

Scavengers 961

Chapter 961: Misunderstanding

"Stop looking."

"You don't have it," Ji You clapped her hands. Seeing Liu Fufeng's expression of regret and pity, Ji You couldn't help but laugh, "You poor dead, with a pile of IOU's yourself, and you still want mine? Dream on, buddy..."

After speaking, Ji You immediately stashed the pile of IOU's in her hand into the Space Button.

Liu Fufeng couldn't help but mutter, "I'm poor, but wanting your IOU's is another matter, right? You can't stop a poor person from dreaming of becoming a millionaire."

"Ahem..." Yue Qiyuan couldn't quite understand how an empire prince, once the first heir of the Empire, could fall into such a state. He cleared his throat, interrupting the conversation between Ji You and Liu Fufeng, and then turned to Ji You, asking, "4444, the Soul Devices have been given to you. Are you sure you can use up all those soul devices?"

Ji You chuckled, "Not to boast, but even if you gave me 100 or 1000 or 10,000, I could use them all."

Yue Qiyuan said helplessly, "Alright, let's be realistic. No one can use that many soul devices at once. Don't mess around, pick one that best matches your spiritual power to use. Too much greed can actually be detrimental to your spiritual power."

If merely piling up quantities could enhance and breakthrough spiritual power, and clean out more Spiritual Silks, then Yue Qiyuan, Sheng Qingyan, and others would not have been stuck at their current level for so long.

In fact, only soul devices with more than 90% compatibility with oneself are effective for enhancing spiritual power by piling quantity.

But—

Whether it's a natural soul artifact or an artificial soul device, their generation or creation is extremely challenging due to their scarcity. It's hard enough to buy one soul device, let alone having the opportunity to choose the quality or compatibility.

...

Moreover, using a large quantity of soul devices with low compatibility at once can cause a mismatch in the magnetic field between the soul devices, negatively impacting the structural stability of the Soul Artifact Array Formation Map, causing premature failure of the soul devices. Worse, it may also adversely affect the user's spiritual world...

Therefore, typically, one can use only one soul device at a time; those with powerful spiritual power might manage 2-3, but no more.

Yue Qiyuan asked in hopes of giving Ji You a friendly reminder.

Ji You understood, rubbed her brow, and said, "Rest assured, I'll be cautious and find the one with the highest compatibility with me to use."

Ahem...

Ji You actually felt awkward admitting to this group of superficial friends that she had never encountered the concept of compatibility. She didn't even know what it felt like to be compatible with a soul device.

Because once a soul device was in Ji You's hands, it never lasted more than 3 seconds before being consumed clean and dry by the Iron Plate and 6 Silk Threads.

"Hmm." Yue Qiyuan nodded, "As long as you get it."

Then.

Not taking a second longer, Ji You hurriedly stashed the soul devices borrowed from everyone except one into the Space Button. However, even after putting several soul devices into the Space Button, the spiritual world remained still, extremely quiet.

Ji You felt somewhat uneasy, under normal circumstances, she wouldn't even have to say a word for the Iron Plate to automatically come out and eat the soul devices. But now? Ji You spread her hand, looking at the soul device lying calmly in her palm, it was completely intact, without a hint of anomaly.

second.

seconds.

seconds.

...

Still unchanged.

"Woman, what are you doing?" Little Golden Dragon leaped over, rolling its eyes at Ji You, "Haven't you released the Spiritual Silk yet?"

Ji You was taken aback.

Right.

She was so focused on why the Iron Plate wasn't coming out to eat that she forgot she had cut off the energy supply to the Iron Plate, and she didn't even know how to reconnect it.

How had she forgotten about the Spiritual Silk?

Not daring to delay, Ji You immediately released the Spiritual Silk, and at that instant, like flowers encountering the sunrise, in the blink of an eye, the soul device in Ji You's hand suddenly shone brightly—

Seeing this, everyone was amazed.

But!!!

In just a moment, the soul device that bloomed with dazzling light, darkened instantly.

Everyone bowed their heads, even more shocked:

Yue Qiguang exclaimed in surprise, "What the heck! This soul device, is—scrapped?"

Yue Qiyuan walked over, inspected thoroughly, and found that the soul device had turned into black ash, speaking with twitching lips in mute silence, "Upon evaluation, it is indeed scrapped."

Shen Changqing opened his mouth, finding it hard to say anything.

Chu Jiaojiao stared, "Ji You, you... what did you do to the soul device?"

Sheng Qingyan tilted his head, examining the black ash, then Ji You, frowningly said, "Poor dead oh, don't you have zero compatibility with the soul device? Otherwise, it wouldn't become scrapped with just a touch."

The soul device requires an Array Diagram to maintain structural stability, while the Array Diagram is solid, it's also extremely fragile, easily destroyed by external spiritual power. If one's compatibility with a soul device is extremely low yet forcibly used, it will definitely cause great damage to the soul device. In severe cases, it may even cause the Array Diagram to collapse, leading the soul device to become completely scrapped.

As Sheng Qingyan voiced this suspicion, everyone was stunned once more, Yue Qiyuan asked, "Who just gave this soul device?"

Yue Qiguang pointed at himself, saying, "Dad gave it. But, it came from Student Fufeng, it's a soul device personally made by Master Deng Mingguang. How could it have low compatibility?"

For a soul artifact maker to be honored as a soul artifact master, the foremost criterion is that the soul devices they make must match the vast majority of people, with compatibility absolutely not too low. Otherwise, the soul devices made by them would not be usable widely, and they couldn't be called soul artifact masters, could they?

This is Deng Mingguang, the most renowned soul artifact maker of the Galaxy Empire, along with Master Kong Zhe from the Alliance, the two are deemed as the strongest soul device makers in human history.

Deng Mingguang's soul device, with 0 compatibility with Ji You, is that possible?

...

Sheng Qingyan glanced at Ji You, "Poor dead oh, take out another soul device by Master Deng Mingguang oh, the one from just now was also by Master Deng Mingguang oh, just take that one oh."

Ji You obliged and took one out.

As a result.

The soul device appeared in Ji You's hand and turned into a smear of black ash in less than 3 seconds.

Everyone: "..."

Yue Qiyuan urged again, "Take another one, by the same maker."

Ji You felt slightly pained, saying, "These are soul devices, these are soul devices I wrote IOUs for, don't just waste them because they aren't yours, huh."

Yue Qiguang frowned, "Enough nonsense, get on with it."

No choice.

Ji You had to unwillingly, somewhat reluctantly, take out a new one in front of everyone.

The outcome was the same.

The soul devices in her hand couldn't survive beyond 3 seconds.

Everyone fell into silence, then Yue Qiyuan, with a hint of sympathy and pain, said, "You really have 0 compatibility with soul devices."

Ji You stubbornly retorted, "How can that be? Such a talented person like me, how could I have 0 compatibility with soul devices?"

Chapter 962: Paradox

Ji You clutched her heart, her body swaying unsteadily, looking as if she couldn't accept reality: "Impossible! Absolutely impossible!"

Yue Qiyuan asserted confidently, "You have zero compatibility with the Soul Device."

Ji You stomped her foot, glaring, and said, "I'm such a genius, how could that be possible? You must be lying to me, the Soul Device must be broken, it definitely has a problem."

Beside her, Yue Qiguang said disdainfully, "This is a Soul Device crafted by Master Deng Mingguang, and you say it's broken? Are you questioning Master Deng Mingguang's skill?"

Master Deng Mingguang is the most renowned soul artifact maker in the Galaxy Empire, having once created a world-famous High-level Soul Device, which has a lifespan of at least 50 years.

Following this, Master Deng Mingguang's soul artifact manufacturing skill became increasingly refined, and over the following decades, he crafted a dozen High-level Soul Devices, as well as numerous Mid-level and low-level Soul Devices... His production is so high in quality and quantity that even Master Kong Zhe, who is as famous as he is, has publicly admitted several times that his production cannot match Deng Mingguang's...

And now, Ji You actually dares to question Master Deng Mingguang's manufacturing skill?

Chu Jiaojiao said, "Classmate Ji You, there's no way Master Deng Mingguang's Soul Device has a problem. The one I'm using is particularly good, and it has an effect on improving my spiritual power."

Shen Changqing also said, "There's no way there's an issue with the Soul Device."

So——

The problem can only be with Ji You.

Ji You raised her hand, covering her ears: "I won't listen, I won't listen, I won't listen... It can't be that my compatibility with the Soul Device is zero."

Suddenly——

The slightly drowsy Sheng Qingyan spoke up: "There's another possibility, you know. If your compatibility with the Soul Device is 100%, this situation could also occur."

The crowd was shocked by these words, and Chu Jiaojiao slapped her thigh hard, "That's right! There's that possibility too, how didn't I think of that?"

Upon hearing this, Yue Qiyuan couldn't help but stare intently at Ji You.

Yue Qiguang also gaped, staring at Ji You.

Shen Changqing looked at Ji You, his face unusually serious...

Liu Fufeng lifted his head, looking towards Ji You...

All of a sudden, facing the strange gazes of her companions, Ji You shamelessly raised her head and said, "That's right, Spicy Eye is correct. My compatibility with the Soul Device is 100%."

Shen Changqing suddenly shook his head, opened his mouth, and said lightly, "Impossible. It's impossible for that situation to occur."

Yue Qiyuan agreed, saying, "100% compatibility is only a theoretical possibility. In reality, for someone to have 100% compatibility with a Soul Device, they must have a Spiritual Silk Cleaning Rate of 100% because only then can they disregard the Soul Device's stability and completely absorb its benefits. But if the Spiritual Silk Cleaning Rate has reached 100%, then it means their spiritual power is already at the limit, with no room for improvement, hence they fundamentally don't need a Soul Device..."

Shen Changqing added, "That's right."

"Ahem..." Ji You cleared her throat and said defiantly, "Why can't I have a 100% Cleaning Rate?"

Seeing Ji You acting as if she was still trying to save face even though she couldn't accept the blow, there was not only sympathy but a bit of heartache. Yue Qiyuan looked at Ji You and said softly, "You?"

"You can't possibly have a 100% Cleaning Rate." Yue Qiyuan said firmly, pausing for a moment before continuing, "Because we use Soul Devices to enhance the Spiritual Silk Cleaning Rate and break the barriers of Spirit Levels. The Soul Device's purpose for us is just that. If your Spiritual Silk Cleaning Rate is already at 100%, it means your spiritual power has peaked, with no potential for further improvement, and you wouldn't need a Soul Device at all."

Shen Changqing nodded, "That's right."

Yue Qiyuan said, "So, it's a paradox."

If the Spiritual Silk Cleaning Rate has reached 100%, it means the level of spiritual power has reached the human limit and cannot improve further, but! Ji You's spiritual power used to be E-level!

Now, she's at B-level.

In just one semester, she went from E-level to B-level. Plus, natural foods, the Soul Device, and Candy Beans processed from Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures... such things have effects on her. All of this indicates her spiritual power hasn't reached its limit.

...

So, the conclusion is——

Ji You cannot possibly have a 100% Spiritual Silk Cleaning Rate.

Hearing what Shen Changqing, Yue Qiyuan, and the others said, a flash appeared in Ji You's eyes. She somewhat understood why Principal Hong, Dr. Luo, and Teacher Mu were so shocked when they saw her spiritual power situation back then, and why they insisted that she keep it a secret.

This!!!

If the outside world found out, they'd even estimate her hair strands to be the best little lab mouse.

But!

Ji You, stubbornly, said, "I am 100% compatible, I'm 100% Spiritual Silk Clean Rate! You morons, if you don't believe me, I'll... I'll rip up all the IOUs!"

Everyone: "..."

Ji You: "This debt, I'm determined to default on."

Everyone: "..."

It's over.

This guy has become stupid out of despair.

For a moment, everyone looked up, and Yue Qiguang stuffed the IOU into his Space Button, saying disdainfully, "This fool's IOU isn't of much use, but in an emergency, it could wipe your ass."

Ji You: "..."

Before Ji You could roll her eyes, she heard Yue Qiguang continue, "It works for meddling too."

Chu Jiaojiao said, "This is Ji You classmate's own handwriting, I want to keep it as a memento."

Shen Changqing quietly: "Just keep it then, it doesn't take up space anyway."

Sheng Qingyan rolled her eyes, saying, "You poor dead, even if they throw it away, they won't let you tear it up."

Nearby, Liu Fufeng, who couldn't join the conversation, suddenly said, "If it doesn't matter to you all, why not give them all to me? I want them."

No one paid him any mind.

Liu Fufeng thought for a moment and said, "I'll buy each IOU for 1 million credit points."

Yue Qiyuan rolled his eyes at Liu Fufeng, saying disdainfully, "1 million? Do you think Dad hasn't seen money before? 1 million to take away a Mid-level Soul Device worth tens of millions from Dad?"

The others evidently agreed.

Liu Fufeng suddenly said, "1 billion."

Everyone: "!!!"

Liu Fufeng said, "For one."

Everyone stared with wide eyes, and Ji You took a deep breath, immediately batting flirtatious eyes at Liu Fufeng: "Liu Fufeng classmate, don't buy that second-hand stuff from them anymore, I have first-hand sources here, want some?"

As she spoke, Ji You quickly pulled out a stack of white paper from her pocket, "Tell me how many you want, and I'll give you as many IOUs."

Everyone: "..."

While everyone felt speechless, unexpectedly, Liu Fufeng said quite seriously, "Give me 10,000 sheets then."

Everyone: "..."

Chapter 963: Light

billion for one piece!!!

For a moment, everyone was dumbfounded with envy.

In shock, Chu Jiaojiao, Yue Qiguang, Yue Qiyuan... all jumped over, just about to ask Liu Fufeng if he needed their IOUs or something. The next second, they heard Liu Fufeng suddenly lower his head slightly, somewhat embarrassed, and said, "But I don't have money right now. Can I owe it for now?"

Ji You: "..."

Using an IOU to purchase your own IOU...

This is simply genius.

To put it simply, this person has a screw loose, and it's not a minor illness.

Ji You immediately waved her hand as if shooing away a fly, and said disdainfully, "Get lost, get lost... hurry up and go..."

Liu Fufeng looked at the stack of blank IOUs in Ji You's hand, feeling quite regretful...

Just as Ji You was about to put away the stack of IOUs, suddenly, Little Golden Dragon jumped over and squeezed out what he thought was a very handsome smile, saying, "Ji You, can you give me a few?"

Ji You twitched the corner of her mouth: "You're a mecha, what do you need these things for?"

Little Golden Dragon said seriously, "Of course, to exchange for money."

"..." Ji You: "What do you need money for?"

Little Golden Dragon cleared his throat and said seriously, "To buy tasty food."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You said speechlessly, "No. Just be a good mecha and don't think about all these messy things."

Little Golden Dragon said very regretfully, "But I want to eat something."

Ji You waved her hand, "But you don't eat, and you won't starve."

Little Golden Dragon kept a stern face, trying to maintain the dignity of Lord Heavenly Dog, but the tone of his voice sounded slightly grieved: "But if I don't eat, I'm hungry."

Ji You said speechlessly, "If you're hungry, I'll buy you food. What do you need my IOU for?"

Little Golden Dragon hummed, "I want to have money myself and buy it myself."

Ji You replied, "If you want money, figure out a way to earn it yourself."

Little Golden Dragon hummed, "But you won't authorize your Star Network account for me to use, so I can't participate in betting."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You took a deep breath and said, "Instead of thinking about earning money step by step, you want to gamble?"

Little Golden Dragon said matter-of-factly, "It's faster to get money this way."

Ji You immediately turned around and said to Chu Jiaojiao, Yue Qiguang, Sheng Qingyan, and others, "I don't want this mecha anymore, who wants it?"

Chu Jiaojiao, Yue Qiguang, Sheng Qingyan, and others immediately turned their backs disdainfully.

Little Golden Dragon snorted, "Hmph! You short-sighted fools, I'm not sticking with you guys! My master must be the most powerful person in the universe."

While cracking jokes with Little Golden Dragon and her friends, Ji You was actually very tense inside because when the first Soul Device failed in less than 3 seconds, Ji You was suddenly overjoyed because the Iron Plate appeared.

The moment she saw the Iron Plate, Ji You was almost moved to tears.

But!

Then, Ji You's heart sank.

The Iron Plate appeared, but it had turned from the original lustrous and shiny into a rusty piece, with no visible luster or complex, beautiful patterns!

Ji You had always jokingly called it the Iron Plate, but she knew it wasn't just an Iron Plate. Now... it truly had become an Iron Plate, and Ji You's heart tightened for a moment:

—Xiao You, is it okay?

Ji You: "Xiao You—"

"Xiao You—"

"Xiao You—"

Silence.

A quiet moment.

second.

seconds.

seconds.

...

Ji You's entire heart was tied up in a knot, and as time passed, just when Ji You was about to despair, suddenly, a hoarse, rough voice rang out: [Sister?]

After the surge of joy, Ji You felt heartache: "Xiao You, what happened to your voice?"

In the enclosed space, the girl wrapped in a cocoon had red-rimmed eyes and swollen eyes, her throat was already ruined, and the originally sweet and soft voice now sounded as harsh as a broken bellows:

[Sister!!!]

[Sister!!! Where did you go just now?]

[I thought... I thought I'd never see you again...]

[I...]

— I was already in despair, and your appearance brought me hope.

— You are my light.

—You are my everything.

The girl tightly clenched her palm, not uttering the last few words.

Ji You held her chest, tightly, tightly, she had many things she wanted to say, to explain, but when the words reached her mouth, she changed it, and only said softly, "Xiao You, it was my fault, sorry for making you worry. There was a bit of an accident just now, but fortunately, the crisis has been resolved. I promise you, no matter what happens in the future, I will definitely tell you the first time as long as your safety is ensured."

Xiao You lightly pressed her lips: [Sister, I will never blame you. So, you never need to apologize to me, never.]

When the girl said this, she slightly raised her eyes, her red and swollen eyes staring at the only light source within her field of vision, softly, softly, said: [Sister... I don't care about myself, my only wish is your safety.]

Ji You opened her mouth: "...But my wish is also your safety."

After saying this, Ji You raised her hand, rubbed her face, and said seriously, "Ahem... girl, don't say cheesy things in the future. The things we say sound just like those clingy little couples, it's super cheesy, super greasy."

Xiao You listened, not feeling embarrassed at all, but instead said seriously: [But to me, sister—you are more important than a lover.]

Ji You: "Ahem... To me, Xiao You is also more important and special than a lover."

Hearing this, a bright light suddenly shone in Xiao You's red and swollen eyes...

So bright.

So bright.

...

The slender, fragile girl straightened her back, her gaze fixed and bright as she stared at the light source, and her hoarse, slightly rough voice fully regained its vitality. She thought about the experiences she just went through, worried about what her sister experienced outside, so she quickly asked: [Sister... What was the crisis encountered outside?]

Ji You gave a brief explanation: "That's basically what happened. I'll tell you more specifically later. It was really dangerous at that time. I even suspected they stopped all of a sudden because they sensed the slightest trace of the Iron Plate."

Xiao You lowered her head and pondered.

Ji You said, "It was terrifying, unimaginably terrifying. All six of my fearless Spiritual Silks were so scared they didn't dare to move."

Upon hearing this, Xiao You raised her head and asked: [Sister, are you really not hurt?]

Ji You shook her head.

Xiao You breathed a sigh of relief and said: [They were indeed very terrifying. I... I was inside the Iron Plate, and I also felt waves of strong foreboding terror... It was as if some catastrophic beast was about to break out. Fortunately... fortunately...]

As Ji You communicated with Xiao You, she kept an eye on the monitor...

Quickly.

The spaceship announced that the destination had been reached.

Chapter 964: Passing Through

The spaceship stopped in a small yet fortress-like space station dock, with strict defenses. Ji You, Shen Changqing, Chu Jiaojiao, Sheng Qingyan... a group of seven people, together with the spaceship, all went through security checks at the space station.

This space station is a military defense space station built by the Alliance near the Star Domain close to Bee Head Star. It serves as a forward base, specifically for collecting and probing Star Beast information, defending against their invasions, and combating interstellar pirates to protect commercial ships or the life and property of Alliance citizens along the way. Currently, there are 100 mechanical warriors stationed here.

The station is heavily guarded, ensuring safety by requiring all individuals, whether Alliance citizens or foreign nationals, to undergo intricate layers of security checks.

Ji You, Chu Jiaojiao, Sheng Qingyan... all cooperated fully with the stationed troops' inspections.

Once all checks were completed, Ji You and her group received their passes for Bee Head Star.

Distributing the passes was a middle-aged warrior with healthy, sun-kissed skin and bright eyes. When he saw Ji You and the young group, his stern expression softened slightly as he asked, "Are you students from the Lanyue Star Military Academy?"

Ji You replied loudly, "Yes."

The middle-aged warrior smiled, "Nice, very spirited."

He handed the pass to Ji You, having examined her brief profile and knowing she was from the Combat Department, with a minor in Material Handling. He then asked, "How is Professor Ye Hong?"

Ji You paused for a moment and quickly responded, "He's doing well."

The old geezer is indeed doing well, especially when he's scolding people—his energy is robust, and you can't tell he's a few hundred years old.

When Professor Ye Hong was mentioned, the middle-aged warrior saw Ji You's smile quickly wrinkle into a frown and said with a laugh, "He's a very serious, meticulous, and stubborn old guy. However, his teaching is excellent. Yet he's quite old now and can't keep up with teaching demands; probably in another 10 years, he'll have to retire. So, if you're interested in Material Handling, you should cherish your time in his classes."

"Ahem..." Ji You said, slightly embarrassed...

Professor Ye Hong is a good teacher... but she's publicly vowed never to take his classes.

Ahem...

Furthermore, the old professor isn't just stern and stubborn; her homework always gets sent back for revision. Even during the final exams, after making dozens of materials, she barely scraped by with a passing grade. He's simply... beyond words in terms of difficulty.

Yet, because of his strictness, despite only attending online classes and never in-person ones, Ji You's Material Handling skills have only improved rapidly. Nowadays, she can produce usable materials from basic ones with ease.

...

Ji You brushed aside the previous embarrassment and earnestly said, "Professor Ye Hong's teaching quality and professional capabilities are indeed very commendable. I respect him greatly."

The middle-aged warrior smiled, "Thank you for your admiration. He is my uncle. I lost my parents early, and my uncle raised me. He always hoped I would study Material Handling with him, but my interest lies in Mecha Battle, which he considers unfortunate. So every time he sees me, he scolds me bitterly."

Ji You: "!!!"

It turns out he's Professor Ye Hong's nephew!

Indeed—

That old-fashioned geezer treats his kin just as sternly as others. Ji You curiously glanced at the middle-aged warrior's badge: [Ye Liqiang, 55 years, Battalion Commander of the 189th Reconnaissance Camp, Sixth Legion. 2-star warrior.]

stars!!!

Ji You's eyes shone brightly, and upon hearing this senior's words, she felt an affinity and immediately became warmer towards the stern-looking Ye Liqiang, even blurting out, "What a coincidence~ Every time Professor Ye Hong sees me, he likes to give me a good scolding too."

"Ahem..." The middle-aged warrior cleared his throat and said, "... Ji You, you must be very outstanding."

—presumably not only outstanding but also quite cheeky.

Oops, too fast with the words. Ji You raised her hand, scratched her head, and awkwardly laughed, "Haha... Haha... Honestly, Professor Ye Hong is really good. His strictness is for the benefit of the students, and I definitely understand and support that."

The middle-aged warrior smiled, "The passes have already been issued to you."

He looked at Ji You and her group of seven, all extremely promising students who will surely be pillars of the Alliance in the future. His formerly stern demeanor softened more as he continued, "Recently, Star Beast activities have been frequent in various places. According to space monitoring information, Bee Head Star is relatively safe at the moment, but your practical combat experience is limited. You must be prudent in your fights with Star Beasts, avoid rash actions."

Ji You, Chu Jiaojiao, Shen Changqing... immediately nodded seriously, "Yes, we will pay attention and prioritize safety."

The middle-aged warrior continued, "The space station here is roughly 3 light years from Bee Head Star. If we need to deploy rescue, it'll take at least 30 light minutes. So make sure you gauge the risks properly."

Ji You responded loudly, "Yes! Don't worry, senior!"

"The warriors stationed here patrol the vicinity of Bee Head Star daily around 12:30 Alliance Standard Time. If you need other supplies, you can seek help from the patrol warriors." After saying this, the middle-aged warrior waved his hand, "Mm, you may leave now; if you hurry over, you'll just catch Bee Head Star's sunset glow... it's certainly a rare sight."

Ji You and others replied loudly, "Yes."

Then.

Ji You and her team boarded the spaceship, activated it, and swiftly raced out of the artificial atmosphere.

The dark cosmos, boundless and vast.

Inside the spaceship, everyone stayed tense. After departing from Ye Liqiang's space station, there were no human guards along the route. If attacked by a Star Beast or faced other emergencies, Ji You and her team would have to rely on self-rescue; they couldn't help but stay on edge.

The spaceship traveled smoothly, with the journey being calm and uneventful, until it arrived above Bee Head Star's atmosphere.

Bee Head Star is a planet with over 70% land area, scarce water resources concentrated in the Southern Hemisphere, where the dangerous Black Thorn Bees reside. Ji You and others' mission targets are Black

Gold Rats, who prefer living in the expansive land area of the Northern Hemisphere and typically hide underground, especially where Black Gold Ore is abundant.

Originally, they wouldn't need to interact with Black Thorn Bees.

Unfortunately—

Ji You, Chu Jiaojiao, Sheng Qingyan... couldn't help but glance at Liu Fufeng...

Unfortunately—

A spur of greed.

Chapter 965: Overstimulated

As the spaceship approached the starry sky where Bee Head Star was located, its speed gradually slowed down, slowly, slowly... and stopped over Bee Head Star.

Then—

Ji You, Chu Jiaojiao, Shen Changqing, Sheng Qingyan, Yue Qiguang, Yue Qiyuan, and even Liu Fufeng, all suddenly widened their eyes: "!!!"

They saw—

Above Bee Head Star, a layer of pink light enveloped it, resembling pink cotton candy, which seemed extremely sweet. Moreover, the cotton candy's shape looked like a heart from afar. Beneath the glow was a spherical planet, half azure blue and half golden, with the two tones clearly separated.

This!

This planet looks incredibly romantic.

Ji You crossed her arms, staring at Bee Head Star not far away, and remarked with a face full of wonder: "This place just seems like the perfect spot for a proposal."

It comes with sweetness.

It comes with hearts.

It comes with pink bubbles.

...

As soon as Ji You spoke, the rough man Yue Qiguang actually agreed quite a bit. He lifted his face and said, "When Dad has a girlfriend in the future, I will definitely bring her here to take a look and then make a vow of eternal love to her in the pink heart glow."

"Cough, cough..."

"Cough, cough..."

"Cough, cough..."

Suddenly, the sound of dry coughing rose and fell, Yue Qiguang frowned, slightly dissatisfied, and said: "You fools, what are you coughing about? Don't think by coughing, Dad doesn't know that you're laughing at me."

Ji You exclaimed with shock: "You actually know we're laughing at you?"

Yue Qiguang's face darkened: "All single dogs, who's nobler than who? When you ridicule Dad, look at yourselves——"

After saying this, Yue Qiguang spit out a mouthful: "A group of dead single dogs."

Everyone: "..."

"Cough, cough..."

"Cough, cough..."

"Cough, cough..."

After a bout of coughing, the spaceship slowly, slowly, advanced into the atmosphere of Bee Head Star.

As the spaceship breached the atmosphere, not quite landing at Dock 06, within the spaceship, everyone quietly gazed outside at the pink halo, appreciating the stunning scenery.

"The spaceship reports, it's now Alliance Standard Time 18:30, about to land at coordinates *** Bee Head Star Dock 06, please prepare——" As soon as the verbal report ended, Ji You, Chu Jiaojiao, Shen Changqing, and others all turned towards the window, only to see the originally pink halo suddenly turning bright blue...

Then.

It was purple.

After that.

It was——

In just a few minutes, the starry sky above Bee Head Star shifted through more than a dozen colors, and the pink light screen gradually turned multicolored. The surrounding clouds also changed color alongside, making the whole spectacle overwhelmingly beautiful...

"So beautiful."

"So stunning."

"Utterly indescribable shock."

"Is this Bee Head Star's sunset glow?"

"Indeed, very beautiful."

...

Amidst the exclamations, Shen Changqing softly said: "The reason for such effects is because this area of Bee Head Star has 9 stars, and each one emits different light, coupled with Bee Head Star's inherent geological impact... Various factors combined together produce such a wondrous view."

Ji You widened her eyes: "9 stars?"

The ancient legend of Hou Yi shooting down the suns wasn't entirely baseless...

Ji You was deeply stirred, realizing her understanding of the Alliance's geography was still lacking.

Shen Changqing nodded and said: "I've always been interested in the geography of the Alliance and previously researched this kind of information, yet the difference between viewing a holographic screen and witnessing it on-site remains huge."

Beauty.

Only 'beauty' can describe it.

Then.

The spaceship began to gradually land towards the destination.

After the Black Gold Ore was mined, since the geographic environment wasn't suitable for humans, there are no inhabitants here. The former mining team had already left, and the previous garrison had also relocated.

Now, the nearest garrison to Bee Head Star is the Space Station where Ye Liqiang senior is located.

Every day, the Mechanical Warriors of the Space Station patrol to determine the safety level of this Star Domain.

Soon.

The spaceship landed at Dock 6.

Dock 6 was built in the Northern Hemisphere of Bee Head Star, and while the entire Bee Head Star no longer has human occupants, many of the man-made structures left by the previous Black Gold Ore mining team still remain. Dock 6 looked somewhat old but all its functionalities were still intact, and it even had docking robots.

Following the guidance of the docking robots, in the pilot's seat of the cockpit, Chu Jiaojiao gradually steered the spaceship to a stable halt along the established trajectory.

Beep—

The spaceship's voice system timely announced: "Spaceship safely landed, please prepare to disembark."

Ji You raised her hand, not letting everyone immediately get off the spaceship, but instead deployed two unmanned reconnaissance drones to survey continuously for several thousand kilometers around...

Then.

A reconnaissance drone, when it was about to approach the Southern Hemisphere, was suddenly discovered by a swarm of Black Thorn Bees, only hearing——

"Buzz, buzz, buzz..."

"Buzz, buzz, buzz..."

"Buzz, buzz, buzz..."

Swarms of Black Thorn Bees spread their wings, rushing toward the drone——

"Crunch~"

After a crisp sound, the drone transmitted this final image to Ji You and the others, and then, in the next second, was mercilessly shredded by the ferocious Black Thorn Bees.

Ji You: "..."

Others: "..."

Staring at the scene, everyone fell into a strange silence.

second.

seconds.

seconds.

...

After a long moment, Ji You, Chu Jiaojiao, Sheng Qingyan... all six people turned their heads simultaneously to stare at Liu Fufeng and in unison said: "Soul Device, we want to return it to you!"

Liu Fufeng: "..."

Liu Fufeng opened her pretty eyes, shaking her head: "No."

With those two words, Liu Fufeng suddenly turned to Ji You and said: "My Soul Device, Ji You has already used 2."

Ji You clutched at her heart: "I'll return them to you! Tenfold, I'll return them tenfold!"

Liu Fufeng's eyes suddenly brightened——

The next second.

"I was just saying it casually, you actually believed it?" Ji You snorted: "I've used up all the Soul Devices, I'm just not going to pay, what can you do? Cough, cough..." After all, there isn't an IOU in Liu Fufeng's hand...

The previous contract written in black and white with Liu Fufeng was signed not only by myself but also by others.

Faced with Ji You's clear intention of defaulting, Chu Jiaojiao, Yue Qiguang, and a few others seemed to want to follow suit. Liu Fufeng suddenly clutched his chest with one hand, his body swaying, and started coughing violently:

"Cough, cough..."

He hastily stretched out a hand, covering his mouth. After a fierce bout of coughing, Liu Fufeng suddenly released his hand, exposing it full of fresh blood...

"I... you..." Everyone's pupils contracted sharply, and for a moment, they didn't know what to say to express the sense of guilt and apology caused by the sudden change of heart.

Liu Fufeng, covering his mouth with a bloody hand again, weakly said: "Sorry... scared... scared you all... I... I'm just not very healthy, can't... can't withstand any sort of shock."

Chapter 966: The Ruse of Self-Sacrifice

"Cough cough..."

"Cough cough..."

"Cough cough..."

The scene was extremely quiet, except for Liu Fufeng's intermittent coughing. Ji You, Chu Jiaojiao, Shen Changqing, Yue Qiyuan, Yue Qiguang, and Sheng Qingyan looked at each other...

Shen Changqing pursed his lips and said, "Are we... being too harsh?"

Yue Qiguang brazenly said, "Not just harsh, absolutely despicable. Taking money without doing the job, trying to anger the creditor to death, once and for all."

"Cough cough..." Yue Qiyuan glared at his foolish brother and scolded, "Stop spouting the harsh truth!"

"Cough cough..." Chu Jiaojiao fiercely pulled a strand of her hair and asked everyone, "So... what are we gonna do? Are we planning to ditch our debts or grit our teeth and push forward? You guys decide, I'll go with the flow."

Oh boy.

Chu Jiaojiao pretends to go with the flow, but actually avoids making decisions to dodge responsibility.

Then.

After Chu Jiaojiao finished speaking, Sheng Qingyan, along with Shen Changqing, Yue Qiguang, Yue Qiyuan, and even Chu Jiaojiao herself, all turned their heads to Ji You...

Ji You said mysteriously, "Why are you all looking at me?"

Yue Qiguang bluntly said, "You're better at handling this kind of shady deal, you make the decision."

Ji You's mouth twitched, "Who? Who are you talking about? I can't understand what you're saying. I'm clueless..."

Saying that, Ji You looked at the group of fair-weather friends, shook her head, and sighed, "I'm just an ordinary follower, whatever you decide, I'll go along..."

At this moment, Liu Fufeng, who was being ignored by the group, coughed forcefully again:

"Cough cough..."

"I... I..."

Each word Liu Fufeng uttered was followed by a cough and spitting blood, appearing weak but maintaining the determination to speak:

"For... forget it."

"Don't make it hard for everyone, I'll... I'll go alone."

"Even if it means crawling and crying, I'll... I'll gritting my teeth and complete the task." Liu Fufeng said, and as he spoke, his whole body seemed to sway and was about to fall. Liu Fufeng kept an eye on the others' reactions but realized Ji You and the group didn't have a single person reaching out to help. Liu Fufeng felt his silver teeth were about to shatter. His figure suddenly wobbled!

"Bang!"

He fell to the ground.

Ji You: "..."

Chu Jiaojiao and others: "..."

Lying on the floor, Liu Fufeng was momentarily completely dazed.

He—

He never expected that no one would actually reach out to support him.

Not a single person.

He fell in Ji You's direction and thought that, no matter what, she would at least offer a knife butt or cane to slightly support him...

But...

Liu Fufeng barely closed his eyes.

At this moment, the atmosphere on the scene was somewhat stifling with silence. Liu Fufeng lay on the old floor of Dock No. 6, gazing at the colourful sky overhead, the glow of sunset casting over his slightly thin body. His pale, pretty face was further accentuated by the shimmering light as thin as cicada wings...

There was... a delicate beauty of fragility.

And, this scene... strangely familiar, Chu Jiaojiao, Yue Qiguang, Yue Qiyuan, Sheng Qingyan, Shen Changqing couldn't help but turn their heads toward Ji You.

Yue Qiguang forcefully shook his head:

[It's different...

At the time, 4444 was genuinely sad, lonely, anguished, longing... along with the misunderstood pain... and various complex emotions intertwined on the pretentiously strong face.

But—

But Liu Fufeng?

Liu Fufeng is truly weak.]

Chu Jiaojiao also shook her head, sighed, and said, "Student Liu Fufeng, if you looked as good as Student Ji You, I wouldn't hesitate. I'd gladly climb mountains and cross seas.

Sadly—

You're not good looking."

Liu Fufeng: "..."

Liu Fufeng's calm face, tinged with sadness and fragility, suddenly stiffened. His pupils slightly contracted, some disbelief flashed in his eyes: "I... I'm not good looking?"

Chu Jiaojiao said, "You're far inferior to Student Ji You."

Liu Fufeng: "..."

Liu Fufeng turned to Ji You, who quickly distanced herself from Chu Jiaojiao and said, "Don't look at me, I didn't say it. Jiaojiao's aesthetic is all over the place, with no consistent standard, don't listen to her nonsense, she's an oddball."

Chu Jiaojiao jumped over, not only not angry, but admired Ji You's face with a silly smile: "I'm an oddball who only likes Student Ji You's — face."

Ji You: "Get lost."

Sensing Liu Fufeng's gaze, Shen Changqing hurriedly shook his head, saying, "Don't ask me, I lack aesthetic sense."

Yue Qiyuan said, "I'm even more aesthetically challenged."

Sheng Qingyan fiercely glared at Liu Fufeng, Ji You, and others, getting exasperated, stomped her foot, "You all are blind... Me — the universe's number one Little Cutie Sheng Qingyan is the best-looking person in the world."

The disbelief in Liu Fufeng's beautiful eyes vanished instantaneously, and seemingly regained a bit of self-confidence. Liu Fufeng looked at Ji You, then at the others, seriously stating, "I look particularly good because I take after my mom. My mom Xia Man is currently recognized as the world's number one beauty."

Ji You: "..."

Everyone: "..."

Liu Fufeng raised a hand to rub his face, "I'm serious, if you don't believe me, check the world beauty rankings."

Ji You asked in shock, "You actually looked at that thing?"

Liu Fufeng slightly lowered his eyelids, his voice mysteriously dropping, "Because, I want to know everything about my mom."

"Cough cough..." Ji You quickly said, "Student Liu Fufeng, don't lie on the floor, it's cold, you're physically weak, get up quickly."

Liu Fufeng's figure twitched slightly, about to get up, but as if he suddenly remembered something, he naturally attempted to rise, but his body wobbled and ended up falling back again.

"Bang!"

"Hiss~" Liu Fufeng couldn't help but take a deep breath, raised a hand to cover the corner of his mouth, which was still lightly bleeding..."I... I need to complete the task, I... I can't give up..."

"This... this may be my only chance to take on a task."

"I..."

This scene, where Liu Fufeng appeared both fragile and strong, made Ji You and the others feel a pang of guilt.

Yue Qiguang fiercely pulled a strand of hair and shouted loudly, "Let's go together! I don't believe our luck as a group will be so bad, and there's nothing to be afraid of, it's just a bunch of low-star bugs."

With these words, suddenly Ji You, Chu Jiaojiao, Shen Changqing, Yue Qiyuan, Sheng Qingyan all shouted loudly: "Shut up!"

...

Chapter 967: Acting Evaluation

Yue Qiguang's words, he simply didn't realize how annoying he was. Even Liu Fufeng, who was lying on the ground, coughing up blood nonstop, had his originally weak and powerless body arching his back for a moment when he heard Yue Qiguang's words.

Yue Qiguang murmured, "Dad, seal your mouth, okay. Really— a bunch of cowards."

Liu Fufeng's stiff body gradually recovered. He lay on the floor, tilted his head, and gazed blankly at the sky. At this moment, Shen Changqing felt a bit of pity. He bent down slightly, handed Liu Fufeng a handkerchief, and said, "Student Fufeng, laying on the floor for too long isn't good for your recovery, and also, you've been coughing blood for too long. You should use a treatment instrument as soon as possible and drink something to replenish your blood."

The first one who came over to help himself was not Ji You, but Shen Changqing. This surprised Liu Fufeng somewhat internally, but he still naturally accepted it with a hint of gratitude, whispering, "Thank you."

Shen Changqing, with a slightly worried look, asked, "Has your body always been like this?"

Liu Fufeng shook his head and said, "No... not always. As long as I'm not stimulated and my emotions don't fluctuate much, it won't happen."

"Oh—" Shen Changqing heard this and looked toward the sky.

Liu Fufeng: "???"

After waiting for a moment and seeing that Shen Changqing remained silent, Liu Fufeng was momentarily speechless. Then, he took out a pill from the Space Button and swallowed it, immediately stopping his cough.

The blood that was constantly flowing from the corner of his mouth gradually stopped as well.

Liu Fufeng struggled to stand up, and his strong demeanor was hardly touching to heaven and earth...

But!

Ji You and the others were a group of ruthless, indifferent people. Seeing Liu Fufeng finally restore a bit of normalcy, this group actually began discussing ways to secretly infiltrate the Southern Hemisphere, plan the traps, and execute the plan to steal 100 Black Thorn Bees...

No one, not a single person, came to care whether Liu Fufeng's body had recovered or not, or whether this medicine had any effect, and how effective it was...

For a moment, Liu Fufeng opened his mouth, then swallowed the pill with a gulp.

Suddenly—

The Little Golden Dragon jumped over, leaned in front of Liu Fufeng, and asked, "The candy you're eating, can you give me one?"

Liu Fufeng: "..."

Hearing this, Ji You, Chu Jiaojiao, Shen Changqing, Yue Qiguang, Yue Qiyuan, Sheng Qingyan all turned their heads in unison, staring at Liu Fufeng and his slightly open mouth—

Facing everyone's doubts, Liu Fufeng raised his hand, rubbed his eyes, and in the blink of an eye, his eyes reddened. He opened his mouth, with a slight quiver in his voice, and said, "I... I'm taking a kind of blood-tonifying and energy-supplementing pill." With that, he coughed once more forcefully.

Ji You cleared her throat, and said earnestly, "Student Fufeng, your acting is a bit exaggerated. Hurry and clean up the tomato sauce, otherwise, a bit of bloody smell can't cover up the tomato smell."

Liu Fufeng: "..."

Chu Jiaojiao and the others were startled, glaring at Liu Fufeng, and then looking at Ji You.

Liu Fufeng raised his hand, touched the corner of his mouth, and then, without changing his expression, said, "Sorry, I ate a tomato-flavored nutrient solution before. Probably because I vomited too much, it came back up."

Even with all the layers uncovered, and not a layer of skin left, he was still forcibly trying to restore his dignity...

This stubborn and struggling spirit indeed commands respect.

For a moment, Ji You was in great admiration. She seriously suggested, "Student Fufeng, your performance has already reached a very impressive level, but the details are slightly lacking. You see you've been coughing blood in big gulps for half an hour, at least ten pounds of blood, right? You still have the strength to talk."

Liu Fufeng: "..."

Ji You said, "Next time, don't use tomato sauce, it's too obvious. Use simulated blood; at least it won't be discovered so quickly."

Liu Fufeng: "..."

Liu Fufeng suddenly, in frustration, said: "No, the simulated blood smells too bad, I can't stand it, I like tomato sauce."

"Cough, cough..." Unable to resist, Yue Qiyuan spoke up quietly, interrupting the two of them, "That's enough, now is not the time to discuss acting skills, let's get to business."

Ji You chuckled and said directly, "The drone sent to the Southern Hemisphere was smashed by the Black Thorn Bees as soon as it entered, which proves there must be a large number of Black Thorn Bees stationed in the direction just now. It's not our best entry point."

Chu Jiaojiao asked, "How many drones do we have left?"

Shen Changqing replied, "We have 6 left. We need at least 3 for our return, so unless necessary, try not to increase the attrition rate."

Yue Qiguang frowned and said, "We can't use drones, how will we gather intelligence later? Should we just go across?"

Ji You glanced at Dock 6 and said softly, "There should be plenty of reconnaissance equipment left here at the Dock. Why don't we borrow and use them first?"

Yue Qiyuan said, "Good idea."

Sheng Qingyan leaned against a chair, very close to Liu Fufeng, who was lying on the floor stubbornly refusing to get up. Sheng Qingyan didn't even bother to offer a thought or suggestion, he half-closed his eyes, pretending to nap.

Even after his act was exposed, Liu Fufeng showed no sign of embarrassment and remained quite calm. The floor was somewhat cool, but it didn't affect his drawing, as his slender fingers kept drawing circles.

...

Ji You said, "Student Shen Changqing, you and Jiaojiao will take action later on, look for monitoring equipment at Dock 6, and if it can be used, put it to use immediately."

Upon hearing this, Shen Changqing and Chu Jiaojiao had no objections and turned to execute the plan.

Then, Ji You told Yue Qiguang and Yue Qiyuan, "You two keep a guard on the spaceship, and if you find anything unusual, start reinforcement immediately."

Ji You pointed to herself, looked at Sheng Qingyan, and said, "Spicy Eye, you and I will receive and process various miscellaneous information, and be ready to support the other teams anytime. Also, we need to guard the position, ready to attack at any moment."

Sheng Qingyan hummed, "I just want to sleep, so noisy."

Though grumbling, being very disgruntled, Sheng Qingyan's actions were no slower than anyone else's.

Ji You turned to Liu Fufeng.

Liu Fufeng widened his eyes, his gaze clear.

Ji You waved her hand and said, "Forget it, you keep squatting in the corner, and continue drawing circles to curse."

Liu Fufeng: "..."

Liu Fufeng muttered, "I don't have to squat in the corner to draw."

At this moment, another drone returned safely to Dock 6. The information it brought back indicated no danger, and Ji You and the group felt less anxious.

Everything was calm.

Suddenly—

Liu Fufeng, who had been quietly drawing circles in the corner, suddenly sprung up!

Chapter 968: Black Gold Rat

Shen Changqing and Chu Jiaojiao gradually approached the Dock's engine room, while brothers Yue Qiguang and Yue Qiyuan sat in the spaceship cockpit, ready to make a quick escape with everyone...

Ji You and Sheng Qingyan held their positions on either side; Ji You was processing information transmitted by two separate drones, observing the video feed and considering from which direction to advance...

Semi-crouched on the ground, Sheng Qingyan squinted at the monitor, his gun barrel continuously rotating...

Liu Fufeng squatted in the corner, one hand supporting his chin, the other absent-mindedly drawing something...

Everything seemed calm, so calm it felt almost like a leisurely excursion. If the winds here were lighter, the sun more gentle, the moisture in the air a bit higher, clouds, yellow sand, a breeze... It would be an ideal vacation spot.

Liu Fufeng, drawing and drawing with one hand...

Suddenly——

He jumped up entirely; just as Liu Fufeng sprang to his feet, the smooth alloy surface of Dock No. 6's ground suddenly burst open, a massive crack appeared instantly, rumbling...

In an instant, the ground collapsed into a large hole!

And in the blink of an eye, a thin, elongated Black Gold Rat burst forth from the collapsed pit, heading straight for Liu Fufeng.

Liu Fufeng's timing was impeccable; a second later, he surely would have fallen in. But, faced with a sudden attack from a Black Gold Rat, Liu Fufeng barely had time to react before feeling a powerful gust rushing towards him, and just before closing his eyes, the last image he saw was sharp claws and fierce fangs...

Liu Fufeng's pupils contracted!

Not good!

His beautiful face!

Liu Fufeng barely managed to raise his arm to shield his face.

At that moment, with a swish, the Black Gold Rat that was about to bite into Liu Fufeng's face halted its action, then suddenly fell to the ground, an arrow pierced through its back to its chest, its belly busted open, and crimson blood streamed out, its body convulsing violently, mouth agape: "Squeak squeak squeak——"

"Squeak squeak squeak——"

The squeaks of the Black Gold Rat gradually weakened and a few seconds later, stopped completely.

Sheng Qingyan retrieved the bow and arrow, coolly gazed at the Black Gold Rat's corpse, inspected it briefly, then disdainfully kicked the body aside, pursing his lips: "Level 1, worthless."

Liu Fufeng looked gratefully at Sheng Qingyan, saying: "Sheng... Sheng Qingyan, thank... thank you for saving me."

Initially, Sheng Qingyan and Liu Fufeng never communicated much, primarily because Sheng Qingyan considered Liu Fufeng's identity a hassle. Sheng Qingyan was someone who would lie down rather than sit, sit rather than stand... living idly was his lifelong pursuit, and troubles were something Sheng Qingyan feared getting involved with. Now facing Liu Fufeng's earnest expression and sincere gratitude, Sheng Qingyan's attitude remained indifferent, waving his hand, he said, "No need to thank; although I took your Soul Device, I honestly didn't want to work for you, just forced into it~"

After speaking.

Sheng Qingyan returned to the monitor, not wanting to engage with Liu Fufeng any further.

Liu Fufeng, sensing this, remained silent but moved next to Ji You and crouched beside her.

After the incident, neither Ji You nor the others were startled. This minor commotion was within everyone's tolerance and not enough to frighten them. Yue Qiyuan and Yue Qiguang continued to hold their positions in the spaceship cockpit, staying put.

Shen Changqing and Chu Jiaojiao successfully entered Dock No. 6's engine room, attempting to activate the Dock's surveillance system.

Ji You gazed calmly at the hole in the ground.

...

Suddenly——

Ji You raised her hand and commanded: "Stand guard!"

"Level 3 readiness!"

"Huh?"

As soon as everyone heard Ji You's voice, they quickly drew their weapons——

Ji You's eyes were bright, her tone as steady as possible, saying: "Underneath us, a preliminary assessment suggests a nest of small Black Gold Rats. Look——"

She raised her hand, pointing to the pattern of marks at the bottom of the hole, "The channels dug up are intricate, and the claw marks don't match this Black Gold Rat. This one must have recently left its mother, just allowed to venture out on its own. Judging by its claws, it's less than 6 months old..."

As Ji You finished speaking, everyone's spines tensed.

From the spaceship, Yue Qiguang shouted: "4444, should we have everyone board the spaceship and choose another place to land?"

Dock No. 6 was unanimously agreed upon as the safest, most suitable place as a rear camp. Yet here, right beneath us, there's an ongoing infestation of Black Gold Rats? This!

This is disastrous.

It's crucial to understand that Black Gold Rats don't grow as large as other Star Beast species; a full-grown Black Gold Rat is roughly the size of an adult's fist. But they are incredibly fast, almost light-speed, and their teeth and claws can penetrate ordinary armor, even shatter the exteriors of 1-3 Star Level Standard Mechas. Moreover, they sometimes suddenly spring out from dark corners to claw at you!

It's virtually impossible to guard against!

What's worse, the X-virus carried by Black Gold Rats is over 80% higher than that carried by other Star Beasts! Even a scratch from a Black Gold Rat can potentially lead to infection of the Star Beast X-virus. The high virus content and infection rate make it at least twice as deadly as other Star Beast viruses! Without timely treatment, losing limbs and replacing organs might be the least of your concerns; losing your life is the most serious.

Despite the advancement in human technology and medicine, encountering a group of Black Gold Rats still leads to a mortality rate of over 40%!

Initially, Ji You opposed accepting this group task because she felt Black Gold Rats were difficult to deal with.

However, Black Gold Rats have one characteristic that greatly reduces their danger; unless it's their breeding season, they never group together. They mostly live alone or in pairs, possibly with one mother rat caring for a group of young.

Underneath this plot of land, it seems to be a mother rat with her brood, slightly troubling is the fact that these are nearing maturity, with their attack and danger levels not insignificantly weak.

...

The situation worsened rapidly; Dock No. 6 was no longer safe. With everyone on high alert, Yue Qiyuan looked at everyone and asked, "Do we change location or—"

Chapter 969: Arrangements

Yue Qiyuan asked, his eyes looking at Ji You. Somehow, among this group of people, although any of them individually could be chosen as the captain—a powerhouse with both spiritual power and physical strength—everyone had somehow begun to tacitly accept Ji You as the captain when gathered together.

At this moment, it wasn't only Yue Qiyuan—everyone else's eyes were also fixed on Ji You, waiting for her decision.

Ji You did not immediately respond.

Her eyes remained focused on the intelligence sent back by the unmanned reconnaissance aircraft in all aspects...

Then.

Ji You used the contact number to ask Shen Changqing and Chu Jiaojiao in the control room, "How much longer until we can connect to the Dock's surveillance system?"

Chu Jiaojiao replied solemnly, "The master control system is broken; classmate Shen Changqing is urgently repairing it. About... 30 minutes or so until connection."

As Chu Jiaojiao finished her words, Shen Changqing, who was busy connecting wires, raised his head and, looking at Ji You on the contact terminal, said, "I estimate we can connect within 25 minutes."

Ji You asked, "Can you be certain?"

Shen Changqing stared at a row of wires obviously bitten off by some sawtooth-like animal, frowning, "Yes, but we're missing a material. If we had it, I could do it faster."

Ji You asked, "What material?"

Shen Changqing said, "It's $\alpha 1+1$, and Mithril, and Red Copper. Their effective usage rate must be over 90%. Sadly, at this moment, I don't know where to find them."

Since most of the Black Gold Ore here on Bee Head Star had been mined, the Alliance has forbidden all mining companies from exploiting it to restore Bee Head Star's ecology as soon as possible. The stationed mining teams have all been withdrawn. Bee Head Star's original environment is not suitable for human settlement. Therefore, there are no humans living here, and Dock 6 has been abandoned for roughly 50 years.

Apart from a few cabins for the short rest of the patrol warriors, Dock 6 no longer has much human societal equipment. As for materials to repair control systems, Shen Changqing and Chu Jiaojiao searched front and back of the control room but found nothing.

This—

Upon hearing Shen Changqing's words, Yue Qiyuan, Yue Qiguang, Sheng Qingyan, and others felt troubled.

Suddenly, Ji You said, "Leave it to me!"

Huh?

Everyone only then realized Ji You is a materials processing scholar.

Ji You lifted her face, saying, "This is a small matter; what's so hard about it? Give me 5 minutes. I have Mithril and Red Copper, we just need $\alpha 1+1$."

Having said that, Ji You took out a bundle of materials from the Space Button in front of everyone.

Everyone: "!!!"

Ji You complained, "Don't be surprised. Professor Ye Hong is too exacting; he always returns my homework several times, leaving me no choice but to find time for practice with some materials on me."

Yue Qiguang: "Cough... Your craftsmanship is only this much useful; quickly process it, don't delay!"

Ji You looked at the crowd, saying, "I've considered it comprehensively. Capturing Black Gold Rats elsewhere is too dangerous. Right now, there's a group underground, perfectly served to us. As long as we use Dock's terrain and equipment properly and seize the opportunity, we can surely wipe out this group of Black Gold Rats!"

Then again, executing her first independent mission, Ji You didn't overreach but chose a very conservative approach.

What does conservative matter?

The goal had always been to complete the mission while ensuring the safety of all personnel.

The quiet Sheng Qingyan suddenly asked, "Poor dead, are you sure the number of Black Gold Rats is enough?"

"How is it not enough?" Chu Jiaojiao retorted, "These creatures reproduce as easily as eating and drinking, and they birth large litters at once, even more than long-eared rabbits."

"Cough cough... Jiaojiao's right," Ji You frowned slightly, "Now, we just need to pray there are 10 reaching Level 2."

The mission goal required the teeth of 10 Level 2 Black Gold Rats. If this group is taken down and there aren't a few Level 2, they'd be doomed...

"Cough cough..."

Ji You believed her squad wouldn't be that unfortunate. Clearing her throat, she asked, "What do you all think?"

The next second, Chu Jiaojiao, Sheng Qingyan, Yue Qiguang, Yue Qiyuan, Shen Changqing all said together: "Let's do it!"

Ji You said, "You all are really confident, what if we're unlucky and find only two or three Level 2?"

Chu Jiaojiao, Sheng Qingyan, Yue Qiguang, Shen Changqing, Yue Qiyuan all said together: "Impossible!"

Yue Qiyuan squinted his eyes, his calm tone filled with confidence: "We are the Universe's strongest team, called the Dream Team! Both the strength and luck are unmatched!"

Yue Qiguang said, "That's right."

Ji You raised her hand, rubbing her forehead, "You two brothers, just say less, talk less."

Then Ji You shifted the tone, decisively stating, "Let's decide. You all stand guard all around, especially watching the holes here, give me 5 minutes."

With that said.

Ji You focused on processing materials.

The simple workbench temporarily set up had a pile of materials strewn all over, but Ji You was not overwhelmed. Her fingers moved, quickly processing each material...

In the corner, Liu Fufeng suddenly stopped what he was doing. He stared at Ji You's hands as they moved continuously, the light in his eyes bright.

...

As soon as time was up, Ji You immediately stopped, neither exceeding nor lacking a second.

Without needing testing, Ji You directly packed the materials, saying to Shen Changqing: "I'll give you 25 minutes, can you do it?"

Shen Changqing shook his head—the refined, harmless face showed a flickering confidence—saying, "Give me 15 minutes, it's enough."

Ji You: "Good."

Shen Changqing rushed back to the control room to begin repairs.

Ji You walked circles around the large hole that emerged, nearby Liu Fufeng followed closely behind, almost stepping on Liu Fufeng's foot when Ji You turned.

Ji You, speechless, said, "When did you start following me?"

Liu Fufeng opened his eyes and replied softly, "5 seconds ago."

Ji You frowned:

[Once again!]

Imperceptibly, lurking to her side. Her sensitivity shouldn't be so low; the issue could only be with Liu Fufeng! Ji You squinted—

Liu Fufeng's figure trembled slightly: "Ji You, don't stare at me like that, I'm scared."

Ji You said, "If you're scared, don't get so close to me."

Liu Fufeng shook his head, refusing, "No! It's very dangerous outside. If I don't stay close to you, I'll be even more scared. They're so weak, it feels like only you can protect me."

"..." Chu Jiaojiao, Yue Qiguang, Sheng Qingyan... all frowned: "Huh???"

Chapter 970: Charging Pole

Liu Fufeng's words directly plunged the atmosphere of the whole scene to a freezing point. Chu Jiaojiao, Yue Qiguang, Yue Qiyuan, even the always lazy Sheng Qingyan, and the honest-looking Shen Changqing all flashed a hint of disbelief on their faces at this moment!

[They're all so weak~]

[They're all so weak~]

[They're all so weak~]

...

These five words echoed like a tape recorder repeatedly, endlessly cycling through the minds of the crowd...

The atmosphere was plunged into a mysterious stagnation...

Chu Jiaojiao, Sheng Qingyan, Yue Qiguang, Yue Qiyuan, Shen Changqing looked at Liu Fufeng as if they wanted to slice him into pieces with their piercing stare!

Liu Fufeng's pupils contracted slightly, his body couldn't help but start to tremble...

At this moment, Ji You laughed heartily and said, "Oh dear! The kid is just naive. He's a straightforward child who never knows how to lie. You all, don't take it to heart with a child."

Chu Jiaojiao and others: "..."

Yue Qiguang snorted and said, "Don't hold me back, I'll beat up every brat like him I see!"

Chu Jiaojiao: "Ahem... I'll pretend I didn't see anything."

Yue Qiyuan: "Brother, go ahead, give it your all, make him feel the pain."

Shen Changqing: "I... I know nothing."

Sheng Qingyan: "Ah Guang, maybe take some weapons with you? I've got a Tie Chui here you could borrow, the kind that can shatter skulls..."

Liu Fufeng heard this, his shoulders trembled even more fiercely, he naturally, little by little, moved behind Ji You...

Ji You jumped aside and laughed, "I'm not shielding him. If you want to beat him, go ahead and do it."

Liu Fufeng: "..."

Liu Fufeng's body stiffened up instantly.

Yue Qiguang rubbed his fist, a sinister smile appeared at the corner of his mouth...

"..." Liu Fufeng opened his mouth and said, "Don't... don't come over, otherwise, I'll curse you."

Yue Qiguang rolled his eyes, "You think I'm scared of your curse?"

Liu Fufeng took a deep breath and said, "Once cursed, you'll be unlucky."

Yue Qiguang waved his fist, "It's the interstellar era, and you're still fooling with superstitions? I don't believe in nonsense; I believe in my fists."

Liu Fufeng's eyes rolled back and forth, saying, "My curse is very effective, if you don't believe..." His voice suddenly caught, "There's a Black Gold Rat behind you."

Yue Qiguang showed a sinister smile, "Trying to trick me? I've had acting training—"

Liu Fufeng's pupils tightened, his lips enlarged, "2 seconds."

The words fell—

'Hoo—'

A gust of wind attacked from behind. Yue Qiguang just sensed something off, continued to try to dodge, but the claws of the Black Gold Rat already swung over. Yue Qiguang raised his hand, faced this claw directly—

"Bang!"

A flash of white light, a Big Chopper cleaved over, blocking between Yue Qiguang's arms.

In the blink of an eye, the Black Gold Rat was sliced in half, and with a clang, it fell to the floor.

Ji You raised the Big Chopper, cursing loudly, "Yue Qiguang, are you a pig? No crisis awareness at all?"

Yue Qiguang: "..."

Ji You kicked away the Black Gold Rat's corpse, still seething inwardly, "Clashing hands with a Black Gold Rat? If you're so capable, why not use your head? Wouldn't it be better to consume that pighead in one use?"

Listening to Ji You's scolding, Yue Qiguang's face turned red, but Ji You's words were all reasonable. Although Yue Qiguang felt more stifled the more he listened, he didn't dare utter a single word.

Ji You wielded the machete and shouted, "Everyone, perk up and always be ready to counter a Black Gold Rat swarm attack!"

Chu Jiaojiao and others shouted back, "Yes."

Ji You glanced sideways at Liu Fufeng, saying, "You—as a weakling, have some self-awareness, okay? Just hide inside the spaceship, stop standing around outside. Later, when the fighting starts, I can't guarantee you won't get hurt."

Liu Fufeng heard this, somewhat unwilling.

Ji You said, "Go!"

Liu Fufeng stood aside, hesitated for a few seconds, feeling somewhat unhappy, but still obediently boarded the spaceship.

Ji You squinted, turned to Yue Qiguang, "You also stand guard at your post."

"Ahem..." He was a strongman, yet he hadn't reacted just now and was actually protected by Ji You. Thinking about this, Yue Qiguang's face flushed red—

With shame.

Yue Qiguang coughed lightly, said nothing, and obediently entered the spaceship cockpit.

Ji You then asked Shen Changqing, "Classmate Shen Changqing, report the progress."

Shen Changqing said, "Smoothly, expected to complete within 10 minutes."

Ji You heard this and relaxed a little.

The ground had collapsed into a pit, black all over inside, with some claw marks around the edge from the Black Gold Rats. Deeper areas were pitch black and almost staring into the abyss.

Ji You furrowed his brows, asking Sheng Qingyan next to him, "Spicy Eye, do you think this underground hole was here originally, or was it dug by the Black Gold Rats?"

Sheng Qingyan lay on the ground, constantly monitoring the surroundings with the monitor. When he heard Ji You's question, he found it a bit boring and casually replied, "How could there be a hole that deep? It must have been dug when constructing the Dock for military defenses."

Ji You thought there was some truth to this as well.

Then.

Ji You held the energy great machete, always keeping an eye on the surroundings.

The Black Gold Rat that suddenly jumped out to attack Yue Qiguang didn't come from the collapsed pit but rather emerged from another corner. At that time, Yue Qiguang was standing beside a Flying Device-exclusive charging pole. These poles, which have built-in charging systems, were installed along with the construction of the Dock. Bee Head Star isn't completely abandoned; humans have only retreated to maintain its planet ecology. Therefore, the charging system here still sees periodic maintenance by the Alliance's military forces stationed here, so this small energy supply station remains intact and usable.

Along the way, the stationed forces patrolling here can recharge when encountering energy shortages in flying devices.

Logically, the energy supply station at the Dock is intact and regularly maintained, so Black Gold Rats shouldn't appear...why did a Black Gold Rat scuttle out from a charging pole?

Ji You saw it clearly; the Black Gold Rat crawled out from the charging pole.

This problem only suggests that—this charging pole is currently malfunctioning.

Ji You, holding the machete and carrying an energy particle gun on her back, slowly walked towards this energy pillar not far away.

step.

steps.

steps.

...

Ji You's steps were steady, her grip on the knife handle remained firm and unshaken. She stopped and looked at the charging pole in front—