

Chapter 1221

Release

Han Xiao turned off the interface, prepared a request to visit EsGod, and sent it to the dynasty.

After a short while, he received the response.

“Hmm? My file got sent back?”

Han Xiao looked at the virtual screen in front of him that was showing the request file he sent to the dynasty.

A red stamp was added to the bottom right corner of the file that wrote ‘Unapproved’ in the dynasty’s language. This meant that his request was rejected.

“The dynasty isn’t letting me visit EsGod. What does that mean?”

Han Xiao frowned. He took out his communicator, thought for a while, and did not call Urranrell’s private number but her office.

The communicator rang for a while and was picked up very soon. Seeing that it was Black Star calling, the liaison officer directed the call to the head secretary of the office.

“Your Excellency Black Star, what can I do for you?” The head secretary had a good relationship with Han Xiao.

“I have just sent a request to visit EsGod, but it was not approved. Is this Urranrell’s decision?”

“Ah, Her Excellency has been attending a meeting, so it shouldn’t be her. I didn’t know about this. Your request was not reported to us.”

“Can you check which department processed the request for me?”

“Sure, please wait for a moment...”

The head secretary searched through the internal system for a while and brought up the files before sighing.

“This is the collective decision of the dynasty’s main artificial intelligence, Heroic Soul, and the prison department. I looked at their internal remarks. The location of EsGod is top secret, and no one is allowed to visit under normal circumstances. Your Excellency Black Star, you are a special case. You’re surprisingly on their visiting blacklist...”

“Why am I on the blacklist? What did I do?” Han Xiao was confused.

The head secretary sighed and said, "You didn't do anything, but you're currently the only person in the world who can release EsGod. Therefore, before the five-hundred-year sentence ends, you're not allowed to visit..."

Han Xiao was speechless.

I caught EsGod for the dynasty, and now I can't even visit him?

Alright, from the dynasty's perspective, this is logical. I'm the only person in the universe who can open the Spacetime Amber seal, so I'm the only one who has the ability to release him. This way, the reason for the dynasty rejecting my visit seems normal. It's simply to avoid risk.

Although it was not wrong for the dynasty to do this, Han Xiao was still disheartened emotionally.

He thought the request would be smoothly approved. He did not expect it to get rejected.

"Can't something be done?" Han Xiao frowned.

"The authorization level for EsGod's prison is very high. If you must visit him, you'll have to ask the Ruler to help. She can approve your request, but it'll need a sensible reason, otherwise..."

Hearing that, Han Xiao nodded.

He had quite a good relationship with Urranrell, but there was no way she could just approve it without a valid reason.

Han Xiao hung up the communication. Urranrell was in a quite important meeting, so he had to wait a while before he could contact her. Since there was time, he used it to think about what to say.

"I was going to see EsGod by visiting him, but sadly, that won't work. Without a valid reason, the dynasty won't allow me to get close to EsGod's cell in any form. Even the coordinates of the prison are a secret, and I don't have the authority to check it..."

Han Xiao tutted with dissatisfaction.

Simply saying he wanted to check on EsGod would not be able to convince the dynasty. Plus, he had to open the amber seal if he wanted to check on EsGod. The best method was still to come up with a special reason so that the dynasty would allow him to open the amber. The risk of this method was the lowest.

If he could not convince the dynasty, he would probably have to imitate Old Manison and try to hack into the dynasty's database to search for related information. Although he would offend the dynasty by doing so, stealing information was not too serious an offence... but this could only be the backup plan.

After a while, the secretary sent a message to him saying that the Ruler's meeting ended. Han Xiao then called Urranrell's private number, and it was picked up very quickly.

Urranrell appeared on the screen with a calm face and cut to the chase.

"Black Star, I heard you just tried to contact me and want to visit EsGod, why?"

Although she hid it very well, Han Xiao was very observant and saw that Urranrell was a little mentally tired. He thought about it and said, "EsGod has already been locked up for decades. I want to open the seal and check on the status of his soul."

"Is that necessary?" Urranrell frowned. "You were the one who suggested the five-hundred-year sentence, and it's only been a few decades. With EsGod's strength, his soul won't have dissipated this quickly. Opening the seal now will only cause trouble."

"Ahem, I was not strong enough back then and had a limited understanding of the level of strength EsGod has. That's why I suggested that the sentence should be as long as possible. Five hundred years was just a rough estimate. Now that I've reached this level and have a deeper understanding of the Spacetime Amber, I've discovered that wiping out the soul of a Beyond Grade A probably won't take that long."

Han Xiao said the reason he had prepared. He did not have proof to explain his suspicion of Gaud, so saying that would only make the dynasty suspicious. Thus, he did not mention Gaud.

Urranrell did not doubt him but still shook her head and said, "I don't think that's needed. EsGod is too dangerous. I still think imprisoning him is the safest. The dynasty can afford to wait that long."

Han Xiao expected Urranrell to say this; he was not surprised. "Experimenting on him is just one of the goals. I actually have other worries. I've only come to understand how strong someone at this level is, and thinking back now, I realized that capturing EsGod was too easy. Something's not right. From what I know about EsGod, he very likely escaped using some kind of soul-related ability. I'm worried that we've been tricked, so I want to open the seal and check."

Urranrell's eyes flickered, but she was still not very convinced.

"Evidence?"

Han Xiao deliberately spoke in a solemn tone. "This is just speculation, which is why I want to verify it. But if you need evidence, you can ask Lotus Swordsman. Back when we caught EsGod, she sensed a strange soul ripple from EsGod. I suspect that was where the problem lay."

Gaud was a star the dynasty had high hopes for, so mentioning him was not a wise choice. Han Xiao's words were mainly targeted at EsGod.

Hearing this, Urranrell finally became serious about the issue and immediately told the head secretary to contact Lotus Swordsman.

Lotus Swordsman came online very quickly and agreed that it did happen. Only about thirty years had passed since it happened, so she remembered it vividly.

Seeing this, Han Xiao heaved a sigh of relief in his mind. This evidence actually could not prove anything. Everyone thought that it was just EsGod's final meaningless struggle. However, now that he made use of it to make his excuse sound more convincing... If this did not happen, convincing Urranrell would probably have been much more difficult.

Having received a response, Urranrell went silent, seemingly analyzing the pros and cons. After a while, she looked up right at Han Xiao's eyes and said seriously, "Black Star, if EsGod gets free, can you guarantee you can capture him again?"

Han Xiao smiled. "I could do it then; I can do it now."

He no longer had the Esper Silence Character Summon Card, but after decades, he was much stronger than before. Even if his guess was wrong, he would just have to seal EsGod up once more.

Furthermore, the others did not know that the Character Summon Card was a one-time ability. They would only think that he could still use the ability.

Urranrell pondered for quite a while and nodded in the end.

"Okay, I'll approve it! Since your suspicion makes sense, open the seal and check EsGod's status. Make sure that we did not capture an empty shell!"

...

Over ten days later...

A huge cube shaped mechanical building hovered in space. It was a galactic fortress covered with armor and shields that were more than enough to endure bombardments from hostile fleets. This was the space prison EsGod was locked up in.

At this point of time, dense dynasty fleets surrounded the prison. Cannons extended from every battleship, all ready to fire.

A black silhouette hovered near the prison. It was Han Xiao. He had opened the secondary dimensional army box and was summoning his army, forming a second encirclement.

Gaud was still on his way in the Flickering World. Han Xiao wasted no time and directly used the King to teleport into the dynasty's subdivision in their territory, boarded the dynasty fleet that was there to pick him up, spent about ten days traveling, and finally arrived at this restricted area.

After summoning countless mechanical soldiers, Han Xiao finally closed the secondary dimensional army box gate and said in the communication channel, "I'm ready. Activate all spacetime stabilization devices and open the prison core."

"Roger." The fleet commander's serious voice sounded in the channel.

The next moment, an invisible ripple extended from the fleet's center. The spacetime of this area instantly 'tightened'. The spacetime coefficients of this area became extremely stable. Almost all abilities related to spacetime became useless.

Then, the space prison opened layers by layers like a blossoming flower showing its stamen. The core of the prison was an egg-shaped cabin that stored the Spacetime Amber of EsGod, tightly locked in place by the mechanical structure of the prison.

As the prison opened, the egg-shaped cabin was unlocked as well. Its independent power system started operating. The thrusters shot out flames and slowly pushed the cabin out.

As Han Xiao extended his arm, his Mechanical Force pulled the ten-meter-long egg-shaped cabin toward him. He then opened the cabin door.

A familiar face entered his sights. It was EsGod, who had been trapped in the Spacetime Amber for decades. He still had the same expression and posture as his last moment of freedom before he was locked up.

“All units ready! Prepare to fire!”

The fleet commander’s grave toned voice sounded in the communication channel.

Even after decades, the fear EsGod had left in people’s hearts had yet to fade away.

“Now, it’s time to verify my speculation...”

Han Xiao looked into EsGod’s eyes, took a deep breath, took out the core of the Spacetime Amber, and poked at the Spacetime Amber seal.

Pop!

It was as if the crisp sound of the Spacetime Amber shattering could be heard.

The prison that locked EsGod up was opened, but his body did not move. It only floated in the vacuum right before Han Xiao’s eyes.

“Is it already an empty shell...”

Han Xiao took out a suction plate shaped device and placed it on EsGod. This was a device used to detect the state of one’s soul.

Although Mechanics were not experts in the soul territory, at his level, building a device to only detect if the target had a soul was not a problem.

As the suction plate was just about to touch EsGod’s body, the next moment, Han Xiao suddenly felt a resistance force at his wrist as if someone suddenly grabbed his wrist tightly. His hand stopped moving abruptly.

Han Xiao immediately looked up at EsGod’s eyes that had color once again.

At the same time, a deep mind message entered Han Xiao’s mind.

“Like I said, we’d meet again sooner or later...”

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“Like I said, we’d meet again sooner or later... Only, I didn’t expect it to come this soon.”

EsGod’s tone was filled with mockery.

Han Xiao’s pupils constricted.

This body isn't an empty shell!

His first thought was that he got Gaud's identity wrong and set EsGod free for nothing.

However, when he heard what EsGod said, his eyes gleamed, and he asked, "Why were you so sure I'd definitely let you out?"

"Oh? You're not letting me out to seek help from me?" EsGod's brows raised. "You didn't station so many soldiers here just to open the amber and see if I'm dead yet, did you?"

Seek help? Right, this b*stard knows about the World Tree Civilization and left the wormhole data behind. He might think that when the advanced civilizations discover the World Tree Civilization, they'll most likely let him out to ask him for information. Is that why he said that we'd meet again sooner or later?

The Spacetime Amber froze everything except the soul that was also trapped inside the body. EsGod knew absolutely nothing about the outside world in the past decades. His impression of the universe was still the same as when he got captured.

The mind conversation happened in the split of a second. The movements of the two of them did not stop during it.

Hu!

EsGod backed away instantly and was about to teleport right away, only to realize that the spacetime of the area around him was stabilized and he could not teleport. He quickly analyzed the strength of the encirclement he was in and came to the conclusion that he would not be able to break through it using ordinary methods. Hence, he quickly thought of other ways to escape and started to use his Dimension Crack ability to fill this area. As long as he could create just a tiny crack, he would be able to escape with teleportation.

Although he did not know why the dynasty let him out, to him, escaping was his top priority.

Han Xiao acted immediately. He led the dozens of Apostle Weapons and many mechanical soldiers forward to surround EsGod. It did not matter what was going on with EsGod. As long as this body was not an empty shell, he had to seal it up once again.

The dynasty fleet around started attacking. All kinds of control-type weapons were also launched continuously. Dark-red energy filled the space.

The battle erupted in an instant!

EsGod was submerged in countless attacks in the blink of an eye.

"Back then, it took eleven Beyond Grade As to finally catch me. Black Star, you're alone now. How are you going to capture me?"

EsGod's mocking voice appeared in Han Xiao's head. Despite being heavily surrounded, he did not panic at all.

After he evolved, the load on his genetic chain had drastically decreased. His strength was undoubtedly at the top tier in the universe. Although he had just come out of the Spacetime Amber, his soul was in a weakened state and had no time to prepare dozens of Beyond Grade A level doppelgangers, he still had the health-energy conversion ability.

Using [Esper Ability—Black Hole], EsGod could convert the attacks he received into his own energy, then use his regeneration Esper Ability to heal at a rapid rate. The enhanced ability to convert energy into health that Han Xiao had was obtained from EsGod too.

If EsGod had time to prepare dozens of doppelgangers in advance, he would probably have been able to single-handedly deal with the Stars Alliance world that Han Xiao had once experienced. Currently, most peak Beyond Grade As were no match for EsGod. Plus, with the many slippery space related Esper Abilities he had, he was basically undefeatable.

If not because Han Xiao landed the Esper Silence ability on him back then, causing all his Esper Abilities to stop functioning and all his doppelgangers to perish, even eleven Beyond Grade As would not have been able to capture him.

Luckily, this time, Han Xiao and the dynasty had set up in advance. EsGod's escaping abilities were rendered useless. With his most troublesome ability gone, his threat level reduced dramatically. Otherwise, he would have been able to escape anytime he wanted.

However, this did not mean that EsGod would certainly never be able to escape. Although the dynasty had used all kinds of advanced spacetime stabilization devices, if they took too long to trap EsGod again, he might still find the chance to 'dig a hole' and escape.

"You'll find out how. I'm no longer the same as before. I don't need help to deal with you."

Han Xiao chose some of the mechanical soldiers and assembled them. As electronic light flickered, the Mechanical Deity appeared and instantly chased after EsGod, slashing and smashing down at him, dragging a trail of electric sparks behind.

Although EsGod had many abilities, he could not use too many of them simultaneously. He solved this problem by using doppelgangers, giving them some of his Esper Abilities. The more doppelgangers that existed at the same time, the more abilities he could use.

As creating doppelgangers required large amounts of energy and he could absorb energy in battle, as the battle went on, the number of doppelgangers would increase. EsGod was also someone who would become stronger the longer the battle went on.

However, EsGod did not prepare any doppelgangers in advance this time. Although he could create them slowly during the battle, Han Xiao's Apostle Weapons were not for decoration. As soon as he created one doppelganger, it would be murdered by the many Apostle Weapons. The number of doppelgangers he had could not increase at all.

Therefore, the current situation was very clear. All factors present had placed EsGod at an extreme disadvantage. All he could do was get beat up.

Despite being able to convert between energy and health, the rate was much slower than Han Xiao. [Esper Ability—Black Hole] had a limit and could not block all damage, and the speed of his regeneration also had a limit. The damage Han Xiao was now able to dish out was on a completely different level to before. Plus, the dynasty fleet also provided support on the side. EsGod's health was decreasing faster than he was regenerating.

After several decades, the level difference between Han Xiao and EsGod became much smaller. He opened the interface, looked at the combat information, and saw more of EsGod's information than before.

He quickly scanned through but did not see [Esper Ability—Rebirth] in EsGod's ability list. He wondered if it was one of the few question marks he still could not see.

However, in EsGod's status bar, Han Xiao discovered something abnormal.

You are in the [Intermediate Weakened Soul] state. Your Psychological Resistance is decreased by 30%. Your INT and MYS attributes are decreased by 15%. Duration: Unknown.

You are in the [Torn Soul] state. You have lost a large portion of INT and MYS attributes. Your Psychological Resistance is decreased by 60%. Duration: Permanent.

"This is..." Han Xiao narrowed his eyes.

Weakened Soul should be the side effect of being imprisoned by the Spacetime Amber, which EsGod could recover from. However, the [Torn Soul] state clearly had nothing to do with the Spacetime Amber, and it just happened to match Gaud's abnormally high attributes.

So, I didn't guess wrong. EsGod is indeed related to Gaud.

The possibility of Gaud being a doppelganger that EsGod had created could be limited, as all his Esper Abilities were useless once he got affected by Esper Silence. Gaud had to have nothing to do with EsGod's abilities to still exist. At the moment of EsGod's capture, he did not have a chance to create doppelgangers. All he could do was soul-related things in that short period of time.

Therefore, EsGod did not just simply shift his soul but unflinchingly used some kind of Esper Ability to tear his own soul apart and fuse it into Gaud's body, leaving the remaining soul in his original body.

The Spacetime Amber froze everything, so there was no way EsGod could control Gaud from inside. Being in the outside world for so many years, it should be EsGod's main consciousness inside Gaud.

At this point of time, the various detection devices of the dynasty fleet did not discover any odd soul ripples, meaning that this 'EsGod' was also not remotely controlled.

Therefore, the two souls were now completely separated into two independent individuals.

This meant that this 'EsGod' before him might not be the EsGod he knew but instead a new personality, a new consciousness that birthed from the remaining soul and memories of EsGod, like a clone. As for the main consciousness of EsGod, it was actually in Gaud... or was it the other way around?

If this was the case, EsGod was still EsGod, and Gaud would still be Gaud. Even though their personalities and memories were hardly different, they were two different people... Could this be what the word 'rebirth' in [Esper Ability—Rebirth] meant?

His original body is a Beyond Grade A, and Gaud also became a Beyond Grade A. This b*stard split into two different Beyond Grade A individuals... If his main consciousness is in Gaud, then he's really completely merciless toward himself.

All kinds of thoughts flashed past Han Xiao's mind.

If the two souls were still linked and shared memories, it would be a conspicuous flaw. Judging from EsGod's personality, if he made up his mind to wipe his ledger clean, he would not have made such a mistake. Therefore, he most likely completely cut off the connection of the two souls.

Not only did he abandon his old body, but he even did not mind creating another 'him' in the universe, giving all the strength he had accumulated in the past to 'someone else'.

If this was really the case, any memories related to Gaud that this 'EsGod' had were probably all deleted by EsGod's main consciousness when his soul split. That way, if the dynasty dissected this 'EsGod' in the future, they would not find anything in the memories.

This was why he was given the name 'God of Espers'. No one but him could ever do something this crazy.

While making all kinds of speculation in his mind, Han Xiao's attacks did not stop. The battle carried on fiercely.

The situation was completely one-sided. EsGod was bathing in psionic energy. His flesh was melting and regenerating countless times every second. Under the nonstop attacks, he could hardly move at all and was in a completely defensive stance. He did not dare stop regenerating health for even a second.

The way he regenerated was through accelerating the division of his cells. Every time his body regenerated, the vitality of his cells would increase, and his life span would decrease. If not because the Evolution Cube had given him a boost in the past, he would not have been able to endure such a highly intense battle.

Feeling Han Xiao's powerful attacks, EsGod was shocked too.

He remembered that when he was locked up, Black Star was not even a peak Beyond Grade A yet. However, with the strength Han Xiao was now displaying, even EsGod could not confidently say he would be able to defeat him. Even if he was at his peak strength, if they fought in a fair duel, he felt it would most likely end up in a tie.

Only how many years have passed, and Black Star is already catching up to my level, even looking like he's about to surpass me?

“Your growth is really unbelievable! I’ve never seen anyone as talented as you!” EsGod honestly marveled from the bottom of his heart.

“Don’t think I’ll attack you one less time because you complimented me.”

Han Xiao continued attacking with an expressionless face. Among all the classes, he now had the easiest time fighting Espers. He gained bonus attributes and increased damage when fighting Espers.

Also, the [Elderly Killer] ability was great against an elderly like EsGod...

Though the evolved EsGod was strong, Han Xiao was not any bit weaker!

Rounds of attacks landed on EsGod continuously. Explosions appeared everywhere EsGod passed by like a snake made of flames.

After continuing to attack for some time, as Han Xiao estimated that the bonuses of his various talents had reached the maximum, Mechanical Force erupted from his body.

Ka la ka la...

The armor at the Mechanical Deity’s forehead suddenly opened up. A pile of mechanical parts extended out, turning into an exquisite mechanical crown that landed on the Mechanical Deity’s head.

The next moment, an invisible shockwave erupted from the crown, concentrated into a beam, and hit EsGod.

EsGod’s entire body trembled. It was like a huge hammer heavily bashed his consciousness.

This was the Universal Treasure Grade equipment Han Xiao learned from Jayz’s technology treasure, a Mechanical Deity exclusive weapon—[Soul Breaking Crown]!

Its name sounded like a magic item, but it was actually a piece of machinery. It worked by obtaining soul energy from breaking down psionic energy. The Soul Breaking Crown could provide an extremely high amount of Psychological Resistance for the user of the Mechanical Deity while at the same time being able to launch mental attacks.

Usually, Mechanics’ weaknesses were their original body and their mind, they also tremendously lacked mind attack means. The effect of this Gold equipment could make up for that weakness to a certain extent... Although Han Xiao was no ordinary Mechanic, the Soul Breaking Crown was still useful to him.

The debuffs on EsGod made his mind his biggest weakness. Han Xiao was used to targeting the enemy’s weak points, so of course, he was not going to let this kind of opportunity slip.

Before EsGod could recover, Han Xiao instantly activated Virtual Soul, easily dragged EsGod’s soul into the virtual world, and gave him a beating.

Having his vital spot being attacked continuously, EsGod received tons of damage.

While EsGod was still stunned, Han Xiao’s original body left the Mechanical Deity, grabbed EsGod’s neck, activated the Spacetime Amber and started to create a seal instantly.

EsGod regained focus very quickly and was about to resist. Seeing this, Han Xiao pressed him into his wide chest and said, "Don't move. Do you remember how I caught you the last time? If you do it again, you won't just be spending the rest of your life in prison; you'll die!"

Hearing this, EsGod's movement paused for a moment as he instantly recalled the trauma of getting hit by Esper Silence back then.

He knew nothing about Character Summon Cards, nor did he know why Black Star could use this ability, so he could not help but think Black Star still had this ability.

"Compared to an endless sentence, why shouldn't I fight till my last moment?" EsGod's eyes narrowed.

He was in a situation that was more than enough to threaten his life. Through the fight earlier, EsGod knew very well that there was absolutely no chance he could escape. If Black Star used Esper Silence, he might really die.

"Are you sure you want to die?" Han Xiao whispered. "Don't you want to see the day the World Tree advents?"

EsGod's body suddenly froze, and shock finally appeared on his face.

He had always thought that he was the only person in the entire universe that knew about this. Never did he expect to hear it from Han Xiao.

When did Black Star find out?

"That data... have you guys already completed studying it?"

EsGod's eyes gleamed.

Han Xiao, however, did not reply. He deliberately said in a meaningful tone, "Stop resisting, and you'll still have a chance to be set free to witness it all. If you die here, there'll be no more hope."

"..." EsGod's expression changed rapidly. He was caught in a dilemma.

However, it only took a few seconds for him to understand the situation he was in. His body became relaxed, and he had stopped resisting.

He looked up right into Han Xiao's eyes and said slowly, "I don't trust that you'll let me out... but I'm willing to make the bet. After all, I don't have anything more to lose.

"This is the second time I've lost to you. Maybe you really can step into that level and witness the scenery there for me..."

At this time, Han Xiao took a step back without saying anything. The prison was complete.

EsGod's body was fixed. He was locked in the Spacetime Amber once again.

The only difference was that he was in a different position.

Seeing this, Han Xiao finally let out a long breath. He shook his head.

“If you continued to resist, I really might not have been able to capture you... Sorry, deception is the way of wars.”

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Han Xiao speculated what EsGod would think. EsGod’s first reaction would not be to think that he knew about this long ago but that the dynasty’s research on that wormhole data had come to a result. Hence, he would suddenly have a little bit of hope. In such a desperate situation, there was a very high chance he would give up resisting. From the results, Han Xiao won the bet.

Deception was a way of the war; conquering the enemy’s mind was the smarter strategy. If not because he used this to successfully intimidate EsGod, he would have spent much more time capturing him, and there would have been a lot of uncertainties.

“Speaking of which, this is this b*stard’s second time going in...”

Han Xiao looked at EsGod, who was in the amber, and sighed.

Ignoring all other factors, EsGod was really a very pure person. In order to reach his goal, he was willing to do anything in the world. As long as one did not get in his way, he would not do anything, and vice versa.

While he was looking at EsGod, the dynasty fleet around instantly stopped attacking upon seeing that the mission was complete and retracted their weapons.

Tons of parts of mechanical soldiers floated in the battlefield. Some were even destroyed by the attacks of the dynasty fleet. In order to dish out as much damage as possible to EsGod, they could not be concerned with causing damage to their ally. Even Han Xiao was confused as to whether these teammates of his were attacking EsGod or him.

He deactivated the Mechanical Deity. Mechanical Force shot out from his hands and turned into electrical chains, linked onto the shattered parts, and assembling them back into mechanical soldiers using Advanced Machinery Construction.

This time, the fleet commander heaved a sigh of relief in the communication channel and said, “Luckily, we set up enough traps in advance and had the edge. If not, we wouldn’t have been able to capture him again while paying such a small price... Alright, please give EsGod to us. We’ll find a place to lock him up.”

His tone was formal.

As Black Star was the one who requested to release EsGod to check on him, capturing him again was not considered a contribution, but letting him get free would have been a huge demerit. Therefore, this was a mission that required a lot of effort but gave no merits, so the fleet commander did not feel appreciative toward Han Xiao.

Capturing EsGod this time looked easy, but that was because they had too big an edge. EsGod was immobile before, which was why they could set up an encirclement any way they wanted, letting EsGod, who was in a weakened state, out after being fully prepared. If EsGod was free in the beginning, there was no way he would have been surrounded by this many traps.

A few dynasty spaceships came to take the prisoner away. Han Xiao stood in place for a while as he watched them bring EsGod away. Only then did the dynasty fleet turn off all the spacetime stabilization devices.

He curled his lips, opened the dimension factory, and stuffed his mechanical army into it for repairs. After rejecting the invitation of boarding the ships, he took out a King mechanical army and disappeared.

The next moment, he appeared in a machinery factory that was no longer in the Constellation Corridor. He crossed multiple Star Fields directly and arrived in Black Star Palace that was in the Flickering World instantly, using the 'Throne' in his private workshop.

Beep beep beep!

At this time, the communicator rang timely. Han Xiao took it out, and as he expected, it was a call from Urranrell.

As she used her ruler rights to approve Han Xiao's request to open EsGod's seal to check his status, she had been paying attention to the live broadcast the whole time, so she called right after it ended.

"Black Star, I've seen the process. Looks like your worries did not come true."

Urranrell nodded.

"...Maybe." Han Xiao shook his head.

EsGod's body was still very much alive and not an empty shell, so in the dynasty's eyes, this was undoubtedly his original body, and their doubts were cleared.

Although he had confirmed EsGod and Gaud's relationship through this, he could not use the information from the interface to convince the dynasty.

Although EsGod showed signs of his soul being torn, the difficulty of verifying that was way too high.

First of all, EsGod would certainly resist and not possibly obediently accept the check. Plus, they could not check on EsGod when he was locked inside the Spacetime Amber.

Secondly, EsGod's level was too high. Only an extremely few peak Beyond Grade As in the universe who were experts in the soul territory could investigate his soul fully, which would also require EsGod to not put up a fight. This was like the difference between using one's ability to attack and using it to cure a sickness; the latter required much more precision.

Thirdly, on the surface, the effects of having a weakened soul and torn soul coincided. It would be extremely difficult to differentiate them. Both could be seen as the side effects of being locked up by the Spacetime Amber.

Even if all of those difficulties were overcome and EsGod's soul was proven to be in a torn state, there was no way he could prove the connection between EsGod and Gaud to the dynasty. The evidence was too weak.

Considering all the factors, Han Xiao felt that there was close to no way he could find any solid proof on this matter.

Urranrell did not have many doubts and said, "Being worried is a good thing. At least what you did got rid of a possible problem for the dynasty, and now we can safely lock EsGod up without having to worry. Plus, you captured EsGod again without paying much of a price. You didn't disappoint me."

She did not feel what Han Xiao did was completely unnecessary. She was the one who gave the order, and Black Star executed it only after she approved it. Now that the matter was settled, it was not a bad thing but a good thing. From her perspective, this operation was a form of reassurance.

"I guess..."

Han Xiao was not in the mood to say much. He casually chatted for a while and went offline afterward. He looked somewhat upset.

Urranrell had already done a lot for him. There was absolutely no merit in this operation. Instead, she had to bear the risk of letting EsGod escape and the responsibility of approving the operation that caused it. At the end of her term, she definitely had to focus on keeping a low profile and making sure everything was going on smoothly. Willingly approving his proposal was already a sign of her strong trust in him; he could not ask her to do more.

If EsGod... no, Gaud wanted to completely wipe his history clean, he most certainly did everything the dynasty asked him to do and nothing else while he was weak, not showing any signs of his ulterior motives. Han Xiao was not able to find any solid evidence this time, so he could not accuse Gaud of anything.

Without solid evidence, the dynasty had no reason to believe in his accusations and test the loyalty of a direct Beyond Grade A member out of nowhere. Therefore, this method was definitely not going to work.

If Gaud really decided to take the lawful path, even if he found evidence, as long as it was not completely definitive, the dynasty might not even want to recognize it so that they could avoid losing a direct Beyond Grade A member with infinite potential. This was not completely impossible.

I'll have to make other plans. Since there's no way to convince the dynasty to investigate Gaud thoroughly, I can only do it myself...

Han Xiao frowned and pondered.

If he was to attack Gaud secretly and it was discovered, he would undoubtedly be in astronomical trouble.

Even if he did it secretly enough, the dynasty would also put in a tremendous amount of effort to search for the culprit. Due to the organizational nature of the Beyond Grade A Association, it would certainly become a key target for the dynasty's investigation, which would also cause an enormous storm. It might even become the fuse of a new Tragedy of the Pinnacles.

Han Xiao had to admit that the method Gaud used to wipe his history clean was impeccable. He became a direct member of one of the three Universal Civilizations, acquiring super powerful protection. If something happened to him, more Beyond Grade As might be dragged down with him.

However, if he was left alone, the entire explored universe would be in danger. He was a colossal hidden threat. This was especially true because this b*stard already got into the insides of the dynasty. God only knew what storm he would stir up. He might even end up being the usher for the World Tree Civilization.

Furthermore, Gaud's Esper Ability had way too much potential. He was still considered easy to deal with now that he had only just entered the Beyond Grade A territory, but as he grew stronger, he would rapidly become tougher to deal with.

"What a dilemma..." Han Xiao rubbed his nose and was a little troubled.

Sometimes, there was no perfect solution, and a decision had to be made between two bad choices.

His thoughts fought internally for a while, and he finally made up his mind.

I must get rid of this time bomb as early as possible before he grows too strong. If I wait for him to show any flaws, it'll be too late!

Han Xiao clenched his teeth.

He started to brainstorm quickly, analyzing the possible consequences while coming up with all kinds of wicked plans.

The best method is to not let Gaud disappear out of nowhere but give a target the dynasty can vent its anger toward. With a direct target, no one else will be dragged down. Hence, not only do I have to avoid being suspected, but I must think of a way to frame it on someone else. I'll also have to consider what different impacts framing different people will cause...

Han Xiao's thoughts quickly spun, and he very soon had a rough plan.

Putting aside the differences between the detailed plans, there were only two choices in terms of execution. One was to do it himself secretly and find a way to frame it on someone else afterward. Another was to find a way to create a situation to lure others to attack Gaud so that he would not be suspected.

Not mentioning the former, the key factor of the latter was 'lure'. It was best for him not to be involved in any way, so calling his friends to murder Gaud was not doable.

For example, the Holy Accord organization had more than enough strength to kill Gaud, but Han Xiao could not possibly ask them to do it. This was the equivalent of handing his vulnerability right into their

hands. The revived Primordial Ones all had their own philosophy and were not united, nor were they his subordinates. He could not ensure they would not leak this secret in the future... Plus, whether they would be willing to help or not was another matter.

The more people who knew about it, the higher the risk, no matter who he asked to help do it.

“No matter which path I take, I’ll have to muddy the waters first...”

Han Xiao’s eyes sparkled.

...

The Beyond Grade A Association headquarters on Planet Finn were visited by a dynasty fleet.

Gaud walked out of the hatch. The dynasty’s senior officer uniform reflected the light of the artificial sun like it was shining.

“Welcome to Planet Finn, Your Excellency Gaud.”

A receptionist who was wearing the association’s uniform instantly approached with an enthusiastic smile.

The news of the dynasty acquiring a new direct Beyond Grade A member had already spread out among the high-class circle, but it was only limited to the name Gaud and nothing else. The dynasty did not publicize too much information; they even controlled the flow of any information regarding Gaud. Therefore, many organizations were guessing Gaud’s way of doing things and his specific abilities... This was the normal treatment for a new Beyond Grade A.

Gaud handed over the request to join the association with all the documents needed. The Beyond Grade A Association hosted a meeting just to welcome this new member. The staff was arranged long ago to wait for Gaud there.

“Lead the way.” Gaud’s tone was casual.

The two of them left the dock, boarded an anti-gravity carrier, and headed toward the spherical conference room at the top of the headquarters building in the middle of the city.

Looking down from the sky, the ground was filled with closely packed buildings. It was a highly advanced galactic city. The receptionist pointed out some of Planet Finn’s hotspots on the way like a tour guide. Gaud did not stop him. He looked down and silently observed the streets that passed by.

The various Beyond Grade A organizations had all set up their agencies there. In the last decade, Planet Finn had already become a prosperous galactic city. Flying carriers dashing across the sky formed the transport network.

Base level personnel in uniforms of different organizations could be seen everywhere on the streets. Gaud even saw quite a number of base-level office workers of the Black Star Army.

However, these organizations were just stationed there. The association’s staff were the ones who were responsible for managing this planet.

The carrier arrived at the platform outside the conference room very soon. Gaud followed the receptionist into his personal lounge. As he was the focus of today's meeting and he had come with his original body, he had to wait for someone to notify him to enter the venue from another door.

After watching the receptionist leave and shut the door, Gaud casually picked up the snacks on the table and started chewing. He sized up the marvelous lounge, and his eyes were filled with enjoyment.

"The Beyond Grade As have been split up for so many years, only finally showing signs of unity in recent years. Black Star, Manison, and Kasuyi have done a really good job. Sadly, I did not wait for such a good time to arrive in the past... However, they probably wouldn't dare take in the most vicious criminal in the universe anyway. If I didn't change my identity, all of this would have nothing to do with me."

Gaud could not help but sneer.

After gangs earned enough money, they would all consider wiping their history clean and turn to legal businesses. It was the same for him. Committing crimes was not his goal, just a path he took to accumulate enough strength.

After getting rid of his past identity, he could now start a new life.

A while later, someone finally came to notify him to enter the venue.

Gaud stood up, patted his clothes, walked down the corridor all the way to the end, and pushed open the tall, exquisite gate. Light shone from within and entered his eyes.

A huge, round table conference room entered his sights. The remote projections of all the Beyond Grade A members were sitting in their own seats. They turned to face him simultaneously. Their eyes all focused on Gaud with all kinds of different emotions.

Gaud became the focal point of the entire venue. He looked around at the familiar faces and uncontrollably dazed off for a moment.

This was the first time he had appeared in front of most of the Beyond Grade As in the universe with his new identity. Looks of hatred, hostility, and fear were no longer anywhere to be found. The hate and conflict of the past was all gone; his relationship with every one of them was completely new.

Being reborn had never felt so refreshing.

At this time, Manison, who sat in the main seat, nodded and said, "This friend here is Gaud. On behalf of all the members of the Beyond Grade A Development Union, I welcome you to the association."

"It's my honor to join the association." Gaud regained focus. A smile with unknown meaning appeared on his face as he placed his hand on his chest and did a universal greeting gesture.

Clotti, who had always been quiet, pointed at the empty seat beside and said, "You're a direct member of the dynasty. I've saved a seat for you. Come here and sit."

Seeing this, Gaud smiled, walked over, and sat beside Clotti. The entire row beside him was the seats for the direct members of the dynasty. It was like he had found his clique.

However, as soon as he sat down, a voice filled with a strong sense of curiosity sounded.

The content of what that person said made Gaud's calm heart skip a beat.

"Gaud, right? I heard your ability is the Super High Risk Esper Ability that only exists in theory, Energy Control! Is that true?"

Chapter 1224 Muddy the Waters

As soon as this was said, the atmosphere in the conference room changed immediately. Everyone looked toward the source of the voice and saw that the person who asked the question was a neutral Beyond Grade A called Lucie, nicknamed 'Ancient Snake'. He was a shapeshift-type Esper who occasionally worked as a mercenary for advanced civilizations. He also frequented the black market.

Gaud stared at him feeling shocked inside.

He had only ever used his ability a few times. He had only fought a little bit decades ago during the Kunde Race war and never sparred with anyone after becoming a Beyond Grade A. Only a few people in the dynasty should have known about his exact abilities. This information was tightly controlled and had yet to spread. He did not expect someone to find out his ability on his first day after joining the association...

Where did the information get leaked?

Gaud did not respond, so someone asked curiously, "Lucie, where did you get that information?"

"The black market, of course. I heard it coincidentally," Lucie casually said.

"Is it reliable?" someone else asked.

"How would I know? I'm trying to find out now, aren't I? Did none of you hear anything similar at all?" Lucie questioned.

Secret Master frowned and slowly said, "My subordinates acquired similar information too, but there's no solid proof. There are hundreds of speculations like this on the black market. God knows who they came from. Most of them are random guesses anyway."

Seeing this, a few more frequents of the black market also expressed their agreement, saying that they had all heard similar things, but none took it seriously.

Han Xiao watched from the side and heaved a sigh of relief in his mind.

He was indeed the one who anonymously placed the information about Gaud's ability into the black market. With his Virtual Technology skills, he left no traces behind at all. From others' perspective, this rumor looked like it appeared out of thin air and spread so quickly that no one could find the root of it. This kind of thing happened every day on the network.

The black-market network was a magical place. Countless information trades were carried on here every day. There was a lot of false information, but secrets would also appear occasionally. Sometimes, even the advanced civilizations had no idea how their secrets were leaked.

For example, a Super High Risk Esper Ability that only existed in theory attracted enough attention and spread very rapidly. Currently, all the organizations were using their own intelligence channels to search for information related to Gaud. Therefore, for someone like Secret Master, who frequented the black market, there was a high chance he would discover it.

However, there were way too many speculations and no solid proof. These guys would not ask Gaud directly just because of these rumors. Therefore, Han Xiao selected a few targets to specifically leak this information to, luring these guys to bring up this topic when everyone was present. Lucie was one of them.

He did not select these targets randomly. Others thought Lucie was a neutral Beyond Grade A, but the truth was that his identity was exposed in the later versions in his previous life as a secret member of a Super Star Cluster civilization just like Traveler. Han Xiao knew all about who he was.

Due to the sensitive competitive relationship between the three Universal Civilizations, Han Xiao had some confidence that he could lure the secret members of the Super Star Cluster civilizations in the association to deliberately stir things up. Even if that failed, he had backup plans.

The crowd discussed the rumours for a while before turning to look at Gaud with strong curiosity in their eyes.

“What’s your real ability?”

Looking at everyone’s curious expression, Gaud exhaled and slowly said, “Do any of you have a habit of announcing your secrets? Well, I don’t. You don’t have to be so curious. You’ll find out in the future.”

Lucie curled his lips and continued to question him. “We’re all association members. What’s so secretive about it? You’ve joined the association, but you won’t share any information with us. That’s not sincere at all. It’s unfair to us. Or is your ability really Energy Control?”

Hearing this, many people nodded in agreement.

In the Beyond Grade A circle, rookies were all treated this way. Everyone wanted to know about the rookie’s secrets and abilities so that if they had to fight the rookie, they would not be surprised by unknown abilities. Most Beyond Grade As had already walked down the same path.

Gaud’s eyelids twitched.

He totally understood that Lucie was basically a sh*t stirrer who wanted to force him to share his secrets.

“Don’t bother asking anymore. I won’t answer you.”

Gaud shook his head and did not deny it but avoided the question.

Keeping his ability a secret was only temporary, not permanent. Once he grew to a certain stage, the dynasty would no longer keep it a secret and would instead promote the fact that he was the first person ever in history to possess this Esper Ability to intimidate the Beyond Grade As of other civilizations.

Therefore, dynasty's current demand of him was only not to directly answer any question about his ability but not lie about it, or the promotion they did in the future would not be as effective.

Furthermore, denying his own ability was not something someone as strong as him should do. It was bad for his reputation. If he damaged his image among the Beyond Grade As, making up for it would be much more troublesome than simply not answering and avoiding the questions.

"So, you're not going to give us face?" Lucie narrowed his eyes. "Our real bodies aren't here, otherwise all we'd have to do is spar with you, and your ability would no longer be a secret. Why are you being so secretive about it? Looks like the rumors are not complete nonsense. Your ability is probably really Energy Control. Even if it isn't, it's definitely very special. That's why you're keeping it a secret."

"Think whatever you want." Gaud did not want to argue with him anymore and looked away.

Seeing this, many people's eyes flickered with some suspicion.

From the way they saw it, by not giving a direct answer, Gaud having the Energy Control Esper Ability seemed more trustworthy. If this was not his ability, he could have just denied it.

If Gaud really did have this overpowered Super High Risk Esper Ability...

Having thought of this, many people had all kinds of ideas.

This time, Han Xiao who had been watching smiled and said, "Alright, alright, if Gaud doesn't want to say it, don't force him. Today, we're welcoming him as a new member after all. Don't make the atmosphere so uptight."

The best result would have been for Gaud to admit what his ability was, but there was nothing Han Xiao could do if Gaud was not willing to answer no matter what. However, this was within Han Xiao's expectations too. As long as he spread the information of Gaud possibly having the 'Energy Control' ability to all the Beyond Grade As present, he would have achieved more than half of his goal regardless of whether Gaud admitted it or not.

Hearing that the vice president had spoken, the others moved on from this topic, and the atmosphere became tranquil again.

Gaud glanced at Han Xiao and saw that Han Xiao nodded at him. He responded with a smile and sighed in his mind.

He had never enjoyed the feeling of being helped; he was always the shared enemy of everyone. At this point, he had to admit that having someone speak for him really felt quite good.

The meeting was casual and relaxed. The main goal of it was to welcome the rookie while helping him to understand the purpose, principle, and the rules of the association, or help him to solve some problems.

For example, they could provide support in helping him to grow his forces, lend him resources, assist in battles, and so on. However, since Gaud was a direct member of the dynasty, he did not need help in terms of resources.

The people chatted casually, pulled Gaud around, and asked him questions. The people on the dynasty's side were the more active ones; the other people only occasionally said a few words.

As they were having a good time chatting, Han Xiao glanced at Manison, chuckled, and said casually, "Gaud, you've just joined the association and don't know about many things, so I must remind you. You have to be careful of our dear Mechanic Emperor. He's very interested in new and young members."

"Oh? Why?"

Gaud turned and saw that Manison's expression was calm, as if he was used to it.

Sun Hunter, who was on the side, laughed out loud and said, "Haha, Black Star is right. Manison has been insisting on not giving up the Felon technology. If you really have a Super High Risk Esper Ability, you must be careful. He might be interested in your fragile body and turn you into his puppet."

"Humph, ridiculous."

Manison closed his eyes and ignored them.

Seeing this, everyone burst into laughter. The room was filled with joy.

Black Star messing with the Mechanic Emperor was already a routine part of the meetings. Hearing Han Xiao say that, everyone only felt it was usual. They were used to it and did not suspect anything.

As time was scarce for everyone present, the welcome meeting ended very quickly. The people went offline one after another. Gaud stood up and returned to the dynasty fleet as well.

As soon as he returned to the room, Gaud received a communication request from the dynasty upper echelons that began with a question right away.

"We've heard about what happened during the Beyond Grade A Association meeting. You didn't tell anyone your ability, did you?"

"Nope." Gaud shook his head.

He was not surprised about how quickly the dynasty got the news. After all, there were many direct members of the dynasty in the association, so they were all sources of information for the dynasty.

"Good. We'll investigate where the information got leaked. To think that your ability was so accurately exposed, there's definitely something going on... The contents of today's meeting will certainly pass on to the federation, the church, and some Super Star Cluster civilizations. They might be suspicious about your ability because of it. Come back as soon as possible. The Flickering World is too dangerous."

"You're saying that someone might try to kill me?" Gaud raised his brows.

"I don't know about that. Times are different now than before. Because of the Beyond Grade A Association, as long as the rules are not broken, this kind of thing will most likely not happen... but it's still better to be cautious."

“Alright then,” Gaud casually replied and hung up the communication.

He did not feel any organization would attack him. The Flickering World was still in war now. The federation and the church would not attack their allies, and the Super Star Cluster civilization would not dare dispatch Beyond Grade As too due to fear of the three Universal Civilizations also sending their direct members into the war. Plus, the Beyond Grade A Association was another layer of insurance for him. He felt he was in a very safe situation.

Unlike the past, the association Black Star and the others founded became a privilege for all Beyond Grade As.

In the past, when Black Star did a lot of things, he got targeted and attacked by the federation and the church all the time. Now, however, the association guaranteed the safety of the Beyond Grade As, so this kind of situation would most likely not happen again.

Gaud benefited from it as well. Furthermore, his identity as a direct member of the dynasty was another layer of protection. He did not think anyone would have any motive to want to kill him—the risk of it far exceeded the reward.

“Now is such a good era for the Beyond Grade As...”

Gaud sighed and ordered the fleet to depart.

Dynasty spaceships took off one after another, entered outer space, and headed in the direction to leave the Flickering World.

At the same time, the content of the meeting got passed into different organizations by the various Beyond Grade As.

...

On the Federation of Light’s mother planet...

“An Esper who possibly possesses the Energy Control Esper Ability that only exists in theory?”

As the federation’s president, Bader, browsed the report sent by the direct Beyond Grade As, his expression changed slightly.

The chief doyen on the side tapped his cane and said with a deep voice, “This is just a guess. It might not be true, and it’s too early to take it seriously.”

“It’s a discovery at least,” Bader said. “This new Beyond Grade A of the dynasty is so secretive about everything. It doesn’t matter if his Esper Ability is Energy Control or not. He’s definitely not ordinary... They say the information got leaked from the black market. Tell the intelligence department to collect related information from the black market network and see if they can verify it.

“If this is true, the dynasty really got lucky. If they acquired such a Super with infinite potential, he will most certainly replace Clotti and become the National Pillar in the future... They already have Black Star, and now they have Gaud too. In terms of individual strength, the dynasty will be able to maintain an edge for hundreds of years. Sigh.”

The chief doyen frowned. "You're not going to do anything, are you? It will cost us much more than it'll benefit us."

"Don't worry. One Beyond Grade A isn't important. I won't destroy the great situation we're in now just for such a trivial matter. The church will probably make the same decision too." Bader waved and suddenly said, "But as for others... I don't know."

"Don't think too much." The chief doyen shook his head. "Times are different. Nothing will happen."

Bader thought about it and nodded. "Hmm, you're right. No one will do it, unless they're an idiot."

Chapter 1225 Speculation and Attack

On the other hand, the contents of the Beyond Grade A meeting also got passed on to the various Super Star Cluster civilizations.

On the Star Arc Civilization's mother planet...

"An Energy Control Esper... this kind of rumor would not appear out of nowhere. Investigate the reliability of this information as soon as possible!"

The Star Arc Civilization was severely worried.

In the past few decades, the growth of the Crimson Dynasty had been way too rapid and smooth. It could be considered their golden era. Not a single advanced civilization was not jealous.

The dynasty already had people like Dark Lord and Black Star, and now Gaud, whose potential might be infinite, had appeared, not to mention he was even a direct member of the dynasty. This news was undoubtedly a nightmare for the Super Star Cluster civilizations. With every new talent the three Universal Civilizations acquired, the Super Star Cluster Alliance faced more pressure in the individual strength territory.

Back when Traveler got publicly executed by the dynasty, although their good brother Modo took the blame for it for some reason, it was impossible for the Star Arc Civilization leader not to be furious watching their own loyal member getting his execution broadcast live by the dynasty. He had only held back and did not do anything because the big picture was more important.

If he could eliminate Gaud and erase the dynasty's future National Pillar in advance, it would be like avenging Traveler and making the dynasty pay for what they did...

The Star Arc Civilization leader's expression shifted rapidly. In the end, he sighed and suppressed his impulses.

"Forget it. The state of the Flickering War is not positive at all. Our allies are getting defeated time and again. We're already in a difficult enough situation, forcing them to send Beyond Grade As into the war too isn't a wise choice. There's no room for risk-taking in the current situation..."

Currently, no Beyond Grade A was part of the Flickering War. The three Universal Civilizations promising not to dispatch any direct Beyond Grade As was one of the very few great things for the Super Star Cluster Alliance. Once they broke the rule and made the three Universal Civilizations send in Beyond Grade As, the situation would become much worse for them than it already was.

The Flickering War was the hope for the Super Star Cluster Alliance to turn their situation around. Between a Beyond Grade A and the overall strategy of the entire civilization, of course, he knew which was more important.

The three Universal Civilizations had control over the resources of the explored universe. The strong became stronger, forming a positive cycle. Those who came after had to grow under restrictions, unable to catch up to their growth speed no matter what. The difference would only grow bigger, and killing a single Beyond Grade A would not change that at all.

If they lost the Flickering War completely, taking revenge might be considered as a form of collecting some interest. Now, however, the risk of acting far outweighed the benefits, so of course, he was not willing to do it.

“Be it Gaud or Black Star, let them do whatever.” The Star Arc Civilization leader shook his head. “I wonder what the other Super Star Cluster civilizations think. No one should want to take this risk; the big picture is more important. As for the federation and the church, they’re not likely to fight internally now... right?”

...

Somewhere in the Primeval Star River, Manison deactivated the remote projection, turned on the virtual screen, and brought up Gaud’s information that was circulating on the internet. He tapped the armrest of the chair with his fingers and pondered.

“Gaud... a new name, not a Beyond Grade A seed from any Star Field. He suddenly appeared out of nowhere, which means he’s been secretly trained by the dynasty all this time. The last person who appeared in a similar way was Clotti, who has the ability to control dark matter. The dynasty heavily promoted his strength as soon as he appeared...”

“Usually, the three Universal Civilizations promote the abilities of their direct Beyond Grade A members. However, the dynasty has asked Gaud to keep it a secret instead. Even Clotti did not receive this treatment, which means this guy’s Esper Ability is extremely special. The rumor of him having the Energy Control Esper Ability might not be fake. Interesting.”

A tint of curiosity flashed past Manison’s eyes.

If Gaud really had such an overpowered ability, he could not say he was not tempted. If this was before, he would have most likely tried to ambush Gaud and capture him to make him into a Felon.

Now, however, he had decided to quit that profession. Unless it was a special situation, he would no longer make new Felons, or he would not possibly be able to have a high reputation in the association.

That b*stard Black Star had been bringing his dark history up all the time, and he was really annoyed by it.

“I shall see how things go first. If Gaud wants to build a reputation in the future, he’ll definitely have to display his ability. There’s no way for him to hide it. In fact, someone might already plan to spar with him before he even leaves the Flickering World.”

Manison suddenly narrowed his eyes and murmured, “There are so many Beyond Grade As and armed fleets in the Flickering World. It’ll be easy to dispatch forces. That place is the most dangerous Star Field in the universe now. It’s the land that nourishes conspiracies and plots... Hmm, I wonder if the federation, the church, and the Super Star Cluster Alliance will do anything...”

...

Meanwhile, in the Limitless Financial Group’s Flickering World subdivision...

“Another high potential stock...”

Sorokin crossed his arms and recalled what happened in the meeting earlier.

From the way he looked at it, Gaud had a bright future and would definitely be able to grow smoothly with the dynasty’s protection. It was almost certain he would become the National Pillar of the dynasty in the future. The dynasty had very high hopes on him.

“If things go well, I might be able to trigger a second Tragedy of the Pinnacles...”

Sorokin contemplated. He felt this was a great opportunity.

If he used the real strength he had been hiding and secretly assassinated Gaud, making the dynasty furious, he should be able to start an enormous storm that would shatter the situation the association had been working so hard to achieve. Thus, the bloody slaughtering between factions would start again.

Although he had joined the association, he was the last person who wanted to see the Beyond Grade A be united. His goals had never changed—one was to earn money, and another was to reduce the number of Beyond Grade As, creating an environment that was beneficial to him.

Furthermore, Black Star had always been a hidden problem. He instinctively wanted to get rid of anything that might expose his true identity.

“If I target Gaud, maybe I can think of a way to pin it on Black Star and cause him trouble... But he knows my secrets, so he’ll definitely suspect me. It’ll be risky for me too.”

Sorokin frowned slightly.

Although he had this idea, it was tough to actually execute it, as Black Star had no motive to target Gaud.

In his eyes, even if he made the move, Black Star would be the last person the dynasty suspected. The framing had almost no chance of working.

He did not dare take the risk before coming up with a detailed plan.

“I have to carefully think on what to do exactly.”

Sorokin’s eyes flickered.

...

A few days passed very quickly. Under the influence of some people with motives, the content of the Beyond Grade A meeting got leaked. It did not only circulate in the black market this time but throughout the entire galactic society, attracting widespread attention.

The appeal of Super High Risk Esper Abilities related topics was very high. It piqued the interest of countless galactic residents. The rumors got more and more widely known. Although there was still no solid proof, under the secret influence of some organizations, it was as if the galactic society had already confirmed that Gaud’s ability was ‘Energy Control’.

Although the various organizations were shocked, due to different reasons, no one acted. They only silently kept an eye on the three Universal Civilizations and the Super Star Cluster Alliance, speculating if they would make a move.

In the eyes of the various organizations, as long as these two sides did not make any moves, nothing would happen.

The changes in the outside world did not affect the schedule of the dynasty fleet. It advanced through space with Gaud on board, heading toward the exit of the Flickering World.

Inside the luxurious training room of the fleet, Gaud hovered in midair, giving off a dim light all over his body. The sound of a moving stream echoed in the air; energy formed tides inside his body.

After a while, he opened his eyes and took a deep breath. The light extinguished, and his body returned to normal.

Gaud reached out his hand and turned his palm up. The next moment, a tiny stream of dark black energy suddenly appeared and spun around his wrist.

He toyed with this stream of energy and grinned.

“It’s no wonder Energy Control is a ‘high class Esper Ability’. It’s been less than a month, and I’ve already cracked about half of the Evolution Energy’s structure and can produce a semi-finished version of it. It’s going smoother than I thought. At this pace, I’ll control this special energy very soon. Then, I will be able to create it all I want and become a walking Evolution Cube...”

The ability of every Esper would change once they became a Beyond Grade A, and Energy Control was no exception. Once he broke down the structure of a type of energy, it would mean he permanently gained control of that type of energy and would be able to create it anytime.

This did not only include all kinds of common types of energy but even special forms of energy such as the Evolution Energy and Primal Esper Ability Entities. As long as he cracked them, they would become his own ability. With every type of energy he controlled, he would become stronger.

Not only that, Gaud even had a fuzzy feeling that once he became even stronger and mastered more types of energy, it seemed like he could even create new forms of energy out of nothing!

Even with his extremely extensive knowledge, he was still astonished. The potential of this overpowered Esper Ability was horrifying!

“Primal Esper Ability Entities are tough to find, but Black Star seems to have two of them. I’m his colleague now, and he wants to build a good relationship with me. If I bring up the request, he should agree to lend them to me... This is so much easier than robbing.”

Gaud was in a great mood. The air felt so refreshing and the future so bright.

In the past when he was a wanted criminal, he could only rob something from others if he wanted it. Now that he had become a member of the Lawful Faction, he finally felt the advantages of having connections.

Gaud sighed as he opened the gate and walked out of the training room. The dynasty soldiers he met on the way all greeted him respectfully. He was already used to it.

When he came to the command room at the bridge, the captain approached and greeted him.

“Your Excellency Gaud, we’re approaching the edge of the fourth exploration stage area of the Flickering World. We’ll be reaching the entrance of the stargate route in two days. After that, we’ll quickly pass through the remaining Star Clusters through the Black Star Army’s territory.”

“Hmm, good work,” Gaud responded monotonously.

“Thank you. It’s an honor to serve y...”

The captain’s tone was humble.

However, before he finished, the ship suddenly trembled. It exited from hyperdrive mood and stopped.

Bang!

The staff all staggered due to the momentum. Some even fell to the floor.

The captain held onto the table and yelled, “What’s going on?”

Very soon, an operational officer responded with a shocked tone. “Captain, the spaceship’s artificial intelligence suddenly lost control. It locked down the engine, activated the emergency stop, turned off all devices, and disconnected from the quantum network! We’ve lost contact with the other spaceships!”

“Is this an attack?” The captain was furious. “Who dares attack the dynasty’s forces! Turn on the backup artificial intelligence immediately and regain control of the spaceship!”

The operational officer quickly returned to his post and worked on the system, but he was covered in sweat very soon.

“It... It can’t be done! All functions of the spaceship are frozen!”

The dynasty crew inside the command room were panicking. Gaud glanced at them. He then turned to look outside the porthole and frowned.

“Am I the target?”

Gaud was surprised. He felt this was the only possibility.

He had analyzed his situation long ago. For their own sake, the odds of the various organizations attacking him were extremely low. He originally thought his trip in the Flickering World would be smooth and did not expect someone to really take such a big risk.

“Looks like the doing of a Virtual Mechanic. Is it the Mechanic Emperor? Tsk, is he really planning on capturing me and turning me into a Felon? He’s already in such a horrible situation, yet he still dares to enrage the dynasty?”

Gaud was shocked.

Being shocked was one thing, but he was not nervous. His experience of being attacked was way too rich. The emotion ‘fear’ did not even exist in him.

Furthermore, he was not really a new Beyond Grade A. Although his strength could not compare with his old days, he had still inherited part of it and was stronger than someone at his level should be. This was one source of his confidence.

If the attacker was the Mechanic Emperor, he had to admit he would not be able to defeat him and could only look for a way to escape.

However, if it was some other organization that took him as a new Beyond Grade A and wanted to eliminate him, they would have made a huge mistake.

In his eyes, the only ones who had the motive and the ability to attack him were the federation, the church, the Super Star Cluster Alliance, and the Mechanic Emperor. It basically could not possibly anyone else.

Gaud’s Beyond Grade A senses suddenly spread out and covered this entire area.

“Let’s see who wants to kill me!”

Chapter 1226 Stop Acting. I Know Who You Are

Gaud’s senses spread rapidly in all directions, covering more and more area. Very soon, he discovered a faint energy source that was hovering right in front of the fleet. However, he could not see it with his eyes. It seemed to be invisible.

The moment he discovered the target, it appeared before the fleet. It was shrouded in a black mechanical suit. Gaud could not figure out whom it was.

“Just one person... hmm? This presence...”

Gaud's expression changed slightly. His Esper Ability was very sensitive about one's energy presence. He could basically remember the unique energy presence of everyone he had ever met. He noticed that the presence of this attacker was familiar, so he might have met them before.

As the radar no longer worked, he sensed the environment around too and realized that the spacetime of this area was locked. It was the common effects of a trap. Space-related abilities such as hyperdrive, teleportation, and so on were all disabled.

Furthermore, his senses could not continue extending further when it reached a certain distance. There seemed to be a layer that separated this area from the outside world.

At this time, the captain noticed the attacker and immediately responded. He yelled to the crew, "Try to reconnect to the network and report this to the dynasty. Also, pull out the artificial intelligence chip, switch to manual controls, and retreat immediately!"

As soon as the order was given, the crew hastily moved. The staff in the main control room quickly headed toward the engine room and pulled out the artificial intelligence. They then used the hardware system to cancel all the artificial intelligence's authorization to control the spaceship. This was to prevent the spaceship from being controlled by the enemy. Plus, they would only be able to reboot the paralyzed spaceship if it was in manual mode.

This dynasty fleet was only responsible for transporting Gaud, so it was a small team. Although the performance of the dynasty battleships was higher than most spaceship models, the size of this team was too small. Its combat capability was very limited and could not possibly fight a Beyond Grade A.

Most importantly, their communication channel was cut off, and they could not request reinforcements from the outside world. The most important mission right now was to get the information out, so the captain did not want to fight. All of this was the standard response written in the Dynasty Commander Strategy Guidebook.

However, although his idea was decent, with the communication network cut off, the command system was broken, and his orders could not be passed onto the others. Shifting into a magic oriented emergency command system would also require some time... and this time dictated the difference between life and death.

Before this dynasty fleet made a move, countless golden electric arcs exploded from the attacker's body. Inside the cluster of electric arcs, a black-bean-like particle expanded and turned into an enormous mechanical army, instantly filling up the sights of everyone!

Mechanical Force—Soldier Nest!

Compressed Orb Innovation—Armed Body!

Indeed, it was Han Xiao's original body who came to attack Gaud!

He deliberately spread the message to have the various organizations suspect each other, but all of that was for one thing—to eliminate Gaud without anyone finding out. Otherwise, it would all be a waste of effort. The other organizations were not going to do it, so he had no choice but to do it himself.

As history and experience proved, the more parts a plan had, the more unstable factors it would have. Many conspiracies and plots were anything but complicated; they did not have so many twists and turns. Therefore, he did not have to be flashy to achieve his goal, focusing on the main conflict was the key.

Now, the waters were muddied. There were way too many possible suspects. He had achieved the first step of his plan, so he could move on to the next step and act now.

Based on the dynasty's route, he calculated a location Gaud had to pass by. He had teleported to the frontline stronghold using the King long ago and secretly moved here, found a desolate area, and planted the trap.

Not only did he place spacetime stabilization devices in this area, but he even used a large area detection masking device and 'sealed' this area up. The inside could not detect the outside, nor could the outside detect what was going on inside. No matter how intense the battle was on the inside, the detection devices outside would not be able to sense the energy shockwaves of the battle and see it as nothing was happening. This way, the chances of anyone discovering something were reduced.

Additionally, Han Xiao planted many other devices that blocked all kinds of detection methods, anything he could think of, all to reduce the chance of getting discovered. Only a Mechanic would be able to do something like this.

The universe already had the technology he used, but the ones Han Xiao used were all improved versions of them that incorporated some similar blueprints in Jayz's technology treasure. These devices were very advanced and much more effective than the ordinary versions.

Of course, the battleships of advanced civilizations had respective detection devices for all these traps. If they were travelling normally, the dynasty fleet would have discovered the anomaly from very far away. However, the range of Han Xiao's hacking abilities was extremely far now. He had secretly won the heart of the dynasty fleet's artificial intelligence long ago and taken control of the fleet, which was why they did not notice it at all. Otherwise, the dynasty fleet would never have stepped into his traps.

Though Gaud's Energy Control Esper Ability was powerful, he was powerless in the virtual territory and could not notice anything.

As soon as the mechanical army appeared, it fired right away at the paralyzed dynasty fleet without hesitation.

Countless beams of light flickered through space. The next moment, the storm of attacks penetrated the dynasty fleet's formation!

The shields of the dynasty fleets were frozen. They were defenseless under the rain of attacks. Beams penetrated the ships one after another. The thick exterior armor became twisted and torn. The spaceships exploded in the blink of an eye, turning into colorful fireworks!

Buzz!

At this time, a dark blue psionic barrier appeared abruptly and protected the remaining spaceship. The mechanical army's attacks rapidly shattered one layer of the barrier after another, but its speed was still delayed.

During this extremely short delay, the thrusters of these spaceships suddenly released huge flames. The spaceship accelerated in an instant and barely escaped the attacks.

Inside the main ship, Gaud's eyes were gleaming. A cluster of light filled with thousands of light strings floated above his palm.

In the crucial moment earlier, he had activated his ability and created a psionic shield that blocked some of the attacks. Then, he used his Esper Ability to fire up the energy furnace of the remaining battleships, skipping the multiple layers of authorization and forcibly activating the thrusters.

After a round of fire, a small fleet like this was already heavily damaged. There were only seven ships left.

"That was close..."

Gaud's expression was grave. He was on edge.

In the moment of the attack, he sensed the energy level of the attack and confirmed it had definitely reached the peak Beyond Grade A standard. It was strong by the peak Beyond Grade A standard even in that matter.

There were only so many Mechanics in the entire universe who were at this level. No matter who it was, it was not someone he could defeat... Of course, it was still most likely that old b*stard Manison!

"We can't fight. Let's go!"

Gaud glanced at the shocked and furious captain, activated his ability again, and pushed the surviving spaceships toward the edge of the sealed area.

He knew that the crew was of no help. It was not that he wanted to save them, but his flying speed was slower than the battleships; he needed them to escape.

As soon as he left this locked area and out of the opponent's trap, he would have a way to contact the outside world.

However, at this moment, a sudden sense of danger appeared in his mind. His intuition felt an overwhelming sense of threat. He instantly charged through the cabin wall and escaped the spaceship.

Swoosh!

The next moment, five extremely condensed red beams shot out from Han Xiao's fingers, easily penetrated the layers of psionic barriers, and cut the remaining battleships into pieces like a hot knife cutting through butter.

The next second, the energy cores of the spaceships exploded. The spaceships turned into fireworks and destroyed all the spaceship fragments.

In an instant, the fleet was annihilated, leaving Gaud to hover in the battlefield alone.

“What a powerful energy beam. It seems to have extremely strong penetrating ability against all energy shields. If I was hit by it, I would definitely be hurt...”

Fear lingered in Gaud’s heart. He was very close to being hit by the red beams earlier.

He looked at and saw that Han Xiao’s black mechanical suit was covered in red energy circuits like blood vessels, all connecting to his fingertips. As the five red beams were launched, these energy circuits dimmed again as if they had entered a cooldown.

Seeing that his attacks had missed, Han Xiao narrowed his eyes.

“These Anti-neutron Beams are completely silent. If it was an ordinary new Beyond Grade A, he would have already been hit. He must have foreseen the threat because of part of the soul he inherited from the past.”

In the last few years, Han Xiao had built more Universal Treasures than just ‘The King’. This black mechanical suit was originally a Gold blueprint from Jayz’s technology treasure. Han Xiao had fused some modern technology into it, improved it, given it a new name, and called it ‘Black King—Ranged Gear’.

This was just one of the products in the series. There were also ‘Melee Gear’, ‘Army Gear’, and ‘Defense Gear’, which excelled in different areas. He called them the “Black King Series”, and they were all Gold Grade mechanical suits!

Without hesitation, Han Xiao charged toward Gaud. Gaud turned around and fled right away.

However, without a spaceship, his flight speed was no match for the mechanical army. He instantly got surrounded by the mechanical troops and fell into a dreadful spot.

As soon as the fight started, Han Xiao immediately noticed just how much of an edge Gaud’s Esper Ability gave him. Not only did he have an outrageously high resistance against energy attacks, but he could even absorb the enemy’s energy attacks during battle to recover his own energy at an astonishing speed. Basically, at the Beyond Grade A level, having this Esper Ability meant having infinite energy. It was incredibly overpowered!

The superiority of his Esper Ability was extremely apparent. With the edge his Esper Ability gave him, Gaud shockingly did not show signs of defeat under the attacks of the mechanical army.

“He has only just entered the Beyond Grade A territory, and he’s already this strong. Will there ever be anyone who can defeat him in the distant future?”

Seeing this, even Han Xiao was astounded by how talented Gaud was. At the same time, his thoughts of eliminating this hidden threat as early as possible became firmer.

The next moment, he personally stepped into the encirclement and charged toward Gaud, deflecting the energy beam attacks from Gaud one after another, successfully closing the distance. Without saying a word, his leg swung down like an axe.

Gaud's expression changed as he hastily raised his hands to block it.

Boom!

An enormous force came from Han Xiao's leg. Even though he protected his body with energy, his body could not endure it. His bones broke one after another, and intense pain flooded his mind.

"To think I got physically beat up by a Mechanic. If my Grade was a little bit higher, you'd be done for..."

Gaud clenched his teeth and endured the pain. As he attempted to back away, he realized his arms felt like they were stuck to the armor on Han Xiao's leg, and he could not pull it away.

He hastily looked at it and saw black nanoparticles spreading at the area of contact, rapidly covered his arms, and headed toward his entire body.

"Sh*t!"

Gaud hastily controlled his energy attempting to get away. However, at this time, his mind suddenly trembled. His soul was dragged into a world made of data streams, and he lost control of his body.

Before he could react, a gigantic silhouette appeared and slapped his soul into the ground.

This is... Virtual Soul!

Gaud had vivid memories of this ability. He clenched his teeth and shouted, "Manison! Is that you?"

Han Xiao ignored him and continued attacking.

Inside the Virtual Domain, Gaud's soul was powerless and was thrashed. Luckily, the strength of his soul far exceeded normal new Beyond Grade As. Only because of that was he able to quickly escape.

As Gaud's consciousness returned to his body, before he could catch a breath, he realized his entire body was wrapped by machines as if he wore a mechanical suit.

"You..."

Before he could start resisting, he saw Han Xiao snap his fingers.

Whoosh!

The next moment, Gaud disappeared without a trace. The King mechanical suit took him away through teleportation, ignoring the spacetime lock in the area.

"Execute the second plan."

Han Xiao turned around immediately and told the mechanical army to bombard the area, wiping away all possible traces of the fleet. At the same time, he folded and compressed the mechanical army and placed them back in his main body.

He had prepared multiple plans. If he could quickly eliminate Gaud right here on the spot, it would be the best. However, if Gaud had the ability to hold on for an extended period of time, he would find a way to change the battlefield.

Although he had set up many traps, the fourth exploration stage area of the Flickering World was way too boisterous. There were uncertainties everywhere. The longer he took, the more risk he would have to bear. He did not want to spend too much time there to avoid running into someone.

The last time he traveled with Kasuyi, he had recorded the coordinates of many Deep Layer secondary dimensions on the way. While waiting for Gaud to arrive, he had chosen a stable dimension no one had ever visited and placed a few 'Thrones' there. He had also left some mechanical armies in that dimension to transform it into a larger sealed area.

When they arrived in the Deep Layer secondary dimension, only then would all of Gaud's ways of escaping be eliminated.

Han Xiao quickly finished up cleaning the traces, stored his troops, hastily changed into another King suit, and instantly disappeared.

As the images in his eyes flickered, he arrived at a new area.

There, the earth was white. It was desolate. There were absolutely no signs of life, as if it was a black and white world. Only outsiders carried colors with them.

In midair, the mechanical army that had set up an ambush in this secondary dimension had surrounded Gaud and was attacking him so that he could not escape.

Seeing that Han Xiao had appeared, Gaud instantly turned and looked at him. His eyes were filled with shock.

The teleportation function of the King was already one of Han Xiao's signatures. When he fell for it, he finally knew who the attacker was, and he could not believe it!

While barely holding on against the attacks of the mechanical army, Gaud stared at Han Xiao. His tone was filled with shock and confusion.

"Black Star! It's you! What do you mean by this!"

He had absolutely no idea why the person who attacked him was Black Star.

Aren't we buddies now?

Didn't you want to befriend me?

Why attack me?

Knowing that Gaud's doom was certain, Han Xiao finally spoke in a calm tone.

"Stop acting. I know who you really are... EsGod. Do you really think you can cut off your past completely and get a new life?"

The moment his words sounded, Gaud's pupils constricted into dots. He completely lost it!

Impossible!

My plan's perfect. How could he possibly know?

Chapter 1227 I Am Starting to Feel More and More Like a Villain

In the past, in order to create a Super High Risk Esper Ability, he had captured Espers ruthlessly without ever considering the consequences. After fusing countless abilities, he had obtained the genetic chain of [Energy Control]. By then, as his original body's ledger was already filled with blood and his life span was ending, he thought of starting a new life.

Hence, he had hidden this ability all along and never shown it. He had secretly chosen 'Gaud' as the container for rebirth and planted this part of his Esper Ability genetic chain into Gaud, planning to inherit this ability after his rebirth. He then killed all his subordinates who knew about it and made sure that this identity had a clean background.

The core of this plan was [Esper Ability—Rebirth]. This was an ability that could only ever be used once, giving the user a second life. It was not a pure soul-type Esper Ability but was related to the High Dimensional Information Form.

Of course, the effect of it was not as simple as simply splitting up his soul. His consciousness would fuse perfectly with the container, forming a new and whole soul, completely unrelated to his original body. Although he would still have his memories, his thoughts and personality would shift to a certain extent. This meant that Gaud was Gaud and no longer EsGod; he had entirely abandoned his past and was truly reborn.

Back when he was captured by Han Xiao and the others, in that brief moment before the Spacetime Amber completely sealed him up, only [Esper Ability—Rebirth] could save him. Hence, he had unflinchingly torn his soul apart and escaped. Using this ability to turn into High Dimensional Information Form, he had escaped the soul seal from Lotus Swordsman and the others, entering Gaud's body.

Not a single person knew about this. After so many years of nothing happening, Gaud had not been worried since long ago. He felt that no one saw through his plan. However, to his absolute shock, his deepest secret got brought up by Han Xiao this easily.

A tsunami was going on in Gaud's mind. He had utterly no idea at which part of the plan he got discovered.

Due to how unstable his mind was, even his defenses became weaker. He was blown away by the mechanical army, adding a few more wounds to his body.

At this time, Gaud's thoughts spun quickly. He suppressed the shock in his heart and said,

"EsGod? What are you talking about?"

“You still don’t want to admit it? Looks like you still have some meaningless hope. Do you think you can possibly escape now that you’re in my hands?”

Han Xiao narrowed his eyes and instantly knew what Gaud was thinking.

Even in such a desperate situation, Gaud would never admit he was EsGod. He believed that if he went missing, the dynasty would most certainly search for him intensively and thoroughly, and Black Star might also be investigated. He felt he still had a chance to escape.

However, if he admitted his identity, what Black Star did would be justified. He could wait for the dynasty to rescue him as long as he did not leave any evidence.

Therefore, no matter how absolutely shocked he was inside, no matter how much Black Star tried to make him talk, Gaud was never going to admit it.

“Black Star! This is completely ridiculous! At least find a better excuse if you want to kill me. How am I related to EsGod? You’re probably worried that I’ll threaten your position when I’m stronger, so you want to get rid of me beforehand. There’s no one else here anyway. Why bother making up something nonexistent?”

Gaud clenched his teeth and spoke with a tone that sounded like he was furious from being accused.

“Why didn’t I notice in the past that your acting skills are on par with Kasuyi’s?” Han Xiao curled his lips.

Gaud ignored what he said as if he was submerged in rage and yelled, “I got it! You’re the one who leaked my ability to the black market! You must have heard it from inside the dynasty and want to muddy the waters, so you can frame it on someone else! Don’t think for a second you can deceive everyone; the dynasty won’t let you run away with this!”

“Since you don’t even dare admit it, there’s nothing much more to talk about.”

Han Xiao shook his head.

He originally wanted to speak with Gaud heart to heart. After all, they had known each other for decades; he wanted to at least give him the chance to say a few last words. However, Gaud was clearly not going to admit it no matter what, so there was nothing more to talk about.

As soon as he said that, Han Xiao activated his Mechanical Force without hesitation, releasing the troops in his original body. He then fused some of the mechanical soldiers into a Mechanical Deity.

This sealed Deep Layer secondary dimension was undisturbed, so Han Xiao did not have to hold back anymore.

Swoosh!

The Celestial Punishment Edge slashed down, shattering multiple layers of shields and smashed Gaud from the sky down to the ground like slapping a fly. He plummeted like a falling meteor, creating an enormous crater.

A shockwave erupted with Gaud in the center. Cracks opened up on the pale earth that extended all the way to the end of the horizon.

Plop...

Gaud was bleeding from every pore on his skin. His shirt was instantly painted red.

An intense pain flooded all his nerves. Before he could even catch a breath, his sights were filled up by dense black silhouettes. The next moment, the barrels of the machines in the sky all lit up.

Gaud hastily jumped up and backed away. The next second, countless psionic cannon beams fused into a gigantic light beam and penetrated the pale earth.

The ground instantly cracked and bulged like a mountain rising from the ground. It then shattered and exploded!

Boom!

The powerful aftershock spread rapidly. Though Gaud created layers of shields, the shockwave still blew him away.

He was only halfway up the sky when the Mechanical Deity caught up to him and smashed him back to the ground, shattering god knew how many more bones.

Although Gaud's Esper Ability had an extraordinary potential, potential was not the same as actual strength. His current Grade was still too low. Before Han Xiao, who was at his peak performance, he was as weak as a child and completely powerless. The battle was entirely one-sided; Gaud could only barely stay alive while getting thrashed!

While Han Xiao beat up Gaud, he took the time to look at the combat information on the interface.

Since his level was much higher than Gaud, he could see all of Gaud's abilities, so he could confirm that Gaud had no way of escaping this situation.

Although he had seen Gaud's interface the last time, he looked through it again now just in case.

Then Han Xiao discovered that Gaud had acquired a new ability.

[Energy Control—Evolution Energy (Unactivated)]: You are analyzing the energy structure of the Evolution Energy. You will master this energy when the analysis is complete. Current analysis progress: 50.2%.

This b*stard is still thinking about the Evolution Cube?

Han Xiao frowned.

This guy is really persistent. It's a shock he still hasn't given up on the Evolution Cube!

Gaud's ability was too stealthy. He only started the analysis after leaving the palace, so Han Xiao did not notice it back then.

Luckily, he indirectly shattered this plan of his because of other reasons, or Gaud would have secretly obtained this technology.

Han Xiao suddenly realized a sensitive problem.

Did Gaud do this only on his own, or did the dynasty ask him to do it?

Han Xiao's eyes gleamed as he thought with a heavy heart.

Although the dynasty had not mentioned the Evolution Cube recently, Han Xiao knew that some people in the dynasty would never give up on obtaining it. Gaud was now a direct member of the dynasty, so the dynasty's upper echelons knew his ability. It was very likely they secretly sent him to crack the Evolution Energy and then claim that their research succeeded so that he would have no reason to be angry.

Han Xiao had nothing to say about the dynasty's doings. They were just trying to acquire what they wanted. There was no right or wrong. What he cared more about was how this piece of intelligence would affect his plan.

If the dynasty asked Gaud to do it, the risk would increase for him. In the dynasty's eyes, he would have a valid motive and not be someone who they had no reason to doubt; he would become a suspect too.

On the other hand, this gave him a new excuse. Since the dynasty played tricks on him first, as long as he did not kill Gaud, even if he got found out and the dynasty held him responsible for it, things would also not end up in the worst scenario.

Looks like it's not all bad... I shall take him down first!

Han Xiao shook his head, suppressed these thoughts, and focused on bullying... no, fighting Gaud.

As time passed, Gaud's state became worse and worse. Although his Esper Ability gave him an infinite amount of energy, it did not give him the ability to regenerate health quickly. His wounds accumulated, and his regenerative speed could not keep up anymore.

Dragging his exhausted and wounded body, Gaud tried to escape time after time, but he failed each attempt.

The strength difference was too great, and Han Xiao was very well prepared. There was nothing Gaud could do.

As a few more light beams penetrated his body, Gaud could not hold on any longer. Like a bird without wings, he plummeted and landed on the wrecked pale ground. Blood flowed out from all over his body, quickly forming a puddle.

Han Xiao deactivated the Mechanical Deity and slowly landed beside Gaud. Gaud still had yet to give up. He dragged his heavily damaged body and crawled on the ground, leaving a trail of blood behind.

"... Give up."

Han Xiao looked at the interface and confirmed that Gaud was already in the near-death state. He shook his head, sighed, bent down, grabbed Gaud's neck, and lifted his entire body up.

Gaud's feet were hovering above the ground. He had no strength to resist. He stared at Han Xiao; his eyes were filled with hatred.

He had finally returned to the Beyond Grade A realm after so long. He had a hopeful future filled with infinite possibilities, and he was looking forward to it.

However, he had never thought that after keeping a low profile and growing for so long, as soon as he appeared in the world full of hope, he would meet Black Star, who figured out his identity and shattered his plan in the womb.

He could not admit this loss!

He still had a bright future!

He still had a big goal!

All the planning in the past years, his lifelong ambition...

All of that was going to perish...

He could not accept it!

He could not lose!

Han Xiao looked at Gaud's twisted expressions and shook his head.

"Whether you admit that you're EsGod or not, it won't change the facts. I did this to you not because of personal reasons. If that thing did not happen, I couldn't care less about you wiping your history and joining the dynasty. After all, I'm no saint. I'm no one to judge your sins.

"But I know exactly how determined you are about what exists on the other side of that wormhole. I can't let you move freely inside the dynasty. That will not only threaten me but the entire explored universe.

"Although that day will come sooner or later, not only will your existence bring that day forward, it'll even cause unpredictable impacts... because you're too pure. As long as there's the slightest opportunity to become stronger, you won't care who you fight for. As for me... I don't like to act only when the threat has already erupted."

Gaud's pupils constricted.

He subconsciously wanted to ask Han Xiao what he knew and opened his mouth but did not speak in the end. He did not want to leave any evidence that might cause suspicion.

"Black Star... the dynasty won't let you get away with this!"

Gaud repeated this sentence again.

Seeing that Gaud was still not admitting anything, Han Xiao knew it was not going to happen. As he activated his Mechanical Force, nanoparticles extended onto Gaud's body and quickly shrouded his body, turning into a spherical mechanical imprisonment device.

Then, Han Xiao activated the Spacetime Amber and slowly covered this imprisonment device up. He then thought about it and said, "Including this time, this is the third time you've fallen into my hands."

Before Gaud could respond, Han Xiao completed the Spacetime Ember seal.

Buzz!

The next moment, the amber was complete.

The entire device got sealed up. From the outside, only the spherical mechanical prison could be seen in the amber. What was inside it was not visible.

At this moment, Han Xiao finally heaved a sigh of relief and relaxed his taut nerves.

"It's finally done. No accidents happened..."

One reason he did not kill Gaud on the spot was to give himself some room for explanation if he got exposed; another was that he did not want to give Gaud an opportunity to be revived by the Sanctums any time soon; last but not least, he did not want to waste the Super High Risk Esper Ability EsGod spent countless years to create, [Energy Control]!

When the Spacetime Amber wiped out Gaud's soul, he could have Feidin use the Soul Swapper and shift the soul of someone he thrust into Gaud's body. Using these two Universal Treasures in combination had always been something he wanted to test out.

Or he could wait for 'Little EsGod' Evans to grow and suck away Gaud's Esper Ability.

He could even wait till he mastered the Felon technology and secretly make Gaud into a Felon. However, the side effects of that were too huge, so it was not the best choice.

As for whether Gaud could still revive after he did all these, Han Xiao did not know either. He never tried it, so he had no way of knowing.

If Gaud could revive, there would indeed be a chance he could get exposed. In the future, when the dynasty discovers the Sanctums, they would certainly try to revive this 'direct member' of theirs.

However, who knew what things would be like then? Furthermore, he could infinitely delay the arrival of that day, and it was easy. Before he was confident in dealing with the dynasty's accusations, he could simply not kill Gaud and only imprison him, letting him out once in a while to beat him up and make sure his soul was not wiped!

This way, Gaud would not die, and of course, he could never be revived!

Merciless, cruel, ruthless, fearsome. Why is my style becoming more and more like a villain?

Han Xiao rubbed his cheeks.

He silently made a joke about himself in his mind before becoming serious.

Capturing Gaud was only a start. The more important thing to do was to deal with the storm the dynasty's rage would stir up not long after that would sweep across all advanced civilizations!

"I've done what I need to do. Now I'll just have to wait for the storm to start... Sigh, I didn't expect myself to start the fuse this time."

Thinking about the various possibilities he had speculated not long ago, Han Xiao exhaled lightly, turned on the interface, and looked at the mission.

The hidden mission [Gaud's Secret] was surprisingly complete. The mission requirement was to find out Gaud's secret, and Han Xiao did not know what the criteria of that was. He clearly did not find any solid evidence, nor did Gaud admit anything. Did he just have to call out his real identity in front of him? Was it really so easy?

Hmm, the fact that I thrashed him is probably the main reason it's considered completed...

The mission completion criteria of hidden missions was quite confusing. Han Xiao did not think too much about it and went to clean things up.

He controlled the mechanical army and bombarded this secondary dimension till the entire dimension collapsed, eliminating all traces.

After completing that, Han Xiao did not waste any time there. He retrieved his machines, put on the King suit, directly returned to Black Star Palace, and found Feidin in the library right away.

Feidin only looked up and glanced at Han Xiao before putting his focus back on reading the book in his hands, letting Han Xiao touch him all he wanted.

After getting plenty of luck in his hands, Han Xiao returned to his personal training room, rubbed his hands with excitement, and chose to conclude the mission.

[Gaud's Secret] completed!

You have received [Character Summon Card – Gaud]!

Character Summon Card – Gaud: [Energy Analysis]—You can efficiently analyze the principles and structure of an energy form, gaining control of the energy. Usage: 0/4

You have received: Draw one of Gaud's ability/talent.

Note: Gaud is an Esper. Parts of the possible abilities have been automatically adjusted to your class.

Randomizing... complete!

Please select one from the five options below as the reward:

1. [Plasma Shockwave] – Ability: Release a plasma arc beam and deal damage to the enemy. The power of it relies on your INT, MYS, and energy output efficiency. Minimum cost per second: 5 energy. Cooldown: 4 seconds.

2. [Kinetic Strengthening] – Ability: Using energy, strengthen your cells and continuously enhance your close-range combat capabilities. The effects rely on your STR, DEX, END, MYS, and energy output efficiency. Minimum cost per minute: 10 energy. Cooldown: 12 seconds.

3. [Spiritual Growth] – Talent: +15% MYS, +10% CHA.

4. [Energy Collecting Ring] – Ability: Absorb the energy around you to rapidly recover your energy. Cost: 2 stamina per second. Cooldown: 0. Can be turned on at all times.

5. [Perfect Energy Affinity Physique] – Talent: You have astounding affinity toward all forms of energy. +120% basic energy senses, +90% basic energy resistance, +60% basic energy absorption efficiency, +30% basic energy attack damage, +20% maximum energy.

Chapter 1228 Sorokin’s Confusion

Seeing the last option, Han Xiao’s eyes sparkled.

“Yoho, nice!”

Among the options, only the last one was valuable. This was one of Gaud’s Molding Talents.

The bonuses this talent gave were all basic bonuses. The increase would be very considerable. To Han Xiao, the three most useful bonuses to him were the additional ninety-percent basic energy resistance, thirty-percent increase to basic energy attack damage, and twenty-percent increase to maximum energy.

His Indestructible Body was only strong because his regenerative speed was extremely quick, but his resistances were not outrageously high. However, this talent directly almost doubled his resistance to energy attacks!

As he became stronger, the attack damage of his mechanical army became stronger too. Hence, the ‘die together’ combo also became riskier for himself as time went on. The last time he used this in the Celestial Star Alliance, he almost sent himself away.

With this talent, if he did the same time again, he would not be in danger at all. This was another big step forward on the path of a Mechanic Tank.

Without this ability, Gaud would have lost consciousness long ago.

The basic energy attack damage bonus only increased Gaud’s own damage output, but in the hands of a Mechanic, it was much stronger. It could increase the damage of all energy type weapons. Its most direct impact would be the increase to the army’s long-range attacks. The thirty-percent increase was also quite ample.

At this point, with so many talents, Han Xiao had already discovered one trait—when the Molding Talents of other classes were possessed by a Mechanic, the effects would be astronomically enlarged. This was the advantage of using the Army Style.

Of course, the extra twenty percent maximum energy was incredible too.

His current maximum energy was around 290,000, so this gave him 50,000 energy right away. It was more than enough for him to acquire the bonuses of a new Energy Rank, maybe even two ranks!

In the later stages, Energy Rank bonuses and Race Evolution were among the main sources of attributes, giving thousands of points easily every time, substantially more than simply leveling up.

At his current Energy Rank, the attributes he would receive every time his rank increased were enormous. His attributes would increase for about seven thousand in total once he gained just one more Energy Rank.

The way the Energy Rank bonuses worked was that when his current energy depleted throughout battles, the bonuses would decrease along with the Energy Rank too. Therefore, the Supers who had infinite energy or could convert between energy and health had a tremendous edge. They could always maintain their energy level at their peak. Han Xiao, Kasuyi, and Oulou were all like this.

You have received the talent [Perfect Energy Affinity Physique]!

It was an easy choice. Han Xiao chose the last option without hesitation.

The next moment, an intense pain erupted in his body. Luckily, his nerves were tough, and he instantly regained control of his body.

This talent changed his physique; all the cells in his body were becoming stronger. The pain only faded after quite some time. His senses of the world changed again. It felt refreshing.

Han Xiao realized that he could now sense the stray universe energy everywhere around him without having to use any ability. It was as if he was suddenly no longer short-sighted; he could observe the world more clearly.

Furthermore, his body was even automatically pulling the stray energy in. The stray energy around was gathering unconsciously, moving around his body like pets.

Anyone who has this physique can be considered a talent. They'll grow extremely quickly. This talent should also be one of the reasons Gaud became a Beyond Grade A so quickly.

Han Xiao's body was filled with energy. He glanced at his attributes, his Energy Rank had already surpassed the 100,000 level.

However, there was no additional notification on the interface, so he was not sure if 100,000 Energy Rank was a new stage.

He was not concerned about it. Based on experience, the benefits of achieving a new Energy Rank would only show during Promotion. That was how it was for the bonuses of 52,000 Energy Rank and 78,000 Energy Rank. Therefore, having higher Energy Ranks at lower levels meant having high potential.

As for the effects of the Character Summon Card, Han Xiao had yet to try it. However, based on the fundamental mechanics of the Character Summon Cards, the effects of [Energy Analysis] were most certainly not permanent. He had two guesses about it.

One possibility was that once he chose which energy to gain control of, he would lose the control when the duration of the Character Summon Card ended. Another possibility was that it was similar to Jayz's [Mechanic—Insight] Character Summon Card; although he would lose the ability after the Character Summon Card duration ended, he would still remember the knowledge he gained by analyzing the energy, which would make studying this type of energy easier in the future.

However, he, of course, did not have the [Energy Control] Esper Ability, so he could not convert energy like Gaud could and would only be able to simulate the process using machines, which would be much more difficult. Espers did not have to understand the principles and mechanisms of their Esper Ability at all; they could use it right away. While the others could not duplicate the same process, they had to analyze the process and find another way to carry it out.

Basically, Espers only had to know that one plus one made two, while the others had to find out why one plus one was two and understand it. The difference was huge.

If the special energy created by Esper Abilities were so easy to break down, the advanced civilizations would have mass produced them long ago, and [Energy Control] would not have been seen as an overpowered ability.

Nonetheless, at least there are four uses. There's room for mistakes.

Han Xiao nodded, he was quite passionate about research.

Although I can fight Pugilists with my fists, I know I'm still a good scientist.

After browsing his attributes for a while more, Han Xiao turned off the interface and entered the quantum network.

For the time being, he did not plan to go anywhere and only wanted to monitor the galactic network at him, waiting for the storm to arrive.

...

"Gaud and his fleet have all gone missing!"

Inside the Crimson Dynasty, Urranrell, who had just received the urgent report, suddenly stood up. Her expression changed drastically.

Before her was the remote projection of the marshal of the exploration army, Tarrokov. His expression was extremely serious as he said with a deep voice, "Yes, it happened just now. The remote link

between Gaud's guard fleet and Planet Lighthouse's artificial intelligence center suddenly broke. We tried repairing it, but all attempts failed. We can't contact Gaud or anyone in the fleet now!"

The artificial intelligences of the dynasty fleets in the Flickering World were all monitored by the Planet Lighthouse headquarters. Once disconnected, Planet Lighthouse would instantly find out where that team went missing. This formed a highly responsive military system that covered most areas in the Flickering World.

"Where did they go missing?" Urranrell frowned heavily.

"Right at the edge of the Flickering World's Emerald Star Cluster, close to the stargate entrance of the third exploration phase. Using the nearest space buoy as a point, we have circled out the rough range of the area they went missing in. I've already sent the teams nearby to investigate."

Hearing this, Urranrell had no choice but to wait patiently. She asked with a grave tone, "What do you think is the cause of this?"

"There's not enough evidence to make an assumption." Tarrokov hesitated then said, "But personally, I'm guessing that the fleet was very likely attacked. Someone wants to kill Gaud. This is the most likely scenario."

Urranrell sat back down, her hands gripped together. The emotions in her eyes were flickering.

Not long after, Tarrokov received a report from his subordinates. His expression changed slightly, and he said, "Your Excellency Urranrell, the teams have sent back the message saying they did not discover any traces of the fleet, nor are there any signs of an anomaly within the area. The spaceships that passed by also said they did not detect anything unusual. It's like the fleet Gaud was in disappeared into thin air..."

Hearing this, Urranrell no longer hesitated. She instantly contacted the chief secretary and said with a firm tone, "Release an Emergency Summon Order. Notify all the upper echelons to drop everything on their hands and gather for a meeting immediately!"

...

About ten minutes later, the remote projections of the dynasty upper echelons came to the conference room one after another. The bosses of the various departments gathered and chatted quietly, not knowing what happened that made Urranrell summon all of them urgently.

Very soon, Urranrell entered the room with a serious expression. She looked around at the various upper echelons present and cut to the chase.

"This is an emergency. The dynasty's direct Beyond Grade A, Gaud, might have been attacked and is confirmed missing!"

As soon as she said that, the entire place became silent.

Shock appeared on the faces of every upper echelon. They did not expect to hear something so shocking.

At this time, Tarrokov stepped up and described the situation in the simplest way.

After understanding the situation, the various upper echelons present were all furious!

“Who dares to attack the dynasty’s direct member? This is trampling the dynasty’s pride!”

“We must investigate it thoroughly!”

“The dynasty is not to be provoked! No matter who did it, we must make them pay!”

Everyone had the same reaction; they were all extremely furious.

They were one of the ruling civilizations, yet someone dared to attack their direct member and wipe out their talent. Whoever was behind this had absolutely no respect for the dynasty at all!

For someone to do something like that, in their eyes, that person was asking to be killed!

An intelligence department high ranking official said with a deep voice, “Since the fleet is missing too, we can assume that the enemy succeeded. We have to first verify if Gaud is still alive. If he’s still alive, we have to prioritize saving him.”

“That’s right. Gaud is an important direct Beyond Grade A. Even if there’s only a tiny chance, we must protect his life!” another military official agreed.

“Gaud is a Beyond Grade A. To be able to take him down so quickly, the enemy definitely had to use a lot of forces. I suggest checking the space buoys nearby immediately. There should be witness reports of large fleets passing by!”

“Don’t have too high hopes. If the enemy could easily cut off the fleet’s remote link, they’d definitely be able to modify the records of the space buoys. The enemy was definitely fully prepared and wouldn’t leave any obvious clues since he dared mess with the dynasty.”

“The enemy could make our fleet disappear without a trace. There’s a high chance that a Beyond Grade A Mechanic is involved!”

“That’s right. The enemy might have left clues in the quantum network. I suggest getting Quantum Demon Judith to investigate, or we can even request help from Black Star if it really comes to that point. Black Star is a top Virtual Mechanic. Not many people in the universe can hide from him in the quantum network!”

The people planned and discussed the matter for a while. The topic then went back to the suspect.

An officer said, “Some time ago, an unknown force spread information about Gaud’s real ability on the network. This might be the fuse; someone wants to eliminate our talent or has eyes on this Super High Risk Esper Ability.”

“Not many organizations have both the ability and motive to do this. The federation and the church have been our competitors forever. They don’t want to see us have someone as talented as Gaud, so they both might act... especially the Federation of Light. They have the Multi-Dimensional Sky Opening Transportation Device, so they can kill Gaud without anyone noticing!”

“No, it is now the development stage of the Flickering World, and we’re still at war. The federation and the church wouldn’t break our temporary partnership for something like this. In fact, the Super Star Clusters civilizations are the most suspicious. They might feel that since they have no way of turning the war around, they had to erase a future threat before losing completely!”

“I heard Black Star has been protesting about Manison’s Felon technology, so the Mechanic Emperor is suspicious too! Don’t forget, Ninja from the Arcane Church is suspected to have been killed by Manison, leading to the church’s Ten Thousand Deity Scepter falling into the federation’s hands... This guy has done something like this before!”

Everyone present had the same three speculations. These three sides had both the ability and the motive. Other than them, no other organization would have the guts to attack the dynasty’s direct member.

Looking at everyone’s excited expressions, Bekorodi’s expression changed slightly as he suddenly thought of something.

No... one more person has the motive.

In the past, he had told Gaud to analyze the Evolution Energy. If Black Star discovered what Gaud did, Black Star would have a reason to attack him too. Black Star was a suspect!

However... Bekorodi could not bring that up!

The plan to analyze the Evolution Cube got called to a stop by Urranrell long ago; Bekorodi only approached Gaud behind Urranrell’s back because he received the subtle approval from the next ruler. He was carrying out this plan secretly; this was not something he could point out in this situation!

It did not matter whether Black Star was actually the one who did it. As soon as what he did got exposed, not only would he be most likely demoted, it would impact the next ruler negatively too.

If Black Star really did it, although Black Star would certainly be held responsible, he would take much more blame. After all, he acted against the orders and placed the dynasty at the moral low ground.

All kinds of plots flashed past his mind. Bekorodi opened his mouth a bit but chose to stay silent in the end.

Even if Black Star was the culprit, he was not going to say it.

Bekorodi thought things through very clearly. It was the next ruler who hinted for him to carry out the plan. The two of them had a silent agreement to have the new ruler break this case open after Urranrell’s term ended, so the new ruler’s reputation and image would be increased.

However, although Bekorodi had this plan, what made him stay silent was more the fact that he did not believe Black Star was the culprit.

With Black Star’s position, even if he did notice what Gaud was doing, he had no reason to make it into such a big deal. He sure had the motive, but it was too weak.

Furthermore, the way Bekorodi looked at it, the title of National Pillar and the three Universal Civilizations' consultant were more than enough to tie Black Star up. After enjoying the benefits of them, Black Star would not want to lose them, so he would not do something as rash as this.

While Bekorodi was brainstorming, the others quickly came to a decision.

Urranrell made the decisive call.

"Announce Gaud going missing on behalf of the dynasty immediately. Tell the entire universe that the dynasty will find the culprit no matter the cost!"

Swoosh!

The upper echelons present stood up simultaneously and nodded.

"Understood!"

...

At a border stargate transit station of the Emerald Star Cluster, a man wearing the uniform of the Limitless Financial Group stood at the scenery observation area and looked at the galaxy outside the porthole. The border stargate was not far away. Belts of light extended from inside the blue space vortex. They were all spaceships entering and leaving the border.

"Based on the time, the fleet guarding Gaud should arrive in a day at most..." this Limitless Financial Group employee murmured.

It was not the original owner who was controlling this body but Sorokin's manifestation.

According to the route the dynasty fleet was taking, they should be leaving the Flickering World through the Black Star Army's territory. Hence, Sorokin had possessed this person many days ago and waited at this stargate, wanting to observe the size of the fleet Gaud was in. He could only come up with a detailed plan after obtaining enough information.

However, although he was already making preparations, he was still hesitant as to whether he was going to make the move or not. After all, the matter was too huge.

"If I do it, it's best to do it in the Black Star Army's territory, it'll be easier to frame it on Black Star this way... even if I fail, Black Star will be held responsible if something happens to Gaud in his territory."

Sorokin pondered.

Beep beep beep!

At this time, his communicator suddenly rang.

Sorokin took it out and glanced at it casually. It was an announcement the dynasty had made in the public channel, which forced a notification to pop up on every communicator.

According to the General Quantum Network Communication Laws, only the civilization that ruled over an area had the right to do this, not any other organizations, especially not consortiums.

“Tsk, how great would it be if this could be used for advertising...” Sorokin mumbled and opened the message.

With just one look, his expression froze on his face, and his entire body turned stiff.

“Gaud was attacked and is already missing?”

Sorokin was stunned, his mind was filled with question marks.

Wait, what? I haven’t started moving yet!

Which hero did my job for me?

Marvelous!

I thank you!

The sudden turn of events astonished Sorokin totally.

Not only him, as soon as this enraged announcement from the Crimson Dynasty was publicized, the entire galactic society was absolutely shocked!

It all happened so suddenly. No one was mentally prepared!

Chapter 1229 The Thief Calling the Cops

Somewhere in the Emerald Star Cluster, a small fleet was slowly sailing. The symbol on the exterior armor of the spaceships showed that this fleet belonged to ‘Ancient Snake’, which meant this was the person who called out Gaud’s Esper Ability during the welcome meeting, Lucie.

Lucie stood before the porthole at the bridge and looked into the galaxy outside the window. Beside him was another neutral Beyond Grade A who was also someone who frequented the black market.

“How long till we arrive at the Star Cluster’s border stargate?” Lucie asked without turning around.

“About a day, boss,” the captain hastily answered.

Hearing this, the neutral Beyond Grade A on the side sighed and said, “I don’t think we can catch up to Gaud. Lucie, do you really have to spar with him?”

“I must find out what his ability really is.”

“Sigh, he’s a direct member of the dynasty. He can totally not accept your request. It’s not like you can force him to fight, right?”

“Humph, I’m going to try it at least.” Lucie looked determined.

After the welcome meeting, he had brought his fleet along with a Beyond Grade A friend and chased behind Gaud along the route they took, hoping to stop Gaud and ask for a spar.

Of course, he did this not just to satisfy his curiosity. As a secret member of a Super Star Cluster civilization, he received a secret order from the upper echelons that asked him to find a way to force Gaud to fight and verify if Gaud's ability was really [Energy Control]. This was why he kept chasing after Gaud.

The Super Star Cluster civilizations did not want to attack Gaud, but a test of this degree was doable. They all wanted to know Gaud's real ability.

At this time, the spaceship's radar suddenly rang.

"Alert! Spacetime stabilized area ahead. Hyperdrive will be shut down. Please stop hyperdrive mode or go around the area..."

The two of them were surprised.

Spacetime stabilized areas usually meant trouble. Neutral Beyond Grade As did not like getting into unnecessary trouble.

Lucie was just about to have the fleet go around the area when the spaceship suddenly received a message.

"This is the Crimson Dynasty exploration army. We're carrying out a check on all passersby. Please stop your ships immediately and cooperate. I repeat, please stop your ships immediately..."

Hearing this, Lucie told the fleet to stop. He looked outside the window and saw a line of defense formed by the dynasty's battleships that seemed to have locked up a large area ahead.

Three dynasty spaceships quickly approached and activated all kinds of detection devices to scan Lucie's fleet.

At the same time, a projection of someone who looked like a dynasty military officer appeared on the communication screen. He looked at Lucie and the Beyond Grade A beside him and said expressionlessly, "Please show us your IDs, spaceship sailing certificate, crew list, logbook..."

Though unhappy, Lucie told the captain to do as he was told. After all, his real identity was sensitive. Plus, he did not think there was anything he had to hide.

The military officer started checking through the information provided. Having realized that Lucie and the person beside him were both Beyond Grade As, his expression changed slightly. A strong sense of suspicion flashed past his eyes.

"What are you doing here? Why are you passing by this area? Where are you heading?"

"The dynasty needs to know that too? This is one of the routes leading to the border stargate station. Is it weird for me to pass by here?" Lucie frowned. "In fact, why are you guys locking this area down?"

"To search people." The dynasty military officer did not want to say much and went back to checking through the records.

At this time, he suddenly realized that there were records of tracking Gaud in Lucie's logbook. His pupils instantly constricted, and he yelled with an indisputable tone, "Everyone, leave the spaceship immediately for further checks!"

The neutral Beyond Grade A on the side frowned. "Isn't this too much? We're just passing by."

"I'll repeat myself one more time. Leave the spaceship immediately for further checks, or we'll do so forcibly!"

After that, the dynasty fleet at the back activated their weapons and aimed at Lucie's fleet immediately, clearly ready to fire at any time.

"Are you threatening me?" Lucie was annoyed.

The dynasty was powerful. Forget their officer not showing him any respect, how dare an officer attempt to order around him, a Beyond Grade A, like that? Did he really think Beyond Grade As were easy to mess with?

Sure, as a neutral Beyond Grade A, he did not have the strength to mess with the dynasty. However, he did not think that just anybody in the dynasty had the right to disrespect him. Furthermore, with the Beyond Grade A Association behind his back, he was not someone who had absolutely no backup at all anymore!

Beep beep beep!

Just as Lucie was about to vent his anger, the communicator of everyone in the ship rang.

Lucie frowned, suppressed his anger for the time being, and took out his communicator. Only then did he see the dynasty's announcement that popped up, and his expression changed drastically.

Gaud is missing?

Who did it? Who had the audacity to do it?

Lucie's body suddenly shook. It suddenly occurred to him.

Wait a minute, I've been tracking Gaud all this time, wanting to spar with him...

If nothing had happened to Gaud, this would have been completely normal and would not lead to the dynasty's hostility. However, now that something had happened to Gaud, anyone who was related became a suspect. Although he was only trailing behind Gaud and did not even meet him, he was still suspicious in the eyes of the dynasty. The dynasty was not going to let go of any leads!

No wonder the dynasty military officer had that attitude!

Lucie knew how huge the matter was. This was not the time to be concerned about whether that officer disrespected him or not. He had to find a way to clear his suspicion.

If he did not cooperate with the dynasty's investigation, he had absolutely no doubts that the dynasty would vent their anger on him—this was not the time to be stubborn.

Lucie's rage instantly extinguished. He did not dare explode and could only tell everyone to leave the spaceship and obediently cooperate with the dynasty's checks. He was extremely frustrated.

Who's the b*stard that did this? Now I've been dragged down too!

...

"What? Gaud is missing? Someone really attacked him?"

The Federation of Light's president, Bader, stood right up from his chair, stunned.

What, who's the idiot?

No, this isn't an idiot. It's a maniac!

The Chief Elder was in dismay too. "Who's so daring as to really attack a direct member of the dynasty? This will affect the entire explored universe's situation, create a huge storm and cause problems for everyone!"

Bader frowned tightly and said with a deep voice, "If we didn't make a move, nor would the church... so it's most likely the Super Star Cluster Alliance's doing."

"Yes, it must be the Super Star Cluster Alliance." The Chief Elder nodded.

Before it happened, the two of them did not think the Super Star Cluster Alliance would dare act. However, when it really happened, to the two of them, since they did not do it, it could only be the Super Star Cluster Alliance!

Who gave them the guts! They dared to attack the dynasty's direct member today. Are they going to attack ours tomorrow?

"The Super Star Cluster Alliance is getting cocky. Looks like the Tragedy of the Pinnacles was not an effective enough of a lesson. Looks like it's time to educate them again..."

Bader's eyes flickered.

He was actually secretly happy about the dynasty being the one that took the hit. He basically enjoyed the benefit of the dynasty being weakened without having to do anything. However, on the other hand, the dynasty represented one of the ruling civilizations, and the federation was also one of the ruling civilizations. Seeing their authority get challenged, he was still angry. These two emotions were not in conflict.

The Chief Elder thought for a moment and said with a heavy heart, "Although we're not the culprit, our specialty is assassination since we have the Multi-Dimensional Sky Opening Transportation Device, so we'll most likely be one of the suspects to the dynasty."

"Hmm, this is a problem. Therefore, we have to make a stand and actively help the dynasty investigate the case. However, we're not the only ones who have this kind of teleportation technology. Who knows if the Mechanic Emperor stole it? Plus, Black Star also has a type of mechanical suit that has similar teleportation abilities..."

“The Mechanic Emperor is suspicious indeed. He’s still the federation’s ally. If he did it, we’ll be responsible too. As for Black Star...” The Chief Elder laughed. “Hehe, as long as the dynasty upper echelons have not gone crazy, it’s impossible for them to suspect Black Star.”

“You’re right.” Bader sighed and shook his head.

...

“Who the f*ck did this?”

The Star Arc Civilization leader was dumbfounded, as if struck by lightning.

Although this was indeed something they wanted to do, the Star Arc Civilization leader knew that no matter who attacked Gaud, the Super Star Cluster Alliance would certainly be the dynasty’s top suspect.

This was pushing them into the flames!

The Star Arc Civilization leader was puzzled. Possible suspects flashed through his mind one after another.

“I didn’t do it. Is it another Super Star Cluster civilization? Who has the motive to do so... Modo?”

Modo had exited the war long ago. The current battle had nothing to do with, so they would really not be afraid of doing something like this. Even the possibility of them wanting to burden the Super Star Cluster Alliance was not out of the question. They had lost the chance to compete, so they wanted to make the other Super Star Cluster civilizations fail just like them!

The brain of the Star Arc Civilization leader’s spun quickly.

Was it the plan of the federation and the church, killing the dynasty’s talent and framing them?

Was it the dynasty’s own plot, making Gaud go missing and framing it on the Super Star Cluster Alliance, giving their direct members a reason to participate in the war and using it as an excuse to start another Tragedy of the Pinnacles? If not, how could it happen so suddenly, and how could Gaud possibly not be able to resist?

The Star Arc Civilization felt as if he had seen through everything.

This was a plot against the Super Star Cluster Alliance!

The three Universal Civilizations wanted them dead!

“We’re too passive. We must do something! We can’t allow the three Universal Civilizations to make things up!”

The Star Arc Civilization leader clenched his teeth.

You want to frame us? We know how to do that too! We must find a scapegoat that’ll shut the three Universal Civilizations up!

Names quickly flashed through his mind, and suddenly, it stopped at one name.

This person did not lack motive, had more than enough ability to do it, and was very suspicious...

I choose you, Manison!

...

In just a few days, the dynasty's announcement swept over all Star Fields like a storm, causing sensations in countless areas.

Some thick and overconfident local terrorist organizations claimed to be responsible for it. Then, in less than a day, the dynasty's fleet arrived at their bases right away and wiped them all out, not leaving a single survivor!

Everyone could feel that, this time, the Crimson Dynasty was really furious!

Many organizations smelled that a storm was about to come...

The Beyond Grade A Association held an emergency meeting to discuss how to deal with this matter too.

In the large round table conference room on Planet Finn, the remote projections of many Beyond Grade As gathered and discussed intensely.

"How could this happen? It's so sudden!"

"It's only been a few days since we last saw Gaud, and now he's... sigh!"

"It has to be someone in the association who did this. Who did it? Step forward!"

They were infuriated.

Although Gaud was a direct member of an advanced civilization, what happened to him impacted the others too. They glanced at Gaud's empty seat from time to time, feeling sympathetic.

The meeting was as noisy as a wet market. This time, Sun Hunter opened his mouth. His thunderous voice covered everyone else's voices.

The others looked over and saw that he was staring at Manison with a suspicious expression.

"Mechanic Emperor, tell us the truth, did you do it?"

"Nonsense! Have you people been brainwashed by Black Star? I'm the president. Why would I possibly take the lead to violate the rules?" Manison's face twitched. He was frustrated.

However, the others still stared at Manison and did not trust him.

Han Xiao had never stopped damaging his reputation. He had planted the seed of doubt in everyone's heart long ago.

Seeing this, veins popped up on Manison's forehead. He was extremely irritated.

No matter how much he explained himself, he would not be able to clear the suspicion. The Beyond Grade As would still suspect him... and Black Star was the one who caused all of this!

Manison glared at Han Xiao and almost wanted to fight him right here in front of everyone till he could vent all his anger out.

This time, Clotti slowly stood up and said with a freezing tone and expressionless face, “No matter who here caused Gaud to go missing, we will drag you out and make you understand the consequences of challenging the dynasty!”

As he was speaking, he glanced at Manison faintly.

The three Universal Civilizations’ direct members usually did not speak, but now, they all made serious statements, expressing that they would catch the culprit no matter what. Many glanced at the Mechanic Emperor from time to time.

Manison’s expression became worse and worse.

However, Sorokin was looking at Manison more and more gently.

If not because this was not the right time, Sorokin would have given Manison a thumbs up and praised him.

At this time, Han Xiao, who had not said much, cleared his throat, attracting everyone’s attention.

“Gaud joined the association before this happened. He’s also one of our members and is protected by the association. Now that he’s missing, this isn’t just an act of provoking the dynasty but also the association’s authority. It’s our duty to find the culprit. This is the purpose of the association!

“Therefore, I propose that the association shall announce to the public that we’ll be investigating this case thoroughly. All Beyond Grade As will be searching for leads together and releasing a kill order across the universe!”

After he said that, whether sincere or fake, everyone expressed their approval and agreement.

“The vice president is right. The association must not be excluded!”

“Who dares target our member? Do they think we’re all decorations?”

Han Xiao’s proposal matched how the majority of people felt. Some were worried that if they did not make a stand, the dynasty would take revenge like the Tragedy of the Pinnacles and threaten their lives.

Since Han Xiao had proposed to provide assistance, it would more or less direct the dynasty’s hatred somewhere else so that they would not be the target for the dynasty to vent its anger.

Furthermore, protecting its members was one of the association’s duties. Most people were glad to see the association make a move. This meant that they would receive the same treatment in the future.

The atmosphere in the room suddenly became united.

Clotti glanced at Han Xiao. His expression became slightly less cold as he nodded at Han Xiao and sat back down.

He had intended to acquire the association’s help. After all, this many Beyond Grade As was an extremely powerful force. Gaining their help would largely increase the chances of finding the culprit.

Black Star was the dynasty's ally, and he had given them a lot of face by making the decision on the spot to provide assistance. Seeing this, Clotti agreed more with the dynasty's strategy.

Letting Black Star control the association was definitely a good thing for the dynasty.

Looking at everyone's reaction, Han Xiao maintained a serious expression on the surface while secretly heaving a sigh of relief in his mind.

This was the effect he wanted to achieve—having all the organizations suspect each other while not knowing that the true culprit was right under their noses...

He had completely muddied the waters.

Chapter 1230 Werewolf Becoming the Detective

The next day, with the Beyond Grade A Association taking the lead, all the Beyond Grade A organizations made a joint announcement. They claimed that this was an insult to the association and that the association would assist the Crimson Dynasty in finding the culprit to avenge Gaud.

As so many Beyond Grade As used their influence to search for clues, it instantly caused chain reactions in the Flickering World, affecting countless normal organizations.

The dynasty also made a public response based on the Beyond Grade A Association's announcement, praising Vice President Black Star's act of taking the lead, not at all mentioning Manison, the actual president. The difference in treatment was clear.

At the same time, the Beyond Grade A Association publicized a universe kill order. Every member chipped in some money, making up an outrageous reward as high as four billion Enas. Among them, the Black Star Army alone contributed half a billion, expressing their determination to find the culprit to the outside world.

The outrageously high reward immediately triggered the enthusiasm of the entire Flickering World. Almost everyone was guessing who the real culprit was every day.

Plus, the dynasty exploration army dispatched a ton of manpower and resources to search for clues, causing the focus of the Flickering World to shift. Although the Flickering World was still the main focus of the galactic residents, the search for Gaud also attracted a lot of attention. Other than fighting in the war, these organizations were also sending their men all over to look for clues.

The federation and the church did not only watch either. They both made announcements stating that they felt just as provoked as the dynasty was and would be sending forces to assist the dynasty in their investigation.

Organizations in the galaxy got questioned one after another. The dynasty collected all kinds of information related to the time surrounding the incident, but they had yet to find any clues.

...

In the remote conference room of the Super Star Cluster Alliance, a meeting was being held.

“... After this, there’s no way the dynasty will put it behind them. They’ll have to settle it no matter what. Never mind if they solve it, but if they end up not being able to solve it, they’ll undoubtedly find a temporary ‘culprit’ to take the blame, save the dynasty’s reputation, and vent their anger. We’re the best choice for the dynasty.”

The remote projections were all of the Super Star Cluster civilization leaders. Listening to the Star Arc Civilization leader speak, everyone had a serious expression.

At the start, they had doubted one of their own and asked if they did it as soon as they met, thinking this was the stupid act of one of their allies. However, after sharing their internal information, only then did they clear each other’s doubts and unite on this matter.

The Star Arc Civilization leader brought up his opinion at the right timing, receiving agreement from many other leaders.

Everyone knew that their situation was against them. Whether the dynasty could find the real culprit or not, the Super Star Cluster Alliance would still very likely take the blame. The three Universal Civilizations would definitely not mind using this opportunity to frame them for a crime they did not commit.

The Tragedy of the Pinnacles was a bloody lesson. No Super Star Cluster civilization wished for that to happen again, so they had no choice but to let the three Universal Civilizations take the moral high ground among the public and toy with them. Therefore, the Star Arc Civilization leader spoke to their hearts.

The others nodded. “That’s right. We can’t sit and wait for our doom. We have to turn the situation around. Explaining ourselves won’t work. It’s best to find a clear ‘culprit’ and announce it so that the three Universal Civilizations can’t use this against us... Manison is a suitable target.”

Seeing this, the Star Arc Civilization leader heaved a sigh of relief and smiled with satisfaction.

He had brought this proposal up in the meeting because he wanted the help of the entire Super Star Cluster Alliance.

They would only have a higher chance of making Manison take the blame if they worked together; the Star Arc Civilization alone was not enough.

Now, the entire Super Star Cluster Alliance had come to an agreement to frame Manison.

...

In the Mechanic Emperor’s secret base, Manison did not look happy. He hung up the call from the federation and frowned slightly.

“The dynasty’s request is too much, telling me to show all my Felons, submit the logbooks of all the spaceships under my command, and even open up the memory database of all my mechanical soldiers for them to check... Hehe, they say they hope I can cooperate with the investigation, but they’ve actually already marked me as the main suspect. The only thing that’s left to do is to bring me over and interrogate me.”

Manison shook his head. He could clearly see that the three Universal Civilizations were also planning to use this opportunity to find out the coordinates of his various bases.

Although he did not do it, he was not so naive as to think he could stay out of it completely.

From Manison’s perspective, the Super Star Cluster Alliance was most likely the culprit. The Super Star Cluster Alliance would certainly not be willing to sit and wait for their doom, so they would definitely do something about it. Manison, however, happened to be between the three Universal Civilizations and the Super Star Cluster Alliance and was the most suspicious. He was the most suitable sacrifice; someone was probably going to pin the incident on him.

“I must prepare some way to fight back and make the Super Star Cluster Alliance take the blame they deserve... Hmm, speaking of which, if they try to frame me, that should prove they’re the real culprits.”

Manison’s thoughts were very clear.

If possible, he might have wanted to frame Black Star and teach that b*stard a lesson.

However, that was way too difficult to do, almost impossible really, so he could only forget about that idea.

...

In the Holy Accord organization’s base...

“To think that this happened in the outside world...”

The various revived Primordial Ones gathered, watched the images on the communicator in Oathkeeper’s hands, and chatted continuously.

“The times are so terrifying now. Even an Esper Ability as powerful as Energy Control has appeared.”

“Pity, he got killed right after he entered the Beyond Grade A territory. Black Star is indeed right. The world outside is dangerous.

“This culprit messed up. No matter how perfectly he executed the plan, as soon as the dynasty figures out the Sanctums and revives Gaud, the truth would be revealed...”

The others nodded.

Oathkeeper, however, was a little worried. “If the dynasty can’t find the culprit, once you revivors appear, the dynasty will suspect you guys too. This isn’t good news.”

Beiger sighed and said, "So, we're affected by the culprit too. We'll have to be more cautious when we decide to go public."

The people sighed and felt that the problem had just fallen down the sky out of nowhere.

...

In the Black Star Army Commander's office, Han Xiao said in his chair. Virtual screens hovered before him, displaying the activities on the quantum network.

Over the past few days, he had been doing this to pay attention to the direction this matter was taking. He had witnessed the spark he lit spread like wildfire, affecting bigger and bigger areas. He felt more and more like a mastermind behind the curtains stirring up storms in the universe.

"This is probably going to be the norm for some time. The dynasty will not stop till they find the real culprit, it's like a hornet nest."

At this time, his communicator suddenly rang. He took it out. It was surprisingly a call from Tarrokov.

As he picked it up, Old Tar's remote projection appeared in the room.

"Old Marshal, it's been some time."

Tarrokov nodded and said with a serious expression, "Black Star, I'll keep things short. The dynasty needs your help now."

"Go ahead."

"Gaud has been missing for many days. The dynasty has already searched all the records of the area within a month's duration before and after the incident, but we have yet to find any solid evidence. Therefore, the upper echelons have decided to form a task force especially in charge of this matter. The dynasty hopes to invite you to join as an expert, relying on your abilities to search for leads on the quantum network. What do you think?"

Han Xiao almost laughed out loud.

"Ahem, I'm the consultant of the three Universal Civilizations. This is my duty. I'm ready anytime."

"Okay. The task force will gather online in a day's time. If you can find any clue, the dynasty will reward you generously."

Tarrokov did not waste any time. He pointed out a few more things and hung up the call right after. He had been busy as hell lately; he really had no time to stay for a chat.

Han Xiao put the communicator down and smirked.

As a werewolf, I successfully got others to believe I'm the seer and even got voted as the detective!

By inviting him, the mastermind, to investigate this case, anyone could be captured but the real culprit...

Furthermore, he would even join as an expert, meaning he had a lot of control over the direction of the investigation. With his capabilities, doing something without anyone noticing was too easy.

This way, he had more targets he could frame...

However, forging clues was still risky. Han Xiao planned to be cautious and see how the 'suspects' reacted.

While he was being secretly glad, a notification suddenly popped up on the interface.

You have triggered the mission [Wanted Order]!

Mission Introduction: An important member of the Crimson Dynasty is suspected to have been ambushed and is now missing. The dynasty trusts your capabilities and has asked you to join the investigation team.

Mission Requirements: Solve the case and capture the culprit.

Reward: Depends on the Mission Rating.

What the hell?

Han Xiao's expression froze, he was stunned.

The situation now was still within his control, but the interface gave him a surprise.

Excuse me, I'm the one who did it. How can I still trigger this mission?

How am I supposed to complete it? By capturing myself?