

## Wow 321

### Chapter 321 Double-fronted Operation!\_3

Swinging up and down, as if its tip had a mouth, wanting to take a bite out of Bai E.

"Pfft!" With a forceful effort, the tentacle burst instantly, splattering juices everywhere.

The direct contact with the high-dimensional being allowed Bai E to catch a fleeting glimpse of a corner of the Otherworldly Space at this moment.

Those indistinct shadows that even lacked a fixed shape were wandering around, like a group of sharks circling their prey, waiting for the fatal moment to pounce and take a vicious bite.

Had it been an ordinary soul, they would have swarmed without hesitation.

But the dazzling light from this soul was too blinding, and the one who had initiated the attack first was easily crushed to pieces.

The danger and unknown of the target temporarily deterred these greedy high-dimensional beings.

Of course, the deterrence wouldn't last long.

Beings born from extreme emotions are not only the masters of those emotions but also slaves to the emotions themselves.

Fear wouldn't last long, their craving for souls was like insects' thirst for biomass.

The next moment, a shadow swooshed forward, and in an instant, it was again grasped by the glowing Spiritual Body.

The twisted and withered arm stared at the eye in the palm while writhing in terror.

"Pfft!"

Bursting!

After getting past the initial discomfort of the Spiritual Body and the physical body being able to perform different operations, Bai E's will and physical body were simultaneously fighting in two levels of the world, with the Spiritual Body fending off those high-dimensional beings while the physical body was also swiftly in action.

At this point, Bai E was no longer calculating the output of Spiritual Energy.

In the midst of activating both "Absolute Defense" and "Graceful Liberation," he even initiated the first phase of "Spiritual Heart Crossing."

The fundamental three-dimensional attributes surged instantly, bringing with them an all-encompassing combat capability.

"Bang!"

A red fist violently smashed towards the face, but in the real world, Bai E didn't even blink, just emotionlessly delivered a fatal blow to the sandworm he firmly pinned beneath him.

In the high-dimensional space, the Spiritual Body countered the coming fist with its forehead.

[??? (Demon) (Chaos) — Using "Lucky Strike" to kill can drop: Definite (Battle Experience 5000 points); Possible (Spiritual Energy (Envy): 30)]

A proper adversary had finally arrived.

The tentacles and arms that were just crushed to bits didn't even bring up a combat record, unclear whether it was due to the special nature of the high-dimensional space, or because those things were not considered individuals but rather part of the background in the high-dimensional space, or perhaps even... environmental factors.

It was like air and water vapor in the real world.

Only this high-dimensional demon with a definite entity was the first real opponent Bai E had encountered.

On the shining Spiritual Body, the visage belonging to Bai E stretched his lips into a somewhat happy smile.

He'd been worried about running out of Spiritual Energy to burn, but the reserves of "Hidden Energy" just came like that.

"Skaha!"

The envious demon lit up with spikes all over and roared at Bai E.

The shining Spiritual Body stretched out both hands and grasped the slender wrists, and in the evidently surprised and confused gaze of the demon of envy, Bai E launched a headbutt.

"Bang!"

[You dealt 3 points of Spiritual Energy damage to the target.]

[Due to the backlash of Spiritual Energy resistance, you took 3 points of Spiritual Energy damage.]

"Bang!"

[You against the target...]

[Because of the Spiritual Energy...]

[Activating "Lucky Strike".]

"Bang!"

The body shattered.

The crimson demon was smashed to pieces under a barrage of headbutts, the fragments that scattered about trying to revert to the essence of high-dimensional space couldn't escape.

Under some indescribable force, those fragments revolved around Bai E's Spiritual Body, the red pieces gradually ground down by a vortex-like force, losing their original color, turning into the purest and flawless primal Spiritual Energy.

[Your "Skill—Soul Black Hole" digested a strand of alien Spiritual Energy and transformed it into your power, increasing Spiritual Energy cap by +1.]

[...Spiritual Energy cap +1.]

+1

+1

+1

Brimming Spiritual Energy flooded into Bai E's soul, which had already weakened considerably, but was now abundantly replenished.

It's my turn now!

The surging Spiritual Energy drove Bai E's body, with flames of revenge blazing fiercely upon his soul.

Chapter 322 Rescue!

The ground was littered with wounds and debris.

Bai E had speculated about the presence of a hidden "commander," but it never showed itself.

After dealing with two waves of the sand creatures and one small Bug Race swarm, there were temporarily no more enemies.

Fighting for many years, the Bug Race had a quite accurate understanding of the human combat strength.

If nothing unexpected happened, a wave of sand creatures combined with a small Bug Race swarm would be enough to easily annihilate a human special forces squad, which was a trap by the Bug Race.

Of course, even knowing it was a trap, humanity would still explore the unknown with the lives of their soldiers.

Sacrifice was the foundation of the Empire; courage was the anthem of humanity.

Facing any unknown, to explore with lives was what humans had been doing for thousands of years, and it had never changed.

You looked at the silhouette of Bai E, who was urgently treating their captain, now left with only one hand and one foot, with tears glistening in his eyes.

Gone.

All gone.

Of the other squad, only their captain remained, while his own squad... Dashan and Song Ying had left, and the captain was crippled too.

Sacrifice was the cornerstone of the Empire; artificial humans were inherently meant to die, and witnessing death was nothing new to them.

However, seeing comrades with whom he had grown close die one after another still brought unbearable pain to the emotions You had developed.

Bai E carried out everything coldly.

Dissecting the corpses of the creatures, sorting out the intact supplies, it was as if he were completely unaffected by the battle.

Overtaken vehicles were impossible to right with his strength alone, and neither the slightly injured captain of the other squad nor You could help, and as for Hu... he couldn't even stand.

Since they couldn't leave by vehicle anyway and the injured were limited in their ability to move, it was better to rest here for the night.

In the dead of night, wandering aimlessly was futile; it was better to rest well on the spot.

By dawn the next day, it would be clear whether the military had received their distress signal and was coming to assist.

Even if they were not considered a priority, with a night's rest, they would be more confident walking back during the day.

In the dark and deep night, the only sound was Bai E quietly dissecting corpses, which made the scene all the more ghastly.

The captain of the other squad lay among the messy supplies, his eyes empty.

You curled up in the shadow beneath a vehicle, his features unclear.

Hu was silent, half-lying on the ground with something propped under him by Bai E; he just turned his head to watch Bai E, who was busy nearby.

"He is a perfect captain."

After watching for a while, Hu suddenly said softly.

Explore new worlds at empire

You lifted his tear-streaked face from the crook of his arms on his knees, looking somewhat dazed at his own captain.

"After we return, we probably need to reorganize the team."

He himself was already broken; he didn't know what awaited him once they got back.

In this era, there were prosthetic limbs, but prosthetics far less adept than a normal body were not sufficient to support him in continuing to fight as a soldier.

Whether the military would be willing to outfit this 'useless' him with prosthetics so he could continue to live as a civilian was also uncertain, but he had no thoughts on this and calmly accepted whatever came, after all, the military's decisions were always made considering all of humanity.

Amidst the intense pain all over his body, he was only thinking about the future of the squad.

Whether it was his own squad or the other one, with such a loss in personnel, it was inevitable to recruit new members once they returned, and if those remaining were not qualified enough, even disbanding the unit was possible.

In the future, there may be more special forces squads, but Squad A97 would be forever buried in the annals of history, becoming a corner of the city's military history that had passed away.

The squad he took over from the previous captain, was it to be lost under his command?

He was unwilling, and so was Bai E.

You's capability was still decent, but far from enough to become the captain of a special forces squad in the eyes of the military. Of the two remaining, only Bai E could shoulder that responsibility.

To become a captain, of course, strength was necessary, and Bai E had proven his prowess far beyond the average soldier.

What was also needed was military merit.

Up until now, the merits Bai E had achieved in numerous battles might have been used up for the Gene Optimization Solution, maybe there was more to come, but it was never certain.

Dissection!

Completing the dissection of all the creature's corpses at this moment, bringing back those core resources needed by the military was also a way to earn military merit.

Bai E was doing his best to increase his "odds of winning".

Even now, just after a brutal battle, his cold rationality drove his actions - this was what made one a most qualified Imperial warrior. Talented individuals should proactively seek advancement, to take on more responsibility.

"You..." Ying gasped for air, stifling the pain from his injuries silently, "from now on, Bai E is your captain. Support him with all your heart, he is the best."

"Yes..." You's voice was as cool as ever, but this time, it trembled noticeably.

"What are you thinking?" Ying gave a smile, extending his left hand, shakily trying to reach out toward You.

You knew he couldn't be reached, so he moved closer proactively, allowing his slightly coarse palm to touch that young face that bore traces of both valiance and immaturity.

Looking at that tear-streaked face, Ying suddenly laughed, "Still too young..."

You bit his lip, his expression somewhat lost.

"Do you still remember what the officer said on the day you were born?"

"..."

"Sacrifice is the foundation of the Empire. You should have anticipated that a day like this would come. Aside from Bai, you're the last one to join the team... Learning to cope with the departure of teammates is also something you must learn in this world." As he spoke, Ying smiled, "Don't worry about me, who knows, I might even start a new life..."

The only way for an Artificial human to leave the military barracks was to suffer irreparable bodily harm on the battlefield while still clinging to life.

Amputated limbs, deemed not worth the military's investment for prosthetic replacements, and a living breathing person too complex to simply "dispose" of, would be expelled from the barracks to fend for themselves.

For many veteran Artificial soldiers, this was even a long-coveted escape route, as Artificial humans weren't privileged with natural persons' right to retire and enjoy a normal life after serving for a certain period.

"As long as you don't forget me and occasionally come to visit, I will be more than content."

"You've lost a lot of blood, we don't know when we can get back yet, it's better to talk less."

Bai E came back from afar at some point, advising Ying softly.

His voice was calm, as steady as ever.

"Did you find anything?" Ying laughed off what Bai E said and instead asked about something else.

He saw that Bai E had done more than just dissect; he had also gone towards the direction from which the small Bug Race tide originated to investigate something.

"Nothing much..." Bai E shook his head, "These bugs were an ambush hiding in deep concealment, waiting for the attack tonight. If we hadn't arrived, those six sandworms and the batch of bugs would have been the foes that their squad had to face alone."

And if it was a trap, without exception, every squad might have been treated the same. It was only because they whimsically changed the location that the sandworms and bug tide that were supposed to attack them missed their chance.

The sandworms could quickly follow through the underground, but the small Bug Race tide, composed of worker and wasp bugs, lacked this ability.

So the subsequent attack by the eight sandworms was likely the "trap" originally prepared for them.

As for whether there would be further attacks... who knows.

Even now, humans do not fully understand the command patterns and scope of the Bug Race's internal structure.

If a group of bugs was tailing a group of human soldiers, those bugs targeting their assigned enemies likely wouldn't come looking for them once they completed their task, meaning they could be safe.

But if the "commander" that Bai E had been worried about remaining hidden contacted its kin, what would happen next was unpredictable.

"Hm..." Ying nodded, acknowledging Bai E's explanation.

They could only wait...

Exhausted to the extreme, the three of them fell into a deep sleep while Bai E sat cross-legged beside them.

His practice of the Breathing Skill seemed to replace the need for normal sleep, and he also needed to recover his depleted Spiritual Energy through the Breathing Skill as soon as possible to face any potential dangers that might arise.

The corpses of bugs strewn about and the stench of blood and putridity in the air that lingered for a long time didn't affect Bai E's meditation at all.

[From Commission Feedback: Insight +0.1, Physical Ability +0.1, Reflex +0.2, Light Weapon Mastery Experience +54, Light Firearm Mastery Experience +14, Long-Range Weapon Mastery Experience +30, Knowledge - Human Body Modification Project 1.0 Experience +55.]

The feedback from the player's mission came belatedly.

Bai E woke with a start upon receiving this information and instinctively covered his eyes with his hand as the harsh light from the distance assaulted his eyes.

It was overwhelming...

Accompanied by the rumbling sound of mechanical engines.

Reinforcements had arrived...

"Phew~" Bai E finally let out a sigh of relief, his mind that had been on edge relaxed at long last.

The three who were asleep awoke in a daze, seeing the reinforcements from the base for real, and realized that Bai E had never deceived them.

With the glaring light behind him, Likok, wearing a long coat, was the first to hop off the yet unsteady vehicle and walk over, "Is anyone still alive?"

"Here." Bai E stood up, raising his arm.

Chapter 323 Worm's purpose?

Looking at the mountainous piles of corpses, particularly the huge bodies of the sand bugs that rivaled the size of transport vehicles, the accompanying officers could only stare agape in astonishment.

So many Bug Race bodies, yet present were only... two special forces squads!

Ten people!

"Damn!"

Since when did our soldiers become so strong in combat?

"Basically, he killed most of them," reported the captain of the other squad honestly to the higher-up who queried about the situation.

All eyes then converged on the soldier whose figure remained upright, his body covered in blood yet hardly showing any other injuries.

That soldier was calm, as if the great battle had nothing to do with him.

However, the reality heard from the survivors was that he had nearly single-handedly exterminated the many huge creatures that ambushed the humans.

People might lie, but corpses don't.

The fresh corpses of the Bug Race were the best evidence, even if the feat sounded like a tall tale.

Thus, even the reinforcement soldiers who knew nothing of the incident could only feel deep reverence when they looked at the silent and upright figure under the glow of the lights.

["Lucky Hit" charge +50.]

Sitting in the vehicle on the way back to the city, everyone's bodies swayed, and Likok knew that the soldiers urgently needed rest, but curiosity regarding the full details of the operation tormented him terribly.

"You may ask."

It seems Bai E, who appeared to be resting with his eyes closed, had opened them at some point.

After a substantial consumption of Spiritual Energy, areas like his temples and forehead had always felt a bit swollen and bouncy; even after some rest, he still didn't quite feel accustomed to it.

But considering the eager eyes of the minister who had chased after his own vehicle, full of desire for knowledge, Bai E took the initiative to speak to him.

The moment he received affirmation, Minister Likok immediately became excited, "How did you realize that your signals were being jammed?"

Bai E took out several disfigured sensors and said, "The lights went out."

"Do you know when it happened?"

[I know.]

There was a moment when Bai E had a feeling, but this sensation was too metaphysical; he had not checked the status of the sensors at the time, so it could not be concluded definitively.

Bai E shook his head, "I don't know."

"Did you encounter any unusual circumstances before the sensors failed?"

"No... The other squad didn't either." After a pause, Bai E proactively looked towards Minister Likok and asked, "What about the other squads?"

"They... their situation was probably like yours. We have sent out scout squads to find them, but they didn't send out their location signals like you did, so finding them is going to take some time."

"Oh~"

Likok didn't care about the battle outcome; how the special forces soldiers encountered the attack and how they responded was something for the military officials to consider. As the minister of the information department, he was more concerned with the only technology that bypassed the special blockade in this battle and transmitted their location back to the military district.

"What did you use to send your location back to the reception center?"

"This." Bai E took out the modified device he had prepared earlier.

It was an indescribably ugly creation connected with irregular circuits, but could such a thing have broken the informational blockade?

Likok held it in his hands like a priceless treasure, unwilling to let go.

Research into the object in hand would of course wait until after returning to base, but the excavation of the talent before him could begin now.

"Did you make this yourself?"

"Um..."

"Where did you learn the technology?" Minister Likok asked eagerly.

Everything done in the barracks left records; Bai E discarded the idea of claiming he had learned these skills in the barracks.

"Black Street..." Bai E took out his badge that permitted him to leave the barracks anytime, "I have permission to leave the barracks at any time. In my spare time from training, I would go out and learn some new things."

"Have you considered joining our information department?" Likok looked intently at Bai E, waiting for the soldier who had impressed him twice to respond.

"I'm afraid I am not qualified enough." Bai E modestly lowered his head, "I only assembled it from those ready-made materials; in essence, it's still something you all manufactured."

In the process of creating it just now, Bai E knew he hadn't done anything special. The thing pieced together from various parts probably didn't hold much value.

As for why they were able to bypass the blockade and send information back to the base, perhaps it was because... it's a one-time thing?

Indeed, that was the only explanation.

To prevent Minister Likok from feeling disappointed after analyzing the composition of the modified object, Bai E directly took the initiative to lower his expectations.

"I see..." Minister Likok nodded, quite agreeing with Bai E's statement.

One couldn't always possess technology superior to that of their city's Information Department, let alone learn anything of real value from Black Street.

He was simply impressed by Bai E's comprehension, "But you really catch on fast. Have you considered developing your career with our Information Department? Plus, it's relatively safe here..."

As he spoke, Minister Likok paused suddenly, remembering that the warrior before him was an artificial human, probably indifferent to danger, life, and death.

"No need, Minister," Bai E shook his head, "I still prefer fighting on the front lines."

The atmosphere grew slightly silent, as Minister Likok was not particularly gregarious by nature.

In the quiet, Bai E spoke up again, "Minister, what are your plans regarding the technology after you return?"

"First, to find the source," Likok said softly with a sigh, sounding somewhat melancholic, "This was just a minor special operation with only ten squads involved. If a major operation that we're really counting on is compromised due to misinformation, causing all our arrangements to fall apart, that would be a real problem."

Having their newly rebooted information technology intercepted right off the bat was undoubtedly a tremendous blow to their confidence.

Bai E was stunned upon hearing this.

Yes...

This was just a minor military operation. Even if the enemy were to annihilate all ten of their squads, what significant advantage would they gain?

The Bug Race's intelligence would not fail to see such an obvious fact. Revealing this trump card during a critical large-scale battle to instantly sever human communications would undoubtedly be more effective in crushing humanity's foundation.

Logically speaking, if they willingly exposed this ability, it was either meant to instill fear in humans,

To tell humans that the Bug Race was strong in this regards, discouraging any further development in this area from humankind.

Or...

Bai E thought about his last retreat from the Bug Race battlefield.

"What if we can't find it?" Bai E asked subconsciously.

"Can't find it?" Likok murmured to himself before shaking his head decidedly, "If we can't find it, we'll keep searching. Our hard-won technology that we've finally picked up, there's now no threat from the electronic demons, so there's no reason to give up. Moreover, our predecessors' technology has never been afraid of any competitors aside from the electronic demons. If our technology is still insufficient to shield against any influences, it simply means our current technology isn't enough. Regardless, we cannot give up the information technology we've finally reclaimed."

"..."

Another possibility highlighted itself at that moment.

Bai E, who had faced the Bug Race's attacks twice, seemed to have a far more intuitive understanding of their purposes than others.

With rational consideration, the Bug Race would never engage in futile acts. A trump card capable of effectively striking at human strength would definitely be used in an even more suitable, larger scenario.

Unless their purpose was indeed to make humans wary... to prompt humans to value and elevate their technological advancement to higher levels.

Just like how that dominant behemoth Bug had allowed him to rescue so many human soldiers in the previous battle.

Exterminating humanity was never the primary objective of those Bugs.

They must have some demand from humans, unfathomable to them for the time being.

The train carriage fell silent for a moment.

Bright headlights pierced through the darkness on this deep night, as the massive rescue convoy carrying the fourteen sand worms that Bai E and the others had killed drove back to the military camp.

The journey was swift.

The trembling of the ground traveled deep into the earth, and as if feeling these vibrations, a pair of mountainous "crystals" suddenly lit up in the deep underground...

...

"He killed eleven sand worms by himself?"

"He extracted the essence of the Bug Race all by himself too?"

"Even the distress signal was his handiwork?"

The officer in charge of recording military merits was somewhat vexed, tugging at his hair.

"How much merit is that worth..."

Experience more on empire

"No, wait, it's this kid again!"

["Lucky Strike" charge +1.]

Chapter 324 Captain qualification

"The operation achieved decent results,"

"Although there were significant personnel losses, with ten squads dispatched and only two squads totaling four people returning, one of those is disabled."

"We also uncovered what is likely a new aspect of the Bug Race—they have a certain capability in information technology, which we'll need to guard against in the future. Minister Likok from the Information Department of the Scientific Research Institute is already focusing on this research."

"Hmm..." Weslin nodded, indicating he was aware of the general outcome of the operation.

"Additionally, of the two squads that returned, one is left with only its captain, while the captain of the other is disabled, leaving just two members. How should we deal with their unit assignments?"

"Deal with such matters yourselves—just follow the standard procedures," Weslin could not be bothered with these trivialities. There were set rules and regulations in place for this kind of thing, no need for his attention.

"Yes, sir!" The aide-de-camp nodded in response.

"Knock, knock, knock!" Suddenly, there was a knocking at the door, and a visitor had arrived outside the closed door of the office.

A guard at the door loyally announced the visitor, "Camp Commanders Carlos and Hamilton request to see the Marshal."

Weslin's brows furrowed slightly, and he replied, "Come in."

Hamilton was the first to enter, taking hurried and heavy steps, "Marshal, I heard that the soldiers sent on this mission have returned?"

Carlos, following behind, watched the speaking Hamilton and kept silent. What the other man said was exactly what he wanted to ask.

"Yes, what about it?"

"One of the mech pilots from our armored battalion was a reserve. Although he survived this mission, I think such military operations are still too dangerous for him. As you know, it's not easy for us to train any mech pilot capable of maneuvering a mecha, and dying in such a place would be a waste of talent."

It was no secret among high-ranking officers that the team capturing sand worms had been ambushed by the Bug Race and all communication signals with the base had been severed. The large-scale deployment couldn't be hidden from them, and with a little inquiry, they would know why there was an urgent mobilization.

Before coming here, Hamilton had already inquired about the surviving combatants who had returned. He was relieved to hear that the unique artificial human soldier was still alive, but the next moment, he thought to come to the Marshal to voice his opinion.

After hearing a few words, Weslin knew what the other was aiming for and prompted, "So?"

"So, I'm applying for his removal from the special forces unit assignment and for him to become fully integrated into our armored battalion."

Having two unit assignments was rare enough in the military you could count such individuals on one hand.

Bai E.

Only that special artificial human soldier enjoyed such honor. Weslin hadn't seen the personnel list for this mission, but now knew who Hamilton was talking about.

This caused a troubled expression to form, "Him... That was a conclusion we all discussed and agreed upon at the time. I'm afraid it's not good to change it on a whim."

"Even if he is a mech pilot from your armored battalion, he should still see some action, right?" Carlos, who had been standing behind, finally spoke up, "Last time on the battlefield if just one of your men had a firmer will, they wouldn't have led so many with Titan-class armaments to total annihilation."

Carlos never opposed letting Bai E take risks. In this era, no one could grow up safely without facing danger.

This era had not only physical enemies like bugs and beastmen but also spiritual adversaries like high-dimensional demons. Without confronting these kinds of difficulties and dangers while honing their skills and minds, human warriors would never be able to truly stand on their own.

In this era, there were no indispensable people. For the future of all humanity, every human was expendable.

"You..." Hamilton's face darkened, but Weslin interrupted.

"So, Carlos, what brings you here?" Weslin did not want to deal with Hamilton, a forceful officer who, once set on something, would use all means to achieve it, occasionally becoming quite a headache.

"I came to ask if the natural human status reward we talked about for Bai E still stands?"

"Of course it does." For a warrior he also valued, Weslin was more than willing to help.

"Great. He has made significant contributions in this battle, and he himself is also interested in promotion. Given that his squad captain has been seriously injured and disabled in this battle, why not let him become the squad captain, also granting him the highest coordination rights at the same level and priority in personnel selection?"

Highest coordination rights at the same level meant that during joint missions by special forces squads, one could directly exercise command over everyone involved.

The reason why the hierarchy of command between the three special forces squads that last went to support the refugees was so readily established is precisely this.

When separated, they each command their own squad, but during a joint mission, it equates to being a mid-level officer.

As for prioritizing the selection of personnel... it's that when a new team is formed, the captain can freely choose from the regular roster the people needed, generally only newly assigned unit captains have this privilege, while reconstructed units simply get what they are given.

Weslin furrowed his brow and asked, "Are the military achievements sufficient?"

Carlos nodded, "Sufficient."

"Then let's do that," Weslin waved his hand, and seeing Hamilton wanting to say something, he hurriedly interrupted, "That's settled then, there are established regulations for this, no need to report these routine matters to me in the future."

"Yes! Marshal!"

...

Tiger was leaving the camp.

Leaning on a walking stick, he moved with difficulty; in his bones he had a bit of stubborn pride and would not want his former teammates to support him, he wasn't that frail yet.

"Let us take you there," You said with some reluctance, looking at her former captain. Even after Bai E's emergency rescue and subsequent treatment in the medical bay, Tiger's face, due to the significant blood loss, still looked abnormally pale.

"No need," Tiger smiled cheerfully, surprisingly looking forward to future life, "My old comrades are all waiting for me outside, they've been living on Black Street for so long, I can go straight to them, there won't be any problem."

Even if they didn't know each other or had never met, just by virtue of being disabled veterans driven out by the military, they were naturally brothers, and occasional contact meant they were aware of each other's existence.

"But you right now..." You's character was just as stubborn, her eyes fixed on Tiger's empty trouser leg, biting her lip trying to insist.

"Go back!" Tiger's expression darkened, his authoritative captain's demeanor on display once again, "Remember! You are warriors of the city, personal feelings should not waste too much of your time. Every second you have should be spent for the sake of all humanity."

You's lips trembled, she firmly responded, "Yes! Captain!"

Tiger looked back nostalgically at the neatly arranged tents in the distance, that was his past life.

After one last glance, Tiger turned decisively, "I'm off."

"Captain..." Bai E, who had been silent until now, stepped forward with a smile at the corner of his mouth, "You can recover and be normal."

Bai E never spoke without purpose, Tiger's heart skipped a beat, he waved his hand, "We'll talk if there's chance... I'm off."

Watching Tiger's staggering figure leave, it was a long time before Bai E said to You, "Let's go back." Find adventures on empire

"Yeah..." You nodded obediently.

After they parted, Bai E turned and left the camp.

As for Tiger going to live on Black Street, Gilder would look after him somewhat, so he wouldn't be at a disadvantage, hence he was not too worried.

Regarding the body...

He had received feedback from Wen Jie concerning human modification technology, and among the items that dropped during the two surges, there were biotechnological components for human biomechanical modification. With both the technology and hardware available, restoring normal human mobility might not be so far-fetched.

Noon, Bai E, facing the sunlight, arrived at the underground storage facility in the wilderness.

Gilder and the Rat People had begun to reside permanently in Black Street, and players habitually waited here.

"My Lord..."

"Hmm~" Bai E nodded, his gaze serene, "How has Black Street been these past few days?"

"Black Street..." Dai Lian repeated softly, recalling the management of Black Street in the past days.

Chapter 325 Do you have a dream?

Managing Black Street was a novelty not only for its original residents but also for the players.

At the start of their jobs, the players were full of interest; besides meeting their daily work targets, they roamed around Black Street with nothing particular in mind.

Once they donned the uniforms provided by Gilder, several players felt like they were part of a city management team, consciously wielding supreme authority.

Black Street was neither too big nor too small. Explore hidden tales at empire

All kinds of small workshops cooperating with each other were nestled among the households, while farming the land and raising livestock required venturing even further afield.

These tasks had always been undertaken by someone, just not on a large scale. Moreover, they were susceptible to being undone by various natural and man-made disasters.

Those involved in production never enjoyed the fruits of their labor, while the idle and arrogant could squander resources at will.

Black Street had not been without order or rules in the past, but they were so fragile they could be shattered with a single poke, like a sheet of paper.

That's why the old Black Street always seemed so gloomy and grey, suffused with a deathly stillness.

Picking everything up again, there was suddenly a vibrant and thriving vitality.

Of course, doing things they had never done or were unaccustomed to always required learning.

Everyone needed to undergo military drills and standardized training; the sheer number of miscellaneous tasks was overwhelming.

However, everything was arranged in an orderly manner.

That elderly man named Gilder was truly remarkable. The adult organization was indeed teeming with talent, with each member pulled out at random possessing such managerial skills.

A few patrolling players sighed to themselves until they reached the edge of a piece of land being cultivated, where Gong Yan suddenly stopped.

She watched a few people swinging hoes in the field and noticed the red glow above their heads.

Hatred...

But one among them did not have it.

These were the underlings of the previous gang boss, Wallis. The more evil acts they committed or assistance they lent to tyranny in the past, the heavier their current burden of drudgery.

A person must always pay the price for their actions—whether now or in the future...

That was the origin of their identity.

As these pieces of information flashed through her mind, Gong Yan maintained a gentle smile on her face. She removed her delicate leather boots, paying no mind to the damp black mud of the cultivated land, and walked barefoot towards them.

With each step sinking deep or just grazing the surface.

The others considered following, but, glancing at the black mud under their feet, they dismissed the idea.

Yanzi was driven by curiosity; let her be...

Gong Yan, with hands clasped behind her, approached the only colorless man.

"Hey!"

The stray dog looked up and was momentarily dazed by the radiant smile of the girl before him, "Sir... Sir."

"Tired?" Gong Yan giggled, her eyes tenderly focused.

The man in front of her didn't look very old, his face still showing some youthfulness. However, long-term malnutrition made him appear rather frail.

"Not tired... not tired..." The breathless stray dog quickly tucked his mud-caked hands behind his back, and his dark feet attempted to burrow into the ground as he pressed them downward.

Soon after, the stray dog realized how dirty he was.

Even his clothes were filthy...

"You can rest if you're tired," Gong Yan said cheerfully, "From what I've seen of the work targets you need to meet, the six of you working together should have it easy."

The stray dog cautiously looked back and, without seeing anything, knew that several burning gazes were fixed on his back.

"Not tired... I enjoy this work," the stray dog replied earnestly, flashing a simple smile with slightly yellowed teeth.

"Hmm~" Gong Yan nodded, neither approving nor disapproving, but then she asked, "Do you know what the purpose of the work you are doing is?"

"Purpose?" The stray dog blinked in bewilderment, recalling the words of the "spokesperson" from the morning assembly—

"The purpose of your work is to make sure each of you can eat a meal, wear clothes that fit, and then continue working, eating better meals, wearing better clothes. Until one day, you won't have to struggle for your livelihood, finding your true pursuit in life. Remember, your work is never for us adults! It's for yourselves!"

"The production reports you produce every day will be posted on the bulletin board for all to see. How much work you do, how many resources you use, everything will be clearly displayed. No one can slack

off, but nobody will be treated unfairly either. Everything that comes from you will ultimately be for you!"

The spokesperson's words were straightforward, without any complex and incomprehensible jargon.

Compared to the words about "equality, freedom, happiness" that the adult had mentioned the night he saved everyone in the street, these seemed far more substantial.

Of course, the adult must have his purposes; it was only that he didn't understand them at the moment.

The only thing he did understand was...

"The purpose of work is to support myself."

"Cough cough cough!" A few coughs suddenly came from behind.

The stray dog's gaze flickered with panic for a moment, and then he looked down, not daring to meet the eyes of the "Law Enforcement Team" again. "Sir, you should leave now; I need to get back to work."

His voice was low, tinged with guilt.

"One last question..." Gong Yan raised her tender, jade-like index finger, grinning as she asked, "Do you have a dream?"

"A dream?" The word left the "stray dog" staring blankly.

A dream? What is a dream?

Money, guns, women!

Who on Black Street wouldn't envy someone like the previous gang boss Wallis?

But... is that kind of life really what I want?

He must be very lonely too, right?

When he looked at someone, they subconsciously looked away.

When he wanted to talk, others would just hum and haw in response.

He had money, guns, and women.

But it didn't seem all that enviable.

Maybe it was enviable before.

After all, compared to the days when I followed the boss like a lapdog, grovelling behind the underlings' underlings, and punching and kicking the even more lowly common folk while laughing and cursing, a life like boss Wallis's was certainly better.

But compared to now... every day I wake up with a purpose, and after finishing our tasks, we can all gather and chat and boast as equals.

The brave ones can even try to strike up a conversation with the girl... the girl they admire.

The same goes for girls... the girls now seem more attractive than the disheveled women in the boss's arms back then.

Why is that?

Wild Dog couldn't figure it out.

But regardless, this kind of life was much more interesting than before.

Work was always fresh.

Each day was new.

Not like before, when I lived a single day like it was a lifetime.

Now, a day is just a day.

Wild Dog didn't want anyone to disrupt these fresh new days, so he was always reluctant to get involved in the things his companions discussed privately.

This new life is so good, he didn't understand why those people weren't happy.

But dreams...

What are dreams? No one ever taught him that word.

"I don't know, ma'am..." Wild Dog said with a pair of confused eyes, blankly staring at the bright girl in front of him.

'She is so pretty... prettier than all the women I've seen before.'

"Set one for yourself... maybe one day, it'll really come true~"

Gong Yan waved her hand and turned to leave.

Arriving at the clear flowing stream, Gong Yan stretched her feet into the water to wash off the dark mud, her fair feet gradually returning to their original appearance under the water's flow.

"What were you talking about with him for so long?" Dai Lian asked curiously, standing aside.

When everyone was together, Yanzi rarely had her own opinions, but whenever she took action, there was definitely a deep meaning behind it.

Gong Yan turned her head back, smiling radiantly in the sun, "It's exciting... the only innocent flower among some unaccepting rebel rousers— isn't that a fun thing?"

"There are rebels?" Kuang Xin immediately picked up his axe, "I'll go chop them down!"

Maintaining the stability of Black Street was their mission.

"They haven't actually done anything yet." Gu Lan, the older sister character, rolled her eyes at Kuang Xin. After spending a couple of days together, she had learned about this guy's straightforward nature.

If they were to punish without due cause before any wrongdoings had been committed, it would be a minor issue for the Law Enforcement Team's prestige to be damaged, but losing the trust of the residents of Black Street and shaking the foundation of E's governance would be the real trouble.

As for how Gong Yan discovered it...

Gu Lan took a deep glance at the girl's back, being a woman herself, she understood all too well the little schemes of this woman.

In the presence of others, she always allowed others to show off, and to some extent, Dai was the "puppet" she had pushed forward, yet the development of any event had never escaped her control.

Impressive.

But not detestable.

One could only say... admirable.

The friends I've made in the game, each one indeed has their own excellence.

"So what should we do?" Kuang Xin asked, looking bewildered.

"Ask the boss~" Gong Yan shrugged, "The boss will see things more clearly than us."

...

Faced with the question posed by Dai Lian, Bai E slightly furrowed his brows.

Unaccepting?

Normal.

People who were wild and suddenly shackled would naturally feel resentful.

But as Gu Lan had said, without any actual facts of wrongdoing, others would certainly not comply if they were punished.

"Don't worry about it," Bai E instructed softly, "Be vigilant, watch out for people who might be involved, but until they actually act, do not disturb their normal lives."

"But, sir... what if they cause some sort of loss we can't accept?"

Bai E smiled, "It's okay, we can accept anything."

Chapter 326 Black Street Veteran

After assigning the players their tasks, Bai E made his way straight to Black Street.

Since the captain had ventured into Black Street, it was only proper to drop by and give him special attention.

Watching the man leave, Dai Lian simply pinched his chin and muttered to himself, "Why do I feel like the boss has changed a bit..."

"Right?...I think so too." Kuang Xin nodded earnestly.

"The look in his eyes." Xu Ruoguang, who had been silent up until now, pointed out the key issue from behind, "The boss's gaze is more murderous than last time we met."

"Murderous... what are you reading so many novels for?" Gu Lan tapped Xu Ruoguang's head with his finger.

But Xu Ruoguang stubbornly pushed back, "That's exactly it."

"It's the look in his eyes." Dai Lian also agreed.

With this reminder from Xu Ruoguang, he too realized where the unsettling feeling came from—it was indeed the look in the eyes.

When confronted with the man's gaze, Dai Lian felt an unprecedented pressure.

The boss today seemed unusually calm, like the deep sea brewing a colossal wave, or a volcano poised to erupt.

Was the boss angry?

Why?

"But he's cooler now~" Kuang Xin's eyes sparkled, admiring how their boss was becoming increasingly stylish.

So lovable~

...

Gilder was dealing with a significant amount of data.

He needed to tally the daily consumption of everyone in Black Street and the volume of work completed each day; he didn't trust anyone else with this job.

Mainly because there weren't any trustworthy individuals yet. The management of Black Street had just started, and it would take some time to assess the local people before choosing those who were capable and wouldn't harbor ulterior motives.

Until then, it was only him who could complete the boss's tasks.

Fortunately, he had the help of the Mouse People. Despite not having systematic training or the corresponding experiences, these creatures were intelligent by nature, learning casually from following along, and they could handle simple data summarization and processing without any issues.

This kind of work consumed a large part of his day.

When Bai E arrived, Gilder was still buried in his work at the desk.

"Bo... Boss?" When Gilder lifted his head from the desk, his mind was still sluggish from the data, and his eyes took a moment to focus.

"You've worked hard."

"Not at all!" Gilder promptly responded, "The greatest fortune of my life is your willingness to trust me."

Being able to dedicate oneself to an area of expertise and toil happily was undeniably a source of happiness.

The words the boss spoke might be incomprehensible to the average person, but Gilder took them to heart.

Perhaps, only after coming here, did his aging life truly start to take shape.

["Lucky Strike" charge +3.]

"..." Bai E pursed his lips, not expecting that a high "loyalty level" could increase his charge from just a casual remark.

Read new chapters at empire

"I've come to ask you something." Bai E didn't waste time with pleasantries. Business didn't require it.

"Speak."

"Is there a group in Black Street made up of veterans who've retired from the military? All of them with disabilities?"

Gilder, who by now had completely grasped the structure of Black Street, confirmed without hesitation, "There is! Are you looking for them, Boss?"

"Not necessarily," Bai E lightly shook his head, "I'm just inquiring about their condition. A comrade from my military days just retired from the barracks today and will likely join the old soldiers, so I wanted to understand their situation."

"They..." Gilder frowned, seemingly unsure how to explain before he finally asked, "You should know about the secret deals between the military and Black Street, right?"

"I do."

Gilder nodded, "The main people handling those were that group of veterans."

Handling such business meant that those people were no longer as "pure" as when they were in the military.

Soldiers born as Artificial Humanity start with a blank slate, but stepping into a dog-eat-dog place like Black Street, if they don't learn some cunning, they would be the first to die.

So even though these are old soldiers who left the battlefield due to injuries, their current situations are actually pretty complicated.

"Dealing with them is also tricky. For now, we only let them manually craft firearms and bullets, refine gunpowder, while those with prosthetic limbs can also take on hunting and the like. You have said that no organization of more than three people is allowed in Black Street, but personally, I think these veterans still keep in touch privately."

After all, they are merely managers installed by the Arbitration Place due to pressure, and many of the original residents have their own life paths and won't completely obey instructions from such appointed managers.

Yes, managing, not ruling,

The control Gilder, including the guard comprising players, had over the place was far from being absolute.

"However, those veterans are clear-headed; they abide by our decrees and even help us maintain order voluntarily. I do plan to select some of them to form a guard unit for Black Street."

The affairs of Black Street should be managed by its people.

Relying solely on the boss's subordinates, who are somewhat odd and naive youngsters, was never a long-term solution.

After all, the management of Black Street is just beginning.

Bai E nodded.

A group with strong cohesion that outwardly follows commands but privately sticks together for warmth?

That's pretty normal.

This management will likely require more attention, but for individuals who can join, it might still be a good thing.

Tiger shouldn't suffer any hardships...

Gilder observed cautiously, "You have a good relationship with your comrade?"

"Yes, quite good."

"For him, that veterans' community should be a good place; they really take care of their own. And when they make some money, they often help others get fitted with prosthetics. Although the quality of those prosthetics isn't great, at least they're usable."

That's good.

Bai E nodded.

Everyone has their own life path. If the tiger could have his own life outside of the barracks, that would be a decent outcome.

...

"Dong dong dong~"

The tiger, following the address, found the legendary "Veterans' Nest".

He had only heard of it, and this was his first visit.

In truth, the words he had said were meant for You to hear. As for the arrangement of his own life... he had never considered ending his life in this way.

He was a warrior, meant to die on the battlefield.

Having cheated death, he found himself plunged into confusion.

Perhaps... those experienced veterans could help him find a new meaning in life.

With a sense of trepidation, the tiger knocked at the gate.

"Squeak~"

The gate opened, revealing a tall man with visible metal prosthetics gazing coldly outside.

Upon seeing the newcomer, with one hand, one leg, leaning on a crutch... and especially the black iron tag on his chest inscribed with characters, his face instantly lit up with a comforting, amiable smile.

"You've come..."

Even without having met before, the bond between veterans dispensed with any sense of strangeness.

The tiger also saw the iron tag on the other man's chest and the smile on his face, which instantly soothed his slightly anxious heart.

"Yes... I've come."

"Come on in!" The man stepped aside, making room without any attempt to offer support.

They all came from that same tough stage of life; veterans had their own resilience and needed no pity for their perceived weaknesses.

"Alright."

The tiger stepped over the threshold with difficulty, taking in the arrangement inside.

The so-called Veterans' Nest was a small courtyard with individual houses for everyone.

"Come, let me take you to meet everyone." The host led the way with warmth.

As they walked, the tiger heard mechanical operations and grinding noises, looking curiously in that direction, only to have his view blocked by walls.

"We're making guns and ammunition," the leading veteran explained considerately, detailing everything about the place, "It's not safe out there. Everyone needs a means to protect themselves."

"Oh~" The tiger nodded.

"The brothers you're about to meet aren't all of us; some have formed a hunting team and gone out to hunt wildlife for the whole of Black Street."

The tiger was taken aback, "The whole Black Street?"

"Yes..." the veteran laughed heartily, "Due to some unexpected events, we now have a unified leader here. Everyone living here needs to work daily, serving all people."

Although that day Wallis didn't dare to provoke these veterans out of the barracks, they were witnesses to the demonic incident.

Living here, none could escape it.

"Oh~" The tiger, not a man of many words, simply nodded again to show he understood.

He had been to Black Street a few times before but had never heard of any unified leader.

But someone who could bring the entire Black Street together must be an extraordinary figure.

"Pat pat pat~" The leading veteran arrived in the open space in the center of the courtyard and clapped his hands, his voice resonant.

"Brothers, a new brother has joined us."

The courtyard consisted of many houses, none of them large, and even though everyone had their own space, the habits developed in the barracks were never forgotten.

At the leading veteran's call, the mechanical noises abruptly fell silent.

Figures emerged from all directions.

"A new brother?"

"Hahaha, another brother has come?"

Standing in place, the tiger slowly turned in a circle, his eyes meeting the sincere, welcoming gazes of the other veterans, and his eyes inadvertently began to fill with tears.

In the midst of a bustling welcome, the leading veteran patted the tiger's shoulder, "Brother, it's rare that you've managed to snatch your life back from the battlefield. From now on, this is your home."

"Home..."

The tiger's mind felt a bit foggy.

He had no clue how he might start his new life, and his brothers' enthusiasm overwhelmed his thoughts for a moment.

Before he realized it, he had been led into an empty room.

"Sit."

The room had only a simple bed and two chairs. The leading veteran pulled out a chair for the tiger and sat down first, patting the adjacent chair, saying,

"Hmm."

"Where did you get injured?" The other's eyes were fixed on the tiger, full of seriousness.

The warm welcome was one thing, but now that they were going to be brothers, it was time to get to know each other.

"Catching bugs."

"Hunting for the Scientific Research Institute?" A cold light flickered in the leading veteran's eyes.

Chapter 327 Conspiracy

From where do the raw materials for the creation of those Gene Optimization Solutions come?

It's still reliant on soldiers occasionally going out to "hunt." After all, not every battle is a decisive major confrontation, and such small-scale military operations are commonplace.

However, the soldier who brings back the most raw materials almost never gets to enjoy the final products made from those materials...

Tiger didn't notice the fleeting resentment in the other party's tone. He knew what was being said, but he spoke with some conflict, "Yes, and no. The target is a kind of new insect, never seen before. We're responsible for capturing them or bringing back their corpses."

"Hmm?" The veteran leading the way was startled, sounding slightly worried, "New types of insects again?"

No matter where they are or what they've gone through, a sense of responsibility for the fate of all humanity has always been a commandment ingrained in them at the genetic level.

"Yes... Ones that can burrow underground. They seem to have evolved specifically for the purpose of launching surprise attacks and destroying our vehicles," said Tiger, his tone filled with sighs, hardly able to imagine how humanity's armies would face the sudden assaults from these creatures emerging from beneath the ground in future battles.

"..." The veteran leading the way remained silent for a moment, then shook his head and scoffed, "It doesn't concern us anymore."

"..." Tiger didn't make any sound in response.

Doesn't concern us anymore?

Perhaps...

The other didn't inquire further, instead shifting the topic, "Which unit were you with before you came here?"

"The special squad... as the captain."

"Whoa! Impressive, brother! They don't care about someone of your level? Don't you have much military merit left?"

"..." Tiger was silent for a moment before responding, "I'm from the physical enhancement series."

Stay tuned to empire

A ruined body means no more value.

If abilities mainly rely on the physical form, and the physical form is no longer intact, replacing it with cybernetic limbs also becomes meaningless.

The leading veteran sighed, "... That's how they are."

Tiger shook his head, "The military really shouldn't waste resources on me."

The old soldier's gaze scanned Tiger's face carefully, said nothing more, only patted his shoulder, then stood up and walked out.

"I'll go get you some living supplies. As for your body... we'll find a way."

"..." Watching the other walk out through the empty doorway, Tiger's eyes became somewhat sharp.

He wasn't foolish.

In his words, the other seemed to be deliberately or unintentionally stirring up his resentment.

Of course... it might also be possible that they themselves harbored resentment, merely unable to hold back their complaints after seeing him.

But no matter what, artificial soldiers should not have such thoughts!

...

The old soldier who left the room ran into another one, "How's it going?"

"Quite loyal."

"Loyal? Who isn't loyal..." The other veteran sighed as he approached, "He'll understand in the future... Let's hold off on the limb issue for now, and don't contact the 'doctor' just yet."

"I know..."

...

Finally, a period of stable growth arrived. The Lord of the house had no missions, and the feeling of being able to see him every day was terrific!

Clearing small BOSSes in the wild, patrolling Black Street, constructing secret underground bases.

The schedule was packed, and every two days, there was enough contribution and experience to learn new skills.

The only regret was... why hadn't Wallis's former subordinates staged a rebellion yet?

According to Yanzi, their resentment was nearly bursting through the skies, and occasionally when they looked at them, members of the Black Street Patrol Guard, it was as if they were shooting daggers with their eyes.

What are they waiting for?

What are they waiting for?

Hurry it up!

"What are we patrolling today? They're all resting."

This was Black Street's first day off, working six days and resting one in a week.

During the continuous patrol days leading up to it, no incidents had been spotted, making the contribution points for managing Black Street seem like a giveaway, so much so that Kuang Xin didn't want to waste any more time on it today.

After the novelty wore off, patrolling every day without any incident became truly dull.

"What if something happens..." Dai Lian became even more cautious, firmly believing that there is no such thing as a free lunch in the game.

How could there be such benefits every day? The more nothing happened, the more anxious and nervous he felt.

Even if this game was ultra-realistic, it still had to abide by the basic theorem of games: no reward without effort.

"And it's precisely because today is the first day off that we must be even more careful!" The daily work consumed a great deal of everyone's physical and mental energy, many things could not be done even with the willingness to act.

Today, with everyone resting for the whole day, might be just the opportunity those with ulterior motives were waiting for.

We must be even more vigilant.

"Look, over there."

As they walked, Gu Lan's calm voice suddenly rang out.

The few people who were talking looked in the direction she was pointing.

It was indeed Wallis's men, four of the former gang leaders.

...

"Hey! Stray Dog! I've seen that chick from the guard frequently looking for you these past few days, she hasn't fallen for you, has she?"

"No, no!" Stray Dog hastily waved his hands, the vivid smile of a beautiful figure appearing involuntarily in his mind, "How could I dare think that."

A girl like that was simply angelic, someone he couldn't even dream of coveting, even considering it felt like committing a crime.

"I don't care if you have or haven't!" The other man grabbed Stray Dog by the collar, "The things we told you, you haven't spilled them, have you!"

"No! Cough, cough!" Stray Dog felt his chest tighten but dared not resist, just managed to respond with difficulty, "No! I haven't!"

"That's good!"

Stray Dog was thrown to the ground and heard the other's threat, "We haven't done anything yet, it's all just talk, they have no evidence against us. But if they hear something from you... Hmph! The first one to die will be that chick! I guarantee it."

"Hey! What are you doing?" A voice came from afar, Kuang Xin, with an axe in hand and a cold look in his eyes, walked briskly towards these scumbags.

If they wanted to stir trouble, they should just do it; this dawdling made them anxiously on edge even when carrying out tasks elsewhere, and it was not pleasant.

"Hmph." The leader of the three men who had gathered gave a cold snort, gave Stray Dog a warning look, and then turned and walked away.

"Are you okay?" Gong Yan approached, her voice gently coming in close to inquire.

Remembering the warning from the blond man, Stray Dog kept his head low and did not dare to look at her.

"No... no problem, my lord, we were just chatting and joking." Saying this, he ran off towards a direction without purpose, not daring to look back.

Only at a corner far from his former companions and away from the guard did Stray Dog lean against a wall, panting heavily as if out of breath.

"Huff~ Huff~"

So annoying!

So annoying!

Why, when life was now so wonderful, were these people still thinking of rebellion?

Could it really get any better?

How could it!

"Hello~"

A lilting clear voice suddenly reached his ears.

Stray Dog looked up and saw a bright, stunning girl wearing a red and black tight long dress, holding a longsword, and looking radiant.

'Looks familiar.'

That was the first thought that jumped into Stray Dog's mind.

But he didn't recognize her.

His gaze swept indifferently across the girl's face, and Stray Dog quickly looked away, not daring to take another glance.

"Excuse me, are you a resident here?"

"Ah yes... I am."

"I'm from elsewhere..."

Franca smiled brightly, using her Spiritual Energy to create a disguise that gave these people a vague cognitive barrier to her identity, allowing her to observe Black Street under the "mysterious lord's" management as a completely unknown person.

Chapter 328 Happiness

At least a week had elapsed under the management of that esteemed individual since the last demon incident on Black Street.

So regardless of what kind of policies the "mysterious figure" had put in place, by now they should have already manifested tangible effects. Your next read awaits at empire

She wanted to see what Black Street, once tainted by demons, could become under the governance of that individual.

"I wish to settle down here, but I simply do not know what life is like for everyone here," Franca said with a smile brimming with laughter, as she looked at the man before her whose complexion was sallow and whose body was emaciated from hunger.

"Life, ah~" The Stray Dog was stunned and a silly smile spread across his face.

His mind was not burdened with many thoughts and could not entertain considerations on multiple threads.

Talking about current life, the minor annoyances he had were instantly forgotten, "It's wonderful! Life is now so good, miss!"

More people were willing to join the big family that was Black Street, and the lady appeared to have quite the temperament—wasn't this all a good thing?

Perhaps in the future, we might all become friends...

Heh heh! Friends!

The Stray Dog enthusiastically introduced the current way of life to the potential friend before him.

"Now we all have to work every day. The boss says..."

Before he had finished speaking, the miss interrupted him impatiently, "But I haven't seen you work all day as I walked by today... Everyone was chatting, resting."

"Because today is a day off. We work six days and rest one day. Only with ample rest can we perform better at work. The leader said this is called a balance between work and leisure."

"Oh~" Franca only smiled, eyes narrowing.

That seemed to hark back to the Golden Age—nowadays... nowadays those "rules" were no longer followed.

"And actually, each day's work does not require much time. Miss, do you know? In the past, we didn't need to strain ourselves every day just to survive. If each of us works for a period of time every day, it is actually very easy to sustain everyone."

"Oh?" Franca raised an eyebrow, "How do you know that?"

As someone from Black Street with limited horizons, it should be difficult to observe the living conditions of every other person from a higher perspective.

"We've got ledgers, miss," the Stray Dog said, his eyes dancing, and his typically timid personality seemed to radiate with light at the moment, "The bulletin board lists our daily output and consumption. It is updated daily, always reflecting the statistics from the previous day."

Resources produced—

Food and daily necessities could be stored for use.

Handicrafts could be traded abroad, and the money from trades could purchase resources needed on Black Street.

Resources were managed and stored collectively.

Gone was the money, gone were the trades, gone was the competition, gone was the idea that if someone else had more, one would have less.

As long as everyone completed the daily production, the resources needed for a normal life could actually keep on growing.

That was too unbelievable!

The Stray Dog learned for the first time that life... didn't have to rely on taking survival materials from others to be fulfilled.

"Come come come! Let me show you," the Stray Dog said enthusiastically, leading the way and proudly presenting everything Black Street had as if he were showing off his own home.

"This is just the beginning. The food we had in the past was quite inferior, and the variety was very limited."

Mostly some plant tubers and animal meat, or a small amount of synthetic food produced within the city.

"But we're cultivating land now. Yesterday they brought seeds, and seeds can grow into grains, can be used for brewing, can make bread... We've also installed nets in the lake so our fish fry won't stray outside... The Guard is clearing threats from the surroundings every day, and the game they catch can also be added to our food reserves..."

Humans are amazing.

We are amazing.

It turns out that life is really simple when people work together...

"Look, this is the land we have cultivated..."

"Look, this is the spinning wheel we use for weaving garments..."

"This is the water wheel..."

"This is the workshop..."

All of this, we've built with our own hands.

The Stray Dog ran around with Franca, introducing every little detail of his home with exceptional care.

A gentle smile hung on Franca's lips as she listened quietly to the ramblings of this ordinary, but happily hearted Black Street resident until she finally spoke softly, "So this boss that you've been talking about, do you like him?"

"Like him! I think everyone probably likes him... The boss doesn't come by often. On the few occasions he has, he talked to us a lot... A lot of what he said I didn't understand, like things about life, goals, freedom, and stuff. But I don't know why, I just enjoy listening to the boss talk. Whenever I see the boss,

I feel happy, as if everything is good. To be more concrete, his spokesperson says that I like to hear the boss say those incomprehensible words... just listening to them is very... very... very joyful! Yes, that's the feeling... I wish the boss could visit us more... But a person as formidable as him probably has many places that need him more."

"Oh, miss, where do you plan to stay?" The Stray Dog seemed to finally remember the substance of the matter, a bit embarrassed as he scratched the back of his head—blaming himself for getting excited and forgetting the time, which caused it to be already late.

The sun had set.

But the sun will always rise again.

"We might have to start work tomorrow only."

"Okay~" Franca smiled, her eyes narrowed, and she readily agreed.

As an officer of Arbitration Place, she was accustomed to dealing with the ugly matters related to demons.

This kind of ordinary and pure happiness was something she was encountering for the first time, filled with a novel feeling.

...

The spokesperson's house was not more impressive than ordinary houses.

Nor was it much larger than ordinary houses.

However, at the moment, shadows crowded the entrance.

Those shadows stood silently in the darkness, like so many walking corpses, wordless and creating a heavy atmosphere.

"Sching!"

The Longsword half-drew from its sheath, revealing a glint of cold light.

Chapter 329 Betrayal

The crowd that silently watched the spokesperson's house on the street remained utterly silent, the atmosphere was as still as death—none of the silent figures even spared a glance for the two wild dogs who had brought Franca along.

The mood was eerily bizarre.

Leading them was the group of ragged henchmen the wild dog knew.

One of the henchmen, with a slovenly posture and a hunched back, leaned against the door of the spokesperson's house, knocking on it languidly as if drained of all strength.

While knocking, he shouted, "Old man! Open up! Old man! Open the door! We've got business with you!"

"Bang Bang Bang Bang!" The force of his knocking grew stronger, causing the door to resound with thuds.

Gilder, who was inside the room tallying accounts, suddenly looked up, his aged face revealing a look of worry.

A familiar feeling...

The Master was right, those who had lived through the demon disaster were more prone to corruption, but he had already asked the Master's guard to keep a strict watch over these people—how did they

The rat-man immediately scurried to the corner wall, his keen sense of danger making him instinctively flee from any threat that could endanger him.

It was only because he remembered he had to obey the Master's order to protect the old man, otherwise, he would have already been digging a tunnel three feet deep to escape...

Gilder straightened out his clothes and stood up.

He indeed used to be an ordinary person, but through his long experience of managing others, he had self-taught how to carry himself and adjust his tone of speech to be persuasive and commanding.

Now, as he stood up and walked toward the door, he carried the air of a noble family's senior butler.

"Creak~"

The door opened, and Gilder stepped out from the shadows of the eaves into the twilight, his gaze calmly sweeping over the silent figures standing around.

Twenty-seven, not too many...

What are they trying to do?

His mind whirled with thoughts, and Gilder's gaze finally rested on the blond man standing close by—the former henchman of Wallis, the one that the Master's guards had warned to be wary of.

Had they finally decided to cause trouble?

The man's sneering, upside-down triangular eyes held a disdainful look, "Hey, old man, you've gotten used to bossing us around these past few days, haven't you? I'm telling you, today... your good days are over!"

"Slap!"

An unexpected slap struck the old man's face, and blood immediately trickled from the corner of his mouth.

"Ah!" Wild Dog, standing in the middle of the street, let out a cry of shock, standing frozen on the spot, "What are you doing!"

The blond man sneered and glanced back at him, then kicked the old man's knee.

"Kneel down!"

Gilder's knee bent, but he forced himself to stand upright again.

The two companions following the blond man also joined in, one of them giving Gilder a kick from behind, "Kneel down!"

After delivering their kicks, the two exchanged a glance and saw a glint of surprise in each other's eyes.

Power...

They felt power!

"Come on, come over!" The blond man wasn't in a rush to kill this so-called "spokesperson"—he was the source of their newfound power; how could they kill him so easily?

The first one to beckon the stunned Wild Dog was the blond man, "Come on, come on! Little wild dog! Don't say that Big Brother doesn't take care of you! Come! Give him a slap, and from then on, whatever you want, you'll have it!"

'After betrayal, you can have everything...'

'After betrayal, the world is vast and open...'

'Betray your Master, betray Order, betray everything, and you will regain control of everything...'

'You are your own Master, no one can control your destiny...'

'Betray! Betray!'

The messy whispers echoed in his ears, the voices filling his mind prompted Wild Dog to instinctively cover his ears, trying to block them out.

However, the characters buzzed like tadpoles, ceaselessly burrowing into his ears, and the inhuman cacophony gradually took on clear meaning...

"I don't want this!"

"I don't want this!"

"Tsk!" The blond man scoffed with disdain at the sight of Wild Dog struggling in pain on the spot and didn't insist; instead, he turned to the others, "Come on! Everyone, take a turn! One strike to him, and this is our first step towards freedom!"

The sound spread like an aura, rippling through the very space.

Franca's right hand clenched the hilt of her longsword, her eyes narrowed in silence, but she did not make a move.

As an enforcer from the Arbitration Place, she could disregard any rules and simply purge these manifest heretics.

However, each enforcer has their own way of operating, and there is no protocol for dealing with heretics... she wanted to see if the "Mysterious Master" had any contingency plans for this.

Indeed, humans who had witnessed demons firsthand were more susceptible to corruption, as she had once said.

Thus, was that Mysterious Master prepared for everything that was currently unfolding, and did he have any emergency plans in place?

Even if he was not here at the moment...

"Brother Three, should we take action?"

The magnified image in the binoculars captured everything happening in the distance; the old soldier, after lowering his binoculars, turned to ask the older soldier who had led them this far.

Brother Three frowned and pondered for a moment before deciding, "Wait and see..."

They didn't dislike the person who had recently set the rules, but they weren't opposed to seeing Black Street return to its former chaotic state.

After all, compared to the great pursuits they had in mind, these current events were insignificant.

"Yes, sir!"

"There's no 'sir' anymore..." Brother Three lit a cigarette.

In the swirl of smoke, there was quiet anticipation for what was brewing in the distance.

"Smack!"

"Ptooy!"

"Tui!"

Some slapped a face, some kicked, some spat, others just made a show of it without daring to do more.

The Rat-man crouched in the shadow behind the house, watching Gilder's back intently.

The old man had told him that he was the adult's face, and that running away on a whim was not allowed.

Unless he signaled with a gesture, he must not lead him to escape.

Gilder's body trembled slightly, seemingly indifferent to the various strikes that were neither light nor heavy and were more like humiliations. He asked in a calm tone, "What do you want to do?"

"What do we want to do?" The blond man sneered.

Nothing in particular.

Just feel like betraying.

Just don't want to listen to you.

Who do you think you are, always demanding they do this and that?

I've got a gun in my hand and a strong punch, why should I be the one to do all that?

"Tui!"

A wad of thick spit hit Gilder's face and slowly slid down.

A roar erupted from the end of the street as Kuang Xin, with an axe in each hand, rushed over with bulging eyes, yelling, "What are you doing!"

"We should first understand the situation..." Dai Lian attempted to analyze.

Kuang Xin and Xu Ruoguang charged out like battering rams.

"Screw asking! Knock them down first, then ask!"

"See that? These are the lapdogs!" the blond man shrieked, his voice growing more distorted, "Kill them! Brothers, kill them!"

God's authority granted him the ability to communicate with everyone at the spiritual level, and his will, amplified like through a loudspeaker, was directly cast into the minds of every "traitor."

Everyone's disgust for "lapdogs" was so intense, those so-called "loyal" dogs were the biggest enemies of "betrayal"!

Discover more stories at [empire](#)

"Go to hell!" Kuang Xin kicked over the resident who rushed at him, trying to stop his advance.

Still rational, he didn't kill indiscriminately; the axes were used more for slapping than chopping.

Up to now, while their power as players might still be far from touching the limits of the combat power of this game world, against these ordinary people...

"Hum!"

Dull purple light emanated from the eyes of two residents, and Kuang Xin instantly felt an invisible force restraining his ankles.

His body, running at full speed, lost its balance and was abruptly tripped.

The voice of Gu Lan from behind warned, "Be careful, they've got Spiritual Energy!"

A different use of Spiritual Energy, more like a Spell from legends.

Demons!

Gu Lan drew her Longsword, Spiritual Energy blazing fiercely as it clung to the blade.

In these few days, she had already learned "self-restraint"; although burning Spiritual Energy was still dangerous, it was at least not as vulnerable as a Spiritual Body without any resistance in a high-dimensional space at the start.

"Fuck!" The fear of that powerful person's bodyguard eroded the blond man's mind, but the more perilous and thrilling the moment, the stronger the beat of his traitorous heart became.

"Smack!" The blond man suddenly slapped Gilder again.

[Physical Strength +0.1.]

Not enough! Not enough!

The blond man, unable to see the panel but sensing a slight improvement in his power, grew increasingly frantic. Any act of betrayal would bring strength, but repeated actions didn't bring additional gains.

Too little! Too little!

The root of it all was that "great person" they spoke of!

That mysterious lord!

"I know you have a way to contact him, and the guy behind you! Bring him here! Bring him here! I want to chop off his head with my own hands! Tell him who my true master is!"

Boom!

An astonishing power exploded in the perception of the non-real world, and the blast swept the souls of everyone present.

The dim purple glow of Spiritual Energy burned like substance in the blond man's eyes as he turned to face Xu Ruoguang charging at him.

In that moment of "bullet time," Xu Ruoguang felt as if a battering ram had smashed into his chest, and he was sent flying instantaneously.

Without looking back, the blond man continued to urge Gilder, "Hurry up! Hurry! I want him to witness the death of his lapdogs with his own eyes! This is the first gift I'm giving him!"

"Boom!" Following Xu Ruoguang, Kuang Xin's body was also blasted away.

"..." Gilder, witnessing everything that was happening, realized only when he saw those who served the powerful person couldn't counter this crisis, that they couldn't resolve the situation on their own.

So, he hesitated slightly before reaching into his chest.

The next moment, however, the item was violently seized by an invisible hand.

"Is this it? Is this it? Hahaha!" Holding the signal gun, the blond man examined it briefly, then suddenly raised it towards the sky.

"Whoosh~~~~~"

"Pop!"

Chapter 330 Golden Dream

At last, they welcomed a rare period of calm development.

Without any missions, every day was filled with training—Mech Suit Piloting Training, Psychic Pressure Resistance Training, Psychic Power Training, Physical Reflex Training.

The newly reformed squad, with Bai E and You at its core, brought in Rose and Stone, two artificial warrior friends of Bai E, and one more...Zero.

The first soldier Bai E had rescued from the praying mantis creature during the bug attack on the camp.

A talent specialty in shooting.

Bai E could see his talent for 'Weakness Detection'—a high burst rate ability.

His skills were quite impressive.

Apart from Bai E and Rose who had their own training schedules, the other two rookies were undergoing all the expedited special training needed for the squad under You's leadership.

After all, these good days of training wouldn't last long, and a mission could arrive at any time.

Not to mention whether missions could be refused, even if they could be, Bai E didn't want to refuse them.

Battle, that was what excited him now.

As he survived longer in this world, combat had become an indispensable part of Bai E's life.

And just as the evening ended with physical training, Bai E saw a bright trajectory line rising into the sky in the distance.

A signal flare!

From the direction of Black Street!

What happened?

Bai E didn't hesitate, grabbing his equipment and heading straight out of the military camp.

...

More and more figures were gathering above Black Street.

The will to betray spread at the level of souls, causing all affected residents to gravitate towards this place involuntarily.

Perhaps their minds harbored similar thoughts, or perhaps not.

But the force of will from higher dimensions made them gather here uncontrollably, like moths to a flame.

Blondie stood with one foot on Kuang Xin, who was trying to struggle beneath him, leaning over to look into the eyes of Gilder, who had knelt down because his legs could no longer bear the weight, "Where's that big shot behind you? Why hasn't he shown up? Is he scared? He better not be scared."

Gilder tried to puff out his chest, as if to maintain the dignity of an adult.

His old lips quivered slightly as he gritted his teeth and said, "If you turn back now, the boss might still spare you."

"Smack!"

Gilder's gaunt face instantly reddened.

"Ptooy!" Blondie spat disdainfully onto his face, "Spare me? Do I need him to spare me?"

He then turned to look at the figures watching from not too far away.

For a moment, he saw shimmering souls flickering before his eyes.

Souls... so many souls...

His mouth was practically watering.

Join me! Join us!

"Come! Offer your betrayal to our lord as evidence!"

Blondie forcefully stamped on the back of Kuang Xin, who was still struggling, and casually whipped Gong Yan, who was beside him with his whip.

"Smack!"

He raised his left hand high, his voice filled with frenzy, "We are born of chaos, we are untamed souls! Nothing can bind us! Betray everything, embrace freedom!"

"Buzz!" A thick grey mist condensed in Gu Lan's eyes, burning with psychic energy that seemed to ignite his entire body.

However...

"Boom!"

An unworldly force crashed down like a thousand-pound boulder.

Several subordinates, their eyes flickering with a purple glow, looked at Gu Lan, who lay submissive on the ground, with an evil smile on their faces.

"See? See?" Blondie sneered, "Betray! After betrayal, you will have everything! The world will be at your feet! Come! Tell me, what do you want?"

What do you want? What do you want?

'You can live any life you wish, attain everything your heart desires.'

The infinity of formlessness towered within the heart, the warm whispers enveloped the ear, and the stray dog lowered its head, calm in expression.

The soul, captured by the demon, had lost the will to struggle.

Betrayal... Can everything be obtained after betrayal?

In the blank expanse of my mind, there appeared the land, the waterwheel, the work of the past few days, and that girl from the guard.

What is it that I want?

Are these the things I want?

No! No, they are not!

"Do you have a dream?"

That girl had asked me once.

"Go and set a dream for yourself!"

A dream?

What is a dream?

I don't know.

No one ever taught me this word.

I am a stray dog, a nameless stray dog.

Ever since I can remember, that's what everyone has called me.

I can't speak grandiose phrases; the words of adults are incomprehensible to me.

I also don't know how to think, for no one has taught me how.

But at this moment...

You ask me what I want?

What do I want?

In my heart.

In my soul.

If the mighty lord knew everything, if he could see through my barren soul, then please look at my heart!

I have never sold my soul to anyone, you are the only one to bear witness to it!

It is entirely mine, a soul that belongs wholly to a human!

It is definitely not something dark like what's happening before me!

Go to hell! I don't know anything at this moment!

What do I want?

How the hell would I know what I want?!

Find more chapters on empire

Aside from what that lord once said—

"I want everyone in this world to be happy, joyful, free!"

The stray dog, with eyes closed, yelled like mad.

Announcing his heart's intent to the world.

Far away, across numerous buildings, Bai E, who was closing his eyes listening to something, relaxed his arms slightly, and finally lowered his bow-carrying arms.

Franca's aura of spiritual energy paused briefly, her gaze turning to the stray dog in surprise, as the partly drawn longsword halted mid-motion.

She could feel it, the devil's aura, had diminished a bit...

Swaying figures, as if enlightened, began to emerge from the shadows of each corner.

Coming out to greet this sunshine, to join this radiance.

"I want everyone in this world to be happy, joyful, free!"

"Everyone should realize their self-worth in coming into this world!"

"Everyone should fulfill their dreams!"

Life is a pilgrimage accumulating suffering, but the unforgettable journey always shines as brightly as the stars.

No matter how many times we face separation and sorrow, we will always rejoice in the joy of reunions.

"The world isn't perfect, but it is certainly not bad."

The stray dog "saw" the figure seated cross-legged on the stump at the center, surrounded by everyone.

He sat there without any pretense, like any ordinary person taking a break from work, a slight smile on his face, speaking calmly as if chatting with friends, quietly addressing everyone.

"So you see... in our lives, we might encounter many things that bring us sorrow, even more darkness, but don't be sad, don't hesitate, don't wander. When the possibly once-in-a-lifetime choice presents itself before your eyes, follow the guidance of your hearts."

"Shout out your dreams loud and clear! That golden dream, I will help you achieve it!"