

# The Interstellar Queen of Scavengers

*Chapter 16: Chapter 16: Subtle Changes*

Deep in the night when all was quiet, after walking through several streets and turning a corner, Ji You returned home. She closed the house's metallic roof and turned on the transparent light layer—this way, she could enjoy the stars in the night sky without going out.

This kind of high-tech, which could change a solid roof to an open one with just the press of a switch, was originally thought by Ji You to be very expensive. However, due to technological advancements, it was quite affordable. Virtually every household in the Alliance had such a device installed, marking it as one of the most basic equipment.

Ji You grabbed a soft mat and laid it directly in the living room. As she lay down and faced the starlight, she entered the Star Network. Her first step was to visit her online store and check the sales of the newly listed necklaces.

However—

The traffic increased by 100+, but not a single necklace had sold.

Ji You was very disappointed.

She mockingly thought to herself that such perfect 'artworks' she crafted by hand were not appreciated by anyone, truly a waste of talents.

Thinking about the balance in her account, Ji You had no time to be dejected, heartbroken, or upset... She dove back into her personal homeland, picked up an axe, and busied herself chopping wood. For some reason, she did not find it as strenuous as the previous night. It felt easier and her efficiency had greatly improved. Previously, she could only make ten chops in a minute, but now she could make at least fifteen, and even up to twenty.

An hour passed, and the system broadcasted.

Ding-dong—

System: [You have worked for 1 hour, successfully collected 100 energy points, exceeding the basic quota by 50 energy points. You have earned 3 credit points this time. The hourly wage of 3 credit points has been automatically transferred to your account. Would you like to continue working?]

Ji You: "Continue."

Tonight's work efficiency had increased so much. Previously, when her hourly earnings were highest, they were around 2.2-2.4, never exceeding 2.5, but tonight it had already reached 3 credit points per hour.

Ji You was more than just amazed; she felt absolutely no fatigue; neither spiritual power nor physical strength showed any signs of tiredness. It was indeed peculiar.

Immersed in her tasks, Ji You chopped wood while pondering what could be the rationale behind this.

One hour passed.

Two hours passed.

Three hours passed.

...

Ding-dong—

System: [You have continuously worked for 6 hours. For the sake of your health, the system advises you to stop working now. Would you like to stop immediately?]

"Stop."

Ji You wiped the sweat off her forehead.

After laboring tirelessly for 6 hours, she hardly felt strained during the first hour. Only in the second hour did she begin to feel a bit tired. The third hour was tiring. The fourth hour was tiresome, yet bearable.

The fifth hour, she endured.

The sixth hour, drenched in sweat, she could no longer continue.

Throwing aside the axe and checking her credit points, this work session had an hourly wage fluctuating between 3.1 and 2.4, soaring to a high of 3.1 credit points, which astonished and delighted Ji You.

She quickly glanced at her account and then logged off.

Lying collapsed on the floor mat, Ji You massaged her throbbing, swollen head. Although her body was extremely weary, her heart felt assured. As long as her physical condition remained at this level, she could survive by doing such laborious work.

This brought Ji You some relief.

The night deepened, and Ji You unknowingly fell asleep.

The next day.

She suddenly got up from the mat, checked the time, and found it was only seven in the morning, she thought to herself: Good, good, it's not too late.

Dressed neatly, she quickly brushed her teeth and washed her face before gulping down half a nutrient solution. Ji You then contacted Xie Chuanqiong, asked for Uncle Xie Yi's ward number, and headed out the door.

After planning to visit Uncle Xie Yi, she intended to go home to study the notes she had borrowed from Sister Liya.

For over half a year since her arrival, her days consisted of scavenging, doing menial labor, and consuming nutrient solutions... these three activities endlessly repeated, over and over... But Ji You refused to continue this decline, she was determined to revive her spirits, continue studying, even though her physical strength and mental powers were naturally much weaker than others, she absolutely could not abandon herself. Through her own diligent and hard work, she resolved to change her current plight.

Taking a Floating Car and arriving at the hospital took only ten minutes.

Xie Yi lay on the hospital bed, wearing a respirator, having just undergone an amputation surgery, he was forced into a deep sleep, but his complexion looked not too bad, and Ji You was relieved.

After visiting Uncle Xie Yi, Ji You left the hospital and returned home.

Since she decided to study, Ji You's attitude was very serious. She purposely set up her desk, turned Sister Liya's study notes into a web version, and read them word by word. Where she found parts she didn't understand, she immediately looked them up.

In such quiet study, she spent half a day until she felt slightly fatigued and then stopped.

Looking at the time, more than half a day had already passed.

Gulu...

Gulu...

Gulu...

Her stomach embarrassingly growled, Ji You slightly helpless, put the books away, turned around, and pulled out a nutrient solution that looked somewhat more appealing, upon opening the package, she immediately smelled an indescribable odor.

Ji You covered her nose.

This taste~

Unchanging for thousands of years.

Can't these food manufacturers improve the flavor a bit?

Ji You complained inwardly, pinching her nose and holding her breath as she swallowed the entire nutrient solution stick. After she finished, she immediately gulped down a large glass of water, and it was a good while before the haunting taste subsided.

Ji You frowned, thinking to herself that she couldn't go on like this anymore, even if she had to break the bank, she had to gather enough money for a meal of natural food!

Immediately, Ji You turned on the Light Computer, found a store selling natural foods, and sorted the prices from low to high. The search results appeared quickly:

Cucumber: Weight 105 grams, Origin: Lianbei Mountain, Selling Price 105 credit points, Shelf life only 3 days 15 hours 23 minutes, Remaining Quantity: 0.

Carrot: Weight 80 grams, Origin: Aisi Plain, Selling Price 90 credit points, Shelf life only 2 days 19 hours 12 minutes, Remaining Quantity: 0.

Qing Fish: Weight 130 grams, Origin: Xiliang Star Seafood Breeding Base, Selling Price 308 credit points, Shelf life only 4 days 09 hours 39 minutes, Remaining Quantity: 0.

...

One by one, the '0's, taunted Ji You silently with their mockery.

Ji You stared, scrolling down one line after another, her heart initially excited, passionate, and fiery, was suddenly thoroughly doused with cold.

Thoroughly chilled.

Haha...

Even food nearing its expiration is still so outrageously expensive, not to mention they have the heartlessness to sell it all out, meaning, even if you want to purchase some discounted items to satisfy a craving, there's no chance.

Her mouth curled into a bitter smile:

The poor really don't even have the privilege to make impulse purchases.

*Chapter 17: Chapter 17: Xie Lingzhi*

Ji You's fervent heart cooled utterly after being doused, and she quickly calmed down, thinking that even if there were leftovers from the discounted items, she didn't have enough money to buy them anyway.

Alas!

Might as well wash up and go to sleep.

Ji You was too disappointed, too disheartened this time; she didn't even check the backend data of her store and just logged off the Star Network, burying herself in sleep.

The next day.

As the daylight brightened, Ji You got up and checked the time, hey, it wasn't even six o'clock yet. Feeling somewhat pleased, Ji You thought she finally hadn't overslept, and somewhat delighted, she hurriedly got up, brushed her teeth, washed her face, ate half a nutrient solution, and then received an outing invitation from Grandma Jenny.

Grandma Jenny said: "You, I'm going to West District with Ryan, Lea, and Aqiong to collect Iron Pear Wood, do you want to come along?" Aqiong is Xie Yi's son, Xie Chuanqiong.

Ji You's eyes lit up, saying: "Of course I do."

Grandma Jenny said: "Then come over to Aqiong's place early for the gathering, we are leaving at 7 o'clock."

Ji You quickly tossed her books aside, stood up, and said: "I'll be right there, make sure to wait for me."

Grandma Jenny laughed, saying: "Alright. We'll wait for you, hurry over then."

The houses of the Xie Family and Grandma Jenny's house were side by side, visiting each other did not even require a detour, just a few steps away. Ji You's home was a bit farther, about a five-minute walk, so Ji You dared not delay. She donned her protective clothing, grabbed her only weapon, an iron axe, and hurried out the door.

When she arrived, everyone was already ready to go, Ji You immediately noticed among them, a figure tall and straight like the pines and cedars. At this moment, slightly curly golden hair clung to his clean forehead, softening his otherwise persistent severity.

Ji You thought she had sneakily glanced at Ryan unnoticed, but Ryan was very sensitive, he met Ji You's gaze and nodded gently, as a greeting.

Looking at the handsome arch of Ryan's eyebrows and those beautiful blue eyes, Ji You's face turned red.

Oh no!

Being caught sneaking a peek, how embarrassing is this?

Ryan, really, could you... just pretend you didn't notice?

Hmph—

Ryan, with so many good attributes, yet still a single dog.

Exactly—

Being single has its reasons!

Ji You thought sulkily, then turned her head, looking at Lea dressed in a dashing manner and smiling said: "Sister Lea, why did you also decide to come collect today?"

Lea wore a black protective suit, naturally tall and slim, this outfit made her look even taller and softened her typically gentle disposition, adding a touch of aggressiveness.

Accompanied by her bright blue eyes, a high ponytail, and a shapely figure...

Such Lea, really was too beautiful.

In contrast, herself, in a drab protective suit, with a hastily tied lackluster bun, and, only a short stature of 165 centimeters... Ji You: "..."

Yingyingying~

She felt self-conscious.

She wanted a tall and curvy figure too.

Unfortunately—

With her Huaxia heritage of yellow skin and black hair, compared to Lea and Ryan with their blue eyes and white skin from Western descent, she naturally didn't have the advantage in height. Moreover, in the interstellar era, human genes had greatly improved compared to ancient times, even women of Huaxia descent like Ji You reached a minimum height of 165 centimeters, which means, Ji You was genuinely short!

Lea looked at the changing expressions on Ji You's face and couldn't help but smile. She raised her hand and rubbed Ji You's adorable bun head, saying with a laugh, "I have a few days off, and since I'm not busy at home, I thought I'd come and make some money with you."

It was the season when Iron Pear Wood was ripe in the wild, and missing this time would mean missing out. Seeing Grandma work so hard, Lea naturally wanted to help her, so she insisted on coming along.

Ji You dodged Lea's playful hands, hugging her head, saying, "Sister Liya, stop rubbing, it will fall apart if you rub it too much."

Lea chuckled, "It feels so good, I can't help myself."

Ji You: "..."

"Tch~"

While the two girls were joking around, a cold snicker suddenly sounded nearby. Ji You looked up and saw Xie Lingzhi, the daughter of Uncle Xie Yi; she had yellow skin, black hair, black eyes, and was about 1.7 meters tall. She stood with her arms crossed, watching the two girls play with a cold, mocking smile on her lips.

Ji You darkened her face, turned her head away, and ignored what Xie Lingzhi might think.

Boring.

This girl wasn't like her and Lea, so they just didn't mesh. Every time they talked to Xie Lingzhi, they barely exchanged three sentences before it turned awkward. Just like now, without even speaking to her, the atmosphere had completely stiffened.

Sigh!

Xie Lingzhi, with her arms crossed, saw that her single cold snort had stopped Ji You and Lea's laughter. She hooked a mocking smile and coldly said, "With a spiritual power of E and Physical Strength F, running to the wilderness is just like delivering food to the Star Beast."

"Why not just stay at home and do the hard labor honestly?"

"Going to the wilderness, isn't it just deliberately holding the team back?"

As Xie Lingzhi's words fell, the atmosphere on the scene completely froze.

Xie Chuanqiong shouted loudly, "Xie Lingzhi, shut up!"

Xie Lingzhi lifted her head angrily.

Xie Chuanqiong said coldly, "If you don't speak, no one asks you to."

"If you guys are taking her with you, then I'm not going!" Xie Lingzhi turned her head and went into the house.

Xie Chuanqiong looked at Ji You and said very apologetically, "You, don't mind her, she speaks without thinking."

Ji You had heard countless cold taunts like this from Xie Lingzhi's mouth before and had long developed an immunity. Anyway, just treat Xie Lingzhi's words as flatulence, and treat her as air.

So, she pursed her lips, shrugged indifferently, and said, "Don't worry, I'm not holding any grudges."

If she really minded, she would have been infuriated countless times already.

Sigh~

Here.

Ji You entered the Xie Family's house and greeted Uncle Xie Yi, who was lying in bed, "Uncle Xie Yi, are you feeling better?"

Xie Yi saw Ji You and wanted to sit up, but he had just had an amputation and couldn't move around the bed. Ji You hurriedly said, "Please lie down, don't get up."

Having experienced hardship himself, the neighbors had generously contributed financially, and Xie Yi was very grateful. He first scolded Ji You, saying, "You, you can barely afford your own food, why are you giving me so much money? Later I'll have Aqiong transfer the money back to you."

Ji You deliberately frowned, angrily saying, "Uncle Xie Yi, this money is my little bit of consideration for you to recuperate, if you send it back, I'm going to be mad."

After several rounds of refusal, they finally dispelled Xie Yi's intention.

A tear twinkled in Xie Yi's eyes, he raised his hand to rub his eyes, then suddenly smiled, "You, thank you. I feel much better. In half a month, I'll be able to undergo the leg transplant surgery."

*Chapter 18: Chapter 18: Sarcastic Remarks*

"Hmm?"

"Has the money arrived?" Ji You's eyes flashed a hint of joy as she said, "It would be great if the leg could be attached sooner, then we could go pick up trash and collect materials in the wilderness together."

Before the original owner committed suicide, due to the severe impact of plagiarism and copyright infringement, not only was the original owner's academic achievements canceled and expelled from school, they were deprived of their scholarship and forced to pay a total of 1.6 million credit points in damages to the victim, Xu Siyu. However, Xu Siyu, being kindhearted, merely symbolically accepted 100,000 credit points, and then let the matter rest, stating she would pursue no further responsibility from Ji You.

But!!!

That 100,000 was all the original owner had, including the little remaining savings from their parents and compensation money, plus the money the original owner had saved over the years through frugal living, working part-time, and earning scholarships... Without this 100,000, it was virtually impossible for the original owner to leave Garbage Planet No. 101.

The cunning and sly Xu Siyu knew exactly how much Ji You had in savings, and her actions not only showcased her benevolence and kindness to the public, winning a lot of favor, but also plunged Ji You into a dire financial situation.

In this move, she killed two birds with one stone, beautifully executed.

The way Xu Siyu acted not only crushed the original owner's spirit but also completely broke her will; after Ji You traveled to this world, she faced such dire straits, with a zero balance in her account and no food at home. Poor Ji You was so hungry she nearly ran out to the yard to eat dirt...

It was at this time that Uncle Xie Yi and Grandma Jenny appeared, knocking on Ji You's door and giving her a bag of nutrient solution, telling her to cheer up, that as long as she lived well, there was hope, and one day, she would clear her name.

Ji You was deeply moved at that moment.

At the same time, she also felt some regret; if Uncle Xie Yi and Grandma Jenny had come a little earlier, the original owner might not have died.

Sigh~

Uncle Xie Yi and Grandma Jenny not only brought food to Ji You but also invited her to join their scavenging team, which provided a breath of fresh air for Ji You's impoverished situation. Thus, she followed the group, working hard on Star Network during the day and picking up trash at night... This lasted for more than half a year.

It was all thanks to the help from Uncle Xie Yi and Grandma Jenny at that time, Ji You was very grateful to them, a kindness she would remember for a lifetime. This was also the reason Ji You could endure Xie Lingzhi's occasional harsh sarcasm and side remarks.

Hearing about Uncle Xie Yi's leg being soon ready for a new transplant, Ji You was genuinely happy.

Xie Yi explained with a smile, saying, "It was Ryan who secretly took out 10,000 credit points and gave it to the hospital, allowing the doctor to cultivate a new leg for me immediately."

Ji You listened, not too surprised; among their group of people, everyone was from the lower class of society, only Ryan had a bit more economic strength than the others. It was not odd for Ryan to be able to take out 10,000 credit points at once.

It's easy to add flowers to the brocade, but difficult to send charcoal in snowy weather.

Ji You's feeling for Ryan grew a bit more fond.

Xie Yi said, "Thanks to Ryan, but I can't take this money for free. I have to pay it back. I've agreed with Ryan to pay him back 500 credit points every month." It's one thing for someone to help you financially in an emergency for medical treatment, but one can't just accept it without any guilt; otherwise, it signifies a problem with one's moral character.

Xie Yi, forty years old this year, with his wife having passed away early, raised his two children alone. After he suddenly encountered this incident, it seemed like his children grew up overnight, becoming more sensible and considerate. Taking advantage of the current holiday, they proposed to their father to accompany Ryan to collect materials in the wilderness to earn some living expenses. After some thought, Xie Yi felt that he could not always keep his children in a greenhouse, and agreed to their request.

The family of three are now trying hard to find ways to repay Ryan's big loan as soon as possible.

Ji You smiled and said, "Yes, the money definitely has to be repaid, but Uncle Xie Yi, don't worry, take care of your health first, and then slowly repay the money."

Xie Yi said, "Although Ryan doesn't rush me, how can I not be anxious? Ah! Right, when you go to the West District to collect Iron Pear Wood, you must be very careful, you cannot be careless again."

Ji You nodded, "Yep, we know."

Under Xie Yi's repeated worries and reminders, the group finally set out. Ji You glanced at Xie Lingzhi who was following the team. This girl kept saying she wouldn't go, but still silently followed them—it was really—tsundere.

Seemingly sensing Ji You's gaze, Xie Lingzhi suddenly turned her head back and stared at her fiercely, sneering, "What are you looking at? If you encounter danger later, I definitely won't lend a hand."

Ji You: "..."

This is not being tsundere.

This is asking for a beating!

Forget it.

Ignore her.

Ji You immediately grabbed Sister Liya's hand and whispered, "Sister Liya, let's stick together later."

Lea nodded with a smile, "Okay."

Lea's spiritual power and Physical Strength are both D-level; although her talents aren't outstanding, they are certainly not bad. She has systematically learned combat training in school, so protecting Ji You would be quite easy for her.

Hearing this, Xie Lingzhi looked disdainful and immediately strode ahead. She carefully moved closer to Ryan and spoke in a gentle, soft voice, "Brother Ryan, can I stick with you later?"

Ryan, upon hearing this, kept his eyes straight and said, "It's not convenient."

Xie Lingzhi, upon hearing this, looked disappointed and somewhat anxiously said, "My Physical Strength is C-level, and my spiritual power is C-level, I definitely won't hold you back." She was so proud because she thought she had the capital to be arrogant; she was the most talented girl on this street, even Lea couldn't compare to her.

Therefore, Xie Lingzhi has always looked down on Ji You, whose spiritual power and Physical Strength are both at the bottom. She thought Ji You, with such talents and strength, entering the wilderness was akin to seeking death. Such a person should just stay peacefully within the protected area.

Xie Lingzhi said, "Brother Ryan, trust me, I absolutely won't drag you down."

Ryan suddenly stopped, explaining, "The place I'm going to is the inner area, it's very dangerous, it's not convenient to bring you along."

Normally, Xie Yi, Ji You, and Grandma Jenny only collected materials in the outer area of the West District; they didn't dare to venture into the inner area. Ryan was looking for materials not like Iron Pear Wood, White Dry Grass, these low-star materials, but for the likes of Jade White Flower, Spotted Tiger Teeth, Xuan Shen... These high-star materials, which required venturing deep into the inner area, where the danger was dozens of times higher than the outer area.

Therefore, Ryan never took Xie Yi, Ji You, and the others.

Upon hearing Ryan's destination, Xie Lingzhi's open mouth gradually closed.

Inner area—

With her capabilities, entering would be suicidal.

*Chapter 19: Chapter 19: Entering the Wilderness*

Xie Lingzhi, well aware of her place, immediately kept quiet and ceased her requests for Ryan to take her.

The group moved briskly and soon arrived at the border of West District.

Ryan stopped first, and everyone else followed, standing next to the protective net and observing the outside from a distance. Beyond the protective net lay endless parched yellow and scorched earth, without a speck of green in sight. In fact, not just the West District but the East District, North District, and 90% of the planet's land were barren and depleted like this, with a lack of resources which made development of planet 101 impossible.

Thus, it could only become a garbage planet.

After negotiating with the personnel guarding the protective net and obtaining permission to travel, Ryan then led the group to the gathering point to board the Floating Airship.

During this season each year, many people set out to the wilderness to collect Iron Pear Wood. Because a robust protective net separated them, many couldn't get out, and some even broke the net in their desperation to escape. Eventually... when the situation escalated and became uncontrollable, the Administrator set a few rules to regulate: ① All personnel going out are responsible for their own safety, and in the event of any danger, the government will not dispatch rescue. ② The protective net opens at 8:00 AM, no waiting if late. ③ At 6:00 PM, the protective net closes promptly, no waiting if late. ④ Each person must pay a tax of 1 credit point.

Just those four points; as long as one signs the agreement in advance, anyone wishing to explore outside is allowed by the planetary administration.

People flowed continuously to adventure in the wilderness, giving rise to a group of airships specializing in transporting clients. A ride costs only 1 credit point, directly flying to a fixed starting point in the suburbs, which greatly facilitates adventurers, especially since if one doesn't have a Mecha, an airship, a Floating Car... relying solely on walking, who knows how long it would take to reach the border areas where materials grow.

Ji You and the others boarded the airship; this was a small airship that could carry up to 50 people at most. Ji You and her group boarded and filled it to exactly 50 people; seeing the count, the pilot quickly started the airship.

A round trip took 5 minutes. The airship had only one hour in the morning to board passengers, allowing a maximum of 6 trips. That's why the pilot wanted to make the most of the time, even an extra trip could earn dozens more credit points.

About 5 minutes later, the airship stopped at a very spacious location. From there, looking into the distance, one could vaguely see a lot of shrubbery, the target for Ji You, Lea, and the rest of the group. Further beyond, the vegetation was much richer, but correspondingly more dangerous. As for even further, one could only see a swath of deep green, the details of which were unclear.

Actually, planet 101 was not completely a desert; at its inland heart lay a very lush jungle, deep in West District, filled with numerous Star Beasts and fraught with peril; ordinary people dared not tread lightly.

After all 50 people disembarked, the airship quickly departed. Those who stepped off the airship were all wearing protective clothing and carried baskets or bags, and of course, some were empty-handed and appeared at ease, as their tools were actually stored inside the Space Button.

The current location was a temporary stopping point set up by the airship operators. The nearby shrubbery had already been stripped clean by people, to gather quality Iron Pear Wood one had to go deeper.

Grandma Jenny asked, "Ryan, which direction should we head in today?"

Ryan looked into the distance and pondered for a moment before responding, "I plan to head in the Southwest direction."

Grandma Jenny said, "Then, we'll go with you towards the Southwest, but we'll only stay at the edge, not venturing deep, is that okay?" Being near Ryan, with his strong Combat Power, made it convenient to receive his protection.

Hearing this, Ryan nodded, "Hmm, follow me then."

Xie Lingzhi looked at Ryan's tall figure, her eyes filled with infatuation... Hearing his words, she quickly ran to catch up, staying close to Ryan, and asked adoringly, "Brother Ryan, did you bring a Mecha along?"

Daring to venture deep alone is impossible without a Mecha.

And having a Mecha is everyone's dream.

Ryan remained silent.

Xie Lingzhi did not receive a reply, but she did not mind; after all, Ryan was a man of few words, and his silence was normal.

Ryan led the way, with Xie Lingzhi following closely behind. Grandma Jenny, Lea, and Ji You walked in the middle; Xie Chuanqiong willingly brought up the rear. The group slowly headed southwest. Some people saw them and, thinking Ryan was strong, wanted to follow for protection, while others did not want to take the risk and just stayed near the passenger airship stop to scavenge...

Xie Lingzhi caught sight of these tag-alongs and couldn't help but purse her lips, turning to ask Ryan, "Brother Ryan, are we just letting them follow? Shouldn't we drive them away?"

She felt that with so many people following, they would definitely compete with her for resources—

Ryan's brow furrowed slightly; in truth, he was not used to Xie Lingzhi's chatter. All along the way, Xie Lingzhi stuck close to him, bombarding him with questions non-stop, barely giving him a moment of peace. Ryan, exasperated, only responded selectively, occasionally giving a perfunctory reply.

He preferred quiet teammates, but since it was Xie Lingzhi's first time exploring the West District, she was very excited and curious. Seeing her as just a young girl, Ryan didn't want to dampen her spirits and thus didn't say anything.

About half an hour later, there was a noticeable amount of Iron Pear Wood around. Some people following Ryan's team, upon seeing this, couldn't resist stopping to gather with their tools.

Later on, they came across a small grove of Iron Pear Wood and another group stopped.

...

This way, the group gradually decreased significantly, and in the end, only Ji You, Grandma Jenny, Lea, Xie Lingzhi, and Xie Chuanqiong were left; there were no outsiders.

After entering the jungle, Ji You clutched her axe tightly, raising her vigilance to the highest level, fearing a sudden encounter with danger. Everyone else did the same, and even the usually noisy Xie Lingzhi gripped her weapon tightly and quieted down considerably.

The only sounds were the soft whisper of the wind and the footsteps of the few people.

After crossing a small hill, Ryan suddenly said, "I've been here before. Just ten more minutes inside, there's a large area of very high-quality Iron Pear Wood. You can gather there. I've checked the surrounding area before; there are no dangerous Star Beasts."

Xie Chuanqiong said, "Brother Ryan, lead the way."

Stumbling along, Ryan finally stopped and said, "We are here."

#### *Chapter 20: Chapter 20: Harvesting Iron Pear Wood*

Ji You looked up and found that behind the small hill, there was a stretch of Iron Pear Wood. The Iron Pear Wood plant grows quite uniquely—before maturation, its branches and leaves spread out like umbrellas of mushrooms; after maturation, all the branches and leaves fall off, leaving it resembling a bunch of wooden stakes. At this moment, the branches and leaves of Iron Pear Wood had already fallen off, leaving only bare trunks, some straight like stakes, and some slightly curved, with most trunks having a diameter of about ten centimeters.

Iron Pear Wood has low requirements for its growing environment, and its rhizomes, fruit cores, branches, and seeds can all reproduce. The fallen branches and leaves from each year can grow into a new Iron Pear Wood the next year as long as they don't rot—

For those who go to harvest it, even if they chop down its trunk, as long as the roots are still buried in the soil, it will sprout new branches in the spring of the next year. It's indeed a very easily reproduced economical plant.

The most economically valuable part of the Iron Pear Wood is the fibers in the trunk and bark, which are very flexible and have a wide range of uses. Ji You and his team aimed to collect these fiber tissues.

At this moment, in this place.

One.

Two.

Three.

...

At a glance, it's almost countless!

So many!

Made a fortune!

Made a fortune!

Made a fortune!

A joyful light flashed in Ji You's eyes as he sincerely exclaimed, "Indeed, sticking with Ryan was the right choice!"

Ryan: "..."

Lea smiled and said, "I want to cling to this thigh too!"

Ryan: "..."

Xie Lingzhi had already rushed over and was circling Ryan, her face full of admiration: "Brother Ryan, when did you discover this place? You are amazing!"

Surrounded by so many girls, giving him starry eyes, Ryan felt very uncomfortable. He held a tense expression, his mouth tightly shut, his gaze fixed on the distance, only the slight redness of his earlobes revealing a bit of his embarrassment.

Grandma Jenny watched this scene and shook her head with a smile, "Alright, you girls, stop bothering Ryan. Let's all spread out and hurry up to collect the Iron Pear Wood."

With that said, Grandma Jenny took out a machete and was about to start collecting.

Ryan suddenly said, "Hold on, everyone get your weapons ready. Aqiong, you be on alert. I'll take a round in the vicinity to check for any dangers before we start collecting."

Xie Chuanqiong nodded, "Good. Ryan, go ahead and explore with ease, I'll handle things here."

Ryan: "Alright."

Leaving those words behind, Ryan went to explore further away.

The others didn't dare to move recklessly but instead closely watched their surroundings, fearing that a formidable Star Beast might suddenly emerge.

After scouting around for about ten minutes, Ryan returned and said to everyone, "I've checked within ten miles nearby; there are no dangerous Star Beasts, only two or three long-eared rabbits. If you see them, just be careful to avoid them."

Xie Chuanqiong asked, "Ryan, are you heading deeper into the jungle now?"

Ryan nodded: "Yes."

Xie Chuanqiong cupped his fists, saying, "Take care."

Ryan said, "Qiong, you protect them. If there's an emergency, contact me immediately."

Xie Chuanqiong replied, "Don't worry, I will be careful."

Here, apart from Ryan, Xie Chuanqiong has the highest Combat Power, with a Spiritual Level of B and a Physical Level of C. Such talent is top-notch on the garbage planet. This year, Xie Chuanqiong has already been admitted to the Lanyue Star Military Academy and will soon become a Military Academy Student.

Xie Chuanqiong is a reserved and reticent person. After speaking with Ryan, he quickly assigned several people to their designated gathering areas: "Lingzhi, you're with me, we will take the left side, Grandma Jenny, you're with Lea and You on the right side. Everyone keeps a distance of 500 meters and call immediately if anything happens. The others must rush to provide support quickly, understand?"

Ji You nodded, "Mhm."

The others did not object.

Especially Xie Lingzhi, pleased not to be with Ji You on the same side, didn't want it to change. Besides, the harvesting of Iron Pear Wood depends on individual ability, and whatever is gathered belongs to the individual. Naturally, Xie Lingzhi prefers to be with her brother to avoid having to help others.

After Ryan left, Xie Lingzhi became silent and aloof, unwilling to speak with the others. She turned and headed left.

Xie Chuanqiong watched his sister's actions with a helpless shake of his head. He then turned to Ji You, Lea, and the others, saying, "You, make sure to stay alert. At any sign of trouble, immediately tell Lea and the others."

Here, Ji You has the lowest Combat Power. Even Grandma Jenny's talent surpasses hers, so Xie Chuanqiong is particularly worried about her and gave her specific instructions.

Ji You squinted her eyes with a smile, "Brother Qiong, don't worry, I understand."

Xie Chuanqiong then turned and followed his sister.

Grandma Jenny looked at Xie Chuanqiong's tall, lean figure and smiled, "Qiong is such a good kid, and he's about to go study at the Military Academy. He has a bright future ahead. Lingzhi is a bit impulsive, but she also has good talent."

Saying so, Grandma Jenny felt quite envious of Xie Yi, who at a young age, managed to raise two children on his own, and now that the children have grown up, his blessed time is coming soon.

Lea held onto Grandma, saying, "Grandma, let's get on with the gathering quickly."

Ji You pointed left and right, saying, "Grandma Jenny, how about you and Sister Lea on this side, and I on this side? Let's not exceed a distance of 5 meters?"

Lea replied, "Yes, let's go with that arrangement."

The Iron Pear Wood here is of excellent quality. Whichever side is chosen for gathering, it's the same. Now, it's important to rush and gather as much as possible.

With the arrangement settled, Ji You didn't waste any more words. She pulled out her axe and a short knife sheathed at her waist. These were ordinary tools, similar to those of the 21st century, clearly inadequate for quickly killing a Star Beast—an energy weapon would be more reliable. However, for chopping down trees, they were very useful.

Ji You looked around and picked an Iron Pear Wood tree with a diameter of nearly 15 centimeters. She drew her axe and fiercely chopped at the bottom of the tree.

Clang—

A crisp sound, only shredding a layer of the bark.

Ji You chopped again.

Clang—

Another layer peeled off.

Having practiced axe swinging in the Star Network, using the axe in reality was quite smooth for Ji You. After several continuous chops, she paused to catch her breath. Bending down, she closely examined the freshly chopped surface and found she had cut through almost a third. It would take just another ten or so minutes to sever it completely.

Iron Pear Wood's fibers are fascinating. When still integrated with the roots and bark, they are relatively easy to cut using ordinary iron or steel knives—it takes just a bit of time. Once extracted from the tree, they rapidly harden, becoming tough in about a minute—too tough for ordinary bladed weapons to cut, and even low-level energy weapons struggle to make an easy cut—

This characteristic greatly facilitates their collection.