

Wow 231

Chapter 231 Do we have to farm?

The ruins at night were quiet and eerie, as Bai E stepped lightly over the shattered sand and stones, creating a faint sound.

In the hidden corners, some daring little creatures opened their curious eyes to look at the huge entity they had never seen in the bygone times.

Bai E followed the barely visible main road, watching the progress on the panel slowly increase.

0.2%...

0.3%...

0.5%...

1%...

Unbelievably slow.

Could this mean that the scope of the ruins was very large?

And yet it was referred to as a 'small' relic...

Bai E inwardly scoffed, taking a turn and suddenly becoming energized.

The monotonous ruins were still ruins, but after the turn, some of the ruined buildings shone brightly with a row of translucent words only he could see—

[Abandoned and Damaged Bar] (Claimable) (Repairable)

[You are exploring a functional area of the target ruins; current exploration progress: 10.7%.]

The progress had suddenly shot up a large fraction!

When Bai E focused, more detailed explanations appeared one by one beneath that line of text—

[Hint: You have discovered a no man's land—an abandoned and damaged bar. Current status: Claimable, Repairable. This area has been abandoned for many years and has lost the effects it once held.

However, the shadow of time has recorded its most perfect days, and if you can gather the necessary materials (alcohol: 100 units, servers: 3, manager: 1), and complete the main building's repairs, you can put it back into use.]

[Bar: As a place to exchange information, it can occasionally serve the function of posting and completing commissions. (Requirements: Regional reputation level 1)]

[Bar: Due to the frequent visits from travelers from all over and various effective information exchanges, this place can occasionally attract some individuals with certain "strength"... (Requirements: Faction reputation level 2, Regional reputation level 2)]

"..."

Bai E's expression became somewhat odd after he read the detailed explanation thoroughly.

Is this... asking me to start farming?

Exploring relics and developing power turned out to be two complementary development paths.

Fine.

Bai E continued forward, simply noting this clue...

He didn't even need to remember it.

Just like the last time he explored the ruins of the internet root server, the map on the panel directly marked the location and size of the ruin with a faint blue line in a three-dimensional display; he could check it whenever he wanted.

As Bai E continued along the main road, he discovered more abandoned buildings—

[Abandoned and Damaged Vehicle Repair Factory]

[Abandoned and Damaged Freshwater Treatment Plant]

[Abandoned and Damaged Food Production Factory]

[Abandoned and Damaged Power Plant]

[Abandoned and Damaged Steel Plant]

[Abandoned and Damaged Market]

...

With each new discovery, the exploration progress of the ruins surged dramatically.

The scale of this small town ruin was certainly no match for the core cities of the Golden Age, but as the saying goes, "Though the sparrow may be small, it possesses all its vital organs."

In this place, Bai E could almost find all the functional buildings necessary for a force... or rather, a community to sustain life.

But in a state of abandonment and ruin.

Restoring these facilities to functioning status would first require finding the key resources they needed.

For instance, the power plant would need at least 3 generators.

The food production factory would need at least 1 production line and three planting bases... and so on and so forth.

As Bai E walked, he suddenly remembered what the refugee elder Gilder had mentioned—allegiance.

Suppose... Suppose one day he left the barracks, even the city.

Or to say, even if he did not leave the barracks or the city, it seemed that it would still be possible to secretly develop his own armed forces.

The underground warehouse that the players were now constructing was too close to Black Street and the barracks. A micro-base wouldn't be an issue, but to expand... location became the biggest obstacle.

Neither the bigwigs in Black Street nor the military would sit by and watch an unknown force build various infrastructures so boldly nearby.

This place... seemed quite right.

Materials, knowledge, people...

The most important was people!

Talent! More talent!

Like Kuang Xin, Dai Lian—talents in combat and tactics.

Like Gong Yan—talents in management.

Like Zhou Wenjie—talents in science and technology.

With people, everything else comes.

Bai E's thoughts flickered briefly through his mind; he didn't think too deeply.

Both his own strength and that of the players were still weak, and what the future held for this group of refugees was uncertain.

If there was a chance, perhaps he could let them start developing from here.

But for now...

Bai E stopped in his tracks.

He was very far from where the rest were resting, having crossed more than a dozen blocks. Anyone who might have followed out of momentary curiosity should have turned back by now.

But still being followed until now... suggested "ulterior motives".

Bai E spoke softly, "Come out."

Two small figures emerged hesitantly from behind a broken wall in the distance.

"Sir... Sir."

"Bai E."

Morphie and Kiro Lan called out softly.

Bai E turned around, squinting at the two in the dim moonlight with some helplessness, "After traveling all day, aren't you tired?"

"We just wanted to see what you were up to..."

With a gentle shake of his head, Bai E responded, "I was just looking to see if there were any resources that could be recovered... All right, there's nothing else here, let's head back."

After all... the progress was already full.

[You have completed all the puzzles of the ruins exploration, current exploration level: 100%.]

There were no extra rewards, just the three-dimensional lines of the entire abandoned town outlined on the panel, waiting to be rebuilt someday.

As Bai E slowly walked forward, Kiro Lan's big eyes looked up at him, filled with nothing but admiration.

"Did you discover anything, sir?"

"Everything that could be moved has been taken."

Hundreds of years have passed since the curtain fell on the Golden Age, and in this era, every resource is scarce and precious. Anything that could be moved from the ruins had long been taken away.

Even some of the more difficult-to-move fixtures had been divided and carried off. After all, for countless ordinary people in this era, even the steel produced in the old days was considered an unimaginably high-tech product.

Bai E shook his head with a hint of regret, his gaze drifting over the silent ruins in the dark, "It's just... such a pity."

Not being able to make use of it... it's a real loss.

There must be some reason why this place was chosen to be a town back in the past, with its fairly fertile land and a live stream not far away.

With manpower and resources, it might be possible to rebuild and make use of it again.

But that's only if one can withstand all possible malice from the wilderness—

Coming from insects, from machine rebels, from beastmen... and even from other humans.

There is actually a lot of land available in this era, a true era of vast spaces and sparse population.

If there are small tribal settlements... like the underground Wind-Eroded Cave, where refugee groups maintain a low-tech primitive life, they might be able to survive for a long time if they're lucky.

But if one really wants to develop industry, to create a future of their own... then without high walls and a sound military system like those in Blackwater City for protection, almost all will die in their infancy.

Insects will subconsciously seek out places where there is a large accumulation of biomass.

Machine rebels will instinctively collect any mineable resources they can.

Beastmen will keep looking for trouble and fights.

Humans... will attempt to occupy the fruits of other people's labor without working for it.

Not all, but often.

Such a pity.

To be confined within towering castles, drooling over the vast world outside, is indeed a great pity.

"Perhaps you could give it a try, sir?" Kiro Lan followed Bai E's gaze and looked towards the silent ruins.

The ruins of the city held a unique beauty of Order for her.

The city planning during the Golden Age was always so reasonable and aesthetically pleasing.

In a moment of inadvertent daydreaming, everything before her eyes seemed to rewind rapidly, restoring to its original perfect state in the fast flow of time.

She saw the broken stones leap back onto the rooftops.

She saw the fractured iron frame return to its place.

She saw the shattered signs hang back under the eaves facing the street.

She saw the toppled equipment soar back up.

Time told everything.

The past glory had not been entirely forgotten.

Even though she had never seen that so-called Golden Age with her own eyes, just by looking at the few traces left behind by that era, she seemed to travel through time and space, tracing back to that most beautiful time from the river of time.

Right before her eyes, everything returned to its most beautiful state.

The bright lights shone around her, and she felt as though she was immersed in the bustling noise of the crowd.

For a moment, she was entranced.

"So beautiful..."

She murmured softly.

"What?" Morphie thought he had heard wrong.

Kiro Lan blinked, and the fantasy-like scenes instantly vanished.

Since childhood, her thoughts had always been particularly divergent, her imagination rich, always able to imagine things she had never seen...

It had troubled her, but she had gradually gotten used to it.

"Shh~"

Out of the blue, Bai E spoke, placing his index finger on his lips.

There was a disturbance.

Quiet and stealthy, as if trying not to attract attention.

Right behind that wall next to them.

Bai E carefully shifted his stance, imperceptibly placing the two children behind himself.

This time... what was it?

"Hiss!"

Grotesque bony claws, like swords, stabbed out from the darkness. The focused Bai E embraced the war blade machine gun that had always hung at his waist and met the attack head-on.

"Clang clang clang!"

The clang of bone against blade echoed like the sound of steel striking steel.

After blocking the opponent's initial assault, Bai E covered the children and fell back several steps before he could clearly see the monster's full form.

A... grey-whitish spider?

A spider bigger than a human!

And not just one.

The spider that launched the attack was just the first to blow the horn of charge, and more grey-white figures emerged quietly from the corners of the ruins, overwhelming in an instant.

In the blink of an eye, had these creatures surrounded them?

This ruin... had guardians?!

Chapter 232 Relic Horror

Bai E raised the machine gun and unloaded a barrage of bullets at the attacking giant spider.

The first was to test its quality, and the second was to make some noise and see if it could draw the attention of the refugees.

If there were monsters in this area, what about the resting refugees? Would they be attacked?

There were only a dozen or so fighters to begin with, and two had died in the battle with the orcs; now, they were short-handed and definitely unable to fully guard the team of over four hundred people through the night.

In order to explore the ruins, he had ventured a bit far from their location, perhaps the sound of gunfire could penetrate the distant space and awaken them from their weary slumber.

While firing the gun single-handedly, Bai E also began to back away as he opened the voice channel and warned all the warriors of the joint squad, "Enemy encounter! Repeat, enemy encounter. A large number of giant spiders have appeared about five kilometers to the southwest of the encampment, stay alert."

More intuitive than the voice were the machine gun shots in the background.

All the warriors, already asleep, were instantly awakened; no one was more familiar with the sound of gunfire than them.

After all, they had spent nearly half their lives to such noises.

It was Bai E!

He had found the enemy.

"What's going on... Didn't we scout ahead?" Captain of Squad 1 woke up with a furrowed brow.

It wasn't as if they had simply picked a spot to sleep; nighttime rest involving so many people naturally required assured safety.

"Bai E said it's five kilometers away... We didn't search that far in detail."

After all, there were only a dozen or so warriors, and as they spread out in a circular range, each could only scout a limited area. The further the radius, the more ground to cover, and they didn't have the energy for that.

"..."

The captain didn't pursue the matter further. Instead, he swiftly stood up, "All hands on alert, wake the refugees."

If it was possible to fight, they would, for finding a spot to shelter from the wind and rain for a comfortable night's rest wasn't easy. The day's journey had left everyone nearly dead tired, needing rest to recover.

But if the enemy was too numerous and strong, and they couldn't be stopped by their handful of warriors, they definitely had to run.

The warriors who had received the order began to wake the nearby refugees.

"Hey! Wake up."

"Everyone, wake up, get them all up."

"Bai E has spotted the enemy, we might have to move at any moment."

Rustling noises spread among the scattered crowd, and some refugees, with sharper ears, had already been jolted awake by the distant gunshots in the silent night.

"Enemies?"

Elder Gilder approached several reliable confidants who were generally dependable, "Count the numbers, see if anyone is missing."

They trusted him to lead, so he had to be worthy of their trust.

At all times and in all places, he needed to consider every member of the team.

"Yes!" Everyone dispersed.

Only Gilder stayed where he was, clutching the blanket that Kiro Lan and Morphie had brought to him, looking worriedly towards the area where the two children had been.

The two said they were going out with Bai E, and now that E had encountered the enemy, he wondered if he could protect the two little ones while fighting.

But if it was E... Surely it would be fine, right?

...

In the wilderness, far from the city, one must always be prepared to face all kinds of dangers.

After issuing orders and seeing that everyone had come to their senses and were preparing, Squad 1's captain once again asked over the voice channel.

"Bai E, what's the enemy?"

"Spiders..." Bai E's voice was terse as he dodged an opponent's three lance-like sharp claws with a swift sidestep while the bullets from his machine gun never ceased pelting the round body of his foe.

Compared to their bodies, the spider's particularly long and narrow claws were indeed their most powerful weapon.

The giant spiders, of course, wouldn't just stand there and take the hits, but these low-intelligence creatures could only launch instinctual hunting behaviors and had almost no resistance against the bullets.

The seemingly hard carapace and the needle-like hairs on it were easily torn apart by the bullets, with the thick biological tissue and body fluids being ripped and flung about by the metallic storm.

After emitting a low growl, the eight spear-like claws finally flattened on the ground, no longer moving.

But Bai E's expression was far from relaxed.

The attributes of the spiders killed by firearms flickered on the panel —

[??? (Beast): Health Points 0/245; Defensive Power 8; Action Power 0%; Traits: Genetic Mutation...]

[Genetic Mutation: Originally just a native species of the planet, they have been infected with alien genes. The original genes and the alien genes have mutated to create a perfect host among their vast numbers. Now, their size can grow almost unlimitedly, as long as there is enough food, they can take over the entire world. Current: Large Beast (Life Upper Limit +50, Physical Performance +3).]

Of course, it was not particularly impressive; its strength and speed weren't especially high, even worse than the previously encountered orcs, it just had a bit more health.

And the one that attacked him was already one of the larger ones in sight, the other smaller spiders probably had even lower attributes.

The drop rate subtitles also complemented the abilities of these monsters from another perspective —
—

[??? (Beast) — To drop when killed with a "Lucky Strike": Guaranteed (Mutant Spider Claws*400, Battle Experience 1250 points); Possible (Trait: Web-Slinging, Trait: Alien Genes)]

This was already the one with the highest drop rate...

It was clear that the individual combat prowess of these creatures really wasn't up to much.

But there were just too many of them.

Just counting those currently in sight, a quick glance revealed dozens.

Genetic mutation coupled with the spiders' terrifying breeding efficiency...there's no telling how many more there are that haven't appeared yet.

To restore normal usage of this relic, it seems necessary to first clear out these "guardian beasts"?

But that was obviously not the immediate concern.

If he didn't regroup with his teammates soon, he would still be able to escape at any moment using his Gun Fighting Skill, but it would spell trouble for these two children.

"Let's go."

Bai E, holding a gun in one hand, started sweeping fire at the spiders that were gradually closing in, while his left hand drew a pistol from his waist and handed it back without looking, "Can you shoot? Take it."

The pistol had limited stopping power, but it could still have some lethal effect on the smaller spiders.

With so many of them, if they truly swarmed him, he'd have a hard time blocking them all; any that slipped through would have to be dealt with by the kids themselves.

"I can," Kiro Lan's voice was calm and steady.

As he spoke, Kiro Lan's gaze was tightly focused on the details of Bai E firing the gun—

The movements of holding the gun, the muscle exertion, the stability of the posture...everything was turned into knowledge that could overcome instinct, infusing it into his body.

She had always been a quick learner since she was young...

"How about you?" Bai E didn't linger on her but asked the little boy Morphie instead, "Do you need a gun?"

He carried two pistols with him.

But he noted that when the boy arrived, he was holding a machete from an orc for self-defense, and he wasn't sure if the boy had any special training.

If he had a specialty, a machete for close protection might be even more useful than a pistol for self-defense.

"No..." Morphie shook his head, scenes of Bai E decapitating spiders with the bayonet mounted on the machine gun replaying in his mind, "but I think I should be fine."

"Okay."

Both children had not only a strong will but also the courage to fight.

After the incident with the demon, the willpower of the two children seemed to have increased, and their voices were equally firm at this moment.

They were not afraid of these monsters...

He was spared the step of having to comfort and encourage them.

"They are just spiders!" Bai E's voice was like the warm sun of winter, instilling endless confidence in people, "Don't be afraid!"

"Da-da-da-da!"

Bai E retreated steadily, the three-round bursts from his machine gun never ceased.

Apparently believing they had finally grasped the vulnerability of their prey, the spiders, which had been approaching slowly from all directions, no longer kept the pressure of their encirclement tight.

Instead, they launched a collective sprint!

Chapter 233 Genius

"Report, Commander! No monsters have been found nearby for the time being."

The alerted soldiers first carefully searched the area around the resting place of the refugees once again.

Clearly, the monsters had not yet approached closely.

"That's good."

The No.1 Commander let out a sigh of relief upon hearing this.

If they were really attacked by monsters from the shadows at night, just their dozen or so people would probably be hard-pressed to provide perfect protection.

However, a choice lay before them—

Retreat? Or clear out the monsters?

This would depend on how tough the enemies were.

"Tiger, take your men and support Bai E with me, and you scouts, come along as well."

Better to take the initiative than to wait passively.

The large number of refugees, with no tactical training, would likely make a hasty retreat difficult without issues arising.

Taking advantage of the enemy's distance to assess their strength and make a decision was better than waiting in place for news.

And if the targets were indeed tough, the two squads plus a few scouts could still serve to slow the enemy's pace, buying enough time for the refugees to retreat.

Leaving Squad 2 behind was for managing the refugees; if anything went amiss on Bai E's side, they could immediately inform this side to retreat via voice communication.

The arrangements of the No.1 team leader were swiftly carried out.

"Yes!"

"Received!"

...

With a "click," the safety pin of a fragmentation grenade was pulled, and timing the last two seconds, Bai E threw it to where the incoming monsters were most concentrated.

Thanks to his newly acquired orcish throwing specialization, he managed to aim quite well.

The metallic casing bounced on the ground slightly before exploding with a boom.

Numerous tiny metal shards shot outwards from the center of the explosion, and a torrent of hot blast instantly shredded a cluster of small spiders.

[Successfully threw the grenade to the right location, Throwing Mastery experience +3.]

[Dealt 30 points of fatal damage to the target!]

[The target's vital signs have disappeared.]

In encounters with bugs and orcs, these small individual weapons weren't of much use, but against these smaller creatures that were within the bounds of common sense, grenades were definitely useful.

"Click~"

"Click~"

One after another.

Taking advantage of the spiders that hadn't fully approached and within a safe distance, Bai E threw all five grenades he had on him in quick succession.

Once they got really close, he wouldn't dare to continue throwing grenades recklessly.

However, after just running down a street, the spider horde, slightly held back by the grenades, once again surrounded him.

Bai E passed the machine gun to his left hand, wielding both the machine gun and the military saber.

Benefiting from an ancient warrior's specialty—Weapon Master— the proficiency in light firearms and light weapons effectively got a +1 level boost.

The actual effectiveness of a level 4 and level 1 specialization became level 5 and level 2, respectively.

The machine gun was for mainline killing, while the saber was for close defense.

Even when encountering more troublesome monsters, the blade attached to the machine gun could work in tandem with the saber, allowing for a coordinated defense with both hands.

Of course, the blade attachment on the machine gun was very heavy, belonging to the same category as the Bug-Slaying Blade, within the range of heavy weapons.

With Bai E's level 2 Heavy Weapon Specialization, its effectiveness was actually at level 3, which was more than sufficient.

The three specializations came into play simultaneously, wielding both gun and blade, sweeping through all opposition.

The two young ones following Bai E were also retreating rapidly and steadily, encountering some spiders that had previously been held back on the way back.

With 360 degrees of the battlefield, Bai E alone obviously couldn't attend to everything; he could only fall back and do his best to hold off the main body of the chasing spider tide, leaving the few medium and small spiders on the way back to fend for themselves.

Fortunately, the spiders blocking their return were not large, and fortunately, the two youngsters displayed astonishing combat abilities.

The orcish cleaver, which seemed small in an orc's hand, seemed somewhat unwieldy when held by a human youth; the heavy weight meant Morphie had to grip it with both hands to properly wield it without hurting himself on the spikes and serrated edges.

When facing slightly larger medium-sized spiders, it was he who bravely engaged them.

As for Kiro Lan... her performance was more reminiscent of Bai E.

Imitating Bai E's stance of fighting with both gun and knife, Kiro Lan took a dagger from a sheath on Bai E's calf.

The small handgun and dagger might not have been as intimidating as Bai E's large gun and sword, but weapons that suited her size were undoubtedly the ones she could control flawlessly.

...

In the gaps where Morphee was fiercely fending off those incoming sharp claws, it was Kiro Lan who made crucial follow-up strikes with his nimble knife and gun.

The coordination was surprisingly in sync.

"Did you often have to fight in your previous lives?" Bai E, who was sparing a fraction of his attention to watch his back and be ready to burst out at any moment, asked curiously.

"Not often..."

"Bang! Bang!"

Kiro Lan coolly fired his gun, and even after hearing Bai E's question, he was still able to maintain a clear head and respond accurately, "Occasionally followed an old hunter on a couple of hunts, but we never got the chance to take a shot."

So, was it purely natural talent?

And as the fight progressed, their performance and cooperation became more and more polished.

The two of them glanced back at Bai E from time to time while fighting; their ability to control their weapons seemed to advance by leaps and bounds in this kind of live combat training.

At first, their attacks were straightforward, especially for Morphie, who seemed to struggle considerably to control the huge chopper in his hands.

However, as the battle went on, before any significant improvement in physical strength, their weapon handling became increasingly delicate.

Often, a defensive move would naturally transition into a counter-strike slash, something utterly unimaginable at the outset.

Amidst this adaptation to combat, the two small figures began to clear the way even faster.

Bai E, who was always watching his back, keenly observed this change.

On the side unseen by the two little ones, Bai E's expression seemed a bit strange.

If these two didn't act as recklessly as gamers, and seemed to have wide connections among the refugees, origins that could be traced, he would suspect they were also molded from the gamer template.

Of course, the main reason was that he didn't receive any experience feedback.

Just natives with strong learning abilities?

Like how Kiro Lan learned his medical skills last night?

That's fine.

With such abilities, whether right now or after reaching the city, they should be able to lead a decent life, so he need not worry about them anymore.

If one looked down from the sky, they would see a dense, grayish-white "carpet" spreading quickly in a certain direction under the cover of night.

Ahead of the carpet were three small black dots moving swiftly, and in the direction they were headed, some similarly sized grayish-white dots were also emerging continuously from the dark ruins on both sides.

It seemed that sensing their prey was about to escape the laid trap, the "presence" lurking in the dark finally lost its patience to remain hidden.

With the sticky sound of segmented limbs tapping on the ground everywhere, pairs of pitch-black compound eyes focused on Bai E's direction from all directions—as if the three enveloped in this boundless malice could feel a tangible desire for slaughter chilling to the bone.

The desire to hunt had merged into a breath-taking killing intent, capturing the soul.

[With the help of "Self Restraint," you have successfully filtered out a certain predatory marking.]

In almost the time it took to inhale, Bai E filtered out that intimidating killing intent that seemed to chill one from head to toe.

Compared to the corruption of higher-dimensional demons, the ability of these ordinary monsters was still insufficient.

Bai E took a deep look over his shoulder at the oncoming tide, where it felt like an icy, lifeless will was staring coldly at him...

The two children who lacked the corresponding abilities felt an instant chill in their hands and feet.

Morphie, who was struggling to wield the chopper, was already in a precarious balance, and the sudden mental intimidation made him stagger; he suddenly lost balance and fell forward.

Kiro Lan showed no apparent reaction, but his response to a spider lunging at him was noticeably slower.

...

"Damn it!"

A line of warriors emerging from behind a corner of the ruins, drawn by the sound of gunfire, tensed up at the scene unfolding before them.

The encirclement was complete; the grayish-white spider army was gradually surrounding the three isolated figures.

If it were only Bai E, they would naturally not worry too much, given the combat ability he had displayed.

But there were also two children by his side...

Would he risk injury for the sake of the children?

Their distance made them anxious but powerless.

...

"Puchi!"

The blade of the war machine gun whizzed through the air, splitting the body of a small spider in two.

The two halves of the corpse drifted down slowly.

"Give me your hand."

Bai E's always stable and calm voice rang in the ears of the little ones as a pair of large hands reached out towards the fallen Morphie in front of him.

"It's just a predicament, I'll lead you out of here."

Chapter 234 explodes!

Before seeing his teammates, Bai E didn't dare to fully unleash his power, after all, he had no idea when the encirclement by the spider swarm would end. He tried to manage the situation with just his regular combat strength until the most critical moment of crisis arrived.

But now that his teammates had come to support him, there was no need to hold back any longer.

Bai E, who had re-sheathed his military knife at his waist, grabbed the fallen Morphie's left hand tightly and pulled him up.

Then he admonished Morphie, "Hold onto Kiro Lan with your other hand, she is your life, never let go no matter what, understand?"

"She's already my life," said Morphie through clenched teeth, his eyes bloodshot with self-reproach for his key moment failure.

[Gun Fighting Skill, activated.]

Bai E pulled up Morphie with one hand, stringing Kiro Lan along with them.

Once he took the lead, the spider swarm could no longer keep pace with his strides.

The menacing and bizarre claws of the spiders that leapt towards him were all severed with a single slash.

The roaring of the machine gun instantly blazed a trail, with countless spear-like claws waving a "welcome" on both sides.

The spider creatures had numerous claws, each almost like a sharp spear.

There were far too many claws barring the path for Bai E to clear them in an instant. If a spider's claw managed to pierce one of the children in the chaos, it could cause a wound that was difficult for them to bear.

Fortunately, those spiders weren't too large, and they couldn't reach the space higher than where they were situated.

So... Spotting the largest one within the spider army that blocked the retreat, Bai E pulled the two along and charged straight at it.

As they approached, Bai E lightly jumped, swinging his arm, which was pulling the two children, upward. The two children, somewhat light in build, were lifted into the air by his tremendous force.

Bai E stepped on the rounded back of a medium-sized spider with one foot as his machine gun erupted with fire, clearing an even wider space in the distance in an instant.

But not right in front of him.

The enclosing circle formed by the spider army was too dense; breaking through just one layer of entrapment didn't do much good.

He needed to think ahead, to make decisions with a longer view.

Route planning complete.

Bai E needed to lead them... to run along the walls.

The collapsed ruins on both sides of the road became the trio's opportunity for escape at that moment.

As the human chain rotated in mid-air, Bai E had to swing forcefully to ensure the safety of the two children due to inertia.

Their palms tightly clasped, the spinning sensation left the two children's minds a complete blank, having never experienced such a thrill before.

As they descended to the nadir, the monsters' claws seemed to graze by their scalp, yet it was all an illusion.

And when flung towards the highest point, they distinctly felt Bai E slowing down the pace, firmly controlling the rhythm of the spin, so they weren't thrown off by the excessive centrifugal force.

At this moment, their only thought was to concentrate all their strength into their hands.

Hold on!

Hold on!

They had to hold onto each other's hands no matter what!

The dust under the metal war boots crumbled at the slightest touch, the walls, long corroded to their core, were fragile as crumbs, with nearly all the force concentrated in Bai E's footsteps, easily destroying the last vestiges of the ruins.

Bai E couldn't afford to stay still for a moment.

The collapsed walls behind them raised a trail of grey dust like a dragon, bowing its head in silent reverence as it sent off its master.

Watch your step, control the pace, and be wary of the spiders' firing attacks.

"Pfft!"

Sticky webs were occasionally spat out by elite spiders aiming to entangle the three of them and restrict their movements.

This soft and clingy attack was more troublesome, and Bai E did his best to avoid it.

Hence, the chosen path became more twisted and intricate.

Under the moonlit night, the three figures dancing in the air resembled fairies beneath the moon.

At some point, even the obscure ring of light high in the sky became the backdrop for the trio, and the supporting soldiers watching this scene held their guns in a daze.

...

"This is... this is unbelievable."

How much whimsical imagination, precise judgment, and execution skills were required to perform such a miracle?

If it were any other soldier present, they could at most ensure their escape from the spider horde.

But with two burdens...

"Tap~ Tap~"

Until the metal war boots landed lightly in front of them.

Bai E knelt down on one knee first after landing, threw aside his machine gun, and perfectly caught the two children he had thrown out at the last moment with one hand each.

Morphie and Kiro Lan, who had landed safely in his arms, were clearly still in shock, it took them a while to come back from their numb state of mind.

The roar of gunfire erupted beside their ears—the teammates who had come to support them took over the fight, and a row of riflemen blocked the pursuing spider swarm.

Only then did the two children tremble, blink, and regain their senses.

"That was... that was thrilling."

Morphie was shaking, slowly replaying the brief breakout in his mind.

Although he hadn't reacted at the time, his wide-open eyes had faithfully recorded everything he saw.

The actions of Bai E were replayed slowly in his mind, giving the impression that even when let go, he still seemed to stand there, looking dazed.

Kiro Lan recovered more quickly, straightened her tattered clothes a bit, took a small step forward out of Bai E's arms, with an unintentional blush flashing across her face.

"Sir... I apologize for the trouble."

"It's fine."

Seeing the two children unharmed, Bai E also breathed a sigh of relief.

The warriors lined up behind him with guns ready began to retreat step by step, and the nearby Captain of Squad 1 turned to remind him, "If you're alright, we should retreat now, there are too many, we can't hold them off."

"Okay," Bai E nodded and looked at the two children, "can you run on your own?"

"Mm-hmm!" Kiro Lan nodded in agreement, then pulled on Morphie, who seemed to be still dazed, "Let's go, no more trouble for the adults."

The grim scene of ruins before their eyes zoomed in rapidly, the sound contracted, and suddenly invaded Morphie's sight, making him shiver, the flickering light in his eyes disappearing in an instant, "Oh~ let's go!"

The number of spiders in the great army was too many, and as the battle progressed, more figures quietly crawled out from every corner of the ruins.

Especially more and more larger spiders were crawling out from the shadows underground, their bodies' compound eyes were dense and numerous, making one's scalp tingle.

"Let's go! We can't stay here any longer."

Team Leader 1 shot single-handedly in an orderly fashion, while opening the voice channel to notify Team Leader 2, who was on standby, "Notify all refugees to retreat orderly, continue heading back to the city!"

It wasn't impossible to travel at night, after all, the usual dangers on this road weren't many, unlike the one leading to the server ruins.

Also, Bai E had been exploring for over an hour, and though the resting refugees might get a bit tired, they weren't completely unable to walk.

"Here is Ka Ruigan, message received," came Team Leader 2's calm voice.

The soldiers on standby sprung into action upon receiving the order, "Get up, everyone, keep moving."

"We're setting off! The sooner we get back to the city, the sooner we'll be safe."

"Our comrades have spotted the enemy; it's no longer safe here, but the distance is still far, so don't worry. An orderly retreat will suffice."

...

"Dadadadada!"

More than a dozen machine guns spat out orange flames, which were particularly conspicuous in the night.

Having already moved some distance away from the ruins of the relics, those gray-white spiders were still relentlessly pursuing.

Even the mutated spiders, with their bodily structure, were nowhere as troublesome as the Bug Race with Chitin Armor, human bullets could easily shred their defenses wherever they hit.

Their round bodies burst open like water-filled bags under the storm of bullets, scattering all around.

Yet their flat claws still twitched unwillingly on the ground.

The machine guns in the soldiers' hands were beginning to overheat, ejected casings paving a trail along their path of retreat.

"They are still chasing us!" Team Leader 2's brows furrowed slightly, his expression turning a bit grave.

Having retreated all the way from a district 5 kilometers away, the ammunition the soldiers had been carrying was running low.

Of course, they could still resupply from the off-road vehicles, but the bigger problem was the firearms themselves.

An overheated barrel was a fatal issue.

Unfortunately, the cumbersome group of over four hundred refugees, even though they tried their best not to cause chaos, couldn't retreat as rapidly as the soldiers.

The large group retreating was right behind them, and ahead... was the relentless spider army still unwilling to let them go.

[Consecutive successful hits on numerous moving targets, Gun Fighting Skill experience +21. (Small chance to awaken special attributes.)]

Bai E rehung the scorching-hot machine gun on his side and took down his bow with his left hand.

It was difficult to maintain high levels of energy reserves with normal food and water consumption; he would only consume the No. 3 ration bar to replenish his energy reserves right before battle.

Moreover, after the recent major battles, the No. 3 ration bars were rapidly consumed. The supplies were limited to one a day, and even with the handful Carlos had given him before the battle against the Bug Race, there weren't many left now.

But now, even without consuming another "No. 3 ration bar," the solar energy replenished after driving away the orcs had filled Bai E's energy reserves completely.

Taking into account the No. 3 ration bars that could be consumed on the spot, it meant that in a prepared battle, he could have twice the energy reserve for an outburst.

One blue bar turning into two blue bars was a great enhancement to his stamina and explosive power.

The ability to maintain full energy reserves during rest without relying on the "No. 3 ration bar" was particularly precious to the current Bai E.

The fully recovered energy reserves played a crucial role at this moment.

When the soldiers' firearms could no longer buy time, the last three arrows could still clear a 500-meter-long safe distance for everyone.

Bai E stood up, nocked an arrow to the bow.

The night breeze gently stirred the hair on his forehead, and Bai E's eyes were as sharp as his arrows.

Draw!

Shoot!

A gust of wind swept through, the residual white airflow stirred up the desolate surroundings, and after a moment, it slowly dissolved into nothingness.

"Whoosh!"

Another arrow!

"Whoosh!"

The final arrow!

The three arrows pierced through everything in their path, the spiders falling one after another were not even an obstacle; they even flew straight into the ruins, burying the last glories of the relics.

Dust filled the air.

Ahead was clear.

Bai E slowly put away the bow, his gaze piercing beyond the 500 meters of space, fixing on the spider eyes that unexpectedly halted due to the terrifying strike.

In the dark spherical eyes, the fear of the unknown finally restrained their bloodthirst for the first time.

Bai E gestured backward with one hand, "You go ahead."

If they dared to pursue further... there were three more arrows.

As they watched the not particularly robust figure, the soldiers covering the rear couldn't help but be filled with extreme awe.

No matter how many times they saw it, this earth-shattering arrow was incomprehensible.

["Lucky Shot" charge +11.]

...

Countless compound eyes locked gazes with Bai E, who stood watchful in the distance, and the entity deep underground in the ruins finally seemed to realize these flesh and blood creatures were not for its taking.

The first spider slowly retracted into the shadows...

Watching the gray-white figures gradually disappear into the darkness, Bai E squinted his eyes.

The rats underground should no longer be enough for the players to toy with, right?

Chapter 235 Are they all geniuses?

The winter sun, distant and chilly, blossomed in the sky with a brilliance that was just right.

The black iron walls of the city started to emerge at the end of the horizon, and the rest of the trip was without many twists and turns.

They had arrived.

From afar, upon seeing the city, the refugees visibly stirred with excitement, and their bodies, which had been listless like the walking dead, suddenly surged with a bit of vitality from deep within.

For most of them... or rather all of them, they had spent the first half of their lives in a wilderness oasis called Jinshuizhou Town.

What did a city look like?

They had only seen and heard about it through some circulated pamphlets and rumors.

So this is how big it is...

The steel city walls, taller than the tallest thing they had ever seen, seemed to reach straight up to the sky.

The humans living inside must be very happy, not having to worry if they would still be able to wake up the next day.

So... were they also going to live in a city like this now?

...

What seemed close took a long walk to reach.

The refugees had already been drained of almost all their energy, and had they not actually seen the city, they would have collapsed long ago.

The last leg of the journey took them nearly until dusk.

They didn't head to the military camp but arrived at a place outside the city that Bai E had never been to before.

The makeshift buildings were almost built against the city walls and looked somewhat run-down; there was also a gathering place outside the city in the distance, but it wasn't Black Street.

This place was closer to another gate of the city.

"Take them to handover."

The captain of Team 1 was clearly familiar with the procedures; the city had its own standard process for handling new refugees.

The personnel responsible for the reception had stern faces. It was hard to tell if it was military silence or if they had reached the pinnacle of exhaustion and numbness, they just stood by the road with dead fish eyes watching the endless grey-black queue.

The smell of the refugees made them frown slightly, "So many?"

"Four hundred and five," the captain of Team 1 replied promptly.

Some unlucky refugees had been hit by the orcs' wildly inaccurate gunfire in the skirmish with them.

"Oh~" The guiding officer nodded, "Have them line up here and wait, one by one."

"Come on, line up, and follow this official," the captain said.

Under the guidance of Team 1's captain, the soldiers of the coalition team maintained order at the scene.

"Everyone, line up and wait here, don't panic, don't rush. This is the last checkpoint before entering the city, and there are some necessary checks."

"Later, follow the orders of those officials, do whatever they tell you, understood?"

Having been with these refugees all the way, the soldiers were familiar with them, and now they said their last goodbyes.

After all, what was to come next had nothing to do with them.

Bai E stood by the road, watching the refugees pass by one by one, each of them looking at him with gratitude, nodding respectfully with a smile even if they didn't speak.

He smiled throughout, trying to comfort their confusion about the unknown, "It's okay, just follow them."

It was only when Morphie and Kiro Lan walked past him, with Kiro Lan looking at Bai E with determination, "I will come to find you, sir."

Bai E still smiled lightly, "You guys just watch yourself."

Everyone had their own choices, and he had no right to interfere.

Not until he watched the team being handed over and settled did Dashan approach Bai E curiously, "How come I didn't see that old man among the refugees?"

"..." Bai E's smile wavered slightly before he shook his head, "Didn't they report him missing last night?"

"Oh~ I remember I saw him last night."

Dashan scratched his head, sounding somewhat regretful, "Did he get hooked by a spider in the chaos? That's a shame."

When that old man was around, he managed the refugees quite well.

He had some ability.

Bai E pursed his lips and did not engage further in the conversation.

He quickly took a few steps forward and caught up with the squad of Team 1's captain.

"Um... Captain, excuse me."

"Bai E..." Team 1's captain paused, his tone noticeably softer, "What is it?"

Bai E glanced back, "What are they queuing for?"

"Health check," Team 1's captain explained patiently. "All new refugees entering the city need a health check."

They needed to check for highly contagious diseases that were a serious threat, examine if their physical fitness could endure at least ten more years of labor, assess whether their mental state was stable enough to comply with regulations... and so on.

The city wasn't a charity; was it its solidarity and cooperation that kept it standing in this bleak world?

No! In times like these, it was the city rules, considering gain and loss to the extreme, that mattered.

Everything useful to the city would get its due role.

Everything useless to the city should be discarded without a second thought.

As for whether life itself would seek a way out... that was up to each individual's fate.

Bai E frowned slightly to himself and looked back again.

He asked, "What will happen to them after the health check?"

"Arrangement?" Team 1's captain looked at Bai E curiously, "Those who are physically fit will go to work in the city, and those who are in poor health..."

He gestured with his eyes toward the gathering place nearby, "That place is waiting for them."

The greatest blessing the city offered to the refugees was allowing them to catch their breath under its protective shade.

Though this space was equally filled with the law of the jungle's barbarity where the strong preyed on the weak.

Bai E frowned deeply in silence.

The captain of Team 1, who had happily completed the mission and returned to the city, was evidently much happier now. At this moment, he even put an arm around Bai E's shoulder, "Brother, don't worry

too much about them. Are you feeling guilty about your own promise? There's no need. Back then, it was your only chance to defeat that demon. They will only be grateful for your rescue.

Not every word needs to be strictly acted upon, many makeshift plans are just that, makeshift. We understand you, and they will too."

"..."

Seeing that Bai E still didn't speak, the captain of Team 1 patted his shoulder with a chuckle, "Alright, stop thinking so much. We'll head back to camp to report our positions, and tonight I'll treat you to a drink at Black Street's bar. Get drunk, and by tomorrow, we'll have forgotten it all."

"Let's go! Back to camp!"

"If the captain's buying, we're not coming back until we're drunk!"

The soldiers who had once again brushed past death's door and even returned from a mission accomplished were somewhat excited.

Aside from fighting, they each had their own desired normal life.

In the midst of the commotion, Tiger came forward and also put his arm around Bai E's shoulder, whispering, "Take it easy, you're just a new recruit. You can't do that much."

Yes... can't do that much.

Bai E pressed his lips together, taking one last look back at the refugees awaiting the judgment of their fate.

...

"Huh?" The medical examiner, seeing the red light flashing on the equipment in front of him, instantly became excited from his previously listless complexion, "Spiritual Energy! Spiritual Energy!"

There was a fluctuation of Spiritual Energy!

This refugee might possess the innate talent to harness Spiritual Energy!

"Quick, quick, quick! Notify the superior! A Spiritual Energy talent has appeared among the refugees!"

"What! A talent for Spiritual Energy!" Another staff member perked up, as if it were a festive occasion for them to find a talent for Spiritual Energy among the refugees.

After peering closely and confirming the screen of the device that first indicated this discovery, the latter rushed out, "I'll go notify the superior right away!"

The equipment used for refugee check-ups could only detect basic things, like whether the body was within a "healthy range," or if there were any obvious contagious diseases, etc. For monitoring Spiritual Energy, it only remained at the level of "fluctuations."

After all, they were just refugees. Assuming an indifferent attitude, they were being tested on the off-chance something might turn up. Of course, finding something was good, but it didn't matter if they didn't.

Because of its crudeness, the equipment was prone to misjudgments, or it was normal to discover just a hint of talent that was difficult to activate. Therefore, a real professional superior was needed for a "final diagnosis."

And such equipment was not just limited to one; there were times when there were many refugees, and checking them one by one would be too inefficient.

Hearing the clamor of two staff members belonging to the same machine, the workers at the four other machines were somewhat dumbfounded.

One of them, also looking at the red light on his machine, said with a puzzled face, "It looks like I've found one too."

This triggered a chain reaction, as the staff at the remaining three machines exclaimed in succession, "Mine too..."

"Mine too..."

"Is the equipment broken?"

So many talents for Spiritual Energy appearing among the refugees at the same time was either the Arbitration Place's enforcers coming to joke with them or the equipment was broken.

There was no third possibility.

"Quick, quick, quick! Get him back! The equipment might be broken! Don't startle the superior over nothing!"

"Hey you! Wait over there. Come! Next one, you try now."

In the spirit of controlling the variables, a staff member directed the refugees being examined to step aside.

"Oh, oh~" The refugees, who didn't understand why the superiors in the city were making such a fuss, shuffled over bewilderedly, murmuring submissively.

The result came out quickly—"Beep, beep, beep~"

It's red!

"Let's test a few more..."

"Beep, beep, beep~"

It's red!

All of them are red!

"Damn it, got all excited for nothing! The freaking machines are all broken!"

"Who got screwed by a dog?"

A voice suddenly emerged from the doorway, and a man as thin as a monkey walked in laughing.

Seeing the newcomer, all the staff members tensed up instantly.

"Superior..."

"Superior~"

The thin monkey's gaze swiftly moved across the faces of the refugees in the room, trying to discern with his own eyes who the chosen one was.

Eventually settling on a particularly handsome young man in his twenties, he asked the staff members with a grin, "Is it that kid?"

"Um, um~" The questioned staff member just shook his head nervously, hesitant to tell the truth.

"Oh?" The thin monkey's gaze shifted again towards the second potential target, "So it must be him then."

Handsome and dashing as he was, how could anyone who shared his Spiritual Energy talent not also be good looking?

"Um, um~" The staff member shook his head again.

"..."

The thin monkey's expression became slightly displeased as he looked toward the third candidate, "It can't possibly be him."

"Superior..."

In the corner, a staff member nervously raised a hand, "They all are..."

Chapter 236 Extraordinary Talent!

?

The staff member bravely stood up, ready to tell the truth.

"Sir... the machines detected them, all of them."

No matter what the facts were, blame the machine first.

"We notified you as soon as we detected the first one, but, to our surprise... all of them were detected by the machine. We now suspect there might be an issue with the machine, yet we still hope that you could help us confirm it, just in case there really are that many talented individuals, which would be a great achievement for us."

Since the summons had already been made, might as well follow through.

Strike with a staff imbued with spiritual energy.

The skinny monkey stroked his chin, his gaze sweeping over the somewhat bewildered and fearful refugees.

If everyone possesses it, it means no one does.

It must be the machine that's broken.

But since they're here anyway, let's see what they're made of.

Tests amongst spiritual energy users don't require much machine assistance. Each practitioner possesses their strengths, and what the skinny monkey excelled in was sensing the fluctuations of others' spiritual energy... but it required the target's non-resistant cooperation first.

The skinny monkey walked towards his chosen number one candidate, speaking in an even tone, "Look into my eyes, focus your attention."

"Yes... yes." The refugee wasn't sure what was going on, but Bai E had instructed them earlier, so following orders was the best option.

The final test, once passed, would lead to a brand new, splendid life.

As their eyes met, the skinny monkey's gaze swirled like a vortex in the refugee's eyes, causing an unconscious dizziness to set in.

"..."

Time quietly passed by during their eye contact, and at a certain moment, the skinny monkey suddenly stepped back, disconnecting from the spiritual contact.

A shock that was hard to express welled up in his heart—

There indeed was talent.

The sensed fluctuations weren't particularly strong and somewhat passive, but still a bit more than the average person.

Perhaps the machines were malfunctioning; it was highly unlikely for everyone to have it. But his own sense was not mistaken; the first candidate he had identified indeed possessed a trace of potential talent that could be unearthed.

Facing someone who might be a future peer, the smile on the skinny monkey's face softened a bit more, "Not bad, not bad at all. Wait over there for a while; I'll take you to register shortly."

In a vast city teeming with people, most are affiliated with various power struggles and factions; only these unaffiliated refugees represented a "wealth" that the city itself could fully control.

After speaking, the skinny monkey then turned his gaze to the second candidate with some expectation, rubbing his hands together.

It seemed his spiritual intuition was incredibly sharp. If the first person he identified had talent, what about the second one?

"Look into my eyes..."

"..."

Present as well?

"..."

To encounter two in one go was a double blessing.

What day was today?

The skinny monkey was ecstatic as he turned towards the third candidate.

"..."

As the vortex swirled in the eyes, the skinny monkey took a step back in disbelief.

Present too?

Three... there were three!

"..." The skinny monkey suddenly looked towards the staff next to the machine and asked uncertainly, "Did you just say that the machines judged all of them to have it?"

"Yes! Yes!"

The staff members nodded in unison, looking compliant.

Could it be that the machines weren't malfunctioning?

Yes, indeed... It's normal for a machine or two to have issues occasionally, but what are the odds of five machines malfunctioning simultaneously?

The skinny monkey's expression became grave.

One was luck, two were a surprise, but all... that was terrifying.

For their world of spiritual energy users, behind any abnormal phenomenon, there often lay astounding secrets.

He began to doubt if the problem was with himself...

"You all continue monitoring. Line up in front of me, anyone who's confirmed by the machines."

"Yes!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Beep beep beep~"

"Beep beep beep~"

The machine's faint buzzing noise started to sound incessantly.

The non-irritating sound rose and fell without a break, turning the examination room into an atmosphere of strangeness.

There were so many refugees lined up that the room could barely contain them, packed in a confused wait.

Until two machines emitted even sharper buzzing sounds consecutively.

"Buzz buzz buzz!"

The skinny monkey, who was testing the refugees in front of him, immediately broke the connection and turned his attention toward the two machines and the targets they were examining.

A boy and a girl, both very young.

Their figures were somewhat frail, but their eyes were bright and lively...

And they were both good-looking too; their worn and tattered clothes couldn't hide their innate aura.

The medical machine's standards only had two levels—might have it, and explosively strong.

When the gap wasn't significant, the machine couldn't tell the difference.

It was only when someone possessed talent to a certain extreme that the machine would issue this burdened warning as it was right now.

In an instant, the skinny monkey's expression, originally one of surprise, swiftly changed to one of humble recognition.

He sprang to his feet and approached the two with careful hastened steps, asking with reverence, "May I know how the two noble individuals wish to be addressed?"

It didn't matter whether they were called nobles or not, or what their ages were; this world recognized only one truth—respect the strong.

No matter where these people came from or what secrets lay behind their appearance, the reality of their spiritual talent stood firm. Such immensely talented refugees... no, nobles, were rare to see even in a monster-filled institution like the Heretical Arbitration House.

And more importantly, they were still young.

If these two young individuals were to progress step by step, their future achievements were unimaginable.

And with such talents, they were bound to receive the city's full nurturing efforts!

As long as they didn't perish halfway from the demon's gaze, they would be the future's strong pillars of support!

Morphie and Kiro Lan exchanged a cautious glance before taking turns to briefly reply.

"Morphie."

"Kiro Lan."

"Morphie... Kiro Lan... I need to conduct a small test for the two of you first, and I would be grateful if you could cooperate."

It was highly likely that the machine had no problems, but considering the need to alert the higher levels of the organization, the Skinny Monkey had to perform a basic test himself.

"...No problem."

The attitude that differed so drastically from how they treated other refugees caused the children to be surprised, but they didn't show too much reaction, simply agreeing cautiously.

Everything in the city was fresh and unfamiliar to them; they needed time to adapt.

The vortex spun quickly; feeling a throbbing pain in his brain, Skinny Monkey hastily retreated four or five steps. Without any time to consider his mind being stirred as if by a heated iron needle, Skinny Monkey stepped forward quickly, his tone humble to the extreme.

"Please wait a moment here; I'll go notify the city's elders to come and receive you."

"Wait." Morphie furrowed her brows slightly and asked Skinny Monkey, "Is there, any problem with us?"

"No problem at all!" Skinny Monkey replied in quick succession, fearing that he might leave any misunderstanding with the future elders, "It's just that your talents are too exceptional; they are rare in the entire city, and our small division has no authority to handle it. We need to report to the higher-ups so they can personally come to guide both of you."

"..."

Talents?

Exceptional?

Morphie and Kiro Lan exchanged glances. They had lived in that oasis town for the past decade or so, where such barbaric places don't pay heed to these things.

They, had talents?

But regardless, seeing the other's humble attitude, both became aware that they might indeed find a decent settlement environment in this city.

Status meant having a voice, and Kiro Lan felt somewhat exhilarated, 'In that case, it should be no problem to go to the military barracks, right?'

...

The appearance of those with Spiritual Energy talents was evidently a top-priority matter in the city.

And this time, the matter was particularly significant!

The arrival of two top-tier talents along with an entire group of over four hundred refugees, all possessing basic talents, immediately caused an uproar within the Spiritual Power Managers Center that received the news.

Each Spiritual Energy practitioner specialized in different areas; not all belonged to the Heretical Arbitration House.

Spiritual Energy practitioners affiliated with the city were firstly part of the Spiritual Power Managers Center and secondly the various functional agencies.

An A-level personnel from the Management Center and two B-level persons arrived together, their released Spiritual Pressure causing Skinny Monkey to hunch over, completely unable to look them in the eye.

"Where are they?" the authoritative female voice in the middle calmly asked.

"They're in that room over there... I've asked the two elders to rest over there first."

"Lead the way."

"Yes."

...

After a more precise test, Aglaya rubbed her temples with her pale finger, looking slightly distressed.

Unimaginably exceptional talents.

Both of them.

In the history of the entire city, probably no more than five individuals possessed Spiritual Energy talents equal to or surpassing these two children.

And each of these talents of such caliber was undoubtedly an indescribable treasure and core of the city.

"We've struck gold!"

An elated male B-level colleague exclaimed.

Another male B-level colleague, although equally excited, still maintained his own critical thinking, "But the question is, why did they appear at the same time?"

It could be called coincidence for two superb talents to appear together, but for two superb talents and a group of basic talents to emerge at the same time was just too strange.

Aglaya crouched down gently, her expression softening slightly from the sternness the outsiders saw, "Child, tell me, where do you all come from?"

These were refugees brought back by the military, which was all the information they had.

Specific details were for the military to record, the refuge center didn't care about those matters.

But now, they could only analyze based on the origins of these people.

About to reach adulthood, the large-sister-figure with pitch-black curls exuded a spirited aura; her face, unlike Kiro Lan's delicate and charming one, possessed a kind of bold and sharp beauty. This caused the typically proactive Morphey to unusually blush slightly.

Kiro Lan spoke calmly, "We come from Jinshuizhou Town."

"Jinshuizhou Town?" The male B-level member silently noted this name.

Aglaya's gaze focused on the girl's face in front of her, and she continued to inquire softly, "Did you encounter anything unusual on the way here?"

Kiro Lan looked straight into her eyes, "When we were hiding in an underground cavern... we encountered a demon, like those in the legends."

"Impossible!" one of the B-level members immediately denied, "If you truly encountered a demon, you could not have escaped!"

Escape with these refugees having no combat power?

Talent potential is potential, combat power is combat power.

Perhaps they had encountered some inexplicable incidents, which these ignorant people mistook for the work of demons.

"No! That was indeed the demon itself." Kiro Lan kept eye contact, unyielding.

Aglaya didn't rush to dismiss this claim. Her serene and wise eyes just stared into Kiro Lan's, "Then how did you manage to escape?"

Upon encountering the true form of a demon, either one was corrupted and enslaved or directly devoured.

Such entities knew nothing of mercy.

Kiro Lan spoke gently as if recalling the towering figure of that elder, "A warrior appeared and saved all of us."

Aglaya narrowed her eyes, "Was it a soldier sent by the military to assist you?"

"Yes."

"What's his name?"

"Bai E."

"Let's go," Aglaya rose suddenly, "To the military camp."

"Hey, hey, hey! You really believe what she said? That's a demon!"

"Then how would you explain all those refugees suddenly having Spiritual Energy fluctuations?" Aglaya glanced back at him.

In her mind, an explanation was already taking form.

But it needed to be confirmed through a face-to-face confrontation.

Chapter 237 Wishing to prove loyalty

"What! You've encountered the high-dimensional demon itself!"

As the Captain of Squad One detailed the full process of the mission and mentioned the demons in the cavern, the usually quiet superior officer suddenly stood up and stared at him with burning eyes, asking with some distrust, "Are you sure it was the demon itself?"

Captain One, who had been full of confidence a moment ago, was also taken aback and subconsciously glanced back at Bai E standing to the side behind him, "It was... right?"

If it wasn't the demon itself, then what could it be?

It had the ability to share real scenes with everyone at the same time and could even create unique horrifying illusions for each person based on their deepest fears to force them into a state of terror.

Although none of the warriors or refugees had ever seen the true form of a demon before, after a discussion, everyone agreed that the creature could be nothing other than a demon.

"..." The officer responsible for listening to the report turned serious.

Confronting a demon was no trifling matter.

In some places, even information about demons was forbidden, let alone facing a demon in the flesh.

Even just meeting those powerful high-dimensional creatures carried the risk of corruption. That was the expertise of the bigwigs at the Heretical Arbitration House, not something ordinary people could take lightly, and even he was not fully versed in the intricacies of it all.

"Wait here, I will call for a user of Spiritual Energy."

"Yes."

Captain One instinctively agreed immediately.

In the silent room, the members of the united squad looked at each other.

"Seems like a serious matter?"

"Wasn't it driven away by Bai E? Shouldn't be any problem, right?"

The fight was over; wasn't everything settled after reporting and rewarding their achievements?

The soldiers who had never dealt with the realm of demons were just as ignorant of the significance behind this caution.

Seeing the superior officer's reaction, everyone felt somewhat uneasy.

Without speaking, all eyes inadvertently swept over Bai E—if there really was a problem, this War God would probably be the most troublesome one.

...

But in a moment, a tall and lanky man pushed aside the curtain and strode into the room.

"You encountered the demon itself?"

The voice of the Spiritual Energy user resonated with a hum, as if imbued with a specific Magic Power that made it difficult to tell lies.

Some basic enhancements, such as improved reflexes or physical stamina, were common abilities of a user of Spiritual Energy.

But each Spiritual Energy user's core ability was different, and this user's core ability was to make it difficult for people to tell lies with ease.

However... this was never a lie.

"Yes, sir."

After a moment of collected contemplation, Captain One showed the responsibility he was supposed to.

The facts remained facts, and would not change no matter how many times one asked.

"We all encountered the demon, and it was Soldier Bai E who defeated it by himself!"

No matter what awaited them, the facts needed to be stated.

"Who is Bai E?"

"I am," Bai E stepped forward, taking the initiative to answer.

"You defeated the demon by yourself?" The Spiritual Energy user fixed his gaze on Bai E. He felt this young man looked somewhat familiar, but had no time to ponder it further.

Looking at Bai E's eyes, veiled with a light mist, "The demon died before you?"

"No, sir! It was banished. It retreated back into the high-dimensional space," Bai E answered calmly, hands clasped behind his back.

The Spiritual Energy user frowned slightly, "How can you be sure it was the high-dimensional space?"

"After it was defeated, the space became hazy, too blinding to look at, and it stirred up a tempest in our minds. I believe these are the traits of the high-dimensional space. Moreover, there were over four hundred refugees present, and they all know."

"Over four hundred refugees saw it as well?" The Spiritual Energy user muttered softly, "This is troublesome."

Without meaning to, he glanced back at the officer who had called him over, somewhat blaming him for not sharing such crucial information...

Then he continued to question Bai E, "What about them? Why did you alone defeat the demon?"

"They were temporarily incapacitated by the demon's corrupting power and I escorted them outside the cavern to rest."

"So only you alone faced the demon? They were just corrupted by its power?"

"Yes, sir! But there were also over four hundred refugees with me inside the cavern."

"..." The Spiritual Energy user lapsed into silence, then spoke to the officer receiving the brief after a moment, "Step outside with me."

After leaving the room, out of earshot of the soldiers, the Spiritual Energy user stopped and with a grave expression said to the officer, "I suspect they are lying."

As for the purpose... perhaps it was to claim military honors?

Most soldiers are loyal, but beneath loyalty, it's not inconceivable that some harbor personal motives.

As a user of Spiritual Energy, he was more aware of the mysteries of the high-dimensional space than ordinary people, including middle and senior military officers who had not come into contact with the Spiritual Power World.

This era was one of decay and darkness; none could escape it.

The people living in this time, with all their belligerence, bloodlust, jealousy, and twisted tendencies, was it really just due to human nature alone?

No!

The sinful presence seeping from the high-dimensional space was constantly influencing this world!

Every breath of air and every bite of food and drink was saturated with sin.

Every creature would, over the long years, be corrupted by the madness in the very air they breathed, deep into their bones; none could avoid it, it was merely a question of time.

Before succumbing to corruption, the value one could provide to the human empire defined the contribution of a person's life.

So, in a world where even betrayal seemed so justifiable, some soldiers seeking personal gain through lies... was unfortunately all too normal.

"Isn't it true that no one could lie before you?" The officer was puzzled, which was precisely why he had sought out this particularly skilled Spiritual Energy user.

"My ability is not an absolute rule."

Those who lied before him would be overwhelmed by the pressure of their guilty conscience in an instant. But if someone had received specialized training or possessed a corresponding resistance, naturally they could be immune.

Spiritual Energy is some kind of ability that transcends common sense, but in essence, it is also just another form of contest.

"So what they said was fine?" the officer frowned tightly.

"I don't know where they got some of this knowledge about demons, but what they said was basically not a big problem," the Spiritual Energy wielder shook his head.

Normally circulated information about demons wouldn't contain such detailed content, such as each person's subjective impression of demons, the demons' mental interference with everyone, and the presence felt when demons are repelled back into high-dimensional space... Without personal experience, it would be difficult to speak so accurately and confidently.

And it was even a solo defeat, which was completely off the mark!

Putting aside the truth of this military achievement, just to say... But how could this possibly be true?!

Demons are also hierarchical!

Ordinary common demon foot soldiers can actually be completely killed in the material world; it's only those so-called "origin demons," whose core is linked to the source of emotions, that have the special privilege of retreating to high-dimensional space to recuperate after suffering fatal blows in the material world.

Do these special squad soldiers really understand how powerful an origin demon is?

If they truly encountered a demon of that caliber, even the enforcers of the Heretical Arbitration House would probably need to be on high alert.

Without assembling a small team of at least ten people, those enforcers would probably not even dare to glance at It.

Such an existence, defeated by you, a mere foot soldier, alone?

And to even directly annihilate its physical body in the material world, sending the demon... back to slumber within high-dimensional space?

Do you think you're the War God Ares himself?

The officer didn't have the Spiritual Energy wielder's complex thoughts and just furrowed his brow, focusing on the present, "So, what do we do now?"

Defeated a high-dimensional demon, but without a shred of evidence, how is this to be handled?

Is this military merit to be recorded or not?

Even if it were to be recorded... How would one record a solo defeat of a demon?

There were no standards or precedents to reference...

"Or... just rub it out and forget it," the officer couldn't be bothered with the hassle.

"Record it! Of course, it must be recorded," the Spiritual Energy wielder insisted.

For the warrior himself, fairness is necessary.

For the military camp, lying is the beginning of corruption.

Excellent soldiers deserve commendation, while corrupted soldiers must undergo cleansing.

Either a cleansing of the spirit or a cleansing of the body.

Otherwise, bigger mistakes will emerge in the future!

"Let's go back there!"

...

"Are you willing to take full responsibility for your words?" the Spiritual Energy wielder stood before Bai E, staring silently into his eyes.

"I am willing," Bai E's voice was resounding and powerful.

The Spiritual Energy wielder then turned to the other members of this joint squad, "And you?"

"Willing!"

"Good," the Spiritual Energy wielder nodded, "Since you insist, I can then tell you everything that is about to happen. Remember, this is your own choice..."

The Spiritual Energy wielder, with hands clasped behind his back, swept his stern gaze over all the soldiers before him, "Anyone who has directly gazed upon a high-dimensional demon has a high probability of being contaminated by the demon! Even though you are now warriors of the empire, it is very possible that you have unwittingly joined the ranks of the demons.

With your own hands, you'll destroy everything that you were supposed to protect!"

"..."

The warriors who had never encountered such information began to show visible panic.

The Spiritual Energy wielder was pleased with this reaction; there was hope for those willing to turn back.

The psychological counseling team in the camp was there for this purpose.

"If you are certain that you truly encountered a high-dimensional demon, then I will request that the enforcers from the Heretical Arbitration House conduct a final arbitration for you.

If it is confirmed that you are still the empire's most loyal warriors, then you will receive the commendations you deserve.

But if... you have unknowingly become the minions and slaves of those demons, then... the Spiritual Energy Furnace awaits you!"

If it's a lie, surely these words would be enough to make them recoil.

Once they recoil, their resolve would no longer be firm.

Before him, lies have nowhere to hide!

The Spiritual Energy wielder's gaze held a faint foggy light, calmly waiting for the chain collapse triggered by some point among these warriors.

The buzzing voice still echoed in the room, with a determined voice ringing out first.

"In the name of the empire, I shall prove my loyalty!"

Bai E spoke out emotionlessly.

The demon had indeed been truly repelled by himself; this was an undeniable fact.

The panel acknowledged everything, and up until now, there was no judgment related to corruption.

Bai E believed he was clean.

The initial voice solidified the resolve of the warriors who had felt uneasy because of the Spiritual Energy wielder's words.

Yes, this was the truth.

Although they hadn't been much help in the process of repelling the demon, this was the fact!

The credit that belonged to Bai E should not be buried!

Furthermore... if they had indeed been unwittingly corrupted by the demons...

Then for humanity... for the empire... they should ensure their own cleanliness!

The city could be destroyed tomorrow, could be breached by external enemies, but should never! Perish at the hands of the warriors who once protected everything!

"In the name of the empire, I shall prove my loyalty!"

All the soldiers cried out in unison!

Chapter 238 Unclean Whisperings

"They might really not be lying," the psychic now harbored a shred of belief in the face of the soldiers' resolve.

"Should we really notify the people from the Arbitration Place?" hesitation still lingered in the heart of the officer who had left the room.

The individuals there were paranoid lunatics, among whom the "Purist Faction" proclaimed that any human who knew even the slightest bit about demon knowledge should be completely eradicated.

And now, the soldiers who had faced the demon...

"Armored battalion." The psychic pointed in a particular direction.

Ever since the last combat with the Bug Race, the city had arranged for the enforcers from the Arbitration Place to come and help train the Mecha pilots of the armored battalion to withstand spiritual energy blasts.

This plan had been underway for some time now, and the enforcers selected as training instructors might not be so fanatical in temperament; privately inviting them for an appraisal shouldn't be an issue.

"That could work!" The officer nodded in agreement.

Such an approach would at least keep the matter quiet, as initiating cross-departmental applications was a complicated affair.

It was now evening, and there were no training tasks.

The enforcer who had been invited, upon hearing it might be related to demons, allowed professional ethics to immediately take control of their body.

"Let's go!"

No matter where they were, eradicating anything related to demons was a duty they had to fulfill as enforcers.

"We invited you here today to examine if there is any demonic residue posing a threat on them," said the officer and psychic, both avoiding too much detail due to their stereotype of the enforcers from the Arbitration Place, not wanting these enforcers to get too involved in this matter.

Internal matters of the military camp were not for the enforcers to decide.

"Hmm," the stout and imposing enforcer responded briefly, "Where are the people?"

"Inside."

They lifted the tent flap and entered the room.

The soldiers from the joint squad were still waiting quietly.

The enforcer reached out to grab an orb-like object from thin air and, after injecting spiritual energy into it for a moment, he firmly declared.

"No."

Each enforcer had their unique ways of discerning the scent of demons, a fundamental skill for battling demons.

Yet, there was nothing.

"Nothing?" The psychic was a bit taken aback, finding it hard to believe that, after an encounter with a demon, there was not a trace of demonic threat lingering on them.

A perfect battle against a demon?

"Really nothing?" The officer was also somewhat stupefied, incredulously repeating the question.

Now that he had somewhat accepted the fact that these soldiers had truly encountered a demon, he was already thinking about how to arrange follow-up actions.

Having encountered a demon, maybe not everyone was problematic, but surely one or two couldn't escape suspicion, right?

Such people definitely couldn't just be handed over to the enforcers for an on-the-spot resolution; the fate of those under the military's jurisdiction had to be decided by high-ranking officers.

But now... nothing?

The plans that had been swirling in his head came to nothing, and the absurd supposition that had temporarily subsided now surged back—

The joint squad repelled a higher-dimensional demon, leaving no evidence behind—is this military achievement acknowledged or not? How should it be recorded?

"Sir... are you certain?" the officer murmured in disbelief, almost without thinking.

"It is our duty; they are merely perfectly normal people, untainted by demons," the enforcer glanced at him, his boiling blood now cooling down gradually.

It turned out to be a false alarm that caused unnecessary excitement.

Chasing after anything related to demons was his duty, as well as his lifelong pursuit.

Having his expectations dashed, he was the one who felt the most distressed.

"All right then... thank you for your trouble, sir," the officer sighed.

"What exactly happened?" Yet the enforcer was in no rush to leave.

Not a single clue related to demons could be overlooked; even if these soldiers themselves were not problematic, they might lead to something truly related to demons.

"It's like this, sir..." Since their own people were clean, the officer didn't hesitate to relay the information they had, "They were dispatched for a mission to meet some refugees, but in the area where the refugees had settled, they encountered a real demon... and then..."

"So..." The enforcer's mood darkened with each word he heard, and his emotional state grew noticeably agitated. He looked at the officer like one would look at an idiot and then turned his gaze towards the psychic, "You believe what they said?"

"..." Feeling pierced by his gaze, the psychic softly retorted, "At first, we didn't believe either..."

"Do you know what level a demon that is only repelled but not killed falls into?" The enforcer eyed the psychic with scorn.

"I know... A Source Demon, right?"

"A Source Demon!" The enforcer laughed bitterly. "A Source Demon, you say... If you know about Source Demons, then you should understand how troublesome such creatures are. Do you think they could defeat a Source Demon with just their power?"

Those were beings even a group of enforcers had to carefully handle together. Was it possible that a single one—no, just a simple soldier with hardly any knowledge of demons—could repel a Source Demon?

What need would there be for enforcers at all then?

He initially thought that, even if the soldiers were fine, they might have clues about the demon, but now it seemed to be a complete false alarm.

"Furthermore..." The enforcer intended to educate the psychic of the military camp a bit, to prevent similar false alarms in the future, "one more thing you must understand—how many refugees did they say there were?"

"Over four hundred," the officer replied without hesitation.

"Over four hundred!" The enforcer snorted with derision, "How could over four hundred refugees summon a Source Demon? And its true form at that! The stronger the demon, the harder it is for them to manifest in the material world; ordinary demons can hardly descend to the material world, even if it's just as a willful possession, let alone a Source Demon!

If over four hundred people could summon the true form of a Source Demon, this world would already belong to the demons!"

He waved his hand dismissively and turned to leave, "They are definitely making it all up; this is an issue for your military to handle, I'm out of here."

"Safe travels, sir..."

The officer's voice of respectful farewell had not completely faded when a calm voice abruptly broke the silence, "But sir, why didn't you ask about the details of the combat process?"

It was Bai E.

He didn't actually care much about the military merit of repelling demons; personally, he would rather have less trouble than more.

But the fact had already occurred, and you can't wrap fire in paper; it was absolutely impossible to suppress what so many people knew.

In the future, when asked why he concealed it, how would he answer?

Moreover, after confronting demons himself, Bai E had personally experienced the affliction of having a seed planted by a demon.

He could only be sure that he was unaffected, but what about the other soldiers? What about those refugees?

Could there be hidden dangers in their souls as the Spiritual Energy users in the military camp said? Was there potential for demons to exploit these weaknesses in the future?

Deep down, he hoped the military would take this matter more seriously.

So he might as well stand his ground now. If they still thought he was faking it... then let them think he was faking it.

Bai E's statement made the enforcer, who had already taken a step out, pause and turn his head sharply toward Bai E, his gaze sharp as a knife.

"You've got some nerve!"

"I only hope that sir will take this seriously. We may be fine, but there is no guarantee that those refugees are as well... and those few scouts who survived."

On the way here, Bai E had noticed that their mental state wasn't quite right, and their spirit, energy, and mind were definitely not what one would expect from a soldier.

Was it truly because they were disheartened by defeat? Or was it because the seeds planted by the demons were still rooted in the corners of their souls?

"Are you teaching me how to do my job?" The enforcer narrowed his eyes slightly, with a glint of cold light flashing.

"If I have offended, it was not my intention."

"..." The enforcer didn't speak again but stared at Bai E with a somewhat gloomy look in his eyes.

Cacophonous whispers from higher dimensions kept whispering in his ear incessantly.

At this moment, it was as if they had substance, saying—

"Kill him!"

"Kill him!"

"Kill this insolent fool who affronts your authority!"

A daunting Spiritual Energy pressure surged through the room, the airflow stumbled slowly, and the chilling breath even spilled out of the door.

No one spoke.

No one dared to break the silence at that moment.

It wasn't until a series of rapid footsteps approached from afar, accompanied by the familiar voice of Marshal Weslin, "The briefing room is this way. The joint squad that went out on a mission just returned not long ago, I've already questioned them, and now they're registering their operation records here."

"Whoosh~"

The door curtain was flung open, and Aglaya, who had not yet stepped into the room, sensed the pervasive Spiritual Energy pressure in the air.

So, right after entering, she turned her attention to the only enforcer in the room.

"What are you doing?!"

The Spiritual Energy pressure from the higher-ranking Spiritual Energy user immediately took control of the scene, and the imposing female voice resonated deep within the souls of everyone present.

Spiritual Energy users' core abilities vary, but most of them are actually quite astute.

To sustain strong Spiritual Energy powers, a sensitive and intelligent brain is essential.

Aglaya, one of the few A-rank managers of the Administration Bureau, is almost certainly one of the most outstanding individuals among all the Spiritual Energy users in the entire city.

She excels in both strength and wisdom.

She didn't even need anyone to explain; by just sensing the atmosphere, she could roughly guess the reason for the tension.

After all, the truth may indeed overturn the understanding of ordinary people... including ordinary enforcers or Spiritual Energy users.

Aglaya's voice was like a bucket of ice water in summer, instantly clearing the enforcer's mind.

The noisy whispers in his mind also dispersed in an instant.

"Lady Aglaya..."

He bowed his head and stepped back, beginning to repent.

Every enforcer of the Arbitration Place faced the constant erosion of those unclean whispers from higher dimensions while battling demons.

Just now, he had nearly fallen.

During his time at the military camp, the silent superiority and irritability he felt while teaching the armored battalion's soldiers had made him lose himself.

Perhaps it was time to consider returning to his career of hunting demons...

Aglaya glanced at him and looked away.

She then turned to Bai E, who was at the center of the oppressive atmosphere just moments ago.

Without needing any introductions, she had already identified her target.

"You're Bai E?"

The tall figure stood before him, even a few centimeters taller than himself, making her approach seem all the more imposing.

Bai E looked up and met her eyes calmly, his voice exhibiting not a single ripple, "Yes, it's me."

"Good that it's you," Aglaya said, her lips curling slightly, seemingly satisfied with the soldier's reaction.

Chapter 239 Bai E, is he an android?

On her way here, she had already heard everything about this warrior from two children—

Alone in the cave, he expelled demons; in the battle against the orcs, he single-handedly turned the tide; at the ruins of the small town, he held the rear with three arrows to repel the enemy.

It was unimaginable how the military managed to train such an extraordinarily capable warrior.

With an unshakable mind unaffected by demons, his great benevolence saved many from disaster, and his combat skills were exceptional, surpassing even those battle-skilled officers of the Arbitration Place.

The reason for her visit was to see for herself what kind of person the true model of this warrior was.

After all, humans are creatures of emotion, and the narratives of Morphie and Kiro Lan inevitably carried the sentimental bias inherent to their humanity.

She needed to bring the owner of these deeds down to earth, strip away the emotional perspectives, and then see what kind of hero stood before her.

As for the facts themselves, she had already inquired with more refugees; facts were facts...

Now seeing him for the first time, he was neither humble nor arrogant, and maintained his self-opinion even when faced with skepticism.

This was indeed the demeanor of a warrior capable of all those feats, and should be the very object of extreme admiration spoken of by the children.

As Aglaya confirmed with her voice, the door curtains rose again.

Morphie and Kiro Lan rushed in from outside, and upon seeing Bai E, both children were instantly overjoyed.

"Sir!"

"Bai E, sir!"

Bai E's lips curled slightly as he smiled at them.

Seeing this scene, he probably also knew a bit of the truth—

The officer's words just now had not escaped the ears of their warriors, and the doubts he raised were actually quite reasonable.

But what he had failed to consider was... talent.

More than four hundred refugees, being ordinary people, did not have the capability to summon the true form of a primeval demon, but what if... there were extraordinary individuals among the refugees?

Yes, talent!

The learning abilities of the two children could even be compared to the system buffs on himself and the players, which had previously taken Bai E by surprise.

And now, it seemed that the children's talents were more fearsome than he had imagined, so much so that the real big shot of the city had rushed over to confront him immediately.

This tall and dignified woman with shiny black curls that gleamed blue, the floating damage numbers above her head confirmed the substance of her strength.

Only slightly less recognized by the system than Yue Ying.

The true core figure of the city in the field of Spiritual Energy!

"I'm asking you, what were you arguing about?" Aglaya spoke softly, her solid voice was calm and imposing, deterring any thoughts of deceit.

"This is Aglaya from the Spiritual Power Managers Center; answer her question seriously." Fearing that these soldiers didn't understand the severity of the situation, Weslin, who personally led the way and stood by smiling, gave a light cough before reminding them.

"I want the lords to focus on screening," Bai E said, meeting her gaze with parity, every word clear and distinct, "Our team has just encountered demons, and I don't know if I could be corrupted by the demons as a result, let alone if others could be subtly tainted."

"Do you know what kind of existence you're up against?" Aglaya gazed intently into Bai E's eyes.

Spiritual Energy is about confrontation.

But she was confident that no one in this city could lie before her.

"I know."

"After getting all your companions on that cart, you should have immediately retreated and brought the intelligence back to the military camp."

The two children had learned some details from the idle chatter of the warriors, but not in great detail.

Aglaya needed this rare case to analyze why this incident ended the way it did, and if possible, whether it could be applied to combat all demons.

Insects are the greatest enemy in the material world, and demons... are the greatest enemies for Spiritual Energy practitioners and the mental realm of all humanity.

"I couldn't retreat. I believed it was a trap set by the demon."

"A trap?" queried Aglaya, her eyebrows raised.

"He was deliberately letting us escape... Fleeing is a sign of weakness; once one fears, one is already within His grasp."

"On what basis?"

"Feeling," answered Bai E with a light blink, each refined movement played slowly in Aglaya's mind, "I deduced that this was a demon centered around 'fear,' and I thought it might be worth trying this line of thinking."

"..." Aglaya stared silently at Bai E before slightly tilting her chin up after a moment, "Do you have absolute confidence in defeating Him?"

"No."

"Then why not return to the city and report? Your actions could have deprived the city of key information, leading to history repeating itself," Aglaya said, her tone somewhat sharp as a keen edge faced head-on.

"I left comrades behind; if I didn't make it out, they could still come back and report after they recovered."

A flawless explanation.

Aglaya's piercing gaze softened slightly.

He was just braver, sharper, and more decisive.

Once he had decided to act... "how to achieve it" had already been demonstrated by facts.

All the refugees had witnessed that process.

The demon at the core of fear finally suffered a backlash, and the warrior's attack was merely going with the flow.

Or rather, it was precisely because of the warrior's selfless devotion that everyone's will to resist was awakened.

Humans have defeated demons countless times throughout history, thanks to the heroes who stepped forward at such critical moments.

However, this time the ability to push back the Primeval Demon was more attributed to the warrior's fierce courage, with few lessons that could be broadly applied.

This demon was special—

Based on more than four hundred refugees, the Primeval Demon's status was indeed lofty, its core tied to "fear," immortal and indestructible.

Even if destroyed in the material world, it would return to high-dimensional space and wait for an opportunity to resurrect.

But it was also weak, much like Morphie and Kiro Lan who supported its birth, possessing innate gifts and a high future potential, but currently lacking strong power, which allowed the warrior to delay it long enough for its "First Elect" to sense the master's "weakness" and thus betray it.

Yes... The Elect.

This is why all the refugees other than Morphie and Kiro Lan also had fluctuations in their Spiritual Energy talent.

In fact, the judgment of the military camp's Spiritual Power Managers and even the executioners was not wrong; even with supernaturally talented individuals like Morphie and Kiro Lan, a group of over four hundred people could not summon any Primeval Demon that had taken form in high-dimensional space into the material world.

So, this Lord of Fear was newly born.

At the initial birth of the Fear Demon, being inside the incubating demon's ovary, they naturally became the First Elect of this newborn demon.

In a sense, their souls were all extremely close to the high-dimensional space that ordinary people struggle to access, resulting in their now innate familiarity with Spiritual Energy.

This was also a method of awakening Spiritual Energy talent; any human who had the chance to touch high-dimensional space with their soul could possibly awaken the talent for Spiritual Energy and become a noble Spiritual Energy manager.

However, those who tried to glimpse the secrets of higher dimensions through this method were often first to be corrupted by the unpredictable high-dimensional space and turned into fodder for demons, with very few able to actively break free and return.

This batch that was rescued... or rather, that initiated resistance on their own to completely break free from the "gods" and return to the present world, was unprecedented!

Moreover, because they had once resisted a demon and shed their status as the Elect, they might be more resilient than ordinary Spiritual Energy managers when facing other demonic incursions in the future.

This was nothing short of miraculous wealth for the city!

And all this, was brought back by this warrior before their eyes!

The conviction from deep within him made his decision utterly correct.

If he had retreated even a step, his soul, his life, would no longer be his own.

There would be no chance of returning to the military camp, let alone passing on a message.

The scouts before him had also had the same thoughts, yet at the moment they decided to flee, they had already lost control of their own fate.

["Lucky Strike" energy recharge +1.]

Aglaya retracted the storm in her eyes, turning instead to look at Weslin, who was just waiting with a grin, "Marshal Weslin, could you please come here for a moment."

Aglaya and Weslin turned their backs, so all the sounds and movements they made were no longer observable by Bai E and the others.

"Marshal Weslin, I would like to see the personal information of this soldier, Bai E."

A warrior able to resist demonic assault and acutely detect the tendrils of its spiritual world invasion likely possesses some talent for Spiritual Energy as well. Even if not as extraordinary as Morphie and Kiro Lan, proper nurturing could definitely make him a powerful executor in the Arbitration Place.

Executors are "expendable" and need to be replenished at all times.

"I have brought it."

Weslin cheerfully took out the tablet he had been holding, prepared for when he knew this personage was coming for the joint squad. He had readied everything.

After all, the Spiritual Power Managers Center is this city's most vital core institution! It's the top priority echelon he needs to court.

The screen lit up and Aglaya's face, previously somewhat gentle, stiffened instantly, her sharp, narrow eyes immediately capturing the most crucial information—

[ID: 95B27]

Synthetic human...

Bai E was a synthetic human...

She held no factional bias against synthetic humans, but there was a prohibition associated with them!

Thought Dulling.

This innate restriction indeed allowed them a bit more resistance to high-dimensional demon corruption than normal humans, but also nearly cut off the possibility of their awakening to Spiritual Energy.

He might... not deserve such deep veneration and admiration from Morphie and Kiro Lan.

Suddenly, Aglaya fell silent.

Returning to face Bai E, Aglaya's expression became so calm it was entirely devoid of emotion.

"I need to conduct a test on you... to confirm there are indeed no remnants of the demon's tendrils on you."

Chapter 240 Implemented Gene Optimization Solution

There were no remnants of demons.

But there was also no Spiritual Energy talent, nor even a degree of resistance.

This was a standard indication of dulled thoughts.

The prohibition could not be broken.

Aglaya sighed quietly to herself and put away the thought she initially had of bolstering the image of Morphe and Kiro Lan as objects of veneration.

"Let's go, you've already wasted a lot of time, from now on... you must study without ceasing."

The two children who had been excitedly talking about how well their clan members were now being treated by Bai E were called away by Aglaya.

As they left, Aglaya did not forget to remind Marshal Weslin, who had come out with her, "Marshal, this warrior has performed exceptionally. Please ensure he receives everything he deserves."

But he should not covet anything unwarranted.

She didn't articulate the message too explicitly, after all, the two children were right beside her, but she expected the Marshal to understand her meaning.

The warrior's merits should not be erased, but he was no longer suitable to remain in contact with Morphie and Kiro Lan.

Cutting off relations was best for everyone.

Weslin paused for a moment, then nodded with a smile, "Understood."

"You don't need to see us off, Marshal. You're also very busy."

"Alright..."

Watching them leave, Weslin turned and went back inside the tent. His gaze swept over the faces of the bewildered soldiers before he spoke in a deep voice.

"Keep everything about this operation a secret for now. Don't let me hear even a whisper about this rescue from anyone unrelated. Also, lock down the operation record with my authorization; no one is allowed to access it. Is that clear to everyone?"

"Understood!"

"Alright, the rest of you can go back now. Bai E, you stay."

Once all the soldiers, including the record-keeping officers and Spiritual Energy managers, had left, Weslin, who had been sitting silently behind the long table, lifted his head from his meditative state. He looked at Bai E with a genuinely pleased smile.

"You did very well this time."

From the brief explanation given during the meeting with Aglaya and what he overheard just then, he had generally grasped the entire process of the incident.

He already had a deep impression of the artificial human warrior before him, whose consistent outstanding performances had vividly and concretely demonstrated his achievements in certain respects.

This time, he had even managed to bring back two extraordinary Spiritual Energy talents and a group of ordinary talents from a mission that was "impossible" to succeed.

Of course, this was a contribution to the Spiritual Power Managers Center and did not reflect on him personally.

His real benefit, however, was that Aglaya owed him a small favor... and the favorable impression he had left on the military under his leadership. That was his greatest gain.

A delighted Weslin made a final, definite promise, "You won't be assigned any missions or wander around these next few days. The quota for the Gene Optimization Solution you applied for has been approved. The staff from the Scientific Research Institute has been waiting for you to return to collect your body data.

"I've already passed on the news of your return to them, and if nothing unexpected happens, they should be over tomorrow."

[It's finally confirmed!]

Joy surged in Bai E's heart.

He hadn't taken seriously the big promises sketched out previously, only now with these definite words did he feel that matters were finally settled.

"Thank you, sir!"

What a grateful warrior...

Full of admiration, Weslin's face was beaming, "It's what you deserve."

...

In the vehicle returning to the city, Aglaya collected her emotions, looking at the two children sitting opposite her.

"Earlier on, you mentioned having certain demands, right?"

Morphie immediately spoke up, "Kiro Lan, she..."

Under the table, Kiro Lan pressed her hand to Morphie's to stop what he was about to say.

Facing Aglaya's questioning gaze, Kiro Lan looked up with a smile, "Nothing much, ma'am. I just want to learn more about demons and combat skills to prevent encountering situations like we've been through before."

Her thoughts were more intricate; she had clearly perceived the change in attitude from Aglaya during their earlier interaction.

In this city, the status and position of Bai E didn't seem very high; he was still subject to the restraint of others.

Aglaya obviously didn't want her to interact with Bai E any longer... So they'd overturn these rules.

In the brief time, Kiro Lan had already gauged her and Morphie's place in this city from how all the city dwellers they met treated them.

They valued her and Morphie highly, indicating that their potential was likely rare in this city.

Likewise, the leader with such charismatic qualities was certainly not a common person.

If both sides worked together, what could stop them from reaching the pinnacle?

There was no rush.

No need to hurry... Everything was still in its early stages.

After all, even Grandfather was working in the shadows for their benefactor.

Aglaya clearly saw Kiro Lan's subtle gesture and was inwardly pleased.

Indeed, children raised in the wilderness were more sensible than those family descendants from the city.

This was good as well, sparing her the need to explain.

After a brief moment of contemplation, Aglaya made a decision, "Then... first go to the Heretical Arbitration Place for some training. You've started late, and although you have exceptional talents, you must be wary of the prying eyes of higher-dimensional demons. The Arbitration Place is an expert in this area, where you can achieve the fastest improvement."

"Alright! We'll follow the instructor's arrangement." Kiro Lan was exceedingly well-behaved.

Morphie didn't think too much and happily echoed, "We'll listen to the instructor!"

...

"Have you heard? Two geniuses have arrived at our House! Real geniuses!"

"Yes, I heard they were personally brought here by Aglaya of the Spiritual Power Managers Center. She requested that they receive the best training possible."

Franca walked along a steel corridor lit only by two rows of dim oil lamps. This was the architectural style of the Arbitration Place.

Stuffy, outdated, with even the air seemingly filled with the scent of rust.

The corridor was not particularly spacious, and not all the enforcement officers passing by were of the reticent kind. As they walked, they chatted among themselves, their voices easily reaching Franca's ears.

Geniuses?

Personally delivered by Aglaya?

The stalwart man walked beside Franca, with a smile playing at the corner of his mouth as he glanced at the young girl beside him, "Is there a newcomer even more talented than you?"

Franca was already considered one of the strongest spiritual talents in the city in recent years, and when she was brought to the Arbitration Place, she did not even receive the personal escort of Aglaya.

Upon hearing this news, Franca's eyes sparkled slightly, and she was quite interested.

She always liked bustling and novel things.

A genius even more formidable than herself sounded like fun.

So, she turned on her heel and headed straight toward the two chatting enforcers, her pretty face brimming with a charmingly cheeky smile, "My colleagues, I overheard you talking about newcomers? Where are they from?"

With her cheerfully smiling face, Franca was obviously capable of easily obtaining information. The two officers responded with beaming smiles, "There are two of them, rumored to be top-tier talents rarely seen. It's said they just arrived in the city as refugees... We really struck gold this time."

"That impressive, huh~" Franca let out a genuine gasp of admiration, "Where are they? Can we go see them?"

"They're with the Judgment Chief... If you dare to go, then go ahead."

"What's there to be afraid of." Franca strode off.

"Hey hey hey!" The brawny man quickly caught up from behind, "We have important matters to attend to!"

Since that rat-like person was rescued by mysterious forces, their traces were lost. Whether they tried tracking the rats or searching through the black industries involved with the military, they couldn't find any information about that mysterious force.

It was as if this mysterious force had emerged out of thin air. The various powers of Black Street seemed to have no clues... or perhaps, they dared not speak?

If it wasn't a local power from Black Street, could it possibly be an extended arm probing from the city?

If it was from the city, that would be troublesome.

In the city, there were hundreds of battle gangs, with complex and intertwined relations, each with their own schemes.

If that rat person was indeed rescued by an internal city power, extracting him back out would be difficult.

But such incidents were not uncommon in the city; the city was too large and chaotic, accommodating every kind of filth and squalor.

They returned to share the intelligence about the rat person with others, marking him as a long-term target.

After all, given what they had collected on his abilities and personality, even among demon believers, he was considered one of the least harmful.

If he were to be exploited by someone with ulterior motives, his abilities would make it quite easy for him to be noticed, but his danger level wasn't top-tier, allowing them to afford the luxury of time for a slow pursuit.

At the same time, all the enforcers sent out on missions needed to return to the Arbitration Place at fixed intervals to report and monitor their spiritual state, provided they were not far from the city.

Those who fought demons were themselves standing on the edge of a precipice, and their reputation was feared by all ordinary people for a reason.

Anyone could fall from grace, indeed, they were even more prone to it...

This was the crucial business they needed to take care of upon their return.

But...

"Let's go see what's happening first~"

Franca never listened to him anyway; this mistress with her own strong opinions only did what she wanted to do.

"I'm not going." Even inside the Arbitration Place, few wished to seek discomfort by visiting the Great Judgment Chief's domain without reason.

"I didn't ask you to."

"..."

...

A towering statue of ten or more meters stood majestically, while a gaunt-faced old man with white hair gazed indifferently at the two adolescents on the distant red carpet below the statue's dark pedestal.

When was the last time the city saw such levels of spiritual talent in youngsters?

Fourteen or fifteen years of age, their eyes were full of life, scanning all around, their extraordinary spiritual acuity radiating like spikes of cold light from a distant star.

Indeed, very conspicuous... Such traits would stand out to him, and no doubt, even more so to those demons in higher dimensions.

For them to have reached this age without any guard or self-cultivation, undetected by those demons, what kind of good fortune did that illustrate?

An aged voice echoed in the spacious hall, ethereal and profound, "Aglaya, are you sure you want to send them here to train?"

Aglaya gently stroked Kiro Lan's soft hair at her side, "They possess the will to fight, and the subjective intent of a spiritual energy wielder is equally crucial."

"You know the consequences all choices may bring." The Judge lowered his eyelids, "Since you've made your decision, I will not refuse."

A rash voice suddenly tumbled in from the far-off hall entrance, across the smooth, mirror-like, bronze floor. The girl's figure skated into view.

"Hey hey hey! Grandpa Nolanitz! Where are the newcomers? Where are they?"