

## Crossing 321

### Chapter 321: Comradery?

Looking at the standard military-use advanced mecha they had obtained, the vague idea swirling in Ling Lan's mind abruptly came into focus. She quickly contacted Leopard and communicated her idea to him.

The moment Li Lanfeng heard her idea, his gaze lit up. He felt that it was an excellent plan. Even as he signalled his agreement, he could not help but be secretly proud. See, this was his friend. What a bright and intelligent rabbit!

The two of them instantly changed their mecha into the standard advanced mecha they had obtained from the ship. Only then did they operate their mecha to move to the airlock's doors and make preparations to sneak inside the mainship proper ...

Just as Ling Lan was about to instruct Little Four to observe the surroundings near the doors of the airlock, to see whether there was anyone out and about, they suddenly sensed the travel speed of the military vessel slowing down. They could also hear the faint sounds of alarms blaring from the mainship proper.

"What's going on, Little Four?" Ling Lan quickly turned to ask Little Four in the mindscape. Right now, Ling Lan was like a blind person — she was solely reliant on Little Four to obtain information on the outside world.

Little Four answered immediately, "Boss, the radar has picked up the appearance of an unidentified flying object about 10 kilometres ahead of the command mainship. The entire ship is now in emergency mode. It isn't suitable for us to act at this time."

Having heard what Little Four had to say, Ling Lan settled down to wait for a while. Meanwhile, Li Lanfeng too had figured out that something seemed to be happening inside the ship, so when Ling Lan suggested they wait, he was in full agreement, curious to see what exactly was happening ...

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At the distant base of the Swift Dragons, right after the eruption of the magnetic tsunami, an urgent notification came, requesting the Swift Dragon fleet to send a search and rescue team immediately to the surrounding districts of planet X192 to help the surviving soldiers and adventurers.

In one of the rooms in the command centre at the Swift Dragon base, a man shrouded in shadows sat on a sofa. In a hoarse voice which sounded grating to the ears, he said to another man equally obscured by shadows, "D9, do you think this notification is fishy?"

"D1, on the surface, this notification is exceedingly normal. Whenever an incident with great casualties occur, the mecha mainframe will definitely inform the closest fleet to send assistance. As far as I know, the magnetic tsunami of X191 is a natural phenomenon ..." Any natural disasters that happened in Mecha World was actually a realistic copy of natural disasters in the real world. In reality, on the fringes of the Chinese Federation in the real world, there had indeed been an eruption of a magnetic tsunami on one of the planets. It was just that it had not been as violent and destructive as the one in Mecha World.

At this point of the conversation, D9 paused, then continued in a dark tone, "That reclamation fleet should also be carrying out their mission right about now ..."

"What you're saying is, it won't be a big problem?" Within the shadows where expressions could not be seen clearly, D1 asked in return with his usual emotionless voice.

"Not quite. It's precisely because there's no problem at all that it is problematic ..." A mocking smirk appeared on D9's lips. "We're infiltrators. We cannot let down our guard. No one can tell whether the mecha mainframe has discovered something."

"Then, pretend we did not receive the notification?" D1 followed up with this question.

"Of course that won't work. At the very least we must act normal and send a search and rescue team over, otherwise the mecha mainframe will definitely become suspicious. We still need a little time before Project T can be completed," refuted D9 directly, "The magnetic tsunami was so strong ... according to the information we received, that reclamation fleet basically had no way of surviving ... Even if there are any lucky survivors, having them be under our guard will be more reassuring for us."

That said, D9 added proudly, "The Swift Dragon base is already fully under our control. No one can carry off any petty tricks under our watch. If the mecha mainframe really tries anything and sends some people over, we will definitely discover them at soonest notice."

"In that case, let's send a search and rescue team! I too do not want there to be any disruptions before Project T is completed." In response to D9's words, D1 gave this order.

On that very day, a patrol ship departed from the Swift Dragon base towards planet X192. Half a day and one night later, when there was still two-fifths of the journey left to planetary sector X192, the ship encountered the sole remaining command ship from the reclamation fleet.

The command mainship no longer had any strength to fight, so they instantly sent out a questioning signal through the public comms. The other side did not delay in responding with their identity. When the mainship found that the other ship was a rescue team from the Swift Dragon base, all of the surviving mecha operators and staff members could not stop from tearing up. Over this past half a day and one night, their minds had constantly tormented by worry — they did not know just how much longer the battered mainship they were on could hold out for, and none of them wished to end up as debris in outer space like the other ships had.

The commander of the mainship and his adjutant looked at one another, their gazes a complicated mix of excitement and nervousness, and also a sort of stoicism. Still, very quickly, both their expressions turned as joyful as the other NPC soldiers below them.

However, the adjutant was still young after all. His hand could not help but clench in nervousness — entering the Swift Dragon base meant their mission was about to officially begin.

As the mainship really had no way of guaranteeing anyone's safety, after making contact with the base, the Swift Dragon fleet's rescue team began moving the people on the mainship to their military vessel.

Meanwhile, Ling Lan and Li Lanfeng took the chance while everyone's attention was drawn to the moving process to let Little Four silently open the airlock doors and snuck into the mainship. Using the route indicators Little Four gave, they very quickly arrived at the central mecha hall.

Right then, the attention of everyone in the hall was gathered on the two launch ports in the hall. The surviving 50 to 60 mecha operators were currently lining up to exit from those two ports and move to the rescue ship. Ling Lan and Li Lanfeng quietly sauntered up to join one of the lines.

The mecha operator who was originally the last in that line was startled by the sudden appearance of two new mecha and turned to give them a curious look. He was not suspicious, however — after all, Ling Lan and Li Lanfeng were currently operating the standard advanced mecha exclusive to this mainship (the identifying logo of the ship the mecha belonged to was displayed on the mecha's chests). At most, he was only wondering why these two had been so slow. Still, this was their own personal business, so the mecha operator did not pay much mind to it.

Seeing that this mecha operator was only looking at them but not asking any questions, Ling Lan and Li Lanfeng breathed out a great silent sigh of relief. They knew their plan to infiltrate had succeeded. Very soon, they had been ejected from the mainship and were flying towards one of the launch ports of the Swift Dragon's patrol ship. Once they had safely landed in the other ship's mecha hall, under the instructions of the staff member there, they operated their mecha adeptly to enter the secured seat arranged for them. After that, they chose to remain in their mecha, silent, making no move to leave their mecha.

The mecha operators of the Swift Dragon ship did not think much about the sight, because many of the mecha operators who had been transferred over were doing the exact same thing. The experience of escaping with their lives had tired out these mecha operators, and now they were safe, their high-strung emotions eased. Thus, after entering their secured seats, many of the mecha operators had instantly fallen asleep. Only a few mecha operators with bolder nerves had the mood to climb out of their mecha to interact with the staff members or mecha operators of the Swift Dragon ship.

Ling Lan and Li Lanfeng both just seemed like another member of the sleeping group, so the staff of the Swift Dragon ship considerately left them alone. In truth, Ling Lan and Li Lanfeng were actually having an intense conversation within their mecha.

Initially, with Ling Lan's and Li Lanfeng's change in mecha, their original team comms had become unusable. But who was Little Four? He had instantly helped Ling Lan and Li Lanfeng to secretly establish a private comms channel for just the two of them.

"Who knows if Combat and the others have also gotten aboard this ship? Would they also be here in this mecha hall?" Li Lanfeng swept one look around at the mecha which all looked the same and could not help but shake his head. He really had no way of finding the other members of their team from all these similar-looking mecha.

"As long as they still live, we'll find them. There is no need to worry." On the other hand, Ling Lan was extremely composed. She had great trust in Qi Long and the others. Having participated in an expedition team before, this kind of trivial matter would not trouble them too much. Besides, this was also a test for them — without her full protection, could they survive based on their own capabilities?

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Right then, in another mecha hall of the Swift Dragon ship, Xie Yi had already struck up a good relationship with the staff members. All smiles, he rejoined his teammates and shared what news he had learned with them.

Qi Long and the other six had not remained in their mecha, because they were currently dressed in the exact same piloting suit as the Federation NPC soldiers and not their own individualistic clothes.

Fortunately enough, when the magnetic tsunami had caught up to the tail of the mainship and the explosion had broken out, with great teamwork and rapport, Qi Long and Luo Lang had grabbed hold of the special-class mecha who had abruptly rushed in and put him right in front of their team to be their shield. The other had taken the majority of the force from the magnetic tsunami, allowing them to safely tide over this crisis. (Of course, Qi Long and the others did not know that the reason they managed to survive was also because Ling Lan had blocked off a large portion of the magnetic tsunami on the outside, otherwise just one special-class mecha alone would not have been able to keep all of them alive ...)

Of course, the end of the special-class mecha was most tragic. He had been instantly destroyed by the force of the magnetic tsunami. This was still the result of the other not reacting in time, activating his defensive measures half a second late. It was this half-second delay that had caused the mecha operator inside the special-class mecha to be unable to endure the force of the magnetic tsunami, hence dying instantly.

The ruthlessness of Qi Long and Luo Lang's decisive action caused the two new members, [No Mecha Unrepaired] and Li Shiyu, to quiver involuntarily in their hearts. In particular, Li Shiyu finally realised that this team he had joined not only had a shameless and black-bellied team leader, even the team members were not very nice people ... if he had been in their shoes, he would never have been able to use an innocent person as a shield ...

Still, Li Shiyu's rational mind acknowledged the fact that Qi Long and Luo Lang's decision had been correct, because their choice had allowed everyone in their team to survive. Li Shiyu did not forget that even as they had grabbed hold of the special-class mecha, Qi Long had pushed him and [No Mecha Unrepaired] to the back of the pack, while the other three members had worked seamlessly with Qi Long and Luo Lang to shield the two of them. In other words, only after the five of them were dead would he and [No Mecha Unrepaired] have met any danger.

After the fact, Li Shiyu's emotions were extremely complicated. He was stunned and confused but also ashamed and guilty for the special-class mecha, yet overall, he was mostly moved. At that moment, he really just could not berate Qi Long and Luo Lang for their ruthless decision ... perhaps this was what comradery meant! Li Shiyu's heart throbbed powerfully, and he found that he rather liked the feeling.

Chapter 322: Anxiety!

For these reasons, Qi Long and the other six managed to survive. Even if they had been afraid, they had been thrown by the explosion right into the middle-back part of the mainship. Of course, they had been severely injured in the process. Here, the benefits of having Li Shiyu had to be mentioned — he had instantly brought out the special medical agents he had developed. Their wounds which would normally have needed one or two days to recover were all mostly healed after several minutes.

Initially, Qi Long and the others had considered going to the tail-most end to look for Boss Ling Lan and [Self-Defined Destiny], but the remnant force of the magnetic storm and the low power of their mecha made it impossible for them to get close to the tail. Just as they were feeling helpless, [No Mecha Unrepaired] discovered a secret. The pilotless mecha around them could be claimed by players as long as the damage levels of the mecha did not exceed 40%.

After discovering this secret, Qi Long's group of seven was both surprised and pleased. This discovery meant that they would be able to find a way to go to the tail end of the mainship to find Boss Lan. They looked around and found that there were ten or so mecha they could collect. Those mecha had not been damaged too badly by the magnetic turbulence. The seven of them picked the best seven mecha and changed into them. Then just as they were about to go to the tail, they heard a mecha operator who had come to check on the situation appear in the middle-back area of the starship.

The magnetic tsunami had caused significant damage to the entire mainship. Not only were all of the staff members in the tail end dead, even some of the defenceless staff members and mecha operators outside of their mecha in the central areas of the ship had been killed by the explosive force of the large explosion. It could be said that the casualties were high.

Although the control centre of the mainship believed that there were basically no survivors in the tail end, they still sent a small mecha squad to go investigate. When Qi Long's group had first sensed the appearance of the mecha squad, their first reflex was to hide. However, Han Jijun had an idea — he instructed the team to go up and greet the mecha squad.

Sure enough, when the mecha squad saw them, the other side was not at all suspicious. Instead, they almost cried out in relief and excitement. They had initially thought that all their comrades in the tail end had died. They really did not expect to find any survivors ... this made them so ecstatic that they had no mind at all to bother asking for the survivors' team numbers or any other personal information.

Just like that, Qi Long and the others were taken into the safe area of the mainship. When the staff there discovered that they were heavily bruised and injured, they were settled into healing pods for the night.

Frankly, there was a fatal flaw in Qi Long's team's cover story. Their mecha control suits were not the formal military-use control suits. Instead, they were using civilian control suits that Mecha World had produced in the fashion of those military suits, so their suits were still somewhat different from the official mecha suits used by soldiers. However, they were very clever — they tore up the most questionable spots on their control suits. Qi Long in particular had almost overdone it to the extent that he was almost naked. At the same time, they were also ruthless enough to hurt themselves on purpose, staining whatever remained of their own control suits red. Their bleeding wounds caused the rescuers to pay no attention to their control suits, placing all their attention on the group's injuries. This allowed the group to safely overcome this most difficult hurdle.

After a night of rest, they put on the military uniforms that had been specially brought over for them. As the living quarters of the soldiers had been at the tail end and so had also been blown up, all of their clothes and daily necessities were sure to be gone as well. The support staff of the mainship naturally had to think for their sakes. Not only did the staff provide them with military uniforms, they were also

each given a standard official military-use mecha control suit. This made Qi Long and the others laugh silently to themselves, glad that they were finally safe.

Of course, there was one other reason why the mainship rescue logistics team was so quick to believe that they were mecha operators of the ship itself. The ship's JMC and the other staff members of the ship who were familiar with the operations of the tail end had all been killed in the explosion, every single one of them. This had contributed to the ease with which Qi Long's group of seven had infiltrated the mainship. The staff members instinctively believed that any mecha operators who were piloting mecha of their mainship must of course be one of their own.

They truly did not believe that someone could sneak in without a trace. Therefore, no one doubted the origins of Qi Long's group. They were all just sincerely glad that their comrades in the tail end had not been completely wiped out. The fact that there were survivors was a comfort to them as well.

There was one more reason they had processed Qi Long and the others so hastily. The staff did not dare to meet the pleading and questioning eyes of Qi Long's team. After the rescue team had found Qi Long's group of seven, they had discovered that the air of the mainship was surging out at a dangerous rate. The mainship did not have enough power left to maintain the atmospheric balance of the air within the ship. In order to ensure the safety of the people in the middle and front sections of the ship, the commander had no choice but to stop the search and rescue efforts and close the airlock gate in the back half of the ship to prevent the air from continuing to leak out.

Although Qi Long's group of seven had pleaded repeatedly for the search and rescue efforts to continue, insisting that there must still be other mecha operators alive in the tail end, the staff still did not manage to enter the tail end again in the end. Time waits for no man — they needed to do their duty by the remaining people. Thus, the airlock gates had to be sealed once more and the search and rescue efforts concluded prematurely.

The hopeful expressions on the faces of Qi Long's team had made the search and rescue soldiers feel extremely guilty; they felt as if they had done wrong by their comrades in the tail end. So after putting them into recovery pods, the staff subconsciously began avoiding them. No one was willing to go verify their identity, because they were afraid that the other party would ask about the final outcome of the search and rescue effort ... just like that, Qi Long's group once again evaded another possibility of being exposed.

It had to be said that Qi Long and the others were very lucky. All of the surviving soldiers on the ship were grieving over the loss of about half of their comrades. Thus, they were exceedingly kind to the survivors, skipping over some of the typically necessary confirmation procedures. Meanwhile, when the commander received the report regarding the surviving mecha operators of the tail end, he too did not think much about it. He only gave word for the staff to take extra care of them and that was it. This was because at that time, the commander had been consumed with anxiety. How could he bring this battered mainship on its last legs to the Swift Dragon base? Who knew how much longer this ship would hold out for?

“The other party is indeed a rescue ship from the Swift Dragon base. We should be able to successfully enter the Swift Dragon base now ... I just don't know how Boss and [Self-Defined Destiny] are doing right

now. I wonder if they're safe ..." Xie Yi whispered, finding it difficult to keep his worry from showing on his brow. Who knew if Boss Lan had managed to survive that magnetic tsunami?

"Don't worry. Who do you take Boss for? Since we all managed to survive, Boss most definitely survived as well," Luo Lang whispered back, his gaze filled with steel-like conviction. Luo Lang was the one with the greatest faith in Ling Lan. In Luo Lang's eyes, his boss would never be defeated, not even by such a horrific thing like the magnetic tsunami.

Han Jijyun nodded and said, "Luo Lang is right. Boss will definitely be fine. Worrying about Boss's condition is not what we should be doing now. Rather, we need to figure out how to infiltrate the Swift Dragon base seamlessly before Boss finds us." Han Jijyun believed that the true challenge lay ahead of them. They needed to begin preparations early. "Once we settle down at the Swift Dragon base, I'm sure that there will inevitably be a registration of the survivors of the mainship. Since we do not know the information of any members of the mainship we can use, at that time, we will definitely be exposed."

"If only Boss were here. He is a hacker, so he would definitely be able to obtain the information of those mecha operators in the tail end and give us some suitable identities." A trace of regret flashed through Lin Zhong-qing's eyes. He too had thought of this problem. As the mainship had been greatly damaged, most of the common soldiers had passed away in this magnetic tsunami. The staff on the ship had been so busy cleaning things up and keeping things together that they had not had the spare energy to properly vet the survivors. However, once everything had settled, both the commander of the mainship and the leader of the Swift Dragon base would be sure to insist for proper checks to be carried out. As Han Jijyun said, their exposure was imminent.

At this point, Lin Zhong-qing could not help but smile bitterly. Once again, he found that Boss Lan was truly an omnipotent existence for them. As long as he was around, any problem would no longer be a problem, able to be solved easily.

"Speaking of hackers, I seem to have heard [Self-Defined Destiny] say before that he too is a hacker. If he were around, perhaps we could also have obtained that information ..." Xie Yi recalled what [Self-Defined Destiny] had said on the transport ship and remarked with some regret.

"That's true! How unlucky. If he were here, we would be much safer ..." said Qi Long in frustration at those words, "If I had known earlier, I would have let [Self-Defined Destiny] enter the mainship first back then."

"It's too late to say all this now. We might as well brainstorm and think about how we should deal with the situation." Li Shiyu interrupted Qi Long's tangent and reminded everyone to stop thinking about useless things.

Han Jijyun nodded and said, "Dux Li is right. The two hackers of our team are not here, so it's pointless to think about ways to get the information via hacker abilities. Let's think of some other way."

The group began to think hard, but unfortunately they could not come up with a good method. Then, Xie Yi saw [No Mecha Unrepaired] staring blankly at a corner. The other was still a second year student in the military academy now due to being held back two years. He was Chang Xinyuan who had been forced into dire straits because he had caught the eye of the Thunder King.

Xie Yi followed his line of sight but saw nothing there except a spider spinning a web ... he stared dubiously at [No Mecha Unrepaired] a.k.a. Chang Xinyuan and wondered — had the other thought of something?

Chang Xinyuan seemed to feel the heat of Xie Yi's gaze, and he slowly came back to himself. He smiled embarrassedly and asked, "Xie Yi, you ... what's up?"

"You were staring off into space. Have you thought of something?" asked Xie Yi curiously.

Chang Xinyuan rubbed his head in embarrassment. "I just never expected that [Lingtian First-String] was actually that Boss Lan who defeated the Leiting Mecha Clan. And it's even more unexpected that I would join your battle clan ... this makes me feel as if I am dreaming ..."

Xie Yi was speechless. When they had first gotten out of their mecha, Chang Xinyuan's expression had been calm and composed. Xie Yi had thought the other had not recognised them and so they had not paid any mind to it. Unexpectedly, Chang Xinyuan knew all about their backgrounds but was only showing signs of it now. Had he just pretended too well ... or was his reflex arc just abnormally slow for him to only react now?

Chang Xinyuan's words made the other people look at each other speechlessly as well. It had already been a full night since then! Friend, for you to exclaim about it now — isn't it a little too late?

The penetrating gazes of the other six made [No Mecha Unrepaired] rather flustered. He once again rubbed his head and said, "Actually, I was just thinking about those words Boss Lan had said to us when we had departed." Unconsciously, Chang Xinyuan had adopted the address of Boss Lan from Qi Long and the others.

Chapter 323: Clearing a Hurdle!

"What are you saying?" Qi Long rubbed his face roughly, suddenly finding that for someone with an impetuous nature like him, dealing with someone with such a slow reflex arc like [No Mecha Unrepaired] was really a kind of torture.

"Boss Lan said that, if by any chance we got split up, we should use pre-arranged aliases to find one another ..." replied Chang Xinyuan.

"So you're saying that Boss Lan will use an alias? Impossible. If Boss Lan really managed to infiltrate the Swift Dragon base, he would definitely use an identity of one of the fallen soldiers, otherwise the other side will see through him." Qi Long was the first to express disbelief. An alias would be easily exposed once the other side checked their databases.

"But you all said that Boss Lan is a powerful hacker. Couldn't he have changed the database?" Chang Xinyuan did not know much about hackers, so he just shared what he believed.

"How could a database be so easily changed?" Qi Long could not help but burst out into snickers. Even the strongest hacker would never dare to do any hanky-panky in the mainframe.

"No, perhaps [No Mecha Unrepaired] is right ..." said Han Jijyun, interrupting Qi Long.



Han Jijyun's words instantly shut Qi Long up. When it came to his sworn brother's judgment, Qi Long had full faith. Therefore, he could only rub his nose helplessly and say nothing more.

"Boss Lan's hacking skills are very formidable. I believe that anyone who knows about Boss Lan's ability knows this." Han Jijyun's words received emphatic nods from Qi Long and the other three of Ling Lan's original team. In contrast to Li Shiyu and Chang Xinyuan who only knew Ling Lan for a short time, the four of them who had grown up beside Ling Lan were well aware of Ling Lan's exploits in terms of hacking.

"Thus, who can say that Boss Lan really can't change the database of the command mainship?" At this point, Han Jijyun's eyes were shining, "I believe that Boss Lan would have already predicted our current circumstances. He will definitely add the aliases we agreed to in advance into the database, along with all the other relevant info."

"Once we're at the Swift Dragon base, if someone actually comes to check our identity, we just need to report the fake identity that has been arranged for us," Han Jijyun stated his decision.

"What if team leader Ling did not manage to change it in time ...?" Li Shiyu, who was not very clear on Ling Lan's abilities, was still rather worried. He felt it was somewhat inappropriate to use this kind of gambling-like method.

"Since there is the possibility of exposure no matter what we do, we might as well take the gamble. I believe in Boss Lan," replied Han Jijyun with determination.

His words drew the agreement of Qi Long and the other three original members. Seeing the determination in their eyes, Li Shiyu could only tuck away his doubts, sigh, and consent. Chang Xinyuan had no objections. As a mechanic who was focused on researching and modifying mecha, as long as the team has made a final decision, he would not have any opposing opinions.

Just like that, another day and half a night later, at 3 o'clock in the morning, the patrol ship safely arrived at the Swift Dragon base.

The Swift Dragon base, which had long been informed, systematically placed all the personnel from the mainship in a large battalion. Qi Long and the others entered the base calmly under the direction of the military personnel of the Swift Dragon Base.

They only took a few casual glances at the situation around them and then they stopped looking around. But those few glances were enough to shock them, because there was an on-duty soldier every one hundred steps within the Swift Dragon base. It looked like the Swift Dragon base was extremely strict in terms of manning the defences.

This was extremely rare among the Federation forces that were highly reliant on technology. It should be known that military bases generally relied on hidden monitors with three hundred and sixty degrees of coverage as the main means of monitoring, and rarely employed so much manpower for defence.

Qi Long and the others appeared unchanged on the surface, but they already had their guards up mentally. It would definitely not be easy to find their boss and complete the final mission under such strict defence. They were well aware that under the close supervision of these people, there were still countless invisible electronic monitoring devices watching them. If they showed any little flaw, they

would be uncovered by the surveillance personnel of the Swift Dragon base, and the consequences would be unthinkable.

Due to the impromptu arrangement, the base was unable to provide excellent accommodation for the survivors of the mainship. Regardless of military rank, all of the survivors were assigned ten to a room. Of course, for those top-ranking officers like the commander of the mainship, the conditions were not as bad.

Qi Long's group of seven was assigned along with three other strangers to a room to rest. They had only rested for a few hours, not fully recovered yet, when they were woken up by a knock on the door. It turned out that the Swift Dragon base's support staff were already here to register their information.

Qi Long and the others shared a look. Han Jijyun signalled for them to continue faking sleep. One of the other three in the room opened the door, muttering angrily, and Han Jijyun perked his ears to listen carefully to their conversation.

Hearing that it was someone here to register their information, the attitude of the person who opened the door was tempered. He stated his information — the logistics head of the Leiguang mecha squad of the Jinglong mainship from the Dragon River transport fleet, Yang Yilong!

After the support staff of the Swift Dragon base keyed in his information, he smiled and said with a salute, "Hello, Second Lieutenant Yang, I'm really sorry for disturbing your rest."

Only then did Han Jijyun open his eyes to peek at the other's epaulette. It turned out the other was just a corporal — no wonder his attitude became so respectful. The status of a support soldier on a base was obviously incomparable to the status of a support staff on a military ship. This was also why all soldiers yearned to serve on a ship, because the starting point of those who obtained a position on a ship was much better than those serving on the ground.

At this time, the other people in the room had all been awakened as well. They rubbed at their eyes, yawning. Seeing this, the support staff walked over the closest bed from the door. Chang Xinyuan was the one lying there and he was currently rubbing his eyes. Seeing the staff approach him, Chang Xinyuan's palms could not help but sweat, and the hand rubbing at his eyes faltered for a moment.

Noticing this, Han Jijyun, who was lying one bed behind Chang Xinyuan, quickly yawned and said, "Why don't you register me first? The quicker I'm done, the quicker I can rest."

The support staff of the Swift Dragon base quickly stepped forward in response to approach Han Jijyun.

"I'm Ji Yinglong, mecha member #5 of the Cheetah mecha squad of the Jinglong mainship from the Dragon River transport fleet," Han Jijyun calmly stated the alias they had set up. The reason he had pretended to be asleep at first was so that one of the other three strangers would register first. That way, he would be able to know the name of that mainship. Though this was not any great secret among the official soldiers of the mainship, as outsiders, they really did not know that information. Besides, he also wanted to know what the standard format of responding was.

With Yang Yilong's answer as a template, Han Jijyun knew how he was supposed to answer.

Han Jijyun's reply caused Yang Yilong from the same ship to do a double take. He stared in surprise at Han Jijyun, but out of propriety, he did not speak up to question the other. He too could not be certain whether his own mainship had such a mecha battle clan with such an unfamiliar sounding name.

After obtaining Han Jijyun's response, the support staff of the Swift Dragon base entered the information into the query system of the base. Then, he saluted and said, "First Lieutenant Ji, hello."

Han Jijyun merely saluted back calmly, but he was mentally shouting 'YES' in his heart. As expected, Boss Lan had modified the database. Otherwise, the other would not have responded this way. With that, he was even more certain that Boss Lan had survived the magnetic tsunami and had safely made his way to the Swift Dragon base.

Seeing Han Jijyun pass through successfully, the others' hearts settled. Moreover, Han Jijyun's answer also showed them what they should say.

Li Shiyu and Chang Xinyuan saw that Han Jijyun really managed to pass through the registration check and could not help but be greatly astonished. They now had a brand new understanding of Ling Lan's hacker abilities.

Chang Xinyuan had originally already been extremely admiring of Ling Lan's mecha control skills. Now, he was even more awed by Ling Lan's hacker abilities. He, who had originally held out very little hope for the outcome of this mission, now began to have some confidence. Perhaps they would really be able to complete this SSS-level mission no one else had ever accomplished before throughout history ... At this thought, Chang Xinyuan's heart pounded, but he very soon pushed down this notion.

Chang Xinyuan smiled wryly to himself. Hanging out with Qi Long and these other youths who were like young calves unafraid of tigers, he had unconsciously begun to lose his rationality, actually beginning to also have such unrealistic thoughts ... but, what if, really, by any chance, they really ... Chang Xinyuan took in a deep breath and firmly pushed all these distracting thoughts to the back of his mind. He knew very well that their mission had just begun — the hardest parts were still yet to come.

Meanwhile, this was the first time Li Shiyu was seeing Ling Lan in a positive light. That initially thick-skinned and shameless Ling Lan in his mind, who loved to manipulate others with petty tricks, began to have a positive image. Sure enough, to become an acknowledged boss, he must have his unique charm and capabilities ...

After checking the information of everyone in the room and determining that there was no problem, the Swift Dragon support staff left the room. At this time, Yang Yilong loudly asked Qi Long, "Captain Luo (Qi Long's alias was Luo Ying), who'd expect that you're actually member #2 of the Cheetah mecha team. That's the position of the team ace, you know!"

Typically, #1 was the team leader, #2 was the main ace of the team, #3 was the secondary ace, #4 was a primary fighter, while #5 and beyond were indefinite. Those numbers could be support and logistics members, or they could also be primary fighters. Although Yang Yilong felt that the name of the Cheetah mecha team sounded very unfamiliar, he still expressed his admiration for Qi Long's position.

Qi Long scratched his head in embarrassment and said with a smile, "I'm no ace, our team leader is ..."

His earnest face and this smile made him appear somewhat dopey, but gave others a feeling of extreme sincerity and trustworthiness. Yang Yilong could not help but find himself liking Qi Long.

Yang Yilong exchanged a few more words with Qi Long. When he heard that they still did not know whether their team leader and their #7 member was dead or alive, he was instantly filled with pity. Seeing this, Qi Long angrily said that he believed that his team leader still lived. This heartfelt display of Qi Long's absolute trust made Yang Yilong admire Qi Long even more. That little bit of doubt initially still present in his heart vanished without a trace at this performance of Qi Long's.

When Han Jijyun saw this, he let out a quiet sigh of relief. When he had responded earlier, he had already been worried that the unfamiliar name of the mecha team would arouse suspicion in the minds of the mainship's members. Luckily, Qi Long's appearance was very handy for deceiving others. At the very least, judging from Yang Yilong's present expression, he had not become suspicious of them.

Chapter 324: The Truth!

At this time, in another room, Ling Lan and Li Lanfeng who had already finished registering were currently laid out on their beds, resting.

Not too long after, Ling Lan received a text message. She flicked open her communicator to look and was instantly immensely excited. In the very next second, she had extremely impolitely kicked at Li Lanfeng on the upper bunk.

Feeling the force coming from his mattress, Li Lanfeng sat up in puzzlement. Before he could ask Ling Lan on the bunk below what had happened, Ling Lan said, "There's news of #2 and the others. Clean up quickly and let's go look for them."

Li Lanfeng's eyes lit up. He put on a jacket and then leapt off the bed to follow Ling Lan heading towards where Qi Long was staying.

The reason Ling Lan received this news so quickly was not because of Little Four's abilities. Of course, if Qi Long and the others' information were to be registered, Little Four, who was already lurking in the network of the Swift Dragon base, would definitely be able to obtain the news at soonest notice. However, in order to let everything seem natural and above-board, when she had registered herself, Ling Lan had generously bribed the support staff of the Swift Dragon base. Of course, she had also let Li Lanfeng utilise that natural ability of his to gain favour with others and intensify the other side's good impression of them, thus successfully securing the other's agreement to help them.

In reality, right when Qi Long and the others' information had been registered, Ling Lan had already been notified by Little Four. However, Ling Lan had kept calm and continued to lay on her bed as if she knew nothing. Only when she received the notification from that support staff did she pretend to be excited and take action.

Of course, the other was not breaking any rules of the base by helping them. After all, Ling Lan and Li Lanfeng were just trying to find their comrades who had gotten split up from them — it's not like they were trying to inquire about the secrets of the base. Moreover, right now within the Swift Dragon base, Ling Lan was not the only person who was doing this. Many other soldiers who had been separated from

their original teammates for various reasons had similarly put forward such requests. Ling Lan had only included an additional minor reward when she had made her request.

This reward was very simple — it was just a bottle of high proof liquor Ling Lan had on her for first-aid purposes. Under Little Four's assistance, Ling Lan had found out that this person's hobby was to drink.

As for why Ling Lan would have such high proof liquor on her ... ahem, ahem, this was actually a remnant habit Ling Lan had brought over from her last life lying on her sickbed. Having gotten used to the idea that alcohol should be used on wounds to sterilize them, she really could not adapt to this world where no prep work was done, with healing agents being directly sprayed or applied onto open wounds and leaving it at that.

Mentally, Ling Lan had always had some fear with regards to this sort of treatment method. What if, by any chance, there was tetanus or something similar about? Wasn't this just asking for trouble? Therefore, she habitually carried several bottles of high-proof liquor with her in her backpack. If she was injured accidentally, she would open one of the bottles to use the alcohol in it to disinfect the wound before spraying healing agents on it ...

With regards to this habit of Ling Lan's, although Qi Long and the others were puzzled by it, they would never question her. They only speculated secretly whether this was because their boss liked alcohol but was forbidden by his parents to drink ... could this be why he had sought out such an unreasonable reason?

It could only be said that some things were already ingrained habits of Ling Lan's. It was impossible for her to change them in a short period of time. Thus, without her knowledge, Ling Lan had become someone who liked to drink in her team members' eyes 1 .

Back when Ling Lan had brought out the liquor and handed it over as an incentive for the support staff, even Li Lanfeng could not help but sweatdrop silently and wonder if Ling Lan was an alcohol-loving rabbit — why else would he think of using alcohol as a bribe?

Still, for whatever reason, overall, Ling Lan's reward had pleased that support staff greatly. Consequently, the other was extremely cooperative, almost notifying them at first notice. This led Li Lanfeng to once again be in awe — the seemingly random and reckless actions of the rabbit always seemed to end up being extremely effective.

The two of them very quickly found the resting spot of Qi Long and the others and knocked on the door.

The one who opened the door was again Yang Yilong — who asked him to be the one sleeping on the bed closest to the door? Opening the door, he saw two strangers, so he asked, "Who are you looking for?"

"Is Luo Ying and company here?" asked Ling Lan coldly. That icy gaze of hers made Yang Yilong feel a chill invade his heart — he quickly ducked back into the room and shouted, "Captain Luo, someone's looking for you."

Hearing this, Qi Long's eyes lit up and he leapt off his top bunk to rush over with wide steps to the door. Seeing his boss's familiar face, he was instantly overwhelmed with emotion, "Leader, you've finally come!"

Qi Long's cry of leader made the other members inside the room leap up in excitement, all of them running over as well.

Yang Yilong was astonished at the sight, but thinking of the impression that person at the doorway had given him, he understood why these mecha team members would be so worked up. Only someone like that could gain the allegiance of proud mecha warriors. With just one glance, Yang Yilong could tell that that team leader was most definitely a formidable warrior. This was because he had felt a similar pressure from the team leader of the Leiguang Battle Clan.

Seeing his other two companions peeking out from their beds, nonverbally asking who the visitor was, Yang Yilong silently indicated for them to remain silent and continue to sleep and not disturb the group.

A mecha team leader was an existence high, high above them mecha support staff — he did not want to incur the displeasure of that team leader.

Qi Long and the others hugged Ling Lan excitedly in succession, and only then did they see the familiar smiling face standing by Ling Lan's side. Other than [No Mecha Unrepaired], all the others could not help but be taken aback, especially Li Shiyu, whose face actually stiffened noticeably for a brief moment.

Seeing this, Li Lanfeng smiled wryly and said, "#8, for previously planning to try and snatch your position in the team from you out of envy, I'm sorry. The crisis this time has let me understand that status, levels, and whatever are all not important. What's most important is my companions. I hope you can forgive me."

Li Shiyu only huffed at those words and turned his head aside without speaking. He knew his own expression had been slightly off — if some surveillance device had just happened to record it, a flaw might have already been discovered. Li Lanfeng was undoubtedly trying to help him hide his slip in composure, but he was just unused to acting and really did not know how to handle the situation.

Seeing this, Xie Yi tugged on Li Shiyu's arm and said, "All of us being able to survive is already a blessing. Why bother with things of the past? Don't you agree, #8?"

Li Shiyu saw everyone looking at him with smiles on their faces and could only reply grudgingly, "Forget it. Let's not talk about past matters anymore."

Only then did Li Lanfeng sigh in relief. He stepped forward to pull Li Shiyu into a strong hug and said, "Thank you, brother, for your tolerance and understanding ..." Only Li Lanfeng knew that he was not just putting on an act when he said this ... he truly hoped that, one day in the future, Li Shiyu could say these same words back to him. However, Li Lanfeng also knew that this was probably an impossible dream.

Seeing this, Ling Lan clapped her hands together forcefully and said, "It's great that you two have buried the hatchet. In future, we must be united. We shouldn't fight amongst ourselves anymore." Ling Lan's words marked the end of the matter, and the group happily welcomed Ling Lan and Li Lanfeng into their room.

Meanwhile, Li Lanfeng latched onto Li Shiyu and the two of them moved to sit on Li Shiyu's bed, where they began whispering to one another. It looked like they had truly buried the hatchet.

Only Li Lanfeng himself knew that despite his seeming composure, he was actually greatly shocked. When he had first seen Li Shiyu, as good as he was at deception, he had almost slipped up and reacted.

That bloody Ling Lan had not given him a heads up that his family's Li Shiyu had also joined the battle clan.

Seeing Li Shiyu's face filled with innocence, Li Lanfeng could not help but sigh internally. What in the world did their Li family owe Ling Lan? Not only had he joined, even Li Shiyu who should not have been able to join had joined ... still, he could not help but become smug deep inside. As expected of his rabbit — able to do what others could not.

If he had the rabbit's help in the future, would he too be able to escape his so-called fate ...? Li Lanfeng's gaze flickered but very quickly settled as he tossed aside this idiotic notion of his. He absolutely could not harm the rabbit. To go against the heavens and change his fate, a terrible price would have to be paid. Grandfather Zhuge had already stated this very clearly from the start. And this price, could very well be his life.

Although Li Lanfeng was physically speaking with Li Shiyu, his mind was distracted in recalling when he and Ling Lan had first seen each other's true faces in this virtual world not too long ago.

When they had arrived at the Swift Dragon base, Ling Lan and Li Lanfeng naturally had to leave their mecha. Of course, they had it much easier than Qi Long and the others because in the virtual world, both Ling Lan and Li Lanfeng were miraculous beings. Because she had Little Four, Ling Lan could easily change her original civilian mecha suit into an official military mecha suit. Meanwhile, Li Lanfeng was a spectre, and though he could not directly change the fixed settings of the virtual world, he could apply a disguise to himself. Thus, when the two had come out from their mecha, their appearance was flawless, no different at all from the other mecha operators.

However, when Ling Lan and Li Lanfeng had met face-to-face for the first time after getting out from their mecha, Li Lanfeng had almost stumbled and revealed his true feelings. If not for the fact that his spectre abilities also hid his expression, his flabbergasted expression would certainly have aroused suspicion in those around him.

In contrast, Ling Lan's ice mask had long been formed, so it did not collapse even when she had seen Li Lanfeng.

"Boss ...!" Li Lanfeng bit back on the 'Lan' that had been about to come out, stopping his outburst at only 'boss', making it seem like he was just greeting his own team leader.

"#9, keep up." Ling Lan's glacial gaze had contained a hidden warning. Although others may not be able to see Li Lanfeng's true expression, perhaps because she was way too familiar with the leopard, Ling Lan had still sensed Li Lanfeng's loss of composure.

This gaze made Li Lanfeng's initially shocked and restless heart cool down instantly. He bowed his head and cuffed his own forehead lightly, chiding himself for his slip. They had both not known about the other, but Ling Lan had still been able to keep calm. In terms of mentality, he had completely lost to the rabbit who was younger than him by three years. This made him feel somewhat embarrassed.

Right then, Li Lanfeng was not at all surprised at why Ling Lan could have logged onto Mecha World at just 10 years old back then. As someone who was able to create a similar disguise as him now, Ling Lan was undoubtedly a spectre just like him. And for spectres in the virtual world, all those so-called restrictions and limits were all inapplicable. None of it could prevent them from moving about as they

wished. Thus, for Ling Lan to be able to enter Mecha World at just 10 years old was completely believable.

That said, Li Lanfeng could not help but sigh to himself. At 10 years old, Ling Lan's spectre abilities had actually been strong enough that he had not noticed a thing. No wonder they had had such affinity back then — even if he had entered the mecha training hall first, the rabbit had still always been able to come unerringly to the training hall he had chosen. Now, thinking back, Ling Lan must have used his own spectre abilities to find where he was.

Was this proof that the rabbit had held him with just as much esteem as he had back then? Which was why the other had used spectre abilities to look for his position and stage a coincidental meeting?

Li Lanfeng felt a surge of warmth in his heart. It looked like his friendship had not been one-sided back then. If he had only told Ling Lan bravely about his real identity back then, perhaps they would be bosom friends now and he would not be ranked behind the other companions of the rabbit.

Right then, a trace of regret rose up uncontrollably in Li Lanfeng's heart. However, it was quickly throttled by him, because he did not think it was too late to change things.

In this manner, although Li Lanfeng's heart had struggled a little, he still accepted Ling Lan. After all, Ling Lan was younger than him by 3 years, while the rabbit had always been a formidable existence in his heart, a strong person he admired. As such, it was exceedingly normal for him to flounder a little to reconcile the difference between the two impressions. Still, these were all minor blips. Li Lanfeng would never bear to give up the rabbit he had missed for so long and had spent 7 years to find.

Meanwhile, when Ling Lan found out the true identity of the leopard, her first thought was — sure enough, the leopard was very dangerous. Her second thought was — the leopard was truly not a good person!

Still, Ling Lan did not mind. As long as the leopard treated her with sincerity and did not harm her companions, she would not care what terrible things the leopard would do in the future. She would still be willing to save a spot for the leopard in her battle clan.

Of course, at present, this was all the weight Li Lanfeng had in Ling Lan's heart. In contrast, if Qi Long and the others planned to do something bad, Ling Lan would definitely roll up her sleeves and pitch in to come up with strategies to help them.

Fine, our queen Ling Lan indeed did not have any so-called true sense of justice in her. She only wanted to take good care of these little followers who trusted her and were willing to follow her, as well as cultivate them to become strong people capable of holding their own in their respective fields.

Chapter 325: The Mantis Stalking the Cicada!

The survivors of the mainship obtained the chance to rest at the Swift Dragon base. Given that the Jinglong mainship had no way to travel long distances, they could only wait for the Federation army to send a new military vessel to pick them up.

After resting peacefully for three days and two nights, when the new mainship members heard that a new military vessel was about to arrive for them in two days, they were ecstatic. Even though they had



been treated pretty well overall in the Swift Dragon base, they had still felt significantly restrained. The mainship members had been restricted to a small living area; for many other places on the base, they simply could not even get close. This made the fleet soldiers who were accustomed to being able to freely move around to feel extremely inconvenienced.

On this night, in a highly-defended area within the Swift Dragon base, several figures appeared silently not too far from the entrance. They lurked at the blind spot in the distance ...

“You’re sure this is the spot?” Someone who appeared to be the commanding officer gestured as he asked the person beside him.

This group of people were wearing advanced induction combat clothing of the Federation military, which could buffer the human body from the outside air and perfectly camouflage the soldiers according to their surrounding environment. Once the soldiers laid down and stopped moving, it would be nigh impossible for even the most advanced radar detectors, thermal monitors, and the human eye to discover them.

The only reason we say ‘nigh’ is because there is nothing which can be guaranteed to be foolproof — there would always be the possibility of what if.

“Only this spot is most closely defended.” The person beside the apparent commander returned a confident hand gesture.

“Have all the surveillance devices been blocked?” The commander turned to look towards another side, his gaze indicating that he wanted to confirm whether his men had completed the most critical step.

There were actually three people on his other side. One of them, who seemed to be their head, saw the question in the commander’s eyes and nodded, signalling that it had been done.

It could be seen from their faces that it had not been easy to complete this step. Other than the one who had nodded, whose condition still seemed fine, the other two people had faint tracks of sweat on their foreheads and their faces were extremely grim. It looked like the two of them had already put forth all their energy to completely block off all the surveillance equipment and create false images.

“How long can it last?” After seeing the other’s response, the commander then asked in a low voice.

“At most for only one hour and a quarter more. If possible, please try to come out within an hour,” said the head grimly. He had not expected the defences of the Swift Dragon base to be so tight — in particular, there was an abnormal number of all kinds of advanced surveillance equipment. This had exceeded their estimation. If they had known earlier, they would have brought along the other two members of their team as well.

“One hour, is it? There should be enough time.” The commander mused a little and felt that it was not a huge problem. Honestly, even if the problem was huge, he still had to go inside and investigate. Hadn’t they already spent so much effort all for the sake of finding out what the hell was happening in the Swift Dragon base?

“Hollow Ground, I’ll leave this to you,” said the commander decisively to one of the others. His attitude was obviously much gentler than before with the others. In the virtual world, he truly did not dare to offend this Hollow Ground.

This man was outwardly different from others. His entire figure was enveloped in shadow, while his face was a complete fog of grey, his facial features forever indistinct. This was the appearance spectres held in the virtual world. They would never reveal their true face because as spectres, everyone who was an enemy would be out to kill them. This was because almost two-thirds of one's life was spent in the virtual world in this present world, and spectres were the terrifying group of people who were the only ones to hold the ability to decide true life and death in the virtual world.

Mind you, even the mainframes of the various great empires that maintained the entire virtual world were incapable of doing this.

Therefore, all the nations both loved and hated spectres — they wished to control the spectres in their borders, while they were extremely worried and jealous about the spectres of other nations. Besides spectres, equally feared by the enemy nations were those prodigiously gifted aberrant geniuses. These people, as long as their real identity was found out, if they were opponents, they would be prioritised for assassination, just like how Ling Lan had been attacked back when she had been younger ...

“Don't worry, no one can hurt them while I'm around.” Hollow Ground's reply was brimming with confidence in himself. As one of the top elites in the central military spectre department, he had this confidence as well as his personal pride.

The commander frowned at those words. He knew spectres were, as a group, all strange and abnormal people. Known as death gods in the virtual world, they always had a sense of superiority as they looked down with contempt on the masses. However, since they were all Federation soldiers here, the commander did not take it to heart. He waved a hand at the men behind him, and two figures dashed out, using various areas of cover to hide themselves as they silently snuck over to an area not too far from the entrance.

At the entrance were two sentry soldiers facing outwards. Their eyes were alertly scanning everything before them — the two men who had snuck over just happened to position themselves in those sentries' blind spots, thus avoiding detection.

When they were only about ten meters away from the sentries, the two lurking men pulled out their weapons, which appeared similar to pistols, and aimed them at the two men on guard. Aware versus unaware — two muffled shots rang out as a cold light flashed at the muzzle of each pistol, and the two men on duty were hit accurately.

The two sentries had no chance to react at all, instantly falling over. It turned out that the men who had snuck over were using the highest level Federation silent tranquillizer gun. Even a relatively stronger C-class demonbeast in this universe would topple over from the anaesthetic in three seconds after being shot by this gun, not to mention these on-duty soldiers who were completely incomparable to a C-class demonbeast. As long as their skin had been scratched, they would be instantly down for the count.

Seeing that they had succeeded, the two men silently dashed over to the opponents' sides and held them up, and then swiftly gripped their heads and twisted forcefully. There was a crack, and the necks of those sentries were broken with no fuss at all. The two men then carefully laid their two victims down on the ground, and without making any noise, they turned their head to signal behind them with a wave.

The commander nodded at Hollow Ground and the other two men with him, then led the others to move stealthily over. Meanwhile, the one who had answered the commander earlier, the head of the three men, followed the commander as well.

To enter, they had to go through an electronic door. This had to be cracked by a hacker, which was why the head had followed. That person's skill level was very high; he only took a few seconds to crack the electronic door. The door opened silently — the inside was extremely dark, but these people all had night vision goggles so their eyesight was not affected much by it.

A warehouse came into sight. Inside it were stacks of military supplies. It looked like the other countless warehouses on the base, extremely normal. However, these people would not be discouraged just because of this surface appearance. They had specifically chosen this place because neither hackers nor spectres could see this area clearly, unlike other places where things could be taken in with one glance.

The commander made a hand gesture beckoning his men in and they all entered in succession. Everyone began to search the warehouse, hoping to find anything suspicious.

About five minutes later, one of their members suddenly waved to the others. It looked like he had found something. The commander immediately led the hacker with them over to the man and began to carefully examine what the other had discovered.

The hacker touched the spot, closed his eyes, and began to examine it with his senses. Very soon, he opened his eyes and nodded to the commander, confirming that this was the right spot.

The commander waved his hand and everyone took cover, hiding in a circle around the hacker. Seeing that everyone had taken cover, the hacker took three brisk steps back, took in a deep breath, and closed his eyes as his hands made various different gestures. He murmured, and then a soft click could be heard — the ground silently opened up, exposing a dark hole only capable of letting one person through at a time.

The commander looked at the hacker, and the hacker shook his head firmly, indicating that there was no perceptible movement below. Only then did the commander signal for his subordinates to scout the way.

After the first man went down the hole, the hacker's face became serious. Three minutes later, he nodded to the commander. This was to tell him that there was no problem below.

The commander motioned for everyone to go down. Once the last person went down, the ground once again returned to normal. It was as if the black hole did not exist, while the electronic door they had initially entered through closed again.

In the meantime, of the three men left at the doorway, two of them had simulated the uniforms of those officers on duty and taken up the sentries' spots at the door. It was just as if nothing major had happened here. And as the one protecting this area, Hollow Ground suddenly merged with the darkness, as if he had never been there at all.

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Right then, in a secret room in the control centre of the Swift Dragon base, eight black-robed people had their eyes closed. D1 and D9 who had appeared at the start were among them, while the remaining six people appeared almost no different from them.

“These tiny ants finally could not resist taking action.” D9 suddenly opened his eyes and smiled sinisterly. He cracked his fingers, rather eager to indulge in a grand fight. After waiting for two days, this group of investigators sent by the Federation mainframe had finally shown themselves.

In fact, the moment the command mainship had arrived at the Swift Dragon base, they had already been monitoring everyone from that ship and set aside a few key suspects. For this purpose, they had not hesitated to transfer several top-class spectres over from their own country. They had to be sure they could keep these people here.

They definitely could not allow the Federation to reclaim this sole foothold in the Federation which had taken them so much trouble to obtain. Moreover, their Project T was at its most critical period now — they could not afford the slightest bit of carelessness.

As long as Project T succeeded, the Chinese Federation would descend into chaos, and they would then be able to take advantage to take over the most central and resource-rich supreme nation in their galaxy. In order to achieve this objective, their empire had spent countless generations worth of sweat and blood to only complete the early stage preparations of Project T ...

“Who’d have expected the other side to send so many people too. Tsk tsk tsk, three top hackers plus a top-class spectre ... we’ve managed to bait some big fish here.” D1 was looking at those people sneaking up to that basement room where they had set up a trap. Right then, those people were slowly approaching — although they were extremely cautious, they had no idea that their every move was already being captured by comprehensive surveillance.

“Keep a close eye on those other suspects.” Seeing everyone becoming excited, D1 could not help but warn coldly. He did not wish for them to succeed here only to result in their most essential secret base being discovered, thus causing them to fall short of success at this final stage.

Chapter 326: The Oriole Comes From Behind!

“Rest assured. D1, D2, and D3 are stationed there. If anything happens, they will inform us,” a black-robed person by D1’s side calmly replied, “Moreover, two of our empire’s top spectres are there looking out. Even if someone really reaches that area, the spectres can also eliminate them directly.”

“We’ve already fished out the biggest fish, and I’m sure the others don’t have the ability to get there,” another black-robed man added.

“Yes, D1, don’t worry too much. You had better think about how we can handle these big fish instead. Say, it’s been a long time since we hunted and killed any spectres of the Chinese Federation,” said another black-robed man with a dark smile.

“D10 speaks truly. D1, let’s show them some of our methods. Together, we can definitely toy with those few hackers until their heads spin.” A black-robed man began to cackle coldly in a corner. He was very interested in the prospect of messing with those top-class hackers of the Chinese Federation.

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Meanwhile on the other side, Qi Long and the others, who had already fallen asleep, suddenly felt their communicators begin to vibrate. They leapt up and quickly put on their pre-prepared night combat clothing. Not long after, they could see the doors of their living quarters swing open automatically. Ling Lan and Li Lanfeng were standing outside the door, fully armed.

“Boss, we are ready,” said Qi Long in a low voice.

“They wouldn’t wake up suddenly, right?” [No Mecha Unrepaired], a.k.a. Chang Xinyuan, pointed at the three NPC soldiers sleeping soundly inside the room and asked worriedly.

“No, I’ve already arranged it so that no one in this room will wake up until dawn. Even if they wake up, they will still think you all are sleeping in the room.” Seeing Chang Xinyuan’s concern, Ling Lan patiently explained. With the heaven-defying god of the virtual world Little Four around, Ling Lan truly wasn’t at all worried that these NPCs would discover any flaws.

Ling Lan carefully scanned her team members and then said softly, “The operation this time is very dangerous and there may even be a risk to your life. It’s not too late to back out now.” Li Shiyu and Chang Xinyuan were members who had joined the clan partway through after all — Ling Lan did not want to force them to brave danger against their will with the rest of her team.

When she mentioned the risk to their lives, everyone was startled, but Qi Long and the others of the original team quickly regained their composure. They had been braving life and death with Ling Lan since they were small, so they were not at all afraid of this. In contrast, a trace of confusion crossed Li Shiyu’s and Chang Xinyuan’s eyes. They did not know what Ling Lan meant when she spoke of this risk to their lives, because in the virtual world, even if they died, they would not really die. At most, their current avatar would just have to start anew and some of their time would be wasted.

Only Li Lanfeng’s countenance shifted subtly at these words. He had thought of something, and the gaze he directed at Ling Lan grew even more shadowed and firm.

Everyone was silent. Although Li Shiyu was obsessed with military medical research, as intelligent as he was, he knew that these words of Ling Lan had actually been directed at him and Chang Xinyuan. Thus, he replied firmly, “Since I have decided to join the Lingtian Battle Clan, that means I am willing to brave life and death together with the Lingtian Battle Clan, both now and in the future.”

This response of Li Shiyu’s had a double meaning — Ling Lan raised a brow in astonishment, pleasant surprise flashing through her eyes. The other implication of Li Shiyu’s words was that, even in the real world, he would still make the same choice.

Chang Xinyuan nodded fiercely at Li Shiyu’s response, indicating that he too felt the same way. Those who liked to tinker with mechanical research did not have such convoluted ways of thinking — he was not aware of the double meaning of Li Shiyu’s words. He only felt that, since he had already come to do this mission, of course he would follow it through till the end. Besides, he also was not someone who would run away when the going got tough, otherwise he would not have stubbornly resisted against the Thunder King for as long as three years.

“In that case, let’s move.” Seeing this, Ling Lan turned decisively and was the first to step into the heavy darkness of the night.

Seeing this, the team members all silently followed suit and stepped out with determination. At this moment, they did not know that this step would bring them into a reign of carnage and bloodshed as they followed their team leader through life and death situations, all the way till the very day their lives ended.

As soon as they left the room, the door closed quietly behind them. Meanwhile, the three NPCs remained fast asleep ...

Ling Lan was making her way towards the west corner of the base. In the daytime, this was where the large canteen the soldiers ate at was located. Whenever it was time for a meal, that area would become filled with human cacophony, but when night came, other than the warehouse area, it was the quietest spot in the base. No one would go there typically. No one knew that beneath the large canteen, there was actually a small secret base.

No one was on duty to patrol the canteen, but Ling Lan had been alerted by Little Four that there were at least three top-class hackers controlling countless surveillance devices, both openly and covertly, to blanket-scan the surrounding area. In other words, even if an ant were to crawl by, those hackers would be able to spot it clearly.

This way of doing things meant that almost no one would be able to slip by under their watch. Only if a top-class hacker came and ripped the control of the surveillance devices here from their hands would anyone be able to enter the area successfully. But that way, they would definitely be discovered instantly. This was one of the reasons why D1 believed that their control of the area was foolproof.

However, they could never imagine that there would be such a magical existence as Little Four in the world. He somehow managed to successfully manipulate things right under the noses of these three top-class hackers, making it so that false images were sent to these hackers, tricking them into believing that everything in the area was normal.

Ling Lan came to the large canteen and patiently waited for Little Four to respond. One minute later, Little Four raised a ‘V’ hand gesture high up into the air, butt wriggling wildly in exhilaration, and Ling Lan knew that Little Four had succeeded.

In her mindspace, Ling Lan instantly sent the smug Little Four flying with a flick of her finger. In order to prevent Little Four from making unnecessary mistakes out of pride, Ling Lan ruthlessly decided to crack down on such behaviour so that Little Four would never learn to be complacent.

Ling Lan signalled for her team members behind her to keep up as she strode up the doors of the large canteen without any sort of concealment. The rest could not help but take fright — was it really okay to just strut up like that directly?

Li Lanfeng looked at the unusually slender figure before him who walked with such sure steps and felt a complex mix of emotions stir in his heart. Compared to the others who knew very little about hacker abilities, Li Lanfeng was well aware that Ling Lan could be so bold because she had already taken control of all the surveillance devices here. Able to accomplish this in such a short amount of time, Ling Lan’s hacker abilities were definitely no lower than imperial level.

He thought of the rumoured imperial level hacker involved in that Tianji Mecha Clan Headquarters explosion incident ... that had most likely been Ling Lan himself. The stronger the rabbit was, the happier he should be, but there was a sense of danger in his heart that was growing thicker and thicker. It was as if the person he was chasing so desperately was getting further and further away from him.

He definitely could not let the rabbit leave him behind! Li Lanfeng secretly gritted his teeth. In the past, he had been concerned over his body's condition, so he had always restrained himself somewhat while training his mecha control skills. Despite being pressured greatly by the Thunder King, he still had not changed his ways to recklessly increase his practice load.

Li Lanfeng had always known what he should do; he would not easily change his plan. But now, he had the urgent desire to become stronger. He felt that if he continued to dither around like this, there would eventually be a day when he would not be able to keep up with the rabbit's pace. The rabbit was very likely to get further and further away from him, and in the end, he would only be able to regretfully become a passing guest in the rabbit's life.

He, Li Lanfeng, absolutely would not accept becoming such a passing guest. No matter how important a passing guest he would be, he was disdainful of the very idea. This was because he wanted to have a long-lasting friendship with the rabbit, until both their heads were grey with old age. He hoped that at that time, they would still be able to drink wine together and reminisce, laughing together at the ups and downs they had shared up till then.

This was a deep desire that had been born from the regrets of Li Lanfeng's heartache when he had lost touch with the rabbit back when he had been 13 years old. Now, seven years later, God had given him the opportunity to re-establish this friendship, and he did not want to lose it again.

The door was soon opened, and Ling Lan led her team members straight into the canteen. The entrance to the secret base was in the canteen's kitchenette. The kitchenette only served the highest commander of the base; even the chef was a close confidante of the commander. In order to ensure the safety of the commander's food and drink, unauthorised people were not allowed to enter the kitchenette. This also worked well to protect the secrecy and security of the secret base.

Ling Lan moved towards the kitchenette like she was extremely familiar with the area. With regards to this, Qi Long and the others were already as used to it as they could be — they believed that all of this was merely due to Ling Lan's hacker abilities. Only Li Lanfeng lifted a curious brow. This was because he knew that hackers did not have the ability to locate an entrance instantaneously, nor did they have the ability to sense secrets remotely. Spectres too had some limits to their abilities — they could only use them at close range.

Li Lanfeng did not know about the existence of Little Four. As an intelligence entity, Little Four was not bound by these restrictions of hackers and spectres, which led to Little Four's status as a one of a kind existence within the virtual world. Just imagine if all the hackers and spectres had the abilities Little Four did. If that was the case, this virtual world would truly be an utter mess.

They had just entered the kitchenette when the position of the head chef's station opened up to reveal an opening. Ling Lan jumped in without delay, for Little Four had already displayed the situation below into Ling Lan's mind in 3D.

The opening and the ground below was about 20 metres apart. Ling Lan had no problems jumping this small bit of distance. With their boss as an exemplar, Qi Long and the others leapt in without any hesitation. Li Shiyu thought about it then jumped in resolutely, while Chang Xinyuan hesitated briefly before jumping in. Meanwhile, Li Lanfeng was last in line because as a spectre, he needed to constantly monitor the situation behind the group to ensure the safety of their rear end and see to it that they were not being followed.

Although this action of Li Lanfeng was rather superfluous as Little Four already had everything in the several kilometres around them under his control. If anything stirred, Little Four would know immediately. Still, Ling Lan would not reveal this truth. For one, she needed to give Li Lanfeng a chance to perform so that he could integrate himself quicker into the team. On the other hand, there were some things that still needed to be covered up. After all, the existence of Little Four was just too bizarre — even if she were to admit it honestly, she still would not be able to properly explain the existence of Little Four. Therefore, she might as well tacitly accept this behaviour of Li Lanfeng, as well as let Qi Long and others be glad for the addition of Li Lanfeng to their team. With an additional hacker in the team, their safety would be much better guaranteed.

Without knowing it, Li Lanfeng was slowly being integrated into Ling Lan's team. Qi Long and the others were more or less beginning to realise the importance of having Li Lanfeng in the team. They no longer solely took Li Lanfeng as a temporary fighter (a temporary fighter's position was the lowest in a clan, because they were replaceable at any time) but considered him as a true member of the clan now.

Chapter 327: Spiritual Share!

After walking for about a minute, Ling Lan suddenly stopped and motioned to indicate that there was someone ahead of them. The others who had become somewhat relaxed due to the daring behaviour of Ling Lan were immediately cautious and alert.

After some thought, Ling Lan decided to expose her abilities a little. Thus, she let out her spiritual power, spreading them out into eight feelers, and began to connect them to the spiritual power of Qi Long and the others.

The spiritual power of those who had already awakened their innate talents was higher than those who had yet to awaken their innate talents, and Qi Long and the others of her original team already had some of Ling Lan's spiritual power in their minds, so her spiritual power connected with theirs very easily. Meanwhile, [No Mecha Unrepaired] and Li Shiyu had awakened support innate talents and so did not have much attack power. Hence, even though Ling Lan had to spend a little more time, she still managed to connect with their spiritual power in the end.

Only when she made contact with Li Lanfeng, her spiritual power was instantly consumed by the spectre power Li Lanfeng had placed around him earlier on as defence. Luckily, Ling Lan's spiritual power level was extremely high and she had deep reserves, so she had not been harmed much even though some of her spiritual power was consumed. That said, suddenly lacking a corner in her initially brimming spiritual power still made Ling Lan feel some discomfort. She frowned slightly, then swiftly circulated her spiritual power to instantly refill the spiritual power that had been consumed.



Ling Lan may not have been bothered much by the incident, but Li Lanfeng was instantly pale with shock and fear. He was well aware what his own power was — it was not typical hacker abilities like he had told Ling Lan but horrifying spectre power. The intrinsic nature of spectre powers was to consume and obliterate — if Ling Lan were to receive any long-lasting damage from this incident, Li Lanfeng would truly regret it for life.

Li Lanfeng's heart was filled with overwhelming regret. Perhaps he should have been honest from the start about what his true abilities were. That way, Ling Lan would not have rashly reached out and tried to connect with his spiritual power.

"Rabbit, are you all right?" In his worry, Li Lanfeng forgot the warning from Ling Lan and called her by his usual address for her.

Rabbit? This unusual address made the ears of all the others perk up high. Qi Long and the others shared a quick knowing glance. As expected, their boss was that rabbit mecha which had caused such a sensation back in the newbie area.

In contrast, Li Shiyu and Chang Xinyuan were extremely confused. They really could not relate such a cute and harmless creature like a rabbit with Ling Lan.

"I'm fine!" Ling Lan, who had been at the head of the team, was instantly right at the back with Li Lanfeng. She pressed her index finger to Li Lanfeng's lips, her gaze sharp and cold in warning to Li Lanfeng to keep quiet. There were soldiers guarding the exit ahead and she was unsure whether they were NPCs or real people. If they were NPCs, Little Four could cover up everything that was happening here, but if they were real people, there was no way to guarantee 100% safety, so Ling Lan did not dare to be careless.

Feeling the warmth of Ling Lan's finger on his lips, Li Lanfeng seemed to be shocked stiff. He could only stare dumbly at the cold face that had suddenly appeared in front of him and remain motionless.

"Release your defence and make it easier for me to connect with your spiritual power." Ling Lan's voice rang out by Li Lanfeng's ear. The warmth of her breath caused Li Lanfeng's ears to slowly turn red, until it was actually bright crimson in the end.

After alerting Li Lanfeng, Ling Lan extended a new cord of spiritual power once more to attempt to connect with Li Lanfeng's spiritual power. Meanwhile, pre-warned now, Li Lanfeng tried his best to restrain his active spectre power, which finally allowed Ling Lan to connect successfully to his spiritual power.

Soon, the situation behind the tunnel was faithfully reflected in the minds of everyone on the team. This was the exclusive special move of the Divine Command sect — Spiritual Share! Ling Xiao's battle clan had been able to prevail for so long largely because Ling Xiao had this ability too.

After successfully connecting to Li Lanfeng's spiritual power, Ling Lan used her spiritual power to command, "Qi Long, Luo Lang, both of you move."

Receiving their orders, Qi Long and Luo Lang immediately split from the group. Due to the Spiritual Share, they knew there were only two sentry guards beyond the tunnel and were also aware of the

guards' every move. They controlled their steps to not make a sound and swiftly moved to the front of the tunnel to lay down in ambush. They would wait to attack at the most appropriate time.

Everyone's attention was on Qi Long and Luo Lang, so they did not notice Li Lanfeng at the rear silently holding his chest, as if trying to calm something.

At the moment that Ling Lan had been close to him, Li Lanfeng, who had seen Ling Lan's face at close-range, suddenly noticed that the rabbit was actually very good-looking ... heaven knows whether it was out of fright or due to surprise, but Li Lanfeng's heart had actually pounded violently during that short moment, and his entire body temperature had risen by several degrees ...

However, Li Lanfeng's self-control was excellent; he regained his composure after just a few seconds. Just then, Qi Long and Luo Lang, who had long saved up their strength, caught the instant the two soldiers took their eyes off the mouth of the tunnel and charged out. Like two cheetahs that had been waiting to pounce, they abruptly launched their attacks at their prey.

The two of them used their left hands to press on their opponents' chests, and with their right hand, they plunged a miniature syringe at the necks of their opponents.

The miniature syringes had been prepared by Li Shiyu, and the high-effect anaesthetic inside the syringes was also courtesy of Li Shiyu. But the conversion of a common syringe into an attack, a potentially lethal weapon at that, was indeed at the orders of Ling Lan. Ever since Li Shiyu had joined the team, Ling Lan had never even considered just letting Li Shiyu simply be a medical doctor. Instead, she made full use of Li Shiyu's medical knowledge and tasked Li Shiyu to develop all kinds of medical weapons that could increase the combat power of the team. For example, this miniature tranquillizer syringe which was simple to use and carry around.

At the moment these two soldiers were pierced in the neck, their final outcome was already decided. The anaesthetic that Li Shiyu specially developed was even stronger than those used in the tranquillizer guns of the military. Initially, Qi Long and Luo Lang had been fully prepared to cope with the opponents' desperate counterattacks — but unexpectedly, the moment the syringes pierced the opponents, the tense muscles of the other party suddenly slackened, and their opponents were unconscious right after that.

Qi Long and Luo Lang carefully placed the two men to one side of the door, while the rest of the team, who had seen them succeed via their mind-link, walked out from the tunnel. When Qi Long saw Li Shiyu come out, a greedy expression appeared on his face. Inside their shared mindscape, he requested, "Senior Shiyu, this miniature tranquillizer syringe you've created is really too useful! Prepare a few more for us next time, okay?"

Powerfully potent, able to take the enemy down instantly, and small enough to carry around in large quantities — these syringes would also be effective as hidden weapons. Qi Long was naturally greedy for this type of useful weapon that could be used from the shadows. Sadly, the anaesthetic in the miniature syringes could only be used once. To use them again, they would need to be refilled with anaesthetic. Moreover, Li Shiyu was rather reluctant to make these things, so each member of the team only had three miniature syringes. After those three were used up, they would have to see when Li Shiyu's mood was good enough that he would be willing to help refill them ... the soporific was controlled by Li Shiyu, so if he did not want to do it, no one could do anything about it.

At Qi Long's request, Li Shiyu's fair face turned dark. D\*mmmit, he was a military doctor, a life-saving angel — not a devil who specialized in making these sorts of harmful weapons ...

"Yes, Senior Shiyu, with your tranquilizer weapons, we won't need to kill others." Ling Lan lightly kicked the two unconscious soldiers lying on the ground. "You've allowed us to avoid staining ourselves with this sin. I really don't know how we should thank you." Ling Lan was spouting these words of gratitude, but the gaze she directed at Li Shiyu was endlessly cold. It seemed to tell Li Shiyu that it was fine even if he did not want to make more — at most, these youths in their team would just have to commit sin much earlier and stain their hands with blood.

Li Shiyu bit on his lip and looked at this bunch of innocent youths before him with hope shining from their eyes. His heart softened once more and he replied, "Understood. When I have time, I'll make more for you all. You can just come find me to refill them when you run out."

Alright, Ling Lan had completely grasped the weakness of Li Shiyu's heart. Li Shiyu truly did not have the heart to let these junior brothers who had just joined the first grade to be exposed so early to killing and sin. This would place great mental and spiritual guilt and pressure on them, which may lead them to become terrified and suffer from sleepless nights.

Li Shiyu would never forget those few cases he had seen in the Military Medical Research Centre. Those cases had all been newbies freshly back from a battlefield. Unable to shake off the guilt they felt after their first kill, they had fallen into severe depression and some even displayed suicidal tendencies ...

If only Li Shiyu had known that these first-year youths that were so pure and innocent in his eyes had already participated in a civilian expedition team and been exposed to killing long before joining the academy, he would certainly regret his decision. These youths had already been stained with blood, and their hearts had already become exceedingly strong and ruthless from their experience. It should be said that Li Shiyu was like a pure and kind-hearted rabbit. For the sakes of what appeared to be a group of rabbits in his eyes but who were actually wolves in rabbits' skins, he was altering his baseline again and again, repeatedly subverting his original three outlooks. Unconsciously, he was going down the path of evolving into a black rabbit ...

Li Lanfeng saw that Li Shiyu had once again chosen to concede, and he knew that this cute and pure younger cousin of his was almost gone. He had mixed feelings about this realisation, unsure what he should say. In the end, he could only sigh ...

Li Shiyu's reply made Qi Long and the others yell out in excitement within their mindspace. Li Shiyu, who had initially felt a bit down for compromising his principles, found his gloomy mood lifting at the sight of his happy juniors.

With her back to them, Ling Lan, who seemed to be studying the door before them, found the corners of her lips quirked up subtly. How is this Dux Li so easy to deceive? As someone from the same Li family, the leopard was obviously much more black-bellied ...

Little Four did not open the door, merely transmitting the situation behind the door faithfully into Ling Lan's mind. Of course, Ling Lan shared this information as soon as she could with the rest of her teammates, and the initially excited group instantly became sombre again, knowing that this would be a difficult hurdle. Because behind the door were another two soldiers staring intently at the door from

about 10 metres away. The moment they opened the door, they would be discovered. And the distance of 10 metres was enough for the soldiers to react and sound the alarm before the quickest attack of the team could reach them.

“Boss, what should we do?” Everyone looked towards Ling Lan and waited for her instructions.

If this were the real world, Ling Lan could have used a spiritual attack to knock down the opponents. But here in the virtual world, this killer move of hers is restricted. Just as Ling Lan was pondering how she could handle this perfectly, Li Lanfeng proposed, “Boss Lan and I are both hackers so we can apply some disguises.” He pointed to the two soldiers who were lying unconscious and continued to say, “Two people from the team can pretend to be the guard soldiers standing at the door, while Boss Lan and I impersonate people from the base and go in. I think they will not doubt us right away, and as long as we can get close to them, Boss Lan and I will have the opportunity to take them out before they sound the alarm.”

Chapter 328: Spectre!

Li Lanfeng’s suggestion put a shine in the eyes of everyone on the team. Han Jiyun cast a searching look at Li Lanfeng, once again feeling that invisible pressure the other gave him.

Ling Lan immediately gave her stamp of approval to Li Lanfeng’s method. Qi Long and Xie Yi were the two brawniest people on the team and thus had the most soldier-like builds. The two of them quickly changed into the uniforms of the two soldiers and separated to stand on both sides of the gate. Other than Ling Lan and Li Lanfeng, the others all ducked into the tunnel again to hide with the two comatose soldiers.

Under everyone’s gaze, Ling Lan and Li Lanfeng’s initially black combat uniforms slowly changed to look like the uniform of the soldiers on the base, exactly like the uniforms Qi Long and Xie Yi had put on. The only difference was their epaulettes — Ling Lan’s choice was a major’s epaulette, while Li Lanfeng wisely chose to be a senior captain. He stood respectfully half a step behind Ling Lan.

This move made Ling Lan’s team’s impression of Li Lanfeng rise once more. It should be said that Li Lanfeng was consistently building on his favourability rating among Ling Lan’s team members, and he was achieving his goal handily.

When everything was ready, Ling Lan instructed Little Four to open the door. After the doors opened, Ling Lan proudly strutted through the doorway, while Li Lanfeng followed behind her solemnly and respectfully.

Meanwhile, Qi Long and Xie Yi were standing straight on both sides of the door with their backs to it. They both executed an exemplary military salute at the same time, only putting their hands down again after Ling Lan and Li Lanfeng had passed by. All of it looked exceedingly normal.

The two soldiers on the other side of the door were taken aback by the sudden opening of the door and the two officers who had randomly walked through. They shared a doubtful glance because they had not received any news from above that someone would enter the secret base at this time.

However, the salutes and respectful behaviour of the two sentry guards at the door made these two soldiers afraid to judge rashly. Perhaps there had been some emergency so those above had not had time to inform them. Still, carrying out their duty as guards, one of the men yelled out, "Password!"

Li Lanfeng had already walked through the doors with Ling Lan at this time. When he heard the soldiers ask for a password, his heart skipped a beat and his steps slowed involuntarily. Only Ling Lan's pace remained steady. As if not at all affected by the other side asking for a password, she continued to walk forwards confidently, even raising her head to look at the two men before her with an extremely cold gaze.

"Hn, well done," Ling Lan finally spoke up, praising the two soldiers lightly. This made the two men frown, and as Ling Lan took one more step forward, the faces of the two men were about to change drastically when she continued to say, "The password ..."

Hearing the mention of the password, the tense expressions of the two men eased for a moment, and it was at this precise moment that Ling Lan pounced forwards like a cheetah with her entire body, instantly coming right up to the two men.

She opened her hands wide and flicked them forcefully. Two gleams of cold light flashed through the air, and then with a shake and a clench of both her arms, two almost invisible thin ropes flew out from her wrists to instantly loop around the hands of the two soldiers. With a forceful tug, the men were dragged away from their initial position.

Ling Lan's attack had seemed complicated, but it had been completed in an instant. The attack had come too suddenly — those two men did not have any time to react and were pulled right into the air. Ling Lan's hands pulled downwards, and the two men who had been about to collide with one another in the air abruptly changed directions to fall towards the ground. With a quick dash, Ling Lan was below them, and she caught the two men securely.

By this time, the two men were already long unconscious. Ling Lan quietly set them down on the floor.

Only then did Li Lanfeng reach Ling Lan's side. Seeing how much Ling Lan's speed and mobility surpassed his, Li Lanfeng felt a deep sense of frustration. Whether it be in terms of mecha controls or physical skills, he was considerably worse than the rabbit. It looked like, for him to achieve his dream of fighting by the rabbit's side, he would need to work much harder.

"Just now you had obviously already hit them with the tranquillizer needles. Why did you still pull them out of their positions?" Even though Li Lanfeng's speed was no match for Ling Lan's, his vision was excellent. He had managed to see all of Ling Lan's moves in their entirety during that instant.

Ling Lan did not reply, only motioning for Li Lanfeng to go check out the area where the two men had been standing. Li Lanfeng walked over suspiciously, but when he bent down to take a closer look, his expression changed. It turned out that the alarm activation device was right where the two men had been standing.

Though the two men had seemed to be standing firmly at their posts, in fact, they had each only been standing with one foot flat on the ground. The ankle of their other foot was in the air. In other words, their weight was only on the first half of their foot, while their ankle was held off the ground. The

moment they noticed anything odd, they need only step down fully and their ankle would trigger the alarm instantly.

This kind of setup was extremely covert and not easily discovered. It could even guarantee that even if the sentry guards did not react in time and were killed, without the conscious thought to keep their ankles up, the guards' feet would certainly step down as their bodies lost balance. The alarm would still be successfully triggered.

Seeing Li Lanfeng return with a face full of belated fear, Ling Lan silently swiped the cold sweat from her forehead. Frankly, she too had not known the alarm was set up in such a way beforehand. If Little Four had not discovered it and alerted her in time right before she attacked, Ling Lan would definitely have fallen for the trap. Even if she managed to kill these two people, they still would not have been able to avoid triggering the alarm. In the end, they would have been forced to run away and return empty-handed.

Seeing that Ling Lan had successfully defeated the two guards inside, Qi Long and the others hurried over. When they saw how the alarm here was set up to be triggered, they too were struck with sympathetic fear, exclaiming that this setup was truly too insane. On the other hand, Chang Xinyuan was extremely interested in the setup. He laid right down on the ground to examine it closely, muttering to himself, as if calculating something.

They did not linger for long. Despite Chang Xinyuan's reluctant gaze, Ling Lan led her team to continue moving deeper into the base. This particular hurdle had indeed been rather challenging, but after that, things became much easier. Perhaps the senior officer of the secret base placed a lot of trust in this alarm setup of theirs, for the following few checkpoints were not as crazy and complicated. Ling Lan's team smoothly made their way to the centre of the base.

Ling Lan led her team members to this area and then stopped moving, because if they moved any further, they would enter the range of the spectres' monitoring. Little Four had long reported to Ling Lan that there were two spectres overseeing the area. The moment they entered within the spectres' range of detection, they would be ruthlessly attacked and obliterated. Moreover, at this time, Ling Lan had no idea how she could explain to her team members how she had known there were spectres here.

Only spectres could sense another spectre — as for who sensed who first, that would depend on whose spectre abilities were stronger. Furthermore, hacker abilities and spectre abilities were two diametrically opposite abilities<sup>1</sup>, which made it almost impossible for both to awaken in the same person at the same time. Even if there was an accident and someone managed to awaken these two abilities that could not coexist, they would still be unable to make those two kinds of abilities strong together.

Because the more powerful the abilities grew, the greater the friction between the two powers would become. The Federation had conducted an experiment once where they had made someone who had awakened both these talents to train them both up equally. In the end, the final outcome was that the bearer of the abilities was unable to withstand the build-up of friction between the two powers. His brain had been crushed under the explosive force caused by the clashing of the two powers, and he was reduced to a vegetable, never waking up ever again.

From then on, the Federation set the restriction so that even if someone awakened both these abilities, they could only choose just one to develop 2 . This information had been carefully conveyed to the students by the instructors of the scout academy around the time their innate talents began to awaken. As such, Qi Long and the others would be well aware of this fact, so she had no way of explaining why she could possess such powerful hacker abilities and spectre abilities at the same time. It could only be said that Little Four's existence was just too formidable beyond comprehension. Ling Lan could not find a reasonable explanation even if she wanted to.

Right then at that moment, Li Lanfeng, who had been rather subdued due to his shock at the extent of Ling Lan's skills, suddenly became focused and his expression turned rather grim. As if sensing something, he immediately cut off his spiritual connection to Ling Lan. Under everyone's stunned gaze and Ling Lan's quiet realisation, an extremely dangerous aura silently seeped out from his body and began to slowly spread.

Everyone felt this aura that made them uncomfortable and sensed their own spiritual power beginning to shudder violently. At the point where they felt as if their spiritual power were about to be consumed by this aura, Ling Lan's spiritual power abruptly surged up and spread out to swiftly wrap around the spiritual power of the seven others in the team.

Ling Lan's protection greatly stabilised the spiritual power of the seven people. Everyone was still unsettled by the experience; only Han Jijyun stared grimly at Li Lanfeng, as if thinking of something.

At this moment, Li Lanfeng had no mind to consider the situation of his companions. He had sensed two dangerous presences ahead, similar to his spectre powers, though they seemed slightly weaker than him since they had yet to notice his presence.

Still, Li Lanfeng's brow remained locked tight. The other side had two people, so Li Lanfeng could not be certain whether he could go up against both of them and keep everyone in the team safe. Afraid that the other side would discover his presence, he swiftly tamped down on his spectre power. With a grave expression, he turned to look at Ling Lan and said softly, "Rabbit, there are two spectres inside. They are very strong. The moment we enter their surveillance range, we will be attacked. Our lives are likely to be threatened."

Against just one, Li Lanfeng had the confidence to defeat the other with just a bit of luck. But with two, Li Lanfeng could not be too sure. After all, the spectres inside were just slightly weaker than him. If the two of them had good rapport and worked together, even if he wanted to protect everyone in Ling Lan's team, he was afraid he would miss something and expose a weakness to be caught by the enemy.

Initially, Li Lanfeng had suspected that Ling Lan too possessed very strong spectre abilities. However, as Ling Lan's hacker abilities had been showcased more and more, Li Lanfeng no longer had much hope for Ling Lan's spectre power. The things that Ling Lan and the others knew, Li Lanfeng knew as well. Although hacker power and spectre power could exist simultaneously, they could not grow strong together.

Perhaps Ling Lan had possessed both these abilities at the start, but he must have chosen to develop his hacker abilities rather than his spectre abilities. Li Lanfeng felt that this was a bit of a shame because almost all spectres were under the control of the Federation military. As the first heir of the Li family, Li Lanfeng naturally could not become a puppet of the military. Thus, when his grandfather had noticed

how unique Li Lanfeng's spiritual power was, suspecting that he might be one of those rumoured spectres, his grandfather had completely sealed away all news of this. This was why Li Lanfeng had not been discovered by the military.

#### Chapter 329: Volunteering to Fight!

All these years, Li Lanfeng had not met any other of his kind in the virtual world. This had made him feel rather lonely, and this was also why he had taken an interest in Ling Lan even before he found out Ling Lan was the rabbit. Thinking that the other might have spectre abilities, he had been curious and wanted to find out more about him.

"You are not a hacker but a spectre, right?" Just as the other companions were astounded by what Li Lanfeng had said, Han Jijyun suddenly asked softly.

Han Jijyun's words surprised the rest of the team. They all knew what spectres represented in the virtual world. No wonder they had felt as if a great catastrophe was upon them just now. The dangerous aura they had sensed at that time was most likely spectre power.

Li Lanfeng nodded and said apologetically, "Yes, I'm a spectre. In order to hide my powers, I lied to you all. I'm sorry!"

"I knew this already. You all also know there are hardly any spectres in the civilian world. For the leopard's personal safety, I did not allow the leopard to speak of this," said Ling Lan suddenly, "I hope that this matter ends here. If anyone else finds out the leopard is a spectre, his life will be in danger."

Ling Lan's words caused everyone's heart to clench. Indeed, spectres had always been the primary targets of assassination by the enemy nations of the Federation. As long as a spectre's real identity was exposed, their enemies would kill the spectre at any cost. This was also why the Federation military had brought all the spectres in their borders under their control. The Federation needed to protect these spectres, though of course part of the reason was also that they were afraid the spectres not under their control would cause some horrific massacre in the virtual world.

In the virtual world, spectres were synonymous with death gods. With the exception of other spectres, no one else could stand up against spectres. Even the most powerful warrior in the real world or the most authoritative leaders and high-ranking officials were like powerless and defenceless babies before a spectre in the virtual world, helpless if the other intended to kill them.

Thus, the authorities in every nation both loved and feared spectres. They loved spectres because they could become weapons to threaten the enemy nations with, but they were also afraid the spectres would turn on them and harm them. This had also brought about the tragedy of spectres never ever having any freedom in their lives. No authority would be willing to let these frightening beings that could endanger their lives in the virtual world run around unchecked. For their own safety, they inevitably chose to control, or even ruthlessly obliterate these spectres!

"Yes, Boss!" Everyone on the team understood what Ling Lan was saying. Besides, Li Lanfeng had chosen to come clean, which was practically placing his life in their hands — this was the trust he had in his teammates. Qi Long and the others were extremely moved by this. It was from this point on that Qi Long and the others truly took Li Lanfeng as their own companion. He was no longer just a friend of the boss



who had joined them halfway, as a member whose status was yet to be determined as temporary or permanent.

Han Jiyun threw a complex glance at Li Lanfeng. He mentally applauded Li Lanfeng's decisiveness in using all he could to obtain the acknowledgement of his companions, allowing him to integrate into the team at a very fast speed. At this time, he had a hunch that Li Lanfeng might be the strongest rival for his position in the team ...

Han Jiyun silently clenched his fists and told himself that he needed to work hard. He absolutely could not lose to Li Lanfeng, this member who had only joined them along the way. He, Han Jiyun, would not give up on the role of military strategist!

Hearing Ling Lan speak up in his defence, Li Lanfeng was extremely grateful. He knew very well that he had never told Ling Lan he was a spectre.

This should be what the books call a 'bosom friend' — at critical moments, the other would help him, accept him, and defend him. Li Lanfeng's heart pumped violently once again, a sort of indescribable warmth rippling within it.

Just as everyone was deciding whether or not to continue with the mission, Ling Lan asked Li Lanfeng with a serious expression, "Leopard, can you withstand the attacks of two spectres?" Only spectres could fight against another spectre's abilities — despite having the virtual god Little Four and so being not at all afraid of the spectres, Ling Lan still needed to ask Li Lanfeng this question. After all, on the surface, Li Lanfeng would be the one fending off the spectres.

Li Lanfeng considered the issue seriously and then replied, "In terms of pure defence, there should be no problem. It's just that there are quite a few members in the team. Once we spread out, I'm afraid I might slip up and the opponent might jump on that chance." The connotation was that resisting was not a problem, but their numbers were a little too many since his defence area was not very wide. Once anyone went out of this range of his, he would not be able to guarantee the safety of all the members of the team.

This was the statement Ling Lan was waiting for. She decided to let Qi Long and the others wait here while she and Li Lanfeng went ahead to check things out.

This decision received firm opposition from the rest of the team; they insisted that they wanted to follow Ling Lan in. They also promised that they would listen to orders and stick closely to Li Lanfeng without veering even one step away.

Li Lanfeng saw that none of the team members wanted to retreat and was instantly filled with pride. He spoke up to say, "Rabbit, I will do my best to protect them. Just let them come."

Ling Lan figured there should not be any big problems since there was still Little Four as backup, so she nodded and agreed.

Ling Lan led the way to the largest door. In fact, they all knew that they had been heading downwards all this while — who knows how deep they had travelled. But upon seeing this large door, every member of their group believed they were already at least 200 to 300 metres deep underground.

Ling Lan then used Spiritual Share to display the situation behind the door to all the team members. It was no longer just a few soldiers protecting this door but a medium-sized team of about 15 people.

On both sides of the door were two iron walls, each with three beam machine guns jutting out from shooting ports aimed at the doorway. And at the end of the iron walls, about 30 metres from the main door, six armed soldiers were each holding a heavy firearm and staring vigilantly at the door. There were also three more people hiding in blind corners of the iron walls. They really did not need to worry about those three men though — as long as they did not reveal themselves, they would not be able to attack the group anyway.

Moreover, Ling Lan and the others were not afraid that they would activate some alarm device either, because once they entered, the spectres would notice them anyway. Thus, they would be exposed regardless of whether the alarm was sounded.

That aside, other than the spectres, they now also had to make preparations to handle an unforeseen enemy — mecha warriors. From the image transmitted via Ling Lan's Spiritual Share, they could see that the area behind the door was vast. There was a space of about 50 metres from ground to ceiling. This proved that not only would ground infantry be present; there might also be mecha operators.

The group set aside those potential enemies for now as they began to analyse how they should deal with the current situation. The six beam machine guns were definitely for Boss Lan to deal with — only Ling Lan had the skill to shoot a hidden weapon accurately into the shooting ports to finish off the six shooters inside.

Meanwhile, Li Lanfeng had to deal with the two spectres. Once they entered, he would have to put all his strength into that, so he would not be able to spare a hand to help with the physical fighting. Therefore, the others would have to deal with the six soldiers with heavy firearms at the front on their own.

Qi Long and the other four of the original group were naturally alright with this. Having grown up under Ling Lan's tough love, even the weakest Han Jiyun was not weaker than the others by much. The key was what they would do for the sixth soldier. After all, each of them could only handle one person — that final additional person would be left out, giving him a chance to fire at them.

Qi Long gave it some serious thought and felt there was still a pretty good chance of success. He was just about to say that he would also handle that last person when Li Shiyu, who had been quietly observing from the side, suddenly volunteered, "That sixth person, leave him to me."

This was the first time Li Shiyu had taken the initiative to do something. This surprised everyone, causing them to all turn to look in Li Shiyu's direction. The intent gazes of the team members disconcerted Li Shiyu, whose fair face was instantly painted with a flush.

"Senior Shiyu is from the military medical research specialization. Won't your combat ability be a little weak? If there's an injury or an accident, the loss to the team will be significant. I don't think it's a good idea." Xie Yi was the first to object. If they were injured, they still had Li Shiyu to help patch them up, but if Li Shiyu was injured, they would be helpless to do anything about it if it were serious.

Xie Yi's words made everyone nod silently in agreement, believing that letting Li Shiyu handle the final sixth soldier was not very appropriate. Chang Xinyuan's mouth twitched, about to volunteer himself when Li Shiyu retorted coldly, "Although I'm a military doctor, my combat skills are not at all weak."

Li Shiyu's typically calm eyes were currently blazing with the flames of anger — Xie Yi's words had made him feel insulted. His expression was proud and confident as he retorted. This expression was very familiar — when Li Yingjie was displaying his proud and haughty side, this was the expression he wore. This caused Qi Long and the others to turn their heads away, unable to look straight at Li Shiyu. As expected of a member of the Li family — that pride and arrogance were in their very bones.

"Ahem ahem, actually, Young Master Shiyu's combat ability is very good. Our Li family puts great focus on cultivating its inheritors' combat skills from young. Based on what I know, Young Master Shiyu's combat ability is significantly stronger than Young Master Yingjie's," Li Lanfeng suddenly interrupted to say with a smile. Though his expression seemed endlessly sincere, as if trying to explain on the behalf of Li Shiyu, for some reason Ling Lan felt a dissonance in his bearing and could not help but feel goosebumps rising all over her body.

"Since we're all from the same team, just call me Shiyu in future," said Li Shiyu earnestly to Li Lanfeng, casting a grateful glance at the other. Li Shiyu frankly loathed the address of 'young master'. However, previously in the military academy, he could not reject the title directly because this was after all tied to the pride and status of his identity as a direct descendant of the Li family. But now, since they had become battle clan comrades, Li Shiyu felt that this address was no longer necessary nor appropriate.

Li Lanfeng smiled widely in response and said with a nod, "Alright then, Shiyu."

When he said this, Ling Lan keenly picked up on Li Lanfeng's buoyant mood.

Seeing Li Shiyu's eagerness to fight and with Li Lanfeng speaking up in support, Qi Long and the others could not find a good way to refuse. So they all turned to look towards Ling Lan, waiting for their boss to give the final word.

Ling Lan nodded and said, "Since Senior Shiyu is sure, then it's decided." Her expression turned stern and she added, "Qi Long, Luo Lang, Xie Yi, Han Jijyun, Lin Zhong-qing, Li Shiyu. The six people at the front are up to you all. You must complete your duty."

"Yes, Boss!" "Yes, Leader!" Even though they all responded slightly differently, the timing of their responses was synchronous. Li Shiyu was currently still unable to call Ling Lan 'Boss' like Qi Long and the others.

Chapter 330: The Lingtian Battle Clan in the Eyes of Chang Xinyuan!

Right then, Chang Xinyuan, who had been standing to one side without finding an opportunity to interrupt, suddenly said, "Wait a minute, I have some things to give you all."

Chang Xinyuan then took out six round metal discs which looked like palm-sized hand mirrors from his bag. He tossed them to Qi Long and the other five and explained, "These are miniature beam shields I created. The power they contain is only able to withstand one heavy artillery attack. Bring them along

with you. Although they aren't that good, they should still be able to play a protective role at critical moments."

Chang Xinyuan then explained how to use the miniature beam shields. The appearance of this unexpected piece of equipment delighted everyone; any extra bit of protection was naturally good. They had already come so far in this mission — the hope of success was in sight; no one wanted to just die and be respawned back at the start.

Qi Long thumped Chang Xinyuan's shoulder enthusiastically, loudly praising how awesome Chang Xinyuan's little invention was as he did so. The strength behind the thumps almost threw Chang Xinyuan to the ground. Qi Long then requested for Chang Xinyuan to make more of these useful and easily portable small beam shields whenever he had the time. It would be best if each of them could have ten or more of these.

With regards to this rather outrageous request of Qi Long's, Chang Xinyuan was not at all angry. Instead, he was very happy, breaking out into a large grin. For Qi Long to say this meant that he, Chang Xinyuan, was useful to the team — the members of the team needed him. This was a great comfort to him.

Along the way, Chang Xinyuan had realised that every member of Ling Lan's team was very strong. Whether it was in terms of mecha operation or physical skills, they were much stronger than the average battle clan, so much stronger than him. This made Chang Xinyuan feel rather inferior and he had even begun to wonder whether he could remain in the clan and actually become a true member.

The brotherly bond among the members of Ling Lan's team made Chang Xinyuan, who had always been alone, endlessly envious. It could be said that Chang Xinyuan had joined Ling Lan's team at the start out of a lack of options — he had no other choice. If he had passed off the chance to join Ling Lan's team, he might very likely have had no other opportunity to ever join a battle clan after that. The cruel truth of the situation pushed him to take the gamble. When Ling Lan had received that SSS-rank mission, he had indeed hesitated. However, Chang Xinyuan was not a person who would give up at the first sign of difficulty, otherwise he would not have resisted the Thunder King's oppression for three years. In the end, he chose to fight along with Ling Lan and the others.

Over this duration of time doing the mission together, he had come to understand the deep bond among the team members. Boss Lan was very cold and somewhat domineering (this was just Chang Xinyuan's perception. Ling Lan was actually not domineering at all, she was just used to keeping a slackface), so it was rather stressful trying to get along with him. At times, just making eye contact with Boss Lan would cause him to have difficulty breathing. He knew that the truly strong would always have a type of aura about them. However, he had never encountered someone like Boss Lan who gave him such heavy pressure. If the Thunder King had exuded the same type of feeling as Boss Lan back then, he probably would not have been able to hold out and would have long chosen to capitulate.

But this domineering, cold, and ruthless Boss Lan would forever stand right at the front of the team and shield them from the wind and rain at the most critical moments. Just like when the magnetic tsunami had hit, Boss Lan had decisively stayed right till the end to ensure all of them safely entered the mainship first. That time, Boss Lan had almost died in the magnetic tsunami.

Chang Xinyuan was well aware that Boss Lan was not just acting. He was very strict with Qi Long and the others' training, perhaps even somewhat brutal about it — he was absolutely a harsh taskmaster. Many

times, Chang Xinyuan himself felt that Qi Long and the others were not going to survive. But then, he also saw more than once how Boss Lan would seek out Li Shiyu whenever he had the time to discuss how they could improve the physical constitutions of the team members, along with their endurance and resistance to blows. And all of this was so they continue to stay alive and well, whether it was in Mecha World or in the real world when they fought on a real battlefield in the future.

Boss Lan was a responsible boss and an even more competent parental battle clan leader. Following such a boss, he would never have to worry about being pushed out someday to be a sacrificial scapegoat. Alright, the bits and pieces which had happened over this period of time had caused him to become like Qi Long and the others, beginning to idolise Boss Lan ...

Meanwhile, Qi Long and Luo Lang were the primary and secondary fighters of the team, the strongest in the team in both mecha combat and physical skills combat, but of course they were incomparable to Boss Lan. Back when the New Cadet Regiment had fought against Leiting in the arena, they had been two of the five representatives. Among them, Luo Lang defeated the third strongest in Leiting, while Qi Long fought on even terms with the second strongest of Leiting, only losing unfortunately in the end. All this information had been conveyed to him by Li Shiyu. He had put his entire mind into modifying mecha back then so he was not very clear on the various things that had happened in the military academy, including that arena battle.

Xie Yi was very warm and passionate. He was the first among the old members of the team to take the initiative to get to know Chang Xinyuan better. Friendly and cheerful, they got along very well. But Xie Yi's combat ability was not weaker than Luo Lang's by much. Typically, in battle clans, the main and secondary fighters would be stronger while the rest of the fighters would be a bracket lower. However, in Ling Lan's battle clan, almost everybody's strength levels were very close. With Xie Yi's strength, even if he might not be able to be the primary fighter in another battle clan, he more than qualified to be a secondary fighter. But in Ling Lan's clan, due to the fierce competition with rivals as plentiful as clouds, Xie Yi could only be one of the two wings of the team.

Han Jijyun normally looked very austere, as if hard to get along with, and his eyes always shone with a calculative light. Chang Xinyuan had always felt rather nervous around these kinds of strategist-type people, afraid to approach them. But whenever Boss Lan was absent or sitting idly by, Han Jijyun would automatically take responsibility for the command of the team, develop tactics, and make arrangements to keep the team operations running smoothly.

During the time they had lost contact with Boss Lan, Han Jijyun had proved that he was well qualified for the role. Back when they had no way of obtaining certain news regarding Boss Lan, he was the one who daringly decided to use the set of false data they had agreed on at the start. Despite part of it being due to Chang Xinyuan's suggestion, after learning more about hacker abilities later, Chang Xinyuan had greatly admired Han Jijyun's boldness and decisiveness, as well as the other's deep and unwavering faith in Boss Lan ...

Meanwhile, Lin Zhong-qing was usually very plain and unobtrusive, perhaps even a little like an invisible person, always silently doing his things. At first, Chang Xinyuan had somewhat overlooked him. But then, the team went on the move. Every time Boss Lan wanted an update on the materials remaining for the team, he would definitely ask Lin Zhong-qing. This let Chang Xinyuan know that Lin Zhong-qing was the head logistician of the team.

The facts proved that Lin Zhong-qing carried out his role as logistician perfectly. Whenever the team needed something, he would be like the legendary Doraemon, bringing out resource after resource to meet the needs of everyone on the team. It was clear to see that he had a very thorough understanding of each and every member of the team, knowing what they might need. In particular, what surprised Chang Xinyuan was that although he, Li Shiyu, and Li Lanfeng had just joined the team, Lin Zhong-qing had been able to figure out some of their habits within this short amount of time. From there, he had actually been able to also prepare some of the materials they needed ...

Li Shiyu had joined the team with him, but the other was already familiar with Qi Long and the others. At first, when Chang Xinyuan had not known their true identities, he could still tell they already knew each other in real life just by their interactions. Li Shiyu was somewhat aloof — this may just be the characteristic of a dux. Chang Xinyuan did not think there was anything wrong with it; it was normal for those with talent to be a little prideful. Perhaps because he too was a researcher like himself, Li Shiyu was also very straightforward and innocent, maybe even a little soft in Chang Xinyuan's eyes. That was why he was always unknowingly falling for Boss Lan's verbal manipulations, having to follow whatever Boss Lan said in the end.

Perhaps finding Li Shiyu a little pitiful, Chang Xinyuan often chatted with the other. Perhaps because they were both newcomers to the team, or perhaps because they were both researchers, and maybe also because the other could sense his benign intentions, the two of them got along very well, always having something to talk about. This was also how he had found out more about Qi Long and the others. During their conversations, they would often talk about their teammates as well as their exploits and achievements.

The one Chang Xinyuan could not puzzle out was Li Lanfeng. The other had a great attitude, often seen with a warm and gentle smile. He was always extremely respectful towards everyone in the team and seemed easy-going. However, Chang Xinyuan just did not dare to get too close to him. For some reason, the other felt unsafe, without the sense of stable security Li Shiyu gave him. This might be because Li Lanfeng was a spectre, having an innate dangerous air about him. Chang Xinyuan could only use this reason to reassure himself.

In short, Chang Xinyuan had been very happy during this period of time spent with the team. Having been oppressed by the Thunder King for three years, constantly lonely and depressed, Chang Xinyuan treasured the happiness he felt in this brief period of time. He could not bear to lose this again — he really wanted to join the team and become a permanent member, not just a passing guest. Thus, Chang Xinyuan had spent these past few days in a daze, afraid that his hopes would be nothing but a mirage 1 .

This was also why Qi Long's outrageous request had made him so happy — it had made him feel just a bit more integrated into the team. In his joy, Chang Xinyuan's thoughts shifted to the six shooters Boss Lan was going to handle. The best hidden weapon for the task would undoubtedly be the miniature tranquillizer shots Li Shiyu had made. Chang Xinyuan remembered very well that Boss Lan had already used up two as they had passed through the tunnel earlier. Right now, he must only have one left on him.

At this thought, Chang Xinyuan quickly brought out the three tranquillizer shots given to him from his bag, passing them over to Ling Lan as he said, "Boss Lan, I remember that you only have one left. To take

out those six men, you'll need another five. I won't be using these 3 of mine. Why don't you take them, Boss?"

Chang Xinyuan's words alerted everyone and they all quickly began rifling through their bags to see if they had any more, all of them wanting to give theirs up for their boss to use.

Ling Lan speechlessly accepted the three tranquillizer shots Chang Xinyuan had handed over. She could not tell them that, as long as she had the materials, Little Four could instantly create countless tranquillizer shots for her ...

Li Lanfeng had just taken out his own set of tranquillizer syringes and was about to hand them over when Li Shiyu beat him to it.

"Here, leader, I won't be using these things. Take it." Li Shiyu decisively passed his three miniature tranquillizer syringes to Ling Lan.

Ling Lan only took two of the three in his hands and said lightly, "In a bit, you'll need to use it."

Ling Lan's words gave Li Shiyu pause, but then Qi Long came up to circle an arm over Li Shiyu's neck and said with a smile, "For those six people we have to deal with, if we want to take them down instantly, we can't lack this creation of yours, you know."

Qi Long's reminder enlightened Li Shiyu. He no longer pressed the matter, taking back that last syringe in his hand. He clamped it tightly between two fingers, prepared to use it when they attacked.