

L Hero

Chapter 1131 I'm Leaving Her to You

Once Han Xiao had digested the information he had just obtained for a while, he pushed open the door and returned to the interrogation room. Aesop, Harrison, and Rody all looked over.

"Your Excellency Black Star, I..." Rody hastily wanted to ask, but Han Xiao raised his hand and stopped him.

"I already know about your situation. Come with me for the time being. I'll try to solve your issue."

Han Xiao pondered over what to do about Rody.

Rody was now only a work in progress; he had yet to complete transforming, so he could not control his abilities. He might only become like the Germinal Organization's Destiny's Child after completely transforming. However, once the transformation was complete, Rody's personality would be taken over by a brand-new personality, so he could be considered dead by then in some senses.

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A stable and controllable Foreseer would be much more useful than this half-assed Foreseer who fainted occasionally. However, since he had accepted the mission, he did not want to just let the transformation happen. Hence, Han Xiao decided to think of ways to prevent Rody's transformation as much as he could... And if he could not prevent it, he would not mind getting a new Destiny's Child.

Judging from Rody's current state, controlling his whereabouts was a necessity. Han Xiao told Phillip to empty a new private lab on the spaceship and told Harrison to take Rody there, put him into a restoration cabin, and inject hypnosis drugs into him so that studying him would be easier. Rody had no choice but to hold on tight to his only hope and cooperate fully.

After the two of them left, Han Xiao and Aesop were the only ones left in the room. They looked at each other.

"I saw you left for a while earlier. Have you already discovered something?" Aesop asked with curiosity.

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"The source of this guy's mutation might be because he was affected by a certain special Primal Esper Ability..." Han Xiao briefly talked about Destiny's Child's information and his experience in the Germinal Organization.

"Destiny's Child... never heard of it," Aesop murmured.

"That's normal. I don't know much either."

Aesop coughed and said, "I don't know much about your past experience, but assuming that the Destiny's Child you met in the past is also a random product of the Primal Esper Ability Entity like Rody, why would two sub-bodies appear on Planet Aquamarine? If it's really random over the universe, do you think this is really coincidental?"

That's nothing. I've seen things that are more coincidental...

This thought flashed past Han Xiao's mind, but he did not show it on his face and agreed. "It is very coincidental indeed."

"Following this logic, if the mutation occurs on the information level, I think that Planet Aquamarine might be special in some way. Maybe it has a special string of fate or something... I'm not saying this out of the blue. I've seen many people who are born with a different string of fate to others..."

Midsentence, Aesop stopped, sized Han Xiao up, and said, "... That's right, someone like you came out of Planet Aquamarine, as well as Hila, another Beyond Grade A. The rise of the two of you caused your mother planet to be unique. Maybe that's the reason."

Han Xiao wanted to say something, but he did not say anything in the end, only patting Aesop's shoulders.

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Smart people are indeed easy to trick. You convinced yourself before I said anything.

"Thanks. Without your prophecy, I would have never noticed this."

Jokes aside, Han Xiao was quite appreciative of Aesop's warning.

"You don't have to thank me. Floating Dragon and Planet Aquamarine are neighbors now. I'm just ensuring the safety of the surrounding residential environment. Plus, among the people I know, my prophecies will have the most impact in your hands. I believe in your abilities and morals." Aesop waved his hand.

Hearing this, Han Xiao could not help but realize how much things had changed.

In the past, Han Xiao really envied Aesop's powerful connections. However, as he continued to rise, without him realizing, he already now had the highest position among the people Aesop knew.

Aesop was willing to discuss anything with him. He had become reliable in his eyes.

Aesop sighed and said, "I've lived so long, and I consider myself to be knowledgeable. Yet, you're still the most shocking person I've ever met in my long life. I've never seen anyone as magical as you. The first time I saw you, although I felt that you had a bright future, I would never have expected you to reach heights countless people are never able to reach in just a few decades. History might forget me, but it'll never forget you."

"... Why the sudden compliments? You're flattering me," Han Xiao joked but revealed an expression that said, 'Don't stop.'

"Maybe it's because I'm getting older, so I like to say these things more and more." Aesop sighed and earnestly said, "Thank you for helping Floating Dragon all these years." Seeing this, Han Xiao wiped off the smile on his face and slowly said, "My achievement cannot be separated from the help I've received from Floating Dragon. Without Ames' protection in the past, things would not have gone so smoothly for me. Therefore, you don't have to thank me. Anything I've done for Floating Dragon is what I should do as repayment."

Just like creating a business, having sponsors would be much easier than starting with nothing. When he was weak, Floating Dragon had helped him a great lot. Therefore, even though his position in the universe was far superior to Floating Dragon, he still held respect for the people of Floating Dragon and never considered himself superior when speaking with them. Plus, he had never stopped helping them.

“Having the opportunity to help someone like you might just be Floating Dragon’s luck.” Aesop’s expression was complicated. He said with a low tone, “Ames is like my daughter, but as you know, the only thing I can do is foresee. I’m not powerful like you guys; you can protect her better than me now... I’ve lived for many years, and I’ve never asked for anything from anyone, but I’m asking you today, protect Ames. I’m leaving her to you. I hope that even after hundreds and thousands of years, you’ll still remember what I said today.”

Then, he gave Han Xiao a meaningful look, pushed the door open, and walked out the room. His slightly bent back disappeared at the end of the corridor.

“Old man...”

Han Xiao watched him leave and exhaled slightly. He understood what Aesop meant.

Although Aesop was an Eternal, he was getting old, and he hardly had any combat capability. Even though he could see the future, what he could do was limited. He was far from being almighty.

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He foresaw the storms that might occur in the future, and the disaster he saw made him feel worried, something he had not felt in a very long time. He was afraid that he was not capable of protecting Ames, so he planned ahead and was willing to put down his pride to privately ask Black Star to always be the protector of Floating Dragon. This was a form of insurance. In Aesop’s eyes, Black Star was the only one who had both the capability and motive to protect Ames, so he was the best candidate he could find.

Ames would absolutely never say these things, so Ames knew only he could say it, and he had to say it. This was why the old man came to him first unlike before-he got scared by his own prophecy. “The old man suppressed his nature of looking for thrills and stayed for decades in such a boring place, Floating Dragon. Although he’s grounded by Ames on paper, if he wanted to leave, he definitely could. And now, because he’s worried about Ames’ future, he ignored his pride and came to ask me for something...”

Han Xiao smiled.

In his previous life, Ames caused Floating Dragon to be destroyed for the sake of revenge. Looking at it now, Aesop was certainly worth

However, this time, I’m here. I won’t let the same thing happen to Floating Dragon.

Tidying up his emotions, Han Xiao returned to the office and summoned Phillip.

He still remembered about searching for where Soul Flame ended up in. Using his authority, he found the information about the Primordial One ‘Soul Emperor’ and quickly browsed through it.

Soul Emperor’s real name was Rovell Sissock. He also had other nicknames such as the King of Souls and Master of Secrets. He was a Primordial One. Before becoming the master of Soul Flame, he was already a powerful Beyond Grade A spiritual Esper.

This person was born in an advanced civilization that was already a powerful civilization in the exploration era.

Back then, Beyond Grade As had only just appeared. Compared to other abilities, spiritual Esper Abilities were more difficult to deal with. The technology at that time could not give birth to any spiritual barrier devices that could stop Soul Emperor, so he could easily penetrate the shields and armor to kill or control the people in spaceships. He made a name for himself in the exploration era war very quickly. After obtaining Soul Flame, like a tiger growing wings, he won countless battles for his civilization in the war using his individual strength and received countless honors and medals. He was seen as the hero and protector of the entire civilization.

However, as all the advanced civilizations started to study the Beyond Grade As, the era when the Primordial Ones were invincible quickly passed. Battles became tougher, and Beyond Grade A casualties started to appear.

Soul Emperor was no exception. Although he was still powerful even among the Beyond Grade As and he was still one of the strongest forces in galactic battles, since he would be targeted every time he appeared, it became tough for him to contribute as much as he did before. He could no longer decide a battle on his own.

Plus, his civilization suffered multiple losses in other battles. The civilization's overall strategy was heavily affected, and the situation gradually grew worse. Because of that, Soul Emperor's fighting style became aggressive. Sometimes, even if it meant he had to suffer heavy injuries, he would still try to turn the battle around. Although it was not enough, this showed how much he wanted to contribute to his civilization and how loyal he was. The Primordial Ones back then were unlike the Beyond Grade As now. Most of them did not have the mindset of putting themselves first. In the exploration era war, the fate of individuals was almost totally tied with the fate of civilizations.

Over the long years of war, the turning point quickly came. The civilization Soul Emperor belonged to faced multiple enemies on the main battlefield, which spanned two Star Systems. The civilization dispatched a large number of military forces, and a decisive battle began.

Countless fleets fought intensely on many battlefronts. The situation changed every second. At the peak of the battle, this civilization was faced with a choice...

Soul Emperor was being targeted and surrounded. He was exhausted and needed reinforcements urgently. Meanwhile, an extremely crucial battlefront also requested immediate backup.

If the fight on this battlefront was lost, it would cause chain reactions and might cause the entire war to slip into the abyss of defeat. However, if they were able to win on this battlefront, they would obtain a huge strategic advantage and have much higher chances of winning. This was also the reason the enemies kept sending troops into this battlefield. At this point of time, this civilization had already dispatched most of its forces into the battlefield and had very few fleets that were available to be deployed. They knew that if they sent reinforcements to both sides, there might be a chance they could save Soul Emperor, but they would definitely not be able to guard the crucial battlefront.

That was where the choice lay... which side they should send their reinforcements to.

To the civilization, this choice did not seem difficult at all.

They abandoned Soul Emperor and decided to put all the reinforcements into that crucial battlefield. The results were just as they expected. They successfully won the fight on that battlefield, obtained a decisive advantage, gradually forced the enemies to retreat, and finally won this war.

Soul Emperor was sacrificed. This civilization said he fought to his last moment and that his death was what led to their victory. The entire civilization mourned for him and paid their respects, hosted his funeral in the highest regards, and gave him the 'Valverde Golden Tower' medal, which represented the highest honor of the civilization. The civilization then also built the Soul Emperor's hero monument on its mother planet to remember him.

However, in the exploration era war, one thing that was never in shortage was enemies. The crucial victory this civilization acquired could not be their amulet forever.

In the end, this civilization never became a winner of the exploration era. It was destroyed by a stronger civilization, its race was almost extinct, and it became a loser that was eliminated. That was the brief life of Soul Emperor. He was marked as 'Killed In Action' in the documents.

All this happened too long ago, and the exploration era was a chaotic time, so the three Universal Civilizations' database only had rough data of Soul Emperor, nothing too detailed. As Soul Emperor's civilization was eliminated, a lot of information about him was buried by history.

After seeing the documents, Han Xiao started pondering. He was not surprised about how the civilization treated Soul Emperor. He was used to it. He was now only interested in the whereabouts of Soul Flame.

"Soul Emperor is the last Soul Flame master known by the world. Is this guy Oathkeeper? Either Soul Emperor faked his death, or Oathkeeper is someone else who took Soul Flame away from Soul Emperor. If that's the case, there's a chance he's one of the Beyond Grade A enemies of Soul Emperor in that battle, but there's also a possibility it's someone else..."

This time, Han Xiao suddenly thought of the Primordial Ones who got revived in his previous life. They did not seem to include Soul Emperor. Han Xiao's eyes sparkled. "It seems that there's quite a high chance Soul Emperor faked his death..."

Han Xiao pondered. Quite a number of Primordial Ones were revived in his previous life. If he waited for those people to be revived, he could ask someone who knew about it...

However, at this time, Han Xiao suddenly thought of something and was instantly stunned.

Wait a minute!

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People who know about it... are not only those Primordial Ones revived by the Holy Accord! The Underworld dimension Hila inherited is also storing the Hero Spirits of Primordial Ones!

Now this is excellent...

Han Xiao's eyes widened.

Is this fate?

Or has collecting people who have Luck Glow really changed my luck too?

Chapter 1132 Plenary Meeting and Provocation

“There are a lot of souls of powerful individuals of the exploration era war stored in the Underworld dimension, not just the Primordial Ones, but also Supers of various races, mostly Calamity Grades. They’re all antiques...”

Han Xiao’s eyes sparkled brightly.

These people were not just combatants. They were also the people who witnessed the various times of the exploration era and reliable sources of first-hand information. They possessed a lot of ancient secrets.

“Aurora can only make bodies for these Hero Spirits and turn them into combatants when she’s Beyond Grade A. Speaking of which, the Underworld dimension is kind of similar to the Indestructible Mechanic Empire... Although the Hero Spirits can’t have bodies now, it shouldn’t be a problem just communicating with them. I wonder how much Hila has repaired the Underworld.”

Han Xiao still remembered that he had an Underworld dimension mission. Once the Underworld was fully recovered, he would receive a (Mark of The Underworld).

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“I shall find a moment to ask Hila if what I’m thinking is right...” Hila was now in the secondary dimensions, so it was not easy to contact her. However, she should return in the next Beyond Grade A plenary meeting. Han Xiao planned to ask her then.

It just so happened that the next plenary meeting of the development union was not far away, so he did not have to go to the secondary dimensions to find her.

He suspected that Soul Emperor faked his death and Oathkeeper was Soul Emperor, but he had yet to decide if he was going to test Oathkeeper the next time they met.

Beep beep!

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This time, Harrison sent him a message saying Rody had settled in.

“Okay.”

Han Xiao was very content.

My intuition was right. I did indeed get surprised when I returned to Planet Aquamarine this time. I discovered the secret of Destiny’s Child, acquired a semi-transformed sub-body of it, and obtained some key information from Aesop.

However, Aesop’s prophecy made him feel pressure too. Storms were secretly brewing.

The stronger he got, the more secrets he came to know, and the more he could sense the hidden chaos and instability under the peace and prosperity of the explored universe.

Han Xiao pondered.

“I’ve got to think of a way to ask about the Crimson Dynasty’s study of the World Tree Civilization wormhole coordinates...”

After he spent a few days on Floating Dragon as a guest and visited Bennett, Han Xiao and his fleet departed again and headed to the Flickering World.

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At the dock, Ames stood. The stream from the thruster of the spaceship made her black dress sway like a cluster of black fog. She had brought along the Floating Dragon officers and watched the Black Star fleet leave, disappearing from sight.

“He left again.”

Ames exhaled slightly and looked down on the data storage device in her hands. This was a gift Han Xiao had given to her before he left. Inside was an Esper Ultimate Knowledge.

She turned around and saw Jenny’s conflicted expression. She was squeezing tightly on a syringe in her hands. That was a gift from Han Xiao too.

“What’s wrong? What did he give you?” Ames was curious.

“...Nothing!”

Jenny forced out a ferocious smile and hid the magical hair growth potion behind her back.

Aesop stroked his beard, smiled, and said, “Black Star gave me a gift too. I’m starting to like him more and more.”

Beside him, eight fist-sized sphere-shaped weapons swiftly flew around.

This was a product personally built by Han Xiao. He named it ‘Explorer-Multifunctional Life Guarding Formation’. It had a full set of functions, including combat, defense, enhancement, life-sustain, stealth, healing, hyperdrive, radiation block, and many more. It was perfect for solo explorers.

With this set of devices, it was equivalent to carrying around a guard team, logistics team, and a galactic carrier. Even an ordinary person would be able to survive for a very long time in Grade B dangerous environments. They would even last quite a while against Calamity Grades with a chance of retreating unharmed. It was expensive to build and very powerful. Just one set was enough to wipe out ordinary surface civilizations, and Han Xiao had given a total of ten sets to Aesop.

Ames blinked and suddenly said, “I heard that you privately asked Black Star to protect me.”

Stunned, Aesop grabbed his beard and said, “Who told you?”

“Who else?” Ames’ brows raised.

“Tsk, this Black Star, doesn’t even know to keep it a secret for me...” Aesop had a slight headache. He nodded with resignation and said, “That did happen, yes. I foresaw that a drastic change is going to happen. My capability is limited. Only Black Star has the ability to...” Before he finished, Ames

interrupted him and said with a slightly heavy tone, "I'm a Beyond Grade A. I can protect myself. Next time, discuss it with me first before thinking for me. I don't like others making decisions on my behalf."

"Alright, alright, I've overstepped." Aesop raised two hands and expressed that he did not want to argue.

Seeing this, Ames nodded. She then smiled faintly and softly said, "... But still, thanks, I appreciate it."

She knew that Han Xiao had told her about it because he did not want Aesop's kind intentions to not get recognized.

Furthermore, Han Xiao was the only one who could mention this. Aesop was never going to tell Ames and ask to be appreciated; he was not that kind of person.

Aesop figured out Han Xiao's intentions too, and his tiny bit of unhappiness disappeared. He was a little touched and appreciative. His impression of Han Xiao was even better.

The fleet travelled for ten days and finally entered the Flickering World through the military stargates. On this day, the Beyond Grade A Association hosted another plenary meeting. Due to the fact that the Mechanics had been dealing with the Intelligent Plague for quite some time, they had missed quite a number of meetings. This was the first meeting for Han Xiao and the others in a while.

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In the development union's headquarters on Planet Finn, Han Xiao's remote projection landed outside the conference room in the army commander's gold-edged black cape, looking respectable. There was still some time till the official start of the meeting, so not everyone had arrived yet. People gathered in small groups outside the conference room and chatted casually.

One of the purposes of the development union was to build a platform that was convenient for Beyond Grade As to communicate with each other. Other than official meetings, their private communications were just as important.

As soon as he appeared, the space outside the venue instantly turned quiet. Everyone looked over with various expressions on their faces. The atmosphere was a little odd.

This time, Milizaus and several dynasty allies approached. "Yo, Black Star, you've finally returned," Milizaus said loudly.

Han Xiao turned and looked over with a smile. He then greeted Beyoni, Silver Shadow, and his other friends one after another.

After a round of greetings, Milizaus praised, "What you did in the Ancient Star Desert really made me see you in a new light. Sadly, I'm not a Mechanic and could not witness it with my own eyes." "That's right. To think that we could not participate in such a historic moment, what a shame." Viru looked regretful. "If I was there, you wouldn't have fought alone. I'd definitely have fought Manison with you," Beyoni said. Lotus Swordsman was merciless. She said coldly, "Nonsense, if you were there, you'd be the first one to die. You're a burden just like Kohler."

Kohler frowned. Why bring me into it? I didn't say anything!

“Not a big deal. It’s not worth mentioning, hehehe...” Hearing compliments from everyone, Han Xiao waved humbly.

One consequence of him destroying the virus core was that the allies saw that his position had increased again, and he was more trusted by the three Universal Civilizations, so they all came to give their compliments.

This time, Milizaus looked left and right, lowered his voice, and said, “Everyone thinks you’re now totally opposed to Manison. The president and the vice president having different philosophies will definitely lead to arguments. The atmosphere in the association now is very sensitive.”

“No wonder everyone was looking at me strangely earlier.” Han Xiao smiled and was not surprised.

“Today is the first time you and Manison will attend the meeting together after the two of you confronted each other, so most people are now waiting to see what will happen.” Han Xiao shook his head and said, “Don’t worry, the development union’s purpose to the outside world is to solve conflicts between Beyond Grade As, so Manison will definitely not publicly disobey the rules. Otherwise, the foundation of the association will be damaged, and that’s unacceptable for him. Therefore, he has to set an example. The most he’ll do is cause trouble for me verbally. There’s no way he’ll use the association’s powers to cause problems for me. As for me, I have even less of a need to provoke him...”

After all, I grabbed even Mechanic Emperor’s trump card. I’m not the one who lost anything.

Han Xiao giggled in his mind but did not say the second half of the last sentence.

Milizaus said slowly, “Yes, that’s for the best. Don’t provoke him. Actually, after Manison expressed his goal, there aren’t that many people supporting him in the association anymore.

“What he did this time was too risky. Many people don’t agree with it. Had he succeeded, we would all have been dragged down by him too. Therefore, quite a number of them are unhappy with Manison now. “On the other hand, there are a lot of members supporting you. Most people hope to use the development union to stick together in groups and obtain better safety assurance, as well as more benefits. But to completely oppose the three Universal Civilizations? That’s too unrealistic; not many are willing to take the risk! Therefore, since you stopped Manison and also built a closer relationship with the three Universal Civilizations, many people are appreciative of you and recognize you for what you’ve done, and they stand on your side.” Hearing this, Han Xiao looked around, and in many eyes around the room, he saw friendliness.

“Hmm, as expected,” Han Xiao responded. He had figured all this would happen long ago.

At this time, a raging voice suddenly sounded from beside.

“Black Star, you’re such an *sshole!”

The people looked at the source of the voice, Secret Master was walking over to him with a blaming expression on his face.

“What did I do to you?” Han Xiao was confused.

“Still playing dumb!” Secret Master was furious. “You messed up my black market forces in the Ancient Star Desert during the Star Field lockdown!”

"I was just following orders to prevent the virus from leaking." Han Xiao blinked.

"Do you think I'd believe you!" Secret Master said with rage.

Only after the three Universal Civilizations stopped the lockdown did he know that his forces in the Ancient Star Desert had become a mess because of Han Xiao. He almost vomited blood.

"You really have misunderstood me," Han Xiao explained slowly. "The three Universal Civilizations wanted me to control the black market to prevent the virus from leaking. Since it was an abnormal situation, I had to use an abnormal method, so I had no choice but to be aggressive. Furthermore, the Intelligent Plague has already been dealt with, and I've moved out of there. It's the three Universal Civilizations that are trying to continue to control the Ancient Star Desert's black market. I only took on this sinful job for the sake of the safety of the universe. Even if I didn't do it, someone else would have, right?"

Secret Master clenched his teeth. "... The thickest thing I've ever seen is your skin!" He did not really want to blame Han Xiao. He knew that the three Universal Civilizations would not compromise even one bit in the face of such a large disaster. At this matter's roots, he could only blame himself for being so unlucky that the location of the virus outbreak happened to be the Ancient Star Desert.

Secret Master also realized that ever since he crossed paths with Black Star, he kept getting unlucky.

I'd better stay away from Black Star so that I won't get affected if he's struck by lightning one day!

As they were chattering, another remote projection arrived. It was Manison, who was at the center of the storm.

Buzz!

In an instant, the entire place became silent.

Everyone looked over at Manison and Han Xiao with eyes that had various emotions.

The only similarity these eyes had was that they were all looking forward to a show.

Manison turned around and calmly looked Han Xiao in the eye.

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As if the fight between two of them never happened, Manison slowly greeted Han Xiao with a calm expression. "We meet again, Black Star."

"What a coincidence, Mechanic Emperor. I thought you'd be too ashamed to attend the meeting today." Han Xiao chuckled.

At this point in time, he felt he looked more like a villain than Manison.

On the side, Milizaus rubbed the dragon horn on his head with confusion.

... Didn't you agree not to provoke the Mechanic Emperor? Did you completely forget what I literally just said?

Chapter 1133 Confrontation

Manison did not get baited. He sized Han Xiao up and nodded. "You're quite humorous. I'm the development union president. I wouldn't miss the meeting even if you might."

Han Xiao stood with his arms crossed and said, "As the president, what you did doesn't really live up to your position though. Not everyone supported you, yet you made the personal choice of kidnapping their interests and gambling with it."

The moment he saw Manison, he completely forgot about not provoking him. In fact, all he wanted to do now was provoke him.

Knowing about the side the association was leaning to, he deliberately tried to bring up the dissatisfaction of the people around, which proved to be quite effective. Many people looked at Manison with even unfriendlier eyes. They were all important people, so none of them liked having anyone else make decisions for them.

The two of them had now clearly drawn the line and gone back to being competitors. Damaging Manison's reputation was not the main goal; satisfying his guilty pleasure was... Wait, it seemed like it was supposed to be the other way round.

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The allies of the federation present felt the most awkward. Manison was still the federation's ally on paper, but they did not want to be on Manison's side either. Those who supported Manison before were feeling uneasy.

Manison completely ignored how the people around him looked at him and coldly said, "I've finally seen through you after this. The purpose of us creating the association was to gain more power and not be controlled by advanced civilizations. You claim to be thinking for the Beyond Grade As, but you're actually just a dog of the three Universal Civilizations. Everything I do is for the Beyond Grade As in the long run, and it's impossible not to take risks... Sadly, you want to suck up to the three Universal Civilizations and not lose your reputation among the Beyond Grade As, so you chose to destroy our hope. In my eyes, that's nothing but a selfish act of an opportunist. I will never have any hope in you anymore."

"Oh, I didn't expect the great Mechanic Emperor to have to resort to bullsh*tting. Being old surely has benefits. Even your way of twisting the facts is so skilled." Han Xiao did not mind at all and said, "Sadly, the audience's eyes are clear. The things you're trying to frame me for won't stick. Everyone has their own opinions about the truth. As the vice president, I have a duty to stop you from forcing everyone to take one path till the end."

"Hehe... do you really think of yourself as the hero just because you're wearing the coat of public opinion the three Universal Civilizations have weaved for you?"

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"You've got a lot of things to say now, but I'm very curious, will you have the face to attend the award ceremony sometime soon that'll be broadcast to the entire universe?"

"Why not? If not for me, how could the three Universal Civilizations have discovered the virus so soon? How could the special antivirus program have been invented so quickly? Without me, the Intelligent

Plague would still be running rampant even now. In terms of contribution, I'm not much inferior to you, but the three Universal Civilizations never said a single word about it. How obvious are their intentions?"

As the conversation got a kick start, the two of them started to argue without holding back.

They started arguing... and the various Beyond Grade As watched with popcorn from the side.

After arguing for a while more, Manison looked around and said coldly, "I didn't come to argue with you today. The purpose of the association is to solve conflicts between Beyond Grade As. As the president, I have to set an example, so don't worry, although we have our differences, I won't do anything to you."

"You say it in such a nice way. I think you're so busy dealing with the three Universal Civilizations and simply don't dare to mess with me anymore," Han Xiao said with a mocking tone. Manison narrowed his eyes and said, "You seem to think that our tie was real. We both know the truth, but you seem to have misunderstood something. Do you really think you can fight on par with me?"

"That's the truth, not a misunderstanding." Han Xiao chuckled and said with a taunting tone, "If you don't approve of it, I'm available anytime."

He had gotten quite a lot of good stuff from Manison, including even his core Unique Talent, so he even wanted to fight Manison more.

"The purpose of the development union is to solve physical conflicts between Beyond Grade As. I won't lower myself to your level."

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Manison turned and walked into the venue with an expressionless face, no longer bothering with Han Xiao.

Seeing this, Han Xiao secretly curled his lips.

Old Man Manison really is patient. If I provoked him like this in the past, he would have undoubtedly come looking for me to have a talk with a forty-mile-long sword in his hands.

However, the Mechanic Emperor should feel frustrated too. He was so certain he could defeat me, but he was forced to stop at a tie by the three Universal Civilizations, and now he has to patiently wait for the opportunity to regain his position. Until then, he will have to watch his reputation get weakened with his own eyes.

I, however, not only acquired his core Unique Talent but also secretly acquired the incomplete blueprint of the virus technology that he dreams of having. I even got a new ability that counters him... but in his mind, my strength is still the same as when we fought.

If I fight him again, I'll certainly give him a 'surprise'.

While Han Xiao was smiling in his head, Kasuyi came over and said, "I've not seen Manison get forced to do something for a very long time. You're one of the very few people who can give him a loss." Han Xiao turned to look at him and said with surprise, "I thought your relationship was quite good with Manison, but you seem quite happy."

Kasuyi smiled with narrowed eyes. "Hehe, don't misunderstand, I have known Manison for many years, and we are indeed quite close friends. However, he's him, and I'm me. To be frank, I don't agree with what he tried doing either. Even if you didn't stop him, I would've drawn the line with him after the incident."

Han Xiao nodded. "Without this matter, the Mechanic Emperor and I might still be friends. Sadly, our philosophies are too different. I only hope this did not affect the relationship between us."

"Don't worry, your conflict with him won't affect our relationship. I don't mind differences in philosophies because I think everyone has something they want... However, although Manison's method was not the most righteous, he did say one thing right. The three Universal Civilizations are just using you to damage him, and when you're no longer of value too one day... his present might become your future."

"I know my lines. You don't have to worry about that."

While the two of them spoke, a third voice appeared. "Therefore... while we're still being used by advanced civilizations, we'll have to quickly get any benefits we can. This comes from my personal experience." The two of them looked over and saw Sorokin, who had come too. Sorokin added his almost symbolic fake smile to the conversation and greeted the two shareholders.

"Oh, it's you." Han Xiao glanced at him. "What other ideas do you have?"

"You're flattering me, Your Excellency Black Star. I'm just an ordinary Beyond Grade A. I'm in no place to take part in such a big topic. I don't have any good ideas. I'm just giving my suggestion from the perspective of a businessman, hoping to provide Your Excellency Black Star with some ideas to deal with the current situation." Sorokin's tone was passionate.

Han Xiao crossed his arms and sized Sorokin up.

"It doesn't look like you're just here to have a chat. What do you want?"

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"Haha, nothing can escape Your Excellency Black Star's eyes indeed," Sorokin said with a bright smile. "I'm hoping to talk about a partnership with you..."

Han Xiao listened to him for a while and finally understood what he meant. He was not even surprised about how shameless Sorokin was.

He had become the consultant of the three Universal Civilizations, so he now had support from all three of them. Sorokin saw a business opportunity, so he wanted to forge a deeper partnership with him, a shareholder. Han Xiao had gotten this shareholder position basically by robbing it, and Sorokin was not happy about it at all initially. However, now that he saw he could profit from it, he instantly put all that behind him without hesitation and came to speak with Han Xiao. The beef between them was not even cleared, yet he could act as nothing happened.

Over the past few months, Han Xiao had been busy dealing with the Intelligent Plague, while Sorokin had been dealing with how displeased the three Universal Civilizations were with him. After paying a hefty price, he was finally able to mitigate the damage.

Not only that, through some flashy moves, Sorokin was able to prove that his stand was the same as that of the three Universal Civilizations, as well as connect with some of the officials of the federation and the church who had real power. He also used his director position in the association to build new profit networks.

Han Xiao suddenly thought of something. "By the way, Manison is also a shareholder of the Limitless Financial Group, so won't the things he did affect you too? Can the three Universal Civilizations allow him to continue being a shareholder?"

"Well, it did have some impact. However, that doesn't stop me from continuing my partnership with him, and the scheduled dividends won't stop for him either." "The three Universal Civilizations allow that?" "Firstly, my financial group is private and legitimate, so I have the right to freely choose who's in my financial group. Secondly, hehe..." Sorokin giggled but did not say anything and gave Han Xiao a knowing look.

Then it occurred to Han Xiao. No wonder the three Universal Civilizations did not mind the two of them having a partnership. They were using the Limitless Financial Group as a way of acquiring information about Mechanic Emperor's forces. This had to be one of the terms Sorokin had to provide to regain the three Universal Civilizations' support. Of course, he did not want to develop a deeper partnership with Sorokin, so he never gave any direct answers to any of Sorokin's questions and just dragged on the conversation.

The people chattered for a while, and it was finally time to start the meeting. They swarmed into the venue and sat on their seats.

Han Xiao did not continue insulting Manison. Following the theme of this meeting, the two of them dealt with matters one after another just like the usual plenary meetings.

However, although the two of them were minding their own businesses, the atmosphere was still very strange. After what happened outside the venue earlier, most people were influenced and acting completely normal would be quite difficult. Very soon, the last topic arrived. Manison looked around at everyone and said with a deep voice, "Due to the sudden outbreak of the Intelligent Plague, the conflict between the three Universal Civilizations and the Super Star Cluster Alliance was postponed for more than half a year. Now that the plague has been dealt with, these two sides are about to start fighting. Our Beyond Grade A Association needs to pick a side.

"As all of you know, the three Universal Civilizations have been holding tight to the Ultimate Knowledges. The terms they gave was to have us deal with the Super Star Cluster Alliance in their place, which I don't intend to agree to. Therefore, I suggest we hold our original stand and do not take part in the war between advanced civilizations."

The people nodded. Although they were unhappy with Manison, this decision was agreed upon by most of them previously, so there was not much argument.

As for the direct members of the three Universal Civilizations, they usually did not express their opinion at times like this. After all, there would be no point even if they did.

However, this time, Manison turned to Han Xiao and suddenly asked, "Vice President, what do you think?"

Han Xiao's eyes flickered, and he started pondering. He noticed what the Mechanic Emperor intended to do.

He was now at the center of public opinion. The reasons behind the three Universal Civilizations' recent compliments of him might not exclude them wanting him to become the representative of the development union who stood on their side. Not only did they hope he would compete with Manison, but they also hoped that he would speak for them in the association.

However, one of the very purposes of building this association was to help the Beyond Grade As escape from the faction lock the advanced civilizations had set up for them, so they did not have to murder each other as tools. On this matter, Han Xiao realized that no matter which side he picked, he would still be negatively affected.

Supporting the overall agreement of the people present was not a problem on the association's side, but although the three Universal Civilizations would not be surprised about it, they would feel somewhat disappointed, which would reduce the support he would receive. The other allies could make this choice because they were the 'crowd', while he was the 'representative' whom the three Universal Civilizations had high hopes for. The impact was different despite the choice being the same.

If he spoke for the three Universal Civilizations and encouraged everyone to deal with the Super Star Cluster Alliance, it would be even worse. He would look like he had completely taken the side of the three Universal Civilizations and become the 'dog' that the Mechanic Emperor claimed he was, which would undoubtedly displease everyone. Furthermore, the philosophy he represented would look different. It would turn from peaceful co-existence to sucking up to the three Universal Civilizations, which completely went against the purpose of the association and was exactly the same as the original path everyone was taking.

Han Xiao looked up. Everyone present, including the direct members of the three Universal Civilizations, was focused on him. They clearly knew what impact this decision he made would have, so they waited for him to make a stand.

Manison's question could not be considered dirty or anything. It was just rightfully using the opportunity.

"Of course, I agree with everyone. That's why we gathered here in the first place... However, I'm going to deal with one of the Super Star Cluster civilizations. I have some private beef with them," Han Xiao said calmly. He was very realistic, so he would not pick the wrong side at times like this.

When the three Universal Civilizations were praising and supporting him, Han Xiao had known a moment when he had to prove to the other Beyond Grade As he did not 'change his heart' would come.

Hearing his answer, the people were satisfied.

After the business was done, the plenary meeting ended, and the Beyond Grade As went offline one after another.

Han Xiao, however, did not leave immediately. He dragged Hila, who had been only watching, to the said, found a room, and closed the door.

"You've returned." Hila sized Han Xiao up and said, "You seem to have lost weight."

"I should be the one saying that to you. How's the Underworld?" Han Xiao smiled.

"It's getting stable and slowly recovering... By the way, I have something to tell you. It's about the Underworld too."

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"What a coincidence, I have something I want to ask you about the Underworld too, but you go first."

Hila nodded.

"Okay, have you heard about the Sanctum?"

Han Xiao's face was filled with shock. He subconsciously pressed his hand on his chest where his heart was.

At that moment, he finally understood how Oathkeeper felt.

Chapter 1134 That Must Be a Fake Black Star

"Where did you hear about the Sanctum?" Han Xiao asked with a shocked tone. "The Underworld told me..." Hila briefly repeated what Onicelu had said. Seeing Han Xiao's reaction, she said, "Humph, so you knew about the Sanctum long ago but didn't tell me."

"Ahem, that's because I didn't know everything about it either, and I'm still privately investigating." Han Xiao coughed and quickly worked his brain.

Hila's message gave him a surprise. He initially only wanted to ask the Underworld Hero Spirits about Soul Emperor, but he was also able to acquire new information about the Sanctum.

According to Hila, someone once invited the two sisters to participate in an operation targeted at the Sanctum. This meant that some Primordial Ones possessed more information about the Sanctum, only that those two sisters did not go in the end. After that, for some unknown reason, the information about the Sanctums seemed to be cut off. Fewer and fewer people knew about it.

Furthermore, Han Xiao also acquired an important piece of intelligence from Hila-one of the Sanctums' functions was reviving the dead. This was the first function of the Sanctums he had discovered, and it finally opened the mysterious curtain for a bit.

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The Holy Accord organization, revived Primordial Ones, the Sanctums...

Han Xiao finally felt like all these things were connected.

No wonder Oathkeeper was acting that way...

Previously, he did not connect the two of them because he did not know the exact use of the Sanctums. Now, he finally had a clearer image of the Holy Accord organization.

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One of the rewards of My Primal Esper Ability Collector Milestone Mission was the Third Sanctum Ability Fragment, which means these two are connected in some way. Then the true goal of the Holy Accord organization in collecting Primal Esper Abilities should be to open the Sanctum and revive people from the past... Seeing that Han Xiao looked like he was deep in thought, Hila frowned and asked, "Was this information useful to you?"

"Useful, very useful." Han Xiao regained focus and said, "Actually, I've been secretly collecting information about the Sanctums, and you've helped me a lot this time. Great job." "As long as it's helpful for you." Hila stopped frowning and nodded. She then asked, "Then what were you going to tell me earlier?" "Haha, I happen to want to ask the Underworld Hero Spirits some questions, and now I have one more question to ask." "Do you need me to awaken the Hero Spirits right now?"

"That'll affect your growth, won't it?"

"As long as you need me to, I don't mind it." Hila did not hesitate at all.

"You don't have to do that. The Underworld is inherited by you after all. Don't only think of me." Han Xiao shook his head, sighed, and said, "Let's not rush. We'll talk about it when the Underworld recovers."

"Alright, just tell me when you need it. I'll help you anytime," Hila said softly.

"We'll talk about it then." Han Xiao nodded, changed the topic, and smiled. "By the way, I brought you a present this time. You should like it."

Hila's eyes sparkled. "What is it?"

"I've made an agreement with the three Universal Civilizations, and I can now acquire three Esper Ultimate Knowledges for you. I brought one for you this time. I'll let Phillip send it to you later."

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"Okay." Hila smiled faintly. She was very satisfied with this present, even more glad that Han Xiao still remembered about her even when he was out on business.

Han Xiao only logged off after chatting for quite a while more.

His sight returned to his body, which was in the main ship's command room.

The fleet was advancing in the Dawn Star Cluster of the Flickering World. They would reach the edge of the Garu Star Cluster in a few days and return to the army's territory.

Standing beside the enormous floor-to-ceiling porthole, Han Xiao looked at the stars passing by outside and thought back to the meeting earlier.

Manison's risky actions caused him to lose support in the association, and his connections were damaged. Without any accidents, during the next election in fifty year's time, it's going to be very tough for him to have two consecutive terms.

However, that old man Manison isn't one to wait for doom to arrive. He's now busy dealing with the three Universal Civilizations' pressure, but he won't stay passive like that. He'll certainly come up with

other plans to improve the situation he's in. Given his philosophy, it's impossible for him to admit he was wrong and go back to the arms of the federation. That would only cause even more problems. The situation can no longer go back to what it was before for him.

He might regain his position as an independent faction like he did in my previous life, but this time, the duration of that will not just last throughout the Calamity of the Supers versions. He will become completely alone. Even if the alliance he had with the federation was not dismantled on paper, the three Universal Civilizations would not give him any more important responsibilities.

Manison's actions caused him to no longer have a Universal Civilization backing him up. However, he could back himself up, so he had the confidence to do this.

If not because Han Xiao had told the three Universal Civilizations about the virus core to reduce the damage caused by the disaster, Manison would not have taken the risk and would still be a comfortable ally of the federation.

Thinking of that, Han Xiao opened the interface and looked at [Key of Adeptus Mechanicus].

The impact of their battle was clearly visible. As the Machinery Faith believers on Planet Magnetic Cloud spread this news as much as they could, the news of him fighting Manison that ended up in a tie was spread in the Machinery Faith very quickly. This had shaken a small part of people's faith in Manison, and Han Xiao attracted a new group of believers.

After the recent events, the bonus of (Key of Adeptus Mechanicus) had increased by quite a lot. The range of bonuses provided by this talent was comprehensive, basically covering all bases of mechanical abilities. Currently, his Machinery Affinity was about 600%, and he also received hundreds of Attribute Points other than in Luck. Furthermore, his ability in the armed, virtual, and many other classifications also improved depending on the believers' preferences. Other than that, his efficiency in building, repairing, and enhancing machines was also improved by a lot. He could also use various machines more efficiently.

The bonuses of the talent were so comprehensive, and the bonuses were still increasing as his believers increased. Han Xiao did not know if there was even an end to it. "The bonuses I'm receiving aren't the most important part..." Han Xiao chuckled.

His [Key of Adeptus Mechanicus) receiving more bonuses meant he had taken away the Mechanic Emperor's believers, so the Mechanic Emperor's bonuses from this talent decreased.

The more I get, the less Manison has.

As this carried on, Manison's advantage over everyone else would decrease.

I might not have earned the most, but Manison definitely lost the most.

After travelling for several days, Han Xiao and the fleet finally arrived at the entrance of the army's territory, Planet Black Gate. He planned to rest there for half a day and then head to the venue of the Black Star Cup. While he was not around, the construction in the army territory had carried on steadily. The Black Star Cup was going smoothly. The members who were eliminated went back to their posts, and the eliminated players returned to the fourth stage free competition zone in the Flickering World to continue to occupy strongholds... Everything was going well.

Currently, most of the matches of the Black Star Cup had already ended. Only the last two most popular matches were left. They were the duel finals of the Calamity Grade group and the square group finals of the players group. The two contestants of the former were both elite Black Star Guards. One was the old bootlicker Hadavy, and other was the newbie bootlicker Jotina. Both were Beyond Grade A seeds, and they stood out from the various Calamity Grades of the army.

Not considering Han Xiao and Hila, these two were recognized as among the strongest in the army.

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Originally, both Lagi and Lothaire would also be qualified enough to fight for the top place among Calamity Grades, but Lagi, being Lagi, had already given up in the qualifiers.

As for Lothaire, it was not suitable for him to appear in front of the public due to his job, so he did not participate in the Black Star Cup.

As for other Calamity Grades, none were a match for Hadavy and Jotina. Even Feidin and Nero could not make up for the difference in direct strength with their Advanced Luck Glow.

As for the square groups contestants on the players' side, they were Frenzied Sword's Team Rivervale, King Admiral's Team Dynasty, Rainy Kim's Team Thunder Storm, and a group of very highly skilled players' Gold Team.

Only one of the Chinese clubs entered the finals of the Pro League, but this was different because the rules of the Black Star Cup were less strict, more random, and more dramatic compared to the official league. Usually, the big clubs would always face attacks from the other three sides at the same time in square scrimmages. Hence, Long Sky, Temple of God, and Fried Eggplants with Fish all got eliminated by their passionate fans.

The fleet docked at Planet Black Gate.

As soon as Han Xiao walked down from the spaceship, he saw Sylvia welcoming him on the dock. A security perimeter was set up. The crowd watched from behind it with curiosity, including some army warriors and players. Not only that, they even held up a set of banners. The left one said "Holding loyalty with iron shoulders", the right said "Carrying lives with a merciful heart", and the middle said "Welcome home, hero of the universe"!

"What the hell..." Han Xiao's eyes opened wide with shock. He turned around, walked back to the cabin, closed the hatch, and opened it again, making sure he was not seeing things.

Did I open the hatch wrong?

While he was being stunned, Sylvia approached him, saluted with the officers, and yelled as if they were afraid the others could not hear them, "Welcome back, Army Commander!"

Han Xiao's mouth twitched. He did not even have to ask to know that this was definitely Sylvia's idea.

Never mind when others praised him, but his own subordinates doing it was too embarrassing, not to mention the fact that this was a public area.

Han Xiao dragged Sylvia aside and whispered with a speechless expression, "What's with the welcome?"

“This welcome ceremony is necessary so that the entire army knows you’ve returned victorious. It’s beneficial for enhancing the members’ sense of recognition,” Sylvia said with a serious tone, but her barely-suppressed grin sold her heart out.

Speechless, Han Xiao quickly dragged Sylvia toward the dock exit and changed the topic.

“The Black Star Cup is coming to an end. How are the preparations for the closing ceremony?”

As this was a business matter, Sylvia wiped the smile off her face and said, “It’s all been settled. When the time comes, you’ll have to make a speech and compliment the winners of every contest.”

“There are so many items. How many people is that going to be?”

Sylvia rolled her eyes. “You asked for this, hero.”

“Alright, I’ll be there,” Han Xiao said with resignation.

“Also, I suggest that you watch the last two matches live at the venue. Since you’ve returned, it’s best for you to show up at the finals to show how much you care about the competition.”

“Well, I’m in no hurry. Might as well.”

The group hastily left the dock. In the crowd, a group of players were looking at Han Xiao with extended necks. Many people around them recognized that these people were the Gold Team, which had entered the finals of the square scrimmage. They were all highly skilled players, and their excellent performance during the Black Star Cup attracted quite a lot of fans.

After watching Han Xiao leave, the members of Gold Team all turned to look at their Mechanic teammate, who stood in the middle.

“We actually really got to meet Black Star by waiting here.” “How was it? Were you able to create the Character Summon Card?” “What ability did you get?”

Their goal of gathering there was to get their Mechanic teammate, who had a Blank Character Summon Card, to copy Black Star’s ability. It would be a trump card for the finals.

As Beyond Grade As were very difficult to find, they were initially planning to just copy from a Calamity Grade. However, the army commander coincidentally returned, and no one was a better target for the Blank Character Summon Card than Black Star.

“Don’t be so impatient. It’s still randomizing.”

This Mechanic teammate displayed his interface and looked at it nervously with everyone else. After about two to three seconds, a notification finally popped up on the interface. The group hastily looked at it.

You have received (Character Summon CardBlack Star).

Ability: (Billion Mechanic Empire-Manison]

Uses: 0/1

Everyone was at a loss.

What's going on?

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Wasn't the target Black Star? Why is the ability from the Mechanic Emperor?

At this point, the few of them suddenly trembled. They exchanged looks and saw horror in each other's eyes. They felt they had just discovered a gigantic secret.

There was only one explanation for this situation!

The army commander had been swapped!

That Black Star must be fake!

Chapter 1135 People, It Is Our Turn to Save the Army!

An hour later...

Inside a dark room, the tiny dark green candle was the only source of light. The flame swayed and flickered, illuminating the faces around the table, leaving shadows on the wall. It looked quite scary and creepy.

Above the candlelight, an interface that was displayed to the people around was floating, showing the introduction of the Black Star Character Summon Card. Gold Team's captain was 'Fly Free', a top non-professional player who started playing all the way back in Version 1.0. He looked worried and troubled as he said in a low voice, "I didn't expect to discover such a big secret. Guys, what should we do now?" "What else? Publicize it!"

"But this is the trump card we're going to use in the finals. If we make it public, won't we have exposed ourselves?" "Oi, priorities! Compared to the safety of the entire army, the competition is no longer that important!"

As they were arguing, a female player gently raised her hand and said, "I have a question. Why don't we turn on the lights, instead of this one candle?"

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"This kind of dark and mysterious environment is needed for something this important. That's how they play it in the movies."

Another team member scratched his head and asked, "I understand that and all, but why only light one candle?"

"We might be the only ones who've discovered the truth. The atmosphere has to be serious, understand?"

Another teammate gave a long "oh" and then said, "I see, but why only light one candle?"

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"Enough!" Fly Free could not take it anymore. He stood up and stopped the replay. Then he went to turn on the light and pulled the rest back on track.

After acquiring the Black Star Character Summon Card, the fragile hearts of all the Gold Team members were shaken. They quickly returned to the stronghold to discuss what they should do.

On dealing with the issue, the opinions of the team were split in two. One side felt they should keep the secret till after the finals; another side felt that the matter was too important, and they should immediately publicize it on the forums to warn the army players that their faction boss might have been swapped.

Although they had worked hard to finally enter the Black Star Cup finals, after discovering this secret, the competition did not seem that interesting anymore. Their attention was completely absorbed by the mystery of the army commander. The Character Summon Card had a 'Black Star' prefix, but they had no way of knowing if this was also part of the target's disguise. After all, the prefix of Character Summon Cards usually only displayed the target's current identity. It did not have the natural ability to see through disguises.

For example, if they used a Blank Character Summon Card on Sorokin or Oathkeeper, it would only be displayed as 'Sorokin Character Summon Card' or 'Oathkeeper Character Summon Card', not their true identity.

Therefore, this 'Manison' suffix was clearly more convincing!

Boom!

Fly Free slammed the table heavily and said with a firm tone, "I think we should immediately publicize this information. We would never have a chance of getting into the finals of any official league, but the Black Star Cup gave us this opportunity. Even if we lose in the finals, we're still top four, and we'll still have gained a lot of fame. Without the Black Star Cup, all this would not have happened. We cannot forget where we came from. The reward of the competition is nothing compared to the safety of the entire army!

"Plus, throughout the versions, just how many benefits has the army commander brought us? How many of us love this character? He might be in danger now. How can we ignore that! The chance of saving the army lies in our hands!"

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The players present were mostly senior Chinese players who had strong feelings for the army. They had come to see it as their home faction long ago.

For example, in order to protect the army and Black Star, Fly Free was even willing to give up their advantage in the final just to tip everyone off. He knew that just a few of them were far from enough to make a difference, so he wanted to unite the army players' power, have them come together to find a way, and expose the Mechanic Emperor's 'conspiracy'!

Hearing this, the people present were reminded of the past and suddenly felt a burning flame of faith in their hearts.

Fly Free reached out his hand. The others understood this gesture. They all reached out their hands and stacked them together. They looked each other in the eyes and saw the strong sense of responsibility in everyone's gaze.

“Now, it’s our turn to save the army commander!”

Fly Free immediately opened to forums to start writing a post. Without hesitation, he gave it this title...

‘Revelation of the Century! The Unspeakable Secret Between Black Star and the Mechanic Emperor!’

The fleet rested for half a day on Planet Black Gate. Then, it very soon started to head toward the venue of the Black Star Cup finals. Inside the cabin, Han Xiao chatted with Sylvia about business for more than half a day, and only then did Sylvia leave.

Alone in the room, Han Xiao comfortably sat in his chair, casually opened up the forums, and started his daily idiotic players observation time.

“Let me look at the happy meal today...”

Han Xiao hummed in a great mood as he entered the forums, but he was instantly stunned.

With a glance, the titles were all along the lines of ‘Extremely Urgent, Please Share! The Army Commander’s Identity Has Become A Mystery!’, ‘Mechanic Emperor’s Horrifying Conspiracy!’, ‘Danger! The Black Star Army’s Owner Might Have Changed!’, and ‘Please Save the Army Commander!’. The entire Flickering World panel was filled with posts similar to those.

What in the world is this?

It’s not even been a day since I last looked at the forums. What happened?

Confused, Han Xiao opened the most viewed post. The original poster was surprisingly an ID he knew, the captain of Gold Team, Fly Free. The post started directly with a high-resolution screenshot, the introduction of the Black Star Character Summon Card. As soon as Han Xiao saw the (Billion Mechanic Empire-Manison) ability, he had a rough idea of what was going on, and his lips started twitching uncontrollably.

You can’t be serious. I have thousands and thousands of abilities, and he somehow copied this ability to the Blank Character Summon Card? How lucky can these people be? Speaking of which, I’ve only just returned. When did they use the Blank Character Summon Card on me? Was it at the docks?

He continued reading. As he expected, Fly Free explained what happened.

“Comrades of the army, I’m Gold Team’s Fly Free. About an hour ago, we discovered a shocking secret! “Not long ago, when the army commander returned to his territory, our team was in the crowd, and we planned to use one Blank Character Summon Card to copy Black Star’s ability. Initially, we planned on using it as the trump card in the upcoming Black Star Cup final. However, as everyone can see from the screenshot, never could we have expected to get the Mechanic Emperor’s ability from Black Star! This completely appalled all of us!

“We could not understand the situation. After some discussion, we came to a shocking conclusion. The army commander now might be the Mechanic Emperor in disguise! His goal is to replace Black Star and take over our army!

“In the end, we decided to immediately publicize this crucial information. We need everyone to unite, find the truth, and destroy this conspiracy! Comrades, the future of the army is in our hands!”

Han Xiao looked like he was constipated.

I mean, this deduction isn't complete nonsense, but why do I still feel like these people are mentally challenged?

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He looked at the responses below, which had already exploded. Countless people expressed their doubts.

"Is this real? Is this screenshot photoshopped?"

"It has to be. Youngsters are trying to come up with big news every day."

"Are you guys trying to make the news and attract some attention while it lasts because you know that you have no chance at winning?" "Bullsh*t."

"It's over. Someone is going to have to change his name into Mechanic Emperor's Big PP."

Facing the doubts, Fly Free responded to these comments.

"I know everyone definitely has doubts. On the day of the final, we'll use this Character Summon Card and display it, so everyone will believe that we need to save the army!"

Save your ass! Han Xiao ground his teeth and returned to the panel, quickly browsing through the related posts. He realized that other than those who doubted it, there were also quite a number who made posts to seriously analyze the possibility of it being true.

[Reinhard: Perhaps it's true. The Mechanic Emperor totally has motive. Didn't the two of them fight with each other some time ago in the Ancient Star Desert? Could it be that the Mechanic Emperor attacked the army commander after that?]

[Pikachu: If this one is fake, then where's the real army commander? Did he die?]

[Wolf Flame: That shouldn't be possible. After all, just think about how tanky the army commander is. I think that Mechanic Emperor might have just exiled him, and he can't come back anytime soon, which is why Mechanic Emperor dares disguise himself as Black Star!]

(Hippo: Are you guys all going with the story that the army commander has been swapped by default? Why can't Black Star have learned the Mechanic Emperor's ability somehow?)

[Smelly Feet Slayer: That's too unlikely. This is the first time in so many years that the Blank Character Summon Card has gotten an ability from Black Star with a suffix.]

[Zero Square Foot of Zero: Could it be that they've made some kind of deal to teach each other their abilities?]

[My Dog's Name Is Lagi: Hmm, so... if we use Blank Character Summon Cards on Mechanic Emperor now, we might get 'Indestructible Body-Black Star'!]

You really are a genius... Han Xiao's teeth were almost starting to hurt from all the grinding.

(Ice Tornado: Wait, there are other possibilities too! Could it be that Black Star was taught by the Mechanic Emperor from the beginning?)

(Blueberry: Holy sh*t! That does sound possible. If Black Star has been Mechanic Emperor's secret disciple since long ago, that'll explain his extremely quick rise!)

(Shadow Song of Execution: If that's true, their conflict some time ago might just be a show. They appear to be on opposite sides, but they're actually on the same side! What a plot twist... I figured it out! The Mechanic Emperor is planning something huge, and he's playing a gigantic match of chess!)

Figured your ass out!

Veins popped up on Han Xiao's forehead.

(Blood Rose: No, my curiosity can't be suppressed any longer. What happened between Black Star and the Mechanic Emperor?)

(Paradise Disco: Just a tiny question, will I get killed if I ask the army commander directly? Although I'm not afraid of that...]

(Bun-Hit-Dog: Ah, my eyes see through all. A storm is brewing. This secret might lead to a new enormous main storyline... I have a feeling that the theme of the next version is going to be the Black Star Army's split! I'm going to have plenty of material again!]

What split! You're the one that's going to split!

Han Xiao had a feeling that if he caught these players and shook them hard enough, he would most certainly hear the sound of liquid flowing in their empty heads.

Then, he suddenly saw a new post. The title was 'Army Rescue Operation-Recruitment Post'.

He clicked in and saw that it was a post from Free Sh*t again.

"Brother and sisters, the Black Star Army has accompanied us over four versions. This is our faction, and we can't allow others to rob what we've worked so hard for!

"However, sadly, the army's officers will not believe what we say. Only us players can see the evidence.

"Because of that, I've decided to start a righteous mutiny. When the closing ceremony of the Black Star Cup is broadcast live to the entire universe, I'm going to step out and expose the Mechanic Emperor's real identity to everyone! "Therefore, I need all of your power! "Although we're far from being able to match Beyond Grade As, we can use our lives to show the entire universe the Mechanic Emperor's conspiracy! "All heroes who are willing to participate in the operation, leave your name under this post and contact us. "Comrades, unsheathe your swords. We're the only ones who can save the army now!

"Even in death, I'm still a member of the Black Star Army!

"Mechanic Emperor Manison, show us your HP bar!"

Han Xiao was completely astounded.

He looked down, and the comments of this post were growing by the hundreds each second. Countless people were thrilled and signed up for it.

What the hell? Are they planning to backstab me?

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Should I feel a headache now, or should I feel touched?

This proves that what I've done in the past four versions has been very effective. I've already built a strong emotional bond with the Chinese players. The fact that these players are willing to go this far for me, it's really touching.. Touching my ass!

What kind of turn of events is this?

He looked at the post again for two more times and clenched his teeth.

"Frankly, this post did indeed make me quite heated... Damn it, smaller brains do indeed occupy less space in the brain to give room for more stupidity!"

Chapter 1136 This Is Love

Han Xiao could not help but rub his temples. Players were the incarnation of anarchy. Even though they were already members of his own faction, they could still not be fully controlled. Although their intentions were good, what they did would always end up causing all kinds of strange things to happen.

The atmosphere of the entire forums got carried away by this topic.

After being frustrated for a while, Han Xiao suddenly laughed.

"These guys really can't seem to stop causing problems... but this might not be a bad thing."

He pondered for a while and suddenly realized that he did not have to stop the players.

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Not to mention that the players were communicating on the forums and there was no way he could use that as evidence to catch them, this was not a bad thing for building a sense of belonging for the army.

If not because the senior players loved and cared about him, they would not try to 'save' him.

He did not have to operate a universal armed force like a tinker, fixing any problems that appeared. Instead, letting the players cause some trouble during the closing ceremony would even bring the Black Star Cup more attention, and he did not even have to plan anything.

The players were led by Fly Free, who wanted to backstab him in the name of justice, but this was completely harmless in Han Xiao's eyes. He was happy to put on a show with them.

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The Black Star Army's public image in the universe was basically an ally of justice recognized by everyone. The people were extremely forgiving toward the army, so even if something like this happened during the Black Star Cup closing ceremony, it would not affect the army's reputation.

Instead, it would feel interesting to most people. The Black Star Army basically had the public opinion armor. Actually, Han Xiao figured out easily that he did not have to explain any rumors spreading among the players to anyone, they were non-issues to him.

I'm the faction leader, a top warlord in the universe, and I didn't really get swapped. If I even have to explain myself in the face of such a weird accusation, it will be a joke.

The evidence of the players' doubts was the Character Summon Card, which actually seemed to make sense from their perspective. However, as long as they could see the big picture, this kind of suspicion would not be able to stand its ground at all. If the Mechanic Emperor really disguised himself as him, there would be way too many flaws in that theory that could not be explained. For example, why did none of the other Beyond Grade As sense it? Why did the three Universal Civilizations not notice it? How could the army's artificial intelligence, Phillip, not respond to it at all? And if he was the Mechanic Emperor, how could the Mechanic Emperor use his secondary dimension army box?

No one in the entire universe could disguise himself as another peak Beyond Grade A perfectly. Even a shapeshifter like 'Illusory Deity' Kant could not.

The players did not understand what seemed like common sense to anyone who could see the big picture, so maybe their accusation would be an interesting topic for galactic residents to discuss over meals. Only completely clueless people would believe it. Their evidence that was on the interface was something that did not exist to ordinary people. Han Xiao knew very well that the main reason the players believed this theory was that it was still fresh. Once the blind passion faded and they saw that everything was continuing as usual, this kind of ridiculous rumor would collapse on itself.

All important people would be involved in strange and wild rumors. There was no need to explain himself, so he decided to give the players some room for imagination.

Han Xiao's eyes gleamed.

To the players who only cared about the benefits of the faction, it did not matter who owned the faction. Therefore, being willing to expose the Mechanic Emperor's 'conspiracy' while bearing the risk of being punished by the faction was basically a sacrificial act.

Then does it mean that the more people who take part in this mission, the more united the army is?

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Furthermore, since the players used this reason to cause trouble, the Mechanic Emperor will be the one getting the negative image here!

Having thought of that, Han Xiao smiled and summoned Phillip.

"Phillip, watch the Immortals of the army closely for some time. Report any and all situations to me."

"Okay, hum!"

"By the way, invite the Beyond Grade As to come and watch the ceremony in my name while you're at it. Send one to the Mechanic Emperor too."

"Hum... Will the Mechanic Emperor come?" Phillip tilted his little head with confusion.

“How would I know? Just send it to him. It’s best if he comes. I’ll have a chance to provoke him again.” Han Xiao giggled. “Alright then, hum...”

Seeing Han Xiao’s evil smile, Phillip obeyed him without asking anything.

“Black Star invited me to attend an event?”

At a secret base somewhere in Primeval Star River, Manison, who was trying to simulate the Virtual Mutiny Virus, stopped and looked at his artificial intelligence with confusion.

“Yes, he’s invited you to attend the Black Star Cup closing ceremony.”

What’s wrong with this guy?

What makes Black Star think I will give him face after what happened?

Manison could not understand it at all.

Is he trying to fix our relationship?

Or make me lose face in public?

“I’m not going. Reject it,” Manison replied and continued to reverse engineer the technology. “Okay, message sent.” Manison replied with a soft grunt and then stopped what he was doing for a moment. “By the way, remind me to watch the stream on the day of the Black Star Cup closing ceremony.”

Although he did not plan to give Han Xiao face, he still wanted to find out what Black Star was attempting to do. There was definitely a reason he had received an invitation.

While the discussion about whether Han Xiao was ‘real or fake’ raged on the forums, the last two finals of the Black Star Cup started as scheduled.

Countless audience platforms floated above the venue planet, covering the sky. They were all fully occupied by army members and spectators who had bought live tickets.

The audience platform specially made by the army was in the form of an oval shaped cabin. All the walls were transparent, so the spectators inside could see the outside from any angle. The walls also had the function to zoom in.

These audience platforms were also protected by transparent energy shields that could block all kinds of impacts and radiation so that there would not be any spectators lucky enough to get hurt. They could also fly at Mach speed twenty-four to ensure the spectators would be able to keep up with the Calamity Grade battles. With the advanced technology the platforms had, the spectators inside would also not feel any turbulence even when flying at such a high speed and always feel as if they were on the ground.

Today, Han Xiao personally came to watch the competition at the venue. He arrived at the extremely crowded venue and hovered in front of the various audience platforms.

As soon as he showed up, he felt like electricity was running through his skin, as if he was being stared at by countless people from behind.

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Han Xiao was not surprised. He knew this was the countless players in the audience seats using 'Detect' on him. In the eyes of the players, Han Xiao's detailed attributes were still all question marks, but the players' goal was to see the color of Han Xiao's name. The result of that was still green, which showed that Han Xiao was on their side, and they started chattering. "Let's begin." Han Xiao was not concerned about the players' discussion. He turned and signaled the host to start the finals. The host coughed and said with a loud voice, "Greetings, everyone. Today is the last day of the official Black Star Cup competitions. There will be a total of two finals, the duel finals of the Calamity Grade group and the Square Scrimmage final of the Immortals group. Without further ado, the first match today will be the fight between two Calamity Grades. Contestants, please enter the venue..."

As soon as he said that, Hadavy and Jotina appeared. After a brief introduction, the two of them went to their own positions and waited for the match to start. Their battlefield was the surface of the entire planet. As time passed, the atmosphere became more and more tense. The moment the host announced the start of the match, two silhouettes left afterimages in their place and clashed.

Boom!

A shockwave expanded. The two of them instantly started attacking each other. Their movements were extremely quick as they moved across the planet's surface. Everywhere they passed, they would leave cracks and deep claw marks hundreds of meters long on the ground.

TIL

Boom!

Violent Pugilist flames continuously landed on Hadavy, shattering all the hills and forests around like a dragon crawling on the land. Disasters such as earthquakes, landslides, and tsunamis erupted. Hadavy was a hardening-type Esper, while Jotina was a Pugilist. Both of them were good at melee combat. The battle between them was violent and savage, basically just the clashing of muscles and muscles, like two beasts fighting each other. To be more precise, Jotina was attacking, and Hadavy was enduring the attacks. The battle would only end when the one enduring the attacks could not take it anymore or when the one attacking got exhausted.

The impact of a Calamity Grade battle was exciting and beautiful for most of the spectators, but in Han Xiao's eyes, the movements of the two of them were like a slow-motion video. He could easily count how many times Hadavy's skin rippled after he got punched.

With Han Xiao's current level, battles of Calamity Grades had absolutely no suspense. Hence, he decided to look at the forums while occasionally glancing back.

Under the eyes of countless people, the result was finally decided after the two of them fought for a very long time. The surface of the planet looked like it had been hit by a meteor shower. It was tragic. In the end, Hadavy was victorious. Although he was covered in bruises and wounds, Jotina had collapsed from exhaustion first.

After decades of combat training, or rather, getting beat up, Hadavy's defense was now extremely high. In combination with his two Molding Talents, True Damage Immunity and Low Strength Attack Immunity, there was not a single person tankier than him in the Black Star Army other than Han Xiao

“Haha, I’m the pillar of the army who His Excellency Black Star personally trained for decades. You’re still too young.”

Hadavy was very proud as he wagged his finger at Jotina, who was on the ground.

If not for his bruised face, this would have been quite convincing...

“Damn it!”

Jotina was not satisfied with the loss at all. She slammed the ground and created a crack dozens of meters wide.

She could not win the championship, which meant that Black Star would not notice her strength. Black Star not noticing her strength meant she would have less time to communicate with Black Star during the award ceremony. Less time to communicate with Black Star during the award ceremony meant it would be more difficult for her to build feelings. More difficulty building feelings meant the chances of her carrying out reproductive activities with Black Star would be lowered. As a new member of the army whose goal was to sleep with Black Star, she was extremely unhappy.

Han Xiao watched as the two of them were sent to have their injuries taken care of. He touched his chin and started pondering.

In my previous life, Hadavy did not reach the Beyond Grade A realm, and Jotina even died at the hands of Beast Ancestor, but now they’re both under my command. I’ve trained Hadavy for decades. His chance of reaching Beyond Grade A, well, isn’t zero. It’s just that his ability is too monotonous. Even if he does become a Beyond Grade A, he’ll probably be at the lowest level like Kohler and Beyoni...

As for Jotina, other than her wild and open personality, Han Xiao quite liked her.

In terms of just potential, the chance of Jotina becoming a Beyond Grade A was probably even higher than Hadavy. However, it would be basically impossible for her to reach Beast Ancestor’s level. Han Xiao felt that the limit of Jotina’s growth was probably somewhere around the level of ‘Star Slasher’ Viru, or ‘Tyrant’ Heber...

Not very strong but not among the weakest. As Han Xiao was reminded of Heber, he started thinking of him. Ever since Heber was defeated by him, he had been keeping a much lower profile and quietly growing in the Shattered Star Ring. Speaking of low profile, Han Xiao was reminded of Psyker again. He felt that this guy’s presence had gotten even lower in the universe. He might want to visit the Star Pupil Civilization some time. After all, he was now the Special Consultant of the three Universal Civilizations, so visiting Psyker would be totally within his duty.

While his thoughts ran wild, Black Star Cup’s logistics department entered the venue and started using tons of industrial devices to operate on this almost destroyed planet.

After a new venue was built, the host announced the start of the last final. Rivervale, Dynasty, Thunder Storm, and Gold’s teams entered one after another, greeting the spectators.

However, all the players’ eyes were focused on Gold, even including the other three teams. Clearly, they were waiting for their proof.

“Captain, should I use the Character Summon Card now?”

Fly Free looked around the entire place and firmly said, "Use it! This is the perfect time to prove we were not lying."

The Mechanic player took a deep breath, opened the interface, and activated the Black Star Character Summon Card. Then, he enlarged his status bar and made it public.

Of course, as the interface was displayed, ordinary people would not be able to see it. Only the players could see the name of the effect given by this Character Summon Card.

Black Star Character Summon Card—[Billion Mechanic Empire-Manison)!

"It's true!"

The players became excited. Some even stood up and made the other spectators confused.

Han Xiao floated in midair with his arms crossed and listened to the discussions of the players from the feedback of the cameras inside the audience platforms. He smirked.

After a while, many players calmed down and looked up at Han Xiao's back view. All kinds of emotions appeared in their eyes. Originally, since this was the last final, it should have been the center of attention. However, many players were in a state of shock and confusion and could not focus on the match. The NPC spectators were as excited as usual, cheering for the four teams, completely ignorant of the emotional rollercoaster the Immortals were going through. Han Xiao did not focus much on the match either and was looking at the players' comments on the forums. The match ended very quickly. Dynasty was the winner, and Gold Team was the first to get eliminated.

Gold Team had exposed their trump card in advance, so as expected, they got focus fired. Furthermore, (Billion Mechanic Empire) was not very powerful in the hands of the players yet.

The players did not have those high-level Mechanic abilities and could not benefit from the specific bonuses. Furthermore, the duration was only a short hour, so the most powerful production and invention abilities of this ability were completely useless. The only things the player could benefit from were bonuses to their Intellect, Machinery Affinity, and Mechanic ability levels. These were just the basic bonuses. Though strong, it was not so powerful it would immediately turn the tide. This ability was totally wasted in the hands of the players. Only peak Beyond Grade A Mechanics would be able to fully utilize the power of (Billion Mechanic Empire).

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"... All the events of the Black Star Cup have now ended. Thank you for watching, and thank you, army commander, for attending the matches today. In three days, we're going to host the closing ceremony of the Black Star Cup. The army commander will be personally congratulating all those who've achieved great results in the Black Star Cup. Ladies and gentlemen, see you then!"

The host then left the venue and ended the broadcast.

The spectators also left the venue, including the players. They kept looking back at Han Xiao while leaving.

Han Xiao smiled and watched them leave. He saw the players' reactions clearly. He uncontrollably raised his brows and felt anticipation for some reason.

I would like to find out how important I am to the players and how many are willing to sacrifice themselves for me.

Chapter 1137 Die! Mechanic Emperor!

It was as if a tide of sacrificial spirit was sweeping across the Black Star Army players.

As the Character Summon Card was proved to be real, the forums temporarily became the intelligence center of Operation Saving Black Star. Many army players gathered in groups and expanded their teams here, making posts under Fly Free's Operation Command Center.

Many senior players who had played since Version 1.0 had a sense of responsibility and faith; they felt they had to do something to solve the crisis of the army falling into the hands of the Mechanic Emperor. Crowds gathered, and even some professional players such as Frenzied Sword and Maple Moon took part. Operation Saving Black Star had become a large event held by the army players themselves.

Of course, there were also those with other motives among the participants. Some just wanted to make the news bigger, some wanted to show their loyalty so Black Star would notice them after 'returning', and some wanted to try to trigger hidden missions. The atmosphere on the forums was like a war was going on. Everyone thought they were making a difference. However, the majority were just rubbernecking and adding spices. There were not only Chinese players in the army anymore. There were also a ton of international players who joined only in Version 4.0. Most of them were just watching with excitement.

Even among the Chinese players, there were also some who did not think it was worth risking the time and effort they had spent in the Black Star Army and did not take part.

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Everything happening on the forums over the past three days was witnessed by Han Xiao. Operation Saving Black Star had absolutely no secrets to him.

Although these players were planning on how to backstab him the next day, not only did Han Xiao feel angry about it, but he even found it interesting

At this time, Phillip popped out and said, "Master, hum... There are a few Immortals who want to see you. They said they have found out that the Immortals are planning a mutiny, so they want to report it to you."

"Oh?" Han Xiao's eyes sparkled.

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Traitors?

Hmm, come to think of it, since they're players, it'd be weird to not have traitors.

"Tell them to come here," Han Xiao ordered.

After staying for a while in the office, a few players in flashy armor came in. They were clearly foreign players judging from their IDs. “Yo, army commander.” An Ice Demon Race player who seemed like their leader greeted Han Xiao in a very hip-pop style.

Han Xiao acted like he had no idea. He looked confused and asked, “You said that the Immortals are planning on a mutiny? Tell me, what is this about?”

“Yo, here’s what it is. We’re all good people, but some Immortals are ambitious people. They’re not happy with your ruling now, so they plan to use a ridiculous excuse to incite the army. Wow. At tomorrow’s award ceremony, they’ll attack you definitely.” Han Xiao rose his brows. “What excuse?”

“From what I heard, they said you’re the Mechanic Emperor in disguise. Ain’t that funny? Hahaha.”

“Interesting.” Han Xiao sized him up, smiled, and said, “Got it, I’ll investigate the matter. If it’s true, you’ll all be given rewards.”

“Hehe, I’d like more Contribution Points.” This person was very straight forward.

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Han Xiao acted as if he did not hear them. He waved and told them to leave. This time, Phillip reported again, saying there were more people who wanted to see him.

He did not reject any of them and patiently spoke to one group of traitors after another. Most of them were foreign players, and what they said was mostly the same, exposing Fly Free and the others’ plan and twisting their motive, claiming the motive of the mutiny was ambition. After sending off the last group of them, Han Xiao smiled.

“Some of these are pure opportunists, but the rest are probably the spies the foreign professional guilds have placed inside the army. Hehe, they’re trying to cause more problems.”

He had always known that there were spies of foreign guilds in the army, and this was unavoidable. The motive behind Fly Free and the other senior players’ actions was positive, but these spies definitely did not have positive motives.

Han Xiao knew instantly that these spies were trying to make the situation worse. On one hand, they wanted the Chinese players to be heavily punished, so the Chinese guilds would be affected too. On the other hand, they also wanted to reduce his trust in the Immortals so that the army players would receive fewer benefits.

Clearly, the foreign players did not care if he was really the Mechanic Emperor or Black Star. If he was the Mechanic Emperor, he would be alarmed, discover the mutiny in advance, and take action. If this was all a misunderstanding and he was still Black Star, reporting the mutiny to him would also be an act of loyalty. They thought they were killing two birds with one stone.

Without the forums, Han Xiao might have fallen for it. However, Han Xiao already knew everything about this through the forums, so he easily saw through these spies’ plan to use him.

Looking at these traitors’ satisfied expressions thinking their plan had worked, Han Xiao looked normal but was laughing inside.

I'll let you guys laugh for a while and deal with you after the ceremony.

Han Xiao tapped the table and ordered, "Phillip, secretly dispatch the mechanical soldiers in the warehouse and put them around the venue, especially the VIP area, audience seats, and the news stand. The moment anyone attacks the guests tomorrow, arrest them immediately."

This order was not targeted at Fly Free and the others. Their target was only him, and their motive was to protect the Black Star Army, so their plan did not consist of hurting the innocents.

However, there would most likely be some people who would use this opportunity to cause problems, damaging the army's reputation by hurting the audience. Han Xiao was quite sure that only those foreign pro guilds would do something like this.

Han Xiao did not want to stop Fly Free and the others from 'expressing their loyalty', but he was not going to watch people with ulterior motives damage the army.

Speaking of which, Version 4.0 is in its middle stages now, about to step into the late stage. The national war will probably occur the same time as the Super Star Cluster Alliance battle, just like my previous life. I wonder if those alliances formed by player organizations will still be founded.

Three days passed very quickly. The competition planet had already been turned into an open stadium for the award ceremony.

The main stage was a large floating platform. Only the most important guests were sitting there. It was surrounded by many smaller platforms, where the audience, media, and the winners of various items were seated.

Spherical shields shrouded the venue, blocking the cold wind in the sky and unrelated people from disrupting the closing ceremony. The inside of the shield had a virtual screen that made the venue look like a closed theater.

All kinds of spaceships floated in the exterior atmosphere. The formally dressed spectators, guests, and contestants arrived at the venue on the carriers provided by the army, found their seats, and sat down. Very soon, the venue became crowded. It was a true festival.

Fly Free and his team sat in the contestant seats, looked around, and occasionally exchanged looks with the players on the same floating platform.

Fly Free's shoulder was tapped. He turned around and realized it was the Rivervale team's captain, Frenzied Sword.

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"When do we move?" Frenzied Sword lowered his voice. As a real loyal follower of Black Star, he also took part in the operation.

"It's still early. No hurry. Just like the plan, when it's our turn to receive the reward, everyone just wait for my signal and move at the same time," Fly Free said quietly. "How many people do you think will be with US?"

“Although a lot of people signed up on the forums, it’ll be amazing if even one tenth of them actually do carry out the plan.” Fly Free shook his head.

“Okay, we’ll be waiting for your signal.”

The players who were taking part in the Saving Black Star Operation communicated privately. On the other side, there was also another group of people planning for a different operation.

On a floating audience stand, a player with the ID of ‘Winter Wolf’ asked his friend beside him through a private channel, “Are our men scattered out yet?”

“Yeah, don’t worry. Our men are scattered throughout the platforms. Some are very close to the celebrity guest seats. When those Chinese make a move, we’ll be able to act in the midst of all the chaos. We’ll definitely cause quite a lot of destruction.”

“Good.” Winter Wolf nodded and said with a low voice, “The Black Star Army faction is too strong. We have to weaken it. This is the first field operation our Northern Battlefield has carried out since its secret founding. We have to make it count to open the path for our national war plans.”

“Understood.”

At the same time, Han Xiao was welcoming the Beyond Grade A remote projections at the VIP seats on the main stage.

With his position and reputation, almost seventy percent of all Beyond Grade A members of the development union came to watch the event. They all sat at the frontmost seats. Han Xiao casually chattered and laughed with them.

As the seats at the venue were fully occupied, all the lights gradually dimmed, only leaving the main stage brightly illuminated.

Seeing this, the noisy venue quietened down. Everyone’s eyes were on the main stage.

Sylvia walked up onto the stage. She was not in her uniform, instead wearing an expensive and elegant purple bare-back dress. She wore light makeup, making her face even more exquisite and beautiful than normal. Her hair was tied up, showing her long and snow-white neck. Her silver earrings swayed lightly, reflecting light from the venue. The bright but not blinding light colored her stunning and marvelous.

She took one look around and said, “Guests, contestants, and viewers behind screens, welcome to the closing ceremony of the first Black Star Cup. I’m the army’s Chief Administrative Official, Sylvia.”

Then, Sylvia paused as stated in the script. Han Xiao smiled and applauded her. The people around followed his lead. Very soon, the venue was filled with roaring applause.

Seeing this, Sylvia then said, “As the army expands, the number of members continues to grow. The initial purpose of the Black Star Cup was to select the elites of the various professions inside the army so that the new members who are capable but not senior enough can have an extra path to rise up. At the same time, it gives the older members a chance to improve themselves. Now, the Black Star Cup has come to a fulfilling end. To our pleasant surprise, we realized just how many elites the army has in various professions...”

Sylvia started reading the script. The image was broadcast to the entire universe through the media cameras present. Of course, the Black Star Cup closing ceremony did not consist of only giving out the reward. The detailed order of the ceremony went Sylvia's speech; the Black Star Cup organizing committee's speech; the winners of various items going up onto the stage to accept their reward and each giving a speech; then last but not least, the army commander's concluding speech. There were also a lot of performances and shows in between.

The army had invited many galactic celebrities, such as singers, actors, and the like. All those invited were extremely famous.

Usually, normal events would be honored to be able to invite just one of those celebrities, given how famous they were. However, the Black Star Cup was way too high class. These celebrities were the ones feeling honored to take part in the closing ceremony. This was an entertainment event hosted by a universal-level warlord, so it was an extremely excellent opportunity to build connections with people at the highest level of the society. In order to obtain a spot in the performances, the companies behind many celebrities even had intense fights.

Han Xiao was invited to the stage very soon to give the awards to the winners personally along with some words of encouragement. The remote projections of the two Vice Commanders, Lagi and Hila, stood beside him. They did not speak and only nodded at the contestants to show encouragement.

However, the reasons behind the two of them not speaking were different. Hila did not like talking, so she did not speak, while Lagi's voice communication function was cut off by Han Xiao so that he could not speak.

The award ceremony had breaks, which were filled by the celebrity performances. As the closing ceremony was about halfway through, Han Xiao felt as if his face was twitching from smiling too much, and the spectators' palms were also getting red from clapping too much. Finally, it was time to give the award to the outstanding contestants of the Immortals' Square Scrimmage.

Here it is... Han Xiao focused.

The people walked onto the stage. Fly Free clenched his teeth and walked up. His back gave off a vibe as if he was walking up to an execution ground.

"Congratulations, you're all talents of the army..."

Han Xiao read the script once more, gave Fly Free a glance, smiled in his brain, and took two steps back, giving the stage to the contestants to speak.

No one on the stage stepped forward; they all looked at Fly Free.

Fly Free nodded at everyone and walked to the lectern with heavy steps. The entire venue was extremely quiet. Everyone's eyes were on him, waiting for his speech.

The players all subconsciously straightened their backs and became nervous, paying attention to every movement of Fly Free.

Fly Free took a deep breath, prepared himself mentally, and spoke. "I'm very proud to have achieved good results in the Black Star Cup, but that's not what I'm going to talk about today... Just a few days

ago, we discovered a shocking secret—the army commander who’s standing on this stage now is not Black Star! He’s someone else in disguise!”

Hu!

we

It was like bombs were being set off everywhere.

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All the spectators, army officers, guests, celebrities, and even the Beyond Grade As present were completely startled by this sudden change. They looked at this guy and could not respond.

W-what’s going on?

“I’m a member of the Black Star Army. This is my home. I will only ever recognize Black Star as our army commander. I won’t allow anyone to disguise as our dear army commander to control the army!” Fly Free’s tone became firm as he yelled, “Today, right here, I’m going to use my life to expose this guy’s conspiracy to the entire universe! Save our leader!”

As soon as he said that, Fly Free turned around, flames erupted all over his body as he charged toward Han Xiao, screaming at the top of his lungs, “Mechanic Emperor! Die!”

At the same time, in a secret base at an unknown location, Manison’s hands trembled, and popcorn splashed all over the floor.

Chapter 1138 Players Not Causing Trouble Have No Soul

“Go!”

A sudden change occurred. With a loud shout, the audience platforms erupted into chaos. About one fifth of the players suddenly moved. Silhouettes rose into the sky and headed right toward Han Xiao on the stage. They were all heroic players who had answered the call.

Like a taut string suddenly snapping, the rest of the players became excited about what was going to happen.

In the crowd, Winter Wolf’s eyes sparkled. He quickly ordered in the channel, “The chance is here! Let’s go!”

The next moment, several hundred players suddenly moved again and were about to attack the audience platform around them.

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Winter Wolf flew up from his seat. Layers of frost condensed on his skin as he dashed right toward the celebrity seats.

Excitement appeared on Winter Wolf’s face as the reflection of many celebrities’ shocked faces entered his sights. Without hesitation, he raised his hand and was about to activate his Esper Ability and release an ice storm to turn these celebrities into ice sculptures.

At the same time, the heroes who were rushing toward the main stage also noticed this group of people who were using this opportunity to attack the innocents. Shock and rage appeared on their faces.

This was not in their plan at all, and subconsciously, some people were about to turn around and stop Winter Wolf and the others guild spies from hurting the innocents.

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All these changes happened in an instant. As chaos was about to erupt, a bright electric light blasted in the middle of the venue!

Snap!

Countless bolts of Mechanical Force lightning shot out like a spider net. The mechanical soldiers that were hiding in the various audience platforms activated instantly and pounced at the players who were causing trouble around them.

These mechanical soldiers were all 'Restrainer – Modified' that could disassemble into advanced restraining suits and capture the target alive. Now that they had received Mechanical Force bonuses from Han Xiao, their attributes completely exceeded the players who were Grade B at best.

Buzz!

Black silhouettes crisscrossed everywhere, and electrical sparks flickered. All the players who were rushing toward Han Xiao from all over the place were suddenly controlled by the Restrainers' electromagnetic chains and the restraining devices, unable to move like birds without wings. Fly Free and the rest of the contestants who were on the main stage were instantly blown away by the exploding energy, falling down at the edge of the stage. The group of them were just about to climb up and continue to charge when Han Xiao softly flipped his hand over. A powerful energy shockwave pressed onto them and slammed them all flat on the ground. The next moment, the metal floor turned into robes made of nanoparticles under the effect of Han Xiao's Mechanical Force, tying Fly Free and the others up tightly.

Before the guests had time to react, the sudden danger was resolved by Han Xiao, who was prepared.

Whew, fortunately, I'm prepared.

Han Xiao secretly breathed a sigh of relief.

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The players were not even at the Calamity Grade, so they were no different from ordinary people to him. They would not be able to cause any threat to him with numbers, but if they were to attack others, the ordinary spectators would definitely be hurt.

Even if he could react quickly, he could not ensure there were no casualties. However, since he was prepared and the players did not know, he was able to restrain all the players the moment they started to move, and no guest was hurt.

This operation was caused by Fly Free leading the momentum; that was all. These people were no different from a group of brutes with no proper unity and plan. Furthermore, most of the participants

only took part on impulse, which was a common occurrence among the players. Plus, the time to prepare was too short, so there was no way they would be able to come up with a detailed plan.

The entire operation felt like a suicide mission.

“His responses are way too quick!” Winter Wolf could only feel a flash before his eyes, and he was captured without being able to resist at all. He was shocked.

He struggled to turn around and take a look and saw that all his friends had been captured by mechanical soldiers and restrained, unable to move.

Sh*t, not even one person died... Still, what we did was enough to anger the army and reduce its trust in all the players, which will in turn make the players in this faction receive fewer benefits...

Winter Wolf was a little regretful that his plan had failed to reach the optimal results, but judging from their goal, this was not a total failure.

These changes happened quickly, and the danger was resolved even quicker. The guests present and the spectators from the various Star Fields were stunned for quite a while before realizing what had happened.

Wait a minute, did we just slip past the gate of death?

“What just happened?”

“Looks like the Black Star Army’s men started a rebellion?”

“They said Black Star isn’t Black Star. Why do I have no idea what that means?”

“That startled me. To think it wasn’t a performance!”

As the guests finally realized what had happened, they became surprised. It had all happened too quick; they did not even sense danger arriving, and it was already resolved. They did not feel scared at all, only surprised and confused.

All the people started discussing the incident while staring at Han Xiao with confusion.

Many army officers quickly came to Han Xiao and stood around him, staring at those players with extremely hostile looks.

Hila stepped forward, her face filled with murderous intent as she yelled, “Arrest all of these rebels. Escort them away and interrogate them thoroughly. I want to know who ordered them to do this!”

“Hey, don’t get all tensed up. I still have some questions I want to ask them. Plus, I think the guests would like an explanation too.”

Han Xiao pulled Hila back and signaled for the officers to step back.

Feeling the confused and curious looks of the people around, he calmly raised his finger. Nanoparticle robes then separated from the metal ground and slowly flew to before Han Xiao, holding Fly Free and the others.

Deliberately showing a somewhat confused expression, Han Xiao curiously asked, "What did you mean by what you just said? Why would you think I'm the Mechanic Emperor in disguise?"

Fly Free was quite frustrated. The sudden act of so many people had absolutely no impact, and they were instantly wiped out. They had become prisoners of the 'Mechanic Emperor'.

However, at least he yelled what he wanted to say to the entire universe, so his goal was achieved. What was left in his heart was only self-sacrificial emotions, so he yelled, "Mechanic Emperor! No matter how good your disguise is, I know you're fake!"

"Do you have any evidence?" Han Xiao raised his brows.

Only players could see the Character Summon Card screenshot, so this evidence would not work on NPCs. Furthermore, that particular Character Summon Card had already been used to prove what they said, so this reason was not convincing at all.

Fly Free had guessed he would face this question long ago, and he knew he would not be able to convince anyone but the players. He was prepared to insult the 'Mechanic Emperor', so he shouted, "Your vibe!"

"Huh?" Even Han Xiao was stunned for a moment.

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"Humph, our Black Star army commander is a man of justice and honor. Just looking at him will make people uncontrollably admire him. But you, Mechanic Emperor, you ignored the safety of the universe for your own sake, attempting to keep the source of the Intelligent Plague for yourself! Your despicable vibe has exposed you!"

"The Mechanic Emperor is despicable?" Han Xiao deliberately raised his tone.

"Very despicable!" Fly Free was not afraid at all. "Who is Black Star? He rose in just a few decades and can already fight you on par. You call yourself an Ancient One? All the years you've spent alive have gone down the toilet! Compared to our army commander... you are nothing!" Quite many Beyond Grade As touched their nose awkwardly... Why does it feel like we're being insulted too? Han Xiao's face twitched. He had to do everything he could not to laugh.

Beautiful!

That's right, buddy, keep going!

"So... this is the reason for your mutiny?"

"It's not a mutiny! Don't even think about twisting our motive! We've fought and bled for the army; we're inseparable from the army! Only Black Star has the right to lead us. If anyone else attempts to put their hands on it, we'll definitely retaliate! Even if you kill me today, I'll still continue yelling these words in my grave-never compromise!"

Fly Free said it with so much emotion that even Han Xiao was almost touched.

The infectious words made quite a number of senior players' blood boil. The emotions from many versions rushed to their heads. They were fearless, as they would not die anyway, and they started shouting. "This is the Black Star Army! F*ck off, Mechanic Emperor!"

"Black Star will shine forever!"

"Captain is the best!" "Immortals will never be slaves!"

The voices echoed in the venue. The faith inside these words moved many viewers.

So, is this what it's like in the armed forces? How beautiful.

On the other hand, the Beyond Grade As were all at a loss.

From their perspective, this was beyond ridiculous.

At this time, Kant suddenly said, "Actually, I can somewhat understand the mindset of these Immortals..."

The others turned to him with expressions of disbelief.

Kant coughed and said, "I've recruited some Immortals. Most of the time, they're quite normal, but sometimes, they'll show signs of being mentally challenged and do things I cannot understand at all..."
"Such as?"

"... There was one guy who asked me directly to turn into a naked female human. I accidentally killed him... three times."

Kasuyi agreed. "I have some Immortals under my command too. Even I can't understand what's in their heads. Someone actually tried to steal my undergarments. Do you believe that?"

"I recall hearing a theory. Experts say that the Immortal Race's undying trait caused their minds to undergo synchronized mutation, which makes them have intermittent manic episodes, delusions, logic disorders, and other mental disorders."

"Oh, then it makes sense..."

Suspecting that their boss was fake just because the vibe was not right? What kind of normal person would ever do that?

However, when it was the Immortals who did something like this, the people would instantly accept it. It seemed that no matter what outrageously weird things the Immortals did, the others would not think of it as abnormal.

As soon as the topic was brought up, many Beyond Grade As who also had Immortals under their command started chattering. Very soon, they came to the pleasant agreement that the Immortals had mental issues, and they really respected Black Star for being able to effectively manage the Immortals, who were so unpredictable.

Secret Master snorted and said, "What are you all talking about? This clearly was directed by Black Star to deliberately embarrass the Mechanic Emperor. My eyes have seen through it all."

“It’s a shame the Mechanic Emperor isn’t here. His expression would be a sight to behold.” Milizaus chuckled.

They then imagined what it would look like and giggled with glee.

While they were chatting, Han Xiao had many exchanges with Fly Free, insulting the Mechanic Emperor from head to toe in all styles.

“Come, kill me.” Fly Free looked heroic.

Seeing that it was about enough, Han Xiao said, “Although for some reason you are so sure that I’m the Mechanic Emperor in disguise, you really are mistaken... The Mechanic Emperor isn’t capable of disguising as me. He’s far from it.”

Hearing this, Kant laughed and said, “Wouldn’t we know if he’s Black Star or not? You guys are too young and naïve. At least get some solid evidence before you act.”

We do have solid evidence... but only we can see it.

Seeing the reactions of Han Xiao and the other Beyond Grade As, Fly Free and the others started to get shaken. They started to doubt themselves. Those who did not fully believe in the theory that this Black Star was fake started agreeing. The effects of Character Summon Cards would not be fake, so the possibility of another theory was higher-Black Star had learnt the Mechanic Emperor’s ability somehow.

Seeing that they were pondering and hesitating, Han Xiao waved and said, “Escort them away for now. I’ll have a proper talk with them after the closing ceremony ends.”

He did not do anything to them for the time being. Dealing with these people was the army’s internal affair, so it was not suitable to handle it there.

The Restrainers took all the players who caused problems out of the venue. After Sylvia came up to calm everyone’s emotions down, the Black Star Cup closing ceremony continued. However, most people’s attention was no longer on the ceremony but on this tiny incident.

The closing ceremony was initially just a standard affair, but then it immediately sparked more conversations, attracting more attention. Han Xiao’s goal of using Fly Free and the others was achieved.

There were no other twists and turns to the closing ceremony till it ended. Everything that happened there was broadcast to the entire universe through the media groups.

The actions of Fly Free caused a new meme to be born in the galaxy-‘Pointing at Black Star to insult the Mechanic Emperor’.

After the stream ended, Manison’s expressionless face was reflected on the now dark screen.

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His eyes were narrowed, and a tint of irritation flashed past his pupils. Mistaken? As if I believe you! This is clearly a show you directed!

I knew you did not invite me for nothing. It was just a plot to embarrass me in public.

Manison clenched his fists.

Black Star, you're too much!

One day, I'm surely going to cut you up and turn you into a Felon!

Chapter 1140 This B*stard Has No Virtue

During the closing ceremony, Fly Free and the other 'loyal' players carried out the operation. After that, almost all the army players were waiting on the forums for what would happen to them.

To many neutral players, these people were reckless and impulsive, so they would certainly suffer heavy consequences. God only knew how severe the faction's punishment would be.

However, when the private recordings from Fly Free and the others were posted, it shocked quite a number of people, and the post instantly garnered millions of views.

The video recorded the full process of Han Xiao's private meeting with them. Seeing how confident and clear-minded the army commander was, the atmosphere on the forums instantly changed into one-sided praise.

(Fly Free: From today onward, the army commander is my brother, and anyone who dares to touch my brother shall feel my wrath! That's all. Who's with me? Who's against me?)

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[I'm The Northern Gods' Idiot: +1.]

[Raylei's Gaze: Our Army Commander was way too cool...]

[Mechanic Emperor's Small PP: Although we're just bullsh*tting most of the time, it isn't too much to use the word 'amazing' to describe what the army commander had done today, is it?]

(The Frog Has Seen Through Everything: Honestly, the chances of these spies successfully framing the others shouldn't be low at all. It would have at least led to a thorough investigation from the army. But Black Star's judgement is way too impressive, seeing through the differences between the two groups right away and providing decisive and accurate solutions. Those who really had ulterior motives got their accounts banned, and you guys, the loyal pillars, only got symbolic punishments. This row of decisions by the army commander is quite amazing.)

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[Tomorrow Won't Be Better: Sigh, to think that Black Star still remembers us old timers from Version 1.0. It's so touching. Praise Black Star!]

(Bun-Hit-Dog: I'm a newbie who just joined this version. Is the army commander actually this amazing? Wow, how interesting. I'll have to binge watch Bun-Hit-Dog's must-see Black Star Series now.)

[I Love The Dawn: You dog, remember to use your smurf account next time when you do promotion acting as a noob...]

The video got uploaded to the forums as Han Xiao expected, so his goal of getting the hearts of the players was already achieved. Not only did his decisions make him have more 'leadership appeal', but the sense of recognition a lot of army players had for the faction also went through the roof. This nostalgia-inducing, fair, and wise series of decisions he made had planted a seed in the many players, forming a bond with the army. Although Han Xiao did not deliberately explain his identity in public, his actions had already indirectly cleared the players' doubts. The focus of the forums at this point was no longer if Han Xiao was fake or real but why Black Star had the Mechanic Emperor's ability.

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There had always been a rumor among the players about Black Star being able to replicate and imitate other characters' abilities, and this rumor was finally proven true.

The majority of the players felt that this special talent Black Star had was the key reason he could grow stronger so fast, being able to 'steal' abilities from opponents. In some respects, the players' guess was very close to the truth. However, no matter how much they guessed, they would never know the truth.

Furthermore, as this theory lacked solid evidence, for the NPCs, it only passed between the players and was not convincing enough for normal people even if they heard about it.

As the one who single-handedly initiated this event, Fly Free became famous overnight. He was seen as the number one loyal member of the army. He expressed his intention to form a Black Star Fan Group on the spot and to communicate with the army commander about making it a team Black Star Guards with only Immortals.

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The atmosphere on the forums was festive. Other than praise for Black Star, there were also many who were laughing at Winter Wolf and the others.

[Mario's Little Mushroom: Tsk, some people just can't bear to see others live a good life and will try their best to pull you back using all kinds of dirty and filthy methods, yet they're not ashamed but honored by it, acting as if it's all for everyone's own good. They're the best definition of the word 'hypocrite'.)

[Master of Bondage: Hehe, sadly for them, our army commander is wise and fair. He won't be deceived.]

However, while all this went on, the Northern Battlefront surprisingly stepped up and announced they were responsible for it. It instantly triggered a verbal war on the forums and attracted the focus of the players. That was how it should be. Compared to praising Black Star, the players were still more interested in arguing with others online.

While the forums were heated, the influence of the Black Star Cup was also fermenting in the galaxy. Army members backstabbing Black Star sparked a lot of conversations and discussions, leading many galactic residents who were not originally interested to curiously find out about the details of the incident.

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Not long after the closing ceremony ended, on behalf of the army, Han Xiao made an official announcement to the entire universe to explain this incident, answering their questions while satisfying their curiosity.

He basically publicized Fly Free's insults toward the Mechanic Emperor on that day with some exaggeration and more details so that the galactic residents could properly enjoy watching it. At the same time, the announcement emphasized that he really hoped the Mechanic Emperor would not be angry about this. This was just someone's most sincere true opinion from the deepest part of his heart. It did not represent the army's opinion. The army would always respect the Mechanic Emperor, even if he was an evil man. At the same time, he hoped that the Mechanic Emperor would uphold his position as an elder and not take the words of such young people seriously.

The galactic residents were just happily watching on, while the Beyond Grade As who attended the event only had one thought about Han Xiao in their hearts.

Wow, you b*stard, you really have absolutely zero virtue!

We like it!