

## Crossing 301

### Chapter 301: The Truth of Control!

Seeing that Ling Lan had come to a realisation, Ling Xiao continued, “One more thing. In order for a mecha to display greater combat power, is it only possible by relying on those fancy and intricate moves? Ling Lan, have you ever thought about this question?”

Ling Lan was stumped by these words. The higher the difficulty of the mecha controls, the harder it was for the enemy to fight against it. This was the universally accepted standard of the mecha world ... but now, Ling Xiao seemed to be suggesting that the truth was not so. Could it be that the entire mecha community was mistaken in their understanding? Or was it her father himself who was mistaken?

Ling Lan instantly eliminated the possibility of her father being wrong. If her father was mistaken in his theoretical understanding of mecha, then how in the world had he come by his god-class operator status? Thinking about the fewer than few god-class operators within the Federation, Ling Lan could not help but think, *Could it be that the official understanding of the mecha community on mecha control was actually wrong, which is why there are so few god-class operators? And my father just happened to understand it correctly, thus breaking the age record to become the youngest god-class operator of the Federation ...?*

Considering this possibility, Ling Lan’s spirits rallied. Did this mean that she was about to learn the truth of mecha control? No wonder it was said that truth was only accessible to a chosen few <sup>1</sup>.

Seeing the radiant light shining from Ling Lan’s eyes, Ling Xiao knew his daughter had figured things out. He continued, “Have you heard of ‘keeping things simple’? This phrase can also apply to mecha control.”

“Does it mean that, it is actually the simplest controls that have the greatest power?” asked Ling Lan with a quirked brow.

“Hn, not quite. It should be more like, being able to control a mecha like your own limbs, using the least amount of effort to bring out the greatest efficiency of a mecha — that is what a true mecha operator needs to do.” Ling Xiao shared his insights, “Those special moves which require tremendous effort with equally tremendous power are not unimportant, but they are just unnecessary outside of those life-or-death moments or some other critical juncture. Using them would just drain and damage your mecha for no reason. If you can use the simplest control methods to deal with an opponent, then why be so wasteful?”

At first, when he had clambered out of the black hole and had been faced with a sky full of enemies, he could only use grand and domineering top-class techniques to frighten the enemy forces into submission. Reality had forced Ling Xiao to use those majestic moves exclusive to god-class operators, but the associated massive drain had secretly made Ling Xiao wince as well. Even though god-class mecha could replenish their energy from the stars automatically, after those two astoundingly powerful area-of-effect attacks he had performed, his god-class mecha’s energy bank had descended to a point where red warnings had been flashing ... Still, as the Federation managed to obtain the ultimate victory in that battle due to this expenditure, Ling Xiao felt that the cost was worth it.

However, this kind of operation was only applicable under that sort of critical scenario. If he had been facing a smaller group of enemies instead, Ling Xiao would never have made the same choice. Mind you, for a mecha operator, once their mecha's energy source was completely drained or was destroyed, it would mean certain death. As such, this was not something a good mecha operator should do. A good mecha operator would do their best to protect themselves even as they dealt with the enemy. They would understand that they only had one life — only by keeping this life would they be able to kill more enemies.

A flash of valour — Ling Xiao did not approve; a flare of brilliance — Ling Xiao did not feel it was worth it. Only by extending one's life could one be considered a good mecha operator, though deserters naturally did not count.

Thus, Ling Lan's fixation with chasing after grand and powerful controls had let Ling Xiao see Ling Lan's problem. This was a common issue with the Federation mecha operators — everyone felt that only the most powerful moves could represent the strength of a mecha operator, when in truth, this thinking was wrong. On the battlefield, the warriors who could survive till the end were often those mecha operators who seemed average in strength but had solid foundations. In the end, they would grow to become even stronger.

Meanwhile, those prodigious mecha operators who caused others to be in awe of them, despite possessing countless grand and elaborate moves, would often die young on the battlefield. Chasing the problem to its roots, every single case could be chalked down to depletion of energy or mecha breakdown, which led them to be struck down by their enemies to sleep forevermore among the stars.

Ling Xiao's words made Ling Lan begin to contemplate deeply. Indeed, regardless of how strong the enemy was, preserving oneself was the most crucial thing. Seeking a moment of valour and glory completely went against Ling Lan's original intentions. Ling Lan had only wanted to continue living on freely and safely; she did not want to let herself become a hero whose name would be carved on some memorial monument.

Enlightened, Ling Lan said solemnly to her father, "I understand now. From now on, I will change my fighting style. Thank you, father, for your guidance." Mecha controls which would let her continue living on was what she truly needed, as well as being the most worthy of her time.

Although her father had only said such a simple few sentences, those words had obviously included the insight Ling Xiao had gained over his 33 years of operating mecha, and so was extremely valuable. From them, Ling Lan could feel Ling Xiao's abundant fatherly love. This made Ling Lan feel extremely moved deep inside, but used to being cold and aloof, she just could not make herself do anything overly warm in response and thus could only sum up her emotions in a simple statement of thanks.

"Alright, since you understand now, then show me your foundational controls properly. I hope you won't disappoint me too much." Ling Xiao naturally could feel Ling Lan's gratitude — he had a slight smile on his lips, but his tone was still stern and grim. At this moment, in order to ensure his daughter would continue to live on safely, he chose to be a strict teacher and not a kind father.

"Yes, father!" Even as Ling Lan replied, she decisively used an advanced mecha repair kit on her mecha. After the repairs were done, the mecha's screen displayed that it was back at 100%. Even the right arm's control system which had been wrecked by Ling Xiao was restored to normal. Clenching and unclenching

the mecha's right hand, Ling Lan found that there was no problem at all with its functioning; Ling Lan was extremely pleased.

Fortunately this place was the mecha world ... mecha were able to be repaired and adjusted to optimum condition in a short period of time without wasting time which could be spent on sparring. If this had been the real world, to repair a mecha and restore it to full fighting power would require quite a few hours, no matter how skilful the repair master was.

Even as Ling Lan sighed internally over how convenient the mecha world was, she controlled her mecha to pick Regretless up from the ground and slung it back over her back. Then, she assumed the most simple and unbelievably familiar stance everyone who used mecha would know.

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The spectating Li Lanfeng and Zhao Jun saw the intermediate mecha suddenly change its initial attack style — its complex and dazzling advanced mecha skills and techniques were suddenly replaced with simplicity.

“Lanfeng, isn't this the basic assessment stance before entering Mecha World?” Zhao Jun stared at this stance which seemed so distant in memory and yet was so memorable, and could not help but ask dubiously.

Li Lanfeng responded affirmatively, “Yes, it is!” The basic assessment moves were the mecha operation movements he was most familiar with. That was the set of moves he had trained to proficiency alongside the rabbit mecha. There had even been many times when the two had challenged each other to see who could complete it faster and better. Who knew that many years after that, these basic assessment moves which could hardly be seen in Mecha World would appear right here before his eyes? This scene brought him back to that time, when he had been secretly watching the rabbit mecha train ...

While Li Lanfeng was lost in his memories, the intermediate mecha moved. It used the most basic out-toed sprinting art — this was a type of high-speed sprinting method for mecha which was also extremely stable, a basic control movement that was able to support the body in executing any type of attack. However, in the later stages, after obtaining the better criss-crossed sprinting method as well as the more advanced Z-shaped body flash art, almost all the mecha operators would scorn the out-toed sprinting art for looking crude and ungainly. Moreover, its speed and evasion ability was also no better than the other two types of sprinting control skills, and so this most basic out-toed sprinting art was set aside.

Later on, with the appearance of even more advanced skills like the Figure-8 Spin, Phantom Light Stream, Gamma Whirl, Light-and-Shadow Skim, and other high-speed flight evasion arts, this most basic out-toed sprinting art became utterly extinct among the advanced mecha warriors.

“Impossible, how can his speed be that fast?” Zhao Jun suddenly shouted in shock, startling Li Lanfeng from his reverie. Li Lanfeng eyes focused as he looked over, and sure enough, even though that intermediate mecha was using the most basic of basics, the out-toed sprint, that speed was no lesser than what they could achieve using the criss-crossed sprint or the Z-shaped body flash art at present. It could even be said that the other was one level higher; this was another reason why Zhao Jun would exclaim in such surprise.

“He’s attacking now. It’s the simplest bash attack.” The intermediate mecha that had been running circles around the imperial mecha master suddenly drew close to the other, both fists efficiently striking out at the other’s head without any bit of subterfuge.

“Using such a simple attack, how could he land a hit?” said Zhao Jun irritably. The other could obviously execute much more complex attacks, so why didn’t he do so instead of using this type of attack method which was clearly not going to work?

Sure enough, the imperial mecha lifted an arm and blocked the intermediate mecha’s fists. But right then, the intermediate mecha’s fists retracted the moment they touched the other, and immediately after, its feet kicked off the ground and swung powerfully at the other ... It looked like that blatant dual-fist attack was actually just a feint — the true finishing move of the intermediate mecha was from its feet.

“This is the basic stomping art! Hells, what exactly is he trying to do?” Zhao Jun could not help but wrap his arms around his head and wail. He wanted to see an instructional fight, not watch as an intermediate mecha displayed the basic assessment moves one after the other ... could that even be considered a real attack?

Li Lanfeng, who had originally been responding to everything Zhao Jun said, was unusually quiet at this time. Within his cockpit, his expression was one of intense shock, filled with disbelief ...

*“This is the rabbit mecha’s most habitual attack move. It’s also something he created. Whenever he had something he couldn’t resolve, he would default to using this move ...”* Across the distance of 7 years, this familiar move emerged once more before his eyes — even as it made him emotional, he was filled with shock and doubt.

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Ling Xiao was rather taken aback by this unexpected kick of Ling Lan’s because this stomping art was not an attack technique. Instead, it was a type of basic movement skill which worked together with the out-toed sprint to help shift directions and speed. Ever since the out-toed sprint fell out of favour, this stomping art had also been forgotten by the mecha operators.

Ling Xiao did not find it surprising that Ling Lan would use the stomping art, but the fact that Ling Lan had actually made some improvements to it and integrated it into her attack did surprise him. He was even greatly pleased by it — this meant that his daughter’s mastery of the basic controls had already reached an apex, otherwise she could not have evolved these basic moves so naturally into attack techniques. It looked like Ling Lan had taken his legacy to heart — she had learned the foundations extremely well, securing them solidly.

“Not bad!” Ling Xiao did not hold back on giving his daughter praise, even as both his hands rose to meet Ling Lan’s feet.

**Chapter 302: Seven Years Ago?**

There was a loud ‘boom’ — due to the collision this time, the intermediate mecha was sent flying back. Meanwhile, Ling Xiao’s body actually wavered slightly as well due to the astounding power behind this stomping art.

“*This is no ordinary stomping art ...*” Ling Xiao was stunned. Could it be that his daughter had added some special technique into this stomping art?

Before Ling Xiao’s astonishment could fade, something even more surprising occurred. The intermediate mecha actually flew backwards at a greater speed than that which it had used to attack Ling Xiao. In the air, Ling Lan flipped her body without trying to control the mecha, letting it careen as it would towards the walls of the private room ...

“Ah ah ah, he’s going to hit the wall!” Despite being extremely dissatisfied with how the intermediate mecha was using basic assessment moves to fight, when he saw the other leave his mecha alone to let it just hurtle towards a wall at high speed, Zhao Jun was instantly yelling out in concern.

Only Ling Xiao and Li Lanfeng had a gleam of light run through their eyes at the same time, though the meaning behind each gleam was vastly different.

Ling Xiao believed his daughter was not that weak — he believed that his daughter would not really crash into the wall. On the other hand, the name of a skill which belonged solely to the rabbit mecha he knew had floated into Li Lanfeng’s mind: ‘*Rabbit Sky Leap!*’. Oftentimes when it had seemed like the situation was completely out of control at high speeds, the rabbit mecha would use this move to turn things around.

Sure enough, just as the intermediate mecha was about to slam into the wall, Ling Lan, who had long been prepared, operated the mecha’s two strong and powerful legs to kick out forcefully at the wall. There was a loud ‘boom’, and the entire room suddenly began to shake violently, almost sending the spectating Zhao Jun’s and Li Lanfeng’s mecha tumbling off their feet.

Meanwhile, following this push off the wall, the intermediate mecha used this surge of rebound force to send its body shooting like lightning towards the imperial mecha standing in the middle of the stage ...

Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng reacted quickly to steady their mecha. Once they were stable once more, they turned their eyes towards the stage again and saw the intermediate mecha zipping around like lightning back and forth across the private room.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang! ... the powerful sounds of collision reverberated like the wild rain of a thunderstorm within the combat room. The two mecha sparred — one as quick as lightning, its movements almost untrackable, while the other was as steady as Mount Tai<sup>1</sup>, taking moves as they came, unmoving as a mountain<sup>2</sup>.

“This is just the stomp technique, countless applications of the stomp technique ...” Zhao Jun peered closely for several 10 or so seconds, then felt his eyes were somewhat raw, with even a trace of pain. He could not help but raise his hands to rub at his eyes. It turned out that the speed of the intermediate mecha had already exceeded the capacity of Zhao Jun’s motion vision — having stared intently at the screen all this time, he was now feeling rather overwhelmed.

“Yes, it’s the stomp technique ...” But this was no ordinary stomp technique, otherwise that imperial mecha would not have surreptitiously shifted its original stance. In contrast to Zhao Jun’s carelessness, the conscientious Li Lanfeng had caught the shift. The imperial mecha, who had initially been standing straight with its legs together, had now spread its legs, and its knees were slightly bent. This was the specific stance of a mecha stabilising its lower body. It was clear to see that the intermediate mecha’s stomp technique was dealing significant impact to the imperial operator, causing the other to have no choice but to use this most stable stance while defending.

And the only one who could utilise the stomp technique so proficiently, in Li Lanfeng’s memory, was the rabbit mecha and no other. Could it be that the rabbit he had searched for in these 7 long years was this intermediate mecha warrior before his eyes right now? <sup>3</sup> But based on the rabbit mecha’s strength, he should not have remained stuck at intermediate mecha level ... One question in Li Lanfeng’s heart seemed to have been answered now, but this answer merely spawned even more questions ...

Just as Zhao Jun was kneading at his eyes and while Li Lanfeng was plagued with questions, the intermediate mecha, who had been moving at high speeds all this while, suddenly dropped to land at a corner of the stage after one more violent clash with the imperial mecha. Due to its sudden stop from a high speed, the mecha was sent sliding forwards 5 metres or so before it found firm footing.

Perhaps extremely used to this type of abrupt stop from high speeds, though the intermediate mecha slid for about 5 metres, its upper body did not waver at all. This proved that this amount of slide was within the intermediate mecha’s calculations.

Li Lanfeng and Zhao Jun shared a look, unsure why the intermediate mecha had suddenly chosen to stop its attack when the situation was looking so optimistic. An idea sparked through Li Lanfeng’s mind. He remembered the rabbit mecha saying once that this type of high-speed stomping actually put a great burden on mecha. Trainee mecha would not be able to withstand it for long — could it be that it was the same for intermediate mecha?

Seeing this, Ling Xiao stood up from his defensive stance and said to Ling Lan with a smile, “Looks like you understand now.”

“Yes, thank you, father, for your guidance,” replied Ling Lan gratefully. That combination of moves she had just performed was so familiar to her they were embedded in her marrow — it was no effort at all to execute, perhaps even casual and easy.

Still, whether in terms of speed or attack power, that set of moves had not been any weaker than any of the other advanced techniques she had used previously. In fact, they could even be considered better, because she still had energy to spare in her controls, unlike before when even as she drained herself, her mecha was forced to operate over its capacity, damaging its lifespan.

This also made Ling Lan realise on a profound level what Ling Xiao’s words meant. Having understood, she stopped her attack, because she had already obtained what she wanted from this instructional fight. Mission complete, it would be a waste of time to continue fighting.

Ling Lan’s words made Ling Xiao’s smile deepen. Ling Xiao knew very well that Ling Lan had achieved true understanding, once again proving that his daughter’s learning ability was absolutely superior to others’.

“Your stomp technique should have been integrated with some other special technique. How did you think of it?” Ling Xiao was extremely curious. Mind you, those who had only begun to learn mecha control would just rotely follow instructions to complete the training exercises. Normally, they would never even think of combining or improvising on any of these controls ... Ling Lan’s ability to do so undoubtedly surprised Ling Xiao greatly, because even he had not been able to do so when he had been younger.

“By coincidence. Back when I first started learning mecha control, I met someone else who had also just begun learning mecha control. The other was a control genius, able to execute each move to utter perfection. His results were very good; I was no match for him at first. This made me determined. Things he could do, what was stopping me from doing them too? So I thought hard on how to increase my mecha’s speed, and worked hard to perfect my transitions between all types of actions. Without knowing it, I applied a leg technique from physical skills to my mecha control, and discovered that it actually produced a certain effect. And so, I began to experiment ...” Hiding part of the truth, Ling Lan told her father the story of her meeting with the leopard mecha <sup>4</sup> back then ...

As Ling Lan was telling the story, she realised that a large part of her proficiency with the basic assessment controls should definitely be credited to the leopard mecha. The other’s companionship had undoubtedly made that dry and routine training time of her life become considerably more interesting. Upon closer examination, of all the basic controls Ling Lan knew now, this set of basic assessment controls was the one Ling Lan was most adept and comfortable with. This was why when Ling Xiao had insisted for Ling Lan to use basic controls, she had chosen this set without thinking. Reality proved that this was the set that had seeped into her bones, the set which had become part of her basic instinct, the set of basic controls that she had truly mastered.

Understanding all this, Ling Xiao prepared to go offline. Although he did not care much about the enlistment assessment results of the military academy, as the head of the division’s assessment delegation, he should still at least show his face and ask cursorily about the results at the end of every day. Otherwise, the administrators of the school might misunderstand and assume that the 23rd Division did not care at all about the First Men’s Military Academy ... In order to successfully accept his daughter into the 23rd Division later on, he needed to maintain a good relationship with the school no matter what.

After saying goodbye to his daughter, Ling Xiao instantly logged off from the private room. The next time he went online, his mecha would automatically appear within the main hall of the mecha combat hall. If Ling Lan required instruction again later, he would not have to spend the effort finding his way here anymore ...

Seeing the imperial mecha vanish, Li Lanfeng knew the pair was about to leave. Impulsively, he rushed forwards and connected to his general comms to say, “Hello, can you please wait a moment?”

Ling Lan was just about to go offline — hearing this, she paused and raised her head to look towards the advanced mecha who had spoken.

Seeing the intermediate mecha looking at him silently, Li Lanfeng hesitated for a moment, but then asked resolutely (because he did not want to miss another chance), “May I ask, 7 years ago, were you at the capital city of planet Azure?”

“Planet Azure? The capital city?” Ling Lan’s face was filled with confusion. Seven years ago, she had indeed let Little Four secretly bring her out into the virtual world, but back then, the place she had asked Little Four to bring her to had been the capital city of Doha!

*“Uh, Boss ... I forgot to tell you. Back when you asked me to take you to the capital, I accidentally chose planet Azure ...”* Little Four, who had been drawn out by the advanced mecha warrior’s question, revealed his blunder to Ling Lan.

At these words, Ling Lan instantly had her guard up. *“How could he know that I was at planet Azure 7 years ago? Could it be that I was exposed somewhere?”*

Little Four became agitated by this supposition — that’s right, back then, he and Boss had been undercover, so how could someone else have discovered this? Little Four quickly scanned the other’s spiritual power ...

“Hmm?” Li Lanfeng frowned lightly. He had sensed some strange disturbance in his surroundings, but could not say for certain what it was. Cautious and vigilant, he immediately wrapped up his spiritual power with his spectre ability. Regardless of whether he was being paranoid, Li Lanfeng’s first reflex was still to choose and protect himself.

*“Ah ... what a familiar energy signature!”* Little Four sensed Li Lanfeng’s spectre power and instantly exclaimed in shock. He swiftly dashed back into Ling Lan’s mindspace and rummaged through his memory bank of energy signatures, comparing them to the energy he had sensed. Soon, he had dug up the long-buried information of the leopard mecha, that is, the spectre whom they had met back then.

*“Boss, we’ve bumped into an old acquaintance!”* replied Little Four excitedly. Because Ling Lan had forbidden him from taking the initiative to venture out and test the spiritual power of others, Little Four had not noticed anything before this even though Li Lanfeng had already been standing there for a long while. Of course, this was also because Little Four had been busy helping Ling Lan control her mecha at the time, with no mind to spare.

*“Who?”* asked Ling Lan, brow lifted in curiosity.

*“It’s that leopard mecha! That spectre who watched the mecha fight with us!”* Little Four responded enthusiastically.

*“So it’s him ...”* Ling Lan was floored. She had just been telling her father about him, and now he actually showed up? It appeared that she and this leopard were truly tied by fate.

### **Chapter 303: Rabbit? Leopard?**

Li Lanfeng waited with bated breath for the intermediate mecha’s reply, but the other was unexpectedly silent. The combat room was thrust into a still silence.

Li Lanfeng’s heart drooped lower and lower as time passed — did this silence mean denial? Right then, an alert rang out suddenly inside his cockpit. Li Lanfeng clicked on the notification by reflex, and saw that it was an alert for a friend request. It was from someone called [Lingtian First-String], and there was a message included: *Leopard, let’s talk some other time.*



Li Lanfeng's heart was instantly brimming with happiness. He tried to click on 'accept' immediately, but his initially extraordinarily nimble hands and fingers, which could execute really challenging advanced mecha warrior moves, were suddenly weak and slow. He tried tapping the screen three times in succession and actually failed every single time.

Li Lanfeng took in a deep breath, and then steadying his right hand with his left, he firmly pressed the 'accept' button.

When he saw the name [Lingtian First-String] appear on his friends list, Li Lanfeng felt his entire body go weak, his eyes beginning to prickle with warmth. He quickly raised his head, holding back the tears of joy which had been about to flow out ...

After searching for so long, he had finally reconnected this friendship which had been interrupted for 7 years! *Dear Heavens, even though you were the one to condemn me to a Phoenix Thrall Fate, at this time, I still want to thank you. Thank you for giving me this chance!*

Zhao Jun saw the intermediate mecha log off without answering Li Lanfeng's question and was instantly livid. "F\*ck, how could he be so cold and unfeeling? Is it really that hard to answer yes or no?" Of course, he was just grumbling for the sake of it; after all, to answer or not to answer was the other's right. Zhao Jun was just irritated on behalf of his good friend Li Lanfeng. Even though Li Lanfeng had never said anything about it to him, Zhao Jun still vaguely knew that Li Lanfeng had been looking for someone in the mecha world all this time over the past four years.

Zhao Jun's disgruntled words shook Li Lanfeng from his joyful reverie. He quickly said, "No, Zhao Jun, he has already told me the answer ..."

"Huh?" Zhao Jun was flummoxed. But he clearly had not heard the other say anything ...

Li Lanfeng did not explain, only continuing on excitedly, "I'll tell you about it later. Let us go!" That said, he left the private room.

Zhao Jun could only scratch his head helplessly. Since Li Lanfeng had said he would tell him later, then he had no choice but to wait for later. Although he really would like to know now, he could do nothing since his friend was verytight-lipped <sup>1</sup>. Fortunately, his patience had already been trained up by hanging out with Li Lanfeng over these past few years, otherwise he would certainly have been suffocated by his need to know. At this thought, Zhao Jun could only sigh softly and follow Li Lanfeng as he left the room.

Once Ling Lan saw that the other had accepted her friend request, she had logged off. It wasn't that she did not want to catch up with the other, but her father had just logged off to hurry to the assessment venue. It would not be appropriate for her to linger here; after all, officially, she was on duty to accompany Ling Xiao.

Later on, after saying goodbye to her father, Ling Lan returned to her living quarters. At this time, Qi Long and the other five were still not back from their training classes yet. Ling Lan did not wait for them, instantly logging onto Mecha World. Ling Lan believed that that stupid leopard must definitely still be in Mecha World waiting for her.

Sure enough, the moment she was online, she received a voice message from [Self-Defined Destiny]. “Rabbit, where are you?” Damm\*t, was she still a rabbit now? <sup>2</sup> In the past, she had already told him not to call her ‘rabbit’, but this fellow just would not change — doing the same even now.

Ling Lan could not help but roll her eyes. She really wanted to pretend she heard nothing, but she could hear the other’s anxiety in his voice. Thinking about how they had not seen each other for 7 years and how it had indeed been extremely difficult for them to meet again, she decided to be merciful and forgive him this once. And so, Ling Lan replied coolly, “Leopard, come to the mecha combat main hall.”

In less than a minute, she saw an advanced mecha entering the doors of the combat hall, sprinting over to her side. “Rabbit, I’m here.” The advanced mecha ostentatiously waved at her, but that special-class mecha which had been with him was nowhere to be seen.

“Leopard, why isn’t your friend here?” asked Ling Lan curiously.

“I did not know whether you would mind, so I asked him to go ahead,” replied the leopard mecha, now [Self-Defined Destiny], with a smile.

Ling Lan stared flatly at [Self-Defined Destiny] — hells, did she come off as such a small-minded person? Besides, the leopard mecha was just some random stranger she had met in the virtual world ... what gave him the confidence to believe that she would rank him so important in her mind? That she would care if he had other friends? Hng hng, if he only knew she had countless little companions by her side she had grown up with, that five of them were as close and intimate with her as could be ...

As expected, the leopard mecha had an uncanny rapport with her. As if sensing Ling Lan’s thoughts, he hurried to explain, “I was thinking to introduce you to him after obtaining your permission ...”

This greatly appeased Ling Lan’s dragon heart <sup>3</sup> — so it was true that the leopard respected her immensely, just as he had back then. Nothing had changed.

Thus, Ling Lan said, “It’s really fine. In future, you can just bring anyone you want to.”

At these words, [Self-Defined Destiny]’s smile deepened and he replied boisterously, “Understood!”

Ling Lan rubbed her brow helplessly and asked, “How did you recognise me earlier?” This was a question both she and Little Four were wondering — after all, it’s been 7 years and she had even changed her mecha; there was nothing of before. Although the other was a spectre, Little Four was certain that the other had not used his spectre abilities to check them out, so there was no reason for him to have identified her ...

“Your stomp technique is no ordinary stomp technique. In every assessment, you would use it, how could I forget it?” replied [Self-Defined Destiny] with a smile, “If you stop using it, then I would have no way to recognise you anymore.” [Self-Defined Destiny] could not help but rejoice in his heart that the other had coincidentally displayed these basic controls, allowing him to find the other.

[Self-Defined Destiny]’s words enlightened Ling Lan and Little Four instantly. So it had been Ling Lan’s habitual movements which had exposed her.

"I believe that, in this world, only you would know this technique. Seven years ago we lost contact, causing me to look for you for these whole seven years. And now I've finally found you," sighed [Self-Defined Destiny].

Ling Lan found herself rather embarrassed now. Over these past 7 years, she had never once logged onto Mecha World, instead spending her time completing the learning space's missions or working on her father's legacy; [Self-Defined Destiny]'s 7 years of effort could be said to be completely futile.

"Is that imperial operator from your sect?" [Self-Defined Destiny] asked curiously.

"Er ... yes," replied Ling Lan after a brief hesitation. She was not purposefully trying to hide anything, but this was her first reunion with the leopard after so long, so there were some things that just could not be explained properly. Even though she and the leopard mecha shared a great rapport and she also greatly appreciated the friendship between them, he was still someone that she had met in the virtual world after all — Ling Lan could not treat him like how she treated Qi Long and her other real world companions and trust him fully. However, Ling Lan's reply was not a lie either. She had inherited her father Ling Xiao's legacy, so of course she belonged to the same sect as her father.

"I had thought so with just one glance. Every move of that imperial operator was utilising the 4 simplest basic movements in defensive controls — block, push, obstruct, and hold<sup>4</sup>. Without using any bit of extraneous force, minimalist to the extreme ... it's like what you told me at the start. Completely mastering the basic controls and using them harmoniously, making them truly part of our natural instinct," exclaimed [Self-Defined Destiny] in awe.

Ling Lan was startled by these words, and quickly asked, "Our fight, did you record it?"

[Self-Defined Destiny] replied sheepishly, "I'm sorry, without obtaining permission, I recorded it. If you mind, I'll immediately delete it."

"No need. I only hope you can make a copy for me. I would also like to take a look." Even though Little Four had also recorded the fight, there were some things that just could not be seen clearly from a first-person perspective. Perhaps viewing the fight from a third-person perspective would allow her to see things clearer.

"Okay." [Self-Defined Destiny] immediately sent the video file over to Ling Lan. When Ling Lan received it, she instantly opened it and began to watch it.

Li Lanfeng saw [Lingtian First-String] become still and silent, and just knew that the other must be fully absorbed in watching the video. He smiled knowingly — he was just too familiar with this state of the rabbit. Oftentimes, when the rabbit had learnt a new movement or had a good idea or some insight, he would descend into this sort of acutely focused state, as if no one else existed around him. This brought Li Lanfeng back to the beginning ... every time this happened, he would always sit silently beside the rabbit mecha and wait patiently for the rabbit mecha to surface from his thoughts.

After approximately 5 minutes, Li Lanfeng finally heard [Lingtian First-String] sigh and say, "As expected, from your perspective, his impressiveness is even more pronounced."

Only now did Ling Lan feel how amazing her father Ling Xiao was. Now her father's basic controls were what could truly be called the best of the best. Even though it had only been the simplest of defensive

motions, whether it was the timing of the interception or the motion itself, everything was perfectly calculated. Each defensive move had been applied when her power was at its weakest point. Moreover, each time, the hand motions of Ling Xiao's mecha had been extremely small — it was clear to see that the drain on the mecha's energy had been contained at the minimum baseline. Ling Lan believed that even if her father had been controlling a trainee mecha against her barrage of wild attacks, he would still be able to block and defend against them all using the least amount of energy.

Her father's control was what could truly be called basic controls. Compared to her father, Ling Lan's basic controls were undoubtedly still much too fancy and elaborate; compared to her father, she still had a really long way to go.

"The imperial operator is naturally very impressive. Basic controls are truly very interesting. In future, I must learn from you and use lower mecha to train my advanced mecha basic controls and techniques. This way, I should be able to experience more of the true essence of basic controls." [Self-Defined Destiny] stared at Ling Lan with starry eyes, as if saying, wasn't he such a smart cookie?

Ling Lan could not help but sweatdrop, uncertain how she should respond. Was she supposed to say that she had only done so because she did not have enough points accumulated to redeem a better mecha?

Still, thinking about it, using a lower mecha to execute advanced mecha techniques did indeed demand a lot from the operator. It was very challenging, which was not a bad thing for an operator, and may perhaps truly aid him in his development. At this thought, Ling Lan decided not to say anything. This was because she also really did not know how to explain to the other why she still did not have enough points to redeem an advanced mecha after these 7 years.

Just like this, because Ling Lan did not know how to explain and also felt that this was harmless to the other, she chose to remain silent. This led Li Lanfeng to think that his assumption was correct, thus pushing him onto this path of no return, eventually leading to the creation of a legendary path belonging solely to himself ...

#### **Chapter 304: A Strange and Wondrous Misunderstanding!**

"Right, do you have a battle clan in Mecha World? I don't have one yet, so if you still have a spot open in yours, why don't you add me?" Li Lanfeng did not want to once again be passing strangers with his rabbit. He had not joined any battle clans thus far because — for one, he was afraid of exposing himself, and two, hadn't he been hoping for this precise scenario all this while? He only wanted to join the rabbit mecha's battle clan, even if the entire battle clan was made up of only the rabbit mecha ...

"Uh, I'm in the process of building one ..." Ling Lan had not expected that the leopard still had not joined a battle clan after these 7 years apart. Could it be that he had not enrolled into a military academy that year, instead choosing to go to a co-ed general academy? Or was he perhaps just a casual <sup>1</sup> mecha operator? Otherwise, with the other's control skills, it was impossible that no one wanted him.

Only military academies had battle clans, because all the cadets at military academies would eventually be Federation soldiers in future. The battle clan a cadet establishes at school would be extended into the army divisions they enlist into later and be expanded further there. In contrast, the students from a

co-ed general academy may not necessarily become a soldier in future, hence they also did not have the right to form battle clans.

Of course, this did not mean that these students had no chance of joining battle clans — some mecha operators who liked mecha piloting would just sign up to join some battle clans that lacked members. Of course, no matter how skilled these people were in control skills, they would never become permanent members of a battle clan. The reason was simple — whether it was at present or in the future, they would never be military personnel. Only if they were willing to serve in the army later on and became proper soldiers would they then have the right to become permanent members of a battle clan.

Ling Lan was well aware that many mecha battle clans in Mecha World were extensions of mecha battle clans in the real world. In saying this, [Self-Defined Destiny] was basically confirming that he was similarly without a battle clan in the real world. This pretty much proved that [Self-Defined Destiny] was probably not a military academy student. Otherwise, with his abilities, even if he did not join any other battle clans, he was fully capable of making one of his own.

Ling Lan, who was originally planning to ask which school [Self-Defined Destiny] was studying at, found herself not daring to ask now. She was afraid she would hurt the other's feelings. Based on the leopard's passion and seriousness in honing his mecha control skills, Ling Lan knew very well that, if at all possible, the leopard would definitely want to study at a military academy.

"In the process of building?" Li Lanfeng was taken aback by Ling Lan's answer.

Someone who could enter the virtual world to learn mecha controls 7 years ago should be about his age, or perhaps even a little older than him ... why had the other not built a battle clan up till now? Could it be that the other was not a military academy cadet, or perhaps did not manage to enrol into a military academy to begin with and could only attend a general academy? And now he had become an official soldier so he could finally build a battle clan?

Li Lanfeng, who had wanted to ask the rabbit which school he was attending, hesitated. What if the other asked him the same question in return after? When the other found out that he was studying at the First Men's Military Academy, would the other's heart be pierced through by a heavy arrow?

"Then, when you build it, can you keep a spot for me?" After some consideration, Li Lanfeng decided not to ask this sensitive question, instead choosing to ask to join Ling Lan's battle clan in a serious manner. In Li Lanfeng's heart, even if the rabbit was just a small foot soldier, he would still be willing to become a member of the other's battle clan and follow the rabbit onto the battlefield to fight together.

"Uh, okay, will you become a soldier in the future?" asked Ling Lan carefully. If the leopard had not given up, replying yes, she would save a permanent member's spot for him. Later, once he entered the military, he could join officially. If not, she could only regretfully give the leopard a temporary contract. Ling Lan needed to take responsibility on behalf of all of the other members of her battle clan.

Ling Lan's question stumped Li Lanfeng for a beat, but he quickly figured out the reason behind it and replied firmly, "Of course." As expected, the rabbit was currently a soldier! Li Lanfeng was glad that he had not asked impulsively.

"That's fine then. There'll be a spot for you in my battle clan." Ling Lan let out a sigh of relief. She was well aware of the leopard mecha's raw talent and abilities in control — he was definitely no weaker than

Qi Long. If the leopard could join, it would be much better than finding someone unfamiliar. She believed that Qi Long and the others would not dislike the leopard's character and temperament.

For some reason, Ling Lan had boundless confidence in the leopard, believing that he could definitely obtain the acknowledgement of the other clan members.

"We'll go to the 23rd Division," cautioned Ling Lan. She did not know how old the leopard was, whether the other was already at the age of enlistment. In any case, she wanted to notify the other so he did not apply for the wrong division. Four years later, when they went to the 23rd Division, even if the leopard was still a foot soldier, she could use her authority to transfer the leopard to her side so he could officially join her battle clan.

"Yes, understood," Li Lanfeng responded happily. He had originally planned to apply for enlistment at the 1st Division, but now decisively switched his goal for next year to enter the 23rd Division and then wait for his rabbit to find him.

Thus, the both of them gingerly avoided asking about school, each thinking that they were right in their assumptions about the other. In this manner, they missed their earliest chance to truly discover the truth about each other ... it had to be said that Ling Lan and Li Lanfeng did indeed have amazing rapport with one another — even their misunderstandings synced up with one another.

"That special-class mecha friend of yours ... could it be that he also has no battle clan? Won't he invite you to stay together?" Ling Lan recalled the special-class mecha that had been together with [Self-Defined Destiny], which had also been very strong, and could not help but ask curiously.

"He and I both do not have official battle clans, though he is temporarily contracted to a mecha battle clan. The contract will automatically dissolve next year. If your battle clan still has a spot at that time, please add him too. Of course, if you feel that that's inappropriate, you can first make a temporary contract. Like me, he'll also become a soldier in the future." Only then did Li Lanfeng remember there was still Zhao Jun to consider, so he quickly explained, suggesting a temporary contract on his own at the same time.

Li Lanfeng knew well that he wanted to follow the rabbit mecha because of that wonderful affinity and rapport he had with the other, which was carved deeply into his heart to this very day. However, Zhao Jun had no ties whatsoever to the rabbit mecha — he could neither trouble the rabbit mecha nor decide Zhao Jun's future for him. After all, the rabbit could very well just be a small foot soldier, and based on Zhao Jun's current power level, he would at least obtain the rank of first lieutenant. Therefore, if Zhao Jun and the rabbit intended to collaborate, signing a temporary contract would be beneficial for both sides.

Li Lanfeng was not someone who needed to push all his friends into one clan — he knew very well that interpersonal relationships required affinity. He was certain that, for the sake of the rabbit mecha, he could compromise and tolerate things that he typically would not tolerate. He had already made up his mind that, even if the rabbit's battle clan consisted of a whole team of foot soldiers, he would still lower himself and curry favour with them in order to obtain their acknowledgement. This all stemmed from his determination to follow the rabbit which had been established 7 years ago. In the face of this type of conviction, all tribulations were but passing clouds.

“Hn, let’s talk about it when the time comes. Right now, I have 5 other companions who should all be permanent members of the battle clan in future. Adding you, there should still be a few slots for a 12-man team. Oh, there are also two others who I have my eye on, though I still haven’t asked them whether they’re willing to join ... if the clan is still not full yet next year, ask your friend over to try out. If everyone is satisfied, then let’s stay together.” Ling Lan did not refuse Zhao Jun outright. After all, Zhao Jun was already a special-class operator at present; meanwhile, the support member candidates of the clan was pretty much settled, so all they needed to add were specialized mecha operators. Thus, Zhao Jun was undoubtedly extremely suitable.

“Oh, alright!” answered Li Lanfeng immediately, decisively agreeing on behalf of Zhao Jun. Zhao Jun did not have a battle clan for next year anyway, so it should not be a problem for him to hang out with Li Lanfeng for a bit. Hearing that the rabbit also had his eye on two other people, Li Lanfeng asked, “Who are the other two? Also people in Mecha World?”

“One of them is called [No Mecha Unrepaired], from Mecha World. As for whether the other has an ID in Mecha World, I can’t be sure. He’s a genius here on our end,” replied Ling Lan.

“[No Mecha Unrepaired], this name is really familiar ...” Li Lanfeng paused over the name for a bit, then suddenly recalled it. Wasn’t he that genius mecha engineer-mechanic who the Thunder King had his eye on? At the start, in order to get him, the Thunder King had gone so far as to seal off all the other’s resources within Mecha World, causing the other to fail his assessment two years in a row. If the other had failed just one more time, he would have been expelled from the First Men’s Military Academy ...

“[No Mecha Unrepaired] is from the Mecha Engineering specialization in the First Men’s Military Academy ...” muttered Li Lanfeng softly.

“Oh, so you’ve heard of him!” said Ling Lan in surprise, “Yes, he’s that prodigy of the Mecha Engineering specialization in the First Men’s Military Academy. He was pressured by the Thunder King, and I just happened to help him out by escorting him to Suncreed City. I wonder if he would be willing to join my battle clan.”

“So the one who helped him to Suncreed City was you ...” Li Lanfeng gaped at the mecha before him. The Thunder King had been livid over the matter, but no matter how much manpower or material resources he invested into finding the person who helped [No Mecha Unrepaired], he just could not find them. This forced the Thunder King to have no choice but to suck it up in silence — Li Lanfeng recalled how pleased he himself had been when he had found out about it back then.

Sure enough, his rabbit was his god of luck. Even though they had not recognised each other yet back then, the rabbit had still helped him to inflict a round of torment on the Thunder King. Li Lanfeng stared at the intermediate mecha across from him with grateful eyes but kept this appreciation to himself.

“I think he should be willing to join,” said Li Lanfeng with a smile. The rabbit was the benefactor of [No Mecha Unrepaired] — this personal debt would have already made it hard for the other to refuse to begin with. On top of that, the rabbit was inviting him to join his battle clan, which was also a form of acknowledgement as well as a form of assistance.

Mind you, although all the other factions in the academy also coveted [No Mecha Unrepaired]’s engineering abilities, they did not dare to offend the Thunder King. Thus, no battle clan had invited [No

Mecha Unrepaired] into their ranks. Without the assistance of any battle clan, even if he passed the assessment this year, the next few years would be very tough for him as some assessments would require the collaboration of a battle clan to complete ... the rabbit's invitation would definitely be a lifeline<sup>2</sup> which the other would never refuse.

"I hope things turn out as you say." Ling Lan felt that it was about time for her to really build her battle clan now. Even though she still could not officially set one up in the school, she could start testing things out in Mecha World, as well as let Qi Long and the others get to know the leopard a bit.

Just like this, Ling Lan and Li Lanfeng arranged a time for their next meeting in Mecha World and then respectively logged off.

The moment Ling Lan logged off, she found that Qi Long and the others had returned. So, she called them all over and solemnly declared that, within Mecha World, she would officially establish their battle clan — Lingtian!

There was no helping it. This bunch of brats had long decided on this ostentatious name. Otherwise, why would they have chosen to style their usernames in 'Lingtian XXX' fashion? If she did not give their battle clan this name, this bunch of brats would definitely flip the table!

### **Chapter 305: Interrogation!**

Late afternoon in Mecha World, Grandsweep City. This city was a large city filled with missions. Right now, quite a few mecha were sprawled about relaxing at a wide plaza not too far from the city gates. There were also some who were standing around idly, resting with their eyes closed.

These mecha were mostly advanced mecha, though there was also a small number of lower mecha and intermediate mecha among them. Some of them had perhaps taken some time from their afternoon to come here and rest, but many more were here to look for comrades with aligned goals, or perhaps to wait to join any team preparing to complete missions but lacked members. This could be their chance to join a battle clan ...

That's right. This was the assembly ground of unaffiliated mecha operators. Without a battle clan, whenever they had free time, they would come here to try their luck, to see if they had any chance to join some battle clan. Even a temporary one would be better than not being part of any battle clan. To become stronger, joining a battle clan was a necessary choice. Upon successfully obtaining an advanced mecha, to become stronger, one would need venture into even tougher areas to complete the missions there, and all of this came with the prerequisite of having a battle clan — otherwise, you could not even accept these missions to begin with, and so would have no way of entering those treacherous areas.

As mentioned previously, not everyone would be able to join a battle clan, as establishing a battle clan was the special right belonging only to military academy cadets or army men. Thus, the number of unaffiliated mecha operators in Mecha World was immense.

In one corner of the plaza, a line of standard advanced mecha were seated in a row on the ground. They were all seated in the same position, their chins propped on their hands. Five mecha in the exact same stance stood out quite a bit — they were obviously part of the same mecha clan. This caused the other



surrounding mecha to stare from the corner of their eyes, filled with envy; quite a number of mecha even semi-casually strolled by before them, hoping to attract the five mecha's attention.

This was because three mecha were all that was needed to form a mecha squad, while six mecha could form a miniature battle clan. The unaffiliated mecha were all guessing whether the five mecha were looking for a final member before going for the mission to establish their battle clan. Regardless of whether they were or they weren't, as long as the possibility existed, all the unaffiliated mecha hoped that the final lucky one would be themselves.

Meanwhile, at this time, the private comms channel of the five mecha was extraordinarily lively.

"Ah ah ah, why isn't Boss here yet?" [Lingtian Combat]'s voice, that is, the hearty volume of Qi Long's throat, instantly drowned out the softer tones of the others' chatter.

"Boss said 1300 hours<sup>1</sup>. Right now, it's only 1247. There's still 13 minutes left. What are you impatient about?" As his sworn brother, Han Jijyun, who was called [Lingtian Abacus] in Mecha World, rebuked without mercy. When would this fellow be just a little more calm and composed like Boss? Only knowing how to fool outsiders with that earnest and sincere face of his.

"Can't you see I'm just excited?! We're about to make a battle clan now! I'm really looking forward to it, and we're going to have a few new people too!" At this point, Qi Long suddenly began to snicker.

This caused the faces of the others to spasm involuntarily. In particular, Li Shiyu's darkened expression emerged at the forefront of Luo Lang's mind. Once again, he could not help but lament silently for Li Shiyu. Who asked him to catch the eye of their boss ... this was his fate!

Luo Lang's mind began to replay that scene which had happened back at the Military Medical Research Centre ...

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Entirely shrouded in cold air, Ling Lan heaved Qi Long, who was typically loud and brash but was currently curled up into a miserable ball of pain, over a shoulder and charged aggressively towards the Military Medical Research Centre with Luo Lang and the others trailing behind her.

Luo Lang and the others actually did not know why Qi Long had suddenly fallen ill, but Boss Lan had said that it was time to seek out Li Shiyu. On the way, they learned of Boss Lan's objective for this excursion. He was planning to break the unspoken rule upheld all this time within the military academy — the rule which stated that the students of the Military Medical Research specialization were not to participate in any faction so they could maintain their neutrality.

Yes, Boss Lan, who was about to establish a battle clan ahead of time in Mecha World, was planning to bring the dux of the Military Medical Research specialization Li Shiyu into his clan. This seemingly impossible goal of Ling Lan's astounded Han Jijyun, Luo Lang, and the others. Yet, after their shock had faded, they were consumed with excitement. If Boss Lan actually succeeded, this would definitely be a grand feat! Only Boss Lan would dare to even think of something like this and actually do it ... In their minds, as long as Boss Lan wanted to do it, nothing was impossible.

It had to be said that Ling Lan's many grand achievements had filled Han Jijyun, Luo Lang, and the others' confidence in her to the brim. They believed that it was impossible for their Boss Lan to fail.

Ling Lan strode right up to the doors of the Military Medical Research Centre, and without any pause to think, she sent the door flying open with a forceful kick.

A loud crash rang out. This abrupt scene along with the sudden loud crash caused all the staff and students of the military medicine specialization to instantly cower down in fear. They had mistakenly assumed that the school was being attacked by an unidentified enemy.

Luo Lang and the others following behind Ling Lan looked at the rampaging Ling Lan before them, who looked like he had crawled out from the depths of hell, and their bodies trembled uncontrollably. Despite knowing that the wrath of their boss was faked, right then, they too were affected by the heavy aggression seeping out from their boss's body, cold sweat breaking out along their back.

In the Military Medical Research Centre, the only one still standing upright with a calm and fearless expression was their dux Li Shiyu. Expression stony, he stared at Ling Lan who had vandalised the doors of the centre and said through gritted teeth, "Ling Lan, are you insane? What do you take this place for?"

"Insane? You should rejoice that I'm not insane, just a little bit angry ... or else, I won't be able to guarantee what I'll do. Li Shiyu, I trusted you, but how have you repaid this trust of mine? Once, twice, my brothers have been presented with problems because of your treatment. Shouldn't you be giving me an explanation? Hm?" said Ling Lan coldly. Her icy gaze and these words instantly doused the rage in Li Shiyu's heart.

"What are you trying to say? What's happened this time?" said Li Shiyu with a slight frown, resigned. Right now, he rather regretted agreeing to rescue Ling Lan's brothers back then out of a moment of soft-hearted weakness. Now it seemed as if this punk had latched onto him — whenever anything happened to Ling Lan's brothers, the other just loved to come and trouble him. In spite of Ling Lan's extremely discourteous attitude, Li Shiyu did not lose his composure, still calmly asking Ling Lan about the situation.

A trace of approval flashed across Ling Lan's cool gaze. As a military doctor, one needed to be level-headed in extreme situations. Even when facing a teammate's doubts and critique, they must be able to calmly explain their thought process and the sequence of events. Only then would they be able to obtain their teammates' trust. Undoubtedly, Li Shiyu was doing this extremely well — as expected of a prodigy of military medicine. For him, expending all this time and effort was worth it.

Ling Lan tamped down on the approval in her heart, and continued to say with a frigid expression, "Setting aside Luo Lang's relapse, I would never have expected the same thing to happen to Qi Long after his recovery. Dux Li, you owe me an explanation." Her words had barely faded when Ling Lan came to stand before Li Shiyu, where she then set down the suffering Qi Long and indicated for Li Shiyu to take a look.

Ling Lan's words made Li Shiyu's fair face flush bright red instantly. This horrible junior actually doubted his treatment abilities again and again ... this was definitely an insult to his professionalism. No matter how calm and composed Li Shiyu was, he could not help but feel rage surging into his chest.

Even so, Li Shiyu was unable to refuse Qi Long treatment. As long as a patient was before him, as a military doctor, he needed to cast aside all personal enmity and save the patient to the best of his

ability. He quickly stepped forward and gripped Qi Long's hand, feeling at his pulse point. And then, Li Shiyu's countenance shifted slightly once more — he had actually sensed the customary reaction from using the gene agent S-modification they had developed from the reading of Qi Long's pulse. Cold sweat instantly broke out all over Li Shiyu's body — could it be that the gene agent S-modification still retained some problematic side issues? But their previous trials had not revealed any sign of this sort of situation?

Li Shiyu was rather uncertain now. He immediately asked the staff to lay Qi Long into a healing pod and treated Qi Long with special restorative agents. Initially shivering uncontrollably from the pain, Qi Long's tortured expression began to ease slowly after 10 or so seconds of this treatment. It looked like the restorative agent was effective.

"I want to know. What medical agent did you give my brothers exactly? Why would such a situation occur?" Ling Lan saw Qi Long's condition turn for the better and the ice on her face thawed considerably. Her tone and demeanour when asking Li Shiyu this was clearly a little warmer.

Li Shiyu was silent for a moment before he answered, "Once his condition is better, I will conduct a comprehensive examination on him. Only at that time will I know what the true reason for this is."

That said, Li Shiyu no longer paid any attention to Ling Lan. He immediately contacted the few specialization instructors he worked with. When his instructors heard of Qi Long's reaction, they were instantly anxious, agreeing to come over immediately so they could study this unique case together.

Ling Lan heard Li Shiyu calling for his instructors to come study together, and despite being as calm as ever on the surface, her heart could not help but pound and feel ill at ease.

Little Four sensed Ling Lan's concern and immediately piped up to reassure her, *"Boss, please don't worry. I have found all their data on the gene agent S-modification. After purifying and improving the gene agents daddy secretly brought us this time, the medical properties of the agents are definitely the same as their gene agent S-modification. They will never discover or suspect anything."* While saying this, Little Four's tone was extremely proud. With regards to the purification of gene agents, there was absolutely no one who could beat him, Little Four.

Ling Lan relaxed with Little Four's assured guarantee. Frankly, even if she was still worried, it was too late to do anything about it now. The arrow had already been notched and the bow pulled taut, they could only fire the arrow. At this point, even if their scheme was seen through by the opponent, they could only grit their teeth and lie all the way.

Therefore, Ling Lan continued to stand there with a cold expression. Meanwhile, Luo Lang and the others were really unsure what was happening with Qi Long, so there was no expression other than worry on their faces. Li Shiyu, who had been silently observing them, felt fear creeping over him. Could it be that Qi Long's condition was real? Was it really the fault of their research centre?

Very soon, the instructors had all arrived. In the meantime, Qi Long's condition had improved considerably; he was no longer in the agonizing pain he had been in at the start. Subsequently, the instructors began to do all sorts of tests on Qi Long — those who drew blood, drew blood, while those who ran numbers, ran numbers. The reports were out very quickly. They discovered that all the

reactions Qi Long were displaying were definitely in line with the customary reaction from injecting the gene agent S-modification.

This diagnosis caused their complexions to pale drastically. Could it be that this gene agent S-modification actually had a latency period and would trigger and break out every so often? This was undoubtedly a very serious latent issue, proving that their gene agent S-modification was greatly flawed.

### **Chapter 306: Joining!**

The instructors were all silent in the face of these reports. They only began discussing the reports in hushed voices after a good long while. After conversing for a while with his instructors, Li Shiyu clenched his teeth and walked over to stand before Ling Lan and apologised, “Our medical agents have been used before by countless people, and none of them have ever presented with a situation like Qi Long’s. This could very well be due to his special physical constitution. Still, whatever the case, this is our error. I’m sorry, Ling Lan.”

“You can save the apology. All I want to know is whether this will cause problems for Qi Long in the future?” Ling Lan’s cold gaze pierced right through Li Shiyu, as if warning Li Shiyu not to even think about bluffing his way through.

“I don’t know. Because this is a unique case, never having occurred before, I cannot tell if Qi Long will present with a similar situation in future. What I can confirm is that this agent will not harm Qi Long’s body permanently in any way. In fact, you could say that even if it acts up in the future, it will only bring benefits and no harm.”

Frankly, Li Shiyu really wanted to say ‘no, this is just an outlier case’, but out of responsibility to his patient, Li Shiyu just could not utter those words. This was because he himself could not say for certain whether this situation of Qi Long’s was just a one-time thing or if it would be a reoccurring issue all his life — after all, this condition of Qi Long’s was truly just too bizarre; no one could say anything definite about it at present.

Hearing this, Ling Lan’s raging aura rose once more. She gripped Li Shiyu by the front of his white robe, pulled him close before her, and said with a murderous expression, “What do you mean by ‘will not harm him permanently in any way’? What is this ‘every time it acts up it’ll only bring benefit’? Do you know that Qi Long will have to go onto a battlefield in future? If this kind of situation happens during regular times, we can still send him straight to a doctor for treatment. But what if it happens to break out during a battle? On the battlefield, any bit of error could cost him his life. Do you think that if this happens in that situation, Qi Long can survive?”

Ling Lan’s blunt questioning left Li Shiyu’s mouth twitching helplessly. Indeed, the scenario Ling Lan had described could very well happen. If the agent acted up on the battlefield, the only fate that awaited Qi Long was death — the enemy would not wait for Qi Long to get over this brief period of incapacitation.

Remorse sprang up in Li Shiyu’s heart. Although his intentions had been good, thinking to give his younger cousin’s friends a small boost in power, who could have expected that this agent would not be suitable for people of all physical constitutions ...? All their previous tests and trials had actually missed out on finding this flaw in the agent.

At this time, one of the instructors walked over. Extremely apologetic, he said, "I am sorry. The reaction of this student to the agent is something we've never seen before. This agent of ours has already been used on countless hundred thousands of people, and none have ever exhibited the side-effects this student has. This might be a special case, but it cannot be denied that this is an error on the part of our Military Medical Research Centre. We will take responsibility for it. Please raise any requests you may have as long as it's within our means."

At these words, Ling Lan released her grip on Li Shiyu's chest and replied evenly, "Requests? I only have one request, and that is that my brother cannot lose his life because of this agent. As long as you all can resolve this, I can pretend as if nothing had happened ..."

Ling Lan's request caused the instructor's expression to become troubled. "I am sorry. Cadet, right now, we have not yet developed an agent which can alleviate the symptoms of this reaction instantaneously. You might have to wait for some time ..."

The instructor could not promise anything. After all, they had always thought that this reaction would only occur right after injection. Once the patient bore it till the end, the agent would be done with its work. They had never had to consider how to alleviate these reaction symptoms, because only by riding through this agonizing pain would the patient's body benefit fully. At most, they would just do as they were doing for Qi Long now, adding a little restorative agent into the mix to restore a little of the patient's stamina and spiritual power to help the patient hang on through the pain ...

"How long do we have to wait? One year? Two years? Three years? Or perhaps five years? Ten years? Perhaps even longer?" A trace of mockery hung on Ling Lan's lips. The disdain in her eyes made the instructor somewhat disgruntled, but he had no way to rebut what Ling Lan had said. The instructors of the military medicine specialization had always based everything they said and did by the data — with regards to something they had yet to research, they truly could not give a specific time frame. It was as Ling Lan said; they might need 8 or 10 years to come up with an answer.

"Could it be that you want my brother to constantly be under threat of death during this period while you all are researching a solution? Any unfortunate mishap, and he could become the first death caused by your agent?" asked Ling Lan with a sneer.

"No, we have no intentions of letting that happen. If possible, we can give military headquarters a report so that Cadet Qi Long can be exempted from the battlefield and become a support staff officer ..." the instructor hurried to explain, stating a short-term suggestion they could think of.

"Sir, do you know what our specialization is? We are from the Mecha Piloting specialization. The reason we chose this specialization is because we want to fight on the frontlines of the battlefield and not hide at the back like a coward. Your suggestion is without question an insult to both me and my brother," barked Ling Lan in response to his words.

Ling Lan's furious demeanour deepened the instructor's remorse; he too felt he had misspoken. He quickly asked, "Then, what do you want?"

Ling Lan swept an icy glare around the Military Medical Research Centre, and everyone there instinctively ducked their heads, avoiding eye contact. At this moment, everyone present had become

suppressed by Ling Lan's cold and domineering force of presence, including those rational-minded instructors.

Then, Ling Lan was heard to say measuredly, "I hope for a military doctor who has graduated from the Military Medical Research specialization to join my battle clan to watch over my brothers' physical condition in the long run. Because, after accepting your treatment, other than the current patient Qi Long, there is still my other brother Luo Lang!" Ling Lan pointed at Luo Lang standing behind her and continued, "Right now, I cannot confirm whether the same condition will present itself in this brother of mine. After all, after undergoing treatment here, he has suffered a relapse before."

Ling Lan's gaze met Li Shiyu's as she spoke, and Li Shiyu's forehead creased slightly in a small frown. Regarding Luo Lang's injuries, Li Shiyu was extremely certain that the centre was not at fault. However, they did not have any persuasive proof otherwise at the moment, so they could only silently bear the blame.

"As Dux Li was the one who caused all this, being responsible for treating my two brothers, I hope for Dux Li to shoulder this responsibility and become a member of my battle clan to watch over the wellbeing of my clan members." Ling Lan finally revealed her true objective.

"No, this is impossible. Cadets from the military medicine specializations are not allowed to join any battle clans. This is an academy regulation," the instructor refused vehemently. Mind you, all the students trained by the military medicine specializations in the academy would end up as outstanding elite doctors of the medical world. As such, they needed to be available to serve the army as a whole and not be tied down to a small battle clan — that would be such a huge waste of talent. Especially in the case of Li Shiyu — he was the most outstanding prodigy of their specialization. The instructors all had high hopes for him, hoping that he would ultimately become the greatest hand of god of the military medicine world one day. This prodigy they had invested so much time and effort in cultivating ... how could they bear to hand him over to some small battle clan?

"Sir, as far as I know, the academy does not have this rule in black and white. At most, this is just a mutual agreement and tradition of this school. You should know that any rule that is not clearly stated is not inviolable. And the fact of the matter is that my two brothers have presented with problems at Dux Li's hands. According to rule 68 subsection 21 of the academy's rules: when an accidental incident occurs (including events such as fights and tournaments, medical cases, risky research studies, etcetera), whoever is responsible for the damages will be the one held responsible for reparation. Based on this regulation, my request is not asking for too much." Ling Lan read the regulation Little Four had dug up for her, and then asked the instructor sharply, "Is the Military Medical Research Centre trying to brush off this responsibility? Or perhaps you all want to go against this regulation?"

"No, that's not it. This ... this ..." Under Ling Lan's aggressive questioning, the instructor was actually rendered speechless. He looked at Li Shiyu, then looked back again at the dogged Ling Lan, and was instantly as anxious as an ant on a hot plate<sup>1</sup>, completely at a loss what to do.

The other instructors saw that things were looking bad — they quickly turned on their communicators and secretly contacted the faculty head of the military medicine specialization, hoping that he would hurry over and resolve this sudden incident. As Li Shiyu's instructors, they did not wish for Li Shiyu to be limited to developing in a small battle clan.

Right at that moment, Li Shiyu, who had been calmly contemplating for a long while, suddenly shouted, "I, am willing to take responsibility!"

Li Shiyu felt that Ling Lan was right. Leaving the matter of Luo Lang aside, Qi Long's condition today was indeed the fault of their Military Medical Research Centre. And since the one who had requested for Qi Long to be given the gene agent S-modification was him, Li Shiyu, he really had no grounds to deflect this responsibility.

Of course, Li Shiyu had initially hoped to enter the best treatment department after graduating, to learn more about more obscure medical arts, treatments, and agents, and study them in depth. Because this way, he would have an even greater chance of curing that bizarre illness of his eldest cousin brother<sup>2</sup>. However, he did not want to evade responsibility. Since Qi Long had suffered as a result of his actions, he was willing to use his own future to compensate for this burden of guilt.

Li Shiyu mentally apologised to his eldest cousin brother in his heart, because this decision of his would undoubtedly cause his cousin to suffer for a little longer. Still, he believed that as long as he worked hard to learn and research, even though it might take him a little longer, he was still confident that he would eventually be able to fully cure that feeble body of his cousin. It was precisely due to this unshakeable confidence that Li Shiyu would shoulder this responsibility so readily.

Hearing Li Shiyu's resolute answer, Ling Lan mentally pumped a fist in her heart with a loud cheer of 'YES, Success!'

After expending all that effort, she had finally snatched this prodigy for her battle clan. Even though her methods were rather despicable, in order to guarantee the lives and safety of her brothers, she would even stoop to even more despicable means. Ling Lan did not regret her actions in the least. She was not a saintly matron — she could not care for the entire Federation army; she could only care for these brothers by her side.

Thus, when Ling Lan looked at Li Shiyu, her gaze was placid and self-assured with not one hint of remorse within it. Ling Lan firmly believed that — Heaven destroys those who don't look out for themselves. This classic line which had been preserved through the ages certainly could not be wrong.

Soon after, the faculty head rushed over, only to hear that the two sides had already come to an agreement. Li Shiyu had agreed to join Ling Lan's battle clan. The head was instantly racked with heartache. However, faced with a resolute Li Shiyu, he could not convince the other to change his mind. In the end, the faculty head could only plead with Ling Lan to promise that he would not leak the news of Li Shiyu joining his battle clan. The faculty head did not wish for the other excellent students his specialization was cultivating with such care to be taken away by even more battle clans ...

Ling Lan's objective had been achieved, so she naturally would not refuse this entreaty of the faculty head. She agreed without hesitation. Just like this, Ling Lan's battle clan was the first ever to include a student from the military medicine specialization in its ranks, and it would also be the only battle clan to possess a military doctor. Meanwhile, at this time, Li Shiyu was unaware, but the curtains of his very own legend were about to be raised

**Chapter 307: Battle Clan Members!**

Although the other five members of Ling Lan's team were sympathetic towards Li Shiyu, who at present appeared to be extremely tragic and innocent in all this, they were still deeply impressed by their boss's grand feat this time. He had actually managed to tie Li Shiyu to their battle force.

After all, having such an exceptional military doctor like Li Shiyu in their battle clan meant their lives had an additional layer of protection when they entered the battlefield. Ling Lan had undoubtedly given them an extra protective life-saving talisman. At this thought, Qi Long and the other four were filled with even more gratitude and respect for Boss Lan.

As for the two other new members Boss Lan had mentioned, Qi Long and the others did not know much. They only knew that one of them was a mecha mechanic, while the other was a mecha operator who was a primary attacker.

Just when the time was about to hit 1300<sup>1</sup>, Lin Zhong-qing, who had been observing the surroundings all this time, suddenly yelled out in the comms channel, "Stop the chitchat. Boss is coming!"

The busily chatting group instantly fell silent, all of them turning their heads to look for the figure of their boss. Coming in diagonally from the right before them, three mecha were swiftly approaching. Two of the three were intermediate mecha, while the last was an advanced mecha.

"Of the two intermediate mecha, one of them should be Boss's," remarked Lin Zhong-qing. As the one who communicated most often with Boss Lan, he was well aware of the current level of Ling Lan's mecha.

He had barely finished speaking when the three mecha came to a stop before them. The five of them received a private message from Ling Lan almost simultaneously, requesting for them to join her party. When Qi Long received the message, he immediately disbanded their previous party of five. Right afterwards, he received Ling Lan's party invitation.

[No Mecha Unrepaired] saw the standardised names with 'Lingtian' before them — [Lingtian Combat], [Lingtian Abacus], [Lingtian Parcel], [Lingtian Razor]<sup>2</sup>, [Lingtian Substitute] — scrolling rapidly across his screen as they joined [Lingtian First-String]'s battle clan one after the other, and his heart was instantly overcome with emotion.

Not too long ago, he had still been worrying over his future because he did not know whether he would be accepted by any battle clan. The grudge between him and the Thunder King had been major news at one point in Mecha World — skilled battle clans that knew about this past history would very likely be unwilling to accept him in order to avoid offending the Thunder King, who was powerful and influential inside Mecha World.

Meanwhile, if he wanted to graduate from the military academy, he would need to join a battle clan. Otherwise, he would not be able to complete those courses which required one. Just as he was at a loss, [No Mecha Unrepaired] had been surprised by [Lingtian First-String] initiating contact. The other had asked him outright if he would be interested to join the other's clan.

This was undoubtedly a straw to clutch at for [No Mecha Unrepaired]. His first reflex was to agree immediately, but luckily, he was still somewhat rational. After calming down, he began to consider the consequences of joining. He could not bring trouble to someone who had helped him before, even though [Lingtian First-String] was indeed very strong.



Thus, [No Mecha Unrepaired] asked [Lingtian First-String] why the other had invited him to join. He also asked if [Lingtian First-String] knew the consequences of inviting him to join. This would certainly offend the Thunder King's faction and may impact the development of [Lingtian First-String]'s battle clan in the future.

Unexpectedly, [Lingtian First-String] only responded with two words, "So what?"

Even as [No Mecha Unrepaired] was touched by this, he was utterly speechless. He then asked [Lingtian First-String] — could it be that he did not want his battle clan to develop properly? It should be known that with a powerful faction applying pressure on them and seeking trouble at every turn, perhaps even interrupting and obstructing them in all of their missions, the other's battle clan would never be able to develop. The clan would only be able to barely survive under the abuse of the Thunder King's faction ... [No Mecha Unrepaired] believed that this was not something [Lingtian First-String] wanted to see.

To his surprise, [Lingtian First-String] did not answer his question, instead asking him in return whether he dared to fight with him.

[Lingtian First-String] did not say that he was not afraid of the Thunder King, nor any other empty words like they would be fine as long as they distanced themselves from the Thunder King's faction. He simply asked [No Mecha Unrepaired] whether he would fight, proving that the other had long considered the severe repercussions of inviting [No Mecha Unrepaired] into his battle clan. This meant that the other's invitation was not an impulsive act but a decision made after deep contemplation.

Upon hearing this question of [Lingtian First-String]'s, [No Mecha Unrepaired] no longer hesitated, agreeing readily. [No Mecha Unrepaired] still recalled how his tears had fallen uncontrollably at the moment he accepted. Perhaps his heart had already become fatigued from resisting the Thunder King's faction alone for so long. The sudden appearance of a friend who was willing to fight by his side was like a shot of heart tonic to him — he had hope once again. [No Mecha Unrepaired] silently made a vow. If he and [Lingtian First-String] truly managed to overcome this hurdle, he would serve [Lingtian First-String]'s battle clan for the rest of his life. Only comrades who were willing to share their burdens and brave trials together were worthy of a lifetime of dedication.

[No Mecha Unrepaired] was well aware that if no battle clan invited him, he would ultimately only have two paths before him. One was to retain his dignity and drop out of school resentfully in the end, while the other was to bow his proud head, break his proud bones, and give up on his dignity to become a subordinate of the Thunder King ... of these two paths, he did not want either of them, and [Lingtian First-String]'s invitation was undoubtedly a third path of salvation from a desperate situation ... Although the future of this third path was vague and uncertain, [No Mecha Unrepaired] was willing to take the risk and fight.

"[No Mecha Unrepaired] shall be the future mecha mechanic of our battle clan. From now on, if you all have any problems with your mecha, you can look for him directly," Ling Lan pointed at [No Mecha Unrepaired], who was lost in his thoughts, and introduced him to the others.

"Oh, so you're that [No Mecha Unrepaired] who had been pressured so much by the Thunder King that you've been driven to a corner ..." [Lingtian Substitute], who was Xie Yi, was the first to exclaim in realisation.

As the public representative of the team dealing with external relations, Xie Yi had always been collecting all information generated within the military academy. He naturally knew quite a lot about [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s matter, even knowing [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s true name in the real world. However, right now they were only a virtual battle clan in Mecha World, and Xie Yi was unsure whether [No Mecha Unrepaired] was to be a permanent member or a member under temporary contract — so, before Boss Lan explicitly defined the other's status within the clan, Xie Yi would still cautiously call [No Mecha Unrepaired] by his username in Mecha World.

"Ah, you all know about that too ...?" asked [No Mecha Unrepaired] with a wry chuckle. He had not expected his story to have become so widespread.

"Yes. Trapped in the newbie town for close to 3 years, never succeeding in stepping out of the town by even one step ... your story has been widely discussed on the Mecha World official forums. I just happened to see it," replied Xie Yi with a smile.

"Looks like, after almost 3 years, the Thunder King still has no intention of letting me be," said [No Mecha Unrepaired] with a troubled expression, "I'm very grateful for [Lingtian First-String]'s invitation to join your team. However, now that you all know as well that the Thunder King is still unwilling to leave me alone till today, once I join the battle clan, great trouble is sure to follow. If you all disagree on my joining due to this, it's still not too late."

"Why would we disagree? What Boss has decided, we will of course uphold," [Lingtian Razor], a.k.a. <sup>3</sup> Luo Lang, responded instantly.

"[Lingtian First-String] is your boss?" [No Mecha Unrepaired] exclaimed in shock. He would never have guessed that [Lingtian First-String], who operated an intermediate mecha just like him, would actually be the boss of this bunch of advanced mecha warriors. However, [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s surprise quickly faded, because he recalled how astoundingly strong [Lingtian First-String] had been even when he had just been operating a rabbit trainee mecha. Perhaps the other had just not upgraded to a better mecha for some reason. [No Mecha Unrepaired] began to construct endless idealisations around [Lingtian First-String] — no one would be willing to believe that the formidable [Lingtian First-String] was in fact truly just an intermediate mecha warrior in Mecha World ...

"This here is [Priceless Kinship], our future doctor," said Ling Lan tonelessly, pointing at [Priceless Kinship]; this introduction was much less meticulous and serious than when she had introduced [No Mecha Unrepaired].

[No Mecha Unrepaired] took a peek at [Priceless Kinship], who was as silent as ever despite hearing [Lingtian First-String]'s simple introduction. Even though he had rushed here together with the other, [Lingtian First-String] had not introduced them to each other prior to this. The whole way here, [Priceless Kinship] had not made a peep — he seemed rather cold and hard to get along with. [No Mecha Unrepaired] wondered silently whether the other was like him, only having been invited by [Lingtian First-String] to join the battle clan recently. This was because the other's name was like his, not beginning with 'Lingtian'.

In contrast to the enthusiasm with which they had welcomed [No Mecha Unrepaired], after hearing [Lingtian First-String]'s introduction, the five other people there abruptly fell silent. After that, several

muttered welcomes rang out within the comms channel, sounding somewhat perfunctory, or perhaps dispirited and uncertain. And the final rather awkward welcome came from [Lingtian Combat].

“Brother Kinship<sup>4</sup>, this junior’s body is in your care now. But please don’t let any other accidents occur ...” Closely following that welcome was a short speech by [Lingtian Combat]. There was a trace of forced cheer in his tone and also a trace of lingering fear — this made [No Mecha Unrepaired] glance curiously at [Priceless Kinship]. Could it be that there was some deeper secret behind his joining?

Hearing [Lingtian Combat]’s words, the initially rather cold and detached [Priceless Kinship] instantly responded seriously, “I will not make the same mistake twice. Please do not worry.” Towards the one he had wronged, Li Shiyu could no longer maintain his aloofness even though he was not particularly pleased with the clan leader Ling Lan.

At this moment, [Lingtian Abacus], a.k.a. Han Jijyun, seemed to sense the awkward atmosphere, and so quickly changed the topic to ask, “Boss, didn’t you say there were three new recruits? Where’s the last one?”

Ling Lan replied, “I’ve already notified him to come over.”

She had barely finished speaking when an advanced mecha could be seen flying here at high speed. It came to an abrupt stop before them without even slipping into a slide step from the inertia. This move completely proved just how skilful the other’s control was, causing the eyes of Qi Long, Luo Lang, and the others to light up. They could tell at a glance that the other’s control was definitely first-class — Qi Long, in particular, found competitive spirit flaring up in his heart. He really wished he could fight one match with the other immediately to see who was stronger.

Everyone in the party quickly saw a notification appear on their own mecha’s screens: [Self-Defined Destiny] has joined team Lingtian.

“[Self-Defined Destiny], another member of our battle clan. A mecha operator, he is a combat member,” Ling Lan introduced. Everyone greeted [Self-Defined Destiny] warmly. Only Han Jijyun subtly quirked a brow even as he greeted the other, because he had sensed something different in the way his boss had introduced [Self-Defined Destiny]. Even though his boss’s tone had been as dispassionate as usual, Han Jijyun had still picked up a subtle difference — this made Han Jijyun begin to take careful note of [Self-Defined Destiny].

[Self-Defined Destiny] saw five others who had the same start to their names as [Lingtian First-String] and knew that these five people must be the most stable and permanent members of the Lingtian Battle Clan. He quickly greeted them warmly in return, though he was equally earnest in greeting [No Mecha Unrepaired] and [Priceless Kinship]. Since he truly wanted to integrate himself into the Lingtian Battle Clan, then he needed to establish a good relationship with every member. On this front, Li Lanfeng did not dare to slack off.

Chapter 308: Accepting a Mission!

In this first meeting, Qi Long and the other four as well as [No Mecha Unrepaired] all felt that [Self-Defined Destiny] was a pretty decent guy. His demeanour was warm and gentle, making others feel as if graced by a spring breeze. Only [Priceless Kinship], a.k.a. Li Shiyu, was still a little puzzled, because the

other's aura gave him a sense of familiarity and affinity, just like how Li Lanfeng had made him feel back when they first met ...

Li Shiyu could not help but mentally shake his head, laughing at himself for being a little too sensitive. Perhaps this person was just a pleasant-tempered person like Li Lanfeng, which was why he would give him this feeling of similarity ... Li Shiyu knew well that the reason he was so attuned to this sort of aura was that his eldest cousin brother radiated the exact same type of aura. His eldest cousin brother just could not become a mecha operator in reality like Li Lanfeng, nor could he enter Mecha World to become an advanced mecha warrior like [Self-Defined Destiny].

Although Mecha World was a virtual world, its advancement levels also drew from the true physical condition of the players in real life. If one's physical constitution in the real world did not meet the standards for advancement, one would also be unable to successfully advance in the virtual world.

Thus, Li Shiyu had never even considered the possibility that his eldest cousin brother might have entered Mecha World and become an advanced mecha warrior. This type of habitual thinking caused him to miss this earliest opportunity of discovering the truth. It was only many years later when he would come to realise that he had actually already touched upon the truth from the very beginning he had merely brushed it aside.

After the few of them got to know one another, Ling Lan led them in a sprint towards the manor of the city lord of Grandsweep City. That was the place where one could accept the mission to build a battle clan. Ling Lan wanted to complete this mission today.

In the square, all the unaffiliated mecha operators watched as the team sprinted towards the city lord's manor, and they could pretty much confirm that the party was on their way to build a battle clan. They could not help but sigh ... why could they not be one of the members in that party?

One mecha operator who could not abide seeing others do well could not help but curse them silently in his heart, "I hope their luck is bad and they don't get a mission ..."

In Mecha World, the mission to establish a battle clan was not that easy to obtain. At present, the sources for these missions as posted on the official forums were truly all kinds of strange 1, different in so many ways. Some could be accepted directly from the city lord, with some of those being received at the official hall of the city lord's manor. There was even one battle clan which had been oddball enough to receive the mission from the janitor at the city lord's manor, while there were also clans that visited the manor multiple times to no avail ... not only that, the missions received also varied in difficulty. Some battle clans had a burst of great luck, managing to receive a supremely easy mission. It could be as easy as merely having to deliver a letter to obtain the clan formation token, thus successfully building one's battle clan. In contrast, there were some missions which were loaded with challenges they might not be completed even after many attempts where the clan members would be wiped out again and again.

Thus from jealousy sprung hate the unaffiliated players without a battle clan could not help but be resentful, hoping that these teams which qualified to establish battle clans would fail in their missions.

After speaking with the mecha operator guarding the gates of the city lord's manor, they found out that only the team leader could enter to accept the mission. So Ling Lan asked the others to wait for her at

the gates before speaking with the mecha operator once more to choose the option of establishing a battle clan. The next second, she was transported into the city lord's manor. The moment one entered the manor, one would automatically be ejected from one's mecha to appear with one's regular appearance. Otherwise, the large hulking mecha would certainly have destroyed the city lord's manor.

The location one was transported to was utterly random, just like the way one could receive a mission. The place Ling Lan came to was a corridor. Ling Lan could not help but frown the best spot to be transported to was the great hall of the manor. That way, it would be much more convenient to find the official hall or the city lord's office, and the success rate of obtaining a mission would be much higher. In contrast, it was hard to tell with this corridor, because you would not be able to tell which doorway you should choose. This was completely a test of luck.

But was it truly just a test of luck? 2 Ling Lan did not rush to look for a way out, instead standing where she had landed to think things through rationally.

Common sense would dictate that there should not be that many restrictions in the way of forming a battle clan. After all, the formation of a battle clan would band unaffiliated mecha operators together, greatly cultivating the cooperation and rapport between mecha operators, which would bring more potential out of the mecha operators within a clan. It could be said that for this type of battle clan that was established early, when enlisting as a clan into an army division, they could clearly skip the period new troops needed to acclimatise to work with one another. They could become an extremely efficient battle unit in a very short period of time.

Without question, this was an excellent model to foster a nation of soldiers. At critical junctures, even the common public could swiftly turn into extremely capable old hands at fighting, equipped with the ability to work in groups to boot.

In that case, why would such a brilliant model have so many restrictions placed on it? With even the process of accepting the clan-formation mission being so abstruse? Ling Lan could not help but recall the associated tests back during the enrolment for the scout academy and the military academy. A flash of insight coursed through her mind could this also be a type of test? However, the ones being tested this time were them, the incipient clan leaders ... what the Federation needed were exceptional leaders who could lead their team members to grow and develop together. Were they trying to weed out those applicant clan leaders who did not have the ability and were only here muddying the waters, to prevent them from destroying the futures of their clan members?

Thinking about it this way, everything made sense it could be explained why there were so many restrictions involved in the formation of a battle clan now. Ling Lan even felt that those party leaders who were unable to obtain a mission were in fact not unlucky as most believed. After entering the city lord's manor, their choices and actions must have been evaluated by the mainframe of Mecha World and found unsuitable for the role of clan leader. Perhaps that's how they lost the right to receive the mission?

In other words, right when one entered the city lord's manor, the assessment for the party leader had already begun!

At this point in her train of thought, Ling Lan could not help but sweatdrop. How much did this world love its hidden tests? Even when they were playing a game 3, they could not avoid this hurdle ... Having

reached this conclusion, Ling Lan naturally raised her guard up to 120%. After all, this would determine whether or not her battle clan could be formed. Even if she did not do it for herself, she would need to take responsibility on behalf of her followers and friends!

“Little Four, split the corridor into several smaller screens. Do not overlook any single small corner. I need to understand everything about this area,” Ling Lan finally spoke up to give Little Four instructions.

Without demur, Little Four broke the image of the corridor into countless smaller screens and displayed them on the screen of Ling Lan’s mecha. Ling Lan began to study each picture carefully, clicking through them one by one. It didn’t take long before she was done scrutinising all of the images.

Ling Lan’s brow scrunched up tighter and tighter because she could not see anything strange on any of the images. It should be said that the corridor was absolutely normal. There were only two doorways one was behind Ling Lan, so it should be the entrance, while the other was at the end of the corridor, so it should be the exit ...

Am I just overthinking things? Ling Lan could not help but wonder. Suddenly thinking of something, she abruptly clicked back to one of the images. It was an image of one corner of the corridor right beside it was a large flower garden, and there was a gardener busy at work inside.

For a person to randomly appear like that in the flower garden, just when she was looking to accept a mission, Ling Lan felt that this was very suspicious.

“Little Four, this gardener, investigate them for me,” Ling Lan instructed Little Four as she pointed at the sweat-drenched gardener.

Little Four obeyed immediately, beginning to flip through and investigate everything he could about the existence of the gardener. In the end, he returned jubilantly, eyes sparkling as he looked at Ling Lan, to say adoringly, “Boss, it’s as you suspected. There is a huge problem with this person.” If not for his boss sensing something strange about the situation, Little Four, who had not thought of taking the initiative to investigate, would have completely missed this opportunity to discover the truth.

At Little Four’s response, Ling Lan’s eyes lit up. “It’s good as long as there is a problem. Who is he exactly?”

“He’s no gardener. He’s actually the lord of this manor, the city lord of Grandsweep City, Luo Yixuan,” answered Little Four smugly. As long as it was something he wanted to find out, no matter how hard the Mecha World mainframe tried to conceal it, the information could never escape his keen fire-gold eyes 4 .

“So, the clan-formation mission should be on him.” The corner of Ling Lan’s lips quirked. What a windfall ... her luck was truly pretty good! Still, the mainframe of Mecha World was really quite despicable, actually disguising a city lord as a gardener. If she had not carefully studied the situation in the corridor, perhaps she might have walked all the way to the end and went off to god knows where. It was likely that she would not have ever obtained a mission then.

“For him to appear in this path you must go through to obtain a mission, Boss, and with the fact that he is the head here, that’s probably close to the mark.” Little Four agreed with Ling Lan’s analysis, believing that the mission must be with the city lord.

Since she had found her target, Ling Lan quickly walked over to the gardener's side and silently waited for the gardener to finish up what he was doing. Ling Lan's patience was excellent, and she believed it was better not to disturb someone as they were working.

The gardener finished planting the tree sapling in his hands and was just turning around to pick up another sapling when he was startled greatly by Ling Lan standing behind him. His expression changed and he pointed at Ling Lan angrily and asked, "Hey, why are you standing behind me? Don't you know that's very frightening?"

"Frightening? If you were a normal gardener, perhaps that might be true. But is Your Lordship really just an ordinary gardener?" said Ling Lan casually. Framed by that cold stony face of hers, it did not come off very friendly. However, Ling Lan was oblivious about this, because her demeanour when speaking was always like this regardless of whom she was speaking with.

"If I'm not an ordinary gardener, then who am I? You impudent punk. I must go report to the city lord and chase you out ..." This seemingly impolite expression and tone of Ling Lan instantly drove the gardener to anger.

Hearing this, Ling Lan's eyebrows lifted and the corner of her lips twitched up slightly. "Aren't you the city lord, Elder?" This expression of Ling Lan's was blatant mockery in the gardener's eyes. It seemed to be saying was there really any point in this idiotic charade?

The gardener's expression instantly turned ugly as rage welled in his heart. Hells, this punk was truly too arrogant! Actually daring to laugh and mock me; not at all knowing how to respect his elders ... and so, his impression of Ling Lan dropped straight from neutral to a negative value.

Poor Ling Lan had long become accustomed to sporting this frozen face of hers. In fact, that little tilt of her lips had been forcefully squeezed out by Ling Lan in hopes of improving the city lord's impression of her. She was hoping that this would prompt the city lord to swiftly assign her a mission, one that was not too hard. However, this effort of hers was destined to go to waste. Sometimes, the best intentions could in fact lead to even worse outcomes ... just as it was with the current Ling Lan.

The gardener did not seem to want to give Ling Lan a mission. Even though Ling Lan had already uncovered his true identity, he still pretended he had heard nothing. He simply asked Ling Lan to leave the garden so she would not disturb his work.

### **Chapter 309: SSS-Rank!**

Out of options, Ling Lan could only say outright, "City Lord Luo Yixuan, I am here to receive a clan-formation mission. Let's not beat around the bush anymore and stop wasting each other's time."

Hearing Ling Lan call out his name directly, the city lord Luo Yixuan knew for sure that his identity had been seen through by the other. Because to the general outside world, his information was only listed as the city lord of Grandsweep City; his full name would not be displayed. It was very likely that the other had found some other clue to his identity from some other source. This also made it so that he could not continue to hold back from giving out the clan-formation mission.

Yet he did not want to make things so easy for this arrogant and impolite punk. An idea struck him and he instantly brought out a large spin wheel and said coldly, "I can give you a mission if you want, but whether or not you can actually receive one will all depend on your luck."

Ling Lan looked at that familiar large spin wheel once more, but this time, its segments were not marked with various mecha but with various mission options for forming a clan. More than half of the segments were labelled with the word 'failure' outright — she could just tell that this was the city lord Luo Yixuan's doing. She thought back on the two times she had spun a rabbit mecha and could not help but cringe inside. What if her spinning luck was bad here ...

Ling Lan was not really worried about the failures, because if she received a 'failure', she could just wait till a week later to try and receive a mission again. She glanced briefly at that terrifying SSS-rank mission on one of the segments in the spin wheel and could not help but gulp silently. Hells, if her spin landed on that, it would definitely be even more tragic than getting a 'failure'. As far as she knew, no one had ever completed an SSS-rank mission up till now ... she did not want to spend her entire life struggling with this mission.

"What? If you're afraid, you can just choose to give up directly and just come again next week," said the city lord Luo Yixuan coldly, arms folded across his chest.

Damm\*t, her luck could not be that bad all the time! Ling Lan would never choose to give up voluntarily; she decisively pressed down on the handle of the large spin wheel. The spin wheel began to spin rapidly — Ling Lan pressed her lips tightly together, praying in her heart for the SSS-rank mission to stay away ... and the large spin wheel finally stopped.

Ling Lan first reflex was to stare down at her own hand. Her hand was obviously so white and soft ... why was her hand-luck so black then?! She even began to curse herself — why did she even think about the SSS-rank mission while the wheel had been spinning? Didn't she know how the more she didn't want something, the more likely it was to come?

Ling Lan had no tears even though she felt like crying. She could not help but sigh loudly at the skies. Reality proved that she was natural enemies with large spin wheels — in the end, the needle firmly pointed at a mission of SSS-rank. Ling Lan's first thought was whether she should just choose to give up and come again next week.

However, before Ling Lan could decide, the city lord, who had been equally stunned by the results, very quickly came to himself. Chortling sinisterly, he withdrew a token from a pocket and threw it into Ling Lan's lap, and then ... he immediately ran away.

Amidst the schadenfreude-filled laughter of the city lord which had yet to fade, Ling Lan stared speechlessly down at the mission token in her hands, a green vein spasming uncontrollably at her temple ... no matter how much the city lord did not like her, he still could not be so irresponsible as to just dump the mission token on her and leave! At the very least he should give her a mission introduction and offer some useful tips or suggestions ... what an extremely irresponsible NPC! Ling Lan decided that she would definitely submit a complaint about this city lord of Grandsweep City. An NPC just could not be that shameless.



With no other recourse, Ling Lan could only try to get more information from the token in her hands. She had just straightened the token when a notification popped up on her mecha's screen.

"Clan-formation mission, mission ranking: SSS-rank. Mission content: A month ago, Fleet Swift Dragon, which is stationed at the Nebula Boundary, sent over an extremely subtle S.O.S. As the message was too brief, the Federation military was unable to determine whether it was a mistake or a true request for assistance. Although headquarters sent a team over to investigate, they did not discover anything out of the ordinary. Despite everything looking normal, the Federation military is not completely convinced. They have decided to secretly send an unofficial civilian expedition to look around the Nebula Boundary to find out once and for all what the S.O.S. was about. Upon completion of the mission, the Federation shall convey the official status of battle clan on the expedition team. The team will from then on be granted the same rights and benefits as military troops of the same rank ..."

"As expected of an SSS-rank mission. How troublesome." Reading the mission introduction, Ling Lan's mood became very horrible. This mission was not easy. One, the people they were supposed to contact were unclear. Two, the situation at the Nebula Boundary was unclear. Three, as a civilian expedition party, entering a location controlled by the Federation military ... that was definitely seeking death. Any random person within a trained fleet would be able to drown their entire expedition team with just a mouthful of spit.

Moreover, how they could covertly get to the Nebula Boundary was also an extremely difficult matter. In short, this mission was already extremely tricky from the very beginning, and the further they progressed, the harder things would be. Also, Ling Lan did not believe that military headquarters would really just send them, this one team. It was highly likely that while they were acting, the military would also send another investigative team to secretly sneak into the Nebula Boundary to investigate. At the bottom of it all, they were just the diversionary lure to draw away the guard troops of the Nebula Boundary.

"Perhaps, giving up would be better for us." Ling Lan felt that this mission was absolutely impossible at the level of her current party.

Ling Lan was not someone who was blindly confident. When the difficulty of a mission was truly worlds apart from her team's capabilities, Ling Lan would rationally choose to give up. She did not want to lead her companions into danger recklessly. Even though dying in the game would not lead to true death, Ling Lan was worried that this would instill the habit of risk-taking within herself. This character trait was undesirable as it could very well hurt everyone in the real world. Ling Lan was constantly on guard against it.

Having come to a decision, Ling Lan instantly threw the token onto the ground without any hesitation. In Mecha World, whether it was equipment, resources, medical agents, or materials, as long as it was dumped somewhere, the system would wipe it away with a refresh when time ran out. The same applied to mission tokens. As long as one chose to cast it aside, the mainframe would judge it as a mission failure ... then, she would be able to come back one week later and accept a new mission. Of course, after failing, the one who accepted the mission would have to pay some price; Ling Lan felt that this was still much more worth it than recklessly risking their lives.

However, what happened next proved that Ling Lan's internal abacus was inaccurate. When Ling Lan chose to discard the token, the system actually notified her that the mission was already bound to her and could not be discarded ... in other words, the mission she had received was a death command that could not be refused.

Seeing this notification, Ling Lan could not help but show a middle finger to the screen inside her cockpit. *Dmmit, mainframe, you're just too shameless!\**

However, since this was already done, Ling Lan did not waste time panicking or despairing. She decided to go back and discuss with her companions how they wanted to complete this mission.

Ling Lan very quickly returned from whence she came and was transported back to the gates of the city lord's manor. Back outside the manor, Ling Lan once again reappeared in her intermediate mecha. Seeing their boss reappear, Qi Long and the others asked Ling Lan excitedly whether she had received a mission.

Ling Lan did not reply, instead asking them to move to a quieter location first. Only then did she share the details of the mission with them. When the others saw the contents of the mission, they instantly fell silent.

Ling Lan smiled wryly. It looked like this mission had scared her companions. She was just about to speak up and explain when Qi Long could be heard to roar excitedly, "Boss, you are just too awesome! Actually obtaining an SSS-rank mission that has not appeared in over several hundred years. I really just need to follow boss and there will be crazy awesome things to do ..."

"Yeah! I can't believe that there's something so exciting to do again so soon!" Xie Yi was just as excited.

"I had just been thinking that Boss would likely bring us an extremely high-level mission. Who would have expected Boss to dish out an SSS-rank mission just like that? My guts are still no match for Boss's," sighed Han Jijyun.

Han Jijyun had always set figuring out Ling Lan's thoughts as his highest goal. However, reality proved that he had still failed this time. Boss was even more savage than he had imagined ... but this was their boss! Forever doing things others would not dare to do. Han Jijyun could not know that this mission was not something Ling Lan had asked for on her own initiative, but was rather something that had been forcefully thrown upon Ling Lan.

"In any case, whatever Boss decides to do, I'll do." Luo Lang had no opinion whatsoever on this; he had long decided to follow his boss faithfully.

"If it's a mission of this level, the resources I prepared previously will be lacking considerably. I'll need to go supplement them as soon as possible." At this moment, Lin Zhong-qing was already thinking about how he could compensate for the ranking of the mission. He had no objections at all on accepting this mission.

Ling Lan stared at this group of audacious people and sweatdropped. Fine, she had forgotten that not many of her companions were normal. Earlier when she had thought they had been scared stiff, her mind must have short-circuited for a moment to even consider it.

Ling Lan turned her head to look at the other three silent people, thinking that these three at least must be shocked ... after all, those abnormal people like her companions should still be the minority.

And so Ling Lan addressed [No Mecha Unrepaired], saying, “[No Mecha Unrepaired], the mission this time is unexpectedly difficult. You can reconsider your invitation to join this battle clan if you would like.” [No Mecha Unrepaired] was after all not that close with them. If by any chance they did not manage to complete the mission, Ling Lan did not want to drag [No Mecha Unrepaired] down with them.

“No, I want to join the battle clan, and I also want to follow you all for the mission ...” At Ling Lan’s words, [No Mecha Unrepaired] quickly responded emphatically, “I was just moved earlier that I actually have the chance to participate in an SSS-rank mission. This is just too unbelievable.” [No Mecha Unrepaired]’s voice actually contained a trace of dreaminess.

“An SSS-rank mission that one might only see once in several hundred years ... there is indeed a need to see this. Besides, I believe you all will need my treatment ability even more.” [Priceless Kinship] deviated from his usual indifference, becoming unbelievably enthusiastic. It was clear to see how much attraction the SSS-rank mission held for him as well.

The corners of Ling Lan’s lips could not help but twitch. Hells, what kind of members were these whom she had taken in?! Each even more abnormal than the one before, actually so eager to attempt a mission normal people would never dare to touch ... She could not help but look towards [Self-Defined Destiny]; her leopard should be a normal person, right?

Li Lanfeng rubbed his jaw and asked with clear interest, “Say, do you all think that by completing this mission, the reward we receive will also be of a legendary level?”

“Legendary level?” Everyone sucked in a sharp breath ... within the mecha comms channel, Ling Lan could practically hear the endless dripping sounds of drooling.

Ling Lan stared up into the sky, speechless. She really could not expect much of her team members. As members of a team led by an abnormal person (a freak), they really could never be normal either ...

### **Chapter 310: Planet X192!**

In Mecha World, for every ten major cities, there would be a sky metropolis connecting these ten major cities. As its name suggests, the sky metropolises existed in the sky. However, these sky metropolises were not for human habitation; they merely functioned as spaceports.

Every day, there would be massive numbers of spacecrafts, military vessels, and cargo ships passing through these metropolises, departing from them or merely stopping by. Many lone wolves, expedition parties, and battle clans which needed to travel to distant lands for their missions would need to enter the sky metropolises to hitch a ride on a starship or some cargo ship. However, though battle clans could freely choose between military vessels and common ships, regular lone wolves and commoner expeditions could only ride civilian spacecrafts.

This was another reason why battle clans were so popular in Mecha World. After all, in Mecha World, 70% of ships were military vessels of the Federation. Furthermore, some military-governed areas could

only be accessed by military vessels — general civilian spacecrafts could not even approach. Oftentimes, the spots with the greatest profits were all located in those areas ...

For instance, the base camp at the Nebula Boundary where the Swift Dragon Fleet was stationed was an area where only military vessels were permitted to enter. This was also why they would find it troublesome — not yet having the right to board military vessels, they would never be able to get close to their destination by using civilian ships alone.

In any case, today, the initially already extremely bustling sky metropolis was even busier than ever. This was because the once-a-season planetary reclamation activity was about to commence officially, and this was also the one and only time when ordinary lone wolves and commoner expedition teams could board military vessels.

Planetary reclamation was an official activity organised by the Federation government. They would release some newly discovered wild and unexplored planets to the public, allowing civilian individuals or groups to go explore and cultivate the land. If they discovered any resources beneficial to the Federation or any new biological organisms, the Federation would reward them with countless credits.

Many troubled lone wolves or expedition teams that were not doing well financially had been able to revive due to this activity, becoming famous people or renowned expedition teams in their own right. Therefore, this planetary reclamation activity had become the premier shortcut for ordinary lone wolves or expedition teams to fame and fortune.

“They only see the glory of success but fail to see the consequences of failure. Tell me, these individuals or parties who go on this exploration — how many of them return alive?” As the person in charge of ferrying these adventurers this time, a commanding officer could not help but sigh as he looked at the spirited civilian adventurers down below controlling their mecha to board the starship from the screen of his mainship.

“This is their own choice. Perhaps this failure will let them understand what it means to act within one’s means,” responded an adjutant coldly from beside the commanding officer. The adjutant did not think highly of these untrained civilian adventurers. If this were not an assignment, he would never have willingly made contact with these trash.

“Oh you. You should not have these kinds of thoughts. Have you never heard the old saying of ‘prodigies sprouting from the civilian world’?” said the commander with a laugh, shaking his head.

“That saying has long become obsolete. With the perfected system of the Federation now, any prodigies would have long been excavated for cultivation. Would they have been able to remain hidden until now?” said the adjutant scornfully. These trash which could not even form proper battle clans could only remain mediocre all their lives. “The only thing that perplexes me is why we have to come to this virtual Mecha World to do this mission. It’s seriously a complete waste of our time.”

At his adjutant’s words, the smile on the commander’s face vanished. Grimly, he said, “Because the Federation mainframe has sent an emergency notification to us. At the Nebula Boundary of Mecha World, some strange phenomena has occurred. Although it has tried its best to eliminate the problem, it has failed, and it simply cannot discover the reason for its failure.”

The adjutant's expression changed. "Could it be that our Federation mainframe has been invaded by an enemy nation's virus?"

The commander nodded solemnly. "Highly possible. This is also why we have secretly entered Mecha World to replace these NPCs under the mainframe's arrangement. You should know that once the Federation mainframe is successfully corrupted by a virus, the entire order of the Federation will utterly collapse. At that time, we will be like deshelled turtles, helpless on the chopping block."

"Are we enough to handle this?" The adjutant was rather concerned. After all, he was not a hacker who was proficient on this front — he really had no certainty in handling everything in the virtual world.

"Don't worry. We are not the only ones who have come. There's still those top-class hackers of the military. Headquarters has even sent out some of those top-level spectres this time ..." Aggression flashed across the commander's face. "Thinking to destroy our mainframe, don't they even dare think they will live to tell the tale."

The adjutant could not help but clench his fists. As someone on the verge of breaking through the barrier of ace to advance to imperial operator, this was undoubtedly a great chance for him. He believed that if this was truly an attack by an enemy, they would certainly have top-class operators as escort. Perhaps this was why headquarters had sent a prodigy like him on the verge of a breakthrough here right at this moment.

*'Ling Xiao, I will definitely become a legendary figure surpassing you!'* Ambition flared in the adjutant's eyes for a brief instant. That god-class operator General Ling Xiao who had broken records multiple times had completely trodden other prodigies under his feet. No matter how outstanding they were, in comparison to his records, they were all not even worth a mention. But all of that was in the past now — if he could advance successfully this year, he would break Ling Xiao's record of being the youngest ever to become an imperial operator ...

At this thought, the adjutant could not help but shiver in excitement. He would definitely pull Ling Xiao down from his godly pedestal!

Among the crowd of mecha registering to board a starship was Ling Lan's party. Around them were all advanced mecha which had been modified, and there were even quite a few formidable special-class mecha. In contrast, their team appeared extremely slapdash. Qi Long and the other four of Ling Lan's original team, Li Lanfeng, and Li Shiyu were all using standard Federation mecha, while [No Mecha Unrepaired] and Ling Lan were using intermediate mecha which were one level below the others. Even though [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s mecha had obviously been modified quite a bit, no matter how well it was modified, it was still nothing before an advanced mecha.

The level difference between mecha was not something which could be bridged with modification ... Of course, this was only referring to ordinary modifications. This may not necessarily be true of a mecha which had been modified by a master-level mechanic.

That said, no one would believe that an ordinary expedition team whose advanced mecha were still just standard mecha would have intermediate mecha modified by a master-level mechanic ...

“Combat, it’s our turn.” Ling Lan saw that it was finally their turn and quickly urged Qi Long on their party comms to go up and register. As her present mecha was still an intermediate mecha, she was really rather unsuited to be the party leader.

“Got it, Boss!” Receiving his boss’s reminder, Qi Long, who had been in a constant state of excitement, finally scrambled over to register. All this had been arranged beforehand — from the moment they set off on the mission, the public leader had been Qi Long.

As Qi Long was registering, Han Jijyun finally voiced his doubts, “Boss, why won’t you let us help you redeem an advanced mecha?”

A lower mecha operator could of course pilot a more advanced mecha, but they would not be able to draw out the full power of the mecha and may even be unable to use it for long periods of time. This was because the more advanced a mecha was, the higher the demands it would place on the operator’s physical constitution and stamina. Some people have tried using advanced mecha as intermediate mecha warriors — 10 minutes later, they would be utterly drained and no longer able to continue piloting the mecha. This stark truth dispelled all thoughts of any operator thinking to take a shortcut; they all practised honestly to advance.

However, Han Jijyun and the others believed that with their boss’s capabilities, even if he piloted a mecha at a higher level, he would be able to play around with the advanced mecha like it were his own arms. Thinking back on how terrifying Ling Lan’s control skills were that year back then, after so many years, his skills could only have gotten better.

“Because, this is more convenient for my mobility. No one will pay attention to an intermediate mecha. Besides, as far as I know, boarding details must match actual ranking, otherwise the mainframe will refuse boarding,” explained Ling Lan calmly. She was too embarrassed to admit that she already had a secret weapon, although this secret weapon was not something she really wanted ...

Han Jijyun was just about to say something when he heard Qi Long yelling in the comms channel, “GO, GO, GO~” It turned out he had finished registering and was now urging them to get on the military vessel.

Seeing this, Ling Lan said, “Let’s board the ship.” That said, she was the first to follow Qi Long to walk towards the boarding entrance of the military vessel. As these were all transport ships, after entering through the entrance, they saw an extremely large empty space. Right then, there were already quite a few mecha inside. They followed the order they entered to walk over to their exclusive secured seats.

In order to ensure the stability of the mecha during transport, the hold of transport ships were all equipped with this type of mecha-specific secured seats. Once a mecha was buckled in, the mecha would not be able to move. Other than the transport ship activating the release of the secured seats, the mecha could only try to break free by breaking the seat with brute strength.

Ling Lan’s team walked over to their secured seats in an orderly manner, and then they all settled in to rest respectively. This so-called rest just meant they were sleeping in their respective cockpits. Once the ship left the spaceport, no one would be allowed to log off until they arrived at the next save point.

Fortunately, this journey was not a very long one; it only took one night. Besides, Ling Lan and the others had already made the proper preparations. All of them had requested several days’ leave from

their instructors, and their virtual login pods were also properly filled with energy replenishing fluid, which should be enough to sustain them till they arrived at the new save point.

This time, the destination the Federation had organised for the planetary reclamation activity was planet X192, which was not too far away from the Nebula Boundary. Ling Lan was aiming to use the planet X192 as their springboard, so they would have the chance to enter the stationed camp grounds of the Swift Dragon Fleet at the Nebula Boundary.

Right then, they did not know that a bunch of people from the Federation military were also planning on doing the exact same thing.

The night passed in silence. The transport fleet very quickly arrived at the Nebula Boundary and began its descent towards planet X192.

At the same time, relevant information on planet X192 was announced on the public channel of Mecha World:

Planet X192; Gravity 29.7, Strength of Magnetic Field 15e-18 tesla. Temperature: 56 1 . Normal Wind Strength level 12; Extreme Wind Strength level 19. Atmospheric Elements: Carbon Dioxide 87%, Hydrogen 3%, Chlorine 8%, Others 2% ...

“F\*ck, is there really life on this planet?” Listening to these details that were not at all suitable for human life, Qi Long asked his companions as he adjusted the settings of his mecha to accommodate for planet X192.