"

"And according to the intelligence fragments we obtained, the closer to Mist Valley, the more terrifying these creatures become."

Li Tianyang looked at Situ Xin. "Whether this is baseless rumor or not, your Jiangnan Region should know. The intelligence Shengjing provided us mentioned the strange beasts existing around the Divine Source."

Situ Xin narrowed his eyes, his right hand tapping rhythmically on the armrest.

Regarding Divine Source intelligence, the most detailed information currently still came from what the Shengjing Region had shared.

They had indeed mentioned encountering extremely bizarre incidents and indescribable guardians when the Divine Source was first discovered in the Qinling Mountains.

Li Tianyang continued, "Your forces are weaker, so having our East Sea Region troops approach the core area first is most beneficial for mission success."

As he reached this point, he let out a cold laugh, his face showing a hint of mockery.

"Moreover, you don't actually believe you could obtain the Divine Source yourselves, do you?"

The East Sea Region's collaboration with Jiangnan Region had always intended for them to help clear away some troubles from the beginning.

Such as the potentially arriving Colombian Navy and other national forces in the surrounding areas.

"Comfortably provide support for us, and when we obtain the Divine Source, you'll naturally receive your share of benefits."

Li Tianyang forcefully knocked on the table. "And if superhumans from Columbia and other countries truly appear, your responsibility will be to buy us time there!"

Li Tianyang's tone and attitude made Deng Shentong and others frown deeply.

It made them realize even more profoundly that without sufficient strength, they lacked the capital to negotiate.

The East Sea Region's superhuman forces far surpassed theirs, allowing Li Tianyang to bluntly tell them, "You're only here to assist us in obtaining the Divine Source."

Though they felt anger in their hearts, they couldn't refute this.

After all, the power disparity was right there for all to see.

Deng Shentong instinctively glanced at Zhang Yi.

Zhang Yi was actually concentrating intently on digging his ears!

It seemed Zhang Yi completely disregarded Li Tianyang's arrogance.

But considering Zhang Yi's consistent behavioral style, Deng Shentong felt quite helpless.

What could they do when their top expert behaved like this?

Yet no one could openly blame Zhang Yi for not being assertive enough.

Among all present, Zhang Yi was the only outsider.

If not for the weakness of these captains from Blizzard City, why would they need Zhang Yi to uphold the title of top expert in their region?

Deng Shentong took a deep breath and stopped speaking further.

However, whether it was him, Lilong, Linghu Feixue, or others, their eyes held deep unwillingness.

Zhang Yi was actually concentrating intently on digging his ears!

So what if they were at a disadvantage?

If opportunity presented itself, they would all attempt to seize that chance for Epsilon-level advancement!

Situ Xin turned his gaze toward Zhang Yi and the other captains.

Seeing Zhang Yi's completely indifferent attitude, he said to Li Tianyang, "Then we'll proceed according to Minister Li's arrangement."

Even negotiating conditions required capital.

The East Sea Region had already shown considerable face by promising resource compensation to Jiangnan Region after obtaining the Divine Source.

Even Zhu Zheng had mentally accepted that obtaining the Divine Source might be impossible.

Among the main combat forces, since Zhang Yi—currently with the highest superhuman ability index—remained silent, others naturally wouldn't stick their necks out.

After all, they were currently inside Xuanwu's stomach.

No one dared underestimate that youth in spirit form sitting nearby drinking tea.

...

Half a day later, Xuanwu finally arrived near the maritime island nation of Star Island after underwater travel.

Its enormous body erupted from the sea with a "boom," creating massive waves.

From a distance, they could see that considerable portions of this island nation were already enveloped by thick toxic miasma.

Even wearing combat suits on the island, everyone would need to regularly take antidotes to prevent miasma invasion.

The space dozens of meters above this island nation appeared gray and hazy, with visible range limited to no more than ten meters.

Xuanwu's massive mouth opened, and the vanguard forces from both regions moved out first, directly deploying assault boats heading toward different directions.

According to plan, they would conduct specialized exploration first, leaving markers for subsequent superhuman forces and guiding them to quickly locate Mist Valley.

Zhang Yi and others arrived at Xuanwu's oral cavity, where large groups gathered without feeling crowded.

Xuanwu's spirit form stood among the crowd at the forefront of the East Sea Region superhumans.

Everyone looking at this Epsilon-level superhuman had eyes filled with awe and ardent admiration.

Even Operations Minister Li Tianyang, usually accustomed to arrogance, wore an ingratiating smile in his presence.

Shortly after, the vanguard forces made landfall first.

Then according to the original plan, Jiangnan Region's vanguard headed toward Golden Phoenix City while East Sea Region's vanguard advanced toward Karadayan.

But at this moment, Xuanwu's eyebrows suddenly furrowed tightly.

"He's here!"

He merely uttered these simple words, leaving everyone confused.

The "he" Xuanwu referred to obviously indicated a specific individual.

Li Tianyang couldn't help asking, "Xuanwu, who has arrived?"

Xuanwu didn't look at those around him but suddenly disappeared from his main body's oral cavity, reappearing the next second atop his main body's head.

His eyes fixed intently on the distant horizon.

Far away, at the junction of sea and sky, a massive white line extending hundreds of miles rapidly approached.

From that direction, Cadillus arrived standing atop a giant whale, a mischievous smile playing on his lips.

Hundreds of enormous deep-sea leviathans and countless marine creatures accompanied him, emitting distant yet terrifying roars as they advanced toward the combined forces of both regions like an overwhelming tide!

"Lord of the Ocean!"

"Lord of the Storm!"

These archrivals of the sea, old opponents who had confronted each other across ocean regions for over a year, met once again.

Xuanwu issued a warning to everyone.

"The Colombian Navy has discovered us! The situation isn't good—they arrived too quickly."

"Perhaps we exposed our tracks long ago."

Xuanwu's deep voice carried immense pressure and panic to others.

Everyone's expression turned extremely serious.

Would they have to engage in a decisive battle with the Colombian Navy here before even making landfall?

Although in terms of strength, their top combat forces from both regions wouldn't fear them.

But they truly lacked the qualifications to participate in battles between two Epsilon-level beings.

Once fighting broke out, most would likely become cannon fodder!

Chapter 940: I am good at escaping

No one expected that they would encounter the Columbus Ocean Navy forces as soon as they arrived at Star Island!

Cadillus's entrance was far too spectacular.

In the ocean, his method of commanding all living beings with [Absolute Authority] was simply game-breaking.

Especially in group battles, where he alone could rival an entire massive fleet!

This was something even Xuanwu couldn't hope to match.

Perhaps one-on-one he wouldn't fear Cadillus, but his group combat abilities fell far short of Cadillus's.

Currently, Cadillus took the lead, with dozens of warships following behind him.

Clearly, the Columbus Ocean Navy had come prepared this time.

It was as if they had known all along that we would come.

Li Tianyang's face turned somewhat pale - the mission difficulty had instantly increased by several levels!

Although they had prepared for the possibility of being discovered by the Columbus Ocean Navy eventually,

they believed they could at least seize the initiative.

Now, all advantages were gone.

"What exactly is going on! Why would the Columbus Ocean Navy appear here!"

Li Tianyang's eyes were bloodshot.

An officer approached him and said, "This time it's not just the Columbus Ocean Navy! We've detected that their fleet includes warships from Neon Pirates, New Rohan, and Malaya!"

"This time they've formed a combined fleet, waiting right here for our arrival!"

Upon hearing this, the atmosphere grew even more oppressive.

Deng Shentong said with a dark expression, frowning, "How could this be? Could it be... we have a mole among us?"

An East Sea Region officer shook his head.

"That's absolutely impossible! Xuanwu has been equipped with a signal jammer. Even if there were a mole in this operation, they couldn't transmit any signals out."

Li Tianyang suddenly turned his head, staring intently at the people from Jiangnan Region, especially Zhang Yi.

"Did you leak the information?"

Zhang Yi's hand rested on Lele's soft fur, too lazy to bother with him.

Situ Xin, with his hands behind his back, said leisurely, "Minister Li, don't get so worked up. Do you really think we would do something so foolish?"

Li Tianyang had spoken in anger, venting frustration.

Actually, he knew that Jiangnan Region wouldn't do such a thing.

If the Divine Source fell into East Sea Region's hands, they could still obtain substantial resources.

But if it fell into the Columbus Ocean Navy's hands, they would get nothing and would only suffer losses to their own interests.

Setting aside lofty ideals, purely from the perspective of self-interest, Jiangnan Region people wouldn't do something so stupid.

At this moment, Qinglong shared his thoughts.

"I have a theory - perhaps they already had a general idea of the Divine Source's location through various signs and intelligence fragments."

"They just couldn't pinpoint the exact location of the Divine Source. But they knew we would definitely deploy forces to search for it."

"Therefore, they've been stationing forces in the surrounding sea areas all along. When we appeared, they probably detected us and followed us here."

Zhuque, the female captain among the Four Spirits, looked at the distant enemy forces on the sea surface and offered her perspective.

"It's also possible this is related to that Epsilon-level [Lord of the Ocean]."

The intelligence East Sea Region had about the Lord of the Ocean was limited.

After all, Xuanwu had never fought Cadillius to the death, so naturally they didn't know if he was hiding any trump cards.

Situ Xin said, "What's done is done. We can only respond to their moves as they come. We don't dare lightly start a war, and they similarly have their reservations. Perhaps we should first see what their attitude is?"

Li Tianyang, with a dark expression, slowly nodded.

This time they had gathered the elite forces of two major regions, while the other side had assembled superhuman forces from multiple countries.

If a real fight broke out, who knew how many would die?

Regardless of victory or defeat, casualties would be heavy, causing a sharp decrease in combat power for their respective regions.

This wasn't the outcome they wanted to see.

The massive sea beast tide drew closer and closer. Those deep-sea leviathans, each like small mountains, radiated terrifying pressure.

They were twisted, powerful, bizarre - mutated into ugly, grotesque forms, with some even unrecognizable as to what kind of creature they had mutated from.

Their ferocious appearances and piercing howls made many soldiers from both regions tense up.

If fighting really broke out, how would they deal with so many sea monsters?

Probably Cadillus alone could eliminate half of them!

Anyone below squad leader level would be completely helpless against such a lineup.

This was also a key reason why Cadillus's superhuman ability index was set at 18,000 points.

He was a genuine war machine - a single person equivalent to a large modern fleet!

The sea beast tide and the combined fleet from Columbus Ocean and other countries stopped about six or seven nautical miles away on the sea surface.

They didn't launch an attack.

Meanwhile, Li Tianyang's side received a communication request.

"From the Columbus Ocean Navy."

Hearing this, Li Tianyang's expression darkened, but he still turned and walked toward Xuanwu's interior.

Situ Xin, as the second-in-command for this operation, naturally followed along.

The communication lasted quite a while - a full half hour or more.

Zhang Yi, completely unconcerned, leaned against Lele's massive body to rest.

As if none of this had anything to do with him.

The others had no way of knowing the negotiation results and could only wait here.

But compared to Zhang Yi, everyone else felt somewhat nervous to varying degrees.

After all, the current situation could escalate into combat at any moment.

Watching Zhang Yi slacking off, Qinglong couldn't help but approach and ask:

"How can you be so carefree? At a time like this, aren't you afraid fighting might break out?"

Zhang Yi gave him a reassuring gesture: "It's fine. Running away is what I'm best at!"

The moment these words left his mouth, Qinglong's expression instantly froze.

Deng Shentong and the other Jiangnan Region superhumans showed embarrassed expressions, each turning their faces away as if to say they didn't know Zhang Yi.

Meanwhile, the East Sea Region superhumans couldn't hold back their laughter.

The number one expert of Jiangnan Region, a master codenamed Chaos - they had thought he would be some tough character.

Who would have thought he was someone who only thought about how to escape when arriving on the battlefield?

It was truly laughable.

"Are all the people Jiangnan Region sends like this?"

"Ah, they've probably been staying in comfortable places for too long."

"When there are no tigers in the mountains, the monkey proclaims himself king. If he were in our region, he'd probably only qualify as an ordinary fleet commander. He wouldn't even make it into the Four Spirits!"

"Absolutely! Every one of our Four Spirits Fleet members is a battle-hardened, first-class elite!"

Facing the discussions around him, Zhang Yi remained completely unbothered.

He never had any interest in being some hero anyway, so why bother seeking others' admiration?

That stuff couldn't put food on the table, so it wasn't much use to him.