

Crossing 341

Chapter 341: The Sleeping Baby!

At this time, Little Four who had left Ling Lan to go wipe out the T-virus returned, suddenly appearing within Ling Lan's mindspace.

Ling Lan saw Little Four's reappearance and knew that he must have finished clearing out the T-virus. Still, the potential harm the T-virus could inflict on the Federation's virtual world was too great, so Ling Lan could not help but ask, "Have you cleared out that T-virus, that Doomsday Flower?"

Little Four grinned widely, nodded and said, "Yup yup, all done."

"You're sure that the T-virus won't appear again in the virtual world?" Ling Lan asked again, still worried.

"Yup yup, as long as Boss does not want to see it, the T-virus will not appear here." Little Four blinked his clear black eyes guilelessly and replied with a sure expression.

Only then did Ling Lan relax. She did not notice when Little Four bowed his head to hide a smile.

Of course Little Four would smile sneakily — he had only said that the T-virus would not appear again if Ling Lan did not want to see it. If Ling Lan wanted to see it again one day, the T-virus could appear any time she wanted it to ...

That's right. He, Little Four, had transferred that T-virus, a.k.a. the Doomsday Flower, into the learning space for focused cultivation. Little Four felt that there was no such thing as good or bad when it came to viruses. It all depended on who the user was. Besides, it wasn't easy for him to see something related to the Mandora star system — Little Four could not bear to erase it just like that ...

Mind you, the instructors in the learning space were unwilling to talk to him much due to his young age, and Ling Lan had so much to do in her daily life that she did not talk to him very often either. Meanwhile, in the virtual world, other than that little optical supercomputer on that spaceship, he still had not encountered another self-aware intelligence entity in this entire virtual world ... yes, Little Four was feeling lonely.

Little Four left Ling Lan's mindspace excitedly to come to a sealed space within the learning space in the next second. There, a baby was sleeping deeply suspended in the air. The baby's body was connected to countless white and black lines whose ends disappeared into the endless darkness of this space. There was no visible end point.

Little Four's figure flashed once more and he was right by the baby's side in the air. He curiously reached out a finger to touch the other's soft cheek. Disturbed, the little baby's pretty brow scrunched up, and its bright red, little lips pouted angrily. It looked like he hated having his sleep disturbed by others.

"Little fellow, sleeping like a dead pig. Being able to continue living, you need to thank your Elder Brother Little Four, you know? Yup, I was the one who saved you, so I should be the one to name you. What should I call you? Little Doom? Little World? 1 Nope, Little World sounds too much like my name Little Four 2 . That name was given to me by Boss. It's my exclusive title!" said Little Four, riled up. His eyes spun and then with a trace of cheekiness he said, "I've decided. I'll call you Little Blossom 3 ... Little

Blossom, you need to grow up quickly and wake up. Stick around with me later on and I guarantee you'll be treated well. Remember that I'm your big brother in the future. You must call me Big Bro Little Four later on!" announced Little Four gleefully.

The sleeping baby did not know then that even before he had woken up, he had already been given an extremely lame name by the naughty Little Four. Only when he grew up did he learn how horrible this name was and lodged a firm protest with Boss Lan. Only then did he manage to retrieve his dignity and gain a new name.

Little Four looked at the sleeping baby, his mood buoyant. He nodded happily, knowing that he would have a friend in the future ...

Little Four was lost in the wonderful daydreams of his beautiful future when he suddenly raised his head and frowned. At that instant, he had sensed a spectre that should have been at the trap rapidly approaching his boss's location.

Little Four's figure flickered and he instantly returned to Ling Lan's mindscape to immediately report his findings to Ling Lan.

After finding out, without even having to think about it, Ling Lan sent Little Four out to kill that person. After killing more than a dozen people, Li Lanfeng was drained in both mental energy and spectre power. Ling Lan did not want to tire him out any further and risk unnecessary complications.

Witt, who was hurrying over, suddenly felt a chill run through his body. And then, an overwhelming cascade of familiar yet horrifying spectre power rolled over him. Despite his fast reflexes, allowing him to speedily whip out his own spectre power to defend himself, the power gap between the two was just too wide. His defence only made that wave of energy pause for a brief moment, and then his consciousness was crushed beneath it.

He seemed to feel his soul splitting apart, and then his vision blacked out and he was no longer aware of anything. He had no chance to see his own body slowly becoming white dots to disappear from this virtual world, just like Hollow Ground.

Meanwhile, somewhere else, the spectre Reiter who was calmly approaching his target, the investigation team, suddenly found his own spectre power vibrating violently. This was a warning sign. He stopped abruptly and after using spectre power to protect himself, he began to test his surroundings. He found nothing, however. Puzzled, he shook his head and could only continue to move forwards, but his demeanour was obviously much more cautious than before.

When Little Four reported back to Ling Lan that he had already handled that spectre, Ling Lan's team had already arrived at the exit.

Ling Lan swept a glance over all her team members and then took out that confession from her bag, intending to pass it to Li Lanfeng. "Leopard, safeguard this data. Remember, you absolutely cannot die this whole trip back. You must live to hand this over to the city lord of Grandsweep City, or else the mission will fail."

Li Lanfeng was taken aback by these words. He did not expect Ling Lan to choose him to shoulder this great responsibility. From the very start of the planning of this strategy, it was clear how important this

role was. Li Lanfeng had always thought that this role was certain to be for Qi Long or Luo Lang, because they were the second and third strongest respectively in the team. At the same time, they were also childhood companions of the rabbit, so in terms of trustworthiness, they should be at the top of the list.

But now, this task had been entrusted to him. Li Lanfeng could feel the full extent of the rabbit's trust in him. This moved him greatly. He secretly took a deep breath and then very calmly reached out a hand to accept the data file. Li Lanfeng was now certain that his importance was definitely not much lesser than that of Qi Long, Luo Lang, and the others in the rabbit's heart. He must live up to the rabbit's feelings for him.

Frankly, Li Lanfeng was overthinking things. Ling Lan had chosen Li Lanfeng because she felt that he was a crafty person with a scheming mind and a bellyful of murky water. Furthermore, his mecha control skills were as good as Qi Long's. No matter how you looked at it, he was from the stock of scoundrels whose misdeeds lasted for thousands of years 4 . She believed that even when it was 'game over' for the rest of the team, Li Lanfeng would still be able to live on with vim and vigour 5 . However, this still indirectly displayed Ling Lan's great faith in the leopard — Li Lanfeng had not been moved for nothing.

Ling Lan then turned to look at Qi Long and instructed seriously, "Qi Long, after this, you lead the team members to provide full protection to the leopard. Even if you all die in battle, you cannot let the leopard die."

Qi Long's expression turned solemn. "Yes, Boss!" Qi Long and the others knew very well that the true challenge would only start after this.

"After that, we will move as planned. We will split our forces in two." As Ling Lan signalled with her gaze for her team to move out, she also instructed Little Four within the mindscape, "Carry out the original plan."

Receiving his orders, Little Four immediately rubbed his palms together and got to work. Killing spectres had only been a temporary job — now, it was finally time for him, Little Four, to really showcase his skills.

In one of the dormitories of the makeshift camp accommodating the survivors of the Jinglong mainship, a soldier was constantly looking at the communicator in his hands. Suddenly, an expression of pleasant surprise appeared on his face and he quickly lifted his head to meet the nervous expression of the companions by his side and said, "There's news! The commanding officer has succeeded on their end and has asked us to start moving to take control of the military ship and wait for their return."

At these words, a member of the group who looked to be the leader immediately nodded his head and gave the order. "Good, then let's start acting according to the original plan."

These people immediately sorted out their weapons and quietly left the camp grounds, sneaking their way towards the spaceport of the military vessel. Their objective had been determined early on — the patrol ship which had brought them here in the first place. According to their plan, when the commanding officers came back, they would also sneak into this military vessel, and before anyone in the Swift Dragon base discovered them, they would start the ship and leave this place.

Ling Lan, who had long sussed out their plan, decided to take advantage of the situation and let her team sneak onto the ship in question as well. This way, with these people from the military as their shields, no one would discover their movements.

Qi Long and the others soon left the canteen — they had to rely on themselves after this. Ling Lan watched them leave and sighed softly. A data file suddenly appeared in her hands — it was that confession she had given Li Lanfeng.

The almighty Little Four had already made a perfect copy of the document. Ling Lan would not put all her eggs in one basket — she had entrusted Li Lanfeng with a copy but had also kept a copy for herself. As long as one of them stayed alive, this mission could be completed. This way of doing things was actually against the rules, but with Little Four making adjustments behind the scenes, everything became reasonable and acceptable.

Ling Lan once again kept the document away. She had divided their forces for two reasons. One, she wanted to completely eliminate the hidden threat. She could not let any of the people from the Caesar Empire who had infiltrated the base go, because she could not let any hidden dangers that could threaten her team members in any way to remain. Two, she needed to rescue those Federation investigation team soldiers who were entrenched in trouble. She still needed to use them as shields to deflect attention from her team.

Little Four simulated the commanding officer's communication signal, and after relaying news to those people holding the fort back in the camp, he left Ling Lan to go kill off those hackers hiding in the command centre.

In the meantime, with Little Four providing cover, Ling Lan made her way to the warehouse at top speed. Although there was still one spectre there, having figured out how to control her spiritual power, Ling Lan had the ability to protect herself. Therefore, she was not afraid, and this was also why Little Four felt reassured enough to leave his boss.

In a hidden room of the command centre, 8 black-robed hackers were staring at the time on the screen before them with ashen faces. The initial estimated time for the successful activation of the T-virus had already exceeded 20 minutes — they had already made the preparations to celebrate their triumph, but reality had intruded to slap them in the face. The virtual world of the Federation was still operating normally with no sign at all of anything wrong.

Chapter 342: Mutated Spiritual Self!

D1 and the others were not just sitting around idly. They had been constantly trying to contact D2 and D3 inside the secret base but were unsuccessful till the very end. Despite the good news coming again and again from the warehouse, their mood was steadily becoming worse.

They already had a vague sense that something was wrong — it was likely that an incident had occurred at the secret base. Every time they considered this possibility, their hearts were filled with regret — why had they been so preoccupied with the victory at hand that they had not immediately transferred the spectres on the other end over to help when D2 had requested assistance?

They were even more frustrated and hateful that the Federation army had played a good move by using diversionary tactics to split their forces, destroying their initial sure-win scenario.

“Say, do you think something happened to D2 and D3?” asked the youngest in the group, D10, unable to bear the depressed atmosphere.

The only response he received, however, was silence. Seeing everyone’s mood becoming worse and worse, D1 rallied his spirits and retorted loudly, “Impossible! We just talked to them half an hour ago. D2 said everything was normal then, that the invaders had been successfully intercepted by the mecha teams, while Carter and Pete had also gained the upper hand.”

“Then why hasn’t the T-virus broken out yet?” D10 finally voiced the question in everyone’s hearts. According to D2’s report half an hour ago, the T-virus should have already erupted 20 minutes ago. Why was there still no sign of it now?

D10’s words caused D1 to fall silent again for a few seconds before he opened his mouth again to rasp hoarsely, “Perhaps, some mutation occurred when the T-virus broke out. After all, we have only succeeded once. No one knows what kind of situation might turn up during its complete formation. Or perhaps the virus has a certain incubation period after breaking out and will not immediately manifest itself ...”

D1’s words caused the others to take heart — indeed, just because there was no sign now did not necessarily mean they had failed. They might as well continue trying to establish contact with the secret base. Perhaps they would be able to get in touch with the people there right in the very next second and obtain some great news. Who knew?

Seeing everyone cheered up, D1’s mood lifted a little as well. He continued to say, “Just now, I’ve contacted Reiter. He said he has already sent Witt over. With that, we should find out very soon what has happened on D2’s end, and why we suddenly lost contact.”

After all, this was not their own country’s virtual network. As intruders, there was just no way for them to take complete control. Almost every day, there was the risk of them losing contact amongst their separated groups. It was just that the disconnect had never lasted so long before, previously lasting for at most a few short minutes. D1 reflexively glanced at the procedural activation key he had pre-programmed. He really hoped he would not have to use it ...

Their hopes rekindled, D1’s group continued to try and find out what was going on with the secret base but they still failed. Not long after, they felt a horrifying wave of energy suddenly descend on their heads. Before they could react to it, that wave of energy had crashed down mercilessly.

When D1 sensed that energy wave, his face changed drastically, and he exclaimed in shock, “Spectre ... this cannot be!”

D1 initially thought that the Huaxia Federation had only sent one spectre this time, so they had purposefully lured that spectre and the Federation investigative team to the trap they had set up in advance. After that, they deployed two spectres of their own with the focused task of intercepting and killing that spectre.

When they had seen the other party walking into their trap without suspecting a thing, D1 and the others had barely had any time to rejoice when they had received D2's urgent notification. They found out that the secret base had been invaded by another unidentified team and there was another powerful spectre with the invaders. This fact had soured D1's mood greatly — he had not expected flaws to actually appear in such a foolproof plan as theirs.

However, D1 had not been too concerned. To ensure the security of the secret base, he had kept two spectres there to hold the fort. D1 felt that it should definitely be no problem for two spectres to handle just one enemy spectre.

That's right. This time, in order to ensure the success of project-T, the Caesar Empire had not only dispatched 30 top-class hackers, they had also generously sent four top-class spectres to handle that spectre the Huaxia Federation would send.

D1's planning was actually ideal. Both spots had two spectres in place — they would definitely be able to kill off the two spectres the Federation had sent. What he had never imagined was that they would succeed at the trap but for the secret base area to end up in a deadlock. In this situation where they had the great advantage of 2 versus 1, it was unexpected for the other to be able to hold them off and hold them at a deadlock. It was even more unexpected that he had actually lost contact with D2 and D3 at the last minute.

Frankly, he had already sensed that something was not right, but he also did not want to think or admit that they might fail. Deep down, he still hoped that everything was progressing as planned at the secret base, that this was just normal connection failure and that no accidents had occurred. However, when this great wave of spectre power emerged, D1 knew then that the secret base must be finished.

D1 was not just a simple hacker — at the same time, he had also awakened spectre powers. However, he had chosen to develop his hacker powers because he did not want to lose his freedom. Perhaps he was naturally extraordinarily gifted — his spectre power did not stop evolving despite his choice. He had achieved breakthroughs twice on that end, advancing to advanced level, only one step away from becoming a top-class spectre.

This had always been his secret. He knew that if the Empire military ever found out, he would definitely lose his freedom to become an experimental subject. Therefore, he had always sealed his spectre power away, only revealing his superior hacker abilities.

This was why D1 had still been able to speak even under the wave of horrifying spectre power. Due to the seal, he had a certain degree of resistance against spectre power attacks.

Still, even so, D1 could not escape this full-powered attack of Little Four's. D1 knew very well that under this horrifying spectre power, his spectre power could only provide some instinctive protection for a moment. Soon, just as if surrendering to one's own king, it would automatically release its defence to welcome death.

Inspiration sparked through D1's mind and he instantly realised that this spectre power was definitely not any so-called top-class existence but an existence that had gone beyond top-class. It was perhaps at the rumoured spectre king level, or perhaps even at the level of spectre god which had never before

appeared in the virtual world ... These hypothetical types of existences had been mentioned in some of the research books he had read back when he had been studying about spectres.

D1 watched helplessly as his group D members became white dots and vanished from the virtual world. If not for his spectre powers providing some instinctual token defence, he would probably have already disappeared without a trace like his other companions by now. But even so, he knew he did not have much time left. He saw his own two feet begin to fade away into white spots to vanish into the air ...

“Are you a spectre king, or a spectre god?” asked D1 fearlessly. The black robe concealing his figure had already been stripped away by that horrific wave of spectre power, revealing his original appearance. He was about 24 to 25 years old with handsome features, golden hair, sapphire-blue eyes, and sharply-defined features. These were all characteristics of Caesarians 1 ...

“Eh? Actually still alive?” Little Four, who had initially assumed the sure-death of everyone with one strike, could not help but exclaim at seeing one of his targets still alive. The next second, Little Four appeared before the eyes of D1. The appearance of Little Four, who looked just like a 5 to 6-year-old boy 2 with a little pigtail braid sticking up from his head along with a chubby little figure and short limbs, made D1 stare at him in disbelief.

“How could the Huaxia Federation have a being like you?” It was obvious at a glance that Little Four was a Huaxian 3 . Although D1 knew that the one who had attacked them must be a spectre from the Huaxia Federation, he was dumbfounded upon seeing Little Four’s childish appearance, unable to comprehend the situation. This was because at Little Four’s apparent age, even the most talented spectre would have only be at the stage of awakening. Typically, a newly awakened spectre could only be at a trainee level — being able to advance straight into lower level would already mark one as an extremely aberrant existence, while advancing to intermediate level would mark the possibility of one being a spectre king ...

But no matter how aberrant a child was, it was impossible for one to immediately step into spectre king realm. D1 smiled bitterly — could it be that the Huaxians’ luck was not yet at an end, which was why they could be so lucky as to possess this kind of natural king? D1 could only think so in the end.

Little Four did not answer D1. He only prodded D1’s body and obtained the other’s data. “You’re so strange. Actually having both hacker power and spectre power existing within you at the same time, with both powers achieving quite a high level.” Little Four naturally knew that the coexistence of spectre power and hacker power in this world was forbidden territory.

“I don’t know why either.” Seeing Little Four acting like a little grown up, D1 found the situation hilarious and actually broke out into laughter. Perhaps knowing he was going to die soon, D1 no longer suppressed himself. He might as well be himself without any restraints and laugh if he felt like laughing ...

“Hmm, there is a need for research.” Little Four looked at D1 and perhaps the other’s handsome appearance gave Little Four a favourable impression, for Little Four instantly came to a decision. Little Four reached out a firm little hand towards D1’s brain.

D1 stared in stunned astonishment as Little Four's hands sunk into his brain, and then he felt his soul being grabbed. It was as if his soul was being forcibly extracted from his body, or perhaps like his body was being torn apart ...

"Ah ...!" The intense pain made D1 scream involuntarily, his entire body beginning to shake violently.

However, the agony made his mind extremely clear. In his mind, he had thousands of questions — what was this child planning to do to him? Why did he hurt so badly? Why could the other's hand sink into his brain like this ... but he would not have the chance to ask these questions. By the time Little Four's hand pulled back from his brain, D1 had lost consciousness, falling into darkness. His entire body suddenly shattered with a cracking sound, turning into countless white dots to disappear into the air.

All of Little Four's attention was on his right hand. He did not notice the little finger of D1's right hand twitching right before D1 lost consciousness. Somewhere in the distance, a hidden installation silently activated.

Little Four opened his right hand. In his palm was a bundle of pure energy, shining with an indistinct white light. Little Four studied it closely and very quickly found that within the white-coloured light, there were several strands of gold that were easily overlooked, much finer than silk threads ...

"Yup, as expected, his spiritual self is really rather abnormal. Looks like before Little Blossom wakes up, I won't be that bored anymore." The corners of Little Four's lips curled upwards involuntarily, his eyebrows bowed in a happy curve. It looked like he was in a great mood. "Consider yourself lucky, meeting me, Little Four, in a good mood, giving yourself a chance to live ..."

As he muttered to himself, Little Four pressed that spiritual self onto his body, where it was then absorbed by Little Four to disappear without a trace.

Chapter 343: Use!

Perhaps Little Four was very happy with the day's harvest, or perhaps Little Four wanted to rush back to help his boss earlier ... in any case, he did not check the scene properly before hurriedly leaving the scene. He did not discover a hidden secret command being successfully transmitted.

Right then, Ling Lan had already rushed to the warehouse doors. Along the way, she had moved according to the route that a clone of Little Four had plotted out for her, making her way unimpeded to her destination.

"After this, there are still several traps, but the Federation investigation team has already destroyed them. We can just move ahead at full speed. One more thing. One of the enemy spectres is already close to the investigation team." Little Four's clone, who had initially been reporting coordinates and real-time situations suddenly became talkative.

Ling Lan calmly raised a brow. "Little Four, you're back?"

In the mindscape, Little Four's initially robotic expression collapsed and he said sullenly, "Boss, how did you know?"

Little Four had deliberately kept quiet when he had returned, wanting to see when Boss would notice he had come back. He did not expect to be caught out the moment he opened his mouth. This made Little Four feel very hurt.

“Your clone doesn’t say any nonsense,” Ling Lan responded evenly. Although Little Four had many clones, his clones were all very mechanical. They were like programmes with specific settings, meticulously carrying out their tasks. Only Little Four’s true body would possess strong emotions which were very obviously reflected in his tone of speech.

Ling Lan’s words dealt a double blow to Little Four. So it turned out his clones were that lame — from tomorrow onwards, he must improve his clones’ intelligence ...

“Finished off all those people?” Ling Lan asked Little Four as she continued to move forwards at high speed.

At this question, Little Four was instantly revived in full spirits. He lifted a victory ‘V’ sign up high and said excitedly, “Of course, with me, Little Four, in charge, success is naturally guaranteed.”

“Found nothing unusual?” Little Four was often careless, so Ling Lan could not help but check with him again.

Little Four thought of that spiritual entity he had put in a secret room in preparation for research and wondered whether that was considered something unusual. However, since Boss had asked him to erase everyone, that spiritual self he had extracted should be his spoils of victory ... it should be fine not to tell Boss about it. Little Four hesitated for a moment but eventually decided that he would report to Boss after his research bore some fruit. Besides, he had already defied his boss in secret so many times already — one more time wouldn’t hurt.

Thus, Little Four decisively shook his head and said, “Nothing unusual.”

Ling Lan trusted Little Four very much. Thus, hearing Little Four say so, she did not inquire further. Ling Lan knew that time was tight — since Little Four was already back, she immediately headed deeper into the warehouse at her greatest speed. In other words, she was charging towards the troubled investigation team.

All the way, not a single NPC soldier showed up to intercept her. There were countless corpses lying beside each checkpoint — it looked like the investigation team was very thorough, making sure not to leave any loose ends, which saved Ling Lan quite a bit of trouble.

When they had two checkpoints left to go, Little Four suddenly reminded, “Boss, the spectre has already met up with the team. It looks like he is about to begin attacking them. Do you want me to immediately go over and kill the enemy?”

Ling Lan’s footsteps paused abruptly but instantly resumed again. Maintaining her original speed, she continued moving towards the two parties. She was silent for about 20 seconds before responding, “No need. Wait for me to arrive at the destination, then we’ll see.”

Indeed. If Little Four took action, they could indeed easily rescue all these people, but how would they explain things after rescuing them? Little Four’s actions would undoubtedly tell the investigation team that there was still an unidentified third party at work in the Swift Dragon base. They would definitely

report this to military headquarters when they returned, and even if they knew that the third party were allies and not enemies, the Federation military would still want to investigate things thoroughly.

Ling Lan did not have the confidence to keep everything under wraps in the face of a full-force investigation by the military. Moreover, she also did not trust the mainframe of Mecha World. If the Federation military tried to obtain information from it, the mainframe might just hand over their mission details to the military ...

Well, even if the Federation military discovered anything, it would not be a big deal. Ling Lan believed that her father Ling Xiao would definitely suppress the matter — he would never allow the military to disrupt their regular military academy life. Still, Ling Lan was afraid that the traitor lurking within the higher levels of the military administration would leak their information to the Caesar Empire. The set-up which had trapped Ling Xiao those many years ago had let Ling Xiao confirm that there was a traitor within military headquarters. On this, Ling Lan agreed whole-heartedly.

If Caesar really learned of their involvement, she and her companions would definitely be swept into an endless chain of threats and attempts on their lives. Caesar would definitely never let them go for destroying the perfect set-up they had painstakingly arranged over the span of a whole 16 years. Just imagine. If it had not been for Ling Lan's group, Caesar would have already obtained the fruits of success.

Ling Lan had indeed rushed over with the intent of rescuing these Federation soldiers, because Ling Lan had been using them from the start.

The moment Ling Lan had arrived at the Swift Dragon base, she had already asked Little Four to comprehend the full situation at the base. They had discovered that there was a bunch of people from a powerful but unidentified faction within the base, who had successfully replaced the mainframe in taking control of the highest clearance command rights of the Swift Dragon base. In other words, the Swift Dragon base was an NPC base controlled by the mainframe in name only. In fact, these NPCs were now already subordinates of the opponent; the mainframe's authority had been superseded.

Meanwhile, Little Four had also discovered five spectres lurking within the base. Among them, one was part of the investigation team sent by military headquarters, while there were as many as four from the unidentified faction. This situation as reported by Little Four had made Ling Lan's heart heavy with worry. The presence of spectres meant that their mission this time had become extremely dangerous — any unfortunate slip might result in them losing their lives. Even though she had Little Four, this nature-defying protective talisman, around, she still could not dare to guarantee she would be able to protect all her team members flawlessly.

Spectres were known as 'death gods' in the virtual world. Their abilities indeed defied nature and were terrifying. Any bit of negligence and you would be caught — they could instantly destroy a player's brain region. Those who were turned into idiots but kept their lives could still be considered lucky; many more would be directly reduced to brain-dead vegetables with no hope of waking up again for the rest of their lives.

So, despite having located their secret base on the first day, Ling Lan had not dared to act impetuously. Four spectres and close to thirty top-class hackers. Even though Little Four had assured her that it was no problem, Ling Lan still did not dare to take risks with the lives of her team members.

Even if Ling Lan had no other strengths, patience was her most prominent character strength. Without full confidence to ensure safety, Ling Lan would strongly suppress the urge to act and pretend she knew nothing. Thus, she had calmly waited at the Swift Dragon base for several days.

Until tonight, when the opportunity finally came. The investigation team the Federation military had sent finally could not restrain themselves any longer and had prepared a night-time excursion to investigate. At first, Ling Lan thought the investigative team would be choosing to enter the secret base her team had found. But unexpectedly, the other team had been successfully lured away by the enemy to a different location, which was the warehouse base that Little Four had long discovered was a trap.

Ling Lan knew that if these people fell for the trap, it would be hard to say what the outcome would be. Over there, there had been more than ten top-class hackers monitoring the area comprehensively, and three strong and powerful mecha warriors and two spectres waiting on full alert. The moment the unwitting investigation team was ambushed, they would have been likely to be completely wiped out. Back then, Ling Lan had had the impulse to go inform the other, but in the end, Ling Lan calmed herself down. She chose the cold-blooded option of observing from the side-lines, because she needed to take responsibility for the safety of her companions.

Despite her rational decision, Ling Lan still felt a little guilty with regards to these soldiers. Thus, once she had finished her own mission, she decided to rush over to rescue them out. Of course, another main reason for this was that she still needed the team to be her team's shields.

Still, rescuing these people needed to be done under the precondition that her team would not be exposed. If rescuing the other team would increase the danger to her own team, Ling Lan would absolutely choose to continue observing from the side-lines. This was why when Little Four suggested she go ahead first to kill the enemy and save the team, Ling Lan had coldly rejected the proposal.

Ling Lan pushed her speed to the limit. It had to be said that the virtual world of this world had been simulated to be as realistic as possible, faithfully reflecting real-world physiques inside the virtual world. Ling Lan's strength at a half step to Domain let her move through the virtual world like the wind. Leaving behind but a fleeting shadow, she had disappeared from sight.

About 40 seconds later, Ling Lan silently arrived at the ambush point. Although the opponent had a number of hackers comprehensively monitoring each corner, with Little Four's cover, Ling Lan naturally would not be discovered.

Ling Lan was very surprised; only the three guarding the door were dead. The other people were all still alive and accounted for, but their situation was bad. Every one of them had been isolated and surrounded by enemies. Ling Lan quickly understood the enemies' intent. They had not chosen to kill the team because they were waiting for their spectre to come erase the men directly. The people from the Caesar Empire were similarly afraid that when these people died in the virtual world and reappeared at a resurrection point, they would report to the Huaxia Federation and give the Federation time to prepare.

When the investigation team of the Federation saw the enemy's spectre appear, they understood what the enemy was planning. Several warriors tried to kill themselves but were stopped by the enemies surrounding them. They had no chance to commit suicide even if they wanted to now.

Seeing this, the commanding officer grimaced. “We’ve been tricked. Still, I cannot understand, Whether or not we get resurrected, it will still expose the fact that something has gone wrong at the Swift Dragon base. At most, you all can only delay things for several days.” The moment they died, it would prove that the Swift Dragon base had been invaded by some unidentified faction with spectres in tow. This was because only spectres could obliterate a player’s brain. The military would definitely dispatch countless spectres over at first notice to hunt and kill these invaders, unless the enemy managed to completely retreat from the base over the next few days.

“Just a delay of a few days will be enough. One more thing — preventing your suicides is not because we’re afraid of you all going back to report. All your resurrection points have already been set to the Swift Dragon base anyway. We just don’t want to bother with the time and effort needed to go erase you all at the resurrection point.” Reiter laughed when he heard what the commander had to say, following up with an explanation as to why they had prevented the other from killing themselves.

The commanding officer’s expression changed at these words and he quickly looked up the relevant details. Sure enough, a few days ago, when they had first landed at the Swift Dragon base, the system had sent a notification telling them that their resurrection point had automatically been changed to the Swift Dragon base. In other words, even if they had committed suicide, they would still be unable to return to Mecha World’s central district. They would still be resurrected here in the Swift Dragon base.

Chapter 344: Rest In Peace!

The commanding officer knew very well that in Mecha World, there was no login point at the Swift Dragon base. In other words, as long as they were still in the Swift Dragon base, they would have no way at all of leaving the virtual world, let alone report to military headquarters. It looked the other’s true intention was indeed not to stop them from reporting but to kill off all of them.

“You all are going too far,” said the commanding officer through gritted teeth. He knew that the odds were truly stacked against their side this time — their only hope was that the enemy only had one spectre ...

Reiter did not get angry in response; they had planned to turn the Huaxia Federation upside down to begin with. Right then, he was still preoccupied with thoughts of the secret base. After all, it was already time for the T-virus to break out yet there was still no unusual signs. This made him rather anxious. Thus, he did not want to speak any further with this commanding officer of the Federation. Circulating his spectre power, he poured it out in a torrent at the other ...

Seeing that things were going south, the commanding officer quickly shared a look with an extremely plain-looking warrior, and then the two of them leapt up. One of them spun into a whirlwind sidekick, while the other let go a flurry of kicks in the air, and they actually managed to send the people surrounding them flying. The next second, they came to the side of an army clerk who had been taking notes all the way and did not seem like he had a lot of combat power and took up protective stances on both sides of him.

In a world invisible to normal humans, two powerful forces collided forcefully. The bodies of Reiter and that clerk shuddered in unison.

Reiter's expression changed. "Spectre." Who would have expected that there would still be another spectre in hiding within the Huaxia Federation team? If he had not arrived in time, the people ambushing on their own side might have been in danger.

The clerk said nothing, only staring coldly back at Reiter. From their one clash, he had understood that the other's spectre power was probably stronger than his by a hair. A trace of regret flashed across his eyes. If he had known the other side had spectres, he would have long killed off all these enemies when they had surrounded his team. In order to figure out the backgrounds of the enemy, they had chosen to tolerate and hold back temporarily. But from the looks of it now, that had been a huge miscalculation.

For the mission this time, in order to guarantee success, military headquarters had sent two spectres on the mission, one overtly, the other covertly. The exposed spectre was Hollow Ground, while the hidden spectre was him, impersonating an army clerk among the investigation team. With the exception of the commanding officer and his adjutant, no one else, not even Hollow Ground, knew of his true identity.

The reason he had been tasked as the hidden spectre was that his spectre powers were rather unique and special. As long as he did not use his spectre power, his entire aura would be just like a regular person's — no one would sense anything strange about him. It should be known that all spectres carried a trace of danger on their aura to some extent. Spectres were extremely sensitive to this trace on the auras of other spectres, so the moment another spectre came within the range of their senses, they would very quickly detect the presence of kin. This special trait of his allowed him to play the role of hidden spectre on many a mission, and this time was no exception.

Thus, when they discovered the enemy was a spectre, the commanding officer and his adjutant had quickly rushed to the hidden spectre's side. Indeed, his spectre power was still pretty decent, but his physical attack capabilities were just like other spectres — terrible.

"I just want to know ... what has happened to our people at the gates?" asked the clerk hoarsely, a hand pressed to his chest, trying to calm the roiling blood and qi within it. Seeing the other rush in from the outside, he already had an inkling that something had gone wrong. Hollow Ground was most likely in trouble, but he still hoped that Hollow Ground was safe and had not died in battle.

Reiter chuckled in response and said, "Since I'm here, what do you think happened to those comrades of yours?"

The clerk's expression turned grim. "Hollow Ground, he is very strong." The connotation being — trying to trick me? No way.

"Oh? So he was called Hollow Ground?" A mocking smirk appeared on Reiter's lips. "He refused to reveal his code name to the very end, saying that he could not disgrace his country ..."

"Bullshit, Hollow Ground can't be dead," retorted the clerk. Hollow Ground was one of the top ten spectres of the Federation — how could he fall so easily here?

Seeing this, Ling Lan had an idea. She asked, "Little Four, can you imitate the energy signature of other spectres?" Every spectre had a unique aura due to the signature of their spectre power — those familiar to it would very easily recognise a spectre by it, so there would be no incidents of accidental injury.

“Of course I can.” Little Four pursed his lips, thinking that Boss was truly underestimating him too much by asking this question.

“That’s great then. Wait for a moment. When you hear my command, immediately imitate Hollow Ground’s energy signature and take the opportunity to kill the Caesar hacker.” Ling Lan’s eyes lit up, her plan taking form. “Of course, make it look like a mutual destruction scenario.”

Little Four’s eyes lit up at these words. This was a game he had never played before. He quickly nodded, indicating that he would do everything his boss said.

Meanwhile, Reiter could see that his opponent was shaken. His gaze flashed and he decided to continue agitating the other, because a spectre who had lost his composure would very easily reveal some weaknesses ...

“All alone, he is very strong, but our side has more than one spectre.” Reiter smiled placidly. At these words, the clerk’s face paled. This was the potential scenario he had been most afraid of. One spectre alone would definitely not have been able to defeat Hollow Ground.

Taking advantage of this window of time while the opponent was still riled up, Reiter once again slyly sent a quick bolt of spectre power at the opponent in a sneak attack. However, Reiter was disappointed — though the clerk looked like he was not using his spectre powers, he had actually been on guard all this time. Sensing the opponent’s spectre power attacking, his own power rose up to meet it instinctively.

Yet, the clerk knew that dragging things out like this with pure force would not end well for them. Even as he blocked the other spectre’s attack, he threw a pointed glance at the commander, signalling for the other to find a chance and escape immediately ...

These two attacks had given Reiter a pretty good idea of the opponent’s strength, which was a hair weaker than his. Still, to finish off the opponent, he would first need to exhaust the other’s spectre power — this would be a drawn-out battle of attrition. At this thought, Reiter began to regret sending Witt back to the secret base so soon ...

There was still no news from the secret base thus far (Reiter did not know that the mediating contact, D1 and his team, had already been wiped out by Little Four). Reiter began to feel anxious. He knew very well what they had come here to do. If something happened at the secret base, the loss would not be mitigated even if he killed off everyone here.

Reiter’s thoughts settled — he would not waste any more time. Mature and experienced spectres all had their own trump cards. For example, the trump card of his last opponent, Hollow Ground, had been that final deathblow. Similarly, as the team leader of the spectres in this operation, he too had his own trump card.

And so, Reiter’s spectre power, which had already been stronger than his opponent by a little, suddenly became several times stronger. This took the clerk by surprise — with an involuntary grunt, he spewed out a mouthful of blood and his face turned as white as paper. This caused the expression of the commanding officer standing by his side to shift. The commander threw a look at his adjutant and the adjutant immediately grabbed hold of the clerk and began running towards the outside of the enemy’s enclosure with the commander right behind them.

At the same time, some of their other team members suddenly broke free of their restraints and began attacking wildly. These actions flustered the people surrounding them, afraid that if they accidentally killed the opponents, they would die and resurrect elsewhere on the Swift Dragon base and cause further trouble for them.

Seeing this, Reiter shouted, "Impudence!" An overwhelming wave of spectre power rolled out to smash these Federation soldiers trying to make their last stand.

The clerk gritted his teeth and used the final bit of his spectre power to spread out a defensive shield to protect these brave comrades of his.

The power of the two spectres clashed violently once more and the clerk could not stop himself from throwing out mouthful after mouthful of blood. He could already feel his defensive shield about to be crushed by the opponent. At that time, it would be time for all of them to die. He was still too weak ...

A deep surge of regret and unwillingness rose within the clerk's heart. If only he were as strong as Hollow Ground, perhaps then he would have been able to protect all these people and let them live. He could almost hear the sounds of shattering coming from his defensive shield. Just as he was about to give up hope and just wait for death to descend ...

"Little Four, do it now!" Seeing this, Ling Lan ordered decisively.

A powerful surge of spectre power appeared suddenly to intercept the other spectre's power. The clerk's gaze brightened — it was Hollow Ground!

Hollow Ground successfully blocked the opponent's attack; when Reiter sensed this familiar power signature, his expression changed drastically and he was screaming in his heart that this was impossible.

Yes, he had clearly seen the other become white spots to vanish in the virtual world. He had confirmed that the other's consciousness had been erased under his and Witt's combined power ... so why then would the spectre power belonging to Hollow Ground appear here at this time? He could not understand it. He was afraid. But he would no longer have any chance to ask any questions, because even as that wave of power blocked his attack, it leapt at him in a counterattack.

The strength behind the counterattack did not feel that strong, but Reiter found that his own spectre power was rapidly fading away. He was pushed back again and again, till he was actually being overpowered by the other's power ...

This made no sense 1 ! This was Reiter's final thought, because this change had occurred within the blink of an eye. Before Reiter could react, he had been erased by this seemingly unimpressive spectre power ...

Everyone present saw the initially forceful and imperious Reiter suddenly explode into white spots that rapidly disappeared. The faces of the Caesarians changed; Reiter's sudden death let them know that things were not good. In contrast, this scene was like a shot of heart tonic to the soldiers of the Huaxia Federation, and they found their battle prowess magnified by several multiples ...

Only the clerk had a sorrowful expression on his face. He could sense that as the enemy spectre's power had dissipated, Hollow Ground's spectre power had also begun to dissipate.

From the spectre power of Hollow Ground that had yet to dissipate from the air, the clerk could almost feel the other's dense reluctance to die, as well as his relief that his companions were safe and unharmed. The clerk was well aware that Hollow Ground had only died because that last attack was Hollow Ground's final trump card. The trump cards of Federation spectres were basically all methods of mutual destruction. This was related to the unyielding character of the Huaxian people ... Hollow Ground must have already been on his last legs 2 after going through consecutive battles, yet he had still rushed over to save them. In the end, he had even sacrificed his life to save them.

Hollow Ground, rest in peace! The clerk closed his damp eyes, pushing down the grief in his mind.

Chapter 345: Ultimate Weapon!

When the clerk opened his eyes again once more, there was no longer any trace of sorrow within his eyes. All that was left was an endless coldness. Since Hollow Ground had left his hopes of life to them, then he would have to complete the mission Hollow Ground had handed to him — he would protect his team members and make sure they escaped from this place.

The clerk stared coldly at the enemies who were beginning to panic. Ignoring his injuries, he forcefully circulated his spectre power which was nearly exhausted to wipe out all the enemies' consciousness. Let these people be sacrificial offerings for Hollow Ground ...

However, forcefully overdrafting his spectre power made the clerk pay a heavy price. For some time after this, he would not be able to use his spectre power at all. Still, the clerk felt that it was worth it!

Seeing the clerk kill off all of the enemies, the commander and his adjutant instantly breathed a mental sigh of relief. Looking at their other team members who had survived with them, they had a strong sense of having evaded a disaster. However, their mood became heavy again very soon, because the clerk told them that he was unable to use his spectre power for the time being. In other words, he could no longer protect them, so it would probably be dangerous to continue staying here. No one could tell whether that unidentified faction had any other spectres with them after all.

As such, the commander quickly decided to withdraw his entire team. On the way, they did not forget to send a message to their waiting companions about the plan to control the starship — they would follow their original plan to escape from the Swift Dragon base.

Although they were not sure where this unidentified faction had come from, they already knew that the Swift Dragon base was now under the enemy's control. Their mission was pretty much completed. Furthermore, the commander was afraid that there were still other spectres in the base. In order to protect the lives of his team members, he needed to bring his team members to escape from this place as soon as possible.

Little Four, who had been secretly monitoring them all this while, immediately intercepted the message they sent and fabricated an 'order received' message from the targeted waiting team in response to the commander's message.

Meanwhile, at this time, at the spaceport of the Swift Dragon base, the Federation soldiers who had already taken action earlier had taken control of the starship without any difficulty. They did not know

that they had accomplished it so easily because Little Four had already finished off all the top-class hackers from Caesar controlling the base. Otherwise, even though they still had a hacker providing cover by creating false information, they would have still been discovered by the enemy hackers controlling the base.

They waited patiently for the commander's arrival on the starship; they had sent the news of their success to the commander when they had taken control of the ship. However, the commander's team seemed to have encountered some difficulty, for he only sent a message telling them to wait patiently before going silent. This made the waiting team begin to feel a little uneasy.

Sure enough, it was not long before they noticed that the defence of the Swift Dragon base had suddenly tightened up. The guards of the base had begun closely examining the NPC survivors at the temporary camp. This made them even more anxious and worried. They were anxious that they were about to be exposed, and they were also worried that it would become infinitely more difficult for the commander's team to sneak back to the starship.

However, after waiting for about half an hour, the commander sent another message: '*Already here. Open the emergency access. Let us board. Let us board.*' The arrival of this news was an instant relief to the waiting soldiers.

The commander's team silently boarded the starship; the entire process was so smooth and unhindered that they almost could not believe it. Many times, it had clearly seemed as if the other party was about to discover them, but then the other side would be strangely drawn away by something to head in another direction instead. Puzzled, they could only believe that their luck today must be off the charts allowing them to sail through danger again and again.

In order to ensure security, the Federation soldiers who were there earlier had already killed off all the NPC soldiers guarding the starship. This allowed the commander's team to instantly relax once they boarded. They did not hesitate to go directly to the main control room of the starship. With the limited amount of manpower they had, they could only focus on getting the starship safely started; they had no mind to bother with the other areas of the ship.

Anxious to rejoin his comrades, the commander did not notice that not long after they left the emergency access, the access opened again silently. Ling Lan, who had been following them all this way, quietly slipped into the starship.

Little Four mastered the entire starship instantly and very soon found the hiding spots of Qi Long and the others.

Without hesitation, Ling Lan walked towards Qi Long and the others' hiding places. Her arrangements had been set — now, she only needed to wait patiently for these Federation soldiers to start the starship and bring them back to the central district.

On the way to reunite with Qi Long and the others, Little Four did not forget to brag about his achievements in the mindscape. The communications between both the Federation parties were actually fake — Little Four had intercepted all messages on both ends before sending them out at the perfect timings, leaving no signs of his involvement.

The moment the commander arrived at the control room, without giving himself time to catch his breath, he had already begun instructing his team members to take over the operations of the various key procedures of the starship. Once everything was prepared, he gave the order to start the starship.

While the starship was still, the NPCs of the Swift Dragon base had not noticed anything amiss here. But when it was suddenly activated, the loud roar of its engines and the energy response it gave out instantly startled the calm spaceport into wakefulness. Everyone in the Swift Dragon base knew immediately that their starship had been hijacked by an unknown faction.

This made the administrators of the Swift Dragon base extremely angry. They decisively dispatched the armoured missile troops of the base to bombard the starship, trying to destroy the ship before it fully activated.

Everyone in the starship stared nervously at the activation progress of the starship. For the starship to launch and fly, it needed to gather 100% of its power, and the prep time for this was a full three minutes. Everyone knew that these three minutes would very likely determine whether they would be able to escape from the Swift Dragon base.

“Commander, they’ve fired the attack missiles,” reported a team member, having seen the warning sign on the screen of the radar he was monitoring.

“Activate the defensive shield first,” said the commander through clenched teeth in the end, after considering several options in his mind in quick succession.

“Yes!” Another team member in charge of operating the defence system decisively turned on the defensive shield. The power store which had been shored up to 10% dropped in one go to rock bottom again. In other words, the starship had to start shoring up energy all over again.

Still, the commander’s directive was correct. Activating the beam shield prevented the many missiles from destroying the main body of the starship. But even so, the explosive force of the missiles shook the starship around enough to make the people inside stagger.

In the #3 mecha hold of the starship, Ling Lan’s team were already seated in the standard mecha of this starship within secure seats. The anti-shock system of the mecha themselves was also much more stable than that of the starship, so despite feeling the vibrations, they were not as thrown by it as the people in the control room.

Seeing this, Qi Long’s loud voice rang out again in the team’s comms. “D*mn, this mission is just too exciting! Whether going or returning, it’s all so thrilling!”

“If it wasn’t thrilling, would it be called an SSS-rank?” responded Han Jijyun lightly, leaving Qi Long speechless.

Several soft snickers could be heard within the channel — it was Xie Yi, Lin Zhong-qing, and the others. To make Qi Long shut up, other than Boss Lan, only Han Jijyun could do it.

The others were still alright, but Chang Xinyuan was rather nervous. He could not help but ask, “We’ll be fine, right?”

Ever since Ling Lan had brought up the fact that if they died here, they would revive within the Swift Dragon base and not the central district, Chang Xinyuan had been afraid he would die here due to the little bit of mecha control skills of his that were utter rubbish. That would hold the team back, forcing Boss Lan and the others to turn back to save him.

“Yes. The defensive shield has already been activated. The anti-aircraft missiles of the base won’t do much damage to the starship,” replied Ling Lan evenly. Little Four was faithfully reflecting everything that was happening in the control room to her mindspace.

Ling Lan’s words made everyone on the team calm down. They knew that it was not as simple as Boss Lan had said to escape from the Swift Dragon base. Every base possessed ultimate weapons to deal with starships and powerful mecha — their only hope was that the supreme commander of the Swift Dragon base would choose not to utilise those weapons out of concern that there might be soldiers from the base on the starship.

Finally, the starship’s power gauge was full. The commander shouted joyfully, “Start moving at low speed!”

Amidst the echoes of this order, the team member in charge of operating the starship slowly lifted the head of the starship and the starship slowly rose into the air.

At this time, witnessing this scene, the command team of the command centre turned to look anxiously at the supreme commander of the Swift Dragon base, awaiting his final order.

The supreme commander calmly zoomed in on the image of the starship and then slammed a hand onto the screen. He ordered, “Activate the ultimate weapon, the magnetic energy beam cannon.”

At this command, everyone’s expressions shifted. Even though some still felt it was rather inappropriate, in the strictly hierarchal NPC world, the lower level officers did not dare to voice any objections.

By this time, the starship had already pulled several hundred metres away from the ground. As long as it could rise up to a height of 2000 metres, it could shift from low speed to high speed and leave the gravity pull of the base’s planet to truly enter outer space. Only at that time would they truly be safe. Everyone in the starship’s control room had cold sweat pouring from their foreheads. This was generally the most dangerous period for starships — this was the moment where starships were most easily struck by weaponry attacks from the ground.

Suddenly, the team member monitoring the surrounding situation yelled out in horror, “The base has activated its ultimate weapon! We’ll be shot down ...”

The commander rushed over when he heard this. On the edges of the base, he saw what had seemed to be a large but normal, barren mountain suddenly split open, a massive cannon barrel slowly rising from its depths. Although only its head was currently visible, the commander could tell what it was with just one look. His face instantly drained of all colour.

If the starship was destroyed, even though they would not really die, with their resurrection point set to the Swift Dragon base, it would not be long before they were certain to become the prisoners of the opponent. The commander did not have the confidence to successfully lead his team in escaping death for the second time. By the time headquarters noticed anything wrong and sent more people to stage a

rescue, it would still be a month later at the very quickest ... if the unknown enemy still had spectres hidden within the secret base, they might really end up losing all their lives here.

At this time, the adjutant who had been standing quietly behind the commander all this time suddenly spoke up to say, "I'll go."

Chapter 346: Death Descends!

The commander understood what the adjutant meant and immediately retorted, "No, that's too dangerous." Even though the adjutant's strength was infinitely close to imperial level, he had still not reached it after all. Relying on the defensive shield of an ace mecha alone against the base's ultimate weapon would at most buy the starship another ten to twenty seconds ...

"We can't just sit here and wait for death. If we can earn a bit more time, then we need to fight our hardest for it," argued the adjutant passionately.

"But, if anything happens to you, you will have no choice but to remain at the Swift Dragon base." The commander told the adjutant the likely outcome of his actions.

"That's still better than having everyone remain here. If by any chance something happens to me, as long as you all live to return, then you'll be able to submit a timely report. That will make it much faster for a rescue team to be sent ... I believe that I should still be able to hold out for a short three to four days," said the adjutant with a determined air. It could not be denied that he possessed the self-confidence and pride of an ace mecha operator deep in his bones.

The commander cast a silent look at the adjutant, then nodded solemnly and said, "Fine. Go and make your preparations. I'll let the members of team C act as your personal JMC to guide your movements." At this point, the commander paused for a moment before adding a final statement, "Take care!"

The adjutant saluted respectfully. "Yes! Sir!" Done speaking, he resolutely turned to leave the control room of the starship. As he turned, all the members of the control room, including the commander, silently saluted him. This was a sign of respect as well as a blessing for a comrade.

Meanwhile, on Ling Lan's end, she had received news of the activation of the Swift Dragon base's ultimate weapon at first notice. This made her mood turn extremely grim, for every base had its own ultimate weapon whose power was exceedingly horrifying. It was the last resort to protect a base — a sure-kill weapon against starships and powerful mecha. No matter how strong the starship's energy shield was, it would at most be able to endure one strike from this weapon. After that one strike, the starship's accumulated power would be completely depleted. It could be imagined that a starship without an energy shield would be a blatant sitting duck — any slightly powerful weapon would be able to riddle the starship with holes.

This development had pushed Ling Lan's team into a dire situation. The moment they died, their mission would be judged as a failure. Moreover, the key thing was that they could not leave the Swift Dragon base either if that happened, and so would have no way of returning to the real world. Sure enough, an SSS-rank mission was extremely insane. Even the ultimate weapon of a base had been brought into play.

Seeing the adjutant volunteer, an idea sparked in Ling Lan's mind. She said to Qi Long, "Qi Long, later, no matter what happens, you must bring the team back alive to the central district and complete our mission."

Qi Long did not understand why his boss was saying this, but whatever Boss said to do, he would of course do his best to do. Thus, he acknowledged the order seriously.

Li Lanfeng was stunned by Ling Lan's words, but he quickly figured out the other's intent. With a shift in his expression, he said, "Rabbit, you're going out?" Instantly, Ling Lan's half-dead, battered appearance after he had intercepted the magnetic tsunami with an imperial mecha appeared in Li Lanfeng's mind's eye, and Li Lanfeng felt his heart shudder.

Li Lanfeng's words instantly enlightened the other members of the team about what Ling Lan was planning to do. They all immediately spoke up in protest — they did not want to lose contact with Boss again.

Seeing this, Ling Lan cast a cold glance at everyone and then said calmly, "Obey my orders!"

Although Ling Lan's tone of voice was extremely calm, her team members still felt a chill permeate their bodies. This cooled their ardent spirits instantaneously — their courage frozen in its tracks — and they did not dare to object any further.

Only Li Lanfeng was not frightened into silence by Ling Lan. Perhaps due to his exceptionally strong mental fortitude, or perhaps out of courage due to his deep concern, he once again spoke up to say, "Rabbit, if you want to go, I'll go with you." He absolutely would not leave the rabbit behind and escape on his own.

Ling Lan merely controlled her mecha to reach out its right hand and tapped Li Lanfeng's mecha lightly on its head. "Leopard, you are still too weak. If you want to help me, improve your strength first. Otherwise, following me will just hold me back. Also, I have faith in you. Don't let me down."

That said, Ling Lan walked out of her mecha's secured seat and let Little Four command the transport system of the ship to move her mecha to the launching device of the ejection port.

Li Lanfeng was saddened by Ling Lan's words. So he was actually that weak in his rabbit's heart and was holding the other back? These words were truly quite hurtful ... he sat within his cockpit and clenched his fists, cursing his infirm body for the first time.

No, he could not be discouraged just like that. Next time, he must make the rabbit understand that he, Li Lanfeng, was capable enough to fight by his side. Li Lanfeng touched the document in his bag. Since he could not help the rabbit at his current level of strength, then he could not disappoint the rabbit any further. He must live to hand this document over to the city lord of Grandsweep City and complete the rabbit's clan-formation mission.

When she found out that the adjutant had already been ejected successfully, Ling Lan then let Little Four arrange for her to be ejected by the starship's launch system. Of course, due to Little Four's interference, the figure of Ling Lan's mecha did not appear on the large display screen of the starship control room. This was also why Ling Lan dared to launch herself into space so blatantly; her movements would never be discovered by these Federation soldiers.

Finally, the base's ultimate weapon was revealed in its entirety. Viewing the image Little Four transmitted over, Ling Lan could not help but feel frightened. Just looking at its outer appearance, one could tell that this was a powerful ultimate weapon. Its ferocious form and its muzzle, which was several tens of metres wide in radius, were signs of how horrific the energy it would blast out was sure to be. A magnetic storm was scary because its associated energy turbulence was too vast and enduring, while an ultimate weapon was horrifying because it focused all its massive power onto a single point. This allowed it to very easily wipe out a target it had locked onto.

"Based on the outer shape of this weapon, I've found some relevant data. It's part of the Federation ultimate weapon series: a magnetic energy beam cannon! It has powerful attack capacity — capable of smashing through all of its target's external defence systems, and at the same time, the terrible magnetic energy it carries can destroy the internal systems of its target." Little Four immediately told Ling Lan all about the ultimate weapon of the Swift Dragon base, giving Ling Lan a good idea of what to expect.

"What a troublesome thing." Ling Lan frowned. Such powerful energy ... if they relied on the Pulsing King Shield of her imperial mecha, they could actually still withstand it. The problem was that the weapon possessed magnetic energy capable of destroying a mecha's internal system as well. This would affect the power circulatory system in the mecha. An imperial mecha without power support would actually be no different from the average mecha.

She glanced at the x192 high-glazed nuclear power source equipped on the imperial mecha and hoped it would be reliable enough to withstand an attack from the magnetic energy beam cannon.

Right then, the starship had successfully climbed up to about 1500 metres. Meanwhile, the ultimate weapon, the magnetic energy beam cannon, had finally stored up enough energy as well to reveal its savage side. A magnetic energy beam shot out from the base, aimed right for the starship suspended in the air.

"Concentrate all power on the point being attacked!" bellowed the commander. At this moment, he had lost his usual composure. If this ultimate weapon was too strong, they might not even be able to withstand one blow.

The magnetic energy beam slammed heavily into the defensive shield of the starship. The power of its blast lasted a whole 20 seconds. During these 20 seconds, the starship was shaken violently by the powerful energy attack. Everyone in the control room was almost thrown to the ground. However, these soldiers were all battle-hardened warriors. They clutched tightly to the control panel before them, and thus were not sent tumbling by the violent vibrations.

Twenty seconds later, when the final bit of the beam from the magnetic energy beam cannon faded away, only then was it discovered that the starship remained high up in the air, but its appearance was battered and dark. The dull and bleak looking outer hull of the starship proved that the starship's power had been utterly depleted; it could no longer maintain its energy shield.

The high-ranking officers in the control room of the base could not help but cheer at the sight. A smile appeared on the supreme commander's face, and then he ordered decisively, "Let the armoured missile troops continue to attack."

When the armoured missile troop on the ground received this command, they once again fired their missiles. But very quickly, they found that their attacks were futile. An ace mecha had appeared beneath the starship, and it was striking down any missiles that were attacking the starship. Before the missiles could reach the starship, the mecha had already shot them down.

When the command centre heard this news, everyone waited for the supreme commander's orders.

The supreme commander frowned as he looked at the grandstanding ace mecha in the sky and then also looked at the starship struggling desperately to replenish its power. He gave a decisive order. "Fire the second round of the magnetic energy beam cannon!"

When the starship's main control room saw the ultimate weapon of the base begin to flash and accumulate light again, the men's faces turned terribly pale. "Sir, they're preparing to fire the second round. Are we done for?"

Seeing that the starship had only recovered 17% of its power, despair was present in everyone's hearts. A full 100% power level had only been barely enough to block the attack of that magnetic energy beam cannon. However, the result of all that effort was still an inevitable 13% damage done to the starship. Fortunately, the crucial flight system of the starship had not been destroyed; this was their good fortune.

"Speed up power accumulation. We can only gather up to 50% power. Whether or not we reach the required altitude, we'll have to switch to high-speed operation." With a grit of his teeth, the commander prepared to take this final gamble. He looked at the ace mecha struggling to defend the starship — he would place his hopes on the other, hoping that the other would be able to help the starship obtain the final bit of time to accumulate power.

Everyone stared nervously at the team member in charge of reporting on the progress of the power accumulation. They could only hope that they could hit 50% power before the ultimate weapon fired its second round.

"Power accumulation at 20% ... 25% ... 30% ... 35% ..." When the team member reported till 35%, the muzzle of the base's ultimate weapon finally erupted in a dazzling blaze of sparks. In the eyes of everyone on the starship, these sparks were undoubtedly the flowers of death here to collect their lives.

"No ...!" Heaven knows who yelled this. Everyone instinctively held on tightly to the control panel before them and closed their eyes, waiting for death to descend upon them.

Chapter 347: Ace Operator!

The adjutant was busy striking down those missiles when his mecha suddenly emitted an emergency alarm. He found that the magnetic energy beam cannon was preparing to shoot once again and unleash its second powerful energy beam.

"For the honour of the Huaxia Federation!" mouthed the adjutant silently. This was the only phrase the Huaxians knew to say on the battlefield — this was a display of their strong attachment to their country, as well as a heartfelt explanation of their final decisions.

A savage light appeared in the eyes of the adjutant. He operated his mecha and pushed it to its maximum power, bringing out the ace mecha's most powerful beam shield as he resolutely went up to meet this overbearing beam cannon.

Five seconds ... ten seconds ... the adjutant let out a great roar in his cockpit. He tolerated the intense agony the strong magnetic energy wrought upon his body, watching calmly as the power of his mecha dropped rapidly until it was finally empty ... only 23 seconds had passed.

What a pity! Before his mecha was completely consumed by the magnetic energy, the adjutant only hoped regretfully in his heart that the starship would be able to hold out on its own for the final 7 seconds it needed to gather power.

The adjutant had no way of seeing the final outcome. His mecha, with him inside, was completely devoured by the magnetic energy beam, instantly turning into a cloud of gas to disappear into the air. Right then, Ling Lan, who had been hiding to one side but was long prepared, controlled her imperial mecha to instantly leap forwards and take the adjutant's place, blocking the remaining magnetic energy beam directed at the starship.

This time, Little Four expended his greatest disguising ability to make Ling Lan's imperial mecha look like the adjutant's ace mecha. Whether it was in the starship's control room or at the command centre of the ground base, all they could see was an ace mecha holding off the magnetic energy beam cannon's attack. When the beam energy ran out, what was revealed in the aftermath was still that extremely battered yet surviving ace mecha!

"He did it!" the commander could not help but shout in exhilaration at the sight of the resilient ace mecha. No one wished for the comrades by their side to die, even if they were in the virtual world.

On a hill at the edge of the Swift Dragon base, an ace mecha was standing there looking out into distant space at the ace mecha that had held off the attack of the magnetic energy beam cannon. He said in a cold tone, "That starship is most probably carrying the enemy that gave D1 no choice but to activate the ultimate weapon system."

"Senior Colonel, you're right. I've observed the other people staying at the Swift Dragon base. They are all NPCs. The investigative soldiers the Huaxia Federation sent are definitely on that ship." The person on the other end of the comms channel confirmed the thoughts of the ace operator.

"Planning to leave the Swift Dragon base just like that? In your dreams." Killing intent flashed through the ace operator's eyes as he sneered and said, "Send me into the sky. I want to greet that ace mecha, and finish off that starship along the way."

"Yes, Senior Colonel!" With that shout, a hole suddenly opened under the spot where the ace mecha was standing. The mecha dropped instantly as if swallowed by the earth.

But very soon, a tube coloured like the hill rose diagonally from the ground, and several seconds later, a muffled sound rang out. That ace mecha was instantly sent shooting into the sky like a cannonball.

When the senior officers in the command centre of the base saw this, some of the officers were baffled. Where had this unexpected ace mecha come from? At that moment, the supreme commander of the Swift Dragon base could be heard to explain, "This is our ace mecha."

The supreme commander's words calmed everyone down and they waited patiently for the final outcome. The power of the magnetic energy beam cannon was indeed very strong, but its energy consumption was also very horrific. If there were other ways to finish off these invading enemies, they would happily save energy resources and not shoot a third round of the magnetic energy beam cannon.

"Boss, an ace mecha is coming." That mecha had just been launched when he had been noticed by Little Four who was monitoring the whole scene, and Little Four quickly informed Ling Lan.

"Godd*mmmit, how could there be an ace mecha in the Swift Dragon base?" This kind of small base generally had an advanced mecha at the most. This inexplicable appearance of a mysterious ace mecha made Ling Lan feel that trouble was coming.

"It's not an NPC." Little Four only had time to say this before that ace mecha was already by Ling Lan's side and was fiercely leaping at her.

Little Four's warning made Ling Lan's heart clench — if the other wasn't an NPC, then he must be a real person. Moreover, soldiers of the Huaxia Federation would never attack a teammate without reason, so this ace operator was very likely from Caesar.

With a 'bang', Ling Lan swiftly drew the beam saber on her back and parried the opponent's fierce attack in time.

"Boss, do you want me to kill him?" asked Little Four in a cold voice, killing intent flashing through his eyes.

Ling Lan controlled her mecha to kick out savagely. Seeing this fierce kick coming at him, the opponent became wary and quickly dodged. The two mecha once again pulled apart from one another, but both sides knew very well that this distance was nothing for ace mecha — they would be able to reach their opponent within the blink of an eye.

Ling Lan was guarding carefully against the other but had begun plotting in her mind. If Little Four could act, they could indeed finish off the opponent easily. But the problem was that there was still a spectre on the ship. The moment Little Four used his spectre-like powers, the other would notice it. This would be a large flaw because ace operators just could not be spectres; therefore, it would be very easy to guess that there was the presence of a third faction at the Swift Dragon base. This way, her ideal plan would be broken — it would become completely pointless to try and use the Federation soldiers as her team's shield.

Ling Lan absolutely would not allow her team members to be exposed. Thus, she decisively rejected Little Four's offer and prepared to resist on her own.

In truth, Ling Lan was extremely confident in herself. With the imperial mecha she was controlling now and her control skills that were no lower than an ace operator's, she was still pretty confident she could

win this match. Her only concern was that she could not fight in an imperial mecha for over 5 minutes. Otherwise, her body would not be able to withstand the feedback force from the cross-level operation.

Furthermore, because she had blocked the magnetic energy beam cannon, she had already wasted about a minute of that time. Thus, she needed to finish this fight and destroy the other mecha within 4 minutes. Ling Lan's eyes glinted with a cold light, planning inside her heart on how she could end the fight quickly.

Ling Lan saw Regretless lying silently in her bag and an idea flashed through her mind. She immediately instructed Little Four on what he needed to do next ...

Very soon, the two mecha once again collided forcefully together. This time, Ling Lan was the one to initiate the attack — she did not have much time left and could not afford to wait. It should be said the skills of the two operators were about equal — the collision of their beam sabers created countless sparks. Whether it was the mainship or the base command centre, everyone was closely watching the fight of the two ace mecha.

The intense battle lasted for less than a minute. Perhaps due to exhausting too much energy from blocking the magnetic energy beam cannon's attack previously, the thruster on one side of Ling Lan's mecha suddenly exploded. From the dazzling sparks and the accompanying thick black smoke, one could tell that the mecha had received pretty significant damage. As expected, without an engine on one side to provide counterbalance, Ling Lan's mecha instantly lost its centre of balance and actually began to tumble over.

But Ling Lan did not give up — she activated her mecha's secondary thruster and tried to regain the balance of her mecha. However, how could the opponent pass this chance by? That ace mecha suddenly flipped to face downwards and then revved its engines to actually begin speeding towards Ling Lan.

Seeing this, while maintaining the balance of her mecha, Ling Lan gritted her teeth and pulled out her beam saber to meet the fierce thrust of the other's beam saber.

With a 'boom', the two beam sabers collided fiercely. One was buffed by the gravitational force of moving downwards, while the other was held up by an awkward, forced lift of the arm. The gap between the strength behind the two swords was completely displayed by the beam sabers.

Due to the opponent's great strength, Ling Lan could no longer hold on to her beam saber. It was sent flying by the opponent, and the beam saber fell from the skies to stab heavily into the ground.

Witnessing this scene, those Federation soldiers watching closely from the military vessel's control room turned pale. Some of them could not help but exclaim in shock and leap to their feet.

Having sent the opponent's weapon flying with one move, the ace operator was exhilarated. Without hesitation, he grabbed onto the Huaxian ace mecha, who was currently preparing to shoot its beam gun to try and stop him from approaching, enduring two shots from the opponent. The beam saber in his right hand stabbing forwards viciously towards other's cockpit ...

"Success!" The ace operator saw his beam saber piercing through the other's cockpit like slicing through bamboo and was overjoyed. He knew he had won, but before he could laugh out in celebration, he

suddenly felt a chill run through his body. And then, intense pain shot straight into his heart, causing him to yell out involuntarily.

“What’s happening?” The ace mecha looked blankly at the black cold weapon that had appeared without warning in his cockpit. That weapon had sliced his body into two, and his entire cockpit was splattered in blood.

For some reason, the ace operator really wanted to deride the virtual world of the Huaxia Federation for being too realistic and bloody. This bit was really not good — they should learn from Caesar and make things more mild and pleasant. Even he, a battle-hardened warrior, felt somewhat queasy at the sight. He could almost really feel his waist being chopped in half — if this had happened to a newbie, that person would most likely be useless after this ...

A life countdown began in the virtual world. The ace operator smiled wryly to himself and pressed a button to replay the last few moments. Only then did he discover that when he had pierced the other’s cockpit, this black cold weapon had suddenly appeared in the opponent’s initially empty right hand. Because the other’s hand was positioned perfectly at a blind spot of all his cameras, he had not noticed. This was why he had found the attack baffling.

“I forgot that the Huaxians favour mutual destruction the most,” said the ace operator in frustration. With its control systems destroyed, his mecha could no longer remain airborne and it plummeted without warning.

On his display screen, the ace mecha operator saw his opponent’s mecha falling faster than his own, and a satisfied smile appeared at the corner of his lips. At least he would die later than the other. By the time they revived, he would definitely find the other for a rematch ...

Ten seconds or so later, that Huaxian ace mecha slammed into the ground first. Right afterwards, he too slammed into the ground, and subsequently, a massive explosion rocked the ground. The fallen mecha were instantly blasted into dust — it was no longer possible to distinguish who was who — and at the same time, the Caesarian ace mecha operator’s final bit of awareness was consumed.

Chapter 348: Escape in High Gear!

When the Caesarian ace operator regained consciousness once more and opened his eyes, he had already returned to the resurrection point of the Swift Dragon base.

The resurrection point of the Swift Dragon base was actually a large room. Normally, the room doors were tightly shut and the NPC soldiers would never enter this area. This was because the mainframe had set it so that resurrection points were considered safe spots. Anyone who resurrected here would never be discovered by the NPC soldiers as long as they did not exit the doors.

The Caesarian ace operator stood up feeling regretful but found that there was someone peeking around the room doors ... black hair and yellow skin, it most definitely had to be that Huaxian who had died alongside him. He decisively drew the dagger at his calf and leapt over.

Hearing the whistle of the wind, that person rolled forwards and evaded his strike. The man turned to look at his attacker and his irises contracted. “Caesarian.” He was the adjutant who had died by the

force of the magnetic energy beam cannon. Having just come out of the resurrection point, he had had no choice but to stick around the area due to the patrolling guards of the base outside the doors. Of course, he also did not know what had happened outside.

“This time, you will still die by my hand!” The ace operator from Caesar pounced as he cried out gleefully.

The adjutant was taken aback by those words, and then as if figuring something out, his gaze narrowed as he once again dodged the other’s attack. Tone hateful, he asked, “The magnetic energy beam cannon, you all were the ones who arranged its activation?”

The Caesarian ace operator sneered with a blade in his hands. “Looks like you aren’t stupid. Indeed, if we hadn’t changed the settings, how could the supreme commander of this base mobilise the base’s ultimate weapon for just a small starship?”

It turned out that that final message sent out by D1 was primarily to the supreme commander of the base. It ordered the other to kill off all invaders at any cost. Of course, once the ultimate weapon was mobilised, those final members of Caesar still hiding on the Caesarian spaceship would be able to find out in time that something had gone wrong.

If Little Four had been a little more careful back then, he would have noticed in time. With Little Four’s capabilities, he could have changed this order completely, perhaps even uncover the hidden Caesarian spaceship based on the clues obtained from the message. Then, he would have been able to find the Caesarians hiding aboard the ship and silently annihilate all of them, truly wrapping up all loose ends.

Then, Ling Lan and the others, including the Federation soldiers, would not have been thrown into this current predicament. They would not have had to tide through difficulty after difficulty; they would definitely have been able to easily depart from the Swift Dragon base ... it could only be said that Little Four, who had learned something of human emotions, had also picked up some of the weaknesses of humans at the same time. For example, carelessness, or the tendency to hide some little secrets he felt were not very important and would not affect the larger picture ...

The Caesarian ace operator’s words caused an expression of realisation to appear on the adjutant’s face. He had in fact been puzzling over the matter all this while — the ultimate weapon would typically not be mobilised unless the survival of the base was threatened. They had only hijacked a ship and tried to flee the base — this would not affect the safety of the base at all, so the ultimate weapon should not have been activated.

Taking the other’s explanation into consideration, everything made sense now. The adjutant looked sullenly at the Caesarian before him and responded belligerently, “I will not die a second time by your hand.” The magnetic energy beam cannon was too powerful for him to resist, so he had no complaints about dying to it, but he definitely would not die at the hands of an equally human enemy.

The two of them confronted each other in a stalemate for several seconds, and then they suddenly leapt at each other. The adjutant pulled out a short dagger from behind his waist in an instant, stabbing it viciously at the opponent.

“Clang clang clang ...” Cold weapons clashed again and again. Both of them being ace operators, their physical skills were equally good. They were actually fighting on even ground — it would be hard to determine a winner anytime soon.

Excitement bloomed in the eyes of the Caesarian ace operator. As expected, the one who dared to pull a mutual destruction move on him was an extremely formidable adversary. Due to Ling Lan’s ingenious scheme, the Caesarian ace operator could never have known that he had actually misidentified his opponent.

Meanwhile, because the adjutant had stayed in this room all this time after reviving, he was not very clear on some things that had transpired. He hated the other side for mobilising the ultimate weapon and stranding him at the Swift Dragon base, and after finding out that this was all a nefarious scheme of Caesar, he had taken the other to be an enemy right away and could not wait to kill the other.

In this manner, for various reasons coupled with some clever manipulation from Ling Lan, her hand in the matter was completely concealed. Until the very end, the Huaxia Federation and the Caesar Empire never discovered that there had been the involvement of a hidden third party between them.

After finishing off the Caesarian ace operator, Ling Lan finally let out a breath of relief. In truth, that final scene had all been an illusion by Little Four. The so-called explosion of the engine and the mecha losing control were all fake — even the beam saber had been intentionally discarded by her to fool the opponent. The scene of plunging his blade into Ling Lan’s cockpit the other saw was naturally also an illusion. It was impossible for an ace mecha’s beam saber to pierce through the cockpit of an imperial mecha. The other’s beam saber had only grazed by the waist of Ling Lan’s mecha, not harming Ling Lan’s mecha one bit.

In the end, taking advantage of the moment the other had let down his guard in joy, Ling Lan had equipped Regretless, which she had long kept on standby, to pierce through the other’s cockpit. Regretless’s unique sharpness once again showed its prowess — the outer shell of the ace mecha had no way of stopping Regretless. The blade pierced cleanly through the cockpit to kill the opponent instantly.

However, this bout of control, fighting, and calculation had indeed tired Ling Lan out to the extreme as well, and her stamina was also at its limit. Ling Lan knew that she needed to return to the starship as soon as possible, otherwise, her body would not be able to take it if she continued to operate this imperial mecha.

When they saw their team’s adjutant choosing mutual destruction with the enemy, all the Huaxian soldiers in the control room of the starship closed their eyes in pain ... in order to live so they could return and report this situation to military headquarters, they had no choice but to abandon their comrade who had given his life to win them this opportunity. This feeling was very painful to them. Their only consolation was that they were currently in the virtual world. As long as there were no spectres, their comrade would only be temporarily trapped here without any danger to his life.

Right at this moment, a team member who had been keeping his post and monitoring the progress of the power accumulation all this while suddenly shouted, “Reporting to the commander! Power at 50%!”

At these words, the commander's eyes sprang open and forcefully suppressing his worry for his adjutant, a trace of resolution flashed across his eyes. He instantly gave the order, "Shift to high gear immediately!"

Subsequently, the team member in charge of speed control firmly pushed the speed dial to its maximum setting.

"Order received. Shifting starship operation from low gear to high gear ... warning, actual height is insufficient, gravitational force is too large. Starship may be damaged. Warning, insufficient power. High gear can only be sustained for 7 minutes. Please choose carefully, please choose carefully ..." The starship's A.I. processed the actual situation and made a determination, instantly issuing an emergency alarm alerting the starship operators that shifting speed settings now was a mistake and was extremely dangerous.

The team members that were in charge of shifting speeds lifted their heads to cast a panicked look at their commander when they heard this alert from the A.I.. After all, they were not specialized starship operators. Encountering this sort of unanticipated situation, they were flustered, unsure what they should do.

The commander clapped his hands fiercely together and said firmly, "Shift to high gear. We'll take the risk." If he continued to dilly-dally, once the enemy fired the third round of the magnetic energy beam cannon, they would truly be doomed. He definitely must not waste this time the adjutant had sacrificed his life to give them. He must lead his team members back to the central district successfully and report the situation to military headquarters in time. This way, he would also be able to save the adjutant faster ...

"Confirm shift to high gear. Countdown begins now. 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, shift to high gear successful. Beginning power drain countdown. 420, 419, 418 ..." The A.I. executed the command to shift to high gear. The moment time was up, the initially slowly climbing starship suddenly sped upwards at high velocity like a propelled arrow.

Because they had not achieved the minimum required height to switch to high speed, under the opposing forces of gravity and the propulsion force of the engine, a part of the armour on the tail part of the starship was ripped off to fall from a height of 1800 meters ...

However, the starship still flew on tenaciously. As a plume of smoke curled around its tail, it prepared to break through the atmospheric layer to enter outer space!

"Commander, now what?" As the starship suddenly accelerated, zooming towards the skies above, the calibrating magnetic energy beam cannon instantly lost its target. The officer in charge of attacking this time immediately reported this to the supreme commander of the base.

The supreme commander wordlessly put down his polar telescope. The power of the magnetic energy beam cannon was indeed very horrifying, but once a target entered higher airspace, especially at the extreme high speeds of the starship in question, it was very hard for the cannon to do anything. In the end, he could only say regretfully, "Forget it. Formally seal away the ultimate weapon. Consider them lucky this time, actually managing to escape from the Swift Dragon base."

“Yes! Commander!” The officer responsible for the magnetic energy beam cannon immediately arranged for the cannon to be sealed and put away.

After this remark, the supreme commander stubbornly raised his polar telescope again to stare out at that starship that was about to fly out of the atmospheric layer. An idea sparked through his mind and he set the telescope down. Turning to the officer beside him, he said, “New orders. All able fighting crew of the Swift Dragon base are to assemble immediately and board their ships. Thirty minutes later, we will officially take flight and give chase to our warship that has been taken hostage. We must destroy it within the range of the Nebula Boundary.”

“Yes, Sir!” The adjutant by his side instantly accepted the order and turned to disseminate this urgent call to arms.

Several seconds later, an ear-splitting emergency alarm blared out across the entire base. In all the encampments, the base’s DMC’s voice rang out, “Emergency notice. All able warriors of the Swift Dragon fleet, please assemble at your respective warships within 30 minutes. Thirty minutes later, the fleet will officially set off ... Emergency notice. All able warriors of the Swift Dragon fleet, please assemble at your respective warships within 30 minutes. Thirty minutes later, the fleet will ...”

The entire Swift Dragon base began to bustle with activity as all of the warriors rushed towards the respective warships they were assigned to. Thirty minutes was extremely tight; they had not a moment to lose.

Chapter 349: Never Letting Go Again!

The supreme commander of the base saw all the soldiers below beginning to move and only then did he turn to leave the command centre. Coming to his personal office, he acted according to his original setting and sent a situation report to the Mecha World mainframe, detailing all the orders he had given in response as well. However, the transmission channel had already been altered by the Caesarian hackers so that his report would be sent directly to the mainframe of the spaceship hidden on the base. Meanwhile, the Federation mainframe remained oblivious to everything that was happening here.

The starship had successfully shifted to high speed and was temporarily out of danger, but this risky order of the commander left Ling Lan in a sticky situation. When the commander had commanded for the ship to shift into high gear, Little Four, who had immediately grasped the information, had quickly passed on the bad news to Ling Lan.

If Ling Lan had not been too far away from the starship, the amount of time left would have been enough for Ling Lan to board the ship again. However, it just so happened that back when Ling Lan had been fighting the Caesarian ace operator, in order to finish the other quicker, she had purposefully pretended to lose control to trick the opponent. At present, she had already fallen to about an altitude of 800 metres, almost a whole 1000 metres away from the starship’s altitude of 1700 metres.

This distance cut Ling Lan’s time extremely short. She operated her imperial mecha to fly at high speed towards the starship, trying to land within the ship while it still had not officially entered high gear. But just as Ling Lan was about to successfully enter a launch port of the starship, the ship managed to

activate high gear and shoot forwards like an arrow, leaving Ling Lan to pounce onto empty air. The ship instantly pulled a considerable distance away from Ling Lan.

Seeing this, Ling Lan clenched her teeth and decisively pushed the imperial mecha to its maximum speed, which was the mecha's overdrive. Overdrive mode was typically in a sealed state and would not be readily activated, because running in overdrive was a great burden on a mecha's engines. The energy consumed per second was no less than when firing a heavy energy projectile cannon. Not only that, overdrive would also take a high toll on the operator's body.

The reason Ling Lan had not activated overdrive mode from the start was because she was afraid her body would not be able to bear it. At the same time, she was placing her hopes on the long shot that she would be able to successfully board the starship by only using high speed. Unexpectedly, all of her cautions was for naught in the end. However, presented with the dire situation of having to stay behind at the Swift Dragon base if she did not use overdrive, Ling Lan naturally would not hesitate any longer!

She needed to board the ship successfully before the starship broke through the atmospheric layer. Otherwise, based on the mecha's power and mobility alone, she would not be able to escape the gravity of the planet to fly into outer space. Even though Ling Lan was currently piloting an imperial mecha, it was still out of the question unless Ling Lan was controlling a god-class mecha. Frankly, even if an imperial mecha could fly into outer space, Ling Lan's current level of strength and physical constitution would not allow her to sustain long periods of cross-level operation anyway ...

This time, Ling Lan's caution taught her a bloody lesson. She understood now that she needed to apply her full strength in all things from now on and not put her hopes on luck and chance, otherwise she might have to pay an even greater price.

Time was running out bit by bit. Ling Lan's mecha came closer and closer to the starship. 100 metres, 50 metres, 30 metres, 20 metres, 10 metres ... she saw the number countdown of the 5-minute limit she set for herself to operate in overdrive dwindling smaller and smaller, and cold sweat poured uncontrollably from her forehead. For the first time, she felt how truly helpless she was.

She clearly only needed to speed up a little more to wrap her hand around that handle at the outermost edge of the final launch port of the starship, but no matter how hard she tried, she just could not close that final bit of distance. Meanwhile, the x192 high-glazed nuclear power source had also begun to emit the red lights warning that its power was about to run out ... could it be that she was still going to fail in the end and be unable to leave the Swift Dragon base? A bad feeling coursed through Ling Lan's heart.

What made Ling Lan even more nervous was the fact that she had begun to feel pain in her body. It started with minor cramps, which slowly turned into an acute ripping sort of pain. It looked like the feedback force of cross-level operation had already seriously impacted her body, and with the passage of time, her condition was only getting worse.

Just as Ling Lan was beginning to despair, a voice suddenly rang out in her mecha's comms, "Rabbit, come on!"

Ling Lan's spirits rallied. She raised her head and saw the figure of a familiar mecha appear at the tail end of the launch port. It was the leopard — with one hand on the handle, he reached his other hand out towards Ling Lan, attempting to grab hold of her mecha.

Seeing the leopard, Ling Lan's heart fluttered and she stretched out her right arm with determination. Her companions had not abandoned her, so why was she giving up hope? Without fearing the acute pain coming from all over her body, Ling Lan pushed her mecha's engines till they were working on overload. Ling Lan's mecha's speed boosted even further and her hand came closer and closer to the leopard's outstretched hand. Five metres, three metres, one metre ...

"Argh ..." Ling Lan let out an unwilling scream. The x192 high-glazed nuclear power source finally fizzled out — Ling Lan pushed forwards at that final moment, reaching out with a desperate hand, and the two mecha's fingers were linked for a moment before slipping apart. Ling Lan's mecha lost all mobility and fell out of her control ...

"Rabbit ..." Ling Lan could almost hear the leopard's mournful wail. She had failed, hadn't she? However, as long as the leopard passed the document to the city lord of Grandsweep City, their mission would be complete. Even if she remained at the Swift Dragon base, it would not affect the formation of the clan.

Ling Lan closed her eyes, resigned, and just as she was about to give up, she suddenly felt her mecha being grabbed hold of by some external force, stopping it from falling. Stunned, she opened her eyes and found that the leopard had already grasped her mecha's right hand with both of his hands ...

"Rabbit, I will never let go again," said Li Lanfeng with a smile. His words had a double meaning — even as he said this to Ling Lan, he was also saying this to himself. He would never again let go of this friendship like he had seven years ago due to miscellaneous reasons.

Li Lanfeng's words puzzled Ling Lan. She saw Li Lanfeng's hands wrapped around her own right hand and could not help but feel her heart skip a beat. Could it be that the leopard had jumped off the starship? Deciding not to leave for her sake?

Ling Lan's emotions were instantly in turmoil. For the first time, someone was willing to brave danger for her ... but Ling Lan's sentimentality only lasted for a moment. Cool logic once again reasserted itself, and she instantly realised that the two of them were not falling rapidly but had been tethered by some force and was flying swiftly upwards with the starship.

Ling Lan turned to look unerringly behind the leopard and saw that the two legs of his mecha were currently caught securely in the hands of Qi Long's mecha ...

"Yo, Boss, it's rare to see you in such a predicament." Qi Long's laughter rang out in Ling Lan's comms, and Ling Lan's heart relaxed as joy stole over her. Even though she was brimming with emotions, accustomed to being as cold as ice, she could only respond dispassionately, "Yes, are you very satisfied by this?"

Ling Lan's cool demeanour strangled Qi Long's laughter, and he felt a chill invade his heart. He could not help but shudder — if his hands had not remained steady, this shudder may have spelled great trouble.

Qi Long was silently regretful — how could he forget that his boss was a cold and ruthless person who would take revenge for the slightest grievance? Qi Long could already foresee that when they got back, he would be captured by his boss for some brutal torment in the private training rooms ... Boo hoo hoo, his little life was surely forfeit.

“Boss, even in such a predicament you are still the most handsomest boss!” Qi Long tried to salvage the situation and alter his impending tragic fate. He feebly tried to suck up to his boss, but in his panic, his skill at flattery fell short of its usual standard, actually missing its mark completely 1 .

“Ho ho, so I am the most handsome when I’m in a sorry state like this, eh?” The corners of Ling Lan’s lips tilted up subtly as she responded levelly, though she was actually in a very happy mood. These were her companions — at crucial moments, they would run over to protect her ... Alright, at this moment, the leopard’s figure had once again been relegated to the recesses of Ling Lan’s mind.

Ling Lan’s words made Qi Long almost want to slap himself. Why was he so stupid? Actually reminding Boss about what he said wrong to begin with ...

In the end, it was still Han Jijyun who took pity on his sworn brother and tugged Qi Long away, helping him out by saying, “Quickly, everyone help out and pull Boss back in.”

It turned out that all the other members were here as well. Luo Lang and Han Jijyun were right behind Qi Long, each with one hand holding onto Qi Long firmly. Meanwhile, Xie Yi and Lin Zhong-qing were standing behind Luo Lang and Han Jijyun and holding onto them in turn.

Why had they appeared here at this opportune moment? The facts of the matter were ...

Before the starship had shifted into high speed, while Ling Lan was working hard to approach and board the starship, Little Four had been secretly controlling the starship and had surreptitiously opened the launch port at the tail end. The Federation soldiers in the ship’s control room were completely ignorant of this series of actions, but Qi Long and the others who had been waiting all this while in the hold at the tail end immediately noticed. They saw the launch port which had been shut all this time finally open up, and it went without saying that it was definitely their boss returning.

But before they could rejoice, the subsequent events not only caused Ling Lan to miss the chance to board the ship, they also left Qi Long and the others dumbfounded. The starship had suddenly shifted into high gear and sent the unprepared group tumbling. Fortunately, they had all still been in their mecha, so even though they had been thrown about terribly and things had been a little awkward, they had not incurred any great injury. Any minor injuries they had suffered had been quickly handled by Li Shiyu.

By the time they had stabilised their own mecha, they discovered that they could see no sign of Boss. Qi Long and the others knew then that their boss must not have caught up to the ship in time. They were instantly filled with worry and anxiety, but they also did not know what to do at that moment in time.

And then, Li Lanfeng, who had been silent all this while, suddenly retrieved the document from his bag and handed it to Qi Long, saying, “Qi Long, I want to go check things out at the launch port. It may be dangerous over there ... I’ll leave this document in your care.”

Qi Long immediately refused and said, “This is a task Boss entrusted to you. I cannot go against Boss’s orders. Besides, I should be the one to go through the tail-end’s passage.”

Qi Long’s direct refusal made Li Lanfeng fall silent. He merely shoved the document at Qi Long outright and before Qi Long could react, Li Lanfeng had already turned away and left.

By the time Qi Long realised what had happened, Li Lanfeng had already disappeared through the first set of doors leading to the tunnel. Speechless, he held onto the document and glanced over at his surrounding companions, and then he decisively shoved the document at the still stunned Chang Xinyuan.

This move of Qi Long's startled Chang Xinyuan, who instantly asked in a panic, "Why ... give it to me?"

Chapter 350: Flee the Base!

"You, have the worst control skills out of the entire team. As a safety precaution, you just stay put and guard these documents properly. If, in this situation, you still mess up and get yourself killed, your sorry ass had better not even dream of joining us, the Lingtian clan," Qi Long threatened aggressively.

This speech left Chang Xinyuan burning with embarrassment. He meant to snap back but found that Qi Long's words rang true, and at that moment he was actually left dumbstruck.

As soon as Qi Long was done speaking, without even considering how Chang Xinyuan would react to his words, he gestured with a wide sweep of his hand for his teammates to leave the mecha hold and then sprinted towards the launch port. Qi Long was actually feeling agitated and worried, not knowing what fate had befallen his boss. He had long thought of travelling to the tail end of the ship to check out the situation for himself, but alas, Li Lanfeng had beaten him to the punch...

At this thought, Qi Long started to grumble about Li Lanfeng in his heart. This fellow really knew how to put on a hell of a show, never missing an opportunity to increase the Boss's awareness of him. Although Qi Long had some quibbles with Li Lanfeng, deep in his heart he held great admiration for him, because only someone who truly held Boss Lan in such high esteem could have this calibre of performance.

The minute Qi Long moved, Luo Lang, Han Jiyun, and the others followed suit. In fact, if it had not been for Boss Lan's previous instruction for them to obey Qi Long's orders the whole way, they would have rushed to the tail end of the ship long ago, unable to contain themselves.

The last one to leave was Li Shiyu, who, before he left, shot a glance at the stupefied Chang Xinyuan who was frozen in place. Sighing softly, he changed directions to walk over to Chang Xinyuan's side, patted him on the shoulder, and said, "Don't overthink it. Qi Long's orders are out of consideration for you. Just trust him and follow his orders. In fact, I think he's right, your control really is a little weak. At the tail end, if there is any danger, it will be difficult for you to even protect yourself. So you might as well stay put here and protect this vital document well."

Chang Xinyuan cast a mournful eye at Li Shiyu. Was this how a teammate from the same battle clan was like? Could he not pick at the scabs on his soul? Could they still get along with each other happily? Chang Xinyuan suddenly found that Li Shiyu, who seemed like such a kind-hearted, nice guy, absolutely had the potential to be a black-bellied person.

Li Shiyu could not know the complaints Chang Xinyuan had in his heart, because right after he was done speaking, he had swiftly chased after Qi Long and the others. Frankly, even though he did not like Ling Lan that much, Ling Lan's actions all this way had still obtained his acknowledgement. He too did not want anything bad to happen to this team leader who looked out for his team members at every turn. Thus, he was also planning to go check things out at the tail end with the rest.

Only Chang Xinyuan was left in the entire mecha hold. He looked down at the document in his hands and sighed in resignation, then carefully tucked the document away in his bag. Like Li Shiyu had said, this document was vital — it would determine whether their team would be able to successfully establish a battle clan, so there was no room for error.

Chang Xinyuan knew deep down that Qi Long words had not been out of contempt for him, otherwise the other would not have placed such an important mission item in his care. In fact, Qi Long's distribution of tasks was extremely appropriate considering the situation. Someone from their team had to live to submit the document and complete the mission, and for safety reasons, this person needed to remain in the mecha hold and avoid danger.

Although Chang Xinyuan had not joined the team for long, he could clearly see the deep bonds between Qi Long and the others and Boss Lan. Their relationship was not the typical friendship and comradery between team members, but was more similar to the blood ties of family. Chang Xinyuan believed that if Boss Lan met with any misfortune and ended up stranded at the Swift Dragon base, Qi Long and the others would likely choose to leave the ship and remain at the Swift Dragon base as well even if they would die for their choice. They would want to go through thick and thin with their boss ...

At this point, Chang Xinyuan could not help but envy the deep brotherly bonds between Boss Lan and Qi Long and the others. If possible, he too wanted to be a part of that, advancing and retreating alongside Boss Lan and Qi Long and the rest. However, having the worst mecha control skills, he had ultimately been selected by Qi Long to be the one to stay here to ensure the mission would be completed. And there was nothing at all he could say to argue against the decision.

This was because Chang Xinyuan was well aware that the Swift Dragon base was rife with danger. Now exposed, deep within the Swift Dragon base, they would definitely have to fight ferociously and cut a path of blood through the base to have any chance of survival. Thus, those who followed Qi Long must be very good at combat, otherwise it would be pointless to go and they may even create trouble for Boss Lan. Chang Xinyuan was very clear on this point. This was why he had remained silent and had resigned himself to accepting Qi Long's arrangement in the end, becoming the person left behind to safeguard the document.

Frankly, Chang Xinyuan was unwilling, because he did not want to be the member left behind. This made him feel very useless.

"Weakest control skills, eh? If I want to stand next to Boss Lan and not get tossed aside, only relying on my modification innate talent is far from enough. I must become stronger, and be like Lin Zhong-qing and Li Shiyu. Even as a support member, I have to become the most formidable one ..." Chang Xinyuan clenched his fists silently, determination flashing in his eyes. Never again would he be so naive as to truly believe, as he did before, that modification was everything.

Having maintained a breakneck speed the whole way, Li Lanfeng was the first to reach the launch port at the tail end. As he reached the mouth of the port, the scene that unfolded was that of Ling Lan piloting a mecha, desperately trying to catch up to the starship. At present, he was about 10 metres away and looked like he could board successfully soon enough. However, Li Lanfeng then noticed that Ling Lan's mecha's power supply seemed slightly unstable, as if it was almost depleted. The mecha was also unable

to maintain a steady speed, speeding up and slowing down erratically, which prevented Ling Lan from closing the gap.

Thus, despite his delight at seeing the rabbit here, Li Lanfeng could not help but feel his heart in his throat, fearing that the rabbit would not catch up in the end. With a glance at the outer area of the launch port, he realized that the outermost rim was lined with handles, probably support structures to help mecha flying at high speed to land quickly on the starship. As he brought his mecha to the entrance, it was promptly sucked out of the starship by a tremendous force. In that instant, he gripped tightly on to one of those handles, simultaneously activating the adhesion mechanism on his feet to secure his mecha's position.

Having done all that, Li Lanfeng activated his comms link and roared, "Rabbit, come on!" as he daringly stretched his body out, right hand outstretched to its limits, reaching with all his might for Rabbit's mecha, so close yet so far.

The rabbit must have heard him, because Li Lanfeng saw him stretch his own right hand towards him, intent on catching Li Lanfeng's hand ...

The two great metal arms were inching closer, but just before they could catch each other, the roaring engines of the rabbit's mecha suddenly died. Even though the rabbit had put all his energy into a final surge forward at that final moment, allowing them to link fingers, the immense weight of the mecha and the recoil from the high-speed flight was not something their fingers could bear. Their fingers were only linked for a moment before they were instantly flung apart.

As Li Lanfeng witnessed the rabbit's mecha stalling and about to plummet, without even thinking about it, he slammed the controls causing the mecha to leap forwards, bursting out from the starship's launch port to tightly clasp the right arm of the rabbit's mecha the second before it started to fall ...

"Rabbit, I will never let go again," was all Li Lanfeng remembered saying with a smile. He knew the true meaning behind his words — Seven years ago, he had chosen to abandon the rabbit, but from now on, he was never letting go again!

Just as Li Lanfeng thought that he and the rabbit would fall down to Swift Dragon base and have to brave life and death together, he felt his mecha being tethered by a great force. His and the rabbit's mecha were suspended below the starship and were quickly being lifted upwards. It turned out that at that crucial moment, Qi Long and the others had made it in time to catch his mecha by the feet with lightning speed.

Like links in a chain, Qi Long's mecha was tightly held onto by Luo Lang and Han Jijyun, while behind them were Xie Yi and Lin Zhong-qing. The four of them each had one fist firmly wrapped around one of the support handles on the launch port walls, forcibly negating the downward momentum of Li Lanfeng's and the rabbit's mecha.

Han Jijyun was about to signal for all of them to haul Li Lanfeng and Rabbit back to the starship when Li Shiyu appeared as well. With his help, Qi Long was finally able to pull Li Lanfeng back on board, ultimately succeeding in dragging Ling Lan back onto the starship.

Ling Lan, who had only just narrowly escaped disaster, had just entered the starship when she barked out, "To the hold, now!" She charged ahead, leading the clan members back to the mecha hold in the

tail end, acting on Little Four's information that the starship was about to breach the atmospheric layer. For any of the unsecured and underpowered mecha, remaining in the launch port at that moment would be absolutely suicidal.

Everyone stampeded towards the mecha hold as Little Four swiftly closed seal after seal behind them. When Chang Xinyuan, who had been waiting safely in his secured seat, saw Boss Lan make it into the mecha hold ahead of the rest, he was overcome with emotion. He instantly cried out, "Boss Lan, you're back!"

Before Ling Lan could reply, the starship started to shudder violently. Except for Chang Xinyuan, who was untroubled due to his being firmly planted on the secured seat, everyone was sent stumbling by the violent vibrations.

"Fall flat!" Everyone's comms channels rang with the sound of Ling Lan's sharp command, and they immediately got into a prone position. The cacophony of mecha clanging against mecha ensued in the hold. If the entire starship hadn't already been quaking uncontrollably, the noise they made would definitely have caught the attention of the Federation soldiers in the main control room.

At that very moment in the main control room, all the Federation soldiers were anxiously hunched over and gripping the control panel before them. The juddering from breaching the atmosphere was extremely powerful — people of lower physical fitness stood no chance of adapting to it. Of course, the reason they suffered so greatly was because the starship did not have sufficient power. In order to ensure that the starship could successfully break out of the Swift Dragon base's atmospheric layer, they had no choice but to conserve every ounce of energy and that meant not activating the starship's anti-shock mechanisms, which left them no choice but to grit their teeth and persevere through it all.

Close to 5 minutes of violent juddering almost caused all of the Federation soldiers in the main control room to be severely injured enough to spew blood. Finally, the starship wrested free of the base's gravity, successfully leaping into outer space. Only then did the violent shaking stop, becoming incomparably stable. Sensing that the situation was now stable, the Federation soldiers stood up straight again. However, their complexions were very pale — the intense tremors may not have hurt them seriously, but their bodies had still been unable to bear the shock well. They would probably need a stretch of time to recover from this once they returned.