

Scavengers 751

Chapter 751: Punishment

Surveillance room.

Mu Jianling had a grim look on her face, her expression seeming rather displeased as she raised her hand, gently tapping the table.

Then, Mu Jianling said: "Group 1-9, food supply will be deducted for today and tomorrow."

The students of Group 1-9, upon suddenly hearing Teacher Mu's voice, broke out into instant wailing.

Food for 2 days!

This is practically a death sentence by starvation!

Mu Jianling's face remained stern as she continued: "Groups 10, 13, 19... your food supply for today is deducted, and your current assignment is extended by one day!"

Hearing the punishments announced by Teacher Mu Jianling, these groups of students evidently had been mentally prepared, thus their facial expressions remained composed.

...

On the first day of the assessment, Mu Jianling sat in the surveillance room, declaring through the broadcast the rewards and punishments for the students one by one. But so far, there have only been punishments, with no group receiving any reward.

...

Han Zheng stood as straight as pines next to Mu Jianling. As Mu Jianling spoke, his dark face was expressionless, with only the light in his eyes shining brightly like stars.

Seeing Teacher Mu's expression growing heavier, Han Zheng couldn't help but say: "Teacher, this batch of juniors is already very outstanding. Their current performance is even better than our batch."

As the sound of Han Zheng's words fell, Teacher Mu Jianling gently raised her hand and massaged her forehead. Han Zheng wasn't sure if he had misheard or misunderstood, but he heard a very faint sigh from the teacher.

Han Zheng's expression grew tense.

Teacher Mu was known for her strong character and had always been very indifferent in her dealings. Hearing her sigh was almost impossible.

Just as Han Zheng became certain that he was under an illusion and had heard wrong, suddenly—

Mu Jianling said: "Too slow!"

Han Zheng: "Teacher?"

Mu Jianling spoke in a low voice: "Although they are outstanding, they have very little time left to grow."

Upon hearing this, Han Zheng's face also darkened.

Indeed.

Too slow.

Even a genius needs sufficient time to temper themselves to stand on their own.

But the storm that is coming won't care if you are a genius, a mediocrity, or anyone else... It will sweep up everything in its path, and nothing and nobody it encounters can escape it.

Silence.

A few seconds later.

Mu Jianling regained her composure, raising her hand, and switched the holographic display to Group 44.

The silence in the room eased a bit, and Han Zheng took the initiative to say: "This group of juniors is the best in this batch. Each has their own strengths. If I were to pick teammates for my Vanguard Camp squad, out of these 10 people, 5 or 6 are excellent prospects! The remaining few, with some training, should also be good."

Han Zheng said this to try and lighten the mood of Teacher Mu, who was clearly not in good spirits just moments ago. But as soon as he spoke, he noticed Teacher Mu's complexion turn grim.

Then—

Mu Jianling suddenly said: "Group 44, all members will have their food supply for today deducted!"

Han Zheng: "..."

This group had completed their task exceptionally well; by rights, there shouldn't be any punishment.

Han Zheng sneaked a glance at Teacher Mu Jianling and noticed she was frowning deeply, her expression extremely displeased. He was even more confused now.

At this moment, the quiet surveillance room was suddenly filled with a clear and exceptionally loud voice:

"Teacher, I object!"

Han Zheng: "Hmm?"

Mu Jianling also raised her eyebrows slightly: "Oh?"

Teacher Mu Jianling had already connected her communication number to the broadcast system of the surveillance room, allowing students to communicate directly with her from the surveillance room.

After Ji You made that statement, Chu Jiaojiao, Yue Qiyuan, Yue Qiguang, Lou, Lance, Xuzhou, and others all looked at her with eyes full of admiration for a brave warrior.

Under the tense gaze of everyone and the seemingly nonchalant but incredibly frosty 'Oh' from Teacher Mu, Ji You felt a bit panicked inside but remained extremely composed on the surface. With a stern face, she said, "Teacher! I don't accept this! Just because you are the examiner doesn't mean you can arbitrarily change the established rules! Our group completed the task's requirements very standardly within the specified time. You can't punish us for that. By punishing us, I have strong reason to believe you are abusing your power for personal gain, deliberately deducting everyone's food."

Hiss~

Number 4444 sure has guts!

Not only the members of Group 44, but when the other groups heard these words, they couldn't help but almost applaud for Number 4444!

Everyone had to admit that, not to mention anything else, her sheer audacity was truly admirable!

Silence.

Dead silence.

Just when everyone thought that Group 44 led by Number 4444, Ji You, was about to face a hammering punishment, a light laugh suddenly came from the broadcast.

Wait?

Laughing?

Many couldn't help but doubt their ears, suspecting they were hallucinating:

—Teacher Mu laughed?

In fact, everyone heard correctly because Mu Jianling continued with a laugh: "Since you don't accept it, then the punishment for your group is canceled."

Huh?

Everyone was shocked: "Just like that?"

Upon hearing this, Ji You's face turned dark:

This is bad!

Something's wrong!

Sure enough—

Mu Jianling continued: "Group leader Ji You shirked her duties, allowing her teammate to harm the dairy cow, thus Ji You's food supply is canceled for two days."

Ji You: "!!!"

Everyone: "!!!"

Ji You took a deep breath: "Teacher, I took corrective measures, and besides, the cow has been treated and returned to lead the herd again! I don't believe I have been negligent; on the contrary, I have been very responsible. When my teammate made a mistake, I did not give up on him but promptly sought to remedy the situation and minimized the loss."

Mu Jianling said indifferently, "The cow broke a horn, and that is your fault."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You, with a bitter face and taking deep breaths, said, "Teacher..."

Before she could utter another word, Mu Jianling interrupted with a cold snort, "Make any more noise, and I'll add another day!"

Ji You: "..."

Immediately, Ji You loudly said, "Teacher, your punishment is truly wise and valiant! I firmly uphold and will carry out your orders! Next time, I will definitely not make such a mistake again."

She said these words so loudly! Anyone unaware would think she was actually happy.

Mu Jianling nodded lightly: "Good that you understand. As the leader, you must set an example and also learn to lead your teammates to progress together, rather than just watching them be foolish and make mistakes."

Ji You nodded vigorously: "I understand your good intentions, teacher."

At the same time—

Ji You swore through gritted teeth in her heart: Next time Old Lady Mu gets a chance to punish me, I'm going to—put a sack over her head and give Old Lady Mu a thrashing!

Ahem...

Mu Jianling: "Very well."

Once the punishment was all announced, Mu Jianling then cut off the broadcast. Following that, an unusual hint of a smile appeared on her indifferent face.

Witnessing all this, Han Zheng: "..."

Han Zheng couldn't help but say, "This little junior Ji You has a pretty solid mentality."

Despite being hit and teased one after another, she still manages to stay so well-balanced.

Upon hearing this, Mu Jianling's lips curved slightly, and she said, "People with thick skin just have that going for them."

Chapter 752: Epic Acting

Cow Farm.

Ji You took the punishment for the entire team with her own strength, a selfless act that deeply shook all members of Group 44.

Chu Jiaojiao stared at Ji You's darkened face, looked and looked, and after quite a while, she suddenly patted her chest and said loudly, "Classmate Ji You, thank you for getting our dinner back for us, don't worry, I'll eat an extra bowl of rice for you!"

Ji You: "..."

The first half of the sentence still sounded human, but the latter half was no better than an animal's talk. Hearing this, Ji You's complexion turned especially dark, and she couldn't help but curse, "Dream on, you still want to eat more for dinner? A single low-level nutrition will do for you!"

Sheng Qingyan covered the corner of her mouth, adding, "And it's the low-level nutrition that you paid for yourself."

Given Teacher Mu's character, this scenario was clearly very possible, and Chu Jiaojiao's face immediately soured: "Can't you guys speak like normal humans?"

Suddenly, Ji You waved her hands and spoke loudly, "Alright, stop talking about these irrelevant things, let's discuss important matters! In 30 minutes, we have to drive the herd of water buffalo back to their pen. What do you guys think we should do?"

Hmm?

Has number 4444 had a change of heart? She isn't clinging to the fact that she took the punishment alone, and she isn't demanding payback from everyone for allowing them a meal?

That's... a bit odd.

Everyone was somewhat puzzled, especially the chief culprit Yue Qiguang, who had already braced himself for the anticipated savage vengeance from number 4444.

Could it be... there was nothing?

With no response around, Ji You asked, "What? Why are you all looking at me with those strange eyes? What do you want to do?"

"Cough cough..."

Yue Qiguang coughed forcefully as he toughened his scalp before speaking loudly, "Number 4444, don't beat around the bush or sneak around, just come out with it, how do you want to deal with dad? This situation started because of dad, and if dad has caused it, dad will bear it alone!"

Although Yue Qiguang normally acted quite arrogant and conceited, he wasn't one to shirk responsibility, so he made it clear for Ji You to use whatever tricks she had directly.

Beside him, Zhang Ye gave Ji You a small glance, also saying, "Yeah, Classmate Ji You, whatever you want us to do, just say it, don't set us up, okay?"

Lou chimed in, "Right, it makes everyone tense when you do this."

Lance nodded vigorously, "That's right, that's right."

Chu Jiaojiao, Sheng Qingyan, Yue Qiyuan, Shen Changqing, including Xuzhou, although they didn't verbalize it, clearly agreed with Zhang Ye and the others.

Ji You: "..."

Ji You didn't speak immediately, she paced with hands behind her back.

One step.

Two steps.

Three steps.

...

After she circled around each teammate, she finally let out a heavy sigh. Then, she looked up at 45-degree angle towards the sky—

Silence.

The surroundings were so quiet that you could hear a pin drop.

The vestiges of the setting sun casted on Ji You's slightly thin figure, seemingly adding a sense of desolation to her presence.

A breeze blew by, lifting a strand of Ji You's hair. Under the gentle wind, she appeared even more solitary, and it seemed that a layer of misunderstood sorrow shrouded her within a few dozen meters...

Everyone: "..."

Hmm???

Had they gone too far?

Cough cough...

Even though everyone often joked around with number 4444, deep down, they truly acknowledged number 4444 as a teammate and as their Captain.

—As long as number 4444 didn't play too many tricks, everything could be discussed.

second.

seconds.

seconds.

...

When the atmosphere became oppressive to a certain extent, and everyone's faces showed guilt, shame, helplessness... In sum, a variety of complex emotions mixed together, Ji You finally let out another sigh—

She turned her head to look at everyone, and on her fair and delicate face, a touch of suppressed sadness appeared:

"So, this is how you all see me?"

She asked.

When she asked, she tried her best to sound calm, but her occasionally trembling shoulders still betrayed a hint of her nervousness and sadness.

Everyone: "..."

—Are we really being too harsh?

Doubts rose in everyone's hearts once again.

Before an answer came, Ji You's clear, bright eyes swiftly flashed with helplessness. Then, to everyone's surprise, she curled her lips into a smile and said, "Alright."

Alright.

That was all Ji You said. Without another word, she silently turned her back, lifted her feet, and walked towards the riverbank.

One step.

Two steps.

Three steps.

...

She didn't look back, and each step she took was quick, stable, and forceful.

It was only then that Chu Jiaojiao, Yue Qiyuan, Shen Changqing, and the others realized that Ji You was not only short but also frail and skinny. However—

Even though Ji You seemed to be too weak to stand a gust of wind, she had always been assertive. Even in her weakest moments, she never truly succumbed to reality...

This Ji You had quietly and imperceptibly erased everyone's impression of her past frailty.

...

Silence spread among the people—

"Hey—" Yue Qiguang suddenly grabbed his hair and shouted at Ji You, "Hey, you idiot with number 4444, where the hell are you going all by yourself?"

Ji You's figure visibly shook, but she didn't turn back and continued walking forward, replying:

"I'm going to round up the cows."

Hearing this, everyone looked at each other, seeing the embarrassment in each other's eyes.

Chu Jiaojiao clutched her chest, clearly unable to bear the guilt in her heart, and shouted, "Ji You, slow down, wait for us all to go together!"

"Cough cough..." Zhang Ye said, "That's right, let's all go together."

Lou and Lance spoke in unison, "The more people, the greater the strength!"

Xuzhou said in a deep voice, "We are teammates."

Having said that, he took a step forward.

Meanwhile, Yue Qiguang, Yue Qiyuan, and Shen Changqing, although silent, had already taken large strides toward Ji You ahead of everyone else.

Sheng Qingyan: "..."

Sheng Qingyan, who witnessed all this, was a little dumbfounded, a flicker of confusion passing over his handsome face: Is number 4444 really that fragile?

It all felt a bit strange.

But—

The sadness in her eyes was not at all obvious, she still acted so proudly and stubbornly, yet it inexplicably evoked feelings of heartache and sorrow.

Forget it.

Forget it.

Sheng Qingyan decided not to delve deeper into it. After all, number 4444 was truly annoying at times, but she indeed had some ability!

Cough cough...

In terms of shooting skills, she was only second to the Universe's number one Little Cutie.

Thinking so, Sheng Qingyan stepped forward to join the large group.

Behind him were steady, strong footsteps growing closer and closer, until they were nearly beside Ji You. Ji You shook a little then turned around somewhat reluctantly:

"You guys—"

After saying three words with a look of helplessness, she suddenly couldn't help but cover her mouth and laugh, saying:

"I'm not angry—"

—Who let us be teammates after all!"

But!!!

Her tone was clearly both aggrieved and resigned!

Chapter 753: Delicate and Charming

"I'm not mad!"

—Who made us teammates?"

When Ji You said this, her voice was both angry and resigned. Clearly she was very angry but too stubborn to admit it, her words not matching her true feelings—

But seeing Ji You like this, Chu Jiaojiao and the others finally felt relieved.

—Ah! This is the normal appearance of number 4444!

Eight tall and imposing boys all relaxed their tensed shoulders, but all still pursed their lips, not daring to speak. Only Chu Jiaojiao patted her chest firmly, exhaling and saying, "Ji You, you really scared me just now. Seeing you so upset, it felt like my heart was in agony."

Ji You did not respond, just gazed at Chu Jiaojiao with clear, limpid eyes, but as she lowered her gaze, the slightly downturned corners of her mouth quietly traced a faint sorrow.

Chu Jiaojiao: "..."

Chu Jiaojiao once again felt what called a strike to the heart!

That look downwards, those drooping eyes revealed an unintentional fragile beauty as if made of thin paper, utterly breathtaking.

This—

was textbook pitiful charm.

Chu Jiaojiao kept taking deep breaths...

Ji You's features were naturally bright, her complexion extremely fair, her eyes bright and spirited. Whether talking or acting, she always exhibited a dynamic and vigorous aura, but Chu Jiaojiao was learning for the first time—that Ji You could also appear so delicately beautiful.

Ji You's vulnerability was but a moment, soon she straightened her back.

But Chu Jiaojiao couldn't stand it anymore, she shouted, "Ji You, don't be afraid, Jiaojiao is here! Jiaojiao will protect you!"

With her words, Ji You's form slightly trembled.

Chu Jiaojiao said forcefully, "Don't cry! From now on, anyone who wants to bully you must step over my dead body!"

With that, Chu Jiaojiao glared at Yue Qiyuan, Yue Qiguang, Shen Changqing, Sheng Qingyan, Xuzhou, Zhang Ye, and the other eight boys.

Eight boys: "..."

This inexplicable hostility—

Yue Qiguang pursed his lips, muttering softly, "Why would daddy bully her?"

Yue Qiyuan glanced at Chu Jiaojiao: "Does she need your protection? Cough... maybe she does now."

Xuzhou commented briefly, "I don't bully girls."

Zhang Ye said, "Although... but... I also don't bully girls."

Cough cough...

Although Ji You doesn't seem like a girl, she indeed is one. That was what Zhang Ye, naturally cautious, didn't dare to spell out explicitly.

Shen Changqing looked at Ji You, fragile yet pretending to be strong, then at Chu Jiaojiao, who nearly wanted to keep Ji You in her pocket—he remained silent for a moment, then said softly, "I also don't bully girls."

Lou said loudly, "Ji You, I'm sorry for scaring you just now, don't be upset, we're teammates, we carry burdens together."

Lance: "That's right! It was all a misunderstanding just now, Ji You, please don't take it to heart, aren't we here to herd cows? Let's move... hurry up!"

Several boys made their statements, but Chu Jiaojiao still kept her guard up, protectively standing by Ji You.

Ji You sighed lightly, saying, "Jiaojiao, and everyone else, you... you don't need to do this, I... I'm not upset."

"Really." As if afraid they wouldn't believe her, Ji You quickly reassured.

However—

Chu Jiaojiao felt even more heartbroken, she said loudly, "Ji You, don't say anything more, I understand! I understand everything! From now on, you have me, I will never let anyone hurt you again!"

Sheng Qingyan: "..."

Sheng Qingyan looked around, not really seeing why this number 4444 who seemed to be perfectly lively needed any protection.

Is she not lively and active?

And—

Who hurt her, huh?

Sheng Qingyan pursed his lips and glared in confusion, unable to understand why the plot had developed to such a bizarre scene.

Then—

On the way to the river, everyone hurriedly protected Ji You as if she were a fragile porcelain doll, with the other seven boys treading lightly and hardly daring to breathe, as though afraid of startling Ji You.

Sheng Qingyan, trailing behind the group, witnessed all this, and after being dumbfounded for a moment, he shook his head, lazily catching up with the large troupe.

...

Majestic and robust buffaloes were tied in the river, looking from afar like small hills.

Half an hour to drive all the buffaloes back to the pen—this task seemed quite formidable.

And—

Just thinking about matching wits and strength with these fierce buffaloes made everyone feel a tightness below.

The group stared, gritting their sore molars, and looked up at the sky—

Then, before team captain Ji You could speak, Chu Jiaojiao patted her chest and intercepted Ji You, saying, "Ji You, you just stand by the shore and watch. Let us rough guys handle the hard work."

Sheng Qingyan: "..."

Ji You shook her head gently, whispering, "That won't do, we are teammates and must bear it together."

"No one is allowed to make Ji You work!" Chu Jiaojiao heard this and immediately said foolishly, "Anyone who dares is crossing me, Chu Jiaojiao!"

Other people hurriedly said, "Ji You, just watch from the side, leave the cattle driving to us."

Ji You gently shook her head. However, before she could act, she was intercepted and had no choice but to stand by the shore, watching her teammates enter the water one by one.

Sheng Qingyan drooped his eyelids, and before entering the water with a lifeless expression, he passed by Ji You and muttered, "Poor dead ghost, you really know how to play."

Ji You: "Play?"

Sheng Qingyan hummed: "Still pretending, huh?"

With clear eyes, Ji You cautioned, "Spicy Eye, be sure to pay attention to safety when you go into the water, and — first catch the Cow King, it might double our results!"

Sheng Qingyan continued to hum: "Someone here is clearly more delicate, why isn't anyone protecting me? I really don't want to go into the water at all."

Despite his complaints, he still went into the water.

Following that, the entire river was filled with the cries of Chu Jiaojiao, Yue Qiguang, Yue Qiyuan... all nine people.

And the overpowering mooing of the buffalo herd.

Fortunately, people like Chu Jiaojiao quickly pinned down the Cow King, and with united efforts, they successfully drove the buffalo herd back into the pen.

At dusk, when the dinners were distributed, everyone in group 44, except Ji You, received a portion of chicken leg rice.

With rich sauce, full color, and a strong burnt aroma, garnished with a few pieces of green vegetables and paired with a cup of fresh sweet juice...

Everyone's appetite soared!

Then—

Chu Jiaojiao gave half a chicken leg, Yue Qiguang contributed the juice, Zhang Ye shared some green vegetables...

In an instant, Ji You's empty plate was piled high.

Ji You kept refusing: "No, no, the teacher penalized my dinner supply."

Chu Jiaojiao said forcefully: "The teacher only canceled your dinner, not forbidden you from eating!"

Then, the more Ji You refused, the more food piled up in front of her.

Control room.

Han Zheng was speechless for a long time; he remembered when he first met her, despite knowing he shouldn't, he still broke the rules and gave Ji You a few packs of cookies and bottles of water. Although the methods were different, it was obviously the same idea.

So—

This little junior sister definitely wouldn't starve anywhere.

Mu Jianling raised his hand, rubbing his temples, then laughed and scolded, "This bastard, 'Ugly Girl's Spring' should definitely have this little rascal play the lead role."

Chapter 754: Truth or Dare

Facing repeated rejections yet swarmed by an ever-growing pile of food, Ji You, the girl enveloped in an 'anguish' of loneliness, took bite after bite, eating the food unhurriedly with a reserved and genteel demeanor until none remained.

Having finished, she pulled out a handkerchief and gently dabbed the corners of her mouth, saying, "Thank you, the dinner was delicious."

Seeing that Ji You had finally finished eating, Chu Jiaojiao, who had been watching the whole time and as an unabashed fan of beauty immediately fawned over her, "Classmate Ji You, you even eat in such a beautiful manner."

Ji You: "..."

The corners of Ji You's mouth twitched almost imperceptibly. Good thing she was easy-going; otherwise, who could dine so heartily under the close scrutiny of 9 pairs of eyes? Especially Chu Jiaojiao, that shameless beauty-chaser, gaping and drooling like she hadn't seen someone eat in hundreds of years...

Ahem...

Throughout the meal, Ji You toughed it out under pressure, chewing slowly and keeping her poise until she finished dinner without leaving a single grain of rice or drop of soup.

Feeling full and satisfied, Ji You was in an excellent mood, so she didn't stint on showing a pleasant face to Chu Jiaojiao and the others, her lips pursed in a toothy smile, "It was very delicious, thank you, everyone."

At the sight of Ji You's happy smile, Chu Jiaojiao was nearly dizzy with delight, "No need to thank us, as long as Classmate Ji You is happy."

Sheng Qingyan: "..."

Sheng Qingyan inwardly scoffed: [Eat that much, of course, she's happy.]

The others might not have been as expressive as Chu Jiaojiao, but seeing the gloom lift from Ji You, they all breathed a sigh of relief.

Then—

Ji You glanced at Sheng Qingyan, with lips puckered so high they could hang an oil bottle, and suddenly turned to Yue Qiguang, whispering, "Yue Qiguang, I know there's something that you just can't figure out about me."

Yue Qiguang: "???"

Ji You's tone was calm as she continued, "Since this started with you, you must be thinking, why haven't I taken revenge on you?"

Rarely blushing, Yue Qiguang flushed but quickly turned his head away with his usual haughty attitude as he felt his cheeks grow hot.

Ji You smiled and said, "Not just Yue Qiguang, but all of you must be confused. Considering my stinginess, how could I allow myself to suffer alone?"

Yue Qiguang muttered with a red face: "Stingy? Who would've thought you, dummy, had some self-awareness."

Yue Qiyuan: "Cough cough..."

Yue Qiguang promptly closed his mouth.

"Ah!" Pretending not to have heard, Ji You sighed, then her gaze gently swept over her teammates.

Without needing an answer, Ji You already knew they all shared the same thoughts, and she heaved another little sigh, "No matter how stingy I am, I'm still your captain, your teammate, and a member of Team 44. So, at any moment, what I need to ensure first is our collective interest, and think of the gains and losses for our entire team... If I alone am punished, versus all of us being punished, which loss is greater and which is smaller?"

Everyone's expressions became focused.

Ji You declared confidently, "No need for me to provide the answer, I believe you all understand. The reason I stood up to argue with Teacher Mu was to fight for the rights we deserve for us all. Although I didn't succeed completely, she changed her mind and let you all have dinner. In my view, that was a reward for my efforts, and that's what I should do."

"Teacher Mu wanted to punish me alone by going hungry, and I could have given up on our rights then and there, letting everyone continue to face the original punishment of hunger but I didn't. Because—"

Ji You paused, her clear and sincere gaze sweeping across Chu Jiao, Yue Qiguang, Yue Qiyuan... before continuing,

"Tomorrow we still face many daunting assessment tasks. If everyone is hungry, our performance tomorrow will surely be affected, and definitely the assessment results of our team. If it's just me going hungry, with your usual performance and our capabilities, we can definitely pull through tomorrow's assessment."

"My final choice, of course, is naturally to choose all of you!"

While speaking, Ji You smiled, "We are teammates after all!"

At these words, the faces of the nine people present, including Sheng Qingyan, all displayed a bit of shame.

—Turns out, everyone had really misunderstood Number 4444!

—Yeah! Although person number 4444 has always been stingy, her actions have always been generous! Why would everyone think of her as someone with a small nose and small eyes who nitpicks over everything?

Cough cough...

With this thought in mind, everyone's expression became even more filled with shame.

Ji You's lips slightly lifted, as she sincerely said, "Thank you all, for being willing to take care of me when my mood suddenly dropped."

Cough...

The chicken leg rice is so fragrant! The fruit juice is so tasty! If I could have even more, that would be just perfect.

However, the words above aren't just empty talk from Ji You, whether as a captain or as a team member, she has always looked at the issues from an overall perspective, prioritizing collective interests. This has always been her mindset and how she demands herself to act.

So, in truth, there's no way she's deceiving these little fools in front of her, cough cough...

After Ji You's heartfelt words, many people in Group 44, who originally thought Ji You was shirking work while enjoying delicious food, now felt even more ashamed.

—When it comes to being petty, it turns out they are the ones who are pettier.

The day's task came to an end.

The group walked back to the temporary campsite with hunched backs and bent waists, their spirits defeated. Upon seeing the miserable state of Group 44, the other students all showed an expression of 'we all get it'.

The entire Group 44: "..."

Yue Qiguang grabbed a tuft of his red hair on top of his head, angrily saying, "What do these idiots mean by looking at us like that? Daddy will sooner or later let them understand what mild sadness is."

"Cough..." Ji You gave him a disdainful look, "Why don't you say less, for fear that others won't know your sadness is too light, huh?"

Yue Qiguang: "..."

The others all kept a straight face, silent, and at that moment, they all straightened their backs, trying to put some distance between themselves and Yue Qiguang.

Yue Qiguang: "Daddy's not mildly sad!"

As his words fell, the area within dozens of meters around Yue Qiguang instantly cleared out.

Yue Qiguang: "..."

Yue Qiguang forced himself to straighten his back, but—

"Hiss~"

He couldn't help but grit his teeth and grimace in pain, taking a sharp breath of cold air.

Nearby.

Passing students pointed and made comments:

"That looks painful, they can't even stand straight."

"Look at Yue Qiguang with that heart-wrenching expression, I'd say his sadness is not only not mild, it's quite intense."

"Group 44 is so pitiful! Thankfully, we didn't draw the task of raising cattle."

"Speaking of which, except for Yue Qiguang, are the other members of Group 44 okay?"

At this comment, Yue Qiyuan, Shen Changqing, Lou, Lance, Zhang Ye, Xuzhou, Chu Jiaojiao, and Sheng Qingyan all simultaneously raised their heads, standing even more upright, but— there were slight traces of strain in everyone's expression.

Just as they were about to continue being the subject of pointing and commenting, Ji You suddenly stepped forward, glaring at the onlooking crowd, and scolded, "Pack up all your messy speculations. We're fine! Everyone disperse, disperse."

Having said that, Ji You performed an aerial somersault and even demonstrated a split, using her actions to break apart the ridiculous assumptions of the crowd and prevent the spread of rumors.

Therefore, all the members of Group 44 looked at Ji You with even greater gratitude.

Chapter 755: The Big Assignment

To prove she wasn't lying, Ji You did the splits several times in a row.

Then—

Having seen with their own eyes Ji You's nimble rolls and splits, students' doubts instantly dissolved:

[Horizontal split, side split, straight split... so many variations in her splits, look how agile she is, doesn't seem like someone who's hurt their groin at all!]

So, gazes of sympathy instantly turned into admiration:

"Group 44 actually survived at the Cow Farm!"

"Not just survived, but completely unharmed!"

"666!"

"Indeed worthy of Group 44!"

...

Amidst the compliments, Ji You lifted her chin, curled her lip corner upwards, and said: "Don't worship us, we're just a tiny bit more amazing and a little bit smarter than you all!"

Everyone: "..."

"Pff~"

Hearing such boastful talk instantly washed away other students' admiration, leaving them no longer interested in crowding around Ji You and her team. They spat and dispersed one by one.

As the onlookers left, the surroundings suddenly quieted down.

Ji You grinned, chuckled 'heh heh', and said: "You see, sometimes to deal with these rubberneckers, the best thing to do is to let them lose interest and disperse on their own."

"Cough cough..." Chu Jiaojiao and the others couldn't help but suppress their coughs, sometimes they had to admit that Ji You, number 4444, did have some clever tricks up her sleeve when it came to handling these issues.

Sure enough, the crowd that had gathered scattered cleanly.

Without the gawking crowd watching over, the backs of the nine members of Group 44, which had been held stiffly, suddenly collapsed, and at that moment, a chorus of sharp intakes of breath could be heard around the scene.

"Sss~"

"Damn it really hurts."

"I can't take it anymore."

...

A thick sense of 'mild sadness' permeated the air; Yue Qiyuan, Yue Qiguang, Shen Changqing, Sheng Qingyan, Chu Jiaojiao, Xuzhou, Zhang Ye, Lou, and Lance, all nine of them looked up at the sky for a while, then suddenly turned around:

Yue Qiguang said through gritted teeth: "The next two days, even if we have to grit our teeth, we must complete the tasks, I don't want to stay at the Cow Farm anymore."

Their task was to take care of cows at the Cow Farm for three days, with additional days added if any problems occurred!

As soon as Yue Qiguang finished speaking, Sheng Qingyan, with a crestfallen face, chimed in: "That's right, I don't want to stay at the Cow Farm either. If I stay any longer, I feel like Universe's number one Little Cutie might end up incomplete."

"Cough cough..." Ji You couldn't help but ask curiously: "Turn into a eunuch?"

Sheng Qingyan: "..."

Sheng Qingyan glared at Ji You resentfully and muttered: "Poor dead, you're going to end up friendless at this rate."

Ji You touched her chin: "I'm quite curious what an 'incomplete' Little Cutie would be like."

Sheng Qingyan stomped her foot, huffed, and turned her back, ignoring Ji You.

The others didn't speak, but their clenched fists and the determined look in their eyes all revealed a resolve to leave the Cow Farm!

Ji You then made a sweeping gesture with her hand and proclaimed: "Comrades! Let's join hands and break out of the Cow Farm together! Let's go!"

Everyone: "..."

...

The very next day.

The toughest task at the Cow Farm, besides dealing with the water buffalo herd, was now assisting pregnant cows with birthing.

That day, the entire farm saw a total of 12 cows giving birth, but Ji You and her team only had 10 people, which was simply...

Eventually, they figured out a method, corralling the 12 cows together for care and prioritizing those about to give birth. Ji You then detailed everyone's specific responsibilities among the team, and through cooperative division of labor, after a brief period of bustle, they managed to help all the cows give birth.

Watching these newborn lives, Ji You and the others couldn't help but remark: "These 12 calves are actually quite cute."

Yue Qiguang grabbed a fistful of his hair, a deep frown on his forehead: "Dad has helped deliver piglets, bunnies, foals, and now even calved... Is dad really from the Combat Department or just one of those idiots from the Agricultural College? When vacation comes and I go home, if those idiots from the First Military Academy find out—where will dad put his face?"

As he spoke, Yue Qiguang suddenly revealed his fangs, giving his teammates a sinister smile: "You all better keep your mouths shut! If anyone dares to let it slip—"

Yue Qiyuan gave him a sidelong glance, saying speechlessly: "You're the only one losing face? Not the rest of us? Just watch your own mouth."

Who would want to spread this kind of embarrassing tale and lose face?

Ji You, fed up with their bickering, couldn't help but retort: "Raising cattle, pigs, bunnies, and also being able to deliver their babies, what's so embarrassing about that? Skills don't weigh you down! The more skills you have, the more ways you have to make a living! I don't find it embarrassing at all!"

Others: "..."

It's not embarrassing, but it's not exactly something you brag about either.

Seeing the expressions on their faces, Ji You knew what they were thinking and criticized: "Can you eat pride? When you guys truly stop caring about face, you'll be invincible."

"Cough cough..."

Having inadvertently told a harsh truth, Ji You quickly tried to save his own dignity: "Just treat it like I'm talking nonsense. Don't take it to heart."

Shen Changqing seemed contemplative.

Lou remained silent.

Yue Qiyuan frowned in deep thought.

Sheng Qingyan rolled her eyes, with an 'I've seen through you a long time ago, Little Cutie' expression.

Lou, Lance, Yue Qiguang, and Zhang Ye also pondered seriously.

Chu Jiaojiao agreed quite a bit: "Ji You makes a lot of sense! And Ji You looks really good."

As his plastic teammates pondered one after another, Ji You suddenly felt overwhelmed:

Crap, what if someone learns my secret move? Will it still be unstoppable when I use it in the future?

...

The third day.

The same tasks as the past two days. Under Ji You's leadership, Group 44 almost had no mishaps and completed all tasks smoothly.

Not only did they complete them successfully, but also exceeded expectations, and Mu Jianling, the teacher, almost found no reason to deduct points or punish them.

The whole Group 44 stood side by side, feeling both happy and anxious at the same time.

Happy that they had received an excellent assessment, and anxious because—

The second task was about to be announced.

What would it be?

Ji You, Chu Jiaojiao, Yue Qiyuan, Shen Changqing... all 10 people tilted their heads up, staring intently at Teacher Mu Jianling.

The expression on Mu Jianling's face showed hesitation, but soon, it seemed she made up her mind and suddenly asked, "Was it fun taking care of the cows?"

Ji You and the others: "..."

Isn't that obvious?

Mu Jianling: "Hmm?"

Ji You and the others in unison, loudly proclaimed: "Not fun at all!"

Mu Jianling laughed and said, "Alright, I'll switch you to something more fun."

Something more fun?

Nobody really believed that—

But still holding a sliver of hope, they stared seriously at Teacher Mu Jianling.

Mu Jianling raised her hand and pointed to the piles of rice, wheat, corn, potatoes, and other produce in the corner of the storeroom, saying: "See all that? Tomorrow the farm will transport a batch of supplies to the Military Supply Department, and you few will be responsible for the transportation!"

Ji You and the others: "!!!"

A substantial task, indeed!

Chapter 756: Relentless Pursuit

From a farm breeder to a transporter?

On the surface, being a transporter doesn't sound like a big deal, just moving farm products from an Agricultural Star to another place, right? But—

This destination is no ordinary place! This is the Military Supply Department!

And which Legion corresponds to the Alliance NY50 Planet?

The Sixth Legion!

The invincible Sixth Legion, commanded by Admiral Bai Ji!

Taking a job as a transporter might even offer a chance to sneak a visit to the logistics section of the Sixth Legion! For those aspiring to join the Sixth Legion like Ji You, Chu Jiaojiao, and Yue Qiguang, this is definitely a fatally attractive opportunity!

So—

The entire Group 44's eyes widened as big as bell clappers!

Ji You, with her mouth agape asked: "Teacher... are you... serious?"

Mu Jianling raised an eyebrow: "Not willing?"

An expression of sheer ecstasy appeared on everyone's faces as they shouted in unison: "Willing!"

Yue Qiguang jumped three feet high: "Willing! Hands and feet willing!" Let's not even mention running a big mission like transporting food to the Military Supply Department, just being able to get out of this damned Cow Farm with these foolish cows makes him a million times more willing.

Seeing this, Mu Jianling's lips slightly curled up, saying: "In that case, get ready, we leave promptly at 6 AM tomorrow."

People like Ji You responded: "Yes, sir!"

Mu Jianling waved his hand: "Alright, dismiss."

Everyone's faces were filled with excitement, their hearts pumping as if injected with chicken blood, insanely excited. When Teacher Mu dismissed everyone, and people were just about to slink back to camp to discuss tomorrow's task, Ji You suddenly asked, "Teacher, tomorrow when we transport farm products, will it just be us going, or will there be others accompanying us?"

As Ji You knew, the distance from Alliance NY50 Planet to the planet where the Sixth Legion's Military Supply Department is located is not close—a regular passenger spaceship would take about 3 days.

And—

Since it's a mission, how will the students' performance be assessed during the task?

Or is it that just successfully completing the mission counts as passing the assessment?

...

Ji You had too many questions, her eyes wide open, looking eagerly at Mu Jianling.

Mu Jianling raised an eyebrow: "What? You guys haven't been weaned yet? You need me to find some nannies and bodyguards to take care of you?"

"Cough..." Ji You managed a smile, saying: "Look at what you're saying, Teacher, we aren't giant babies, there's no way we would need bodyguards and nannies."

Chu Jiaojiao, Yue Qiguang, Yue Qiyuan, Sheng Qingyan and others also chimed in:

"No way!"

"Absolutely impossible!"

"There's no need!"

Mu Jianling said: "If not needed, then disperse."

Ji You cleared her throat: "Cough cough... Teacher... could you... give us a detailed set of assessment rules?"

With detailed rules, we could look into...

The loopholes.

Cough cough...

Mu Jianling glanced at Ji You's expression and immediately knew what she was thinking. He raised his hand and unceremoniously tapped on Ji You's forehead, scolding:

"No!"

"It all depends on my mood, and right now, my mood is very bad..."

Upon hearing this, Chu Jiaojiao, Yue Qiguang, Yue Qiyuan... all nine people quickly slipped away, leaving only Ji You.

Mu Jianling: "Aren't you going too?"

Ji You shamelessly put on a smile, cozying up to Mu Jianling with a sycophantic look, "Teacher, what's troubling your mood? Let me share some of your troubles, huh?"

Mu Jianling: "..."

This little rascal really has a thick face, seriously—

Ji You, observing Teacher Mu's expression, said: "Teacher, let me tell you a secret, I have a little nickname called 'Pistachio,' because whenever there's something unpleasant, just talk to me, and it'll surely turn delightful."

Mu Jianling's mouth twitched, saying annoyed: "I think 'Smashed Melon' suits you better! Want your head smashed open? If not, scam immediately!"

Ji You: "..."

Ji You felt somewhat defeated...

She couldn't pry open Devil Mu's mouth, alas!

Ji You hung her head and walked outside, feeling a bit 'dejected'...

Suddenly—

Mu Jianling said: "The mission carries certain risks, prioritize your own and your teammates' safety, and if necessary, you may abandon the assessment."

Huh?

Ji You stopped abruptly and hurriedly asked, "Teacher, you mean—"

Mu Jianling glared and cursed: "Just scram!"

Ji You knew that she couldn't pry any more from Teacher Mu, so she stopped bothering her and swiftly prepared to leave.

But before leaving, Ji You thought of a vital issue and, thick-faced, asked: "Teacher, we currently lack sufficient weapons. Will the school provide them or can we procure them ourselves?"

Mu Jianling said: "A batch will be provided before you set off."

Upon hearing this, Ji You immediately felt relieved.

Thus, she didn't stay a moment longer and quickly ran off.

In less than a second, she was out of sight.

"Wait—" Mu Jianling hadn't finished speaking yet, and by the time she looked, where could she find Ji You? She couldn't help but twitch her mouth corner, cursing: "Little rascal, used and thrown away."

She was too lazy to move, originally wanting to take the opportunity to have this little rascal make dinner.

So, Mu Jianling sat down, opened up the portable stove, placed a pot on it, and dumped all the ingredients into the pot, then poured a large ladle of water.

Hotpot, it's not a sophisticated dish, just a pot of stewed mix.

In a while, a fragrance of food floated from Mu Jianling's tent.

Biting on the bland low-level nutrition bars, the students' faces suddenly showed a hint of misery:

Torture.

From afar, Ji You smelled the hotpot's aroma, twitched her mouth, and said: "Such a waste of good food! Beef and lamb rolls taste best fresh! They need just 3 seconds, she actually boiled them for eighteen minutes!!!"

Regarding eating, no one cared more than Ji You, but now everyone was not in the mood to worry about Teacher Mu's messy hotpot, as Shen Changqing sternly asked: "Ayuan, have you found out anything? Which places did NY50 pass through on its way to the Sixth Legion's Military Supply Department?"

Upon Ji You's return, echoing Teacher Mu's words, everyone paid close attention.

Teacher Mu mentioned it was quite dangerous, so where could the danger most likely come from?

Everyone pooled their thoughts, concluding that the most likely sources of danger were the places it passed through!

Could it be the dangerous asteroid belts?

Or the wormholes?

Or perhaps the interstellar pirates?

...

Yue Qiyuan and Yue Qiguang's father, Yue Daolu, as the current executive of the Alliance Military Supply Department, had more insights about the affairs of various Legion's Military Supply Departments than any others; hence, Shen Changqing had asked.

The whole group fell silent, including Ji You, all turning towards Yue Qiyuan.

Facing everyone's intent gazes, Yue Qiyuan said somberly: "This area has no specific geographical risks, but—"

Chapter 757: Discussion

"But—"

Yue Qiyuan said, then his tone shifted, his expression suddenly turning very stern, and he continued, "However, along the way, we will pass by Yunding Star."

Everyone: "!!!"

Yue Qiyuan paused for a moment, opened the Light Computer, set it to flat mode, and pointing at a star map, he said: "Or rather, it is not the most critical that it is Yunding Star, the important thing is the direction we are leaving from after we pass Yunding Star—it's very close to here!"

Then, with his slender fingers, he pointed to a certain spot.

Everyone followed his direction, and seeing it, all had serious expressions on their faces:

Chu Jiaojiao said, "It's so close to White Horse Junction?"

White Horse Junction?

Ji You didn't understand, but she was not in a hurry, instead patiently waiting for others to explain.

Shen Changqing seeing Ji You's puzzled expression, took the initiative to explain: "White Horse Junction, formally known as the White Horse Asteroid Belt, named because its outline on the star map resembles a horse. This belt is filled with fragmented asteroids, and cosmic hurricanes of varying sizes almost never cease... Anyone or any spaceship, starship caught in it would have a slim chance of survival. In short, it's very dangerous!"

Ji You and the others listened intently.

Shen Changqing continued, "But—the danger isn't just from here; it's also because White Horse Junction is a place where interstellar pirates frequent!"

Ji You frowned and asked: "Where do the interstellar pirates appear from? From the hurricane belt of White Horse Junction?"

Shen Changqing nodded, "Exactly. There are always some desperadoes, driven by money, who would daringly brave the dangers. Despite the peril inside White Horse Junction, it also serves as a natural protective wall. After the pirates hijack something, they just hide inside, and almost no trace of them can be found..."

Lou, with wide eyes, said: "If it's so dangerous, why can't we just go around it?"

Shen Changqing and Yue Qiyuan shook their heads together, and Shen Changqing said, "Taking a detour would be even more dangerous for us. Because, other routes have even greater risks."

Ji You stroked her chin, asking, "So, you're saying as long as we get lucky and don't encounter interstellar pirates, there's actually no risk along the way?"

Shen Changqing nodded, "You could say that." But—luck is hard to predict.

Ji You opened her mouth: "Let's not bet on luck then, we should think of ways to prevent pirate attacks."

The topic dropped, and everyone began to fall silent.

The atmosphere turned somewhat somber.

How ferocious interstellar pirates are, everyone present knew, Ji You and the others had trained for a semester, but they were just novices touching real Mecha, and their practical experience was pitiful.

And interstellar pirates?

These people were truly ruthless, licking blood off the knife edges, emerging from the mountains of corpses.

...

After a moment of silence, Chu Jiaojiao suddenly fiercely slammed her fist to the ground—

"Bang!"

The floor instantly shattered.

Ji You: "..."

Ji You hissed, glaring at this suddenly mad brute, just about to speak, when she inadvertently caught a rare glimpse of a sinister look on Chu Jiaojiao's face.

Chu Jiaojiao, with a somber face, said: "Interstellar pirates? Just worried about where those rats are hiding, if they dare come at us—"

"Crack~"

Chu Jiaojiao clenched her fist, her tightly gripped palm, Tik Tok—

Tick-tock~

Tick-tock~

Crimson blood, dripping down bead by bead.

Around, the smell of blood pervaded.

A collective solemnity settled on everyone's faces:

What's with Chu Jiao?

Suddenly, Sheng Qingyan stepped forward, standing behind Chu Jiao and spoke with an uncharacteristically serious tone, "Count me in."

Ji You glanced at the two, only then noticing that Chu Jiao and Sheng Qingyan were standing together. Usually effeminate and an eyesore, Sheng Qingyan actually stood a head taller than Chu Jiao!

Right now, Sheng Qingyan did look completely manly, but—

Ji You cursed outright, "What are you doing? Self-harming and swearing oaths, we should be discussing how to save ourselves from pirates, not fight to the death!"

Chu Jiao opened her mouth to speak, but Ji You raised her hand, cutting her off, "You all rest assured, when it does come time to fight the pirates, none of the ten people on our team will back down."

Chu Jiao held back her words.

Yue Qiguang said, "Number 4444 is right, dad was just thinking about finding some pirates to practice on! If those pirates dare to cross us, dad will give them a send-off."

Lou and Lance also said, "Count us in."

Xuzhou and Zhang Ye remained silent, but their expressions said it all.

Yue Qiyuan and Shen Changqing both nodded in agreement.

Ji You looked at Chu Jiaojiao and firmly said, "Jiaojiao, Spicy Eye, and all of you—remember this: we're not just classmates, not just teammates, but comrades-at-arms! So, when something happens, don't just tough it out alone!"

"Especially you!" Ji You glared fiercely at Chu Jiaojiao and scolded, "Hurting yourself in front of everyone, that behavior is extremely foolish. Don't you know it would hurt me?"

Chu Jiaojiao: "!!!"

Being scolded so dominantly by Ji You, the gloom and sadness in Chu Jiaojiao's heart were washed away, and moreover—Ji You actually said she would be hurt?

Ahhhhh!!!

Chu Jiaojiao felt like she was floating on clouds, she took a deep breath to regain some sense, and loudly said, "Classmate Ji You, you also look good when you're angry."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You scolded, "Cut the flattery, let's all focus on the matter at hand. I asked Teacher Mu, and the school will provide us with weapons, everyone remember not to be greedy and only take what you're proficient with; stack up on energy boxes."

Availability of weapons is varied, and having more types doesn't guarantee victory; especially in a life and death fight, it matters who can finish off their opponent fastest and most ruthlessly. So, one must use weapons they are skilled with.

This reasoning, everyone understood.

Following Ji You's earlier words, Yue Qiyuan said, "Correct, choose the weapons you're adept with."

Then.

Yue Qiyuan pointed at the navigation map, saying, "Of course, we should try our best to avoid encountering interstellar pirates. Hence, when we pass by Yunding Star, we must not stop and should speed up to leave."

Ji You,

who didn't know much about Yunding Star before, but Senior Shi Ya had been on a mission there for a long time. Ji You had made it a point to understand this place.

On the surface, Yunding Star belongs to Alliance territory, but it's located at the borders between the Alliance and other countries, penetrated by various forces internally, making it highly complex and often a hotspot for conflicts—it is one of the most unsafe places within the Alliance.

Ji You agreed with Yue Qiyuan's point, saying, "Don't stop if it's not necessary."

Then.

Everyone discussed other business, and once they confirmed nothing was missed, Ji You finally waved her hand, "Rest well tonight, revitalized your spirits, we depart early tomorrow morning."

Chapter 758: Companionship

After discussing,

Group 44 all lay down to sleep in their temporary quarters, as they had done before.

Soon, the room was filled with the sound of snoring.

Wrapped in her protective clothing, Ji You lay down with her clothes on and, in a drowsy haze, she heard someone nearby constantly turning over.

Hmm?

Under the night sky, Ji You looked up and saw it was Chu Jiaojiao's spot.

When Ji You looked over, Chu Jiaojiao was covering her head and, like a worm, wriggled back and forth...

Ji You furrowed her brow: This girl, usually the moment her head is covered, she can fall asleep in half a second, what's going on now?

Before Ji You, the image of Chu Jiaojiao's fierce and gloomy face as she punched the ground, and her fists dripping blood – drip, drip...

Is she unable to sleep?

Because of the interstellar pirates?

Ji You, of course, knew that Chu Jiaojiao's sudden unusual behavior was because everyone had mentioned the interstellar pirates.

While she was thinking this, Chu Jiaojiao, who had been turning over, suddenly sat up straight, then stood up, glanced around, realized she hadn't disturbed the others, and then tiptoed out the door.

Chu Jiaojiao went out the door and casually found a rock nearby to sit on, lifting her head to gaze at the stars and bright satellites in the sky.

second.

seconds.

seconds.

...

It was quiet all around, with only a slight breeze blowing.

Suddenly—

A faint sound of footsteps came from behind, and Chu Jiaojiao arched her back, on full alert—

But in an instant, Chu Jiaojiao lowered her guard, her body relaxed again, and said, "Ji You, why are you out here?"

Shuffling her feet in her shoes and yawning, Ji You carelessly sat down next to Chu Jiaojiao and casually said, "The night breeze feels nice, just came out for some air."

Hearing this, a glint of crystal light flashed through Chu Jiaojiao's eyes, and her heart felt warm.

But—

At this moment, Chu Jiaojiao didn't really want to talk much, nor did she want to interact too much with anyone—even if it was Ji You.

However, Chu Jiaojiao had clearly overthought it. After Ji You sat down, she didn't seem interested in conversing. She lifted her head, her white cheeks exposed, eyes slightly closed, seemingly truly enjoying the feel of the breeze.

second.

seconds.

seconds.

...

Ji You didn't speak at all, with only the sound of her soft breathing remaining. Listening to this faint breathing beside her, Chu Jiaojiao's slightly tense heartstrings gradually relaxed, and not only that, she felt an extremely calming and relaxing sensation.

So—

Chu Jiaojiao, copying Ji You, also gently closed her eyes, feeling the gentle touch of the breeze on her face.

For a long time.

For a long time.

...

Suddenly, Chu Jiaojiao shuddered, waking from her slumber, only to realize her head had somehow ended up resting on Ji You's shoulder.

Ji You had a petite frame, and her shoulders were far from sturdy, it could be said that it was quite uncomfortable to lean on, but!!! She had actually fallen asleep.

Flustered, Chu Jiaojiao said: "Ji You, you... you really look good."

Ji You: "..."

Truly, a face that never logs off.

Ji You looked up at the sky, saying nonchalantly, "It's getting late, let's go back to sleep."

Chu Jiaojiao nodded vigorously: "I'll listen to Ji You!"

As they walked toward their temporary residence, halfway there, Chu Jiaojiao hesitated before saying, "Ji You, sorry for worrying you. I won't be like this anymore."

Ji You waved her hand dismissively, "No need to apologize, everyone has their down moments."

Chu Jiaojiao felt a warmth in her heart. She pursed her lips and said softly, "My parents were killed by interstellar pirates, so since I was young, I swore to eliminate all the interstellar pirates. The thought of possibly encountering them made me a bit moody just now."

Ji You listened and didn't say anything fancy, just nodded and said, "I support you."

A gleam flashed in Chu Jiaojiao's eyes—

**

The wind rustled through the lush green rice paddies, waves of green rolling with the breeze, the fresh scent of rice spreading all around. In the nearby ranch, herds of cows grazed on the grass, occasionally mooing. From farther away, the occasional bleating of sheep could be heard...

Out of place in this idyllic pastoral scenery was a group of fully armed, tense students with serious expressions.

Ji You stood at the forefront. She wore protective clothing, a waist-holstered energy gun, and had an energy great machete on her back, almost covering her entirely.

Seeing this scene, Mu Jianling's mouth twitched. Then looking at Chu Jiaojiao, Yue Qiguang, Yue Qiyuan, Sheng Qingyan, Shen Changqing behind Ji You... all decked out like bandits entering a village, one more exaggerated than the last, Mu Jianling's mouth twitched again.

Silence.

The atmosphere around was tense, excited, and expectant...

After a while, Mu Jianling raised his hand to rub his forehead and said, "Specialize in weapons, not just amassing them. Why do you all carry so much?"

Ji You, as the captain, stepped forward to explain, "Teacher, we're not being greedy, each person just took two items."

Ji You had the energy gun and energy machete.

Yue Qiguang had the Energy Hammer and Energy Axe.

Chu Jiaojiao had the energy knife and energy dagger.

Sheng Qingyan had the Energy Sniper Rifle and Energy Bow and Arrow.

...

All in all, they chose what they were good at.

Mu Jianling glanced at Ji You and said, "Put all the weapons away and get ready to leave."

To their surprise, Teacher Mu didn't stop them further. Ji You and the others, upon hearing this, quickly stashed their weapons into the Space Button, moving swiftly as if afraid Teacher Mu would change his mind.

Then.

After the transport robots had completely loaded the cargo spaceship, Mu Jianling checked the time and said, "Board the spaceship, let's depart."

This cargo spaceship was the smallest in weight on planet NY50, shaped like a sleek fish with a black body. The internal operating system was simple; once the operating orbit was set, the spaceship could automatically pilot to the destination, so, most of the time, it did not require manual operation.

However, that didn't mean a spaceship pilot wasn't needed. In specific situations, like emergencies, it could switch to manual piloting mode.

Group 44 had 10 members, and except for the oddity Ji You who had only 6 Spiritual Silks, the other 9 including Chu Jiaojiao, Shen Changqing, and Sheng Qingyan could serve as spaceship pilots anytime.

So, there was no worry about the piloting of the spaceship.

...

After Mu Jianling finished speaking, he realized Ji You and the others hadn't moved. He frowned slightly, saying, "Aren't you going?"

Ji You squeezed out a smile, saying, "Um, teacher, this is our first time leaving you on a mission. Is there anything you want to tell us?"

Mu Jianling scrutinized her, his voice cold: "No, just get moving."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You grumbled, "Why are you so cold-hearted, so merciless, so unreasonable!"

"Hm?" Mu Jianling raised an eyebrow: "Want to test just how heartless and cold and unreasonable I can be?"

"No, no, no..." Everyone spoke at once, saying, "It's fine if you stay."

Mu Jianling lowered his hand that he had raised, then suddenly extended his leg and kicked Ji You in the buttocks, scolding, "Delay one more second and it's zero points for everyone, get lost!"

Sss~

This was truly cold-hearted, truly merciless, truly unreasonable.

Leading the way, Ji You hurried onto the spaceship.

Chapter 759: The Salesman Comes Knocking

Ji You and the group, like monkeys, agilely climbed onto the spaceship.

Mu Jianling scolded with laughter: "Deliberately courting trouble, you rascals!"

As her words fell, the smile on Mu Jianling's face disappeared, and a trace of worry flashed in her eyes as she looked at the rising spaceship:

Too early.

It shouldn't be this early.

However—

Flowers in a greenhouse cannot withstand the attack of a storm.

Moreover, time waits for no one.

Eaglets need to be released to soar in the sky.

...

Thinking this, Mu Jianling's face regained its usual indifference, and then, with hands behind her back, she slowly walked towards the assessment area for the other students.

...

Here.

On the spaceship, Ji You, Chu Jiaojiao, Yue Qiguang, Yue Qiyuan, Shen Changqing... all sat together, their expressions tense:

Ji You said, "Guys, we are about to break through the atmosphere."

As soon as these words were spoken, the spaceship's body slightly shook and broke through the atmosphere of NY50 Star, heading towards space.

Chu Jiaojiao, Yue Qiguang, Yue Qiyuan, Shen Changqing... their faces all filled with excitement!

Lou jumped up and said, "Wow! I finally flew out into space by myself!"

Lance blinked his big blue eyes: "Me too! I'm so excited!"

Xuzhou and Zhang Ye didn't say anything, but their eyes revealed excitement too.

As soon as Sheng Qingyan boarded the spaceship, he laid down to sleep, claiming that the universe's number-one cutie must have sufficient sleep.

No one bothered Sheng Qingyan, letting him be.

Yue Qiguang glanced at Lou and Lance, and with a smirk said: "Old fashioned! Daddy here piloted a spaceship into space for a round trip when I was 11!"

Beside him, Yue Qiyuan added solemnly: "It's just that he got caught by my dad and had his legs broken."

Yue Qiguang: "..."

Nevertheless, when Lou, Lance, Zhang Ye, and Xuzhou heard Yue Qiguang's words, they instantly widened their eyes, with Lou even pursuing further, asking: "Yue Qiguang, did you really pilot a spaceship alone at 11?"

Yue Qiguang was feeling proud, but before he could speak, Yue Qiyuan said: "It was just a toy spaceship, fully automatic, no operation needed, and he only got past the atmosphere of the Main Star and hadn't started having fun before getting caught by my dad."

Yue Qiguang: "..."

Yue Qiguang's forehead veins throbbed: "Yue Qiyuan, can't you just shut up?"

Yue Qiyuan: "No."

"Ahem..." Lou coughed, saying, "Ah Guang is still amazing! So brave."

...

Everyone bantered playfully, and as the spaceship continued to travel, they soon could no longer see the planet NY50 Star.

Ji You turned serious and commanded: "Everyone, listen to my command. Stay alert and adhere to the roles we just assigned, each maintaining your position."

Everyone: "Yes."

Shortly after leaving the NY50 Star, the location of their spaceship remained within a very safe travel route.

It is known that NY50 Star is a military food reserve base, and with military forces guarding nearby star domains, they wouldn't allow interstellar pirates or Star Beasts to wreak havoc here.

Ji You isn't worried about such accidents, but she still made personnel arrangements immediately.

Lou and Lance were responsible for monitoring the spaceship's navigation in the cockpit, making timely adjustments if any deviations occurred.

Chu Jiaojiao and Xuzhou are responsible for surveilling the surrounding area; upon noticing anything unusual, they must immediately report.

Shen Changqing and Yue Qiyuan are in charge of the spaceship, Mecha, and energy weapon inspection and maintenance.

Zhang Ye, Yue Qiguang, and Sheng Qingyan are the first to rest and will alternate shifts with others later. Resting personnel rota every 3 hours to ensure everyone has enough sleep.

Ji You is overseeing everything.

...

The journey was smooth, and by the next day, they had traveled one-third of the route.

Cockpit.

Lou suddenly announced: "Prepare—the spaceship is about to cross Jump Point 39, the next destination is—"

Boom—

As Lou finished speaking, the peaceful starry sea parted as Ji You and their ship entered the Jump Point, emerging a few minutes later from another.

In the distance, there was a faint light, continuously flickering.

The spaceship headed rapidly towards the direction of the light.

Soon, a kite-shaped space station appeared before everyone's eyes, where one could faintly hear the bustling voices of people.

Inside the cockpit, Lou's voice, with a hint of excitement and elation, announced: "Kite Space Station, arrived smoothly."

Through the spaceship's surveillance, Ji You could clearly see the scenery within the docking port of Kite Space Station.

No abnormalities.

Ji You raised his hand, saying: "Everyone, prepare to disembark."

Kite Space Station is a completely man-made station, specifically designed to provide supplies to various spaceships and Starships passing by. This Star Domain is Alliance territory, making the station under the jurisdiction and supervision of the Alliance, though, it is a privately-owned station.

Yes, it is a commercial space station built by a private enterprise with the approval of the Alliance. Hence, the station includes not just routine supplies but also various business centers, catering, leisure, entertainment...

Ji You and the team could have bypassed this stop, but considering potential emergencies like energy shortages en route, it would be too late to resupply later. Additionally, the route marked by Teacher Mu also designated this location for supplies, and reaching the next supply station would take another three days at least. Thus, Ji You and the team decided to resupply here.

The spaceship docked smoothly at the port, and Ji You and others disembarked. Immediately, a docking robot approached them, smiling: "Dear guests, welcome to Kite Space Station, wishing you and your friends a pleasant journey."

Ji You smiled: "Thank you."

The robot, after glancing at Ji You and the group, smiled again: "Guests, today our 'Haolai' restaurant has great thirst-quenching drinks available, milk tea, sour soup, soy milk..."

Hearing this, the others seemed a bit tempted, but Ji You remained unmoved, coldly saying: "Thank you, we don't need it."

She knew, just by noticing this robot's eloquent speech and gestures, that it possessed a high intelligence level, and this overly attentive demeanor, needless to say, Ji You knew it was a salesman!

Sure enough—

Unaffected by Ji You's coldness, the robot continued smiling, stating: "New in the beverage shop, 66% off across the board, and today's milk tea is free."

Everyone "!!!"

Yue Qiguang was the first to jump in and ask: "Free? Really?"

The robot nodded: "Yes, just come into the store, and you can enjoy the sweet milk tea."

Yue Qiguang couldn't help but swallow, but he didn't rush off immediately, instead glancing at Ji You: "4444, should we go?"

Ji You: "No!"

Yue Qiguang: "..."

Others: "..."

Everyone was surprised by such a resolute refusal from Ji You! Honestly, they were a bit disappointed.

Since the start of the final exam, the group had been consuming low-level nutrition, which was not only unpalatable but also left them hungry...

Now, there was a chance to indulge in a good meal, and everyone was looking forward to it, miserably swallowing their saliva, giving Ji You pitiful looks.

The robot beside them smiled, "Guests, my honesty extends to both young and old, it's really free."

Ji You, with a cold heart, declared: "No good goods are cheap, not to mention free!"

Such various strategies were all too familiar to her, and no one was going to swindle a penny from her pockets!

Chapter 760: Schemes! Nothing but Schemes!

Free?

Where on earth can you find such good deals? Haven't you heard that nothing comes for free?

The endless tricks of the merchants, the best way to avoid being bled dry is to stay alert from the start and eliminate all possibilities of being duped.

So—

With a cold heart, Ji You turned down the enthusiastic recommendation of the sales robot. Seeing that Ji You and the others had no intention of entering the store, the robot didn't persistently bother them. He gently raised his hand, pointed to the rest area seats nearby, and said with a smile: "Respected guests, your spaceship's energy refill will take 2 hours and 30 minutes. During this period, you and your friends can rest in the lounge. We offer comfortable recliners, free afternoon tea, and various leisure and entertainment games for guests to pass the time."

The lounge was not far from the energy supply station, approximately 100 meters away. Following the direction pointed out, Ji You took a look and then nodded: "Please notify us immediately once the energy refill is complete."

The robot smiled: "Okay."

Ji You took the lead toward the lounge.

Soon, the group entered the lounge, which looked unremarkable from the outside, but once inside, it was a whole other world with luxurious and classy decor. The lounge was not just a single room; apart from the spacious hall, there were individual rest rooms along the curving corridor for guests who needed privacy.

Ji You glanced around. The hall was already filled with quite a few people, but there were still a dozen empty booths. She pondered for a moment and asked the others: "Do you want to sit in the hall or a private rest room?"

Everyone replied in unison: "A private rest room."

That's what Ji You thought as well, so she turned to the nearby service robot and requested: "Mr. Robot, please arrange a private rest room for us."

The robot smiled: "Of course, guest. Do you need the luxury type or the convenience type?"

The question immediately set off alarms in Ji You's mind: "Wait... first tell me the difference between the two... Ah! Tell me first, which one incurs a charge?"

The smile on the service robot's face was still formal as it said: "Guest, both the luxury and convenience type rest rooms are charged. The difference is..."

"Wait a moment..." Ji You frowned and said: "The robot at the docking port mentioned that you offer free rest booths here."

The service robot seemed to have heard this kind of comment countless times before. It continued to smile with its electronic voice stating methodically: "Yes, we offer free rest booths, but this does not include private rest rooms. If you and your friends would like to use a free booth, please feel free to find an empty space in the hall."

So only the hall was free.

But!!!

Ji You sensed a scheming merchant smell. She turned to look at Chu Jiaojiao, Shen Changqing, Sheng Qingyan, Yue Qiguang, and the others, asking: "What do you say, shall we sit in the free hall or the charged private rest rooms?"

The nine people almost didn't need to think before they said in unison: "The free ones."

The service robot: "..."

A twitch appeared at the corner of Ji You's mouth: The choice of a bunch of penny-pinchers was indeed as expected.

Then, Ji You turned to the robot and said with a smile: "Thank you for your assistance. We'll just find a free place to sit."

The service robot: "Of course, please make yourself at home, guests."

It must be said, aside from the sales pitch at the beginning, the robots here exhibited a very Zen-like attitude, as if they didn't care whether the customers spent money or not.

Ji You was pleased with this.

Then, the group found an empty table, which was just the right size for 10 people, and sat down.

Next.

Without needing Ji You and the others to give instructions, less than 1 minute after they sat down, a robot carrying afternoon tea appeared. Before the robot even got close, the sweet aroma of the very appetizing afternoon tea wafted into everyone's nose.

As the robot approached and was about to place the afternoon tea for 10 people on the table, Ji You asked nervously: "Wait, tell me first, is this charged?"

The robot shook its head: "No charge, please enjoy it with peace of mind, guests."

Ji You glanced at the afternoon tea. There were 10 cups of 200ml milk tea, 10 servings of strawberry-filled rolls, 10 servings of fruit salad, and 10 servings of mini grilled wings!

These mini grilled wings were made from the wings of a relatively small Long-legged Chicken. The preparation was similar to a certain recipe from Ji You's past life, and just by smelling it, one's appetite was greatly stimulated.

The amount of food provided for afternoon tea is so huge!

And, they look so colorful, fragrant, and delicious!

The key point is that it's free!

Free!

In a flash, including Ji You, the pupils of all ten members of the squad dilated!

With delicious food right before their eyes, Ji You still remained vigilant. She repeatedly confirmed whether there were any hidden traps and, after receiving only negative responses, she finally let her guard down.

The robot left.

Ji You glanced at her companions and then, looking towards everyone, she cleared her throat and said with restraint, "One portion each, everyone eat slowly. After finishing, we can rest for a bit. I estimate our spaceship will be replenished by then."

As soon as she finished speaking, everyone couldn't hold back any longer and began to feast!

Ji You first picked up her milk tea, took a gentle sip, and upon tasting, felt a smooth milky flavor followed by plump, rounded particles sliding into her mouth. She lightly bit down, and the soft, sweet chewiness combined with a springy texture was simply...

Indescribable!

Ji You forcefully resisted the urge to finish it all in one gulp and then slowly pinched a strawberry cream roll, placing it gently into her mouth.

Immediately after, her pupils shone bright!

This!

This is way too delicious!

The perfect blend of just-right sweetness and the slight tang of strawberries...

So delicious it's... indescribable!

Ji You tried to control herself but the palm-sized strawberry cream roll still disappeared into her stomach in the blink of an eye.

Once the wicked cravings were unleashed, almost impossible to restrain, Ji You then devoured the fruit salad, gulped down the milk tea, and finished off a pair of small roasted wings.

When Ji You put down her chopsticks and wiped her mouth clean with a napkin, she raised her head only to see nine pairs of eager eyes staring at her.

Ji You: "..."

Such delicious afternoon tea, no one dared to take it lightly. Not only Ji You, but the others also guarded their finished portions with their elbows. Ji You's mouth twitched as she said, "What are you looking at? I've finished eating."

"Cough cough..." All nine faces looked a bit awkward. Chu Jiaojiao stepped forward and asked Ji You, "Uh, Ji You, are you full?"

Ji You gritted her teeth and said, "No!"

Chu Jiaojiao and the others chorused, "Neither are we!"

Then—

Everyone looked down together to see a sudden appearance of a holographic advertisement on the table:

[Haizailai Restaurant, where it's always a good idea to come back for more. Now offering a super deluxe Buy One Get One Free meal package (note: includes one free afternoon tea). Additionally: Groups of more than 10 people get an 8.88% discount.]

Following that.

There were holographic simulations of various fancy dishes—

Ji You: "..."

Damn it!

It's all a setup!

All tricks!