

Wow 281

Chapter 281 Accept People

After the orcs left, the real problem began to emerge—

How should the task objectives be allocated?

There was only one task item, and only one ultimate winner in the prize pool task.

No one was willing to easily give way, but most solo players realized the gap between themselves and those truly elite players after the battle with the orcs.

Especially that trio who arrived later...

Watching the figure jumping down from the vehicle, many solo players' eyes filled with a touch of yearning and awe.

If someone is half a step ahead, you can still find a way to undercut them.

But if they're two steps ahead... go home, wash up, and go to sleep.

It turned out, among the players who entered the game in the same period, there were already such formidable experts.

"Buddy, do you remember me?" a solo player suddenly approached Kuang Xin and winked at him, "We've met during a previous task, remember? You even said you'd ask around if I could join you?"

Some solo players had seen the trio before and had even noticed their extraordinary strength early on, so they had somewhat casually asked whether they could join the organization that the trio belonged to.

After all, when the trio appeared together, anyone with a working brain could tell that their abilities must originate from the same source.

As long as one found the underlying reason behind the trio's formation, even if one couldn't become an expert on their level, at the very least, they could surpass other players by a large margin.

Playing a game is all about being above average and treating everyone equally unless they're beneath you.

When showing off, do it downwards; those above are selectively overlooked.

Kuang Xin wasn't very adept at handling such direct enthusiasm from others and was about to speak when Gu Lan pulled him to one side.

The tall and elegant woman stared at Kuang Xin with calm eyes, "Think carefully before you answer. I don't know if the force behind you is willing to be exposed. That you were able to get in was due to your own abilities and opportunities; be careful not to be dragged down by outsiders."

You should know that every interaction in this game follows a logic, and the biggest realization after entering this game world is not to treat it as a mere game... at least, not when dealing with NPCs.

Having understood a bit of information, Gu Lan didn't want this honest young man to be easily deceived by others into revealing core information.

Keep in mind that the players are a mixed bag, and what appears good on the surface may not truly be good.

The attentive gaze of the imposing woman in front of him caused Kuang Xin some agitation. Her commanding and attractive presence, far more aggressive than Gong Yan's girl-next-door charm, was more than he could handle when not in battle mode.

"No... it's nothing, I have a clear idea," he stammered.

Ever since the boss set the rules, the three of them had agreed—

Dai and Yanzi would handle negotiations, and he would listen.

Choosing members had to be done cautiously, as their fortunes were tied together.

If a subordinate made a mistake, the blame would ultimately rest on their own shoulders, so it would be a significant loss if that got them kicked out.

This prize pool task was their first formal engagement with many other players, and close contact made them acutely aware of the advantages they had over ordinary players under the protection of their patron.

Not just ordinary players, even the top experts trained by large guilds like Black Hole and Thorn couldn't match any of the trio.

This further proved the generosity of their patron.

Perhaps in the world of the natives, their patron wasn't the most formidable one, but he was certainly the most willing to cultivate them as players.

Therefore, they must not be expelled by the patron!

The previously indifferent attitude toward the "Order" organization had long since vanished. Not to mention his current life, even if he accidentally died one day, he would definitely have to find "Order" again after a fresh start.

The increasing importance they placed on the "Order" organization made them take the rules set by the organization even more seriously.

They could recruit new members, but only after thorough vetting.

The recruits wouldn't be official members of the team registered under their names, but external associates without any official title, undergoing personal evaluation.

"Our organization can take in new people," Kuang Xin looked back at the player, directly sharing the news that everyone was most eager to hear.

In fact, not only the player who came to cozy up but almost all the solo players, including those from Thorn and Black Hole, were resting off to the side with their ears perked up, listening in.

The moment Kuang Xin spoke those words, many were instantly exhilarated.

They've encountered a good person!

Someone with such resources and still willing to share, truly a great person!

If it were them, they'd definitely keep everything hidden.

Having a unique advantage to themselves, that's what's truly satisfying.

"However... our organization has very strict requirements for recruitment."

"Yes, yes!" the first player who approached nodded vigorously.

Strict? Totally normal!

What trials? What assessment tasks?

Bring it on!

"The most fundamental requirement... is to be good and lawful."

"Huh?"

"Huh?"

Gasps of amazement arose.

The name of the organization, as well as its core pursuits and philosophies, cannot be revealed for the time being, but some superficial aspects that can be used for screening are always something that can be shared with everyone.

"Upholding normal Order, fighting evil crimes, protecting humanity, and exterminating other races are the basic conditions for joining our organization. If you are willing to accept this premise, then each of us has five spots available to recruit external members on behalf of the organization.

Of course, although these members are external, they enjoy the same official benefits as us, with no differences. It's just that in the eyes of the organization, each squad is a whole—sharing glory and disgrace, and collective responsibility for rewards and punishments. For this reason, your actions will determine our status within the organization.

Therefore, before we take you into our squad as external members, we need to assess those interested for a period of time. We ask for your understanding,"

he said.

This was a plan prearranged by the three of them—when encountering other players inquiring, it was Kuang Xin who would announce these core messages.

After all, he seemed a bit more sincere when he spoke...

Almost everyone listened quietly to Kuang Xin's speech. The power that he—or rather, the three of them—had demonstrated, was the capital they had to command everyone's silence.

"Count me in!"

"Count me in!"

"Bro! Pick me, pick me! I'm an old good guy, a law-abiding citizen with good public standing!"

Of course, there were also those who were dissatisfied with these seemingly cumbersome rules and regulations, "MD, even playing a game one has to abide by the law, to hell with it! I'm not putting up with this!"

"Exactly! Even after joining the squad, we're still just external members. What benefits we get still have to go through their hands first—who knows how much they'll skim off what's rightly ours? So, we're just supposed to work for them after all? I knew it was too good to be true to spread such good news! You go if you want, but I won't be fooled!"

Their words clearly entered everyone's ears, and reached all the players.

The people who said these things had ulterior motives, but the wills of those players who could be swayed by them were not necessarily very firm.

Kuang Xin and the others didn't care at all.

Recruiting people could indeed speed up the process of earning contributions, but it also meant that they needed to put effort into management.

Whether they recruited members or not was actually fine with the three of them.

Leaving things to fate often made it easier to find like-minded friends.

"Count me in," Gu Lan said with a smile to Kuang Xin, then turned and walked towards Gong Yan, who was crouched to the side treating injuries for some players. "I'll join your team, okay? However you want to assess me, feel free."

Although she had some of her own channels for advancement, they were not forcibly tied to her personal background; she was free to go wherever she wished.

The way these three conducted themselves also made her feel alright, which made her start to find the organization behind them even more interesting.

As for why she joined Gong Yan's team... she knew she was someone with a brain.

Being in Kuang Xin's team might seem suspicious in the eyes of the three, so it was better to be open with her intentions. It was wiser to join this seemingly smarter girl's team in a straightforward and honest manner, to demonstrate... loyalty.

The ones who should be in Kuang Xin's team are a bunch of brainless melee fighters.

"Sure thing, sis!" Gong Yan immediately responded with a smile, "Welcome to the team, sis!"

"Count me in too, brother!" From a distance, Xu Ruoguang left Ren Fengxing behind and came running over.

"Hey, hey, brother! The thing I was asking you about..." Ren Fengxing grabbed his arm, trying not to let him go.

Ren Fengxing didn't want to join the crowd schmoozing around the trio, and besides, these three did not seem like the kind of people who could be swayed easily. It was better to take a different approach.

He still remembered the move "Alpha Assault".

He believed that his action of leading all the players to their rescue must have left a deep impression of gratitude on them.

Looking puzzled at Ren Fengxing, Xu Ruoguang, who was pulled back, said, "I'm a player too, why are you asking me?"

"Huh?"

"Huh?"

"You're a player too?"

"What else? If you've got something to say, go ask the uncle," Xu Ruoguang said, freeing his arm and running towards Kuang Xin, "Count me in! Count me in!"

Ren Fengxing, left standing there, silently watched his retreating figure, feeling an urge to weep without tears.

No name and health bar above the head! Negative review!

He turned his head to look at the real NPCs...

The uncle with the back-carried sword looked cheerfully towards the direction where Xu Ruoguang was running, his eyes squinted, "We follow Guang's lead..."

"..."

"..."

"That's enough; what happens later is up to you. For now, let's get down to discussing how to distribute the spoils of this mission. That's more practical," said one of the players, breaking the lively mood that had gathered around with a cold interjection.

He was a lone wolf.

The lean lone player, holding a handgun tightly, swept his cold gaze over all the eyes drawn to him by his voice, "I suggest that the Black Hole Guild submit the mission's bounty. They have made the greatest effort and contribution in this mission, and the sacrifices they made were also the most significant. The final reward of this mission should rightfully be theirs.

Anyone who disagrees is making an enemy of all the players present!"

He had not joined a guild because he found the starting point of the normal approach too low.

Right now was a great opportunity to show his worth.

Even just helping temporarily could net one a thousand bucks a head; becoming one of his core confidants meant his takeoff was imminent, right?

The lean lone player swept his chill gaze over each player looking his way, "What do you all think?"

Chapter 282 The Rose Teaching Attempt

"Hehe~"

"Dumbass."

With just a glance, everyone turned their heads away and went back to what they were doing.

The atmosphere was lively again.

'Dumbass!' Ren Fengxing's face was livid as he cursed inwardly.

The evident fact was that the trio had played a much bigger role than he had.

So what if there are more people? That's useless; he wasn't even planning to compete with them anymore, so why would this weasel need to chirp in?

Although he coveted the rewards of the jackpot mission, each member of the trio was terrifyingly strong.

He was not afraid of the resentment from solo players, but it was best to avoid provoking such powerful players who were clearly a cut above all other players at this stage.

After all, his guild wasn't following a single-core strategy, so missing out on a reward that solely benefited one person wasn't a big issue...

"Cough, cough!" Being called a dumbass made it impossible for Ren Fengxing to remain invisible, so he took the initiative to stand out, salvaging the last bit of his dignity, "The main credit for this mission goes to these three brothers, so I won't fight over the mission item, haha. Of course, the one thousand cash I promised everyone still stands."

This was his most graceful exit.

Speaking, Ren Fengxing just felt a twinge in his heart, a huge loss!

But it was his last chance to leave a good impression.

He said he didn't care about solo players, but when the opportunity arose, he still needed to rally them, even if it was just to leave a good impression on the thorns or the trio.

"Boss, do we get it too?" A discordant voice reached his ears.

Ren Fengxing shot a resentful glance toward his underling, his eyes nearly shooting fire, "Yes! Everyone does!"

Everybody was happy!

Except for the solo player who had spoken up, who watched Ren Fengxing's back with a confused face, feeling puzzled—

Why would His Majesty surrender first when his subjects are still willing to fight to the death?

"Fengxing?" The solo player approached him.

"Great! You're really something!" Ren Fengxing patted his shoulder, his smile somewhat spasmodic.

Turning away, he quietly ordered his subordinates, "Find a secluded place and take him out with two shots! I don't want to see this dumb fuck ever again!!"

"Time to go home!"

...

[You have completed multiple cycles of the Spiritual Power Breathing Skill, increasing your Spiritual Energy limit by +1.]

[Rewards from the mission: your Insight +0.1, Physical Fitness +0.1, Reflexes +0.1, Spiritual Energy +0.1, Heavy Weapons Mastery Experience +54, Ranged Weapons Mastery Experience +41.]

It had been a while since he'd received attribute feedback from a mission.

Indeed, launching different fresh missions tended to elicit feedback from players.

Any monotonous and repetitive action had a threshold for ability gain, which seemed to be an eternal truth in this world.

Bai E put aside his thoughts and finished his morning Mecha simulation cabin training.

Today, he was not lonely, secretly training all by himself.

His superior had found him a partner.

Someone familiar...

Rose.

It was only natural to choose her.

Although whoever it was would undoubtedly be seen as a buy-one-get-one-free offer for Bai E, the selection itself still had to be excellent.

And ideally, it was someone who had cooperated with Bai E before and had a similar status... Rose was the perfect choice.

Her control over her body and comprehension seemed to carry over to operating Mechas. The speed at which she became proficient was almost unimaginable, only slightly behind Bai E.

Their coordination was also without question, as if they were born to know each other's intentions; even their operating habits were in perfect harmony.

After everyone left, the instructor looked at the detailed results of their first collaboration and fell into thought—

Perhaps, he should ask Hamilton to dig out a few more from the synthetic humans?

This stuff was a lot quicker to pick up than natural humans!

...

Bai E didn't leave the camp at noon.

Given the feedback from players, they must still be out on missions, probably encountering orcs by now; otherwise, there wouldn't be so much feedback on various abilities.

And Gilder had gone to Black Street under the guidance of the ratmen to get to know the local customs. It would likely be empty outside too; there was no need to go.

It was better to practice the newly acquired Spiritual Power Breathing Skill.

This technique needed to be practiced often, until it could be performed effortlessly like Yueying, who was always running it. Only then could he consider himself to have mastered it.

Looking at Rose sitting at the same table, Bai E leaned in close and whispered mysteriously, "Join me after lunch; I've got something good for you."

"Something good?" Rose narrowed her eyes, eyeing Bai E somewhat strangely.

Compared to before, the man now seemed to have more of what natural humans called "humanity."

But, since it was Bai E, Rose agreed immediately, "Sure."

Everyone seized the rare opportunity to rest at noon, and the barracks were silent. Bai E adeptly avoided most surveillance and led Rose to a quiet, deserted corner.

"Here, sit down."

Bai E led by example, indicating for Rose to mimic his actions.

Testing this on Rose was his idea.

His modified Spiritual Breathing Skill, derived from the Elf Breathing Skill, might not necessarily be suitable for all humans. He had to question its applicability.

Teaching it to players couldn't be considered a universal case because their panel systems, just like his, were nonsensical.

So, finding someone from the native population who was close to him and would never betray him to test it was undoubtedly a secure backup for his future.

For instance... just for instance: if he ever did something outrageous and the military or even the city pursued him, perhaps at a critical moment, he could use this breathing skill, applicable to all humans, to save his own life?

Yueying had said it, humans had no similar breathing techniques.

Maybe because they were so numerous, they didn't bother to research it.

But if he directly hit them in the face with a ready-made skill, they would have no reason to refuse.

The more trump cards, the better.

Rose obediently learned from Bai E and sat cross-legged, her muscular, wheat-colored thighs exposed under the shorts she wore for training.

"What do you want to do?" she asked, puzzled.

"Teach you how to breathe."

Rose was even more perplexed, "You need to teach me how to breathe?"

"It's related to spiritual energy."

"Spiritual energy?!" Rose's eyes narrowed, as she instinctively looked around and, noticing no one was nearby, she lowered her voice in surprise and asked, "You have spiritual energy now?"

"Shh~" Bai E hushed her, "This is something I've only told you, it was taught to me by that Elf Race's Yueying."

The details weren't necessary to elaborate on, having a source was enough.

"I just want to see if you can learn it too."

"Spiritual energy..." Rose murmured, sitting up straight with excitement.

As a newly created artificial human, she naturally longed for the extraordinary power of spiritual energy she occasionally heard about.

However, she had heard that there was a natural prohibition in their artificial bodies, making it nearly impossible for any of them to master spiritual energy.

Now that there was an opportunity to learn spiritual energy, she had to grasp it well.

"What should I do?"

"Just follow my lead."

Whether it was the Elf Breathing Skill or the Spiritual Power Breathing Skill tailored for Bai E's own use, the essence remained unchanged, and the core concept was always the same. Thus, the teaching process was almost identical.

The only change was the rhythm.

"Calm your mind."

"Concentrate."

"Empty your brain..."

Bai E guided Rose into a state of grace.

If it weren't for Bai E, Rose would have been the brightest one among these new recruits.

Her comprehension was not bad at all.

Following Bai E's guidance, Rose easily entered the zone.

Bai E, who had begun to develop a certain "spiritual sense," could vaguely perceive the body beside him gradually entering a sublime state conducive to sensing spiritual energy.

"Breathe out~"

"Breathe in~"

The first step in learning spiritual energy is to perceive.

Bai E didn't possess Yueying's powerful ability to externalize spiritual energy, so he could only guide her to feel it for herself as much as possible.

If her talent was strong enough... perhaps she could feel that wondrous power herself, right?

Perhaps...

"Breathe out~"

"Breathe in~"

Bai E, with his eyes closed, also entered the optimal state for cultivating spiritual energy.

Time slowly passed.

At a certain moment, an alarm in his heart silently rang, and the afternoon training session, like an invisible alarm clock, awakened Bai E from his meditation.

[Through the process of instructing others, you have gained a deeper understanding of your own spiritual energy, increasing your spiritual energy limit by +2.]

"..."

Better than a night of meditation for himself?

Indeed, teaching others appears to be the best time to organize one's own learning.

Bai E nodded silently to himself and looked at his companion.

Rose blinked her beautiful big eyes with long eyelashes.

"Didn't feel anything?" Bai E felt somewhat embarrassed.

"Nothing," Rose said earnestly, nodding her head and emphasizing her point, "not at all."

Including watching Bai E's breathing, she didn't sense any hint of mystical aura from it.

And she firmly believed in the existence of spiritual energy, so personal will was not the issue.

"Maybe my level isn't high enough?" Bai E suggested, looking for problems in himself first.

"Indeed..."

"..."

Rose burst into laughter, her hearty and generous demeanor unchanged, "Of course, it's also possible I just don't have the talent. Yueying was willing to teach you, which means you have some advantage. It's alright if I can't learn; I appreciate that you would teach me!"

"Alright then..."

"Let's go," Rose said, patting off her bottom and standing up without a hint of dejection, "The Psychic Pressure Resistance Training is about to start, and it's my first lesson, so I can't be late."

Since she had become Bai E's partner in piloting mechas, she had to participate in Psychic Pressure Resistance Training as well.

"Okay! Let's go!"

...

Watching the soldiers gradually gathering before her, Franca's eyes drifted off.

That morning, she received an emergency notice from the headquarters for all enforcement officers—

To capture the "demon child"!

The so-called "demon child" was just a term.

They didn't seem to have any connection to demons, and even through the professional methods of the enforcement officers, no trace of demonic essence could be found on them.

But for some reason, normal humans who came into contact with these "demon children" were highly likely to become minions of demons.

These were the devil's offspring!

Chapter 283 Son of the Devil!

Franca's heart churned with the vague description of the Demon's Child contained in the execution order issued by the Place—

Demon's Child

Number: Unknown

Abilities: Unknown

Features: Of suspicious origin with no definite source, their actions are unpredictable and hard to summarize into patterns, their moods are fickle and their strategies may change at any time, they have a thin regard for rules and regulations, and occasionally speak in "gibberish" incomprehensible to others during conversations; moreover, they grow extremely fast.

This ambiguous description undoubtedly made it especially difficult to judge the target.

Origin, behavior style, temperament, awareness of the law... none of these were enough to definitively determine whether someone was a Demon's Child.

After all, even without the Demon's Child, most people in today's city would fit this description.

At present, the only two conclusive indicators to determine whether one was a Demon's Child were not comprehensive, and not all Demon's Children were like this. The true number of hidden Demon's Children was unknown to anyone.

The scope of this definition was too broad, almost indistinguishable from having no definition at all.

If the extermination order were to be implemented according to this decree, then perhaps seventy to eighty percent of the city's population would perish.

The most decisive evidence would be to track backwards from the humans who had become Demon Believers before they had made the transformation and investigate the people they had come into contact with one by one.

This task was enormous and inefficient, additionally only being a case of locking the stable after the horse has bolted.

The possibility of error was also great, which is why the execution order called for "arrest" instead of the "death" that usually resulted from an enforcer's intervention.

Franca felt heavy at heart.

The new crisis might not have much to do with her work teaching in the military camp, but it was a crisis that all of humanity must face.

Existences that had no relations with demons but could still spread the faith of demons... Were they those tools concocted by demons, specially designed to evade human Arbitration enforcers?

She wondered if other cities or settlements of displaced people had encountered such weird phenomena.

The soldiers for the Psychic Pressure Resistance Training had finally gathered completely, with the last two walking side by side and taking their places at the end of the line.

Franca blinked and gathered her thoughts.

If the Demon's Children really did infiltrate every facet of the city on a grand scale, they might end up needing these soldiers before her, should the Arbitration Place be short on personnel. Training should not be taken lightly, as it was also key to building humanity's reserve of power.

Such scenarios had occurred in the past. When the demons entered the real world, they were no longer invincible and beyond comprehension.

Even if attacks from regular people didn't have much effect on them, when there were enough of them, they couldn't be ignored. What's more, the military's large-scale thermal weapons posed a considerable threat even to the great demons.

The city had endured through storms and turmoil for several centuries. Franca believed that as long as everyone worked hard and stayed united, the city would still stand proud, even a hundred years from now when her own bones were long dust.

"Fall in!"

The somewhat youthful voice sounded exceptionally authoritative today.

Franca wasted no words and directly ordered, "Line up and enter the chamber."

Standing at the entrance of the chamber, Franca watched as each soldier passed by.

Her gaze faltered only slightly for the last two.

Despite any disappointments from past training, that artificial human soldier known as Bai E had a reputation too prominent to be ignored.

And the female soldier following him... was a newcomer joining the Psychic Pressure Resistance Training for the first time today.

Franca always held expectations for newcomers' performances, like unboxing a mystery package.

With the activation of the "Spiritual Energy Engine" hidden within the chamber, once again that sensation blurring sound, light, and even space and time enveloped them.

This strange assault that affected all senses and the spirit itself wasn't diminished even though Bai E had awakened his Spiritual Energy.

The pressure of Spiritual Energy was impartial to everyone present.

Encased within it, Bai E felt the space around him begin to distort... so much so that his own body started to ripple like waves.

His Spiritual Energy, which had reached a limit of 4 points, didn't just sit by idly, but joined the "dance" amidst the chaos.

4 points of Spiritual Energy didn't help Bai E cope better with this Spiritual Energy oppression; rather, his uncontrollable personal energy sought its origin from the same source, plunging Bai E even more profoundly into experiencing that oppression on his spirit.

And within this intense, "intimate" experience, Bai E, lost in a distorted field of Spiritual Energy, discovered details he hadn't noticed before—

For instance, wails?

Yes, wails.

What was the source of the psychic oppressive field in the Spiritual Energy chamber?

Bai E certainly had his doubts about this.

Spiritual Energy can only be provided by living beings with psychic power; inanimate objects are absolutely incapable of wielding or even mimicking the effects of Spiritual Energy.

So where did the Spiritual Energy come from that was necessary for creating the chamber's oppressive effect?

From the instructors?

Franca?

Was the chamber actually her Spiritual Energy amplifier, allowing her to apply pressure on a scale similar to that of the Bug Race's rulers?

If humans had this technology, wouldn't it have been employed in battle rather than merely in training? Wouldn't they have already struck at the Bug Race's homeland?

Bai E didn't believe in this fleeting guess of his.

However, at that moment, he "discovered" more tangible "evidence."

Evidence stemming from Spiritual Energy resonance.

Wails.

This field of Spiritual Energy was in such agony, it was as if countless tormented souls were crying within it, unable to find peace.

The pain was boundless and traceless, ceaselessly tormenting them.

Only when their will had completely dissipated, and even the last trace of resentment had been wrung dry, would the eternal torture quietly fade away.

It was then that they would finally find true rest... or perhaps be completely erased from existence.

This sinister speculation sent a chill down Bai E's spine, a psychological "weakness" that made his performance against Spiritual Energy suppression even more dismal.

The distorted sense of space grew more intense, leaving Bai E feeling dizzy and utterly disoriented.

So much so that he staggered with every step, as if he might fall at any moment.

"..." Franca frowned upon seeing the slightly moving figure.

How could his performance be worse than last time?

The results of Psychic Pressure Resistance Training should only get better, even for a pig-headed recruit.

Of course, occasional fluctuations were normal, but when they occurred to this legendary "hero," it was all the more disappointing.

Franca moved her gaze away, looking instead at the female soldier standing beside him.

Their eyes met...

"..."

"..."

Are you alright?

How can you keep your eyes open?

Franca's eyes widened, fixating on the other person—do you like to sleep with your eyes open?

Rose looked around in confusion, first at her surroundings, then at Bai E, and finally at the young woman who was likely the instructor.

She said nothing, but her face was blank.

Who am I? Where am I? What am I doing?

Why does everyone look so pained?

Why is everyone staggering?

What's wrong with them?

Why don't I feel anything?

The stark contrast between her experience and that of the others sowed seeds of doubt in Rose's mind.

But even filled with doubt, she did not speak out easily, fearing she might disrupt the others' "important business."

It was only after confirming that the new recruit was indeed unaffected by the Spiritual Energy suppression that Franca approached, "You... you... you... you're okay?"

Now full of self-doubt, Rose, who was usually bold, spoke in a tentative voice, "I... should I be okay?"

"You don't feel anything?"

"What should I be feeling?"

"..."

"..."

Believer!

That word abruptly flashed through Franca's mind.

Such individuals were natural born nemesis to demons, their presence in the world akin to a "black hole" in high-dimensional space.

They could not sense Spiritual Energy, nor could they be affected by it.

Wherever they went, demons must keep their distance by three feet!

Believers were the natural enemies of demons, but they themselves held no potential for growth in Spiritual Energy.

Such individuals were extremely rare among humans, so much so that they defied the concept of "proportion."

If Franca was not from a prominent family that had access to a wealth of knowledge, she might not have thought of this rare species so quickly.

Every Believer was a masterful demon hunter!

"Stand right there, don't move."

Franca decided to observe further.

It's not like she could run away; it was best to confirm before reporting it higher up.

Otherwise, it would be quite embarrassing!

...

Bai E had slept until evening, waking even later than last time.

It was an exceptionally deep sleep.

It was no wonder that Psychic Pressure Resistance Training always started in the afternoon and required a full day's cooldown time; the mental exhaustion was indeed supreme.

Awake, Bai E kept the slight "enlightenment" from before his fainting deeply tucked away in his heart.

He was determined to gain clarity about it in the future, but certainly not now.

Feeling his stomach rumble with hunger, he quickly went to the cafeteria for some gruel, then hurried off to meet Yue Ying at their usual spot.

Perhaps due to the late hour the day before, or perhaps because Yue Ying had something on her mind, the two hadn't been able to properly communicate after the awakening of Spiritual Energy.

Having awakened his Spiritual Energy for a full day and fumbling with its use on his own, he was filled with countless questions, all waiting for Yue Ying's explanations.

Chapter 284 Spiritual Energy Gift Pack

"You're late," Yue Ying's voice was calm, with no hint of blame, merely stating a fact.

There was also none of the gasping, intermittent speech from last night.

"Hmm..." Bai E nodded in acknowledgment before explaining, "Passed out during the afternoon training, just woke up."

"The 'Psychic Pressure Resistance Training' spoken of by your people?"

"Yes."

"..." Yue Ying said nothing more, but a hint of sadness flickered through her eyes.

The human race, with its sheer numbers, could employ some unconventional methods for training that her elven kind could hardly reach in a lifetime.

Not allowing herself to be distracted by irrelevant matters, Yue Ying simply commanded, "Sit down."

Once Bai E had seated himself cross-legged, Yue Ying asked softly, "It's been a day, how do you feel?"

"I feel... like they're not under my control."

It was just like the Spiritual Power Breathing Skill during that afternoon's training - his own Spiritual Energy communicated with the "external enemy," increasing the pressure on himself, a true traitor.

'They?' Yue Ying murmured softly, emphasizing 'they' with a hint of curiosity, "That's normal; you will hasn't fully adapted to their presence yet. You might sometimes get the illusion that they aren't yours before a deeper connection is established."

With time, the connection would naturally deepen.

Deliberate practice would also accelerate this process.

"Let's give it a try," Yue Ying closed her eyes, "Sense your body, spread your Spiritual Energy over it, use Spiritual Energy to 'understand' your body, and transform it into the capabilities that your body needs when necessary."

Enhancing the body's basic attributes with Spiritual Energy is the most fundamental application of Spiritual Energy, a technique known to every wielder of Spiritual Energy. The difference lies only in the duration and scale of the enhancement.

[You are learning skills related to Spiritual Energy...]

[Teaching mission triggered - Spirit Heart Crossing.]

[Teaching Mission - Spirit Heart Crossing: You have just begun to possess Spiritual Energy, but it's only the beginning. To properly utilize this power that is uniquely yours, you need to put in much more effort and diligently study.

Mission requirements: Follow Yue Ying's guidance to complete an enhancement of your body's attribute expression 0/1, thereby officially entering the first stage of Spiritual Energy development - Spirit Heart Crossing. Mission Reward: Spiritual Energy limit +1.]

[Teaching: The use of Spiritual Energy is an entirely new field for you; you must pay a certain price (battle experience/general experience) to follow the guidance of others to acquire the full scope of Spiritual Energy skills. (Cost: 10 points of experience/min)]

Bai E wasn't in a hurry to pay with experience; after learning the Spiritual Power Breathing Skill, his experience had depleted significantly.

His battle experience had been completely drained, and he was left with only 779 points of general experience. He couldn't be reckless with his spending before getting a new supplement.

As Yue Ying had suggested, Bai E tried communicating with the 'little spirits' that seemed enigmatic.

A cloud of Spiritual Energy enveloped Bai E's body; with a current value of 4 points, the Spiritual Energy transformed into an extraordinary power, permeating his body in an ineffable manner... into every single one of his cells.

"..."

Yue Ying, next to Bai E, felt a surprise at sensing the strength of Spiritual Energy, which was unlike the initial awakening phase.

How could one achieve such an amount of Spiritual Energy within a single day of awakening?

She knew that progress in Spiritual Energy was always a gradual accumulation, difficult to boost significantly in an instant.

To have accumulated such a quantity of Spiritual Energy within a day of awakening indicated that this human warrior's talent might be even better than she had anticipated.

[Lucky Hit Charge +1.]

Bai E opened his eyes, sensing the additional power surging through his body, and felt a sense of joy.

That simple?

The fact that he had learned a new ability on his own for the first time without the aid of experience made Bai E pleasantly surprised.

It seems I, too, am a genius.

[Spiritual Energy Stage One - Spirit Heart Crossing: You have mastered the method of enhancing your own attribute expression with Spiritual Energy. From now on, you can use Spiritual Energy to enhance your physical strength, insight, and reflexes at any time. You can enhance all attributes simultaneously or focus on a single attribute.

(Enhancement Strength: Tiered Decline, currently 4%/12%; Consumption: Tiered Increase, currently 1 point of Spiritual Energy per minute for the first 4 minutes, unable to maintain Spirit Heart Crossing state with less than 1 point of Spiritual Energy, 10% of 'current Spiritual Energy' per minute from 4 to 30 minutes, with at least a 1 point decrement each time, 10% of 'Spiritual Energy limit' per minute after 30 minutes, with at least a 1 point decrement each time.)]

[You have successfully maintained the 'Spirit Heart Crossing' state for at least one minute, completing the enhancement of your body's overall attribute expression and gaining proficiency in the 'Spirit Heart Crossing' state. Reward: Spiritual Energy limit +1, has been issued.]

"It seems you have mastered the application of Spirit Heart Crossing," Yue Ying nodded, quite satisfied. As a novice to the Spiritual Energy realm, there was almost no secret Bai E could keep from her, as she could acutely feel every slight change occurring within him.

Spirit Heart Crossing was a basic skill of the first stage of Spiritual Energy; it wasn't astonishing for anyone to master it on their own as familiarity with Spiritual Energy developed over time.

"Spirit Heart Crossing will accompany you throughout your life, as your accumulation of Spiritual Energy becomes more profound, the assistance it provides will also gradually increase."

There was no need for an elaborate explanation on this point; Yue Ying breezed over it, moving on to the next teaching.

Chapter 285 Spiritual Energy Gift Pack_2

Bai E had just awakened his Spiritual Energy and there were too many basic Spiritual Energy techniques he needed to learn and master.

"Next, you need to master some external application techniques," Yueying said.

Augmenting oneself was the basic of the basics, but applying it to things outside oneself naturally presented some difficulty.

Yueying's gaze casually swept over Bai E before finally resting on his calf, "Draw your dagger."

Other weapons were too cumbersome, only a compact dagger could be carried at all times, ensuring Bai E always had a weapon at his disposal.

"Mm," Bai E swiftly drew his dagger, the specially treated matte black blade did not attract attention even at night.

"Imagine your Spiritual Energy is an extension of your body, like invisible tentacles... use the tendrils of Spiritual Energy to sense the existence of the dagger, to delve into its internal structure, and to encompass it within your 'domain'..."

[Teaching Task Triggered—Spiritual Power Enchantment]

[Teaching Task—Spiritual Power Enchantment: ...Task completion reward: Spiritual Energy limit +1.]

Bai E, who had similar experiences with the Gun Fighting Skill, felt that he could easily accomplish this.

His Spiritual Energy, like a grey mist, spread from his body into the dagger in his hand, with the dagger's every structural property manifesting in his mind as clearly as an "ingredient list."

Subconsciously, he knew how to make it exhibit the properties he desired.

Yes, subconsciously.

All actions within the realm of Spiritual Energy were subconscious.

There was no need to understand the exact ratios of various elements needed to give a material the desired characteristics, no need to comprehend the mysterious chemical reactions that occurred according to their own laws.

One only needed to know... what one desired.

The dagger... softened.

"???"

"???"

Yueying looked at Bai E with a somewhat strange expression.

Normally, a person's first attempt would make it harder, but why did you...

Bai E waved his now limp dagger around, producing a wind-breaking sound akin to that of a Soft Sword.

Intrigued by his special attribute "Whip Tips" from his close combat expertise, Bai E found the flexibility of the weapon quite interesting.

Realizing he could actually make it soft, he couldn't help but be amazed.

What a magical power...

[You have successfully used Spiritual Energy to change the properties of the object in hand. Teaching Task—Spiritual Power Enchantment completed. Reward: Spiritual Energy limit +1 has been granted.]

"Making it softer rather than harder is more difficult. It looks like you're quite proficient in this use of Spiritual Energy," Yueying wasn't too surprised; these basic skills were also something she had naturally mastered at the moment she awakened her Spiritual Energy, indeed nothing special.

"Next... is the full utilization of Spiritual Energy."

[Teaching Task Triggered—Spirit's Breathing.]

[Teaching Task—Spirit's Breathing: ...Task completion reward: Spiritual Energy limit +1.]

When needed, one could burst toward higher peaks, and in moments of relaxation, conserve more willpower.

Spiritual Energy was born from willpower; easing the output of willpower was to conserve the output of Spiritual Energy.

As Bai E personally transformed the Elf Breathing Skill into the Spiritual Power Breathing Skill suitable for humans, mastering this breathing technique was effortless for him, easily understood.

[Spirit's Breathing: You have proficiently mastered the method of fully utilizing Spiritual Energy.

From now on, during the continuous "Spirit Heart Crossing" and "Spiritual Power Enchantment," any moment not involved in intense output will build up your potential for a burst and reduce Spiritual Energy consumption by 33%, while potentially increasing the actual effect by an additional 50% during a burst.]

[...Teaching Task—Spirit's Breathing completed. Reward: Spiritual Energy limit +1 has been granted.]

The basic Spiritual Energy starter pack.

It was like levelling up and then clicking on skill points repeatedly; the sensation of rapid improvement was somewhat addictive.

Bai E looked forward to Yueying with anticipation, waiting for her to provide him with more of the abilities he needed.

This Elf Race lady was like a walking treasure trove; just digging out something from her could greatly benefit oneself.

Yueying lived up to the expectations, nodding in satisfaction as Bai E learned another trick, "Next, we move on to the actual use of Spiritual Energy to execute 'miracles'."

[Triggered Teaching Task — Spiritual Power Maxims.]

[Teaching Task — Spiritual Power Maxims: ... Task Completion Reward: Spiritual Energy cap +3.]

"Powerful practitioners of Spiritual Energy, even the words they speak, possess extraordinary power. The belief mixed within their words can invisibly influence the will of the listeners. Of course, language is just one form; any method that can convey your message to others can serve as a medium..."

Whether it was the military Spiritual Power practitioners Bai E had previously encountered or Yueying herself, there was a conscious or unconscious use of this ability.

The speaking Yueying thought about her "loss of composure" the night before.

At that time, it was because she couldn't control her stray thoughts, which caused her words to unconsciously carry a hint of desire.

Fortunately, the human warrior before her had a steadfast will and wasn't infected by her; otherwise...

If he had given an enthusiastic response at that time, she dared not imagine what would have happened last night.

Every moment on the path of Spiritual Energy carried risks and required the practitioner to strictly control themselves.

"... Pay attention, as your proficiency in Spiritual Energy deepens, you'll need to control your powerful thoughts even more. If every word you utter has the power to influence hearts, you should consider how to prevent affecting the minds of others.

The influence is mutual; when you endlessly spread your thoughts, you will also receive the chaotic thoughts of others, which is certainly not beneficial to you," Yueying said seriously, with grave emphasis on every word.

Spiritual Power Maxims was not only a method for utilizing Spiritual Energy but also a self-restraint for curbing it.

Learn to use, then learn to restrain.

Bai E slowly nodded, "I understand now."

This skill was clearly more difficult; the reward given for completing the task increased from 1 point of Spiritual Energy cap for the previous three teaching tasks to 3 points.

Rewards are often linked to difficulty.

After two attempts, realizing this wasn't a skill he could master on "talent" alone, Bai E directly activated the cheat mode to assist with experience.

[You are using general experience to correct your Maxims conversion...]

[Current Conversion Progress: 35.7%]

...

[... Teaching Task — Spiritual Power Maxims, completed. Reward: Spiritual Energy cap +3, issued.]

The technique of Spiritual Power Maxims wasn't too simple, nor was it overly difficult; after spending a total of 600 points of experience, he finally mastered it.

Exactly 10 points.

Through four tasks, while mastering the basic tricks of Spiritual Energy, Bai E also significantly increased his overall Spiritual Energy.

"Alright, that's about it for today... There aren't many skills you can learn with your newly awakened Spiritual Energy. Before you increase your power to a new level, boosting your store of Spiritual Energy is your most urgent task," Yueying said.

[Tip: Your Spiritual Energy isn't strong enough to support higher levels of learning. Quickly increase your Spiritual Energy total, and after reaching at least 50 points, you can seek Yueying for more advanced Spiritual Energy skills.]

"Whew~"

Bai E nodded, stood up, and bid farewell.

"Ms. Yueying, goodbye."

"Goodbye."

As Bai E left, he looked at the panel displaying the many newly learned abilities and the fact that he was left with only 179 points in his total experience reserve; a sense of urgency involuntarily rose from the bottom of his heart.

Need to find an opportunity to harvest.

Time to crank up the intensity—

The bunch of newly learned Spiritual Power skills, I'll straight up add them to the second level of the Faction Shop!

Gong Yan in the trio seemed to have a preference for Spiritual Energy; the Faction Shop had never offered Spiritual Energy-related skills, so he rarely harvested experience from her.

The other two were practically sheared bald; time to switch to a new sheep for a sheer.

Chapter 286 Weird Black Street

...

"Huh? Another update?"

The update news from the Faction Shop filled the three people who were on their way back to the city with surprise.

"Let's see what we have here..."

"Spiritual Power Enchantment... Spirit's Breath... Spiritual Energy Maxims... Wow, all related to Spiritual Energy?"

"Spirit's Breath?" Gu Lan, who was sitting in the same car, perked up his ears when he heard this keyword.

Xu Ruoguang and Gu Lan were currently the only two new friends who had gained the trust of the trio.

Gu Lan had a hearty personality, and even though she belonged to a guild, all her guild members could be said to be workers she had hired with money.

Saying she was on her own wasn't exactly wrong.

Xu Ruoguang, although new to the group, had fought tooth and nail for those ordinary refugee NPCs, and had also earned their heartfelt adoration. Plus, with the "Alpha Swordsmanship" he demonstrated, he met the organization's standards in both strength and character.

The trio had decided to select one of the two as the candidate for the talent recruitment task assigned by their organization.

As potential future companions, everyone naturally traveled together on their way back to the city. At this moment, Gu Lan, who was sitting in the same car, was more curious about the mysterious organization mentioned by the trio than ever.

"What's this Spirit's Breath?" The mature woman asked straightforwardly. She had heard this term from Xu Ruoguang before, but the guy had only heard bits and pieces about it himself, and when pressed for details, was unable to elaborate.

Kuang Xin, after carefully reading over the description of this new item listed in the Faction Shop, hesitated before explaining, "It seems to be a way to use Spiritual Energy, which can reduce consumption and increase power... that's what it says!"

"Can you all learn it?" Gu Lan, looking at the trio, was somewhat surprised.

"Ah~" Kuang Xin nodded as if it were a matter of course, "As long as it's listed in the Faction Shop, we can all learn it. It's guaranteed teaching; if you can't learn it, they'll keep teaching until you do. However, you have to pay the corresponding faction contribution. And earning faction contributions is quite straightforward, right now we're just..."

"That's nice..." Gu Lan said with genuine envy on her face.

From what she had experienced since entering the game, it was unbelievable for these three to find an organization willing to nurture them as players.

Dai Lian laughed and sent a voice from the driver's seat, "No worries, once you join the organization, you will be able to learn it too. The leader treats everyone equally. We'll take you to meet our boss when we get back, and if he agrees to take you in, then we'll be comrades in the same pit."

"Didn't the boss say he only wants one?" Kuang Xin spoke honestly, only to be pinched by Gong Yan, who was sitting behind him.

The girl smiled and looked at the two new recruits, "It's okay. Although the leader did say that he indeed only wants one for now, there will be plenty of opportunities in the future. Our leader's ambition... is huge."

"But, we'll complete the task first when we get back. Holding onto it for too long invites trouble. We can get the task rewards first, and there's no rush to meet the leader afterwards. Besides, it's so late, it wouldn't be convenient for the leader to see us." Dai Lian made arrangements from the front, and then spoke to Xu Ruoguang, "Hey, Guang...

after we get back, you should take a task first, okay?"

Dai Lian had some unconventional ideas...

About this reward pool task, everyone subconsciously thought, based on their past gaming experiences, that there could only be one ultimate winner.

But who says the winner can only be one person rather than a group?

Dai Lian decided to try a new approach, testing whether submitting the task as a group would allow them to split the reward pool's experience fairly.

They were brothers after all, aiming for fairness.

...

Black Street was dead quiet at night.

It was very late.

Even the moon was hiding behind the clouds, too shy to come out.

The folks living on Black Street were probably deep in slumber, not even the rumbling engine of the car, akin to a tractor, could wake them from their dreams.

No one came out to see what the fuss was about.

There was not even a soul to curse.

Driving a car on the not-so-spacious roads of Black Street, Dai Lian curiously surveyed the pitch-dark houses on both sides.

No lights were visible inside, nor any sound of people.

Were they sleeping that heavily? Or had they all gone to the arena to enjoy some entertainment?

With questions on his mind, the car continued to move slowly forward.

They weren't too familiar with Black Street; plus, even if there was something out of the ordinary... what's there for them players to fear?

The dim light from the car pierced through the darkness of the night, gradually disappearing into the depths of the street.

From afar, as the car drove deeper into the street, it looked as if it were willfully diving into the gaping maw of a monster, and in the corner that sunk into the seemingly bottomless depths, two faint voices arose.

"Grandpa... shouldn't we warn them?"

The speaking rat person twitched his nose slightly, as if sniffing at the increasingly intense scent of danger in the air.

Endowed with special abilities by the "Benevolent Father," he was not only capable of infecting rats, but he also had certain rat-related abilities of his own.

Like... an acute perception of "danger."

There was something wrong with Black Street.

At least there was something wrong today.

...

Today, when they came out to explore, the Rat sensed a faint but distinct whiff of danger in the air.

And as the residents who lived on the street were almost all summoned away by some force using an unknown excuse, that sense of danger only grew stronger.

It became so strong that the Rat was reluctant to step any closer.

Insisting on this, the elder Gilder didn't force the issue.

They didn't know what was happening, but leaving now would be too regrettable.

If he was tasked to understand Black Street, how could he say he understood it if he didn't observe a potential incident from a first-person perspective?

So, the two of them stayed at a distance from Black Street, waiting to discover more "facts" to corroborate the Rat's perception.

Unexpectedly, what they awaited first was the return of the lord's three subordinates.

To alert or not to alert?

The Rat's perceptions were not absolute, and Gilder, inexperienced in this realm, couldn't make an accurate judgment due to his lack of knowledge.

After some hesitation, they decided to let the lord's three subordinates go ahead and scout the situation.

Since they were subordinates valued by the lord, even though they didn't possess his level of strength, they were likely not that much worse.

If they encountered an incident, escaping probably wouldn't be a problem.

The two, hidden in the shadows, quietly awaited any possible incidents, the Rat's small eyes gleaming like bright black gems in the dark.

Gazing towards the direction constantly sending out danger signals, the Rat's slender body trembled unconsciously...

Gilder's hand reached into his bosom, where a small flare gun was concealed.

This was an agreement with the lord—if they encountered something of great impact and difficult to resolve, they could use the flare gun in an emergency to summon him.

The lord had promised that as long as it was within the visible range of the flare gun, he would rush over as quickly as possible, regardless of the situation.

But unless absolutely necessary, Gilder was reluctant to summon the lord for no reason.

However, the atmosphere of Black Street at the moment was truly hair-raising.

He was prepared for this...

Suddenly, Gilder's aged eyes narrowed slightly, and he murmured softly, "Someone else is coming..."

"Swoosh!"

"Swoosh!"

Two figures leaped out from the unseen dark alley.

Too far away to hear what they were saying, Gilder could only discern through the night's dim light that they seemed to be holding some special instruments in their hands.

...

"Such a heavy demonic presence!"

"No one's here, where have all the people gone?"

A distinctive insignia of the executors from Arbitration Place flashed, and the tall, thin man scanned the area with a cold face, "It seems this place has become a breeding ground for demons."

Usually, when such a situation occurs, it is because the area has been completely seduced and corrupted by the demons' Believers.

All the ordinary people would have turned into Believers of demons to conjure such an intense demonic presence.

This was a judgment based on experience.

His medium-height companion shook his head, "Don't jump to conclusions, it could also be the 'Demon Child' phenomenon that the Place mentioned recently."

The Demon Child was an adversary they had never encountered before. Faced with a fresh opponent, no amount of thinking outside the box seemed too much.

The tall, thin man shook his head, "Anyway, let's find the main culprit first."

While speaking, the tall, thin man channeled Spiritual Energy into a crystal ball-like object in his hands.

This was a creation from the Place specifically designed to track demonic presence, albeit with a very small sensing range. It only issued a warning and provided a vague location when it detected a definite demonic presence.

In fact, they were alerted by the crystal ball, which suddenly went off, and hurried over from nearby.

Ever since the last incident where the executor responsible for this area along with a temporary executor returned unsuccessfully, they had taken it upon themselves to watch over this area.

An executor's actions were mostly autonomous. As long as they ensured not to waste too many resources on the same matter or area, their actions were actually quite free.

After maneuvering the crystal ball in various directions and triggering it with Spiritual Energy, it quickly pointed the two men in a direction—

The depths of Black Street.

The red dot flashing within the crystal ball seemed to scream at them like a demon.

The tall executor put away the crystal ball and said coldly, "Let's go!"

Chapter 287 Pay for work?

As two strange silhouettes penetrated deeper, the long street above fell back into that deathly stillness.

The deep silence at the end of the long street devoured all the residents, the vehicle belonging to the trio, and the two strange silhouettes—like a monster lurking in the darkness, effortlessly swallowing even the darkness itself.

Gazing along that pitch-black stretch of the long street, Gilder strained his aged eyes to pierce through the veil of night, seeking to uncover the truth of the matter...

Beneath the long street, it was far from the quiet it appeared on the surface.

"Speak up! Do you want to work for our boss or not!"

"Yeah, yeah! I've already said I'll work for our boss! Stop hitting me already..." The man's face was bruised and swollen as he desperately clung to the other's thigh, unable to stop whimpering.

"You've been hitting me for so damn long! When I say I'm willing to work for the boss, don't you understand?! I want to work! Tell me what to do, quick! I'll do it now!"

However, the man asking the questions dared not respond but simply looked back, trembling, with caution, to the man reclining on the peeling russet couch behind him—who was the true decider of everyone's fate.

Wallis chuckled hoarsely in a low voice, as if his throat was clogged with phlegm, full of static noise.

Reclining on the couch, he watched the "torture" taking place before him with a sideways glance. Although he was laughing, his face was devoid of any mirth, only endless coldness.

Beneath that coldness was a deep fury brewing like the sea's churning depths.

The protruding mechanical eye glinted a blinding red, as if blood was flowing at his feet.

The boss was angry...

A silent command guided the lackey.

The lackey, whip in hand, turned and struck the man on the ground across the face with another lash.

"You're not sincere! That's for not being sincere! You never really wanted to work for our boss!"

"Smack! Smack!"

Lash after lash...

"I'm willing... I'm willing..."

The space opened up, and suddenly the vast underground area was filled with the sound of the whip cracking against flesh.

"Speak! Will you work for our boss or not?"

"That's for being stubborn! That's for being stubborn!"

The orange warm light flickered chaotically, and the messy sounds of whipping strangely composed a mad symphony.

"Hahahaha!"

Wallis suddenly clutched his forehead, laughing uncontrollably.

Not a single one!

Not a single one!

It wasn't just the people lured in who were unwilling to work for him; even his own men were equally reluctant.

Unwilling!

All of them were unwilling!

All lies!

Even those closest to him, his trusted lieutenants, had never truly followed him!

They were only submissive to his power, to his influence, to his brutality.

But what was submissive was never to him as a person!

All of it was fake!

Only the bounty hunters!

Those strange bounty hunters! They were the ones truly willing to work for him.

As long as he provided ample reward, they would serve him wholeheartedly and without a single word of complaint.

In fact, the benefits he received from them far outweighed what he had given!

Why? Why couldn't the world be full of such people?

Only them... only them...

He was thankful to the heavens for bestowing upon him these eyes that could see through all falsehoods.

Having lived for so many years, he had finally discovered what truly deserved his pursuit.

Only occasionally, in a fleeting moment, did a voice of "regret" in Wallis's heart question—

Is everything I have now truly deserved?

This power within my grasp...

This authority obeyed by thousands...

This insight to see through the human heart...

Initially, should I have not been so greedy?

Even those bounty hunters working for me... I schemed to harvest their wealth under the guise of allegiance rings...

Why did they agree?

Wallis suddenly bowed his head, his mood switching from manic laughter to an icy demeanor in an instant.

The brief moment of inner weakness lasted less than the space of a breath.

His actions had proven that his current path was correct!

The people around him... they were all traitors!

"Clickety-clack, clickety-clack~"

A peculiar sound suddenly approached from afar. Wallis, whose senses were now extremely sharp, twitched his ear and was the first to hear this unexpected noise.

Outsiders?

Or had those bounty hunters returned?

The loose skin on the sides of his lower lip formed folds, and Wallis's mood suddenly lifted.

Soon enough, one of the lookouts outside rushed in with urgent haste.

"Boss! Boss! It's those bounty hunters! They've brought back what you wanted!"

"Oh~," Wallis finally showed a sincere smile on his face, "Quick, bring them in!"

"Yes!"

...

The furrows on the brows of the five people who walked into the underground hall were evident.

In fact, while waiting in the room above ground, they had already heard the noisy sounds mixed with moans coming from below, but it wasn't until they arrived underground that they realized things might be even more brutal than they had imagined.

Everywhere they looked, the spacious hall, originally cluttered with a variety of miscellaneous items, was now filled with figures in the corners.

Some stood... some lay...

Large beads of sweat could be seen dripping down from faces... not only from those who lay on the ground moaning, but also from the foreheads of those wielding whips, drenched in sweat.

Every person was soaked, as if they had been fished out of water.

Hot?

Of course it was hot.

The orange lamps lit up throughout the underground hall, their glowing tubes emitting a substantial amount of heat radiation.

In the hazy warmth of the orange light, even the air seemed to warp, making the entire underground hall feel like an unbearable steamer.

But the five newcomers didn't feel too much of the heat.

Compared to the heat, it seemed there was something else that made everyone... except the figure sitting on the sofa... feel... fear.

Because of fear, they were tense. Because they were tense, their heart rates increased. Because their heart rates increased, their pores contracted. And so... they were drenched in sweat.

Including those who were acting as the attackers.

The object of their fear, of course, was the solitary figure sitting on the sofa—Wallis.

'Is this a show of power?' Dai Lian thought, but then immediately dismissed the idea.

They had been here before, and while the leader in front of them certainly commanded a certain amount of respect, he wasn't so frightening.

At least he shouldn't make his own men feel this way.

Had something happened that they were unaware of, something so brutal that even his own men harbored such deep fear of him?

But what did that matter to them?

It had nothing to do with them whatsoever.

They were only there to turn in a task, and whether they split the reward pool amongst themselves or one person got all the experience, it made no real difference to them.

The experience from the reward pool task might be substantial, but it wasn't going to determine the future pace of the game on its own.

It was just a task.

"We've brought back the treasure you wanted," Dai Lian spoke, taking half a step ahead of the others, "It's on the car upstairs."

As the brain of the team, it was his responsibility to handle interactions with NPCs during collective actions.

Wallis's lips curled up slightly. He slowly rose from the sofa, his tone carrying a strange and eerie inflection, "Don't call it 'treasure.' You are my treasures. I'm very happy to see you return."

Kuang Xin furrowed his eyebrows, feeling a bit nauseated.

Hardened! His fists clenched!

Who the hell is your treasure?

Wallis seemed utterly indifferent to the disgust shown by the four others besides Dai Lian, continuing with his own performance, "What about the other children? Didn't they return with you?"

Was he talking about the other players who had accepted the reward pool task with them?

Why ask about them?

As the question flitted through his mind, Dai Lian chose his words carefully, giving a cautious reply, "We cooperated to complete the task and came back together, it's just that some are faster than others. The slower ones might still be on the way, while the faster ones should have already arrived."

The vehicle they drove was not particularly fast, as it was loaded with five people and the items for the task. Those with quicker means of travel probably arrived near Blackwater City earlier than they did.

"Why don't they come to see me?"

"..." Dai Lian paused slightly, replying somewhat helplessly, "They didn't complete the task and feel too ashamed to see you."

"Hahahaha! No need to be so formal! I want to see them! I want to see all my children!" Wallis eyed Dai Lian with both his normal eye and the red-glowing, protruding mechanical eye, his gaze filled with anticipation, "Could you find them for me?"

As he spoke, Wallis's tone paused, then he emphasized, "Of course, to ensure that you keep your promise, before you find them for me, you'll need to leave something as collateral, won't you?"

The sinister mechanical eye circled over the five of them, his tone leisurely as he inquired, "What do you think you should leave?"

The wandering gaze finally settled on Gong Yan, "How about, we leave this young lady here? I assure you, I will raise her to be plump and fair! She will become my most outstanding daughter!"

[Triggered side quest—Find Comrades.]

[Find Comrades: Your employer is worried about all the "children" who performed tasks for him. As companions who carried out the task together, you have the obligation to ensure the safe return of all comrades. Task Requirement: Find all comrades who took part in the "Reward Pool Task—Seize Creation" within the allotted time 0/1.

Task Completion Reward: -300 Blackwater Coins, -100 General/Battle Experience; Task Failure Penalty: -600 Blackwater Coins, -200 General/Battle Experience (Countdown: 4 hours, 59 minutes, 59 seconds)]
(Note: Accepting this task requires a "hostage." If the task fails, "hostage" will encounter a special plot.)

"..."

A negative reward?

They had to pay currency and experience to do a task for an NPC?

Paid work? Sounds familiar...

The five people who saw the task pop up on their screens couldn't help but exchange looks, their eyes reflecting a sense of 'never seen before.'

"That's just outrageous..."

"Perhaps we've encountered some kind of extraordinary quest chain?"

Gu Lan, with her broad experience and in-depth interactions in many games, had seen her fair share of deep game content that ordinary players might never come across in their lifetimes.

It wasn't as though there had never been quest chains that initially deducted experience and money only to multiply the returns in the end.

If completed, the rewards were unimaginably rich.

After all, it was just a game... what game would let players lose out?

Did they even want to keep making games?

The task might be weird, but... perhaps it was worth a try?

Gu Lan's gaze held a hint of eagerness to give it a shot.

Chapter 288 alarm!

"And be quick about it~," Wallis said with excitement, as if imagining a scene where all "Bounty Hunters" were working for him, "Before dawn! I have limited patience."

Facing the other party's urging, Gu Lan excitedly suggested, "I'm willing to be collateral."

The Thorn Valkyrie wasn't afraid at all. Seeing the hostages would face a "special scenario" if the mission failed only made her more thrilled.

"Shall we just forget it?" Dai Lian wasn't particularly willing to take risks with things he was unfamiliar with. This mission had been exuding an oddness from the beginning, not to mention their current bizarre situation.

It seemed that their arrival caused even those who were beating others to stop their actions and turn their heads to quietly watch the five of them.

The ones wailing seemed to cease their agony, curling up on the ground while looking on twistedly and expectantly... as if they were the saviors.

This kind of silent observation was downright hair-raising, and Dai Lian didn't want to stay here a moment longer. Moreover, with their backing from powerful figures, they could develop much more comfortably than other players. There was no need to undertake such a strange mission.

"What do you all think?"

"I think we should drop it too," Gong Yan said, wrapping her arms around herself. Despite the warmth of the underground hall, the gaze from that mechanical eye always made her feel chills down her spine.

"I think we should just leave, no need to bother with that disgusting thing on the other side," Kuang Xin said, finding it irritating even to glance at him.

Xu Ruoguang looked at everyone and nodded in agreement quietly, "I think so too."

The hand he used to speak was slightly trembling as it rested on the hilt of his sword at his waist.

It was excitement...

The other party's aura was so familiar... familiar to the point where he wanted to go up and slash him with his sword!

"Alright then..." Gu Lan could only shrug helplessly as everyone wanted to play it safe. She couldn't ignore everyone's opinion; this wasn't just her guild, "I'll listen to you all."

"My lord... I'm afraid we can't accept your commission," Dai Lian said calmly. Although he referred to him as my lord, his attitude was already one of equality.

Different "attitudes" are required when facing different NPCs.

Players are not beings that you can bully at will.

"We came back simply to fulfill our duty, to bring you what you commissioned... As for your current request, we truly don't have time. Sorry."

"Not doing it?" The smile that had been constant on Wallis's face suddenly stiffened, and the only original eye he had left emitted a dangerous chill, "Not doing it? How can you not do it?"

"My lord, our commission relationship is only temporary. We completed the task, and now you should fulfill your promise," Dai Lian reminded him. "The items are upstairs; you can send someone to check, then... settle the commission."

He didn't know why, but this time the task reward settlement was proving to be exceptionally difficult.

Perhaps there was some special plotline, but Dai Lian didn't want to delve deeper into content that seemed too bizarre.

Wallis obviously didn't want to let go of the five odd "Bounty Hunters" who could bring him unimaginable power. It had already been proven that their service could enhance his strength, so they must continue doing so indefinitely!

How could they renege?

"How can you renege? How can you renege?" Wallis asked repeatedly, each time more heavily than the last, his expression growing more paranoid and frantic, "You should work for me! This is your responsibility in coming to this world!"

"Bang!"

The response to him was a bullet.

From behind the five players... came from the stairs connecting to the room on the ground.

The ancient double-barreled shotgun fired a slender bullet, with mysterious inscriptions traced upon it, creating patterns dazzling to the eyes.

Only Gong Yan and Gu Lan were able to glance at it briefly, yet they utterly failed to comprehend its meaning.

The five players, who were belatedly aware of the gunfire, turned their heads and saw two men in black trench coats, each holding the edge of the floor above with one hand as they flipped down from the narrow staircase entrance.

As the two men landed agilely on their feet, two lifeless bodies flopped down from above, making a double 'thump' as they hit the ground.

"We've really found a big one!" The man of average height leading the way shouldered his double-barreled shotgun, slowly sweeping his gaze over every creature he could see.

A faint grey Spiritual Energy clung to his eyes, allowing him to differentiate whether the creatures in front of him had any connection to demons.

A thick demonic presence had cloaked everyone, endowing them with an ominous and sinister aura.

And the most central source... was undoubtedly the figure standing alone in the middle of the hall, dark and profound like a high-dimensional space curvature point.

The tall and thin companion landing behind casually surveyed the surrounding architecture and kicked away a device resembling a wrench.

With the clanking of gears and chains, the entrance to the ground was slowly sealed by the sliding iron gate.

With a 'swoosh,' he drew his twin silver scimitars, the blades reflecting a warm orange sheen.

"No one's leaving today!" the thin, tall man bared his teeth, his voice rough and deep.

The devilish scent filling his nostrils was revolting, yet it excited him immensely.

His gaze swept over the two men who had suddenly appeared, and Dai Lian saw a familiar emblem between the collars of their trench coats, so he murmured a warning to his companions, "It's the people from Arbitration Place."

They weren't the same two they were familiar with, but the agents of Arbitration Place generally acted in the same manner.

Moreover, since the agents of Arbitration Place had sniffed their way here, the answer was almost ready to present itself.

The abnormal beholder gang leader before them had become a Believer of the demon at some unknown time!

Were they... entangled in some special scripted event?

He wondered if there was any benefit to be reaped from it.

Dai Lian's eyes flickered as he subconsciously stepped back when he heard the two agents of Arbitration Place, who were deemed capable allies to rely on at the moment, cry out in unison, "Don't come any closer!"

"Step aside!" x2

"..."

The two agents looked at the five players with eyes full of vigilance, "We'll discuss your matters, children of the demon, after we've dealt with him! Don't think about running; you won't get away!"

The stance of the Place towards the children of the demon was somewhat ambiguous at the moment.

After all, these people were not demons themselves, and according to the information collected so far, their actions also did not tend to serve demons.

The reality unfolding before their eyes could also substantiate this, as they had been there for a while, merely observing what kind of relationship existed between the children of the demon and the demon's Believers before they came forward.

And quite obviously, the children of the demon and the demon's Believers were not one and the same.

Hearing the words of the Arbitration Place agents, the players were utterly befuddled—

"???"

"The child of a demon?"

"How did we become 'children of demons'?"

"What even is a 'child of a demon'?"

Dai Lian did not dwell too much on this, he merely urged everyone to move towards the edge.

After all, the main players at the moment were not the five of them, but rather the confrontation between the gang leader, who had given himself over to demons, and the two enforcers of the Arbitration Place.

They... might have become camera carriers?

Realizing there was a spectacle to be witnessed, several players lost their initial tension and instead filled with anticipation for the clash of high-end powers within the game.

Wallis tilted his head to the sky, spreading his arms wide as if embracing something.

"Did you think I hadn't noticed you?" His voice boomed increasingly less human, sounding as though boundless thunder roared behind him, and as he turned his head, the indescribable ferocious face of a monster had replaced his originally mechanically modified one.

"I've been waiting for you to come in!"

The brutal aura spread out instantaneously like a tsunami, and the surging Spiritual Energy stirred in an otherworldly sense like an underwater vortex, drawing all present uncontrollably closer.

As if even their souls were being absorbed...

The true form of a demon... descended!

"The true form!"

"He has directly summoned his true form!"

Visible horror rose instantly on the faces of the two enforcers.

The gap between the true form of a demon and a demon Believer was as vast as the heavens and the earth.

In their brief investigation, there was only one core demon Believer here, the leader of the Underground Fighting Gang... but how could a single person have summoned the true form of a demon!

"This is trouble!"

...

The terrifying voice of the Demon God echoed in the depths of Black Street like the deep tolling of a bell.

It was a shriek that seemed to come from the depths of the human heart, instilling a profound awe from the depths of the soul.

Like the heart being tightly clutched, unknown terror eroded Gilder's mind wave after wave like a sea storm.

No sound...

But the voice resounded directly within the heart.

Gilder was all too familiar with this, as during those endless days and nights of torment, it was this kind of spiritual fear that tortured every one of his displaced compatriots, including himself.

It was a demon!

Another demon had appeared in the world!

The moment Gilder realized this thought, he pulled his hands out from his embrace.

He raised the flare gun, which was covered in the sweat of his palm, and aimed it toward the sky.

"Whoosh!"

The orange firework left a trail in the sky that lasted quite a while, and the sharp buzzing could be heard even from a great distance.

...

Military camp.

Seeing the projectile shooting straight into the sky, the soldier on night watch in the tower narrowed his eyes and then shook his head resignedly.

"Those fighting gangs... they always love to cause a commotion."

Crying for help when they can't win in a fight was the most common tactic of those outside gangs.

But even if those guys had their brains knocked out, it wouldn't have much to do with their military camp.

Only when things got too out of hand would someone notify them to send a few people to handle and intimidate a bit.

Usually, it wasn't taken seriously.

Yet it was still quite unusual to see such a ruckus in the middle of the night...

His companion on night watch strained to look in the direction of the flare, then shook his head with some regret, "Too far away, can't get a good view of the action..."

"Hey, hey, hey? Stop looking, it seems like someone's coming our way?" Hearing his comrade's words, the soldier turned to look back at the military camp.

Sure enough, a slender figure approached the gate at a brisk pace.

"Who's going out in the middle of the night?"

Raising her hood slightly, the delicate jawline appeared before the eyes of the soldiers at the gate.

"It's Miss Yueying..."

"Let her pass!"

...

"Someone else is coming..."

"Why is nobody sleeping in the middle of the night?"

"...It's an armored battalion instructor from the Arbitration Place."

"...Let him pass!"

...

"And another one comes..."

Bai E, facing the light, showed his pass...

Chapter 289 Fierce Battle

Bai E was originally meditating on his bed in his campsite, cultivating Spiritual Energy.

Having learned a plethora of skills regarding Spiritual Energy with Yue Ying tonight, he needed serene reflection to consolidate them, assisting himself in becoming more familiar with those techniques.

Of course... the cultivation of Spiritual Energy itself was also essential.

Beyond the awakening, subsequent practice did not present images of a sky full of stars or the primordial cosmos as grand visions beyond time and space.

Bai E's Spiritual Energy merely undulated faintly within his body; occasionally, some mischievous energy would leap out from the life magnetic field designated by his body, briefly "peeking" at the outside world.

Spiritual Energy was never a constrained or rigid theorem; it followed the heart's intentions, the human will, the occasional whimsical ideas... and occasionally, the dark thoughts from deep within, born of impulse, wandering freely in this world.

As of now, Bai E's spiritual power of level 10 was insufficient to support him in extended external observation of the "world."

However, at the moment the signal shot into the sky, Bai E, who had given the order, felt as if he witnessed the entire journey of the flare from dark corners to the heavens.

Because it was "related" to him, was the energy able to capture it the moment it appeared?

Realizing this, Bai E harbored even more fascination towards the existence of Spiritual Energy, and the sudden surprise in his thoughts caused a momentary surge within it.

The rapid expansion and contraction were akin to a "desire" of the Spiritual Energy to grow; had he calmed his mind to meditate quietly at that moment, perhaps his Spiritual Energy would joyfully increase by +1.

However, Bai E didn't have the luxury to delve deeper.

Trouble had struck!

He and Gilder had stressed the importance of the signal flare, and he trusted the old man knew what he was doing.

If it weren't for something significant, he would never have fired the signal flare to summon Bai E.

Since the signal was launched, it meant something had happened that was related to his own "foundation" and was urgent and inescapable.

It had to be resolved immediately!

What could it be?

The secret underground warehouse discovered?

The rat people found by the Arbitration Place?

Or something else?

But the direction the signal came from was... Black Street.

The faint trail of light in the sky was still visible, allowing one to discern the direction from which the signal had originated.

Produced by the military, Bai E had taken the opportunity to exchange military merits for it and had given it to Gilder; its quality was, of course, reliable.

So what had happened on Black Street?

After leaving the camp, Bai E sprinted through the dim starlight at breakneck speed.

Black Street was the nearest human settlement outside the military camp, but it was still at a considerable distance from the camp itself.

...

The basement.

The demon revealed its true form.

With a distorted face, its muscles were skinless and bulged as though countless tangled sinews had gathered together; shiny fascia wrapped around the body like a layer of bloody sausage casing, and its abscessed head was covered with eyes.

Those eyes focused simultaneously in different directions on every person present, roving around and emanating palpable malice to everyone under their gaze.

In fact, there were not many people left...

Aside from five players and two enforcers from Arbitration Place, everyone else in the basement—whether they were being whipped or the thugs delivering the beatings—had collapsed limply to the ground the moment the demon manifested.

The force that targeted their souls was not something those who muddled through Black Street without any central beliefs could resist.

Among the multitude of eyes on the swollen mass, some seemed puzzled by the situation, looking around aimlessly.

"Thank goodness it's not an original demon!" One of the enforcers on high alert relaxed slightly upon seeing the demon's true form.

The souls that were being drained had not been sent directly to a higher-dimensional space to become wandering spirits in that bizarre realm, suffering eternal torment, but were temporarily imprisoned within the demon's body.

This opened up the possibility of rescuing them... or rather, the possibility of granting them release.

"Are you afraid?" The enforcer of average height took a step back, standing shoulder to shoulder with his partner.

The standard team of two enforcers could usually only guarantee an advantage over demon Believers, provided the group wasn't too large.

But facing the demon's true form head-on... he wasn't very confident.

The recordings of similar events in the office usually required several or even more than ten teams working together to achieve victory.

Of course... the scale of demon Believers capable of summoning the true form of a demon was often immense; those Believers were troublesome on their own, and the summoned demon's strength would increase with the number of summoners, so difficulty was expected.

The current situation, where a singular Believer summoned the demon to possess and descend... was unheard of.

The tall, skinny enforcer pulled a bottle filled with Exorcism Essential Oil from his chest, "pop" went the sound as he opened the stopper, pouring the slightly viscous liquid onto the crossed blades in his hands.

Watching the massive, terrifying figure shaped like a mountain of flesh, the tall, skinny man's body trembled with excitement, "This is the very demon we've been hunting!"

Demons in their true forms rarely appear in the human world for two main reasons. First, the conditions supporting their arrival in this realm are extremely harsh, and under the relentless pursuit of the Arbitration Place's full corps of executioners, it is rare for believers who worship demons to amass a sufficiently large scale and sacrifice enough to summon a demon's true body.

Moreover, aside from those demons of the primeval source and above, other demons stand a chance of being slain once they come into the real world.

Purifying even one is undoubtedly a great contribution to the whole of human society.

The emotional thoughts and sentiments drifting in higher-dimensional space would not normally harm people in the real world, but it is these "demons," formed and with a will from the entanglement of countless emotions, that pose the greatest threat to human society.

They instinctively manipulate emotions to accelerate the corrosion of human minds.

External threats like insects and beastmen might also be severe disasters to humankind, but it is often the erosion from within that is more worthy of vigilance and more capable of completely subverting everything humans have.

"Do you want our help?" A voice suddenly came from the corner.

It was Dai Lian's.

This game was not like the conventional ones they used to play; the players could not just stand by holding the camera.

Perhaps, they too could do something?

The medium-sized executioner glanced over the five players, his expression revealing complex emotions—

It was these children of demons that turned normal humans into believers capable of summoning demons on their own, yet now they were willing to fight side by side with him and his partner...

Perhaps... they could not be labeled as "children of demons"?

That title might not be quite fair to them.

The fleeting thought passed, and the executioner gently pushed bullets soaked in Exorcism Essential Oil into the chamber of his shotgun.

With an explosive blaze bursting from the barrel, the elongated and sharp projectiles were the first to sound the horn of attack against the descending demon.

"Fire!"

The dual-bladed executioner dashed forward with agile steps, as complementary coordination was a must for a two-person fighting team.

While his partner was skilled with a gun, infusing bullets with his will to create piercing power strong enough to penetrate metal and stone, he naturally had to be able to entangle the opponent at close quarters, giving his partner enough opportunity to find vulnerabilities and deliver fatal damage.

What met the dual blades was a hand hammer resembling a flesh tumor encrusted with metal spikes. Despite the executioner's agile figure, the hammer acted like a lethal magnet, attracting his blades and forcing him into a contest of strength where he was at a disadvantage.

The true form of the demon was bizarre, vaguely resembling a humanoid shape, but otherwise, it bore no relation to humankind.

Where hands should be, there were only two massive lumps of flesh throbbing as if they were breathing.

In the instant when the blades filled with Spiritual Energy made contact with the hammer, an astonishing suction force transmitted from the hammer to the blades.

The Spiritual Energy adhering to the blades was instantly torn apart like fluid ripped by a giant gravitational source, pulled into the depths of the hammer.

Spiritual Energy is a part of the spirit.

The abnormal effects acting on Spiritual Energy are often felt as if they were one's own, and the lean executioner instinctively combated this deadly suction.

Naturally, he found himself overpowered in terms of strength as he focused all his effort on fighting the abnormal attraction.

In an instant, his lean body was hurled into the air, smashing towards the concrete ceiling above.

The seasoned executioner was not simply defeated; his immediate decision to use the force of his foe to escape the danger zone saved him. The moment he touched the ceiling, he used all four limbs to spring away lightly.

However, the foe was clearly unwilling to let him go.

The seemingly cumbersome legs burst forth with incredible speed, their acceleration ability in a straight line comparable to the executioner's agile evasions.

And the underground space was only so large, severely limiting the humans skilled in agile combat.

"Ding!"

"Ding!"

The dual blades resisted with difficulty, while the bullets searched for a chance to penetrate the defenses.

But the longer the fight went on, the paler the two executioners' faces became.

They could clearly sense that their Spiritual Energy was rapidly weakening!

Or rather, not weakening... but being absorbed!

Being absorbed by this coreless demon!

A demon capable of absorbing the Spiritual Energy of its opponents for its own use!

This was troublesome!

"Boom!"

A massive battle-ax crashed down on the demon wielding the heavy hammer. Kuang Xin, who was not quick, finally caught up with the brief pause in the "two-person" battle.

Kuang Xin, who specialized solely in strength, was no less capable in terms of strength than the executioners empowered by Spiritual Energy, and his use of heavy weapons also granted him an additional advantage from the weapon itself.

"RUA!"

"Bang!"

The next moment, the fleshy hammer ferociously slammed against the ax face, and Kuang Xin went flying in response...

Chapter 290 Adaptive Armor

However, Kuang Xin's momentary block had allowed both Xu Ruoguang and Gu Lan to close in, with longswords that differed in style but were equally fast and sharp.

Dai Lian took down his bow and arrow but did not shoot immediately.

In such a complex and cramped environment, with the figures in combat rapidly intertwining and changing, it was very easy to accidentally strike a teammate.

The temporary stalemate by the player gave the two enforcers from Arbitration Place a brief opportunity to catch their breath.

"Its strength is so powerful..."

"And it has special abilities."

The two enforcers communicated briefly with the information they had observed.

"But there's only one Believer... how is that possible?"

Experience derived from long-term combat with demons allowed all enforcers to make basic judgments about a demon's combat capabilities.

The strength of demons in high-dimensional spaces varied greatly, but regardless of how strong or weak they were, when they arrived in the real world, they would undergo a certain "rule-based" "combat power adjustment."

In simple terms, the more human Believers summoning the demon, the stronger the individual strength, life essence... or mainly, the stronger the Spiritual Energy, the stronger the summoned demon would be.

If it's a possession-type arrival, the human host's own strength will also have an influence.

So sometimes, the summoning process for a demon is also a two-way selection—

If the scale of Believers performing the summoning is too small, a demon lord with an exceedingly high status in the high-dimensional space might arrive in the real world only to become a laughingstock, a situation no demon would accept.

A demon that can be summoned by a weakling must also be a weakling.

But how could a demon summoned by only one Believer be so troublesome that they were almost no match for it?

The enforcers' gaze drifted, and they saw those "Children of the Demon" struggling to buy them time... The reason might lie with them.

But no matter what, the fact had already occurred, and what they needed to consider was how to counter it.

"He can absorb the Spiritual Energy from our attacks..." the tall and thin enforcer muttered contemplatively.

"We can't use Spiritual Energy anymore... We need a more tangible form of strength."

Combat wasn't just about brute force, especially when fighting demons; intellect was equally important.

Demons that stemmed from different emotional cores often possessed different types of abilities, some excelling in deceitful schemes, half-truths and half-lies; others in close-quarters combat, fierce and unrivaled.

To confront demons with different inclinations, one must choose the appropriate counter-tactic.

"Tangible, huh..."

The enforcer carrying a double-barreled shotgun squinted his eyes and took a step back.

He stretched out his hand, and the space about twenty or thirty centimeters in front of his palm began to blur.

With the demon's arrival in person, the space it occupied had taken on some characteristics of the high-dimensional space—

Partially tangible, partially ethereal, disregarding time and space.

This also made it much easier for them to use the spiritual technique that allowed storage of items in high-dimensional space.

The black steel creation slowly emerged from the hazy waves, revealing its edges as it was gradually pulled out by his hand.

As the object being stored was quite large, it required some time.

The tall and thin enforcer didn't wait relentlessly; the demon's strength was unimaginably huge, and it could ignore attacks that didn't exceed a certain threshold. Although the "Children of the Demon" tried their best to entangle it, another had already been sent flying in the time it took to speak.

Gu Lan was suddenly smashed against the wall and fell limply to the ground.

Kuang Xin, who had been sent flying earlier, had not yet recovered, and with Gu Lan severely hit, only Xu Ruoguang remained in close combat, his fingers brushing over the longsword with a sharp gaze.

A focused will sharpened his perception of time once again, and the bullet-time effect working behind the scenes accelerated not just his consciousness.

His recent strikes had allowed him to see some of the demon's basic attribute information from the system feedback panel—

[??? (Demon) (Chaos): Health 193/200; Defensive Power 99; Action Power 100%; Attack Power (Type: Blunt) 20~???; Traits: Adaptive Armor, ???]

[Adaptive Armor: The living body's surface defense system allows ??? to adapt to any attack initiated against it. As long as the attack doesn't exceed its defensive power, all forms of attacks will struggle to achieve effective offense.]

In fact, even without the display of the system panel, his instincts, which were more direct in combat, also made him realize something—

The demon's defensive power was beyond imagination, and there were only two ways to inflict genuine effective damage on it:

Either, use an overwhelmingly powerful attack exceeding 99 points to break through directly.

However, given their current weapons only had an energy output of around ten to twenty points, this requirement was far too strict.

Or... exceed the "living armor's" response time with the fastest strike and breach the opponent's reactive defenses in one go.

Conveniently, what he could do was precisely this ultra-fast strike!

The pus-filled boils symbolizing its head, those countless eyes simultaneously watched Kuang Xin, Gu Lan, Xu Ruoguang, and other players, each eye filled with greed and covetousness at this moment.

"Don't seek death, children... My children, do not seek your own destruction, you shall be my finest offspring..."

The voice that sounded half-Demon God, half-human emanated from this terrifying body, its resonant echo as if there were hundreds of people participating in a chorus with his voice.

That was the voice of countless ordinary people from Black Street trapped within his body...

That voice made Xu Ruoguang so angry, the desire for anger driving his longsword.

The flash of a sword, the shadow of the blade shattered, the figure flew.

The moment he activated it, countless eyes seemed to freeze on him, and Xu Ruoguang, who locked eyes with the enemy, felt that his next move was entirely within the opponent's expectation.

So he was indeed sent flying by a hammer blow...

"Cough cough cough!" The heavy blow to his chest had Xu Ruoguang curled up on the ground, coughing violently.

This was the first time, even "bullet time" was ineffective against the enemy!

Seeing their teammate was no match, the two female gamers, who felt it was time to do something, simultaneously unleashed their Spiritual Energy.

Both of them had intrinsic attributes that leaned toward the mysterious, possessing enough mystical base attributes that once they entered the "game," their natural talents were inevitably related to Spiritual Energy.

They didn't need to cultivate; their grasp over Spiritual Energy came naturally.

This was the path of all human beings with the gift of Spiritual Energy, and it was their path as well.

"Don't!"

The tall and lean executor sensed the explosion of those two bursts of Spiritual Energy right away.

Too primitive! Too crude!

These kids' Spiritual Energy grew wildly, having the talent but not the control.

Spiritual Energy without control... only brings disaster upon the bearer.

Especially when around demons...

Compared to their physical bodies in the real world, the "Spiritual Bodies" of most intelligent creatures in high-dimensional space are as fragile as thin paper.

And the moment a Spiritual Energy talent bursts forth, it shines in high-dimensional space like a starfire in the dark night.

In that instant, just like sharks in the sea drawn to the scent of blood, the demons "draw close", recklessly swimming towards the shine, tearing apart the "Spiritual Body" of the Spiritual Energy talent.

Some with the talent for Spiritual Energy might occasionally burst forth and, due to "luck", temporarily evade the demons' grasp, but when they're near a demon... such luck must not be counted on!

The summoned Demon God itself had already drawn enough attention of its "kin"!

And now...

The tall and lean executor, who first raised his voice in warning, gave a slight start at the next breath.

The spirited girl who was first struck with a sword could be put aside for now, but... that girl who looked a bit more delicate and cute, how... how...

Her outburst was so easygoing and concealed?

Her way of using Spiritual Energy was still savage, but it wasn't something a Spiritual Energy talent who had grown wild could compare to.

However... this covert way of using Spiritual Energy wasn't something he had seen before.

Where had she learned such techniques?

As the doubt flashed through his mind, the tall and lean executor, wielding dual blades, charged straight at Gu Lan.

No matter what, the cute girl's Spiritual Energy outburst was a bit more concealed, and that was somewhat more reassuring.

At least... he wouldn't have to consider saving them both in the high-dimensional space at the same time.

With a stride, the tall and lean executor became half visible and half invisible—

High-Dimensional Walking!

Entering high-dimensional space actively and briefly, which was initially used to dodge some attacks in the real world, could also be applied in combat within high-dimensional space.

Relying on the direct touch of the magnetic field of life from the real world for positioning, the tall and lean executor arrived next to the formless jellyfish-like "Spiritual Body" without shape or color.

"Swish!"

Dual blades unleashed, severing several tentacles coming from who knows where out of the "darkness".

"Extinguish it quickly!" An alert voice resounded directly in Gu Lan's mind, and she, sensing threat instinctively, complied with the tall and lean executor's suggestion.

The flicker of "firelight" in the dark space dissipated in an instant, and this brief crisis was averted with more alarm than harm.

The intentional dispersal of the Spiritual Energy also meant that Gu Lan had no more power to resist, and Gong Yan's outburst was only to hasten her own healing.

But the players' resistance didn't stop there.

"Whoosh!"

A pitch-black steel arrow shot out from a corner, Dai Lian, who had been looking for an opportunity, finally made his move, and indeed, it was this unspoken understanding that made Gu Lan and Gong Yan burst forth with Spiritual Energy simultaneously, trying to cover up their real ace in the hole.

This arrow flew as swiftly as lightning.

"Clang!"

The sound of metal clashing rang out, and the bent arrow fell to the ground, defeated.

A powerful shot indeed would not stop for any obstruction, but when facing a target it couldn't penetrate, it couldn't serve its purpose.

"This isn't your responsibility, kids!"

A composed voice rose from the direction of the underground hall entrance, and the delays everyone contributed to finally allowed the executor to draw the weapon he needed.

A heavy machine gun... one that should be mounted on a vehicle.