

L Hero

Chapter 811 Tinder Awakening and Origin of Mechanical Lives

Every Ultimate Knowledge involved the territory of the gods. The prerequisite to learning them was an extremely high Intelligence.

Han Xiao did not choose the Energy Branch [Mechanical Life Tinder] just to activate [King's Mentor]. It was also because this Ultimate Knowledge had a very wide application range.

Compared to the Virtual Technology Ultimate Knowledge, [Mechanical Life Tinder] was more useful for him now.

As the complex knowledge flew into his mind, images flashed before Han Xiao's eyes.

On the desolate black earth, a man planted a mass of metal. As time passed, mechanical cities rose from the ground, and metal spread out on the surface extremely quickly and replaced the black soil.

Countless blue, well-dressed beings kneeled on the ground. Their minds entered mechanical bodies through pipes one after another, leaving their physical bodies behind.

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In a rift under the ground, countless scrap parts scattered around in the darkness. One day, a golden streak of lightning landed from outside the sky right onto the waste mechanical parts, and a golden energy wave expanded. The scrap mechanical parts were united into one by an invisible force, forming a rough mechanical life..."

"These are the origins of mechanical lives..." All kinds of images flashed past as Han Xiao's understanding deepened.

Machines were initially just tools, tools that countless races learned to use and build as their civilizations grew. There were countless races in Galaxy, but mechanical lives born from nature were almost non-existent. Most of them were artificially built.

Some races built mechanical soldiers for war, which led to mechanical lives. Some left their weak body behind and became mechanical lives to get through a disaster. Some races lacked the ability to move themselves so they created mechanical lives as slaves.

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Beyond Grade A Mechanics were the peak of creating mechanical lives.

As the knowledge learning was complete, Han Xiao took a deep breath and slowed down his mind.

He looked at the new abilities on the interface. [Ultimate Knowledge Possessor] was the talent rewarded when learning the first Ultimate Knowledge, and [Mechanical Life Creator] was the talent given by [Mechanical Life Tinder].

Han Xiao then looked at the new ability, [Tinder Awakening]. This was the most important one.

With a thought in his mind, the hovering guards behind him trembled and flew in front of him. They assembled with cracking sounds into a human-shaped mechanical soldier.

It had silver alloy armor and a streamlined body, and cannon barrels were embedded in its palms, knees, shoulders, and head. Psionic blue light emitted from within the armor's gaps. It had a very heavy futuristic vibe.

This was one of the elite mechanical soldiers that Han Xiao could build. Its name was Hovering Fissionist. It could both act as his hovering guard and assemble into a mechanical soldier. It was an orange, high-level machine.

This Hovering Fissionist was controlled by the combat artificial intelligence, Sparta. It stood still before Han Xiao.

"Let's see its effects..."

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Buzz!

Han Xiao raised his palm, clenched his fist, and used [King's Mentor].

A mass of blue and gold Mechanical Force appeared in his palm and made cracking sounds like a thunder cloud. The next moment, this mass of Mechanical Force dashed onto the Hovering Fissionist, turning into electric sparks on its mechanical surface. Then, they entered through the gaps between the Hovering Fissionist's armor and fused into its energy furnace.

Han Xiao did not stop there. Another mass of Mechanical Force appeared in his palm and entered the Hovering Fissionist. It was [Machinery Fusion].

After that, Han Xiao activated [Tinder Awakening]. Gold light shot out from his eyes, a bright gold sphere of Mechanical Force appeared on his hand, it was blinding.

Although [Tinder Awakening] did not have a cooldown, it could only be used on targets already enhanced by [King's Mentor] and [Machinery Fusion], and these two abilities had cooldowns.

These three abilities in addition to [Emperor's Gift] were the complete set of abilities to create a mechanical life.

Han Xiao extended his hand forward, bright gold Mechanical Force flowed into the Hovering Fissionist.

His health, stamina, and energy immediately decreased a huge chunk.

Having lost half his health and energy instantly, he felt extremely weak.

This ability is really tiring to use... Han Xiao's mouth twitched. Ever since I became a Beyond Grade A Super, this should be the most health I've ever lost in a single instance...

He exhaled and let his body slowly recover, staring at the Hovering Fissionist before him.

Ding!

Suddenly, the light from the energy of the Hovering Fissionist became much brighter!

The next second, the mechanical parts on it moved on their own. The armor plates on its surface opened and closed like scales.

Clank!

Han Xiao could feel that the Hovering Fissionist was going through a change on the microscopic level.

Countless nano-grade silica-based neural fibers grew extremely quickly in its body. The parts on its body gradually turned into an organic 'whole'. The electrical sparks of a mind ignited in its chip, forming special thinking organs and fundamental logic. Energy flowed through its entire body and fueled this change.

Bang!

It was as if something in the Hovering Fissionist had awoken and ignited the tinder of life.

Hum...

This lasted quite a while before the light emitted from the Hovering Fissionist returned to normal.

Han Xiao sized it up and said, "Sparta, give me the inspection report."

"... Inspection complete. A new consciousness has been born in this unit. It's very young and is trying to communicate with me. I temporarily closed its network port. What should I do now? Please give the order, master."

Sparta appeared in the quantum network and spoke with a serious and formal tone, completely different from how lively Phillip was.

"Hmm... Build a data firewall around its consciousness first, and check its fundamental logic to see if an order to never betray me is fixed. Open its network port and filter some information for it to download."

Han Xiao gave the order and slapped Hovering Fissionist to deal some damage, triggering the combat information.

Hovering Fissionist's attributes appeared on the interface—there was no longer the equipment introduction but the attributes of a character.

The race was shown to be [Mechanical Life] and its level was as high as Lv185. It could level up like normal creatures. Its armor value became its health, and its various parameters became its other attributes. Its weapons and parts became many talents and abilities that had growth potential.

It has become a living unit.

"Sparta, let it control its own body."

Sparta responded and temporarily stopped controlling the Hovering Fissionist.

Hum!

Hovering Fissionist shivered. Its tensed body seemed to have relaxed. It then stretched his head around as if it was adapting to the vision provided by its senses. It raised its palm and touched its face.

It felt completely different.

When the combat artificial intelligence controlled all the mechanical soldiers at once, although their movements were not stiff, they did not make any unnecessary movements and were objects that only followed orders. When control was given back to the Hovering Fissionist, its movement felt immediately lively. It had become a living being that could think, doubt, and move on its own will.

Phillip and Sparta were artificial intelligence; their nature was different compared to mechanical lives. Mechanical lives' individual consciousness was equivalent to their 'freedom' and 'soul'; they had emotions and feelings.

However, that consciousness was born from the circuits in their chips, so they did not have the general 'soul'. Hence, they were immune to normal psychic and mind attacks. To the mechanical lives, only the Virtual Mechanics' attacks were considered 'mind attacks', as they could hack into the consciousness of mechanical lives and rewrite their fundamental logic.

Han Xiao had preset the ordering logic of Hovering Fissionist to be one level lower than his artificial intelligence, so orders from his artificial intelligence were like military orders that could not be disobeyed.

Hovering Fissionist looked around. It turned to look at Han Xiao and said in a wondering tone, "Mas... ter?"

It used the Universal Language.

Han Xiao nodded. He then walked around it once and sized it up from head to toe.

Hovering Fissionist stood still, but its head turned 360 degrees to keep looking at Han Xiao. It was filled with the ignorance and doubts of a newborn baby.

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Why does it feel a little creepy? Han Xiao asked, "Is there anything you want to ask?"

"Want? To? Ask?" Hovering Fissionist said word by word as if its consciousness circuits were quickly working. After some thinking, it then asked, "Who... am I? Where... am I? What should I do?"

Okay, the ultimate three questions... Han Xiao thought it was funny. He then shook his head and said, "Sparta, open its network port and send it data."

The next moment, Hovering Fissionist's movements stopped. An enormous stream of data relating to the universe, life, and combat entered its consciousness and was quickly digested. It skipped the ignorant stage of a newborn instantly.

It stayed silent for a while before suddenly getting down on one knee and changing the way it spoke.

"Your Excellency Black Star, my creator."

Its voice system simulated a respectful tone.

Han Xiao raised his brows, thought for a moment, and asked, "Now, do you know who you are?"

"My name is Psionic Prime." It gave itself a name.

Psionic Prime? Why don't you call yourself Optimus Prime? Han Xiao complained in his mind.

"You're the first mechanical life I've created. Show me your strength."

Ka ka ka!

Psionic Prime moved and tested weapons one after another. It disassembled into singular hovering guards and flew around like butterflies before assembling again. Its combat style was extremely swift and flashy—mechanical lives had a very high application level to their own bodies. They could acquire abilities on their own and fix them on their character information interfaces.

Han Xiao's Mechanical Force bonus was effective on it as well. Psionic Prime was stronger than it was before Tinder Awakening.

"Come back."

After some testing, Han Xiao gave an order, and Psionic Prime automatically disassembled into hovering guards and floated around him obediently.

"Not bad." Han Xiao was satisfied and started planning in his head.

He could only create mechanical lives with self-growth potential using the set of abilities including [Tinder Awakening], [King's Mentor], and others, so its efficiency was limited, only creating elite and mini-boss units over time.

As for the majority of mechanical soldiers, Han Xiao was not planning to turn them into mechanical lives. One reason for this was the efficiency limit; he had to turn the high-level machinery first. Another reason was that the casualties of those mechanical soldiers were too high, so its long-term effect would be inferior compared to high-level machinery.

"After turning into mechanical lives, their growth potential is increased tremendously, and they are even able to grow into mechanical civilizations. Manison has some mechanical civilizations under his command..."

Han Xiao pondered. He could imitate this and let his mechanical lives develop into civilizations.

If he had a mechanical civilization under his command, they would automatically operate, reproduce, and create offspring, which meant that they would provide him with a continuous source of soldiers. The only problem was that this was extremely time-consuming.

However, his life span and the time between version updates were both very long, so this was not a huge problem.

"Or can I take someone else's mechanical civilization?" Han Xiao got rid of this thought as soon as it came up. He thought it was better not to create enemies everywhere.

Steady and firm, that was the Great Mechanic Han's personality.

Having learned an Ultimate Knowledge, Han Xiao was content and had a smile on his face. He walked out of the workshop and saw a few people immediately. Hila and the Black Star Guards were all waiting at his door.

“What are you guys doing here?” Han Xiao looked around and then fixed his eyes on Hadavy. This guy stood at the front of everyone else and had a mysterious smile on his face.

Hadavy took out a deck of Wayne Cards and showed Han Xiao the top card. “Look, your card has been updated again.”

Han Xiao looked at it. This was the Strong Card with his image on it.

“Black Star—Han Xiao.”

It was finally updated to become a Beyond Grade A, as well as the ‘Crimson Dynasty Ally’ trait. Its description also included his fight with Heber and Psyker, and its card effects were greatly increased.

“Isn’t that just a matter of time? Did you guys come all the way just to show me this?”

Han Xiao was speechless. With his position, how could the Wayne Card company not update his card?

Hadavy chuckled and skillfully moved his fingers to fan the cards. Han Xiao looked through it and raised his brows. These cards were Hila, Feidin, and the others. They were now marked as ‘Black Star Guards’. Like the Bloodshed Land’s Vanguard Officials, they had their own cards.

One of the reasons he had formed the Black Star Guards was to make Hila and the others famous. Now, this goal was achieved. The Black Star Guards name became their identity, and they were now famous, so they came to share this piece of good news with Han Xiao.

“That’s not bad, congratulations on becoming known in the universe.” Han Xiao smiled and casually rubbed Feidin’s shoulders, which led to Chen Xing rolling her eyes.

This time, Aurora spoke with her crispy voice. “Uncle, one more thing, there’s someone special here to see you.”

“Who? Someone from the dynasty?”

“No, that guy calls himself the ruler of Sodrian. His name is Troy.”

Sodrian’s ruler?

Sodrian was the novice planet of the Constellation Corridor players in Version 1.0. Due to its ruler being involved in sensitive political matters, the ruler was treated as a traitor. The ruler then escaped with his fleet and hid from everyone, still not captured till today.

What is this guy doing here? Han Xiao was curious.

...

Troy was the only one in the conference room, and he seemed to have a lot on his mind.

He was a tall humanoid. His yellow hair was tied into a foreign-style braid. His eyes were sharp, and his nose was a pair of small holes in the middle of his eyes. He was not considered to be ugly looking, just quite old. He had two hands and two legs but no tail. He had a pair of large wings behind his back with yellow feathers on them.

“Will Black Star help me?” Troy’s eyes flashed.

He escaped with his fleet and had been chased by the Star System civilization till now. The situation was not looking very bright. If this continued, he would be captured by the Star System civilization sooner or later. Due to the political secrets that he was involved in, Troy knew that if he was captured, his fate would be worse than death.

Just as he was being extremely anxious about his future, he received the news about the Black Star Army building a subdivision and recruiting manpower on a large scale on Planet Gilman. Suddenly, he saw some hope and felt that Black Star Army might be able to help him.

He just had to join the Black Star Army and follow the army's fleet to borrow the Crimson Dynasty's stargate, leave the Central Galaxy, and take refuge in the Shattered Star Ring. That way, he would be safe.

Troy initially wanted to hide his identity while joining the army and secretly smuggle his way out of the Central Galaxy. However, he thought about it and felt that the risk of being discovered by a Beyond Grade A was too high, and he would very likely be discovered. By then, he would lose even this opportunity. Therefore, he felt that it was better to request to see Black Star, explain the situation, and sincerely make his proposal to convince Black Star to help them.

In his eyes, the only way he could rise again was to leave the Central Galaxy and return in the future to take revenge on his political enemies.

When he thought of how his political enemies had destroyed what he had been working on for so many years, Troy's expression became more furious and full of hatred.

He was now a traitor and would never be able to return to his civilization. The only thing he could do was flee. If he ever got the chance, he would destroy his political enemy's everything without hesitation and take revenge on the civilization that kept hunting him down.

Swoosh.

The sound of the door opening broke Troy's train of thought. He hastily stood up and looked at Han Xiao with admiration.

"Your Excellency Black Star," Troy hastily greeted respectfully and introduced himself, deliberately acting trepidatious.

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"I've heard about you. You're now a rebel. What do you want from me?" Han Xiao asked.

"Well..." Troy took a deep breath and used the sincere tone that he had practiced a hundred times to explain the situation in words he had prepared long beforehand.

Basically, he was saying that he was framed by his political enemy and misunderstood by his civilization. In order to protect himself, he could only resist and escape, which forced him to become a rebel. He wanted to join the Black Star Army and work for the army, in exchange for an opportunity to take refuge in the Shattered Star Ring.

"I see..." Han Xiao narrowed his eyes and sized Troy up.

Suddenly, he seemed to have recalled something, and the look on his face became strange.

Chapter 812 Stealing Leeks Makes Me Happy

Looking at Troy's trepidatious and respectful expression, Han Xiao chuckled and asked, "So what you mean is, the reason you're in this situation today is all because you were framed, and that you're innocent?"

Troy swallowed his saliva and said, "I was tricked by my political enemy, they framed me for many crimes."

Han Xiao gave a long "oh", not expressing whether he believed Troy's explanation and said, "So now you want to take refuge under my command and let me protect you?"

Troy said cautiously, "I won't dare to ask for your protection, all I'm asking for is for you to allow me to follow the Black Star Army's fleet and leave the Central Galaxy through the stargate. I'm wanted by a Star System civilization, I can't use any stargates without anyone's help.

Han Xiao laughed and shook his head. "All the civilizations in the Constellation Corridor are ruled by the dynasty, don't you know I'm the dynasty's ally? You're now a wanted criminal of a civilization under the dynasty's ruling, it's already kind of me to not capture you right here, but you still want me to bear the risk and bring you to the Shattered Star Ring? All you have are words, yet you want me to help you for free... do I look like philanthropists to you?"

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"No no, you're mistaken." Troy quickly waved his hands and said, "Although I do want to take refuge here, my intention to join the Black Star Army is sincere. Your rise in the Shattered Star Ring has spread across the universe, I've admired you for a very long time. If you don't mind, I'm willing to work for you and be loyal to you in the future."

"Oh?" Han Xiao placed his elbows on the table and his palms crossed before his nose, stared at Troy and said slowly, "You said you're innocent, do you think I believe that? Your ambitions failed and you're wanted to by a civilization, so you want me to back you up and use my name to pay the cost of your failure for you. Do you think there are such great things in the world?"

In fact, this guy was not innocent at all. In the years he ruled Sodrian, he secretly planned a lot of conspiracies to obtain more power. When these things got exposed, he became a rebel to the civilization. His political enemies did indeed exaggerate some of the things he did, but he was no saint either.

The situation Troy explained to Han Xiao was not completely untrue, he just changed some of the reasoning behind them and deliberately kept the factors regarding his own ambitions a secret, and did not tell the whole truth. He wanted to put the blame on others and make his crimes seem less severe, so he would look like he was forced and helpless, which he delusionally hoped would lower Han Xiao's suspicion towards him.

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However, this was completely ineffective to Han Xiao. Sodrian was the earliest novice planet in the Constellation Corridor, with so much information the players had dug up, Han Xiao knew what happened all too well. Troy could not hide it from him at all.

Furthermore, Han Xiao had searched through the forums and found a hidden mission in the Galaxy Chronicles recorded by the Constellation Corridor players — When Troy was retreating and fleeing, he arranged people to plant high energy explosives in the political building of Sodrian's capital city that was more than enough to wipe out more than 10 streets. He completely ignored the civilian casualties and was extremely cruel. However, this triggered the players' hidden mission and the trap was destroyed by the players. This was more than enough to prove that Troy was nothing but a cruel and heartless man who would have his revenge no matter the means and the unnecessary casualties.

Under the stare of Han Xiao's eyes, Troy's expression stiffened. He was anxious, if not because he had no other way out, he would not have taken such a desperate measure. He clenched his teeth, let go of all his pride and suddenly prone before Han Xiao — In the universally accepted cultural standards, this position represented complete obedience.

"With your position, who dares to lie to you! It's my fault for not saying things clearly and causing your misunderstanding, I am sorry. Please save my life, I'm willing to forever work for you."

Han Xiao curled his lips in his mind. He knew exactly what Troy was intending to do — it was nothing but an attempt to take refugee after making a huge mistake. Since the army was recruiting, he thought this was his opportunity so he intended to use sweet words to convince him.

If not because Troy had a special use to him, he would have let people capture Troy long ago to exchange for the bounty.

Han Xiao stood up, glanced at Troy's back of the head and said, "I don't need your loyalty, and I don't need your appreciation even more. I'm too lazy to capture you, so I'll take it as I've never seen you. Get out of my sights right now and don't let me see you again, or else..."

Whoosh! The door opened and Hila walked in, she stared at Troy coldly and clearly signifying him to piss off.

Troy's face was pressed onto the floor and his expression could not be seen. Only after two seconds did he stand up and patted his shirt as if he was patting away the non-existent dust. With his head down, his eyes were fixed onto the floor and he did not dare to look up at Han Xiao's eyes. Under Hila's sharp stare, he walked out of the room step by step silently with clenched fists and was escorted out of the subdivision.

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After he left, Han Xiao's expression relaxed and turned into an odd smile.

"I wonder if this will be of use in the future..."

The Great Technician Han had a motive to deliberately let Troy leave. As the main storyline NPC of one of the novice planets, Troy still had some storyline on him. According to how things out in the previous life, Troy would barely escape from the chase in the end.

Then, since he was a wanted man, he fled into the border of the Central Galaxy and survived there. Afterward, he was accepted by the Fallen Ark and became one of EsGod's subordinates, but he did not even make it to the officer position. The players only noticed and recorded this because he was once the main storyline NPC of a novice planet.

The fact that an important NPC in the early stages became someone so insignificant in the later stages was like an easter egg to the players, which was why Han Xiao remembered Troy.

Therefore, before Han Xiao let Troy leave, he secretly planted a ward on him.

EsGod was immune to the Observer's Mark, but Troy's appearance gave Han Xiao a flash of insight — if Troy joined the Fallen Ark in the future like he did in the previous life, Han Xiao would be able to monitor EsGod's movements.

Although he had no idea when and if this would work out, since it was not a significant plot, Han Xiao was casual about it. After all, he did not have any good way to deal with EsGod yet. It would be great if this ends up working, but it would not be a big deal even if it does not.

...

40 days passed very quickly.

Han Xiao stayed on Planet Gilman all along, waiting for the subdivision to recruit more people. During this time, he had been expanding his mechanical army every day, as well as using the new Ultimate Knowledge to slowly create mechanical lives. Starting with Psionic Prime, he now had 3,000 first-generation mechanical lives under his command...

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There were a few reasons why he did not create more. Firstly, [King's Mentor]'s cooldown used days as a unit, and this was the prerequisite ability of [Tinder Awakening].

Secondly, although [Tinder Awakening] could be used on multiple targets at the same time, its upper limit was not very high. Even at its maximum level, it could only be used on more than 10 targets at once. Furthermore, Han Xiao had discovered that if he used it on multiple targets at the same time, their initial level would not be as high compared to if he used it only on one target. The cost of this ability was the same be it single or multiple targets, so when his energy was spread amongst multiple targets, they naturally received lesser energy individually.

Thirdly... his body could not take it if he used it too frequently.

This had also made Han Xiao's thoughts about developing a mechanical civilization more firm. The efficiency of creating mechanical lives was not high just with [Tinder Awakening]. His health and energy recovered fast, but stamina required rest to recover. In comparison, a fully developed mechanical civilization could provide him with a supply of soldiers at a much faster efficiency without him having to put in all these efforts on days on end.

In the past 40 days, the recruiting of the Planet Gilman subdivision had settled.

There were many Beyond Grade A organizations in the Central Galaxy, so Black Star Army's appeal here was not as high as compared to back in the Shattered Star Ring. The Planet Gilman subdivision had only

recruited a little more than 10 million new members and it was slowing down. Compared to the Beyond Grade A organizations in the Central Galaxy, this number was quite low. This was only the beginning for this subdivision.

Amongst the new members, about more than 4 million were players, which made up about 85% of all the players in the Constellation Corridor. Through the army's benefits and the words of mouth on the forums, the majority of the Constellation Corridor players had rushed here to join.

In this more than 4 million players, most decided to become members of the mercenary department. There were two types of army members, one was the full member who obeyed the army's orders, another was the semi-members who worked for the army but had generally complete freedom. Mercenaries were a typical example of the latter.

The mercenary system was lenient, and the mercenary department of the army did not violate the rules of galactic mercenaries. Most of the Constellation Corridor players were here for the benefits, so being mercenaries was a choice with more freedom. They basically had a very simple relationship with the army of doing things for the army in exchange for resources, this way their faction would not be locked.

Han Xiao was not surprised about this, the players in the other Star Field had just known his army, he knew that feelings needed time to develop.

He gave the Constellation Corridor players more than enough time to make their choices. Amongst the more than 4 million players, 700,000 accepted the Flickering World main storyline mission and requested to go to the Shattered Star Ring with the army.

The majority of the 700,000 players were normal players. The remaining millions of players decided to stay in their birth Star Field to continue exploring while watching how would things turn out for those that decided to go to the Shattered Star Ring.

Han Xiao was able to dig away 700,000 leeks just in the first batch, so he was quite satisfied with this.

Today was the day of departure. An enormous Black Star Army transport fleet was ready to leave, all the 700,000 players have already boarded the ships.

At this time, players from all the Star Fields were paying attention to this occasion from the broadcasts on the forums.

All the players were interested in the first time a player would cross a Star Field, this might be an example for them in the future when they get the chance to do the same. Therefore, this became the most-watched occasion ever since the Black Star Army's creation, its popularity amongst the players had broken the record!

On the transport ships, the players chatted with excitement.

"I wonder what does it feel to travel across Star Fields, how will it be different from normal stargates?"

"Will the Shattered Star Ring players bully us?"

"Guys, do you think something fun will happen if we jump out of the ship in the stargate..."

"Guards! That's the guy!"

Inside the command room of the main ship, Hila leaned against the wall with her arms crossed, Aurora busily operated on the main pilot seat, and Feidin stood beside her and watched.

Hadavy sat on the sofa with a square-shaped blue crystal wine bottle in his hand, gulping down on the mercury colored wine inside that made him choke and his face blush. Wayne Cards were on the table, the rule was to drink if you lost. There was a pile of empty bottles beside his seat, opposite him was the speechless old man Aesop who was dragged here.

Ames stood behind the scenery window with hands behind her back and looked at the fleet around. With Han Xiao, Hila, and Aesop, these people she was close to accompanying her for the past more than a month holiday, she had quite a good time.

Han Xiao stood before the star map, the destination was set long ago. When everyone had boarded, he gave out an order to the entire fleet.

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“Depart.”

Boom!

The thrusters shot out flames and the battleships took off.

“We’ve finally departed!” The many players on the ships were thrilled, the countless people watching on the forums were looking closely too.

The fleet slowly headed away from the Planet Gilman subdivision and accelerated. Carrying 700,000 leeks, it headed to the Shattered Star Ring.

Chapter 813 Ames“ Request

Shattered Star Ring, Crimson Dynasty Military Stargate Station.

The Black Star Army transport ships rode out from the blue vortex stargate one after another, the space energy covering their shields quickly dissipated.

“We’re back.” Inside the main ship’s command room, Han Xiao exhaled.

Despite being prosperous and peaceful, the shadow of the universal civilizations always shrouded over the Central Galaxy like a mountain, giving him an invisible sense of pressure. Although Shattered Star Ring was rural, he had been here for more than 20 years and this was the army’s headquarters, he felt calmer and secured here.

Ames walked to his side, looked out the universe outside the porthole and said, “I had quite a good time traveling with you guys for the past two months. Since now we’re homed, I shall get going.”

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“What’s the hurry? Come with us.”

“Floating Dragon recently drifted to another Star Cluster, we’re not along the way.”

Han Xiao reluctantly nodded and said, "Alright then, I'll let my men prepare a spaceship for you. By the way, the preparations on dynasty's side are almost complete, I'll be departing very soon to explore the Flickering World, do you want to come too? There should be much new and interesting stuff there."

Ames waved and said, "That's the Crimson Dynasty's mission, I shall not go."

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Aesop rubbed his beard and interrupted, "Yesterday, I had a new prophecy that's related to the Flickering World."

Another prophecy? Han Xiao's eyes sparkled and said with curiosity, "Old man, you've helped me with your prophecy ability again?"

"Erm, let me explain. I did not help you particularly, it's just that those people who are close to me will have some kind of fate connection with me, and my ability can randomly sense what might happen to these people in the future. It's like a dream, very blurry, basically just a feeling.

Yesterday, I sensed what might happen to you in the Flickering World..."

Then, Aesop paused and said with a very serious tone, "You better be careful about the Arcane Church."

The Arcane Church? Have they still not given up taking back the Evolution Cube? It does indeed seem possible.

Han Xiao blinked and realized Aesop did not continue, he wondered, "That's it? Don't you have any useful information like time and location or something?"

Aesop shrugged. "Things can change anytime since the future is so far ahead, there's no accurate prophecy, just intuition."

"Got it, I'll keep a lookout and let people keep an eye on the movements of the Star Pupil Holy Race. If the Arcane Church does want to do something to me, Psyker will definitely be part of it."

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Han Xiao nodded and patted Aesop's shoulder.

"Oh, by the way, one more thing." Aesop rubbed his beard and said, "I heard some Ancient Ones members have been secretly asking around about you, a few of them seems to be interested in you."

Han Xiao looked at Aesop from head to toe and said with a doubtful tone, "Where did you hear that?"

"I used to be one of them too, what's so weird about me having a few friends?"

Aesop tsk-tsked, shrugged and said,

"When I followed you to the dynasty's capital and met those dynasty allies, Ravenlaude told the other Ancient Ones about me. Now those guys all know that a former member of The Ancient Ones is now with you and Ames, so some friends contacted me."

Having heard with Aesop said, Han Xiao could not help but feel amazed. For someone this ancient like Aesop, both his connections and history were unfathomable. Somehow, Aesop could always obtain information that was extremely rare and inaccessible to most people.

“Who are the ones that are asking about me?”

“Mechanic Empire, Sun Hunter, Void Overlord...” Aesop’s voice suddenly got deeper and said with a soft voice, “And Thousand Shadows.”

Other than Mechanic Empire, Han Xiao did not have any contact with the first few Ancient Ones. Sun Hunter was a CannonMaster, Void Overlord was a Void being, and Han Xiao had no idea why they were asking about him. However, when Aesop mentioned Thousand Shadows, Han Xiao’s eyes narrowed immediately.

Back then when they interrogated Thousand Shadows’ “Shadow Warriors”, Aesop was the one who helped. Aesop knew Thousand Shadows once had his eyes on Han Xiao, so he mentioned this to alert him.

“Maybe he still wants to capture me or something. He’s at the Federation Of Light’s Star Field so I can’t do anything for the time being. I shall wait till I have the chance to deal with him.” Han Xiao registered this matter to memory.

The mission [Prey] was still inactive. In the past, he did not know if Thousand Shadows had given up on him, but now, it seemed that this guy had yet to give up. However, he was no longer the Calamity Grade he was back then, so Thousand Shadows would not be able to capture him so easily.

This time, Ames suddenly said softly, “Black Star, I’ve been thinking about something recently and I want to discuss with you.”

Han Xiao turned to look at Ames and captured a tint of hesitation on her face. This was very rare for Ames, so Han Xiao said curiously,

“What do you want to discuss with me? Do you want to borrow money? Is 50 million Enas enough?”

“Who’s borrowing money from you? Do you think I’m that poor?” Ames’s brow twitched slightly.

“Actually... I’ve been thinking about Floating Dragon’s development plan recently...”

Both Han Xiao and Han Xiao’s eyes widened immediately, their faces were filled with complete shock.

“What happened to you? Is that something you should be thinking about?”

“Am I this unreliable to you?” Ames said with resignation. “I’m the Floating Dragon’s leader, what’s so strange for me to think for my organization occasionally?”

“It’s not strange for others, but for you... it is indeed strange! Who doesn’t know how laz... ahem, carefree you are.”

Han Xiao changed the word he was going to say the last minute and hid his giggle. Ames had never thought about developing her faction all these years, and her slacker image was already deeply rooted in everyone’s heart. God knows why she suddenly changed her mind.

“Stop kidding, I’m serious this time.” Han Xiao gave Han Xiao a glare.

She never had any passion for growing her organization, but that had lasted for too long and she felt like it was time to make a change. Especially after how she witnessed Han Xiao leading the rise of the Black Star Army for the past ten-plus years with her own eyes. With such a positive example, it made her feel a tiny bit interested in growing her forces too. She wanted to imitate Han Xiao and operate the Floating Dragon better. It had nothing to do with her ambition or anything of that sort, Ames mainly saw it as an interesting thing to do.

However, of course, Ames was never going to admit to Han Xiao that the things he did were what piqued her interest.

“Alright then, I’ll pretend it’s serious...” Seeing the not so friendly expression in Ames’ eyes, Han Xiao tried his best not to laugh and waved his hands. “Okay, okay. It’s serious. So, you want to develop Floating Dragon, what do you want to discuss with me?”

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Ames stayed silent for a while then said slowly, “Floating Dragon has been drifting in the universe for a very long time, I want to make it stay in one place.”

Han Xiao pondered for a while, then nodded.

“Yo, that’s quite a good idea. With a fixed location headquarters, it’s easier for people to feel confident about Floating Dragon. As a Beyond Grade A, you have an extraordinary amount of appeal. As long as you can turn the image which the Shattered Star Ring Supers have about you around, and show that you’re serious about expanding, the number of people who are willing to work for you will definitely be tens and hundreds of times more compared to now.

Han Xiao caressed his chin, sized Ames up and joked, “Plus, you’re so pretty, so your appeal might even be stronger than mine.”

Ames’ expression became odd. She stared at Han Xiao and said in a shocked and doubtful tone,

“You actually think I’m pretty?!”

“What’s so strange about that...”

Han Xiao was confused, he had no idea why Ames had such an exaggerated response.

Han Xiao shook his head and went back to the topic. “Have you decided on where Floating Dragon should stay at?”

“That’s what I wanted to discuss with you...”

Ames calmed her emotions down, seemed to have hesitated for half a second then said slowly, “I’m planning to let Floating Dragon stay at Planet Aquamarine, what do you think?”

Han Xiao was stunned in place.

“No?”

Ames raised her brows and gave a faint smile, "More than 10 years ago, your mother planet faced a disaster. Through the galactic media channels, you announced that the Floating Dragon was interested in Planet Aquamarine. Using the Floating Dragon's name, Planet Aquamarine has received a lot of investments and fundings from a ton of financial groups and has been developing very well. Even Godora allowed the Floating Dragon's control over Planet Aquamarine... You're not going to go back on your words, are you?"

Han Xiao shook his head with resignation. During that time, the Black Star Mercenary Group was still a tiny organization that still belonged to the Floating Dragon. Only through using the Floating Dragon name was he able to give Planet Aquamarine the opportunity to so quickly step into the galaxy.

After he left the Floating Dragon, the Black Star Army took over the management of Planet Aquamarine. The Floating Dragon did not say anything about it, so he thought Ames did not mind. Unexpectedly, Ames now suddenly brought it up.

"Since Planet Aquamarine is a planet ruled by my Floating Dragon on paper..." Ames' smiled brightly, Han Xiao's troubled expression made her very delighted. She smiled and said, "Then it should be justifiable for me to choose Planet Aquamarine as the headquarter location for Floating Dragon, isn't it?"

"Are you going to chase my people away from my mother planet?" Han Xiao was surprised. Planet Aquamarine was the foundation of his seat in the Shattered Star Ring Civilization Conference, there was no way he would give it to anyone else.

"Am I such a horrible person to you?" Ames said with a displeased ton, "Don't worry, just like your army's headquarters, the Floating Dragon will just be parked outside the planet's atmosphere and will not interfere with Planet Aquamarine's government. That's why I'm discussing it with you."

Han Xiao's eyes spun around. If that was the case, not only would it not be a bad thing, but it would be a great thing instead.

Throughout all these years the army headquarters had stayed around Planet Golden Gate, it brought Planet Golden Gate an almost unparalleled chance of development. Its economy, security, and many other aspects had improved tremendously since then and it became a beyond top tier prosperous colonial planet of Godora.

If Ames did the same, Planet Aquamarine's development speed would rocket instantly as well and indirectly receive tons of resources. Furthermore, with a Beyond Grade A, Ames as its neighbor, Planet Aquamarine would be massively safer, which would free Han Xiao of many worries.

With some thoughts flashing past Han Xiao's mind, he understood what Ames was thinking — the reason for her to choose Planet Aquamarine as the headquarters of the Floating Dragon was much more than it just being "justifiable". He sighed and said, "Looks like I'm going to owe you another favor."

"Good that you know." Ames smiled.

"Alright, I agree. I'll let the army subdivision at Planet Aquamarine to work with you by then, Sylvia and the others will take care of the details..."

"Hmm, I'll let Jenny settle it..."

Speaking of Jenny, Han Xiao suddenly thought of something. “By the way, about this, have you told Jenny about it in advance?”

“No.”

The two of them stared at each other’s eyes and stayed silent for a moment.

So this is indeed a sudden idea... Han Xiao sighed. He actually really thought Ames had seriously considered this, but as it turned out, this was exactly her style.

“Ahem, now that that’s settle, I shall get going.” Ames dry coughed with her fist covering her lips to hide her awkwardness, then turned around and left immediately.

Han Xiao watched as Ames and Aesop boarded the small spaceship and deviated from the fleet, turning into a stream of light and disappeared. He then ordered the fleet to continue advancing back to the army’s headquarters.

The task of traveling across Star Fields was completed. Han Xiao opened the forums to see what were the players’ responses.

When they just passed through the stargate, the more than 700,000 players inside the fleet did not really react to it much, but instead the Shattered Star Ring players had bigger responses. It was because the players from another Star Field had come to their territory and they could not wait to meet them.

The first example of players crossing to another Star Field had extraordinary meanings, the players from the various Star Fields recorded this moment in their Chronicle posts:

“Galaxy Calendar: Year 705, March 18th.

Led by the Black Star Army, more than 700,000 players left Constellation Corridor and arrived at the Shattered Star Ring. This was the first example of players successfully traveling to another Star Field in the entire Galaxy.”

The recruitment of players in the Constellation Corridor this time went quite smoothly, and Han Xiao knew exactly why — there were not many factions the players could choose in Version 3.0, and he knew what the players needed. Therefore, the Black Star Army was a top-notch faction in this stage and had excellent appeal.

As the players’ level increases, the number of powerful factions they would be able to choose would increase too. For example, the three universal civilizations and beyond Star Cluster civilizations. By then, the army would not be able to recruit players as easily anymore. This was unavoidable, there would always be people who would want to try out new factions for a new experience.

This was also one of the reasons Han Xiao kept expanding his army and increasing its competitiveness. From a certain perspective, it was actually a good thing to choose the rural Shattered Star Ring as its headquarters, as there were fewer direct competitors here.

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...

After traveling for more than 10 days, the fleet finally returned to the army's headquarters.

Millions of Shattered Star Ring players were gathered in the army headquarters at the moment, looking forward to meeting the foreign Constellation Corridor players. The majority of them were here to rubberneck.

The more than 700,000 Constellation Corridor players looked at the army headquarters satellite outside the porthole, their hearts were filled with excitement.

After staying on the ships with anticipation for so many days, they were finally here.

Chapter 814 Players: I Don't Want To Socialize. Han Xiao: No, You Do.

The transport spaceships landed on the headquarters' docks one after another.

As the more than 700,000 Constellation Corridor players stepped onto the headquarters' grounds, the millions of army players quickly came. The harbor and the hall were all filled with players. Luckily, the army headquarters satellite was large enough to carry billions of members.

This was the first time players from different Star Fields met outside of professional competitions. Be it the Chinese, Russians, or the Australian players, they all sized each other up in this first meeting.

When comparing the two sides, the difference was obvious.

The equipment on the more than 700,000 Constellation Corridor players varied broadly in terms of color and models, it looked quite messy.

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On the millions of army players' side, the color of their equipment and weapons were mainly black and silver. Although their equipment models differed, they were not as messy as the Constellation Corridor players. Most of the army players used the few sets of widely recognized army combat armors with the best performances, they looked like an elite military force and looked neat. The individual tiny differences between them were not that obvious. Furthermore, their equipment all had the Black Star Army symbol on them.

After getting down from the ship, some of the more than 700,000 newcomers greeted and talked to the others, some curiously observed and looked around the headquarters, and some went to communicate with the army NPCs. Generally, they scattered around and familiarized themselves with the headquarters.

Vodka and Captain Old Henry brought along their guild officers and looked for the guild leaders of the large Chinese guilds.

While the Long Sky club was in their rented base in the Black Star Army headquarters, the leaders of Sky Territory and Ancient Dynasty, Jade Green Sky and Morning Snow Twilight Frost came to meet the Russian guild officers.

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"It's good to see you, my Chinese friends. I'm the vice-president of Power And Glory, Vodka."

Vodka and his friends introduced themselves.

“Good to see you too,” Jade Green Sky smiled and said, the translation function relayed the meaning of his words to Vodka and the others.

They chatted casually for a while before getting down to business.

“The people above told us to build a guild branch here. Some time ago, the guilds on your side and our side have already contacted each other. The people above said that your guilds would provide us with some help in the early stages...”

Morning Snow Twilight Frost smiled and said, “That’s right. If I may ask, how many guild members did you bring here to build your guild branch?”

“I brought 12 guild officers, 150 official members, and 1,200 external members,” Vodka said.

The representatives of the other guilds said their numbers too, all were around 1,000. Being an officer or an official member of the large professional guilds was a proper job, they received salaries for playing the game. As for the external players, some of them were casual volunteers and some were similar to studios, they received bonuses from the clubs as well.

“For the thousands of you to start guild branches here, the road ahead is quite tough. You have to start from zero in every aspect. You will need to purchase all kinds of tools, items, carriers, which all require money; it’s the same for equipment repairs, enhancements, and renewals; building your bases is quite costly as well, and don’t forget about the traveling fees to do missions too. Furthermore, you need to search for channels that can provide stable streams of EXP, materials, and money. The earlier you turn losses into profit, the better, right?”

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Vodka and the rest nodded continuously. To them, operating the guilds was a job, they were here on a mission. Their job performance depended on how well they operated the guild branch.

Morning Snow Twilight Frost secretly exchanged looks with Jade Green Sky, smiled and said slowly,

“Some time ago, we completed the Black Star Army’s main storyline mission [Secret War], many of us obtained the army exclusive honorable title [Secret Warrior]. Anyone with this title can enjoy a 10% off discount on any purchases within the army. Of course, you guys don’t have that treatment.”

Only the army players who took part in the secret war had such privileges, this was a limited time only title, the players who joined later had no chance to obtain it anymore.

These guilds who had just come from another Star Field knew about this long ago through the forums, of course, they were jealous.

“You mean...”

“Yes, we can provide a channel for you to enjoy that discount. We will purchase products from the army at 10% off, and we will sell them to your two guilds at 3% off. Large guilds like us have more than enough funds and Contribution Points to fulfill your mass purchase needs... Of course, you can also look for normal players and ask them to help, but there’s a risk of getting tricked.”

Vodka did not give a response. It was clear that Dynasty and Long Sky were planning to profit from the price difference. As the manager of this guild branch, he had to be calculative.

Compared to purchasing resources from these Chinese clubs, he was more willing to work with reliable normal Chinese players. He could lend their title to purchase at 10% off and give them some resources from time to time, which would be much cheaper than a mere 3% off.

However, Morning Snow Twilight Frost saw right through them and knew exactly what these Russian guild representatives were thinking. He smiled faintly and said, "If you purchase from us, we will provide help to you in other ways too.

"In what ways?"

"For example, quality mission resources, hidden NPC intel, if you accept some kind of high difficulty mission, we can provide manpower to help you, also... we can ensure your safety."

"Safety?" Vodka's expression changed. "What do you mean?"

"The Shattered Star Ring is the territory which us Chinese clubs have been operating in since many versions ago. The dozens of large guilds and many more medium to smaller guilds have split most of the quality resources here. As outsiders who suddenly arrived to build your guilds, I can't guarantee no other guilds will have conflicts with you. And if it just so happens that you guys will have to fight guild wars with other local guilds, since you're just a guild branch and have very limited manpower, you will be at quite a massive disadvantage."

One of the goals those guilds which belonged to clubs had was to provide resources for their professional players, and the large guilds of the various nations were each others' biggest competitors. There was no way the Chinese clubs here would watch other professional clubs peacefully operate their guild branches here. Their higher-ups have already informed these guilds to think of some ways to restraint the developments of those competitors.

No matter how rich these foreign clubs were, if there were always people disrupting their missions, robbing their resources, and chasing down and killing their members, they would not be able to grow and would always make losses.

What Morning Snow Twilight Frost said was a reminder to Vodka and the others, saying that if they did not pay some "protection fees" to them, there were more than enough people here that could find their troubles.

Of course, the Chinese clubs were not too excessive about it. After all, players from all around the world were watching the situation of these first batch of players who have traveled to another Star Field. As the host, they could not openly bully these newcomers who had absolutely no foundations here. Even though they were competitors, they had to care about how much attention this matter attracted. They did not want the other countries to have a horrible image of the Chinese professional circle, so they still gave a little bit of discount and help, so that it would look like the foreign clubs did not make too much loss on the surface.

The normal players, of course, would not be targeted. However, the clubs of the various nations were first and foremost, commercial businesses. In order for their business to bloom, they had to rely on the

glory of their professional players. While they had to make profits, they also had the hopes of the players on their shoulders. Professional players fought in competitions, and they, the official guilds had to fight in the game as well. If the Chinese clubs went to another Star Field to start their guild branches, they would be treated very similarly as well, restricted in many aspects.

Vodka and the others exchanged looks then agreed with resignation. Deep down, however, they did not yield so easily. They secretly decided to look for chances to work with normal players without letting the Chinese clubs know, so they could pay lesser protection fees.

On the other side at the guild base of the Temple of God guild.

The guild president of the other two clubs, Jupiter and Cowherd Star were having a meeting with the Kangaroo Boxing guild branch president, Captain Old Henry, and the other Australian guild representatives. They were discussing the exact same thing as what Long Sky and Dynasty were...

The four largest clubs had already made agreements behind the curtains to do the same thing. Compared to their plans, this bit of protection fees were just minor profits.

...

To the more than 700,000 newcomers, the army headquarters was their new main city.

While they were familiarising themselves with the environment, Han Xiao had returned to the office of the Army Commander. The officers who had been managing the headquarters for the past two months were reporting to him.

Han Xiao leaned on his chair and looked at the group of officers in front of him.

“How’s the army doing while I wasn’t here?”

Sylvia took a step forward and reported, “We have digested the gains we made through the last expansions, as well as successfully linked with the business channels of the various allies in the Shattered Star Ring. The Black Star Army’s current business range covers more than 10 industries, forming a complete trading system, intelligence system, transportation system, and many others.”

Reynold said with a deep voice, “The Logistics Department has built 126 machinery workshop factories in various locations, making rushed orders of more satellite bases. According to the army’s future blueprint, we will continue to build more divisions in all the seven Star Clusters and expand our forces.”

Herlous nodded and said, “Due to the increase in the number of members and the size of our forces, the army’s fleet is expanding as well. The Logistics Departments already have a lot of things on their hands that are yet to be completed, so I made orders with the financial groups we’re working with and there’re new batches of battleships being built every day.”

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Han Xiao nodded. These were all things he told them to do before he left. He then asked, “Anything else?”

Sylvia said a little awkwardly, “Erm... our funds are running out...”

Han Xiao's eyes widened. "We have so many businesses, including the resource planet mining rights from many civilizations, how are we lacking money?"

"The cost of expansion was too high. The current maintenance fee of the army is extremely costly, plus the Logistics Department has been producing at full capacity all the time, which is reducing our funds at quite a terrifying speed. Furthermore, it's the off-season for trading lately, many of the financial groups working with us have seen decreased sales, so the profit period of the mining of resource planets is extended. Hence, our capital flow is a little tight..."

"Did you not look for the Crimson Dynasty and the Purple Crystal Civilization's men and asked them to send funds? Didn't I tell you, that you can look for them whenever we're lacking funds if it's caused by normal operation?" Han Xiao asked.

"I did..." Sylvia replied with resignation, "They did not reject, they just said that they would only do so when you tell them personally. They only recognize you."

"Alright then, I'll contact them later." Han Xiao's mouth twitched. These two only recognized him as their ally, which was unavoidable. Although his army was enormous, its true core was still him.

"One more thing. You told me to gather the teams needed to explore the Flickering World, I've already done so. They're split into many fleets and are now in standby at the various sub-bases in Colton, ready to depart anytime," Sylvia said.

"Good, Zoel will be hurrying me to get going very soon."

Han Xiao gave Sylvia a very satisfied look.

The three of them then reported some of the details. Seeing that Han Xiao had no other orders, they relaxed and started casually chatting.

"Why didn't I see Lagi? I've returned and my vice-captain isn't here to see me, what's he been busy doing?" Han Xiao wondered.

"Hehe, he's been busy every day, either busy playing cards or busy sleeping!"

Sylvia felt angry whenever Lagi's name was brought up. He then gave Herlous a stare and said, "You too. He has been dragging you to play cards every day, why don't you ever reject him?!"

"What do you know about fun between card-mates?" Herlous snorted.

"Don't mention playing cards in front of me." Han Xiao complained. "How has Lagi been teaching Tomar?"

Tomar was a protagonist character he brought back, and Han Xiao did not forget about him.

"I heard he's learning very fast."

Han Xiao nodded, then looked at Reynold and said with anticipation, "What about my godson? Has he shown any special talent in terms of machinery?"

"Err... no," Reynold told the truth. "But he's learning very fast too, he's quite talented on the path of the machinery."

Sigh, I wonder if this will help in getting [Perfect Mechanical Sense]... Han Xiao waved his hand with resignation.

“I’ll bring him out in a few days times, that’ll be all.”

The three of them nodded and left the room. Han Xiao took out his communicator and contacted the Purple Crystal Civilization and the Crimson Dynasty, successfully requested for funds.

Zoel also reminded him that the Crimson Dynasty was done preparing their exploration team, and told Han Xiao to lead his people to the Flickering World’s Dawn Star Cluster sometime soon and rendezvous with the dynasty’s army. By then, they would officially start to explore the Flickering World.

After settling the official matters, Han Xiao then looked at how the 700,000 new players were doing in the army’s headquarters.

These Constellation Corridor players were still familiarizing themselves with the headquarters’ structure and map. Han Xiao had noticed something — although these more than 700,000 players have already traveled to another Star Field, they were still posting on their Constellation Corridor forums page out of habit.

Although the players of both sides communicated quite a lot on the forums, only a minority of players interacted with each other in the army’s headquarters. Despite all of them being army members, there were still obvious differences between the players of the two Star Fields. They were not completely avoiding each other, but they were basically playing on their owns.

“This won’t do...” Han Xiao shook his head.

He pondered, then quickly wrote two Faction Missions and gave them out through the faction interface to all the army players.

[[Teach a Recruit] (Repeatable)]

Mission Introduction: The most recent expansion of the Black Star Army has brought back new warriors from another Star Field. The senior members of the army can choose to teach the new members, helping them to get familiar with the tasks in the army quickly.

Mission Requirements: Team up with one or more new warriors (players) from another Star Field and complete any one army mission.

Reward: 100 ~ 300 Black Star Army Contribution Points.

Remarks: Only players who have been in the army for more than a year can accept this mission.

[Consult A Veteran] (Repeatable)

Mission Introduction: As a new member of the Black Star Army, the veterans are the best people to learn from. Go and consult them, let them help you to know more about the army.

Mission Requirements: Team up with one or more senior warriors (players who have been in the army for more than a year) and complete any one army mission]

Reward: 100 ~ 300 Black Star Army Contribution Points.

Remarks: Only players who have been in the army for less than a year can accept this mission.

“Hehehe...” Looking at the two missions he had just distributed, Han Xiao giggled mischievously.

After existing for three versions, the army’s Contribution Point had already become a key resource that was just as important as Enas, no amount was too much for anyone.

He did not want to players of the two Star Fields to form their own circles. Those club guilds were commercial competitors with each other so there was nothing he could do, but there was definitely something he could do for those normal players. Since they were all here at his headquarters, they were all leaks in the same field. He needed those new and old members to interact with each other and play together.

The social aspect of a game was a key factor in the players’ game experience!

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Since players of both sides were so shy and did not interact with their foreign friends, Han Xiao decided to lure them to socialize.

This would be beneficial for the Constellation Corridor to embrace the army’s system. Not only would they be able to adapt to the new environment quicker, but the “Constellation Corridor” tag on those players would also slowly disappear and they would soon just think of themselves as “army players”.

This way, the personal connection between the players would become another reason for them to stay in the army. Using players to “attract” players, indirectly enhancing the appeal and sense of belonging of the faction!

Han Xiao suddenly patted his forehead and his expression became weird.

“Why does it feel similar to the oldest profession...”

Chapter 815 Socializing Mad Genius

As Han Xiao distributed the two new missions, notifications popped up on the interfaces of all the army players.

“Doing missions with new members gives bonus Faction Contribution Points? That sounds like a great deal.”

“Any mission? Does running errands count?”

“For sure, even using the army Dungeon Crystals counts.”

“These can be repeated? Awesome!”

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“Must team up with players who have been in the faction for less than a year, so only the new players born on Planet Deirdre in Version 3.0?”

“The Constellation Corridor players count too, right? Didn’t they just join the army?”

The two faction missions became a faction event and stirred up a wave among the players.

Han Xiao’s missions were not compulsory. He used the reward to lure them instead. Most of the players would not miss such a rare opportunity to farm Contribution Points. It was just teaming up with new players; they had nothing to lose and a lot to gain.

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Maybe some players could not be bothered, but most players were willing to grab this opportunity.

As long as most people were deliberately teaming up with new members and not just with their inner circle friends, they would have taken the first step to socializing with players from other Star Fields, and Han Xiao’s goal would be achieved.

When playing together, they would build some kind of relationship in one way or another. At the very least, adding each other to their friend lists would be common.

The two missions were a set targeted at different groups. [Teach a Recruit]’s purpose was to make the older members willing to team up with the new members, and [Consult a Veteran]’s aim was to make the new members look for old members to help them.

The Constellation Corridor players were not the only ones considered as ‘recruits’. The players from the Version 3.0 novice planet, Planet Deirdre, were also new members of the army. The Shattered Star Ring old members would, of course, be more willing to play with them, so [Consult a Veteran] ensured that those foreign players would look for the senior army members as well.

Compared to those senior members of the army, these new members needed the Contribution Points more and were more passionate about this mission.

Secretly guided by Han Xiao, the situation in the army headquarters changed very quickly. The areas where players gathered became boisterous, and groups of people asked to team up in the public channel.

“LF1M[1] new army member above level 100, no Pugilists. All old army members here. Let’s do missions together to farm Contribution Points.”

“Level 88 Cannon Master, newbie here, need an old member to team up with to farm Contribution Points!”

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“Thirty-man team here, planning to enter the [Secret War—Protection Warfare] dungeon. LF4M high-level Constellation Corridor players above Grade C+. Tank and disables needed, no damage dealers! Again, no damage dealers! Come quick!”

The interactions between players immediately became frequent.

The foreign players entered different army player teams and quickly mixed in with the environment. As the players were waiting for the Flickering World main storyline, they were mainly farming dungeons, which indirectly increased the sales of Dungeon Crystals.

The players had no suspicion of these two missions—to the players, it was very normal for the army to encourage the old members to teach the new members since a group of new members had just arrived from another Star Field.

“Hey, Chinese pal, do you know when this event will end?”

“Who cares? Just farm it as much as possible.”

“You guys don’t seem surprised at all. In our Star Field, group activities like this are very rare.”

“Haha, this happens very frequently in our army. I’ve already taken part in many large missions that had hundreds of thousands of participants. You’ll get used to it soon. This is a specialty of the Shattered Star Ring.”

As the normal players were teaming up, so were the club guilds. The four biggest Chinese guilds were overjoyed.

They had just made the price difference agreement with the foreign guilds, and this mission popped up right after. The Russian and Australian guild players were all recruits, so these guild representatives came back right after they had just left.

Even the faction was helping them!

After monitoring for a while, Han Xiao nodded and was rather satisfied with the impact he had made. This was a good start to make the players from different Star Fields mix together.

This would largely increase the efficiency of communication between the players from two sides and was beneficial for the faction.

He planned to keep these two missions active for some time.

They would have to explore the Flickering World very soon, which would have countless missions, so this mission would encourage the players from two sides to work together.

Closing the forums, Han Xiao left the office and returned to his bedroom.

His bedroom in the army had a very minimalist layout. The walls were metallic, and there was a window on the ceiling that looked right into the vast universe. A large black bed sat in the middle of the room, with a bookshelf, fridge, automatic cooker, waste bin, and other simple items beside the wall. The one plant pot in the corner of the wall grown by Han Xiao personally gave this cold and boring looking room a sense of liveliness.

Han Xiao took off his clothes and took a shower. He then took out a hand full of special grade nutrition pastes of different flavors and casually gulped them down. This thing recovered stamina extremely quickly, and it was not cheap.

Beyond Grade As basically did not need to sleep or eat at all, but he decided to retain his habit as a human. The increase in strength and change in the race would make beings look at the world in a different way. He did not need to rest, but he wanted to remind himself he was still human.

Due to the astonishing control that Beyond Grade As had over their bodies, there was no way for Han Xiao to fall asleep naturally. He could only control his brain to enter a rest state.

Since travelling to the Central Galaxy, this was the first time he had slept.

Han Xiao lay on the bed. Before sleeping, his consciousness entered the quantum network and told Phillip, "I'm sleeping. Call me up if anything. Goodnight."

"Goodnight, master, hum..." Phillip replied.

...

After sleeping for a night, Han Xiao's eyes opened exactly on time. He came out from under the blanket, washed up, took off his pajamas, and donned his black robe, once again recovering to the image of Black Star.

The first thing he did was open the forums. Due to the team-up missions, more and more new members of the army had become active on the Shattered Star Ring page and interacted with the Chinese players.

Han Xiao noticed a new pinned post—it was the new episode of Galaxy Times.

"They should mention the Star Field migration..."

Han Xiao opened it up.

After the familiar opening, the two hosts shared what interesting things were happening around the various Star Fields. They soon mentioned the first batch of players to travel to another Star Field.

"Not long ago, the renowned NPC faction of the Shattered Star Ring, the Black Star Army, provided the Constellation Corridor players a way to go to the Shattered Star Ring. Based on statistics, there are a total of 713,000 players who chose to leave with the Black Star Army, completing the first known event of any player traveling to another Star Field.

"In Version 2.0, the Black Star Army was the guiding faction to lead the Shattered Star Ring players to the galaxy. Now, they have once again guided the players of another Star Field to cross Star Fields. Maybe this is a signal—in the next version, the players might be able to cross Star Fields on a large scale and go to different areas freely!

"So far, this is how the activity areas of the players have developed: Version 1.0, novice planet; Version 2.0, entering the galaxy; Version 3.0, exploring the Star Cluster... The activity range of the players has been expanding every version. Initially, we thought that the players would be exploring their birth Star Field mainly in the next version, but the Black Star Army has given us new ideas. Due to the theme of Galaxy, the players of the various Star Fields will interact sooner or later. Therefore, according to this trend, we can speculate that the next version will be the stage where players can freely cross Star Fields."

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Han Xiao shook his head and smiled as he finished watching the show. This speculation was very logical, but Galaxy Times was only half right.

In the next version, the players would indeed be able to cross to another Star Fields on a large scale. However, unlike what Galaxy Times had speculated, the players would gather in the Flickering World instead of freely going to different areas.

Galaxy Times misguided the players, which was unavoidable. Other than Han Xiao, no players knew that the Flickering World would be the main stage of the next version.

...

“The players who are following me to the Flickering World still don’t know how much of an advantage they’ve gained.”

After looking at the forums for half an hour, only then did Han Xiao start to do other things. He patrolled around the army headquarters before heading to the Logistics Department.

When he entered Reynold’s office, he saw Nero, who was buried in the mountain of books.

“Godfather!” As soon as Nero looked up, his deep and dark eye bags were clearly visible. Realizing that it was Han Xiao, joy bloomed on his exhausted face. He immediately threw away the theory book in his hands and dashed into Han Xiao’s arms.

Looking at the terrifying amount of homework Reynold had given, Han Xiao’s mouth twitched.

This is almost on the level of child abuse...

Scolding Reynold in his mind, Han Xiao patted Nero’s head and said, “Come, I’m taking you out.”

“Really?” Nero was so overjoyed and surprised that his tears almost gushed out.

When he left Planet Aquamarine, Nero thought that he had followed his godfather out to play. To his absolute shock, there was an infinite amount of homework that he could never finish waiting for him!

Given Reynold’s personality, the thing he was best at was forceful education. In the past two months, Nero felt like he was in living hell, and seeing Han Xiao was like seeing an angel who had come to save him—he could finally escape this endless misery!

“I promised you, right?” Han Xiao smiled. Actually, the main goal was not to take Nero sightseeing but to go to the Tyla Civilization, which Harrofal had been part of, and search for the set of wormhole travel data back from when EsGod’s doppelganger entered it.

Other than Nero, Han Xiao only took Hila, Aurora, and Feidin along. They took the extremely quick Blacklight Stealth, so it would not take long for a return trip and would not delay the Flickering World mission.

As Harrofal had been killed by EsGod’s subordinate long ago, the chances of finding the wormhole data were very slim, which was why Han Xiao brought his two lucky mascots—Feidin and Nero—to offset his luck.

After all, those who believed in luck were... the unluckiest ones.

...

The Blacklight Stealth flew through the stargate and did not make any stops along the way. Not many days later, Han Xiao and the others arrived at one of the Tyla Civilization's governance planets to visit the high-level mechanic school that Harrofal had been part of.

With Han Xiao's identity, as long as his intentions were not hostile, he was welcomed as a guest by all the civilizations in the Shattered Star Ring... except the Klent Kingdom, who had been cursing him every day, and the Star Pupil Holy Race, who had been secretly sticking needles into his voodoo doll.

This mechanic school was government-based and raised many Mechanic talents for the Tyla Civilization. The school was vast and magnificent.

The principal was already waiting at the entrance of the school with others. Han Xiao was met with a warm welcome the moment he arrived.

"Your Excellency Black Star, it's our honor to have you." The principal smiled brightly.

"You're too kind." Han Xiao nodded.

"Please, follow me." Mechanical hoverboards arrived as the principal raised his arm. These were all public carriers inside the school.

Han Xiao stepped onto the hoverboard and followed the principal to head to the guest room, chatting and laughing along the way.

They passed through the school, and to Han Xiao's surprise, they attracted a lot of attention.

It seemed like some students had recognized him and spread the message out, leading to groups of students following behind them on mechanical hoverboards and watching them from afar.

Han Xiao looked behind him and said with surprise, "These are all students of this school, right? Why are they following behind us?"

The principal said with resignation, "Your Excellency Black Star, as you know, this is a mechanic school. All the students here are Mechanic class Supers..."

"And?"

"Ahem, you don't seem to know your significance in the hearts of the Mechanic class students..."

Han Xiao suddenly understood. He then looked back and realized that the students behind him were all filled with excitement, surprise, and admiration as they looked at him. It was almost worshipping.

He was the one and only Beyond Grade A Mechanic in the Shattered Star Ring, so his position was even more special in the eyes of the Mechanic Supers. He was basically the top authority of the Mechanics in the Shattered Star Ring. His visit to this school caused a sensation among the students.

The principal smiled and said, "Your Excellency Black Star, why don't you host a lecture here and teach them a tiny bit of your infinite wisdom on the path of the machinery. What do you think?"

“Hmm...” Han Xiao thought about it and did not reject it. He waved his hand and said, “I’ll see to it, if this trip goes smoothly.”

“Is there a goal for this visit?” the principal asked. Han Xiao only requested to visit and had yet to tell him his goal.

“Harrofal was my friend. I’m here to look for a set of data he had left behind.”

The principal was stunned for a moment. “Oh, him... alas, some time ago, the school was attacked, and he was killed by a group of kidnapers. He was an amazing researcher, and regretfully, we lost a crucial talent.”

“Those killers were EsGod’s subordinates. I’ve already avenged him.”

After a moment’s silence, the principal suddenly asked, “Did those EsGod subordinates you spoke of kidnap him because of that set of data you mentioned?”

This was not difficult to deduce, so Han Xiao was not surprised. He glanced at him and nodded.

“Yes. When Harrofal was doing wormhole research, I visited him many times. One time, we were attacked by the DarkStar leader, and I was forced to fight an EsGod doppelganger. However, back then, I was no match for it. Only thanks to Harrofal’s help was I able to lure the EsGod doppelganger into a wormhole and banish it. What I want is that set of location data for that wormhole.”

The wormhole cluster of the Taralam Star Cluster was the center of the Shattered Star Ring. The teleportation location of every unstable wormhole was random, unlike stargates, which had a fixed destination. Also, the chance of those random destinations repeating was infinitely close to zero, so finding that same wormhole would do nothing. Only the recorded coordinates data would be useful.

The principal shook his head. “When Harrofal was kidnapped, all the wormhole detectors in his lab were taken away, every single one of them.”

“He should’ve recorded the data into the internal database of your school. I hope that you can give me the authority to search for it.”

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“Er... the database consisting of the research data is highly confidential. I can only allow outsiders to browse it when it’s approved by the upper echelons of the civilization... I’m not even sure if Harrofal backed up that data. Also, there are too many sets of wormhole data he recorded. If you don’t recall the date and time, we won’t know which set of data you’re looking for...”

“Then please notify the upper echelons of the Tyla Civilization for me,” Han Xiao said with a deep voice.

Internal databases that had something to do with the government definitely had extremely strong virtual defense measures. As there were still hopes of obtaining the data through a just method, he did not want to use Virtual Intrusion and make a Star Cluster his enemy.

As a Beyond Grade A, he could not always do things sneakily. Furthermore, he still had no idea what was so important about the set of wormhole data that EsGod mentioned.

[1] LFXM is a common term in MMOs meaning Looking For x More player(s).

Chapter 816 Mechanic Class Top Mentor

The group of them entered the school's central building. The Mechanic students were not allowed to enter, so they loitered around outside for a while and gradually left one after another.

Han Xiao and the others came to the principal's guest room. A bionic mechanical assistant secretary brought them some drinks. The principal invited them to sit. "Your Excellency Black Star, please wait for a moment. I'll relay your request to my superiors."

Han Xiao nodded and watched the principal leave. The group waited in the room.

Nero leaned on the window and curiously looked at the scenery in the school. Small mechanical islands hovered in the sky, metal buildings in yellow and blue stood tall on the ground, students crossed between the buildings riding mechanical skateboards, and the red, yellow, and green forests waved with the wind. The alloy buildings coexisted with the artificial greenery, forming a harmonious color tone. It had a special sense of beauty.

"This place looks so different from Planet Aquamarine. It's so beautiful." Everything was fresh to Nero.

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"This is nothing. The dynasty school at the Crimson Dynasty's mother planet is much more magnificent than this." Han Xiao chuckled. He had brought Nero out not just to rub some luck from him but also to broaden Nero's knowledge.

"Really? I want to see that." Nero was really interested.

"I'll take you there if there's a chance." Han Xiao beckoned Nero over, pointed at the drink on the table, and said, "Come, try it. It's good."

On the table were a few cups of hot white liquid flickering with a tint of light gold, giving off a thick milky fragrance. This was some kind of milk product provided by the Tyla Civilization.

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Nero picked up the cup and took a sip. His eyes widened, and he gulped down a mouthful. He exhaled in satisfaction, licked away the white stain on his mouth, and looked like he wanted more.

"How was it?"

"Godfather, what is this? I've never tasted such delicious milk before."

Han Xiao smiled and explained, "When the Tyla Civilization was exploring a certain colonial planet, they discovered a galactic being that was on the verge of extinction. They were called the Herepoli Beasts, commonly known as the Giant Nebula Beasts. They are extremely large and can travel in the universe with their body. Some even call them the Mount of Giant Gods. However, the reproduction speed of the Giant Nebula Beasts is very long; they only mate every hundred years or so. After their cubs are born, they enter a three-month lactation period. The Giant Nebula Beasts only produce milk in those three short months. Their milk is rare, expensive, nourishing, and very unique. That's what you drank."

"I see." Nero rubbed his stomach. "No wonder my body feels so warm after drinking it."

"Do you want more? Drink mine too." Han Xiao smiled.

Nero licked his lips and was very tempted. After some tough internal conflict, he shook his head and said, "This is so valuable and rare; I can't drink it all. Godfather, you drink it too."

The others all laughed.

"I'm fine." Han Xiao shook his hand. Luxurious things that were extremely valuable to normal galactic residents were nothing much in his eyes. He could have plenty if he wanted.

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However, he did not have much interest in luxurious consumables. He preferred to buy more special grade nutrition pastes with that money, which were much more convenient to consume and recovered his stamina very quickly, much higher quality-price ratio.

After chatting for a while, the principal had yet to return. Han Xiao turned around and looked at the mechanical assistant secretary that stood still beside the wall.

"How may I be of service to you?" The mechanical assistant secretary sensed his sights and responded immediately.

Han Xiao shook his hand and observed the bionic skin of this mechanical assistant secretary.

This principal looked respectable and reputable, but the bionic appearance given to this mechanical secretary was extremely seductive and s*xxy. It might really have the full set of functions of a 'secretary'...

After waiting a while longer, the principal finally returned.

"Sorry to have kept you waiting, Your Excellency Black Star. The people above have agreed with your request and allowed me to use my authority to help you to find that data."

"Okay, thank the upper echelons of the Tyla Civilization for me." Han Xiao was relieved. Things were much easier now that it was settled with his face.

He was reminded of how even Star System civilizations did not give him face at all in the past, and he had to find someone to help him. Now that he was a Beyond Grade A, even the Star Cluster civilizations were willing to give him face.

The principal pressed a few times on the office desk. The color of it suddenly changed as it became the control screen of the internal database. He looked up and asked, "Your Excellency Black Star, do you remember the time and location of the data?"

Han Xiao nodded and told him. The principle then inputted the corresponding parameters and ran the search engine to look for related data.

Although they agreed to help, they were not going to let a Beyond Grade A operate their internal database, so the principal was assisting him.

Countless items flashed past the screen. After scrolling for a while, only one item was left that perfectly matched the parameters.

The principal exhaled deeply. “Found it. Looks like Harrofal uploaded the data; the time and location are both right. See if this is the data you wanted.”

Han Xiao walked over and browsed through it carefully. Although he did not professionally study wormholes like Harrofal, he had related professional knowledge of it and could understand the coordinates. However, this set of coordinates was outside the star map of the known universe and had a very complicated set of parameters. Without a star map, nothing could be discerned from just the data. He would only know where it led after studying it.

“EsGod was so concerned with this set of data. Which corner of the universe did his doppelganger get thrown to?” Han Xiao wondered.

Confirming that this set of data was from when Harrofal banished the EsGod doppelganger, Han Xiao blinked and took hundreds of photos instantly, which were transmitted to Phillip’s database. He then nodded at the principal.

“Looks like I’m in luck. I’ve already made a back up. Thank you for this.”

The principal shut down the screen, and the desk returned to normal. He then smiled and said, “I’m glad you’ve found what you came for. I have one thing I hope to ask from you.”

Han Xiao was not surprised at all—the Tyla Civilization would not help him for free if they did not want to obtain something from him in exchange.

“If it’s within my capabilities, I will help.”

“Haha, you’re mistaken. All we want to do is for you to become an honorary professor of the Tyla Official Mechanic School.”

That’s it? Han Xiao was a little surprised. After some thinking, he then understood their intention.

As the one and only Beyond Grade A Mechanic in the Shattered Star Ring, if he became a professor at the Tyla Civilization’s official mechanic school, the name of this school would be much more famous and would attract tons more students. Many Mechanic students would apply to study in this school, which would give the Tyla Civilization more talents. Furthermore, as a professor of the Tyla Civilization’s official school, it somewhat meant he was on their side. The Tyla Civilization would benefit a lot from this.

Since they had just helped him, Han Xiao was not going to reject such a small request. He nodded and said, “Sure.”

The principal was delighted. “Then I shall have my people settle it immediately. By the way, since you’re an honorary professor of the school, I hope you can host a lecture here. Either tomorrow or the day after is fine. It won’t take too much time. If you don’t mind, I’ll get my men to announce it within the school.”

“Alright, I shall stay here and trouble you for a few more days.”

Thinking about it, Han Xiao suddenly said, "By the way, since I'm now a professor of this school, why don't you give me a copy of the basic and advanced lessons of your school?"

The lessons of official schools like this were all very carefully authored. The fundamental textbooks would be quite useful for factions, so he could take them back and train the Mechanic Supers of the army in a systematic way.

Some high-grade Supers might not be good at teaching despite their strength... for example, Rey 'Forceful Education' Nold...

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Since Han Xiao was now an honorary professor of this school, he might as well gain something from it.

...

The next day, the Tyla Civilization immediately announced in a very high-profile way that they had successfully hired Black Star to be the honorary professor of their official mechanic school. They contacted a bunch of galactic media outlets to spread this news.

Currently, many of the civilizations in the Shattered Star Ring were the Black Star Army's business allies, but being an honorary professor of a civilization's official school signified an even closer relationship. The first ones to receive this news were the various Star Cluster civilizations of the Shattered Star Ring; they were all shocked and felt it was so sudden. Why did Black Star suddenly get mixed with the Tyla Civilization?

The Purple Crystal was even more shocked. Never mind you sneaking into the Crimson Dynasty's bed, we can't mess with them, so we'll live with it, but how can you flirt with that shameless neighbor? You *sshole, did you forget I'm your origina... ahem, your earliest ally who has invested the most in you?

Han Xiao's communicator was almost exploding from Ralph's calls, and he spent some time to finally calm him down.

This piece of news also shocked the many students in the Tyla Official Mechanic School.

Black Star is now our school's honorary professor, and he's going to do a lecture?

How did that perverted principal convince Black Star?

The students were exhilarated and honored.

Originally, the lecture was supposed to be carried out inside the building, but there were too many students attending, so the school decided to have Han Xiao give the lecture at the open central square.

As the day of the lecture arrived, the area was completely filled with people. There were absolutely no empty seats, and countless students even hovered in the air, riding mechanical skateboards. More than ninety percent of the people in the entire school came.

Most of the teachers and professors went to listen too—in front of a Beyond Grade A Mechanic, they were all students.

Han Xiao stood in the middle of the freshly built tall stage in the middle of the central square, looked around, and smiled bitterly in his mind.

He had thought that he would just be teaching a small group of students; never had he expected to create such a scene. Not only were there so many people here, but there were also even many recording devices around that videoed his every move. It was almost like a concert or even preaching.

Of course, he had no problem doing this. He did not even mind fist fighting with Heber in front of trillions of galactic residents back then, so this would not affect him at all. With his Beyond Grade A standard, he just had to casually share some experiences, and these students would be satisfied.

However, Han Xiao was not really used to this. Currently, the person who used lectures as core competitiveness was that old man Austin.

“Ahem, let’s get started...” Han Xiao cleared his throat and started speaking.

...

At the Bloodshed Land’s headquarters, Heber was confused. “Black Star went to give an open lecture to a Star Cluster civilization’s official school? He’s got to go to the Flickering World soon, yet he still has the time to do that?”

Inside the Palace of Hidden Spells, Austin murmured with a strange expression, “This guy, is he trying to imitate me and form a Hidden Machinery Abbey or something?”

“Tsk, I hate Mechanics.” On the Star Pupil Holy Race Mother Planet, Psyker shut down the screen without hesitation. He did not want to see Han Xiao at all. Every time he saw the Evolution Cube on his neck, his heart would ache... every single time.

In the Crimson Dynasty Diplomatic Building, Zoel shook his head and laughed. “Yo, this guy is doing it again?”

From the way he looked at it, Han Xiao was not satisfied with his current position and went to form alliances with more Star Cluster civilizations.

He was happy to see this as long as it did not affect the main business. The more influence the dynasty’s ally had in a Star Field, the better it was for them.

As for the players who were at the Black Star Army headquarters, some also discovered the broadcast on the galactic channels. Word quickly spread among the players, and more and more players turned on their communicators to watch Han Xiao’s lecture curiously.

“Huh, I thought the Army Commander has been in the headquarters. Turns out he went to another civilization.”

“What’s he talking about? Why does it sound like complete gibberish?”

When the many players were watching curiously, the Mechanic players among them were suddenly startled—a notification popped up on their interfaces.

You are listening to Black Star (Lv ?) share his knowledge of the Mechanic class. Due to the wide level difference, judging INT and LUK... Judgment complete. You are not sure if you understood. 1 random Mechanic class ability has received 50,000 EXP.

You are listening to Black Star (Lv ?) share his knowledge of the Mechanic class. Due to the wide level difference, judging INT and LUK... Judgment complete. You kind of understood. 2 random Mechanic class abilities have received 120,000 EXP.

...

You are listening to Black Star (Lv ?) share his knowledge of the Mechanic class. Due to the wide level difference, judging INT and LUK... Judgment complete. With a flash of insight, you suddenly figured it out. 4 random Mechanic class abilities have received 350,000 EXP.

All the Mechanic class players who were watching the broadcast were shocked.

“This is... imparting ability experiences?”

The Mechanic class players were overjoyed.

This was the notification that would pop up when NPCs shared abilities or their experiences with the players, but events that gave random ability EXP were very rare. The Mechanic class players did not expect this at all; they had only watched the broadcast out of curiosity and happened to trigger this amazing event.

Very soon, this piece of news spread on the forums like a typhoon. All the Mechanic class players came to know about it and all went to watch the broadcast with excitement.

“Holy, my Mechanic class ability leveled up!”

“Is this a random event?”

“This is so much quicker than doing missions... damn, my [Intermediate Machinery Affinity] is at Lv.9, one level from maximum!”

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“The Army Commander is awesome, as always!”

Leveling up abilities was always a bottomless pit of EXP, so the Mechanic class players were euphoric.

The players of the other four classes could only watch the Mechanic class players with jealousy.

It had been a very long time since Han Xiao had personally taught the players any abilities. As his interaction with the players decreased, many players had gradually started to forget the things he did in the past. This accident coincidentally made countless players recall that he was once a mentor.

Because of this, he became the recognized Top Mechanic Class Mentor!

Chapter 817 Pioneering

“Your Excellency Black Star, you’re welcome to come and visit the school any time.”

At the harbor, the principal brought his people along and sent Han Xiao and the others off. The lecture in the morning was very effective. The students were not the only ones who learned from it—he did too. So, his closeness and gratitude toward Han Xiao now were very sincere.

“Hmm, keep in touch.” Han Xiao nodded before leading the rest onto the Blacklight Stealth. It took off, turned into a stream of light, and disappeared in the dark, vast cosmic space.

Having obtained the data and completed the promised lecture, the goal of this trip was achieved. He did not stay any longer and left the Tyla Civilization.

As for the impact of this, he did not care about it much. The Tyla Civilization was considered a neutral and powerful civilization in the Shattered Star Ring. Other forces rarely messed with them, and they did not mess with others deliberately. The afterheat of the Black Star Army’s expansion had yet to vanish, so this bit of news would not cause too big a storm. At most, it might trigger some responses from the Star Cluster civilizations of the same grade.

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Instead, the excited Mechanic players on the forums surprised him. Only through the forums did he know that his open lecture triggered a random ability EXP reward event.

There were many ways the players could obtain EXP, and this was one of them, but a very rare one. Other than their luck, it also depended on the knowledge difference between the players and what the NPCs were teaching. Pugilists and Mages were no strangers to this. Pugilists could secretly listen and learn abilities from some dojos. It was risky and did not guarantee success. The players mainly did this to avoid spending Contribution Points. It was the same for the Mages.

“What a surprise, this coincidentally strengthened my Mechanic class mentor image.” Han Xiao shook his head.

His consciousness entered the quantum network and poked at Phillip.

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“How’s the study of that set of data?”

“It’s too complicated, hum... I can’t estimate the time needed to decipher it.”

The location data of the wormhole had been given to Phillip to analyze. It required a huge amount of experiments and tests, and even Han Xiao did not know how long it would take before there were any results.

However, Han Xiao was not in a hurry. Since the Tyla Civilization now knew that EsGod and he had their eyes on this set of data, they would definitely feel that this data had secrets. Therefore, they would have professional scientists secretly study this data. The efficiency of an entire Star Cluster civilization would definitely not be slower than him or EsGod, and this was one of the reasons he had befriended the Tyla Civilization. If the Tyla Civilization discovered any clues, he would have a chance to learn them as well, which would be quite nice.

He also planned to send the data to the dynasty when he had time and borrow the dynasty's technology to decipher its secret.

...

After a smooth flight, the Blacklight Stealth returned to the army headquarters.

They rested for a few days, and the gathering order of the dynasty was officially announced. The dynasty had notified the Black Star Army, the Bloodshed Land, and Klent, the various Shattered Star Ring allies, to immediately head to the Flickering World through the dynasty stargate at the border of the Star Field.

After preparing for so long, the dynasty was finally about to start its first stage of exploration of the Flickering World!

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Han Xiao immediately announced this as well.

When the departure date arrived, Phillip's broadcast announcement echoed in the entire army headquarters.

"All army members participating in the developments of the Flickering World, please board the ships immediately. We will be leaving in thirty minutes! I repeat, all..."

The players moved with anticipation and entered the harbor, boarding the transport ships one after another.

After the secret war ended, the Flickering World had become the next main storyline in the eyes of the players.

Exploring a new Star Field... this was the largest main storyline they had ever seen!

The millions of players were exhilarated!

Furthermore, with the example of the limited title [Secret Warrior], most of the army players accepted the Flickering World's main storyline mission. The players were excited just thinking about it.

Among which, the Constellation Corridor players were even more excited. The Shattered Star Ring players at least had similar experiences before, but the Constellation Corridor players had rarely had any large group missions like this, if any.

In the past, they had only heard about the benefits of being in the Black Star Army. Now, they had personally experienced it. The new recruits had an even higher rating for the army in their hearts.

The people at the army headquarters gathered and boarded the spaceships very quickly. With Han Xiao's order, the fleet departed.

Sylvia had already prepared all the fleets a few months ago. While the main fleet departed from the army headquarters, the teams in standby at the various sub-bases in the Colton Star Cluster departed as well. According to the plan, these subdivisions would rendezvous with Han Xiao one after another along the way.

The number of fleets and people the army had dispatched this time was enormous. Almost all the members who could move freely went along. It was the largest-scale operation in the history of the army.

No amount of manpower would ever be enough in exploring an entire new Star Field, so this exploration team would be building strongholds in the Flickering World and not return for a very long time, including Han Xiao.

The Black Star Army had already stabilized itself in the Shattered Star Ring, and its business was consistent. Furthermore, with the support of its two allies, the dynasty and Purple Crystal, as well as the protection of being a member of the Shattered Star Ring Civilization Conference, there was basically nothing to worry about.

The Flickering World would be the central stage of the next version. Developing the Flickering World was a crucial part of the next stage of development for the army.

The dynasty allies in the Shattered Star Ring were the ones to start the exploration first. Han Xiao had gone through a lot of planning to obtain such an advantage, so he could not possibly miss it. In order to deal with the countless organizations that would be fighting for territory in the future, he had to gain bigger advantages and build firm foundations in the early stages.

...

Somewhere in the Shattered Star Ring drifted Floating Dragon Island.

"I see, so Black Star has departed..."

Han Xiao's message appeared on the communicator. Ames looked away from the communicator and glanced at the floating dragon officers at the two sides of the throne.

"Let's go, toward Planet Aquamarine."

Come and read on our website wuxia.worldsite. Thanks

...

In the Central Galaxy, on the Federation of Light's mother planet, the president of the Federation of Light, Bader Ohoside, put down the deck of intelligence in his hands, looked at the Elders in the room, slowly said, "The Crimson Dynasty is finally going to officially start to explore the Flickering World... The dynasty will be focusing on this in the future. The exploration of the Flickering World is estimated to take decades or even an entire century."

The Chief Elder tapped the ground with his crutch and said with a hoarse voice, "It was our detectors that discovered the Flickering World. Back then, we transferred the ownership of the Flickering World to the Crimson Dynasty for a lot of profits. It will take a very long time for them to make a net profit from developing a new Star Field."

Back when they compromised with the Crimson Dynasty, it was not just to exchange for profits and calm the Crimson Tide. They also had more secret plans.

“Hmm...” Bader said indifferently. “In order to develop a new Star Field, the dynasty will definitely put in a lot of manpower and resources. The Flickering World will become a pond of quicksand that keeps dragging the dynasty’s men down in the decades to come. The dynasty will have a very difficult time fighting for anything else during that time. This is highly beneficial to us.”

The Chief Elder caressed the crystal at the top of his crutch and said, “When the dynasty purchased the ownership of the Flickering World from us, we made an agreement that only the Crimson Dynasty is allowed to build stargates at the early stages of the exploration. Any unauthorized forces in the Flickering World will be seen as enemies of the dynasty... However, the agreement is just words.”

“Without us having to do anything, those ambitious beyond Star Cluster civilizations are smart enough to know the Arcane Church’s and our stand on this,” Bader said. “They know very well that this is a perfect chance for them. Almost none of them will be willing to give up on the resources of a new Star Field. Although these chess pieces only obey us on the surface usually, as soon as they see something with low risk and high reward, they will act according to our goals without needing us to do anything.”

After a pause, Bader continued. “With so much attention on them, the dynasty doesn’t have the ability to have the new Star Field to itself. Due to multiple factors, the dynasty will open the Flickering World to the entire universe around the time they complete creating a full star map of it. This way, they will be able to obtain an infinite amount of foreign labor and resources, and most of the dynasty’s military and manpower will be able to retreat.”

The Chief Elder nodded. “The dynasty has the ownership of the Star Field, but the larger the profit, the more pressure they will have to endure. Let them endure it. Something can only be said to be lost when it was once possessed. We can obtain larger profits by taking a step back here.”

Bader crossed his arms and narrowed his eyes. “Since the dynasty is willing, let’s give them more pressure.”

...

On the Crimson Dynasty Mother Planet, the Dynasty Ruler, Urranrell, had just finished reading the intelligence of the Black Star Army and the Bloodshed Land departing. She put down the deck of data in her hands and looked up. Everyone there was a top-level official of the dynasty.

“Your Excellency Ruler, the Shattered Star Ring allies are the ones to carry out the earliest explorations. We will continue to put in more dynasty troops and allies in the future. The Federation of Light compromised on paper, but they will definitely violate the agreement secretly. The Federation of Light, the Arcane Church, and those beyond Star Cluster civilizations will undoubtedly move discreetly.”

“I know,” Urranrell said calmly. “Ever since the universe entered the Galaxy Calendar era, the Federation of Light lost their sharpness and are no longer willing to endure the pressure, so they don’t deserve the largest profits. I never expected them to obey the agreement anyway. In the coming decades, things might be tough for us, but history will eventually prove that those who have given up on the future will be abandoned by the future.”

Everyone nodded in silence.

“Those who cause trouble secretly will not expose their identity. Using this chance, we shall strike fear into those beyond Star Cluster civilizations who are getting more and more lawless.”

Urranrell’s eyes became focused as she spoke with a powerful and firm voice.

“Let’s remind them of the dynasty’s way of doing things!”

...

On the Fallen Ark, Harrison woke EsGod up from his sleep.

“The Arcane Church has responded.”

EsGod woke up, breathed, and said slowly, “What did they say?”

“They say that they’ve never heard about this.”

“That means they agreed.” EsGod narrowed his eyes. “Tell the fleet to turn around and go to the desolate universe belt near the Arcane Church. Let’s see where the temporary stargate they’ve prepared for me is.”

...

At the edge of the Shattered Star Ring, inside the endless darkness, a gigantic stargate stood in the cosmic space. The enormous Black Star Army was approaching slowly.

This was the Crimson Dynasty’s exclusive stargate connecting to the Flickering World, which was currently the only way to go to the Flickering World. A lot of dynasty’s battleships were stationed there to keep anyone from sneaking through.

After reporting their identity, the Black Star Army fleet entered the stargate one batch after another, disappearing into the blue space vortex.

“We’re going to do pioneering!”

“Brothers, I’m a little excited!”

The players on the transport ships were filled with anticipation.

As the main ship was about to enter the stargate, on the bridge, Hila and the Black Star Guards all turned around subconsciously to look at the bright stars behind them.

Han Xiao glanced behind him as well.

The next time I’ll be back here will be very far in the future...

Looks like I’m going to have to spend the ten-month EXP penalty period in the Flickering World.

When I am back in the known universe by then, my level should be far higher than the 240 I am at now.

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And the Evolution Cube might not be the only Universal Treasure in my hands...

Turning his head back, Han Xiao looked at the blue stargate vortex ahead. The other side of this stargate was a wide world filled with opportunities.

Boom!

The next moment, the main ship entered the stargate and trembled.

In an instant, there was only a bright blue light in their sights.

Chapter 818 Black-sheep-wall!

The main ship crossed the stargate and arrived at the Flickering World immediately from the Shattered Star Ring.

There were dynasty's fleets stationed on this side of the stargate too.

Han Xiao looked outside the window at the masses of star lights distributed around.

Unlike that prosperous Star Field in his memories, the Flickering World was still very primal and desolate. It did not have any traces of being developed before. The quantum network was silent; the only quantum network signal that he could connect to was the dynasty's military base station channel. This meant that this new Star Field was not open to the public.

"Beep beep..."

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As soon as the main ship crossed the stargate, it received a communication request from the dynasty's military.

After the communication request was accepted, a 3D projection appeared. It was an old dynasty officer and a familiar face.

Hila glanced at the dense number of badges on this person. She looked at the military ranking badge on the sleeve of his army uniform and concluded that this person was a dynasty admiral, a well-established upper echelon of the military.

This person's eyes were locked onto Han Xiao. He slightly raised his head and smiled gently.

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"I'm Tarrokov, the commander in chief of the development team of the Flickering World. Your Excellency Black Star, welcome to the Dawn Star Cluster."

"Commander." Han Xiao nodded.

Tarrokov was someone he was familiar with. In his previous life, when the players were active in the Flickering World, Tarrokov was also the commander in chief of the dynasty's troops stationed in the Flickering World. Back then, many of the missions were distributed in the form of military documents, and they were all signed by Tarrokov. He was in charge of the dynasty's troops in the Flickering World; all the dynasty missions came from him, so of course, the players were familiar with him.

Now that he had come to explore the Flickering World, Tarrokov would be considered as his semi-boss. Tarrokov would be contacting the dynasty's many allies on behalf of the dynasty, relaying the dynasty's orders to them. Han Xiao knew that he would be seeing this guy a lot for quite a long time.

Luckily, Tarrokov was a very senior military boss, and he was very gentle and steady, easy to get along with. This was also the reason the dynasty had sent him to take care of the matters in the Flickering World.

"Bloodshed Land and Klent arrived at the Flickering World two days ago. Come with your fleet as quickly as possible. When you're here, we will discuss the field exploration plans."

"Okay."

Han Xiao nodded, and Tarrokov hung up the communication.

Han Xiao opened the 3D star map. The current map of the Flickering World appeared before everyone's eyes. Only the Dawn Star Cluster was marked as green and completely explored, which had a rather complete star map. The other ninety percent or so of the area was all gray and had no details.

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The dynasty had built many strongholds in the Dawn Star Cluster, among which the main stronghold was on a planet at the border of the Dawn Star Cluster that connected to the unexplored area. The planet was named Planet Lighthouse, signifying its place as the lighthouse that guided the explorers' return.

The gathering location marked by Tarrokov was there.

"It will still take some time till all the fleets cross the stargate." Aurora pressed here and pulled there on the operation table, bringing up the gathering countdown that was calculated by the artificial intelligence.

Officers with important jobs such as Sylvia, Herlous, Reynold, and Lagi had all remained in the Shattered Star Ring to maintain the army headquarters' operations. Han Xiao had only brought some of the army's officers along this time, such as the Black Star Guards. Most of them did not have any jobs to do usually, and they were now assigned to different posts to take care of different matters in the exploration team.

The tons of non-combat knowledge that Aurora had learned could now be of use. She became Han Xiao's administrative officer and was responsible for the miscellaneous matters.

"Phillip, plan the route," Han Xiao said.

"Roger that, hum..."

An illuminated line immediately appeared on the star map, marking the quickest route to Planet Lighthouse.

The dynasty knew the importance of transportation and had built many military stargates in the Dawn Star Cluster to allow frequent jumps, tremendously reducing the traveling time within the Star Cluster. These were all marked on the star map. However, this was only the case during the closed exploration period. Han Xiao knew that once the Flickering World was open to the public, the dynasty would recover some of those military channels.

Han Xiao thought for a moment and said, "Split a few engineering fleets out from the main fleet and build the quantum communication stations for our army in the Dawn Star Cluster. Let the dynasty know about it. Tell them that this is for us to interact with the people in the Shattered Star Ring headquarters more easily."

It was the countless base stations and network nodes everywhere in the known universe that allowed the quantum network to exist in all places. However, as the Flickering World had no such stations, it had yet to connect with the quantum network of the known universe and could only redirect signals from the dynasty's nodes and base stations. This move from Han Xiao was to plot out the army's network base stations here. When the Star Field was open to the public in the future, they would become natural intelligence channels. Usually, this was an authority only high-level civilizations had.

However, now, this was one of the privileges given to the dynasty's allied forces. The dynasty would not stop him.

The army's battleships passed through the stargate one after another. Very soon, they all arrived at the Flickering World and immediately headed toward Planet Lighthouse in hyperdrive.

There were currently no outsiders in the Dawn Star Cluster, so the trip was smooth. After traveling for a few days and through dozens of military stargates linking the various strongholds, they crossed the entire Dawn Star Cluster, and Planet Lighthouse was within their sights.

A planet surrounded by countless battleships appeared outside the porthole.

On a tiny planet, the dynasty's direct exploration team, the Bloodshed Land's exploration team, the Klent Kingdom's exploration team, and the late to the party Black Star Army's exploration team gathered. The number of spaceships gathered there exceeded a hundred million!

It was marvelous!

Among which, the dynasty's direct spaceships had the highest number. They made up to about seventy percent of all the spaceships.

Not far away from the planet, there were many stargate stations coexisting but were yet to be activated.

The surface of Planet Lighthouse was covered by machinery and metal, not showing even the slightest soil. The dynasty's exploration team used the dynasty's well known 'Foolproof Planet Base Expansion Pack' on Planet Lighthouse. It flattened the ground through high pressure, increased the planet density, changed its landscape, and modified its crust, directly turning this planet into a Planet Grade Military Base.

The fleet stopped outside the atmosphere. Han Xiao and the Black Star Guards took a small spaceship and landed on Planet Lighthouse's dock.

Whoosh!

The hatch opened.

Han Xiao stepped onto the metal dock, looked across at the metal buildings, and fixed onto the most conspicuous building far away.

It was a few-thousand-meter-tall building. All the buildings around it looked like dwarfs under a giant. This was Planet Lighthouse's stronghold headquarters.

There were already officers waiting at the dock. After they did their formal military greetings, they invited Han Xiao and the rest to board the ground carrier and head to Planet Lighthouse's headquarters together.

Whoosh!

As they traveled across the buildings on the planet's surface, the sound of wind howled outside their carrier.

Han Xiao observed around and realized that the buildings on the surface were mainly hangars and warehouses. Countless carriers and mechanical assistants were transporting trucks of resources like hard working ants.

Seeing that they were looking around, the officer explained, "Planet Lighthouse is the logistics base of the exploration team. A large amount of supplies and resources are stored here."

Han Xiao nodded. The three Star Clusters that would be explored in the first stage were Renault, Garu, and Crown, all neighboring Star Clusters of the Dawn Star Cluster. Planet Lighthouse was located at a crucial junction and was the best transit station.

The ground distance was very short, and they arrived at the Planet Lighthouse headquarters very soon. Through the anti-gravity lift, they came all the way to the middle level at the headquarters, more than 1,400 meters above the ground.

Following the instructions, they walked into an enormous strategy conference room. There were already many people in the room. Han Xiao narrowed his eyes and immediately saw Heber—with his tiny-mountain-sized body, he was the most conspicuous.

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Heber turned and looked over. Their eyes clashed in midair. Heber's eyes had no emotions in them. He sat still on his seat and did not move before casually nodding in greeting.

Behind him were the Eight Vanguard Officials of the Bloodshed Land, who all looked at Han Xiao with hostility in their eyes.

That was especially so for the Chief Vanguard Official, Fosters, who looked like he wanted to turn his sight into knives and stab Han Xiao with them.

Although the Black Star Army and the Bloodshed Land had agreed to have a ceasefire, the hostility that the Bloodshed Land officers felt toward Han Xiao would not reduce because of it.

"Humph."

Seeing this, Hila took a step forward, and the Black Star Guards behind her followed right after, staring at the Vanguard Officials of Heber.

Hila and Fosters' sights met and almost created explosions in midair. The atmosphere became very tense.

In the past, when Han Xiao attended the Tyrant Party the second time, Fosters had challenged Han Xiao's subordinates. As the captain of the Black Star Guards, Hila had accepted the challenge, but Heber had appeared and told Fosters to back off, so the two of them did not end up fighting in the end.

Now that they had met again, this history appeared in both of their heads.

One was the Bloodshed Land's Chief Vanguard Official; the other was the Black Star Army's captain of the Black Star Guards. Be it their position, identity, or strength, they were naturally opposed to each other. Whoever beat the other would prove that their faction was better than another. The two of them stared at each other coldly while adding each other's name to the list of enemies they had to fight in the future.

Since Aurora had more than enough safety assurance, other than to repay Han Xiao, Hila continued to work for Han Xiao to become stronger. As she had the experience of being restrained by others, she had a very strong desire for power. Although she did not take the extreme path like she did in Han Xiao's previous life, she did not give up on any opportunities to challenge someone strong.

Han Xiao was not bothered. He waved and told the Black Star Guards to take a step back.

There was no way they would end up fighting right under the dynasty's nose, so there was no point in just staring at each other.

Seeing that the two sides had settled down, Han Xiao smiled at Heber.

"You're quite early."

"Unlike you, I don't like to be late," Heber replied indifferently.

He saw Han Xiao as someone on his level but had no intention of learning more about him or befriending him.

The two sides had a deep hatred for each other and only reluctantly became allies because of the dynasty. Although they were now at peace, they were still competitors in terms of the Flickering World exploration.

Since they were business competitors, Heber did not want to be friendly. His action of asking for a ceasefire with the Black Star Army in the past had already reduced his reputation within the Bloodshed Land. He could not let people mistakenly think that he was actually afraid of Black Star.

Han Xiao chuckled and knew exactly what Heber was thinking, but he did not mind.

Ty-Ty has been having a hard time. Let's not make it worse.

Not bothering about Heber, Han Xiao turned and looked at Tarrokov, who was standing beside the strategic analysis board. He smiled and said, "Chief commander, we finally meet."

"Your Excellency Black Star, Zoel might have already said this, but let me say it again. On behalf of the dynasty, we welcome your alliance."

When Han Xiao was speaking with Heber, Tarrokov watched from the side and did not speak. Once Han Xiao spoke to him, only then did he give a formal reply.

“Looks like we’re going to be colleagues for a very long time in the future.” Han Xiao shook Tarrokov’s hands.

“Please, take a seat.” Tarrokov smiled and pointed at a seat.

Han Xiao nodded and led his people to sit down. His men and Heber’s men sat on opposite sides of the room, and the Klent Kingdom’s men were in the middle.

The leader of the Klent Kingdom was someone Han Xiao did not know. They did not show Han Xiao any politeness at all, not even a greeting.

Compared to Klent, Heber’s hatred was nothing. Klent’s decade-long plan had been completely shattered. The secret war had been ended by Han Xiao single-handedly, and the resources they invested had yielded zero profit.

The loss they made was uncountable!

Hate Purple Crystal? They basically won without doing anything.

Hate the Crimson Dynasty? As if we would dare!

Hate the Bloodshed Land?

... Wake up!

Therefore, their hatred could only land on Han Xiao, no one else.

If the Bloodshed Land’s hostility toward Han Xiao was two stars, Klent’s hostility was at least ten stars.

“Since everyone’s here, let’s get started.”

Tarrokov completely ignored the conflict between the three sides and turned on the strategic analysis board behind him. He brought up the unexplored star map of the Renault, Garu, and Crown Star Clusters.

“These three Star Clusters are the targets of the first stage of developments. The Bloodshed Land and Klent will explore Renault, the dynasty’s direct teams will explore Crown, and the Black Star Army will explore Garu. These are your choices, which were made long ago. Now, let me talk about the details... The task of exploration is very cumbersome, but in the end, it can be divided into a few key points.”

Tarrokov extended a few fingers.

“The drawing of the star map, the large-scale deployment of area observation buoys, the installation of a traffic network, the construction of transit stations and strongholds, the completion of the detailed information of the various planets... and the collection of resources.”

Han Xiao nodded. These were just the main goals. There were tons of tasks that had to be carried out in reality. They had to carry out construction at the same time as exploring the map. The reason they had brought so many people there was to split up and increase their efficiency.

This time, Tarrokov said, "The dynasty has the most manpower. In order to ensure progress, we will be sending some teams to follow the three of you and provide assistance.

The dynasty made up to seventy percent of all the forces there, so it was normal to give them some of their manpower. However, this was just one reason; surveillance was another reason.

The dynasty was willing to let its ally forces take part in the exploration and share the benefits, but it could not completely leave things to its allies. Sending out these surveillance teams would prevent its allies from not reporting the resources discovered or reporting the incorrect quantity deliberately, ensuring the accuracy of the results of the exploration.

The dynasty has invested a lot of this, so of course, they're getting the largest portion of the resources in the new Star Field. Completely sensible...

However, there was still a lot of room in terms of how much extra profit the explorers would obtain.

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The others had no idea what was on those unexplored planets and could only explore them one by one. It completely depended on their luck.

Han Xiao also did not know what was on most of the planets. He was an extremely experienced player in his previous life, but he was not as experienced as remembering the information about every single planet... However, he still knew full well about the famous and unique planets in the Flickering World.

This meant that he did not need to do field exploration to know which planets were extremely profitable and rich.

"Hmm..."

Han Xiao caressed his chin and contemplated.

Chapter 819 Special Exploration Route

Heber and the Klent commander knew that the dynasty would send out surveillance teams, so they were not surprised either.

Tarrokov explained the details as he pointed at the locations on the star map. The others listened silently.

When Tarrokov was finished, the Klent commander suddenly said, "We know what you've just said. What I want to know is, us Shattered Star Ring allies are the first teams to take part in the exploration, and the dynasty will be sending its allies from other Star Fields here too, so when will the next batch of dynasty allies arrive?"

Star Fields were too huge. Even all of them combined were just a leaf within a forest compared to a Star Field; they were very tiny. With just them, God only knew when the Flickering World would be fully explored. Therefore, the dynasty would be sending more manpower there in the future. Those dynasty allies who arrived later would be both allies and new competitors.

What Klent cared about was when the next batch of competitors would arrive, basically how much time they had ahead of others.

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Tarrokov smiled.

“That depends on the arrangements of the dynasty’s upper echelons and the gathering speed of our allied forces, as well as the progress of our exploration. I have yet to receive any notification on the exact time. However, according to my estimation, the next batch of exploration teams will only arrive in half a year’s time at the earliest. Before that, the dynasty will have to rely on you guys. If the progress of the exploration is outstanding, the dynasty will not be petty in terms of rewards.”

The few of them nodded. If the exploration was smooth and the results were beyond expected, it would all become their contributions. The dynasty would take a large portion of the resources, so they would be given rewards based on the results of the pioneering. This was the key factor of their competition.

The one whose exploration went the smoothest and obtained the most profit would be merited the most.

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Tarrokov paused and asked, “For the Star Clusters you’ve decided to explore, what direction are you guys planning to enter from?”

The Star Cluster could be divided into dozens of Star Systems. They were all exploring into the center from the edges of it.

The border line was extremely long, so the direction they were going to enter from was very important. If they started exploring from poor locations, they would make a huge loss since they would waste a lot of time not discovering many resources.

The only information they had to decide on this was the semi-complete star map drawn through astronomical observations. The most they could do was just avoid the obvious desolate universe belts, but the resources on the planets were still unknown.

Although Tarrokov had only just asked, the few of them had discussed and analyzed this privately long ago.

Heber and Klent were on the same side. They planned to split into twenty-three teams and enter one Star System of their choice from twenty-three different locations. The teams would not be far from each other and would advance together in a fan shape, gradually gathering at a certain point to build a large transit stronghold. They would then continue to split and explore, making sure the exploration range of every team would not be repeated as much as possible.

Han Xiao listened as the Klent commander described their plan and nodded in his mind.

Heber had made a good choice. The first area they were going to explore was called the Jeraton Star System, a rather rich Star System of the Renault Star Cluster in his previous life. It did indeed have rich resources.

If the Flickering World's star map was 2D and linked with the known universe, the Dawn Star Cluster would be at the most west side of the Flickering World. As for the three Star Clusters right beside it, Garu was at its North, Renault was at its East, and Crown was at its South. The Jeraton Star System, which Heber and Klent were going to explore first, was the border Star System on the southwest side of Renault.

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Tarrokov nodded, turned to look at Han Xiao, and asked, "What about you?"

Han Xiao pointed at the border Star System at the southernmost point of the Garu Star Cluster. He drew a route upward that penetrated more than ten Star Systems, connecting the southernmost part of the Garu Star Cluster to its easternmost part.

"What do you mean by this?" Tarrokov was surprised.

"Well..." Han Xiao smiled mysteriously. "I will have my main force explore from the border Star System at the southernmost side and send out a team carrying stargate devices. This team will only build stargates along the way and not make any other stops. I'm going to build a stargate route and connect these ten Star Systems together first."

"You want to build the important long traffic route first?" Tarrokov raised his brows.

"Not only that, whenever this team connects to the next Star System, I will split up more men to explore other Star Systems." Han Xiao shrugged.

Tarrokov frowned slightly. Heber and the Klent commander exchanged looks, too. They were a little speechless.

In their eyes, the problem with Black Star's exploration plan was too obvious—insufficient manpower.

With only so many people, even exploring one Star System would take a lot of time, yet Black Star wanted to explore more than ten Star Systems at the same time. How would he have enough manpower? They all thought that his appetite was too large, and it had exceeded his capabilities.

Building an important long traffic route first was a good thing to the dynasty, so Tarrokov had no problem with that. However, this did not match the profit perspective of a dynasty ally, so Han Xiao's decision surprised him.

This was not a horse race. There was no point in connecting all these Star Systems if he would not be able to finish exploring all of them. Since the exploration efficiency was limited, wasting manpower to build long-term stargate channels would only make traveling to other Star Systems much easier for the forces that would come later. This looked like it had many more cons than pros.

Klent and the Bloodshed Land wanted to finish exploring one Star System before going to the next. In comparison, they were exploring in areas while Han Xiao was exploring in lines.

To balance the profit between its allies, the dynasty's plan was also to gradually move forward and slowly explore, not preparing to install complete stargate traffic networks in the unexplored areas immediately. The astronomical observations had already given them a semi-complete star map, so what

they lacked was the completion of detailed information and field inspection. Therefore, the goal of the first stage of the exploration was just the three areas beside the Dawn Star Cluster.

During the slow process of exploration, the exploration team would always be building stargates. Therefore, the long-distance stargate channels would eventually appear, and there was no need to build it specifically.

This meant that the Black Star Army was wasting its own resources and time while reducing its results. This made Tarrokov, Heber, the Klent commander very confused.

“Do you want to reconsider?” Tarrokov asked out of good intentions.

Han Xiao waved and chuckled. “No need, I like to rely on my luck. Maybe I can discover some rich resource planets in advance.”

Seeing that Black Star remained stubborn, the Klent commander ridiculed him in his mind.

With such a poor exploration plan that clearly lacked consideration, their pioneering would definitely not go smoothly. This meant that they would most likely beat the Black Star Army this time.

“Okay then.” Tarrokov did not insist.

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No matter what method its allies used to explore, the dynasty would not make any losses. After all, the entire Star Field belonged to them. The only one that would make losses was the Black Star Army itself, and since Black Star did not care, he did not care either.

Han Xiao had a smile on his face, and the others could not figure out what he was thinking.

This exploration plan that looked to be very desperate for merit suited his goals the most.

The reason that the fewest organizations decided to explore the Garu Star Cluster, as mentioned by Zoel, was that in the few Star Systems at the south of the Garu Star Cluster, there were obvious desolate universe belts. If he imitated Heber and the others and only explored one border Star System, he would definitely not produce many results.

He used this exploration plan to first develop those known rich planets in his memories.

On this traffic route stretching from the south of Garu to the east, there were a few Star Systems that were extremely prosperous areas with many renowned rich planets in the previous life, which only he knew about now.

Also, as he stretched the exploration line, the surveillance of the dynasty would likely be less intense, which would give him room to operate.

Han Xiao was not going to give up on such a good opportunity.

Another goal he had was to distract the others away from his true goal.

Han Xiao hoped to go to the south of the Garu Star Cluster as soon as possible without seeming too obvious.

This was because the ownerless Universal Treasure in his memories was located in the other Star Cluster connected to the south of the Garu Star Cluster!

He would only be able to obtain that Universal Treasure as soon as possible if he built this stargate route!

Tarrokov turned off the star map and said with a deep voice, "It's all decided then. You guys, wait here for two days. I'll dispatch teams to fuse into your teams as well as pass the stargate, buoys, and the other exploration devices to you. We shall depart officially in two days."

"Okay," the Klent commander replied.

Han Xiao and Heber nodded and did not speak.

They stood up and left the conference room.

Walking out of the door, Han Xiao and Heber glanced at each other at the same time, as if their clashing sights created flames in midair. They then turned around and left with their officers in opposite directions.

...

"Hey, what do you think Black Star is thinking?"

Heber and Klent's men were walking together. On the way, a Vanguard Official could not help but ask the chief staff sergeant, Jorde, beside him.

"What are you trying to say?" Jorde glanced at him.

"Don't you know what kind of person Black Star is? He's never one to be willing to make losses. He clearly knows that there's no benefit in building the long-distance stargate route in advance, so he definitely has other motives."

Jorde's eyes flickered. "Indeed, Black Star's decision is strange..."

"Chief staff sergeant, what do you think his motive is?"

The people around all eavesdropped at the conversation.

"I'm not Black Star," Jorde said with resignation. "The only reason I can think of is that Black Star is not willing to explore the poor border Star Systems of the Garu Star Cluster. But still, there's no need for him to waste time and cross more than ten Star Systems. I can't think of any other reasons... Maybe his appetite is too large, or maybe he really wants to rely on his luck."

"Maybe he wants to first take over the planets that will be traffic stations in the future."

"No way, the dynasty won't allow it."

As the Flickering World was an undeveloped Star Field, everyone subconsciously had one assumption—no one knew the detailed information of the Flickering World. Therefore, there was no way anyone could guess Han Xiao's motives.

The Klent commander quickly walked to Heber's side and said softly, "Your Excellency Tyrant, what do you say we..."

"Finish your sentence if you have something to say. Don't make me guess." Heber looked straight forward.

"... what do you say we send people to secretly head to the Garu Star Cluster and monitor Black Star's movements?"

"What's the point of that?" Heber glanced at him. "Do you dare disrupt the exploration right under the dynasty's nose?"

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The Klent commander was stunned for a moment. He pondered carefully and came to a realization.

Exploring the Flickering World was the dynasty's key strategic goal, so even if they did know what the Black Star Army was planning to do, they could not do anything about it. If they disrupted the exploration progress for their own interest, the dynasty would definitely not show mercy and make them an example, to show the other allied organizations who would participate in the exploration in the future what the consequences of daring to disrupt the dynasty's plans were.

Having realized that, the Klent commander backed off and did not mention this matter anymore.

It seemed like the only way to be above the Black Star Army was to compete fairly through their pioneering results.

Luckily, not only did Black Star choose the Garu, but he also chose to use a horrible plan. The Bloodshed Land and their victory were certain.

Chapter 820 The Star of the Main Storyline and Stowaways

The fleet stayed on Planet Lighthouse for two days receiving all kinds of exploration devices from Tarrokov. Huge alloy containers were loaded into the transport ships of the Black Star Army and neatly arranged.

These were all exploration supplies provided by the dynasty. There were stargate devices, Foolproof Planet Base Expansion Packs, universe surveillance buoys, and so on. These were all military devices that were unavailable to the general public and only occasionally appeared on the black markets.

Han Xiao told Phillip to do a count. They had received about five hundred sets of stargate devices, six thousand Foolproof Planet Base Expansion Packs, and fifteen billion universe surveillance buoys. These were not given but lent to him as mission items.

Also, Tarrokov had dispatched a dynasty fleet that temporarily joined the Black Star Army's teams to assist him in exploring the Garu Star Cluster. The commander of this fleet was a major under Tarrokov. His name was Senico.

Tarrokov would be stationed on Planet Lighthouse as the chief commander, and the dynasty fleets he sent out all had their own commanders. Senico was Tarrokov's direct subordinate, as well as one of the

dynasty officers stationed in the Flickering World according to Han Xiao's memories. Han Xiao had a faint image of him.

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As they would be working alongside each other during the exploration, Han Xiao met and spoke with Senico. They came to a simple consensus; Senico expressed that he would not interfere with Black Star's exploration plan and would only be assisting them mainly.

After preparing for two days, the chief commander finally announced the start of the operation. The fleets of various forces went in their separate ways to the Star Clusters of their choices.

The Renault Star Cluster would be explored by the Bloodshed Land and Klent, Garu by the Black Star Army, and the Crown Star Cluster by the dynasty's remaining fleet. Comparatively, the Crown Star Cluster had the most people, and the Garu Star Cluster had the fewest.

The Black Star Army and Senico's fleet headed to the most South Star System of the Garu Star Cluster.

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Before departing, Han Xiao had already announced the army's exploration plan to all the members, including the millions of players.

He had put up all kinds of tasks on the faction mission list, such as exploring planets and deploying buoys, which were also classified into different areas. There were plenty of missions, but each one of them had a maximum participant limit.

The many kinds of exploration missions sparked discussion on the forums. Different exploration missions gave different Exploration Points, and the Exploration Points relied on the actual results of those missions. The players would only know how many Exploration Points they would get when they completed them, so the players could only speculate and analyze for the moment, but they were still enjoying it.

On the forums, the players generally agreed that exploring planets theoretically would lead to the most results. As discovering resources and lives, digging up the planet's history, mining the resources, and the other activities that would possibly happen during exploring planets all gave Exploration Points as a reward. At the same time, the process of it was filled with the joy of discovering the unknown.

In comparison, those missions to deploy buoys, build stargates, and construct strongholds were considered hard labor tasks. They were the least popular missions among the players.

Han Xiao knew that once the players were more familiar with the process of the exploration, the guilds would start fighting each other as the large guilds would want to make planets with rich resources their guild resource point. Although they would only be able to obtain a small portion of the total resources mined, that would still be considered a large reward to the players.

In his previous life, there were two reasons for the players of different nations to fight each other—faction wars and planets with rich resources. Now, however, all the millions of the players were in his faction, so there would be no faction conflicts. The only reason they would fight each other now would be for the ownership of resource points.

Although things had yet to reach the stage of intense guild wars, he knew that there would definitely be competition since there were club guilds from different nations in the army.

One reason he encouraged socializing between players was to reduce the impact of the guild conflicts on normal players as much as possible. The conflict between players was unavoidable, but he wanted to prevent the players from having direct hostility toward each other.

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As long as the players in his army were not divided to such an extent, the competition between guilds would not affect his profit. After all, the players would still have to repair their equipment in the army after they damaged it during battle.

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After some days, the various fleets arrived at their respective locations and officially started their exploration tasks.

The Black Star Army's exploration team came to the southernmost Star System of Garu and built the first transit station according to the plan, connecting with the Dawn Star Cluster.

The engineering team used a Foolproof Planet Base Expansion Pack on a desolate planet at the border of the Star System. The transport ship opened its cabin, and hundreds of thousands of gigantic mechanical bases that looked like needles flew out—they were all base nodes.

The base nodes formed a large net and shrouded the entire planet.

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Then, the thrusters of these nodes shot out orange flames and penetrated the planet's atmosphere. Like hundreds of thousands of missiles, these nodes landed and plugged deep into the planet surface, stirring up endless dust.

The next moment, all the base nodes were activated. A red light appeared on the top of these nodes as they started to modify the planet's environment and terrain. Every node was vibrating and emitting impact waves one after another, triggering earthquakes and tearing the ground open.

Gray and silver metal extended from these nodes and spread over the ground, turning the planet surface into a metal surface. According to the preset program, bases, fortresses, and warehouses would rise from the ground.

After dozens of hours, the initial modification was complete. The once desolate planet now looked completely different; it became a planet fortress in gray and silver. This was the first stronghold in the Garu Star Cluster.

The dynasty's engineering ships were not just watching. They dragged along gigantic parts of the stargate and were assembling it beside this stronghold.

An unactivated stargate looked like a gigantic hollow mechanical ring. After it was activated, the inner circle of this mechanical ring emitted blue light and space energy, connecting to one of the stargates near Planet Lighthouse.

Then, the hollow part of the mechanical ring turned into a wormhole-like blue vortex, becoming a fully functional stargate.

Other than the team left behind to build the stronghold, the rest split up. Some went to deploy buoys nearby, and some went to explore the unknown planets nearby.

A Star System had about ten Star Zones. The main team of the Black Star Army was now exploring the first Star Zone.

According to the plan, Han Xiao sent out a special task force led by Hadavy to move alone with a hundred and fifty stargate devices. Its goal was to cross the many Star Systems and head to the east of the Garu Star Cluster, building a long distance stargate route on the way.

The spaceships given to this special task force were all high-grade transport ships that had a maximum speed of 14.1 warp speed. It would take about four months for them to reach the destination through nonstop hyperdrive.

After the special task force completed building the long distance stargate route, the four-month trip would be reduced to a mere few hours.

As countless army members were doing their part, Han Xiao led a group of army warriors and players to a planet at the center of this Star Zone on the main ship.

In his memories, this planet was a trade transfer station and one of the entrances into the Garu Star Cluster in his previous life. It was rather valuable. Furthermore, it did not have a harsh environment and was quite habitable. It also had a native civilization.

Currently, this planet did not have a name yet and only had a serial number. He wanted to head there in advance and start its exploration.

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Outside the border of the Shattered Star Ring was the edge of the known universe, the desolate universe belt between the Shattered Star Ring and the Flickering World.

Fleets left from the border one after another from different locations, turning into hyperdrive streams of light and entering the desolate universe belt, heading in the Flickering World's direction.

News of the Crimson Dynasty exploring the Flickering World had spread across the entire galaxy. Although the dynasty clearly stated that the other civilizations were not allowed to enter, the mere words on paper were not enough to scare those powerful forces away. They all wanted to enter the Flickering World in advance to grab the opportunities there.

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These fleets were from different civilizations and organizations; they all hid their identities.

As they were unable to use the dynasty's stargate, they could only sneak into the Flickering World, taking along stargate devices and planning to secretly build stargate routes without getting discovered by the dynasty.

Even though these fleets were all extremely quick, it would still take a very long time for them to cross the desolate universe belt and arrive at the Flickering World.

Among these smugglers, some were doing it for profits, and some had ulterior motives.

One of them was the group of people the Arcane Church secretly sent.